



# Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association

## TURNROW TALK

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### President's Column

by Rusty Elston

*Elston Crop Management, Inc., Cheneyville, LA*

Let me begin by saying that it is an honor and privilege to be the President of the LACA for 2008. I can remember the first LACA meeting that I attended. I was a senior at Louisiana Tech University. The year was 1980. Grady Coburn invited me to participate in the meeting. There were about 60 people in the meeting. I was so impressed and wanted to someday be a part of this organization and profession. Since that time I've not missed an LACA spring meeting. Our organization has grown and become a very highly respected group of crop professionals.

This year our Louisiana Agricultural Technology and Management Conference was a great success. The attendance was the highest ever. The speakers and presentations were great. Thanks to everyone who participated in the planning of the conference and to all who participated in the conference. Next year's meeting will be even better, count on it.

This year will be a great year for farmers and consultants. There will be many challenges. Together, as a team, we will do what it takes to make this year a success. A very important person in my life has said many times, "The difficult we will do today, the impossible may take a little longer." This is the kind of drive that we as consultants must have to be what our farmer clients need. Being in the LACA is so beneficial. Not only are we continually educating ourselves but being able to network with others in our profession who are exposed daily to field situations is invaluable. It is such a blessing to be able to pick up the phone and be able to call dozens of people who are always willing and able to help.

I truly believe that the opportunity for success as farmers and consultants is very good. As consultants, we must work hard to provide our farmers with the best information possible. We must encourage good stewardship of the land that God has blessed us with. Technology is progressing rapidly. Changes are going to occur whether we like it or not. At a meeting I recently attended, the speaker who was very high up on the corporate ladder said this about technology, "Technology can be learned and

be a benefit to you or you can ignore it and become a victim of it." Wow, this hit me right between the eyes. As crop consultants we have to keep up or be left behind, it's that simple. I hope that 2008 is a good year for you. I hope that we get those "just right" rains when we need them. I'm proud to be an independent crop consultant. I'm proud to be in the LACA. Be sure to thank the Lord for His many blessings, for what you have and for what you don't have. This will be a great year. God bless you!

*Rusty Elston was featured in the Cotton Consultant's Corner of Cotton Farming magazine in March. He had some really insightful things to say, so if you haven't seen this issue, please make sure you do. Rusty made the statement that the most rewarding part of his career is the trust relationship between he and his clients. He also encouraged other consultants to attend educational meetings throughout the year, saying these are a must to staying on top of the consulting business and being able to evolve with the changing times and challenges we all face.*

### Professional Crop Consultants Inducted into the Louisiana Agricultural Hall of Fame

Two icons in the agricultural consulting profession were honored at our annual consultants' meeting this year with the Louisiana Agricultural Hall of Fame Award. Grady Coburn, Ph.D. and Calvin Viator, Ph.D., both cornerstones of the association, being among the first to get the association off the ground, were the recipients of this most prestigious award.

Grady was employed by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service from 1972-1974 and coordinated and supervised a statewide cotton pest management program. In 1975, he started his own crop consulting and contract research business in Cheneyville, LA where he still continues today, quite successfully. Grady served as LACA President in 1978-79, and has served on numerous committees both in LACA and NAICC. He has also served as NAICC President. Grady currently serves LACA as a member of the Governmental Affairs Committee and is the LACA appointed member on the LDAF Pesticide Advisory Commission. Honors include Cotton Farming Magazine's Consultant of the Year, induction into the Ag Consultant and Fieldman Magazine's Crop Professional Hall of Fame, and the list goes on.

Calvin is the owner of the consulting service Calvin Viator Ph.D. & Associates, LLC. He taught at Nicholls State University from 1966 to 1996 as a full

professor in the Department of Biological Sciences before retirement. Calvin is a charter member of the Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association and served as its charter president. He was Secretary-Treasurer of this group for 20 years. Calvin is a member of the American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists, the American Sugar Cane League, the Louisiana Farm Bureau, the Louisiana Soybean Association and the National Association of Independent Crop Consultants where he was named "Consultant of the Year" in 2002.

### **KUDOS to the Scholarship Committee!** **Congratulations to the Scholarship Winners!**

The LACA Scholarship Committee, chaired by Blaine Viator, really went above and beyond this year in reaching out to our young people. We encourage all of you to tell those well-deserving students you know about the scholarships available each year. Scholarship applications and criteria can be found on the LACA website at [www.laagcon.org](http://www.laagcon.org).

There were a record number of applicants this year and the following were the "cream of the crop". Congratulations to Rob Ferguson, Padma Latha Bomireddy, and Cade LeJeune on being outstanding students in their fields of study. You can read about and see all of our winners on the LACA website. Rob, Padma, and Cade, we wish for all of you continued success.

### **Executive Board Meets with** **LSU AgCenter Administration**

Members of the LACA Executive Board and Governmental Affairs Committee met again this spring with Chancellor Bill Richardson, and Vice-Chancellors David Boethel and Paul Coreil to discuss current issues with the AgCenter, and how LACA can best give assistance in promoting agriculture in our state. Among some of the items discussed were vacancies of crop specialist positions at the AgCenter, the hiring freeze imposed by Governor Jindal and its effect on filling the crop specialists positions needed, and the hiring of Dr. Dan Stephenson as weed scientist at Dean Lee Research Station upon the retirement of Roy P. Vidrine. The many aspects of ongoing and future biofuels research was also discussed. Thanks was given to the AgCenter administration for helping to spread the word on the LACA 2008 scholarships presented at the '08 LATMC this year and it was decided that information will be sent for distribution regarding the NAICC/FEAE Richard L. Jensen, Ph.D. Memorial Scholarship for 2009 also. An update was given by Chancellor Bill Richardson concerning the Board of Regents. LSU's new president, John Lombardy, was said to be very supportive of the AgCenter and as of now there are

no longer any plans to move the AgCenter under the umbrella of the university. According to Dr. Richardson, consolidation is not on the new president's agenda. The AgCenter administration asked for LACA's assistance in taking the time to talk to legislators and lobbying for critical issues on the state and national levels. Also discussed at length were recommendations made based on the newly implemented Mehlich III test which the LSU soils lab converted to in 2005 after using the Strong Bray extraction for years.

This time of networking and discussing pertinent issues is appreciated by both the AgCenter administration and leaders of LACA and is another way that the strong relationship between the two entities is maintained. We are the envy of other states in this regard!!

### **'08 LATMC Boasts Record Attendance**

Attendance at the 2008 Louisiana Agricultural Technology & Management Conference again broke records this year. Pre-registration was above 200 and on-site registration was overwhelming with a total attendance of just under 300! We are attributing this primarily to the exceptional speakers and presentations which are being sought after by members of our program planning committee. The LACA Fall Retreat attended by the Gov't Affairs and LATMC Program Planning Committees, as well as the LACA Board. LSU AgCenter specialists and researchers, as well as USDA-ARS and LDAF personnel is a key part of planning for and making our annual consultants' meeting a success!!!

### **NAICC 11th Annual Crawfish Boil on the Hill** **a Huge Success!!!**

Among those joining legislators and staffers in Washington, D.C. this year for the annual NAICC Crawfish Boil on the Hill, were some of our own. LSU AgCenter Vice-Chancellor, David Boethel and Louisiana Cotton Producer's Jess Barr joined regulars such as Ray Young, Grady Coburn, and Jim Braucht. This is a time enjoyed by all; for some it's the first time to taste the Cajun delicacy and others have become quite the pros at it. Of all the parties held in D.C., this is one event that all who come say they wouldn't miss for anything. The atmosphere is "Louisiana laid-back", with no lobbying, or business talk, only a good time for all. It's a small way of saying "thank you" to the lawmakers and those who go to bat for agriculture in our nation's capitol. Boiled crawfish, crawfish etoufee', and alligator sauce picante' are on the menu and prepared by our own Jim Braucht, De Cook, and his partner, Ned Darbonne, both of Bayer CropScience. If you haven't attended one of the CBOH events, you are missing out! And, if you're not a member of NAICC, you're missing out BIG TIME! Go to [www.naicc.org](http://www.naicc.org) and browse the NAICC website for more information on the Alliance.

## Contract Researchers, Independent Crop Consultants, and the University - The Ingredients Needed to Sustain Agriculture

In my almost 30 years in weed science research and extension with the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center I have interacted closely with both crop consultants and growers. My involvement in these areas has contributed to a keen awareness of how we all contribute to making agriculture a viable entity. For any new pesticide to be registered by EPA extensive internal testing by the company and residue studies with contract researchers are required. The development of insect resistance to insecticides and weed resistance to herbicides along with new diseases on the horizon contribute to making management of pest problems a moving target. The need for development of novel technologies to address the important areas of weed, insect, and disease management in crops will be even more important in the future.

The changes in pest management technology in the last 30 years have been phenomenal. When I started my weed science career I conducted research with the graminicides which allowed for postemergence control of grass weeds in broadleaf crops. This was especially meaningful to me because I had spent my early years on the family farm hoeing johnsongrass in cotton fields. I was also able to be in the forefront of research with the sulfonylureas and imidazolinone herbicides which have become a mainstay in cotton, corn, soybean, peanut, wheat, and rice weed control programs. Then came the Roundup Ready era and I was one of the first university scientists to evaluate at that time what was referred to as "glyphosate tolerant soybeans". In my experiences traveling through the major crop-producing areas in the South in the early 1990's, it was common to see cotton, soybean, and corn fields infested with many grass and broadleaf weeds. In some cases, it was difficult to even see the crop for the weeds that were present. At that time, particularly in soybeans, the herbicides were so narrow in weed control spectrum that two or three herbicides applied together might be needed to control weeds in fields. Because commodity prices were low and herbicide costs were high, it was just not economical to control all weeds present in fields. Consequently, weeds thrived and caused significant yield loss. Traveling through those same areas in recent years presents a starkly different picture. Fields are cleaner than they have ever been which is directly attributed to advancements in weed management technologies through development of herbicide-resistant crops. As farmers were able to more effectively control weeds the need for tillage decreased. The shift toward reduced tillage systems had a

positive environmental impact by reducing soil and herbicide loss from fields.

These advancements did not occur by chance but were a joint effort with agri-chemical companies, contract researchers, and university researchers all contributing to market success. I make it a priority that my graduate students have an appreciation not only of weed science but also of other pest management disciplines. I also see that students have the opportunity to interact with agri-chemical representatives who call on me. Although our research is not conducted under GLP, students are made aware of EPA regulations concerning GLP. My close interaction with consultants keeps me abreast of the latest problems in the field and new innovations. I am then better able to plan my research and extension programs so that new problems are addressed in a timely manner. As the 2008 growing season approaches, prices for many commodities are the best they have been in many years. The upbeat attitude of farmers at grower meeting has been refreshing. The reality is, however, that some of the currently used technologies may be short-lived. Weeds resistant to glyphosate have created much concern primarily because alternative herbicides are not available and for the most part new herbicides are not in development. If farmers have to revert back to using cultivation or directed applications of herbicides, the positive environmental gains in soil conservation could be nullified. Without the initiative in discovery and development of new pesticides, contract research opportunities will decrease and independent crop consultants will be locked into recommending pesticide programs that may not sustain productivity. However different we may perceive ourselves, university researchers, contract researchers, and independent crop consultants are all working toward the same goal - to sustain agricultural production in the U.S. The fact is that without farmers there will be no need for any of us.

Along those same lines, we should take every opportunity to promote the value of what we do and the importance of agriculture and the role it plays in our national security. After all, who should be interested in agriculture - well, anyone who wears clothes, lives in a house, or eats food and that pretty much includes everyone. The recipe for success will continue to be the interaction among agri-chemical companies, private contract researchers, public universities, and crop consultants, all working together for the betterment of agriculture.

*James L. "Jim" Griffin is the Lee F. Mason LSU Alumni Association Professor in the School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences at Louisiana State University. He has a joint research, extension, and teaching responsibility in the area of weed ecology and weed management.*

Welcome New Members!!!

Joining LACA as Voting Members in 2008 are Hank Jones of C&J Ag Consulting LLP, and Justin Turner and Ed Lane of Morehouse Ag Consultants, Inc.

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New Affiliate Members include Ralph Bagwell, Paul Coreil, Rob Ferguson, Ben Legendre, and Boyd Padgett of the LSU AgCenter, Corey Davis of Syngenta Crop Protection, Jerry Jack Ford and Marc Grabert of BASF Corporation, and Debra Fitzgerald of ISK Biosciences Corporation.

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Sustaining Members joining are 3 Tier Technologies, Agricultural Information Management (AIM), AgRenaissance Software, Isagro USA, and Ouachita Fertilizer.

2008 LACA Executive Board

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**Mark Your Calendars for the 2009  
LACA Sponsored  
Louisiana Agricultural Technology &  
Management Conference  
February 11-13, 2009**

**For information on membership in  
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