It has been a wonderful transition from summer to fall. Our turf group was the highlight of the College of Ag tailgate and our clubs were active in connecting with former students as well as the next generation. Our own Harvest Festival was a real highlight of the season and a great opportunity to get to know our extended departmental family. Thanks to all involved in these events.

Soil and Crop Sciences continues to have an exceptional placement ratio for our students. There are some exceptional career opportunities in our science for those that have committed to learn enough basic science to work effectively in interdisciplinary areas of soil, crop and turf science. Career expansion especially at the undergraduate level has been very strong the past five years. One or our recent undergraduates took a job for more than $80,000 per year. We need more great students to meet the future needs for science related jobs in agriculture and environment.

We hope to see you all at the CSSA-ASA-SSSA meetings in Long Beach. As President I will celebrate Halloween there. We have many participating and receiving awards. Make sure to invite former students and industry contacts to our mixer at Gladstones, 330 S Pine Avenue, Nov 4 from 5:30 to 7:30.

This week is our Soil and Crop Science Extension retreat at Camp Alan. Opportunities for the future, strategic planning, intra agency communication, professional development, electronic media, mentoring and promotion, and funding opportunities will highlight the discussion.

Thanks to all who have worked to host our many seminar speakers. It has led to many new interactions and especially helped keep us current on emerging science.

We continue to move forward with our Grand Challenges and our legislative initiatives. This creates both the vision and potential funding for our future. Thanks to those who work to coordinate these activities and especially to our clientele that support our initiatives.

Partnerships such as the Aflatoxin Mitigation Center of Excellence Research Program (AMCOE), with our commodity groups, continue to be a great value for coordination efforts regionally and nationally to solve production problems. I am in the process of reviewing current proposals for AMCOE, but this is just one of many existing partnerships. We will be meeting Sorghum in November and with Cotton State Support in early December. This past week we had great discussion with Texas Rice Producers on new project plans.

This month I have had a special opportunity to participate in the Edgar McFadden Symposium. We are currently planning to rotate this symposium annually with South Dakota. We had several students recognized at the event and it proved to be a
great exchange of science in wheat breeding and genetics. We also had many participate in the World Food Prize meetings in Des Moines. The CAST award recipient was Alison Van Eenennaam who provides extension education on molecular genetics and its use. The World Food Prize recipient Dr. Rajaram, works with us as a judge on the Beachell-Borlaug scholars program and worked with and followed Dr. Borlaug at CIMMYT. This continues to be an energizing meeting that engages some of our Texas High School students, our Beachell Borlaug Scholars, and world leaders. I had the opportunity to participate in STEM planning as part of this.

We continue to have the opportunity to make a difference through filling positions. Currently we are recruiting for cropping systems agronomist at Vernon, nutrient and water management specialist at College Station, extension agronomist at Vernon as well as the Borlaug Chair and Beachell chair.

Sam Feagley hosted the Mineland Reclamation Workshop and Larry Redmon and Mark McFarland hosted Ranch Management University since our last newsletter. These are just examples of how our department makes a difference for many diverse clientele.

Much of our opportunity for the future is based on donations from those that benefitted in the past. We appreciate all of our donors. The Legacy dinner recently honored several of our supporters as well as the recent COADC meeting. A special thanks to all that were recognized at these events.

My wife and I want to thank ESSM for the recent recognition as part of their welcome to their new department head. It was a great learning experience to work with them the past three years.

I am at a loss for words, but few have had a bigger impact on my enjoyment of our move to Texas than Dr. Tom Cothren, I will miss him personally. I still start my response to many requests for someone to serve as a reviewer, as a graduate advisor, as a host for a visiting group of scientists, as a committee chair, as a reference, etc. by saying see if Tom is available. A special thanks to his family for sharing his time with us all these years.

See you at the Thanksgiving Lunch on Tuesday, November 25 from 11-1pm.

David

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<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
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Dr. Joe Tom Cothren, 70, of College Station, passed away on Thursday, October 16, 2014. Funeral services were held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, October 20, 2014 at A&M Church of Christ, 2475 Earl Rudder Fwy S in College Station with Pastor Foree Grove officiating. Interment followed at College Station Memorial Cemetery.

Tom was born on May 15, 1944 in Stratford, Oklahoma to John and Evelyn (Wood) Cothren. He grew up in Garvin County, Oklahoma and graduated from Maysville High School in 1962. Tom graduated from East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma in 1966 with a Bachelor’s degree in Chemistry. He went on to attend Oklahoma State University receiving a Master of Natural Science and Ph.D. in Botany (Plant Physiology). Tom served on the faculty at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville before coming to Texas A&M University in 1982. During his years of teaching and research, Tom received many honors including Fellow of American Society of Agronomy, Fellow of Crop Science Society of America, Outstanding Research Award in Cotton Physiology and the Special Achievement Award for Teaching from Texas A&M. Tom served on the Faculty Senate at Texas A&M for several years. His most important achievement was the close relationships he maintained with his students and coworkers.

Tom enjoyed landscaping and working in the yard, solving crossword puzzles with his friends and spending time with his pets. Family and friends were the most important aspect of Tom’s life.

He is preceded in death by his parents, John Henry Cothren and wife Evelyn; brother, Horace Cothren; sister, Wanda Tyler and husband Jim; brother-in-law, Cecil Carter and nieces, DonEtta Cothren and Rhonda Cothren.

Tom leaves behind his loving wife of 39 years, Lynda Cothren; daughter, Claire Cothren and husband Michael Burke of Dallas; son, Denton Cothren and wife Lindsey of College Station; sister, Marie Carter of Maysville, OK; brother, Donald Cothren and wife Phillips; sister, Lynda McCarty and husband Mike; sister-in-law, Nadine (Cothren) Kirby – all of Stratford, OK; and brother-in-law, Michael Moore and wife Debbie of Southlake. He is also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, extended family members and friends.

The family would like to extend special thanks to Dr. Venkatraj and the staff at Hope Cancer Center, Dr. Garcia-Manero and his staff at MD Anderson Cancer Center, and College Station Medical Center for their wonderful care.

As an expression of sympathy, memorial contributions can be made in Tom’s name to Hospice Brazos Valley, 502 W. 26th Street, Bryan, TX 77803.
Sympathy

Please keep the family of Lillian Cole Milberger in your thoughts and prayers. Lillian passed away on October 8, 2014. Lillian and FJ Milberger were early leaders in the Texas Turfgrass industry and pioneered seed production in Texas. FJ passed away a few years ago. The department has had a strong relationship with the Milberger family for decades.

Please keep Tom and Melinda Hallmark, and their family, in your prayers. Their grandson Ethan passed away on September 26.
Dr. Seth Murray, an associate professor in the Soil and Crop Sciences Department, was honored with the 2014 Crop Science Society of America Young Scientist Award. This award is designed to recognize young crop scientists who have made an outstanding contribution in any area of crop science by the age of 40.

Dr. Murray holds a B.S. from Michigan State University, and received his Ph.D from Cornell University in 2008. At Texas A&M, he directs a program on quantitative genetic discovery and applied maize breeding. His research includes improving yield, aflatoxin resistance, and drought tolerance for the southern United States, and genetic diversity for perennial, blue, and QPM maize.

He is an Associate Editor for the Crop Science and the Journal of Plant Registrations, Web Editor for the National Association of Plant Breeders, and served as chair or vice-chair for multiple scientific meetings. Seth has been / is a committee member for 37 graduate students including 17 as a chair/co-chair, and teaches graduate and undergraduate classes. He has been an author on 29 refereed journal articles, four book chapters, and three released germplasm lines.

The Soil and Crop Sciences Department congratulates Dr. Murray on this achievement, and thanks him for his strong commitment to the long term enhancement of agriculture, as evidenced through his aggressive and innovative research, teaching, and service.
The H2O 4 Texas meeting, recently held in Ft. Worth, Texas, invited three undergraduate students from the department of soil and crop sciences to attend and participate in the discussion of water conservation issues. The meeting was hosted by the H2O 4 Texas Coalition and the three students from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences that attended received Texas Seed Trade Association scholarships for the 2014-2015 academic year.

The students that attended the H2O 4 Texas conference were Shelby Redgate, (Joseph) Eric Evans and Ana Sophia Corona Gaxiola.

“Ana Sophia, Shelby, and Eric were exposed to the personal and legal issues surrounding water in the state, from societal issues to conservation to various consumer needs to potential infrastructure and political solutions such as ocean desalination,” Dr. Wayne Smith, associate department head from soil and crop sciences said.

Shelby Redgate, a senior Plant and Environmental Soil Science and Bioenvironmental Sciences double major, said that her favorite part about the conference was hearing the current issues concerning water in Texas and listening to the potential solutions.

“I feel it is important for students to attend conferences such as H2O 4 Texas in order to be exposed to the current water situation and what it means for agriculture,” said Redgate. “These are issues that we will have to face and find solutions to.”

Another student that attended the conference, Ana Sophia Corona Gaxiola, a senior and Plant and Environmental Soil Science major, said that her favorite part about the conference was listening to the discussion by professionals in the political spectrum on the outlook of the coming government makeup.

“It was very informative in seeing the current status of government from a closer perspective,” Gaxiola said. “I also really enjoyed networking with the Texas Seed Trade Association and the members that were invited to dine with us.”

All of the students noted that it was an eye-opening experience and appreciated the opportunity to be exposed to such important issues at this level.

“It would be a great experience if all of our undergraduate students were exposed to these kinds of discussions,” Dr. Smith said.
College Tailgate
In 1944, the year Bir Bahadur (B.B.) Singh was born in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, Indian agriculture was in shambles. During nearly 200 years of British rule, the country’s agricultural enterprise had been turned over to commodities such as cotton, indigo, and sugarcane for export; what little food was grown hinged on rainfall and the soil’s natural fertility—or lack of it. Crop yields were often abysmal as a result, and famine was common. So when India won independence from Britain in 1947, the Indian government enacted a sweeping program of nationwide, agricultural education.

That’s why when Singh graduated in 1956 from his village school with good grades and an interest in science, he found himself at one of India’s newly minted agricultural high schools. It was the only nearby school where he could study science, Singh says, as well as the closest high school to his home. Plus, his father wanted him to attend, saying, “Why don’t you study agriculture and see what help you can give to our people,” Singh recalls.

“So I was okay with going to an agricultural high school, and that later became my good luck,” he says. Turns out it also became the good luck of millions of the world’s smallholder farmers.

Today, Singh is among the most revered breeders of legume—or pulse—crops, credited with improving the diets, incomes, and lives of farming families across Africa, Asia, and South America. In the late 1960s and 1970s, for instance, the ASA and CSSA Fellow not only established the first systematic breeding program for soybean in India, but was also pivotal in bringing the novel food to millions of Indian people. Soybean production has since grown in India from just 5,000 tons in 1961 to about 12 million today. Yet this was only the start.

“Of course, B.B. is best known for his work with cowpea,” says Bill Payne, an ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Fellow who was at Texas A&M and CGIAR in Ethiopia before becoming dean of agriculture at the University of Nevada–Reno this winter. “Almost anywhere in the world, you cannot work on cowpea without running into him in some way, fashion, or form.”

Known also as black-eyed pea, cowpea is a staple crop in many tropical areas, and Singh’s signature achievement is a fast-maturing variety that fits into the rotational niches between wheat, maize, and rice. Due largely to this advance, worldwide cowpea production rose from 1.3 million to 7 million tons between 1981 and 2013—the only food legume to enjoy such an upswing. But the crop scientist, now in the 48th year of his career, isn’t content to stop there.

“I think there’s a very good possibility that we will have a surge in pulse production in the coming decades,” says Singh, who currently splits his time between Texas A&M University and India’s G.B. Pant University. The title of his new book, Cowpea—The Food Legume of the 21st Century (see page 8) asserts the same.

Those who know him don’t doubt it. “He’s just tenacious,” says CSSA President David Baltensperger, also an ASA and CSSA Fellow. He often compares Singh’s success with cowpea to Norman Borlaug’s accomplishments with wheat.
“One of the secrets to B.B., like Dr. Borlaug, has been his ability to keep his eye on what he considers to be really powerful fundamentals. That leads to a lot of success over a long career.”

**Good Decisions ... and a Little Luck**

Focus is indeed crucial for a researcher, and other colleagues add that Singh is highly intelligent, full of energy, and a careful listener—as well as supremely dedicated to helping farmers. “He is an excellent scientist—I mean, he publishes a lot,” says Ken Dashiell of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria, from which Singh retired in 2006. “But he probably spends 98% of his energy on getting the best cowpea varieties for the farmers, and 2% of his energy on publishing.”

What Singh himself says is that he’s been lucky. “At every stage of my life, some good people have come, given me direction, and good things have happened,” he says. The first stroke of luck came when his father pushed him toward an agricultural high school because it helped gain him admission in 1960 to India’s first agricultural university: Uttar Pradesh Agricultural University (now Pant University). Singh then earned a scholarship in 1963 to do graduate studies in plant breeding at the University of Illinois, where again he made a fateful choice. After learning how much research was already under way to improve cereals, Singh resolved to study legumes to help India’s vegetarian multitudes meet their need for protein. And at the University of Illinois, that meant one option: soybean.

“So, that’s how I decided to work on soybean,” he says, “and it was one of the best decisions that I took in my life.”

Soybean contains roughly twice the protein of other pulses, he explains, and by the time he earned his Ph.D., USAID and the University of Illinois were already trying to bring soybean to countries beset by malnutrition, including India. Meanwhile, the dean of agriculture at Pant University was monitoring Singh’s progress, and in 1968 sent him a “very personal and emotional letter,” Singh says. It offered him—an assistant professorship at Pant that included 50% more salary than what a new assistant professor in India typically earned. Singh had two competing offers from U.S. universities for substantially higher pay, but he never gave the decision a second thought. Later that year, he returned to India to begin the work that would transform soybean from an agricultural novelty into one of the nation’s principal foods.

He might have stayed at Pant for the rest of his career. But in 1977, a change in university administration led to major campus unrest, including the shooting of several staff. Hoping to get away for a “breathing spell,” Singh began looking for other opportunities and was immediately offered soybean breeding positions by the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Zambia and by IITA in Nigeria. Opting for IITA because of his interest in research, he intended to stay abroad for just two years, but “then based on my work, they kept me there forever, and I spent my life there,” he says. They asked something else of him, as well: to work not on soybean, but cowpea.