

From the Oat Newsletter, volume 21, 1970:

I.M. Atkins
Award for Distinguished Service to Oat Improvement



Dr. Irvin Milburn Atkins, now retired from the staff of Texas A&M University, has left an indelible mark upon Texas agriculture. He began his career in 1928 as a Junior Agronomist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and concurrently served as Assistant Superintendent of the San Antonio Field Station, San Antonio, Texas. In 1930 he became an Associate Agronomist with the USDA and Assistant Superintendent of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Substation at Denton, Texas. Dr. Atkins was promoted to the rank of USDA Agronomist in 1946 and in 1954 he was transferred to Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, where he became Professor and Small Grains Section Leader. Since retirement in 1968 Dr. Atkins has served as a Consultant with Texas Seed Companies.

Dr. Atkins is author or co-author of 134 publications of various kinds. He was directly involved in development and release of 11 oat varieties, eight wheat, four barley, and four flax varieties. Of particular importance was the winter hardiness of Texas oat varieties Bronco, Mustang, and Norwin which assured production of winter oats in northern sections of the State, thus adding needed winter forage for livestock in addition to grain. Prior to development of those hardy varieties, only spring-sown oats could be grown. Crown rust tolerance of New Nortex made it one of the most popular varieties of oats in Texas and other southern States. Development of such oat varieties as Houston, Norwin, Coronado, and Cortez represent improvement in specific crown rust

resistance, straw strength, test weight, seed size and quality, and forage production. Among the improved wheat varieties were those which represented a 20 bushel per acre increase in yield under irrigation and a 2 to 3 bushel increase on dry land in the High Plains of Texas, when compared to the varieties Turkey and Mediterranean, grown in 1930. In North Central Texas the improved varieties produced approximately 10 bushels more per acre on dry land. Some of the same wheat varieties were two pounds per bushel heavier in test weight.

Dr. Atkins is a member of Alpha Zeta, Gamma Sigma Delta, Phi Kappa Phi, and Sigma Xi. He is a member of the American Phytopathological Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and is a member and Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy. He was recognized as Man of the Month in August 1954 by the Southern Seedsman, received the Seedsman Digest Award in 1956, and was cited for contributions to the Southwest Wheat Industry in 1968 with receipt of the Lone Star Cereal Chemistry Award.

Dr. Atkins was born July 24, 1904, at Corning, Kansas. He received a B.S. degree in 1928 and an M.S. degree in 1936 from Kansas State University, and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Minnesota in 1945.