

From the Oat Newsletter, volume 21, 1970:

G. K. Middleton  
Award for Distinguished Service to Oat Improvement



Dr. Gordon Kennedy Middleton, Plant Breeder with the McNair Seed Company, Laurinburg, North Carolina, is a retired Professor of North Carolina State University. He began his career as a Teacher and Plant Breeder at the Kaifeng Baptist School in Kaifeng, China, in 1920. The next six years have remained among the most gratifying of his life, because of his benevolent concern for his fellow man. A variety of wheat developed during that period by Dr. Middleton was still making superior yields for Chinese farmers in 1960, according to a book published in Vienna, Austria. After returning to the U.S. in 1926, he taught vocational agriculture in North Carolina the next two years. In 1929 he served at North Carolina State University as an Extension Specialist in seed improvement. During the next six years that he worked with this program, he helped organize the North Carolina Crop Improvement Association. In 1936 he was transferred from the Extension Service to the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station and placed in charge of corn, peanut, and small grain breeding. As the staff expanded, he gave up work with corn in 1940 and peanuts in 1944, after helping organize both programs. He directed the Small Grain Breeding Program from 1936 to 1961, as well as serving as Director of the North Carolina Crop Improvement Association from 1939 to 1945, and Head of the Field Crops Section, Department of Agronomy, from 1939 to 1948. In 1955 Dr. Middleton obtained a two-year leave of absence to be an Agricultural Advisor to the Government of Thailand. In the fall of 1960 he spent three months in Peru as part of North Carolina State University's mission to that country. He retired from the North Carolina State University Staff in 1961, returned

for a three year period with the North Carolina Crop Improvement Association, and has since been employed by the McNair Seed Company.

In the 25 years that Dr. Middleton headed the Small Grain Improvement Program, he was responsible for developing five varieties of wheat, seven of barley, and three of oats. He cooperated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in developing two additional wheats, one barley, and three oats. Development of these small grain varieties has done more than increase the income of North Carolina farmers -- it has helped stabilize small grain production in the State. Of particular significance was the development of Atlas 50 and Atlas 60 soft wheats. They have served as a source of increased protein content in hard red winter wheat breeding programs.

Dr. Middleton has served as Chancellor of a local Alpha Zeta Chapter, and as Chairman of the Agronomy Section, Southern Agricultural Workers Association. The North Carolina Crop Improvement Association presented him with their Distinguished Service Award. He has been a teacher and a staunch leader in his local Baptist Church.

Dr. Middleton was born October 28, 1895, near Warsaw, North Carolina. He attended public school and a Baptist High School in North Carolina. He obtained a B.S. degree from North Carolina State University in 1917, served in the Army in 1918 and 1919, received his M.S. degree from Cornell University in 1920, and his Ph.D. from Cornell in 1930.