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William Price Wood, Jr., A Commercial Oat Breeder Passes On

By T. R. Stanton

William Price Wood, Jr., died suddenly of a heart attack on November 8, 1953, while visiting his son at Fork Union (Virginia) Military Academy. He was the son of Mrs. Sudie Rucker Wood and the late William P. Wood, Sr., and was born in Richmond, Va., April 3, 1905.

Mr. Wood was a graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and held a M. S. degree from Cornell University, where he majored in Plant Breeding.

At the time of his death he was President and a partner in the well-known seed firm of T. W. Wood and Sons, Richmond, Va., of which he became a member shortly after graduation. Mr. Wood served as President of the Southern Seedsmen's Association in 1937 and also as a member of the Executive Committee during the following years. He was one of the youngest men ever to be named President of that Association. He likewise served in the positions of Vice-President, President, Director and Secretary of the Virginia Seedsmen's Association over a period of years.

Mr. Wood served as a Major in the U. S. Army during World War II, was a member of the Commonwealth and Country Clubs of Virginia, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church of Richmond and the Virginia and Richmond Chambers of Commerce.

Mr. Wood's company was one of the first commercial seedsmen to merchandise Winter Turf (Virginia Gray) oats, probably from its founding in 1879. This company later introduced Lee (Lee Coldproof) oats to the farmers of Virginia, which through the special efforts of William P. Wood, Jr., was increased and distributed from an original stock of one bushel of seed furnished by the U. S. Department of Agriculture from its then Arlington Farm, Rosslyn, Va. More recent introductions of improved oats by the Wood Co., have been the productive new varieties, Fulwood, Woodgrain and Woodlee, developed under the direction of Mr. Wood, Jr., during the last few years of his life. He also was instrumental in the development of many stocks of hybrid corn. Furthermore, his company selected and first placed on the market seed of the well-known soft red winter wheat variety, Leap (Leaf's Prolific).

Bill Wood, as he was affectionately known to his many friends, was a human dynamo for work and a very enthusiastic plant breeder. His imagination knew no limitations regarding the great potentialities of what might be accomplished through plant breeding, especially for the improvement of the cereal grains, soybeans, legumes and grasses. He will long be remembered by his friends who knew him best for his many contributions to the agriculture of Virginia and adjoining states through the dissemination of better strains and varieties of field crop plants.