

In Memoriam
S.J.P. CHILTON
February 3, 1909-April 2, 2001

Dr. St. John Poindexter Chilton passed away on April 2, 2001 in Rapides Regional Medical Center in Alexandria, Louisiana. Probably very few of today's growers and processors in the Louisiana industry remember Dr. Chilton, although there are a few of us who remember him quite well. Dr. Chilton was 92 when he passed away and is survived by his wife, Alice Hunter Chilton of Bayou Rapides. The official notice of his death states that he was retired as a plant pathology professor and department head at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He was also a former consultant for the Nicaragua Sugar Estates, director of LaPlace Enterprises, president of the local chapter of SAR, past president of the Louisiana Historical and Genealogical Society, president of the Historical Association of Central Louisiana, a Rotarian and was listed in Who's Who in the World.

From a personal recollection, Dr. Chilton was bigger than all those things. He was most instrumental in establishing the sugarcane crossing and selection program at LSU. During the 1950s, 60s and early 70s, he and Elias Paliatseas were the individuals who led the crossing and selection program at LSU. Preston Dunckelman was also part of that team in the early years. It was demonstrated that sugarcane could be forced to flower in Louisiana using a photoperiod regime and that viable seed could be produced from these crosses. This work was done in the early 1950s. The Grand Isle crossing facility was established, although it was used for flowering and crossing for only a couple of years and seed were planted in Baton Rouge for selection. The "L" selection program was established and high sugar content was a major objective in their selection effort. In fact, L60-25 was the first variety to come from that initiative and set a new high water mark in terms of sugar content in the industry. The variety lasted only a few years because of mosaic and RSD susceptibility, but definitely brought this industry into the era of high sugar varieties.

Dr. Chilton, while known for his determination, aggressiveness and dedication toward the sugar industry, was also sometimes regarded as a "tough individual" and someone who could be quite combative. Those who crossed him soon learned how powerful he could be. He served on many a graduate student's committee, and from a personal standpoint, lived up to his reputation as "tough and spirited". He often kept the "fire lit" under people making sure they were always moving and he was always eager to share his sugarcane breeding philosophies with those interested in listening. He will always be remembered for his dedication, determination and the direction he brought to the LSU selection program. He will be sadly missed by his relatives and friends throughout the international sugar community.