

THE CONFERENCE BEGINNINGS

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Fifty years ago the need for collective action seemed to be the motivating force that brought this pioneer group of regulatory agencies, University scientists, industry personnel, and applicators together for the first conference. Throughout the early proceedings of this conference, the one theme that permeates their objective was education and cooperation.

In reviewing the first meeting, the sessions concentrated on the basics such as: weed collection-identification, herbicide chemistry-mode of action, application equipment, control of specific weeds, and concerns about drift.

The Early Leaders

The first slate of officers were really pioneers in California weed control, as well as for the nation, individuals such as:

Walter Ball, Department of Agriculture, Chairman of the first conference, President of the 1950 conference, President of the WSWS (oldest weed conference), and later served as C.W.C. Business Manager; a good educator and dedicated public official.

Alden Crafts, Professor U.C. Davis, second President of the conference, student of Professor W.W. Robbins, who served as his inspiration to work in plant physiology and weed control research. Dr. Crafts was a dedicated Professor whose many students became leaders in the discipline of Weed Science.

Murray Pyror, California Dept. of Agriculture, fourth President of the conference, drafted the original constitution and bylaws of the conference, member of the 1949 Organization Committee, presented the first paper on 2,4-D drift in California in 1951.

Norman Akesson, Professor/Agricultural Engineer U.C. Davis, Chairman of the first Nominating Committee, presented the first paper on the development of weed control equipment in 1949, became the 18th President of the conference.

Bill Harvey, U.C. Davis Weed Control Specialist, attended the first conference as a Monsanto Company representative; at the second conference he presented the first paper on weed control in vegetable and field crops, served as fifth President of the conference; tireless educator on weed control throughout the state.

The above individuals represent only a few who were willing educators and provided leadership in this fledgling science.

Issues and Conference Structure

In many ways the issues at that first meeting were not unlike the same topics we are concerned with in 1998... product performance, efficiency in herbicide application, concerns about drift, knowledge as to how the herbicide works, and the ongoing question of what is the "best method of control." One sensed there was a great exchange of information on the techniques of "killing weeds."

The Officers were selected from the three major categories of attendees: industry, regulatory, and education. Candidate selection was at the discretion of the Nominating Committee and the candidates were offered to the conference for approval. It wasn't until 1980 that Officers were elected by the ballot system. In order to provide continuity of the conference administration, the Bylaws allowed for the Secretary to proceed through the chairs over a three-year period. A Board of Directors was later added to the organization and, in 1960, a Steering Committee was developed to serve at the discretion of the President for advice and counsel.

Program format at the conference was changed to allow for concurrent sessions in the early 1980's. It was recognized that single sessions did not allow for adequate coverage of the extensive amount of information being developed. Although most members recognized the benefits of concurrent sessions, it was a "heated" and widely debated topic. The diversity of subjects propelled the conference to make this structural change, which resulted in a greater outreach of information to the attendees.

Later improvements by the organizers of this conference added special sessions devoted to weed schools, herbicide mode of action, specific weed biology, environmental issues, and the politics of pest management.

Perhaps the greatest legacy the conference will leave to future students of weed science is the text, Principles of Weed Control in California. This tremendous achievement of volunteers committing their knowledge and time was an outstanding example of the cooperative spirit that has prevailed within the conference. Two individuals who must be recognized, among many, are Floyd O. Colbert and Edward M. Rose, the co-chairmen of this accomplishment.

The Conference Future in the 21st Century

During the intense period of the development of weed control information, our conference was considered to be a primer meeting. The challenge of you young members in the profession is to maintain the quality and vitality of the conference as a major source of weed science information. The major attendees are those in pest management. There are many educational opportunities for those requiring pest control advisors' accreditation and weed management information. It will behoove the leaders of this conference to continue their efforts to present timely, objective, and effective

information. The trends for longer periods of herbicide development and greater proprietary information may restrict the freedom of extending information to the general public.

The concept of transgenic plants being resistant to herbicides may limit the public sector research vs. the private research developments. If this becomes so, the results may be a reduced involvement in problem solving by public weed workers, with greater dependency upon the plant protection industries as the primary source of product information.

As I look back, the exciting years were the 1960's and 1970's where the development of so much chemistry was upon us! The adoption by growers was rapid, resulting in tremendous labor savings and increased yields from the bountiful technologies of industry.

It has been said that agriculture is a "mature" industry today. The taxpayers' willingness to consider public monies to be for the benefits of "all society" may be a thing of the past!

The discipline of weed science will continue to be under close scrutiny by the regulators and political interest groups. Consumers' concern for food safety and the environment will place greater efforts on a strong educational outreach. The California Society of Weed Science should continue to be a dynamic force in this arena.

I certainly believe the future for "weeds" and their existence in the 21st century is assured.