B.R. Wells

Rice Research Studies 2009

R.J. Norman and K.A.K. Moldenhauer, editors

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Bobby R. Wells was born July 30, 1934, at Wickliffe, Ky. He received his B.S. degree in agriculture from Murray State University in 1959, his M.S. degree in agronomy from the University of Arkansas in 1961, and his Ph.D. in soils from the University of Missouri in 1964. Wells joined the faculty of the University of Arkansas in 1966 after two years as an assistant professor at Murray State University. He spent his first 16 years at the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Rice Research and Extension Center near Stuttgart. In 1982, he moved to the University of Arkansas Department of Agronomy in Fayetteville.

Wells was a world-renowned expert on rice production with special emphasis on rice nutrition and soil fertility. He was very active in the Rice Technical Working Group (RTWG), for which he served on several committees, chaired and/or moderated Rice Culture sections at the meetings, and was a past secretary and chairman of the RTWG. He loved being a professor and was an outstanding teacher and a mentor to numerous graduate students. Wells developed an upper-level course in rice production and taught it for many years. He was appointed head of the Department of Agronomy in 1993 and was promoted to the rank of University Professor that year in recognition of his outstanding contributions to research, service, and teaching.

Among the awards Wells received were the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Department of Agronomy (1981), the Distinguished Rice Research and/or Education Award from the Rice Technical Working Group (1988), and the Outstanding Researcher Award from the Arkansas Association of Cooperative Extension Specialists (1992). He was named a Fellow in the American Society of Agronomy (1993) and was awarded, posthumously, the Distinguished Service Award from the RTWG (1998).

Wells edited this series when it was titled Arkansas Rice Research Studies from the publication’s inception in 1991 until his death in 1996. Because of Wells’ contribution to rice research and this publication, it was renamed the B.R. Wells Rice Research Studies in his memory starting with the 1996 publication.
Phil Tacker was born April 22, 1956, in West Memphis, Ark. His folks farmed at Black Oak, just south of Marked Tree, until he was five years old. He remembers picking cotton into a flour sack that his mom fixed for him so he could go to the field with his dad. He also remembers his dad having geese to eat the grass in the cotton, and Phil would herd them in at lunch and get them back out after lunch.

In 1962, Phil’s family moved from the Delta to the Ozark Foothills in Greenbrier, Ark. After graduating from Greenbrier High School, he enrolled at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in the fall of 1974. He was a member of FarmHouse Fraternity and lived in the house with young men from mostly rural backgrounds who worked their way through college. He says this produced some lifetime friendships that helped him mature and contributed to his having a special college experience. He received a B.S. degree in Agricultural Engineering in 1979 and started his master’s degree work as a graduate assistant in the Agricultural Engineering Department of the College of Agriculture and Home Economics.

Phil and Susan Dallas of Vilonia were married in July 1980, he completed his M.S. degree requirements in 1982, and he was appointed to an engineering position with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service in Little Rock in August of 1982. The position was in soil and water management and it had been open for five years. This, coupled with the fact that irrigation was rapidly expanding since 1980, which was one of the driest summers on record, provided ample opportunity for Phil to establish an extension education program in irrigation water management.

Phil worked with researchers, extension specialists, county agents, and growers to develop resources that addressed the questions and problems growers were dealing with relative to drainage and irrigation. Phil says he realized early on that he could be most effective by working with county agents and growers in conducting on-farm demonstrations of recommended water management practices. This provided the opportunity to evaluate the practices on a farm scale so agents and growers could determine how the practices could be implemented on other fields and farms. It also provided Phil valuable on-farm experiences of learning from growers and sharing this information through meeting presentations and other outreach efforts.

“Another blessing was how this provided me the opportunity to travel much of the Delta and work with some of the finest people,” Phil said.
Some of the resources and programs that came out of these efforts are as follows:

1) Crop irrigation scheduling recommendations and an “Irrigation Scheduling Computer Program” for cotton, corn, soybean and grain sorghum that is used in at least five other states.

2) Irrigation pumping plant testing to determine inefficiencies and ways to reduce pumping costs.

3) Proper selection and implementation of polypipe for irrigation when it first became available and started replacing the use of rigid aluminum and PVC pipe on the farm.

4) Development of “Multiple Inlet Rice Irrigation” as an alternative to conventional cascading of water from the top of the field to the bottom.

5) “Border Irrigation” as an alternative irrigation method for crops planted on relatively uniform sloping fields.

6) Publication for estimating irrigation pumping costs.

7) Implementation of the “Phaucet Computer Program” for designing efficient furrow irrigation systems with polypipe.

8) Spreadsheets for “Comparing and Evaluating Irrigation Pumping Costs” and for “Selecting the Proper Size of PVC Underground Irrigation Pipe.”

Phil received the “Award for Advancement of Surface Irrigation” from the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers in 2004. After almost 27 years with the Division of Agriculture, Phil took an early retirement at the end of June 2009 and is working on a half-time basis with Delta Plastics, which makes polypipe and is located in Little Rock. He is a technical advisor and support person to the sales staff.

Susan and Phil have two daughters, Brooke, 23, and Whitney, 25. Susan retired in June 2010 after 28 years as a speech therapist in public schools.

Phil says he is very thankful for his Extension career and realizes how blessed he is to have been able to keep one very fulfilling job for almost 27 years and remain close to family. He says he and Susan are further blessed with retirements at relatively young ages and in good health, with options to work part time while pursuing other interests such as Christian ministry opportunities.
FOREWORD

Research reports contained in this publication may represent preliminary or only a single year of results; therefore, these results should not be used as a basis for long-term recommendations.

Several research reports in this publication will appear in other Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station publications. This duplication is the result of the overlap in research coverage between disciplines and our effort to inform Arkansas rice producers of all the research being conducted with funds from the rice check-off program. This publication also contains research funded by industry, federal, and state agencies.

Use of products and trade names in any of the research reports does not constitute a guarantee or warranty of the products named and does not signify that these products are approved to the exclusion of comparable products.

All authors are either current or former faculty, staff, or students of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, or scientists with the United States Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service. For further information about any author, contact Agricultural Communication Services, (501) 575-5647.

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