

Student Memories of Professor E.H. Strickland

-by John Bocoock

A presentation by John Bocoock at the 14th Annual Strickland Lecture, March 20th, 2009.

I am grateful to be able to speak on behalf of the students of Colonel Strickland. My class of 1957 has the distinction of receiving the concluding lecture of his career. As it was one of the most memorable moments of our four years of lectures, it is a good starting point. That day, Colonel Strickland marched briskly into the classroom with his usual erect stance and gave no indication that this was an historic day in his life. At the conclusion of the lecture he picked up his notes, and said words to the effect that, "this is the last lecture of my career". Without hesitation, he strode out, before we could muster a cheer, a salute or some other appropriate recognition of the great moment. I think we all passed the course, but we felt that we failed to adequately express appreciation for the unique contribution the Colonel made to our university experience. We felt quite mortified.

I hope that speaking to you today will help compensate for our negligence over 50 years ago.

The other two Strickland lectures that made the most lasting impression on both me and the classmates I conferred with recently were his exposés on bed bugs and the common house fly. Our classmate who had personal experience with bed bugs was somewhat traumatized by the graphic reliving of the experience. We have all lived with house flies but only a privileged few have experienced Strickland's depiction, with hands and facial expression, of the house fly moving from one germ pile to the next, and hence to our kitchens, thus exposing us a variety of unpleasant epidemics.

There were 30 students in our class and I must confess that none of us went on to a career in entomology. I want you to be very clear that this is not because Colonel Strickland's lectures lacked challenge or pizzazz. It is more likely because he was very honest. He admitted that Alberta crops face less risk from insects than crops in any other agricultural area in the world. We enjoy an entomological oasis. This may explain why, in our minds, entomology was trumped by the more obvious challenges of crop, soil or animal science.

Looking around today, it occurs to me that we should pay more attention to bees and ants, and learn how individuals can work in community for the common good.

Young Aggies arrive at the University to equip themselves to, "Feed the World". In conclusion, I pay tribute to Colonel Strickland and all his colleagues, past and present, who have given their best to prepare us for the task.