

EDWIN S. PLISSEY (1997)



Ed started his journey in the potato world before the potato blossom season was over in 1934 (July 27) on a farm in Washburn, Maine. The first of 10 children, he was raised there on the family farm. After graduating from the local high school in 1952, he entered the University of Maine. With a major in Agronomy and a minor in Ag-Education, he graduated four years later. He continued there to earn a Master of Science degree in Botany and Plant Pathology in 1958.

The official debut of Ed's professional educational bent was in teaching vocational agriculture at Patten (potato country), Maine, for two years. Ed then served as the Area Potato Specialist for Northern Aroostook County from 1960 to 1968. In this capacity, his responsibility was conducting educational programs and demonstrations on potato production, storage, handling, and marketing for growers and citizens of the St. John Valley, one of Maine's major potato production areas.

For the next eight years, Ed served as a Professor and Area Extension Potato Specialist with the University of Minnesota - North Dakota University in the Red River Valley. His responsibilities were similar to those in Maine, besides which he developed close associations with the Snack Food Association, National Potato Board, and National Potato Council - associations he has maintained throughout his career. While in this position, Ed did post-Master's work with the University of North Dakota in the subjects of Ecology, Waste Management, Technical Writing, and Marketing. Following two years of work with private industry - associated with potatoes, naturally - Ed became Executive Director of the Maine Potato Commission in 1978. In this capacity, he was responsible for developing and conducting advertising and promotion, market development and research programs for the Maine potato industry through the use of potato tax funds. He was a major force behind maintaining and strengthening ties with the University of Maine faculty involved in potato research. He also used his extensive knowledge of potato production and marketing to assist in setting priorities of research needs for the industry.

In 1985, Ed became Potato Specialist with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service, and maintained this position until his retirement this year. At this post, he developed, coordinated, and carried out statewide educational program for the Maine potato industry. Included in his achievements are the annual Maine Potato Chip/Processing Conference, Cooperative Extension annual Leadership Training Institute, and the Northeast Potato Technology Forum. He carried out applied and demonstration research, published fact sheets and edited Spudlines - a newsletter for the Maine potato industry. As founder and advisor of the Mid-Maine Young Farmers Association and Young Farmer Leadership Institute, Ed has helped young farmers with market studies, industry policies, and educational pursuits. He was also one of the founders of Club 500 in the Northeast that has brought together potato experts from Maritime Canada and Maine to address industry wide concerns, and to encourage adaptation of various farm technologies to the region's benefit. Ed, "a multimedia man", has been for many years a co-host of the early morning "Potato Pickers Special" on WAGM-TV in Presque Isle, ME.

Ed has been the leading force behind the growth of chip potato production and marketing in the State of Maine. He initiated annual chipping potato variety trials together with the Snack Food Association and the NE-107 regional potato variety adaptation trial project. As a result of his efforts, chip potato marketings from Maine have increased over fivefold since 1982. The expertise of Ed Plissey willingly has been shared abroad. In 1994, he traveled to the Republic of Georgia, a former Soviet block state, to assist their local potato growers develop a seed potato industry. Because of his leadership, a study tour group from Georgia was hosted in Maine the following year, and a potato genetic engineering firm, NatureMark, Inc., has agreed to establish a seed potato development program in their country. Ed has also assisted Maine's potato seed industry in developing markets in Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Bermuda, and the Dominican Republic. He has done value-added market research in Holland, Scotland, and Canada.

Beyond his duties as a Cooperative Extension Specialist, Ed has made significant contributions to scientific literature through publication of fact sheets, journal articles, and technical bulletins. One of Ed's strengths is his ability to take the results of University research to the industry in ways that have practical applications.

The Potato Association of America has benefited from Ed's membership as an active participant. Beyond presenting papers and journal articles, he has co-chaired Local Arrangement Committees for two PAA annual meetings in Maine (Presque Isle and Bangor) and participated on two other LAC's while in the mid-west. He has been Chair of the Extension Section and of the Utilization and Marketing Section, five years an Associate Editor of the American Potato Journal, Secretary of the National Potato Anti-Bnfise Committee for six years and continues membership on that committee, and has served as a Director of PAA since 1996.

Ed also has enjoyed activity in various other organizations, professionally and personally. As a Jaycee, he received Outstanding Young Man awards; he has been a Rotarian for 25 years; he sings with the SPEBSQSA "Barbershoppers" and has been president of his chapter; he's a private pilot and member of a local flying association; and he's active in the Methodist Church. In 1957, Marilyn E. Bonney became a wedded partner of Ed's and, while a Registered Dietitian, they have raised a family of two sons and three daughters. Now Marilyn and Ed join in their retirements in a new company venture Bio-Ag Research Associates, Inc.

~Alfred A. Bushway, Edward F. Johnston, Therese M. Work