

An Organization, a Family, and Fifty Years of Homecomings: A Historical Reflection of American Peanut Research and Education Society

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ABSTRACT

From its early days when the Peanut Improvement Working Group (PIWG) became the American Peanut Research and Education Association (APREA), and later, the American Peanut Research and Education Society (APRES), this organization has evolved into a vital foundation within the peanut industry. For the past fifty years, the APRES meeting has become a juncture that brings together a diverse group of individuals from industry, academia, research, and business, to name a few, creating a space where the latest research, ideas, and concepts are produced, discussed, and shared. Most importantly, APRES is also about family. It is like having a yearly family reunion. This family-centric orientation makes the society and its yearly meeting very different from other organizations. Each year means seeing old friends, as well as watching children and grandchildren grow up, and strengthening that bond of being part of the APRES family through this connection. The evolution of APRES and the subsequent generations of new graduate students, scientists, researchers, and others continues to shape the direction of the society. APRES facilitates this connection between science, industry and friendship in an environment that mentors and cultivates the next generation of scientists and individuals in peanut production. By tracing the history of APRES, the role of the society emerges as a reflection of how the peanut industry is evolving, and with it, how the function and role of APRES evolves alongside it. For fifty years, this society and its yearly meeting continues to develop its place as a cornerstone of the peanut industry, as well as create a family atmosphere among its membership.

Key Words: APRES, APREA, peanut, family, graduate, Sugg, Wilson

The year 2018 marks an incredible milestone for the American Peanut Research and Education Society (APRES). For fifty years, APRES has

become one of the critical architects within the peanut industry, with research that has made the industry stronger. APRES is also unique in how it differs from most other organizations. Year after year, people come back to this meeting, and it is like a mini family reunion. Even in this age of social media, APRES is where one can watch new colleagues become mentors and families grow to include children and grandchildren. So, in the spirit of the APRES family, this article will talk about the origins of APRES, how it evolved, and what APRES has become.

We can pinpoint the beginning of APRES to 1957, when the Peanut Improvement Working Group formed in Auburn, Alabama, because there was a need to provide, according to Frank McGill, ‘continuing means for the exchange of peanut research between all segments of the U.S. peanut industry’ (F. McGill, personal communication, February 2018). Dr. Charles Simpson also adds that the PIWG was meant to ‘enhance the entire industry through research, education, evaluation of current ways of growing harvesting, grading, shelling, storing, processing, and packaging of peanuts to provide a better product to consumers’ (C. Simpson, personal communication, February 2018).

In 1961, Joe Sugg wrote an article for North Carolina’s *The Rocky Mount Telegram*, describing the PIWG and its recent convention, defining the PIWG’s function as ‘In addition to providing a media for the exchange of ideas, the Peanut Improvement Working Group formulates suggestions and ideas which it passes on to groups which have authority and the capability to take necessary action to carry out the activities which the [PIWG] feels will be advantageous to the progress of industry’ (Peanut News and Views, 1961). The PIWG existed until 1968, because while it had served an early purpose, Dr. Coyt T. Wilson wrote that one of the main issues with the PIWG was it had some limitations (Wilson, 1974). These limitations included the lack of a legal status and the inability for members to speak on behalf of PIWG. Joe Sugg, in his APRES Fellows acceptance speech, noted the birth of APRES was the result of a virile seed that was planted in National Peanut Council meetings in 1956 (Sugg, 1988).

By 1968, it was decided that the PIWG needed to evolve into a different organization. Many of the

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PIWG members, including Frank McGill and Dr. Jim Butler, helped in conceiving the idea to advance the PIWG into a different organization (J. Williams, personal communication, March 2018). PIWG grew in ‘wisdom and stature,’ according to Mr. McGill. (F. McGill, personal communication, February 2018) and this was the beginning of the American Peanut Research and Education Association (APREA), with Dr. Norman D. Davis as its first president. In 1975, it was formally discussed and decided upon by the Ad Hoc Acronym Committee how to properly pronounce APREA. Robert Pettit, Al Norden, and Joe Sugg announced that the committee recommends that ‘the emphasis be on PRE with the first and last A’s pronounced as short A’s. Therefore, APREA should be pronounced A PRE’ A. Phonetically this would be AH PRE AH’ (Anonymous 1975).

The first meeting of APREA was held in Atlanta, Georgia from July 13-15, 1969. Papers presented included: Aflatoxin Incidence in Peanuts as Affected by Harvesting and Curing Procedures; Drying Rate of Virginia-Type Peanuts in Random, Down and Inverted Windrows; and Development of Narrow Row Peanut Production Systems (Anonymous 1969). In an interesting aside, in the minutes of the business meeting, there was a discussion between Dr. Coyt T. Wilson and Mr. Joe Sugg, according to Mr. McGill, about the revision of the 1951 book, *The Peanut—The Unpredictable Legume*. Also, it was noted that Dr. Wilson suggested the name change from PIWG to APREA (Anonymous 1969). They would later have two awards named after them: Joe Sugg Graduate Student Award and the Coyt T. Wilson Distinguished Service Award.

Dr. James Dickens, president of APREA in 1970, wrote an article for *Southeastern Peanut Farmer*, in which he describes how, although APREA was relatively new, it had an older foundation on which it was built. He wrote that ‘APREA still owes a debt of gratitude to those many individuals who started this movement which has produced a more progressive and enlightened industry’ (Dickens, 1971). In 1974, APREA held their annual meeting in Williamsburg—the only time that it was held there before the 50th anniversary in 2018. It was at this 1974 meeting that the Bailey Award was originated and would be awarded the next year, at the behest of Dr. Wallace Bailey, in honor of his wife, Martha (APREA Originates the Bailey Award, January 1975).

APRES has endeavored to make return visits to popular cities, staying within the peanut producing regions. Texas newspapers would report when the

APRES meetings would be in Texas, both advertising and highlighting its presence (‘Peanut Research Group Set to Meet,’ 1970; ‘APREA,’ 1970; ‘Tripp Heads Peanut Group,’ 1976). In an interesting aside, the July 1976 business meeting notes reference that Dr. Leland Tripp made the motion, and Dr. Astor Perry seconded it, that the 1977 APREA meeting be held in Hershey, Pennsylvania, pending an August 1976 site visit. However, and without explanation, the 1977 annual meeting was actually held in Asheville, North Carolina (Anonymous 1976). Also, at the 1977 meeting, Maurice Hoover of North Carolina State University discussed the different dessert and beverage potentials of peanut butter—including one for a peanut chocolate beverage and powdered peanut butter—which are described and the methods by which they could be concocted (Anonymous 1977). In 1975, there were 480 members, with a peak in 1985 of 742 members. Seventy members attended the first meeting in 1969 (Anonymous 1969), with 400 attendees by 1975 (Anonymous 1997). As the number of members grew, so did the number of accompanying spouses and children.

While APREA was able to evolve and go further than the PIWG could, in 1979, APREA would become the American Peanut Research and Education Society (APRES) (*Articles Of Amendment To The Charter Of American Peanut Research And Education Association, Inc.*, 1979; APRES 2018). After some legal wrangling, and proof sent to the IRS, APRES became official by 1980 (W. G. Thornton to D. F. Bond, April 30, 1980). One of the most significant moments in this history is this transition from APREA to APRES, because it highlights how APRES was going to continue as a prominent force and partner in the industry.

While there had been informal gatherings of the spouses at the meetings, 1979 was the first year that the Ladies’ Program/Ladies’ Hospitality, the forerunner to today’s Spouse’s Program, was referenced, with Helen Wolfe as its chairman. This first committee also included Sally Banks, Shari Dunn, Barbara Kirby, Beverly Ketring, and Sue Santelmann. It would be called the Ladies’ Program until 1987/1988 (Anonymous, 1979; Anonymous 1987).

Dinner in 1979 was barbeque at the Discoveryland Amphitheater (Anonymous 1979). Barbeque would also become a dinner tradition for many, many years for the main APRES dinners, because, as it has been researched before, barbeque is a favorite choice for agricultural gatherings (Beasley, 2014). The APRES logo was formally adopted in 1981, along with the establishment of the *APRES Fellows* (Anonymous, 1981). The year 1982 would be the first time APRES met in New Mexico, as

well as the election of the first *Fellows*; Ray Hammons, Kenneth Garren, and Astor Perry (Anonymous 1982). APRES was growing by membership, by committees, by programs, by awards, and by attendees.

In 1985, APRES began exploring the option of developing graduate student participation awards and involvement, as proposed by Dr. Gale Buchanan (Anonymous 1985). Two years later, at the 1987 Orlando meeting, it was brought up again, when Dr. Johnny Wynne asked about an Ad Hoc committee that would be appointed to study the issue of graduate student papers and that the findings be presented at the next year's meeting. There was also discussion about giving a graduate student paper award, via the Bailey Award Committee (Sholar, 1988). In 1988, it was formally decided that there should be a graduate student paper award, given in honor of Joe Sugg, with its own special session in the program, along with a judging committee (Sholar, 1988). In 1989, graduate student paper abstracts appeared in the APRES program and subsequent proceedings. The first winners of the Sugg award were Ramon Cu and F. Davis Smith, receiving \$200 and \$100 checks, respectively (Sholar 1989). Within a year, the Graduate Student competition was already recognized as a valuable component of the annual meeting (Sholar 1991). Jay Williams empathically stated that student paper competition is a real highlight of the meetings today (personal communication, March 2018).

The creation of the graduate student competition is a milestone that has become an extremely important aspect of the APRES meeting. Graduate students are the future of APRES and their research can be workshopped, and they can make vital networking connections. These graduate students, in many instances, usually return the following year to the APRES meeting in a professional capacity. The Joe Sugg Competition facilitates this connection with graduate students' research. This also emphasizes APRES as an environment that nurtures the next generation of scientists, along with those who are also in the agricultural industry. The 2018 meeting highlighted two new aspects to the graduate student experience and encouraged graduate student participation even further. The first was the inaugural graduate student only luncheon, with speakers from industry and other topics, and the second was the expansion of the competition from two days to three.

To start a new decade, it was decided that APRES would start honoring those members who had contributed outstanding service to the organization with the *Coyt T. Wilson award*. The first

recipient was Dr. Donald H. Smith. In 1990 the first female APRES fellow Ruth Ann Taber was inducted (Sholar 1990). The National Peanut Foundation and National Peanut Council's first female president, Kim Cutchins, gave an address to APRES in 1991. Since 1990, there have been three other female fellows, Dr. Peggy Ozias-Akins, Dr. Kelly Chenault, and Dr. Barbara Shew.

In addition to the continuing growth and influence of APRES, by 1991, DowElanco, now Dow AgroSciences, offered to finance the formation of two awards, which would honor those in research and extension, later becoming the *Education award*, for either an overall program or individual accomplishment (Sholar 1991). Dr. Ron Sholar won the *Excellence in Extension*, while Dr. Rodrigo Rodriguez-Kabana won the *Excellence in Research* award (Sholar 1992). In 1993, at the 25th anniversary of APRES, Dr. Walt Mazingo presented the wood-carved peanut and an APRES flag at the business meeting, which were both specially made to commemorate the 25th anniversary. These were meant to be displayed at the registration table, as well as the business meeting, becoming permanent physical fixtures at future APRES meetings (Sholar, 1993).

The 1990s led into a new millennium, where APRES kept evolving with the rapidly changing times, including notes in the 2000 proceedings about utilizing a web advisory committee and other internet-related items, with 448 members (Sholar, 2000). The mid-2000s ushered in the first female presidents of APRES, within a three year back-to-back-to-back period, when Drs. Chenault, Shew, and Maria Gallo all served (Leon and Cutchins 2016). In 2014, it was decided that all the previous proceedings would be digitized and accessible online, which Dr. Jason Woodward volunteered to oversee (Woodward and Cutchins 2014).

In 1970, the APREA proceedings for that year referenced that in 1969, there had been 218 members, but by 1970, there were 270 members (Anonymous 1970). By 1975 the numbers were first reported in earnest, every 10 years. Starting in 1978 there were 540 members, 1988 there were 669 members, 1998 had 496 members, 2008 reported 254 members, and for 2017, 319 members (Leon and Cutchins, 2016; K. Cutchins personal communication June 2018).

In 1987, then-President of APRES, Dr. Morris Porter, recounted in his president's report that he believed 'The American Peanut Research and Education Society can lead the way in finding the answers to today's problems as well as those of tomorrow' (Anonymous, 1987). Mr. Jay Williams stated that APRES has been a huge catalyst for the

peanut industry; the lasting legacy of APRES is a stronger peanut industry brought about by the bringing together of researchers, extension workers, growers, shellers, and processors to address and coordinate solutions to common problems (personal communication, March 2018). Dr. Harold Pattee echoed Mr. Williams by agreeing the significance of the interaction that occurs at the meetings between the individuals that come to the meetings is one of the legacies of APRES that continues to progress (personal communication, January 2018). Dr. Walt Mazingo stated that research has provided many advances in production practices to improve yields which affects the supply to the shellers which in turn supply the manufacturers and on to the consumer. Problem solving along this path has certainly come from APRES members (personal communication, July 2018).

APRES has dedicated itself to addressing topical issues within the peanut industry, shifting its focus as the need dictates. The eminently crucial *Peanut Science* journal, books published, as well as the research and education awards, emphasize how APRES has evolved from its 1950s origins into what we have today in 2018. As Dr. Simpson stated that ‘APRES has been the life blood of the industry: many segments of the industry have contributed to the growth of the peanut industry, but APRES has been where the whole thing has come together’ (personal communication, March 2018). Dr. Walt Mazingo supported these statements in that [APRES] has brought all segments of the peanut industry together in a mutual setting to work together to solve problems for the benefit of the total industry (personal communication, July 2018).

In 2016, Dr. Tom Stalker president’s report noted APRES ‘gives all of us an opportunity to interact with colleagues and learn new information within and apart from our normal job activities. This is the only Society that actively encourages family participation, a tradition that has greatly enhanced the environment of the meetings’ (Stalker 2016). Dr. Simpson noted this as well, stating that he sees one of APRES’ strengths in its family-oriented gathering: as it was always intended to be a family-oriented meeting, and for his family it was that way most of the time, as well as for others (personal communication, February 2018). The importance of APRES can be measured in the number of spouses, children, families, who attend each meeting.

Much of APRES has remained the same with the annual dinner, the ice cream social, the hospitality room, the programs for spouses, and

the quality of presentations and presenters. But, APRES has also evolved each year. Subsequently, the evolution of APRES and the way the society is being shaped is represented with new generations of members, families, graduate students, and scientists, along with those already established. Every year is like a family reunion, a homecoming where old friends and families gather to welcome the next generation to APRES, and that is true today, where APRES is setting the foundation for the next fifty years.

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