

Delaware student gets international experience in tropical agriculture

NEWARK, Del. — Steve Leath plans to go into international agricultural research when he completes his graduate studies. Judging by his experience with Panamanian vegetable growers last winter, the personable, dark-bearded young plant scientist should do well in his chosen profession.

Leath, who has just received a master's degree in plant pathology from the University of Delaware, spent three months in Panama last winter gaining first-hand experience in tropical agriculture and testing a plant disease screening method he developed as part of his thesis research. He's the first College of Agriculture student to visit the country under partial support from the university's Title XII program.

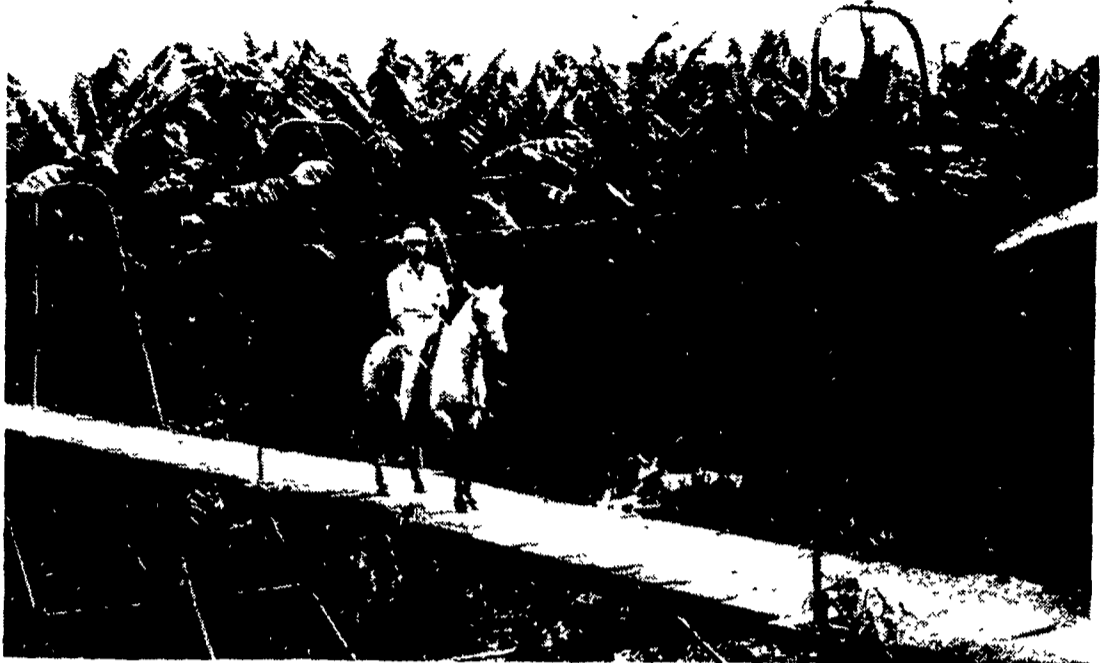
Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1975 calls for expanded programs in international agriculture at American universities. The philosophy behind the Act is that the best way to increase world food supplies is to help small farmers in less-developed countries grow more of their own food through improved farming practices.

"The future food needs of less-

developed countries will be far beyond what the U.S.A. can provide," says Dr. Charles R. Curtis, Title XII coordinator for the university. "It is in our own best interest as a nation to help them improve their food production and trade potential through these programs."

Two years ago the University of Delaware received a five-year strengthening grant from AID (the Agency for International Development), which administers Title XII. Over 50 U.S. land grant colleges and other selected schools now have such grants. Their purpose is to increase the ability of these institutions to participate in the large scale agricultural projects AID sponsors in various parts of the world. The university receives \$100,000 a year which it must match with its own funds.

While Steve was in Panama he spent part of his time working with members of a local farmers' marketing cooperative near the town of Boquete in Chiriqui province—the country's major agricultural district. He also spent a good deal of time studying the problems of tropical agriculture and surveying local farms. He visited a number of other



Delaware was never like this. University of many differences during a recent study trip to Delaware grad student Steve Leath found Panama. Here he tours a banana plantation.

agricultural areas in Panama as well.


During most of January he lived on the 150-acre farm of a grower

who raises potatoes, onions and other fresh-market vegetables, and coffee. At that time of year the growing season is in full swing, so

Leath was able to observe many tropical farming practices at first-hand.

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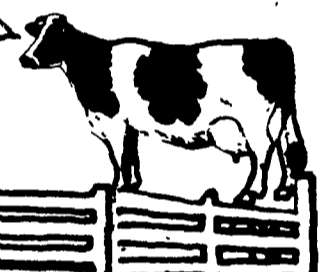
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