

PMCGA's First President A 'Student of Corn'

(Continued from Page 1)

after three years of tests showed that not only could corn be planted as early as mid-April, but some of the best yields came from crops planted in April.

Some of the early experiments also searched for the right combination of seeds and soils.

"We had a method where we'd run four sections with 12 or 14 hybrids staggered to get away from soil problems," Rumbaugh said.

In those years farmers could have good crop yield seasons and bad crop yield seasons. Rumbaugh remembers one year when the corn was well ahead of "knee-high by the Fourth of July." However, the rest of that

summer turned to dust, and the crop produced only about eight bushels an acre.

Rumbaugh remembers that he was harrowing oats one spring day when his wife told him some gentlemen in State College had telephoned. They wanted to form a state corn growers association, and they knew Rumbaugh from his early work on running the corn test plots with the extension service. They asked him to lead the founding association and he agreed, serving for three years as the first president of PMCGA.

Dr. Joe McGahen, a retired professor emeritus of Penn State University's College of Agriculture whose specialty was crop production, was one

of the men who encouraged Rumbaugh in his experiments.

"I visited his farm. That was my position at the time — to visit corn producers throughout the state" as the extension service's corn specialist for Pennsylvania, McGahen said. "We had this corn program — the one-acre corn contest — but I didn't like the connotation of a contest. I thought there were more benefits than just a contest."

According to McGahen, Rumbaugh was instrumental in getting other farmers in Armstrong and Indiana counties to participate. The program went from being a contest to a study that looked at the cultural practices of pro-



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ducing corn.

The real educational part of their cooperation was that the farmers got together for a "crops day."

"People were talking with their neighbors about what they did with their crops," McGahen said.

Results of seed experiments were shared with association members, and awards were presented each year to top growers. Originally the association's prizes were awarded at the state Farm Show, Rumbaugh said.

Rumbaugh himself is the

proud owner of one of those trophies. In one of the first years of competition he was named the corn growing champion with a five-acre average yield of 170.7 bushels per acre using Pioneer 3773 — a yield that would be more than respectable even today.

"And this isn't prime corn-growing country here," he said.

In the early days Rumbaugh's family operated a poultry business on the farm and grew corn for chicken feed. Later they also raised sheep and Angus cattle.

But today the Rumbaughs are strictly crop farmers — "deer and groundhogs" are the only livestock on his farm, Rumbaugh said — and this season they're growing oats and hay in addition to about 90 acres of corn.

They sell their crops mainly to neighboring hog and cattle farmers. A small amount of their hay has been sold for mulch in Armstrong County's underground mushroom farms, and in past years some of their hay fed thoroughbreds at The Meadows harness racing track in Washington County.

The Rumbaugh experimental corn plots have been posted with signs advertising the use of Pioneer Funk Agway, Doebler's, and other brands of seeds as the Rumbaughs searched for the right combination of seed and

(Turn to Page 16)

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