

Research center sprouts amid forest and field

By F. ALAN BOYCE
Associated Press Writer

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, N.C.—Six thousand acres of forest and field have become one of the nation's busiest research centers, due to the cooperation of three universities and a keen anticipation of the demands of technology.

That's the explanation offered the hundreds of people from dozens of states who come looking for the lure that Research Triangle Park holds for high-technology industry, asserts Ned Huffman, director of the Research Triangle Foundation.

Huffman makes it sound easy: Just rope off an area bounded by Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University, limit its use to research and watch it grow.

"We didn't do any of it. All of these things were already in place," he said. "Without exception the universities are used in one way or another by all organizations here.

Hundreds of professionals serve as adjunct professors, sharing knowledge.

But it wasn't only the magnet of the universities' research that pulled in such companies-in-residence as IBM, General Electric and Burroughs-Wellcome Co., the pharmaceutical giant whose architecturally striking headquarters have become a symbol of the park. Since the original \$2 million investment in 1959, the park has added:

- Research Triangle Institute, a \$500-million facility that provides basic research for incoming industry.
- The Microelectronics Center of North Carolina, a \$24 million project opening this fall that helped lure General Electric Co.'s semiconductor research facility to the park.
- The N.C. Biotechnology Center, given a \$1 million in preliminary financing to help recruit researchers in such emerging fields as genetic manipulation.

Research Triangle Park was started to try to keep North Carolina's college graduates in the state, Huffman said.

"North Carolina was basically an agricultural state," he explained. "Its principle 'high-technology' industries were tobacco, textiles, wood furniture and brick. The minds being produced in our universities were being exported. A way had to be found to keep them home."

In the late 1950s, organizers planned a conventional industrial park but abandoned it due to lack of corporate interest. But with the effort to keep college graduates home, the idea for a park devoted to research caught on, Huffman said.

With the universities and RTI as drawing cards, the park grew steadily. As of this month, it had 45 research-oriented companies and more than 40 support facilities such as banks, law firms and restaurants. About 20,000 people work in the park and collectively earn more than \$500 million a year, Huffman said.

The federal government owns

about 20 percent of the land, including large tracts used by the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences.

A big part of the park's attraction is its pleasant country setting, preserved by stiff building and zoning requirements.

No heavy industry is allowed in the park, although some assembly and light manufacturing is allowed on the periphery. Its core is reserved for research facilities. All park buildings must be at least 150 feet from the road and companies may build on only 15 percent of their property. The rest is landscaped and maintained by the state.

In contrast, most other high-tech areas are heavily industrial, Huffman said. And many, including Stanford Industrial Park in California, long considered the largest research area in the nation, have filled up their available land, said George Herbert, president of RTI, who worked at the Stanford park for several years before

coming to Research Triangle.

"You come here, you know who your neighbors are going to be," Huffman said. "You know this will be a park, a campus atmosphere."

"Number one among all of the things people look for is livability," he said. "Good schools, good churches, shopping centers, good government."

Bob Wright, a spokesman for IBM Corp., which has 5,500 employees in the park, said the company was drawn by the labor force and the environment.

"It's one of the more popular IBM locations," Wright said.

"IBM was looking ahead to meet future product demands," added IBM's Dave Benevise. "One of the major things are the universities." The park owes part of its rapid growth to fortunate timing.

"The institute began working on health and medicine, the environment, social sciences and education just as the (national) emphasis began to shift away from defense," Herbert recalled.

Then, as interest in high-technology began replacing health as the front-runner in science, the Microelectronics Center was nearing completion, said W.H. Anderson, the center's secretary-treasurer.

The new center brings specialists from North Carolina A&T State University, UNC-Greensboro and UNC-Charlotte into the research "family" centered in the park.

Companies participating in the Microelectronics Center will have access to basic research and an area in which to test new equipment, while students from the universities hone their skills in developing the semiconductors that high-tech industry is based upon, Anderson said.

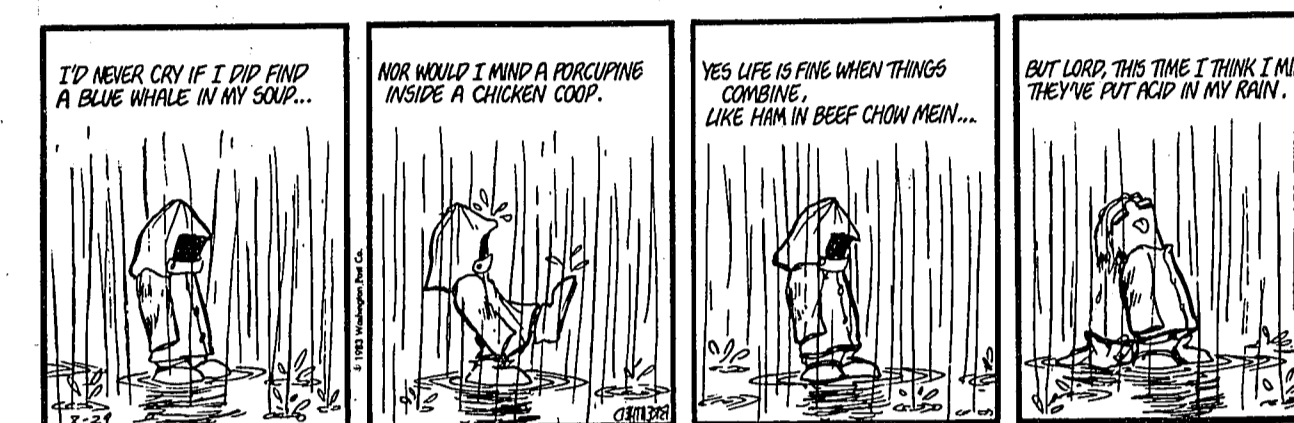
"Clearly, we're an interface between teaching and basic research available from universities," said Anderson. "It's a meeting ground where the two needs can come together. General Electric needs advances in process research.

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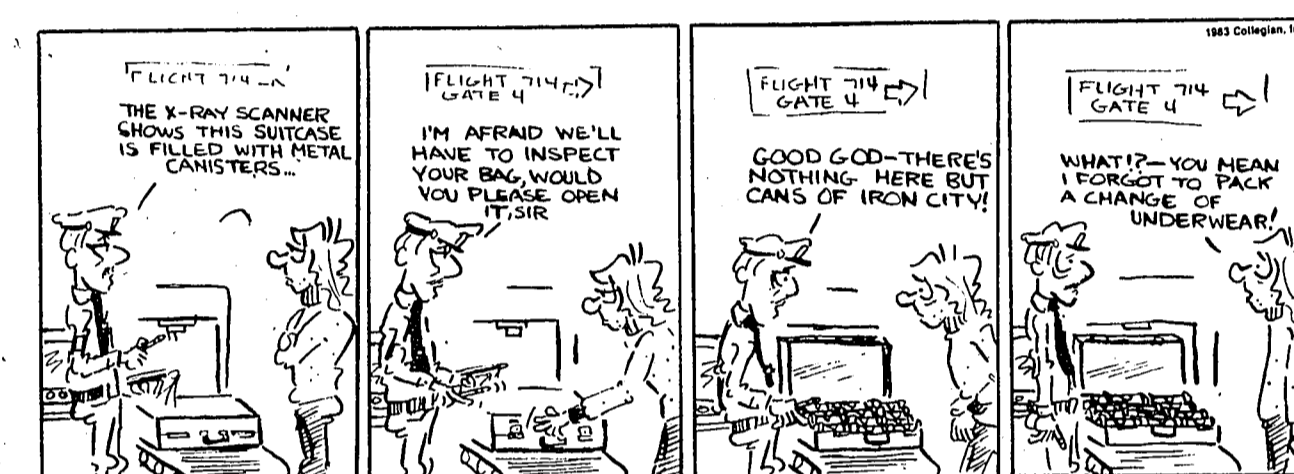
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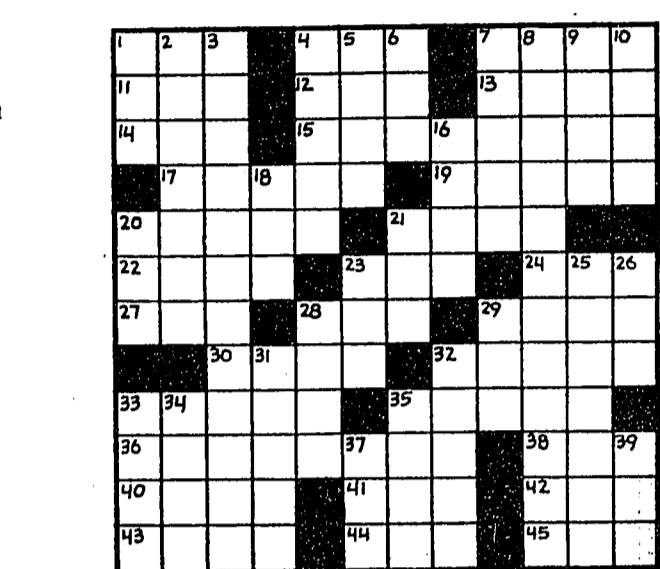
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- Russian city
- Stem
- Marabou
- Joined
- Wings
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