Articles

Some Notes About Guy D. Smith

Robert B. Grossman

I worked for Guy from 1958 until he retired from the Federal Government in 1972 (he had a subsequent fruitful career). For the first few years, I was directly under Lyle Alexander, who reported to Guy. Subsequently, after Lyle's retirement, I was Head of the SCS Soil Survey Laboratory at Lincoln, NE and was directly under Guy, since Lyle was not replaced. The three laboratories then (others at Riverside, CA and Beltsville, MD) reported to Guy. Guy, incidentally, looked on Lyle as his equal or superior. He once said that he would rather work for Lyle than be his supervisor.

Guy was born on 20 June 1907, in Atlantic, IA. He died on 22 Aug, 1981. His father was a detective for the Rock Island Railroad. (I think Guy had some of the traits of a good detective.) Guy graduated from the University of Illinois in 1930; worked in the Illinois state soil survey from 1930 to 1933; completed an M.S. degree at the University of Missouri in Soils in 1934; worked in land acquisition, Resettlement Administration from 1934 to 1936; and returned to the Illinois soil survey and while there completed a Ph.D. in soils in 1940. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1942 to 1946. In 1946, he joined the Federal soil survey, where he remained until his retirement.

Guy met his wife at the roller-skating rink at the University of Illinois. The rink was still standing when I was there in the late 1950s. The Smiths had three children, I think. I met his wife once. I had lunch at their house. Guy was recuperating from a fall from a ladder; I believe he had been pruning a tree when he fell. While I was in Washington, Lyle Alexander asked me to visit Guy. I remember that the lunch included cottage cheese and a salad. I remember the cottage cheese because at that time in life my lunch consisted of fruit and a pint of cottage cheese. The only other time I got a glimpse of Guy’s personal life was at the end of his career in SCS. It was at a retirement recognition for Guy at the conclusion, I think, of a National Work Planning Meeting; it was held in a nondescript room of some hotel. Guy made some brief remarks, towards the conclusion of which he said that he regretted that

---

1 R.B. Grossman, National Soil Survey Center, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 100 Centennial Mall North, Federal Building, Room 152, Lincoln, NE 68508-3866 (robert.grossman@nssc.nrcs.usda.gov).

Published in Soil Survey Horizon. 45:1–6 (2004).