He was born 18 October 1912 in Champaign, IL on a small farm. After graduating from the University of Illinois in 1934, he worked there as an assistant in soil physics and soil survey until 1938, when he moved to the University of Missouri for his doctoral research. During WWII he did soil mapping in California and Tennessee before returning to Illinois to head its soil survey, from where he eventually moved to the Michigan State soils faculty. He served as soils consultant to Japan in 1945 and later visited all continents except Antarctica, some of it in conjunction with international soils conferences.

"Gene" Whiteside was a dedicated and highly accomplished teacher and researcher, specializing in research on the origin, formation, classification and utilization of soils. For many years, he was the representative for the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station in the National Cooperative Soil Survey, and actively participated in fieldwork, correlation and report-writing for many Michigan counties. He was a major contributor to the concepts and drafts that led up to the so-called Seventh Approximation of Soil Taxonomy, the first comprehensive international soil classification system. His hands-on example and inspired teaching stimulated over 100 students from across the United States and many foreign countries to seek his guidance for their graduate theses and dissertations.

Contributed by Bob McLeese.

Purple Fingers?
The original Hellige-Truog Combination Soil tester was in widespread use as a soil-testing kit in the U.S. from the 1930s to 1960s. The kit was used to determine, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, soil reaction, nitrates, ammonia, sulfates, and chlorides. An off-shoot of the kit is the Hellige-Truog Soil Reaction (pH) Tester. The Hellige-Truog Soil Reaction Tester was one of the first tests in which the soil was treated directly with indicator solution and the results then read colorimetrically. The pH tester has been an important tool in field soil survey. Just ask any soil mapper with purple-stained fingers.

For more information see:
www.soils.wisc.edu/soils/people/emeritus/truog/truog.htm