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"Mr. Peanut" awarded UGA Alumnus of Distinction

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Frank McGill

Submitted



TIFTON — Frank McGill, a retired University of Georgia extension agronomist known as “Mr. Peanut,” was honored by The University of Georgia Graduate School as an Alumnus of Distinction for achieving exceptional success in their professional careers and in service to their community at a ceremony in October.

He was one of eight alumni so honored.

“To work with a nut, you’ve got to be a nut,” he said. “I’ve just had a wonderful career. I’ve had a lot of fun with it too.”

McGill was an agronomist and peanut specialist stationed at the UGA Coastal Plain Experiment Station. While there, he helped develop a multi-discipline “package approach” for peanut production in Georgia increasing the state’s peanut yield by more than 2,000 pounds per acre in less than 20 years.

McGill, who was born in Chula, was a county extension agent before being stationed at the experiment station.

His father, who was a farmer of 80 acres in Chula, told him and his two brothers that there wasn't enough room for all of them on 80 acres, so they needed to get their education. McGill did just that, eventually earning a Master of Science in agronomy in 1962.

McGill said that when he first became an agronomist, there was little research available on peanuts for county agents to distribute.

"The forerunner of any effective extension program has to be research," he said. "We can't tell them what we don't know. You can't have a good, effective program to increase yield if you don't first have the research that answers the questions. And we just didn't have much."

He developed a team of peanut specialists and put together what he called a world-class peanut team. That team combined multiple aspects of research on peanuts into one resource for farmers to use.

"I called it research explosion," he said. "From 1955 to 1965, we got new pesticides. We had new varieties of peanuts. We had new this, new that. So we got in a room and we got a bulletin written called 'A Package Approach.'"

McGill said that 13 scientists contributed to the first bulletin.

"They tell me that it is just as important today as it was when we put it together," he said. "You have to use every one of these technologies. Every one of them.

McGill is retired but serves as president of the American Peanut Research and Education Society, chairman of the UGA Agronomists, the U.S. Task Force on Peanut Policy and the U.S. Peanut Improvement Working Group.

He was technical advisor to the Georgia Peanut Commission, U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee, National Peanut Council and National Peanut Growers Group. He traveled to 21 countries as a peanut consultant.

After retirement, he worked as a peanut consultant with M&M Mars.

McGill was a D.W. Brooks Distinguished Professor of Agronomy at UGA and named Man of the Year by Progressive Farmer Magazine. He received the Distinguished UGA Faculty Award and the Distinguished Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College Award. He was inducted into the Georgia Peanut

Hall of Fame and received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Peanut Council. Some of his many accolades include induction into the UGA Agricultural Hall of Fame and receiving the Valor Award from Southern Peanut Farmers.

McGill was selected as one of 12 UGA scientists whose work has impacted the world in the last 100 years as part of UGA's centennial celebrations.



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