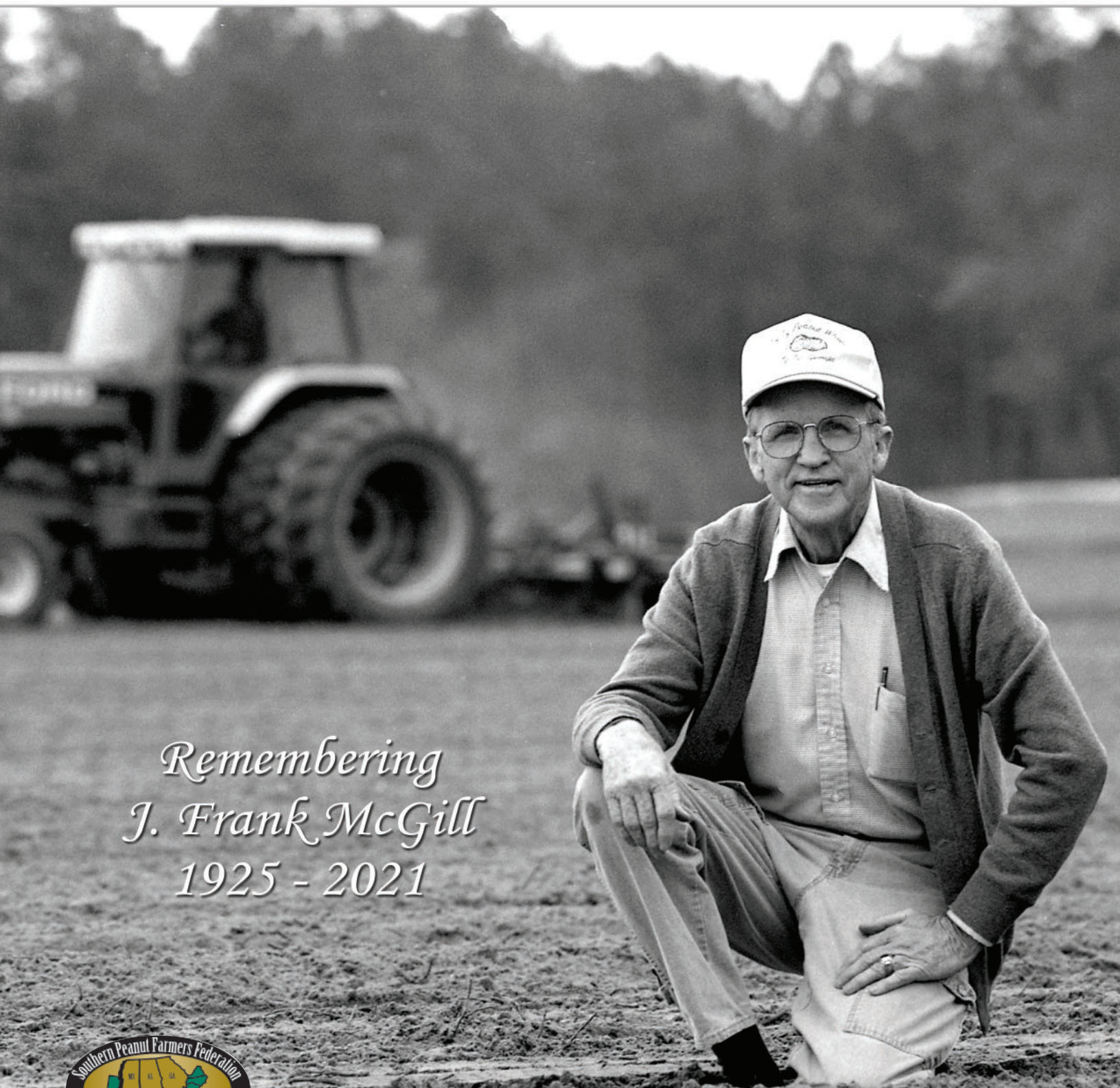


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PEANUT FARMER



*Remembering
J. Frank McGill
1925 - 2021*



A communication service of the Southern Peanut Farmers Federation.

Peanuts

McGill's Mission Field

A fast walk, humorous stories and handwritten notes are a few of the things family and friends remember about J. Frank McGill, also known affectionately as Mr. Peanut. McGill, 95, passed away on March 3 in Tifton, Georgia.

McGill received many awards through the years for his work within the peanut industry from multiple organizations and the University of Georgia, and was the first inductee into the Georgia Peanut Hall of Fame at the Georgia Peanut Commission in 1982.

The awards were great, but the memories and lives touched were the best part for McGill. He touched the lives of many within the peanut industry throughout Georgia, the U.S. and the world.

McGill was raised on a small family farm near Chula, Georgia, where he learned more about an honest living while being raised during the Depression. He gained honest work ethic on the family farm which led later to a 46 year career as a county Extension agriculture agent, Extension peanut specialist with the University of Georgia and peanut consultant with M&M Mars.

At one time in his life, McGill actually questioned whether God was calling him into ministry service. However, McGill's mission was in the field of peanuts and he fulfilled that mission by serving farmers and teaching all who would listen about peanuts.

During McGill's funeral, his daughter shared a story about how McGill would take family members out to the peanut field and if they were lucky he would crack open a peanut and reveal the seeds inside. With genuine awe in his eyes, he would begin to talk about the power of that seed. McGill would discuss how once the seed was planted in the ground a miracle would occur which would bring new life, and the power to feed hungry people and provide a livelihood for the farmer. He treated his work as a sacred calling and his devotion to it a spiritual one.

McGill's first impressions of the University of Georgia happened at the young age of 8 when the university agreed to accept fresh produce and meat for his brother's college tuition. So, as a young boy he helped his Dad load up two butchered hogs, sweet potatoes and syrup in the families Model T and made the 200-mile trek to Athens, Georgia.

Those events made a lasting impression on McGill and helped him decide to learn more about UGA which led to his thirty-one year career with the UGA Extension Service.

During the time span of 1949 to 1978, peanut yields increased from 800 pounds per acre to more than 3,000 pounds per acre as technology continued to advance within the industry. McGill provided a team approach within the Extension Service which can also be attributed to the increased yield.

A quote excerpt within McGill's book, "From the Mule to the Moon" sums up his love and acclaim for Georgia farmers.

The statement reads, "All of the ingredients contributing to this giant step of progress are too numerous, complicated and diverse for me to document adequately. However, the peanut growers of Georgia who consistently embraced a mentality for change during my forty-six years in the business are without a doubt the key ingredient to Georgia's peanut success story."

McGill also paved the way for an Extension ag engineer to join him at UGA. Initially, UGA wanted to hire a second peanut agronomist to assist McGill but he had other plans and knew the peanut industry really needed an ag engineer. McGill wrote the letter for the Georgia Peanut Commission to send to Athens requesting an ag engineer and the rest is history.

McGill continued to make an impact on former and current peanut agronomists at UGA such as John Beasley and Scott Monfort.

"I was fortunate and blessed in that Frank and I traveled together to several peanut meetings during my early years



J. Frank McGill
1925-2021

when he and I were invited to speak at the same meeting," says John Beasley, former Extension peanut agronomist at UGA and current department head of crop, soil and environmental sciences at Auburn University. "We spent those road miles talking about family, faith and peanuts. I will always cherish those private moments, laughing at his stories and inspired by his faith and passion for serving people."

Scott Monfort, UGA Extension peanut agronomist says, "Mr. Frank set the bar very high in supporting the needs of the peanut growers in Georgia as 'the first peanut specialist'. His level of enthusiasm and dedication to supporting the peanut growers in Georgia is something I continue to strive for each day."

Don Koehler, executive director at the Georgia Peanut Commission, first met McGill when he started working at GPC thirty-five years ago. Since then, McGill provided Koehler with historical facts, advice and a life-long friendship.

"Over time, he was sparing in his advice and when he did tell me something, I always knew it was very important," Koehler says. "I remember in one of those rare bits of advice, he told me it would be foolish to predict a peanut crop on the Fourth of July and I never forgot that and thanks to him, I didn't make a fool of myself doing so."

McGill will leave a lasting legacy among the peanut industry with his humble attitude, humorous and educational stories, inquisitive nature and the team approach for the UGA Extension service. ◀

By JOY CROSBY

J. Frank McGill
December 16, 1925 - March 3, 2021

