

Wesley Patterson Garrigus, 1909–1985: A brief biography¹

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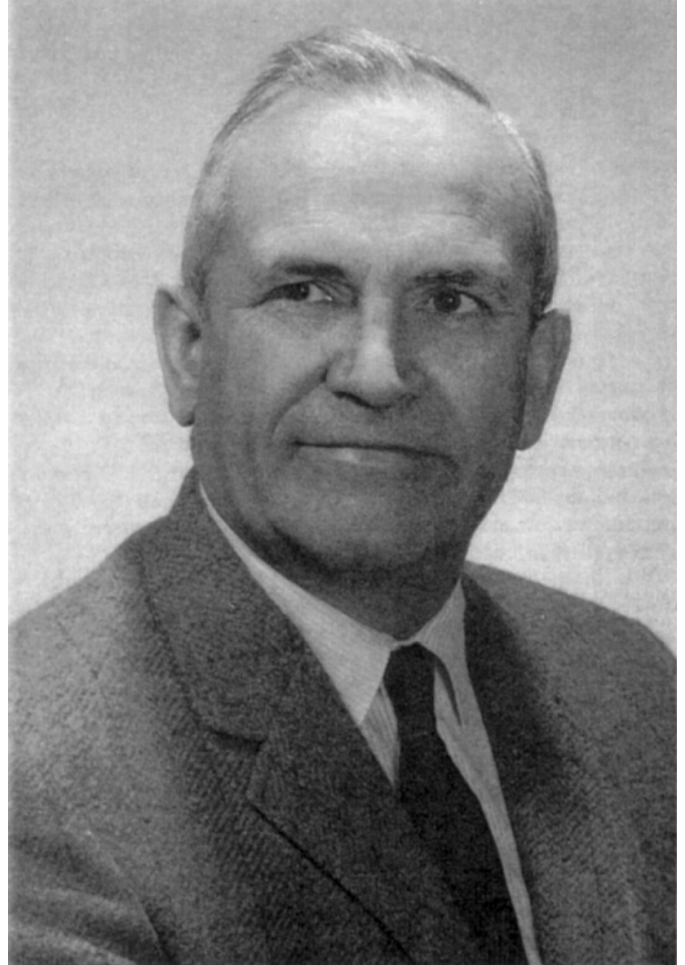
Wesley Patterson Garrigus served a distinctly significant role in the agricultural sciences and higher education in a specific locale, the University and State of Kentucky. His activities and achievements contributed measurably to the animal sciences profession, both regionally and nationally, and his effective approach and personable demeanor gained widespread appreciation and admiration.

“Wes,” as he was affectionately known in many circles throughout his lifetime, was born in 1909 in Storrs, CT. His early experiences and environment, through completion of his baccalaureate degree in 1931, at the now-University of Connecticut, were within the context of the “land-grant” philosophy and the inspiration of his father, Professor Harry Lucian Garrigus, who earned the title “Animal Husbandman of the East.”

In another era and area, Wes, within his generation of personal and professional life and environment, acquired appellations and accolades in his own right. He was named, repeatedly from varying sources, “Man of the Year of Kentucky Agriculture” and “Kentucky Cattleman of the Year.” He received the “Distinguished Service to Kentucky Agriculture Award” from the Kentucky Farm Bureau in 1968.

“Garrigus had a vision for the livestock industry in Kentucky and moved to make it come true.”³ “The three-fold purpose of the Land-Grant University guided Garrigus in his contributions to Kentucky Agriculture.”⁴

Wesley’s early and undergraduate years involved traditional 4-H participation. He successfully exhibited grand championship livestock (Beef, 1922), and his involvement with shearing led to his improvising a commercial-style shearing team to supplement his college funds. His secondary school activities were varied, and



his interest in sports earned him recognition as an all-state center in high school football.

At the university he had opportunities to further his animal interests and expertise as student labor in beef and sheep units and in intercollegiate livestock evaluation. He also occasionally accompanied his father on professional trips, usually within the Northeast.

He accepted a graduate assistantship at the University of Illinois, completing the M.S. degree in 1933 and Ph.D. in 1935. The research that he initiated at Illinois,⁵ involving forages and grazing steers, and incorporating creative techniques, was a precursor for subsequent studies in the pasture-abundant Bluegrass State.

During that period Wes married Helen Robbins, daughter of a university family. His own father had

¹The authors acknowledge with appreciation the “perspectives” provided by The Late General Benjamin J. Butler, former student and former State Commissioner of Agriculture, KY; Robert R. Garrigus, Prof., Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, son of Wesley; and James D. Kemp, Prof. and former student, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

²The author appreciates the invitation to present his brother and assumes that personal references or bias will be understood.

³The late Frank H. Baker, Director of National Programs, Winrock International, Morrilton, AR.

⁴North American International Livestock Exposition, Louisville, KY.

⁵Ill. Agric. Exp. Sta. Bull. 454.

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married Bertha Patterson, also daughter of a college faculty member, and Wes was pleasantly aware of the parallels between these two marriages.

Following a two-year agronomic assignment with the Soil Conservation Service of the USDA, Dr. Garrigus accepted an appointment to the Animal Industry Group at the University of Kentucky in 1937. His responsibilities involved extensive teaching. A member of his initial class recalls those early years and the continuing impact of Garrigus as instructor, and subsequently as administrator, when he wrote:

The hundreds of students whose lives he touched will remember him fondly. What better tribute? Not only was he an excellent instructor, he was also a real, genuine, caring human being who had a devout interest in every student who came under his tutelage. [As commissioner] I sought the advice and counsel of Wes Garrigus and he was of immeasurable assistance in bringing necessary reforms to the programs [of the state].¹

Another former student, Dr. James Corbin, who has served in both agri-business and academic positions, stated: "Many of us owe our careers to Dr. Garrigus' superior guidance, support and understanding."

In 1941 he was named Chairman of the Group, a position he maintained until his retirement in 1974. During his tenure, the department expanded its program, personnel, and facilities rapidly. A nomination statement of the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) in 1983 lauded Garrigus "for his guidance of the Department through the lean post-depression and World War II years into the rapid growth and scientific changes of the 1950's and '60's . . . and expanded science-based research and extension programs." The academic program progressed to a Ph.D.-granting level, extending to as many as 90 students simultaneously.⁶ He continued to support and encourage the traditional, time-honored exhibiting and very successful competition of university-owned livestock.

After reorganization, representatives of the constitutive units formed the "Animal Sciences Cabinet," which deliberated policies. A cabinet member observed:

Garrigus was known as the 'boss' . . . but he was boss by persuasion and diplomacy, not by coercion. He was open-minded as standards changed (e.g., criteria for carcass grading). I enjoyed and profited by my many years' association with him. He was my instructor, my advisor, my co-worker, my boss, but most of all my friend.¹

The physical facilities expansion and potential for program development of the department, station, and university were enhanced by the acquisition of three outlying estates, the planning for which involved Garri-

gus. "Garrigus was instrumental in instigating searches for funds for development; he motivated people to use their resources effectively."³

Garrigus, as recorded in the memorial statement of the University Senate, "was a respected research scientist." His early and continuing emphases involved the utilization of significant natural resources of the state through animal conversion: 1) extensive available grasslands leading to the development of the widely recognized "Kentucky cow-calf program" management system; 2) by-products of the distillery industry as a feed resource, and subsequently contributing to fuel availability, prompted by the national energy crisis. The significance of these studies was recognized with the Distinguished Nutritionist Research Award of the Distiller's Research Council (1964).

Successive nutrition studies on major plant species and the cow-calf system authored by Garrigus, or Garrigus and co-researchers, are recorded in Kentucky Station Bulletins.⁷ The import of Garrigus' research was evident not only in awards but also in the application of the cow-calf system throughout the Southeast. The ASAS cited his research in forage evaluation as "noteworthy and of influence throughout the United States and the World." He was appointed to the National Research Council sub-committee on Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle, and he also was a member of the Feed Survey Committee of the American Feed Manufacturers Association.

Garrigus published over 125 scientific and popular articles as well as a college textbook, *Introductory Animal Science*, in 1951.

Respect for Garrigus' research acumen, as well as his administrative ability, was reflected in his dual appointment in 1951 as Associate director of the Agriculture Experiment Station while simultaneously serving as department chair. He continued in this challenging dual role until 1966.

His special service to ASAS included the following: president of southern section, 1956–57; national vice president, 1958; president, 1959; and representative to joint committee with dairy and agronomy societies relative to forage research and techniques. Garrigus was elected a Fellow of ASAS in 1973 and recipient of the first Animal Industry Service Award in 1974.

Other organizational and honorary affiliations included Alpha Zeta, Gamma Sigma Delta, Omicron Delta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Xi, and Alpha Gamma Rho. Rotary Club and Second Presbyterian Church, Lexington, were major community/civic groups served by Garrigus. The officiating Minister at Wes' memorial service mused, "There was something about Wes that made one instantly comfortable in his presence. He was indeed a wise man . . . who made no special claim to wisdom . . . whose counsel was sought and welcomed rather than imposed and resisted.

⁶Kemp, J. D. History of the Dept. of Animal Sciences, Published by College of Agric., Univ. of KY.

⁷KY Agric. Res. Sta. Bull. 564, 566, 567, 573, 577, 578, 579, 636, 662.

Following retirement, Garrigus was appointed Curator of the Saddle and Sirloin Club Portrait Gallery at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville in 1977. He subsequently prepared a biographical compilation of all honorees, including his father, H. L. Garrigus. Wesley's portrait was added to the gallery of outstanding animal agriculturists in 1983, following his nomination by ASAS.

A signal, culminating recognition was accorded Wesley in the posthumous naming of the Agriculture Science Building on the Lexington campus the Wesley P. Garrigus Building "in honor of the man who did so much for the Department and the Industry."

Progenitor, progeny, and posterity, familiar terms to geneticists and genealogists, seem particularly applicable to successive generations of the Garrigus family. Wesley and his brother Upson each followed the professional interest of their father, H. L. Garrigus. All were honored in a joint ceremony and dedication of the Garrigus Pavilion at the Eastern States Exposition, Springfield, MA. Wesley's son, Bob (Dr. Robert R. Garrigus)¹, has very effectively served a nearly 35-yr academic appointment in the animal sciences and all-university assignments at Middle Tennessee State University.²

⁸Reflected in a letter received from a livestock producer: "You (Garrigus) have the reputation over this state of being not only a scientific man but full of good sense and practical experience."

Bob provided a moving response to the tribute of dedication of the Garrigus Building on the University of Kentucky campus. He recalled his father/mentor as a role model: encouraging sons Bob and Jim and daughter Betty to pursue individual interests and establish high educational and lifetime goals; traveling extensively with the family in the summer during his children's formative years; hosting, with their mother, Helen, backyard events for large university or state groups; providing remarkably dedicated care during Helen's difficult illness; and following his grandchildren's activities, including attending livestock exhibits and taking special interest and providing assistance in each of their respective homes.

The impact of Wesley Garrigus was attributable to certain characteristic traits (an analytical aptitude, a logical/technological balance,⁸ ingenuity and ethical consciousness) melded with an approachable personality and sensitivity in interaction with others, whether teaching, counseling, directing education and research units, organizational leadership or community, church or family relationships.

Following his death in April 1985 the Senate of the University recorded the following:

Dr. Wesley Patterson Garrigus was a teacher, researcher, administrator, church and community leader, family man and friend. The University, the Lexington community and the State of Kentucky are better places as the result of his many contributions.

Wes did indeed exemplify a profession and a personality.