Sugarbeet Research Expands

Dr. Larry Smith joined the staff of the Northwest Experiment Station in 1971. He had a B.S. degree in agricultural education, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in agronomy from the University of Minnesota. Smith was appointed as agronomist for the Station.

Smith assumed the responsibility for the sugarbeet research when Dr. Soine retired. About a section of good quality research land had been purchased in the 1960's and 70's without a dollar of the taxpayers' money. A sugarbeet contract was arranged to insure making land payments. The Sugarbeet Growers Association requested more research and extension personnel to service Minnesota and North Dakota.

In 1977, The Minnesota Legislature appropriated funds to underwrite a full-time agronomy position for sugarbeet studies at the Northwest Experiment Station.

Roger Ruthenberg worked in the school's horticulture department starting in 1965. After the Experiment Station transition, Ruthenberg was assigned to the agronomy department under Soine. Ruthenberg developed several unusual pieces of special plot equipment since he was an excellent mechanic. Roger came to be familiar with plot layout, hiring plot workers, and sugarbeet harvesting while working for Smith's sugarbeet project.

Farm foremen on University Experiment Stations have always been key persons to getting research and general farming accomplished. Juel Torvi came to the Station April, 1923. His service until February 28, 1971, was a tour of duty that extended from a Station with a barn full of horses to the enclosed cab combines. He cultivated the “wild oats” and eventually sprayed them to death. He was probably involved with a greater change in technology during his tenure than any other staff member.