

## HISTORICAL NOTE

While my mother and I were going through some of her personal effects, she found an old *ILLINOIS ALUMNI NEWS* from January, 1949. She must have known at the time that her 1 year old son was destined to be a corn breeder and saved this issue with the article about the University of Illinois Botany department's hiring of Marcus Rhoades and John Laughnan. Remembering reading the letter from John Laughnan written in 1958 and published in the 2008 Maize Genetics Cooperation Newsletter where he proposed "an informal get-together of maize geneticists", I thought perhaps some would enjoy reading about the hiring of Dr. Laughnan and Dr. Rhoades. John Laughnan particularly is a special memory for me as he taught me my first college genetics course. As a sweet corn breeder I also am indebted to him for his development of Illini Chief, the first sweet corn hybrid with the *sh2* gene – a type of corn now commonly known as "supersweet".

Dr. Rhoades helped found the Maize Genetics Coop and I believe was the first curator of the genetic stocks. While a graduate student at Illinois the MGC still met at Allerton Park. At those meetings I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Rhoades and many other well known corn geneticists and chat informally during the evening cocktail hour.

I hope some of you appreciate the little bit of history presented in this old alumni news.

David Fisher

DeForest, WI

Monsanto

*Beginning of  
study of  
corn genetics  
at UoI.  
p. 4*

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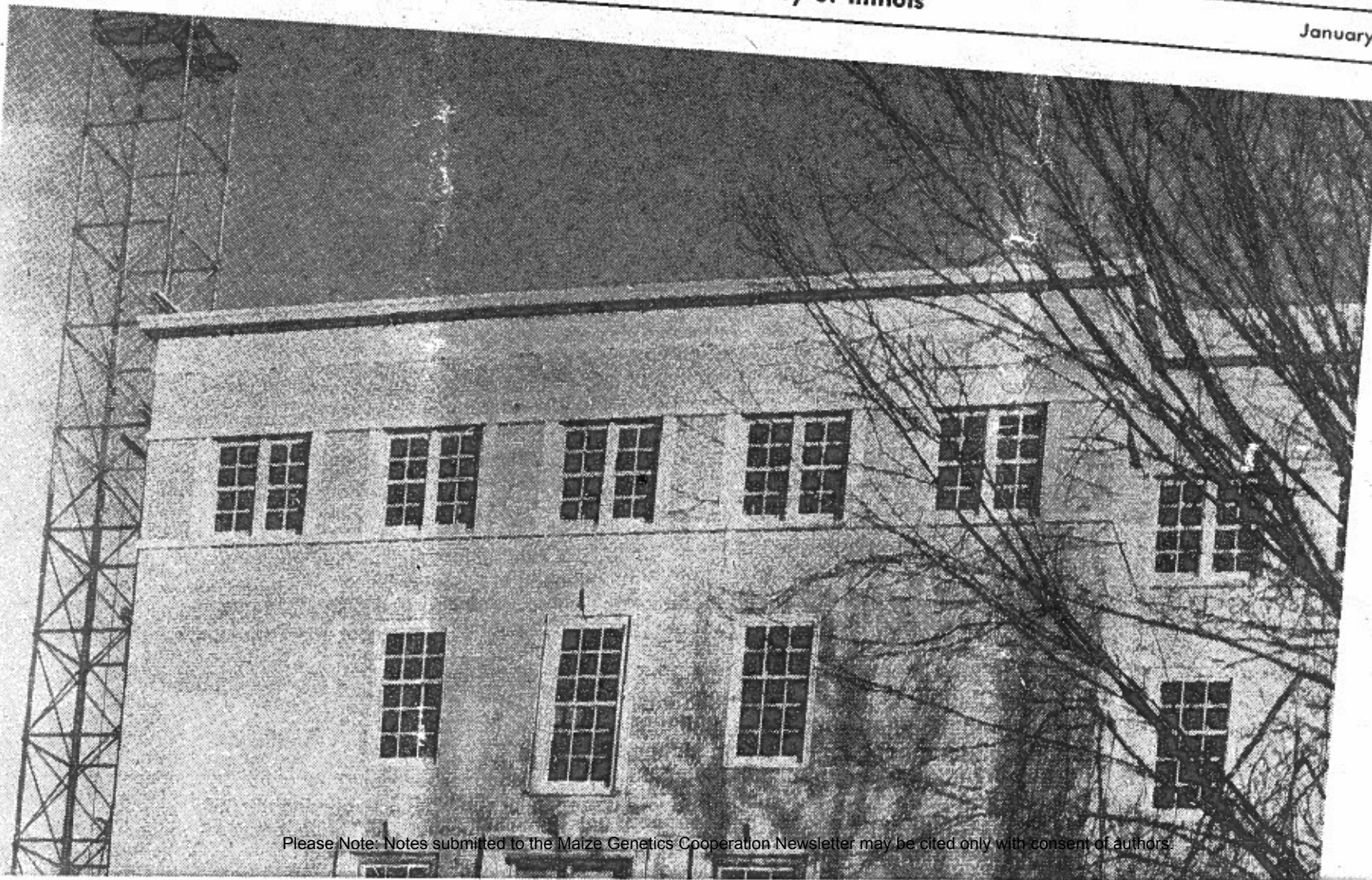
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# Illinois Alumni News

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high school circus which sounds a little like the old interscholastic circus will be given the average of Oberlin News Letter high school basketball tournament, for the benefit of those who can't get into the night sessions.

Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians captivated the campus when they were here just before the holidays. They gave two concerts the same evening and did three radio shows from the Auditorium stage. Waring gave faculty and students some of the most enjoyable programs ever heard here and gave the University some excellent national publicity . . . In a sweet and tactful way, Fred kidded the life out of all of us here because the Auditorium is so inadequate and has such terrible acoustics . . . Every freshman knows, of course, that we need a larger and better concert hall. Purdue and Indiana have pointed the way . . .

Recent research here has greatly reduced railroad accidents resulting from failures of car wheels, thus keeping up the famous U of I. tradition of service to the railroads . . . The first University-sponsored number of the campus literary magazine "Tempo" is off the press. The hope of the English department is to publish two issues each semester, containing the best in student writing. Included in the first issue were several stories by alumni . . . A dozen or more waitresses in an Urbana restaurant are putting their war-veteran husbands through the University . . . If you worry about campus morals, come over and see the throngs of students who pack into campus churches . . . The Faculty-Alumni lounge of the Illini Union is becoming a popular place for alumni and alumnae weddings . . . One out of every 12 persons who get their doctor's degree in chemistry receives it at the U. of I. In 1936-45, Illinois awarded 411 Ph.Ds. in

## ILLINOIS ALUMNI NEWS

Begins Where Student Days End

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Lucille Turigliatto '40 ----- Associate

and valesburg.

Any editor of an alumni news should, in addition to these things, get better acquainted with the people who read the paper. He ought to be around interviewing scores of alumni who are doing especially interesting things.

The one thing that tends to be discouraging about all this—for us—is that it probably won't get done. Of course, after a fashion, we know what's going on. We know about some of the major campus enterprises and we know who thinks what about whom. But we don't have time for much leg work. As it is, most of the things we peck out for this magazine are done at night or while hiding in an attic. Neither the country editor nor the alumni editor can have "hours." The telephone rings just as easily after 6 p. m. as it does before. Perhaps this is the real fun about the jobs—and certainly puts our schedule alongside that of many University officials, the chief of whom is President Stoddard himself.

But often when lugging home the heavy brief case we recall what the cashier of the home-town bank said to us one night when he found us working in a country newspaper office around 10 p. m. He looked at us thoughtfully for a while and then pronounced judgment:

"You just aren't smart enough, are you, to make a living by working only in the daytime?"

### DADDY'S HELPER

Athletic Director Doug Mills came close to spending a night in Chicago with a strange bag of merchandise. Doug packed the bag one morning before coming to the campus and only a whim prompted him to open it at his residence at noon. It was then that he discovered his young son, Peter, had emptied the suitcase and repacked it with the following: a complete outfit of Peter's clothes; a few of Peter's books, in case Daddy found he needed something to read; one pillow, in case Daddy became tired.

### BABY SITTER

A U. of I. professor and his wife who have wanted to be particularly careful about their young son employed a baby sitter for him, for years—until the other evening the one sent out from a local agency proved to be one of the young man's grade school classmates.



Three new University trustees were invited to meet with the present board in its January meeting held January 13. Left to right, the board members who will take office in March are: George W. Herrick '13, Law '13, Clinton; Mrs. A. R. (Frances Best) Watkins '21, Chicago; and Robert Z. Hickman '29, Danville. Mr. Herrick and Mr. Hickman also are members of the U. of I. Foundation and Mrs. Watkins is a former officer of the Alumni association and now president of the Chicago Illinae Club.

## Botanists Study Corn Heredity

Two professors, newcomers to the University's Botany department—Marcus M. Rhoades, who was brought here from Columbia, and John R. Laughnan from Princeton—are working as a team to do research in the hereditary characteristics and the cellular structure of corn. The two scientists, who are experts in two phases of the same subject, are devoting their time to the basic aspects of the corn plant.

Professor Rhoades is one of the nation's foremost cytogeneticists whose main interest is cytology (the study of cell structure) and Professor Laughnan is concerned with chemical genetics. Although what they find out may have no immediate bearing on methods in corn production, the geneticists might well point out that their past work led to the production of hybrid corn—worth millions of dollars.

Actually, the fact that corn is such an important crop in the U. S. economy—and in the economy of the Midwest in particular—is not the primary reason behind the U. of I. study.

It just happens that corn is the plant best suited to the study of genetics. "Irrespective of the value of the corn crop, I'd still choose it," Professor Rhoades declared.

"It's the best plant we have for this type of work," he said. "It's easy to grow, the sexes are separated (the tassel is the male flower, the ear the female flower), it's easy to cross and its chro-

mosomes are very favorable for study."

Corn's economic importance does make it easier for the geneticists to get the necessary laboratories and equipment, however, just as the atom bomb makes it easier for the physicists to get appropriations for their betatrons and cyclotrons.

The U. of I. has allocated some \$60,000 to the development of a cytogenetics laboratory in the Natural History building, and much of the necessary equipment has been ordered.

A small amount of experimental corn is being grown in University greenhouses during the winter, and the agronomy plots will provide a larger amount in the summer, through cooperation between the "theoretical" and the "applied" research workers.

In the meantime, Professors Rhoades and Laughnan are studying the nature of gene mutation from corn samples they already have—corn whose kernels are speckled with black or striped with red like peppermint candy.

The mutations which cause the changes "are the building blocks of evolution," Professor Rhoades noted. "Plants and animals have become diversified only because of gene changes or mutations.

"An experimental attack on the study of the mutation process may yield some information on the nature or structure of genes themselves and also on the way in which genes act in controlling development."