

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Ed Runge

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project

Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-073

Ed Runge, a life-long agronomist, soil scientist and University professor, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's and Illinois State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: October 24, 2008    Location: IL Information Service Studio, Springfield, IL  
Early career and Evolution of American Agriculture

Date: October 24, 2008    Location: IL Information Service Studio, Springfield, IL  
Study and soil science extension work overseas, Agriculture policies

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPLM

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): Tony Bateman and Greg Lipe, IL Information Service Videographers

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 67    Total Time: 2 hr + 1 hr 58 min / 2 + 1.97 hrs = 3.97 hrs

Session 1: Early life and career as a an agronomist and soil scientist

Session 2: Illinois soils & work at Texas A & M with Norman Borlaug

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 12/10/2008.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

© 2008 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

# Abstract

## Ed Runge, *Oral History of IL Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2008-073

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Ed Runge was born on August 4th, 1933 in St. Peter, Illinois, and raised there on his family's farm. Ed discussed farm life in the Great Depression and during World War II. Determined to get a college education, at the University of Illinois he majored in Agricultural Education, an M.S. in Agronomy-Soils, with minors in Chemistry and Agricultural Economics in 1957, then a Ph.D. in Agronomy and Soil Science from Iowa State University in 1963. He married Patricia Rice in 1956.

Runge taught agronomy and soil science courses while conducting research, first at Iowa State University, then at the University of Illinois from 1966 through 1973. From 1973 to 1980 he was Professor and Chair of Agronomy at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and spent the rest of his career at Texas A & M University as head of the Soil and Crop Science Department, then the Billie B. Turner Chair in Production Agronomy. An Emeritus Professor, he works part-time at the Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture.

Runge discussed the evolution in American agriculture, from the impact of mechanization, then the introduction of hybrids, then the use of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, and finally the impact of genetics on agriculture. At Texas A&M he began a long-term friendship with Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug. He traveled and worked extensively abroad, doing soil science research and performing extension services in places as diverse as New Zealand, Indonesia, Brazil, Africa, and Myanmar. He was an early advocate for alternative uses for corn, emphasizing demand enhancement, with ethanol production as one way to increase demand for corn. He also advocated the promise other biomass to produce fuel. He shared his views on many of the most important issues in agriculture today.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** St. Peter, Illinois; Rural Electrical Association (REA); farm life during WW II; Lutheran Churches in rural Illinois; University of Illinois College of Agriculture; Iowa State University College of Agriculture; work as a soil scientist/agronomist; University of Missouri-Columbia Department of Agronomy; Texas A & M University Department of Soil and Crop Science; Norman Borlaug; hybridization of corn; agriculture in New Zealand in 1970; evolutionary stages of American agriculture; agriculture in Brazil; agriculture in Burma (Myanmar); ethanol production and debate in America; bio-mass studies for fuel production; set-aside programs;

**Note to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

### **COPYRIGHT**

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955**