



Dr. William H. Pierre (1898-1982) left an indelible imprint on agronomic science during his tenure at Iowa State University as an administrator, researcher, and leader. In all of his endeavors he could not accept anything but his best effort. Dr. Pierre came to Iowa State University in 1938 as head of the Department of Agronomy. He was born in Brussels, Wisconsin, and completed his graduate education at the University of Wisconsin, receiving the Ph.D. in 1925. He served at South Dakota State University (1921-22), Auburn University (1925-29), and West Virginia University (1929-38). His initial work on the effect of nitrogen fertilizers on soil pH was rewarded with the American Society of Agronomy Nitrogen Research Award in 1931. This often cited research was pursued in his later years when he elucidated the effect of crops on soil acidity development by the cation-anion balance in plants and the excess-base concept. This research led him to the pioneer development of methodology for the determination of maximum yield of corn as a function of the N concentration in corn grain. Until his death, Dr. Pierre continued to research the effect of corn genotypes on N concentration in corn grain.

Dr. Pierre was a superb judge of scientists. As head of the ISU Department of Agronomy, the faculty increased from 22 to 47 and 8 of the faculty he selected became distinguished professors. Many of his students and former faculty progressed to leadership positions throughout the nation.

He was a strong supporter of basic and applied research, a promoter of cooperative research, and a believer in excellence in teaching, research, and extension. Under Dr. Pierre's leadership, field research on the major soils in Iowa was expanded with the establishment of outlying research centers; the climatology program was established; the Soil Testing Laboratory was organized; the North Central Regional Plant Introduction Center was accepted as part of agronomy; USDA scientists were incorporated as full members into the department; and the groundwork for the cooperative soil survey program was established.

Dr. Pierre was named a fellow and honorary member of the Soil Science Society of America and the American Society of America, both of which he served as president. Among the numerous honors he received throughout his career, Dr. Pierre was named fellow of the Soil Conservation Society of America and of the International Society of Soil Science. In addition to his teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities, Dr. Pierre also served on several national committees and participated in international phases of agronomy through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the US Agency for International Development.

A kind and gentle person, Dr. Pierre always had time for those who needed his counsel. He was proud of and dedicated to his family. His energy and enthusiasm for his work were unsurpassed. For those who knew him and his family, this lecture is a fitting reminder of Dr. Pierre's standard of excellence.