

# Looking back: How It All Began

*In August of 1981, formed was the embryo of an idea that ultimately would put a dealer organization into supporting field research.*

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It was called the National Fertilizer Solutions Association (NFSA) back in those days, an organization devoted to promoting the fluid concept of fertilization in agricultural fields. The organization was made up of 840 dealers and manufacturers supplying fertilizers, pesticides, additives, etc., plus multi-forms of equipment tailored to the fluid fertilizer industry.

It was first formed in 1954 as the National Nitrogen Solutions Association (NNSA) when a group of independent liquid fertilizer dealers—hearty disciples of fluids—met and decided it was time to evangelize the fluid concept of fertilization via marketing, technological, and educational programs. In 1955, the NNSA was incorporated and named Wayne Johnson as its first president. In 1956, the NNSA was changed to the National Fertilizer Solutions Association (NFSA) and Harold Shelm became its first Executive Vice President. He was succeeded by Richard Gilliland in 1974. Following Gilliland were Dave Murray from 1979 to 1983, Jay Vroom from 1984 to 1988, and Jim Boillot from 1988 to 1991. In addition to Wayne Johnson, among the early principals were Bill Lohry, Glen Brandt, Harry Melton, Keith Erny, Don Humphrey, Bill Stephens, Richard Jacoby, Eddie Platz, Bob Boswell, Hovey Tinsman, De Willard, and Ed Krysl.

Ever popular among NFSA members was The Annual Round Up program held in Indianapolis or St. Louis. It was educational in nature and had exhibit tables for equipment manufacturers who were members of the NFSA and participants in its many programs. High point was the NFSA annual convention that included educational programs and featured a large exhibit hall of equipment and other products marketed by members. A perennial crowd pleaser, the largest attendance was recorded at the 1981 convention in Las Vegas, exceeding 3,000 paid registrations. Locations for this event were major cities in the U.S. (Dallas, Denver, Kansas City, Atlanta, Houston, New Orleans, St. Louis).

It was at a 1981 August board meeting, under the leadership of Scott Tinsman (then NFSA president) that the idea of the FFF was given birth. “It was unanimously



decided,” Tinsman announced, “to establish a separate, nonprofit foundation to fund continual research and development into new methods, concepts, and/or products.” Tinsman added it was crucial this effort originate from fluid dealers, suppliers, and related industries. A target date of January 1982 was set to form the new foundation.

In January of 1982, Waddy Garrett, newly installed NFSA president, announced formation of the FFF as one of his top priorities. “The new research foundation will be an endeavor on the part of the NFSA to get into research and development of fluid fertilizers in order to disseminate information to the dealer so he’ll have a better marketing arsenal,” he said. “We will have a committee or board that will screen projects to be selected.” Waddy added that the NFSA would then establish an annual fund to support those fluid research projects selected. Dr. James T. Batchelor was hired as vice president of research and education in mid-1982. Scott Tinsman was elected as the FFF’s first president. Dr. Batchelor continued as vice president of research and education until he was succeeded by Dr. Julian Smith in 1987 until 1990.

The FFF flourished as a separately funded 501-c-3 corporation under the auspices of the NFSA until early 1992 when it was absorbed into the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), under the directorship of Tom Hunton. It was at this point that Bill Lohry, CEO of Nutra-Flo Company, stepped in to get the FFF’s bylaws rewritten to make

it a corporation independent of the ARA. Shortly thereafter, Ned van Buren was asked to return from retirement as editor of a newly formed magazine named Fluid Journal, which first appeared in the spring of 1993. At that time, Ed Krysl was chair of the FFF Board of Directors.

The FFF was run by regional representatives until Dr. Richard Wiese was hired as its first President in 1995. He was succeeded by Dr. Larry Murphy in the spring of 1998 and the FFF headquarters was moved to its present location in Manhattan, Kansas. Under his leadership the FFF flourished mightily until his retirement in 2008. He was succeeded by Dr. Dale Leikam who is now in command of the FFF and looking forward to the celebration events coming this February.

“All of this will be consummated at our Annual Fluid Forum in Scottsdale, Arizona, in February as the FFF prepares to celebrate its 30 years of service to agriculture,” says Leikam. “We extend a hearty welcome to all.”

In addition to its in-depth educational meetings covering on-going research, there will be displays and speakers who will offer vivid moments in the Foundation’s history of serving the world of agriculture to provide adequate and nourishing food to an ever-expanding world population. The 2012 date is February 19 to 21 at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona. Reservations may be obtained by calling 785/776-0273 or emailing [fluidfertilizer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fluidfertilizer@sbcglobal.net)