

Dr. V.A. Little remembers

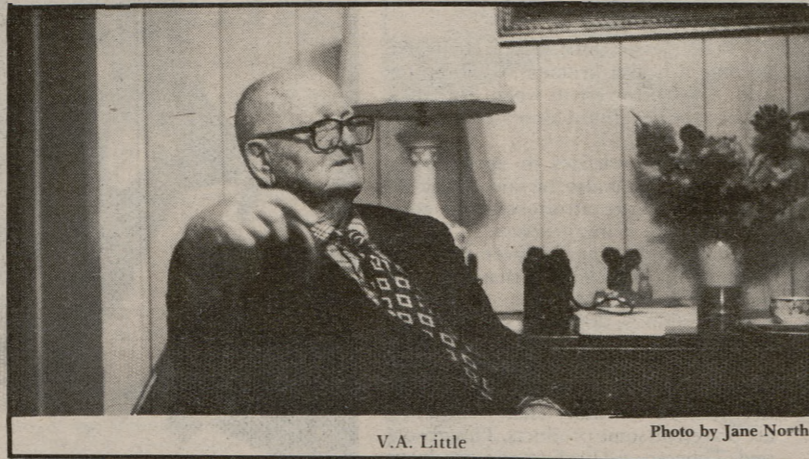
By JANE NORTH

Dr. V.A. Little, an 84-year-old retired entomology professor, likes to sit in his easy chair and reminisce about his 41 years of teaching at Texas A&M University.

Little remembers an all-male school, a musty classroom, a tarantula and a wasp.

In 1923, he came to Texas A&M to work on his master's degree in entomology. That fall, he was also offered an assistant teaching position.

"It was enjoyable — nobody enjoyed teaching more than I," Little reflected.



V.A. Little Photo by Jane North

He was involved

in teaching 41 years

He taught in the Mechanical Engineering Building, during his first two years, because the old Biological Sciences Building was being remodeled. After the remodeling was completed, Little taught in the Biological Sciences Building for 25 years.

Doyle Gougler, a former student of Little's who is now an assistant professor of communications at Texas A&M, said the old Biology building was dark and dank, reeked of formaldehyde and had buckling wooden floors.

Gougler also remembers Little bringing

ing a coffee can with a tarantula in it to class. He said the professor would let the insect crawl up and down his arm.

"That tarantula bit the dickens out of me one day, too — right on the finger," Little said.

Little remembers one day when he had the tarantula on his shirt sleeve. One of the women in his office thought it was a fake rubber spider and reached over to touch it. It ran up his arm.

"That cleared the office," he said chuckling.

Little said he also used to bring male wasps to class (only the females sting). The students couldn't believe he didn't get stung.

"If you teach school, you have to do a lot of things that interest kids, you know — I'd tell 'em jokes and what not."

Little's teaching techniques earned him many awards during his 41 years of teaching, including the Outstanding Professor of the College of Agriculture award in 1958, 1960 and 1962.

"Anybody that works in a place for as long as I did is going to get a few honors and recognitions and such," he said modestly.

He admits, however, that he's proud of the Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award he received in 1958 and that he still wears the gold watch he was given.

Little has written several books during his career.

"Well, I am not a voluminous writer," he said. "The ambition of so many professional men is to get something in print. I never did believe in that. If I had something worthwhile to publish, I'd publish it," he said.

One of his books, "General and Applied Entomology," is the text for Entomology 201, a general entomology course. The book has also been used all over the United States and abroad. Little revised the text in 1964, after his retirement. The book is now in its third edition.

"It's a simple book — a beginner's book," he said. "That's what students want and what they need, so I wrote it like that."

"I remember an all-male school and musty classroom."

--V.A. Little

He also wrote a paperback about cotton insects that had limited distribution. After retirement, he said he wanted to write another book, but never did.

After receiving his master's degree in 1925, Little taught for 18 years. In 1943 he got his Ph.D., but in everyday life, he said, he prefers to be called Mr. Little, not Dr. Little.

"There's no title more honorable than mister," he said.

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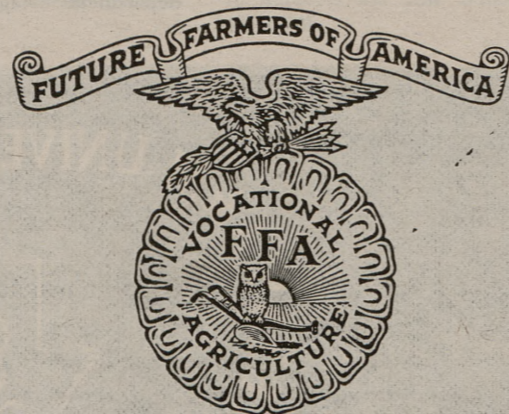
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