

## King of the Row remembers roots, with eye on future growth

By Kenner Patton

**F**OR MANY, FARMING IS MUCH MORE than a career; it's a way of life. It isn't just in the blood, it's in the mud stuck on a farmer's boots and the sweat on his brow. In this regard, George King is no exception. As Delta Council president and row-crop farmer with nearly 45 years' experience in the field, this leader in ag is clearly king of the row.

King started "farming" when he was just 15 as he helped long-time Leland, Mississippi farmer, Ray Beckham, in the summers.

"I learned a lot from Mr. Beckham, but the most important lessons had nothing specifically to do with farming. The two most important instructions were to work hard and always be on time," King said. "Those messages followed me the rest of my life, and I hopefully have passed them down to my four children. I try to stick to them every day."

In 1985, King began working with his cousins, the McCaskill brothers: Jeffery, Tommy, Danny, and Robert.

"Working there I got to do every job imaginable on the farm. But my main job was driving a dirt bucket tractor to precision-level land for irrigation," King said. "That was a great experience for my next career step when my father-in-law, Boots Nelson, and brother-in-law, Tommy Nelson, and I formed a partnership that created Nelson-King Farms, LLC in 1987. Those friendships and partnerships are still strong today."

The Nelson-King Farm now spans 6,500 acres and is nestled between Lake

Washington and Lake Jackson in south Washington County, concentrating on a rotation of corn and soybean. King and his partner, Tommy, have been fortunate that Nelson-King Farms now includes their wives and two of their sons as part of the farming operation.

"The daily hands-on operation has fallen to my son and nephew while I concentrate on managing our grain bins, dirt moving operation, finances, FSA requirements, and new technology," King said.

King is also quick to acknowledge the benefit of mentors and long-term relationships in his life.

"I have been involved with Delta Council for more than 20 years, and this year I am honored to serve as president. Through Delta Council, I have been really fortunate to work with some great leaders in agriculture. Tom Robertson, John Phillips, and Chip Morgan have been instrumental in helping me continue

to grow and learn more about ag. And I would not even be in this business if it wasn't for my father-in-law, Boots Nelson."

After receiving his bachelor's degree in agronomy from Mississippi State University in 1983, King reflects back on how much agriculture has changed.

"When I first started farming back in the '80s, we were just trying to run a lean operation and make a living. But decades later, we've been fortunate enough to have survived through some lean times and celebrate the better years. Looking forward, I think helping solve the water and irrigation issue will be our next greatest challenge," King said. "I also think a lot about our younger farmers and continue to wish them the blessings I have received. I encourage them to get the best education they can. And I also tell them to remember the lesson Mr. Beckham taught me long ago, 'Don't nothing ever take the place of hard work.'"

