



## OPTIMIST, FARMER, COMMUNITY LEADER

*CALS alumnus builds upon tradition in the Delta*

**A**BBOTT MYERS is both a third generation farmer and a third generation bulldog. His son, Abbott Ransome Myers, Jr., continues in his footsteps in farming. The father and son work alongside each other day in and day out farming more than 7,500 acres of row-crops near Tunica, Mississippi. Now, Abbott's grandson, also his namesake, has taken an interest in the land. Abbott, Sr. says building upon this family legacy is the driving force in his life's work.

Abbott's grandfather started the family farm with land in Helena, Mississippi after he graduated from Mississippi State University as an agriculture major in 1915. Myers' father graduated in 1943 as an engineering major, before heading off to fight in World War II. After that, he returned home to work on the farm. Abbott, a '72 agricultural engineering technology and business alumnus, also had a knack for engineering, originally setting out to become an aerospace engineer. During his sophomore year, however, his father suffered a detached retina, which brought Abbott home early that summer to help out on the farm. That

decision changed his life's trajectory.

"To be honest, I hadn't planned on farming and that summer I made the biggest mess on the farm. But each night, I was able to talk with my father and he'd tell me what to do. After that I found I enjoyed making the decisions and being the boss," Abbott said.

Once he returned to MSU, he switched majors to agricultural engineering technology and business.

"Mississippi Land Bank loaned me money and I bought a little piece of ground when I was in college," said Abbott, who raised his first crop in 1971 before he graduated from MSU in 1972.

After college, he returned to farming full-time, raising 33 crops with his dad. Now he's raised about 17 crops with his son. Much of the farm is dedicated to rice.

"While we grow corn and soybeans, rice is our largest business. Everything is bought, planted, and developed around rice. We began with 60 acres of rice in 1979 and we harvested 2,250 acres last year," he said.

Myers also said he's spent his farming life working to make the land better

and acquiring more of it when he could.

"It doesn't make a difference whether you rent or buy, you pay for the land you occupy so it's better to own it. We've been able to buy land when we could and make it more productive," he said. "We land-formed all of this land ourselves at different grades during different times. I have the farm now just about like I want it."

He attributes much of that land acquisition to his relationship to the Mississippi Land Bank.

"Mississippi Land Bank has been one reason we've been so blessed. They've stuck by me and encouraged me to buy land," Myers said.

As a way to give back to the organization, Myers became chairman of the board of the financial institution.

"Banking is totally different than anything I do and is something I enjoy. Mississippi Land Bank's business is agriculture and they've been mighty good to me. I'm just trying to pay back what they've done for me," Myers said, who explained that the board's job is to set policy and hire the CEO.

Myers is also the chairman of the board at Coahoma Electric Association and an elder at the Tunica Presbyterian Church. In the past, he's served as president of the Tunica Academy, Rotary Club, Soil Conservation District, and served on various councils and boards including the Delta Council, the Rice Council, and the Yazoo Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District.

Myers makes it clear his greatest joy is family. In addition to his son, Ransome, Myers and his wife, Sheryl—married nearly 50 years—have a daughter Katie, two grandsons and one granddaughter. He also says it's a blessing to work with his son.

"He shows up for work before I do and is always in a good mood, which makes me in a good mood," he said.

Myers said it's important to remain an optimist as a farmer but it's also important to save for the tough times.

"You have to be an optimist to farm. We have good and bad years and my father taught me that if you make a good crop, you better save that money because you are going to need it."