THE HENRY FORD OF AGRICULTURE
Charles F. Seabrook 1881 – 1964
and
Seabrook Farms 1893 – 1959

by
John M. Seabrook
The mission of the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center is to preserve and make known the unique history of Seabrook in Upper Deerfield Township, Cumberland County, as a place where people of different races and cultural heritage were given an opportunity for a new start in life and subsequently their significant contributions to the township, state, and nation.

This statement crystallizing a broad purpose of the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center (SECC), was first adopted in 1996 when the Seabrook Chapter Japanese American Citizens League formed a committee to initiate the SECC. The mission statement was included in the bylaws of the organization at incorporation on September 4, 1991. The museum and first exhibition was dedicated and opened to the public October 8, 1994 on the occasion of the Peoples Inaugural sponsored by The Upper Deerfield Township Committee, the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, the Seabrook Chapter JACL, and the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center.
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FOREWORD

In October, 1994, the Seabrook chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League reunited hundreds of former and present residents of Seabrook, New Jersey to celebrate its 50th anniversary of community service at Seabrook Farms during and after World War II. Charles F Seabrook had created the village of Seabrook in Cumberland County’s flat, rich farmlands to house workers for his pioneering frozen foods business. Life-buffeted people from thirty cultures found here a safe haven and the blessing of steady work.

The Japanese Americans who came from America’s shameful internment camps found in Charles F Seabrook a father who afforded respect, security, and hope. So at the gala 50th-year reunion ceremonies, they especially enjoyed hearing C.F.’s youngest son John (Jack) recall his family, the business, and life in Seabrook Village. Now, with help from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center makes his story available to all of us. In doing so, the center affords us a priceless first-hand account featuring the rise and demise of Charles F. Seabrook and Seabrook Farms.

This stirring twentieth-century saga is rapidly unfolding. One installment came from C.F.’s grandson John in the February 20-27, 1995, issue of The New Yorker. This addition by his father Jack is of singular value, for he was at the pulse of the family and its agribusiness for forty-two years. Like his older brothers Belford and Courtney, he worked the standard 60 hour week of a field hand at age nine. He was C.F.’s produce grader at age thirteen. Later, he presided over the company in its most successful years.

Jack Seabrook writes with balance, tact, and deep responsibility to his family. He muses the anguish that many must have felt as his father’s demons let him subordinate everything to his passion to create, only to snatch away his capacity to do so. Time and distance temper this account, leaving irony its niche as we read that C.F. (often termed the “Henry Ford of American Agriculture”) hated farming. We may find our own irony in Jack’s downplaying of adversity - so much like the Japanese Americans who tried to screen past bitterness from their children.

According to this account, C.F.’s obsession was engineering-building. He built roads through southern New Jersey and the housing, plants, and railway needed for his enterprise, going so far as to ‘engineer’ a split of Upper Deerfield from Deerfield Township so ‘his’ voters could authorize modern replacements for one-room schools. He was a major contractor for Philadelphia’s 1926 Sesquicentennial, its subways, and the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. In slack times in America, he built roads in Cuba and Costa Rica and transportation systems in nine European countries.

Through the genius of C.F. and his family (oldest son Belford managed the construction of Route 77 at age fourteen), Seabrook Farms became the nation’s largest producer of frozen foods. As many as 5,000 men and women, speaking over thirty languages, were employed on 20,000 acres, making Seabrook America’s most culturally diverse rural area. However, unknown to most, titanic struggles lay behind these achievements. With this account, however, even the armchair adventurer senses the travails (e.g., struggles with weather, manpower shortages, labor relations, technological change, competition, and finance) that felled this Goliath at last. But down is not out. Jack happily and proudly reports that Belford’s boys (now in their sixties) and their sons have built a new plant for freezing vegetables not far from the old site, and they have recaptured the Seabrook Farms brand and brought it home.

So, five generations of Seabrooks have committed a century and a quarter to farming in southern New Jersey. To know their larger-than-life story and to have it so well told invests New Jersey’s history with new romance and drama, kindling wonder, appreciation, and, perhaps, a flicker or two of wisdom.

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INTRODUCTION OF JOHN M. SEABROOK
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AGRICULTURE

I first met Jack Seabrook in June of 1954, when, along with a lot of other college kids, I had a summer job at Seabrook Farms. In my first week on the job, I met Jack and his older brother Belford. Jack was at that time president of the company. Before the summer was over, I had also met his brother Courtney and his father C.F. and had become close friends with five or six of the Seabrook grandchildren.

Although Seabrook Farms was a big-time, scientific farming corporation, the Seabrooks were people who worked hard but had fun doing it. I obviously liked the atmosphere at Seabrook because I came back each summer during college. After I graduated from the University of Massachusetts in 1957, I began working there full-time. I recently visited the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center and saw a copy of a speech Jack Seabrook made in Toronto, Canada as chairman of International Utilities Corporation in 1969, ten years after leaving Seabrook Farms. In introducing Jack as the speaker, the Honorable Robert H. Winters, Canada’s Minister of Trade, said, “Mr. Seabrook was born a farmer, educated as a chemical engineer, and although his present occupation defies description most people today consider him a financier. He started with International Utilities as a consultant in September 1959, became a vice-president in 1960, a director in 1963, president in 1965, chief-executive in 1967, and chairman in January 1969; you could say his progress has been steady.”

“His progress has been steady” is a good summary of Jack’s life. Many people would have been content with the success he had at Seabrook, but he went on from there. When I looked in Who’s Who, I counted more than 20 companies that, since leaving Seabrook in 1959, Jack has been associated with, either as a director or as an officer, and often the CEO. He has been involved in shipping in the turbulent Middle East, gold-mining north of the Arctic Circle, gas and electric utilities in Canada, railroads in the United States, telephones in Brazil, shipbuilding in Japan, and many other things in many other places. Although his working life has taken him to places for long periods, he has always maintained his roots in rural southern New Jersey, and he and his wife Liz are still New Jersey residents, although his four children are all away pursuing their own careers. In 1989, at age 72, he severed all business ties, and, since then, has devoted his energy to land conservation, a subject near and dear to him since he served as a supervisor in the Soil Conservation District in South Jersey before World War II. Although both our lives have changed dramatically in the 41 years since I first met Jack, I have always been able to pick up the telephone at any time and get his help. He has always declined to run for elective public office, but he has always been ready to serve the State of New Jersey and the nation whenever called upon.

I cannot close this introduction without commenting on the many similarities between Jack and his favorite nephew, my friend Jim Seabrook. Strictly speaking, Jack is John M. Seabrook and Jim is James M. Seabrook. They both have engineering degrees from Princeton University, and, playfully, they refer to each other by appending their graduating class: J.M. Seabrook 1939 and J.M. Seabrook 1955. In founding and developing Seabrook Brothers and Sons, Jim Seabrook has shown the same steady qualities as his uncle Jack. For 18 years, his company has provided a profitable home for the vegetable crops of South Jersey’s farms when most other processors have long since departed.
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The Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center and the Japanese American Citizens League, as part of their October 8, 1994, People’s Inaugural at Seabrook, New Jersey, asked me to write this paper to be lodged at the Cultural Center along with the other papers and oral histories. I was an active participant in the running of Seabrook Farms until I was 42 years old, including five years as President. In preparation for this retrospective, I have had access to a mass of records and documents stretching back to World War I, augmented by the recollections of surviving members of the family, including my older brother Courtney, the only other living member of my generation. However, the story recounted here is, in many instances, based on my own memory, which undoubtedly is influenced by subsequent events. Life at Seabrook was never dull. We all had strongly held and widely different opinions, and some of these show in my writing.

The Early Years

Charles F. Seabrook, almost always called C.F., rarely Charlie after boyhood, was born on his father’s farm at Becbe Run, Hopewell Township near Bridgeton, New Jersey on May 28, 1881, the second of four children of Arthur P (A.P.) and Elizabeth Riley Seabrook. A.P. was born July 14, 1856, at 57 Union Road in St. Mary Newington, Surrey, England and brought to Rhinebeck, Duchess County, New York in 1860 when his father, Samuel S. Seabrook, was employed by the famous abolitionist and editor of the New York Tribune, Horace Greeley, of
"Go West" fame. Samuel died in 1870 shortly after moving to Cumberland County, New Jersey. His eldest son A.P. started farming a few years later. C.E.'s older sister Fanny, born November 25, 1879, died unmarried in 1902. His younger sister Ida, born March 23, 1883, married March 25, 1906, and died March 4, 1918. C.E.'s mother Elizabeth died January 17, 1919, in the flu epidemic at the end of World War I. The youngest child Sydney was born March 14, 1889. He did not enjoy the hard work on the farm under his eight years older brother C.E. and left home to join the Salvation Army apparently before he was 16. Sydney married first on March 30, 1912, and again in 1935, this time to a Salvation Army worker born in 1918, by whom he had children. After a lifetime in the Salvation Army, Sydney died October 17, 1963, but he and C.E. never met after he left home, except at A.P.'s funeral. A.P. died at his home on Fayette Street in Bridgeton on April 25, 1937.

A.P. was a truck farmer who started raising fancy vegetable produce on a small tenant farm in the mid-1870's and selling it door to door from a huckster wagon in Bridgeton. In 1893, when C.E. was 12 years old, A.P. purchased the 57-acre Minchin farm in Deerfield (now Upper Deerfield) Township. This was the nucleus from which Seabrook Farms grew. A.P. was a very good truck farmer, indeed. C.E., who worked full time at the new farm, added a new wrinkle, overhead irrigation. C.E.'s first attempt at irrigation was a single pipe with holes in it over a celery bed in 1907. After the first year's success, more pipes were added and with artificial rain, quality and yields improved. The Seabrooks, now in partnership as A.P. Seabrook and Son, became a preferred supplier of vegetables. A.P., a happy, warm, genial man with a large white mustache, made friends easily and did the selling, originally from the huckster wagon and later to commission merchants in the cities. C.E. a more serious and austere personality than his father, stayed home and ran the farm. He was fiercely ambitious and always driving hard for more, bigger, and better. He always wanted to plow any excess cash back into his own business for expansion. He did not invest in securities or put money into any business he did not run. A.P. in an age when successful farmers often expected to retire and move into town in their forties, didn't care that much about expansion and the power it brought, he wanted money for retirement.

On November 22, 1905, at the Deerfield Presbyterian Church near the farm, C.E. married Norma Dale, the daughter of a New Jersey farming family whose roots went back to Colonial days. In 1911-12, C.E. bought out A.P.'s share of the business. A.P. was 55 years old at the time. C.E. and Norma were 30, and their first three children, Belford, Courtnay, and Thelma, had all been born in A.P.'s house, where the two families lived and worked together until January 1915, when A.P. moved into the house he had purchased on Fayette Street in Bridgeton. Belford Laurence was born on July 7, 1907: Charles Courtnay, January 15, 1909: and Thelma Dale, September 6, 1910. I was the last child and did not arrive until April 16, 1917.

During the partnership years, sales expanded. The land was farmed intensively because labor was cheaper than land. Four and five crops per year were sometimes harvested from the same acre by planting each new crop in between the rows of the previous crop was harvested. This was very labor intensive, and increasing numbers of single men were needed. Norma Seabrook, under the direction of her mother-in-law, had to see to the housing and feeding of those men. In later life, Norma Seabrook often said to her children, "Once an adult, never never live with your parents or your in-laws, or have them live with you, no matter what the inducement." She also described to her three sons the fierce fights over business policy between A.P. and C.E. and did her best to shield her three sons from some of the force of her husband's driving ambition. She warned her sons of her husband's divide-and-rule tactics, urging them to stick together always. A.P. and C.E., when they dissolved their partnership after 1911, did not part friends, their final disagreement being over the price C.E. offered for A.P.'s share of the business.

A warmly laudatory article written by I.T. Nichols, which appeared January 24, 1913, in the Dollar Weekly News of Bridgeton, describes Arthur P. Seabrook upon his retirement after twenty-seven years of farming, as the famous truck farmer who was first to introduce overhead irrigation and the first to use a gasoline tractor. It says that the farm in which A.P. lost interest has been taken over by a corporation capitalized at $150,000." It goes on to say that "the new
owners have already purchased an additional 68 acres. The story relates that A.P. made his "last delivery to Bridgeton on Saturday, January 4, 1913, and thereafter will reside in his handsome new home on Fayette Street, acting as agent for the West Jersey Marl and Transportation Company." The article concludes by saying that it was to A.P.'s credit that he had set a great record as a farmer and "few indeed have succeeded so well." The story does not mention son Charles E. Seabrook at all, which, since the irrigation was C.E.'s project, may have added to the ill will between son and father. C.E.'s competitiveness with his father resurfaced at the end of World War II when Courtney, in writing publicity for the new Seabrook Farms brand, wanted to use 1875, the date A.P. started farming as the founding date; however, C.E. wanted to use the date A.P. sold or left, either 1911 or 1913. Courtney finally convinced him to let us use 1893, the date A.P. bought the Minch farm, provided we did not mention A.P.

Arthur P. Seabrook now drops out of the print stories about Seabrook Farms and, for the next 25 years, only C.E. Seabrook is mentioned. On July 18, 1913, the same Dollar Weekly says, "C.E. Seabrook, who has heretofore managed the affairs and operations of A.P. Seabrook & Son, is the president and general manager of Seabrook Farms Company." It goes on to say more land has been added, new and improved machinery installed, a contract has been let for a large greenhouse and new varieties, including fancy strawberries, are being added. There also was a story that July in The Telephone News describing the new modern and scientific management of Seabrook Farms. Then, on October 3, 1913, the Dollar News ran a big story with headline "Cumberland's Show Place, The Great Agricultural Operation of Seabrook Farm; Two Hundred Seventy-Five Acres, Carloads Shipped to Many Points."

From these news articles, we learn that 200 new acres were added in 1913, and irrigated land doubled from twenty-five acres in 1912 to fifty, which required 50,000 linear feet of pipe overhead plus underground mains and pumps. There are nine new board houses, a new greenhouse 300 feet long and 60 feet wide, labor imported from New York and Philadelphia, and carloads of produce regularly shipped to New York, Philadelphia and as far as Atlanta, Georgia. The reporter tells us on the day of his late summer 1913 visit, a mixed carload of spinach, lettuce, and parsley is transported to Woodruff Station in "the big motor wagon." Leaving Woodruff at 4:00 p.m., the railroad got the car to Jersey City by 11:00 p.m., and the fresh produce was in the New York market before dawn. We also learn that Seabrook Farms Company has as its officers C.E. Seabrook, president and general manager; George W. Waite, vice-president; A.M. Seabrook, secretary and office manager; and the treasurer is Archer Platt, the "well-known cashier of the Farmers and Merchants National Bank of Bridgeton." Mr. Platt, treasurer in 1913, was still around in 1950 and appears as paymaster in the photo story now on view at the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center about paying Seabrook Farms employees in silver dollars.

Mr. Waite lived in New York City where he was president of the New York Stable Manure Co. and where he had been for 31 years a train master at the Pennsylvania Railroad. Mr. Waite may have been the representative of the White family who supplied the new capital for all this 1913 expansion. He may not have lasted long since he is not mentioned again, and my brother Court and I never heard C.E. or my mother speak of him.

Although C.E.'s parting with his father A.P. was unhappy, two of A.P.'s younger brothers, "Uncle Bert," the office manager, and "Uncle Frank," the chief mechanic, for many years worked for C.E. These men were C.E.'s uncles, but everyone else also called them uncle. Uncle Bert, Albert M. Seabrook, born in Rhinebeck, N.Y. in 1861, became secretary of Seabrook Farms Co. in 1913 after 22 years as owner, publisher, and
editor of the Enterprise, a Glassboro, New Jersey newspaper. When
Seabrook Farms was incorporated, C.E. felt he needed someone whom
he could trust at his elbow and who had a formal education. Uncle
Bert had graduated from Trenton State Normal School in 1885 and
taught school until he bought the newspaper in 1891. To induce him
to move, a new house was built for him next to C.E.'s house (A.P.'s
original farmhouse). He lived there
until he died in 1948 with his wife
Molly, the former Mary D. Johnson,
whom he married June 20, 1888.

Uncle Bert went to the office
almost every day until he retired at
age 84 in 1945. At an office Christmas
party held early in World War II, Uncle
Bert delighted the large group
present by pointing out in a speech
that, 50 years before, he alone had
done the job that now required 100
people.

C.F. Expands the Business

In an interview with Bruce Barton published in the May 1921 issue
of The American Magazine, C.E. said, "The people who write poems
to farming never got up before dawn to milk cows seven days a week
and never weeded onions on their knees in the heat and mosquitoes.
All my life, I wanted to be a construction engineer." He became an
engineer too and a very good one, indeed, even though he was entirely
self-taught.

When Seabrook Farms became a corporation in 1913, large sums of
fresh capital were raised, primarily in New York from W.A. and A.M.
White (founders of White Weld) and from Edgar L. Smith. As capital
flowed in, the building began at once. C.E. organized his own
engineering company, which he personally, not the Seabrook Farms
corporation, owned. That firm, originally the C.E. Seabrook Company,
later called Seabrook Engineering Corporation, built 35 miles of roads,
buildings, power plants, cold storage, railroads (two railroads so as to
get the best rates, one to connect with the Central of New Jersey and
one to connect with the Pennsylvania), dams for water storage with
pipelines and pumping stations for irrigation systems, machine shop,
blacksmith shop, woodworking shop, sawmill, garages, packing sheds,
and neat villages for the employees. All was accomplished under C.E.'s

personal supervision and all in the short space of eight years.

As a boy, C.E. went to school only when his father's farm work
allowed. He quit school altogether at age twelve, but later he wanted
the children of his workers to attend a good school. In 1920, when
the voters of Deerfield Township voted against his proposal for a
consolidated school, he had the New Jersey legislature divide the
township and create Upper Deerfield Township. He then built the
consolidated school that stands today.

C.E. actually directed
the building himself, as is
recorded on the bronze
plaque still at the
entrance. It is easy to
spot the original building
despite more recent
additions because he
used a very special,
expensive brick. It was
finished in time for me
to attend Grades 2 - 8 in
the new building.

Everything that anyone could conceivably need for a modern fully
industrialized farm was built using the White's money. By 1921, there
were 500 year-round employees housed there, and Seabrook Farms Co.
had grown to 3,400 intensively cultivated acres, of which 250 were
under overhead irrigation. C.E. became famous as an industrial farmer,
and B.C. Forbes, founder of Forbes Magazine and grandfather of the
present editor, Steve Forbes, christened him "the Henry Ford of Agriculture." C.F. was a national hero for his contribution to the world food supply in World War I.

This expansion was in the run up to, and during, the 1914-18 war. Fortunately, this was a time of rising demand and rising food prices. Less than a decade after A.P. sold out, the expansion ended when the price of farm products and farmland began to fall throughout the United States. After World War I, improved transport allowed vegetable farms as far south as Homestead, Florida to reach the Philadelphia and New York markets weeks before the earliest Seabrook crops were ready. This meant others could now skim off the high prices paid for early season vegetables which Seabrook had once enjoyed. Seabrook now had to sell at the lower mid-season prices. In the 1920's, the vast acreage of fruit trees C.F. had planted during the period of wartime high costs began to bear fruit, but prices were poor and demand low. The high fixed cost of establishing the orchards never was recovered and the trees were finally torn out during World War II and the land planted in vegetables.

While profits at Seabrook Farms were falling, C.F. personally made two new agricultural investments. With Peter M. Koster, he established the Koster Nursery to grow ornamental trees and shrubs in 1920, and a second business venture to grow gladioli, daffodils, tulip bulbs, and cut flowers. Because of the threat of disease, the import of these bulbs from Holland was cut off by the United States Department of Agriculture, making growing them in the United States profitable. These two new businesses were personal investments of C.F.'s, and not a part of Seabrook Farms Co., so they did not help the White's investment. These two new companies brought ideas and skilled workers with know-how from Holland. Today in New Jersey's Cumberland and Salem Counties, there are many nurseries and quite a few Dutch names among the local population, a legacy from C.F. Seabrook. C.F. loved trees and lined miles of South Jersey roadsides with trees, another obvious legacy.

C.F. Loses the Business

I was born and spent my first seven years in what had been A.P.'s house at busy Farm Center, where I was free to roam the shops and fields and make friends with the children of the workers. My two best friends were Paul, the son of black migrants from South Carolina; and Presto, the son of Sicilian immigrants. I sometimes visited the separate villages where they lived. There also was a "German" village, the "Polack Hotel," and a lot of barracks-style housing for short-term workers, but they were not nearby, so I did not visit them until later. The so-called Poles, all single men, were former soldiers from the White Russian army who had been brought to the U.S. after their defeat by the Bolsheviks in the aftermath of World War I.

We never thought about segregation or integration. Everybody worked together, but it seemed natural then that people wanted to live in ethnic villages with their own kind, talk their own language, and eat their own foods. We Seabrooks were Presbyterians and went to a very plain, unadorned church. As a child, I was fascinated by the contrast with the Roman Catholic Church, with the color and excitement of the religious processions held in the Italian village on Saint's days. But there was another reason why I liked the Italian village best.

At every event, Saint's days, weddings, funerals, or christenings, there was always cake soaked in sweet anisette liquor which we kids loved. I
went to these events with my mother, who felt the family should be represented, but I doubt she knew why I was so willing to go. Delivered to our house every morning was wonderful Italian bread, baked daily in the brick beehive ovens cooperatively by the ladies in the Italian village. To this day, I don't like 'store-bought' bread.

There were great sights, sounds, and smells everywhere at Farm Center for us kids. Just across the street from our house was a stable with 200 horses and, right in front of the house, a Frick refrigeration plant powered by a row of magnificent Corliss steam engines with showy snap valves and gleaming, shiny pistons, all in rhythmic motion. On still nights, the ammonia fumes from the compressors mingled with the ammonia from the stables. The effect was like a whiff of smelling salts. The blacksmith shop was nearby with four forges glowing, where John Shaw sweated next to Abe Skilowitz, both pounding red hot iron, with the smell of soft coal smoke and burning hooves. The sawmill made whole logs into shipping boxes and smelled of pine. The machine shop, smelling of hot machine oil, was dominated by Germans. Schmidt, the boss, told exciting stories of chasing Poncho Villa in Mexico as a soldier with General “Black Jack” Pershing. When I was a little older and rode the midnight trucks to the New York flower market, I even learned a little Yiddish. It was all part of a wonderful education for C.F.'s three sons.

Overbuilt, with high fixed costs, Seabrook Farms was losing money. In the autumn of 1924, the White family, the outside shareholders who had so enthusiastically supplied the capital for expansion, sacked C.F. as general manager and put the company into receivership with a White associate, Meyer Handelman of New York, as Receiver. He renamed the company Del-Hay Farms. C.F. lost his investment.

On very short notice, the Seabrook family had to leave the house at Farm Center where C.F. had lived since 1893. This house had been vastly improved and enlarged since its original life as A.P.'s farmhouse, and it had been Norma Seabrook's only home for the 19 years of her marriage. C.F. was now away most of the time, but my mother, my sister, and I went to live at the Cumberland Hotel in Bridgeton during the months that a house on Polk Lane near Deerfield Street was being remodeled into a future residence for the family. Belford and Courtney were working that summer and then left for school in the autumn. This Polk Lane house continued to be the Seabrook family home until Mother died in 1968, four years after C.F.'s death. With its many acres of splendid gardens, it then became and remains Seabrook House, an institution for recovering alcoholics.

I found life in the Cumberland Hotel confining. My mother bought me an elaborate chemistry set which I established in a hotel bathroom. After we moved to the Polk Lane farmhouse that was to be our permanent home, my brother Courtney helped me build a laboratory in the basement. By 1930, the laboratory was very well equipped, partly with very sophisticated equipment given to me by Colonel Evan Kimble, founder of Kimble Glass in Vineland. I worked in the laboratory most evenings, learning from second-hand textbooks purchased cheaply from the bookstands surrounding Philadelphia's medical schools. Our family had an excellent Encyclopedia Britannica, dated 1910, and my mother bought me a modern U.S. one as well. There also were lots of books from correspondence courses C.F. had taken with Mother's help in the early years of their marriage to augment his slim formal education. The classics did not interest me, but I devoured the books on subjects such as steam engineering, railroad construction, water supply, sewage systems, and agricultural drainage. The Polk Lane house being isolated and my siblings away at school, there was no social life for me. I was alone with Mother most nights, and she encouraged me to spend my time learning. The roads were poor in winter, and the first year the school bus was horse-drawn, driven by a Mr. Wilble. Bikes didn't work on the dirt road, so I rode a pony.

Until I was 13 years old in 1930, I hardly knew my father at all. Even if he was at home, he was not the sort of father who paid any attention to small children, and after I was seven in 1924, I saw him only on his occasional visits to South Jersey and had little contact with him.
C.F., Construction Engineer

Despite the 1924 receivership and the loss of his investment, C.F. never missed a beat. He still had his own construction company and, in the expansion at Seabrook Farms, he had thoroughly learned the civil engineering construction business. He now established several additional and interrelated construction companies, some with outside investors, to bid construction jobs in the United States and abroad. C.F. had acquired political power and, by 1920, had become a Highway Commissioner of the State of New Jersey. Once expansion stopped at Seabrook Farms, he lost interest in the farm and, as the 1920's got underway, he devoted more and more of his attention to the construction business. Paving roads in southern New Jersey was the first order of business, but before long he was building roads in faraway places such as Costa Rica and Cuba. He also took on a series of dealerships or distributorships in things related to the construction business, such as the General Motors truck, various patented machinery for paving of streets with "natural" asphalt from Trinidad, and even the Packard motor car. At one time, he was the distributor in the eastern United States and all of Europe for the Holt tractor of Peoria, Illinois, a predecessor of Caterpillar.

He was the general contractor for about one-third of the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exhibition, which was to open on July 4, 1926, celebrating the 1776 Declaration of Independence. It was a huge job with a short deadline for completion and, along with it, he took contracts for various infrastructure improvements in the region, such as subway tunnels in Philadelphia and the approaches for the new suspension bridge across the Delaware River (now known as the Ben Franklin Bridge) that replaced the Camden-Philadelphia ferry in 1926. I remember the excitement of the workers about the Jack Dempsey-Gene Tunney fight held outdoors at the "Sesqua" that summer. The referee's decision was questioned and that led to fights among the workmen. Belford, a gang boss, was strongly partisan, but I can't remember which boxer he supported. In the middle 1920's, C.F. went to Europe to do construction jobs, eventually working in nine countries as far afield as Turkey. C.F. went at the construction business with great relish. His head office was at 50 Church Street in New York City and he lived at the Engineers Club on 40th Street off Fifth Avenue. He had a South Jersey at all, it was usually on a Sunday.

The 1920's were without doubt the best decade of C.F.'s life. He was doing exactly what he wanted to do. He often made as many as four round trips a year across the Atlantic, and that meant spending forty days a year on the big luxury ships. He learned about fine food, wine, and clothes. I can remember my mother asking in that period why he needed so many sets of evening clothes? He explained he needed both white tie and black tie on the ship, and that it was customary for a regular traveler to leave his shipboard clothes in the care of the ship's valet so they would be ready and laid out in the cabin when he came aboard for the next trip. He needed another complete set of clothes to leave at the Savoy, where he lived in London, and still another at his club in New York. This may sound slightly familiar to my own wife and children from the period half a century later when I was traveling the world on international business.

The biggest and most exciting of all these construction jobs was in Soviet Russia, where C.F. did projects as diverse as building new railroads and new docks at Murmansk (to be heard from again in World War II), street paving in Moscow, irrigation works down near the Black Sea, and even a survey for a canal to connect the Volga with the Don River, and, thus, give central Russia an outlet to the sea. Mother visited him there in 1929, but only once. Sadly, I have no records, letters, or blueprints to document this period of C.F.'s life, only Mother's old passport. Staff, including engineers, was drawn from the New York, New Jersey, and the Philadelphia area, but if any with knowledge of C.F.'s Russian period have survived, I have not found them. Since the United States did not recognize Soviet Russia, there were no consular arrangements to protect our citizens doing business there. Because of this, C.F. started his Russian work being paid in gold in advance in New York by Amtorg Trading, but the work was exciting, and he could expand the jobs more rapidly by dropping the demand for gold pay in advance and extending credit. C.F. still did not care about accumulating money. He had no liquid cash reserves when, after the Great
Depression started and the October 1929 market crashed, the Soviets suspended payments.

C.E had lived abroad or in New York City during much of the preceding decade and had paid scant attention to the farm properties he owned personally. Now in 1930-31, he concentrated on the one set of hard assets he still had left, farmland, his personal land, and the new acquisition, Investors Management Corp. that he controlled. After the 1924 change of name and management, Del-Bay Farms continued to do poorly, and the White family wanted to sell it. In October 1929, C.E organized a group of investors from Fall River, Massachusetts under the name of Investors’ Management Corporation, and, with this group, bought the Del-Bay assets from the Receiver, Meyer Handelman.

In August 1930, C.E gathered all the family at breakfast and told us that he was broke; however, this time, unlike 1924, he intended to keep control and eventually pay off the creditors, a promise he kept. He told Belford and Courtney there would be no more engineering jobs anywhere. Thelma, now 19, was sent to work in the office over the truck and car agency at 41 Atlantic Street in Bridgeton, New Jersey, to which C.E transferred his office after he closed the offices in Berlin, London, and New York. Belford and Courtney, halfway through college, were told they were to finish the next two years, but pay their own expenses. There was no cash at all, and we would use barter for many things. Mother suggested certain other economies, which C.E promptly vetoed, saying, to maintain credit, he had to keep up appearances. He still had a man shave him every morning and bought a new Panama hat each summer. We three boys each received new summer job assignments, mine being at the cannery at Farm Center. I would be his personal representative as the vegetable grader.

The cannery, still owned by others, bought its produce from both Investor’s Management and the other lands owned by C.E on the basis of a quality grade. The higher the quality, the higher the price. Quality below a certain standard meant rejection. There were two graders, the other being an employee of the cannery. Our separate results were averaged to get the final grade. That C.E selected his 13 year-old son, who had just graduated from the eighth grade, to do a job so critical to his finances did not seem at all remarkable to those who knew C.E. Nor did it seem at all odd to my brothers or me. We had all started our working lives on the farm. By the time we were nine, we were expected to work a man’s sixty-hour week during school vacations. By the time we were twelve, we were expected to be responsible leaders, gang bosses, or foremen. On assigning me the new job, my father said the same thing to me I had heard him say some years before to Courtney: “Be careful, your head sticks above the crowd both literally and figuratively, and a lot of people will try to knock it off.” C.E never gave us much advice. I think we were supposed to learn by doing. Some of my own mistakes I know must have been expensive for the company, and that was probably true in my job as a vegetable grader, but C.E persisted in the earlier years in believing his own family should always be the leaders.

Once I started work at the cannery, I got to know a much wider group of workers. They came to know my laboratory, which, in 1934, I moved to the plant. Among those who asked for my help was Mark Loper, the manager of the former Del-Bay farmland. I began to regularly do soil analysis for him. He could have asked the county agent, but he did not want anyone to know what he was doing. I agreed to keep it our secret. This arrangement was to change the course of my life in September 1939, when Mark quit.

C.E was probably pleased with my laboratory work, but I never remember his visiting it or saying he was pleased. The nearest he ever came was to tell people, often in my presence, “Jack is an example of the fact that, as time goes on, generations get weaker but wiser.” This was a reference to the fact I was tall and very thin in my teens and certainly not the physical specimen that Belford, a high school athlete, was. Anyhow, I took it as the nearest thing to a compliment I was ever going to get. It is quite possible when C.E decided he needed a vegetable grader whom he could trust at the cannery, he thought my lab experience useful. C.E was never close or intimate in anyway with any of his family. None of us thought this was odd. It was just the way the Seabrook family was. In fact, it was not until 1953, when we three boys were grown men and a psychiatrist at the Clifton Springs Sanitarium pointed it out, we realized how odd this was. Seen up close, as we saw him, C.E was cold and distant, but, in public, he was highly successful at projecting a warm, caring, friendly image to a large group that would never get in close. Once in a great while at a gala family party, C.E would project a warmer image to the grandchildren, but, at most family parties, there was tension, because C.E was being cruelly and sarcastically critical of some family member, a daughter-in-law who was hard of hearing or a pre-teen grandson who happened to be overweight. The food and drink at these parties were magnificent and abundant, but attendance by the family was compulsory.

The 1930’s: Farmers Again

After an absence of six years, C.E was back in charge of the farm, but his timing was terrible. As F. Alan Palmer writes in his fine book This Place Called Home, “There have been few less opportune times in history to invest in agriculture.” C.E acquired Investors Management
Corp. (Del-Bay, the old Seabrook Farms) in October 1929, the month of the Wall Street crash and the official start of the Great Depression. Although agriculture had been depressed since the end of World War I, farm prices now went from bad to worse. The local banks were stuffed with foreclosed farm mortgages. With land values so low and dropping, it was difficult by 1930 to sell farmland or even borrow against it. To survive, C.E. would have to farm the land and somehow eke out cash. He had about 1,000 acres of land he owned personally plus the 3,400 acres of Del-Bay plus some additional land at Koster Nursery and the bulb farm.

In the early 1930's, cash was always short, sometimes non-existent. Cash was king. For a few thousand dollars cash, C.E. was able first to lease, then to purchase from a receiver in bankruptcy the entire plant and equipment of the cannery established by New York Canners at Farm Center some years before. Selling prices for both fresh and canned produce kept dropping to new lows, but at least some money came in. Wage rates paid to employees dropped just as fast or, as some felt, even faster than selling prices. When there was no cash to pay employees, they were paid in script that looked like a paycheck, but was not. It was just the company's promise to pay at some vague future time. The script was accepted by the local merchants and circulated in lieu of money. Eventually, it all was redeemed in full.

As the Great Depression deepened, starting with the winter of 1930-31, there was concern for the unemployed in cities like Newark, New Jersey, where people were actually starving. Before Roosevelt introduced federal relief in 1934, the individual cities and states did what they could to help the feeble local relief efforts that sometimes existed, but often there was no organized effort. The State of New Jersey distributed surplus fresh foods in summer and canned foods in winter while supplies lasted.

We had mountains of cabbage on the farm we could not sell, and C.E. had the political connections to promote a novel but sound idea to the State. In a remarkably short time, Belford organized and built a whole new plant for making and canning sauerkraut, a well-balanced food, which the State of New Jersey distributed. At a later time, Belford added other facilities to convert dust bowl cattle and surplus potatoes and carrots, all of which would have rotted for lack of markets, into beef stew. The demand for food relief was so great and the tax collections so poor that the New Jersey State Treasury was exhausted, and they couldn't pay us for these emergency relief rations, but the Seabrook plants kept running anyhow. The American Can Company, the supplier of the tin cans, which was the main cash expense in addition to payroll, was willing to and did wait more than a year for their pay. Employees could be paid in script. Finally, the death of Dr. John T. Dorrance, Sr., of Camden, New Jersey, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology educated owner of the Campbell Soup Company, provided a substantial inheritance tax payment to the New Jersey State Treasury. With good political connections and the help of Mary G. Roebling, president of Trenton Trust, Seabrook Farms was able to collect most of what was owed to us from the Dorrance tax money alone. Everybody got paid and Seabrook was a happy place.

Although private lenders were still not available, C.E. was able in February 1933 to borrow $250,000 from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (R.F.C.) in Washington, a very welcome help, which allowed us to go forward with the 1933 growing season. Carl Crispin, a banker in nearby Swedesboro, and his younger brother Floyd, who worked at the Corn Exchange Bank in Philadelphia, had helped organize the R.F.C. loan. Both men had as much of our banking business as they wanted for the rest of their lives.

In another move to raise funds, Belford contracted with the State of New Jersey Highway Department for winter snow removal in the winter of 1933-34. The contract was a logical solution to the needs of both the company and the State. The State did not have the equipment or the personnel to clear its new network of highways of snow and the company had little work for its trucks, tractors, and skilled operators and mechanics during the winter. It snowed a lot that winter. Belford often worked 30 hours a week to keep the plows rolling. The state paid 75 cents an hour to these men at a time when our regular rates were 20 and 30 cents for similar work. This cheered everyone and employee morale improved. The company also received rental for its equipment.

With the workers' wages dropping in such brutal economic conditions, labor unrest would have been natural. Seabrook Farms had the additional misfortune of being the only large industrial farming operation near New York City, and thus, a good place for various liberal groups, including the communists, to test their strength. Donald Henderson, a former Columbia University professor and his wife, Elinor Henderson, headed the effort. They were assisted by Leif and Vivian Dahl, labor organizers from Vineland. Large numbers of homeless people were moved from the cities of Newark and Philadelphia into the empty barrack style housing that had been built during the boom years to house seasonal temporary workers. Most of these squatters had never been employed at Seabrook Farms, and there was no work for them now, but they provided mass pickets to support attempted strikes. The milling mob led to riots and eventually bloodshed, all of which was well covered by the NY Times. Despite the pickets and riots, operations continued with workers and executives carrying guns. Twenty-four-hour armed guards provided excitement at the Polk Lane Seabrook residence during my high-school years. But mother was calm throughout and fed ice cream to the guards on the night shift. Only a
few of the regular workers joined the strikers, and even they eventually became disillusioned with Henderson. Finally, the county sheriff deputized hundreds of local citizens. The squatters were driven out with tear gas; the barricades were burned; and, by late summer of 1934, quiet was restored. There were no more strikes. I believe that the DiGiorgio ranch in California went through a very similar experience at the same time. In 1934, C.E maintained that the Hendersons and the Dahlens were Communist agents and their work was directed from Moscow, but not everyone believed that. However, it has been confirmed all four were members of the Communist Party and that funding did come from Moscow. Professor Henderson was discharged from the Economics Department of Columbia for his political activities.

During these troubled times, Belford had organized a small but reasonably well-trained company police force around a nucleus of former New Jersey State Troopers. The force was good at labor espionage. Having had serious trouble once, we paid a lot of attention to their reports. As the decade of the 1930s ended, we became aware that some of the same groups were again trying to organize our workers, only this time under the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.) banner. In the winter of 1940-41, Belford and I convinced C.E this was a serious threat to the stability of our farm and factory workers. John B. Kelly, better known as Jack Kelly, father of Grace Kelly, had regularly done our brickwork and we knew him well. He suggested we consult Jim Flanigan, a close friend and associate of Kelly in Philadelphia Democratic politics.

James G.A. Flanigan, during the administration of Pennsylvania governor George H. Earle, had organized and chaired the Pennsylvania State Labor Relations Board, an early forerunner of the National Labor Relations Board (N.L.R.B.), and knew his way around unions. I felt that a series of craft unions could be a nightmare in a seasonal farming business and favored instead having just one industrial union, but Flanigan was leery of the C.I.O. He also pointed out that our trucks were delivering frozen foods to most of the cities on the East Coast. Since the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Warehousemen and Chauffeurs (Teamsters), an American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) union then, had the absolute power to keep our highly perishable products out of almost any warehouse in the nation, the Teamsters had to be included if we were to have any hope of labor peace. The Teamsters were much feared.

In the 1920's and 1930's, we had been forced to pay tribute to a corrupt Teamster local in Vineland, New Jersey; said to be controlled by one of the New York Mafia families. We got our produce trucks into New York City by the process of "buying books." The local sold us a certain number of Teamster paid-up dues books with the name blank, and we gave one to each New York-bound driver to use at the entrance to the Holland Tunnel. This insured a safe passage into the city.

Flanigan used his Irish charm on his friend, Dan Tobin, the Teamster national boss, and in 1941, we suddenly found ourselves moved from the Vineland local to the jurisdiction of an "honest" Camden, New Jersey local. The Irish head of the new local wanted nothing to do with trying to organize and collect dues from a bunch of seasonal farmhands you can't find at dues time." But he very much wanted the men who worked in the warehouses and over-the-road drivers who took the frozen product to other warehouses in the cities, as well as their helpers and the employees in the garages. These men were what his union was all about, and he would fight to keep them out of the clutches of the C.I.O. or any other union.

The Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (Butchers) union had expanded its jurisdiction from the workers in the meat packing plants, to retail butchers who worked for the big food chain stores and then to all the retail clerks in those stores. Work in the meat packing houses had some similarity to work in our canning/freezing plant, and the Butchers union was not hostile to the idea of an industrial-type union embracing many crafts; in fact, the Butchers were willing to take everyone except people claimed by the Teamsters.

Furthermore, the Philadelphia head of the Butchers was Leon B. Schachter, a young, aggressive, very forward-looking new type of union leader, whose honesty and ability had favorably impressed Flanigan when the Butchers organized the retail clerks. Flanigan's father was a founder and one-third owner of the American Stores Company (Acme), so he knew that story from both sides of the bargaining table. Schachter was also smart enough to cooperate with the Teamsters, who were the muscle men of labor organizers.

In 1941, the A.F.L., Butchers and Teamsters unions established a joint organizing committee for South Jersey headed by Schachter. The Teamsters would organize the over-the-road truck drivers, garages, and warehouses. The Butchers had jurisdiction over everyone else on the farms and in the factory, including farm truck and tractor drivers and the farm repair shops. Only the office workers were not unionized.

Coached by Jim Flanigan, Belford and I conducted the negotiations, while C.E gave his blessing. In 1941, with considerable cooperation from the company, the whole of the enterprise—farms, factory, warehouses, and over-the-road trucking became an A.F.L. closed shop with the dues check-off. From then on until 1959, either Belford or I was always available to any union officials any time to discuss any subject. Although there were some hard bargaining sessions, there was never a work stoppage in the remaining 20 years of family control.

In 1941, when the A.F.L. announced the closed shop, the A.F.L. newspaper boasted, "Repeated C.I.O. efforts to organize Scabrook..."
Farms met with rebuff. Donald Henderson, the Columbia University professor, was in the forefront of these efforts. The ultra-radical slogan of ‘down with the bosses’ didn’t work with Seabrook employees.” Under our new contract, only permanent, year-round workers were full union members. Seasonal workers were provisional members, received lower wages, could not vote, and paid a lower rate of union dues. If you think that sounds modern, you are right. Some airline unions are experimenting with two-tier wage ideas in 1995. Since the warehouses and over-the-road drivers had steady work, the ‘teamsters had only a few seasonal employees, but the vast majority of the workers covered by the Butcher contract were seasonal.

The ‘Boys’ Grow Up

C.F. never intended his sons to be farmers. He decreed in the 1920’s that Belford and Courtney should be educated as civil engineers since that seemed at the time to best fit his main interest. As they each reached fourteen, my two older brothers went to work in C.F.’s engineering companies. At age fourteen, Belford was a foreman on the 1921 project that built the concrete South Jersey highway now known as New Jersey Route 77. Belford was a boss, and Courtney a timekeeper on the 1925-26 Sesquicentennial job. Later both worked on New York State jobs at Lake George and at the Bear Mountain Bridge across the Hudson River.

I was too young before 1930 for any of those engineering jobs, so I worked in the fields at the flower and bulb business until I went to the cannery that August of 1930 when C.F. came home from Russia.

Belford graduated from Princeton University and Courtney from Lehigh University, both in June 1932 with B.S. degrees in engineering. The Great Depression had two years before done away with any chance of civil engineering jobs. They went right to work, with Belford in charge of the new canning plant and Courtney in charge of the Koster Nursery. In the summer of 1932, C.F. went off to Europe, trying to collect some of the money owed him, leaving Belford, newly graduated from Princeton, in charge of the business. Belford remained in charge of the processing plant operation from 1932 until he went off to war in 1942. In modern corporate terminology, Belford was the chief operating officer. On the site of the old cannery, Belford conceived, designed, built, and operated the great four story freezing plant which, even after World War II, was featured in Life as an industrial wonder.

Belford inherited his father’s drive and aggressiveness. Whereas Courtney and I were tall like Mother, Belford was shorter, about C.F.’s height, but a little heavier. From boyhood, he was a very hard worker who loved physical exercise. Belford was open and direct, always calling a spade a spade, a great favorite with the employees, a natural leader of the sometimes rough workmen. He was quite handy with his fists, which, in those days, was considered appropriate and actually contributed to his popularity among the men. He had been a high school football quarterback and used the same leadership style at work. Belford was twenty-five years old and already married with two children when he graduated from Princeton in 1932. By then, he had worked at a wide variety of jobs on the farm, in the factory, and in the construction business, all of which gave him great confidence. Like his father, he loved building things. He had already been in charge of the canning factory in the summers of 1930 and 1931. In June 1932, he took charge at once and started working very long hours, summer and winter. C.F. had anticipated the Prohibition Repeal, and Belford, in the winter of 1933-34, built a distillery for converting excess apples to brandy. It was ready to go with license #1 as soon as the new Twenty-First Amendment became law in April 1934.

Courtney graduated from Lehigh with a B.S. degree in civil engineering in 1932 at age twenty-three. He was more intellectual and less oriented toward physical action than his older brother. He also was less inclined to seek a direct confrontation with C.F. when they differed. Left to decide for himself, he might have stayed on in college for advanced degrees and become an engineering professor. His father had other ideas. In June 1932, Courtney took charge of the nursery business. He was very good at plant breeding and enjoyed his job, especially the fact that C.F., who was busy with other things, left him mostly on his own to develop the nursery business. C.F. used the nursery and bulb business as feeders for his only real hobby, which was developing an extensive English garden around the Polk Lane residence. During the 1930’s, C.F. employed an English landscape architect, who lived in the Polk Lane house, took his meals with the family, and devoted full time to designing and installing the gardens C.F.
had envisioned during his many trips to England in the 1920’s. Courtney, managing the nursery, made it possible for C.E to enjoy his gardens on a very grand scale without undue financial burden. Courtney successfully ran the nursery for seven years.

After a year at Mercersburg Academy to fill in the holes in my Bridgewater High School education, I entered Princeton as a chemical engineering student in the autumn of 1935. During Princeton vacations, I had a series of summer jobs as a technician at food plants around the United States, often at plants packing vegetables and fruit. These jobs were useful in broadening my experience and in getting me to understand that not all businesses were like the Seabrook patriarchal organization in southern New Jersey. In Oregon, I was astounded that people worked only a five-day week, that factory workers were white, native-born, went to college, and regularly enjoyed swimming and tennis, sports unknown to the factory workers I knew. Despite my summer absences, I kept my own lab going at Seabrook and kept in touch with all that my brothers were doing at Seabrook Farms by using holidays and weekend visits home during the college school year.

Upon graduation in 1939, I went at once to Quebec to assist in building the new jointly-owned Deerfield Packing Ltd. near Montreal. I also helped train the new workforce. I was very much on my own, and training from scratch workers who had never seen a frozen foods plant taught me a lot. The Catholic Church required us to close the plant at midnight on Saturday until midnight Sunday. Once he said his three Masses, the young French parish priest, who hated the English domination of Canada, would spend the rest of Sunday with me. From him I learned about Quebec politics and the social and family life of its people. That priest was shocked that I, as a Princeton Phi Beta Kappa, was working with my hands, in fact, working at all. To his view, the intellectual elite, as he called them, were meant to talk, not work. He found it odd that I actually liked to work.

Although my brothers and I did run quite different parts of Seabrook Farms, with Belford at processing and engineering, Courtney at sales, and me at farming and later finance, we did coordinate closely with one another and discussed the whole enterprise daily. None of the three of us ever made a major decision without consulting the other two. This was true always without regard to our positions and titles. Until after World War II, Belford and Courtney, with their respective families, lived on Polk Lane in houses only a few hundred yards from C.E’s house; and, from 1939 to 1959, I lived in Seeley; less than two miles from them. C.E owned all three of these houses and had decided where we each should live. After the end of World War II, Belford and Courtney purchased farms in Salem County about fifteen miles from C.E’s house and moved into houses they owned themselves. I dearly loved my house in Seeley and did not move to a house I owned until October 1959. I often tried to buy the Seeley house from C.E, but, after I left Seabrook Farms, C.E’s housing manager gave me 30 days notice to vacate. Our respective wives and children were all close friends, and we gathered at each other’s houses frequently during our years at Seabrook. From my earliest memory, business was discussed at C.E’s family dinner table if there were no non-family guests. After his return from Europe in August 1930, and especially once the two older sons were out of college and had their own houses, C.E developed the habit of a Sunday morning business meeting, followed by a family dinner about 2:00 p.m. This meant the Seabrook men could not accompany their wives to the regular 11:00 a.m. church service, which especially distressed Belford’s wife, a Presbyterian minister’s daughter.

Quick Freezing is Born

Belford had visited Clarence Birdseye’s lab oratory in Gloucester, Massachusetts during the summer of 1929 after his freshman year in Princeton. In the summer of 1930, he used direct expansion ammonia in a crude freezer for quick-freezing 20,000 pounds of lima beans, our first experimental venture into this new method of vegetable preservation. The ammonia came from the ice plant C.E had built during
World War I for icing rail cars.

That first experimental freezer was housed in the 1913 white brick building originally designed for shipping fresh vegetables. The same 1913 building was later converted into the famous "Murphy Freezing Plant," which annually poured out millions of pounds of frozen vegetables packed into fifty-pound containers for institutional use.

C. E. approached the General Foods Corporation at 250 Park Avenue in New York City, the Postum Building, to see if there was something Seabrook Farms could do for their new Birdseye frozen food business. Birdseye had started selling frozen fish and expanded into fruits and berries packed in syrup. General Foods had, in 1930, purchased at great expense from Goldman Sachs, the patented Birdseye process for quick-freezing in retail packages. Since the packages were scaled before freezing, the product was not dehydrated as it was in Belford's original experimental freezer and some later models. Birdseye and Seabrook were a perfect match. General Foods had patents, capital, and marketing know-how. The old varieties of vegetables used for the fresh market or canning were not suitable for freezing, but Seabrook Farms knew how to quickly develop and use new varieties in commercial quantity. Seabrook Farms also had the land, the know-how, the management skills, a processing plant, and complete control of the entire process from seed to package. This greatly shortened the development period for Birdseye, and soon high-quality quick-frozen vegetables were in the stores. This early start made Birdseye the dominant brand for years. The huge, slow-speed, steam-powered, Frick ammonia compressors, installed during World War I, to make ice, now worked full-time freezing vegetables, and the ice making facilities were dismantled.

As production increased, the Frick factory in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, which had been nearly shut down by the Depression, was kept busy making ever larger, electrically-driven, refrigeration compressors to service the new Birdseye patented freezers. Whereas Clarence Birdseye's original design used brine because it was thought to be safer, our engineers were accustomed to and licensed for direct expansion ammonia in the freezers, which was colder and faster.

Birdseye was a buyer that appreciated and was willing to pay extra for the kind of quality frozen vegetables that, at that time, only Seabrook could produce in the needed quantity. After 1934, as demands increased so rapidly, Belford was hard-pressed to build new facilities during each winter to accommodate the next year's production. Construction now went on winter and summer. Seabrook Farms provided year-round employment for hundreds of construction employees (they were employees, not outside contractors) in addition to a very long production season stretching from March through November for its farm and factory workers. Only the bricklayers and structural steel workers were from outside contractors. There was no slackening of this building boom for the next 20 years. In the 1930s, once freezing commenced, Seabrook was the brightest spot in the economy of southern New Jersey. Employment rose rapidly and wages followed. Until World War II, many industries were still depressed, so there was no shortage of skilled or unskilled labor, and the Seabrook construction boom continued.

C. E. decided the same talent Courtney had shown in marketing a large volume of small nursery plants through the big food chain markets was needed at Deerfield Packing to market canned and frozen foods. The company now had dozens of frozen food customers in addition to Birdseye, each with his own private label. Although he still kept general authority over the nursery, Courtney moved into the main office in 1939, developed the Seabrook Farms brand, and continued as the top marketing man in the company until the end came in 1959.

A new Canadian company, Deerfield Packing Limited, was organized in 1938. It was to develop a plant to quick-freeze fruits and vegetables at a location south of Montreal for shipment to Britain. Ownership was divided among Birdseye, Seabrook, Chivers, and later Unilever. The last two firms were in the food business in Britain and would buy the entire output. Birdseye would supply the patented freezers, and Seabrook would build, staff, and operate the plant. After graduating from Princeton with a degree in chemical engineering, I was sent to Canada in June 1939 to help get the plant started, work out the bugs, and train the mixture of French Canadian and Indian (native American) employees. There were the usual start-up problems, but the plant was in full production when, on September 1, 1939, World War II started, and ships were suddenly no longer available for transporting frozen foods to Britain. Now the produce of the new plant had to be sold in Canada.

 Courtney took on the problem of finding Canadian buyers, not an easy task since there were few freezer cabinets in retail stores, and Canadian wartime restrictions were hostile to frozen foods. Spending part-time in Canada during the years 1940-41, Courtney was able to sell the plant's output, and, in the process, he learned valuable lessons about operating in wartime conditions under price controls and
rationing. This experience was useful to the Seabrook family preparing for what was ahead in the United States. As an example, whereas wartime Canada favored canning and discouraged freezing, the Seabrooks had sold the Washington regulators on the wartime advantages of freezing by the time of December 7, 1941. We showed them the amount of steel and other scarce materials to be used in building a new freezing plant and its related cold storage was less than the steel and tin required to put just one year's output into cans. The war being expected to last more than one year, there was then a big net saving of steel year after year. With the transportation shortage, we also showed the regulators that, pound-for-pound of edible product, frozen foods required less than half the shipping weight of canned foods.

Courtney also handled the company's relations with the various canning, freezing, and grocery trade associations. Whenever possible, the government used these trade groups to regulate the industry. The frozen food industry was brand-new and a critical problem was the development of standards and the writing of specifications. This work was done by the trade associations in cooperation with government agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration (F.D.A.) and United States Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.). Getting the standards correct was essential to the whole frozen foods industry. Courtney took a turn as president of the Frozen Food Trade Association, along with other pioneers of the industry. Utilizing his valuable Canadian experience, Courtney also handled the company's relationships with the many wartime regulatory bodies in Washington and with the Quartermaster.

As the frozen food industry grew, Birdseye developed suppliers of vegetables other than Seabrook in other parts of the country, and Seabrook developed private label customers other than Birdseye. This diversification of suppliers and customers was a necessary precaution, but the relationship between the two remained close. Birdseye eventually acquired plants of its own and began actually producing frozen vegetables, so, in a sense, they became business competitors of Seabrook. This led Seabrook to concentrate more on its own Seabrook Farms brand of frozen vegetables, which became an advertised brand under Courtney's guidance, selling in competition with Birdseye.

A New Job for Me

In September 1939, while C.F and I were discussing the problems running a large, complex farming operation with no staff, no subordinate managers, and no delegation whatsoever. Mark ran a strictly one-man show and it had caught up with him at last.

C.F., who had worked with Mark for years, said Mark could not leave because he had trained no successor. Mark suddenly pointed to me and said, "Jack can do it." Mark's confidence in me was based on the help I had given him at my lab with his soil problems over the previous five years. C.F. had never once considered the idea of me as a farmer; in fact, except in this emergency, he would have opposed it. C.F. snorted and said it would take a two-year period to train me as a replacement, but Mark said he would only give it two days, and he meant it. So, in September 1939, I took over as the operating head of the several thousand acres of Investor's Management, the former Del-Ray and the original pre-1924 Seabrook Farms. C.F. did not want to be a farmer himself, and he never wanted any of his sons to be a farmer. But this was a real emergency, and, again, it was typical of C.F.'s thinking prior to his pre-1941 illness to think, because we were his sons, we could do anything.

I had never tried to manage anything near this size, but, again, no one thought it at all odd. C.F. chose me, a twenty-year old with a brand-new degree in engineering, to fill this critical job. Mark Loper's prior experience before joining one of C.F.'s construction jobs years before was as a guard at Leesburg State Prison. There were no assistant managers, just one old-fashioned gang boss who ran the hoe gang, and
he died that first winter of 1939-40. All other employees received their orders directly from "Mr. Loper" at least twice a day, usually in the early morning and again at lunch. There were no written records of crop yields, harvesting and planting dates, or quantities of seeds planted or fertilizers used. There was no technical staff at all, and the numbers had been removed from the fertilizer and seed drills to prevent anyone knowing Mark's methods. No wonder he had been unable to carry on. However, on the bright side, Mark did have a willing and happy workforce, everyone of whom wanted to help me.

We were in the midst of the critical spinach harvest. Having just returned from Canada, where I had gone directly from graduation, I had not even unpacked my belongings from Princeton. I was staying at my parents' home, and, in my first week on the job, C.F. was waiting for me at the breakfast table each morning when I came down at 5:00 a.m. I was twenty-two and had gone to bed at nine, whereas he was fifty-eight and had usually been up working on some problem until after midnight. Finally, Mother joined us one morning and said very firmly, "Charlie, you are already killing yourself with overwork before you started this early morning nonsense. You cannot relive your youth. Leave Jack alone. He will survive." Mother rarely interfered, but, when she did, she had an air of quiet authority that was quite compelling. When C.F. got angry, he was noisy, shouting and gesticulating, but, when Mother was angry, she became very quiet and the room seemed to grow suddenly cold.

That September 1939, I began really learning the farming business and the art of managing a large enterprise with hundreds of employees. From then on for the next twenty years, C.F. would be critical of me personally when I was out of favor, but he never actually interfered with my management of the farming operations. In addition to Investors Management, run by Mark Loper, there was a second large farming unit run by Paul Baitinger. The two were operated very differently, with much jealousy between the two managers. Although both Paul and Mark had done well each in his own way, no outsider would have believed that C.F. controlled both. Each said he hoped the other would fail. There was no attempt to coordinate the purchase of seed, fertilizer, tractors, machinery, or anything else. About equal in size, they did not coordinate their planting and harvest schedules. This led to serious scheduling problems at the freezing plant when crops from both properties matured at once. From my experience as a grader, I knew what those peaks cost the factory and knew I had to change that eventually. But I had watched Belford for ten years fight similar battles and sometimes lose. I knew I shouldn't tackle reorganizing the Baitinger unit until I had a plainly visible success at Investor's because Paul would run to C.F. for defense.

Paul Baitinger, a German immigrant, favored white employees, often foreign-born. Mark Loper liked local blacks, especially as tractor operators. Many of Mark's men were from several light-skinned interrelated families, who had lived in South Jersey for a long time and were well respected. I had grown up and gone to school with some of these people or their relatives. Some had dropped out after eight or ten years of schooling, but many had completed high school. If any went off to college, they rarely returned to South Jersey. I got on well with Mark's black employees from the start. Many were intelligent, and, with some wintertime help, could help run Caterpillar, these same people, who had previously been laborers, were soon running on their own an excellent diesel overhaul and repair shop. Our tractors were now running better, longer, and cheaper than before. Tractor costs were an important part of a mechanized vegetable operation.

After Pearl Harbor under wartime emergency conditions, the farming operations were completely reorganized, a line and staff management system installed with two-way radio communication, centralized purchasing, and standardization of equipment to simplify repair-part stocking. Since C.F. was ill and away in Florida, we were able to abandon the dividing line between the old fieldsmen of Paul and Mark that had grown by historical accident and were able to set up a series of operating divisions based on geography. Each division had a manager who reported to a central management staff. We were acquiring land rapidly through lease and purchase. By 1946, there were ten operating divisions. To better utilize the freezing plant and our farm equipment, we operated twenty-four hours, seven days a week on a regular basis whenever needed. To spread out the harvest, we developed new varieties and used heat units to determine planting dates rather than the cycles of the moon. Rain, especially late-night local thunderstorms during harvest, required frequent, prompt relocation of crews and machinery to drier fields. This was a challenge. It would have been impossible to do without radio communication and up-to-the-minute information on maturity and yields for every field. We did not yet have computers in the 1940's, but one came as close as possible to real-time data by using mechanical calculators. When the farm worked twenty-four hour days, the men preferred two twelve-hour shifts to three eight-hour shifts since, with weather interruptions, eight-hour shifts would not have given them the hours they wanted during the nine-month busy season. I had a radio in my bedroom, and, along with the other managers during busy planting and harvest seasons, we tried to follow an eight-hours on, four-hours off schedule. This allowed me to be on the scene for at least eight hours during each twelve-hour shift. If all went well, I got eight hours sleep in two segments, but, of course, something often went wrong. Harvest time was exciting, and everyone was keyed up, so we all got along with little sleep.
Although I headed it, I certainly did not do this reorganization by myself. Starting slowly in 1932, Belford had been adding experienced, educated managers and technicians in the canning and freezing operations, but his influence on the farming operations run by Baitinger and Loper had been minimal. Now, following his example, I began employing good managers, including experienced agricultural college graduates. With our rapid expansion, there still were good jobs for all the old-timers, so no one felt pushed out. Two outstanding examples of this process of change, both of whom arrived in the 1930's, were James E Hale, an M.I.T.-educated food technologist from Boston who came to organize a quality control department for the freezing plant and eventually stayed to run the whole plant, and William J. Scheffer, a Hungarian industrial engineer, who came to us as a cost accountant and eventually held almost all the top management jobs on the farm and in the factory at one time or another. These two bright men, Hale, the restrained Yankee, and Scheffer, the voluble middle-European, made major contributions to the Seabrook enterprise. They quickly became members of the extended Seabrook family. Each in his very different way had enormous influence on me personally. Hale had been formally recruited by Belford from M.I.T., but Scheffer came to us by chance.

Bill Scheffer emigrated to New York in the 1920's because he would not accept a Czech passport when his Hungarian hometown of Bratislava became a part of Czechoslovakia. The New York Times carried lurid stories of the 1930's labor troubles at Seabrook Farms. Scheffer read them, and, having been a sixteen-year-old member of the Home Guard who fought the World War I Bela Kun Communist uprising in Budapest, he drove down from New York City in the early spring of 1934 to see what the labor dispute was all about. He witnessed one of the last of the Donald Henderson riots and a nasty one. I now a high-school senior, was circulating anonymously among the mob trying to spot the leaders when I saw this dark, muscular, handsome foreigner with a black mustache and promptly assumed he must be one of the main "agitators." Today, I never would have dared even approach him, but, at the time, I asked what business he had being there. He soon poured out a story of wanting to help in the fight against what, in 1934, we called the "red menace." He was tired of New York City and his job as an industrial engineer at the Dixie Cup plant. His very Hungarian wife wanted to have children and raise them on a farm. I believed him and managed to get him safely through the mob besetting the office building to meet C.E. who was instantly impressed with this well-educated, erect, smart, heel-clicking, former Husar.

Bill Scheffer and I worked together happily for the next 25 years. We remained close friends until he died in 1986 at age 85, long after we both left Seabrook. I learned more from him than from any college course, professor, or textbook. He was a genius, full of ideas on how to measure any kind of output and use that measurement as a tool for managing. But he was blunt, undiplomatic, and did not understand American working people. We were careful to keep him away from the union leaders. He shouted his orders in a loud voice, and our wartime German prisoners deferred to him as if he had been the World War I Kaiser. He never became involved in or even understood company or family politics, but got on perfectly with C.E. and all three sons. At different times in his long career at Seabrook, he managed all parts of the enterprise. After the 1959 sale, he worked for other frozen food packers around the world. When his wife died, he came to live in the middle of my personal farm, twenty-two miles west of Seabrook. He looked after my land until he died.

Jim Hale left Seabrook for greener pastures in World War II, but, during the years he was there, I learned almost as much from him as I would have by attending his beloved M.I.T. myself. In the 1930's, he had a devotion to and an understanding of quality control in the industrial process which would still be considered modern even in 1995. And, as every good manager should, but rarely does, he trained the perfect successor, Edward L. Morin, another bright New Englander who stayed to the end.

C.F. Falls III

Although I worked full time at farming in the 1939-41 period, I continued my involvement with what C.F. was doing in financing the farm and plant expansion. I worked at supplementing my college education in the same subjects by learning the practical details of accounting, corporate finance, and corporate law. In mid-September 1941, after a long and difficult negotiation, C.F., our lawyer Senator Albert R. McAllister, and I, at an office on Wall Street, finally closed a really big private placement of securities. We raised $1,610,000, of
which $210,000 was from the sale of newly-issued common stock, $800,000 from 4-1/2% preferred stock, and $600,000 in first-mortgage notes. I tried to sign all those securities with an early ballpoint pen, but, in those days, the bank's lawyers insisted I use a gold, flexible fountain pen to make my signature more distinctive and more difficult to forge.

The closing went smoothly. We got the money, shook hands with the bankers, and went out onto Wall Street. The Senator and I automatically turned west to head for Hudson Terminal, the tube to Newark, and the train home, but C.F. turned east. I asked if he wasn't coming home, and he simply said no and walked away. On the way home, the Senator, who had been with C.F. in many deals, said from long experience he did not expect C.F. to thank him or say it was a good job well done. However, since this was the first big financing and a truly momentous turning point for the company, he thought C.F. might this one time just take a minute to sit down and chat about it. I suspect once the money was assured, C.F. had dismissed the $1,610,000 from his mind and gone on to work on the next project.

That financing, long and difficult, may have been more a strain on C.F. than we realized. Two weeks after the closing, on October 3, 1941, C.F. was incapacitated by a serious illness, probably a stroke. He was moved to Florida, where he was under the care of Miss Leila Small, a large Australian nurse and former disciple of Sister Kenny. She had saved C.F.'s life during a long intestinal illness in the Crimea 14 years before. Miss Small was a good nurse, probably the right one for C.F., but she was incredibly opinionated and made life very difficult for those of us who had to go through her to get C.F.'s approval at times. Her tone often implied we were incompetent. We all went through twenty-seven very difficult months, during which business communications often flowed through her with resultant trouble.

Prior to the 1941 illness, C.F. had exuded confidence that he could and would tackle anything. His heroes in life were the great builders, men like Steve Bechtel and Henry Kaiser. He had their outlook, "Tackle any job no matter what or how big, get it done, and move on to the next." But after his long illness, C.F. never regained that confidence. And although he learned to project a strong public image, he simply lacked the old confidence when he was with people who were his peers - directors and bankers. He did not fully recover his health and never again felt able to take personal charge of operations. This was an important change in how the business was managed. Previously, he could be in direct contact with any phase of the business and felt he could personally replace any executive. From boardroom, he never had been an office person who relied on written reports. Now C.F. relied upon a variety of people to relay verbal reports. There was no opportunity for "the boys," as he called his sons, to settle differences of

opinion with him at the site of operations, where both sides could see the same set of facts and make a logical decision.

As A.P. and his son had clashed before 1911, it was probably inevitable two such strong-willed men as C.F. and Belford would have similar clashes. Until 1941, the clashes had always been settled, usually on a logical basis. After the 1941 illness, the differences became more serious. Belford, blunt and direct, had only one negotiating technique, which was straight ahead. C.F., never direct, now an invalid, was often Machiavellian in his approach, and Belford did not fare well. After December 7, 1941, Belford, who had some military training and loved it, began planning to take up a military commission. He said he had done everything he could to please C.F., working night and day for ten years building C.F.'s business. He now felt he had a right to leave, especially since the country needed him. There was some justice in Belford's argument, but it infuriated C.F., who became almost paranoid that all three sons would leave him. He could not run the business without them.

C.F. pleaded with Mother to help keep the boys from leaving. Through highly placed emissaries, C.F. began insisting to everyone, from the local draft board to the Quartermaster General himself, that it was essential to the war effort to keep all three sons where they were. Belford bitterly resented all of his father's interference and never forgave him.

At first C.F. met with some success, but, finally, the Quartermaster General ordered Belford to join General MacArthur, where he was a great success at organizing food production on the Australian continent to support MacArthur's army. Francis Raymaly, another of our executives, was commissioned in the Navy and sent to New Zealand to feed the fleet fighting Japan. Even after Belford left the Army as a lieutenant colonel in August 1946, he and C.F. were still at odds. Belford definitely did not want to return to Seabrook Farms, but Mother, Courtney, and I convinced him he was needed. In various positions, he continued to bring innovative solutions to the company's continuing need for expanded production. But Belford was never again willing to assume any leadership position of the type he had held from 1932 to 1942, when he was clearly C.F.'s
second-in-command. Although I was ten years younger and originally was definitely the "kid brother," Belford became my most loyal supporter, especially after I was elected executive vice president in 1951.

Like their father and uncles, all three of Belford's sons worked at Seabrook Farms each summer during school holidays. Two of them came to work full-time at Seabrook after completing their education and military service, Charles E. Seabrook, II, in 1952, and James M. Seabrook in 1958. Belford was quite properly proud of his sons and pleased to have them in the company. He continued to doubt whether his reluctant decision to return to Seabrook after World War II had been correct. In 1948, Belford moved from the house on Polk Lane, across from C.F.'s, to a farm he had purchased fifteen miles away. The antagonism between C.F. and Belford's family continued despite the distance. C.F. was especially critical of Belford's wife, Harriet, and how she was raising her four children. In 1951, C.F. tried to prevent the marriage of their daughter (who was past twenty-one and a Smith College graduate) to a man whose family they knew and loved. There was no chance of repairing the breach after that. Sadly, Harriet developed cancer in the middle 1950's, and, after she had endured multiple radical surgery, Belford decided to resign his position at Seabrook Farms in 1957. At the urging of all the directors, he did agree to remain on the Board of Directors.

The War Years

The initial debt and equity financing privately placed in September 1941 lasted only a short time before more money was required to pay for the rapid expansion needed to supply the Quartermaster. We continued to raise more money, $1,537,000 in 1943, $1,250,000 in 1944, $750,000 in 1945, $750,000 in 1946. These, unlike the September 1941 private placement, were all public offerings through New York and Chicago investment bankers, primarily Newton P. Frye, Arthur C. Allen, and Warren H. Snow. A registration statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission (S.E.C.) was filed in March 1943. Now we were a public company with all the restrictions that went along with it. The three investment bankers and other outsiders joined the Board of Directors of Deerfield Packing Corporation. C.F., when he was around, chafed under the new requirements and never did master the S.E.C. rules, so I handled most of these details with the new lawyers and with Haskins and Sells, the new "big eight" auditors the S.E.C. required us to use. These new requirements often put me in an awkward position with C.F., who previously had not been very formal in corporate matters. He felt he was the company, and he saw no reason to separate his personal affairs from it. That caused big trouble. I came to know well the three investment bankers on our board as we jointly tried to untangle C.F.'s personal affairs from the company's. From 1943 on, I learned a lot about financing a public company. That was useful during the next 16 years I spent at Seabrook Farms, but was a life-saver in June 1959 when I was suddenly out job-hunting.

The war years at Seabrook Farms were probably not too different than they were at any other essential industry operating under pressure to increase production. C.F. had been in England when Prime Minister Chamberlain came back to London from Munich to announce "Peace in our time." C.F., like Churchill, was not fooled, and Seabrook Farms, forewarned, began to discuss preparations for war well before it actually started on September 1, 1939. Like almost all others and as in every war, we unfortunately started preparing for the previous war.

We began to think about how work could be altered, especially in the farming operations, utilizing women in traditional men's jobs. This is what C.F. had done in World War I with the famous Seabrook Farms Farmerettes that attracted so much publicity. In World War I, women, many of them from New York City, took over jobs on the farm that previously were all male. Although it was difficult to find well-trained men in World War II, ironically, we suffered more from a shortage of women in the packing plant than men on the farm. The shortage of women began early. By the summer of 1941, the State of New Jersey was running a big advertising campaign signed by the Governor, asking women to work in food plants at what, until Pearl Harbor, was still called "Defense Work."

During the war itself, we never had enough women. Occasionally, we had to use men, such as German prisoners or soldiers from Fort Dix awaiting orders, in women's work on the sorting tables or the packaging lines. These young men hated doing women's work and were not good at it. The monotony of sitting all day sorting vegetables on a moving belt was tolerated reasonably well by older women, less well by younger women, and not at all by young men or at least so it seemed in World War II. By contrast, the packaging lines moved fast and, in those days, before they were fully mechanized, the lines required rapid hand coordination. Young women enjoyed that work and a few young men tolerated it, perhaps only because of the contact it provided the soldiers with young women.

Of course, some of our regular products had to be altered for military use. Some products the military wanted were all new to us. In the new category were the quantities of dehydrated vegetables, potatoes, carrots, turnips, and onions we packed in large containers for mass feeding. They were not very popular with troops but were
essential in faraway places with scarce transport and little fresh food available. There was one important difference in our wartime activities from some other essential industries. Frozen foods were a hot new item in 1941. We all were certain that civilian demand would be high when the war was over. In 1945, with the conversion to peacetime, there were few problems and no layoffs at Seabrook.

During the war, C.F. was often away for much of the time, nursing his poor health. When he was not around, he worried about finding top executives for the factory (but not the farming operations), perhaps subconsciously missing Belford. He frequently recruited and sent to us new managers for the plant. Thomas E. Milliman, an experienced executive of a fertilizer and farm supply company in Ithaca, New York, was one of the best ones. His tenure as an officer of Deerfield Packing lasted from April 30, 1943 until March 29, 1944, nearly a year, which was longer than most. After his resignation as an officer, Tom did stay until 1959 on the Board of Directors, where he was a great help. The regular "permanent" executives, men like Bill Scheffer, tried to fill in around these rotating outsiders the best they could.

In the period 1939-59, I usually was the Seabrook in charge of labor matters. I did the recruiting in places like Appalachia and Jamaica, conducted the union negotiations, and mastered the paperwork required to get raises for our employees during wartime wage control. I dealt with the War Manpower Commission and the Congressional Committees, which seemed always to be holding hearings on labor matters. In 1943, I was discussing with a Philadelphia Quaker organization the need to improve our relations with the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) so as to improve the recruitment of black Americans. The Quakers suggested we try to get Americans of Japanese ancestry out of the internment camps.

At the same time some of the internees in the camps, independently, were checking out Seabrook Farms as a place to work if permitted to leave the camps. Finally, in early 1944, a few people came from the camps to work here, and then more came. Eventually, 2,500 came, a very welcome addition to our labor supply. The Japanese American migration has been well covered by others. I won't repeat the story here.

After Nurse Small left in 1944, C.F.'s health improved. Upon his return from Florida in 1944, he, of course, noticed the Japanese faces during his first plant tour. The arrival of these new people rekindled C.F.'s interest. Building was restricted in wartime, but we had permission to build a village for the Japanese Americans. C.F. now went at house-building with renewed energy.

After the war ended, he went to Europe, his first trip there in years, to help relocate refugees such as the Estonians from Germany to Seabrook Farms.

Selling under the 'Seabrook' Label

In 1943, we began selling our own retail brand of frozen vegetables. Courtney's role and importance to the company now greatly increased, and his influence on package design, advertising, distribution channels, market selection, and competitive pricing, were critical to the company's continuing profitability. Selling a branded product for retail consumption was a whole new field in which C.F. had no experience and little interest, although he was proud to have his name and company become so well known. The name of the processing company was now changed from Deerfield Packing Corporation to Seabrook Farms Company. Courtney
even designed the brand logo as a copy of C.E.'s signature. The fact there was a real family named Seabrook who owned and ran these extensive scientific farming and freezing operations was used to develop a form of publicity even more effective than our paid advertising. Courtney was a superb salesman, and his wife was a creative cook with a natural talent for making food attractive. They used their flair for entertaining with fine food and wine to enhance the Seabrook quality image, and my wife and I joined in when we could. We could never match dollar-for-dollar the General Foods advertising budget, but, through this more subtle approach, we could still compete on an equal basis in many areas. Food editors, society writers, radio hosts, wine societies all gave us free plugs as being the high-quality company.

In November 1948, when the Deerfield Packing Corporation name was changed to Seabrook Farms Company, a name not used corporately since the 1924 Del-Bay receivership, the Seabrook and Battinger name was changed to Seabrook Farms Inc. There were now three companies with similar names, Seabrook Farms Inc., Seabrook Farms Company, and Seabrook Farming Corporation. Seabrook Farms Inc., wholly owned by C.E., owned all the farm lands, the housing, Koster nursery, and 66% of Seabrook Farms Company. Seabrook Farms Company was 32% owned by the public. It owned and operated the processing plant and, through 100%-owned subsidiaries, the warehouses (Cumberland Warehouse), the trucking (Cumberland Auto and Truck), and the farming operations (Seabrook Farming Corporation), but not the land. Since the public was really only aware of Seabrook Farms Company, the existence of three companies with similar

names caused no confusion. However, it has recently puzzled people who have tried to explain details of what is generally just called Seabrook Farms.

Now the public company and the brand name were the same. Over-the-counter trading in Seabrook Farms Company shares picked up and more brokers were making a market in the stock. The increased public ownership of debt and equity and the constant need for more capital gave the three investment bankers more clout on the Board of Directors. By 1951, C.E. now seventy, had had a decade of health ups-and-downs. The bankers, concerned about leadership, were insistent on a succession plan. In August 1951, at C.E.'s suggestion, the Board elected me executive vice-president. Belford supported this heartily. Nothing much, especially in my operating responsibilities, changed, but outsiders, such as the bankers, shareholders, and the press, wanted to talk to me more often. For a while, the directors relaxed, thinking the matter of succession was settled, and I would become president before too long.

In 1952, increased production of frozen foods, primarily on the West Coast, often by new producers with uncertain quality, created a situation that began to alarm their Eastern financial backers. Some big New York banks with little knowledge of the frozen foods business had extended easy credit to the new packers. In particular, these banks did not know that top-quality foods can almost always be sold at some price, but when there is a surplus, poor quality is difficult or impossible to sell. Carloads of frozen broccoli and other crops arrived in New York from California in 1952-53. Sometimes it could not be sold to cover the cost of the freight alone.

C.E., remembering his ouster in 1924 by Del-Bay, had always been determined to hang on to his 68% voting control of Seabrook Farms Company. Since he refused to sell additional voting equity, the company had to rely heavily on short-term, supposedly seasonal bank loans. But these loans were never paid off since much of the money raised as short-term working capital loans actually went into capital spending for the plant. With some banks now in a panic about the glut of frozen foods and with selling prices dropping, our own banks became very uneasy and began to press for repayment.

Under the pressure, C.E.'s fragile health failed again. He quarreled bitterly with all three sons, with other company executives, and, finally, the outside directors. Suddenly, at a stormy Board of Directors meeting on May 18, 1953, C.E. demanded my resignation. Perhaps his logic was that it was the bankers who caused me to be elected executive vice-president in the first place, and they still were not satisfied, so get rid of me. At first, the Board refused to go along, and, for a while, it looked as if the directors would precipitate a crisis which would cause C.E. to exercise his voting control and fire the Board. But Tom Milliman, who
knew C.F. well, decided the storm must be only temporary and reason would soon prevail. He convinced the investment bankers the storm would pass. They agreed to go along if I agreed to resign, but not actually leave Seabrook Farms.

After the meeting, C.F. had more health problems. Finally, his personal lawyer in New York City, Leo P. Dorsey, who was also a director and had witnessed the boardroom scene, took C.F. to the Clifton Springs Sanitarium in New York on June 27, 1953. Although C.F. with his absolute voting control, had always had the theoretical power to call a shareholders’ meeting, throw out the directors, and vote in new directors, this was the first time he had ever come so close to doing so. With the company’s finances balanced so precariously on a mountain of long overdue short-term loans, the thought of the potential consequence was sobering to all concerned. Wild rumors spread quickly, but those who knew what actually had happened tried to calm the key employees.

Despite my resignation, after the May 18, 1953 meeting, as after the August 1951 meeting, nothing much changed for me except this time, for a while, I would have no corporate title. No one wanted to rock the boat by questioning my position or authority. I went on doing what I had done before. As he improved, C.F. wrote me the first and only personal letter I ever received from him inviting me to come to visit him. Mother and I visited C.F. at Clifton Springs on July 13. The psychiatrist gave us all good advice and new insights. When he came home in October, he was very contrite about his behavior and did all he could to calm the bankers who had been so disturbed by the May 18 incident.

C.F. attended the November 5, 1953 Board meeting. I was elected first vice-president, a new title with the same duties as executive vice-president, but designed to save face for C.F. The shareholders were never informed of those events and no minutes of the May 18 meeting had ever appeared. Now in November, a highly sanitized version was prepared, much to Belford’s disgust. It was agreed at the November meeting I would be elected president at the Board meeting to be held after the annual meeting on June 2, 1954. I recount this episode in some detail because it is typical of C.F.’s behavior as his mood swings became more pronounced. There were to be more and worse.

In 1954, as president but not C.E.O., I now had some, but limited, power over the whole company and began to make changes. I brought in Booz, Allen & Hamilton, a consulting firm, to help reduce costs and increase profitability. We did not need so much new ideas on cost reduction as political cover. The Board felt it was more likely C.F. would more easily accept changes if they were suggested by outsiders like Booz, Allen & Hamilton. We began to make some progress. It was obvious the plant and the bloated workforce were too big for our sales capacity. Despite our struggle to sell more, inventory had been piling up since 1951. Unit costs were higher than the competition’s. These problems had all been suspected for several years, but C.F. had refused to acknowledge them. He did not have to because the resultant losses had been buried in the company’s inventory, so our financial statements were in the black. When an inventory is stored at -10 Fahrenheit, sealed in packages in a dimly-lit frozen warehouse, even the best auditors lose their zeal for careful checking.

The Banks Get Nervous

C.F. had for years depended for financial advice and help in securing loans on a charming, smooth, handsome resident of New York City named Oscar Rogers Flynn. Flynn wrote and spoke well. He was extremely clever with figures. It was Flynn who directed the preparation of our public financial statements. He was on a first-name basis with many people in the New York financial world. Our bank loans in September 1954 were at $7 million, an all-time high. Flynn told the banks still more would be needed to get us through the 1954 autumn crop season. Spinach being a large money crop, we could then start to pay down loans. Some of our most loyal banks were at their lending limit and could not legally loan us more. The investment bankers on the Board, in particular, the two from Chicago, had doubts about Flynn. He was too glib, too quick with his explanations of discrepancies in his figures to suit them. But he was the person to whom C.F. always listened on financial matters and a fact of life with whom we three sons had to deal. Now, at this critical time, the
commercial banking group became suspicious of the values at which Flynn had priced the swollen inventory. It was the only collateral the banks had. Ed Soast, a vice-president of the Provident National Bank in Philadelphia and a meticulous credit analyst, showed in a study that Flynn had overpriced the inventory by millions, and the company, unlike the picture shown in Flynn's financial statements, was close to being insolvent.

Just then, Hurricane Hazel wiped out much of our spinach crop on the night of October 14-15, 1954. A number of the banks threatened to foreclose if the loans weren't reduced. As the crisis dragged on into November, C.E was told by the banks he must give up control. Now very frightened, he finally recognized the banks no longer believed Flynn's figures and asked me to take complete charge and do whatever I could to prevent disaster. Working into December with Booz, Allen, our accountants Haskins & Sells, and other experts, we put together a financial rescue plan. With strong support for the plan from B.F. Sawin, the head of the Provident National Bank in Philadelphia, some banks agreed to go along. Others, including the Chase Manhattan Bank and Philadelphia National Bank, declined at first. After some further negotiations, the banks agreed to a moratorium to give us more time.

On Christmas Eve 1954, they all agreed to stay in the credit with their present loans, provided C.E put his shares in a five-year voting trust. There were various tight covenants and requirements, including that Flynn be terminated, that I make a full financial report in person to the banks monthly, that C.E withdraw from the management entirely and have any future input only at Board meetings, and that the inventory be revalued realistically. The latter point created an immediate pretax loss of $2.7 million. Leo P. Dorsey, C.E.'s personal attorney from New York, had represented New York banks and was very wise in their ways. Dorsey told C.E he was much better off with this voting trust than a creditor's committee, the only alternative and the one that a few weeks before Dorsey thought inevitable. C.E accepted the whole plan.

C.E immediately announced the changes to the family at the Christmas party at the Polk Lane house. He asked all the family to help me in any way they could. C.E seemed happy to have shifted the responsibility to me and actually pleased with the outcome. After he went upstairs to bed, Mother took the three sons aside and raised a serious question. As she had told us before, C.E had a guilty conscience about how he got A.P's half of the business in 1911. He often worried that his sons would treat him the same way. He seemed happy right now, but he could have another bad spell and view the voting trust as a way for "the boys" to get control since the voting trustees would be all powerful. I explained the voting trust had no power to sell C.E.'s shares or alter the terms of his stock or recapitalize the company. The voting trust could elect directors to manage the business, but only C.E could take other shareholder actions. Obviously, the banks wanted the company to have more permanent capital and rely less on bank debt, but they had settled for less in the voting trust. The trust was drawn by Townson, Munson, and Elliot, the same law firm which had drawn wills for C.E over the years. It provided for three trustees, C.E., Ben Sawin, and me, with any two votes controlling. The papers were signed by the bank representative, C.E., and me in Philadelphia on January 7, 1955.

In simple terms, the company's problem in 1955 was far too many employees per unit of output, the result of years of finding jobs for people and too much production capacity for the sales capacity in the new competitive climate. Downsizing was not easy, but it was made possible because no one's favorite pets were spared. In addition to the obvious fat, such as make-work jobs for favorites and questionable jobs like the church organist, a lot of useful but nonessential departments were swept away. These included the climatology research lab, the photographic department, the social service organization, among others. We tried to cushion the layoff pain for long-time employees by having them do "detail" work in large retail frozen-food departments under the direction of our sales force. C.E was enthusiastic, even helpful at first, but, as more people complained to him about the changes, by 1956 he began to make bitter remarks about running the company to suit the bankers.

We struggled along through 1955 and 1956. Reducing costs of all kinds, reducing inventory and trying to reduce debt was slow going, and the bankers remained uneasy. Some banks wanted to close down...
and liquidate the company, but others, led by Ben Sawin, insisted they would recover more of their loans by supporting "the boys" in a workout. Of course, competitors spread rumors, especially to the big food chain store buyers, that Seabrook was bankrupt and going out of business.

At first we did lose some customers, but the first Life magazine issue in 1955, a double two-week issue, came out carrying a magnificent five-page color spread of pictures praising Seabrook Farms. Life, in the days before television dominance, was the most potent advertising medium. General Foods often used some of the four full-color pages they bought every week to plug Birdseye. Seabrook Farms never was able to afford Life, but now we had an editorial story far more effective than any paid advertising. The Life editors kept the content of the story a secret from the magazine's advertising staff. General Foods threatened the publisher, and the Time-Life advertising people were furious, but the Life editors stood firm. The story helped convince customers to stay with us, and we breathed easier. I had worked for two years to get that story, but I had no idea it would have such a powerful influence on our customers at such a critical time.

Then, in 1957, we had our second bit of good fortune. This put us on the road to good financial health. Two big names in frozen foods at that time were Snow Crop and Minute Maid. In early days, both sold only frozen juices, mainly orange juice, but Snow Crop soon added vegetables, most of which were "co-packed" for them by private label packers. We did not have a juice line, we sold our Seabrook Farms brand through the same distributors Minute Maid used since they had only juice. Then, in the 1950's, Minute Maid added vegetables, again which were co-packed for them. This made it difficult for distributors and retailers to carry both the Seabrook Farms brand and Minute Maid. Snow Crop lost money and was merged with Minute Maid, but, with the drop in prices, Minute Maid was losing money on vegetables, had swollen vegetable inventories and unhappy banks, including some of the same banks which were unhappy with our inventory.

I had the audacious idea of offering to liquidate the large Minute Maid brand vegetable inventory for the banks in return for Minute Maid going out of the vegetable business. When I approached Ben Sawin, the Philadelphia banker who saved Seabrook Farms from foreclosure in 1954-55, he suggested I approach the banks first before talking to Minute Maid. He offered to take me to the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City, where he arranged for me to have a brief interview with David Rockefeller's co-chairman, George Champion. Champion had admired Sawin's credit judgment since the Depression days, when Sawin, then a National Bank examiner, was closing banks. I suggested we take over the Snow Crop-Minute Maid vegetable inventories, which Champion and other banks were holding as collateral, liquidate them for a 15% fee, and, as each item was sold out, replace it with the Seabrook Farms brand from our own production. The Chase Manhattan Bank also had slow loans based on our inventory. Champion approved the idea mostly on his faith in Sawin's judgment. Jack Fox and his Minute Maid board accepted the idea. In November 1957, we purchased the vegetable business of Snow Crop and Minute Maid. Snow Crop-Minute Maid were now out of the vegetable business for good, and Seabrook had the sales outlets. In the following years, Seabrook would be able to supply our own production. This transfer worked because neither Snow Crop nor Minute Maid had extensive vegetable production facilities of their own to shut down. The West Coast private label packers lost production volume, but we were now able to divert some of our East Coast production to replace it. Even before we could supply these new outlets from our production, Seabrook began to make money. More important, our bank loans were being rapidly reduced. In the second year, starting in November 1958, the old Minute Maid-Snow Crop inventories were running out, and we
were replacing them from our own production. Four months of those sales were included in the fiscal year ended February 28, 1959. Seabrook Farms had higher sales volume and made much more money than ever before in the history of the company in that year. There were exciting prospects for the years ahead when we could supply the new sales outlets from our own production for a full year instead of for just four months. Some of these exciting prospects are conveyed in the annual report the company issued April 8, 1959 for the fiscal year ended February 28, 1959. (A half-size reproduction of the report is included as an appendix to this history.)

The Fall of Seabrook Farms

C.F. was seventy-eight years old in 1959 and in failing health, grew increasingly unhappy as the business changed to meet the competitive environment. The company was making good money; sales were up sharply; bank loans were down. The Board of Directors was studying the acquisition by lease or by purchase of three small frozen-food plants, one each in Georgia, Idaho, and California. These plants were needed to fill the Snow Crop-Minute Maid line and to give us some protection from crop failure by diversifying. C.F. had not seen the branch plants and would not travel to see them. He had no interest in brand marketing or the development of new products, such as the creamed spinach cook-in-pouch foods, all subjects which now occupied much of the Board's discussions. He had lost touch with some modern aspects of the farming and freezing operations. Before 1953, C.F. had focused Board discussions on financing the expansion of the now-aging multi-story plant at Seabrook. Now, when he attempted to enter Board discussions of all these matters, his arguments were often unrealistic. Despite the sales of newly-issued shares, C.F. still held 68% of the voting common. Of course, after the voting trust was signed in January 1955, this percentage did not change. Under the voting trust, the Trustees could not recapitalize the company or issue new shares. But C.F. was free at all times to sell his shares. From 1951 on, as the Board's role slowly increased, C.F. often contested their decisions. Except briefly at the May 18, 1955 Board meeting, which went badly, he had never pushed past the Board to exercise his ultimate voting control. Prior to his 1941 illness, C.F. had always exuded complete confidence. He could and would tackle anything. After 1941, and especially after his May 1953 breakdown and the subsequent bank crisis, he lacked the confidence in his own ability to operate the company. Until the spring of 1959, he often complained and threatened, but he had always drawn back from overriding the collective leadership of the Board by using the voting power of his 68% stock holding to throw out the Board. Now under the voting trust, although he could always still sell his stock, he could no longer vote it to change the Board. He had lost his power to threaten, except for the threat to sell.

The five-year voting trust would end January 7, 1960. Having observed C.F.'s behavior in the Board room, the banks grew increasingly nervous about extending the necessary crop loans for the 1959 packing season because by January 7, 1960, not all the new loans would be repaid. Their loans had been much reduced, and now the banks for the first time in years could get out of the credit without loss. April-May was the natural low period in our loan cycle. They were reluctant to supply the needed cash for the 1959 growing season unless they were assured C.F. would not again resume control come the January 1960 end of the voting trust. They were convinced if C.F. did regain control they might not be able to get their money back. The banks decided they could not go forward without an extension of the voting trust. C.F., speaking through Samuel P Orlando, a lawyer with no experience with big money center banks (they had dealt with Dorsey negotiating the voting trust), flatly refused to grant any extension. A very difficult period now ensued.
Samuel P. Orlando was a criminal lawyer who had been a judge in Camden, New Jersey and, as a small child, had come from Sicily with his parents to Seabrook Farms. C.F. had always been fond of Orlando, sometimes saw him socially, and invited him to his annual New Year’s party, but, to my knowledge, did not use him as a lawyer, certainly not in financial matters. Now, in 1958 and 1959, as C.F. became more angry and confused, Orlando began to visit him regularly and sympathized with him about the problems he was having with the Board and his sons over how the business was run. Dorsey understood our eight banks and might have arranged some face-saving accommodation, but Dorsey, getting older, had grown tired of the bickering and left Orlando largely on his own. Orlando made a serious mistake by flatly refusing the bank’s request for an extension to the voting trust. After the visits of Orlando, the banks took C.F.’s refusal to extend the voting trust much more seriously than before and decided they must treat it as the act of an irrational person. Geoffrey S. Smith, chairman of the Girard Trust, was a lawyer with prior experience in the legal consequences of mental incompetence. After hearing him and other legal counsel, the banks as a group decided that were now legally on notice that C.F. was probably incompetent and, even if C.F. now agreed to sign, they could not extend the voting trust without guidance from a court as to C.F.’s mental competence. Worse yet from the standpoint of the Seabrooks, the bank lawyers said only the family could take the required legal action to have a court appoint a guardian or declare C.F. legally sound before they could act. Orlando’s refusal had put the company into a crisis which steadily worsened daily. We could not go into the new season without money. There seemed no way out except to do what the banks wanted and ask the courts to clarify C.F.’s ability to sign an extension.

The whole family agreed we had to try, so at Mother’s suggestion, we retained a former judge, Richard J. Hughes, whose family were old friends of hers. Hughes later served eight years as Governor and a long term as Chief Justice of New Jersey. The resultant newspaper publicity was unfortunately couched in terms of a generational battle rather than a banking problem. The matter was set for early trial before Judge Orville Schalick but had to be delayed because of a personal problem of the judge. Although at that time we knew little of Alzheimer’s disease, Hughes was confident the judge, upon hearing the evidence, would appoint a guardian. Orlando, an experienced trial lawyer, was equally convinced he would win and assembled a team of courtroom psychiatrists of the type he had used in criminal trials. The new season was upon us, and we were facing deadlines daily on things which had to be done. You cannot shut down a growing season to await a court decision.

On Wednesday night, May 6, 1959, at a Delaware State Bankers' Association meeting at the Wilmington Club, Jim Gallagher, a vice-president of the Marine Midland Bank, one of our banks that really understood the food business, told me that Orlando and Oscar Rogers Flynn (now on the scene again and hungry for a commission and revenge) were negotiating with Seeman Brothers, another Marine Midland client, to sell them Seabrook Farms. Seeman was an old wholesale grocery firm with an excellent reputation. Gallagher went on to explain that Seeman itself had recently been quietly taken over by a shadowy group headed nominally by a man named John Fowler. Gallagher was reluctant to say more about who now really controlled Seeman, but it was clear that he, an old-timer with strong feelings about business ethics, felt once they controlled Seabrook Farms, I should have nothing to do with these people. Gallagher asked me not to reveal he was the source of this information. Three days later on Friday at a Trustees meeting at Ithaca College, George Trencher, president of Marine Midland, talked openly to Herman Mueller, a fellow Ithaca trustee, along the same lines. Mueller, with his late partner Bill Milligan, had been C.F.'s accountants and tax advisors since World War I. Mueller probably had been closer to C.F. over a longer period of years than anyone else with financial knowledge. He was loyal to C.F.’s best interest. Mueller disapproved of what Orlando and Flynn were doing, and he expressed his alarm to all of us.

During the next week, Ben Sawin and his friend Bill Renchard, chairman of the Chemical Bank, researched John Fowler and the new owners of Seeman. They decided, based on the record of some of Fowler’s prior deals, the group of banks in the Seabrook Farms credit would have nothing to do with Fowler. They strongly advised me to avoid Seeman if I could. Although I was the contact man, my two brothers and my mother were fully involved in all of these decisions. My sister and her husband, Robert Sidur, had been present in the family meeting and had concurred in the decision to hire Judge Hughes to represent the united family in asking for a court appointed guardian. In the subsequent rush of events, they were not always kept up to date, since they did not live nearby. That mistake on our part led to a split between the Sidurs and Thelma's three brothers. The operating season was upon us, and we had to find a way to conclude this impasse. We concluded that if a sale did take place, fighting in the courts could delay a decision for years and the absence of a solution would destroy the business with far-reaching consequences.

Early Sunday morning, May 17, 1959, Fowler phoned me, out of the blue, at my home to tell me that, at a late night meeting a few hours before, Orlando and Flynn had sold C.F.’s 68% control of Seabrook Farms Company to Seeman Brothers. He asked me to meet him in New York City later that day, which I did. Fowler explained he was not concerned with C.F.’s mental state because the 68% of the purchased
shares of Seabrook Farms Company were owned by a corporation (Seabrook Farms Inc., formerly Seabrook and Baatinger), not by C.F. personally, and that Seeman had purchased the shares from the corporation, not from C.F. Since C.F. owned 100% of Seabrook Farms, Inc., Orlando must have warned Fowler that, as the banks believed, in a fight, a court would likely "pierce the corporate veil" and look through this bit of legal sophistry. Fowler, not knowing that I was forewarned, was loud in his praise of all I had done to revive Seabrook Farms and told me of his great plans for my future. I said thanks, but no thanks to his offer to stay on as CEO at many times my then modest salary. There also was a hint of jobs for my brothers. In fact, anything we wanted seemed to be on offer if we would just let the deal go through. I said we had known about the negotiations for ten days (he was surprised), plenty of time to make a decision. We, as a family, had concluded that if the deal went through, we would not fight it. I did not say Orlando's tactics of spiritting C.F. away to a hiding place and the press stories had an effect on us all, our wives and especially on Mother, and we wanted an end to the whole mess. If Seeman could keep Seabrook running, it certainly could be better than having it shut down while waiting for a legal decision.

Since the sale was now a fact, I told Fowler that my brothers and I, and all the other Directors would cooperate in a smooth transition, provided all eight of our lending banks were paid off in full. Fowler took over at the shareholder's meeting on May 26, 1959. We three Seabrook brothers and most of the other members of the Board of Directors left, never to return. Fowler paid C.F. $6.00 per share, but only $1.00 per share in cash, or $500,000. The remaining $5.00 per share, or $2.5 million, was a note secured only by the stock. To buy out the remaining 52% minority, Fowler made varying deals, all cash. My brothers and I sold our shares on the over-the-counter market for an average of $14.00, nearly 2 1/2 times the $6.00 price, even though the market was depressed by the publicity. Why, contrary to normal practice, the 68% control block was sold for so much less than the minority and who got paid what commission, Orlando and Flynn never gave to explain. The eight banks in our credit insisted on being paid out in full and never again did business with Seeman/Seabrook. New banks, not knowledgeable in the food business, did loan large sums to them and some later regretted the decision.

When the story broke, Governor Meyner's Secretary of Agriculture, Phillip Alampi, expressed concern that, if Seeman closed the Seabrook plant, the closure would spell big trouble for the New Jersey economy, with 500 independent farmers, and 50,000 acres of crops looking for a home. The A.F.L.'s Leon Schachtier, perhaps privy to certain things the Teamsters knew about Fowler, was even more blunt in his opposition. He also disclosed that, since his takeover of Seeman, Fowler had closed a New Jersey food plant putting 400 of Schachtier's union workers on the street and shutting off that market for farm produce.

As a family, we had fought as hard as we knew how to protect C.F. from destroying his life's work, including the Hughes suit to have the courts rule on C.F.'s competence and perhaps appoint a guardian. Once Fowler had the stock, we three sons left quietly and went off to other careers to repair our egos and our pocketbooks. We had families to support and had taken very small salaries at Seabrook. On Friday, May 22, 1959, we had the added sadness of the death of Harriet Seabrook, Bellford's wife of 31 years, who was much loved by everyone in the company. The memorial service was held May 25th, the day before the shareholders' meeting, but C.F. did not attend.

The shareholders' meeting at which Seeman took over was held Tuesday afternoon, May 26, in a company cafeteria. I went only because I had to go. My two brothers and most of the other Directors did not attend. When I got back to my office, a group of tough Seabrook Farms over-the-road truck drivers, headed by the Teamster Union steward with whom my brothers and I had grown up, had moved all my personal files and belongings out of the Seabrook Farms office to my home, saying I might need my files. They too seemed to know who John Fowler was.

Seabrook Farms Company, the public company Seeman bought, owned the land immediately surrounding the freezing plant and warehouses, but the housing complex, the farmland, and Koster Nursery were all owned by Seabrook Farms Inc., a corporation formerly called Seabrook and Baatinger and owned 100% by C.F. personally. Orlando, now a director of that company, never attempted to sell those Seabrook Farms Inc. shares. Perhaps he feared it would precipitate a test of C.F.'s competence, so Seeman never got ownership of the land.

Phillip Alampi and Leon Schachtier were right to view the takeover with alarm. Whether Fowler was just incompetent or all along intended to loot the company, or both, I cannot say. The company went downhill, gradually at first, and then rapidly. The new Fowler management was not especially interested in crops grown in New Jersey and the Seabrook plant was eventually relegated to merely repacking frozen produce grown, processed, and frozen elsewhere. Seabrook Farms Company was later sold to an honest and competent company from the South, but it was too far gone to save. In 1975, the last owners closed the big Seabrook plant for good and gave the property to the township rather than pay the taxes. All the jobs were long gone and the farmers had no outlet for their produce. The dynamiting of the power plant and great smokestack was witnessed by many with misty eyes.

Orlando and his friends ran Seabrook Farms Inc., the holding
company, on behalf of C.F until he died at home very early Tuesday morning, October 20, 1964. The final nurse on duty, Anne Johnson, was an old friend, and she phoned me at 1:00 a.m. I went over to the Folk Lane house to awaken Mother and tell her. After C.F's death, Orlando and his group ran Seabrook Farms Inc. as executors and trustees under C.F's will. The new will, written by Orlando, was curious, as it was witnessed by a battery of psychiatrists, all experienced at court testimony. When Seabrook Farms Company came to an end in the early 1970's, there was no one to operate all those many acres of farmland owned by Seabrook Farms Inc. The land and the many housing units were all sold off to a variety of buyers. For thirty-five years after Alampi and Schachter had issued their warning, there was high unemployment and excess farmland in the South Jersey area to which C.F Seabrook had once brought prosperity during the Great Depression.

I sometimes wonder if the outcome would have been different if C.F had educated at least one of his sons as a psychiatrist instead of an engineer.

But there is a happy ending. In 1977, C.F's two eldest grandsons, Charles E Seabrook, II, and James M. Seabrook, having started a new business, froze their first pack in an all-new vegetable freezing plant built 3 miles down the railroad line from the old plant their father, Belford, started to build in 1952. Between them, Charlie and Jimmy have five sons. All are involved with the new company. Seabrook Brothers and Sons, the corporate name they chose because they could not legally use Seabrook Farms, has gone from success to success. In December 1982, they bought part of the site of the old plant from the township to whom the Seeman successors had given it in lieu of taxes. Finally, in May 1994, almost 35 years to the day in May 1959, when the legal rights to the Seabrook Farms name and the Seabrook Farms brand label passed out of the family, Seabrook Brothers and Sons were finally able to buy it all back. So Seabrook Farms is back in the family, 101 years after A.P. and C.F moved their farming business to the site where the old freezing plant stood.
APPENDIX

Seabrook Farms Co.

ANNUAL REPORT
For the year ended February 28, 1959

Seabrook Farms Co.
HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRESS

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<th>1955</th>
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<td>Earnings (loss) before income taxes</td>
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<td>Federal income taxes (net credits)</td>
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PER SHARE DATA
(Common and participating preference stocks)

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<td>Earnings (loss)</td>
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We grow them so much better
Annual Report

For Year Ended February 28, 1959

To Our Stockholders:

The fiscal year ended February 28, 1959, was the most successful in the history of Seafood Farms Co. Net sales and revenues rose to a record $30,111,000, up 17% over last year. Earnings also set a new high of $11,330,000. This is 4% above the participating preferred and common stocks, after providing for annual dividend requirements on the 4½% cumulative preferred stock. Earnings this year benefited from a tax operating loss carry-over from prior years. However, pre-tax earnings were $13,198,000 and also set a new high for the company.

Contributing to the improvement were the more stable pricing conditions in the industry, the good 1958 growing season, the improvements in both our marketing and production techniques, the successful introduction of new products, and the diversification of our production sources by the establishment of a multiplant system.

Our purchase in November, 1957, of the Snow Crop vegetable and fruit business from the Minute Maid Corporation has been advantageous to us, and to Minute Maid. During 1958 the Snow Crop territory was expanded to include all the United States and Canada. The brokerage sales from the Minute Maid territory were completed by August 1, 1958 and since that date all Snow Corp sales have been from our own inventory.

New Products:

After several years of research and development, a new line of frozen prepared vegetables, packaged in the revolutionary "cook-in-the-bag" pouch, was introduced in November, 1958. Consumer acceptance has been enthusiastic and the new line has helped to make Seafood Farms known as today's most progressive frozen foods merchandise. Additionally, 12 new items of a high-quality character were added during the past year to the Seafood product line.

New Production Facilities:

To support our expanding sales volume and to provide further protection, through geographical diversification, against production losses because of weather hazards, we acquired during the year through lease and management agreements two additional production facilities. In April, 1958, we leased a pea processing plant located in Lovington, Idaho. This plant was formerly owned by Minute Maid Corporation, and we now have a contract to purchase it. We expect to close title in due course. In September we entered into an agreement to manage the beef processing plant and business of Banana frozen Foods Co.

...of Minot, Georgia, and we have an option to purchase this company. During February, 1959, we were negotiating for the acquisition of a small processing company in California, but these negotiations were discontinued on March 3 because of the uncertain future of the present management as more fully discussed later in this report.

Production:

The 1958 growing season was generally favorable for our crops. Increased efficiency in both our freezing and processing operations resulted in lower unit production costs. Adequate maintenance and a systematic renewal of processing lines have kept our plant up to date and efficient.

Also, the Louisiana plant during this initial year under our operation contributed to overall lowering of unit production costs.

Dividends:

Regular quarterly dividends were paid on the 4½% cumulative preferred stock as were the amounts that were in arrears last year.

Cash dividends on the participating preferred and common stocks may not, under restrictive clauses of the indenture covering the 3½% debentures, be paid out of our present earned surplus. As of February 28, 1959, this restriction would apply to earned surplus up to an amount of $2,484,000.

Financial Position:

Working capital increased $486,000 during the year to a total of $6,124,000. Sinking fund payments of $397,000 were provided on the debentures, reducing the long-term debt to $1,461,000. Capital expenditures of $321,000 were made during the year.

Bank Credit and Voting Trust:

Approximately 40% of the company's voting stock is owned by Seafood Farms Inc., which is in turn largely owned by C. F. Seabrook, Chairman of the Board of the company. Under the Securities & Exchange Commission's definition Seafood Farms, Inc. and C. F. Seabrook are parents of the company. The unusual nature of its business and the shortage of permanent capital have caused the company to rely heavily on credit from commercial banks during most of its history. In December, 1954, when the company had sustained large operating losses, a management reorganization was agreed upon. A plan based on putting the stock owned by Seafood Farms, Inc. into a voting trust was approved by the stockholders in January, 1955, and John M. Seabrook was elected Chief Executive Officer. A majority of the three voting trustees—R. F. Saccio, President of the President Thresherman Bank & Trust Co., C. F. Seabrook and John M. Seabrook—was vote the controlling stock to
select directors and to ratify and approve any and all acts in the management and operation of the business, but a unanimous vote of the trustees is required for most other actions which require stockholder approval.

During the past four years, C. F. Seabrook has usually opposed the major moves of the management in such matters as personnel changes, the decision to enter the prepared foods field, the Lackaw contract, the Minute Maid-Snow Corp contract, the Bakman contract, the Louisiana plant, and the plan to acquire a California plant. Leo P. Donay, another director, has divided his support. The nine other members of the Board of Directors support the management.

During February, 1959, the company began negotiations with the banking group on a new loan agreement to be effective on April 30, 1959, which would have adequately supplied the credit needs for the coming year. The present voting trust expires in January, 1960, and the banking group, in order to insure continuity of management, requested, as a condition of the new loan agreement, a satisfactory extension of this voting trust with an investment permitting a majority of the trustees to deal with the refinancing of the debentures which are due February 1, 1962.

On March 3, 1959, C. F. Seabrook, Leo P. Donay and Samuel F. Orlando, a majority of the Board of Directors of Seabrook Farms, Inc., met with representatives of the banking group and refused the extension and announcement of the voting trust on the terms stated by the banks. After this meeting, the company was notified that the bank credit will terminate on April 30, 1959 and that the notes due thereafter are expected to be paid unless conditions satisfactory to the banks are agreed upon prior thereto. On April 8, 1959, there was outstanding $3,059,000 of bank debt. Every effort is being made to resolve these problems and the stockholders will be kept informed of future developments.

OUTLOOK

Under the present circumstances it is difficult to make predictions for the year ahead. However, our efforts in the year ahead will be concentrated on obtaining further improvements in productivity and efficiency, on expanding the marketing advances made this year, and on further new product developments, all of which should increase sales and profits above this year's record levels.

By order of the Board of Directors

John M. Seabrook
President

Seabrook, New Jersey
April 6, 1959

Consolidated Statements of Earnings and Earned Surplus

YEAR ENDED FEBRUARY 28
1959  1958

EARNINGS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales and revenues</td>
<td>$29,417,745</td>
<td>$22,473,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net sales</td>
<td>$29,417,745</td>
<td>$22,473,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income and dividends</td>
<td>494,542</td>
<td>634,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30,912,287</td>
<td>29,108,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs and expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of products sold</td>
<td>22,949,035</td>
<td>22,133,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling, general and administrative expenses</td>
<td>3,973,493</td>
<td>3,897,631</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depreciation</td>
<td>490,070</td>
<td>496,743</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest on indebtedness, including amortization of bond discount and expenses</td>
<td>598,049</td>
<td>568,871</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other expenses</td>
<td>247,295</td>
<td>78,087</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29,777,027</td>
<td>25,904,057</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earnings before taxes</td>
<td>1,136,260</td>
<td>161,440</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision for Federal income taxes</td>
<td>425,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>711,260</td>
<td>161,440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EARNED SURPLUS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance at beginning of year</td>
<td>$1,388,812</td>
<td>$1,336,330</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>711,260</td>
<td>161,440</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,100,072</td>
<td>1,597,770</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dividends on cumulative preferred stock (including amounts previously in arrears)</td>
<td>87,147</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Balance at end of year</td>
<td>$2,187,219</td>
<td>$1,336,330</td>
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</table>

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. Because the majority stockholder of the Company has not agreed to an extension and amendment of the Voting Trust Agreement (which expires January 7, 1960) under which such stockholder holds his shares of the Company's capital stock, the Company's voting rights have been limited to an extent which may materially reduce the potential earning power of the Company. The Company's directors are considering various alternatives in an effort to maintain economic condition satisfactory to the investors in the Company. The amount of income received under this Agreement as at April 8, 1959 was $3,059,000.

2. Under restrictive clauses of the Indenture covering the 3½% debentures, cash dividends on participating preferred and common stocks may not be paid out of the earned surplus shown in the consolidated statements of financial position. At February 28, 1959, this restriction would apply to earned surplus up to an amount of $1,586,202.

3. The provision for Federal income taxes for the year ended February 28, 1959 has been computed on the basis that the Company has deductions from taxable income available under the operating loss carry-forward provisions of the Internal Revenue Code.
Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

FEBRUARY 28

1959  1958

CURRENT ASSETS:
Cash  $ 1,079,465  $ 1,698,899
Receivables, less allowance for uncollectible losses: 1959, $37,013  2,447,074  2,933,385
Inventories (details on following page)  10,273,970  8,034,799
Prepaid expenses  376,343  440,744
Total Current Assets  14,667,771  12,702,331

LESS, CURRENT LIABILITIES:
Notes payable to banks  3,625,000  2,960,500
Accounts and trade notes payable  2,312,220  2,462,549
Accrued expenses  426,373  273,831
Stockholders' fund payments required within one year for redemption of debentures  397,000  367,000
Federal income taxes  395,221  395,221
Total  8,363,254  7,093,381

WORKING CAPITAL  6,304,517  5,609,950

Plant and equipment (details on following page)  3,071,744  3,364,319
Investment in wholly-owned subsidiaries—net  99,273  99,273
Other assets  89,885  102,036
Total  6,551,446  6,864,616

Less, long-term debt (details on following page)  1,469,872  1,586,021

NET ASSETS  5,081,574  5,278,595

OWNERSHIP EVIDENCED BY:
Preferred stock, 4.5% cumulative, par value $100, redemption value $100 (authorized and outstanding: 1959, 5,000 shares)  $ 968,300  $ 968,300
Participating preference stock, par value $5; redemption value $10, convertible into common (authorized 100,000 shares outstanding: 1959, 22,323 shares)  222,323  222,323
Common stock, par value $1 (authorized 976,023 shares outstanding: 1959, 508,559 shares)  508,559  508,559
Capital surplus  4,101,236  4,131,336
Earned surplus (see note 2)  2,015,640  1,888,812
Total Net Assets  5,081,574  5,278,595

Details of Selected Items

FEBRUARY 28

1959  1958

INVENTORIES:
Finished products, at lower of cost or market  9,145,041  7,774,841
Materials and supplies, at cost or less  1,356,309  860,126
Total  10,501,350  8,634,967

PLANT AND EQUIPMENT, AT COST:
Land  17,392  17,392
Buildings  3,773,079  3,669,625
Machinery and equipment  6,635,476  5,831,657
Farming facilities  1,087,994  1,061,799
Total  10,512,358  10,666,677
Less: accumulated depreciation  7,561,156  7,395,859
Total net of depreciation  2,951,202  3,270,818

Long-term debt  119,864  —

Net book value  3,071,038  3,540,319

ACCOUNTANTS' OPINION

Seabrook Farms Co.:
We have examined the consolidated statement of financial position of Seabrook Farms Co. and subsidiaries as of February 28, 1959 and the related consolidated statements of earnings and earned surplus for the year then ended, and have concluded that the financial position and consolidated statements of earnings and earned surplus are fairly stated in conformity with the generally accepted accounting principles applied in this year that ended, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles applied in that of the preceding year.

New York, April 8, 1959

[Signature]

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SEABROOK FARMS CO.
Main Office, Seabrook, New Jersey

DIRECTORS:
C. F. SEABROOK, Chairman, Seabrook, N. J.
LEO P. DORSEY, Attorney, New York, N. Y.
A. J. RALINGER, Bridgeton, N. J.
EDDIE K. HAYS, Dean Witter & Co., Chicago, Ill.
PETER KEHR, Attorney, New York, N. Y.
HENRY G. LAMBERT, A. C. Aiyer and Company, Inc., New York, N. Y.
THOMAS E. MILLIMAN, Co-op G. L. F. Exchange, Inc., Ithaca, N. Y.
EUGENE MORE, Plow Canada Seed & Trust Company, London, N. J.
BELFORD L. SEABROOK, Professional Engineer, Allentown, N. J.
C. COURTNESE SEABROOK, Seabrook, N. J.
JOHN M. SEABROOK, Seabrook, N. J.

OFFICERS:
JOHN M. SEABROOK, President
WILLIAM B. CLEMENTS, Vice-President
MANNING M. EKTON, Vice-President
C. COURTNESE SEABROOK, Vice-President
ELMER N. SOKKEL, Secretary and Treasurer
JOHN R. KIESLING, Treasurer
D. W. BUDD, Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer

TRANSFER AGENTS:
THE MARINE MIDLAND TRUST COMPANY OF NEW YORK, 120 Broadway, New York 15, N. Y., transfer agent, participating in the common stock.
SEABROOK FARMS, Seabrook, N. J., transfer agent, 4½% cumulative preferred stock.

TRUSTEES:

ANNUAL MEETING:
The annual meeting of stockholders of the company will be held at 10:30 a.m. on May 26, 1959 at the general offices of the company at Seabrook, New Jersey.

SEABROOK FARMS FROZEN FOODS

VEGETABLES
Asparagus, Cut and Tips
Asparagus, Spears
Beans, Cut Green
Beans, Pea Bush Green
Beans, Cut Wax
Broccoli, Chopped
Broccoli, Cut
Broccoli, Spears
Broccoli, Spring Chopped
Brussels Sprouts
Carrots, Diced
Cauliflower
Collards
Corn, Cob
Corn, Cream Style
Corn, Cut
Kale
Leeks, Baby
Leeks, Chunk
Leeks, Plum
Leeks, Butterbeans
Mushroom Green
Mustard Green
Okra, Cut
Okra, Whole
Onion Rings
Peas
Peas, Blanche
Peas and Carrots
Peanuts, Dried Green
Potato Puffs
Potato Rolls
Potatoes, Cucumber Cut
Potatoes, Diced
Potatoes, French Fried
Potatoes, Roasted
Potatoes, Whole Boiled
Sauerkraut
Spinach, Chopped
Spinach, Whole Leaf
Spinach
Sousmash
Twelve Greens

FRUITS
Blueberries
Peaches, Sliced
Raspberries
Rhubarb
Strawberries, Sliced
Strawberries, Whole

PREMIUM QUALITY VEGETABLES
Asparagus Spears, Premium
*Artichoke Hearts
Beans, White Green
*Broccoli Florets
*Sunny Sprouts, Baby
*Peas, Petite

PREPARED ENTREES
Baked Ham with Baked Potatoes
Beef Lasagna Lasagna with Noodles
Beef in Red Wine Sauce
Chicken Cacciatore
Cocktail Meatballs
Leaf Soup with Frankfurters
Salad Dressing with Mushroom Sauce
Veal Scallopini
Waffles

PREPARED VEGETABLES
*Asparagus Cut and Tips, Hollandaise Sauce
*Baby Lima Beans in Cheese Sauce
*Chopped Broccoli Au Gratin
*Creamed Spinach
*Cucumber Slices
*Diced Potatoes
*Potatoes and Peas in Cream Sauce

*New products introduced during 1958
THE NEW JERSEY COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

The New Jersey Council for the Humanities (NJCH) actively supports the public's use of the humanities to enrich personal and community life in New Jersey. The NJCH sponsors projects that bring humanities scholars together with the general public to examine and discuss important ideas and issues. Projects are designed to provide lifelong learning opportunities to the people of New Jersey.

People examine the human experience and explore basic questions of meaning and value through the humanities, an umbrella phrase for a range of disciplines and areas of inquiry that include literature, history, philosophy, languages, and comparative religion. Public humanities projects bring these disciplines out of the classroom and into our lives, giving us the opportunity to look beyond our everyday concerns and see ourselves in relation to larger questions. The humanities offer ways to investigate, evaluate, discover, record, and articulate the meaning of human experience.

The NJCH awards grants of up to $10,000 each to New Jersey nonprofit groups through a semiannual competitive proposal review process. Minigrants of up to $20,000 are awarded bimonthly. The NJCH also creates its own initiatives and sets aside separate grant funds for proposals related to these initiatives.

In addition, the Council sponsors People & Stories/Gente y Cuentos, a literature discussion series held in English or in Spanish that allows educationally and socially diverse groups to discuss contemporary short stories. The annual NJCH Book Award, begun in 1989, honors a New Jersey author whose humanities book balances scholarship with general public appeal. NJCH offers more than twenty different Reading & Discussion Programs in literature, culture and history, and music history. Funding for these programs is available through NJCH minigrants. In THINK offers the business community the opportunity to provide humanities programs to its employees. Most programs are presented in the workplace during lunchtime.

The NJCH is a non-profit organization established in 1972 as a state council of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Accountable to the NEH and responsive to the people of New Jersey, the council is supported by the NEH, corporations, foundations, and individuals. The Council is composed of twenty-five volunteer members, of whom six are gubernatorial appointees.
FROM A RURAL MAIL BOX TO A FARM SO BIG IT HAS A POST OFFICE OF ITS OWN

Few American success stories are so dramatic as those of Charles F. Seabrook and the giant farming enterprise he built.

The story begins a half century ago when a boy began farming his family's 57-acre homestead.

Today, he still owns the 57 acres and the modest home upon it. But surrounding the original homestead stretch 50,000 acres of crops comprising the world's largest freezing-freeze operation. Nearly half of that ground is operated by Seabrook Farms; the remainder by over a thousand independent farmers who contract to market their produce through Seabrook Farms' tremendous quick-freeze plant and elaborate distribution system serving 30,000 retail stores up and down the east coast, west to Chicago.

Where young Charlie Seabrook could walk from the north field to the south pasture in a few minutes, today he can drive for 15 miles and still be on land that belongs to his Farm. As a boy, he could climb the tall oak tree by the house and see the limits of the family's homestead. Today, his sons have to ride an airplane if they want to see the borders of their domain.

Most visitors to Seabrook Farms are first impressed by the magnitude of things: That 90,000,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables a season are packed by Seabrook Farms; that these 50,000 crop acres produce 15 percent of America's entire output of frozen vegetables, processed right on the farm in the world's largest freezing plant—itself covering 25 acres; that 300 people are employed during peak season; that 300 trucks and machines, 150 trailers and five Boeing biplanes are required; that an average of 5,000,000 gallons of water are used daily in the peak season; and 2,000,000 pounds of seed are needed each year.

Amazed by such titanic totals, they later begin to appreciate the extraordinary attention to detail and quality control which make this the only truck farm in the world completely integrated from the planting of the seed through every phase to the final processing and packaging.