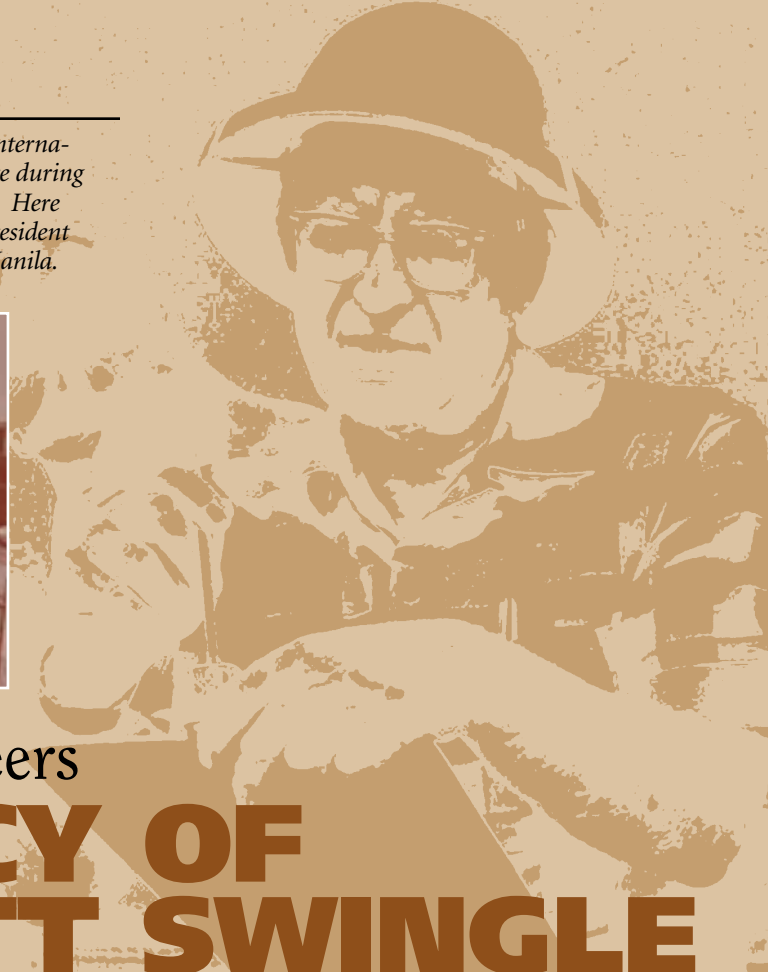
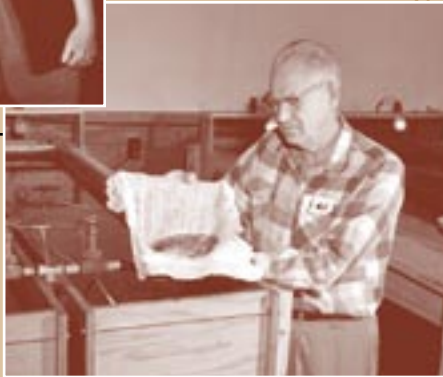




Dr. Swingle attended many international meetings on fish culture during his lengthy overseas journeys. Here he meets with former Vice-President Lopez of the Philippines in Manila.

Tilapia is an important source of nutrition in Asia, Africa and South America. Dr. Swingle sought to improve and advance culture techniques for this species to help feed the hungry around the world.



Alabama's Conservation Pioneers

THE LEGACY OF HOMER SCOTT SWINGLE

Part Two: Establishing Fisheries Programs around the Globe

By Jerry L. Moss, District III Fisheries Supervisor, Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and Dr. Donovan D. Moss, Professor Emeritus, Auburn University Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures

Editor's Note: *This is the second article of a two-part series that describes the contributions of Homer Scott Swingle to the field of aquatic sciences and fisheries management. The first article, which appeared in the October 2003 issue of **Outdoor Alabama**, reviewed the early years of Dr. Swingle's quest for successful management of farm fish ponds, fish culture procedures and research in the field of aquaculture that heralded the beginning of the commercial catfish industry in Alabama. This article will focus on Dr. Swingle's vision of using innovative fish culture techniques to help feed hungry people throughout the world.*

While working on the dynamics associated with the management of farm fish ponds used for recreational fishing, Dr. Homer Scott Swingle began to develop an interest in producing and culturing fish in ponds as a food crop. His contributions in the development of aquaculture (the growing or farming of plants and animals in fresh, brackish or saline waters) as a means of food production gained him an international reputation and worldwide fame. Consequently, he was invited to visit Israel and Thailand in 1957 and India in 1961 as a fisheries consultant at the request of the host countries. He was increasingly requested to make trips abroad by various international foundations and governments.

Dr. Swingle was exposed to milkfish culture in the Philippines, eel and shrimp culture in Taiwan, carp culture in India and

Israel, walking catfish culture in Thailand and the culture of tilapia in Africa, Asia and South America. During these trips abroad, Swingle observed the pressing need to increase fish production in many Third World countries where fish were considered a staple food that provided much-needed protein to people who existed on a basic subsistence diet. Swingle's heart went out to those individuals whose daily struggle to feed their families was so apparent.

International Teaching Effort

Swingle's emphasis shifted dramatically from sport fisheries to the culture and production of food fish. He reorganized the Auburn fisheries program to one that evaluated species and developed culture methods for producing food fish. Primar-

ily because of his knowledge of international aquaculture, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began contracting with Auburn University for fishery work in developing countries beginning in 1967 and provided the university with a development grant for fisheries and aquaculture technology in 1970. The grant ushered in the International Center for Aquaculture (ICA), which became an integral part of the Auburn fisheries program. Dr. Swingle and his staff became “globe-trotting” fisheries consultants to many countries around the world. From 1967 to 1973, Swingle and his faculty visited 20 countries and the first long-term out-of-country assignments were assigned to qualified fisheries staff members at the ICA.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says: “Give a man a fish and you have fed him for today; teach a man to fish and you have fed him for a lifetime.” Dr. Swingle firmly believed in this philosophy, and as part of his efforts to promote aquaculture and fish culture techniques in other countries, his staff traveled overseas to locate sites for freshwater and brackish water research centers, fish hatcheries and fish culture facilities. Additionally, Auburn faculty would identify foreign nationals who would come to Auburn for training in fish culture. Between 1967 and 2002, about 1,000 international students from 60 countries studied in the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures at Auburn University.


A Lasting Legacy

Swingle was an enthusiastic and inspiring teacher who shared his philosophy on the scientific principles for fish production with his students. He was instrumental in training two generations of fisheries scientists using principles developed and proven in the field. His former students returned to their home countries to deliver a wealth of knowledge about fish-

eries and aquaculture. An international network of fisheries scientists around the globe was thereby established to promote aquaculture and solve cultural problems.

Dr. Swingle passed away in May 1973 at the age of 71. He left behind a rich legacy in fisheries management and aquaculture, which has had tremendous impacts in Alabama, our nation and many countries around the world. His techniques and management methods are now practiced worldwide to make fish available to feed the hungry. The programs and International Aquaculture Center that Swingle established at Auburn continue to grow and expand.

In 1991, the ICA received a new name to reflect the increasing role and scope of its programs overseas. It officially became the International Center for Aquaculture and Aquatic Environments (ICAEE). The mission of the ICAEE is to advance knowledge of aquatic and environmental resources through research and education, participate in activities to protect and conserve aquatic resources, and work to enhance the quality of life for people who depend upon aquatic and environmental resources for their livelihood and well being, which ultimately, was part of Dr. Swingle’s far reaching vision for the future.

Dr. Swingle dedicated himself to the service of other people. He served farm pond owners, sportsmen and catfish producers in Alabama and presidents, prime ministers and heads of state in developing countries overseas to improve the lives of their people using state-of-the-art techniques to advance fish production to help feed the hungry around the world. 

The authors would like to acknowledge Bryan Duncan, E.W. Shell, Leonard Lovshin and I.B. Byrd for their contributions to this article. Photographs in this article are from the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures Library Archive collection at Auburn University.

Milkfish are a popular food staple in Southeast Asia. These were photographed in a fish market during an early Swingle visit to Taiwan.

Learn More: Visit the Mann Wildlife Learning Museum at the Montgomery Zoo where a tribute to Alabama’s Conservation Pioneers is displayed. Homer Scott Swingle is just one of several conservation pioneers honored.



Swingle’s Awards, Honors and Recognition for Outstanding Service

- ▶ U. S. Department of Interior’s Conservation Service Award (1951)
- ▶ Nash Conservation Award (1954)
- ▶ President of the American Fisheries Society (1958)
- ▶ Man of the Year in Southern Aquaculture (1958)
- ▶ Awarded Honorary Doctor of Science Degree, Ohio State University (1958)
- ▶ Governor’s Conservation Award (1960)
- ▶ Leopold Award from the Wildlife Society (1965)
- ▶ Chairman, World Symposium on Warm Water Fish Culture (1966)
- ▶ Served on President Johnson’s Panel for Food for Peace (1966)
- ▶ Auburn University Alumni Research Professor (1968)
- ▶ Inducted into the Fish Culture Hall of Fame (Circa 1968)
- ▶ Head of Fisheries Department at Auburn University (1970)
- ▶ Director of International Center for Aquaculture (1970)
- ▶ Directed the largest Freshwater Fisheries Research Unit in the World at Auburn (1960s – 1973).

Accomplishments of Dr. Swingle’s International Center for Aquaculture and Aquatic Environments from 1967-2002

- ▶ \$30.5 million in grants and contracts
- ▶ 102 Foreign countries visited by Auburn Fisheries staff
- ▶ 1,355 Individual trips made overseas to provide assistance
- ▶ 190 Person-years of international effort
- ▶ 39 Long-term assignments by Auburn Fisheries faculty in 15 countries