



MONTHLY NEWS LETTER

OCTOBER 1955.- Final examinations for the first semester were held around the middle of the month. These exams always bring out some interesting points. In the present instance, two first-year students made such poor grades that they had to be dropped. Both of these had passed--and quite successfully--the Examen de Capacidad before entering. A third member of this class who had some low grades but would have been permitted to show what he could do in the second semester preferred to go home. All of which sums up, we believe, to factors which we have mentioned in previous News Letters; sometimes bright boys are attracted by the idea of a free scholarship, but when they have been here a short time, they realize that they are not interested in agriculture as a career. And sometimes bright boys who do not particularly want to come here are encouraged to do so by their parents, who (1) like the free scholarship idea, or (2) think that we can make something out of little Oscar who has been a perennial headache at home.

During the month we prepared a new "Carta Circular" to be sent to all inquirers (and it is worth noting that we are already receiving 5 to 10 applications per day, for scholarships in 1956) and we revised the Examen de Capacidad (intelligence test) on the basis of our experience last Spring. This examination now consists of fifty questions instead of one hundred as of last year. We have retained all of the questions we have found most useful in the past, but have cut down the total number because we believe it is difficult for most boys to concentrate on an examination for three to five hours.

On starting the classroom program for the second semester, we find as usual that some of the boys say, when they begin a new course, "Oh, we covered that point last semester in Biology (or in Soils, or in almost any other course you want to name)". Our reply is that we see no harm in a certain amount of repetition; in fact, we think it is a useful thing. For example, students are given two or three opportunities to learn to classify soils accurately by touch. And again, when we started the class in Horticulture one year, we asked a student to come to the blackboard and draw a diagram showing the essential parts of a flower, which he had been taught the previous year in Biology. He promptly produced a fair representation of a racemose inflorescence, nothing else.

This idea of repetition has stuck in our minds since that day 40 years ago when we entered the Berlitz School in Washington, D. C., to study the German language. Herr Richter pointed to a window and asked, "Was ist das?" To which we promptly replied, "Das ist ein fenster". Another window, same question and same answer. Then a third. We were glad by that time that the room only had three fensters, but we have never forgotten the German word for window.

During the month we filled our three silos with a fine mixture of 65 or 70% sweet sorghum, the rest pigeon pea tops. We had to do this job during a period of almost daily rains--this month has been the wettest we have ever experienced here. A good crop of rice is now ready to harvest, and a fair crop of corn. The vegetable garden, on the other hand, was practically out of production at the end of the month, a situation which occurs annually at the end of the rainy season. Bud-grafting was commenced in our fine nursery of seven or eight thousand "rosa macho" rootstocks. Nurseries of avocado, mango and citrus rootstocks are coming along well; the boys will get plenty of practice this year.