Plaquemines Citrus Industry Faces Slow Recovery from Betsy

By BERT HYDE

The Plaquemines Parish citrus industry, nearly completely recovered from the disastrous 1951 freeze, now must make another comeback.

Winds and floodwaters spawned by Hurricane Betsy killed more than 75 per cent of the citrus trees in the parish, compared to the 95 per cent killed by the freeze.

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Farris corroborated this by saying that much has been learned about citrus growing in Plaquemines the past year due to experimentation, and cooperation with Florida, California and Texas growers in development of new disease resistant plants.

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McEachern's estimates were supported by such large parish growers as Wilmer E. Farris, manager of the Orange Grove Plantation, Ralph Brown, who heads the LSU Plaquemines Parish Agricultural Experimental Station, State Rep. Barney Schoenberg, Felix Elston and others.

SCHOENBERG FARED a little better than most of the flood victims. Some of his Satsuma trees below Buras were under water only a couple of days and appear not to have been hurt.

Schoenberg said he lost approximately 500 trees.

Farris said his losses at Orange Grove amounted to more than 16,000 trees, including more than 500 old trees in Plaquemines Parish on the orange farm when it was purchased two years ago. These trees were among the few in Plaquemines to survive the 1951 and 1950 freezes.

Farris said he has already begun replanting. Schoenberg has set out some 400 trees since the hurricane, Farris approximately 100 trees at Orange Grove.

Farris said he will begin full replanting before February and hopes to have 18,000 trees in the ground before the spring of 1967.

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He said old-time planters of Plaquemines used to believe it took 10 years to get a tree to begin bearing profitable yields. He said this can be accomplished in three to five years with present tree stock and know-how.

McEachern said the replants which were destroyed would have been in heavy production in their sixth and seventh years, in 1967 and 1968, if not before.

All of the growers said that much of the fruit in the parish which may have been salvaged after Betsy was lost to tree shock. Many of the standing trees on Orange Grove and at Schoenberg's farm were dropping their fruit before it was ripening.
MRS. DONLENE BUTLER, home demonstration agent for Plaquemines Parish and MURPHY M'eachern, county agent, inspect an orange tree on the McEachern farm, where approximately half of the 220 trees were lost to wind and water.

THIS HANDFUL OF NAVAL oranges survived the wind and water damage of the hurricane and then overcame the threat of shock. They are now beginning to ripen.

AN OFFICIAL OF THE Louisiana State University Experimental Farm at West Pointe a la Hache stands beside a three-year-old tree which survived Betsy. More than 350,000 trees in Plaquemines Parish did not weather the storm.