Tobacco Long-Time Interest Of Local Leader

Sixty-three years after half years, "beginning in 1927 was in the Greenville unit of the graduating from the old and ending in 1931." Greenville High School, J. Con Lanier is still actively concerned about one of his life-long interests, tobacco.

Now semi-retired, the elderly native of Greenville for a long span of years served his com- Greenville's depression years shape up. In early years, before munity and his country in a mayor, Lanier was deeply in- service in World War I, Lanier number of causes — as county volved on another front — had received a law degree from solicitor, mayor of Greenville, France in World War I. "I spent the Law School at the University an Army officer in World War I, 18 months in France," he of North Carolina and had with the National Recovery Act reminisced, "after having been completed further studies at (NRA); as a state senator; and commissioned a second Georgetown University in for the longest period of all, as lieutenant in Infantry. My Washington, D.C. general counsel for the Tobacco memory of those years are still Association of the U.S. and Leaf Tobacco Exporters Association.

Greenville Mayor

operations."

Greenville was operated without the force knocked me down." part of formulating the program a budget to guide spending, After the end of the war, as "the greatest thing in my life, Lanier replied "Those were Lanier returned to Greenville, getting it adopted." depression years, and it was but again became involved in a Remembering the achard to collect any taxes." military capacity when he was complishment was not without Lanier said his time as mayor of appointed a captain in the field opposition, he said "we had a Greenville covered five and a artillery. "That was in 1927. I great battle on our hands, but

"At that time we had eight city until late 1933." councilmen, elected every two years," he pointed out.

World War I Experience

very clear, and I must say we years of the Roosevelt adwent through the mill."

the Silver Star for gallantry in program on tobacco," Lanier "The most important thing action and was twice recom- said. "That program, now during my administration as mended for the Distinguished nearly 40 years old, was put in Mayor of Greenville," Lanier Service Cross. "Through some effect then and is still in recalled, "was the instigation of miracle I was not hit," he said. operation. It was the tobacco submitting a budget each year. "several times I had close calls, allotment program." Prior to that time there was no including one time when the budget for the city's yearly pistol on my hip took a big piece tobacco allotments "has been a of shell fragment. The fragment saving grace for tobacco far-Asked how the city of went half through the pistol and mers." In fact, he referred to his

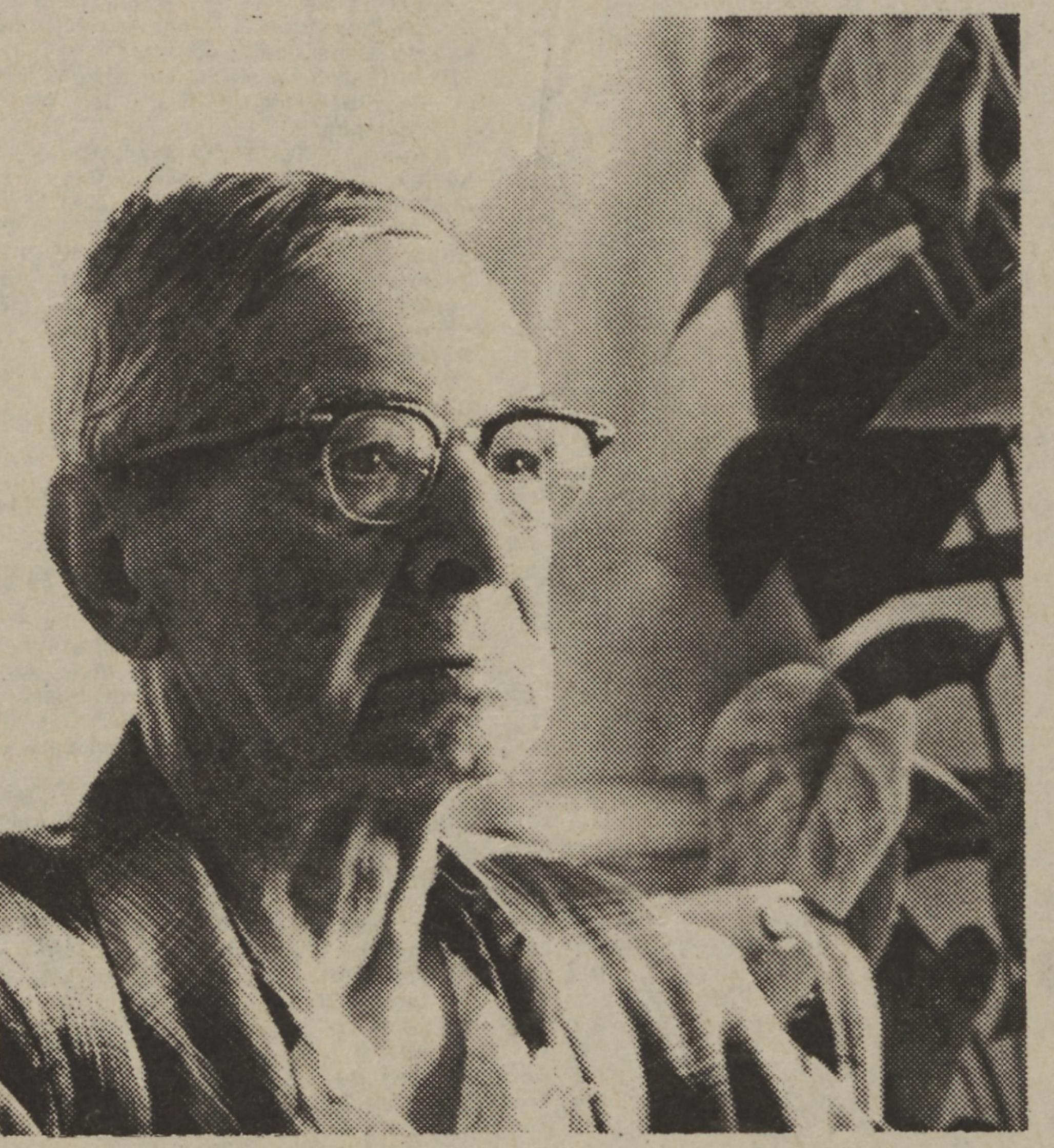
National Guard for seven years,

Career Shapes Up

By 1934 the career that was to occupy Lanier for the rest of his A decade before becoming working years was beginning to

"It was in 1934, in the early ministration that I moved to The young Army officer won Washington to help in forming a

Lanier feels the program of



J. CON LANIER... former Mayor of Greenville, State Senator, soldier, NRA administrator and tobacco counselor.

Text and Photograph By Jerry Raynor

the farmers came through and of a traveling ambassador for but tobacco always pulls out and go of it.

Returns To Greenville

After the program was established, Lanier returned to Greenville and again plunged into activities connected with general counsel for the Tobacco Association of the U.S. and Leaf Tobacco Exporters Association. "This was my life work for 25 years, up until my retirement," Lanier commented. He noted that this position is now filled by Malcolm Sewell.

In the course of this 25 year period, Lanier also held one political post — that of State Senator from Pitt County. "I was our representative in the 1945," he remarked.

Traveling Ambassador

signed up for it 97 percent." In the tobacco trade, with trips to its still with us." all these years since the Japan, the Philippines, England, Once engaged in farming a program was initally enacted, France, Germany, Denmark, fairly large acreage of tobacco, Lanier feels it has been the one Holland, Belgium, and several Lanier says, "The 15 acres I thing that has made it possible other countries. "I'd go to see have now are all that I can for tobacco farmers to make a the people interested in buying manage or want. Labor is dif-

Extolls American Leaf

"My job was to extoll the quality of American grown leaf cured tobacco. American tobacco is the best, and always tobacco. This time it was as will be. There was never any tobacco farmer is slowly being trouble on that point, the main trouble was the price. They wanted our tobacco, but only what they had to have to make good cigarettes."

> Usually, the long time tobacco advocate stated, "the buyers realized they couldn't buy anywhere else the kind of tobacco we grow."

Defends Tobacco

World War II years, from 1941 to the defense of tobacco against "I'm not saying," he was charges that it is harmful. "Oh quick to add, ". "that this means that," he spoke crisply, that tobacco is on the way out. "tobacco has always been That's far from the case, it's just "As counselor," Lanier ex- subjected to do-gooders who the conditions have changed for plained, "the tobacco work took want to abolish it. It's an old farmers. Knowing farmers. me to practically every market story. The fight's been going on they'll find a way out of their in the U.S. I was also something since the reign of King James, problems."

ficult to come by and I'm not prepared to change to mechanization."

Mechanization Inevitable

Mechanization, Lanier says, is inevitable. "The average driven out of business as he practices it today. The trend is toward consolidation of tobacco acreage into big operations."

Saying this "is one of the problems farmers in general have to face," Lanier feels that "the small farmer cannot invest money necessary to get all the expensive items used in mechanization. I think the small farmer will be forced to turn to Lanier was quick to come to other crops."