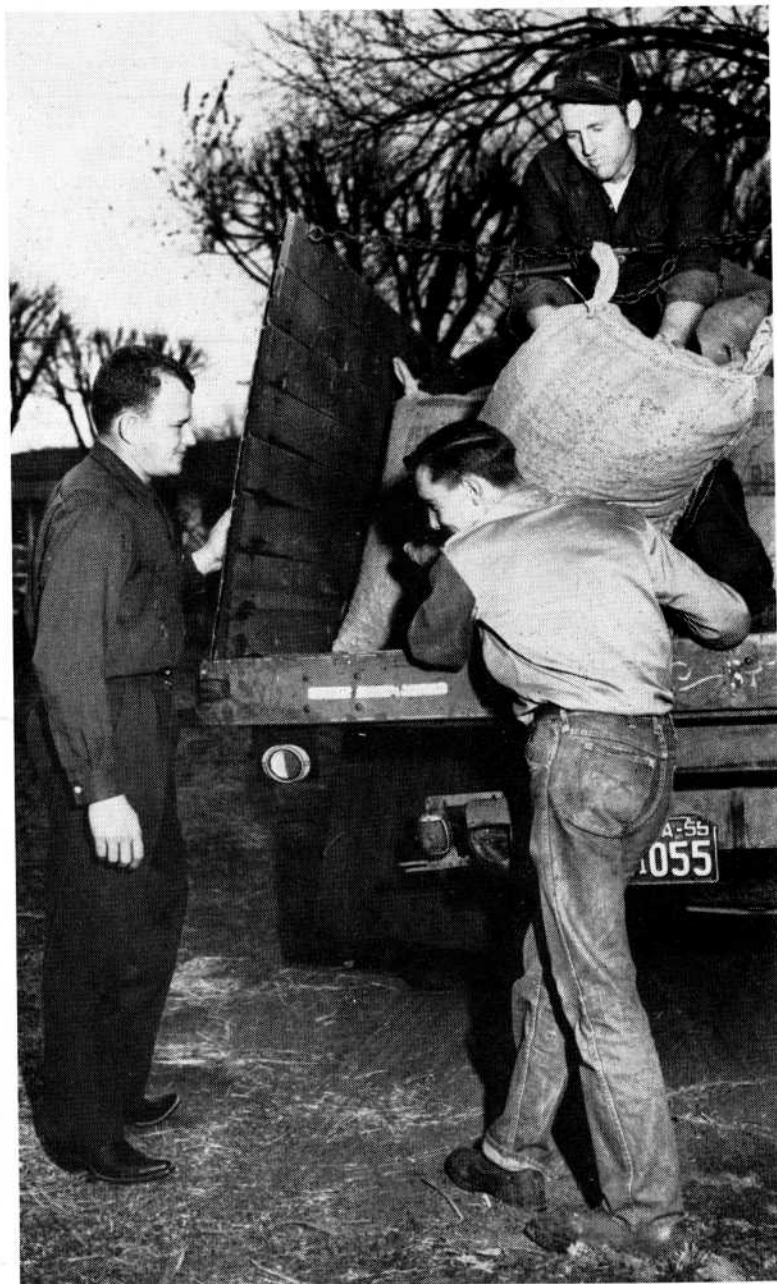


The Nutcracker Suite

The heavy machines, as they clean, crack, shell and sort pecans in the Bristow processing plant of a former O.U. student, clatter and grind through an unusual musical arrangement.

PHOTOGRAPHED By JOHN CRANE



Joe Ihle, '41-'43, watches sacks of native Oklahoma pecans being unloaded at his pecan processing plant, Bristow. He buys from farmers in northeastern Oklahoma.

Plant worker pours pecans in machine that removes defective nuts and hulls. Nuts are sterilized, moistened to keep nut meats from smashing in mechanized cracker.

THE ROAR of the machines made talk difficult. "You may get used to it, I haven't," said the young man as he put the telephone down. "But we can't shut them down."

There was good reason for the machines to keep up their pace. They were processing Oklahoma's pecan crop for the holiday demand for pecan meats for candy and desserts. The young man was Joe Ihle, '41-'43, co-owner of the processing plant located in Bristow. As he talked, his partner, Clyde LeForce, former Tulsa football star, joined him.

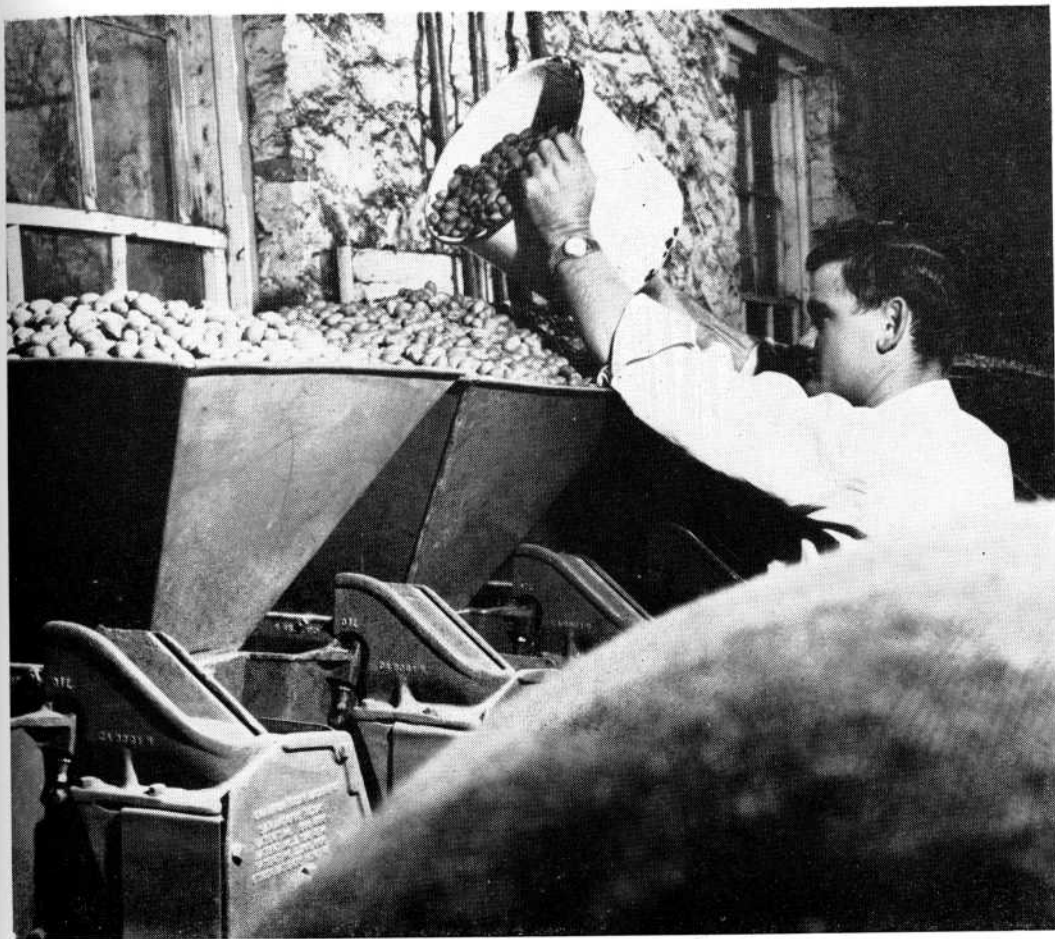
Later Ihle explained the step-by-step migration of the pecan as it arrived from the farmer's field until it was packaged in wholesale lots as shelled, sorted and graded meats for buyers from Eastern markets.

"We'll process between 1 million and 2 million pounds this year, depending on the market. We're awfully busy now. I'm buying enough pecans to keep us busy for the next 9 months and the plant is running 24 hours a day," Ihle said.

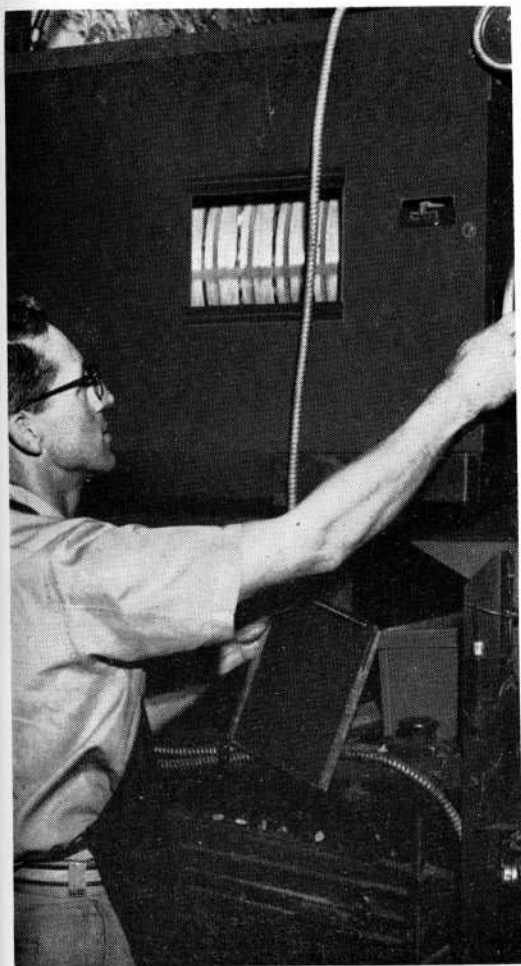
A pecan meat is a relatively tender thing, but the huge machines that clean, crack, shell pecan meats belie any tenderness. And when the machines have done their best, humans are still needed to provide the last check on the fitness of the meats for market.

The complicated process that the native pecan undergoes before providing a filling for a sweet tooth is indicated on these pages. The roar of the machines still lingers and provides an unusual "Nutcracker Suite."





After being sterilized, nuts go to cracker. Troughs, feeding cracking devices, form a bank along one of the plant's walls.



Clyde LeForce, co-owner of plant, checks pecan sheller, and Ihle examines nut meats as they are separated from removed shells.



Some nuts are broken during shelling process. Packaged separately from halves, machine gives pieces final cleaning.

The Nutcracker Suite Makes Holiday Music



After pecans have been cracked, shelled and cleaned by machines, they are graded by women who remove any imperfections before final grading.

Halves are graded according to width of meat in the last step before boxing. Clyde LeForce gives pecans their final check.

