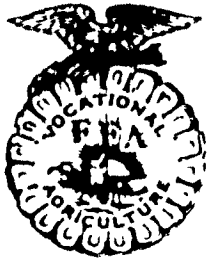


Thoughts in Passing



"Teaching Agriculture As A Career"
By David L. Gerstenlauer
Agricultural Education today is a broader and more

challenging career. There are more areas of specialization yet "traditional" programs still remain to be taught. There

are about 107,000 more students to train in the U.S. than in 1970 and demands for food and products rise each year. While there were somewhat fewer Vo-Ag teachers trained in 1974 than in 1970, there was still a greater percentage of qualified persons who actually took a teaching job. Out of the 1,600 students prepared to teach in 1974, 58.1 percent took teaching jobs, 16.1 percent went into other fields of work than agriculture, 9.2 percent went back to the farm, 8.8 percent went back to college for advanced degrees and 7.8 percent went into agribusiness careers. Even with 1,600 people trained in 1974, there was a teacher shortage all over the U.S.

Sometimes ag teachers can be called a "jack of all trades" because he must be knowledgeable in basic areas which cover many specific careers and abilities. The

eight categories listed in most Ag Ed textbooks are: 1. Agricultural Production (farming) 2. Ag Products 3. Ag Supplies 4. Forestry 5. Horticulture 6. Ag Mechanics 7. Ag Resources and 8. Other Agriculture. In the area of ag production, many technical skills must be known and much knowledge is needed to work with plants, animals, the economics and business aspects of farming and general mechanical knowledge to repair, maintain and build farm equipment. Ag products is an area dealing with processing and selling meats, other food products, flowers, lumber or any type of product processed to be used by consumers. Ag teachers must also be aware of the agricultural supplies that are processed and sold for consumers. Seeds, feeds, fertilizers, hardware and tools are some of the supplies farmers use and need to learn more about (them). One of the more specific areas of agriculture is forestry. Tree growth, diseases, yields, uses and quality along with woodlot management techniques are studied to produce lumber, paper, wood products and conservation of the en-

vironment. Horticulture is an area of plant science which includes the study of flowers, shrubs, ornamental trees, fruits, vegetables and landscape design. Wood skills, metal skills, plumbing, concrete work, welding, electricity, engines, tool identification and use, tractor repair and maintenance and machinery use, maintenance and repair are all taught in ag mechanics. For several years now, agriculturalists have been studying wildlife management, conservation of soil and water, weather prediction and recreation to increase our knowledge of ag resources. The last category, called other agriculture, is a general area including professionals working in education, research and providing services to the farm community.

In order to become an ag teacher, it is important to go to a certified college or university and earn a Bachelor's degree and a teaching certificate. In Pennsylvania, Ag Education students attend Penn State University for four years and are certified to teach. Another way to become a Vo-Ag instructor is to earn a

Bachelor's degree (in any subject) and then take the additional credits required to become certified to teach Vo-Ag. Ag Ed students take a variety of courses in English, Arts, Humanities, Education methods and theories, Sciences, Health and Physical Education and Agriculture to complete a degree. In the area of agriculture, courses are broken down into Animals, Plants, Mechanics, and Business economics. Taking animals as an example, ag ed students study feeding, breeding, management, anatomy, judging, meats, diseases, new research, and manure removal to name a few areas. This is done for dairy and all classes or major livestock. When studying plants, topics include breeding, nutrition, growth regulations, weed and pest controls, diseases, trees, flowers, fruits, vegetables, field crops, grains, vine crops, shrubs, ferns, mosses, soils, harvest techniques and storage. There are many more topics of study in both plant and animal areas that must be taught. Ag teachers must study just as many areas in Business economics and Ag Mechanics, all of which lead to this idea of being a "jack of all trades".

The job opportunities in Ag Education lie in many areas. In teaching, one can work in single teacher departments or multiple teacher departments. These teachers work in elementary schools, high schools, Junior colleges. The ag teacher may teach in one specialty subject area or in many areas. In Vo-Tech schools ag teachers generally teach in one area such as Horticulture or Mechanics. In High Schools, most ag teachers expose students to all eight areas of agriculture, but may also teach one specific area or even adult education courses. Since there are many schools opening new jobs and expanding present programs, the ag teacher has many positions to choose from in a career that is both promising and challenging.

Agricultural Education includes other career opportunities than formal teaching. Many Ag Ed graduates go back to the farm with a practical farming knowledge and a desire to develop the agricultural community and add to the community's leadership. Other positions are available in agribusiness, extension, research, agricultural services, or perhaps one of the other eight agricultural areas of study. Some ag ed students go back to school for advanced degrees and may wind up in universities or in government services.

Certainly, not everyone can be a teacher, but our world needs good agricultural leaders if it is to meet the challenges and responsibilities placed upon our agricultural society.

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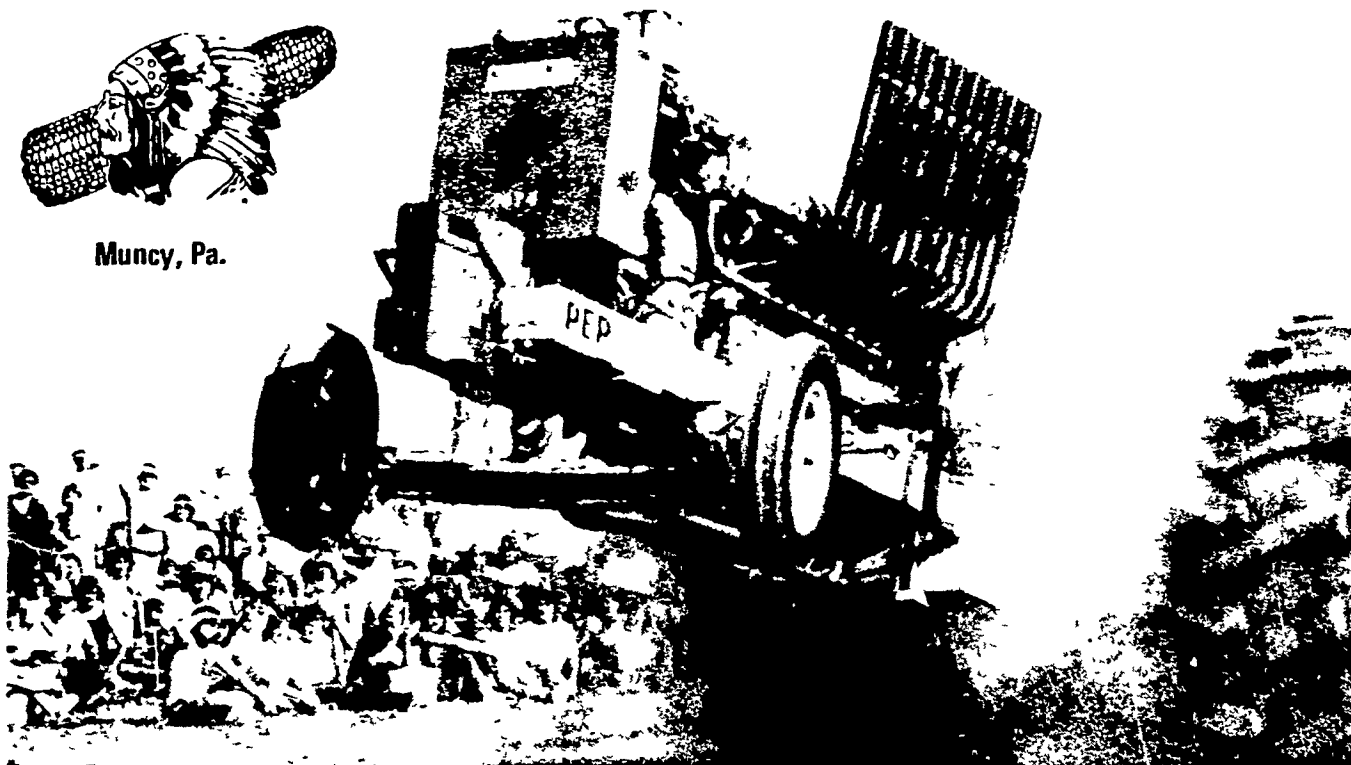
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