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THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL AGRIBUSINESS

The question has arisen in recent years as to what purpose Vocational Agribusiness plays in preparing a student for life. Is Agribusiness Education still useful? Should high school students be encouraged to take ag? What type student will benefit from ag classes? The basic question seems to be this: What is Vocational Agribusiness' role in today's educational society?

Agribusiness Education began as one of the programs in Vocational Education. Vocational Education was designed as a course of study for students who were not going or could not go to college. Vocational programs train students for careers available immediately following graduation from high school e.g. welding, cosmetology, food preparation, office management, auto repair, etc. Vocational Education gives students the hands-on experience needed in order to get a job once they have graduated.

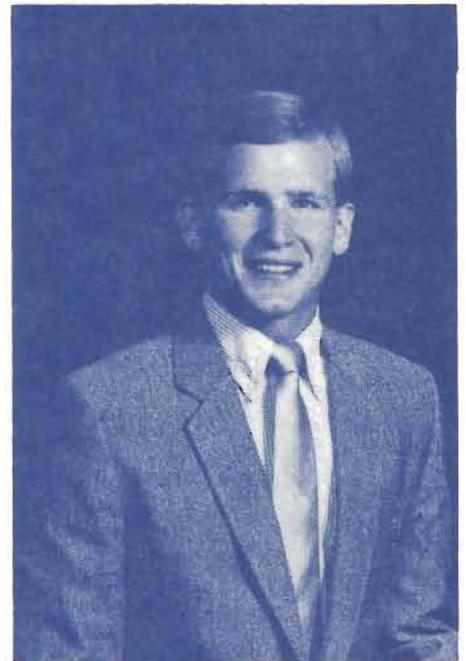
Vocational Agribusiness was a program developed to train students for careers in farming and the agricultural industry after graduation. Is this still the case? We now see a number of vo ag students going on to college after graduation. Is the knowledge learned in the ag classroom beneficial to a student entering college, or would the student be better off taking more college preparatory courses? Has the agricultural industry become so advanced that students must go to college to pursue a career in agriculture? Does it matter if the student is or is not going into agriculture? I cannot answer these questions directly, but I can tell you how Vocational Agribusiness Education has affected my own life.

I am currently a student at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, a non-agricultural school. My major is in Finance and Management Information Systems. I am planning for a career as a financial consultant for high-tech businesses. In spite of all of this, I had four years of vo ag in high school. Why? I enrolled in agribusiness because I wanted to have a class that was fun as well as educational. In most classes all you do is just read and write, but in ag you get to go on field trips and work with your hands. I continued to take ag throughout my high school years because I saw in it the means whereby I might reach certain goals I had set for my life. Yet, what were the benefits I gained from Vocational Agribusiness?

by
Robert Weaver
Past National Officer

1. Hands-on experience. The ability to take the knowledge gained in the class-room and put it to practical use.
2. Mechanical knowledge useful throughout all areas of life such as electricity, woodworking, plumbing, crop production, livestock care, and welding.
3. Entrepreneurship. The encouragement toward independent thinking and the development of self sufficiency by developing a SOE Program.
4. Communication skills. Not only public speaking but also the ability to explain my reasons for picking a certain animal in a judging contest, and the ability to communicate with other team members to form a stronger and better team.
5. Leadership training. How to run a meeting, lead and direct discussion, work with and delegate committees, development of the proper attitude for a leader to possess, self-confidence, and development of parliamentary procedure skills useful in any type of meeting.
6. An appreciation for an understanding of the nation's largest and most important industry, Agriculture. No matter what career field I go into, I will always have a clear understanding of the importance of Agriculture in any political or business decision I make.

Vocational Agribusiness Education's importance seems to lie in the fact that it is many things to many people. All students, male and female, will find areas of interest within the Vo-Ag program. The question we must answer in the future is not whether Vo-Ag is useful, but can it continue to meet the needs of everyone entering the program? One thing we must remember is that no matter how important Vocational Agribusiness is, the program would not be as successful as it has been without its association with the Future Farmers of America.



ABOUT ROBERT WEAVER

Robert served as the 1985-86 National Vice President, Southern Region, Future Farmers of America. He served as President of the Alabama FFA Association in 1982-83. While attending high school, Robert was a member of the Falkville FFA Chapter. He graduated from Falkville in May 1983 where he received a 12-year Perfect Attendance Award.

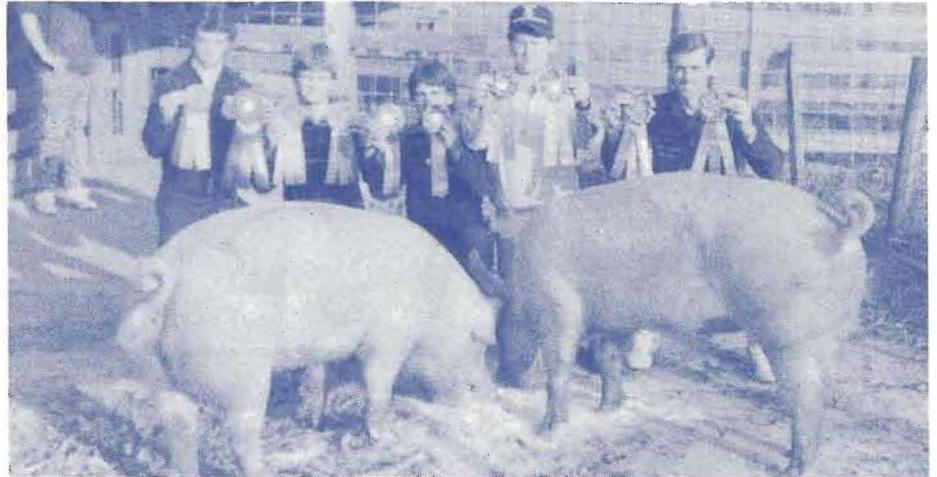
Robert enjoys golf, racquetball, hiking, chess, philately, music, reading, travel, and motivational speaking.



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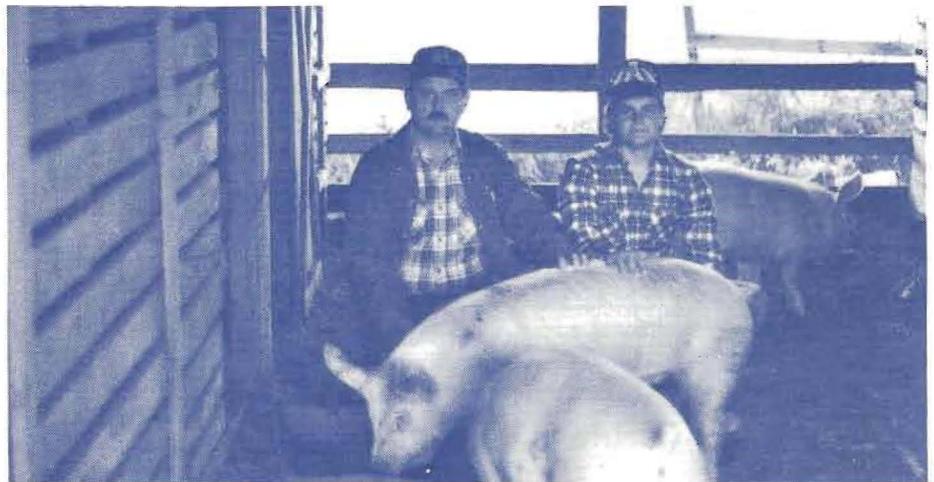
State Jr. Market Hog Show In New Facility



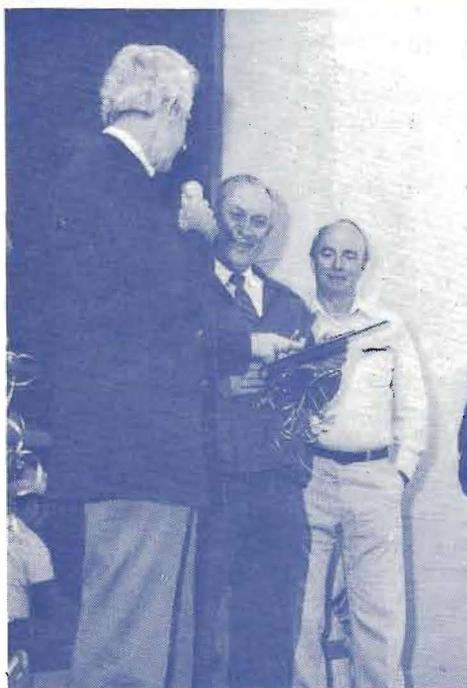
WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING, but it sure does help. These pigs from the Grand Bay FFA Chapter have a winning record. Assisting FFA advisor, Robin Clark, display winning ribbons are (l-r) David Driskell, Richard Fowler, Charles Brinkman, Clark, and Robert Brinkman.

Dedication

Because of his love for young people in the FFA in Alabama and for his many years of service as livestock specialist, district specialist and advisor to the Alabama Young Farmers Educational Association, we dedicate this issue of the *Alabama FFA Reporter* to Mr. H. N. Lewis. He has announced his retirement effective March 31. We wish for him a happy, healthy retirement.



J. W. MYRICK, advisor, and Tracy Mitchell, FFA member from the Gaylesville FFA Chapter, select pigs to be shown in the State Jr. Market Hog Show.



SWINE FACILITY DEDICATED—The Alabama Agricultural Center's new swine barn located at Garrett Coliseum in Montgomery, was officially opened during the 1986 South Alabama State Fair. At ribbon cutting ceremonies, the barn was named in honor of H. N. Lewis, district and livestock specialist, Agribusiness Education Field Office, Auburn University. Shown during the ceremony are (l-r) Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries Albert McDonald; Lewis, and L. T. Farris, Manager, Garrett Coliseum.

FFA Members Prepare For Spring Shows



CARING FOR THREE STEERS AND ONE HEIFER requires a great deal of time for Darin Moseley, a sophomore at Geneva County High School. This is Darin's third year showing steers and heifers. Darin received the Star Greenhand Award from the Hartford FFA Chapter, where Stacy Hatcher is advisor.



THIS IS THE THIRD SHOW STEER for Lenny Lee from the Calhoun High School FFA Chapter. Lenny shows in four-five shows per year. He is president of his local FFA Chapter and is pictured here with FFA Advisor Jasper Lambert.



AGRIBUSINESS EDUCATION TEACHER at Sparkman High School, Ken Prater (right) along with (from left) Darrell Henry and Dan Guffey, check the healing process of this steer, dehorned in the fall of 1986.



JASON POPWELL is making preparations for the upcoming steer shows. Jason is a sophomore member of the Marbury FFA Chapter. His advisor is Mike Tidwell.



LEIGH ANN PENN is a 16-year old junior at Holly Pond High School. She has shown steers and heifers for the past 10 years. Her parents and her sister, Paula, have been great influences in her involvement in the livestock program. Leigh Ann is a member of the Holly Pond FFA Chapter, and was a member of the state-winning livestock team in 1986. She found judging at the national contest very exciting and something she had always wanted to do. She has shown Polled Hereford Heifers at three National Jr. shows in Missouri, Indiana and Oklahoma. Her FFA advisor at Holly Pond is Darrell Hicks.



Young Farmers Educational Association

by
Mac Wayne Donnell
Past President

The Young Farmers Educational Association seeks to build on the solid foundation of production agriculture which began in high school agribusiness classes. In addition, it continues to develop the skills taught during meetings of the Future Farmers of America chapters.

Organized in 1980, the Alabama Young Farmers Educational Association was patterned after the adult education classes taught at night during the depression by vocational agribusiness instructors. Chapters hold monthly meetings to continue this method of bringing adults into the vo-ag department for further instruction in agribusiness. Because the advisors of each local Young Farmers chapter are the vo-ag teachers, the members are kept up-to-date with the changes in agriculture.

As the FFA uses field trips to expose members to different aspects of agribusiness, the Young Farmers sponsor tours to expose its members to the variety of local agricultural industries and operations. For instance at the 1985 state meeting held at Auburn University, tours included the separate units of: fisheries, beef cattle production, swine production, vegetable crops, forestry, School of Veterinary Medicine, and the Alabama Crop Improvement Association.

During the 1986 meeting held recently in Dothan, the Young Farmers Education Association sponsored tours to Dothan Oil Mill energy plant, which is fueled by the burning of peanut hulls. This plant supplies four percent of the power to the Dothan area. The U. S. Army base at Ft. Rucker was also toured. The military installation, which is a training base for helicopter pilots, was included to give the

members from across the state a view of one of the major contributors to the local economy.

Being former FFA members, the current Young Farmers Association recognize the problems faced by high school agribusinessmen—problems such as materials for projects and quality show animal prospects.

One of the major projects of the Hartford Chapter of Young Farmers is the annual calf sale held each summer. Notice of the sale is publicized throughout the Southeast. Quality calves are made available to the local school-age buyers at reasonable prices.

This chapter also provides tools and equipment for the local agribusiness department. Some of the donated materials were grooming chutes, blow dryers and brushes for the steer and heifer programs. Tools and bins were also provided for use in the vo-ag shop.

To continue the spirit of competition promoted through FFA, the Alabama Y.F.E.A. sponsors a Farm Family of the Year Award to honor an outstanding chapter member. This award was most recently won by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Helms of Rehobeth. On a local level, the Hartford Chapter also honors three farmers each year. These farmers are selected from three age groups according to their number of years in farming.

The Young Farmers Educational program could be described as an extension of the FFA, or as a "Big Brother". One of the responsibilities of the Association is to lend a hand to you—the local FFA member. We try to be available for advice, moral support, or just to provide another strong back or an extra pair of hands.

During my six-year involvement with the Young Farmers, I have gained many benefits

both personally and professionally. By traveling to local, state and national meetings, I have been able to meet and share with other people from across the country ideas that will improve farming operations not only for myself but for fellow agribusinessmen as well.

Serving in various offices, most recently as State President, I have improved my leadership abilities. Speaking to groups has become somewhat easier. My planning and organizational skills are also getting better with practice.

The time spent with people who share similar concerns has helped me to survive the stress of modern-day farming. It is a comfort to know that you are not alone.

It is my hope that you will take advantage of the opportunities offered through the vo-ag department and the FFA chapter and will continue to grow by becoming part of the Young Farmers Educational Association. Currently we have 13 chapters in the state.



ALABAMA Y.F.E.A. STATE OFFICERS—(l-r) Pat West, Vice President, Rehobeth; Danny Hattaway, Director, East Central District, Lincoln; Mac Wayne Donnell, Past State President, Hartford; Chris Thompson, President, Midland City; H.N. Lewis, State Advisor, Auburn; Mike Wise, Director, Southeast District, Slocomb; Terry Odom, Reporter, Hartford; Bill Stanley, Treasurer, Hartford, and John Paul Kelley, Secretary, Rehobeth.



FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR—Don Sanders, District Manager, Curtis Industries, is shown presenting Mr. and Mrs. Fred Helms, of Rehobeth, the Farm Family of the Year Award during the recent convention of the Young Farmers in Dothan.