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FFA — MORE THAN COWS AND PLOWS

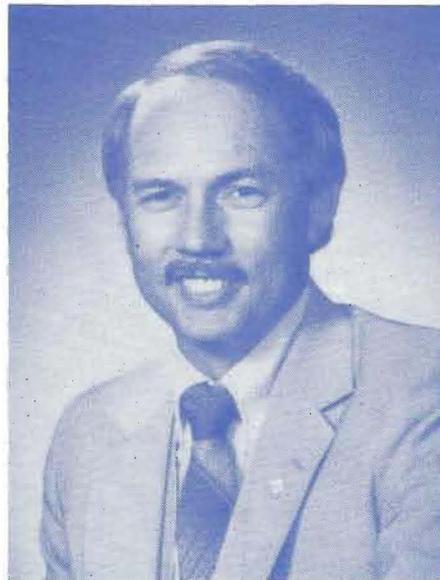
by
Galen Grace

Each time I sit down to write or stand up to speak, I wonder how many lives this message will touch. Let me tell you that one trip to the National FFA Convention will surely touch your life the way it did mine this past November. If there is any doubt as to the future leadership of our country, it can be seen here.

Now to the task at hand—to show that the FFA is not just dirt farming, grease under your fingernails, and manure up to your knees. In a sense, we are all gamblers because we love a challenge, so I hope it is all right to make you a bet. My bet is that you will not be able to name a job description that can't be used in agriculture. While you try to think of one, let me tell you a little about what I see each day as I travel.

I see people moving from the city to the country, and I see people move from the country to the city. They do this for a challenge. Challenge to me is our attitudes. Attitudes mean everything in your day to day living. If you have a poor attitude, you will never see accomplishments from your challenges. Often I see people frown upon FFA and agriculture because we don't do a good job of selling what there is to offer them. When in sales as I am, you learn that public relations and promotions are the key issues. The same is true for agriculture and the FFA.

The reason I am in agriculture is because a gentleman told me when I was a senior in high school that someone has to feed the world, and he could offer anyone with a degree in agriculture 25 jobs that day. Today a farm family of four feeds themselves and 300 additional people. But think what takes place for this farm family to accomplish this. Twenty percent of America's labor force or 21 million people are employed in the agricultural industry. On the back panel of the brochure, "FFA-Agriculture's New Spirit," there is a list of professional career opportunities in agriculture through 1990 as stated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., and I list this as support material:



- 32% Marketing, Merchandising and Sales Representative
- 29% Scientists, Engineers and Related Professionals
- 14% Managers and Financial Specialists
- 11% Social Service Professionals
- 8% Agricultural Production Specialists
- 6% Educational and Communication Specialists

Yes, there is a good future in agriculture, but maybe some of you need to put your emphasis in related fields rather than production agriculture. The feature programs for this issue are horticulture, forestry, building construction and computers in agriculture. Let me name some more that I see each day that might be appealing — communications, veterinary science, food science, international marketing and biotechnology.

What we need to remember though is to always be a salesman for our industry. We can accomplish this by being leaders in organizations, our communities and state affairs, then promote our industry—agriculture. I have found over the

years if you take those few extra minutes for special causes or to promote agriculture, it will pay many dividends, whether it be personal or monetary. This reminds me of a saying I once heard, "Lead, follow, or get out of the way!"

In closing I want to challenge each of you to use every available tool offered to make wise decisions. This may be printed materials furnished by your association, trade journals, industry literature, or information given by your advisor. But most of all don't be ashamed of what you are or who you are because some day you will be the FUTURE AGRICULTURAL LEADERS OF AMERICA.

ABOUT GALEN GRACE

Galen Grace grew up on a poultry, beef cattle, swine, horse, cotton, corn, and hay farm near Jasper, Alabama, in Walker County.

Grace attended Walker County High School, Walker Jr. College and Auburn University. At Auburn, he was a member of Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity. He received his B.S. Degree in Poultry Science in 1973, and started to work for Gold Kist Poultry in Boaz. Since 1980 he has worked with Salsbury Laboratories Inc. as a territory manager.

Presently Grace is serving as Vice Chairman of the Board of Alabama Poultry and Egg Association; President of the Alabama Poultry Foundation; Agribusiness Education Advisory Committee and the County 4-H/FFA Steer Program Financial Committee. He is a past president of the Auburn University Agricultural Alumni Association, is an Honorary State Farmer and a member of Gamma Sigma Delta.

Grace and his wife Becky live in Albertville and have two sons, Jarod and Jody.

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Michael S. Casey joined the State Agribusiness Staff on December 21, assuming responsibilities as the State FFA Livestock and District Specialist for Southeast Alabama. He brings eleven and a half years experience to the position held by H.N. Lewis, prior to his retirement.

Casey comes to the position from Dale County High School where he was the agribusiness education teacher.

While at Dale County High School, Casey's students participated in local and state purebred and market beef, swine and lamb shows. At Dale County High, he helped establish a ten-acre school farm for his students and the community. During his years at Dale County, his FFA Chapter had the Alabama Future Farmer of the Year and the Star Farmer of America of the National FFA Organization.

Casey would like to develop more student participation at both the local and state livestock shows. He further states he would like to see each student have the opportunity to excel in agriculture/agribusiness education. He would

PLANNING CAREERS IN FORESTRY—Students in the Forestry Program at Bibb County AVTC sometimes get “up in the air” when you mention FFA activities. Eddie Miller, left, and Shawn Nelson prepare to remove dead limbs from this tall oak, as Lane Atchison, left, and Shane Meigs observe from ground level. Tree surgery work is a regular part of Roger Brother's Forestry Program in Bibb County.

What do these students think about their future in the forestry industry? Shawn Nelson says after graduation he plans to go to work for a tree trimming company. Much of the work he has done in forestry and FFA relates directly to this type of work, he adds.

Eddie Miller has worked part-time for the past four years at Tannehill State Park. After graduation, he plans to work at the park full-time. He says he will be able to use the skills he has learned in forestry and FFA on this job.

Lane Atchison has been involved in the FFA Forestry Judging Contest for the past two years. I can use the skills and knowledge I have gained to get employment in the forest industry, he concludes.

Shane Meigs also plans to go to work for a tree surgery company after high school. He believes that the work he has done in FFA, such as the Forestry and Land Judging Contests, will help him in such a job.

like to see more students participate in the FFA Contest and Awards Program.

Casey has received the honorary State and American Farmer Degrees; Outstanding Vocational Instructor Award; Outstanding Vocational Program in Agriculture Award, and the NVATA Outstanding Teacher of Vocational Agriculture Award. He is a member of numerous professional organizations.

Casey, a native of Monroe County, attended Excel High School; Patrick Henry Jr. College, and completed his undergraduate and graduate work at Auburn University.

Casey and his wife Susie have a daughter and a son, Mandy and Clint. The Caseys will reside in Opelika.

FFA . . .
 The Future Of
 American
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FUTURE HINGES ON COMPUTERS—Tommy Shelton (left) and Keith Blankenship, Agribusiness Education students at Scottsboro High School, believe that computers are the backbone of our future. These FFA members claim that everything in one way or another will hinge on the operation of computers and that incorporating them into the Agribusiness program will help students better understand and work with them.

In the Agribusiness program at Scottsboro, students are working with three different types of computers: The Tandy 1000 SX, the Apple II+, and the Amstrad PC. Through the incorporated computer program, students are learning farm management, principles of welding, electricity, small engines, parliamentary procedures, animal and crop science, and facts about the FFA.

Wesley Hardman, Chapter Advisor, is counting on one of these FFA members entering the Computers in Agriculture Contest.



SPRINGBOARD FOR CAREERS—Members of Gary Hall's "Gold" FFA Chapter, have learned two things while being enrolled in Horticulture at Opp High School. The FFA gives members a chance to use what they have learned in the classroom in competition at the end of the year and that skills learned in the classroom help to prepare for future careers.

Ramona King plans to use her skills in environmental protection, while Jody Adams is planning a career in architecture. Although Richard Moore and Walter Wade do not have specific career plans, both indicate they will be able to rely on their horticulture skills when looking for a job after graduation this spring.

Participating in the FFA Floriculture Contest is something these FFA members have enjoyed. "It gives us a chance to get away from the traditional FFA contests involving crops and livestock," says Ramona.

Photographed during a recent landscape design lesson are, clockwise: Gary Hall, FFA Advisor, Richard Moore, Walter Wade, Ramona King, and Jody Adams.



HANDS-ON—This Vocational Agribusiness Building Construction Department at Lamar AVTC is an area of Vocational Education that provides the students with a specialized unit designed to provide skills in carpentry, maintenance, electricity, and plumbing.

The students say that this course adds a new dimension to learning—"hands-on" in addition to "eyes-on." All of the students say they learn better this way.

This program provides the students with skills that will help them find a better or higher-paying job. It also helps them to gain self-confidence, self-awareness, and good work habits.

The picture includes (L-R) Jake Gray, instructor, and students Timothy Stewart and Tommy Moore, as Gray gives instruction in laying out a window opening.



LEARNING—MANAGEMENT—LIFE—Ted Hoffren, Horticulture Instructor at Robertsedale AVTC, gives instruction to (L-R) Mike Hammock, Jeremy Sullivan, and Brenda Woerner, as they transplant seedlings from flats to individual pots in the work area.

From knowledge gained in the classroom, Mike has built a 16' X 20' greenhouse at home, and Brenda has more than 1,500 plants growing in her own nursery that will be ready for market this summer.

When asked to sum up the FFA in one word, Mike says, "Learning;" Brenda replied, "Management." Jeremy says the FFA has taught him much about "Life." He says he will be one step ahead of the others, he can grow his own food.

What do these FFA members think about the image of the FFA? "Jeremy says being in the FFA makes him feel "trapped" into farming but realizes the FFA is much bigger, more than "plows." Mike and Brenda think that changing the name should be given consideration, but do not change the "content" of the FFA.



OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN—A recent visit to the Haleyville AVTC found Gary Warren, Building Construction teacher, giving instruction to his students as they were involved in remodeling the football stadium press box. Warren has 24 students and all are FFA members.

Denise McKinney, the only female member in the class, sees this as an opportunity to learn. There is more to Agriculture than farming, she says. There is more to construction than building a house, she concludes.

How do the other class members feel about having a girl in class? Danny Flannagan and Dewayne Johnson say it is different having a girl in class. We have more respect for girls now. Boys are no better than girls. Johnson says this goes to show that anyone can learn from building construction.

Although they may not all pursue a career in construction, many of the students say they will always have their building construction skills to fall back on if other things do not work out.

In addition to the Building Construction Contest, FFA members at Haleyville AVTC also participate in Forestry and Land Judging Contests. By preparing for the Forestry Judging Contest, we learn the different types of trees that produce lumber for construction; and we learn the different soil types in Land Judging, so we will know how to select the proper location for the homesite, states Danny Flannagan.



AT EASE WITH PEOPLE—Care of greenhouse plants, especially small seedlings, is a daily task of these FFA members from the J. R. Pittard AVTC Horticulture Program. Pictured in the school greenhouse (L-R) are Katrina Skelton, Renee Battle, and Jimmy Hampton. Active FFA participation earned these three a trip to Kansas City last November. Ken Boyd is their advisor.

In talking with these FFA members, it does not take long to realize that they have learned much more than horticulture skills from their classroom and FFA activities. Katrina says the FFA has given her a better sense of leadership, she is more at ease in meeting people and making new friends.

Renee says the FFA has helped her to understand that she has the ability to be anything she wants to be and to feel good about herself.

Jimmy says the FFA has helped him to set new and higher goals and has shown him how to reach them.

All three agree that the FFA has helped them to be at ease in speaking in front of a large group. Many of their speaking skills have been learned through active participation in the BOAC Program and getting the community involved in the program.

Their chapter has also been involved in Chapter Safety, as well as Nursery/ Landscape and Floriculture Judging.



ALABAMA YOUNG FARMERS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION

The annual Alabama Young Farmers Educational Association Convention was held in Dothan in January. There were 225 members, their wives, sponsors and guests present. The meeting was highlighted by a tour of the Farley Nuclear Plant and an address by Mr M. M. Cope, President, Chauncey Sparks State Technical College. Selected to serve as State President for 1988 was Danny Mathis, member of the Wicksburg Chapter. Recipients of awards were: Chapter Attendance Award - Rehobeth Chapter, Jimmy Owen, Advisor; Outstanding Farm Family Award - the Danny Mathis Family of Wicksburg.

AYFEA OFFICERS shown are (seated 1-r) Danny Mathis, President, Wicksburg Chapter; John P. Kelly, Vice President, Rehobeth; Terry Odom, Secretary, Hartford; (back row 1-r) Randall Meadows, Treasurer, Rehobeth; Robins Carothers, Reporter, Rehobeth; George Schwartz, Jr., Southwest Director, South Baldwin Chapter, Foley, and Bob Edmondson, Southeast Director, Wicksburg.