Seeking the Proper Balance

Professional Duties

Personal Obligations

THEME: Balancing Your Professional and Personal Life
A Tough Balancing Act

This issue examines a timely topic very appropriate for a profession that prides itself on long hours, a fast pace, and an unwavering dedication to task, and being all things to all who exhibit an interest in agriculture. This credo is mighty noble, and of the fabric that must go to be made. However, it does require an examination from a practical rather than philosophical level because real world assessments usually reveal pictures vastly different from a professional ideal.

From a real world perspective, America’s work ethic has changed substantially from that needed to perform strenuous manual labor characteristic of heavy industry and an agrarian society. Likewise, an information age filled with complex high technology is leading to social reforms, a new work ethic, and most importantly, a new way of thinking and of use. To help society understand itself, the mass media, and broadcast in particular, are frequently used to show and unfortunately to instill norms, ethics, and more.

All American images created by television shows such as “Father Knows Best,” “Family Ties,” and even the immensely popular “The Cosby Show” cannot possibly counteract negative images so pervasive in 1987. Although Cosby and Company are masters at making us laugh while positively portraying a very attractive two career family situation, life in America includes far more choices and demands that can only be depicted via a 30 minutes (less the commercials) of slick video packaging.

“Dallas,” “Miami Vice,” “Hill Street Blues,” “Falcon Crest” et al. also frequently remind us that divorce rates hover close to 50%; single parent families are on the rise, and we’re seeing an escalating concern about domestic violence and substance abuse among the urban as well as the American family. It’s being redined. The dad works while mom cooks, cleans, and cares for the kids scenario is a far more idiosyncratic, more dramatic, especial for professionals in service-oriented occupations including agricultural education.

Many of the topics we’ve had for the better since they allow us to define their roles while achieving professional status comparable to that of men. As this evolution continues, serious questions must be posed about blending the 8-5 with the after the 5 hours to maximize personal satisfaction and professional service.

L.H. Newcomb, the theme editor for this issue, notes that agricultural education has its stressors and our colleagues do burn out. Workaholics are prime candidates and quite a number in agricultural education is already experiencing burnout. Others in this issue share solutions to cope with this and other impediments to professional and personal satisfaction. By first experimenting and then adhering to workable strategies being suggested, one should not only cope but thoroughly enjoy a professional career in agricultural education.

Interestingly enough, early one Saturday morning while editing copy for this issue, I read one man’s advice that Saturdays and Sundays should be set aside for the question of what to do on Saturdays and Sundays with a design for the cover of the issue, my toddler son quickly decided that we should play tiddly (his version of Ohio State football) because graphics had become boring. Later that afternoon, during a study of her from her studies and other professional activities, my wife said she certainly plans to read this issue to see what advice I can be giving about balancing personal life with a two career family.

Whether professionals in agricultural education are single, single parents, members of a two career family, or from one career families, common solutions are apparent. First, the problem solving approach held as a hallmark in agricultural education must be practiced as well as preached to balance professional and personal life. Second, reality must be observed because all days contain 24 hours. My strategy is to keepily observe and emulate the family situation. Third, professional growth requires an occasional community and family situations that I desire. This strategy means priorities must be set and implemented, i.e. exceedingly hard choices made because personal excellence in all phases of agricultural education is an impractical goal.

Organization, time management, role modification and sharing, true hobbies, micros, high technology, delayed gratification and a burning desire to balance professional and personal life are crucial. My credo says an excellent personal life is balanced with two super professional careers, a difficult task, yes, an impossible task, no. A tough balancing act, you can bet the ranch.

About the Cover

Professionals in agricultural education should consistently strive to balance their professional duties with their personal obligations. Realistic assessments should be made of what is expected in terms of a professional career. (Drawing by Gary S. Quaasquid and the Editor).
THEME

Burnout: The Plague of the Modern Helping Professional

There is a steady stream of articles about burnout in the daily paper, Time, U.S. News and World Report, Psychology Today, and many other places. It is certainly not uncommon to hear colleagues, school children, Sunday school teachers, or anyone else claiming to be burned out. In fact, perhaps some folks think it is fashionable to proclaim they are burnt out. Just as likely, many deny the presence of the malady if they suspect it is affecting them.

Unfortunately, the term is used far too casually. What exactly is burnout? According to Freudenberg (1988, page 16), burnout is "to deplete oneself, to exhaust one's physical and mental resources, to wear oneself out by excessive striving to reach some unrealistic expectation imposed by oneself or the value of society." Cherniss (1980, page 3) says burnout is "...a process that begins with extensive and prolonged levels of job stress. The stress produces strain in the worker. . . . The process is completed when the worker defensively copes with the job and becomes apathetic, cynical, and unproductive. While the above definitions may be helpful, perhaps even more helpful is a model that begins to explain the phenomenon. Each individual is unique. Each person has the attributes of personality, self-concept, ideals, goals, and level of commitment and how these factors respond to stress. Hence, individuals face burnout at a different time and for different reasons.

Secondly, the environment both at work and away from work contributes to potential stressors. At work these stressors may emanate from a cluttered, noisy, distracting physical environment or most certainly from a highly charged, negative, emotionally charged environment. In addition, overload or underload, one's uncertainty about his or her role, and the extent of people contact also are stressors at the work place. Interestingly, it is interesting to note that positive social support at work and a good deal of autonomy in the job, stress is less likely to be detrimental. Furthermore, the environment outside of work also contains stressors. Lastly, sex differences between individuals outside of work help to counter stress.

Whether at work or away from work, the true goal is to have balanced living. For when there is balance, burnout is stifled.

To the extent that stressors are processed with effective coping skills they are dissipated. Furthermore, stress which is dissipated does not become strain; stress which is not dissipated accumulates as strain and once it crosses an individual's threshold, becomes burnout emotions. Coming to understand this model and applying it to one's daily living is critical if one wishes to ameliorate the effects of stress in life.

THEME

A Letter to a Friend

By Daniel B. Dunham

(Not an available title - possibly a joke)

For example, I've experienced several of those life-altering stresses; after I left the self-employed status of farming in 1958, I've changed jobs 12 times; moved every 20 times; experienced the birth of three children; the deaths of a brother, two parents, and an uncle; and a heart attack! On the plus side, I've been married once (for 28 years) and haven't had any financial problems that could be called serious. And, it's important to point out right here that the main reason I've survived these stress points and near traumas is a spouse who has always been there to help through every crisis.

Overcoming Workaholism

I learned early in my career, and am today, a workaholic. I am, too, something of a perfectionist, (Continued on page 6)
"On Balance - A Letter to a Friend"

(Continued from page 5)

though less so these days than 20 years ago. I am possessed also of a severe case of "Type A" personality... another affliction with which I have lived these 50 years, and will, I expect for 50 more.

Work has indeed been central in my life. I've never had a job I didn't absolutely enjoy to the fullest, almost all of the time. Each job I've had, successively, has been the best job. I've been lucky in that respect. But the jobs were tough jobs, and I attacked each one with the vigor and commitment of a true "Type A" workaholic. And I paid the price.

The Price of Workaholism

We pay a price for our overwork in a number of different ways. For our family, my shortcomings in the "quality time" area, caused by my addiction for work were not, fortunately, disastrous. I'm sure my kids would have been better off had I been home more, especially at times when they, too, were experiencing the stress of a move, a new school, moving to a new place. But the need to keep moving from coast to coast. They are a resilient lot who made the adjustments to compensate for what I see now as my selfishness about the importance of my job.

Another price paid by my overwork is in damage to our physical and mental health. For me, as you know, this was to manifest most extremely by the heart attack in late 1983. During a routine medical check-up every year, I had a lot of time to think, read, and consider the facts of my life. I found it very hard to read about heart attacks, recovery, and prevention of future episodes and hard to face a new regimen of diet and exercise. Because you, see, I was scared of seeing myself for what I really am. I resisted learning and changing. And I still do. But as I said before, there is progress.

What all of that amounts to is that I have learned a few things, and am doing quite a few things differently as a result. Maybe this is where I can help you, George, because I am living my life differently today than 15 years ago when I first began experiencing "anxiety attacks", and began, with the help of a couple of good physicians, to make a few course corrections. The progress is slow... something like a diet. I've been off and on the wagon so many times I'm at least an expert in getting started again! So, what have I learned? Mostly about pacing and modifying and balancing.

Pacing

One of the tricks of this business of learning to live with who you are to be in very small steps, I found that you can't pace if you don't shorten your stride. That's when I started making lists. I honestly took seriously the notion that, each day, we deal with three sets of things to do. They are the "Got To's", the "Ought To's" and the "Nice To's". There are important actions. Take the first one in fact, we deal with all of the things you think you should do that day. The second is to divide your list into the 3 "To Do" categories, or priority groups. The third step is to NOT do some, or all, of the "Nice To's" that day.

Just don't do them. Each succeeding day, don't do a few more, until you're into the "Ought To" list, and finally, you are NOT doing any at all. Some of you may say, What you'll learn is that, for some of the things you honestly feel you must do, that not doing them doesn't make any difference in the way the world works. And some of your "Ought To's" (a word only recently added to my vocabulary). Once you've done it the first time, it becomes increasingly easier to do it the second time. Or, more important, being clear about not worrying if you progress is slow, and some weeks the lists seem to get longer. If you stick to it, you will learn to set priorities, and get some space in your life. And, you can't change pace without some struggle which brings me to a second trick of the moderating trade.

Do Work at Work

"Work worth doing is worth doing at work," I'm not sure where I first heard that statement. Maybe I made it up. But it's been working for me for nearly 20 years now, for the past six years I have not taken any work home. Before that, very little but with a few "acceptable exceptions."

It is less easy for the mind to leave work at the office or school. Indeed, I do wake up many a morning thinking about work, what's on the agenda for the day, what to do first: what NOT TO DO. But I don't do it on, or concentrate to the exclusion of everything else. It's natural for a workaholic to think about work. The difference is in not thinking about it all the time. We have to practice NOT THINKING about work.

Take Time for Self

Let me say a few more words about space and pace. I have always given myself some time each day too. Usually, that's around noon. During the 2 years in Washington, D.C., I rarely went "out to lunch." I just don't like the "dinner lunch"-es, and I found, neither do I my stomach. I "brown-bagged" lunch about 75% of the time during those years eating mostly by myself in my office. It was my personal time - a break in a schedule which couldn't run to as many as 15 to 20 meetings each day at peak times. Once you create some space in your day, you can think about pace. And, possibly, how to do with many things we do, rather than with how fast or slowly we do them. Again, it has to do with selecting the right "Got To's," and allowing time to do a few things well. Then, we create our own spaces, and find it possible to re-pace to a more reasonable rate.

Learn to Manage Time

You may find it worth your while to take a workshop on time management. There are quite a few "tricks" for better use of that non-renewable resource we have available - time - to be learned from the time experts. You'll learn, mostly from practice, that your time is more controllable. And, you have to work at it. In fact, actually do some of the things the time managers suggest.

You're Not Responsible for Others

A third practice I've made myself become pretty good at is to not believe that I am responsible for the feelings or motivations of other people. I've had to learn, often the hard way, that THEY are responsible for how they feel. I am not. My responsibility is to deal as effectively as I can with the ways in which they might make work difficult for me. This means getting out those feelings, getting their work and their relationships with me and with others with whom we jointly work. And there is a big difference between the two. Similarly, I am not responsible for the motives of others, and, more importantly, I have pretty much stopped trying to guess what it is that motivates them. For, or not to make assumptions about motives, because when I do, I've found, I'm almost always wrong.

Another major change began for me when I started to take seriously several years of admonishments about diet and exercise. I am now an "exercise walker" and to walk 10 to 15 miles a week. The diet is harder and not so consistent. The point is that I am aware of the need to make this a regular part of my life, and that I must work to make that happen. And, I feel better, am more relaxed, and more efficient at work when I'm "on the program." I'm also more agreeable, easier to get along with, and like myself better.

A couple of final thoughts. After our visit last month, it occurred to me that you don't have a hobby. Neither do I. I'm working on several, but not too seriously. What is important is that I am aware of the fact that I ought to have an alternative or two that I enjoy as much as I enjoy my work, but that are not work. We do have several favorite things to do away from the job, but none could probably be called a true hobby, for a while we were quite dedicated square dancers, and we'll probably get back into that again one day. We are also back-road travelers, and our passion (more than a hobby) is the Oregon Coast where we spend many days. I wish you had had a hobby. I know you retired would have been a lot easier on him. He farmed actively until age 77, then "retired"... but not easily or happily. And part of that was because he had not really prepared himself to do something other than the work he had always known. Suffice to say that I encourage both of us to get into something that provides a real break - and space - from our work. Maybe it's called a hobby.

Finally, George, it's probably worth repeating that this is all a rather slow, one-step-at-a-time, sometimes frustrating process. Achieving balance between work, family and home, leisure and other pursuits is a constant challenge. The balance need not be perfect or even always consistent. To be unsatisfied with where we are in attempting to re-center our lives - through pacing, creating space and moderating - is also part of the challenge. I know I haven't achieved what I want yet - but I am satisfied with the trend.

A short summary might help to highlight and remember a few of the more important ideas in what is otherwise a rather lengthy attempt to share those personal views with a friend.

- Make lists, set daily priorities and learn to NOT DO things that make little difference in the long run.
- Leave work at the workplace
- Make some space for yourself in each day's routine (eat out)
- Accept responsibility only for your own feelings and motives and not for those of others.
- Exercise regularly (do something you enjoy) and watch what and how much you eat.
- Buy a hobby of some kind
- Read, take a workshop, listen to others, seek help from professionals to get started and keep going.
- Take it a step at a time - make them small steps
- When you fall off the wagon, get up and get on again.

And remember - you have to decide what balance you want among all of the aspects of your life that are important to you. I think through the moderate change of a few things you are now doing - to change pace, make space - and understand that it takes time. Don't expect miracles, just make a few small ones of your own.

I expect that's more than enough said, my friend. Maybe there are just a couple of things here that will partly explain why I seemed to you to "have it all together." I don't, but I'm gaining on it.

My best to you and yours.

Dan

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Theme

"What Works For Me"

Balancing your professional commitments with your personal life and family commitments can be a constant challenge. It seems there is never enough time to get the work done at school besides devoting sufficient time to family matters. One must always search for the fine line between overdoing it at work and sacrificing precious family time. It is important to ask the question, how many days out of the year do you leave the house before the kids are even awake, or at best, you say a quick 'good morning' at the breakfast table before leaving, and when you get home that night they are already in bed? Vocational agriculture teachers tend to argue with themselves over these matters and usually justify their long hours at work for the sake of a "successful vocational agriculture program."

An Inherent Conflict

The desire to be successful in one's profession will always be in conflict with the goal of attaining a high quality family life full of activities and time spent together. Vince Lombardi, the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, knew and understood that fact. He once said, "Success demands singleness of purpose... mental toughness. You decide what price you and your family must pay for success... once you've decided on that price, you put it out of your mind and work towards your goal." He knew that whatever success or goals he achieved with his Packers, his family life would pay a price. So each teacher asks, what price must be paid and what can be done to lower the price and still be successful as a teacher?

Some Strategies That Might Work

After teaching vocational agriculture for the past 11 years, some strategies that have worked for me include categorizing your duties and responsibilities, selecting program priorities, communicating with family, encouraging spouse to accept community roles, and a few other ideas.

Always one sided (i.e., the job duties always winning out over the duties at home).

Last year, another vocational agriculture teacher with over 10 years in teaching told of one of his decisions that he wished he had made different. He had a middle-aged son who was dying of cancer. During the county fair, this teacher had a feeling that he should take some time and visit his son again (who lived in another state). But he couldn't see how he could take the time during the county fair since he had never missed a fair in all of his years in teaching. So, he planned to take the time right after the fair was over. His son died a couple of days later. In retrospect he said that he shouldn't have made the trip. He realized the final visit would have gotten along without him. Seeing his son one last time would have meant more to him than any fair or any job for that matter.

Select Program Priorities

When teachers graduate from college and start their first year of teaching, many of them have the impression that they can do all of the duties of a vocational agriculture teacher better than anything else. They can be the best classroom and laboratory teacher in the state with the nestest facilities. All of their students will conduct superb SOE programs that the teachers help them develop to the maximum degree and they are all working toward their career goal. They also think they will have time to conduct superb FFA Chapter Programs, including winning the National Chapter Award, BOAC, Safety, Proficiency Awards, judging contests, and all of the rest.

However, after a couple of years of teaching, reality hits most teachers and they realize it's just not humanly possible, unless they are willing to spend about 20 hours a day, seven days a week at it. That doesn't leave any time for the personal life. So, most teachers need to accept the fact that they have to do the best they can in the "Must Do's" of the job and prudently select some of the "Should Do's" and "Nice To Do's."

The Huntington FFA Chapter has received a couple of gold awards at the state level in BOAC, some state recognition in the National Chapter Award Program, and two first place awards in the overall Nebraska Vocational Agriculture contest Sweepstakes award area. The chapter has also been involved in many community projects during the year. But, the chapter never did all of those things the same year. Each year some of the "Should Do's" and "Nice To Do's" were selected. It seems to work and still leave time for the family life.

Communicate With Family

Good communication is a must. Usually, between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. after our two boys go to bed, my wife and I have some time to visit about the day. If it has been a busy week, where the time in the evenings has not been available, then it's Sunday morning when we take about an hour to have breakfast and discuss about the past week's events. I find out what happened at home while I was gone and we look to the week ahead and check the calendar and do some planning. I've gotten into too many conflicts that could have been avoided had I told my wife about upcoming events early rather than inform her the day of or evening before.

Spouse Accepts Community Roles

Another idea that has worked for my wife and me is that she has accepted the community responsibilities that have come our way. She has served on our Church Council and is currently serving as President of the school board for our community school. Several advantages to this idea are that she has a chance to work with people in the community and on meeting nights I get to do chores after supper, help the boys with their lessons, and get them to bed. This gives her a needed break from those responsibilities. Since we've done this, I have found that I really look forward to taking over for her at home. It offers a welcome change of pace.

Other Ideas

Early in my teaching career, my wife attended the National FFA Convention, a couple of State FFA Conventions, the state agriculture teachers' summer conference, and other events. This gave her a good idea of what was involved in this profession and why I can get so motivated about being a vocational agriculture teacher. It was also easier for her to leave then, before we had a family, or at least before the boys were in school.

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"What Works For Me"
(Continued from page 9)

Another essential is to use your summer vacation days. During my first three summers, I usually had 3 to 5 days of vacation days that I never used because I couldn't get all of the work done at school. I finally realized I was cheating my family and myself by not spending those days at home with them. The work is never done at school anyway, is it? My dad used to say, "If a farmer can say he's got everything done, he's not really a farmer." That holds true for a vocational agriculture teacher as well.

How about working on Saturday and Sunday? I used to spend quite a few Saturdays and some Sundays on vocational agriculture/FFA activities. That has also changed. I work on only 4 or 6 Saturdays per year on vocational agriculture/FFA activities and have eliminated all vocational agriculture/FFA activities on Sunday. That day is our family day. The programs at school have not been hampered by those changes. The weekend is a special time for a family, if I don't have to work at the Friday night football game, and we might attend the game as a family or pay a visit to friends or relatives. Saturday is our day off working together.

Like many other teachers, I'm involved in farming and we make it a family affair as much as possible. A typical Saturday may find all of us scooping the manure off of the concrete floor around the barn, grinding feed for the cattle, or just driving out to the pasture to check on the cows and their calves.

On a typical Sunday, when church services, enjoy a big breakfast, "mom and dad" have their "coffee hours," and later we'll all go outside for a game of baseball or football. In the afternoon, we'll visit relatives or friends, go fishing or hunting, play a family game together, or just watch the football or baseball game on T.V. After enjoying a few years of these kinds of weekends, I've never gone back to working weekends at school. Another thing vocational agriculture teachers should remember is that our students also need their weekends at home, away from school activities.

My wife and I probably don't do as much socially as other couples our age do. But maybe that's typical of a vocational agriculture teacher's life. We quit golfing a couple of years ago because we knew we could be home doing something as a family rather than being on the golf course. We don't bowl or belong to any community groups right now either. We've decided that there will be more time for those activities after our boys are older and away from home. They are only home for a short time of our lives, and we'll make the most of it while they are here.

What price does one's family pay for the sake of success in this profession? That's the constant question vocational agriculture teachers face. Remember the words of Lombardi. He knew that the degree of success was in direct relationship with the price paid by the family. The teacher whose son died of cancer retired last year. When asked what one thing he would do differently if he had to do it over, he said, without a doubt, he would spend more time with his family.

My dad and my supervising teacher both told me at different times that my family was more important than my job. Their words seem more meaningful as each year goes by. When you think about it, given our education and our experience, how are we capable of doing a job other than teaching vocational agriculture. Therefore, it seems logical that we are replaceable even though we may not think so.

But we are not replaceable in our role in our family. Imagine yourself, 30, 40, or more years from now, at retirement age and asking yourself this question: "Comparing my students, their parents, my administrators, and fellow teachers with my family, who is most important to me and who will remember me best for what I have or have not done in this life?" How one answers that question is a matter of choice. A family understands that a certain degree of success is essential and important, but they also know that there is a limit to the price paid. It's up to each individual to keep things in perspective.

All of the successes, all of the awards, and all of the satisfactions of teaching linger only in the memory. The family unit, the joys and hardships experienced together, the growing up and growing old and the teaching of life and life's values to your children — these are the things that endure and are the qualities of life so much more important than any job or profession.

Fosters Longevity
It is essential to have teachers who live a life that will bring forth many years of effective teaching. Much is lost when a teacher leaves the profession after being a successful teacher. Experiences, insights, understandings, and skills are lost. Efforts and energies put forth to get a teacher to a level of performance that provides effective instruction must be restarted on another individual. This may become a frustrating experience to an administrator, which may lower that person's level of performance.

Enhances Professional Relationships
Delighted people are a source of joy to an administrator. It is a pleasure to work with people who have a positive attitude toward the teaching profession. Teachers who possess both dedication and a positive attitude have found a proper balance in life. Getting satisfaction from the job and enjoying a quality personal life provide the means of building relationships which give stability to staff personnel.

Improves Efficiency
Individuals who have achieved a balanced life in their professional and personal lives have mastered being organized. Someone has described life as a smorgasbord. There is more to do than anyone has time to do. Selections and choices are in abundant supply. The question then is how to select quality. Teachers who have discovered how to manage time properly, both in the professional and personal arenas of life, are wise indeed. These are persons who are effective, thus gaining a personal satisfaction that far exceeds what many consider to be essential in life such as economic gain or praise. Teachers who gain satisfaction from their professional and personal lives are in a position to be effective and contribute to the mission of the educational system.

Aids Accountability
There are teachers who for various reasons make excuses for why they are not happy in teaching. These are generally teachers who do not understand their accountability as individuals. If they devote too much time to the profession it is because someone is demanding too much. If they devote too much time to their personal life it is also because someone else is demanding too much of their time. Neither of these situations take into consideration one's accountability for providing for effectiveness in both aspects of life. A sense of guilt may develop in such circumstances, thus contributing to a low level of performance. A balanced individual feels responsible for one's actions and does not tend to blame others.

Leads to Effective Instruction
Last, and for the most important reason, administrators are looking for individuals who will be effective teachers. This will contribute to high morale and strong teamwork. Building quality programs is a goal of any institution which seeks to serve people. Attitudes of a teacher are important and tend to be passed on to their students. Good teachers have positive attitudes, thus becoming extremely important contributors to the education process. No amount of competency will overcome a poor attitude. There is no substitute for effective instruction. As an administrator I may do a great deal to support a teacher, but I cannot compensate for poor instruction. Effective teachers get the job done. Excellence in education is becoming a national theme. To meet this challenge it is going to take effective teachers. Teachers who have achieved a balanced life and who stay in the profession are our greatest resource for achieving true excellence in education.
Professional and Personal Balance
In A Two Career Family

Maintaining professional and personal balance in a two-career family can be accomplished, though it won't always be easy. Striving for advances in the careers of wife and husband requires commitment—commitment to each other and commitment by each to their profession. Add children, and there's a three-way commitment.

Is there a challenge? You bet there is. In fact, there are many of them. The purpose of this article is to describe some of the approaches the authors have used in their personal and professional lives.

Background
One of the authors is the chief financial officer and a professor of business at a university; the other is a vocational agriculture teacher educator and department head at a different university. Together, they have experienced the challenges, rewards, and joys of a two-career marriage. Plus, there are two children—one a high school senior and the other a 10th grader.

Dual careers have always been a part of the marriage. He started as a vocational agriculture teacher; she as a business education and English teacher. Sharing professional and personal time began after graduation from college and marriage. Then there was graduate school—she was a single student while he completed doctoral study at the University of Illinois, and he was a beginning assistant professor while she earned her doctorate at Mississippi State University. And children were born during the time of graduate study for her.

It was our belief that we would not just carry on day-to-day routines in our careers. We wanted to be professionally active and make professional contributions. Books, articles, research, leadership positions, and, hopefully, professional contributions have been a result.

And the children—we wanted to be involved in their growth and education. We knew we couldn't be with them all the time but we could be involved in quality ways in their development. Serving on the school board, as president of band boosters, by being active in school events, and other ways could help them grow educationally. Family outings to the mountains, cities, beaches, and other activities would provide time together. And, of course, daily support and involvement are essential.

Strategies for Coping
Through the years certain strategies have been useful in our two-career marriage. These strategies have helped give professional and personal balance in a two-career marriage with strong career commitments.

Respect for the Other's Professional Pursuits Is Essential
We respect the career pursuits of each other. We find joy in each other's accomplishments. We support each other in times of career stress. The support may involve discussion of job situations, the trying out of courses of action, giving a little extra effort in daily routine when the job demands of the other are greater, and making it possible for each other to be professionally active. This has helped us understand each other's career.

Budget Time for Professional and Personal Life
Scheduling of activities is important. Using a calendar to keep each other informed of professional, social, and other events is very important. Regularly reviewing schedules together and recording these on a calendar at home, help in avoiding conflicts.

There are times when priorities must be set. Events may conflict. Personal leave time must often be scheduled just as other events. And, planning well ahead of time is essential.

Have a Division of Labor
Maintaining a home is a dual responsibility. An understanding of this from the beginning has been essential. Each has certain duties. For example, one cooks and the other does the dishes. One shops for groceries and the other tends to automobile maintenance. One may wash certain clothes and the other the building and iron. And, with some duties, working together is beneficial.

Each person must be flexible. When job demands mean trips away from home, the other picks up the slack. Also children can assist with responsibilities.

Professional Activities Can Become Personal Time
Separation of professional and personal life is difficult. Professional involvement can be a time of enhancing personal life. Attending a meal function (such as a student organization or faculty awards banquet) is time together away from the kitchen. When one has a professional meeting or conference, the other may take vacation leave from work and go along. This gives personal time together as well as helps one better understand career demands of the other. Plus, children may go on trips and have valuable experiences. For example, our daughter recently accompanied us when we attended a reception at a meeting of the board of trustees for all universities in Mississippi. Our daughter met live university presidents during one evening. What other 10th grader can say she has done that?

Use Children's Activities as Personal Time
There are many activities available to children and parents. Attending band concerts, dramas and musicals, awards programs, athletic events, and other school activities is a quality, satisfying use of personal time. Also, attending such events shows children that there is parental support for their activities.

Involvement in school and educational projects can pay good dividends. Family outings to help children collect specimens for school science projects is a learning experience for children and parents. Parents become an extension of the school and thereby enhance educational achievement. The few involvements we are invited to are no compared to the satisfaction we have when we see our children excel.

Maintain an Extent of Independence
In two-career marriages, each person must ultimately make it on his or her own. Both individuals can't go and do everything together. We have found that each spouse must be relatively independent of the other. Traveling alone, being away overnight, making early morning trips, and other non-routine activities must be readily accepted by the other. At times both careers are single tasks; singles is needed when both have activities at the same time. Separate checking accounts, credit cards, and ownership have certain advantages. Of course, it is very important that both individuals are aware of each other's schedule and personal financial details.

Support Each Other
Each of us finds joy and celebration in each other's accomplishments. Each of us is hurt when the other experiences a setback or faces a career crisis. Mutual support and understanding are critical factors in dual careers.

Have Quality Activities for Children
Individuals don't perform as efficiently and effectively in their work when they are preoccupied with their children. Arrangements need to be made for the proper care of small children, scheduled after school events, and establishing study routines in the home in the evening. Quality summer and holiday activities need to be scheduled. Summer camps offer excellent opportunities for learning and development. It is important to carefully evaluate camps and other child care services—use those that focus on academics rather than athletics. Cultivating friendships of children with other children is preferred to allowing them freedom to roam the neighborhood to find friends on their own.

Have Quality Escape Activities
Everyone needs time to escape from the rigors of career demands, the way the time is used, i.e., kind of escape, and importance the professional status of the individual. Quality use of personal time builds energy for career success. Professional renewal may be found in many ways. We have found that changing routines and environments for a few days is refreshing. A quiet weekend at home may be just as renewing as traveling to some distant location. We have found a mix of the two to be most beneficial.

Conclusion: Time Is Limited
There is just so much time available in a work day. It is important to carefully prioritize our professional activities. We have always found time to do what we wanted to do. Two-career families can find the appropriate balance, even when both individuals have strong career commitment and demanding careers.

Nobody ever said that a dual-career marriage was easy. There is no free lunch. Sacrifice and compromises are a daily part of our lives. With hard work, love, and dedication, however, an appropriate balance can be reached to satisfactorily combine careers and personal lives.
Burnout: Fact or Fallacy?

While the popular in general talks a lot about the idea of burnout, very little is actually known about the extent to which vocational agriculture teachers are burned out. Newcomb’s article in this issue of THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE defines what burnout is, but the question remains: Does it affect vocational agriculture teachers, and, if so, is it enough to cause concern?

Potential Sources of Burnout

Diverse Challenges in the Classroom

What is it about the nature of vocational agriculture teachers’ jobs that makes them susceptible to burnout? Vocational agriculture teachers need to be able to identify the source of sources of undue stress which may ultimately lead to burnout.

Because vocational agriculture teachers are constantly making decisions that affect the lives of the students, the teachers could be sources of stress. Additionally, teachers of vocational agriculture usually have students of varied needs within the classroom which causes the teacher to prepare varied lessons to reach all students. This is difficult and exhausting work. Another challenge for the vocational agriculture teacher is being able to maintain discipline within the classroom and laboratory. From personal experience, this author knows that discipline is a potentially depleting task, thus adding emotional pressure.

Teachers of vocational agriculture are also constantly in close contact with people in the agricultural community, many of whom look-up to the vocational agriculture teacher as an expert in all fields of agriculture, thus causing additional stress. These sources of stress will lead to burnout.

Workload

In addition to the teaching responsibilities, several other components are included in the total vocational agriculture program. The FFA organization requires a substantial amount of time as does supervising the students’ S&I programs. In some areas of the country, vocational agriculture teachers are responsible for instruction and supervision of the adult education program and the young farmers’ organization. The responsibilities are such that a "normal" workload is not easy. It’s not unusual to hear vocational agriculture teachers complain about working long hours and having more work to complete than is humanly possible. But, all this work must be done! It’s, therefore, not unusual to find the work load of the vocational agriculture teachers as a potential source of burnout.

Time Pressures

Because of the rigorous nature of the program in vocational agriculture, time pressures could be cited as a cause of additional stress. Also, all states have forms which must be completed and forwarded to the state office by a given date. Individuals are also a source of pressure for vocational agriculture teachers. Some of these individuals are administrators, the parents, and other teachers in the school district. It seems that all parties concerned expect nothing but the best from the vocational agriculture program, thus adding pressure.

Measuring Burnout

How is the phenomenon of burnout measured? Basically teachers are asked to respond to statements that measure their psychological conditions in a number of areas. One accepted way of measuring burnout is to see how emotionally exhausted, deprofessionalized and effective teachers feel they are. This is accomplished by using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Emotional exhaustion measures feelings of being overextended and exhausted by one’s work. Deprofessionalization measures feelings of impotence and responses and responses without feeling toward one’s students. Personal accomplishment measures feelings of competence and successful achievement as related to working with students.

The subscales of emotional exhaustion, deprofessionalization, and personal accomplishment are measured on two dimensions: frequency and intensity. Frequency measures the number of occurrences and intensity measures how strong the feelings are when they are experienced.

If vocational agriculture teachers score too high on the emotional exhaustion subscale, they are agreeing with statements such as: "I feel emotionally drained from my work." "I feel used up at the end of the work day." and "I feel like I’m at the end of my rope." By scoring high on the deprofessionalization subscale, it indicates that the vocational agriculture teachers are saying: "I don’t really care what happens to any of my students, "I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally," and "I feel I treat some of my students as if they were impersonal objects."

In contrast to the emotional exhaustion and deprofessionalization subscales, scores that are low on both the frequency and intensity dimensions of the personal accomplishment subscale correspond to higher levels of burnout. On a personal accomplishment subscale then, by scoring low, it means that vocational agriculture teachers do not feel that they are "very energetic," do not feel that they "do very effectively with the problems of their students," and feel they are not "positively influencing other people’s lives through their work."

One study measured the extent of burnout among vocational agriculture teachers using the three subscales identified above. The results of the study are sufficient to cause concern for those in the profession.

Burnout Among Vocational Agriculture Teachers

Ohio vocational agriculture teachers are experiencing considerable burnout (Newcomb, Betts, & Cano, in press). In the area of emotional exhaustion, between 17% and 23% of the teachers were in the high burnout category. Scores on the deprofessionalization subscale indicated that between 28% and 39% of the scores fell in the area indicating high burnout. Approximately 30% of the vocational agriculture teachers were found to experience a high level of burnout as measured by the personal accomplishment subscale.

Hence, a sufficient number of Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture are experiencing high levels of burnout. Earlier, the following question was asked: Does burnout affect vocational agriculture teachers, and, if so, is it enough to cause concern? It appears to this author that the answer to the question is a definite yes. However, a new question arises: Are the teachers of vocational agriculture doing anything to cope with these levels of burnout?

Using Coping Skills

Based on the model explained in the Newcomb article, it is known that burnout is influenced by how well teachers of vocational agriculture use coping skills to dissipate stress. These skills are divided into four sets of coping behaviors: recreational resources, which reflect the use of recreational activities as a distractor from stressful events; self care/personal coping, which reflects the ability to cope; (Continued on page 16)
Take The Time To Smell The Roses

"Take the time to smell the roses" is the advice often given to us by our elders. The problem is that most of us never find the time to even plant the rose bush!

Does lack of "time" to really do the things you want to do sound all too familiar? Do you feel you are spending too much time in the professional sphere of your life and not enough time in the personal sphere? If so, we suggest you first assess how your time is being spent and then set out to work on the area that appears out of balance.

Activity/Time Identification

To help determine the balance between your professional and personal life, we have developed an "Activity/Time Chart" for you to complete. To begin, you need to identify your activities in both the professional and personal sphere of your life and the amount of daily time you devote to each. The third category utilized in the chart is the amount of time you spend sleeping.

In reviewing your professional sphere, include the following types of activities:

- Work activities include time spent on teaching; routine functions; short and long term projects; meetings with colleagues, supervisor and students; extra curricular functions, etc.
- Related activities include time spent in participating in organizations and events that are directly or indirectly related to your job, etc.

In reviewing your personal sphere, include the following types of activities:

- Personal Life Activities:
  - Family activities include time spent on recreation, maintenance and housekeeping tasks; socializing; meal preparation, shopping, etc.
  - Self activities include time spent on hobbies, personal care, recreation, private time, time with friends, church or synagogue activities, community organizations, political involvement, club involvement, etc.

Now that you identified your professional and personal activities and convert these activities into hours spent per day by using the "Activity/Time Chart" provided.

Activity/Time Chart

The purpose of recording the time spent in the professional and personal sphere of your life and the time spent rejuvenating yourself through sleep is to aid you in determining if you are living your life in balance. Your personal life will also be divided between time spent in family activities and self activities to further assist you in analyzing the balance in your life.

Using the color code below, color in the appropriate amount of time you spend in each category listed.

To determine if your life is adequately balanced, add the number of hours you sleep a week. Based on an average of eight hours of sleep per night, the number of hours you sleep a week should be approximately 56 hours.

ACTIVITY/TIME CHART

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<tr>
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By SANDRA K. ALLAIRE AND NANCY R. WIELHCELM

(Dr. Alleire is an Instructor and Dr. Wielchel is an Assistant Professor in Home & Family Services at the University of Minnesota, College of Agriculture, St. Paul, Minnesota 55106.)

Professional Life Activities:

- Work activities include time spent on teaching; routine functions; short and long term projects; meetings with colleagues, supervisor and students; extra curricular functions, etc.
- Related activities include time spent in participating in organizations and events that are directly or indirectly related to your job, etc.

In reviewing your personal sphere, include the following types of activities:

- Personal Life Activities:
  - Family activities include time spent on recreation, maintenance and housekeeping tasks; socializing; meal preparation, shopping, etc.
  - Self activities include time spent on hobbies, personal care, recreation, private time, time with friends, church or synagogue activities, community organizations, political involvement, club involvement, etc.

Now continue by adding the number of hours you spend working. This sphere of your life should be approximately 56 hours or less.

Follow with adding the number of hours spent in your personal sphere. This should again be approximately one-third of your week's hours. To further assess the time you spend in this sphere, count the number of hours devoted to your family and then to yourself. A comparison of these hours will help you further assess the balance in your life.

Remember, self time is very important to your growth and development as well as in your relationships to those around you in both your personal and professional life.

If after completing this exercise, you determine that in a week's time you spend approximately equal hours in the three major areas recorded, your life appears to be in balance. CONGRATULATIONS!

If not, recognize we can all live unbalanced for short periods of time, but extended unbalance can lead to a variety of problems and general dissatisfaction with your life. We are all too aware of people who are so work-oriented that health and family problems often result. Understand that most often the unbalance is caused not from too much to do, but a failure to organize what we have to do and would like to do according to our values and commitments.

Achieving Balance

For those of you who would like to live a more balanced and satisfying life, these suggestions may help you achieve this goal. Look closely at that portion of your life in which...
Take The Time To Smell The Roses
(Continued from page 17)

you are spending too much time at the sacrifice of the others. This is the area that will need to be set back into
balance. To resolve the imbalance, set out to work through the four action steps listed below:
1. Planning/Organizing — Some portion of everyday should be spent planning and organizing your day’s ac-
tivities so that the time you spend in these three major areas is more effective. Facilitate this task, ask yourself the
following questions:
   a) What are the factors that are causing me to spend too much time in this category?
b) How can I plan, organize and streamline the un-
balanced part of my life?
c) Which factors can I control? If you can control them,
you may choose to eliminate, delegate, or short cut them
(handle more efficiently) which may involve adapting your
standards to accommodate achieving balance.
2. Priorities — Determine which activities in your area of
imbalance are most important to you. Make sure those
are given your immediate attention and adequate time is
allotted. Place the others in lower priority. Con-

Continue to work through your priority list making sure you
delegate more time to the areas being slighted. This step is
important to do in both your professional and personal
spheres.
3. Communication — It is important to communicate
your priorities, and the plan you have devised in dealing
with them to those people it will affect. In communicating,
you may find a need to compromise with others involved
doing solicit help.
4. Attitude — None of these suggestions will help if
your attitude is negative. To approach the imbalance, you
must have a positive attitude toward the idea that a
balanced life can be a reality and is achievable. A good at-
titude can make a difference so take the effort to adjust
your attitude if needed.

Conclusion
We hope after completing the ACTIVITY/TIME,
CHART, you were able to determine if you are spending
the time in your life in a balanced way. For those of you
who discovered areas needing work, we hope our sugges-
tions were helpful in directing you in making changes. So,
the next time someone suggests you take time to smell the
roses, just smile and say, “I think I will. I've got the bushes
planted this year.”

Your Marriage and The Profession

There are probably many people in your community
who at one time or another harbored the belief that the
vocational agriculture teacher lived at the school, slept
in the shop, and ate all meals in the school cafeteria. Hon-
est, dedicated, articulate, resourceful, and most of all, hard
working. These are but a few of the words often used in
describing the vocational agriculture teacher. From the
school administrator to students, many recognize the time
and effort the vocational agriculture teacher puts forth in
providing a quality educational experience for all.
Yet, do students, parents and administrators realize
vocational agriculture teachers have a spouse, children,
homes, pets and troubles of their own? It is difficult for
many to understand that a teacher’s life is not bound by
the time and space of the school. Vocational agriculture
students must co-exist roles such as teacher, FFA ad-
visor, spouse, community participant. However, in doing
so, vocational agriculture teachers must cope with the
many demands of their multiple roles, especially the
demands placed upon them by marriage. These demands
have been acknowledged many times over, but rarely have
they been subject to study.

Do We Have A Problem?
Marital relationships have been identified as a major fac-
tor causing vocational agriculture teachers to leave the
profession. Several independent studies of teacher turn-
over in vocational agriculture throughout the U.S. have
uncovered the role of marital relationships in job satisfac-
tion (Cole, 1981; Cooper and Nelson, 1981; Matton, 1974).
A number of qualified graduates of agricultural education
programs choose not to teach due to the job demands
associated with the profession and their influence on
marital satisfaction. Prospective vocational agriculture
teachers are aware of the demands the job may place upon
a marriage (Cooper and Nelson, 1981; Peters, 1981). Final-
ly, just as the demands of the job seem to have a relation-
ship to marital satisfaction, marital satisfaction seems to
also have a relationship to the quality of the vocational
agriculture program. When a school activity is disruptive
and nonconducive to favorable spouse relations, school
related activity will be terminated or neglected (Gerhke,
1979).

Marital Satisfaction and Vocational Agriculture

In the spring of 1985, a study was conducted in New
Mexico to identify the spouse’s perception of selected job
demands upon marital satisfaction and to determine the
relationship between specific employment characteristics
and marital satisfaction as perceived by the spouse.

This study sought to answer how the spouse perceived
selected job demands associated with teaching vocational
agriculture influenced satisfaction. The job demands in-
cluded long hours, evening and weekend activities,
teachers’ annual salary in relation to the amount of effort,
employment status of the spouse, size of community
employed, size of family, and age of children. This study
also considered the relationship between marital satisfac-
tion as perceived by the spouse and job satisfaction,
salary, job status, career advancement, and job stability.

What The Spouse Has To Say
Fifty-seven teachers were married at the time of the study
and were asked to rate their wives and three female teachers. Because
of the small size of the target population, all of these
recently married teachers were included in the study. Forty-six wives
(85.2%) responded to the mail questionnaire, while two
of the three husbands responded. Forty-eight question-
naires were returned for a total of 84.2%.
The average member of this sample had been married for
slightly more than 12 years and had a spouse who had
taught approximately 11 years. The teacher was employed
in a community of 19,000. had two children, and earned
between $23,000 and $26,000 per year.

Slightly less than 57% of the spouses of the vocational
agriculture teachers indicated that marital satisfaction
would increase if salary would increase and job respon-
sibilities remained the same. More than half of the spouses
indicated that marital satisfaction would remain unchang-
eless regardless of the spouse having to work outside of
the home, be it voluntary or involuntary. If another oc-
cupational choice was possible, slightly less than 50% of
the spouses indicated that a career as farmer/rancher
would increase marital satisfaction. Slightly more than
55% of the respondents indicated that a career as a police
officer, truck driver, and career officer in the military
would decrease marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction
would remain the same for more than 50% of the
respondents for the occupational areas of manager of a
retail store, stay at home activity, and nonrepresentative
of a bank, lawyer, and technical engineer.

More than three-quarters of the spouses felt that com-
pany size had no effect upon marital satisfaction. Slight-
ly more than 55% of the spouses in the sample indicated
that the amount of time the vocational agriculture teacher
was involved in the job does affect marital satisfaction and
additional activities decrease marital satisfaction.

In terms of children in the relationship, 55% of the
respondents indicated that child responsibilities did not pre-
vent them from being a spouse. 55% of the teachers had
children. Similarly, close to three-quarters of the
respondents did not feel that the demands of the job
prevented the vocational agriculture teacher from spend-
ing time with the younger children or the older children.

The respondents indicated that generally they find their
husband’s wife’s career rewarding in terms of job satisfac-
tion (73.6%), salary (53.6%), job status (79%), and job stabi-
ility (81%).

The respondents were asked to rate their marital satisfaction
on a ten point index with 10 as high and 1 as
low. The respondent’s average marital satisfaction was
7.59. In correlating marital satisfaction with the employ-
ment characteristics of job satisfaction, salary, job status,
and career advancement, no significant relationship was
found. A moderate relationship was found between marit-
al satisfaction and job stability (r = .47 p<.05). The better
the spouse’s satisfaction with job stability, the higher the
marital satisfaction index.

(Continued on page 20)

BY CARY S. AND JUDY E. STRAGAUSIS

Mr. Stragausis is an Associate Professor of Agricultural Edu-
cation at Colorado State University and a former voca-
tional agriculture teacher and advisor in North Dakota.
Mrs. Stragausis is a speech pathologist in private practice.

Fishing is an excellent past-time for vocational agriculture teachers and their families. (Photo courtesy of Deanne Housing)

JANUARY, 1987

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Professional organizations in agricultural education hold annual meetings
near major metropolitan centers such as Los Angeles. Individuals who travel to these meetings to "tack" the cultural,
educational, and entertainment options that are readily available. (Photo
courtesy of Richard Hylton).

CHAPTER 23

Agricultural Education in the United States

19
Your Marriage and The Profession

(Continued from page 19)

This What Suggests

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on interpretations of the data presented in this study and are limited to the group studied in study.

1. The spouse indicates that the amount of time a vocational agriculture teacher is involved in professional ac-
   tivities has a negative effect on marital satisfaction. How are you spending your time as a vocational
   agriculture teacher?

2. An increased activity related to the profession will have a negative influence on marital satisfaction as
   perceived by the spouse. Is the additional activity really going to benefit your program if done at the expense
   of marital satisfaction?

3. Although a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and actual salary was not found, the spouse of
   the vocational agriculture teacher feels that the salary of the vocational agriculture teacher influences marital
   satisfaction. The spouse perceived an increase in salary would increase marital satisfaction while a decrease in
   salary would have a similar direct effect.

4. The most rewarding attributes of a career in voca-
   tional agriculture, as expressed by the spouse, is the opportu-
   nity to work with young people and that the voca-
   tional agriculture teacher finds the job satisfying. The
   spouse recognizes and supports certain attributes of
   teaching vocational agriculture. Capitalize on these at-
   traits.

5. The spouses felt that the least rewarding attributes of a
   career in vocational agriculture include time away from
   home for various professional activities, low salary, and
   the lack of administrative support. Time and money can
   combine with poor administrative support to produce the
   most stress in marital relationship.

You Didn't Marry Your Job!

Examine your job as a vocational agriculture teacher and marital satisfaction. It is like the childhood question of
"Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" You can’t real-
ly begin to say what should come first. Place one before
the other and troubles may abound. To recognize the rela-
ship of marital satisfaction and your career in voca-
 tional agriculture is an important first step. It is a step to
professional stability and personal worth.

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BOOK REVIEW

Dairy Cattle Judging Techniques, by George W. Trimberger and William M. Igen, Prentice-Hall, Inc. Engle-
wood Cliffs, N J 07632.

This book is designed for students developing a systematic method of properly judging dairy cattle. The book gives a written explanation of the ideal characteristics of dairy cattle including: bulls, dairy cows, dry cows, and dairy buyers. This development is in the form of clearly written including sharp, clear pictures examples of ideal dairy charac-
teristics and deviations from the ideal.

The book contains 25 indepth chap-
ters about judging dairy cattle. The major areas covered include an ex-
ceptional chapter of organizing and presenting oral reasons, specific chapters explaining udder shape and attachment, top lines, shoulder confirmation, head and neck characteristics, judging of fitting and showmanship

context of fitting and showing dairy cattle. Each chapter contains a wide variety of pictures illustrating the points
mentioned in the chapter. A great deal of new information including recent revisions of the PCBAC scorecard which places increased emphasis on the mammary system, illustrations of a linear directional classification system, and recent developments in the association of various components of type with pro-
duction and longevity are included in the book. The type of ideal cattle sale and milking Short-
horns have been included.

It is well written for the beginner to
grasp the sometimes difficult techni-
quies of judging dairy cattle. Other
highlights contained in the book is of type appraisal chart, a list of com-
parative terms used in presenting oral
reasons, and a special chapter on show-
inger techniques and procedures.

The book would be an excellent resource for a unit in dairy cattle judging or helping prepare a dairy cattle judging team. The photographs of ideal dairy characteristics and dairy cattle with problem dairy characteristics which are difficult for teachers to find, in live examples and slide presen-
tations of dairy classes will be useful to students.

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Is My Job Too Big For Me?

By Roy A. Enkams and David L. Moring
(Mr. Enkams and Mr. Moring are Vocational Agriculture Instructors at North Lamar High School, Round Rock, TX 78664.)

Do you have a tendency to complain or feel that you are being less effective? Do you feel that your job is too big for you? Do you wish you could "catch up" with your work before the day gets away? Do you wonder if you have taken its toll on you so that you can no longer keep up as you could when you were younger? Do you think inexperience is your problem?

If any of these questions apply, perhaps you should be complimenting yourself rather than feeling guilty or discouraged. Let us look at some factors that affect our responsibilities and opportunities as vocational agriculture teachers. In no way are the authors suggesting that we go back to the "way it used to be" or are we complaining about the present conditions. The purpose of this article is to take a realistic look at our job today and to feel good about the job we are doing.

Although most vocational agriculture teachers are no longer the community veterinarian, the only shop teacher, and the only twelve month employee at the school, he or she has many other additional time and energy consuming responsibilities. Certainly, equipment and modern technology make some teaching duties easier than they were 20 years ago.

Most of our examples are from North Carolina, but similar situations still occur in other states. We ask you to con-
sider these changes and feel good about what you are doing.

Teaching Load and Courses

In 1966, vocational agriculture teachers had four courses per day. Now many have five or more classes plus homeroom, study hall, or other extra teaching duties. The numbers also have increased from four - Agriculture I, II, and III - to 17 plus Agriculture Coop. These include Introduction to Agriculture/Natural Resources, Homesteading and Gardening, Skills, and Levels I, II, and III in each of these: Agricultural Production, Agri-
cultural Machinery and Equipment, Structural, Ornamental Horticulture, Forestry, and Natural Resources/En-
vironmental Protection. In addition, we have more years of knowledge and technical advancements. Does the abundance of agricultural chemicals and governmental regulations contribute? Have new machines and many new agricultural machines have you learned to use?

Administration and Organization

We have consolidated, integrated, assessed, justified, followed up, licensed, accredited, and reaccredited. We now deal with sex equity, civil rights, disadvantaged, han-
dicapped, mainstreaming, competencies, and complex funding and purchasing policies.

School districts now cover from one-fourth to a whole county, making us travel further to visit students and mak-
ing both high school and adult students have to travel

more for after school events. They also feel less a part of the school, making support more difficult to get.

Combining students of different sexes, races, urban and rural, and agricultural and nonagricultural backgrounds has given us a more diverse group to teach. Mainstreaming of disadvantaged and handicapped students has provided us students with a broader range of abilities. It takes more time and resources to teach such heterogeneous classes.

Forms and paperwork continue to multiply. A form is required for everything from students' going to the rescues to justifying your summer employment. Indi-

uals of all sorts, sections, and classes may be asked to check your work. The school principal usually requests a handout or a report.

Competition

To have an adult education program, we have to com-
pete with the Extension Service, the local community col-
lege, and commercial agricultural supply dealers. To get high school students to recruit because we are not only in competition with academic courses, but also with many elective courses. For after school FFA events, there is competition with many other clubs, expanded sports programs, part-time or full-time jobs, and more community

(Continued on page 22)
Is My Job Too Big For Me?

(Continued from page 21)

activities. There is also a struggle for funds because vocational dollars are not allotted from the state by program areas. Others want a share of local funds. All these things take more time.

Facilities

Most departments have more equipment and additional shops and laboratories to maintain and operate or they have to share facilities and equipment with other vocational programs. No longer do we have only a classroom, an office, a shop, and perhaps a school farm. Add one or more greenhouses, a nursery, a forestry or natural resources laboratory, and a much more complex school farm if one is still available. How much longer does it take just to do the inventory? Now count the maintenance, repair, and planning time necessary to use these facilities for our students to learn by doing.

The FFA

Is more really better? Face to face contests on the state level have increased from six to 17 with some districts holding extra ones. In addition to more contests, four of the other six contests have added events or increased the difficulty of the existing contests. On the national level, several contests have been expanded and made more difficult. Proficiency award areas have increased from about 12 to 29 plus the forms have become increasingly more comprehensive. Chapter awards have increased in number and length. Competitions are longer and more detailed. FFA Alumni affiliates have been organized, and the Washington Conference Program has been added. Providing our students FFA opportunities takes more time and skills. For many teachers, these activities now require written permission from administrators and parents.

Supervised Occupational Experience Programs

A farming project — it is not that simple any more. The diversity of students makes the SOPs more of an individual plan than it has ever been. Most students no longer live and work on their parent's farm. Farm work is often on someone else's farm. They may be working in an off-farm agricultural business. Many have part-time jobs in non-agricultural businesses. Making SOPs visit often requires visiting two locations — the home and the job site — sometimes over 200 miles apart plus the distance from school. Both parents usually work away from home. If the student lives on a farm, getting a share of ownership is more complex because of contracts and legal obligations. Records are harder to grade because of the wide variety of programs. This component of the total vocational agriculture program also takes more time.

Summary

Doctors have not cured all diseases. Ministers have not won all to the Lord. Farmers have not fed all the hungry. Vocational agriculture teachers have not taught everything about agriculture. Most people think doctors, ministers, and farmers are doing a good job, and most people think vocational agriculture teachers are doing a good job, too.

We probably will not accomplish everything we had planned or desired to do. We can feel good about every achievement, the job we are doing, and most of all ourselves. "Mr./Ms. Vocational Agriculture Teacher, 1987."

Community and technical colleges, agri-supply dealers, and Extension now offer adult education such as this tour of agriculture. (Photo courtesy of the authors.)

Duties and Compensation of Virginia Agriculture Teachers in 1977 and 1986

Agriculture teacher salaries in 1986 were nearly double what they were in 1977. That varied over the teaching experience range, but most teachers that had taught with inflation over the period by 1986. (See note on reference page). This was true despite the reduction in length of teacher contracts. Salaries by years of teaching experience are presented in Table 1.

Survey information was obtained from agriculture teachers in Virginia at the area meetings in 1976-77 and again in 1985-86. Absentees were followed up by mail. The final return rate was about 90 percent both times. A drop from 363 respondents to 300 was an indication of the reduction in teacher numbers over the period.

A more experienced work force came with the reduction in teacher numbers. The average years of teaching experience was up two years to 12.6 in 1977. The median years of experience was up from 7 years to 10.

Accompanying the reduction in teacher numbers was an increase in the teachers who teach in a one-teacher department — 41 percent versus 22 percent in 1977. Teachers in 1986 were teaching a greater variety of agricultural courses. Teachers did in fact teach many non-agriculture periods. Non-agriculture periods taught per teacher per day were 43 in 1986 and 3 in 1977. Also, this is inflated by the fact that 22.6 percent of the teachers taught in schools having 7-period days. (The seven-period day was begun because of limited time for electives.)

The number of extra duties per teacher had not increased during the period. The five most frequently performed extra duties in order were: hall duty (53%); school maintenance (52%); homeroom (43%); take tickets at ball games (45%); lunch room duty (33%); and drive bus for agriculture trips (28%).

Health and life insurance benefits had increased. Nearly half (46.6%) of the teachers received free health insurance. The percentage was 25 in 1977. Free life insurance was reported by 97 percent of the teachers.

Travel allowance, more of a program benefit than a teacher benefit, had suffered a serious erosion. The average travel allowance in 1986 was $515, spent at 20 cents a mile. The allowance in 1977 was $457, spent at 12 cents per mile. That is a 20 percent reduction in terms of miles available for travel.

Although the amount of adult work was still impressive, there had been a slight increase. Two-thirds of the teachers received adult teaching supplements for an average of 102 hours of instruction. (These supplements are part of the salary reported in both the 1977 and 1986 studies). The use of lay instructors to teach adult classes was down substantially since 1977, yet 44 teachers reported making use of them. School-community centers continued to decline in number such that 6.7 percent of teachers were involved with centers in 1986 versus 21.4 percent in 1977. Young Farmer advisors numbered 213 or 38 percent, down from 44.6 percent of the larger work force in 1977. Multiple advisories programs were down. (The YE program in Virginia is virtually unchanged.

Summary

After a nine-year period ending in 1986, salaries of agriculture teachers in Virginia had about caught up with inflation over the period. Though diminished in numbers and working on somewhat reduced contracts, the Virginia program had not suffered as much as might be expected. However, nine more years like the last are unpleasant to contemplate.

References

Note — A $676 dollar which was worth $551 in 1977 was down to $538 in 1986. Stated in terms of the Consumer Price Index, the Index went from 181.8 in 1977 to 315 in 1986. Vaughn, Paul R. and Martin B. McMillion. SALARIES AND WAGES CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN VIRGINIA, College of Education, VT and VI, Blacksburg, Virginia, June 1978.

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The number of teachers = 292.

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Stories in Pictures

After The Bell Sounds

Vocational agriculture students acquire numerous benefits from being placed in an agribusiness. Teachers must schedule the hours needed to adequately supervise them if the best learning is to occur. (Photo courtesy of Mike Rush.)

Teachers must practice to safely operate power equipment in the laboratory. Pressures created from teaching with such equipment should be reduced with proper practice and close following of safety precautions. (Photo courtesy of Ken Bruewelheide.)

Fund raising consumes quite a few hours in the life of a state supervisor and FFA Executive Secretary. A representative of Freeport-McMoran, Inc., presents a check to J.C. Simmons (right), a state supervisor in Louisiana, while Robert Simmons (left), the LA Executive Secretary, looks on.

Students who compete in FFA judging contests have spent countless hours being instructed by their vocational agriculture teacher in a variety of laboratory settings. (Photo courtesy of Stacy Gartin.)