

# Ignorance Is Not Bliss!



BY GARY MOORE

*Dr. Moore is professor of Agricultural and Extension Education at North Carolina State University, Raleigh.*

**I**gnorance is bliss." Thomas Gray's time-worn phrase may be cute, but it does not help promote diversity in agricultural education. Diversity in agricultural education means that all students from all cultures and backgrounds are in agriculture classes and the FFA. When we understand and teach about other cultures, our classes become more attractive to students of all cultures. For example, African-American students could be more interested in the FFA if they were aware of their heritage as it relates to the FFA.

In the early days of agricultural education, schools in the South were segregated with a separate youth organization for black students—the New Farmers of America (NFA). The NFA is an important part of our heritage. On the occasion of the NFA and FFA merger, Adolphus Pinson, the NFA president, stated, "Please be reminded that the spirit of the New Farmers of America does not die here today. Rather we awake to the dawn of a new day. Together we walk into the dawn as Future Farmers and toward a fuller realization of our educational aim and purposes." Remembering the spirit of the NFA can help agricultural education in its quest for greater diversity.

How much do you know about the NFA? To help you learn more about the NFA, the following quiz has been developed (the answers are found at the end of the quiz). You may want to use this quiz with your students.

## The NFA

- \_\_\_ 1. The student organization for African-American agricultural students prior to school integration was the:
  - A. National Farmers of America
  - B. Nubian Farmers of America
  - C. Negro Farmers of America
  - D. New Farmers of America
- \_\_\_ 2. The national NFA organization was started in:
  - A. 1928
  - B. 1929
  - C. 1932
  - D. 1935
- \_\_\_ 3. The NFA was divided into:
  - A. Two sections
  - B. Three sections
  - C. Four sections
  - D. No sections were needed because the organization was limited to the South
- \_\_\_ 4. The NFA degrees were:
  - A. Farm Hand, Improved Farmer, Modern Farmer, Superior Farmer
  - B. Tenant Farmer, Farm Owner, Landlord
  - C. Greenhand, Chapter Farmer, State Farmer, Dixie Farmer
  - D. There were no degrees in the NFA
- \_\_\_ 5. The "Father" of the NFA was:
  - A. Booker T. Washington
  - B. George Washington Carver
  - C. George Washington Owens
  - D. Fred McClure
- \_\_\_ 6. The NFA colors were:
  - A. National Blue and Corn Gold
  - B. Black and Cotton White
  - C. Black and Old Gold
  - D. Forest Green and Cotton White
- \_\_\_ 7. The NFA emblem differed from the FFA emblem in that it had:
  - A. A cross section of a cotton boll
  - B. A mule pulling the plow
  - C. The sun high in the sky
  - D. No eagle at the top
- \_\_\_ 8. National NFA week was during the week of April 5. This was because:
  - A. It marked the start of spring
  - B. The NFA was incorporated on April 5
  - C. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed on April 5
  - D. Booker T. Washington was born on April 5
- \_\_\_ 9. The NFA conventions were generally held in:
  - A. Nashville, Tennessee
  - B. Atlanta, Georgia
  - C. Charlotte, North Carolina
  - D. Petersburg, Virginia
- \_\_\_ 10. The NFA merged with the FFA in:
  - A. 1945
  - B. 1963
  - C. 1965
  - D. 1969
  - E. 1976

## The NFA Quiz - Answers

1. (D) New Farmers of America. The organization had its roots in the New Farmers of Virginia which was started in 1927.

2. (D) The NFA organization held regional meetings as early as 1928. In 1935, the organizational meeting for an official national association was held at Tuskegee Institute.

3. (B) The NFA was divided into three sections. The Washington section (named for Booker T. Washington) consisted of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia and New Jersey. The Almmot section was composed of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. The section name comes from the first letter of each state in the section. The third section was the Sargent section and was comprised of Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee and Kentucky. This section was named after Dr. H.O. Sargent, a white federal agricultural education official responsible for supervising Negro agricultural education programs in the South.

4. (A) There were 4 degrees in the NFA; Farm hand, Improved Farmer, Modern Farmer, and Superior Farmer.

5. (C) George Washington Owens, an agricultural professor at Virginia State College, is considered the founder of the NFA. He was instrumental in starting the Future Farmers of Virginia and was active in establishing the NFA.

6. (C) Black and Old Gold were the NFA colors.

7. (A) The NFA emblem was exactly like the FFA emblem except it was black and gold and contained a cross section of a cotton boll instead of the ear of corn.

8. (D) NFA week was held during the week in which Booker T. Washington was born, April 5. The NFA treasurer was stationed at the picture of Booker T. Washington.

9. (B) Atlanta, Georgia, was the home of NFA conventions from 1949 to 1965. Prior to that, the convention was rotated among the states.

10. (C) The last NFA convention was held in Atlanta in October of 1965. The convention adjourned and the NFA officers and choir headed immediately for Kansas City for the FFA convention. An impressive ceremony was conducted in which the NFA merged with the FFA.

## Conclusion

While addressing the FFA convention in 1965, Adolphus Pinson, the last NFA president, said, "There is an established philosophy that in unity, there is strength." We can strive for unity in agricultural education by remembering the NFA. This can help African-American students feel a stronger bond with agricultural education and the FFA. As teachers, we should include the history of the NFA in our curriculum. Ignorance is not bliss. ■

## Essential Elements of . . .

(continued from page 24)

experience. It takes hard work and creative thinking on the teacher's part to develop problems to teach the subject content and still relate to as many students as possible

No one has proposed that teachers of agriculture teach all their subject content through the problem-solving approach. However, if we are going to prepare our students for a rapidly changing agricultural industry, we must teach them how to make decisions through problem-solving skills. After all, there is no better way to learn problem-solving skills than through participating in problem-solving.

## References

- American Association for Agricultural Education. (1991). *Preparation of Professionals for Agricultural Education*. Committee report presented at the meeting of the American Association for Agricultural Education, Los Angeles, CA.
- Crunkilton, J.R. (1988). Thinking out loud about this process we call teaching. *The Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture*, 29(1), 2-10.
- Martin, R.A. (1982). Solving problems in the real world. *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, 54(10), 13-14.
- Phipps, L.J., & Osborne, E. W. (1988). *Handbook on agricultural education in public schools*. Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers and Publishers.
- Stewart, W.F. (1959). Teaching based on problem solving. *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, 32(4), 86-89. ■

## Building the Case for . . .

(continued from page 21)

education from the high school level to the middle school level is not appropriate. The temptation to duplicate classes and activities must be avoided. Middle school-aged students are different from high school students, and those differences must be addressed in agriculture programs, if those programs are to be successful.

## References

- Barrick, R.K., & Hughes, J.M. (1994). *State-level vocational administrator perceptions relevant to career-oriented education in the middle grades*. Summary of Research No. 74. Columbus: The Ohio State University, Department of Agricultural Education.
- Braze, E. & Smalley, B. (1982). What are middle schools good for? *Instructor*, 92(4), 31-33.
- Curtiss, T.E. & Bidwell, W.W. (1977). *Curriculum and instruction for emerging adolescents*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
- Greenberg, A., & Hunter, A. (1982). *Striving for excellence: Middle schoolers study work*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 236436).
- Kindred, L.W.; Wolotkiewicz, R.J.; Mickelson, J.M.; Copenlin, L.E.; & Dyson, E. (1976). *The middle school curriculum: A practitioner's handbook*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Lipsitz, J. (1984). *Successful schools for young adolescents*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, Inc.
- Miller, M.J. (1988). Career counseling for the middle grade youngster: Grades 6-9. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 25(4), 172-179.
- Rossetti, R.; Padilla, D.; & McCaslin, N.L. (1992). *A nationwide examination of middle school enrollment in agricultural education and membership in the National FFA Organization*. Columbus: The Ohio State University, Department of Agricultural Education.
- Sale, L.L. (1979). *Introduction to middle school teaching*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co. ■