

# An Interview with Cayce Scarborough

By Gary Moore

*What were the most significant changes in public school education in agriculture during your career?*

The most significant event that occurred during my career was that we were too slow to change the focus of vocational agriculture in response to the socio-cultural changes in society. The federal leaders in vocational agriculture were strong believers in *Federal Bulletin 1*. This document stated the objective of agricultural education was to prepare students for farming. The federal leadership emphasized that "becoming established in farming" was the reason we had vocational agriculture. I believe the federal leadership focused on this goal too long.

During the early days of vocational agriculture a major socio-cultural change was occurring in rural America. Small communities were rapidly disappearing. The depression had an impact on local communities. Money was in short supply. Small farmers sold out to larger farmers and left the communities. The churches died out because members either moved away or died. Many schools were closed or consolidated. There were no opportunities to "become established in farming." Since it was not possible to become established in farming, the federal leadership should have looked at other goals for vocational agriculture.

H. M. Byram's 1959 book on guidance in agricultural education included information on off-farm occupations, but it was largely ignored. A diagram titled "The Vocational Life of Vo-Ag Students" was developed in a graduate course I taught at North Caro-

lina State. The diagram showed a variety of off-farm career choices, including agriculture teacher. Yet the federal leadership did not recognize anything other than "establishment in farming" as a viable goal for vocational agriculture. *We should have changed sooner!*

There were some positive changes. The structure of the curriculum, but not the content, changed.

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When I attended high school in 1924-1928, I took Field Crops my freshman year, Animal Husbandry the next year, and Horticulture the third year; Farm Management was taught the fourth year. When I started teaching agriculture, the curriculum structure was changed to Ag I, II, III, and IV. Another change was a decline in the use of home improvement projects. All students can have home improvement as a project. This should have been emphasized more.

Even though I was a district supervisor during part of my professional career, I did have some concerns about "the supervisor." I think supervision could have been improved. Some of the supervisors needed more education and some needed more professionalism.

*What were the most significant changes in teacher education in agricultural education?*

The work of H. M. Hamlin, my major professor at the University of Illinois, had a major impact on teacher education. He was a strong advocate of studying the local community to determine what to teach and in involving the community in the agricultural education program through the use of advisory committees. At North Carolina State we got Selz Mayo, head of Rural Sociology, to teach a course on Community Study. Then students studied the community where they would student teach. This had a major impact on students understanding the community and helped them determine what should be taught. It made them better teachers.

*As a former Editor of The Agricul-*

*tural Education Magazine, what challenges did you encounter? What major purposes should The Magazine achieve?*

My biggest challenge was to make the *Magazine* more interesting. Some of the research-based articles were boring. I continued the pro and con articles my predecessor, Ralph Woodin, had started. I also tried to get more articles from agriculture teachers, but it is hard getting agriculture teachers to write.

The challenge for the *Magazine* is to get readers to feel better about the profession of agricultural education. Whether one is a teacher or supervisor, they should feel inspired when reading the *Magazine*. The *Magazine* should also encourage members of the profession to develop leadership. Some teachers have switched jobs because they don't feel good about what they do. They don't feel empowered. The *Magazine* should help remedy this.

**Footnote**

Dr. C. Cayce Scarborough, 94 years of age, was interviewed in Raleigh, North Carolina, on July 6, 2006 by Gary Moore. Dr. Moore is Professor of Agricultural Education at North Carolina State University.



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*C. Cayce Scarborough's professional career began in 1935 as a high school teacher of agriculture. A former district supervisor and FFA Executive Secretary in Alabama, he was Professor of Agricultural Education at North Carolina State University (1950-1973) and Auburn University (1947-1949; 1973-1979). Dr. Scarborough is a former Editor (1965-1967) of The Agricultural Education Magazine.*

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