

NACTA Yesterday

50+ Years Ago

The first NACTA Executive Committee meeting to be held in separate conference was convened by NACTA President E.B. Knight at Cape Girardeau, Missouri during 6-7 May, 1955. It was in this meeting that the idea of a NACTA publication was first floated. At the second annual meeting in 1956, C.R Pearce of Warrensburg, MO “chaired” the Publication Committee. Apparently he was its only member and failed to get a publication together for that meeting. He then proposed that a “real” committee be formed for the following year. The names of this committee were read at the third annual conference in 1957 and in November of that year the committee published Volume 1 #1 of the NACTA newsletter. This was a 6”x9”, 8 page letter written by the committee, who noted that “we are trying to publish this issue of the NACTA Newsletter on a shoestring.” In 1958 Dr. E.B. Knight of Tennessee Tech at Cookeville was elected chair of the Publication Committee and assumed his position as editor of the newsletter.

40 Years Ago (Volume 12, 1968)

The annual meeting was held in April of this year at Louisiana Polytechnic Institute in Ruston, LA. Franklin E. Eldridge, Dean of the College of Agriculture at the University of Nebraska was elected President and Murray Brown, Head of the Department of Agricultural Education at Sam Houston State University, was elected Vice President. In his address Dr. Eldridge noted that racism was still prevalent, the United States was involved in an unpopular war, and there was international economic instability which placed the value of the dollar into question. He went on to say that we needed an adequate US food supply to help feed the world, but who would produce it, with fewer students seeking careers in agriculture. He urged that NACTA and “we in agriculture must expand our concepts of service to those urban sections of our society....” [The issues of 40 years ago are with us today; this address could be delivered with all relevancy at this year’s annual meeting.]

In outlining an “Introductory Course in Agriculture”, George Gries, University of Arizona, notes that more students from non-farm backgrounds are entering agriculture at the same time that the agriculture industry is diversifying. Students now had different goals and were concerned with global agriculture and ecology and not simply production. He urged that faculty shift their emphasis to include regional and local issues in their courses to better prepare students for the new agriculture. His outline includes discussion of agricultural in the social and historical contexts and depends little on the “hard sciences”. His thought...you have to make introductory agriculture meaningful to today’s students to get them interested in it. [Food for thought!]

30 Years Ago (Volume 22, 1978)

Mundy and Tringa of the Department of Horticulture, University of Georgia published an interesting article on innovative teaching techniques, admonishing faculty to eliminate unnecessary co- and pre-requisites and other unnecessary courses in the curriculum. They urged faculty not to use slides as a crutch to fill up time in a class. Slides are overused and should be employed only when necessary to illustrate a point. They also noted that many students can neither read nor write adequately and that it was incumbent upon faculty to force the students to do their assigned reading by calling upon them in class to discuss various points in the chapters. Faculty must also assign writing assignments and correct them properly. They go on to say that most faculty agree with these assessments and observations, but don’t adhere to them. Why?

Wayne Banwart, present NACTA president, then Assistant Professor of Agronomy at University of Illinois, reviewed a newly published text on soils.

20 Years Ago (Volume 32, 1988)

Doug Pals (NACTA President 1993-94) served as Western Regional Director-Elect.

White and Broder, in their article on “Testing and Student Aggression” reported that students with a GPA < 2.8, those with assertive personalities, those who attended classes less than 95% of the time and those who paid for more than 50% of their college costs were far more apt to be confrontational in class than other students. To lower the chances of an unpleasant event, they urge faculty to make course objectives clear, give students adequate time to complete quizzes and other assignments, don’t give pop quizzes or exams on Mondays, and do provide a mid-course evaluation to lessen tensions.

10 Years Ago (Volume 42, 1998)

The annual meetings were hosted by Wenatchee Valley College. I still remember harvesting and eating (with permission of course) a great many juicy sweet cherries during one of the field trips at that meeting.

In an article entitled “Readability of Feature Articles in Trade Periodicals,” Roger Baur and Allen Zimmerman (NACTA President 2006-2007) reported that the readability of these articles was similar to that of freshmen level texts and higher than the average reading ability of most students entering an associate degree curriculum.

M. Susie Whittington won the E.B. Knight Journal Award for “Classroom Behaviors: What Lessons Can Professors Learn” (NACTA Journal March 1997, pgs. 37-42).

Foy Mills won the Southern Region John Deere Award and Tracy Hoover, Doug Pals, Andy Herring, Bruce Miller, and others were elected Teacher Fellows.

Bob Gough, NACTA Historian