

# comments on ag journalism

It's coming to an end, almost faster than I can say. And as I sit here trying to meet the deadline for this editorial, I find myself looking back and reflecting on the things that have happened to me since I came to Aggieland all those years ago, and especially since I became an agricultural journalism major.

No, I'm not dying, though I guess in a way some people might consider graduation the death of a certain part of one's life. In less than three weeks I will have reached the end of the yellow brick road that I have been traveling since I graduated from high school in 1977, and the thought thrills yet terrifies me.



I don't regret going to Texas Christian University for three semesters before transferring to A&M, and I don't regret changing majors five times in my college career. Though it took me a while to find agricultural journalism, it was well worth the wait.

Agricultural journalism is an excellent major but I get very frustrated with people who treat us like second-class citizens. Ag journalism is in the College of Agriculture, but not really. And we're part of the Department of Communications, but not really. We get the best of both worlds, but not really.

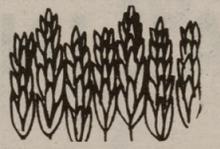
Though we sometimes get the best of both worlds, we are really misfits. Agricultural people think we're weird because we aren't from farm backgrounds and don't hang out at Kleberg. Journalism

people think we're weird because we don't live at the Battalion and hang around Reed McDonald more. And how could we actually find anything exciting or fulfilling in writing about agriculture?



But the worse thing is that both groups consider us only lukewarm writers. I am not an ag major because I couldn't handle straight journalism, and I am not an journalism major because I couldn't handle straight agriculture. I am an ag journalism major because I LOVE TO WRITE ABOUT AGRICULTURE, PERIOD.

Every semester since I have been associated with ACT, members have agonized over the decision concerning production of the Agriculturist. And every semester I voted to continue the tradition. Well, the time has come to put the old dog to sleep. We try so hard to put this thing together: we ask, demand, threaten, plead, beg and cajole for stories and production help. But it always ends up being just a few people who do all the work, though others promised us faithfully at the beginning of the semester that we could count on them.

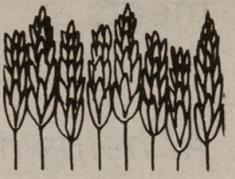


But where do ag journalism majors go from here? I wish I knew...All complaints and gripes aside, being in the College of Agriculture is great, as is being part of the communications department. But apathy and ignorance are killing my major, and I can't think of one single way to get people excited about ag communications. It amazes me that others don't want to be ag communicators because it's such a diverse, exciting field. And the agricultural industry desperately needs people trained in ag communications. Texas A&M has the opportunity to be the best ag communications school in the nation--the talent is here, as are the facilities, information and money. But Aggieland doesn't have the most important ingredient--interested students.



As I look back, I don't regret the hundreds of hours that I have invested in this tabloid, it was a very valuable learning experience and one I wouldn't trade for anything. But I also remember all the sleepless nights, missed dates, hours spent writing headlines when nobody showed up, panic felt when I realized how much I had to accomplish and the time I had to do it in. And though I've never been a quitter before, I am suggesting that this be the last copy of the Agriculturist. Even if I weren't graduating, as president of ACT it would be my recommendation. This tabloid has

served a purpose in the past, but I honestly think that it is more of an albatross now than anything. Though it would be sorely missed by some, I have a feeling that most people wouldn't even notice that it was gone.



And like the Agriculturist, my time has come to move on. But before I go, I would like to thank Mr. Gougler, ACT advisor, companion and friend, for his endless devotion to ACT and ag journalism. Many heart-felt thanks also go to everyone who has helped me with production of this tabloid the past two years, I don't need to name you individually because you know who you are.

--kitty fraley--



## Editor's note

I would like to thank everyone involved in the production of the Agriculturist. Those who wrote stories, developed and printed pictures and those who edited worked hard. I would especially like to thank Mr. Doyle Gougler, our loyal and adored advisor. He always has time to help us out and he does a wonderful job of keeping us on the straight and narrow.

We had a good production staff this semester. We also had some good writers and some extra help with the photographs. But we have experienced the same fizzling out of interest that we experience every semester.

The Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow face printing the Agriculturist with renewed interest every semester. The problem is since production is all on a volunteer basis, about half way through the production process a number of people find that they have class assignments and other outside activities. When this happens the editorial staff ends up being stuck doing all the work.

We as students find it hard to delegate our time. It's hard to keep up with classes and still find time to participate in club activities and also do some nonschool things.

Although the Agriculturist is a lot of

hard work and many hours are taken away from study time, I still believe it is the best way for the agricultural journalism majors here at Texas A&M to learn production techniques and experience editorial responsibilities.

We are not required to take any advanced editorial or production type classes and it seems like most ag journalism students graduate without even knowing how a newspaper or magazine is produced.

I have worked on the Agriculturist for four years now and I've seen the same sad situation develop every semester. Maybe it is about time to stop expecting students to get this experience on their own (on a voluntary basis) and start requiring our ag journalism majors to do production work on a publication. The publication, in my opinion, should not be the Agriculturist, but a more professional type magazine or tabloid or a newsletter produced and mailed out to ag journalists across the country.

In order for the students to get the experience they need, the students must be required to work on a publication before graduation.

## Ethical Agriculture

By ANN RAMSBOTTOM

Some of the toughest decisions to make involve conflicts between ethical beliefs and professional responsibility, said an agricultural ethics professor at Texas A&M University.

Dr. Paul Thompson, assistant professor of philosophy and humanities, is teaching a new course this semester. The course deals with agricultural issues as they relate to cultural practices and the environment.

The course is Agricultural Ethics and is cross-listed as a 489 agricultural economics and philosophy elective.

"I don't really like the name Ag Ethics," Thompson said. "A better name would be Philosophical Problems Involved in Agriculture."

The purpose of the course is to expose students to agricultural issues so that they're familiar with them when they get out of college.

"We like to introduce students to a little bit of sophistication and language on the issues so that they can handle problems intelligently and form educated opinions," Thompson said.

"The difficult part about teaching this course," Thompson said, "is that there are no clear cut answers."

Thompson gave several examples of issues that the class has dealt with. One example is pesticides. Pesticides are a big concern in modern agriculture, Thompson said.

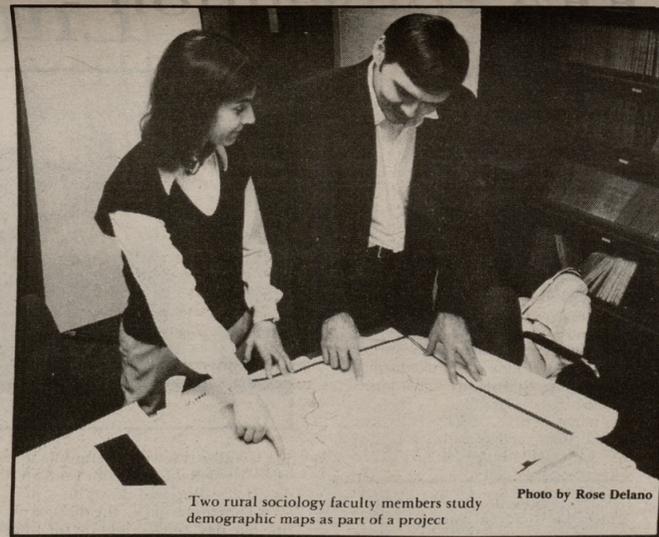
"Pesticides get into the food chain and become a health problem," Thompson said. "We're forced to weigh the risks against the benefits of increased productivity."

Marketing practices in agribusiness present problems also, he said. "Agricultural products are introduced to the consumer by the manufacturers," Thompson said. "The manufacturer provides promotional information that may not be in the best interest of the consumer. The question is, do we trust the manufacturer?"

Government health and nutrition regulations force people to make influential decisions all the time. Heavy subsidies are placed on some products, Thompson said. Tobacco and beef are two products which have been continually criticized by those in the medical profession.

"On one hand," Thompson said, "we have to keep the economy going. We can't just put the producers of these products out of business." On the other hand, he added, the consumer has to decide whether or not to support the industries which might be harmful to him.

Finally, a key issue is world hunger. "There are thousands of people in the world that don't get enough to eat," Thompson said. "As a wealthy nation, we must decide what our responsibilities are -- do we encourage agricultural development in poor countries or do we just give them the food."



Two rural sociology faculty members study demographic maps as part of a project. Photo by Rose Delano

## Studying rural life

By KITTY FRALEY

Their offices are in the old hospital. They are faculty members of an official department in the College of Agriculture, although the department has no academic program and their research is almost entirely funded by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

"The emphasis in rural sociology is on the analysis of the problems and potentials of rural people and rural communities," says Dr. Steve Murdock, department head in rural sociology.

"Rural sociology is concerned primarily with rural areas and agriculture, and its research tends to be applied and oriented to the direct needs of decision makers," he explained.

Rural sociology was first offered at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas in 1918 through the department of economics, which was in the School of Agriculture.

In the fall of 1920, the department of rural social science was formed, and in 1921 the name was changed to the department of rural sociology. In 1946 the departments of agricultural economics

and rural sociology were combined into the department of agricultural economics and sociology (but courses were still listed as Rural Sociology 205, 315, etc.).

In 1960 the term "rural" was dropped from all sociology courses. In 1963 the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas became Texas A&M University, and the School of Agriculture became the College of Agriculture. The sociology department was transferred to the College of Liberal Arts in 1960 but rural sociology stayed in the College of Agriculture.

Research in rural sociology is concerned with 10 major areas: population analysis, natural resource usage and impacts, community development, rural services and institutions, sociology of agriculture, sociology of adoption and diffusion, social and demographic dimensions of the marketing of agricultural products, agricultural manpower and program/extension evaluation.

"Our emphasis here is on research, because what findings we come up with are always applied," Murdock said. "Our theory and training is the same as sociologists, only our emphasis is agriculture."

## KCC aids in teaching, research

By GRETCHEN RATLIFF

There is a room in the Kleberg Center that houses a valuable timesaver for many students and faculty members working on the west side of the Texas A&M University campus.

The room is 032 and it's the Kleberg Computer Center. The center has been in existence for four years and is available to anyone needing to do computer work. The majority of its users, however, are from departments and classes on the west campus.

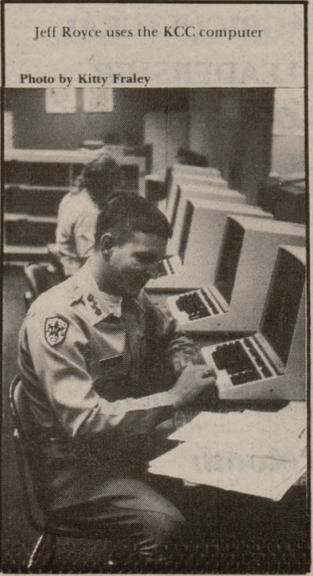
The center consists of 16 Wilbur terminals, microcomputers, printers and card readers. It is tied into the University's main computer system and operating hours are 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

John Labore, a graduate student from Kentucky working on his doctorate in agricultural economics, assists in the center.

"We get quite a broad range of users," he said. He added that most of the users are graduate students and faculty members conducting research.

Dr. Ron Edwards, associate professor of animal science, said the center is in an ideal location and that it helps students and faculty complete their computer programs more quickly and efficiently.

"Otherwise, every time we wanted to do something, we'd have to walk across campus to the main terminal," Edwards said.



Jeff Royce uses the KCC computer. Photo by Kitty Fraley

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