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AGRICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL
RESPOND TO QUESTION ABOUT THEIR CREATIVITY

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Letters containing the question, "What is the most creative thing you've ever done?" were sent to everyone listed in the 1970-71 AATEA Directory of Agricultural Teacher Education Personnel in the United States the last three months of 1970. No follow-up letters were sent. For the purposes of this study, the author wished to determine how many persons in the field of agricultural education would have enough "Instant trust," "give of yourself," "willingness to share" type of creativity to reply to this broad, wide-open question.

Each potential respondent was given few instructions and no explanation regarding the meaning of the sentence. The intent was to find out what each respondent's free response to the question was without regard for what anyone else might think. The only definitions utilized, and the only restrictions imposed, would be those which the person himself supplied of his own free will.

Sixty-seven replies were received by February 1971 and are the ones summarized here. Thirty-five states and one territory were represented. Table 1 shows the geographic distribution of the respondents.

TABLE 1

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURAL TEACHER
EDUCATION PERSONNEL RESPONDING TO THE QUESTION

<u>State or Territory Represented</u>	<u>Number of Responses from Each</u>
Illinois, Nebraska, and Ohio	6
Michigan, Virginia and West Virginia	3
Alabama, Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas	2
California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, and Wisconsin	1
<u>Total of 35 states and one territory</u>	<u>67 total responses</u>

Table 2 provides selected characteristics of those who responded to the question, "What is the most creative thing you've ever done?"

TABLE 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

A. Institution awarding the highest degree attained and the number of respondents represented by each.	
<u>Institution</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Cornell University	11
The Pennsylvania State University	9

Table 2 (continued)

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Ohio State University	8
University of Illinois	7
Michigan State University	6
University of Nebraska	4
Auburn University, Iowa State University, Louisiana State University, University of Minnesota, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	2
California State Polytechnic College (San Luis Obispo), Columbia University, University of Florida, University of Kentucky, University of Missouri, Oklahoma State University, Purdue University, Rutgers University, Texas Tech University, Tuskegee Institute, University of Wisconsin, University of Wyoming	1

B. Highest degree attained and the number of respondents represented by each.	
<u>Degree</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Ph. D.	31
Ed. D.	22
M. S.	8
M. Ed.	4
Other	2

Table 2 (continued)

C. Academic rank achieved and the number of respondents represented by each	
<u>Academic Rank</u>	<u>Number of Respondents¹</u>
Professor Emeritus	3
Professor	20
Associate Professor	24
Assistant Professor	16
Instructor and other	4

¹Twelve of the respondents were either chairmen or heads of their departments.

Four of the respondents did not answer the question posed for various stated reasons. They probably provided valuable insights as to why some persons did not respond at all. The following examples indicate that a number of those who did answer the "magic question" had difficulty in doing so:

- A. I find it difficult to answer the question ... Is creativity an event or is it a process?
- B. What kind of box are you trying to open? For the life of me I have a hard time sorting through imagination and creation.
- C. I have some reservations about "my" or "man" being able to create anything.
- D. You are aware this is a hard question to answer.
- E. ... are you interested in things done of a creative nature in agricultural education, or are you interested in anything that I might consider creative?
- F. It was a challenge to decide what was the single most creative thing I've ever done.

There also were rather frequent expressions of interest and support for the study. Examples follow:

- A. I appreciate the question you are raising ...
- B. This is an area where research activity would be most enlightening.
- C. It is most commendable for you to compile and report the most creative things done by agricultural education workers ...

- D. I hope this is the type of creative work you are interested in. If more information is needed please do not hesitate to write.
- E. I am very much impressed with your study of creative talent ...
- F. I will be very interested to hear what comes out of this study ...
- G. It has been a pleasure to reply.

Table 3 summarizes the "most creative thing or things"¹ identified by 63 respondents.

TABLE 3
TYPES OF THINGS IDENTIFIED AS "MOST CREATIVE" BY RESPONDENTS

Most Creative Things	Number Identifying
Planning to teach and teaching, teaching aids, special programs for preparing teachers, new concept utilized in teaching a particular group, improved methods of teaching which will make subject more interesting, complete revision of entire program, development of entirely new curriculum or program, encouraging leadership through FFA or other dynamic devices, and related responses	32
Publication or writing of some type: bulletin, survey report, doctoral thesis or dissertation, book, booklet, interest scale, journal article, establishing new approach for professional magazine, popularized versions of research for various target audiences, brochure, or other	19
Children	5

¹A few gave two or more things equal rank as "most creative." One man, for example, provided highlights of his most significant family, professional, religious and civic contributions.

Table 3 (continued)

<u>Most Creative Thing</u>	<u>Number Identifying</u>
Planning and directing a national rural vocational education institute, developing plans for the establishment of a statewide technical institute of agriculture, developing a youth worker's council for a large and important area of a state, designing communications network to aid in the recruitment of more teachers of vocational agriculture, or sales promotion for agricultural product	5
Experiences in foreign countries: things learned, obstacles surmounted, successes, or related	4
Inventing and/or designing types of activities: hydrostatic self-propelled experimental plot combine, self feeder for swine out of plywood when plywood was new product for such use, remodeling of interior of personal residence, or creative iron work	4
"... bizzar naivete when it comes to reading discipline patterns," effort required in order to be successful and to stay alive "on this old earth," or allowing "an individual who was very close to me the freedom to do anything the individual wanted, so far as our relationship was concerned"	3
Experiences as mayor of growing suburb, as member of Kiwanis, and as member of church	1
"... staging of the musical 'Oklahoma' in a high school where I taught agriculture"	1

The information in Table 3 cannot begin to even hint at the appreciation and interest generated in the researcher by the excellent responses. Two examples which would classify under the first category (teaching) may provide some evidence of why this is so.

Example 1

"The boys I trained in leadership throughout the organization Future Farmers of America; in many ways and many times have let me know they appreciate the wonderful experiences they lived and how it has contributed to their future success in life."

Example 2

"Within the specific tasks of teaching one creative thing stands out. This concerned helping a young man turn his whole life style completely around. This did not occur, of course, in one week. The basic turn around occurred from continued consultations over the period of a year. The student was a very distraught individual as I began to work with him in the ninth grade. He ran around with a very wild gang of boys who paraded throughout the community almost nightly to destroy property. Before the year was over he had learned to have other accelerators for his energy and he began to apply these energies to school and FFA projects. Within the year, for example, he won the school speech contest. Later in his high school career he missed being the state FFA president by one point. He became president of the high school student council, and he organized and became the first president of a county-wide student council. This involved establishing contacts with and coordinating the activities among five different schools."

As mentioned previously, four of the respondents did not answer the question, "What is the most creative thing you've ever done?" for various stated reasons. The main reasons one or more of these individuals did not answer the question seemed to be related to; the researcher's failure to provide his definition of "creativity," the purpose of the study and the disposition to be made of the answers were not specified, and the respondent couldn't determine what the researcher wanted him to do.

Examples of creative accomplishments listed in addition to the "most creative" were:

- A. "Competencies Needed by Teachers of High School Ornamental Horticulture Courses" Research Division Bulletin.
- B. Experience Programs book. Developed concept of individual student study-guides.

- C. Slip form for concrete ditch lining.
- D. Very creative manual on teaching parliamentary procedure (now out of print).
- E. Established an agricultural teacher education program in the most urbanized State of the Union.
- F. Agricultural Education: Approaches to Learning and Teaching.
- G. Research: "Agricultural Off-Farm Occupations and Training Needs" for one state.
- H. As undergraduate, "Developed a plan that appeared in my home state as a 'Six Point Plan for Legislative Action'".
- I. Influencing the lives of a number of students in a positive way.
- J. Developing a total program of agricultural education for teacher training of elementary school teachers in the country of Cambodia.
- K. Organized and taught an adult class of 200 members in agriculture ... using a second language, Finnish.
- L. Editorials for professional magazine. Book to be published.

Major conclusions of the study were:

- 1. More than 60 persons in the field of agricultural education had the "instant trust," "give of yourself" "willingness to share" type of creativity required for inclusion in the study.
- 2. Creativity in the field of agricultural education was rather widely distributed geographically.
- 3. There seemed to be certain institutions of higher education which encouraged creativity, allowed freedom for it to exist and/or attracted students with creative talent.
- 4. The creative people represented in this study were willing to "go the extra mile," and seemed interested in helping this different type of study succeed. They not only tended to consider themselves creative, but were interested in developing the creative talent of others. They were quick to give credit to associates when speaking of their own successes.
- 5. Many of those who responded were concerned about what the researcher might think of their answers, and whether or not their answers might be useful.

Notes

1. The question used for this study was inspired by the researcher's attendance at the Sixteenth Annual Creative Problem-Solving Institute, Buffalo, New York, June 1970. He also attended the Seventeenth Annual Creative Problem-Solving Institute, June 1971. It, too, was terrific, and recommended highly for anyone with creative potential.
2. The question, "What is the most creative thing you've ever done?" has been asked of thousands of people, and hundreds of replies have been received.

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