

Proposed FFA Creed

I believe in the future of agriculture. Ours is an industry rich in tradition and ripe with promise. As farmers before me diligently coaxed life from this land, I will dedicate myself to the tasks before me. The legacy left to me is one of honor and I shall strive to preserve and strengthen the dignity of American agriculture.

I believe a career in agriculture is a worthy undertaking. In choosing agriculture, I embrace a purposeful way of life based on productive work, progressive thought, calculated risk and a commitment to education. I welcome these challenges, for I know such a life yields endless rewards.

I believe I am responsible for the well-being of the earth. I stand ready to make wise choices which will enhance life for my fellow human beings and preserve the world's precious resources. I accept eagerly this charge, for the future literally depends upon me.

I believe that building my self-esteem and developing my natural talents are among the most valuable contributions I can make to my society. A nation's wealth is found in its people, and I must seek to become a well-rounded citizen, a person of solid character upon whom this country can lay its mantle of leadership.

I Believe...

I Believe...

How do you feel when you recite the FFA Creed?

By Lynn Hamilton

They're only words. Two-hundred and fifty-eight of them, to be exact.

Taken individually, they aren't cause for much discussion. But grouped as they are, they form the FFA Creed, about which lots of people have been talking recently.

The familiar lines, penned by E.M. Tiffany (Erwin Milton for trivia buffs) have become an important tradition of the FFA organization. Thousands of members cut their public speaking teeth on the five paragraphs, nervously stuttering "I believe..." before intimidating panels of judges. State and national officers cite the FFA Creed as their first training exercise in leadership.

But what really is a creed? What should it do for an organization? Webster's dictionary defines a creed as any statement of belief or principles. A creed should express the philosophy of a group and its members. It describes the group's actions, aspirations and beliefs, and communicates this to outside audiences. New members are initiated to the group's values through its creed.

This definition introduces the issues surrounding the current FFA Creed. Back in 1930, when the first FFA Creed was presented, it was written for an organization of rural boys whose main career goal was to produce food for a growing nation. The original creed, part of which follows here, described the FFA's philosophy well.

I believe that the dignity of labor depends not so much upon what you do, as upon how you do it; that opportunity comes to a boy on the farm as often as to a boy in the city; that life on the farm may be full, happy and free, and that a prosperous agriculture is essential to our national welfare; that my success depends not upon my dreams, but what I actually do, not upon luck but upon pluck.

Written by an unknown author, this first creed was published in the 1930 FFA Manual. It was never officially adopted. Instead, Tiffany rewrote its concepts into a creed that was very similar to today's. His version was accepted at the 3rd national convention, and was revised slightly in 1966 at the 38th national convention.

It's now been 24 years since the Creed was revised. The timeline itself is not so important but what does matter is how the FFA has evolved during those years. Today, the largest

FFA chapters are in Philadelphia and Chicago, with hundreds of members who have never set foot on a farm. FFA members across the country are preparing for careers in sales, research, engineering, communications, and the many other careers available in agriculture.

Yet the Creed embraces only one segment of our membership—those who have come from and plan to go back to the farm. Though not to be ignored or forgotten, that segment is clearly the minority in today's diverse membership. In a time when agricultural education and FFA are striving to expand their mission, the Creed, by its narrow focus, limits those efforts.

An ideal FFA Creed for today would encompass all members...no matter what their Supervised Agricultural Experience programs, home situations or career goals. The Creed should inspire each member to take ownership in its words, and to truly believe in its philosophies.

Of course, there are members, teachers and alumni who believe that the current creed does this job, and does it well. In some parts of the country, the FFA Creed is as appropriate today as it was 60 years ago, and may continue to be for the next 60 years.

Considering a change in the Creed has been the task of the FFA Manual Revision Committee. Convened by the National FFA Board of Directors, one of the committee's missions is to consider the Creed and its possible revision. The Board has requested input from FFA members and advisors. If you have any suggestions, ideas, or would like to pen a few paragraphs of a creed, send your ideas to the Information Department at the National FFA Center, P.O. Box 15160, Alexandria, VA 22309-0160.

Virtually every national FFA convention presents new issues, some of which result in dramatic alterations to the constitution. Change is the very nature of a progressive organization. Those who will be charged with keeping agriculture moving forward cannot be afraid to stretch their imaginations beyond tradition.

This November, the national convention delegates might have the chance to decide the future of the Creed. Whether it be a revision of Tiffany's work, a new creed, or the same one, the intent is that all FFA members will be able to recite "I believe..." and mean it. ■■■

New Creed or Same Creed?

Convention delegates to vote on a new FFA Creed.

By Andrew Markwart

As the National FFA Organization continues to change to stay current with its membership, the changes are not coming fast enough for some members and too fast for others. Such is the case with a proposed new FFA Creed.

The proposed creed (see box) resulted from the work of a committee that studied the Official FFA Manual and suggested revisions to make the manual easier to read and more appropriate to current FFA members. The committee was given permission by the FFA Board of Directors to propose changes to the current creed and compose new creeds.

Bill Stagg, FFA director of information and chairman of the Manual Revision Committee, said that the group took a "back to basics" approach in studying the creed. "The committee began its deliberations by considering what a creed is, how it is used in FFA and what values or themes it should contain," said Stagg. "All possibilities were explored, from a minor rewrite of the current creed to a completely new creed. After examining drafts of each approach, the committee felt strongly that a new creed would best meet the criteria established in a fresh, contemporary way. At the same time, the committee sought to retain some of the 'look and feel' of the creed by E.M. Tiffany."

The committee chose a creed written by committee member Shirley Sokolosky, of Owasso, Oklahoma. As a member of the FFA in Missouri, Sokolosky competed in the state creed speaking contest, served as state secretary and received the American Farmer Degree. She later worked as a counselor at the Washington Conference Program and has served as editor of the national FFA convention *Proceedings* for the past three years.

The proposed creed was approved by the FFA Board of Directors and National Officers at their July meeting to be put on the agenda for delegate consideration at the national convention.

The week following the board meet-

ing, the proposed creed was presented to all state FFA presidents during the State Presidents' Conference held in Washington, D. C. These same state officers will be voting on the issue as delegates at the national convention. FFA members are being urged to share their views about the proposed creed with their state officers.

Sokolosky says that it is important for

current FFA members to stand back and look at the proposed creed from a different perspective as they formulate their opinions. In an upcoming article in the November issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, Sokolosky says, "We must analyze FFA as if we had never set eyes on it before. We must see it

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Proposed FFA Creed

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FFA members are being urged to share their views about the proposed creed with their state officers.

New Creed or Same Creed?

(Continued from Page 18)

through the eyes of a 14-year-old who has no knowledge of the past 63 years. We must view the creed as a vital piece of the puzzle that makes up FFA; a piece that must be appealing and provide a satisfying experience for members."

Knowing that some people fear that FFA is making changes for changes sake, Sokolosky suggests that, "tradition just for tradition's sake is every bit as dangerous."

Others disagree. For 60 years, new members have been learning and reciting the creed in order to receive the Greenhand FFA Degree. As a result, many current and past FFA members have strong emotional ties to the current creed. "I believe our organization needs to have a few things it can keep as its tradition," said Kevin White, California vice president. "If we keep changing things, there won't be much tradition left. I'm all for change and open-mindedness, but I believe the current creed says everything that I believe in and FFA stands for."

The proposed creed honors the heritage of farming in America while broadening its scope to encompass all careers in agriculture. Most of the values found in the current creed are also in the proposed creed but phrased with modern terminology and style. The third paragraph of the proposed creed does introduce a strong emphasis on individual environmental responsibility not found in the current creed.

The outcome of the creed decision and other convention business will be reported in the December-January issue of *FFA New Horizons*, the convention *Proceedings*, which is sent to each FFA chapter at the close of national convention, and on the AgEd Network. ***



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DELEGATES TO CONSIDER NEW FFA CREED

You've probably heard the rumor. It's true. A new FFA Creed will be presented before the delegate body at the 1990 National FFA Convention. It has been a long process, almost two years in the mill by the time convention rolls around, according to Lynn Hamilton of the FFA Information department. During this time, many voices have been heard, those of teachers, members, state staff, teacher educators and alumni. The result is the creed you see on this page.

In January, 1989, the National FFA Board of Directors recommended a committee be formed to revise all parts of the Official FFA Manual, including the Creed. The committee, composed of teachers, state staff, and former members, recommended that a new creed be written to reflect a broader image of FFA members and of agriculture. Five creeds were submitted, and the committee spent the next year getting the required feedback from the FFA family. At the July, 1990, board meeting, it was approved to present this creed to the delegates at this year's convention. During all of the deliberations, the answers to the following questions have guided the decision.

Why change?

Today, many FFA members fall outside the parameters set by the current Creed. An increasingly large number will never "know the joys and discomforts of agricultural life." Therefore, it was felt that a new creed needed to be written; one that would include the rural students in Iowa as well as the urban students in Philadelphia. That agriculture would again form the core of the creed was a given—but this time, a wider, more encompassing view of agriculture would be presented.

What is the role of the Creed in the FFA?

The creed gives young members their first public speaking experience, and prepares them for the greater leadership roles which lie ahead. Members are able to tell the public in a few paragraphs about the heritage, present path, and future direction of the organization. Greenhand ceremonies, chapter banquets, and creed contests provide this opportunity. FFA members who recite the creed are clarifying and reinforcing their personal value system while informing others about the FFA. The words of the creed can greatly impress parents and community members.

Getting ready for Kansas City

The proposed creed was presented to the participants of the State Presidents' Conference in July. In order to reach as many members as possible before it comes to the delegate floor in Kansas City, the creed will be printed in the Oct.-Nov. issue of *FFA New Horizons*. At the convention, the creed issue will fall under the Information Delegate Committee and will require a majority of the delegate body to be approved. If you have comments or questions about the proposed creed, contact the Information department at the National FFA Center, P.O. Box 15160, Alexandria, VA 22309 or call 703-360-3600. You may also want to give feedback to the official FFA delegates from your state.

FFA CREED

(PROPOSED FOR CONSIDERATION OF FFA DELEGATES AT THIS YEARS' CONVENTION)

I believe in the future of agriculture. Ours is an industry rich in tradition and ripe with promise. As farmers before me diligently coaxed life from this land, I will dedicate myself to the tasks before me. The legacy left to me is one of honor and I shall strive to preserve and strengthen the dignity of American agriculture.

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A New Creed for FFA

Shirley Sokolosky authored the creed which will be considered by delegates to the 63rd National FFA Convention. As a member of the national organization's FFA Manual Revision Committee, she was one of 10 persons charged with analyzing the manual and all its contents in early 1989. From this committee came a recommendation that a new creed be presented to members; a creed which would broaden its references to agriculture while retaining the timeless messages so appreciated by members in the original creeds.

Sokolosky now lives in Owasso, Oklahoma, but was reared on a cattle farm near Paris, Missouri and was an active FFA member. She competed in the state creed speaking contest, served as state secretary, received the American Farmer degree and worked at the Washington Conference Program. If the Sokolosky name sounds familiar, it's because husband Dee was national FFA vice president of the Western Region in 1971-78 and mother-in-law Phyllis was national chairman of the FFA Alumni in 1979-80.

When I was just a little kid, my brother David joined FFA. For a few weeks, he went everywhere with a rolled-up manual stuck in his back jeans pocket. Mornings, he sat in the car at the end of the lane with Mom, waiting for the school bus, reciting what I thought was a poem, over and over. Vivid memories were being made and my mother still speaks of those days when David was learning the FFA creed. Later, I too would take up that little blue and gold book and learn the words of E.M. Tiffany.

Like many of you, I must admit an emotional attachment to the five paragraphs that have been such an effective launching pad for so many people. I cut my FFA teeth on it and no doubt many of you did too.

As I worked with the committee to study the creed, however, I learned that my personal feelings were not the best perspective from which to study the future. Rather, I have begun to understand that doing what's best for FFA members in the coming decades requires a hard look at every aspect of the organization. We must analyze FFA as if we had never set eyes on it before. We must see it through the eyes of a 14-year-old who has no knowledge of the past 63 years. We must view the creed as a vital piece of the puzzle that makes up FFA; a piece that must be appealing and provide a satisfying experience for members.

To be objective about any change, it is helpful to analyze what we're trying to accomplish in the first place. What is a creed? What purpose does it serve? What should be included?

Bill Stagg, FFA's director of information, likens a good creed to the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. It is a clearcut statement of belief. The writing is concise and poetic. Every citizen of our country can repeat this pledge without having to stop and analyze whether or not it applies to him. It is short and the words are easy to say. All of us can proudly claim ownership of the beliefs expressed.



By SHIRLEY SOKOLSKY

(Ms. Sokolosky is member, National FFA Manual Revision Committee.)

It would be unfair, however, to try and explain the FFA creed's importance in one paragraph. For thousands of members, this document has been a springboard to the rest of the organization and far more than an initiation rite.

I believe that learning the FFA's creed gives confidence at a time when confidence may be sorely lacking. For many, it is the first time to stand before a group and speak. For others, the memorization is a test of self-discipline. For all, learning and reciting the creed comes along at a crucial time in life, a time when students may be making decisions which will determine the rest of their lives.

You and I were lucky. For the most part we did not have to contend with the allure of drugs and many of the pressures that threaten to destroy today's young people. FFA was there, feeding our minds and our hearts.

The world would probably be a better place if all teenagers could enjoy the fruitful experiences offered by FFA during their school and non-school hours. Since such a wish is impractical, I would at least settle for young people who have access to agriculture classes. I fear, however, that the urbanization of America is chipping away at our base of members at such a rate that we're losing the best and brightest even in communities that offer FFA.

Two young women from our town take turns babysitting for our two small children. Both will be juniors in the fall; both plan careers in journalism. Both are eloquent young people who could have been model chapter reporters or state officers. Neither even considered FFA. Although the chapter in our town has a strong agribusiness emphasis, neither of these girls understood what FFA could offer them.

Why not? Are we doing all we can to make FFA an organization that attracts the best students and then holds on to them? The creed is but one part of the package that we can offer young students. We must take every step to make sure it is a statement that they can believe.

One of the hardest things for me to admit during the early days of our committee work was that my attachment to the trappings of FFA — the jacket, creed, motto, etc. — really didn't matter. The things of FFA are only important as

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A New Creed for FFA

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long as they further the FFA's aim, the development of young agriculturists. When the day comes that these things no longer meet our needs, they should be replaced by something more effective.

During my college days in livestock judging laboratory, our poor teaching assistant spent half his class time hollering at us to back up so we could get a good view of all four animals. "Back up," he'd shout, flinging his arms up and down in an effort to push us toward the edge of the ring. We would, of course, take a few steps backwards. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, though, we'd start edging our way forwards until we were nearly on top of the animals once again.

It's easy to get too close. To forget to stand back and look at the big picture is a human tendency. Yes, the creed approved in 1965 might be fine for your members if you live in an area where production agriculture is the only business. Ask yourself, what if a change should take place? And what about the multitude of chapters where production is the exception and not the rule? Should they be forced to recite the creed which effectively excludes them?

It is time, I think, for us to think bigger than ourselves. To consider the common good of the organization for the nineties and beyond requires a selflessness from all of us. It is time to back up and stay there long enough to get a true picture.

If you are concerned that FFA is losing its heritage by believing in the "future of agriculture" rather than the "future of farming," I can assure you that this was the farthest thing from my mind as I wrote a new creed. Some of my finest, and most character-building, hours were spent chasing calves through the pastures of the family farm. Those of us who farm and who used to farm must just remember that FFA has never been in the business of limiting opportunity; it is the organization where a young agriculturist, male or female, black or white, could find his place. Let us now declare that it doesn't matter where you grow up on 1,000 acres or one quarter of an acre or even 1,200 square feet: If you are serious about a future in agriculture, let us tell them FFA has a spot for you.

If you fear that FFA is making changes for changes sake, let me warn you that tradition just for tradition's sake is every bit as dangerous. Changing something that we like is a scary feeling. In fact, it's downright uncertain. What if the new creed isn't as appropriate as the old one? What if it doesn't fill the members' needs as adequately?

I think we adults can set our minds at ease on this one. Nearly 300 competent delegates will be studying this question with intensity this month. They will make no change lightly. I think we can all be confident in the outcome if we do our best to open their minds and help them understand the real issues behind this question.

What the Proposed Creed Means

When you read any creed, images may come to mind. "For I know the joys and discomforts of agricultural life" always reminded me of the night we sowed grass seed on

a pond bank during a thunderstorm. You probably have similar comparisons.

It is risky to tell you what the proposed creed means to me because the images each reader forms might be more appropriate. What follows is simply a summary of my thoughts as I wrote.

I believe in the future of agriculture. Our industry is one with staying power. It will be there for me as long as I choose to take part. I support agriculture by believing in it, and am confident that it will remain an exciting, progressive entity. Ours is an industry rich in tradition and ripe with promise. While we honor the best of our past, we also see that the future is filled with opportunity. As farmers before me diligently coaxed life from this land, I will dedicate myself to the tasks before me. I realize that the opportunities I have today are a result of the perseverance of farmers for centuries, and I will approach my life with the same courage. I appreciate the sacrifices made by farmers as they battled every conceivable problem. Though I may never plant a field I salute the men and women who nurtured the soil. The legacy left to me is one of honor and I shall strive to preserve and strengthen the dignity of American agriculture. I am filled with pride when I think of the work of farmers and will do all I can to see that I am a credit to the industry.

I believe a career in agriculture is a worthy undertaking. I am serious about my choice and believe that it is time well spent. In choosing agriculture, I embrace a way of life based on productive work, progressive thought, calculated risk and a commitment to education. I willingly make this choice with full knowledge of its challenges. I welcome these challenges for I know such a life yields endless rewards. Although the path I've chosen will not be easy, I also realize that taking the harder road will result in a more fruitful life.

I believe I am responsible for the well-being of the earth. I must do my fair share to take care of the planet. I cannot assume that others will do this job for me. I stand ready to make wise choices which will enhance life for my fellow human beings and preserve the world's precious resources. Our industry has a great impact on the environment and as an agriculturist, I will face many questions about the use of chemicals, the care of living things and the development of technology. I realize too, that people are the most valuable resource and we must take special care of our earth to ensure a safe environment for all. I accept eagerly this charge, for the future literally depends upon me. This speaks for itself, doesn't it?

*I believe that building my self-esteem and developing my natural talents are among the most valuable contributions I can make to society. For me, this is the underlying value of FFA and other groups that encourage personal development. People who have a feeling of self-worth don't have to resort to substance abuse or crime for a feeling of accomplishment. In Oklahoma, a man named Don Hawkins waits for execution, sentenced to die for the murder of a 29-year-old housewife. He told *The Tulsa Tribune* that thinking about robbing stores gave him the same rush of adrenalin as playing in sandlot baseball games at an earlier age. I don't mean to suggest that non-FFA members will end*

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National FFA Board of Directors The Corporate Change Agent

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at the national level has grown from 24.0% in 1987 to 44.40% in 1990.

The FFA and industry work together to foster the spirit of free enterprise and the development of creative entrepreneurship and innovation. The proposed Financial Records Package will help FFA members upgrade financial records currently used in FFA programs and agricultural education so that the records are in line with accepted accounting and financial management practices. FFA members have the opportunity to learn more about marketing from an agricultural marketing curriculum sponsored by the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board. This is only the first of perhaps a series of marketing materials made available through cooperative efforts of The Council and the National FFA Foundation.

The FFA in the Year 2—

The very nature of the organization has been placed under study as a Structure Task Force works toward answering four questions: What is the National FFA Organization and what should it become? How can the National FFA best serve its clientele? How can the National FFA best meet the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Education? And how does the FFA fit into the Agricultural Education Structure — Present and Future? In view of the diverse interests of members, the multitudes of program initiatives, and the changing nature of agriculture, answers to these questions must be pursued. Self-study creates anxious feelings. However, the National FFA Organization is very sincere in its desire to have in place a structure which is conducive to best serving its members. The willingness to change and grow is essential if the vision is to be realized. It is not the purpose of the Task Force to "throw out the baby with bath water." It is the Task Force's purpose to help the Na-

tional FFA staff and the profession answer the four guiding questions.

Summary

The National FFA Board of Directors, along with the Board of Consultants, Board of Trustees, and FFA Foundation, reflect the interests of the agricultural education community. They have a vested interest in the successful future of the FFA. Bold, innovative thinking is encouraged. The history and tradition of the organization is respected. The FFA member from the family farm is still just as important as the agribusiness entrepreneur. If it sounds like the FFA is involved in everything imaginable — it is. The National FFA Organization has a piece of every goal in the Strategic Plan. However, their focus is on the ultimate benefit to the FFA member and the FFA organization as a whole. It is the responsibility of the National FFA Board of Directors to assist the organization in making sound decisions to move a viable FFA organization into the future. I hope you have enjoyed your visit with the Board. Hopefully, over the great lunch prepared by the Supply Service staff, you have benefited from getting to know the National officers and colleagues in the profession on a more personal basis. Together We Can!

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A New Creed for FFA

(Continued from page 14)

up on Death Row, but one does wonder what might have happened to some less fortunate adults had they had FFA's competitive influence in their lives as teens. A nation's

wealth is found in its people, and I must seek to become a well-rounded citizen, a person of solid character upon whom this country can lay its mantle of leadership. The future of this country and the world community depends on my willingness to become the best person I can become, a person worthy to take on its leadership, from local to national ranks.

CORRECTION

The correct address for Dr. Barbara Malpiedi Kirby, Theme Editor for March, 1991 issue whose name is "Computerized Instruction" is:

Department of Occupational Education
Box 7801
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC 27695-7801

The due date for articles for the March issue is December 1, 1990.