



The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

Papers downloaded from AgEcon Search may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.

No endorsement of AgEcon Search or its fundraising activities by the author(s) of the following work or their employer(s) is intended or implied.

Fred E. Justus

Lifetime Achievement Award

- S-67 Evaluation of the Beef Production Industry in the South—1968–1976 (Co-chairman of Objective II Executive Committee of S-67)
- NCR-4 North Central Farm Management Research Committee—Member 1958–1965, Chairman 1961–1962
- NC-59 Official Title—Identification and Measurement of Managerial Ability and its Effects on Resource Use in Farming—State (Missouri) Project Leader; Secretary of NC-59 Committee
- Agribusiness Club—Outstanding Teacher 1982–1983

Contributing 35 years of service to agricultural economics, Dr. Fred E. Justus' career epitomizes the contributions of a Southern Agricultural Economics Association (SAEA) Lifetime Achievement Award winner. Dr. Justus had a multifaceted career in teaching, applied research, extension, and service.

While zeroing in on primary contributions to Southern agriculture, one cannot ignore Fred's 10 years on the University of Missouri faculty. His first research project there was on the economics of cotton production in Southeast Missouri as part of S-42, a major Southern region project. A North Central region project on measuring and improving management ability provided him with basic insights applicable to all regions.

Until the mid-1980s, he had a typical teaching–research appointment at the University of Kentucky. His teaching schedule included courses in Advanced Farm Management and Rural Real Estate Appraisal. Dr. Justus always considered himself foremost as a teacher. His students always gave him strong teacher evaluations. He took real pride in his



courses and was named Outstanding Teacher in 1982–1983 by the Agribusiness Student Club. The farm management course was actually a business management course—a blend primarily of production economics, business management and analysis, and labor management. The rural appraisal course gave students the latest thinking and techniques of professional appraisers, and actual farm appraisal experiences.

Fred Justus' research projects were primarily applied in nature because of his preference to respond to the needs of farmers for sound, applicable economic data to help solve management problems. A primary contribution was his leadership in S-67 (evaluation of the beef production industry in the South), where

he served on the executive committee and was cochairman.

Originally a portion of his appointment was allocated to extension work, primarily writing publications (e.g., reports for the Kentucky Farm Business Analysis Program), supporting the Kentucky Farm Business Association, and as Secretary-Treasurer of the Kentucky Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. In the mid-1980s his appointment was changed to 40% extension, when he became Coordinator of the Kentucky Farm Business Analysis Program. He served in this role until his retirement in June, 1992. His responsibilities included supervising and coordinating 13 specialists who provided record analyses for 625 commercial farmers. He was particularly proud of the program's contributions to the financial well-being of Kentucky farmers.

Another major component of his career involved the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. He served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Kentucky chapter for 20 years. On the national level, he served as College Vice President (1985–1986) of the American Society of Farm Managers and Ru-

ral Appraisers, was on the *Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers* journal editorial committee for over a decade, and served on a number of other committees.

Dr. Justus contributed significantly to the education of many students (over 50 received M.S. or Ph.Ds under his direction and more than 1,000 undergraduates through his courses at University of Kentucky), and to the welfare of Kentucky farmers. Fred and his wife, Evelyn, continue to live in Lexington, KY. Fred continues to work with the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, and the Boy Scouts.

Dr. Fred E. Justus has made a powerful and enduring contribution in farm management teaching, applied research, extension, and service to the southeastern United States. Fred's impact continues, not just because he is still involved with his professional association, but because of the legacy of the work he did while a faculty member at University of Kentucky. He is a wonderful person, a dedicated professional, a counselor, and friend. Those who worked with him are better for the experience. It is for these reasons Dr. Justus deserves the SAEA's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Thoughts About Our Profession

Fred E. Justus

Looking back at one's career after a decade of retirement is an interesting and sometimes sobering experience. This is especially true when you are expecting some words of wisdom and I have had a minimal amount of involvement in the profession since retiring. I may sound like a traitor, but there is life after a career in agricultural economics.

Let me make it clear, I'm glad I selected the career I did; I feel fortunate to have been associated with the people I worked with in Missouri, Kentucky, and other regional states; and I feel comfortable with what I did and accomplished. Of course, I could have accomplished more.

Two things should be brought out that help explain my thinking. First, I am a people person and consider myself a teacher. This obviously influenced my emphasis on resident instruction, practical research, and extension endeavors. Moreover, my avocation for 35 years has been Boy Scouts—I still train Scout leaders.

A second factor is that while I received a strong education in economic theory, I received my Ph.D. before the advent of mathematical economics. Recognizing this limitation was fundamental in career decisions.

This leads to my first "words of wisdom"—as you can't solve all the world's problems, "try not to be what you shouldn't be." The key to having a productive, satisfying career is to recognize your strengths and weaknesses, your interests and comfort zones. Then find your niche and do everything to excel. Young faculty members, obviously, must do the research and publish to gain tenure, but I believe the most productive years of a career can and should be after tenure is attained. Certainly that is not the time to start coasting. By then, a person should have realized his/her limitations, strengths, and interests and is making adjustments to the rewarding and productive niche.

I've witnessed two situations where career "shouldn't be" occurs. First, by the time a faculty member receives tenure he/she should have developed some valuable leadership skills. But not all faculty members should aspire to be ad-

ministrators or measure a successful career by whether or not administration is on the vita.

Although salary enhancements and prestige may be attractive, administrative chores, particularly evaluating performance of colleagues and friends, making budget allocations, and resolving personnel problems, are not for everyone. I'm sure every senior agricultural economist here can name excellent faculty members who "fizzled" upon becoming an administrator.

Faculty members do not come out of a single talent and interest mold. Some could happily spend all their time doing basic research, some would love to teach and advise students full-time, and some seem born to keep the highways hot doing extension and service work. Some, of course, feel comfortable in a variety of academic endeavors. As we are well aware, all three—resident instruction, research, and extension service—are components of a land-grant institution's charge. Logic would seem to indicate that maximum performance would result from complete specialization, but most appointments contain two or all three components. The primary premise behind these appointments is that teachers and extension personnel should do some research to keep their presentations up-to-date, and researchers should do some teaching and extension work to encourage application of their research findings.

Various highly productive niches can be developed within this institutional structure if faculty members (and administrators) recognize their abilities and interests, and real cooperation among faculty is obtained. Let me draw a few observations that certainly are not always true. Basic researchers perform better as instructors of graduate level courses than undergraduate courses. There is far more real and presumed competition for time between undergraduate courses and basic research. Moreover, the interest and communication gaps between graduate students and researchers are notably smaller. Most research projects can supply data that have extension applications, but the premise that all researchers can present findings so that exten-

sion clients can and will effectively use the findings is open for debate. Their knowledge of clients' needs and information acquiring practices is often questionable. Writing for a professional journal is quite different than writing for extension outlets. On the other hand, extension specialists may have limited time, interests, and abilities to do basic research but know their clients' needs and how to reach their needs. Thus, real cooperative efforts between researchers and extension faculty can result in better-designed projects and more effective dissemination of results. Similar cooperative efforts between teaching and research faculty members can be effective.

Next, I'd like to briefly discuss another issue that has been around a long time but agricultural economists need to revisit regularly. Lord Baden-Powell, founder of Boy Scouts, liked to quote an ancient proverb—"Give a man a fish and he'll have food for today; teach a man to fish and he'll never be hungry." Just add "learning how to fish better" and we've pretty well summarized our professional charge—acquire new knowledge and disseminate it.

It is relatively simple to give our clients data to use (fish), but my concern is relating to extension clients and students how to interpret data, use data, and make decisions based on their analyses. As a farm management specialist, I always felt my primary role was to teach students and farmers how to make sound decisions using physical production data presented by our colleagues in other agricultural disciplines (and other sources). This was always a challenge as it seems to be a natural inclination to believe that greater physical production automatically means more profits. And, our time frame is only "now."

The explosion in development and use of computer technology, one would assume, could minimize my concern. But, I'm not so sure it doesn't increase the problem. Farmers and others may become so conditioned to accept computer outputs without even questioning the reasonableness of results or considering risk factors, some of which may be unrelated to the specific decisions. I am not anti computers, but I am not comforted by the large number of sales clerks, particularly young people, who can't figure correct change if something is wrong with the computer, or hand you a tab that is very unreasonable because of an input goof. I firmly believe we still have to teach "how to fish."

The last issue I'd like to address is profes-

sional integrity. Agricultural economists, I believe, have a high level of integrity, but I bring this up because I also believe we tend to be somewhat naïve about the subject. We believe that if we work diligently, we'll be treated fairly, honestly, and without outside pressures. After all, that's how we feel we treat others.

Our beliefs are tested when submitted journal articles are rejected, we are passed over for tenure and promotion (especially when a colleague we feel is less worthy is promoted), we receive a lower than expected merit rating, or when a grant proposal is turned down. These are part of our profession and we learn from them. However, if we know or feel strongly that we've been wronged it takes real effort to continue to be self-motivated. Professional integrity must also be maintained when we attain positions where we have to make these decisions. Positive motivation accomplishes more than negative motivation.

Some of us have felt the sting of political and economic leaders when academic freedom leads to analytical results unpopular with special interests. Perhaps the most important lesson of the Watergate fiasco is "if you discover a lie but don't report it, you become part of the lie." Professional ethics dictate that we seek the truth and report results. However, our dilemma is compounded by a peculiar trait of our society; far too many people despise whistle-blowers, as much or more than persons who commit crimes. One needs only look back at recent revelations regarding accounting practices of major firms.

Most in our profession fortunately will not face this problem, but it sometimes happens and maybe by accident. Faculty can reduce probabilities by not seeking or accepting grants where strings are attached, and checking with administrators before making questionable commitments. But, as noted, it happens and then each of us must decide the strength of our personal values.

In summarizing, I feel positive about the future of agricultural economics. However, all in our discipline must recognize the disadvantage we continue to face in gaining recognition by our clients. We have to work harder and more creatively on this problem.

I certainly am appreciative and honored that the SAEA bestowed upon me the Lifetime Achievement Award and hope that my remarks here have given you something to seriously consider.