The Editor's Corner; Meet ACE Authors

R. E. Stevenson

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Abstract
Editorial back matter, including an editorial from R.E. Stevenson for vol. 55, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1972) of ACE.

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SWAN SONGS SHOULD be sung by swans, but I'm unable to resist such indulgence as I face my last issue as editor of ACE Quarterly. Since I have avoided the practice of restraint in this column throughout my tenure, I see no reason to try for any such self control in my last offering.

The major thought I have at this time is a feeling of gratitude. Serving as ACE editor has been a meaningful experience for me, and I'm grateful for the opportunity. I would be remiss if I failed to thank the many AAACE members who have supported me by furnishing articles, both on request and on individual initiative. Without you I would have been up the proverbial creek without a paddle. Encouragement I have received from many of you, along with the general feeling of support from practically every member, has given me the encouragement I needed to face each quarter's deadline.

I've enjoyed complete freedom in putting out ACE, and for this I'm deeply grateful. I have used this freedom to comment on many issues facing AAACE and all of agriculture, many of which I probably should have kept quiet about. Too often we hear only an "official" stand on things, so at least my column has aired other than official views on various subjects.

Probably some of you feel that I have been unduly harsh on your expressed ideas. But many of my agitating comments have resulted in someone putting his thoughts down on paper, either in a letter to me or as an article for ACE. I've gained a lot from these exchanges, and learned to appreciate some ideas different from my own. This takes some good ammunition from you to overcome my many prejudices and fixed opinions.

The Future of AAACE

Despite the cloudy picture in my crystal ball, I see a bright future for AAACE. I see some shoals along the way, however, that will require good navigation by the leadership — with help from the total membership — to avoid.

Probably the biggest need is for AAACE to be recognized and treated as an organization of individual communicators. Too often in the past it has been thought of and operated as an organization of "state editors" and their staffs. This attitude has hurt
the organization and stifled some potential "giants" in our membership. The "unwritten law" that only a head state editor or USDA agency information head can be president of AAACE is a slam at the many talented non-administrators in the organization. Before you accuse me of imagining this situation, make up a list of non-department or agency heads who have been president. You'll have to go back before my time in AAACE to find one. The point I'm making is that we don't take advantage of the abilities of our members when we arrange it so that the top leadership comes from such a small percentage of total membership. While I've never been accused of joining the battle for women's lib, I might also note the scarcity of females in important assignments.

One other thing we need to guard against is the idea, which sometimes originates in an organization or agency, that AAACE has the function of supporting their specific programs. This is false and dangerous. AAACE's function is to support and further the profession of agricultural communications and to aid the growth of individuals in the profession. This, in turn, will aid all of our departments in improving their services. Trying to use AAACE to further a specific political cause can only weaken it.

Before you get the idea that I'm concentrating on the negative, let me say that I note progress in the very areas I just complained about. But progress could be much faster if we admit that the problems exist. This is the kind of change in direction that requires no official action by directors or membership - just a recognition of the need and consideration of it as decisions are made.

ACE Quarterly, like AAACE itself, has a lot of room for improvement. I'm confident you will see improvement under direction of the new editor, Charles Bower of West Virginia. But regardless of his good work, ACE can only reach the heights possible by steady support by the membership. Likewise, AAACE's future will be determined by each of you.

R.E.S.
STEVENSON: The Editor's Corner; Meet ACE Authors

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