

# THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

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## TEACHING THROUGH DEMONSTRATIONS

One of the chief objectives in teaching agriculture on a vocational basis is that the students shall learn to *know* the things that they need to know and learn to *do* the things they need to know how to do in order to meet with success as workers in the farming occupations of their choice. Good teachers of agriculture employ a variety of devices or methods of procedure designed to achieve this objective. Of the many valuable methods or devices usually employed in teaching, the demonstration method is found to be particularly helpful in teaching agriculture. In response to the requests from teachers it is the purpose of this issue of the Visitor to give emphasis to the importance of the agriculture demonstration as employed in 4-H club work.

Many of the boys who are employed for instruction in agriculture are members of agriculture demonstration teams and are trained by the teachers of agriculture. The agriculture demonstration team which won the grand champion banner at the 1928 Minnesota State Fair was composed of two boys who are enrolled for instruction in agriculture at the Deer River high school where H. F. Betsinger, who trained the boys, is the teacher of agriculture. Nelvin Haugland and Carlton Nelson, the dairy demonstration team that won the grand championship of the United States at the 1928 National Dairy Show at Memphis, are former students in agriculture at the Spring Grove high school, where H. J. Hookom was the teacher of agriculture. This team, which won in competition with teams from nineteen other states, was trained by County Agent L. A. Churchill, a former teacher of agriculture, and A. J. Williams, the present teacher of agriculture at Spring Grove.

Some of the leaders who have been closely associated with the work of the agriculture demonstration teams that have brought honor and credit to the state this year have been asked to contribute from their experience some suggestions thought to be of value to anyone interested in agriculture demonstration work. T. A. Erickson, state leader of Boys' and Girls' 4-H Club work,

gives the following principles as guides in club demonstrations:

"Two things are very important in agricultural extension work. First, that the individual be taught the better methods of agriculture and home economics developed by the agricultural colleges and United States Department of Agriculture. Second, that each one who has adopted these better practices become demonstrator of them to their neighbors.

"These principles are even more important in 4-H club work than in adult work, because one big objective in club work is *training for leadership*. Because of this, the individual and team demonstrations have received much attention as a method of extension teaching.

"There are a few important principles to follow in order to make a team or individual demonstration effective. *First*, some individual phase of a project should be selected as a subject. Unity in subject is important. *Second*, the subject selected should be a part of the project, and the material presented should come out of the personal experience of the demonstrator. *Third*, select a subject which permits "doing things" from beginning to end of the demonstration. Lots of action generally makes a good demonstration. A lecture is not a demonstration. *Fourth*, unity, simplicity and practicability of material with sincerity, earnestness, thoroughness, and "pep" on the part of demonstrators are qualities of a successful demonstration. *Fifth*, in a 4-H team demonstration, team work, appearance of team, and ability to answer questions are important. *Sixth*, avoid complicated subject, technical terms in subject matter, advice to the audience, and equipment not familiar to demonstrators."

H. F. Betsinger, in writing of his experiences in teaching agriculture, indicates that the agriculture demonstration work of his boys is an important factor in creating interest in the department of agriculture in the high school. Betsinger writes:

"Last spring we decided to place more emphasis on agriculture demonstration work as a method of teaching new and improved practices in agriculture. The

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values of demonstration work may be summarized as follows: *first, value to students*: (1) allows self-expression; (2) develops poise; (3) broadens outlook on life; (4) instruction put into practice; *second, value to school*: (1) a means of interesting students; (2) advertising for the school and agriculture department; (3) instruction made easier and more profitable; *third, value to parents*: (1) children become better members of the family; (2) children take a new interest in farm and home problems; *fourth, value to community*: (1) arouses interest in the welfare of the community's greatest asset—boys and girls; (2) an interest in better farm and home practices is created.

"The natural interest and inclinations of the boys were considered in choosing the team members. One team decided to demonstrate "capons and caponizing." The boys began at once an intensive study of their problem. After mastering part of the material and having had some actual practice of the various phases of the work they began to organize the demonstration. This was based upon actual practices carried out by the boys upon their home farms. Rehearsals were held once or twice a week, mainly in the evening, so that there would be no interference with farm work. This was not very good as the boys were so apt to be tired after a hard day's work. Evening work with caponizing was especially bad, but with the use of flash lights we managed to get along fairly well and a good technique was developed and not a bird was lost. It took quite a bit of planning in order to have birds ready for the practice periods, but we worked this out early in the season.

"Three demonstrations were given by the team on Farm Bureau Community Exhibit days. This was good practice and good advertising. Much interest was created and the Farm Bureau units ap-

preciated the work. Later, this team won the grand championship for agriculture demonstrations at the 1928 Minnesota State Fair. The boys on the poultry team will continue with their poultry work and caponize enough cockerels for a limited local demand. The demonstration was of enough influence so that several poultrymen have decided to caponize enough cockerels for their home consumption at least.

"We may say that at the present time the business men and the farmers of Deer River are solidly back of the departments of agriculture in the high school and the program for Boys' and Girls' Club work."

Nelvin Haugland and Carlton Nelson, who won the national grand championship at Memphis, place a high educational value on their demonstration work as is shown by their personal account of their experiences. Nelvin Haugland writes the following about his trip to the National Dairy Show:

"The Minnesota 4-H Club delegation, lead by Mr. Erickson, traveled by auto to Memphis, Tennessee. This made the trip very interesting. After driving through Iowa, where we saw some very fine corn fields, we crossed the Mississippi river at Davenport into Illinois. After driving through a large part of Illinois we crossed the Mississippi again near Alton, Illinois, and found ourselves in St. Louis, Missouri. Here we visited Forest Park, the largest park in the world, covering nearly 2000 acres. We also visited the Jefferson Memorial, where Lindbergh's fame rests in the form of trophies, medals, and countless other things. Going through the cotton region of Arkansas and after crossing the Mississippi on a ferry, we found ourselves in Memphis.

"Some say that a dairy show consists of only dairy cattle. We found that there were many more things involved, although the dairy cow had the most prominent place in the show. To me, the dairy demonstrations were of the greatest interest, partly because we were competing in them but mostly because we learned new ideas to bring home to our own 4-H club.

"I believe that dairy demonstration work has a good future. The subjects that are discussed are truly of importance to the farmer. From my experience in that work I have learned that there are many things to take into consideration. First, the demonstration must apply to home conditions; second, it must be practical and simple; third, the ones who demonstrate must have

"pep" and show keen interest in the subject; and fourth, it is better to explain one thing well rather than to skip over many things and not really explain any of them. I have learned more about the subject of clean milk in the demonstration than I could in any other way. Another thing that demonstration work does is that it trains a person to get up before an audience and express himself.

"As a result of winning the dairy demonstration contest, we were awarded gold medals and gold watches. Although these things are fine to have as a remembrance of the contest, it is not what I value the most. It is the education that I got from the trip and demonstration, beside the practical experience that I value by far the most."

Carlton Nelson has a similar story to tell regarding the trip to Memphis:

"My trip to Memphis was of great interest. The close observation of the different states we passed through gave me a different point of view than I previously had. In Arkansas, the new things to me were the mules, negroes, and cotton fields. It was a great experience to see how cotton grows, how the seeds are taken out by the gin, and how it is pressed into huge bales. We also went through a cotton press in Memphis. Here the bales were again pressed so they would not be so bulky to handle.

"I enjoyed very much being at the show as I had a chance to see numerous herds of high quality dairy cattle. It certainly is a great opportunity for any boy or girl to see such cattle. The only thing I wished was that I might some day be able to own a similar herd.

"I feel that I have accomplished more this year than I have during any other year of my life that I can remember. By *accomplished* I mean what I have learned and experienced in my demonstration work. I know now that there is no better way of learning how to do a thing than by actually doing it. When I look back to the first day last spring when I started my experience with demonstration work, it seems to me a miracle that I could learn so much about one subject in such a short time. I feel that the value of the information and experience I have gained these few months is worth more than one year in school.

"Demonstration work is not only *work* but it has much pleasure in it. I think it is a real pleasure to be able to discuss and show a public audience what we are doing at home. There is no better way of advertising our achievements. In my demonstration work I have received ex-

cellent training in appearing before an audience. I value the experience and pleasure received from club and demonstration work so much that I now would not give it up for anything. It has not only helped in public speaking but also in ability to think and concentrate.

"Pleasure in my work has also come to me in other ways. Club and demonstration work has given me many trips that are of great educational value to any boy or girl of my age. I have received opportunities and honors that I never dreamed could come to me. The friendships I have formed would be too numerous to mention. They will be of a lifelong remembrance to me. Anything a person can do which forms friendship is of great value to him. I urge any club boy or girl who is eligible to enroll in demonstration work, as it has wonderful educational value.

"In conclusion I might say that I have appreciated the trip I have been awarded, the banners, medals and prizes, and the honor I have gained. But most of all, I feel that the experience and the real knowledge of the dairy business which I have gained through demonstration work are the best rewards and will be of most value to me in my future life and vocation."

L. A. Churchill, county agent in Houston county, the home county of the 1928 grand champion demonstration team of the United States, regards demonstration work as essential in a well rounded program of extension work. Churchill says:

"Demonstration work in 4-H club work seems to me to present an advanced form of training in the education of rural boys and girls. There is no question but that the boy or girl of ten to fifteen years should get the fundamentals of his or her project, and I believe that the project should be more definite. However, the older boy and girl needs something more advanced to hold his or her interest and the demonstration work seems to provide this need.

"I believe that any demonstration should be first of all practical, one that can be put into practice on the farms of the county. I believe that this is one reason why demonstrations have been so successful in Houston county. Nearly all of our demonstrations have been practical. This will encourage the boys and girls in getting all they can out of their projects.

"In Houston county I feel that the demonstration work has kept a large number of the older boys and girls in club work and it gives them some real training and at the same time a goal

to work for. There is no question in my mind but that the team members themselves benefit by it, the work benefits by it, and agriculture as a whole benefits by it."

Mr. A. J. Williams, teacher of agriculture at Spring Grove, assisted in the training of the dairy demonstration team which brought honors to Minnesota in 1928. In response to a request for a statement regarding the value of demonstration work as a factor in teaching Mr. Williams writes:

"Demonstration work has gained much in importance and popularity in recent years. The full merit of the work as yet is unknown. The work has rightly arrived at the important stage of consideration that it now holds because demonstrations are one of the most effective means of education and placing of proper methods and ideas before a group so that the results can be put into practice.

"Training a demonstration team as with any other team means that much effort and practice must be put forth if the team is to be successful. Selection of the subject matter for the demonstration and the selection of the team are the most important steps previous to the long and faithful training period which must follow. The subject matter for demonstration must be simple, explicit, and practical in any demonstration that is to be given before the general public. The members of the team must be persons who thoroughly believe in the practices which they are to demonstrate, who have good, strong and convincing voices, and who are eager to impart their information to others. The next step is to arrange the subject matter in the most simple and practical way for presentation. Charts and posters are valuable but more effective work can be done with actual equipment and by referring to actual experiences. The members of the team should be busy at all times; if not actually demonstrating, either preparing for other parts of the demonstration or aiding the other member of the team. All activities of the demonstration should be in clear view of the audience with the actual demonstrating holding the more prominent place.

"The demonstration should be written in detail by the members of the team but not learned verbatim by the team. The demonstrators should know the demonstration and information concerning it well enough to substitute effectively words, sentences, and even paragraphs during the demonstration if occasion arises. To reach perfection, many rehearsals during a long period of training

are necessary. Each time the demonstration is rehearsed it should be given with the same eagerness and enthusiasm that it is to be given in competition before a public audience. It is a good idea to practice as much as possible before an audience and have the audience ask as many questions as possible pertaining to the demonstration. Answering questions concerning the demonstration is of vital importance as that part is the determining factor as to the success or failure of the demonstration.

"The value of demonstration work in the teaching of vocational agriculture or in Boys' and Girls' 4-H Club work is of great importance. First of all, as has been mentioned, demonstration work is a very effective method of teaching, regardless of where it is used—in the class room, extension work, or elsewhere. Secondly, demonstrations will increase the enrollment of a class or organization. There are very few boys or girls who, while watching their classmates or fellow workers in a demonstration, do not wish that they were able to do the same. In this way demonstrations stimulate interest very effectively.

"Awards for success should be made in some way but not in cash prizes. Probably the most valuable awards that can be made to boys and girls are educational trips. Besides the interest and educational value of such trips, other important results are the new friendships and acquaintances of boys and girls from other parts of the country along with men who are leaders and authorities in various lines of work.

"The members of the 4-H Club Dairy Demonstration team who won the trip to Memphis, Tennessee, to attend the National Dairy Show and Tri-State Cotton Show which was held in conjunction with the dairy show are Carlton Nelson and Nelvin Haugland of Spring Grove, Minnesota. The team was declared national dairy demonstration champions and were awarded gold medals and watches for this achievement. This trip gave 45 club members and leaders who attended from Minnesota the opportunity to see the best of dairy cattle from all over the United States and the best of cotton that is produced in this country, the latter being something which most of the Minnesota group had never seen grown before. The trip was wonderful from start to finish but every one of the Minnesota group was glad to return home and expressed their preference for living in Minnesota rather than in Dixie."

A. M. F.