During the period from 1935 to 1950 there was a definite belief on the part of our society as a whole that our population would outgrow agricultural production and there was a felt need to educate more people in Agronomy. That was the "golden era" of our profession. We just couldn't educate agronomists fast enough. In 1935 Texas A. & M. College, the largest agricultural college at that time, graduated three B.S. degree men in Agronomy. Four years later the senior class numbered 45. Other colleges can tell of similar growth. The hybrid corn industry was beginning to grow, and plant breeders were scarce. The Soil Conservation Service was established, and soils men were scarce. The fertilizer industry was expanding, and agronomists were hardly available. Agronomy faculties in colleges needed to grow and there were not enough agronomists with advanced degrees to go around. The situation is vastly different in 1961. On November 24, 1961, the editorial writer for the Des Moines Register had this to say:

"The Peace Corps has attracted plenty of volunteers in general, apparently, but not enough with the special skills most urgently needed. A shortage of agricultural technicians, for example, has forced cancellation of several farm projects in underdeveloped countries. This is surprising. In relation to its own needs, the United States probably has a larger supply of agricultural technicians than of any other technical specialty. A strong argument can be made that the United States not only is producing surpluses of many farm commodities, but is employing a surplus of technical experts in agriculture."

This editorial writer has simply expressed a belief that is quite common today—that only a limited number of opportunities exist in the whole field of Agriculture. In other words, the image of Agronomy is associated with the opportunity for employment. If the demand were higher for graduates at this time, the image would be considerably improved.

Throughout the last decade, population in this country grew faster than the labor force, which created more new jobs every year. But these new jobs were in urban areas rather than in rural areas. This need for enlargement of the labor force was combined with rapid growth in technology in Agriculture, which resulted in a surplus of farm labor. The surplus of farm labor, however, could find new opportunities in cities. The cold war and the large expenditures for defense industries helped to create the need for large numbers of engineers and physical scientists. Even as the farm population rapidly decreased, agricultural production grew faster than the population was growing and surplus commodities piled higher and higher. In short, society as a whole just does not feel the need to increase the number of college-educated people in Agriculture. But society as a

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1 Invitational paper presented in the Agronomic Education Division, American Society of Agronomy Meetings, 1961.
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