Parting Thoughts from the Editor

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Over the past three years, it has been my distinguished honor to serve as editor of *Soil Survey Horizons* and subsequently, *Soil Horizons*. The journal has undergone tremendous change over the past three years; changes that I hope you, the readers, have enjoyed. The focus of the journal, once predominantly domestic, has broadened to include many international authors and associate editors from India, China, Germany, and Brazil. We've introduced new types of articles such as feature articles, guest columns from soil scientists worldwide, “Day in the Life” profiles, and “Tales from the Pits” columns.

Yet in doing so, we've tried to maintain the special niche that the journal fills, which is uniquely different from other soil science publications. We have kept and enhanced our student paper contest and are able to offer full color and dynamic content to authors. Perhaps the most controversial move we made was to go completely electronic with our dissemination. However, as the journal does not collect publication fees from authors, it was a necessary move to ensure its financial stability.

In thinking of the changes that the journal has experienced over the past few years, I couldn't help but think of how such changes reflect our discipline of soil science. Years ago, a large focus of soil science in the USA was devoted to initial soil survey work. We mapped county to county, prepared students to enter the workforce as soil surveyors, and investigated special problems collaboratively between the USDA-NRCS and universities. With the majority of initial soil survey work now complete, save Alaska and the public mountain and military lands, our discipline has changed with time. Today, we are focused more on how to deliver and interpret our information to end users. In an era where every federal program comes under scrutiny as to its benefit to the American people, we need to work hard to educate the populace about the importance of our work. Too many times I've told someone I received a degree in agronomy and had them stare back at me with a perplexed look on their face. Other times I've introduced myself as a soil scientist only to hear a snicker or laugh—“You work with dirt?” Of course, there is nothing funny about the gravity of the situation in which we find ourselves.

Our planet now supports in excess of 7 billion people. Recent United Nations (UN) projections place the population at 9.6 billion by 2050. Population increases put ever more pressure on agronomists to produce more crops to feed a hungry world. Norman Borlaug knew it, and he devoted his career to feeding people. The UN seeks to address such needs through its Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) while the U.S. government is addressing them through its Feed the Future program. Feeding hungry people throughout the world quickly dispels any snickers concerning the importance of our chosen profession.

Over my career, I've been fortunate to travel to many distant places around the world. I've met countless people who hunger; not just physical hunger for food, but educational hunger for knowledge. They are fathers who toil in the field all day with a hoe to scratch out barely enough money to feed a family. They are mothers who worry about clean drinking water too often spoiled by nitrates, coliform, or heavy metals. They are sons and daughters who try to strike an amiable balance between working so the family will have enough to eat and daring to dream that they could one day receive an education and escape a life of desperate poverty. I've seen students working late into the night, studying until the sun has given way to moonlight. And I'm contacted every week by students around the world who have questions about soils or how to improve their crop production.

We must take our knowledge and skills to the people. We must step out of our comfort zone and go to places where the need is great, be it in our backyards or around the world. Too many times we've only read about desperation in the papers or heard about it on the news, without working to produce tangible change. We live in a global society today; one where food grown in one country is trans-