

A Tribute to A Fine Man Who Had a Major Influence on Me

Mr. Jack Corn was the Vocational Agriculture (Vo. Ag.) teacher and Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter sponsor at [Pacolet High School](#). I'm not sure what year Mr. Corn came to Pacolet, but I think it was about 1952 to 1953. Mr. Corn had attended Spartanburg Methodist College after graduating from Mauldin High School. He dropped out of school to serve his country in WW 2 in the Army Air Corp. After the war was over, he enrolled at Clemson and majored in agriculture education. He left Pacolet at a date unknown to me, probably the middle to late 60's.

While at Pacolet, Mr. Corn was involved in many activities. He ran the [cannery](#) during the summer, where many of the locals brought their home grown produce to be canned. He sponsored the Pacolet Chapter of the FFA. [He was the first volunteer Fire Chief when Pacolet organized a volunteer fire department.](#) He would take the Vo. Ag. Class to some farmer's farm by request to neuter a bull calf, or a pig - and even a goat every now and again. We'd also take field trips to the school farm to run a seed cleaning machine-not a good thing to be around if you had any allergies

I was fortunate enough to be swayed by my Dad to take Vo. Ag., which was a 3 year curriculum. We lived on 75 acres on Highway 9 just about one mile below Mr. Corn's house. (He was one of my best paper route customers. He would always leave the 40 cents that the paper cost per week on the front porch window ledge) Vo. Ag. was a curriculum designed for country boys that probably would not be going to college. The subjects taught ranged from judging livestock (where we competed against other FFA chapters) to public speaking, to internal combustion engines, to ag. equipment, land judging (as to its suitability for crop production), to rudimentary sex education, to shop machinery, agronomy, animal husbandry, to welding, etc. etc.

To take Vo. Ag. you had to join the FFA, and that required an initiation. One of the things we had to do was to trace our handprint onto a sheet of green poster paper-symbolizing that we were "Greenhands". We then had to acquire the signature of each upper classman in our FFA chapter. Each of them made a paddle about 2ft long and about 1/4 to 3/8 inch thick. Each upper classman would give you one lick with that paddle in return for his signature. All of us "Greenhands" had a black and blue butt for several days.

The night of the formal initiation we assembled at the Vo. Ag. Building - wearing nothing but panties and a bra purloined from a sympathetic mother or sister. To say the initiation was an ordeal would be an understatement. I'll spare you the details. Mr. Corn supervised the whole operation to make sure it didn't get too rough. After it was over and we changed clothes, we joined the FHA (Future Homemakers Association) for a party.

Sometimes during 6th period, we'd have Fun Friday. Students with talent would perform - singing the latest hits, or maybe a popular song that the choir was working on. Do you remember "Kawliga" by Hank Williams Sr.? Mr. Corn had a nice voice, and he would sing. Do you remember "You Are My Sunshine"? I remember him singing that specifically. One Friday, we were thrilled to be visited by Joe Bennett and his *Sparkletones*. They had one big hit, "Pink Shirt, Black Pants". They were from Cowpens which was our sister school in District 3. They spent some time in Vegas - where they would open for Elvis!

At school events, Mr. Corn would be there with a camera-the old flash bulb for indoor shots. He also filmed the football games and gave the film to the coaches for review. In October, we'd have a fall festival in the gym, and Mr. Corn would be right there. One of his booth's featured a piece of lumber about 6" x 6" by 3ft long. He'd let any "prospect" pay a dollar and try to drive a 20 penny nail all the way into the timber with one blow from a standard claw hammer. I remember Mr. "Peavine" Brown doing it and he was the only one who did and he won \$3 for his effort.

We boys idolized Mr. Corn. He wasn't very tall, probably 5'9" and looked just a bit rotund. The looks were deceiving. He was very muscular and extremely strong.

We had a large anvil in the shop, sitting on a waist high work bench. That anvil must have weighed 250 to 300 lbs. We'd heard that Mr. Corn, at some time in the past, had picked that anvil up off the floor and set it on the work bench. We hounded him unceasingly to demonstrate that feat. One day, to our surprise, he told us that if we'd set it on the floor, he'd see if he could still do it. It was all we could do, but two of us managed to set it on the floor without dropping it. Mr. Corn squatted facing the anvil, put one arm under it on each end, took a deep breath, and slowly stood up, taking one step forward, and then leaning back just a bit, got the front edge on the bench and then stepped forward again and he'd done it!!

He was a bit red in the face as he turned to me and said, "Do you want to try it now, Dennis?"

I hastily assured him that was above my pay grade!!!!

Outside, and behind the shop was a small anvil. It weighed about 85 or 90 lbs. Mr. Corn could press it up to arm's length over his head with one hand. I tried and tried-but never got it done. I never saw any other student do it either!

Mr. Corn was a fan of Kaiser/ Frazer cars. He had a 1953 Kaiser, and a 1947 Frazer, which was a bit smaller than the Kaiser. Sometimes we'd take road trips to go to a livestock judging or a soil judging contest. There'd usually be 4 of us on the team, and we'd go in Mr. Corn's Kaiser. I remember coming down the straight stretch of US 9, the Spartanburg Highway, and all 4 of us begin to rock sideways in unison. Man, we really had that Kaiser rocking up on one side and down the other. Mr. Corn just grinned and said "You don't lack much turning her over!" He didn't say to quit, but we did. Had to love a teacher like that.

One day we were in Vo. Ag. Class, and the Principal, Mr. Blackwell, over the loudspeaker, PA system, asked Mr. Corn if he could come to the office for a minute. Mr. Corn didn't have to tell us to behave-we KNEW! He couldn't have gotten halfway to Mr. B's office when a piece of chalk hit me in the back of the head. I knew that Calvin had done it, so I let drive with a piece of my own. Pretty soon it was on-everybody was throwing chalk. "Ol" Calvin made a great shot with a blackboard eraser - caught me right in the mouth. He flew out the backdoor.

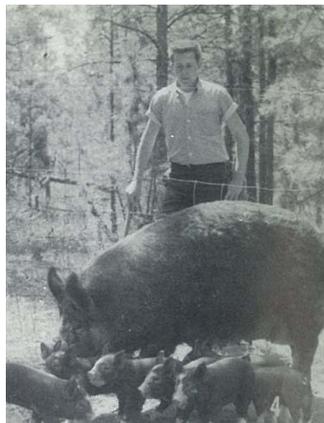
Out the end window, I could see he was headed for the front door. I had my eraser and my arm was cocked to let him have it the moment he opened the door. I waited, the door swung open and I let fly. Caught him square in the face!! Mr. Corn that is!! UH OH.

Mr. Corn could wield a paddle like no one else. He'd only drawback about a foot, and he could lift you right off the floor. He was grinning and said "I thought I could depend on you guys to behave." He looked all around, there were 2 or 3 erasers and several pieces of chalk on the floor. Mr. Corn asked, "Did anyone here not participate?" He was the kind of man you just wouldn't lie to - nobody declared innocence.

"Well, line up. Everybody gets a lick. Dennis, since you hit me with that throw, you get a little extra. You go to the back of the line." Well everyone got their lick---and I got 3! Don't know if I could have stood any more. He set my rear on fire!!

The FFA had a livestock program for its members. They would give you a pig or a calf. You had to raise it, have it bred, and turn one pig or one calf back into the program. I got 2 Berkshire pigs and a Guernsey heifer. I raised my two gilts (female pigs) and had them bred. One gave birth to 9 little pigs, and one had 8. I gave 2 little gilts back to the FFA chain. I still had 13 to sell (I lost 2 shortly after they were born).

My original two gilts made two fine sows (big female hogs). I decided to take them to the market. We had a terrible time getting those hogs to go up the ramp into Dad's truck. Mr. Corn was there helping, as was Bob Shack, and Dad. It must have taken 2 -3 hours, but we got it done. I got about \$600 for those two sows - which I banked for college.



By the time I went off to college, my heifer had been bred 3 times and had produced bull calves each time. I'd traded that heifer to dad for some money I owed him for wrecking his truck. He finally had to buy a heifer calf for the FFA. You only got 3 chances to produce a heifer, reasoning that the sale of 3 steers would produce more than enough to buy a heifer. Dad always felt he got taken on that deal.

Mr. Corn, and his wife Meena, had 4 children Judy, Johnny, Jan and Jerry. He and Coach Neil McNeil seemed to be competing as to who could have the largest family. Each had 4, and both quit at that level, so they remained tied.

When I was in high school, I developed a "potty mouth"! I swore too much and it became a habit. Coach McNeil took me to task over it. Mr. Corn sat me down and gave me a talking to - not so much as to right and wrong - but his thesis was that if you needed to resort to profanity to get your point across, or to express yourself, that your vocabulary must be limited. A person with an

adequate vocabulary could express himself using plain English, if his vocabulary was sufficient. He encouraged me to not use profanity routinely - saying if you did, you had nothing to resort to when you were really angry. I never heard Mr. Corn swear, or even use scatological language.

I was elected president of the FFA my senior year, and was also elected to be vice president of the senior class. Mrs. Littlejohn (who was really a great teacher) sponsored the Student Council. She asked for a meeting with Mr. Corn and me because both of my elected positions entitled me to a Student Council Seat. She took the position that I had to resign from one or the other. Mr. Corn took a different perspective. He said "We want Dennis as our Chapter President, and we are not going to make him give up his senior class office. We'll just drop off the Student Council!"

Well, with him giving me that kind of support, I had to respond in kind, so I volunteered to give up the vice presidency of the senior class, which was mostly an honorary position. The real work was by the President and the Secretary. We elected Nick Jones as VP of the senior class, a position he deserved, and I was glad to see him elected.

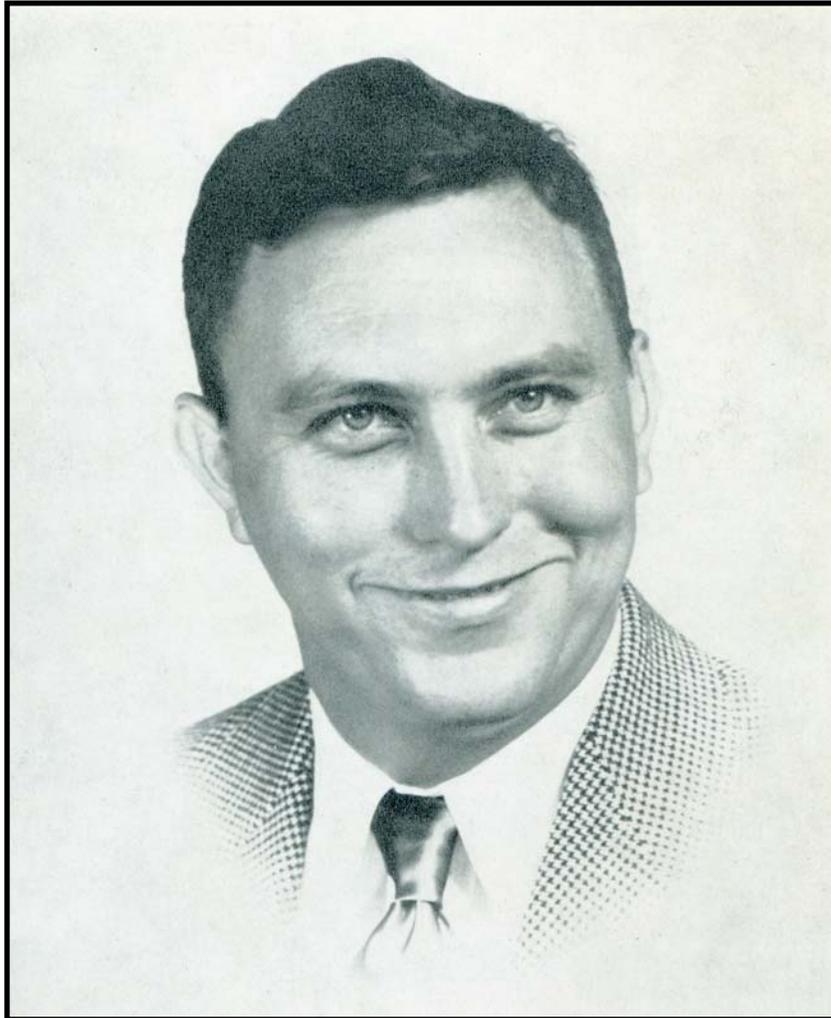
Mr. Corn spent a good deal of time talking to me about college - especially about Clemson. He encouraged me to apply for a Sears Scholarship to the School of Agriculture. These were \$300 scholarships, (tuition, room and board was only \$880) good for one year only. Since Mr. Corn was the most knowledgeable man I knew, and he had majored in agriculture, I felt if I could follow in his footsteps that I would do well.

I was awarded one of the 10 Sears Scholarships, and I decided to major in Agricultural Engineering. My Scholarship was only good for one year, so after the first year I switched to Civil Engineering. I talked with Mr. Corn before I changed majors, and he was all for whatever I wanted to do. No pressure of any kind, just encouragement to do well in whatever I chose.

Sometime in the middle to late 60's Mr. Corn and his family left Pacolet. He took a position as the General Manager of a big farm in the low state. I sort of lost touch with him after that. I stayed 6 years at Clemson, taking a BSCE in 1964, and then two years of Graduate School leading to a Master's degree in Environmental Engineering.

Two years after I left Clemson, I moved to Illinois where I lived for 10 years. Mr. Corn and I lost contact with each other. If you know anyone that was in Pacolet's Chapter of the FFA during Mr. Corn's tenure, I'll bet you, if you asked them what they thought of him, nearly all them will tell you he was the finest, or at least one of the finest men they ever knew. I know he was the greatest influence for good of any man (except for my Dad) that I knew in my formative years.

Mr. Corn retired in 1987, and passed away in March of 2004. I didn't hear of his passing until July of that year. I was greatly saddened that I didn't get to see him one last time. To this day, I feel a sense of loss when I think of him, but it is overshadowed by all the good memories and all the things he taught me. I am sure any of his other Pacolet Students would tell you the same thing. Mr. Jack P. Corn was a fine man.



• *Dedication*

WE dedicate our 1952 TOMAHAWK to JACK P. CORN, our vocational teacher, as a token of our esteem and affection. To his honor and credit may this volume be a mark of recognition. We are happy to salute him as an inspiring teacher and a beloved gentleman.

(In 1952, The Pacolet High School annual, *The Tomahawk*, was dedicated to Mr. Corn. The photo and the dedication above were included.)

F. F. A.



F F A Sweetheart

MISS MARTHA BROWN



Dennis Crocker
President



Mr. Jack Corn
Advisor

This is the FFA page as shown in the 1960 annual, *The Tomahawk*.

Jack Corn

Jack Percy Corn, 79, of 311 Elm Drive, husband of Jane C. Corn, died Sunday, March 21, 2004, at National Health Care of Mauldin after several years of declining health. Born in Etowah, N.C., he was a son of the late William Raleigh and Annie McElrath Corn. Mr. Corn moved to Mauldin when he was one year old. The Corn family farm and home place was in the area of what is now Corn Road in Mauldin.

After graduating from Mauldin High School, Mr. Corn attended Spartanburg Methodist College. He served in the Army Air Corp. during World War II and graduated from Clemson University after he returned home. His chosen career was teaching in the area of agriculture. Mr. Corn taught in Pacolet, at Carolina High School in Greenville and in Laurens District 55 Schools for 23 years where he was the Director of Vocational Education and Assistant Principal. He retired in 1987 after 40 years in education. He was a life member of the Future Farmers of America and was among South Carolina's outstanding educators in Agriculture. Mr. Corn was a member of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church where he had been a deacon and an elder. He was the first Volunteer Fire Chief in Pacolet, S.C.

Family members, friends and students will remember Mr. Corn as a man who touched lives in a significant way. He will also be remembered for his avid love and support of Spartanburg Methodist College and Clemson University. He was proud to have served his country in World War II. He conveyed a strong belief in the inherent goodness in every individual and saw the beauty inside the souls of all people he knew. He gave support to all those with whom he worked and to his students. Many who knew him expressed that he was the kindest person they ever knew.

Surviving, in addition to his wife, of the home are two daughters, Judy Newman and her husband, Allan, of Powdersville and Jan Gault and her husband, Paul, of Fountain Inn; two sons, John Corn and his wife, Laura, of Simpsonville and Jerry Corn, of Mauldin; one sister, Carrie Lee Leopard, of Mauldin; three granddaughters, Dea Gist and her husband, Nick, of West Point, N.Y., Irina Gault and Brenna Gault, both of Fountain Inn; two grandsons, Nathan Makolandra and Joey Makolandra, both of Simpsonville; and two great-grandchildren, Madeline Gist and Graham Gist. Also surviving are one stepdaughter, Suellen Crofts Holmes and her husband, Joseph, of Enoree; three stepsons, Owen Crofts and his wife, Brenda, of Waterloo, David Crofts and his wife, Kathy, of Laurens and Neal Crofts and his wife, Jeanie of Sumter; eight step-grandchildren, Kristie Meeks and her husband, Jeff, Kelly Todd and her husband, Greg, all of Clinton, Hunter Holmes, Stephen Crofts, Tyler Crofts and Olivia Crofts, of Laurens and Jacob Crofts and David Crofts of Sumter; three stepgreat-grandchildren, Blake Meeks, Chandler Todd and Ashlyn Todd; one sister-in-law and brother-in-law and several nieces and nephews. Mr. Corn was predeceased by his first wife, Wilhelmina Albertson Corn; two sisters; and five brothers.

Funeral services will be conducted 2 p.m. Tuesday, March 23, 2004, at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mauldin with Dr. Bill Linderman and the Rev. Phil Hall officiating. Burial will be in Greenville Memorial Gardens. The family will receive friends from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. tonight, March 22, 2004, at Cannon Funerals and Cremations in Simpsonville.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the SC FFA Scholarship Fund, SC FFA Office of Public Affairs, 1401 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29201.

(Obituary of Jack Corn from the Greenville Newspaper)