

# Elmer J. Gump



Elmer J. Gump was born April 10, 1895 in Cameron District, Marshall County, West Virginia where he lived all his life.

After service as Chief Cook with the 314th Field Artillery, 80th Division, World War I, he returned to Cameron to marry and to become a teacher in the Marshall Counties Schools. He entered into a partnership in 1922 with his father to operate a dairy farm first known as the D.D. Gump and Son Dairy; on the death of his father in 1933 the name was changed to West End Dairy Farms. Initially they had 12 cows and 90 acres of land and the first delivery of five quarts to individuals and a gallon can to a restaurant were made from a slat bottom buggy. During the forty years he was in business the farm was enlarged to 560 acres. The herd of largely registered Jerseys grew to more

than 60 head and became necessary to purchase milk wholesale to meet the daily demands of over 100 gallons.

Mr. Gump's first automatic milking machines were powered by a gas engine and the milk was cooled with ice. The availability of electricity in 1933 brought great changes. Electric power operated the milkers, pumped coolant through a heat exchanger to cool the milk, and cooled a large walk-in storage room that held the milk until delivery. In later years an electric bottling machine and bottle washer were added along with a pasteurizer and homogenizer. This was indeed a modern facility for such a small rural community.

To operate a 560 acre farm on the hilly slopes of West Virginia's Northern Panhandle required perseverance and ingenuity which Elmer Gump certainly displayed. He was greatly influenced by Gerald Heebink from the West Virginia University Extension Service and R.S. Virtue the Extension Agent for Marshall County. As a result, he was one of the first in Marshall County to practice contour farming and crop rotation and to advocate the use of lime and chemical fertilizers to supplement natural fertilizer. He repeatedly reinvested his assets and was among the first to mechanize his farming operation with tractors, hay loaders, balers, and to install an electric hay drier. He was an early advocate of the artificial insemination program and was one of those instrumental in organizing the Artificial Breeder's Cooperative headquartered in Clarksburg, W. Va. His farm was often used by the Extension Service to demonstrate proper farming procedures to others in the Northern Panhandle area and his knowledge in the medical treatment of farm animals was such that he was frequently called by his neighboring farmers when a veterinarian was not available.

He was a member and Past President of the West Virginia Dairyman's Association, Past President of the Dairyman's Cooperative Sales Association, served as a director of the Marshall County Farm Bureau Association and was instrumental in establishing the Farm Bureau Cooperative Store that became the Southern States Cooperative in which he was a stockholder and director. He helped organize the Northern Panhandle Soil Conservation District, was made an honorary member of the Future Farmers of America for his support and cooperation and was a supporter of the 4-H Clubs of America.

Elmer Gump had a deep love of the land and for his farm animals. Despite his lack of formal education, he displayed great expertise in agricultural practices and animal husbandry which brought the respect and esteem of farmers throughout the state of West Virginia. As a strong civic minded person, he supported his community, his church and he loved his fellow man – he truly lived by the Golden Rule.