Gerald Heebink

Gerald Heebink was born at Baldwin, Wisconsin in 1894. He graduated from Baldwin High School in 1913, River Falls Wisconsin Normal School in 1918, served in the military from 1918-1919 (France), graduated with honors from the University of Wisconsin in 1922 (B.S. in Agriculture), received a M.S. degree from the same school in 1926, was extension dairyman in South Dakota from 1923 to 1935, and moved to West Virginia to a position he held until his death.

Mr. Heebink came to West Virginia at a time when agriculture was king and the dairy industry was one of the top enterprises. He was the right man at the right time, and his enthusiasm in improving both production and marketing was contagious among the dairy farmers whose welfare was his chief concern.

Unusually effective at the podium, persuasively presenting the latest scientific innovation in a practical, down-to-earth way, he was also comfortable and confident with a pitchfork as he helped fork hay or manure while convincing dairyman of the importance of record keeping and the necessity of utilizing the Dairy Herd Improvement Association, which he organized.

He was one of those instrumental in forming and developing the West Virginia Artificial Breeders Cooperative; he correlated the bringing of the Carnation plant to Clarksburg in 1940, an act that distributed millions of dollars to dozens of farmers; and he work unceasing with the commercial plants so they could buy more of the West Virginia Dairymen's commodity.

Mr. Heebink developed the West Virginia Dairymen's Association, was instrumental in establishing the West Virginia Dairy Cattle Show at Jackson's Mill in 1938, taught "Dairy Short Courses" that are classics of their kinds, chaired the first West Virginia "June Dairy Princess Contest," and started the June Dairy Day at West Virginia University.

David Heebink established the "Gerald Heebink Award" in memory of his father. This award is presented annually to the West Virginia University faculty member most noted for outstanding public service.