

Robert L. Hammer



Robert L. Hammer, a native of Lewis County, and a graduate of West Virginia University, has been a dominant force in promoting a better agricultural industry in West Virginia for more than forty years. His first career was as County Extension Agent in Barbour and Randolph Counties for 33 years, the second career was as a State Sheep Specialist with the State Department of Agriculture for five years, and presently he is chief advisor for the Catholic Rural Life Center farm in Randolph County.

Three major interests in his career have been sheep husbandry, pasture improvement, and youth work. One of Mr. Hammer's major activities as Randolph County Extension Agent was his work with the Master Shepherd Program. This program was established to promote better sheep husbandry throughout the state. Through Mr. Hammer's efforts about one-third of those enrolled in the program were from Randolph County. In nine out of 16 years that the program was in operation, a Randolph County shepherd received the Master Shepherd Award.

When Mr. Hammer became State Sheep Specialist with the State Department of Agriculture in 1970, he observed that internal parasites in sheep constituted the major obstacle to quality lamb production. Through his knowledge of interest, 14 demonstrational flocks were established in sheep producing areas to demonstrate what could be done if internal parasites were controlled. By controlling parasites, it was demonstrated that a farmer can more than double his return. He pioneered the aerial fertilization and brush control program in Randolph County. Over a period of seven years while he was Randolph County Extension Agent, approximately 15,000 acres of mountainous, limestone soil were treated with an average of 345 pounds of 46 percent phosphate per acre. This more than doubled the carrying capacity the fields. During the same period more than 500 acres were treated with chemicals for brush control.

Mr. Hammer was instrumental in the development of Camp Pioneer, the Randolph County 4-H Camp. It has developed into one of the better 4-H camps in the state. He supervised the construction of the camp buildings, and sewage system with lagoon. This was the first sanitary lagoon built in the state.

In dairy, Mr. Hammer organized the Artificial Breeder's Cooperative Dairy to market the increased milk production which resulted from the use of artificial insemination. In beef, he encouraged farmers to enroll in the Beef Cattle Performance Testing Program. Four of the ten herds enrolled in the program were from Randolph County. When he retired, 22 herds were enrolled. Mr. Hammer organized the first Feeder Calf Sales in Randolph County.

Mr. Hammer was selected many years ago by the Randolph County Court to be a charter member of the Randolph County Planning Commission to represent the agricultural industry. He is one of the two original members of the commission still serving.

He has been active in professional and community organizations. He served as President of the West Virginia County Agents' Association, was a member of Alpha Zeta in his undergraduate days, was elected to Gamma Sigma Delta, served as President of Upsilon Sigma Phi, is a member of the Elkins Kiwanis Club, and numerous agricultural-related organizations. He served on the Randolph County Recreation Board and the Mountain State Forest Festival Board of Directors.

"Dependable and responsible," have been used to describe Mr. Hammer. "He took great pride in his work and