

E. E. John Hott



John Hott was reared on a family farm at Kirby, W.Va., in Hampshire County. He was one of 12 children and was only able to receive an eighth grade education. After serving in World War II (including the D-Day experience), he returned home and met his wife, Ruth, a registered nurse. They moved to Pendleton County, her home, and start in the poultry business with Ruth's father, C. F. Burgoyne. He later bought the business from Mr. Burgoyne.

Mr. Hott was a visionary, blessed with a keen business mind coupled with an extremely strong work ethic. He began growing layer and broiler chickens in small houses. Realizing he had to market his chickens at a profit, he developed markets in Pittsburg, Cleveland, Akron and Huntington. At that time, there were no vertically integrated poultry businesses or poultry processing plants. His own feed mill became a necessity in 1954, which today is Hott's Ag-Service in Franklin, W.Va. With feed preparation capabilities, this entrepreneur saw the opportunity to start contracting with other farmers to grow chickens for him. He provided the feed and marketing; thus the beginning of vertical integration in the West Virginia poultry industry.

In 1953, Mr. Hott, his father-in-law and two other investors bought the Texaco distributorship, operating under the name Franklin Oil Company. His fuel demand for poultry trucking, coupled with large kerosene and heating oil demands to heat his and the many early poultry houses of his cooperators afforded another business opportunity to help himself and service the growing industry.

Mr. Hott built the first large commercial poultry house in West Virginia (550 feet long). Agriculturalist from throughout the area came to see this large, state of the art poultry building. Rockingham Poultry Co-operative expanded to West Virginia in the 1950s, and Mr. Hott started selling to them. They lacked feed processing ability, so Mr. Hott's feed mill expanded and provided additional feed for the Co-op. He was one of the largest producers of poultry in West Virginia with 13 large houses providing 1,460,000 to 1,500,000 birds per year.

Mr. Hott used what he learned in that industry and began doing the same in the hog industry. He had the feed mill, and began feeding several hundred hogs a year. He bought the feeder pigs, fed some himself and provided feeder pigs and feed for other contract farmers to finish marketing at Shen-Valley Meat Packing Co-op.

Today, three sons and one son-in-law operate the day-to-day operations of the agribusinesses. Mr. Hott was recognized for his accomplishments with many awards and honors, including W.Va. District Conservation Farmer of the Year in 1966, and honorary Lifetime Membership in the W.Va. Poultry Association.