

James L. "Joe" Copeman



James L. Copeman devoted 42 years of service to the agricultural industry of West Virginia by working to improve farm and home living conditions and making people happy. Born and raised on a Preston County livestock farm, he devoted his professional career to helping West Virginia rural people.

A 1933 graduate of the West Virginia University College of Agriculture, he became a WVU field agent in farm economics in 1934. Mr. Copeman was appointed Assistant County Agent in Ritchie County in 1935 and in December 1935 became County Agent in Taylor County. In July 1937, Mr. Copeman joined the Monongahela Power Company in the Rural Building

Department. When we retired he was Supervisor of Agricultural Services.

Mr. Copeman may be identified as "Mr. Farming for Better Living," a program that began in 1940 and continued for 30 years. Although he was the director of the program, he was usually out of sight, always in the background, but never out of control. As a director of Farming for Better Living Program, he worked directly with agricultural agencies and with farm families in promoting better farming practices and better living on the farm.

Active in organizations of the electric industry, Mr. Copeman was closely associated with the establishment of the West Virginia Farm and Home Electrification Building at Jackson's Mill. He served on many committees and as chairman of the West Virginia Farm and Home Electrification Council. He is a past Chairman of the Rural Committee of the Edison Electric Institute, a past Chairman of the Rural Committee of the Public Utilities Association of the Virginias, and served as a delegate to the Ohio and Maryland Farm Electrification Councils.

In order to improve his technical skill and aesthetics in the application of electricity, Mr. Copeman completed a six-month course in architecture and buildings at the University of Illinois. He is the author of many publications used with the Farming for Better Living Program.

Mr. Copeman was always interested in and promoted youth activities, especially a 4-H and FFA. He assisted with many county and state 4-H and FFA camps and meetings as a leader, teacher, and judge of various events. He has probably shaken the hands and distributed ribbons to more winners in youth contests than any other person in the state.

As has been pointed out, "the factual statement of Mr. Copeman's activities provides and inadequate view of his dedication to agriculture and to rural West Virginia. It fails to reflect the esteem in which he is held by his friends and co-workers and the recognitions bestowed upon him."

Within the state, Mr. Copeman has received many awards including Friend of 4-H, Award of Merit from the West Virginia Vocational Association, an Honorary State FFA Farmer Degree, and the 4-H All-Star Award. The Block and Bridle Club at West Virginia University dedicated the 15th Little Eastern National Livestock Association to him. He was awarded the Gamma Sigma Delta Special Certificate of Merit for Distinguished Service to West Virginia Agriculture in 1973. Nationally, he has been presented the Friend of 4-H Citation and the National FFA Distinguished Service Award.

Mr. Copeman is well known for his courteous composure, his interest in people, particularly young people, his pleasant smile. A tireless worker with complete dedication to the promotion of better farmer and better living, Mr. Copeman has left his mark on countless West Virginians.