

Asher W. Kelly, Jr.



Asher W. Kelly, Jr., was born and raised in Randolph County, West Virginia. He was known for his “zest for life,” commitment to his profession, and love of his country and state. He served as a pilot with the U.S. Air Force in World War II, and was a retired Lt. Colonel in the West Virginia Air National Guard. In 1941, he received a bachelors degree in forestry from West Virginia University.

Mr. Kelly’s life was spent in the service of his state in private and public forestry. His career was primarily with the West Virginia Division of Forestry, serving as district forester for the Rupert region, assistant state forester for fire control and state forester of West Virginia. He also served as executive secretary for the W.Va. Forest Council and assistant commissioner for the W.Va. Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Kelly was known for his love of flying and spent countless hours in the air detecting and developing strategies for the suppression of fires. In his positions as assistant state forester for fire control and state forester, he instituted the Fire Warden System for volunteer manpower and placement of fire tools across West Virginia, initiated the first Fire Control Agreements with large landowners for the availability of manpower and suppression efforts, established the Fire Tower System for detection of forest fires throughout West Virginia, initiated the use of aircraft for detection of forest fires and introduced the use of mechanized equipment for the suppression of forest fires.

His affiliations were many, including the National Association of State Foresters, W.Va. Forests, Inc., Society of American Foresters and Gamma Sigma Delta. He was also a West Virginia Licensed Forester #6. During his career, he received recognition for his work from the U.S. Forest Service, W.Va. Forests, Inc., U.S. Department of Agriculture, W.Va. Department of Natural Resources, West Virginia University and many conservation groups and organizations.

Mr. Kelly spent 38 years in the service of his country and state. His “forte” was the protection of the United States during World War II and the protection of West Virginia’s valuable forest resources during his professional forestry career. His desire to prevent the destruction of wildfires brought about many new and successful initiatives in West Virginia that resulted in the bountiful and beautiful forest resources that we all enjoy today.