

Leighton G. Watson



Leighton G. Watson, for more than 40 years an active participant in the agricultural affairs of West Virginia and several foreign countries, is a native of Berkley County. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in journalism from West Virginia University.

Upon receiving his bachelor's degree in 1938, he became assistant Extension Editor for the West Virginia Cooperative Extension Service. In July 1939, he moved to the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, with time out for 38 months service in the U.S. Navy, until 1947. On July 1, 1947, he became Extension Editor of the WVU Cooperative Extension Service.

During the remainder of his career, he was actively involved in the editing, printing, and distribution of all publications issued by the Cooperative Extension Service. In addition, he supervised the preparation and distribution of the radio and television service and the newspaper releases. He initiated and developed present radio tape service to West Virginia radio stations. He was responsible for planning and implementing the educational communications programs to support the activities of the West Virginia University Center for Extension and Continuing Education.

Mr. Watson was particularly interested in promoting better communications and understanding between his co-workers as well as with the thousands of West Virginians involved in the activities and programs of the Center for Extension and Continuing Education. He planned and conducted numerous training sessions in communications with his co-workers in the Center, with other state agencies such as the Department of Labor and the Department of Natural Resources, and with other governmental agencies. He was particularly interested in working with 4-H and other youth groups, and with the members of the many Extension Homemakers Clubs.

On a national level, Mr. Watson served as Secretary-Treasurer on the American Association of Agricultural College Editors and Coordinator of the National Headquarters Office for a three-year period, July 1, 1972-June 30, 1975. He served on various committees and it was during his term as Chairman of the International Relations Committee that the committee organized and held a work session on "Communications in International Rural Development," at the University of Chicago Center for Continuing Education.

Mr. Watson also served agricultural and rural people at the international level. During 1954-55, he spent 14 months in Turkey as an information advisor to the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture. He also spent two different periods in Nicaragua working with the Ministry of Agriculture to develop training programs for Extension Agents in the use of radio to teach rural people. Another similar assignment took Mr. Watson to Afghanistan in 1971 and to Bangladesh in 1974. He also has two tours of duty in El Salvador.

In 1963, he was elected to membership in Gamma Sigma Delta, the Honor Society of Agriculture. He served as president for one year. He is also a member of Epsilon Sigma Phi and in 1970, the Grand Council of Epsilon Sigma Phi, National Honorary Extension Fraternity, awarded him with a Certificate of Recognition "for outstanding service as an Extension worker in West Virginia." He is a member of the 4-H All Starts.

A former co-worker recently made this statement concerning Mr. Watson"

"In his quiet, efficient, unassuming, sincere, and dedicated approach to the accomplishment of difficult tasks, he has rendered exceptional service to the farmers, farm families, and other citizens of West Virginia."