

John O. Knapp



John Oliver Knapp devoted approximately 48 years of his life to service for the agriculture and people of West Virginia and to West Virginia University. He served approximately 45 years in the West Virginia Cooperative Extension Service as a county agent, district agent, and director.

The development of Jackson's Mill as a State 4-H Camp and leadership development center occurred primarily during Mr. Knapp's term as Director of the Cooperative Extension Service. He provided distinguished service to the rural people of West Virginia through his leadership for many educational livestock efforts, including the cow and calf program, the demonstrational feeder calf sales, purebred ram sales, ham and bacon shows and sales, and performance testing.

Mr. Knapp provided leadership to develop legislation enacted in 1953 by the West Virginia Legislature which provided for the County Extension Service Committees. This legislation has resulted in the planning and execution of the county extension programs as a joint responsibility of local people and Extension agents.

After his retirement as Director of the Cooperative Extension Service, he served as special assistant to the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics, as chairman of the dairy department of the College and as Acting Dean of the College.

Mr. Knapp provided significant national leadership in agricultural and youth programs. He was an incorporator of the National 4-H Club Foundation, served as chairman of the National Advisory Board of the National 4-H Club Foundation, and served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National 4-H Foundation. One of his memorable occasions was participating with President Dwight D. Eisenhower in the dedication of the National 4-H Center in Washington, D.C.

His national leadership role also was evident in his work with the U.S. Congress through the American Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities. He served four years as a member of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy, including two years as secretary and one year as chairman. He was instrumental in the work done of the Extension Consolidation Bill which consolidated national Cooperative Extension Service legislation. He also served as advisor to the National Rural Youth Committee of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

His outstanding work brought his many recognitions including "Man-of-the-Year" in Service to West Virginia Agriculture in 1959. He received a national Certificate of Recognition from Epsilon Sigma Phi in 1954 for outstanding service to agriculture.

Mr. Knapp's knowledge of rural life, his keen insight, his ability to analyze problems, his sound judgment, his progressive attitude, his friendly personality, and unfailing good humor set him apart from most people.