

Spelman B. Collins

Spelman B. Collins was born on June 5, 1902 in Oakland, California. He graduated from University of California Davis with a degree in agriculture. He spent several years as a range sheep operator this work was done in Utah, California and Nevada, mostly around Carson City and Reno, Nevada. Also as a camp tender and later as a foreman of an extensive field fattening operation.

Next my Grandfather's life was teaching agriculture at Middletown, Calistoga and Livermore High Schools. In 1940 he joined the faculty of California Polytechnic College at San Luis Obispo where he was instrumental in building the sheep unit, stocked with purebred Suffolk sheep of course!

In 1949 Spelman was brought in as a sheep specialist on the Walt Disney movie "So Dear to My Heart" to train several lambs to knock over things, including the show judge. He also played one of the judges at the local fair and received accolades for his acting prowess. This did not get him because he went right back teaching.

In 1956 Spelman wrote a book on the business of raising sheep call Profitable Sheep, with the intention that it would be used students and as well as sheep ranchers alike. I would not be surprised if many of you have a copy, as do I. And yes, I raise sheep and use his book.

Over the years while still teaching and after retiring Spelman raised Suffolk sheep and showed them across the country. His knowledge and experience also made him in demand as a judge in both small fairs as well as some of the most prestigious shows across the country including Louisville. His time and effort was first and foremost given to his students, Future Farmers of America Chapters, 4-H groups and organizing the first Junior Wool Growers Association at Calpoly SLO added to his standing. His peers from Calpoly, the show circuit and later from the California Wool Growers honored him with the "Golden Fleece Award".

Our Grandfather died September 19, 1994 at his ranch in the Santa Ynez Valley. He had sheep up to his passing which I took care of under the teacher's watchful eyes. I am proud and humbled by him, that he would leave me the legacy of his life's work. Our family is very thankful to the United Suffolk Sheep Association for bestowing this great honor of our Grandpa Baa.

To finish, I have a story told to me many times about his early days with the sheep. After one of his turns at herding a bandy of ewes in the valleys and mountains of central California he returned the band to their owner who stated "Spelman you will never ever make a sheepman". We are so very glad he didn't take that comment to hear.

Submitted by Christopher M. Castagna, Spelman's Oldest Grandson.