

Byron Earle Colby, 1913–1991: A Brief Biography

Gerald L. Smith¹



Byron Colby was born the youngest of three children in Helena, MT. The family later moved to Newburg, NY, where his mother died. The family then returned to the old Colby farm in Plainfield, NH.

During his years of growing up he knew the hard work of farming, but he also learned to enjoy hunting and fishing. He enjoyed these sports his entire life, although in later years he did his hunting with a camera. His photographs earned him several awards.

His early education was in a one-room grammar school to and from which he commuted by horse and buggy. In 1932 he graduated from Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, NH. He was awarded the B.S.

degree in Animal Husbandry in 1936 by the University of New Hampshire. While a student there he was on the football and wrestling teams and was also an honor student, as shown by his memberships in Alpha Zeta and Phi Sigma.

His professional career started as a Rural Agent for Public Service Co. of New Hampshire applying electricity to the farm. This was the time of the Rural Electric Authority's major expansion. In 1938 he joined the Extension Service in Middlesex County, MA as an Associate 4-H Club Agent, moving up to Club Agent in Essex County in April 1941. During WWII he was active in encouraging and teaching people in the county to produce as much of their food as possible. He was even known to have transported pigs in the trunk of his car.

In 1940, he married Esther Norris, his college sweetheart. They had two sons, Bruce and Alan, and also two grandsons.

Byron did such a superb job as 4-H Agent that he was hired as Extension Professor in Animal Science at the University of Massachusetts in 1947. His responsibilities were in the fields of beef, goats, horses, sheep, and swine. He was very proficient in his knowledge of these species, but he was also proficient in being able to work with people. He had a great sense of humor and used this in a very constructive way. His dedication to helping people improve themselves was a driving force and he used the livestock programs and his teaching to accomplish this.

In 1957 he earned an M.S. degree from Michigan State University with a major in Extension Education, and soon after began teaching livestock courses at the University of Massachusetts in addition to his extension work. In 1975 he was honored with the Outstanding Professor of the Year award by the Stockbridge School students.

During his 40-year career he served as a popular livestock judge throughout New England and eastern Canada, and he assisted with the shows at the Eastern States Exposition annually.

Professor Colby authored or co-authored 25 bulletins. He also published "Beef & Sheep Highlights" and "Pointers for Pork Profits" for 28 years. His most popular publication was "Dairy Goats – Breeding, Feeding and Management" (1966), which had 150,000 copies published and which is an official book of the American Goat Association. It is used in every state and several foreign countries. It should also be

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noted that he held over 20 offices in various professional societies and that in 1978 he was recognized as a Fellow of the American Society of Animal Science.

His civic and church affiliations were many. He was a Boy Scout Merit Badge Counselor for 15 years and troop committee chairman for three years. He was also a 50-year member of the Masons, Cheshire Lodge No. 23 in Cornish Flats, NH. He was a very active church

member, serving as deacon for 12 years, teaching church school for seven years, and acting as a trustee for six years. His real interest was helping his fellow man in any way he could.

Byron Colby retired in 1978 and 11 years later he and his wife moved to Fallbrook, CA to be near their son and his family. Byron died there on November 22, 1991.