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Walter Franklin Hughes

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About the cover

DR. WALTER FRANKLIN HUGHES (1922–2020)

Walter F. Hughes was born on January 27, 1922, at Cottage Hospital in Santa Barbara, California, to Willis Merwin Hughes and Minnie Ellen Doty Hughes. He grew up during the Great Depression with three brothers and a sister on a small Southern California farm, near Goleta. The family always had animals, and Walt and his brothers established a dairy herd at the Elwood Ranch in Goleta. The dairy herd provided a consistent source of income for the family and was intended to fund the college educations of the four brothers. After graduation from the Santa Barbara High School on 1940, Walt matriculated at the Agricultural College at Davis, California. The entry of the U.S. in World War II interfered with his studies, and Walt volunteered for the Army Air Force. He successfully completed 35 bombing missions as a B-24 pilot, flying from England to Germany. During his training, he met Violet Sasso, a member of the Women's Army Corps. They got married after the war and settled in Davis where he received his bachelor's degree in animal husbandry. In 1948, Walt and 41 other men were selected for the first class of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Davis. During his studies, he worked as a technician in the Department of Avian Medicine under the guidance of Drs. Adler, Bankowski, Yamamoto and Zander. This experience was probably responsible for his subsequent life-long career in poultry medicine and husbandry. After graduation in 1952, Walt worked for a private practice with an emphasis on poultry diseases. In 1955, he joined Kimber Farms, where he worked until 1971 as the Director of the Veterinary Laboratory. During his tenure, he instituted major husbandry and management practices such as the All-in, All-out concept, the Flock Projection System and Performance Goal Concept. Dr. H. Rubin obtained eggs from Kimber farms for his research on Rous sarcoma virus (RSV) and noticed a reduction of RSV plaques in some cultures. Walter together with Dr. Schaaf suggested that the reduction was probably caused by endemic leukosis virus, which was indeed the case. This led to the development of the RIF (resistance inducing factor) test by Dr. Rubin. Walter immediately used the RIF test to develop a leukosis virus-free flock providing an important resource for the vaccine industry. Walter was also very much involved in research on Marek's disease and obtained in 1969 the HVT strain from Dr. Witter. Kimber farms immediately started to produce HVT vaccine and obtained the California State license in 1971. In that year, Walt left Kimber farms and joined Fairview Farms as Vice President for Operations. During his tenure there he developed ventilation and cooling systems during the early days of the high-rise poultry housing. Walter was always active in civic organizations including many years as the president of the Fremont Unified School Board. For 27 years he volunteered as a WWII Bomber docent for the Collings Foundation's Wings of Freedom Tour. He was also a long-term tai chi practitioner and credited tai chi for his balance and strength. *Avian Diseases* acknowledges his daughter Patricia Macomber for providing some of the information.