

Friend and Counselor (published in the Cooperative Consumer newspaper, Vol. 25, No. 21, Dated November 15, 1958, written by Howard Cowden [Founder of what eventually would become Farmland Industries through Union Oil Co, CCA and finally Farmland] about R. J. Ackley.)



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ONE SECTION OF THE MURAL that decorates the lobby of CCA's office building in Kansas City depicts a group of farmers listening to a speaker. The central figure is a man whose solid features and firm pose suggest strength and determination. The model which the artist used for this figure was Robert J. Ackley of Garden City, Kansas. There could not have been a better choice.

Bob Ackley died the other day at the age of 85. Few men have spent as many years as he did in the active service of farmer cooperatives. In his death, I feel a great personal loss because Bob was one of those who had stood at my side from the very beginning of CCA.

Bob Ackley's character was tempered in the hot fires of adversity. Born near Leavenworth, Kansas in 1873, he experienced the trials of pioneering when that area was considered a part of the Midwestern frontier. He went to western Kansas shortly after the turn of the century. He knew the hard times of the 1890's, the panic of 1907, and the farm depression of the 1920's. He watched dust clouds roll across his land in the 1930's, when people were saying that most of western Kansas would never produce again.

The record of Bob's life is that of a man who would never concede defeat. When farm conditions were at their worst, Bob Ackley was at his best.

As a very young man, he recognized the importance of farmers working together. His early experiences with cooperatives were discouraging, but he never gave up. He was one of the founders of the Garden City Cooperative Equity Exchange and a member of its board for almost 40 years. The Garden City Co-op was one of the original members of CCA and Bob Ackley was one of the original members of CCA's board.

As a CCA Board Member as well as the recognized leader of his home Co-op, Bob was the solid, determined individual that one sees in the lobby mural. I can recall several occasions when it took only a statement from Bob Ackley to shift our 21-member Board from a position of uncertainty on a given matter to one of firm decision. CCA and its member co-ops benefited immeasurably from his wise counsel and unqualified loyalty. All who knew him will miss him. - Howard A. Cowden