

My name is Ben Casper. I am the son of William Vere Casper who farmed in Franklin County for some 40 years. He operated one of the first irrigated farms in the Basin City area and was truly one of the trailblazers of the Columbia Basin agricultural movement.

William (Bill) Casper was raised on a farm in Heber City, Utah. He was an Army paratrooper in Japan in 1946-47 and served a mission for his church in southern California and Arizona in 1948-50.

- He was an International Farm Youth Exchange delegate (sponsored by the Utah State Extension Service and Lions Clubs of Utah) to India for 5 months in 1953. After returning, he spent two months giving 125 lectures about his experiences in India (with over 21,000 attendees) to high school students and Lions Clubs members throughout Utah.
- Bill graduated from Utah State University with a degree in Vocational Agriculture. He taught Vo-Ag classes at Manti High School in Manti, UT for a year.
- Wanting to fulfill his dream of becoming a farmer, Bill began working as a County Extension Agent in the Columbia Basin in 1956. He worked out of the Franklin County Extension office in Mesa. He served as a Settler Assistance Agent and helped new farmers in the Basin get started on their farms that were being carved out of the sand and sagebrush. He worked mainly in Blocks 11, 12, 15, 16 and 19. Using topography maps, he provided suggestions concerning the layout of the fields and where the head ditches, drops and drains should be and the best place for the farmsteads to be located. Helping the farmers locate and stake out their units on a 100 foot grid, they would survey and shoot the elevation at the base of each stake.
- With very limited resources, Bill and his wife, Joan, who was always at his side, began farming a 67-acre unit in Block 19, before and after his work each day as a County Agent. They mixed concrete by hand in subfreezing temperatures for their new home. This new "farm family" relied on an outhouse, hauling water from an old homestead a mile away and bathing in a tin tub for the next several years. There were four children in the home before a well was finally dug and a bathroom and running water installed.
- Bill resigned as a County Agent in 1958 and became a full-time farmer. Over the next 30 years, he developed his farm into 1,000 acres which was irrigated by siphon tubes, hand lines and wheel lines until pivot irrigation came in the mid-1970's.
- He raised sweet and field corn, lima beans, potatoes, sugar beets, dry beans, milo, hay, peas, wheat, cattle and 9 kids.
- In 1960, Bill was named the top grower of a Five-Acre Corn Contest that was sponsored by the Pasco Chamber of Commerce, Pasco Kiwanis Club and several local seed and fertilizer dealers.
- In 1963, he was asked to serve on the A.S.C.S (Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service) committee as chairman. He served as chairman for the next 3 years.
- Some of Bill's hired hands later became farmers, college professors, dentists, and businessmen. Many of them credit him for teaching them good habits that benefited them later in life.
- He strove to follow the best farm practices available and kept his farms as productive, weed-free and efficient as possible. Erosion control, correct irrigating practices, timely crop management and doing the job right were always his concern. To his neighboring farmers, he loaned

equipment, shared his knowledge and experience and helped them out when he could see they were in need.

- Bill loved farming and was known by many as the hardest working farmer they'd ever met. He served diligently in his church assignments and shared what he had with others.

In 1985, Bill was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, which forced him to retire in 1992. He passed away from pneumonia in 2004.

The following quotes are taken from "A Farmer's Life", The Biography of William Vere Casper

Dr. Lyn Harris, DDS, La Grande, OR:

"It took me a lot of years to realize all the lessons I learned on the farm. I used it as a barometer for every difficult task I encountered in my life, and I would say to myself, "Heck, this still isn't as tough as working on the farm. If you could do that, you can do this as well." I thank you Bill and your family for all that you taught me, and for helping me to grow from a skinny, insecure kid into a self confident young man. Learning the value of hard work on the farm has helped me to get through college and dental school and to establish a successful business. I have fond memories of the summers I spent with you."

Gale Tuttle, Farmer, Basin City, WA :

"Memories bring me lots and lots and lots of sprinkler changing but I don't really recall bad times. I appreciate the friendship and help Bill has shown me over the years. I'm fortunate to have known you and your family and call the Ringold valley our home."

Dr. Stephen McGary, Dean of College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, BYU-Idaho, Rexburg, Idaho:

"I really don't know where to start or what I could say that would do justice for the things that I learned from Bill Casper. Bill provided the environment in which good traits were able to develop and function. I learned the meaning of hard work, of being dependable and honest in providing a day of work.

Bill was a great motivator. He would give me compliments and encourage me to do things that I thought I couldn't do. He trusted me with jobs that I felt were very important and learned about farming techniques from him."