

PROFILE

John Lorain Weagley, in charge of the Seeing Eye Breeding Farm at Mendham, New Jersey, has spent his life on farms. He was born in 1920 on a farm in Lehmaster, Pennsylvania, moving at the age of four to Juliustown, New Jersey. His first grade of school found him in Somerville, New Jersey. One room housed twelve grades with two teachers over all — one teacher taking the first six grades and another taking the next. Each row of old-fashioned desks represented a grade. It was here that young John started his academic career, in the first row.

Weagley's father then moved to the Agricultural Experimental Station at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. There, on what was called the College Farm, he remained for the next twenty years — until retired. Here Weagley grew up, went to grammar school, high school, and finally Rutgers University. Graduating in the spring of 1943, he worked that summer at the college farm on the beef animal project which was being conducted to meet heavy requirements for beef during the war.

In the fall of 1943 Weagley enlisted in the Navy, receiving his commission as ensign in 1944. After three years' duty on a destroyer escort in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Pacific, Weagley was detached from active duty in the spring of 1946 and from inactive duty this year.

During the years he lived at the Agricultural Experimental Station at Rutgers, Weagley was influenced by the advice and guidance of Dr. John W. Bartlett, research specialist in dairy husbandry at Rutgers. (Dr. Bartlett was elected a member of the Board of Trustees of The Seeing Eye in 1948). It was to Dr. Bartlett, therefore, that he went after his discharge from the Navy, and while working for E. R. Squibb and Sons in New Brunswick—"just to be near Rutgers and the Experimental Station. I told Dr. Bartlett I wanted to do post graduate work back at the school. He asked me then how I liked working with dogs." Weagley said that all his life his first love had been working and caring for young farm animals, and he didn't see any reason why dogs didn't fit into that category. "Dr. Bartlett told me then about the opening in the Seeing Eye's Breeding Division. I was so anxious to get that job that I rushed to the school at Morristown for an interview with Mr. Ebeling (then executive vice president).

"I was accepted! For the next two years I went back to Rutgers on a Seeing Eye Fellowship, under the supervision of Dr. Bartlett. During my spare time — summers, after school, mornings before school, and my free afternoons — I worked at The Seeing Eye. I was kennel man for Miss Agnes Fowler, a member of the Board of Trustees of The Seeing Eye, who donned blue jeans and went to work in the school's breeding division during the man-power shortage of World War II. She introduced me to all of the work, including the part played by the 4-H Club in northern New Jersey. Mr. Debetaz was untiring in acquainting me with training work, all of which was necessary for my work in breeding."

In the meantime Weagley had been living at the newly acquired Breeding Farm in Mendham since the spring of 1947. When he received his Master's degree from Rutgers in 1948

his actual employment by The Seeing Eye became effective. Weagley seemed surprised when asked how he liked the work. "Why, it seems like a natural carry-over from work with farm animals and young stock — there is really no difference. My interest, as far as the work is concerned, is just that! There's a definite object in view — we are breeding not only a special type of dog, but a dog for a special purpose. It's a real challenge!"

Helping Weagley at the Breeding Farm are Mr. Jesse Simmons, senior kennel man since 1950, and Mr. Paul Diehl, who recently completed his first year. Their living quarters are modern apartments above the kennels. Dr. Pfau, research specialist under Dr. Bartlett, keeps the lines open for consultation between Rutgers and the Breeding Farm.

In 1944 Weagley married Marion Virginia Lewis of Madison, New Jersey. Mrs. Weagley's father was superintendent of the estate on which the Rutgers beef animal project was being conducted. They have three boys, Johnnie six, Jeffrey three, and Jimmie one. A year-old abandoned pup named Jerry completes the household. "Of course, I'm always bringing litters of pups over to the house from the kennels too," said Weagley. "Helps them to get used to homes before they go to the 4-H Club children. And Jerry knows his place when the pups are there—he stays off to one side and just watches.

"Hobbies? Why nothing special," said Weagley. "Well, yes. I love the outdoors. I like boating, swimming, and all winter sports, especially tobogganing and skating. And there's plenty of each around Ironia Mountain where we live," concluded Weagley.

JOHN LORAIN WEAGLEY

