

St. Clair's Cokers make farm family operation

BY THOMAS F. HILL
News staff writer

ASHVILLE, Oct. 24 — Friendship is the name of the community in which the J. M. Coker family lives, and they firmly live up to its name.

They also stay as busy as the small animals for whom Beaver Valley was named.

Mr. and Mrs. Coker have lived in the Friendship Community of Beaver Valley for the past 15 years. And they have established a reputation for hard work, progressive thinking and Christian living.

This family — nominated to represent St. Clair County in the search for "Families, the Alabama Kind" in a project sponsored by The Birmingham News and the Auburn Extension Service — consists of John M. Coker Sr., his wife, Mary Sue, and two sons, John Coker Jr., 15, and Martin, 11. Living with them is Mr. Coker's mother, Mrs. Carrie Coker, who is

Coker was born and reared

on a St. Clair County farm not far from his present residence. He was educated in county schools and served five years with the 31st Infantry Division during World War II, attaining the rank of staff sergeant. Much of this time was in the South Pacific.

MRS. COKER was born and reared on a Franklin County farm near Russellville. After graduation from high school and Florence State Teachers College, she taught the first grade in a Franklin County school 11 years.

The Cokers operate a widely diversified farm program, which is a "family operation" in every way. They have beef cattle, forage crops, poultry and timber on their 273 acres. Corn and cotton are grown on a secondary 80 acre farm some six miles away which is managed on a tenant share crop basis.

The beef cattle operation is a "cow and calf" project with approximately 40 brood cows, mainly polled Hereford and Shorthorn crosses which have

Here's another visit by family photo

This is another in a series of picture stories about outstanding Alabama families who have been selected by their neighbors representative of their community and county.

They are participating in a search for Alabama's most exemplary family. This program is being sponsored by The Birmingham News and the Auburn University Extension Service.

At the conclusion of the project, four district winners will be selected, from which Alabama's most exemplary family will be picked.

been upgraded throughout the past few years with purebred registered sires.

Some 120 acres of improved pasture and forage crops for hay were established and are maintained according to soil tests and recommendations from Auburn Extension Service.

The forage crops planted yearly are crimson clover and rye grass in the fall and brown top millet in the spring. The brood cow herd is managed for spring calves for the most part, making them ready for the fall feeder calf market when they are in good demand.

THE COKERS ALSO maintain a laying flock of about 700 hens. The eggs are marketed to regular customers in Ashville and surrounding area.

One-hundred acres of their land is in pines, some of which have been planted in a reforestation program according to Extension Service recommendations. Selective thinning and cutting are practiced.

The Cokers are active in community and church life.

Coker is president of the Friendship Community Club, a member of St. Clair County Library Board, a trustee of St. Clair County High School, a member of the home improvement program, a member of the Parent-Teacher Association, and a five year fertilization demonstration program participant.

He is past president of the St. Clair County Farm Bureau. During his second year as head

of this organization it attained a paid membership of 1,183, an all-time high. He is past member of the Rural Area Development Committee and has participated in many fund raising campaigns for higher education.

Mrs. Coker, an outstanding homemaker, is third-vice president of the Pine Forest Home Demonstration Club. With the help of Coker's mother, she carries out an extensive canning and home freezing program.

BOTH SONS HAPPILY accept many responsibilities delegated them. They have been taught to carry out these daily chores with accuracy and dispatch.

John Jr. is in the 10th grade. He is a member of the Future Farmers of America and the 4-H Club and carries projects in hogs and forestry.

Martin is in the fifth grade. He plans to enter the 4-H Club next year. He is taking piano lessons.

Both boys are good students and make good grades at Odenville School.

"Grandma" Coker is an important member of the family. She helps with the housework, crochets and works daily with her flowers.

ALL MEMBERS OF the family are members of Evergreen Methodist Church, located about three miles from their home.

Coker is a member of the Board of Stewards. Mrs. Coker is church secretary and treasurer and teaches the Junior Sunday School class. Martin sometimes fills in as pianist when the regular pianist is absent.

All members of the family attend Sunday School and church regularly.



COOPERATION IS SUCCESS KEY OF COKER FARM
... Mr. and Mrs. Coker grade eggs for sale in area

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HARD-WORKING FARM FAMILY REPRESENTS ST. CLAIR COUNTY
... Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Coker and sons, John Jr. and Martin

families, *the* Alabama kind



'APPLES' GROW BIG ON COKER FARM
Mr. Coker and his sons insist these pumpkins are just Alabama-sized ap