

Harry Lee Kesterson



Harry Lee Kesterson was born October 15, 1913. After taking a leadership role on his family's 350-acre farm at the age of 23, he married Alma Wharton in 1939. Together they raised eight children. In 1953, he established a successful farm machinery business, Kesterson Sales Company. Through his business, he supported FFA programs at local high schools. He worked closely with vocational agriculture teachers in Wirt County to promote awareness.

Mr. Kesterson held a special place in his heart for 4-H. He was a founding member of the organization's Board of Directors and took a leadership role in the Wood County Fair. He hoped the event would be a showcase for young people's accomplishments in the area of agriculture and spark additional interest. He also hosted 4-H field days at his family's farm and welcomed local school groups for tours.

He served as supervisor for the Little Kanawha Soil Conservation District for many years. He was active in the Wood County and West Virginia Farm Bureaus. He was a committee member of the Farmer's Home Administration, helping to review and approve loans. He was instrumental in the development of the West Virginia Cattle-men's Association, serving as its first president.

After the Union Livestock Market in Parkersburg, W.Va., burned in the early 1970s, he saw the need for a new market for local farmers. He helped organize a group of entrepreneurs to build a new Union Livestock Market in Mineral Wells, W.Va. He served on the Market's board of directors and as treasurer, and took a leading role in the market's design and construction.

Mr. Kesterson was instrumental in bringing the Limousin breed of cattle to West Virginia. He studied the breed extensively and made many buying trips to ranches in Oklahoma and South Dakota. He was a lifetime member of the North American Limousin Association.

Beyond his efforts in agriculture, Mr. Kesterson had an active civic life. He was a member of Parkersburg Rotary, a 32nd degree Mason, and a member of the Order of the Odd Fellows. Active in the Stout Memorial United Methodist Church, he also served as Sunday School Superintendent at the Bethel Presbyterian Church.

While active personally and professionally, his first love was his family and the farm they shared. He stressed the importance of education to area youth. Mr. Kesterson passed away in 1984.