

Russell T. Linger, Jr.



Russell T. Linger, Jr., was born March 31, 1939, on the family farm in Huttonsville. He showed an interest in agriculture in his early teens and was active in 4-H and FFA during his school years. He was valedictorian at Tygart Valley High School, along with being a member of student council and the yearbook staff. He won first place in the 4-H field crop contest in 1956 and attended the National 4-H Club Congress in Chicago. He was President of his FFA Chapter and participated in a variety of contests. He received his American Farmer Degree at the National FFA Convention in

Kansas City in 1957.

He attended WVU for a year, where he worked in the horticultural greenhouse with plant breeding legend Dr. Mannon Gallegly developing blight-resistant tomatoes. Despite making good grades, Linger felt the call of the farm and returned to Huttonsville where he continued to work the dairy operation with his father.

In 1962, he joined the armed services and worked as a military police officer at Fort Eustis, Va. He and his wife Betty were married in the same year. Following his honorable discharge in 1964, he returned to the farm, eventually purchasing it from his father. He stopped growing potatoes and expanded the dairy operation, which grew from 60 cows to as high as 275 head. Good record-keeping, superior breeding and well-balanced feed rations kept production at record levels.

The farm also provided demonstration plots, farm tours and field tests for the Extension Service and seed companies. He retired from the farm in 2004, turning it over to his son, Russell III. His grandson also joined the operation in 2016. Beyond the successful farm operation, Linger has been an active supporter of his community. He hosted the WV Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers farm tour in 2018. He provided heifers to his son and other 4-H'ers for their dairy heifer projects and bought some of the heifers as replacements over the years.

He has been a member of the Randolph County Farm Bureau since 1960. He was a member of the Dairy Farmers of America from 1980-2016 and a delegate to the national convention for six years. He was also a member of the West Virginia Holstein Association over the same period. He served as President of the state Dairy Herd Improvement Association Board for two years and was a

member of the Randolph/Tucker Livestock Marketing Association Board of Directors, Randolph County Extension committees and the Camp Pioneer Recreation Board.

He has been a member of the local Parent Teacher Association since 1980 and was instrumental in building a new playground at the local elementary school. He is a longtime member of the Tygart Valley Lions Club and served as its President in 1970-71. The club has raised approximately \$30,000 annually for eyecare projects and student scholarships. Linger was the recipient of the Lions' Leonard Jarrott Award in 2006, given to a West Virginia member who has made outstanding contributions to vision projects. He has also been recognized as a 50-year member of the local club and as a Lions International Life Member.

He is a 50-year member of the Huttonsville / Mill Creek Volunteer Fire Department, in which he served as Secretary for 15 years, and as Chief for two years. He has been a member of the Randolph County Ambulance Service since 2004, helped organize and serves as a Director of Valley Healthcare, and is a Director at Memorial General Hospital. He is a Director and Chairman of the Loan Committee at Mountain Valley Bank.

He was a 40-year member of Tygart Valley Presbyterian Church for over 40 years, where he served as a Deacon and an Elder, and is now a member of the First United Methodist Church of Elkins.

Faith, family and agriculture have been the mainstays of Linger's life, but he and his wife Betty have made exploring the world another passion. They have traveled extensively abroad, visiting 129 countries, where they often stayed at working farms to get a sense of how agriculture is practiced around the globe.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture awarded him the Farm Family Award in 1984. The farm received the Tygart Valley and the West Virginia Soil Conservation Award in 1991. It was also the catalog honoree at the 2003 West Virginia Dairy Cattle Show.