George Washington Litton, 1910 to 1989: A brief biography

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George Washington Litton was very intelligent, a perfectionist, and may have been a genius. Litton was a conscientious, kind, and considerate person. He was a great stockman, statesman, communicator, teacher, and livestock industry leader. Litton had a deep interest in livestock, especially as the industry benefited people. He always had a deep interest in young people (students). Most of Litton’s professional efforts were in applied aspects of animal production, but he had a deep interest and respect for basic scientific aspects. Litton was a traditional animal husbandryman with a true love of livestock. His ultimate interest was the impact on the consumer. Litton had the respect and admiration of farmers, ranchers, educators, researchers, extension specialists and agents, and livestock producers throughout the state of Virginia and the nation.

George W. Litton was born in Lee County, near Pennington Gap, VA, on February 22, 1910. He was reared on a general livestock farm where his father produced one of the leading herds of purebred Hereford cattle. He attended Elk Knob Junior High School and Lee Baptist Institute. He enrolled at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) when the only entrance requirement, according to George, was to find it. He earned his BS degree in 1931 and the MS degree in 1940 in animal husbandry from VPI. Later he did graduate work at Oklahoma State University.

After completing his BS degree, Litton was employed as assistant county agent in 3 counties in Virginia. In 1932 he became the first county agent in Tazewell County and served until 1939, when he went to Blacksburg to do graduate work at his alma mater. Professor Litton did a great job as county agent. Litton was very effective and popular with farmers, known for being very considerate, kind, and good humored. One day as he was hurrying to the next farm (probably at 15 to 20 miles per hour), a rooster got in the way and was seriously injured. He picked up the rooster, brought it to the lady of the house, and apologized profusely for injuring the bird. She looked at his automobile and asked, “Is that the car you were driving?” and he replied that it was. Her response was, “If he couldn’t outrun that vehicle, he would be worthless for breeding hens!”

While in Tazewell County, George met, courted, and married Maria Boren. They were the parents of a daughter, Jane, and a son, Lex. Although George was very busy and devoted to his profession, his first priority was his family.