



### **Samuel S. Obenshain**

Former Academy president, Samuel Shockley Obenshain died peacefully Wednesday, July 26, 2000, at this home. At age 96, he was still running the family farm. In his bright red sweater, he was a familiar figure to many in Blacksburg as he took his daily walks along his farm on Prices Fork Road, determined to keep active each day of his life. He had a long and distinguished career at Virginia Tech, from his graduation as No. 2 in the Class of 1927 to his 36 years as a professor of agronomy. He was a pioneer in soil research in the state. During his tenure, Tech's soils mapping and classification program was generally recognized as one of the strongest programs in the United States - and therefore the world. As a classroom professor, he taught and mentored a generation of farmers, scientists and extension agents. As the first chairman of the graduate committee for Tech's College of Agriculture, he encouraged many students to pursue advanced degrees and scientific careers. In the 1950's, he became the first faculty member at Virginia Tech qualified to use radioisotopes in his research after studying at Oak Ridge, Tenn. He was also the first Tech faculty member to serve as a consultant for a U.S. international aid team from the U.S. State Department. He headed a three-man team of U.S. experts to Korea to analyze the nation's fertilizer needs after the separation of North and South Korea. He later led a three-man team to Bangladesh to evaluate whether an irrigation system could be built along the Ganges. In 1965, he served as president of the Virginia Academy of Science. Among other honors, he was named Virginia Tech's Outstanding Graduate of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for the Class of 1927, and in 1997, received Virginia Tech's Ag Alumni Citation Award for years of service to Virginia's agriculture industry and to the university. He also founded Soils Consultants, a successful soils engineering firm in Northern Virginia. Surviving are two sons and daughters-in-law, a daughter-in-law, one daughter, 10 grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.