

# 50-year milestone for writer Dave Hay



## The Story Never Ends

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Guest Columnist

Dave Hay honored with third 50-year milestone

There have been three 50-year milestones in Dave Hay's life this year.

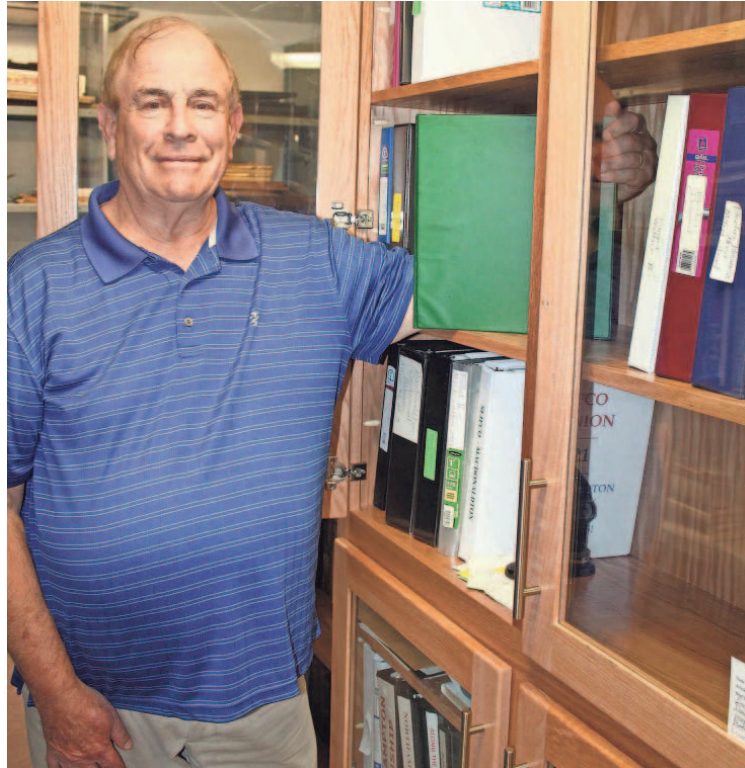
The well-known Somerset County writer and historian has written for newspapers for 50 years on May 17. He and his wife, the former Virginia Long, celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 10. And, on Wednesday evening at the Berlin Area Historical Society, Hay was honored for 50 years as the lecturer of Hillcrest Grange.

Under the byline, David R. Hay, 75, of Somerset, has been a well-known columnist and writer for both the former The New Republic newspaper and at the Daily American newspaper, writing thousands of articles in 50 years while continuing a full-time career as a postal carrier with Somerset Post Office. And, as if all that didn't keep him busy enough, he planned programs and handled publicity for Hillcrest Grange for 50 years.

Kathy Blough, who coordinated the event for the Grange, said that she originally thought about getting a church for the venue to allow for more space but Hay told her he didn't think many people would attend. The society's outer room was packed with Hay's family and friends who spent the evening honoring him for service not only to the Grange but to the community in general.

And, in the midst of all the well-wishers, I had the privilege to speak as one of many on behalf of Dave Hay, who I have always considered a kindred spirit because of our common ground of newspaper writing.

When I met Hay more than 33 years ago in the Daily American newsroom, we struck up a friendship that would be



**Hillcrest Grange commissioned Craig Engle of Garrett to make a bookcase placed at the Berlin Area Historical Society for a selection of Dave Hay's binders and books. Hay was honored Wednesday evening with the bookcase during a Hillcrest Grange meeting that celebrated his 50 years as lecturer of Hillcrest.**

SANDRA LEPLLEY/FOR THE DAILY AMERICAN

lasting and many times throughout the decades, our conversations led us to what was going on in the news or what was going on in the newsroom. There was always so much excitement in that newsroom and we enjoyed being a part of it all!

Dave actually started working in the Daily American newsroom as a photo-journalist for \$63 a week for 14 months before being drafted into the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War in the late

1960s. When he came back home from the service, he went back to the Daily American for a time but later took a civil service test and began working for the postal service in 1970.

But, his love of writing and photo-journalism stayed with him. He turned those passions into a way of capturing the stories of local people and families and it served him well because he became well known as the publicity person for the Grange news. Each program

he planned for Hillcrest Grange became a way to weave that information and photos into a story for the newspaper. And, the readers loved it!

On Wednesday evening, Dave Hay expressed how "humbled" he felt for this honor and how it "amazed" him that he was able to plan and manage programs for the Grange for 50 years. He said Grange was always a "stepping stone" for him in life. He said how writing stories "expanded his friendship circle" and he had an "unquenchable interest in learning about farms and families."

"I enjoyed building friendships along the way with the other families and in the end, they became more than just friends but were like family to us," said Hay.

Hay discussed the losses in his life that have made things more difficult in recent years. He talked about how the Grange hall was like a second home to him but was sold to become a private residence a few years ago. He talked about the sale of his family's beloved Blue Lick Valley farm last year. He talked about the loss of his sister, Linda Lou Hay, who died April 1, 2022, and now the most recent loss of his younger brother, Dan Hay, who died July 27 at the age of 71 years. "But, we will get through it," said his wife Virginia and Dave agreed. Dave gave his wife, Virginia, credit for all her support for 50 years and how she cooked and helped entertain their many visitors and friends.

At the end of the evening, many gathered to take photographs of Dave Hay, by the new bookcase donated in Dave's honor, by the quilt in the historical society building where Dave has been the longtime curator, with other grange members who were also honored and with his wife Virginia. It was a celebration of life for a man who has that unique ability to give his talents back to the community and give his friendship to others.