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TOP STORY

SPOTLIGHT

Texas A&M entomology graduate Lingren is pests' worst enemy

Haley Wiggins
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For Scott Lingren, pest control is more than a business — it is a field he has been part of since childhood.



Scott Lingren and Venus Pest Company crew.
Haley Wiggins

Lingren, 54, spent summers beginning around age 10 working in the fields of Arizona alongside his father, Pete Lingren. Both father and son earned Ph.D. degrees in entomology from Texas A&M University, creating a family connection to the university and the study of insects that would eventually shape Lingren’s career.

After graduate school, Lingren chose to work in the agricultural industry, and his





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He returned to College Station in 2000 and, a year later, founded **Venus Pest Company**.

Lingren had considered several businesses before settling on pest control, including day care centers, mall kiosks and smoothie shops. Ultimately, he chose an industry he already understood.

“I was gonna eventually start a business,” Lingren said. “I just didn’t know what it was going to be.”

Starting a business came with its own lessons. When Lingren first set up the company’s phone number, the first call he received was not from a customer.

“It was a guy telling me my tire was low,” he said.

As Venus grew, the distinction between work and everyday life often disappeared. Business expenses became personal expenses, and Lingren found himself thinking about the company constantly.

Recognition from the community helped confirm that the business was taking hold. Awards such as the Newman 10, along with recognition from the Bryan Rotary Club and Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce, gave him reassurance that the company was building a reputation beyond just gaining customers.

Wade Beckman, the owner of Shipwreck Grill who has known Lingren for years, saw that development firsthand.



Scott Lingren sprays at Shipwreck Grill in Bryan.

Haley Wiggins

Beckman's best friend and Lingren earned their Ph.D.s together at Texas A&M. While Beckman's friend specialized in aerial distribution of chemicals, Lingren focused on application and effects, giving him a scientific foundation that Beckman said still sets him apart in the pest-control industry.

Beckman has used Venus at his three restaurants, rental houses, his son's house and his own home, and he has recommended the company to friends. He remembers Lingren wanting to approach pest control as organically and safely as possible, even though there were practical limits to that goal.

"He's always been concerned about what we spray, when we spray, and especially if there's pets and kids and families involved," Beckman said.

That approach, Beckman said, has remained part of how Lingren operates the business.

"He's really good at what he does," Beckman said. "And he's stayed true to that."

Lingren credits his father with teaching him the way he approaches insects and pest control. Rather than simply counting insects or measuring their numbers, his father taught him to watch what they actually do.

That lesson continues to influence the way Lingren thinks about pests and wildlife.

“You have to go and observe and see what the insects are doing and kind of monitor, to see what you could possibly do to correct that,” he said.

Technology has changed how that observation happens, with cameras and other monitoring tools that can provide information that once required someone to be physically present.

While newer products have changed the way pest-control companies approach insects, the basic goal has remained the same.

“We always win,” Lingren said of the company’s approach to pests. “We don’t let a bug win.”

He said some pests are more difficult than others, like German cockroaches and bed bugs, with some pests like fire ants and mosquitoes needing a control-based approach since they cannot be eliminated permanently.

Beckman said customers also benefit from having someone with a Ph.D. in entomology behind the company.

“You’re dealing with somebody who actually studied insects as a career and as a passion,” Beckman said.

That expertise became especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when pest control was considered an essential service even as many businesses shut down.

Some of Venus’ restaurant customers temporarily closed, creating a challenge for the company. Lingren responded by offering lower-cost kitchen services to help businesses maintain pest control while they were struggling.

Residential business remained steady and even increased as more people stayed home and noticed problems they might have overlooked before.

Today, rising insurance and fuel costs remain challenges, but Lingren said improvements in routing software have helped the company operate more efficiently. Keeping technicians working in concentrated areas also reduces unnecessary driving and allows the company to serve customers more effectively.

Venus has increasingly focused its work in Brazos County rather than expanding farther away. Lingren said staying local allows the company to provide better service while continuing to benefit from growth in the area, including development along Highway 30 toward Grimes County.

The pest-control industry remains competitive, but Lingren does not see other companies as enemies.

“We just all get along,” he said. “And there’s always new business for everybody.”

For Lingren, the most meaningful measure of Venus’ success is not simply its size. He said he is particularly proud of the technicians who represent the company every day and the reputation they have built with customers.

“I’m really proud when I’m looking through our reviews and everybody’s talking about how much they like the technicians,” Lingren said. “And that’s true of the people we have now and the people we had in the past.”

Beckman said that reputation is tied to Lingren’s involvement in the community, not just as a way to promote his business but because he considers Bryan-College Station home.

That connection is one reason Beckman believes Lingren has been able to build a business that feels different from a large, national pest-control company.

“He’s just that kind of guy,” Beckman said.

More than two decades after founding Venus, Lingren is beginning to think about what comes next. Both of his sons are in college and have shown an interest in business, although neither has followed him into entomology.

Lingren would like the company to remain connected to his family, but he also wants it to remain connected to the community. Private equity firms have shown interest in the business because of the recurring revenue common in pest control, but Lingren said he is wary of selling to a company that could change the character of what he built.

“Private equity can rob the soul out of these businesses,” he said.

Lingren said not in the near future, but he can eventually imagine stepping away, and spending more time fishing, but he doesn’t want to lose the connection to the people and places that have shaped his life.

“I don’t know that I’m gonna make 25 more years personally,” Lingren said. “I think I’ll probably be fishing somewhere.

“But the business may still stay in the family, but I definitely want it to stay in the community.”