

Bicentennial feature

The McWilliamses look back on 160 years of farm experiences

By DIETER KRIEG

GRAYSVILLE — Paul and Nellie McWilliams have a combined total of over 150 years of farm experiences to look back on. Both were born in the 19th Century and they live on a farm which was deeded to the McWilliams family in 1845. Their history in Spruce Creek Valley dates back to 1790.

A remarkable sense of humor very much a part of both their personalities, the Huntingdon County couple humorously describe the days when hunting and fishing were the only easy things about life on the farm. McWilliams will be 82 in July, his wife turns 80 later this month. They've been married for 57 years and are still fighting over who has the better baseball team — Pittsburgh or Philadelphia.

Active in farming ever since he was 10 years old, McWilliams says there was no such thing as "the good old days" in farming. But his wife says with a laugh: "If he ever quit, he'd be the most contrary man to live with you'd ever want to see. He's out every morning clearing fence rows and cleaning things up . . . he can't sit still for five minutes."

Indeed, the witty and wiry McWilliams doesn't hesitate to tackle a field of hay all by himself. Working with an old baler and tractor which have seen several decades of use, he has been making hay on his 305-acre farm year after year. He hopes to be back out again this year, although he admits he's slowing down just a bit, and a double hernia bothers him. He loads, unloads, and stacks the crop by himself on many occasions and even takes it to central Pennsylvania auctions on an old pickup truck throughout the Winter and Spring months.

While trying to give the impression that things were too hard in farming during the first half of this century, McWilliams hasn't made things as easy for himself as he could.

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Owners of a farm which has been in the same family since 1845, Paul and Nellie McWilliams have a combined total of 160 years of farm life experiences to look back on. Their verdict is that there was no such

thing as "the good old days" in farming. Both are still active and lively, and this year, as in past years, McWilliams will be bringing thousands of hay bales in by himself. He'll be 82 in July; she turns 80 later this month.

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