

Retired Farmer BBQs To Benefit Charity

BY MARGIE FUSCO

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BENSHOFF HILL — Hear ye, hear ye. Carl Harrison, a former state leader in poultry and swine farming and now a tipstaff of the Cambria County Court, is still going strong.

"The Harrisons are changers," he says. That may be why, at age 75, Harrison hasn't slowed down from a lifetime of working for change and for the betterment of the community.

During the 1950s and 60s, Harrison made a name for himself through his agricultural activities on the local, state, and national level. A turkey farmer who worked with a General Mills feed store as a salesman, Harrison was hired as general manager and marketing agent for Penn Best Turkey Growers Cooperative.

That position led to an appointment to the agriculture division of the Pennsylvania Chain Store Council, where he met presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, and spoke at a national agricultural convention in Dallas, Texas. Harrison was instrumental in bringing Ezra Taft Benton, U.S. secretary of agriculture under the Eisenhower

administration, into Cambria County to speak in the mid-1950s.

By 1957, "the price of turkeys had gotten ridiculous," Harrison recalls. With a market value of 26 cents a pound wholesale, "we went completely broke."

He thought about leaving farming, but that year, for his parents wedding anniversary, son, Ronald bought them a Yorkshire gilt . . . a purebred sow ready to bear young. From that first litter of pigs, Harrison built a pork business.

"Wherever I am, I can take my part," he says. And he took his part as a pork farmer quickly. He describes as "one of the highlights of my life," the Pennsylvania Yorkshire show and sale in Harrisburg where the three finalists were Harrison and his sons. Ronald was showing hogs for the Reno Thomas farm. Lenn was a Penn State student showing from the school herd. And Carl was competing with them both using his own hogs.

"The boys were much better showmen than their Dad. They did their best to outdo him," Harrison recalls with a grin. "But I had the best pig."

With his sons started on their careers, Ronald as a farm

manager and Lenn as a veterinary pathologist, and daughter Laverne Patricia married and starting her own family, Harrison and his wife, Louise, thought it was time to retire from farming.

But if he left farming, Harrison didn't retire. He took a job with the county court, where he is now in his 25th year. And that isn't all he does.

Over the years, Harrison became interested not only in raising food products but also in how food was prepared. He began taking butchering courses and earned certification as a butcher, opening his own shop on his property in Benshoff Hill, a few miles outside Johnstown.

Eventually his concern led to an alliance with Harry Kaufman, a poultry expert with the Agricultural Extension Service, and Paul Markhoff, a poultry professor at Penn State.

The men launched a barbecuing program that eventually took them to other states preparing meals for up to 5,000 people every weekend from May through October. Harrison estimates that 95 percent of their barbecuing work was done for charity. He kept figures during his final year in the program four



Carl Harrison and his wife, Louise, like to plan their barbecues over a cup of coffee at the kitchen table.

years ago, and discovered he'd prepared and cooked 8½ tons of chickens and had raised more than \$22,000 for various charities.

Harrison may have cut back on his barbecuing schedule, but he hasn't stopped entirely. He keeps his portable barbecue pits in working order and is generous with his tips about how to conduct a good barbecue. He's a stickler about using a particular size of chicken, selecting a purchase place for his poultry and meat, barbecuing only over charcoal and wood, and even preparing the side dishes.

Along with his wife and a work crew, Harrison still conducts barbecues for local church organizations and volunteer fire departments. He and his wife are proud of the success of their banquets and say it is a combination of quality food selection,

careful cooking and a cooperative work crew.

Trent Roberts, former president of the Middle Taylor Township fire department and a nephew of Harrison, can give a first-hand account of his barbecuing success after six years of barbecuing for the fire company. "We don't have to sell tickets . . . people come to us asking for them, it's so popular." The event, held the Sunday after Labor Day, now draws close to 1,000 people and makes more than \$2,000 for the fire company in a single day.

Roberts has also been part of Harrison's work crew. "He donates his time and equipment. He gets all the chickens and does all the cutting. He even grows the corn. He's the most generous person. He's done his share of donating and then some, and it's all for the good of the community."



The Harrisons relax with their granddaughter, Valerie Harrison, of Gettysburg, child of their older son, Ronald.

Master Barbecuer Depends On Charcoal, Wood For Flavor

Carl Harrison offers the following tips for people planning a barbecue this summer.

"I've done as well as I have because I stick to charcoal and wood," he says. He does not barbecue over a gas fire. "You won't get the best taste out of barbecued food if you use a commercial gas grill. People today don't like to take time to do it the old way, but sometimes the older way is best."

Harrison also notes that a barbecue menu can be more exotic than chicken.

Lobster. Lobster can be barbecued for a tender delicacy. First, begin with a wood fire made of locust or oak. Never use charcoal for lobster. Also, the barbecue must begin with live lobsters, cooked first in a pot of boiling water for 1½ minutes.

Begin grilling by placing the lobster on its back for several minutes. Then, using tongs, flip the lobster over to place the meat side on the fire.

The lobster is done when the meat side turns pinkish white.

Pork Chops. Mr. Harrison butchers his own pork. He recommends that any pork chop barbecue begin with chops 1-1/8th inch thick, because barbecuing dries out thinner meats.

Chops should be cooked over a charcoal fire that is already hot. Cook pork chops for 26 minutes.

Steaks. Harrison uses only steaks purchased from Kansas. He suggests that all steaks used for grilling should be aged, for additional flavor. Because barbecuing tends to dry the meat, he also insists that steaks be at least 1-1/8th inch thick. Steaks must be cooked over a charcoal fire that is already hot.

Grill steaks 7 minutes for rare, 14 minutes for medium, and 19 minutes for well done.

Chicken. Harrison begins with 3 pound chickens, which he splits himself. He prefers to remove the wings. The giblets need not be thrown away but can be donated to a local food bank.

Chickens should be grilled at least 15 inches from the fire. Otherwise, the poultry will turn black.

Beef. "Beef can be barbecued and even sliced down for sandwiches, if it's handled right," Mr. Harrison says. To barbecue beef, he begins with a 40 pound boneless top round roast.

Beef must be cooked in an underground pit. He recommends a pit 3 feet wide and 4½ to 5 feet deep. "Fill the hole with locust cut to 1 foot lengths. Burn enough to get 18 to 20 inches of hot coals."

Set the round of beef on circles of aluminum foil and place into the pit. Then place a steel plate about 5-by-7 foot over the hole. Cover the steel plate with 2 or 3 inches of dirt and build a second locust fire atop the plate.

Beef should cook 6 hours for medium rare, 7 hours for medium well, and 8 hours for well done.

To Slice Beef: Lay four strips of aluminum foil in alternating layers to form an X. (One layer vertical, one horizontal, then another vertical and another horizontal.) Tightly wrap up the cooked beef roast in the foil and let it sit for 20 minutes. "The beef will set up for slicing just fine," Mr. Harrison says.

Following is Carl and Louise Harrison's recipe for their special barbecue sauce. Turn to this week's featured recipe on page B6 for another Harrison recipe.

Chicken Barbecue Sauce

For any amount, combine:

½ part corn oil
 ½ part vinegar
 ½ part water
 Salt to flavor

"You must have some salt," Harrison says, "or the sauce will be flat." He mixes his sauce in 5-gallon batches and adds ½ pound of salt for that amount. Also, he notes that the sauce must be sprayed from a metal container. He prefers a steel sprayer for his work.

Homestead Notes



The Harrisons make their own baked beans for their barbecues. Although Carl runs the barbecue pit, Louise takes charge in the kitchen.

NY-PENN Homemakers' Day Set

TOWANDA — A NY-PENN Homemakers' Day is planned for Wednesday, April 29 at the Guthrie Inn in Sayre.

This spring's program is a joint event of the Bradford County Cooperative Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Association of Tioga County, NY.

The program will be held from 9:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with registration time from 9 to 9:45 a.m. Program topics will include, "Assertiveness: What is it?", presented by Mary Lehman, extension associate, industrial and labor relations, Cornell University. Debbie Armstrong, Tioga County, New York extension agent, will

present "What's New in Vegetable Gardening," and "Keeping Your Life in Balance" will be presented by Dr. James Van Horn, family sociology specialist at Penn State University.

A buffet style lunch will be served. There will be exhibits to view and door prizes provided by local merchants.

There is a fee to attend and advance reservations are necessary. Paid reservation deadline is April 22. To make a reservation, contact the Bradford County Extension Office, 701 South Fourth Street, Towanda, PA 18848, phone 265-2896.