

# Volunteers Donate Time And Cattle: Meat For The Hungry

**BY BONNIE BRECHBILL**  
Franklin Co. Correspondent  
**GREENCASTLE** (Franklin Co.) — For one week out of the year, Gerald and Pauline Martin's butcher shop is turned into a mission station.

Volunteers, 100-150 of them a day, come to Cloverbloom Farm Market, five miles north of Greencastle, to process beef for the hungry. Concerned church members who will never be able to travel to foreign lands to help the needy can serve people overseas by cutting up meat, filling cans, or stamping labels.

The 132 head of cattle that were donated to the project were turned into approximately 22,000 28-ounce cans of beef during one week in January to be distributed to the hungry worldwide.

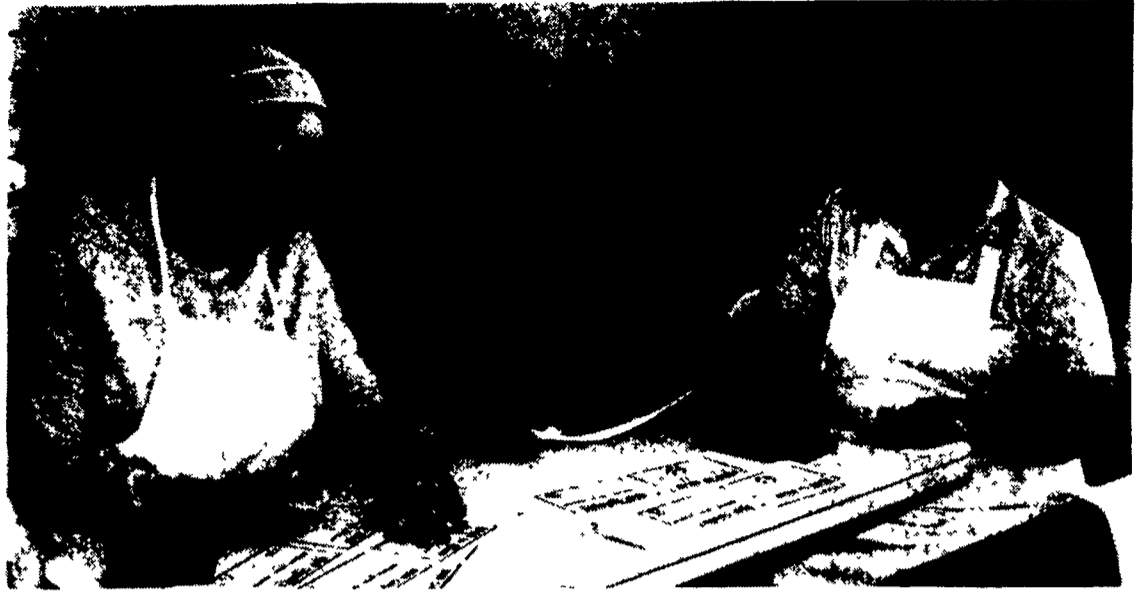
The phenomenon of hundreds of volunteers from various churches coming together to can meat for relief is repeated in 30

communities in the eastern half of the United States whenever the Mennonite Central Committee's meat canner arrives.

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), headquartered in Akron, maintains a mobile meat canner staffed by three volunteers. From October through April each year since 1974, the canner, which is housed in a tractor-trailer truck, travels to Mennonite communities in eleven states, going as far north as North Dakota and as far west as Kansas.

It is not just Mennonites who participate in the project, however, according to Mark Stahl, 24, an MCC volunteer on the mobile canner. People from Lutheran, Brethren, Baptist and Amish churches also help with the work.

Three MCC workers, who sign up for two-year terms, staff the canner. The leader of the crew is always a second-year volunteer. All three workers must be certi-



Lydia Miller, 83, center, was the oldest volunteer at Cloverbloom. The meat canning project started on her farm in the 1940s. Here, she and two friends stamp labels to be glued onto the cans of meat.

fied at Pennsylvania State University by taking a one-week course, Better Process Control. First-year workers also receive on-the-job training.

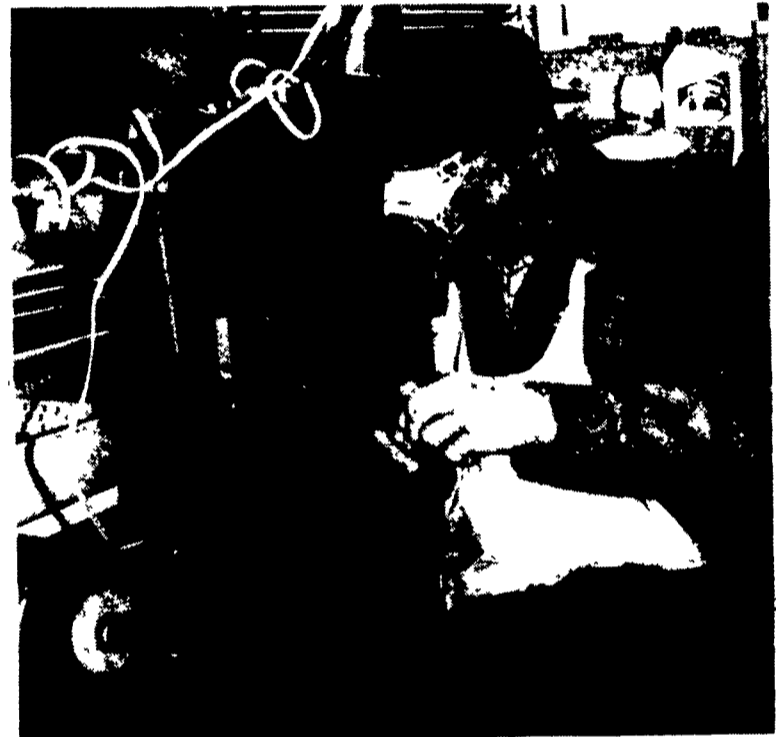
According to Stahl, the mobile canning unit contains a grinder, tubs, steam kettles, pressure cookers, cooling tanks, broilers to generate steam, and a sealing machine that puts the lids on the cans of meat. At Cloverbloom, the trailer is attached directly to the butcher shop, and workers can go down an enclosed ramp from the trailer into the area where the volunteers cut up the meat. "This is one of the nicest places we go to," Stahl said.

By mid-January, almost three months into the 1989-90 canning season, the mobile unit had processed 103,000 cans of meat.

When traveling with the canner, MCC workers stay in the homes of church members at each stop.

During the six months of the year that the canner is not on the road, Stahl and his crew, Laverne Eby, 23, of Saskatchewan, Canada; and Rudy Schmidt of Kansas, perform maintenance on the canner at MCC headquarters and also do general maintenance tasks at the headquarters' buildings. They get a 2-3 week vacation in the summer and two weeks off at Christmas time. They are not paid for their labors.

Most of the cans of beef that were processed at Cloverbloom this year will go to Nicaragua and Egypt. The beef broth that was produced during the cooking process was canned and will be distributed in the United States to soup kitchens and nursing homes,



Percy King of Mount Zion Mennonite Church grinds meat to prepare it for canning.

according to Pauline Martin.

The Cloverbloom stop is the second largest one on the MCC canner's route for the number of cans of beef processed. The largest is Middlebury, Indiana, Stahl said.

The Martins have been donating Cloverbloom's facilities to the project for 17 years. When they first heard of the meat canning project, "The Lord laid it on our hearts to do this," Pauline said. "We heard about it one Sunday evening at church, my husband called someone the next morning, and we got started."

Over 2,475 head of cattle have been processed at Cloverbloom for relief since 1974.

About half of Cloverbloom's regular employees help with the project by slaughtering the cattle and readying the carcasses for the volunteers who come in to cut up the meat.

"We're one of the few places that go from killing the beef to canning it," Pauline said. At some places where the MCC canner stops, the local churches purchase boned, boxed beef, which the volunteers cut up.

Most volunteers give a day or two of their time to the project to help cut up the thousands of pounds of beef that are processed, but Ernest Wingert of Chambersburg comes to Cloverbloom every day during the week that the MCC canner is there. He doesn't cut up any meat, but he keeps the knives sharp so that the other volunteers can work efficiently. "Some of the

knives I sharpen maybe four times," said Wingert, a member of the New Guilford Brethren in Christ church. Wingert has been sharpening knives for the meat project for eight years, ever since his retirement.

The oldest volunteer at Cloverbloom was Lydia Miller, 83, a member of the Mount Olivet Mennonite church. When the MCC meat canning project started in the 1940s, it did not have a mobile unit. Lydia and her husband Amos, who raised asparagus near Cearfoss, Maryland, had a canner for processing their asparagus. MCC volunteers came to the Millers' farm and used their canner to process meat. "It was a smaller scale operation then," Miller said.

Miller, who was widowed three years ago, gives her time to the project each year, stamping labels that will be glued onto the cans of meat. The labels bear the MCC logo, and say, "Beef Chunks, Food for Relief, in the name of Christ."

This project thrives on volunteers — people like the Martins who donate their facilities, those who donate cattle or money to purchase cattle, the mobile canner crew, the people who cut up the meat, sharpen the knives and stamp the labels, and the people who do the administrative work behind the scenes. It is these volunteers, according to the MCC, to make it possible for hungry people around the world to receive food in Christ's name.



Volunteer Clarence Martin pushes chilled quarters of beef to another area of the butcher shop to be sawed into pieces.



Ladies cut the beef into small pieces to ready it for canning.