

Edna McClure's Pie Baking Hits 43,862 Total

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— In the world of baseball, those who excel in batting, pitching, hitting, and fielding often make it into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Edna McClure of RR 1, Port Royal qualifies for the Hall of Fame but, instead of a bat, she uses a rolling pin and has had 43,862 "hits" in 35 years — a perfect batting record. She has had no errors, and her "pitching" into the work of making 43,862 pies gives her a perfect all-around record.

Edna's "Hall of Fame" record has fans not only in her native Juniata County but in other areas as well. After she really got started in baking pies to sell, she sent many each week to Harrisburg where her son and her brother-in-law filled orders from other employees where they worked. At that time, (1968) her large pies sold for \$1. That sounds like a small amount, but then Edna recalls that cornstarch was 10¢ a box whereas it is 79¢ now, and that all ingredients of the crust and the fillings have increased in cost accordingly.

Other "fans" are the customers from many areas who stop to eat at Spruce Hill Lunch, owned and operated by daughter Carlen, where Edna's pies are a great drawing card. Many come from Lancaster County and other more distant points.

When asked about favorite pies, Edna said that for "in-season" fillings, she finds rhubarb custard to be the favorite for cut pies in the restaurant and for pies ordered whole. The year-round favorite is coconut cream, with lemon sponge probably next in line. Husband Harvey's favorite is rhubarb custard, and Edna likes them all and so has no real favorite.

As so often happens, people want to know the secret of Edna's success. Of course the first required ingredients are hard work and a disciplined schedule. As to her recipes, Edna has made no attempt to keep them a secret. They have been in her head for so many years that there is no hesitation in knowing them exactly, but she had never put them in writing until recently.

This winter she wrote all of her recipes for Carlen so that she could have "The Pie Book" printed by Impressions Printing and Publishing of Mifflintown. This has added to Edna's fame because the book was an instant success! The first printing was 125, but they were all sold in seven days. Carlen has taken orders for 525 more, and the second printing will be available by the time this story is published. Carlen notes that they are already becoming a collector's item and are being bought by women who do not even bake pies. The taste of nostalgia appeals to them, as they read Edna's notes of the origination of many of the recipes and other personal notes.

The book has 27 pages with recipes for 19 pies as well as for the crust and for mincemeat. Carlen takes care of the orders and sale of the book because Edna is totally hearing impaired. Orders for "The Pie Book" may be sent

to Spruce Hill Lunch, R R 1, Box 824, Port Royal, PA 17082. Cost is \$5 + 30¢ tax and \$1 shipping, or a total of \$6.30. Check should be made payable to Spruce Hill Lunch.

For those who wish to stop in it, it is important to note that Spruce Hill Lunch is open only on Thursdays and Fridays from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It has been necessary for Carlen to reduce her hours in recent months due to various illnesses and injuries in the family, and she does not want folks to drive a long distance only to find Spruce Hill Lunch closed.

Now, let's go back to the beginning years of this "Hall of Famer." Born on a farm in Licking Creek, a few miles from Mifflin, Edna had two older brothers. Because of her present reputation for baking, we might think that Edna spent a lot of time in the kitchen with her mother. Not so! She much preferred being in the fields helping her father and so never learned much in the kitchen. She fondly recalls how she and others swam in the "crick" and went ice skating on Zook's Dam from a very early age to age 45 when she stopped because she had broken her shoulder (but not while skating). She still enjoys swimming.

Edna graduated from Juniata Joint High School in 1944 and is thrilled that, at their 50th year class reunion this year, the committee will give her pie book as a favor to those in attendance.

Between graduation and marriage, Edna worked at a sewing factory and as a waitress at Bratton's Restaurant (now closed) in Mifflin. Even there, the closest she came to cooking was making sodas!

She married T. Harvey McClure of Port Royal in 1946, and they lived as tenant farmers on the Paul McClure farm for four years. The next eight years they were tenant farmers on a Groninger Valley farm.

When asked if she enjoyed cooking after marriage, Edna's answer was definitely affirmative. She made her own bread, and still does, "from scratch." She also enjoyed making cornmeal mush, which she still makes for Spruce Hill Lunch. Even though Edna made pies in her earlier years of marriage, she never felt she was good at it. Then she was hired as a pie-maker by Zimmie's Restaurant (now closed) near Mifflintown, with the understanding that the manager would teach her how to make them! She baked pies there two nights a week.

In 1968, Edna decided that she would start making her own pies to sell, and so she took orders and became so busy that she never had to advertise. She wanted especially to work at home because she was helping to raise a grandson, Steve, and wanted to be there for him.

When asked how she kept record of the number of pies she has baked, Edna brought out a very efficiently-kept record book, started in 1968. The book lists how many and what type of pies she baked each day. In the back, as

a summary, she has charts showing totals for each week, month, and year. When she started that book 26 years ago, little could Edna have realized what it would mean to her and others now.

Since 1976, when Carlen opened Spruce Hill Lunch, all orders for Edna's pies have gone through there, and she has also kept the restaurant supplied with her special pies for sale by the piece. Rheumatoid arthritis has taken its toll on her hands so that they are quite crippled, most likely from all of that pie crust rolling. Although she does not make those palatable pies as quickly or as often now, she still makes 35 each week for her favorite customer, Spruce Hill Lunch, along Route 75 about 6 miles south of Port Royal.

Edna's most loyal fan and helper has been her husband, Harvey, who retired from the Montgomery Ward store in Lewistown when it closed in 1981. Since then he has helped Carlen at the restaurant and has helped Edna to prepare the fruit for her pies. Recently he has had to slow down in his helpfulness due to ill health.

A helpful hint that came out in the interview is that Edna and Harvey mix 50 pounds of flour with shortening at one time and store it in the cold until she needs crusts. Perhaps "pie on a moment's notice" could be Edna's motto.

In addition to daughter Carlen, the McClures have another daughter, Ellen, who is married to Jay Hockenbrock. They both teach in the Big Spring School District.

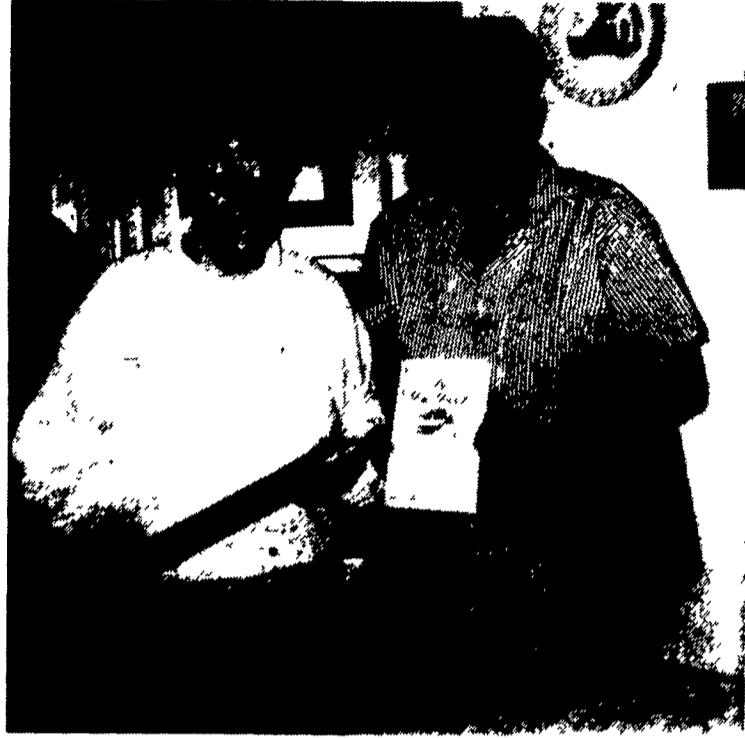
Harvey and Edna also have a son, Furman, who lives near Newport and works as a machinist for Lebanon Valley Offset Printing Company. He and his wife have one son.

Carlen's son, Steve, is the grandson who was the reason that Edna wanted to work at home back in 1968. He had a close call with death in the Blizzard of '93, and the story of how he survived will be in an upcoming issue of "Guideposts." Steve still lives with Edna and Harvey but, after nearly a year of rehab, he drives daily to State College to his work at Nittany Valley Offset Printing.

Edna says that she takes little credit for her ability as a pie maker for she feels it is a God-given talent. She has lived her life with faith in God, and he has faithfully

carried her and her family through many trials of flood, sickness, and accident. This Hall of Famer has not allowed her complete loss of hearing to ruin her sweet spirit of her love for people. Edna and daughters, Carlen and Ellen, have

learned sign language. Carlen signed the questions to her mother during the interview. Like a real champion, Edna has overcome obstacles and hardships, and she continues to bless many with her talent of making pies.



Edna McClure with her daughter Carlen holds a copy of "The Pie Book," which was recently printed.



Edna McClure in her home, with husband Harvey who has been of great help and support to her in her pie making.



Partial results of a typical day of baking pies for Edna McClure. Shown are coconut cream, blueberry, apple and raisin crumb. She holds a coconut pie, one of a number that she got up at 5:00 a.m. to start baking.

Homestead Notes