

90-Year-Olds Just Keep Working And Working

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— Although Clarence Harnish is 90 years old, he has no intentions of retiring.

"But now I work about 10 hours a day instead of 15-18," he said.

This year, Harnish stopped raising steers but continues to work most of the 300 acres of ground that he and his son John own.

"Hard work, fresh air, and enjoying things to do," he said were the reasons he is able to work hard when the majority of people his age are no longer able to cope with life.

Harnish's wife Esther of 66 years is 91 years of age. She rises at 5:30 a.m. because she has so much to do.

"A woman's work is never done," she said of the gardening, flower beds, canning, and freezing she does.

As she looks out the window at the apples, blueberry, peach, and plum trees and bushes, she notices apples falling from the trees. She plans to can them that day, not because the couple needs anymore

food, but because "I just can't see things going to waste," she said.

The couple married in 1929, at the beginning of the Great Depression, and set up housekeeping with sparse furnishings.

"We had nothing but good health and knowing how to work," Harnish said. "We learned then that you can live without things. If you don't buy what you can't pay for, you'll never owe anyone," Harnish said.

For the first 11 years, in addition to farming, Harnish also knocked on Lancaster City doors to peddle chickens, eggs, and butter that his wife had churned.

Wheat was considered a basic crop and the couple farmed at least 30 acres annually. "Wheat was a big part of our income. We waited until spring to take it to the mill so that we could receive a better price," Harnish said as he reflected on the changes during his lifetime.

"Then, a manure fork was considered a necessity, but today the manure is pumped into tanks.

"It's also easy to move feed from one farm to another — something we couldn't do back then,"

Harnish said.

But Harnish isn't one to extol the virtues of "the good old days."

"I sure do like the changes," said Harnish as he recalled the slow work of walking after a plow. "I like tractors much better and they do a better job."

In his growing-up years, he often helped his dad who did thrashing for neighbors. The long hard work of loading hay bales is only a memory now as cutting and chopping can be done in one day.

It's easier work for Mrs. Harnish too. She said, "My, we had nine to 11 men at one table when the thrashers came."

She spoke of preparing a big piece of beef, mashed potatoes, noodles, bread, lima beans, cabbage slaw, fruit and pie for the meal. "When the thrashes came, we let other things wait," she said of the never-ending household duties when there were no household appliances to ease the manual workload.

One of Harnish's fondest memories is of Dutch Bucher, the first county agent. Bucher worked closely with Harnish to lay out the farm in 5/4-acre strips of corn, hay, and tomatoes in order to save the dark loam soil that was easily washable on his farm. In addition to the strips, Harnish learned to let chopped cornstalks stand over the winter. Bucher also advised him that his soil did not need as much fertilizer as considered popular at the time.

These soil saving efforts resulted in Harnish receiving recognition for having the highest yield and quality shelled corn in Pennsylvania in 1954.

Harnish has always been supportive of higher education. Of the couple's five children, one is a surgeon, another a nurse, and another a school teacher. Harnish, himself, was a choice scholar who excelled in math when he was graduated from West Lampeter Vocational High School.

Harnish's dad kept a close watch on his son's school homework.

"My father was also good at math. When I did my homework, I had to explain how I got the answer and not just show him an answer," Harnish said.

Although the school offered ag courses, Harnish said that his father gave him the best background for successful farming.

"For a long time, I had him looking over my shoulders," Harnish said.

Any disagreements Harnish might have had with his dad were never verbalized. He said, "Sometimes I might have disagreed in my thoughts, but he always won out because my feet were under his table."

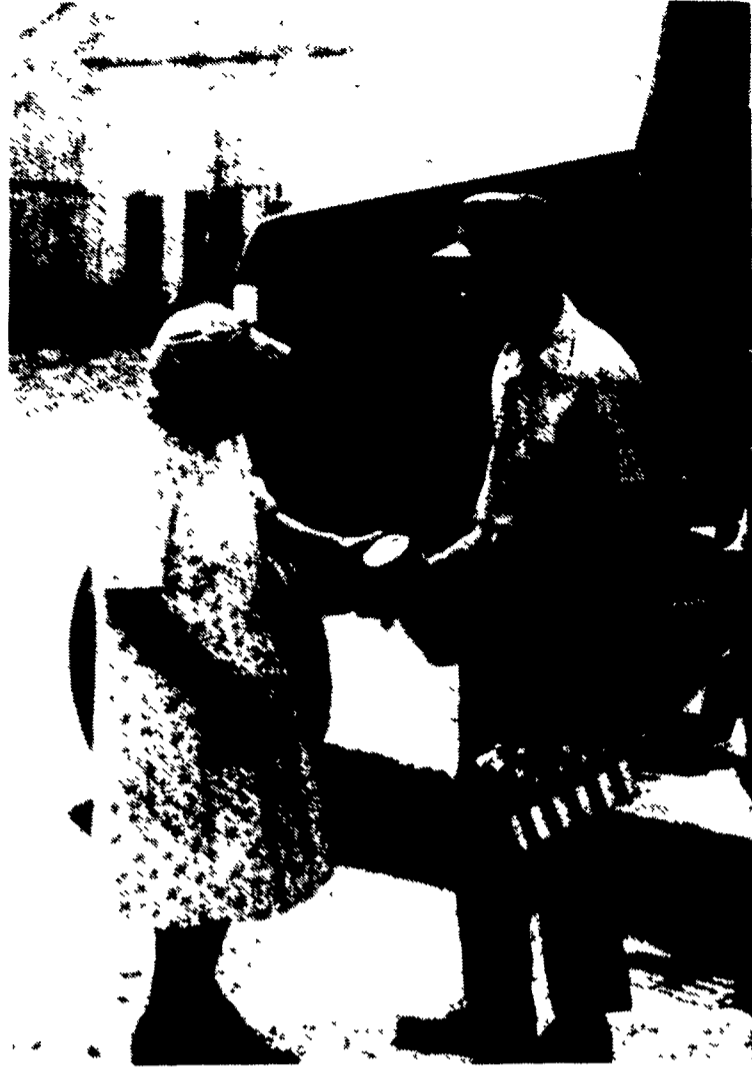
When Harnish was graduated from high school, his dad presented him with a new Cleveland car.

"But I didn't get it handed to me. I worked for free for my dad from the time I was 18 until 21 years old," Harnish said.

Harnish's math expertise pays off. When he goes for lumber, he has the price figured out before the sales clerk punches the numbers on the computer.

Harnish said, "I have an inclination to toy with a computer. If I were 15 years younger or still had livestock, I would look into buying one, but at my age, why bother?"

When it comes to equipment, Harnish said that he was always prone to purchase new equipment if it offered a better way to get



Ninety-one-year-old Esther Harnish packs a lunch for her husband, Clarence, 91, to take along on his field work.



Harnish and his son John review the bookkeeping records. John said his dad can often calculate figures in his head before people can push calculator or computer buttons.



Clarence and Esther display a photograph of their Strasburg farm where they began farming in 1929. Several plaques have been awarded to Harnish for producing the highest yield and quality of corn in the state.



"A woman's work is never done," says Esther. Even at 91-years-of age, she arises at 5:30 in order to work in her garden and can fruit from the many fruit trees growing on their land.

Homestead Notes

rops more economically. Through the years—that meant installing a barn cleaner, purchasing a hay baler as soon as World War II was over, a hay crusher, and a mixer to mix their own total mixed rations in which he saw a big gain per day on less food.

Harnish said that he faced the challenge between raising the lucrative money crop, tobacco, and remaining true to his conviction that it was wrong to make money off a product that he wouldn't want his sons to use.

He turned to raising tomatoes instead of tobacco. They also raised laying hens, cows, turkeys, and steers.

"I never regretted it," he said. "It gave me more time to take some Bible study courses and gathering eggs is much better than stripping tobacco," he said.

Through the years, Harnish said that the weather often played

havoc on the best laid plans of farmers. One year, he lost all his tomato crop. "But we had cows and chickens so we didn't hurt too badly," Harnish said.

Church work is of prime importance to Harnish, who said that he puts God first in his life. "I have a little talk in the morning with the Lord to find out what the Lord has to say," Harnish said. He also spends 10 minutes daily on his exercise bicycle and some time in a sauna that they installed. He takes a 15-minute nap, which he said relaxes him and allows him to return to work refreshed.

"If I were president, I would pass a law for everyone to have off from 12 to 2 p.m.," he said. That allows time to eat, take a nap, and relax.

Harnish said that he and his wife have always been concerned about what they eat. They eat lots of fruit

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