

At 71, Bishop Keeps On Hauling

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then, they were moving mostly their own stock.

"But people got to saying, 'Would you take a calf along for me?'"

And so a business was born and with it a family tradition.

Today, the Super Duty Ford with the 12-foot bed and aluminum sides → "Robert G. Bishop & Son" emblazoned proudly on the cab — is a familiar sight to farmers in the five-county area that straddles the Maryland-Pennsylvania border.

Bishop and his son Benn bought the truck last April with 54,000 miles on it. The gauge now stands at 66,800. Their first truck, a similar Super Duty which they continue to use, has logged more than 250,000 miles.

At Robert G. Bishop & Son — "Livestock Dealing and Trucking" — in Gettysburg, the work day usually starts at 8 a.m. or shortly after.

The company headquarters is a telephone and a Rolodex of customer phone numbers, both precariously balanced on top of a clothes dryer in the farm kitchen.

Company meetings are held at lunchtime when Benn comes in from his full-time job at a local sawmill and Bob takes a break from the day's pickups.

The firm's executive secretary is a white-haired woman with a friendly smile who's been the queen of Bishop's heart since they met 45 years ago when he was making the hay at her daddy's place.

The former Betty Wenschhof was home from college that summer. On the last day Bishop toiled in her family's fields — the hot July sun sweltering above — the pretty co-ed took pity on the lanky farm boy and invited him in for dinner.

As he left, he thought he should return the hospitality. So he asked her out, tossing the offer across the front porch, wondering how she'd answer. He knew, he recalls now, that she wouldn't take him seriously.

"But I said, 'I'll see you at seven.' She wasn't ready when I came at seven," Bob said with a chuckle. "But she got ready," he said, remembering blue eyes twinkling. On Thanksgiving Day of that same year, Bishop bought the farm they still own. In the meantime, Betty finished her courses at Shippensburg College and earned her teaching degree.

On July 19, 1952, they married and then left on their honeymoon — an 8,000 mile trip cross country in a 1950 Chevy.

That trip, and a two-week tour of New England to celebrate their 25th anniversary, are the only vacations they've ever taken. Those brief adventures and eight weeks spent recovering from a hernia mark about the only time Bishop has missed the area's weekly livestock sales.

Along the way they had three daughters — Bobbi Jo, Bonni and Beth — in addition to son, Benn. Now there are in-laws and six grandchildren to complete the family.

And still Bishop hauls, his days planned around the animals that must be delivered and many a night spent standing 'round a sale ring.

His devotion to the auctions might have driven a lesser woman mad.

But Betty is made of stronger stuff than that. She works around his calendar, arranging family get-togethers and holiday dinners at a time — and sometimes even a day — more convenient for him.

A "behind-the-scenes" partner in the business that Bishop has built, she is the appointment taker, the receptionist, and even an assistant livestock handler when the need arises.

Not to mention those homecooked lunches that keep a man going when the day gets long. Bishop keeps hours that would fell men half his age. And he probably owes his energy to her delicious soups and ever-present jars of

homemade jelly, so sweet and good he almost eats it straight off the spoon.

Bishop's birthday — as typical a day as any — began with a trip to Don Mason's farm in New Freedom Township where he picked up a few fat steers and took them for butchering at Norman J. Shriver, Jr.'s in Emmitsburg, Md.

Conscientious to a fault, Bishop said he likes to get animals scheduled for slaughtering to the butcher's as soon as possible "so if something kicks up, they're already in." Rumbling down the road in the morning cold, Bishop steers like the former schoolbus driver he is.

Thirty-five years hauling other people's children and his own — in addition to his livestock dealing — have taught him to be gentle with his cargo.

Bishop's trucked hogs, sheep, and goats in his time. He even "took a flittin'" back in 1948 and



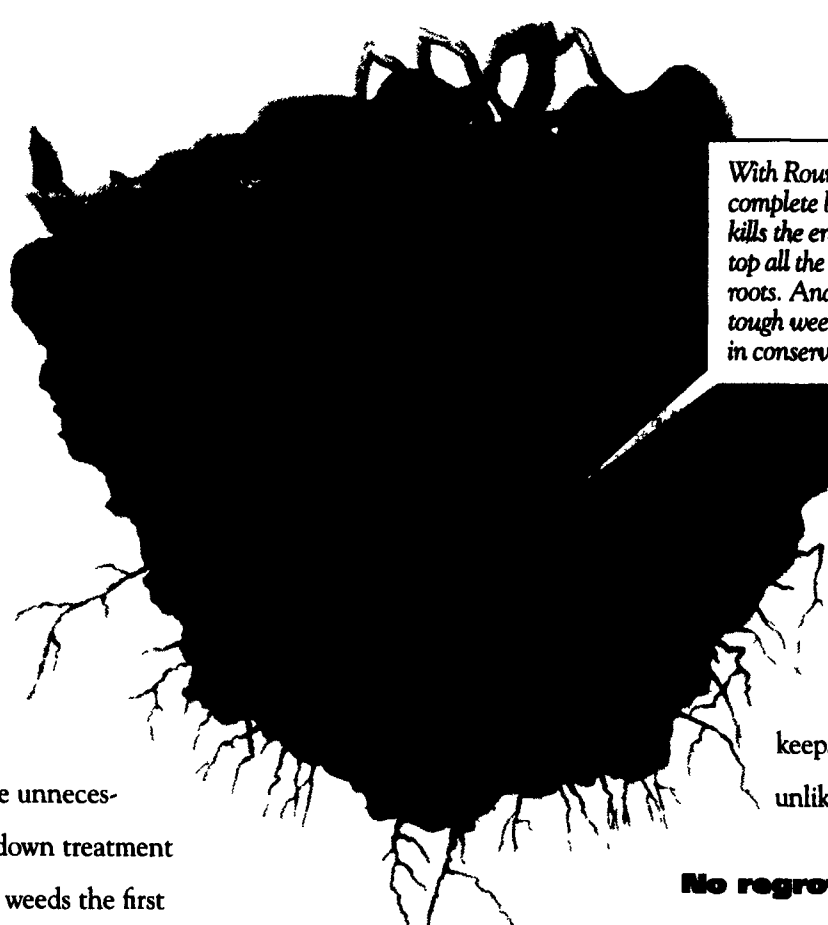
Benn Bishop, left, and Bob Bishop, right, meet daily for lunch at the family farm to discuss the day's chores. Together they run Robert G. Bishop & Son, a longtime livestock dealing and trucking firm in Adams County.

hired out to move a man's belongings to Palm Beach, Fla. Occasionally, he's still asked to take a load of horses to New Holland, Pa. But it's the cattle — dairy and

beef — that are the lifeblood of Bishop & Son. Bishop attends auctions in Greencastle on Monday and Thursday, Westminster, Md. on Tuesday and Hagerstown, Md.

on Wednesday. While there aren't near as many haulers in business as when Bishop began, trucking livestock is still a much-needed agricultural service.

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