



At 100 years of age, Mary Forney and her daughter Allegra Sanner talk about the birthday party on the farm.

## Centenarian Reminisces

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NEFFSVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Mary Forney celebrated her 100th birthday on her childhood farm recently.

It was a day to reminisce about growing up on Willow Spring Farm in Clay Township.

One hundred years is a lot of memories to recall, but Mary remembers them as if they happened yesterday.

"My father was an award-winning orchard man," Mary said.

In fact, Christian B. Snyder received the Master Farmer Award in 1928 for "his seed selection work that has done more than anyone else to fix the type and disease-resistant qualities of Lancaster County Sure-Crop corn, his production of disease-free berry plants, and control of the oriental peach moth. He was also the first in the area to test both dairy and beef cattle for tuberculosis."

Snyder was also treasurer of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Association and an officer for the extension association.

Some of Mary's fondest memories are of childhood days filled with swinging on a long rope from a branch of the willow tree, finding pretty stones in the brook running through the front yard, rolling down the hills in the yard, seeing watermelons and jugs of milk chilling in the ice cold trough in the springhouse, and riding to Sunday school in the horse and buggy.

There was no bathroom in the house, but Mary recalled that the outhouse had two holes, one regular size and one smaller, with a step for the children. A Sears Roebuck catalogue provided both entertainment and cleansing.

"We spent a lot of time there when it was dishwashing time in the kitchen," Mary said.

After graduation from Elizabethtown College, Mary taught school until she was 30 years old and married a widower in 1931.

Her husband-to-be drove a car named "Moon," said Mary. "So I told people I was marrying the man on the moon."

Roy Forney had somewhat of an unusual life. Married at 19, his first wife was the only child of a wealthy family. Her father gave a farm to them as a gift, but when she died a year later from childbirth, her father took the farm back. Forney had a newborn baby to raise. He remarried only to lose his second wife when she died from complica-

tions when giving birth to their second child.

Forney returned to Elizabethtown College to earn a degree to teach math. It was at college that Forney and Mary became acquainted.

Forney served as a lay pastor (without pay) and Mary often served as chorister in the meetings where he preached.

When Mary married Forney, he had three children from two different mothers.

"But I was never a stepmother," Mary said. "My husband wouldn't allow that. They were our children."

The children were ages 10, 5, and 1/2. Later, Mary and her husband had two additional children. The oldest is deceased but the other four include Arlene Stauffer, Conestoga; Allegra Sanner, Dowingtown; LeRoy Forney, Philadelphia; and Miriam Hassan, South Bend, Ind.

"My mother was always formal and proper and taught us to be well behaved," said Allegra, the third child. "She was always kind and gentle. I never saw her lose her temper."

After their marriage, Forney became a full-time pastor for the Church of the Brethren in Somerset County. Mary assisted him by serving as choir director, teaching adult Sunday school classes, and typing church bulletins and other secretarial duties. She used her artistic talents to paint pictures that illustrated some of her husband's sermons.

The walls of her apartment at the Brethren Village, Lititz, serve as the background for many of her oil paintings.

Her husband died in 1973 from complications suffered from falling down the steps.

At that time, the couple was semi-retired with Forney serving as pastor of visitation for the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren.

About 23 years ago, Mary moved to Brethren Village. For the first 17 years she shared a cottage with a friend.

"We bought a place in Florida where we visited every winter. We went on a cruise and did other interesting things," Mary said.

Mary also served as president of the Society of Farm Women in both Lancaster and Somerset counties and as treasurer of the state society.



On barn-building day, a meal was served to all the men before the women sat down to eat. Mary is fourth from the right.



Butchering day was an exciting time as Mary remembers it. From left are C.B. Snyder, Aunt Amanda Landis, Mary (Forney), Uncle Amos Landis, two butchers, and Aunt Sarah Wiest.

Although she no longer paints, Mary used her artistic abilities to make 125 bookmarks for each of the guests who attended her party on Aug. 7. She used the dots from a hole punch and a few defined strokes of a pen to bring a cheery existence to bugs, birds, flowers, caterpillars, and butterflies.

When family members wanted to play her 100th birthday party, Mary at first protested. But then she said, "I don't want a fuss, but I would like a family reunion."

Thus the surviving children planned the Snyder-Forney Reunion with relatives coming from as far away as California and China.

At the reunion, Mary requested that "The Lord's Prayer" be sung before the noon meal.

"We have loads of musicians in our family," Allegra said, "and the singing was beautiful."

Pictures and posters depicting 100 years of Allegra's life were on display. A distant relative who lives on the family farm opened it up for tours. The house has been beautifully restored and is furnished with many cherished family heirlooms.

"A reunion is more than people

related to each other. It's people joined by shared memories and hopes, drawn together by mutual caring and concerns. A family is special."

Mary's sister Ida Snyder is alive at 102 years of age, but was unable to attend because she lives in California.

Although 100 years old, Mary still likes to have fun, but said that all her old friends have died. Four years ago, Mary carried the Olympic torch when it came to the Lititz area.

A former tennis player, Mary has turned in her racquet to play Scrabble and Rummy Cube.

"She never complains," her daughter said. "She gets up at 6:30 every morning."

Mary interspersed, "That's because I want to hear the in-house T.V. (a program that includes

devotions and news)."

"She always dresses as soon as she gets up," Allegra said.

"Don't you?" Mary asked. "I always did."

At 9 a.m., Mary participates in an exercise class.

"I keep busy. I stop by the store and bank," Mary said.

"I just stopped driving a car last year."

She also had kept a garden on the retirement home's property.

"I kept my gardening tools in my car trunk. When I gave up driving, I had no place to keep my (garden) tools, so I gave up gardening too," Mary said. "But I miss those wonderful strawberries and rhubarb that I grew in my garden."

Of her 100 years of living, Mary said, "I can't think of any years that were better than others. I enjoyed them all."

## Skunks In Your Yard?

YORK (York Co.) — This time of the year, skunks frequent yards searching for white grubs (the larvae of Japanese beetles and June bugs). Many people want to know how to keep skunks away. Penn State master gardeners respond

that the digging skunks do in the top inch of soil causes little damage. They will work at night and move on to winter hibernation when grubs are gone, so consider letting them help you with pest control.