

Ethel McKibbon celebrates 90th birthday

By Kelly Smith
Leader Reporter

Want to live to be 90? Just don't be afraid of hard work.

That's the advice Mrs. Ethel McKibbon, of Eganville, gives -- and she should know. This month she's going to celebrate that 90th birthday.

"I don't think hard work hurts you. I worked hard

but I enjoyed it," she said, adding, "if you spend a little bit of good times with it, it's always good."

Ethel Peever, later to become Ethel McKibbon, was born five miles from Cobden in Bromley Township on August 10, 1900.

Since that time, she has lived through two World Wars, the Great Depression, the advent of radio, television, heart trans-

plants, and space travel.

But perhaps one of the things she remembers as producing the most excitement was the day when her family got their first telephone.

"I remember when we got our first telephone at home," she said with a smile. "It was before the war (World War One). There were seven or eight neighbors on the line and

you had all the different rings. You could listen in if you wanted to."

At that time, she added, the telephone was more than just a communications device. It was also a way for neighbors to look out for each other. If a phone rang a lot, with no answer, you knew your neighbor might be in trouble, so you checked it out.

"The party line was more for the family or community. Oh, it was a lot of bother sometimes, but you knew if you heard a lot of rings (like) in the case of fire -- there was an alarm hooked to the telephone (five long rings or just continuous) -- then you would have everyone come running."

Christmas is another thing that has changed over the years. Today, Mrs. McKibbon questions the amount of toys and presents children receive. When she was a child these were not nearly so plentiful.

"We'd maybe get a whole orange and that was a big thing because you always had to share them at that time."

Because there was no high school in the area at that time, Mrs. McKibbon was unable to go beyond elementary school. However, because she had always wanted to be a nurse, and because at that time hospitals would train girls with only an elementary public school education, she began training at a hospital in North Bay when she was 20.

She had a year and a half of training left to complete when she decided to leave nursing and get married.

On September 6, 1922, at the age of 22, she married Charles McKibbon. They lived together in his home- stead on Concession Road 12 in Eganville until Mr. McKibbon passed way in 1970. Mrs. McKibbon has lived there now for 67 years.

Over the years, they had five boys. Their second child died of spina bifida as an infant, but the other four are still living. Keith and Alton still live in Eganville, while Elmer lives in Kingston and Harold lives in Richmond Hill.

"I think the happiest time of your life is when your first child is born," she said.

Despite giving up nursing, Mrs. McKibbon kept busy for a while after her marriage, acting as a midwife, delivering 10 babies in the area. And when she wasn't doing that, or working in her home, she was out helping her husband on their dairy farm.

While things were certainly more difficult, Mrs. McKibbon doesn't remember the depression as being a particularly bad time.

"You know, things were cheaper and you made things. Runners for your children were 30 some cents and you either bought them or you went without. We had to live under it and get along."

"I often seen us go to church and you didn't have any money for collection. I don't know what would happen today if that happened."

Now, more than half a century, 10 grandchildren and eight great grandchildren later, Mrs. McKibbon is still going strong and keeping active.

She belongs to the Women's Institute, is active in her church, and often keeps herself busy weeding her garden and crocheting ("It keeps my fingers supple").

Only last year did she give up driving, and only then because she had a cataract developing on one eye and has some arthritis in her right leg.

"I've been driving I guess since I was 24. All them years I drove I never had an accident. Now I have a cataract on one eye, so I thought I'd better not drive this year. I miss it."

Mrs. McKibbon, a bright and cheery lady, is looking forward to the future. She chuckles as she thinks about the possibility of living another decade or two.

"A friend ... told me the other day I'd probably live to be 110 ... I don't know, as long as I have my wits about me."

It appears Mrs. McKibbon has a bright and cheery future ahead of her.



Checking the tomatoes

Being 90-years-old doesn't stop Mrs. Ethel McKibbon from keeping busy. When she's not tending to her garden, she might be found with some of her friends from the Women's Institute, of which she is a part, or she might possibly be crocheting a new afghan.

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Mrs. Ethel McKibbon is a Life Member of
The Lake Dore Women's Institute

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