

Retired farmers like fish out of water

Some farmers adjust to retirement fairly well, but many are like fish out of water when they leave the farm.

There are several reasons for this — some of them obvious ones. To begin with, farming isn't merely a job. It's a lifestyle.

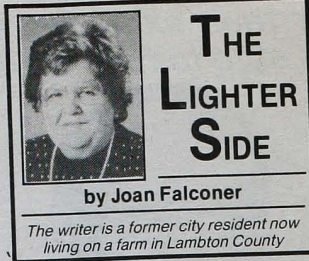
A 40-hour-a-week job can be discarded, sometimes without any tears. Some people are happy to be finished with a job that has kept them from their real interests, whether they be golf, travel or gardening.

But farming isn't your typical job. A farmer can't be compared with a plumber or an electrician. The farmer's job is a big part of him and without it he can feel incomplete.

How many farmers ever become serious golfers or tennis players, for example? Very few, indeed.

The reason for this is obvious: they don't have the time for such luxuries. And in most cases they don't have the interest.

This is probably because their



THE LIGHTER SIDE

by Joan Falconer

The writer is a former city resident now living on a farm in Lambton County

lives are already full and they're "hobbies" are attending auction sales and livestock shows or shopping around for breeding stock.

As a result, farmers seldom need hobbies to fill their time. Many of them already work a 75-hour week as it is.

So what happens to farmers when the years start to pile up? A lot of them ignore the big 65, which for most professions is the job departure time.

For farmers it's just another birthday and they have no intention of quitting just because they're now senior citizens.

In one way, farmers are lucky. No one hands them a piece of paper saying their services are no longer required because they're too old.

They are their own bosses and they tell themselves they will retire when they are good and ready.

Many farmers are still going strong long after age 65 — some as long as they live. And they wouldn't want it any other way.

Of course there are some who move to the nearest town, go south for half the year and seem to enjoy the casual lifestyle which is found on the shuffleboard court or in the swimming pool. They enjoy relaxing card games with other seniors.

But some of them would gladly trade the shuffleboard court and swimming pool for a 12-hour day behind the plow. Why? Because farming is still in their blood and always will be.

The Lighter Side appears weekly in Farming Today.

Give thanks every day

By Frances Kilbourne

Monday, Oct. 11 was Canada's official day of Thanksgiving. But for those of us who farm in Southwestern Ontario, mid-October finds a quantity of our crops still unharvested, fall tillage still a fond hope, and thousands jobs left over from the summer still to be addressed. Our Thanksgiving "holiday" may be just another busy day in yet another hectic season.

But that does not mean Thanksgiving thoughts escape our minds. As farmers, our Thanksgiving Day spreads across the year.

There's a Thanksgiving Day in winter when you stumble through a blizzard to the barn, collar up and hat pulled down, eyes squinted against the storm. Inside the friendly warmth of that familiar place you turn on the radio and CBC Toronto is describing the chaos on the Don Valley Parkway and warning the 401 is about to be closed. You push back your hat, take off your overcoat, and the normal complications of the day seem quite manageable.

There's a Thanksgiving Day in March when the migrating swans stay overnight on the ponds, smoke comes from the neighbour's sugar shack, and you go back to the barn late in the evening to open up some extra doors for cooling ventilation. Winter is fading and that's a cause for celebration.

A few weeks later there's another special Thanksgiving Day when the machinery heads for the fields and you can't escape the fragrance of sun-warmed earth. Seed goes into the planters and you remember:

*We plough the fields and scatter,
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered,
By God's almighty hand.*

There's a Thanksgiving Day in the summer when you turn into the lane after a hectic afternoon in the city the farm and everything in it says "welcome home" and you pause for a moment to take it all in.

Thanksgiving comes as you stand in the barn door watching great drops of rain pound down, and you know the last load of hay is safely tucked in the dry.

Thanksgiving dawns as you watch the grain wagons fill with oats and barley, wheat, soybeans or golden corn.

Thanksgiving arrives with the many trucks that serve the farm — trucks leaving with the milk or meat or eggs or grain and trucks arriving with the multitude of supplies needed to keep the business running smoothly.

Thanksgiving for your profession and your small part in it strikes as you wheel a cart through the well-stocked grocery store. You realize in that urban setting you are probably the only person in the crowd who really knows the complexity of food production, and how fragile is the system that puts the food there.

Sometimes Thanksgiving Days are made by neighbours, those who offer a wagon, or an afternoon's help, or both, when you need it most. There's a feeling of Thanksgiving too on a warm August evening crop tour, or a February kitchen meeting with your seed dealer as you realize there are still people totally committed to agriculture and that the land is in good hands.

Somewhere between Halloween and Christmas Eve there will be a moment when all the machines will be out of the fields, the animals will have settled into their winter quarters, and we the farmers will be adjusting to another season's routines. That too will be a Thanksgiving Day, just one of the many we celebrate year round on our farms.

May we all find a little Thanksgiving in EVERY day.



BEST TWINS — Erin, left, and Allison Dale, 13 months, were the best of two sets of twins at the Aylmer Fair. They are daughters of Kelly and Mark Dale, of RR 2, Glanworth.

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