



STOOK BUILDER — Retired Glanworth farmer Bill Bradish demonstrates proper way to build a grain stook on son Tom's St. Thomas-area farm Saturday.

The stooks allow for proper ventilation of grain as it cures for a week or 10 days in the sun. (T-J Photo).

Area farmer longs for old days

By CLYDE WARRINGTON
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GLANWORTH — It's going to take Bill Bradish and the boys 10 days to cut and thrash their way through a six-acre oats field here, but they're loving every minute of it.

Mr. Bradish, 87, a retired farmer living in Glanworth, waxes nostalgic at the sight of a 40-year-old grain binder slowly wading through the thigh-deep field and laments the day the combine was invented.

"I'd say in all my days of farming, maybe I've done five acres, all told, on a tractor," he said, turning down an offer to take over the wheel of the machine.

Then he pulls from his pocket an envelope and extracts two fading pictures from inside, showing him leading a horse-drawn binder, "doing the same thing, right here in the same field, 65 years ago."

DRY IN SUN

Then the elderly gentleman stoops to explain "stooks" carefully bound, 20-25-pound sheaves of grain, which are stacked side by side in a rectangle to dry in the sun.

The sheaves are being collected for use in the Elgin Historial Show, Aug. 10-11 at the Dan Patterson Con-

servation Area, and later, in September, in the International Plowing Match and farm equipment show to be held at Talbotville.

St. Thomas farm implement dealer Don Williams, a collector of historic farm equipment, said he plans to feed the sheaves into some steam-engine and tractor-powered thrashing machines to demonstrate farming methods of old.

To chop down the field, he invited about 20 area farmers out Saturday to lend a hand.

Stooking was about the only method used by farmers to cure their grain prior to the introduction of combines in the early 1940s, Mr. Williams said. Apart from Amish Mennonites who have resisted farm technology, it is a practice which is fading into the history books.

TINY HOUSES

The stooks resemble tiny thatch houses when assembled properly. They are constructed with the ends facing north and south for even drying in the sunlight and offer adequate ventilation for "a real good cure," Mr. Bradish says.

To build a stook, "you start with two sheaves, then you add around until it's braced on all sides," he said.

The best stooks are made with 10 sheaves — four

per side, plus the two end pieces, and gaining the knack isn't particularly difficult.

"If you stook all day, you'd be building a pretty good stook by night," he said.

After seven to 10 days of curing, the stooks are ready for thrashing. A combine could go through a similar field in a day, skipping the lengthy curing process, he said.