

Melvin Terry, of Dalkeith

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# Champion bean grower: doing things right

By Louise Sproule

**DALKEITH** — Last week I visited Melvin Terry, a retired farmer who lives in Dalkeith, on Main St.

Mr. Terry's claim to fame is winning first prize in the white field beans class at the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Seed, Feed and Forage Show.

I thought I'd try and find out the secret to being a champion bean grower.

We sat and talked in the house for a while before going into the garden.

How long has he been working the land?

"Just subtract 15 from 86 and that's when I first started growing things," Mr. Terry said with a laugh.

Years ago, he said, they grew sulphur beans.

When Mr. Terry's father died, 15-year-old Melvin took over the family farm near Fournier. Then, it was

a struggle to survive on the family farm.

Today, planting and growing things is just a hobby for Mr. Terry.

"I'm still as interested as ever in agriculture. I read everything I can get hold of," he said.

"Sometimes I wonder about the changes we're going through. Machines are just one of the things that has changed farm life. It's changed from a way of making a living to big business," he said.

And the quota system, he thinks, put an end to the small farm.

"I know we have to change things," he says, "But it used to be that when a man loved to farm, he got other jobs to keep himself going, so he could raise his family in the country, where it was quiet."

Their home is spotless, with everything in its place.

And Mr. Terry's garden is just as neatly kept.

His garden is on a slope facing south; there's not a weed in sight, only long rows of vegetables.

"Things are just getting started, there's lettuce, carrots, beans, radishes, beets, earlier peas, onions, earlier beans ..." he points out, walking along the edge of the garden.

But that's all different now, he believes.

"Then it got to the point where you either got big or you got out," Mr. Terry said.

"The quota system has changed a lot of things, but I don't think it solved anything great; there are still a lot of drawbacks," he added.

In days gone by, Mr. Terry remembers how most family farms had lots of help at home.

"But, go to hire a man on the farm today and he looks for something with a seat, not a handle," Mr. Terry said.

At 65 years of age, Mr. Terry decided to hand the reins over to his son, Willie.

"It was time for me to get out and him to get in," Mr. Terry said.

"If you don't have a farm handed down to you, then you can't get in at all," he said.

"If you have enough money to start up in farming, then you have enough money to retire," he commented.

Melvin and Phyllis Terry retired to Dalkeith 21 years ago.

And then we come to the beans.

They're planted 18 inches apart so that each plant will have a better chance, he says.

"They have bean-pulling machines that pull the whole plant up by the roots, but I tell you, I have a hard time to pull these plants up in the fall. They've got lots of roots," he commented. "A man that's growing beans today can't do it this way," he added.

Mr. Terry says he's learned a lot about gardening from the mistakes he's made.

"I'm not an expert," he says modestly.

Mr. Terry puts barnyard manure on his garden, which he cultivates using a spade and cultivator.

"I do it all myself. I don't even own a tiller," he said.

The cultivator that he uses has a sentimental value, too. Mr. Terry remembers he was only four years old when his father brought the "Easy Gardener" cultivator home. The words "Easy Gardener" can still be read along one side of the cultivator.

Mr. Terry remembers his father always said, if you do a thing, do it right. And doing things right seems to have paid off for Mr. Terry.

At 86, he's healthy and happy. He still cuts and splits his own firewood from four-foot lengths, and does any work that needs to be done.

His wife, Phyllis, doesn't worry about him working too much.

"You just can't stop him. He does everything himself. I asked his doctor about it, and he said, let him do it."

He's never been bored in his life, he says, because he's never had time to be bored.

As I prepared to leave, Mr. and Mrs. Terry point to various perennial flowers, "Those are beautiful." "These are so purple when they come out." "My mother used to grow these."

"You've got to smell this rose before you go," said Mr. Terry, leading me over to a 6-foot tall rose bush. He reached through to the back of the bush to find the only blossom, oblivious to the thorns. He pulled a branch forward bearing one large rose. I smelled it.

And that, I thought to myself, is how I will remember the Terrys: people who make you stop to smell the roses.