

The Hardy boys turn 90 years old

Clean living, hard work and faith credited

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January 7, twins Ewart Boyce Hardy and Stewart Albert Hardy of Dartford are celebrating their 90th birthdays. Last weekend, they were joined by older brother Leslie, 92, for a family celebration in Warkworth, just a few kilometres from their Dartford birthplace.

When the twins were just two years in 1916, their mother Eleanor Jane Hardy was diagnosed with breast cancer. Determined to beat the disease, she travelled by horse-drawn cutter 20 miles from Dartford to Keene across the frozen Rice Lake. It was an extreme treatment, before the days of penicillin, specialized surgical utensils and procedures: both breasts were removed. Not expected to live, Eleanor Hardy prayed God give her enough time to raise the twins and their four-year-old brother. If she survived, Eleanor promised God she would handle all the Sunday school duties at her church.

Twelve years later, at the age of 57, liver cancer did claim her life - but not before she had instilled her family with an abiding love of God.

Today, the twins credit clean living, hard work and their faith with keeping them going.

"When we would go to bed at night, she would stand in the bedroom doorway and sing a verse or two of a hymn. She would recite a scripture and have us memorize it," recalls Ewart, now of Warkworth, remembering, too, the family devotions each morning after breakfast.

Ewart remembers his mother lost most of the use of her right arm with the cancer surgery. His father would stay in the house on Monday mornings and help her with the laundry.

With this hardship, it was Ewart who spent the next few years living with his grandparents, seeing his parents often, but not returning home until he was old enough to attend school. And he never once regretted it.

"My grandmother I thought she was the essence of perfection," he says.

"God has been good to us. All our lives are in

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— Ewart Hardy

God's hands. So many are taken before they get this old," says Stewart, crediting the successes he has enjoyed in life as "chiefly due to the Lord."

"It seems to me that it's unusual for twins to reach our age. I don't know of any others," Ewart remarked after a weekend of merriment. "Maybe it was our clean living. Any one that's ever farmed, if they succeeded, they worked hard."

A family birthday drew 50 to a dinner in Warkworth. More than 200 attended a separate party for Stewart in Marmora.

Stewart says God isn't finished with him yet: "He must find that I'm still a help in the community. I like to encourage other folks."

Ewart and his wife of 54 years, Florence, farmed the family farm near Dartford north of Warkworth for most of those years, milking cows then later keeping beef cattle. Florence died nine years ago. Just this past fall, Ewart gave up driving, his home in Warkworth, and moved to the Community Nursing Home in the hamlet.

He confesses he wasn't sure he'd like the nursing home. However, "There's no use being downhearted," he says, listening for a moment as volunteers and staff joke and laugh. "I like it. The girls out here in the hall sing and have a good time and laugh. To me, that's better than medicine."

Stewart, who married the former Helen Wells, farmed north of Highway 7 until 1973, then moved to nearby Marmora where, on a cold, snowy winter's day, he still cheerfully picks up the mail and helps at the local nursing home worship services when called upon.

At a family birthday party in Warkworth last weekend, two of Ewart's daughters read excerpts from the twins' baby books. Some of the excerpts from Ewart's book include catching his first fish on May 24, 1919. In October of that year, he saw his first caterpillar tractor at Warkworth Fair.

"Mom wrote a letter before she died," Ewart says; it wasn't to be opened for at least two years after she died.

"It was an exhortation of the world," Ewart says. His mother cautioned God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah not because of righteous people, but for the evil. "She said Evil would be after us.

"I still have it (the letter). She said she'd be praying for us when she got to Heaven," he says.

"I realized that whatever happens, God is at the centre of it. I didn't want my faith to wander," says Ewart who still remembers the sweater he was wearing the day his minister in Dartford asked who wanted to give their life to the Lord and he responded at the age of nine.

"I did a lot of stumbling and falling down. But I didn't give up."

Today, Ewart says he prays almost nightly that the Lord, his Lord, will come back.

"He'll come back in his own time. Even though I have a family and loved ones, I'm getting lonely to see my parents and my loved ones that I know have made it to heaven."

But neither Ewart nor Stewart will be giving up the ghost anytime soon.

"I asked them to come back to my 100th," Ewart chuckles.

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