

happy man, content with his life and his lot in it. "I've had a hell of a good life," he smiles candidly. Then adds a rhetorical comment gained from his experience, "If you've got good health, what more do you need?"

And he learned valuable lessons from his grandfather. "My grandfather never wanted for anything. He made sure his wants coincided with his ability to provide them. If he couldn't afford something, he didn't want it."

Elwood took that message to heart, living frugally all his life. Most of the money he needed in his retirement has come from the sales of Christmas trees. He estimates that he has planted between 200-250,000 trees for Christmas trees and permanent forest. He sold Christmas trees for 50 years from 1957-2007. Alvin still sells them with his dad's assistance.

"When you retire, you can't sit down and die." He started preparing for his retirement years before the day came. He continued to do a full day's work for years after he quit his electrical work. Now he's down to a few hours a day.

Sharon says that early in his retirement he was so busy that he suggested he might need help.

There has been sadness and dreams unfulfilled. The illness and passing of Betty in 1985 was difficult; she had suffered from Multiple Sclerosis for 22 years. Reflecting back, he quietly calls it a terrible disease. It affected her for half their married life.

Elwood doesn't give unsolicited advice; he never liked people telling him what to do. "Everyone has the right to make their own decisions, right or wrong." His policy, when people give him unsolicited advice, is to agree, then do what he planned to do anyway.

With nearly 90 years behind him, Elwood has gained the grace of thoughtful reflection. When asked what he would change, he suggests that most things you would like to change, you couldn't, even if you wanted.

There was no better place in the world to grow up than on the farm in the 1920's and 30's. It was where he learned many of the skills he used in later life.