

# Helam and his fiddle, an inseparable combination

By LAUREL J. CAMPBELL  
Post VISION Editor

Helam Gorrill grew up in a family where music was important. Now, 80 years later, it's still one of the most cherished gifts of his life.

"My dad played the fiddle, it was sort of a gift in the family, and I started playing with him at house parties when I had short pants on," said Gorrill who recently celebrated his 80th birthday.

A resident of Cresswell since 1943, Gorrill was honored on his birthday by a surprise party thrown by neighbors and friends at the Manilla Community Centre. Close to 250 people turned out to wish him the best of health and many more such happy occasions. "Some said that was the most people ever seen in Manilla hall," said Gorrill.

His memories of entertaining start with those early house parties and remain some of his favorite. "Sometimes we'd stay all night," he said, "but I never missed a days work afterward."

When Gorrill was 15 he started working as a thrasher for Billy Hall, a position he kept for 13 years, four months of the year. "I'd thrash all day, and play at a party most of the night," said Gorrill. "They'd take up a collection for us. We got a lot of big nickels then — times was tough."

Gorrill made \$2 a day plus room and board as a thrasher, "and I was thrilled to get the job," he said. "I remember one

time when I played on Friday night in Port Bolster, Saturday night in Hartley, saw my lady friend on Sunday, and the phone rang Monday morning. "There's another damn dance on," said one of his thrashing mates as Gorrill left again, fiddle in hand on Monday night. "Tuesday, we finished work at 7:30 p.m. and I was dead to the world until Wednesday morning," Gorrill laughed. "I like playin' the fiddle best of anything, but I like playin' cards too."

From working for Hall, Gorrill bought his own thrashing machines and did custom work around the country. In addition, he had a beef operation, bartered a bit with property and in 1952 bought the first baler in the area. "I was one of the first to do custom baling," he said. "I was never afraid of hard work, in fact I enjoyed it, and I always had the best of health."

Gorrill describes his playing as old time country music, "the same kind of music my dad used

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**Eighty years young:** Helam Gorrill receives special recognition from the office of MP Bill Scott during his surprise 80th birthday party. Presenting the certificate on behalf of Scott was Lloyd Graham.

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