

Old time farmers

McEnerys still farm 100 acres

by Jennifer Barr

Are there any oldtime farmers left? Not the modernized mechanized food factories laboring under huge mortgages, but the contented small farmer with small amounts of mixed stock. One who still has time to smell the flowers and attend the fall fairs.

Yes, there are quite a few such farmers in the area. They're mostly near retirement age and they have often inherited the farm, so have no mortgage problems. But, they've been full-time farmers all their lives and will probably stay that way if God and the Government doesn't get 'em.

Two such farmers are Jesse and Grace McEnery who live near Ballinafad. Mrs. McEnery has helped run the hundred acre farm all her married life and Mr. McEnery has been there 50 years.

He says he was "born down the road" and lived in Acton for a year and a half - "a year and a half too long" (to live in a town), he comments. As a still young boy he moved to his great grandfather's farm near Ballinafad and has been there ever since. The farm was first settled by the McEnery family in 1870, just three years too late for a century farm plaque.

The McEnerys have made a decent living from 10 milking cows, a few pigs and chickens all their lives.

"I've enjoyed it and made a living," says Mr. McEnery, "I just had a few of each."

Having a small amount of livestock permitted Jesse McEnery to indulge himself a little. It gave him the time to pursue his main interest - agricultural fairs.

He is well-known from Peterborough to

Lake Huron as a winning driver of show harness horses. If Jesse McEnery was driving, that horse or team was the one to beat.

Not only did he drive his own roadsters, light commercial horses, Percherons and Clydesdales, but he drove anyone else's too. For years he drove fine harness ponies for Stan Matthews and roadsters for Archie Kerr, all old time horsemen from the same area.

Mr. McEnery says he's shown everything but Clydes.

"I've shown Shetlands, fine harness ponies, Hackneys, roadsters Belgians, Percherons - I've shown them all."

Now that most of the horsemen Mr. McEnery used to drive for are retired, the successful showman has turned to judging and announcing at fairs - and who better to do it?

These are his holidays, the weekends he visits a fair.

But they're not the same as they used to be, he says.

"Fairs aren't the advertisement for stock anymore." It's a rich man's hobby not a farmer's hobby, now.

He thinks the horse show section of local fairs is bigger now than "it was for a while" but he says it's very expensive now to get into the show ring. Most draft horse breeders have sponsors who pay for the costly harness and show wagon in return for advertising privileges.

Horse pulling pastime

Another former pastime of Jesse McEnery was horse pulling contests. He used to travel the route with Dan Campbell, of Acton, he with his light commercial

team and Campbell with his heavy-weights.

"But there isn't a teamster in them now," he comments ruefully. "There isn't a horse set to draw like they used to, they should be set to lift not leap into the load like they do now. They should have the lines starched so they can push them."

While Mr. McEnery spent his time travelling round the fairs and milking cows, Mrs. McEnery was far from idle. She has been a teacher for many years at Peacock School, No. 1, and Woodside - all small community schools now closed.

She also was poll clerk at election time in Ballinafad and says "there was a time we knew everyone - now we don't."

Now she is busy with quilting and needlework having taught quilting in Georgetown and needlework in the Ballinafad Community Hall.

Mrs. McEnery also grows fantastic plants and displays an intricate array of philodendron and ivy plants covering half of the family room and originating from three small plastic planters. In over 15 years, although Mr. McEnery says it's been longer than that, she's trained the climbing vines back and forth over two walls with little more care than occasional watering.

Even with all these interests and jobs, a house to run and a daughter to raise, Mrs. McEnery was very active in farming.

"Never hired anybody, that's the hired man over there," says Mr. McEnery indicating his wife.

Mrs. McEnery drove the tractor, hauled loads, and helped with the harvest. They still use binder and thresher, stooking the grain.

"In 40 years, we never killed each other yet," chuckles Mr. McEnery.

The McEnerys keep beef cattle now instead of the milking cows for the cream contract. His stock numbers about 20 cattle at the moment including his ten brood cows. He used to keep a bull with his neighbour until six years ago, now he uses the United Breeders artificial insemination unit.

The 15 hens and two roosters keep the farm in eggs while the sow is expecting a litter any day now.

Mr. McEnery likes to keep two or three sows and enjoys the pigs.

"It's no use trying to contrary a pig."

He used to raise pigs to the 'chunk' stage for market but found he was too soft hearted to sell them.

"They stayed around till they were old enough to vote."

He farms his hundred acres, harvesting wood from the 20 acre bush for the wood stove, and bringing in what hay he needs.

The McEnerys don't mind the snow but as Mrs. McEnery puts it, "Snow didn't matter so much then." Farmers used to hitch up the team and just drive through the fields. Which is exactly what the McEnerys do now - drive through the field, that is. Their laneway looks like a mountain pass in deepest winter and it's easier to blow a long winding path through the pasture. A bit nerve-wracking for reporters, though.

The McEnerys have no horses now but relied on them in the old days. Mr. McEnery did a lot of horse and buggy



GRACE McENERY, an active participant in the family farm, is well known for her needlework and quilting classes, as well as for the years she taught public school.



JESSE McENERY, long time fair exhibitor, horse show judge and announcer, farms near Ballinafad in the quiet relaxed way of an "old-time" farmer.



20 Years Ago

GYP AND BOB draw gravel for Jesse McEnery 20 years ago when horses were still a large part of the McEnery farm operation. Mr. McEnery is a well-known horse judge and fair announcer and had shown horses in the area for more years than he can count.

New Toronto station may bump Buffalo to converters

Acton's cable customers could end up losing a Buffalo station unless they have a converter.

The Canadian Radio and Television Commission, CRTC, which licenses stations and regulates cable firms, has given approval in principle to a new multi-lingual television station for the Toronto area.

John Ollivier, Halton Cable Systems, confirmed this week licensing of a new station could bump one of the three stations from Buffalo from the regular channels 2 to 13 service to converters.

He explained the new Toronto station would have to be included in the regular cable service if it is included in the grade A signal zone group and is viewed as a

priority Canadian station by the CRTC.

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