

Eastern Market Operator Is 96; Keeps Working

7 OCT. 1979



Sunday News Photo by Glenn Sietz

Clayton Shenk will be 96 today, Sunday, Oct. 7. He still puts in a 10-hour day Fridays at his cheese stand at New eastern Market Memory Lane.

YORK — Clayton Shenk of New Danville in Lancaster County will be celebrating his 96th birthday today, but that won't keep him from being back on the job next Friday at Shenk's Cheese stand at the Eastern Market on Memory Lane in York.

A familiar face to many Eastern Market shoppers, Shenk and his cheese stand have been there since the market opened. In fact his business association with York Countians started in 1942, when he opened a stand at the Central Market.

"I've been at it all of my life," said Shenk, whose family has "tended market" in Lancaster since he was a child. And who continues to work a 10 hour day on Fridays because he enjoys it.

"Nobody's is pushing me to work," he says.

SHENK, WHO GREW up on a farm, began his cheese business around 1918, he said. They were farming and "tending market" at the time, but with eight children, he began to look for a way to supplement the family income.

"I bought a milk route," he recalled, "and then with the excess milk, we began to make cheese."

With the help of his family, he began to make his cup cheese, a Pennsylvania Dutch cheese which is still one of his main products.

For years, the Shenk family made their cheese at home until 1945 when "we built a plant," said Shenk.

Today they are still making their own cup cheese which "not too many people make, any more," said Shenk, and which, during the winter they ship all over the country.

"We also make our own Schmirkase cheese," said Dale Shenk, Clayton Shenk's grandson who works with him at the Eastern Market. This is also a German cheese.

"I gave my business over to my son, Bob," said Shenk, so now his involvement in it is limited to his one day a week at the Eastern Market. But when he is not working at the market, Shenk enjoys farming. He particularly likes growing watermelons and cantalopes.

His formula for staying so healthy and active is to "just keep moving," he said. He also eats quite a bit of his own cheese, and although he's not sure whether that has helped any, it hasn't hurt any, he concluded.