

Stahlstown woman learned value of hard work

By Jerry Vondas
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Like her ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War, made their way across Pennsylvania and established themselves in the Ligonier Valley, Phyllis Newell worked hard to make a life for herself and her family.

"My mother was a proud member of the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution), primarily through her relatives the Roadmans," recalled her son, Harold Newell.

Phyllis Mildred Hood Newell, of Stahlstown, died on Friday, April 20, 2007, in Ligonier Gardens. She was 97.

"My mother could also trace our father's side of the family -- the Germans and Pennsylvania Dutch who came west from Lancaster," her son added.

"She was an astute student of history. When my mother was 58 years old, she and my father flew to Germany to visit my brother John, who was stationed there," said Harold Newell.

"Along with Dad, she visited the historic cities, toured the death camps of the Holocaust and even learned to speak some German."

Born and raised on a farm in Stahlstown, Phyllis Hood was one of five children in the family of W. Frank and Mabel Roadman Hood. Her father, besides owning a farm, was employed as a road supervisor for Cook Township.

Another of her sons, Frank Newell, said his mother had to complete her chores, including helping to milk the cows on her parents' farm, before leaving for school in the morning.

"My mother wanted to become a nurse and took a year of training before she returned to school and graduated from Ligonier High School," Frank Newell added.

In 1927, Phyllis Hood married Frank Newell, whose family owned a neighboring farm.

"When they first met, Dad handled the whippets at the Rolling Rock Club, before he went to work at Latrobe Steel."

Frank Newell said that once his parents had their own farm, his mother would cook for her husband, five sons, and farm hands who came in periodically to help with the thrashing.

Frank Newell said his mother was a member of the Donegal Township School Board.

"She also taught Sunday School and played the piano, while Dad helped maintain the former Evangelical United Brethren Church in Pleasant Grove. There was a merger and the Stahlstown Trinity United Methodist Church was formed," said Frank Newell.

"As strict as our parents were, we had fun," he added. "Mom was the scorekeeper when Dad and my brothers and I played baseball for the Ligonier Valley Baseball League.

"Mom also worked at times in the gift shop at Story Book Forest (at Idlewild Park in Ligonier) and often played the role of the 'Woman in the Shoe,'" said Frank Newell.

"She was never one to sit still," her son added. "She sold Avon and Tupperware products and was still driving when she was 92."

Mrs. Newell is survived by her sons, Harold and Robert, of Ligonier, Richard, of Derry, Frank, of Stahlstown, and John, of Franklin Park; 19 grandchildren, and 31 great-grandchildren.

She is also survived by her sisters, Arlene Hood Pasulka and Carol Hood Hall Alexander, both of Ligonier.

Mrs. Newell was preceded in death by her husband, Ernest W. Newell, in 1984; a son, William "Billy" Newell; a grandson, Russell "Rusty" Newell, and brothers, Paul and Grant Hood Sr.

Friends will be received from 2 to 4 and 6 to 8 p.m. today at the Snyder Funeral Home Inc. & Crematory, Bell and East Church Streets, Ligonier. Additional viewing from 10:30 a.m. until 11 a.m., the time of the services in the Stahlstown United Methodist Church, with the Rev. Audrey J. Bell officiating.

Interment in the Stahlstown Cemetery.