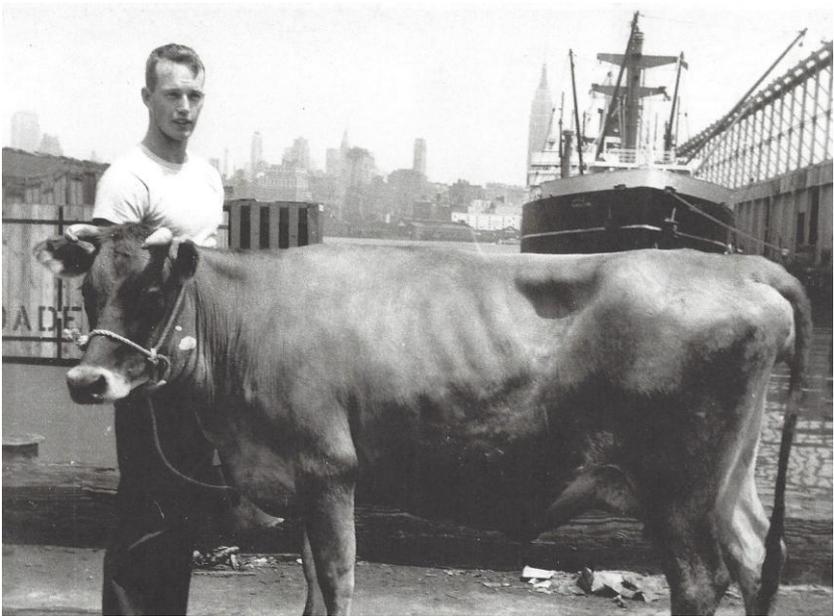


HAROLD REMEMBERS

His Life



Alexandria, Egypt 1956

Byron Harold Armstrong was born on October 7, 1931 to Byron and Ava (Zimmerman) Armstrong in Falls Church, Virginia. His early childhood years were spent with his maternal grandparents in the Spring Creek area, then the family moved to the Hiner place in Doe Hill (Highland County) and from there to Mossy Creek. There he helped his father with the livestock on the farm, ran a sawmill and bulldozer, and doing custom work for local farmers. They raised beef cattle, pigs, chickens and sheep. They had 100 head of cattle. In 1947 they bought a Reo truck they used to take cattle to summer pasture land in Highland County. This truck is still in the family.

When eligible for military draft in the 1950's, he chose alternative service instead. He trained for Brethren Volunteer Service at New Windsor, Maryland, and Kassel, Germany. His first assignment was to take railroad car loads of cattle for Heifer Project to Austria. He remembers seeing Austrian cattle coming down out of the mountains after summer pasturing, much like his family had done back home.

Next he was sent to Istanbul, Turkey, where he worked on a Bulgarian refugee camp sheltering about 60 people from Turkey and Bulgaria. He and Lyle Neher took over for Merle Crouse and David Rittenhouse. They lived in the summer palace of the last Sultan of Turkey. There was a lot of land there and he and the refugees raised hogs to sell to the Hilton Hotel. (Harold remembered that one of the herdsman, who was taking advantage of the others, got killed for his gold teeth.) The camp also received chickens from Heifer Project for meat and eggs. They raised grain to feed their chickens. The Sultan's granddaughter, who lived in the palace with them, asked for Harold's advice on farming and dairy practices. She wanted Harold to stay and help her, but he had to return home because of his father's sudden accidental death.

He returned to New Windsor for awhile, then was assigned to take a few cattle to Alexandria, Egypt, for the United Nations. On this trip, one of the cows had a new calf! Through this project, Harold became one of the famous BVS "Sea-going Cowboys". The story goes, that when the new calf was born, Harold noticed that the cow didn't have enough milk for the calf. He went to the ship's captain with his concerns. It turned

out that some of the crew had been milking the cow for milk for themselves. This was soon stopped so the calf could get the milk it needed.

Upon returning to the States, he worked on the family farm. In 1957, the family bought a home at Bridgewater, Virginia. It had a large house, built in the 1880's, on approximately 5 acres, and a nice barn and some other outbuildings. It had a few fruit trees, and his mother raised cows and chickens there. Because the house had previously served as an apartment building, a local carpenter, Verlin Michael, remodeled parts of the house so the family could move in, then he remodeled the rest of the house. At this time, Harold went to work for Emmett Mohler doing custom bulldozer and construction work.

Because of his BVS European work, the Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Illinois, contacted him to work on a refugee farm camp in Sardinia, Italy, which was supported by the actor, Don Murray, who visited this project often. He worked there from 1957-1959. The farm got a machine that made cement blocks. With these blocks they built houses for the refugees, and chicken houses for the chickens they received from Heifer Project. With these chickens, they were able to sell eggs to the community and support themselves a bit. Then they bought a feed mill, and got a donation of a John Deere tractor. They bought beans (soy?) and wheat from neighboring farms, which they ground into chicken feed in their mill, having enough left over to sell in the neighborhood. They bought an incubator to hatch baby chicks, so both the refugee farm and their neighbors helped each other.

In this refugee farm, each house had a patch of land so the inhabitants could raise their own gardens. The Italian government helped level the land for an irrigation system, where water from a canal above could flow down the rows of crops to water them.

In 1958, Harold visited the Brussels World Fair because he attended a conference for BVS workers there.

Both Harold and his brother, I.J., purchased 1961 Pontiac convertibles. Harold's was white with blue leather seats – a big boat of a car compared to today's cars. But it was his pride and joy.

Pictures of I.J. and Arnetta's wedding show that elegant car. Harold also a Harley Davidson Gold Edition motorcycle. He later told his wife he had enjoyed riding the motorcycle around the countryside roads of upstate New York on Sunday afternoons. But in recent conversations, it was hinted that the car and motorcycle were also used for their speed. The motorcycle is still in the family. The car was sold to a car enthusiast who has taken it on several road trips out west.

About the time Harold's two years on this farm were over, Don Murray was making a movie in Ireland with his friend, Jimmy Cagney. Jimmy needed someone to manage his farm in Stanfordville, New York, so Harold got the job. He worked here six years, raising and showing Scotch Highlander cattle, and a few Angus and Hereford cattle.

In the fall of 1965, he began working for George Perkins on his Walbridge Farm at Millbrook, New York, breeding and showing registered Aberdeen Angus cattle. At one time they had 1,200 head. Their cattle won 2 International Grand Champion heifers in Chicago during 1968-1970. They showed cattle at the Denver show winning three Reserve Champions. Harold also showed many Grand and Reserve Champion bulls for the neighboring Ankony Angus Farm at several smaller cattle shows all over the United States. During the 1970's, Walbridge Farm bought a farm in Stanford, Kentucky, using this farm for productions sales. They had a dispersal sale in 1980. Some of the heifers from this sale were sent up to Walbridge Farm to supplement their herd. Harold worked for Walbridge Farm for 40 years.

He retired in 2005, to return to the family home in Bridgewater, Virginia, but he still pastured cattle for his brother here. He gave a hand to friends and family members on their farms, making hay, and working with cattle. With failing health in 2015, he went to the Bridgewater Retirement Home.

Harold has always willingly given his time and talents to all. In addition to farming, he has held several offices with agricultural organizations, historical societies, and church organizations.