

At 103, Mr. Gapinski has factual information because he was there



Martin Gapinski

BY BARBARA McCOY
Herald Times Staff Writer
"Early to bed and early to rise," said Martin Gapinski when he was asked his thought on a long healthy life. We had better start turning our lights out early, because this man is 103 years young. He must know what he's talking about.

Mr. Gapinski was born in Ludzisko, Poland on Nov. 9, 1871. The family emigrated to Chicago when he was 18 and he worked for the Swift-Armour Company for

better than two years. Wanting a different kind of life, he left Chicago with his family to settle in Elmira.

"We had to clear the timber from the land before we could build and prepare the ground for planting. I worked in the railroad round house to bring home money for all of us," explained Mr. Gapinski. Hardships did not get him down. "We just took things as they came," he said.

In 1900, he married Mary

Switalski. The couple had eight children, Mrs. Anthony (Leocadio) Topolinski, Martha Gapinski, Mrs. Joseph (Babina) Konefke, Mrs. John (Clara) Sobonya, David, Joseph and Blase. Mr. and Mrs. Gapinski celebrated 73 anniversaries together. Mrs. Gapinski passed away in 1973.

"A time I will never forget was when we decided to build a two family home. It was in February and before the house was finished, it caught fire. I had to go up on the roof where I could throw pails of water on the blaze. My feet froze and it was three months before I could get around again. A short time after, I had a mastoid develop in the ear and had to have help. Doctor McGregor road out to my house in a horse and buggy and operated right in my home.

In the early years, there was no social life to speak of. "We were just too busy trying to make a living and

build a town. Too many things had to be done. My father, brother-in-law and myself cleared the ground for the St. Thomas Cemetery. We looked forward to weddings because all the families would get together and enjoy themselves. We did not have a church so Mass was held at my sister's house. A priest would come to Skibinski's every Sunday."

The Gapinski home was finally completed with enough room to house two families. Eventually, as the families grew, the home was too small. It was time to move on. "I decided to travel around the country to see if there was a place that we would like better. Lumbering jobs took care of my needs so I worked my way to Washington. It rained most of the time and I decided that this was not for me.

"I came back to Michigan and took over the Charles Height farm in Gaylord."

The family lived on the

farm until 1954. "When I retired, we bought a home on Wisconsin St. and lived there until my wife passed away. I moved to Detroit to live with my daughter but I still come back to Gaylord as often as possible and still consider it my home.

The years have brought many changes since Mr. Gapinski was born. The hardships of yesteryear have resulted into a world of modern conveniences which makes for easier living. "I have always enjoyed each new invention, especially flying. I am always ready to get on a plane.

Not a one to let life pass him by, Mr. Gapinski still keeps active. "My health is still good because I eat everything and go for walks every day. We go to church as often as we can. Our Senior Citizens group has a good program and I play Pokeeno, bingo and bunko. Thursday is a special day because the Gaylord paper comes and I say to my daughter, what's new in Gaylord."

...In the news

Otsego County residents have been well informed for the past 100 years as to the happenings and news in the county through radio and newspapers.

From the pages of 10 Otsego County newspapers that appeared throughout the county's 100 years emerged one successful publication which is still printed today, The Otsego County Herald Times.

The Herald, the first newspaper in the county established in 1875 by Charles L. Fuller, was incorporated with the Otsego County Times in 1906 to become today's Otsego County Herald Times.

One of Fuller's printers, H.C. McKinley bought The Herald when Fuller moved to Canada after embezzling county funds as treasurer.

Another of Fuller's early printers, T.B. Willoughby, went on to found his own publication known as The Otsego County News in 1884.

The Independent, a newspaper edited by a Mr. Shunk, and The Champion, edited by W. Harrington, a lawyer, were both unsuccessful ventures into the world of journalism.

Other failing attempts to keep the public posted were the Vanderbilt Review, published by G.J. Miles in 1885, The Elmira Express, founded in 1869 by James L. Campbell, and The Elmira Sentry. Interestingly, only one copy of The Elmira Sentry has been found leading to the conclusion that perhaps the May 3, 1889 issue was the only one published before the firm closed their doors.

Richard. Crenore who worked for The Herald, and Frank H. Wislon established the Otsego

County Times and sold it to Glen H. Miner in the late 1890's. Miner and The Herald owner, McKinley, later merged the two publications to become The Otsego County Herald Times.

Only one other attempt was made to publish a newspaper that readers preferred to The Otsego County Herald Times. J.E. Goldie and F.A. Lord began The Otsego County Advance in 1912 and continued publication until 1916 when the paper was leased to F.H. Wilson. When Wilson purchased the Otsego County Herald Times in 1920, The Advance discontinued publication.

The Herald Times is owned today by Otsego County Herald Times, Inc. James L. Grisso is vice-president and general manager.

Besides just reading the news, county residents began hearing news on the radio in 1950 when WATC Radio was founded in Gaylord by Les Biederman. WATC is part of the Paul Bunyan Network, an affiliate of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and a member of

the Associated Press. The 1,000 watt daytime station, with general manager George "Bud" Zimmerman, is known through the area as the "Community Service Station."

In addition, in 1972 John DeGroot established WWRM-FM Stereo North Radio above Glen's Market which operates at 50,000 watts and features, "warm, friendly music." The 24-hour station focuses not only on local news, but on area news as well and is associated with United Press International.

Undoubtedly through the county's 100 years of history, there has been plenty of news to report, and every resident will continue to be informed through the media.

In addition to the news media, several advertising shopping guides have been published over the years. Currently serving the Gaylord area are the Northern Star, founded by Gordon Everett in 1960, and The Drummer, introduced by Otsego County Herald Times, Inc. in 1972. Everett also started Central Printing Corp., which prints a number of publications.

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