

Clarksburg has a Field Day

One resident hasn't missed one of them

By MELISSA MERLIE
Gazette Lifestyle Editor

CLARKSBURG — Francis McCollister has had a field day once a year for the past 74 years.

The 88-year-old Clarksburg resident has participated in every Clarksburg Field Day since it started in 1915.

The former hardware store owner remembered Field Days full of athletic games and contests, politicians stumpng and hot-air balloons rising.

"They were the old-fashioned balloons that you built a fire under," he said. "They weren't like the gas-powered ones you have now."

"We had lots more different things than we have now," he said. "Now, it's more of a get-together to see your friends. But they still put on a good day."

They are the 98 members of the Clarksburg United Methodist Church and other town residents who work together to pull off Field Day. The daylong party, which is Thursday, usually draws 2,000 to 3,000 people.

The church has sponsored Field Day every year except one.

"It was during the gasoline rationing days of World War II," McCollister said.

"People didn't do much traveling and the church decided to cancel the event. We had a very active merchants association, and we decided it would be a shame not to have it. So we put on a little street carnival."

Lucille McDonald, who has attended the past 36 Field Days, remembers one year when a downpour dampened activities.

"It happened before we had permanent buildings, when we were using tents," she said. "We all got under the tents and they started leaking. Everybody rolled up their pants legs and took off their shoes and had fun."

McCollister also remembered one Field Day when the aspiring politician Jim Rhodes spoke. Little did listeners know that Rhodes, who was married to a Clarksburg native, would be governor of Ohio one day.

One aspect of Field Day that remains unchanged is the food, said Charlotte Wood. Wood is a church member who has "graduated" from working in the fish stand to the dinner stand.

"It's kind of like a smorgasbord," she said. "Chicken, fish, salad, slaw, tomatoes, cakes, cottage cheese, green beans, succotash, baked beans, pies. Roasting ears aren't available this year because the season didn't cooperate with us."

Ice-cold watermelon is one food item missing from latter-day Field Days.

"When I was a child," McDonald said, "They used to have watermelon in big horse tanks. They got new ones from the hardware store and put ice in them."

"It was big excitement because most people back then didn't have watermelon very often. It was right before the day of refrigeration."

McDonald recalled another defunct activity.

"They had an event called 'Shoot the Anvil.' They'd place two blacksmith anvils together so that the hollows in each of them created a sphere. Then they put gunpowder in it.

"The year we did it they fixed it with wires to batteries. They had me put the two wires together. Of course, I was scared. It set the gunpowder off and the two anvils went up in the air. There was a horrible noise, like a cannon going off."

Events include:

■ Adelphi Band concert — 1 to 2 p.m.

■ Carson Clouser Jr., banjo and mandolin player from Greenfield — 2 to 2:30 p.m.

■ Adena High School Band concert — 2:30 to 3:15 p.m.

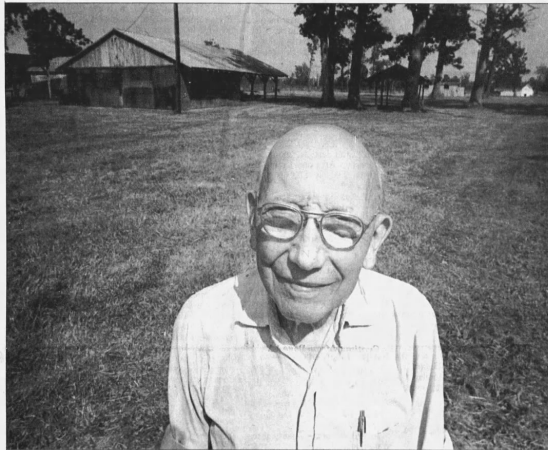
■ Adena Jr. Twirlers — 3:15 to 4 p.m.

■ Children's games and greased-pole climb — 4 to 5 p.m.

■ Adelphi Band — 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

■ The Spencers, a gospel group from Shiloh — 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

■ The Country Express, from Washington Court House — 8:30 to 10:30 p.m.



Tom Johnson/Gazette

Francis McCollister has participated in all 74 of Clarksburg's annual Field Days. His duties have included being in charge of electricity and the public-address system and working as a cashier at one of the stands. Here he poses in the park along Ohio 138 east of Clarksburg, where Field Day takes place.

Field Day schedule

CLARKSBURG — One tradition that continues at Field Day is the Adelphi Band concert.

The band has performed at the daylong event, coming up Thursday, for more than 50 years.

Field Day takes place on the Field Day grounds along Ohio 138 1/4 mile east of Clarksburg. Admission is 50 cents for adults. Children 12 years old and younger will be admitted free. Plenty of free parking will be available, but everyone is asked to take lawn chairs.

The trap shooting, horseshoe pitching and flea market will be ongoing during the day. Serving of the fish and chicken dinners will start at 4:30 p.m.

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