



DISPLAYED BESIDE MR. SCHROCK are just a few of the inventions tractor loader he made from scratch. he has made over the years. The display on the wall shows a picture of the

– Photos by Anita Hirsch/Good Samaritan Center

99 years and still having fun

Inventor, farmer, mail carrier keeps busy entertaining others with his harmonica

By MARY LOU OLSON
ml.olson@nwkansas.com

For nearly a century, Loren Schrock, now a resident of the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center, has enjoyed life to the fullest, sharing his talents with others.

Mr. Schrock, who will be 100 in May, has worn many hats, including inventor, musician, farmer, mechanic, truck driver, mail carrier, gas-truck delivery man, and even worked on hydraulic jacks on the Beech Aircraft assembly line in Salina.

Visitors to the center often enjoy his harmonica and mouth-harp music, at programs with his daughter, Cheryl Miller of Oberlin, who accompanies him on the piano.

A native of Selden, Mr. Schrock was born June 9, 1913, the oldest of seven children of Harley and Nancy Schrock. He grew up on the family farm and attended country school, then graduated from Selden High School in 1931.

"One of my greatest accomplishments as a young man was when I was working for Orland Hanshaw, an area farmer, and dug a 32-foot-deep cistern for him by hand," he recalled.

Another of his accomplishments was building a loader for a tractor completely from scratch.

He recalled that as a young man, after graduating from high school, he was driving around Selden one day and spotted some girls sunbathing in their yard. He decided to ring a bell in his car which sounded like a telephone. He said when the girls jumped up and ran into the house, he, being just a country boy, was embarrassed and didn't know what to do.

"I asked my cousin, Melvin Vaughn, and he said, 'I know those girls; let's go talk to them,'" so we did.

"I thought one of the girls, Marian Bishop, was especially pretty and good looking, so I decided to call her up and ask her to go to the show since I had a car. She accepted and we started dating."

He decided to join the Navy Seabees, but said he was told "You

don't even weigh 100 pounds" (he weighed 95 at the time). After he was turned down, he said, he made up his mind to return home, talk to his girlfriend, then they could just run away and get married.

When he told her, "Let's get married," she said, "OK, any time!"

However, they talked it over and decided that since her parents, Marion and Jesse Bishop, were preparing to celebrate their 52nd wedding anniversary Dec. 25, 1932, they would get married on that day. The Selden Methodist pastor tied the knot for them.

"We found a little house in Selden, which we rented for \$5 a month," he said. "Our folks helped us clean it, my folks gave us a dozen hens and her mother gave us 200 chickens, so you couldn't beat that. And that little house is still standing in Selden."

Always a lover of music, Mr. Schrock said that his father bought him his first harmonica when he was 3 and he taught himself how to play. That was just the beginning,

however, as he later learned to play the juice harp, accordion, violin and even the spoons, using his mother's spoons as a kid.

When he retired, his son told him, "You'll die if you don't keep busy," so even after he moved to the nursing home, his son Pat and his wife Krys, of Beaver City, Neb., brought him a long table for a work bench.

So now Mr. Schrock spends many hours making airplanes from small juice cans, kites, windmills, and whirly wind yard ornaments from pop cans.

He said after he learned how to make styrofoam kites, he and his wife kept busy during the 21 winters they spent in Weslaco, Texas, making and selling them.

They lived in Hoxie for many years. After his wife moved to the Hoxie Long Term Care Unit, Mr. Schrock said, he continued to live alone until suffering a nasty fall in their home. He was taken to a hospital in Wichita, where it was discovered he had a broken neck. After he was fitted with a neck col-

lar, three days later his daughter and son brought him back to the Hoxie Long Term Care Unit.

He is proud of his firm handshake, which he attributes to the fact that he always used his hands every day.

"I had both knees replaced at the same time in the mid-80s," he said, "and now I have 16-year-old knees."

Mr. Schrock was honored recently at the nursing home for being the oldest volunteer there. He enjoys dressing up like Colonel Sanders, founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken, along with entertaining others with his music. His daughter said that he likes to end his programs loud and fast by playing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

He also assists when memorial services for residents are held at the nursing home and always closes the service with, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

Mr. Schrock moved to Oberlin after his wife died in 2011 to be closer to his daughter Cheryl and her husband, Jerry Miller.



DRESSING UP as Kentucky Fried Chicken's Colonel Sanders is a favorite for Loren Schrock and always delights residents and staff at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center.



JOINING THEIR FATHER, Loren Schrock, for a musical program at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center were his son Pat (left), playing the harmonica, and his daughter, Cheryl Miller, on the piano.