

ISCHUA VALLEY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE LITZENBERGER BAKERY

An era ended recently when William F. Litzenberger (Bill), passed away December 28, 2014, at the age of 98 years and 9 months, in a nursing facility in Woodstock, Illinois.

He was born March 30, 1916, in Buffalo, New York, and lived at 160 Zenner Street, until May 1924, when his father, Emil purchased the bakery in Franklinville. All of Emil's friends told him he would never make it in such a small town, but he knew better.

When Emil, his wife Marie (nee Morlok) and four children (Emil Jr, Marian, William, and Elmer) moved to Franklinville, Marie said, many years later, "I just cried! All my friends were in Buffalo!" Indeed, for the next 8 or 9 years she drove to Buffalo every Saturday with the children to see her friends and shop at the Broadway Market.

In 1935, Bill graduated from Ten Broeck Academy, and was torn between working as a baker with his father, and going to Fredonia State Teachers College to pursue a degree in music. A young lady from Ischua made up his mind for him. Betty Washburn lived with her grandparents, Tom and Grace Moore, and attended TBA as well. On September 7, 1939, they were married in Alexander, New York. They celebrated 75 years of marriage September 7, 2014.

Bill was an accomplished musician, as well as a baker. He played all the saxophones, clarinet and flute, and played in the Ontario Knife Company Band, and in several dance bands in the Western NY area.

He worked in the Quality Bakery from 1935, until Jan 1, 1951, when he purchased the bakery from his father, except for an eleven month tour of duty in the US Navy, from April 1945, to March 1946. He was in charge of the bakery on the USS Midway aircraft carrier during its shake-down cruise. He earned the Victory Medal and the American Theatre Medal.

He ran bakery from 1951 until November of 1984, when it was sold. During these years he was Past Master of Franklinville F&AM Masonic Lodge 626, an avid bowler, scoring the first high game (292) at the newly opened Bolean Alleys, and was a square dancer.

In 1965, he attended the Wilton School of Cake Decorating in Chicago, Il, and in later years taught cake decorating at BOCES in Ellicottville. In 1994, Bill and Betty permanently retired to Sunset Beach, NC.

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In addition to Betty, he is survived by two sons, Thomas J. of Palmetto, FL, William F. of Crystal Lake, IL, three grandchildren Stephen of Baltimore, MD, Jonathan of Atlanta, GA, and Jennifer of Madison, WI, and seven great-grandchildren.

Now, back to the Bakery.

Emil and Marie both came from Europe in 1909; Emil from Alsace Province in France, and Marie Morlok from the Black Forest of Germany. They met and were married in Buffalo, NY, October 30, 1911.

When Emil first opened the bakery, he had a second and sometime third baker working with him, as they delivered as far North as the Delevan area, and South to Ischua, with the Model T truck inherited in the purchase. Marie's brother, Ernst Morlok was recruited and baked with Emil until 1944, when he bought the bakery in Ellicottville, NY.

The bread truck route was discontinued when Bill was drafted, and in 1946, the bread truck, a 1935 Chevrolet, was traded to the bakery in Salamanca, NY, for 200 pounds of sugar. In 1947, the bakery was closed for several weeks while the front two-thirds of the building were stabilized due to a rotting foundation. The front was modernized with green and black glass tiles, the floors in the store and finishing rooms were replaced with concrete, and the floor of the brick oven was leveled, and the bricks in the arch were repaired. This work was done by a person who repaired the fireboxes in large steam locomotives.

When Bill took over the bakery, he was the only baker, and had already scaled back on bread production due to the loss of the bread route to the local country stores. For a few years, his younger brother Elmer worked on Saturdays until he and his family moved to Cocoa Beach, FL in 1955. His mother Marie continued to work at the bakery after Emil's death in 1952, until her death in 1973.

After Bill took over the bakery, he made changes to some the product line including eliminating the pies, except for the "nickel pies", a four-inch pie, and changing the recipes for the fruit cake, and the cakes, resulting in a much tastier, moister product.

His daily output of goods included 57 loaves of Quality Bread, 33 loaves of Pullman Loaf, and 57 loaves of Salt Rising Bread, as well as 12-15 dozen donuts and sweet rolls, coffee cakes, hamburger, hot dog, hard, and kimmelweck rolls, and two dozen different kinds of cookies, having to make at least three kinds a day. He did this himself from 1951 until 1984, five days a week. His hours were from 12:30 AM until 12:30 PM, then sleeping in the afternoon until 6 PM, and back to bed by 9:30 PM. He maintained this schedule for almost 50 years. After he retired in 1984, he continued to

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bake on Saturday mornings, making bread, cookies, coffee cakes, pecan roll, and an occasional birthday or wedding cake until November of 2013, when it became too much for him.

There are things about the Bakery I will never forget. Cold mornings when the white marshmallow cream could barely be forced into the donut shells, the smell of the salt rising sponge when it was prepared at noon for the bread the next day. The roar of the gas when he set the burner on full open to heat the bricks, the sound of the bread slicer, the sound of the bread dough when it was cut and tossed on the scale to weigh it, and the sound of the mixer making the bread dough. And of course, the smell of frying donuts.

Many of these sounds and smells I experience on a daily basis when I visit the local Mom and Pop donut shop in Bradenton, FL, where they DO taste like my father's donuts.