

## Memories: An Interview with George Bassage By Dawn Russell



George Bassage (**left photo**) a life-long resident of Walworth, was born on May 11, 1935, to Leona and Loyde Bassage. He has two siblings - Bob and Claire. George and his siblings grew up on his parents' farm located at 4441 Walworth-Ontario Road. George remembers his dad being a hard-working farmer. George's grandfather, Velorous Bassage, bought the farm in 1911; Loyde acquired the farm in 1949. Leona was quite the farm girl. She would help on the farm and also was an excellent cook. Every Saturday she would bake molasses and white cookies, along with homemade bread. There would always be enough for whoever may come to visit. When they had visitors for a meal, George's mom used to say "FHB" (family hold back, visitors come first.)

He remembers sliding down Rowell's hill in the winter, located on the roadway close to his house. George and the other kids would slide down the steep hill without a fear of cars, because back then there didn't seem to be much traffic. While growing up George and his family attended the Walworth Baptist Church. He remembers a time when his brothers were sitting in the back pew during church service and were causing trouble. Later after church their dad gave his

brothers a licking out at the barn, while George stood in the doorway laughing. Their dad saw him laughing and then it was George's turn, so down to the barn he went, and let's say he never did that again!

George helped his dad with the farm a lot while growing up. George and his friends, Karel Ambroz, Ray Herold, Howard Clark and Barry Blake, would go to Bernie Porray's farm to play basketball and all the boys would go out to eat at Bill Gray's afterward. While George was growing up he had a pet Peking duck, which he named Pinky. This duck would follow him everywhere. One time his grandmother asked George to fetch a dozen eggs from the hen house. Well, George could only find 8 eggs, so he snatched 4 from a hen still setting. His grandmother figured this out real quick when George returned with the dozen eggs; he couldn't fool her.

He had a very happy childhood. He remembers everyone got along and knew their neighbor, and people had respect for one another. Neighbors would help others farm. After church every Sunday his family would visit with neighbors or they would come to his parents' house. George attended school at the Walworth High School until eighth grade, the last graduating class. He remembers walking 2 miles to school every day until 5<sup>th</sup> grade, when buses became available. George went onward to finish his last four years of school at the Ontario High School, graduating in 1953. In high school two agriculture classes were needed due to the many farm boys attending.



George met Gwyn, the love of his life, in 1957. His friend, Willard Rowell, set up a blind date with Gwyn for George. When they arrived at her house, before meeting Gwyn, George happened upon a picture of Gwyn and told Willard "This is the girl I am going to marry." Gwyn and George dated for 8 months and were married on August 1, 1957, at the Baptist Church in Fairport. They have been married 58 years. After marrying they lived in George's parents' house for 1 1/2 years. Then they moved to West Walworth, and George worked for Bob Downs doing custom combining, specializing in spinach, peas, and sweet corn for processing plants Birds Eye and Edgett & Burnham. He also farmed 200 acres.

Ray Yucker was Walworth Highway Superintendent and George worked for him, having replaced Ray Welker when Ray went into the service. In the winter George would plow snow. When the workers had down time from plowing, Charlie Hack would come to the shop and the guys would play euchre.

In 1964 George's dad asked him to buy the family farm. George had the choice of being Highway Superintendent or running the farm. He chose the farm. At this time it was a dairy farm. George milked cows for sixty years. He also worked 4,000 bales of hay per year. When he started working the farm it was with no fancy equipment, just hard labor.

When George's father became older, every morning like clockwork he would be there to help George farm and again every night. Loyde had a real passion for farming, and George caught the passion.

George and Gwyn have four children - Heidi, Terry, Colin, and Aaron. They have eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. In 1999, when their children became grown, Gwyn became pastor at the West Walworth Baptist Church; meanwhile George was her right-hand man. They decided to sell the cows in 1999 and do crop farming, custom combining grain and corn.

George worked for K & D Disposal and Country Max for six years each, meanwhile still farming. They sold the farm in 2008 and moved to Manchester. George and Gwyn were married again on their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Gwyn wearing

the dress of her dreams. In George's retirement he enjoys doing puzzles, playing euchre at the Walworth and West Walworth firehouses, and still helping farm for people. When asked what George's favorite memory of Walworth was, he replied "I had the best childhood ever growing up in Walworth."