



Elmer Askwith

January 20, 1911 - May 5, 2013

Elmer Askwith died in his home, just where he wanted to be, on May 5, 2013 at the young age of 102. Elmer began his long life in Rudyard where he grew up on a farm just north of the village on what is now Maiden Lane, but that was referred to then as Quarter Line Road by his father William and mother Adeline. Elmer was an amazing storyteller with an exceptional memory. For example, when Elmer decided he wanted to learn to play the fiddle, he started turning in rat heads to the township, earning 10 cents for each until he had about \$7 to order his first fiddle from Sears and Roebuck. Self-taught, he recalls his father telling their neighbor Mr. Altman, "he suffered the tortures of the damned listening to that young fellow play." But Elmer persisted and by 17 was playing at local dances, often in the "hall" above the old Fibre store. "I never could play very well but I thought I could," he said. "Back then we had poor music and a good time. Now they have good music and a poor time." Elmer's first visit to his soon-to-be wife, Claudina, was accomplished by skiing the 11 miles to her house in Brimley, using heavy 7-foot long hickory skies and wearing his barn clothes. He was so rank by then that when she came into the house where he and her mother planned to surprise her by having him hide behind the door, she said, "What stinks?" The couple married in 1932 and moved into a house in Rudyard, beginning a life together that lasted 66 years. During the depression work was scarce and Elmer took whatever jobs he could find. He watched for fires for six summers in the fire tower at Kinross and worked a short stint at the tannery in Algonquin. His primary livelihood

was working at the Sault Locks for 35 years, and he retired as a Lockmaster. Many people in the EUP know Elmer because he tuned and repaired their pianos, a skill he learned during the depression and practiced most of the years he lived in the Sault. Elmer and Claudina bought ten acres in the Sault on Ryan Street when it was still a dirt road, building his house with hand tools. In 1942, a few years after they'd moved in, the U.S. Army wanted his land for an Army base but he was able to work out a rental agreement. His family lived with anti-aircraft guns, guards and soldiers undergoing training outside the kitchen window, sometimes right in their garden. "A lot of these people were from the cities. They'd never seen a garden," said Elmer, explaining how he'd stopped a marching exercise that was trampling his newly planted garden. He wasn't so lucky the next time. "It was the saddest day of my life," he said, when the school board forced him to sell them half of his property to build the present Washington School. He built a new foundation and moved his house there, on the remaining five acres where it still is today. Elmer attributes his longevity to careful living ... regular habits, getting enough sleep, "I was never with the gang smoking and drinking." He remained an avid gardener who grew much of what the family ate. In the last few years, he installed a hand-cranked composter in his basement, which extended the gardening year and provided daily exercise. His activities at home and work required skills in mechanics, construction, woodworking, welding, machining and machine repair. Elmer was definitely a handyman and could fix just about anything. Elmer weathered some troubles including the death of his son James who was only 52 in 1997, then Claudina in 1998. He's fond of a story that describes his outlook on life. The Catholic School basketball team was a good team, slated to win the regional championship. When they lost, "The manager, who was an older person, said "Tomorrow the sun will shine", and it does. It's a good saying." As Elmer grew older, his physical capabilities gradually decreased. While this occurred, those around him were amazed by his mental sharpness. He would often devise methods to compensate for his physical limitations. For example, he built a frame to carry wood downstairs on his back. When the wood

became too heavy, he constructed a mechanical device to bring the wood downstairs. He recognized and accepted the limitations of his body with grace and his ever-present humbleness. True to his practical nature, Elmer ate less as his body required less and did his best to practice regular exercise, even if it entailed simply walking from room to room in his home. It was rare indeed for Elmer to complain and his over-riding comments were inevitably expressions of gratitude at his "luck," but everyone who knew him knew it was a lot more than luck that made him what he was. Elmer was predeceased by his parents William and Adeline (Foisy) Askwith, his wife Claudina (Nelson), his son James, brothers Albert (Ruby), Roy (Blanche) and William, and sister Georgina (Ted) McKee. He is survived by his sons Raymond (Jody) from Cadillac, Richard (Leslie) from the Sault, John (Susan) from the Sault, his daughter Annemarie IHM from the Sault, and Jim's wife Nancy from Chicago. Elmer has 11 grandchildren: Christopher (Amanda) Askwith, Brian Askwith, Joanna Askwith, John Askwith and Gregory Askwith [Jim's kids]; Kabrina (Eric) Rozine and Alicia Askwith [John's kids]; and David (Sierra) Askwith, Emily Lindeman, Will Eger and Grace (Keith) Watson [Richard's kids]. Elmer also has 4 great grandchildren. Arrangements are being assisted by Clark Bailey Newhouse Funeral Home. Visitations will be Sunday, May 12, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., followed by a ceremony of remembrance from 7:00 to 8:30. A funeral mass will be held at St. Mary's Catholic Church on Monday, May 13, at 11 a.m. with Brother John Hascall presiding. A luncheon will be held after the funeral mass. Interment will follow at Pine Grove cemetery (first entrance coming from the Sault). On-line condolences may be left at www.clardbaileynewhouse.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *Elmer Askwith*

October 05, 2023 at 09:54 AM



“ *Elmer Askwith*

October 02, 2023 at 10:14 PM



“ *Elmer Askwith*

September 01, 2022 at 07:49 PM



“ *Annemarie & family - So sorry to hear of your loss. He was with you for such a long time and I'm sure you have many memories to cherish. It is very difficult, I know, but know that many people have you in their thoughts and prayers. Take care.*

Jim McGann - May 19, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ *We are saddened to hear of the passing of our dear Uncle Elmer. We know that his many stories, sharp wit, love of learning, mastery of life and gardening and love of his family will bring you peace and comfort in this difficult time and for many years ahead. Please accept our sympathy at your loss of such a wonderful father, grandfather and great-grandfather.*

Virgil & Pam SanJose - May 11, 2013 at 12:00 AM

JK

“ So sorry to hear of your loss. We are thinking of you in this difficult time. God Bless.

Jill Kachur - May 10, 2013 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ Annemarie, Your IHM sisters are with you...we have enjoyed the tales of your Dad over the years and rejoice with you in his long and loving life.

Barbara Stanbridge,IHM - May 10, 2013 at 12:00 AM

LF

“ Very sorry to learn of Mr Askwith's passing. He was a wonderful man whom I got to know slightly through his periodic, to-perfection tuning of my grandmother's piano. Rest in peace, Mr Askwith.

Larry Farnquist - May 09, 2013 at 12:00 AM