

92-year-old still active

# Hard work agreed with Mike Rusnak



MICHAEL RUSNAK

Mike Rusnak began working when he was 10½ years old.

That was 82 years ago in a country that no longer exists by name.

The Gageton resident, who celebrated his 92nd birthday Sept. 21, came to this country when he was 17, in 1906.

Rusnak is a native of Slovakia, which after World War I was reorganized as part of what is now Czechoslovakia.

One reason why he came here, he explained, was that had he been three years older, he would have had to serve in the military before he could get a passport to come to the United States.

The other reason, he said with a slight smile, was to "look for a good job."

His first job, in Slovakia, was working on rafts of tied-together logs, being floated from the forests to the mills, a journey that could take from 5-9 days.

He later worked in a textile mill, then went back to the river.

An older brother was working in Pittsburgh, so when Rusnak arrived in the United States, that's where he went.

His first job was at a plant north of Pittsburgh that built railroad freight cars. He recalled that after two weeks on the job, his arms were so tired, he couldn't lift them to his face.

He was there three years, then worked one winter at a lumber camp in West Virginia. He later worked in coal mines and a Wisconsin lumber camp.

Rusnak arrived in Michigan about 1909 to work in sugar beet fields in Durand, west of Flint.

## Heavy vote reported

Continued from page one

### HURON COUNTY

One mill for repair of bridges was defeated, 8,785-5,270. The same proposal lost in the August primary. A levy of .2 mill for senior citizen activities was defeated, 7,830-6,390.

Two proposals in Grant township were defeated. One mill for five years for roads was rejected, 212-124, and allowing sale of liquor, 219-120.

### SANILAC COUNTY

County clerk Lawrence Smith's effort to gain reelection via write-in votes after losing the Republican primary failed. He received 2,714 votes. Primary winner Delene Schultheiss received 10,860.

In District 1 of the county Board of Commissioners, Republican Eugene Foote received 1,331 votes. Democrat Eileen Riess received 508.

In Greenleaf township, 1 mill for five years for roads was approved, 142-136.

In Austin township, renewal of 2.5 mills for roads for four years was okayed, 150-125.

## Arson claims 1,000 lives each year

Arson will claim more than 1,000 lives this year, and cause an additional 10,000 to 15,000 injuries in the U.S. The property losses attributed to arson are staggering. Some estimate it's as high as \$15 billion.

It's not only one of the most destructive, costly and easiest crimes, but it also ranks as one of the fastest growing. Incidence of arson has risen 400 percent in the last decade.

Besides its toll on human life and injury, arson also creates blighted neighborhoods, unemployment, tax increases for additional fire and police protection, loss of property tax revenue and increases in insurance premiums.

When World War I came in 1917, he was drafted into the Army. As he wasn't a citizen yet, he wasn't sent to fight in the war in Europe. He was stationed in Texas and Washington state.

Rusnak, moving where the jobs were, came to the Gageton area in 1920 from Swartz Creek.

Starting about 1922, he worked six years for Francis McDonald, a farmer, northwest of Cass City.

For eight years, starting in 1928, he drove a milk route, picking up farmers' milk cans to deliver to the Nestle's plant in Cass City.

Also about 1928, he bought a 20-acre farm on Hurds Corner Road, a half-mile north of Cass City Road. With future land purchases, he eventually farmed a total of 120 acres. The milk route only took half of each day, which left plenty of farming.

IN 1928, RUSNAK GOT lots of helpers -- all at once. A bachelor, he advertised for a wife in a Slovakian newspaper printed in this country.

He received a response from Elizabeth Goda, a widow living in New Hampshire who had also immigrated from Slovakia.

The two corresponded for a while and decided to marry. They never met until Mrs. Goda got off the train -- with her seven children.

Rusnak knew before then that she had that many children, but that didn't bother him, he explained. He was from a family of 14 children.

He and his wife had twin daughters of their own, born in 1931. They are Rose (Mrs. Enoch) Osenoski, Cass City, and Anna (Mrs. Ray) Kubacki, Ubyly.

The seven Goda children ranged in age from 5 to 19 when they arrived here. They are now Margaret (Mrs. Stanley) Walter, Cass City; Elizabeth (Mrs. Frank) Seurnyck, Caro; Mary (Mrs. Aaron) Welton, Ubyly; Joe Goda, Detroit; Frank Goda, California; and John and Paul Goda, both of Bay City.

The first Mrs. Rusnak died in March, 1962, at the age of 69.

ABOUT A YEAR LATER, Rusnak married Elizabeth Janek, a widow from Indiana.

How did they meet? Rusnak ran an ad in the Slovakian newspaper again.

About the time they were married, he sold his farm and the couple moved to their present home on South Street in Gageton.

The present Mrs. Rusnak, born in a different part of Slovakia, has four children, Mary Berland and Steve, Joe and Mike Janek, all living in Indiana.

As mentioned, Rusnak was one of 14 children. He and his older brother were the only ones to come to the United States. The brother eventually moved to Lansing. He is now deceased.

Rusnak has not heard from any relatives in the old country in several years. He assumes all his brothers and sisters are now deceased.

Rusnak was an active gardener until two years ago. At age 92, he reads occasionally, likes to watch

television and enjoys mowing his lawn on his riding lawn mower.

He is the oldest member of St. Agatha's Catholic church, which is across the street from his house.



IN THE ARMY during World War I was Michael Rusnak, shown here stationed in Texas.



IN 1911, Rusnak was working in sugar beet fields at St. Johns, near Lansing, when this photo was taken, outside of what were apparently the living quarters. He is the one seated.



HALLOWEEN VISIT -- Twenty-four youngsters from the Cass City Pre-school Nursery visited Provincial House Friday morning to trick-or-treat with the residents, a few of whom are shown here with their guests.



GOOD WEATHER the last couple of weeks has enabled farmers to make much progress in their harvesting. One indicator was this lineup at the Wickes Elevator Friday.

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