



Marcia Barnes • Clay County Progress  
Herman Eller holds tomatoes just picked from his garden located along-side Upper Hightower Road where Eller has a seasonal vegetable stand.

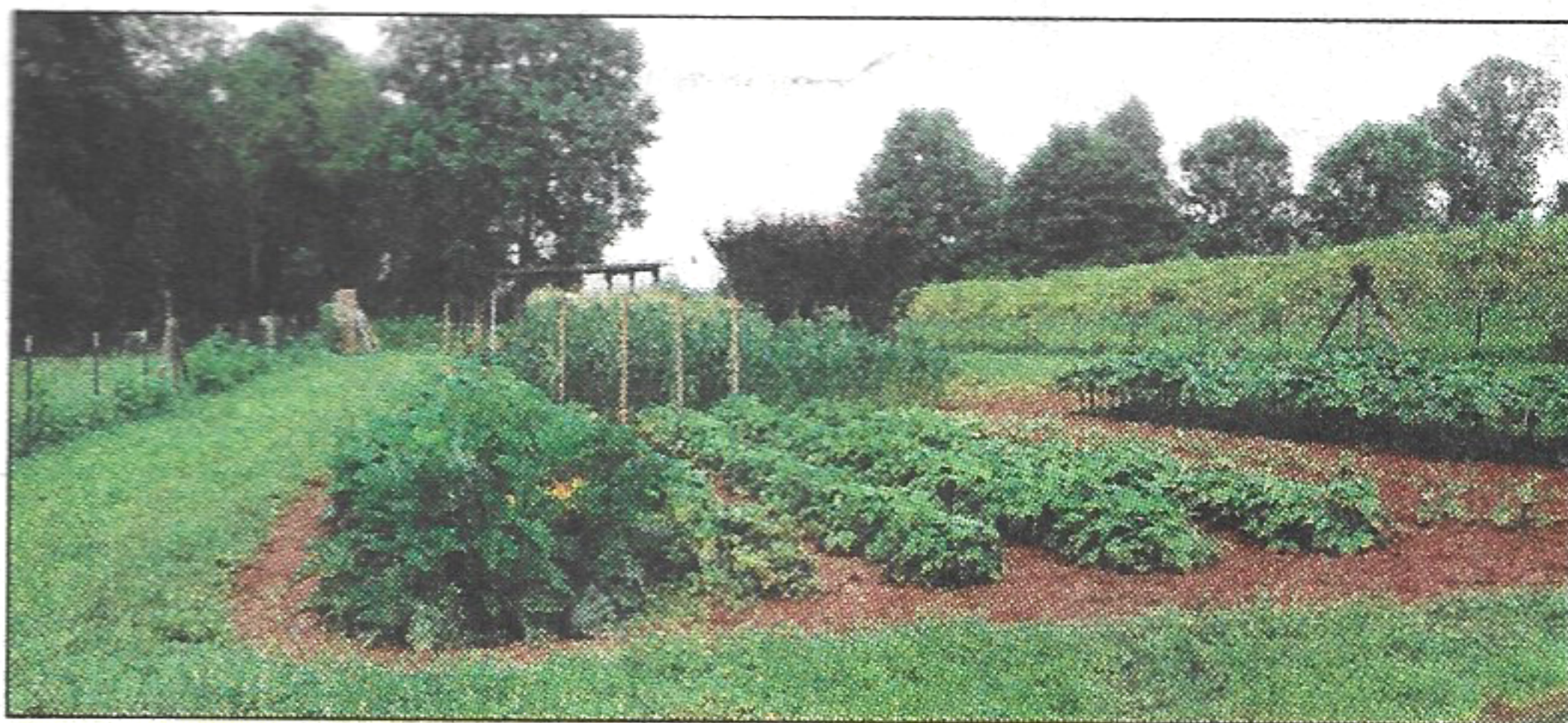
# Herman Eller: The man and the farmer

Marcia Barnes  
Feature Writer

Herman Eller celebrated his 86th birthday Sunday, July 25. He was born and raised in the northeast corner of Towns County, Ga. He has been farming since he was a boy of 10 years.

Eller still farms with help from Bob and Beth McEwen, neighbors who live close by and this year's crop is as thriving as any with first picks being basketball-size green cabbage, purple cabbage and parsley.

Most of the residents living along Upper Hightower Road are



Marcia Barnes • Clay County Progress

Early morning light in the mountains of Towns County falls on Eller's even rows of corn, beans, squash, okra and parsley.

not surprised to see Eller's annual vegetable stand appear with signs spelling out yellow squash,

green peppers, tomatoes and various herbs. Always, there are

See FARMER A2

## FARMER

Continued from A1

are weeks when green beans generously begin to fill baskets at the stand. This year's variety, named Accelerate, has a five-star rating and doesn't require stringing.

Eller said, "The cucumbers have run their course, but the corn should be ready to pick in a week or so."

While waiting for staggered corn plantings to grow, the seasoned farmer watches the daily weather patterns and measures rainfall as a natural thing to do. Eller says he was raised in a two-room rented house which had a kitchen built on the side where he started tending a family garden with his older brothers, Truett, Jewel and Willard.

"I worked that garden although someone else did the plowing. Momma had her hands full raising six boys. Lee

"You couldn't go to the bank in Hiwassee then. It was too far. Momma devised a way to keep what he earned by hiding the cash in a can and burying it inside a corn crib near the church.

"Somehow momma learned about a house and property that Rich Boen on Scataway was about to sell. I don't know how she found that out, but momma didn't know who might buy it and she did want it for the family.

"Momma and Truett took the cash from the corn crib and started walking over to Scataway at 4 a.m. and bought the house and 90 acres. She bought it all," Eller said.

"That house was cold in the winter even with a double fireplace, one in the kitchen and one in the living room with one chimney. The postman carrying the mail then was Frank Corn. He had a pick-up truck and somebody said he carried a gun for snakes or trouble. Farther down the road there was a home grown store and a post office, but you could set your money in the mail box and Frank would take it and leave you a book of

stamps.

"Daddy bought the property in 1945. I was 10 when we all moved and I started plowing on our own land. Daddy bought a mule and we plowed with a blade about 12 inches wide and worked nearly 20 acres. It took about a week.

"Later, we had a harrow. It had teeth and was wider and didn't take as long. We also had a circular blade that we called a cut-a-way. Mainly we grew corn and soybeans and we'd dry out the soybeans for the animals."

Eller said the family garden was big, growing potatoes, sweet potatoes, cabbage, peas, beans, tomatoes, okra; the animals kept were chickens and hogs.

"In the fall of the year, we'd select one of the hogs to butcher for meat. We'd sharpen the ends of a pole and position it so we could bind up the legs of the hog and its head would be off the ground. We'd scald the

schooling, but as Eller spoke about a day with friends at a local store another kind of story unfolded.

"We all hung out on the lake and played setback cards at Sanford Berrong's store. I was about 15 at the time and Lee who was three years younger was with me the afternoon we saw a truck coming up the road. We knew the truck. It was a black Ford pickup, no writing on the side and we knew Ed Barnard was coming with a revenuer. Barnard was the sheriff in Rabun County for many years.

"Lee and I started walking down the road headed toward a neighbor's still which sat off of a branch on Little Mountain. We were whistling and singing as loud as we could to warn them and put clues in the songs hoping to keep them from getting caught.

"Hiwassee High School was where I graduated and finished 11th grade in 1953. Eleventh grade was all that was required. The building was up above McConnell Church and there was a lunchroom across from the school. Another building was for

Future Farmers of America.

"All we had was basketball," Eller said. I didn't eat in the lunchroom often because I didn't have the money, but Blanche Woods had a store and if you had a nickel you could buy some chestnuts for lunch. She always kept a barrel of chestnuts in the store.

"June was graduation and I headed straight to Canton to find a job. I was 17 and everywhere they said they couldn't hire me unless I was 18 or older, but I did get an interview with Macomber, a steel company.

"I said, 'I'm looking for a job.'

"He said, 'Where are you from?'

"I said, 'Georgia.'

"He said, 'You're hired. My best workers are from Georgia and West Virginia.'"

Eller said he still had to wait two weeks until he turned 18 before starting the job as an assembler. "I worked there

hired me, and asked if I could go home. He said he couldn't possibly let me go, they were too far behind.

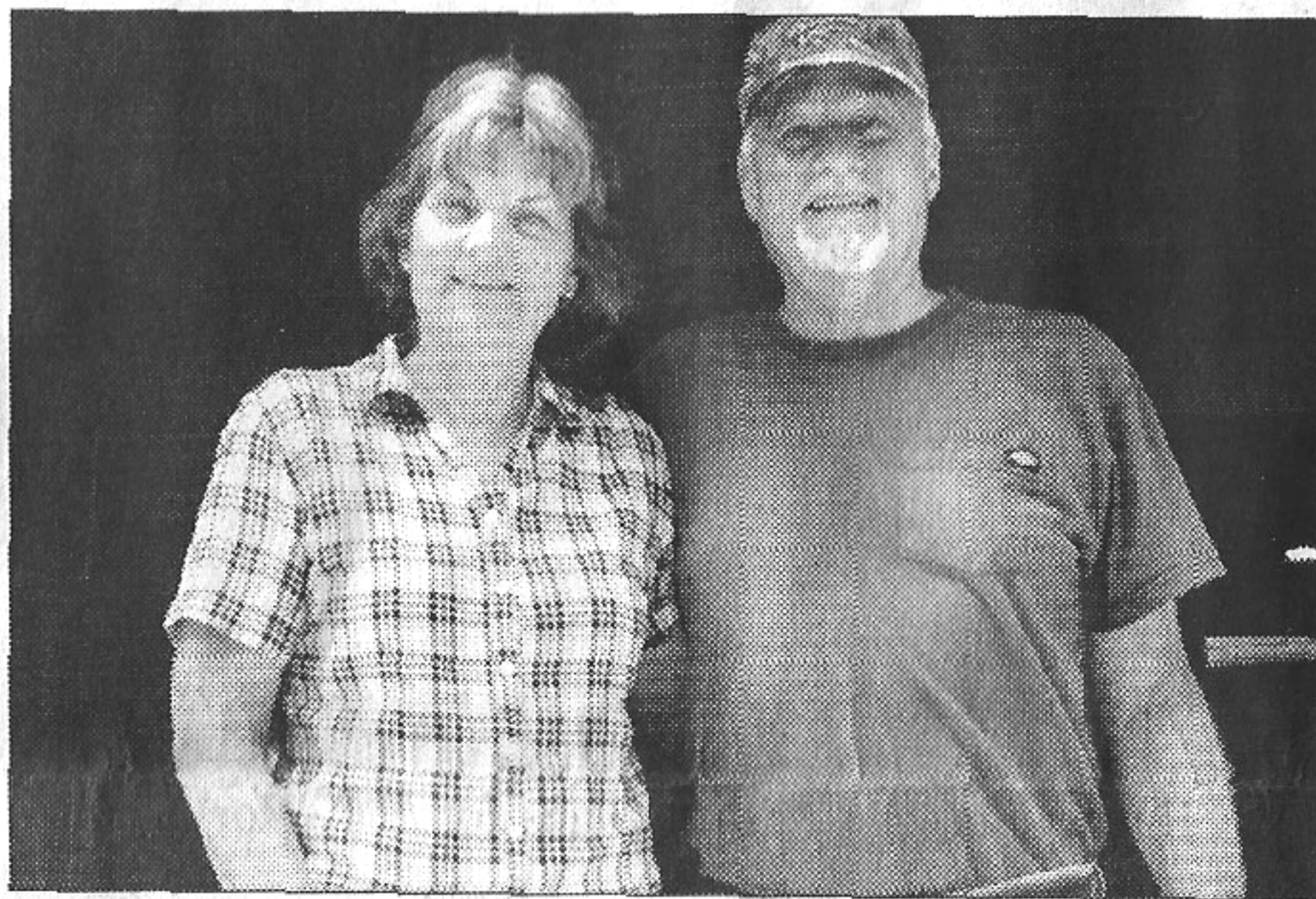
"So I put up with it for a few more days and then headed to Georgia. Momma had gone to the doctor, the medicine was helping to heal the poisoning, but she still needed me.

"I was near the draft age and didn't want to go, but a letter came in the mail and I went by bus to Atlanta for a medical exam hoping to be exempt due to a previous break in my wrist that had healed badly.

"I told the Army doctor I couldn't do push-ups. 'That don't matter,' he said. 'Next.'"

Eller said he didn't get to come back home. He was loaded on a bus and arrived at Fort Jackson, S.C. before midnight, given bed clothes and assigned to a barrack.

"It was actually a tent with a coal heater and it was January. There were eight men to a tent and basic training was eight weeks. Then I went to Ft. Hood, Texas for another eight weeks and was assigned to military tanks before being sent to Fort Myer, Va., across



Marcia Barnes • Clay County Progress

Beth and Bob McEwen, neighbors who live close to Eller, help with the annual planting and harvesting of crops.

from the city of Washington.

"That's where I was attached to Headquarters Company and became a part of the Honor Guard. We paraded every Sunday and sometimes paraded during the week. We paraded when Eisenhower went out and when Kennedy came in.

"My group was in the front and used in all types of honor

March, but went to Atlanta soon to find better work. There wasn't much going on in the mountains, but I did enjoy going to the dirt car races in Brasstown."

Eller also went to Atlanta to visit Helen; the couple was married in 1964. Recalling one of those trips to Atlanta to see Helen, Eller breaks into a story about one time he'd gone to see her before they were married.

"On the way home I bought a 6-pack outside of Towns County. It was after midnight and I was cruising along at 60 mph. Another car came up behind me, I thought it might be my friend Thurman, then I realized it was a state trooper. I kept right on going, but I saw I was fixing to run out of gas and I didn't want to run out between Towns and Rabun County.

"When I got to the store, I pulled over and one of the officers had me get out. 'You sure are a good driver,' those were his first words.

"I probably shouldn't have given him the reply I did. The patrolmen were from Hall County and didn't know the

Barber took over the station, I worked there another 20 years.

"Helen and I and our daughter, Susie, lived in that house 20 some years. It had a huge tree in the backyard and the garden at the house had soil so rich that when we moved back to the mountains I brought several yards of that soil and put it in the garden here.

"While Helen and Susie helped we had a slightly larger garden and grew almost everything, including potatoes, white half-runner beans and cantaloupe. People were wanting me to grow more tomatoes. The beans would sell out and the smaller yellow squash would go quickly."

When Eller lost his wife and daughter to long-standing illnesses which took their lives too soon, it would seem to most people that the garden might come to its end, but the McEwens had stood by helping all the Ellers during those

likes it just the same.

Progress feature writer, Marcia Hawley Barnes, is author of "The Little Book of Secret Family Recipes, and Tobijah."

CLAY COUNTY  
**Progress**  
Proud to be Clay County's hometown newspaper  
Thursdays, August 12, 2021 • www.claycountyprogress.com • Hayesville, NC  
1 dollar / 52 cents mailed

We have the best deals on tires for all of your school activities.

SET OF 4 Starting at \$99.95 and up

Financing available on wheels and tires

**HIGH COUNTRY TIRE & WHEELS**

We carry a full line of name brand tires!

High Tread New Car Takeoff Tires Most sizes available 13"-20"

**OIL CHANGE** starting at \$29.95!

USED 1ST QUALITY TIRES starting at \$15.95 EACH!

Mon & Tue 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Thu & Fri 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Sat 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Closed Wed & Sun

35 Cobalt Street, Blairsville, Ga. 706-835-1488