

Allen Eiry's Legacy Lives On

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Seneca County Elderly Benefitting From Estate

By JIM MAURER
Staff Writer

GREEN SPRINGS — Allen Eiry died in 1974 at the age of 80.

But now, in 1983, his name is still remembered —

He's remembered as a man who minded his own business, whether as an automobile dealer in Green Springs or as an investor in various properties and a pipeline operation in the county.

A lifelong bachelor, he's remembered for his eccentricities of living in a run-down house with second-hand linoleum on the floors; for inviting the neighborhood children to walk with him through the cemetery; and for mooching meals and laundry services off his neighbors.

He's remembered most of all because he remembered — remembered his friends at the poor farm, as the Seneca County Home used to be called. Eiry (pronounced eye-er-ee) frequently visited there to talk with the residents, whom he considered his friends.

Eiry left an estate valued at \$1 million, and today senior citizens in Seneca County benefit from his generosity by receiving free meals, tickets for cultural events and participation in YMCA programs. They will soon have a new senior citizens center. All this has been provided either entirely or in part from the \$160,000 annual income generated by Eiry's estate.

His will stipulated that his estate be used for the "welfare and good of the inhabitants of

the Seneca County Old Folks Home." The estate was tied up in litigation until four years ago and is now valued at over \$2 million.

The Seneca County Home was closed in 1986 by the county commissioners in a money-saving move. The 22 remaining residents either found other accommodations or moved in with relatives.

A five-member advisory committee has been set up to oversee distribution of the income generated by the estate funds. According to Leo A. Whitlow, who co-chairs the advisory board, Eiry's wish was to enhance the quality of life of his friends at the county home — not to support the institution in ways handled by tax funds.

"We were trying to make life a little better, but not sustain life," he explained.

"Since there are no longer (county home) residents, we're still trying to accomplish this for the type of people who would have lived there," he said.

In his later years, Eiry's humble lifestyle made him look like he could qualify for the county home. For although many of his friends and neighbors knew him to be frugal, few realized he had accumulated a fortune.

Green Springs, where Eiry lived and died, is located about 13 miles northeast of Tiffin on the border of Seneca and Sandusky counties.

Eiry dropped out of school after the eighth grade. He and his brother, Vern who preceded him in death, farmed the land



ALLEN EIRY with neighbor children around 1951

where they were raised outside of Green Springs. The land was later sold to construct the Beaver Creek Reservoir, which serves as the main water source for the city of Clyde.

Eiry was a familiar figure in bib overalls at his automobile dealership in Green Springs, which he started in the 1920s and sold about 1949.

He and Don Miller started the Miller Pipeline Corp., Green Springs, a pipeline contractor

company, about 1951.

The A&P Co. leased land he owned in surrounding cities for food stores.

A bachelor, he was a member of the Seneca County Farm Bureau, the Green Springs Masonic Lodge and the advisory board of Croghan Colonial Bank, Green Springs. He had been a member of the Green Springs Sanitary Board. He's buried in Green Springs Ceme-

Please Turn to Page A6

Allen

Continued from Page A1

tery. The Green Springs house he owned is a modest duplex on West Adams Street. When he owned it, inside bare walls were visible where the plaster had fallen off years before. A neighbor's scrap linoleum became Eiry's new kitchen floor when he salvaged it from the junk pile.

One of his neighbors, Mrs. John Roth, tells how another neighbor once sent him a note containing 25 cents. The note said the quarter was a donation toward getting siding installed on his house.

Eiry often would show up at friends' or neighbors' homes about supper time, when there was a good chance he'd be invited to stay and eat, Mrs. Roth remembered.

She told how she did his laundry for years without pay or other compensation except for an occasional bag of bread crusts which were usually a week old and stale by the time he brought them to her.

After all those years of work, she said, he left her about \$1,000 in his will.

To entertain his friends he would invite them out to his farm to view his steam-powered machinery, with which he was fascinated.

He was known for taking his

friends' children on rides around the county. He would stop with the kids at cemeteries and allow them to wander among the grave markers.

The State Forest Nursery is located just west of Green Springs and a former state employee, Gordon Huff, said Eiry would visit there often to learn about the operation and talk about what was being done there.

His visits to the county home were frequent, but those who heard him talk noted that his favorite conversation topics were how to save money and "the olden days."

He was knowledgeable and an "interesting conversationalist," according to a former employee, James Kittle. The car dealership received statewide attention when it opened, from people who had heard of his honest, straightforward business sense.

After his death, stacks of copies of The Wall Street Journal were found on tables, chairs and floors in his house. He had bought it daily, read it completely and never threw a copy away, according to neighbors.

The trust fund he left behind is proof of the generosity he kept under wraps during his life.

Five-Member Board Oversees Eiry Estate

GREEN SPRINGS — The trust fund Allen Eiry left for the benefit of senior citizens in the county is overseen by a five-member advisory board under the guidance of Probate Judge Gerald Meyer.

The board includes co-chairmen Leo A. Whitlow and Richard A. Bush, and three other members — the Rev. Robert Diller, Carolyn Fetzer and Wayne Marker. The panel meets about eight times yearly to review application requests.

The two main criteria used for determining eligible applicants are tax exempt status and benefiting county residents who would have possibly been county home residents, Whitlow said.

Potential recipients file an application with the advisory committee, which reviews it and renders a final decision. The actual funds are distributed by the Columbus Foundation, a Columbus organization which oversees nearly 400 similar funds.

"This (fund) is to give extra privileges to senior citizens," Whitlow said. It's not intended for housing or utility payments but "to enhance their lifestyle."

Whitlow cited several expenditures approved by the panel including: \$100,000 toward the \$600,000 senior citizen center being built in downtown Tiffin; \$20,000 for a guardianship program for indigent people in county Probate Court; \$14,200 for daily lunch and "Meals on Wheels" programs in the Green Springs area; \$17,000 for tickets for a variety of events at the Ritz Theater, Tiffin; \$10,000 for the community hospice program to aid terminally ill people, and \$12,000 for the Tiffin and Fostoria YMCAs to develop exercise programs which benefit persons with arthritis and similar afflictions.

Meyer meets supply, demand

By Vincent Campanella

A-T STAFF WRITER

One March day at Probate Court, Judge Gerald D. Meyer walked in on supply and demand.

Representing "demand" were social service officials, there to suggest he set up a guardian program for indigent older adults.

Representing "supply" were committee members of the Allen Eiry trust, there to discuss which groups should be granted the trust money.

Meyer, who ruled that the money would go to the county's "needy, elderly and infirm persons," suggested that demand seek help from supply.

The result: Supply granted demand \$10,000 to institute the program, to be overseen by the judge as part of Probate Court.

"I think it's a real good use of the money," Meyer, who filed the application with the committee, said.

The money will be used to hire a guardian for an indigent person who has no one to be his guardian.



Judge Gerald Meyer

Many people in this situation are defined as mentally incompetent by an attending physician and therefore aren't capable to take care of themselves.

If they are admitted to the hospital, they cannot be released without

guardian consent.

Although the lone mentally incompetent person is not in great numbers in the county, officials agreed the guardian program is good to have when needed.

In the past, Meyer would appoint attorneys for guardianships. But the judge explained that in the time it takes to appoint a lawyer, usually at least three days in the court system, the indigent person goes unattended.

Under the new program, the guardian will be appointed immediately, Meyer wrote in the application.

"Sounds like a good program," said attorney Paul Kutscher, who has been appointed guardian several times.

Thomas Eberly, the attorney for Mercy Hospital, last was appointed a guardian in the mid-1970s. In the case, a man, defined as mentally incompetent, needed to have his leg amputated but had no one to consent to the operation.

A guardianship often is needed

• please see SUPPLY, page 2A

Supply

• from page 1A

when the indigent mentally incompetent person refuses doctor's orders. At times a doctor, for health reasons, might suggest that a patient be admitted to a nursing home and not be sent home. If the patient refuses, a guardian can sign him into the home.

Often, the Adult Protective Services will petition the court to have a person appointed a guardian.

In guardianship hearings, evi-

dence has to be presented to the judge to prove that the person is unable to take care of himself.

Some of the officials aware of these persons are Wanda Sharrock, director of the Commission on Aging; Jean Roberts, social services director at Mercy Hospital, Judy Munn with Adult Protective Services; and Nancy Becker, the former social services director at Autumnwood Care Center.

"All of us social workers had talked about it (a guardian program)," Becker said. "We went to Probate Court thinking that was the place to start."

But Meyer didn't have enough

money in his budget to set up the program.

Now that he does, the judge said he plans to hire one guardian, maybe two.

The \$10,000 will go toward paying the guardian salary.

The judge said he may re-apply to the committee for more grant money to run the program.

Applications for the position are available at Probate Court. Meyer will interview and select the guardian.

The judge said he would like someone who empathizes with these people.