

**INTERVIEW with  
Frank & Olga Hathaway of Westhampton,  
Retired Dairy Farmers  
Olga is the HEN Program Coordinator for Westhampton  
February 2009**

*HCDC: Folks: Now, we know that Hathaways have been around the hilltowns for a very long time, but how... and when... did the two of you come to live here in Westhampton as a couple?*

**Frank:** It was June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Olga was from a family farm in Easthampton and I was farming with my father in Westhampton. We both attended a 4-H dance at the Easthampton town hall.

*HCDC: And did you dance?* **Olga:** Oh, we danced and danced all around the town hall.

**Frank:** Shortly afterwards, even before we were married, we began cutting timber at the farm and had it milled to build our house. We built the first portion of the house and a barn, for ourselves. Things went on from there.

*HCDC: Olga, how did the two of you first come to connect with the HEN Program?*

**Olga:** Through Eleanor Miller, who was one of the originators of the program. I was in the hospital and Frank was home having recuperated from heart surgery. Eleanor came by to see how Frank was doing and found him on the roof shoveling snow. She inquired as to why he was up there and he replied, "because, Eleanor, that is where the snow is". She insisted that we consider accepting some help around the house.

*HCDC: Olga, when did you first become the coordinator for your town?* **Olga:** After my recuperation, Eleanor and I eventually sat down and I agreed to coordinate. I've met a lot of people and it's been rewarding.

*HCDC: Frank, it's obvious that you fill an important role here, too. Are you the devils advocate for Olga?* **Frank:** YES, I think so.

*HCDC: Frank, I know that you enjoy your computer and spend lots of time on-line. Have you found that to be a good connection into today's world?* **Frank:** Not really. I'm looking for something out there. Medical issues, genealogy, history, e-mail. Recently, I found a site with pictures of every town in the Commonwealth. I have written two books, the first about growing up in Westhampton and the other an extensive history of "The Hathaway's of Westhampton", with many early photographs. Olga has written a book, too, which is titled "Life in the shadow of Mount Tom". It's is her personal history.

*HCDC: Olga, you and Frank both look and act young...but I know that you both need help around the place, too, as do many other folks in their homes. How does HEN offer useful assistance and what sort of requests do you generally hear from other Westhampton elders?*

**Olga:** Vacuuming and heavy scrubbing is hardest for most older folks and for us as well. That is currently the most common request from elders.

*HCDC: Olga, where do you find the caregivers...is it difficult to recruit willing and reliable, people?* **Olga:** Sometimes they are acquaintances or they have responded to our posters. Also, I ask around. Once, we were driving past a fire station and I stopped in to inquire if they knew of

anyone who might be interested in the work. It might seem unlikely but I found one of my very best caregivers that way!

*HCDC : Frank & Olga, I have to ask you both--does it get pretty hard to get up and get on with things on certain days? You are in your mid 80's...how do you motivate yourselves to overcome your pains, discomfort and sorrows so as to accomplish the things that you know need doing?*

**Olga:** We push! But, some days we take it easy. **Frank:** In the wintertime it can be harder, but I have a secret. It's called the wood furnace! I have to get up and go to the basement to load the firewood and get it burning. It provides its own incentive. **Olga:** And being a couple really helps...it's a balancing act. It's really hard sometimes but, mostly, we just do what we have to.

*HCDC: Olga, I know you understand that some folks need a bit more help or reassurance than others might need. How do you bring that subject up in your interviews with participants? Olga:* I might say, "Do you think you might need a little more help than you have"? People actually know what they need and, basically, I know these people.

*HCDC: Frank, Westhampton HEN has been instrumental in helping the 7-town HEN Program broaden the services that we offer. Several times we have first tried new ideas on you and Olga and you have taken the leads successfully. Is Westhampton something of a "can-do" town, generally, or have you been a guiding hand? Frank:* I think for people my age it was "can-do"... somehow, we get things done. We see the need and try to do something about it.

*HCDC: Olga, is there anything about HEN or Westhampton or life in general that you would like to share with readers before we end for today? Olga:* If there is a need, I hope that people will realize that there is help for them.

*HCDC: And you, Frank? Frank:* A wonderful part of HEN is that it is real and we **can** get someone there to help. **Olga:** I think in a small town people are more concerned about each other. Women used to have quilting parties. Quilts were made in large quantities and stored for emergencies. That would be much harder to accomplish now. **Frank:** Westhampton used to be very close knit. Everyone would turn out to help after a fire or some other tragedy. Now the town is bigger and it's changing.