

Miss Gertie Presented Letter From Gov. Holton

By THELMA SMITH
N-V Woman's Editor

STUARTS DRAFT — For 50 years "Miss Gertie" has sat at her cobbler's bench. Up to now her reward has been (besides the money for her work) the satisfaction of a job well done and the knowledge that a host of friends are interested in her welfare.

But today she's the proud possessor of another reward, a personal letter from Governor Holton recognizing her 50th anniversary in cobbling.

"I can take a joke," she said merrily when Sen. H. D. Dawbarn, personal emissary for the governor, told her he had a letter from the governor for her.

When she was assured that the framed letter really was for her, she said, "Is it real? Then I'm going to take good care of it. I am more than pleased."

Later she talked about the governor and his duties and the senator and his duties and she was more impressed with the honor that had been bestowed upon her.

Miss Gertrude Lowry is a cobbler by choice and inheritance. For many years her father was a cobbler in Stuarts Draft and for seven years she worked with him as she learned

the trade. When he became ill, she took over his duties.

She used to work every afternoon, but the demand for her specialty is not what it used to be so she only works on Fridays and Saturdays now.

She rides to and from her shop on Wayne Ave. with a neighbor, but for three years she walked the three miles from her home, after her horse died seven years ago.

Miss Gertie lives near Shenandoah Acres in an area considered by many as typical country for holiday cabins. Her home, however, is a year-round residence. She lives there alone with only Tippy, her dog, for company since her sister, Miss Maggie, died in 1962. Tippy, by the way, is somewhat of a politician. When anyone asks him to shake hands, he does. Only he doesn't know when to stop and keeps offering first one paw and then another.

He's only friendly, though, after Miss Gertie assures him the visitor approaching is a friend. Otherwise, he's her protector. But he's more than that. Some time ago Miss Gertie had a fall and since that time has had some difficulty in moving around, because of a permanent knee injury. Sometimes when she kneels she finds it difficult to get up. "Tippy gets me by the britches and tries to get me up."

"But I don't get afraid here," said Miss Gertie. "Sometimes I get a little lonesome after I've finished my work. I don't have a television now. The lightning struck my antenna and I took it down. That really tore up the side of the house. I'm afraid of it at television. I wish I had one of those small ones with the

rabbit ears. But I can't afford it."

"I love my home," she continued. "This house is 64 years old but I'll ask you not to ask how old I am," she said with a twinkle in her clear blue eyes.

On the days when she is not in her shop she spends the time working in her garden, tending the chickens ("Lord knows how many I have, 50 maybe."), reading the Bible, and in general just enjoying being alive and living on "Gertie's Lane."

"Somebody else named this road but they could have spelled my name right. My real name is Gertrude, not Gertie."

There was a time when Miss Gertie did quite a bit of hunting and fishing but now any nature walks she might take are at the Christmas season when she gathers greens to make wreaths to sell on the street in Staunton. Come this Christmas, she'll be celebrating her 50th anniversary at this job too. Through the years she's worked at construction also. She's helped to build a number of cabins and built one all by herself.

"And I'm not planning to retire at any special age. It won't make any difference. If I am able to work I'm going to. I've got to make a living."

Then she brushed an imaginary speck of dust from the framed letter from the governor which read:

"It has been brought to my attention that this month marks your 50th anniversary year as a licensed cobbler in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

"This is a remarkable achievement in itself, made even more significant in view of the late President Hoover's

PERSONAL EMISSARY of Gov. Linwood Holton, Sen. H. D. Dawbarn presents a letter to Miss Gertrude Lowry in observance of her 50th anniversary as a cobbler.

(N-V Photos by Smith)

recognition of your accomplishment as the only woman licensed cobbler in the U. S.

"Miss Gertie is known to practically every resident of Staunton and Waynesboro and

is, I am sure, an inspiration to all who knew her.

"I am pleased to join with your many friends and acquaintances on this most significant occasion to offer my personal congratulations and best wishes. Cordially Linwood Holton."