

# THE WEAVER INTERVIEW



MR. AND MRS. WEAVER ON THE FRONT PORCH SWING

chickens and also get into shipping poultry by rail to the northern states. Because his father was in the poultry business near Waynesboro, young Jason already knew the ins and outs of the trade. He borrowed \$500.00 dollars from an uncle and rented a small building behind the present Engleman's Hardware store and started his business. He went around to different farms and bought up as many chickens as he thought he could handle in the store and soon people were coming to him for their Sunday chicken! That first year, Jason slept underneath the counter in his store and at the end of the year he showed a profit of \$60.00. Then as he started making more, he took a room at Flory's boarding house and later to the Dodge Hotel. As the business grew he moved it to a store closer to the railroad. He got burned out twice but even that didn't dampen the enthusiasm of Jason Weaver.

By this time he had earned the nickname, "chicken" Weaver and it still stands today. He was shipping crate after crate of chickens to those northern states he dreamed about, in refrigerated cars on the Norfolk and Western lines that ran through the Draft. In those days they were shipped "New York dressed", which meant that although they were plucked, the head, feet and insides were still intact. How very different than today, where you can buy any part of the chicken right in the supermarket.

When Jason was 26 years old he fell in love and married Marie Elizabeth Martin and they settled in a large white home at the end of High Street. There they lived until 4 of their 6 children were born. As their family increased, they decided to build their own home farther up High Street. A set of twin girls were born there and the Weaver family was complete.

Mrs. Weaver tells of the fun the family had growing up. "We spent alot of time with our children. We read them Bible stories and Saturday nights were reserved as our family night. We played croquet or ball in the side yard and always seemed to have the whole neighborhood's children here too. Afterwards, we'd all go in the house and I'd peel a huge pan of apples for everyone. I'd give them out til every last one of them was gone! We raised our family the way we had been raised, with hard work and alot of love. Back when we were young men and women, we'd get together at each other's homes for "socials". The girls would bake a pie and the fellows would bring some special kind of candy. We'd sing and talk together and just

In the early 1900's a plucky, young man named Jason Weaver walked into Stuarts Draft from his home in the Ladd area, with the intention of opening up his own poultry business. His arrival in the Draft wasn't met with alot of fanfare... in fact one family thought he was a bum walking down the railroad tracks with his lunch wrapped up in a hankerchief! But the teenage Weaver persevered and soon word spread about the young man opening a business. Up til this time, when the lady of the house wanted fried chicken for Sunday dinner, she had to pay a visit to her own family henhouse or else go to a farmer and buy one. Jason's dream was to supply the townspeople with

Jason Weaver cont.

have a good time.

Jason was a deacon in the Valley View Mennonite Church (now Stuarts Draft Mennonite Church) and then in 1954 he was ordained along with another man, as a preacher for Valley View. He served for 11 years before retiring in 1965.

In those early years Jason also tried his hand at several other businesses, all of which were successful. He shipped apples all over the world and ran a large hatchery out on rt. 608. He even raised turkeys, which he told me were the dumbest creatures on God's earth.

He remembers the toll booth that used to sit out near Almarodes Exxon Station on rt. 340. In those days there were no road taxes so there were toll booths set up to collect the money. If you didn't pay the toll, a wooden cross arm came down and blocked your way.

I asked the Weavers how Stuarts Draft got it's name and they seemed very clear as to it's origin. "The town was first called Stuarts" recalled Jason. "It was named after it's founder, Thomas Stuart. It was called that for a long time & then two government men from Washington D.C. came down here because of a mixup in the mail. Seems there was another little town up near Rocky Mount that was called Stuart and the mail was always getting switched around. So these here men came down to see about it. Nobody wanted to change the name so they just added on to it a little. They put the "Draft" on it because of the strong breeze that always seems to blow here." According to Mr. Weaver, this is the correct version of how the Draft got it's name.

Jason was also mentioned in the History of Stuarts Draft (page 2) when he became "man of the hour" after saving the lives of three people locked in the bank vault.

Today Jason and his wife Marie still live in the beautiful old brick home that they raised their family in. It is still as well-

coming now as it was to all those  
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Jason Weaver cont...

neighborhood children years ago.

This month both Mr. and Mrs. Weaver will celebrate birthdays. He will be 89 years old on the 10th and she'll be 81 on the last day of the month.

God has surely blessed this wonderful couple throughout their lives and as they sit holding hands on the front porch swing, I know that I in turn have been blessed by meeting them. Thanks Jason and Marie Weaver and a very happy birthday to you both!

Lynn Barrett