

Notes passing of friend

To the Editor:

I am writing to tell you and the readers of the passing of a very special friend.

For all of us there are those people regardless whether we have known them for many years or they entered our life comparatively recently, who leave an indelible mark upon us. For me, one of those people was David E. Byler, who passed from this life on December 3.

David was a gentle man who possessed a combination of wit and wisdom regardless of the hardships of life. He will long be remembered by those who were fortunate enough to have known him. The columns that he wrote for the Amish newspaper show an interest in his fellow man. David was the proprietor of D. E. Byler's Buggy Shop located in the McKinley section of the town of Palatine. There he and his apprentice, Emanuel Byler, followed the combined trades of wagonmaker, wheelwright, and blacksmith. David had been a wagonmaker for more than 30 years.

It was to the D. E. Byler Buggy Shop that I went to find someone with the expertise to rebuild the old cannon at Van Alstyne house in Canajoharie. A few years ago, before the coming of the Amish, it would have been extremely difficult or impossible to find anyone in our area to undertake the job. The cannon keeps a silent vigil as a reminder to those who pass by of the skill I found in that shop.

At the passing of David I can not help but think back through the years to 1963. On July 18 of that year I wrote in this newspaper of the passing of another friend, John Hambrecht. John had served Canajoharie for nearly 50 years as a horseshoer, blacksmith and wheelwright. The article said that it was the "end of an era."

In the 1950s I used the same "end of an era" theme in writing about the restoration of the Fort Klock district school. At that time I, and probably most other people, were sure that there would never be any more one-room country schools or wheelwrights in our area. I thought then that the wagon tire I helped John Hambrecht set would never be done again in our community. Today, there are two Amish country schools in Stone Arabia. The skill of the wheelwright's trade, said to be 3,000 years old, has passed from David E. Byler to the younger hands of Emanuel Byler just as has been the custom through the centuries.

At this Christmas season it is well for all of us to remember that eras do not easily end. Despite all of the evil and suffering in the world today there is still that which is kind and good all about us.

That era too will survive.

Willis Barshied Jr., Palatine Bridge