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Columnist hangs it up at 86

'When we forget to remember,' said retiring columnist William Zulker, 'I think we're in trouble.'

By JOEL SHANNON
For The Lebanon Daily News

RICHLAND — For the last 2 1/2 years, 85-year-old William Zulker has been using his monthly "The Way It Was in Lebanon County" column to help readers remember to remember.

Community events, church picnics, family gatherings, marriages and business activities of past generations of Lebanon County residents have

been staples of the monthly column. Zulker has used the archives of the Lebanon Daily News to generate these monthly snapshots of what life was like in Lebanon County years ago.

The column has run in the Daily News on the first Sunday of each month since July 2010.

But Zulker has decided that the December 2012 edition will be the last installment, explaining, "I will be 86 in December, and I decided that I don't want any more responsibility. I want to sit on my back deck and watch the clouds and the airplanes as they

stream by. I want to get up in the morning without having any responsibilities. I've waited 85 years for that."

Zulker moved to Lebanon County in 2004 after a long, fast-paced career as an author, preacher, and college administrator at Eastern University. He has attempted to highlight what he sees as the "community, family-oriented environment" of Lebanon County in each of his columns. Asked if he had noticed any major changes to Lebanon County through the scores of archived editions of the Daily News that he had pored through, he responded that the county has stayed remarkably stable in his view — always a caring community.

See FOLKS, page 6A



Folks

William Zulker said all his files are stored in his basement.

Continued from 6A

At times, he said, that kind of communal awareness was more striking than others — Zulker recalls that some editions of the Daily News from the '20s highlighted when grown children went back

home to help their parents clean.

As Zulker wrote his columns, he began to think of the them as an outworking of his own ministry.

"I think this sense of being in a community, having a concern for others, not being isolated is a part of my Christian faith," he said.

Zulker said he hopes the random stories have created connections in his readers' minds, reminding them of their roots.

"The enjoyment of looking to the past is something I think a lot of people miss be-

cause they're always saying, 'Look to the future! Look to the future!' Look to the future!" he said. "Our lives are built upon the experiences of the past, and that's a challenge to us. When we forget to remember, I think we're in trouble."

Forgetting to remember has never been a problem for Zulker, who meticulously keeps track of his life experiences in organized files. He is currently compiling photos and saved church bulletins from each of the 175 churches he has preached at. And he is starting to index his extensive collection of personal photos

by faces. Zulker's files are stored in a memory cave of sorts: his basement. The room is lined with history, historical photos and decorations, photos from his 20 trips to Europe with his family, and files filled with the organized memories of a long, happy life.

"I preserve everything for the benefit of my grandchildren," he said with a smile. "Maybe someday they'll be interested in knowing what Pop-Pop did."

While Zulker is retiring from writing "The Way It Was," those who know him realize that even without responsibilities, he will be keeping busy. He says he looks forward to compiling his memoirs for his grandchildren, continuing his extensive research on early 20th



William Zulker stands beside the Chevrolet sedan that shares his birth date, 1926.

century Pennsylvanian entrepreneur and religious leader John Wanamaker, and adding to his extensive collection of stereo photographs. He may even continue a hobby he

picked up in his early 80s: flying.

Even without the responsibility of writing "The Way It Was," it's unlikely that Zulker will be twiddling his thumbs.