

## LEARNING

by MIKE HARRIS

This week's subject "Learning" needs two components to work. The most important is for one to have a desire to learn and second someone with some ability to teach. That is the easiest way to learn. Then of course there is the adage "experience is the best teacher!" Maybe? If one does not learn from doing that can only be because there is no desire to learn. In my experience my father taught that every job can teach the worker something.

On the farm a young boy with red hair had always something to do, simple chores, like stacking wood for the kitchen cook stove. According to the nature of the cut wood there was always, if one stopped to look, an easy way to neatly stack it, or a harder less neat way. It did not take long to learn that a few minutes planning before starting was time well invested. The habit of stop and think before starting an undertaking proved the basis of my entire life's working.

I almost never had to look for a job. I was hired away from one boss by another when my ability was recognized. I cannot remember ever coming to a job that I was not able to increase the efficiency or productivity of the job. A simple example, I was already retired and thought I would like a little extra cash. I answered an ad "collator, check printing firm." I was hired, given a space to work and left to my own devices. First I noted my table was low and I was working bent over, also the floor was slick and my feet kept slipping. That evening I stopped at a variety store and bought a rubber mat for one dollar. When I got home I found a piece of 2x4 in my scrap heap and cut four pieces 4x4. The next day I raised my table on the squares; I put the mat down so my feet would not slide around. At noon the supervisor came by. "Something about your station is different," he said "What did you do?" "Well," I explained, "I bought a rubber mat to stand on." Immediately he said, "Who authorized it?" "No one," I replied. "I paid for it myself. One whole dollar. My comfort, my money, thank you." "Oh! What else did you do, your station seems different?" "I raised my table four inches because I am tall and do not like to work stooped over." I then showed him the four blocks of wood and told him I had them at home and they did not cost anything. He walked away shaking his head.

This habit of finding a way to build a better mouse trap served me well in my work and even in the army. On the advice of a grizzled veteran of World War One, I bought in a war surplus store a Boy Scout knife, a rope hammock and a hank of braided clothes line, total cost seven dollars. I never slept on the ground and never experienced any rheumatism. The willingness to learn by listening, and hearing, observing and thinking have served me well all my long life. **BUT ONE MUST WANT TO LEARN.**