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Man Could Be U.S.'s Oldest Worker

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WAYNESBORO, Pa. (AP) — At 102, Milton W. Garland could be the oldest worker in the United States.

Garland still works 20 hours a week as a consultant at Frick Co., the Waynesboro refrigeration plant he has called home for 77 years.

Garland's phone hasn't stopped ringing since Green Thumb, Inc. mentioned him earlier this month at a press conference in Washington, D.C., to open its campaign to find America's oldest worker.

News people from TV, radio and newspapers have been asking for interviews, some from as far away as California and Iowa.

Garland, a bit surprised by the attention, says, "It's something that's got me stirred up."

A senior consultant of technical services at Frick, Garland said he is fortunate to have good health and to have a company that's allowed him to work.

The official winner of the oldest worker contest won't be announced until early next year, but so far, Garland is older than all his competitors, according to Alice Ann Toole, Green Thumb's national director of public affairs.

Green Thumb, the nation's oldest and largest provider of mature-worker training and employment, is sponsoring the "oldest worker" contest with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging.

According to Toole, Garland's name went national during an Oct. 3 press conference in Washington, D.C., the home of Green Thumb headquarters.

"He has such an interesting story," said Toole. "He went to work for (Frick) in 1920 and is now a senior consultant for the company. He was one of the pioneers of modern refrigeration and holds 40 patents."

When a reporter tried to reach Garland recently to discuss his sudden fame, he wasn't in his office.

Instead, the centenarian was

working — in the field consulting for the Doris I. Billow Ice Arena in Zullinger, a village just outside Waynesboro. It's a fitting project, considering the fact that Garland designed and developed some of the first commercial ice rinks in the United States.

Frick is providing the ice-making equipment for the rink, and Garland is in his element working with refrigeration.

It's a career he ventured into after serving in World War I. In fact, Garland has been credited with helping to start the fast-food industry.

"When I graduated from school in 1920, jobs were scarce in Harrisburg, my hometown," he said. "I moved to Waynesboro and Frick Company hired me in July 1920 — and I have been here ever since."

Today, Frick is head of York International's industrial refrigeration division.

Garland said he never dreamed he would be where he is today, but his work is something he's always enjoyed, especially the challenges.

"Refrigeration is a challenge because new applications keep coming along," he said. "In all of my 77 years of experience, there are still things to be learned."

Since the grand celebration of

his 100th birthday in 1995, Garland, dubbed "Mr. Refrigeration," has completed a book titled "Industrial Refrigeration 102: A Design Manual" and is looking for a publisher.

Asked about his goals, Garland referred to the kindness of Frick.

"While I was officially retired from Frick in '67, I was able to continue with them as a self-employed consultant," he said, adding one doesn't get as far as he has without the help of others.

"I like the work. I enjoy the work and I would like to keep at it as long as I can," he said.

The search for America's oldest worker begins on the state level, where senior workers are nominated. In Pennsylvania, the deadline for nominations is Dec. 15, according to M. Claire Powers, special projects coordinator for Green Thumb. The national deadline is Dec. 30.

Nominees must be employed at least 20 hours a week, and Garland meets those specifications.

Although Garland has received a lot of publicity, entries are still being accepted, Powers said.

"We have received a lot of entries," said Powers. "We have a number of workers in their 90s. I want to encourage people to continue entering."



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