

Ag

Lancaster Farming

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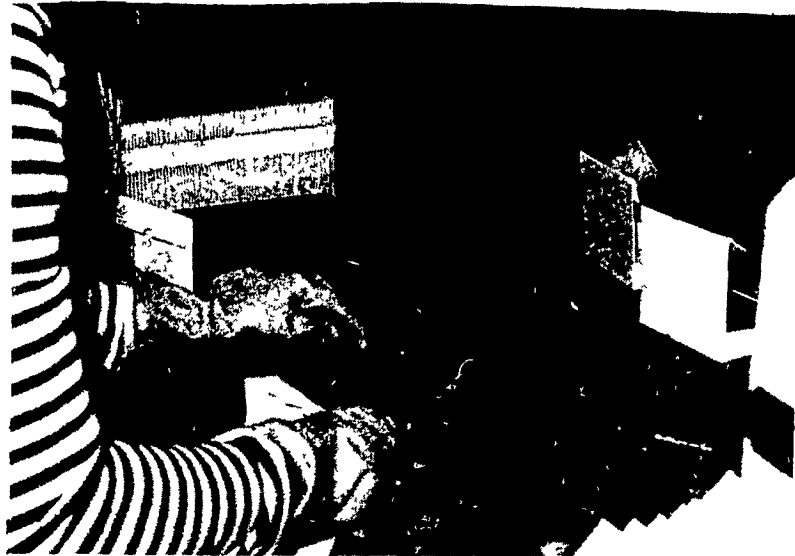
\$2.00 Per Year

Farm Calendar

John F. Cope

- Saturday, May 13**
10 a.m. - Penn-Mar Shropshire Breeders Club Spring meeting, Menhennet Farm, Cochranville.
- Sunday, May 14**
Mother's Day
- Tuesday, May 16**
8 p.m. - Ephrata Young Farmers monthly meeting, "Incentives for Sons and Hired Help," vocational agriculture department, Ephrata Area High School
- County Grange visitation meetings, Colerain Grange, host, Quarryville Fire Hall.
- Thursday, May 18**
1 p.m. - FFA Land Judging Contest, Manheim Central High School

Finding a Way to Process Food Better



The more hands involved in handling asparagus, the higher the cost. Yet, it is this rapid handling that assures the consumer of a fresh, tender product.



John Cope looks over the stock in his freezer at the East Petersburg processing plant. Once asparagus is frozen it is kept here at zero degrees until ready for shipping.

How many times have you gone to your local supermarket, saw fresh, green asparagus and then decided not to buy it because of the price? "Asparagus is costly because of the way it must be processed. There are a great many hands involved to get that asparagus from the field onto your table."

So says John Cope, owner of John F. Cope, Inc., Manheim, RD 1. And he ought to know, because he has been growing, processing and selling asparagus since 1948.

Now Cope's corn is widely known throughout this area. But so is Cope's asparagus and since this is the time of the year for the processing of the tender, green stalks, Lancaster Farming visited the John F. Cope processing plant near East Petersburg.

"I first began to grow and process asparagus in 1948. I didn't even like the stuff at the time but I was in New Jersey and watched some men cutting asparagus in a field. By the time the asparagus was cut until it was finally moved onto a truck it had been setting around for almost a whole day. I thought that a better method could be found to handle it so I came back home and began to raise some myself," recalls Cope.

That small beginning has mushroomed into an estimate that this year Cope's will process over 80,000 pounds of asparagus.

"And we could handle more. I was thinking about planting some more acreage this year but I am getting a little older now and I'm not sure that I want to expand the business any further," said Cope.

It takes from three to five years to get into the production end of the asparagus business. It takes at least three years for the crowns and roots to mature and then another year or two for the stalk to grow to harvest size.

Once the crop is cut it is brought quickly to the processing plant. "We once had a saying," Cope said, "The sun never rises on Cope's asparagus on harvest day. That is, we would have the asparagus cut before the sun came up and into the processing plant as early as possible. Now that we have grown larger we can't make that claim any more. But we make every effort to get the asparagus into the plant as quickly as possible. It can't be left to sit around."

The key to good asparagus is fast processing. Once it arrives at the processing plant it is unloaded onto a conveyor belt which takes the asparagus through a wash cycle. Then it is taken inside for sorting and sizing. There are about twenty-five or so employees at the Cope processing plant. They receive the asparagus and then prepare it for either fresh packing or freezing.

"We were one of the first companies to use polyethylene bags in packaging our fresh asparagus," notes Cope proudly. The asparagus, before it is packaged, is sized and only the larger spears go to the consumer. The tips and cuts are generally used in the frozen food end of the business.

(Continued On Page 34)

4-H Calendar

- Monday, May 15**
7:30 p.m. - New Holland 4-H Baby Beef Club meeting, home of Sue and William Hughes.
- 8 p.m. - 4-H County Council reorganizational meeting, Farm and Home Center.
- Tuesday, May 16**
7:30 p.m. - Garden Spot Community 4-H Club meeting, Room 114, Conestoga Valley High School.
- Wednesday, May 17**
7:45 p.m. - 4-H Horse Judging meeting, Farm and Home Center.
- Thursday, May 18**
6:45 p.m. - Elizabethtown Pig and Rabbit 4-H Club meeting, home of Dan Baum, Elizabethtown.
- Saturday, May 20**
9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. - County Council car wash, Wolf Motors, 1485 Manheim Pike, Lancaster.

In This Issue

Classified Ads	35 thru 39
Editorial Page	10
Market Section	2, 3, 4
Sales Register	28-29
Thoughts in Passing	8
Women's Section	24 thru 27

Farm and Home Foundation Awards Ten Scholarships

Ten Lancaster County High School seniors each received \$400 agriculture and home economics scholarships this week. The scholarships were announced at a meeting of the Farm and Home and Home Foundation Tuesday night to the following:

Cynthia Lou Binkley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard B. Binkley, 16 South Fulton Street, Strasburg, Lampeter-Strasburg High School, who plans to attend Mansfield State College.

Douglas Brenner, son of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Brenner, Conestoga RD2, Penn Manor High School, who will attend Penn State University.

Mary Lou Brodhecker, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. K. Walter Brodhecker, 1702 Zarker Road, Lancaster, from Manheim Township High School, who plans to attend Messiah College.

Cynthia Ann Darkes, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lester H.

Darkes, 572 East Willow Street, Elizabethtown, Elizabethtown Area High School, who will attend Harding College.

Gary Dean, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Dean Jr, Strasburg RD1, Lampeter-Strasburg High School, who will attend Penn State University.

Clyde Erb, son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Erb, Columbia RD2, Penn Manor High School, who will attend Penn State University.

Carol Harting, daughter of Mrs. Helen Harting, 606 South Fourth Street, Denver, Cocalico High School, who plans to attend Mansfield State College.

Randolph Hickernell, son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Hickernell, Landisville, Hempfield High School, who will attend the University of Idaho.

Gail Ann Kutz, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul G. Kutz, 842 N. (Continued On Page 34)



These long stretches of tobacco muslin Thursday revealed the push of young plants underneath, but also showed that the tender tobacco plants have a long way to go before they can be planted on

Memorial Day, or soon thereafter. The corn planting is going very slow due to wet conditions under the topsoil. However, reports are good that much corn should start going in today.