

# Mary Sue Shaw cans in "Barren" surroundings

By JOYCE BUPP  
York Co. Reporter

STEWARTSTOWN, Pa. - It's known as "The Barrens." But the 240-acre farm, 150 acres of which is planted in marching lines of neatly-kept fruit trees, is anything but barren.

Sitting amidst branches heavily loaded with fat red plums, blushing nectarines, and swelling apples is a stately red brick house. It's the home of Glenn and Mary Sue Shaw, Stewartstown R1, partners in the family orchard business.

"I love to watch things grow," sums up Mary Sue, commenting on her life as an active member of the fruit-growing industry. And a quick look around the Shaw home confirms that fact.

A large vegetable garden begins a little beyond the kitchen door, bursting with ripening beans, broccoli, and tomatoes. Just a few steps from the other side of the house, pumpkin vines cast their runners in all directions, totally concealing the ground beneath. Brilliantly blooming flowers catch a visitor's eye as they brighten the flower beds, and plants cascade from pots and hanging baskets.

"Our son Barron, who's seven, is the seventh generation of Shaw's on this land," Mary Sue explains. Glenn Shaw and his father work the land together, and have 80 per cent of the orchard space in apple trees. The Mason-Dixon line slices through the farm, making the Shaws members of agriculture in both Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Surrounded by bushels of ripening foods, it's almost obvious that Mary Sue would be a devoted food canner, freezer, and preserver.

"I grew up with the canning philosophy as a child in Arkansas. We had a family of eight and my mother always preserved food," explains the slender, pretty farm wife. "While Glenn was

studying for his doctorate in plant physiology in College Park, Md., I came up here every weekend in the Summer to can for us."

"My mother-in-law was so understanding and patient to put up with me underfoot in her kitchen all those times," she laughingly recalls.

A listing of the goodies on the Shaw's pantry shelves grows longer each year, as Mary Sue experiments with new recipes and ways of putting up nature's bounty that surrounds her home. Two freezers, as well, are constantly being utilized and refilled.

For the second year in a row, a large apricot tree bore a welcome harvest. Apricots are notoriously frost-prone, so the golden fruits are double welcome and put to use by the Shaws in several ways. In addition to the traditional canned apricots, Winter months will find this fruit-loving family enjoying them dried, in jam, and as the base for a thirst-quenching nectar. The nectar is prepared by

pureeing the apricots into a concentrated form, then adding water to liquify at serving time.

"Our table has applesauce on it every meal," adds Mary Sue. With apples being the main production commodity, the Shaw family enjoys this year-round favorite fruit in just about every way, imaginable. An avid apple promoter, Mary Sue sports tiny red apple earrings, a quietly unique advertisement for the family's livelihood.

"Although our family likes the basics, mostly, I frequently try new recipes using the canned and frozen fruits. We often have fruit cobbler, and eat fruit on ice cream almost every day," she emphasizes. One favorite topping is made by thickening canned black Bing sweet cherries and their juice with cornstarch, and serving it atop vanilla ice cream.

Many favorite preserving recipes have originated in what Mary Sue kiddingly labels "her Bible," a well-

used copy of the Better Homes and Gardens Cookbook, copyright 1942. And, other-special recipes have been shared by friends, like her conversation-stopping "Died and Gone to Heaven Pickles."

Well-balanced meals including vegetables are important to Mary Sue, and so a large portion of her preserving time is devoted to them.

Her self-imposed goal each year is to have a ripe tomato by July 4. Some of the bushels that follow soon afterward become homemade ketchup.

A dishwasher is one of this expert's favorite canning aids; she fills the appliance with jars to be used, runs the cycle, and has them sterilized all in one operation.

"If they happen to have a spot dried on the glass, I scrub it with very fine steel wool. Then, because the wool will rust, I use it to wash windows soon after. It won't scratch the glass, but easily

removes any dried on dirt or dust - even bugs!" she notes.

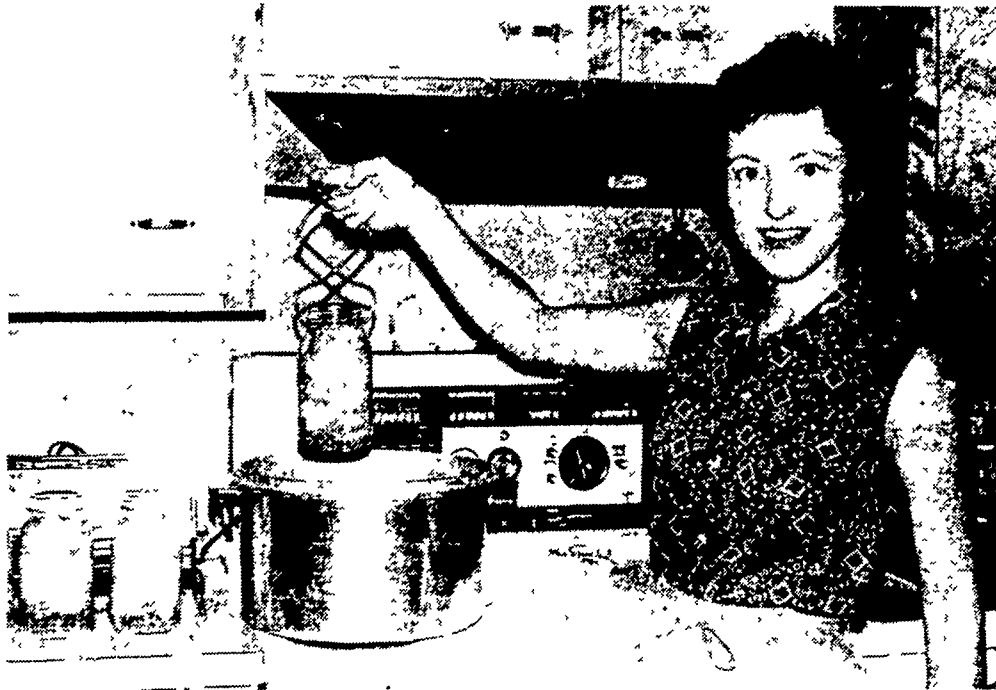
Quite knowledgeable about the fruit operation, Mary Sue sells produce for a few weeks at the beginning of the season, until large enough quantities are being harvested to warrant opening the packing house and sales stand. Customers frequently ask for her advice on best varieties and methods of preserving.

"My favorite apple is the Jonathan," she quickly admits. "It's a wonderful all-

round apple for eating or cooking. York Imperials make excellent canning and commercial apples. We also grow a good many pears; one of our favorites is the Magness variety, but I can mostly Bartletts. Harmony is probably our number-one choice in peaches."

A side-benefit of the apple packing is the production of gallons and gallons of sweet delicious cider, which the

(Continued on Page 105)



Mary Sue Shaw takes another canner full of peaches off the stove to brighten cold winter days ahead.

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