

She first toddled around the packing house -- now she wears the banner of apple queen

By JOYCE BUPP
Staff correspondent

YORK — She's been sorting and helping with apples ever since she was old enough to toddle around the packing house on the family farm near Leader Heights. With a background like that, it was almost inevitable that Sandy Markey would someday wear the crown and banner of the Pennsylvania Apple Queen.

Pretty and slender, Sandy is the daughter of Ronald

and Marilyn Markey, Indian Rock Dam Road. The Markeys operate a vegetable, fruit and poultry family marketing business with Ronald's parents, the Kenneth Markeys.

About 100 acres are cropped in apples, peaches, apricots, strawberries, sweet corn, potatoes, and other fresh market crops. The flock of 3000 laying hens provide eggs for the retail sales, too. Produce is sold through four-day-weekly at-

tendance at two popular York area farmers' markets, the Eastern Market and downtown's Central Market.

Sandy won her crown during the state Horticultural Association meeting at Hershey, held in February. With blossoms just now bursting into bloom across the East, she began her promotional activities this week at the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival in Winchester, West Virginia. Thirty-four princesses and horticulture queens participated in the annual festivities, which included parades, luncheons and the coronation of a youthful celebrity as honorary queen.

A 1976 graduate of Dallastown Area High School, Sandy is employed in the installment loan department of the Commonwealth National Bank of York. Presently pursuing courses with the American Institution of Banking and with York College, she is eyeing a career in the agri-business loan field.

Naturally, apples appear regularly in many forms on the Markey dinner table, but there's still one unbeaten family favorite.

"Pies," grins Sandy when questioned how she most often uses apples. "We bake them as a family and usually make eight or 10 at a time." Although the excess pies are

frozen for later use, the Markeys always bake them first and then simple reheat or thaw them in a microwave oven as needed.

Staymans or Jonathans are Sandy's favorite apple varieties, because she opts for a slight tartness in flavor. She maintains a good-humored feud over this choice with her dad, who prefers the Red or Golden Delicious as his apple favorite.

Applesauce also comes in for heavy use during meals at this farm home. Marilyn and her daughters prepare gallons of the sauce at a time, freezing the excess for instant menu additions. Apples are never peeled for saucing; instead the stems are removed, the fruit is quartered and cooked until soft, and then the resulting pulp is run through a food mill. Apple skins left on during the sauce cooking process will add a pink color to the finished product.

Sandy and her younger sisters, Karen, 17, and Joyce, 15, have been working members of the farm operation since they were small children. All three girls can often be found helping to pick the fresh market crops and the family spends many evenings together packing produce for market the following day. Sometimes, they take turns behind the

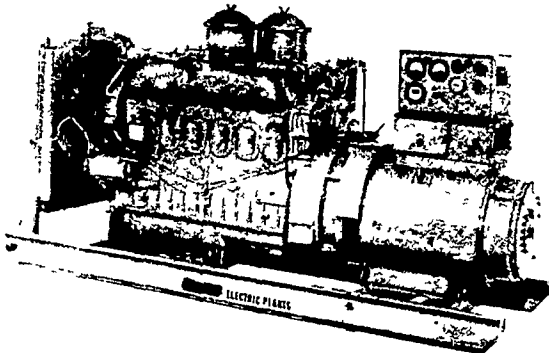
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Transforming apples into pies is a labor of love performed often in the kitchen of Sandy Markey's home.

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