

Preserving some farm land and having fun, too

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
RAWLINSVILLE — Tom and Cindy Hampton have their own little agricultural land preservation project going and are having some fun at carrying it out, too.

Owners of 34 acres in southern Lancaster County, they're preserving their own little block of ag land through the Tucquan Vineyard — the original grape growing operation in Lancaster County in modern times.

"The land down here is far from ideal for normal agriculture," Cindy explains.

"But the rocky, well-

drained land is quite suitable for grapes and fruit trees and we're able to keep the land in agriculture."

Their vineyard is located on a southerly slope, one of the highest in the county. The area is moderated by both the nearby Muddy Run reservoir and the Susquehanna River.

The transplanted Cabbage Hill Lancaster City couple started the operation in 1968, which makes it the first vineyard in the county since those dating from Colonial times were frozen out in the mid-1800's.

Only about a fifth of their land is cultivated — five

acres in grapes and a couple in fruit trees — but the intensive operation permits them to keep the remainder in its original virgin river hills status.

The Hamptons just began retail commercial sales of wine last year after serving amateur wine-makers and homemakers preparing juices and juices for a number of years. They also provided a lot of the rootstock for other later vineyards in this area.

Tucquan produces the raw product and bottles both grape and apple wines, including Chancellor, Foch, Cascade, Seyval Blanc,

White Blend, Steuben, Catwaba and Sweet Cascade. They grow both French hybrid and American variety grapes, along with red and yellow Delicious, Winesap, MacIntosh and Stayman apples.

Grape growing is very labor intensive," Cindy explains.

We pick all our grapes by hand, more than 20 tons a season. But this is the only time that we hire extra labor.

"We do everything else ourselves. Right now, we're in the midst of bottling last

year's crop to get ready for the coming August harvest."

Tom is a millwright at the Armstrong Floor Plant, a skill that came in quite handy in putting together the piping and tubing for the wine-making operation.

Cindy is also quite active elsewhere, including chairing arrangements for the Lancaster Town Fair in October.

In a curious combination, they're a couple that want to preserve something in both their urban and now rural heritages.

In addition to the wine

operation, the couple retails various home-grown fruit, such as nectarines, apricots, apples, peaches, blueberries and even some pumpkins in the fall.

The two operations are kept quite separate though in keeping with strict regulations. The wine is sold in an attractive tasting room, while the fruit is sold out in the parking lot.

Located just a few miles south of Rawlinsville, Tucquan offers a view of neatly trellised grapes and apple trees from the

(Turn to Page C31)



Tucquan Vineyard operated by Cindy Hampton, above, and her husband, Tom, is a true farm-winery in southern Lancaster County. It is located just south of Rawlinsville along the Drytown Road.



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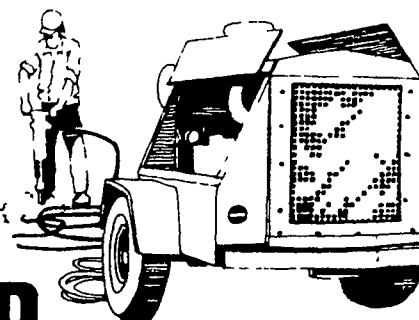
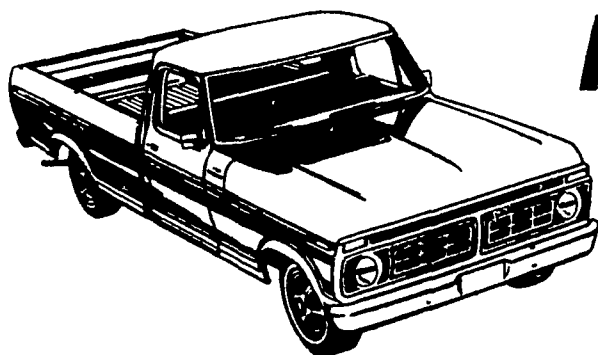
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