



Picked early in the morning by the summer crews, red-ripe tomatoes wait for delivery from the fields to retail and wholesale customers of the Raab firm.



Many local high school students find summer employment at the Raab business, performing such jobs as sorting the pear crop.

Fruitful feifdom

(Continued from Page A21)

enjoyment of the pleasurable free bonuses of fresh air and exercise afforded in the chance to harvest

their own food.

While the market is open six days a week, year round, strawberry season marks the first

major spring harvest push as the dozen acres of straw-mulched berry patch begin to show red. A couple of acres of raspberries follow, ripening along with some ten acres of several varieties of cherries.

Mid-summer main crops include 16 acres of sweet corn, three of peaches, and over five of cantaloupes and cucumbers. Assorted vegetable plantings, from asparagus to zucchini, round out the broad selection of table-fresh offerings.

Apples are the mainstay of the orchard, with 36 acres cropped to several varieties that comprise a major part of the winter months' produce displays. Fall favorites of local customers include pears and seasonal decorative produce, like gourds and pumpkins for pies and jack-o-lanterns.

"You name it, we got it," quips this veteran, as he pauses just long enough for a fast trip through the beautifully-kept orchards.

In 1960, Raab's love of people drew him into the local political arena, where he served nine years on the township's board of commissioners. A four-year term as president of the York County board of commissioners followed.

A decision that Raab still calls "the hardest of my life" came in 1972, as he debated between a farther pursuit of public service or a return to full-time farming.

In the end, seedlings, soil and sprouts won out over the proverbial smoke-filled rooms of campaign strategy, and the "Jolly Green Giant" retired to again take the reins of his first love.

Both a sixth and seventh generation of Raab's have been drawn back to these fruit-studded rolling fields, rich in family history.

Jane Raab Lehman, his daughter, is sales manager of the business. Meanwhile, 12-year-old Jonathon, Joe's grandson and son of P. Joseph Raab II is learning the business literally at the bottom of the ladder, working with the picking, packing and sorting summer crews.

A third Raab, Joe's brother Walter, has been a long-time employee of the family firm, assisting with the management and handling of the crops.

Cars are lined up in the parking lot, another wagonload of produce backs up to the unloading dock and three employees wait to confer with the boss. Relentlessly, the phone is jangling again and Raab takes off again to wrap up more produce bargaining, his parting lament still hanging in the air.

"If only we farmers could get together...."

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