What's Christmas

(Continued from Page A13)

Claussen invites them to come early to tag their trees. Customers have come as early as October. When the tree is tagged and the customer is ready to cut it, the staff members bring the tree to the barn, use an air hose to blow out the dead needles, make sure the bottom cut is straight and drill a whole up into the trunk from the bottom so the tree will fit onto the stand holder.

"I have people who come to look at the tree, then come back with the family and tag the tree," Claussen said. "Later they come back to visit the tree and at last, come back one more time to cut the tree and take it home. They bring camcorders and cameras out to the field. Selecting a

tree is a family event for them. They really care about their tree. I am amazed how much time people will spend on a tree they intend to throw away after Christmas.

"So we give them and their tree special individual attention and our efforts seem to be appreciated. I need to be commercial enough so people know I'm here, but no flashing lights or neon signs," Claussen said. "Many of my customers come for the country atmosphere and we bend over backwards to share our country atmosphere with them."

In addition to the retail business at the farm, some trees are sold wholesale and some for fundraising activities. At other times of the year, trees are dug and sold for landscaping projects.

Everyone on the farm workspart-time. A number of employees have been referred by the guidance counselor at Penn Manor High School. Claussen likes to create jobs in his business. "I tell the high school guidance counselor to send me kids who want to work, but who can also use the bucks," Claussen said. "We hire all part-time help, and I try to have a bank of people on call at all times."

Claussen said the Christmas tree business is often overlooked in Lancaster County. He believes there are many trees growing in the nooks and crannies around the county. "More than you realize," he said.

But he thinks it's a good part time job for someone with some acres to plant in trees. "Everything my fellow worker told me about

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the Christmas tree business was correct, except that they don't require a lot of work," Claussen

"But we have fun. We work hard to make it fun. I keep hearing about the economy and the oversupply of trees, but I guarantee people are going to have a tree for Christmas," Claussen said.

"What's Christmas without a tree?"

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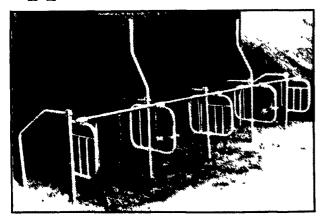
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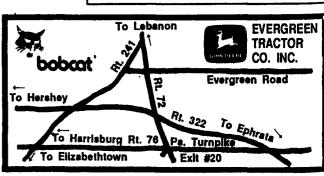
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