

# Who Says Pumpkins Don't Grow On Trees?

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HOLTWOOD (Lancaster Co.)

—Who said pumpkins don't grow on trees?

John and Martha Herr have living proof. A pumpkin hangs from the pine tree in their backyard.

If you look a bit closer, you can see the pumpkin vine hidden beneath the tree branches. Herr had planted pumpkins in his garden, and while gone on a month-long trip, the pumpkin vine meandered from the garden, wrapped itself around the tree, and sprouted a pumpkin.

The pumpkin growing on a tree seems symbolic of the Herr family who appear to thrive on impossibilities.

John is a chemist who sang at Carnegie Hall, ran for mayor, farmed, and studied at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore for seven years on a part-time basis while raising five children. The couple had a son who lost his legs in a mountain climbing accident but later conquered rock climbing on artificial legs.

Martha likes to help others conquer the impossible. She teaches illiterate adults to read. She is concerned that there are 35,000 adults in the county who cannot read. She is now the literacy tutor coordinator for the Lancaster-Lebanon Literacy Center.

The Herr couple, who married in college, decided when they married that they wanted lots of children fast and to own a nice farm.

"I am a tenth generation Hans Herr descendant, so owning good farmland was something I always aspired to do. It happened," said John, who goes by the full name

John Bucher Herr, to differentiate himself from the numerous other John Herrs in the county.

Herr's most consuming passion is singing. He grew up with no particular interest in music. His family moved often. The longest time Herr spent at one school, he said, was seven months. That was at the Edward Hand Junior High School in Lancaster, where the U.S. Marine Chorus presented a choral program.

"I was wowed by that," Herr said. But his love for sports was stronger, and Herr pursued sports. When he attended Eastern Mennonite College, his interest in sports continued, but he found time to take a voice class — not a whole lot of training for a person who would later achieve his dream of singing at Carnegie Hall.

But first, he worked a few years as a chemist, built a house, sold it, and purchased a 130-acre farm, which they named "Leban Kai" — a combination of German and Hawaiian words that mean "living by the water". The farm is situated at the head waters of Muddy Run Creek.

At first, the Herrs fattened calves for steers to raise the money needed to pay the farm mortgage. Later, they raised tomatoes, corn, and hay.

"Those days were the heyday for tomato raising. If you had early tomatoes, you received a phenomenal price," he said.

The Herrs raised eight acres of tomatoes, but it was never enough, Herr said. "It's still to be determined what can be grown on 100 feet (of land)," Herr said.

In the wintertime, Herr would build a house or two, which he later sold or used as a rental property.

Eventually, the tomato business dwindled and Herr concentrated on buying rental properties to fix up in the city.

Every summer the family took a long trip. Mountain climbing and skiing became family hobbies. Their son Hugh became obsessed with climbing and established many records in soloing. But when Hugh was 17 years old, he lost his legs during an ice climbing expedition. The story about the accident, how he lost his legs, how he learned to climb on artificial legs, and later design prothesis and sneakers for amputees is told in the book "Second Ascent" by Alison Osius.

The Herrs travel to other countries about three times a year. They continue to live on the farm but rent the barns and land to neighboring farmers. But Herr hasn't lost his yen for farming. His dream is to raise the biggest pumpkin ever. In his travels, he has viewed some giant species, one in Connecticut that reached 910 pounds.

This year he did raise some large pumpkins in his garden, but the one on the tree, although small, is the one that is considered his prize. At first it reached almost to the top of the tree, but as it grows, the weight of the pumpkin brings it lower.



John and Martha Herr show off the pumpkin that grows from a tree on their farm. The pumpkin started growing near the top of the tree, but the weight of it brings it lower and lower.

## Plastic Coatings On Teeth Give Lasting Smiles

CHICAGO, Ill. — Children who have dental sealants applied to their teeth today will be smiling for years to come.

The clear plastic coatings can prevent 90 percent of tooth decay, but just one child in 10 has had the sealants applied.

"Dental sealants are highly effective in preventing decay on the biting surfaces of molars, where the majority of decay occurs in children," said Erik Olsen, D.D.S., chairman of the American Fund for Dental Health.

Dentists recommend that sealants be applied to the first permanent molars soon after they erupt, between ages 6-8, and to the second molars when they appear, around ages 12-14. Sealing both sets of teeth as soon as they appear prevents decay from taking hold

and destroying the teeth.

The coatings, which seal out decay and seal in healthy teeth, are quick, easy and painless to apply. First, the teeth are thoroughly cleaned and dried. Next, the tooth surface is treated with a solution that enables the sealant to bond to it. A liquid coating is then painted onto the top of the tooth. Finally, the liquid hardens, providing solid protection against decay.

"Dental sealants are not new, they're not experimental, and they're not used enough," Dr. Siegal said.

Parents interested in helping their children have healthy smiles that last should contact their dentist, their local health department or write the American Fund for Dental Health at 211 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611.

## 4H

### Happenings

At the last P.A.W.S. 4-H business meeting the group discussed new and old business and held elections. Some new business was upcoming Carnival Night and the Holiday Workshop, P.A.W.S. TV debut on a show called Kids Corner which will be aired October 30 on Channel 12.

In election news the new officers are president, Andrea Proscics

of Lebanon; vice president, Jeff Bowlby of Flemington; secretary, Matt Savarino of Flemington; treasurer, Mat Bishop of Flemington; corresponding secretary Peter Staples of Flemington; historian, Chris Savarino of Flemington; photographer, Becky Palumbo of Lebanon; and awards master, Christine Trontill of Lebanon.



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