

# Brown's Market Celebrates Half-Century



From a tiny business started in the family basement, the fruit-gift basket sideline has developed into a major part of Brown's Orchard Retail Market. Gathered at the fruit basket center are, from left, Many, Scott, Brenda and Travis, and Stan and Nona Brown.

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only use what is absolutely necessary; and the new materials are very short-lasting with little residual. We don't want to throw money away on unnecessary application or use anything that in any way might endanger ourselves," Brown says.

Still, chemical use and food concerns continue to be an occasionally-volatile issue for the industry. Like many apple growers, the Browns are awaiting the issuance of federal rules on the pasteurization of cider, uncertain which direction they

want to proceed. Pasteurization is costly. Unpasteurization can also be costly, if even the rumor of a food scare arises.

Stan does note that during the much-publicized controversy over the use of the chemical Alar, apple sales did indeed climb. Even for veteran retail marketers like the Browns, food safety issues are confusing and weighty problems.

Though the orchard contains a few remaining apple trees from earlier years, some up to 55 years old, new varieties con-

stantly offer improved qualities. Fuji is a late apple which stores well, Jonagold a newer semi-tart good for cooking, Ginger Gold, an early "wonderful" yellow and Gala, a popular favorite.

"They are all very flavorful, some almost revolutionary," Brown comments of the increasingly better qualities of newer apples. "The old varieties are slowing dying in favor of the newer ones." Sometimes, he admits, getting people to just try the newer introductions is the most difficult part of the variety

evolution.

With the next generation of Browns taking increasing responsibility, Stan and Nona are giving even more time to education and leadership activities. Both have always been deeply committed to supporting agriculture and the community, including programs such as 4-H and the Chamber of Commerce.

Stan has just stepped down from 12 years on the board of the Pennsylvania Horticulture Association, serving the past two years as its president. That included helping to organize the annual meeting, which pulls together growers of fruits and vegetables for a combined gathering of about 1800. He has also worked closely with the Farm Show apple dumpling booth, a fund-raiser which generates some \$20,000 toward the association's education and promotion efforts.

"It was a real privilege to serve in that capacity," he says of his work with the trade association of more than 600 members across the commonwealth. "The people have been great and we've made a lot of long-lasting friends."

Education is the PHA's primary effort, including teaming with Penn State extension specialists in holding meetings around the state. The organiza-

tion is also heavily involved in horticulture research, providing some \$14 million over the years toward a variety of projects.

Working closely with the Horticulture trade Alliance, a lobbying arm of the industry, the horticulture group is constantly involved with legislative efforts. Labor issues have been an ongoing issue of concern to the growers' group. Food safety is another area of critical attention, and, in Brown's opinion, a "major scare to all of agriculture."

Having turned the president's gavel over to his successor, Adams County grower Jim Lott, Brown looks forward to continued participation in industry marketing conferences and trade events.

"If you pick up one tip or pointer, it's worth the time and effort it takes. It's also refreshing to talk with others, learn how others do things," he says of their involvement.

And while Stan and Nona Brown are always on the lookout for new ideas they can adapt to their business, they have no plans to make any hasty or dramatic changes to a formula that has been highly successful.

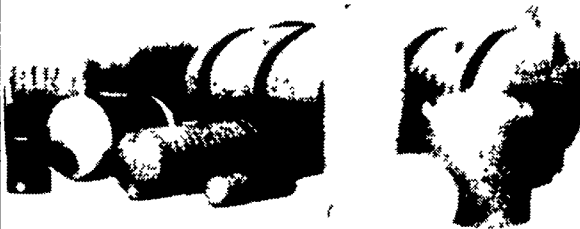
"I don't envision a different mission for the Brown's business," he says. "Just to continue doing what we're doing."



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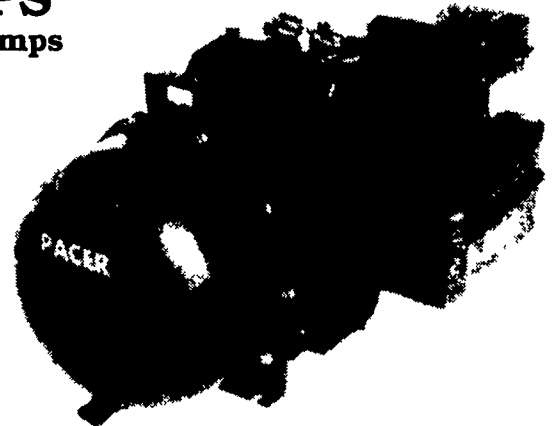
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