



Frecon Orchards is ablaze with spectacular blooms in the peach tree part of the orchard. Barbara Gilbert, a 30-year employee of Frecon Orchards, enjoys late season pruning on these Saturn peach trees. The Saturn peach is a freestone, white flesh peach that is shaped like a saucer with a small seed that pops out, making it quick and easy snack for children and adults.

Springtime Blossoms

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff

BOYERTOWN (Berks Co.) —

When Richard S. Frecon purchased an orchard in the area known as "The Fruit Basket of the World in 1944," he didn't foresee that most competitors' orchards would eventually dwindle to nothing and that Frecon Fruit Farms Inc. would blossom into a thriving three-generational business.

The survival of the 200-acre farm has not been without sweat,

tears, and continual education to keep abreast of changing consumer habits.

"Our goal has always been to provide the finest fruits and vegetables grown, never to be the biggest," said Richard S. Frecon Sr., who was a fruit and vegetable inspector for the state of Pennsylvania before he settled in Boyertown.

Although retired, the elder Frecon remains chairman of the board for the three separate businesses in the family enterprise, which

include the retail sales outlet that daughter-in-law Torrie oversees, the wholesale growing operation that her husband Henry manages, and an orchard supply business run by Henry's brother Richard A. A sister Teri serves as secretary and treasurer for the enterprise.

"But like any farm, we fill in wherever needed," Torrie said.

The orchards spread for miles on some of the hilliest land in the area.

"It's a bit difficult to have an orchard in such a hilly area, but the

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Frecon Orchards is a family enterprise with three separate businesses. The retail outlet and wholesale growing operation is headed by Henry and his wife Torrie, at left. Teri Frecon, center, is secretary and treasurer for the enterprise begun by her father, Richard S. Frecon. Richard is retired but remains chairman of the board for the three separate businesses. An orchard supply business is run by Richard A., right.

'Willow In the Wind' Will Go To Highest Bidder

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff

MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.)

— Fifty years ago, Eileen Miller was one of the first students to attend Kraybill's Mennonite School. Later she married Galen Benner and all six of their children attended the school. Today, three of the Benners' grandchildren are students at the Mount Joy school, which has grown from 31 students to 418.

Throughout the years, the school has relied on an annual benefit sale to boost its treasury, enabling students a lower price to attend the private school.

In those beginning years, Eileen's mother (Barbara Miller) headed the quilt committee.

"My mother soon discovered that if she picked out a good quilt, it would bring a good price," Eileen said.

Now that Eileen is in charge, she carries on the tradition of her mother. This year Eileen didn't need to search to find a breathtaking quilt that promises to bring a hefty bid at the school's upcoming benefit sale to be held May 7-8.

Eileen knew exactly where to look for the most stunning quilt as a special donation for the school's 50th anniversary—her daughter-in-law. Cheryl, married to Eileen's son Lamar Benner, is a quilt artist. She designs original patterns in many different styles.

The one selected for the benefit auction is called "Willow In The Wind." The contemporary-style quilt features bold, bright tropical flowers, cheerful butterflies and dragonflies, and Cheryl's trademark—a petite ladybug. The quilt explodes with joyful colors and surprising details stitched onto a muted white and beige background.

Cheryl designs quilts with so many details to applique that seamstresses recognize that her designs cannot be stitched in a rush. Cheryl has several employees who complete the applique and quilting for the commissioned quilts.

"Cheryl designs them, but she doesn't make them," said Eileen. "I wonder if she had to make them if she would put in all that detail?"

But it's the details that bring

depth and life to the design. Without the detail, it would be just another quilt — not a unique, original that is recognizable as one designed by an artist and will gain in value in years to come.

People are prone to copy Cheryl's designs and claim them as their own. It's a frustration that all great artists face. Usually, the counterfeiters alter a few details and claim it as their own original, but counterfeit copies often lack balanced scale and the detail so prevalent in Cheryl's designs.

Cheryl became a quilt designer almost by accident. After she was graduated from the Art Institute of Philadelphia, Cheryl took a job with People's Place, where she designed book covers and illustrated children's books.

About 10 years ago, she was asked to design a quilt for People's Place. Her first design was called "County Love." The design took the county by storm, and it continues to be one of the most popular quilt patterns around. Since then, Cheryl has designed a series of quilts that are featured in books:

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Cheryl Benner designed this contemporary quilt that she calls "Willow in the Wind." Her designs are known for their detail, eye-catching beauty, and a ladybug trademark that appears somewhere in all of her patterns. Several of Cheryl's quilt patterns are published in books. Cheryl also illustrates children's books and designs fabrics.

