

# Neighbors Are My Customers'

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ideas includes looking at better ways to manage weeds, either by pesticide use or mechanized weeders or a combination of the two.

One exciting development, he said, was the addition of 25-50 trees of peaches which will come during apple season in October. This new variety is one of 50 varieties of peaches grown at the farm.

"We have had success with September peaches and are looking to launch out into possibly October. We planted them last year and will know a few years down the road."

Another long-range idea is a possible greenhouse expansion.

"I see technology changing in the greenhouse industry. We handle over 100 varieties of just herbs. I feel like, after all these years, I've just scratched the surface," he said.

A better flower display and a facelift for the entire outer wall of the stand is also on Erb's "to-do" list. The early sweet corn enters the scene on June 21, followed by other varieties which will fill the market until the end of October.

The fall crop includes pumpkins, gourds, Indian and popcorn. "In the fall, the whole season is different," said Erb.

Among the produce varieties, as with many stands, sweet corn is king. Although

peaches are also an important crop, corn leads in terms of dollar value and sheer acreage, said Erb.

## A Business Of Variety

"We have a network of employees who help do different things," he said, estimating that the business employs 25-30 seasonal workers. "We have high school and college-age students along with retirees who work a variety of schedules to fill niches."

The variety of employees also means a variety of interests. "We have some employees who love to come to the farm and get dirty, and others that love to interact with the customers," he said.

Erb enjoys production over administrative responsibilities. He uses words such as "exciting," "invigorating" and "challenging" when he speaks about his job.

"The challenge is with all the variety we deal with —

such as energy costs, weather, new varieties of plants, new technology — to have a consistent, quality produce. That's what keeps me interested."

A focus on harvesting the fruit when it is at the peak of ripeness is a hallmark of the stand, and what makes the fruit so popular with the customers.

"I'm growing a product that's here today and had better be eaten by tomorrow at the latest," said Erb. "We're trying to give the community the next best thing to having a peach tree in the back yard."

Erb's parents, Ruth and Roy Erb, began farming in 1938. The next year they sold produce off the back of a truck or with a sign out on the road, inviting customers back on the farm. By 1954, a roadside stand was built at the location of Brooklawn Farm's present stand.



Truly a roadside stand: one of the stand's seasonal employees, Dora McAlpin, Millersville, operates the cash register.

## Apple Crop Outlook, Marketing Conference Aug. 16-17

MCLEAN, Va. — The U.S. Apple Association (USApple) announced that its 2001 Apple Crop Outlook and Marketing Conference will be Aug. 16-17 at Chicago's Fairmont Hotel.

USApple's annual conference combines market outlooks and networking, and is the premiere gathering of the apple industry in the U.S.,

and perhaps the world. More than 350 industry leaders from the U.S. and around the world, representing all segments of the apple industry — production, processing, sales and marketing — attended the 2000 conference.

"USApple's meeting provides significant value year after year," said USApple President and CEO Kraig R.

Naasz. "The latest U.S. and world apple market intelligence combined with unparalleled networking opportunities make this meeting a one-stop source for apple industry information."

The 2001 conference will again feature current, first-hand information needed to compete in today's global apple marketplace. Outlooks for the U.S., European, Chinese, Canadian and Mexican crops will be detailed. Other sessions will focus on apple processing demand, apple juice concentrate issues, regional crop discussions and

more.

As in the past two years, the conference will again include the association's annual business meeting, and presentation of the industry's two top awards: the American Fruit Grower magazine's Apple Grower of the Year and The Packer/The Grower publications' Apple Person of the Year.

USApple will distribute registration information to members and past conference attendees this spring. Other interested persons can contact USApple at (703) 442-8850 for more information.

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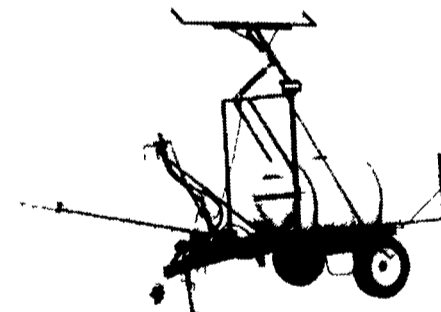
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