

# Area still retains family fruit farms

By GRACE R. DOVE  
Post Staff

Once known primarily for its large family farms, the Back Mountain is still home to several popular fruit growers, one of which has been operated by the same family continuously for 167 years.

Brace's Orchards in Franklin Township is owned by the Brace family, who first began farming here in 1826.

"It started as a hay, grain and dairy operation, with a few fruit trees," said owner Larry Brace, who today runs the orchards with his son, Paul, and daughter, Linda Mancinelli. "Different generations expanded the orchards back in the early 1900's."

He has about 70 acres, planted with apples, peaches, pears, prunes and grapes - any type of tree fruit that will grow in this climate.

Brace never counted them, but figures he has thousands of trees.

In addition to good eating, the apples yield another treat, a popular and tasty cider, which the Braces make preservative-free and sell to local supermarkets.

It's a 12-hour a day, seven day a week job, with little time off. There's many hours of hard work in every season of the year - pruning, planting, spraying, mowing, picking and making cider.

With all their hard work, farmers can't control their biggest challenge, the weather. The trees need the right temperatures and rainfall to produce a good crop, which can be damaged if a late spring freeze ruins tender buds or a summer drought stunts the fruit.

Deer, racoons, bugs, mice and birds also present challenges, feasting on leaves, fruit or young shoots. The Braces scare them off with an electronic sound machine.

"It's a way of life," Brace said. "You have to grow up with it and really like it."

Just down the road from Brace is Dymond's, where customers can pick their own strawberries, tomatoes and beans. Dymond's strawberries are known throughout the area.

The Dymonds also raise apples, plums, pears, sweet cherries, pie cherries, blueberries and raspberries, according to Tim Dymond, who operates it with his brother, Fred Dymond, III. Their father and grandfather, Fred, Sr., and Fred, Jr., started the farm in the 1950's.

Their fruit and produce also supply the family's store off Route 309 in Shavertown.

"When you're in farming, you're your own boss," Tim Dymond said. "You aren't cooped up all day indoors - you get to work outside."

His wife, Jolaine, raises her own veggies for canning and freezing.

"They taste better than the store-bought ones," Dymond said.

Although strawberries have only a two-week harvest season, they require work all year round, Dymond said.

Plowing, planting, spraying, keeping weeds down, irrigating when necessary and replanting every three



DALLAS POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

**IT'S ALL IN THEIR FAMILY** - Larry and Paul Brace and Paul, Jr., inspect an apple tree in their large orchard in Franklin Township. Started 167 years ago, Brace's Orchard has been designated by the state as a "Century Farm" and is one of the area's oldest continuously operating family farms. Seven generations have lived and worked on it, Brace said.

or four years keeps the family busy. It's tough to get help and pay them decent wages, he added.

At the Back Mountain's western end is the Spencer family orchard on top of Larksville Mountain on Huntsville Road in Jackson Township.

Ben "Bud" and Dorothy Spencer raise about 15 acres of apples for eating or cider, eight acres of strawberries and five acres of pumpkins and sweet corn, which they sell at a stand alongside the road. Wyoming County resident Mike Fields helps them run it.

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