

Rohrbach's Farm

Rohrbach's Farm as Told by Mr. Ronald Rohrbach

Interviewed by Mackenzie Wrobel and Ian Schwartz in the spring of 2003

In 1955 Ronald Rohrbach's grandfather and father started the Rohrbachs Farm Market. Here they sold produce for many years. The market then progressed rapidly and surly.

As Rohrbach grew up, he decided to take over the family business after attending college at Penn State. He and his wife Cathy then took over the Farm Market and have been taking care of the place ever since. They have three children, all grown up now.

PATCHWORK: Okay, and your name is?

ROHRBACH: I'm Ronald Rohrbach.

PATCHWORK: And do you have any kids?

ROHRBACH: Yes I do, We've got three children, they're all grown. Deneise is married and lives in Langhorn, Pennsylvania with her husband. Debra is actually here at home but works for CSIU Unit at, out of Lewisburg and teaches Speech Pathology or works with children in the Shamokin School District, and Mark is home on the farm with us.

PATCHWORK: How long have you lived in Columbia County?

ROHRBACH: Basically for me all my life, which is a long...We've been here a long time.

PATCHWORK: In 1951, why did your grandfather and father start the farm market?

ROHRBACH: Basically, selling produce was part of family for a long long time I, I don't remember much from my grandfather's concern but dad always told us from the time he was even little, they used to, at that time, what was called was using truck, truck crops, it was called peddled thing to the, at that time they were called Mom & Pop stores. Like particularly in the Shamokin and Ashland and Mount Carmel area. And so it was something that was always growing produce and direct marketing was always, I guess, in the system

or in your blood line, and the opportunity actually came up for them in 1955. When the opportunity came up for them to, to buy this place which is what my dad wanted to do because there was fruit on it at that time and he felt the location, that he had enough foresight to see the location was pretty good to continue to grow, fruit and vegetables and to continue to retail market. So that's how that whole thing developed.

PATCHWORK: Were the farm markets popular when they started this one?

ROHRBACH: I would have to probably so at that time what was, obviously what was real popular was ya know getting more fresh produce right off the farm. You have to kind of keep in mind that what we see today, what we have available on a year round basis today are a lot of commodities because of transportation situation. Because obviously there wasn't a lot, and a lot of products were only available when they were in season and I can think of even things like you can go to the grocery store or come to our place and buy head lettuce or even things like celery. I mean my dad used to grow celery, and celery actually was a product that was only available in the local community when it was in season, what was growing. Now we get it from California every day of the year. and a lot of commodities like that, so I think the freshness of the farm market was very popular at that time. Particularly things like apples potatoes and eggs, and lots of commodities were sold at that time that you can't do today. And I think of things like fresh poultry, that kind of thing, meat and that kind of thing more inspection on kinds of things. It was a pretty popular thing. A lot more Mom & Pop type of stores.

PATCHWORK: Do you feel the Market was successful in the first 10 years of business?

ROHRBACH: Well, first ten years of business would have and that kind of thing, we wouldn't be able to do it. We have to do the extra thing and the kind of things that are unique to us, or to our marketing or to our farm kind of atmosphere that you can't get in the grocery store, where as you can get the produce in the stores just as well as you can here. So we work on the value added kind of products and like I say some if it is gourmet products. Our own bakery, doing things from scratch with the bakery.

PATCHWORK: So you bake everything in the bakery?

ROHRBACH: Yeah, we consider it a scratch bakery, There are some things that are already made for the most part, the girls just left from, they made sticky buns and bread tonight which is all homemade. Pies are all homemade; cookies for the most part are homemade. There are some products that are shipped in that I would say that aren't necessarily fake, but you dip it out of the bucket and stick it in instead of doing it from scratch.

PATCHWORK: When you were growing up, did you feel obligated to work at the farm market?

ROHRBACH: Not obligated, it was just an area of the business and what I like to do and I guess I'd have to say I wasn't an adventurous person as a kid so I didn't go exploring lots of opportunities as a kid. I went to Penn State and pretty much made the decision at that point that this is where I wanted to be,.

PATCHWORK: Can you tell me some of the daily chores that you do around the farm?

ROHRBACH: Well as owner/manger, you get the opportunity to kind of tell everybody else what to do to a certain extent, like the bakery crew. They know what they're doing everyday there they have their own manger, so when we're in season with our own season, especially with spring, it's basically checking the orchard and seeing what stage we're at as far as what we need to do and making sure the guys in the winter time that they are doing it right. The way I want to have it done. I see that it getting done, see where they are at and then, basically I've been helping with a bit with the produce. Doing something right around here in the market besides the management aspect of overseeing pretty much all of the business but that overseeing part is just checking in with people. Like I said, the bakery they know what they are doing on their own, I mean I'm not telling them what to do because they'd be telling me what to do because I have no idea how many pies to bake a day or anything like that. and they are good at that kind of stuff. And then with mark, who was outside the door there when you came. He's doing all the farming and things for us so it's checking in with him, seeing where he's at, telling him a little bit with what I think needs to be getting done today and tomorrow. And I do a lot of hands on kind of stuff. Takeing care of the produce somewhat, particularly as cold as it was this winter. Business was not real good. I took care of most all that stuff myself. So we get some time do other things too.