

Berry pickers enjoy plentiful crops

By ERIC MORTENSON
Of the Emerald

"I've picked cherries in Mosier and even in The Dalles, I've climbed many a ladder and joked with all my pals, We pick all night We quit whenever we can, But the bings and lamberts must stay on Until we've picked the annes!"

(An old cherry picking song, sung with gusto to the tune of an even older Hamm's beer jingle.)

To the casual visitor, Eugene would seem to be the center of commerce and culture for this end of the Willamette Valley. Fast money and fine art seem to be the keystones of our bustling city.

Forget it. Nothing could be further from the truth. Eugene may pretend to be a home for city slickers but don't believe it. Every summer Eugene puts her lace away and pulls on her workboots.

There're berries and cherries to be harvetsted, beans, apples, pears, peaches — rhubarb too.

We show our true nature each summer tromping through bushes looking for berries or filling heavy wooden boxes with fruit. Orchards and fields abound out there, and

they offer fruit and vegetable picking for food and profit.

Hugh Hemley, a rural manpower specialist at the Eugene office of the state employment division, says hundreds of people around Eugene can find work in the fields and orchards during the summer. He says that the pole bean crop requires 2,400 pickers. Cherry growers needed about 200 pickers in their orchards and peaches and apples will take another 60 to 80 pickers in late August and September. About 450 people picked strawberries this summer, Hemley says.

But it is hard, hot work picking fruit. The hours stretch out when the sun beats down. For the most part, you get paid according to how much you pick. Cherry pickers, for example, pulled in about six cents for every pound they picked. That's the same price cherry pickers have been getting for the last 10 years.

Glenn Mack could tell you all about it. Mack owns a cherry orchard out West 11th Avenue and has seen cherries and cherry pickers come and go since 1921, when his father bought the orchard.

"It used to be you'd get whole families coming out to pick, year after year," Mack says. "When their kids grewed up why they'd bring their families. Now you get people



Drawing by Kate Seigal

from all walks of life."

Mack and his wife figure that they had about 200 pickers in and out of their orchard this year. "Some of them stay half an hour," Mack says with a laugh, "some of them stay half a day. Some of them manage to stay a full day."

After 56 years in the business Mack is able to take things as they come. He says he has had trouble with teenagers who come to pick for him. "You have problems with kids when there's nobody to ramrod them," he says. "It takes a Philadelphia lawyer to figure out all the angles on them."

So picking cherries is hard

work and picking cherry pickers is even harder. But what it comes down to is that there is work out there for those who want it.

Avid berry pickers can also keep the fruits of their labor. Instead of getting paid for picking fruit, you pay the owner and U-pick.

Take a look in the classified ads of the newspapers. Cherries of all kinds are waiting to be picked. Raspberries. Loganberries. Blackcaps and Boysenberries. Apricots. It goes on and on.

One of the outfits that runs a U-pick operation is the Allender berry farm out Coburg

Road. Go over that skinny little bridge by Armitage Park, take a right on McKenzie View after the bridge and follow the road. About a mile down the way is the berry farm on the right.

Anne Shirey and her sister Paula work for the Allenders, showing people where to park, where to pick, how to pick and collecting their money afterwards. They say that most of the people who come out to pick are middle-aged women. The women, they say, get just a touch nostalgic about the whole thing, because they picked berries for money when they were kids.

If you picked berries when you were a kid then you would understand.

Of course you still have to pay the owner for what you pick, but you get fresh fruit.

But everybody knows that the king of the wild fruits is the blackberry.

Blackberries grow everywhere. In backyards and pastures, on hillsides and along riverbanks, around construction sites and up chimneys. They do things to Cheerios that are talked about in hushed tones, and the jam they make is something to worship.

The Lane County extension office says that you should ask before you go crashing through private property to pick blackberries, but if they're in public then have at it.



Fifty-seven year old Kathleen Ware produces another quilt for the business she operates out of her home, located between the small towns of Walton and Mapleton, 10 miles east of the coast on Highway 126. The quilt maker has been in business for the last four years, although she learned her trade when she was a young woman. Ware incorporates the lone star, fancy Dresden plate and flywheel patterns into her colorful comforters.

Story and Photos
By JANE LEHMAN
Of the Emerald

Prosperous quilt maker plys patchwork business

If you're barreling down Highway 126 enroute to the coast you're bound to miss a crudely painted sign along the roadside. But on the way back to Eugene, you are more likely to notice a house by the roadside, halfway between Mapleton and Walton. It bears a wooden sign reading "quilts."

You have just come across the home of 57-year-old Kathleen Ware. Operating out of her tiny home, Ware spends the days producing the quilts to be sold.

Ware started her business four years ago.

"I saw where I'd have to stay home and be with him (her ailing husband) and I decided to make quilts. And he said what you doin' that for. And I said I was going to sell them. So just out of the blue I fixed me up a sign and stuck it out on the porch," recalls Ware.

The advertising paid off. Last year she made and sold 22 quilts, but already this year she has finished her twenty-first.

If her prices seem steep (\$150 to \$300 for a king-size quilt), it was out of self-defense.

"I was just getting so many back orders I couldn't keep up with them," she said. "Now I make a little profit, too. I was making less than \$100 a month. That's darn low wages."

The patterns she works on bring to mind the pioneering days when the craft flourished — lone star, fancy Dresden plate, flywheel.

She finds that the lone star pattern is her best seller and also takes the shortest time to sew together — one week.

To produce a quilt, she first cuts out the pieces from yardage she has purchased — she used up all her material scraps a long time ago. Husband John often helps out at this stage of the project.

Then she sews the pieces together by hand. "Some people want a completely hand-sewn one," she says, "but I don't think they hold together quite so well." She does handle some hand-sewn quilts on consignment.

The final step of the process is the actual quilting. She sews the quilt top to the backing. As she stitches around the various pattern pieces, the filling

between the two layers puffs up the design, creating the quilted effect.

Ware learned her craft soon after she was married. Her mother came to visit for two months and during that time they worked on making a quilt.

"One day Mom didn't feel too good and stayed in bed," she remembers. So I just decided I'd see how much I could do by myself. Well I finished the whole thing. And you know if Mom just didn't get up that next day and feel just fine."

She has made quilts on and off for her family every since then.

She believes her business received a boost when "we got into one of them best-places-to-stop books. Most of them that stopped were from Canada.



One guy from Washington said he'd just picked up the book in the library and said he read about us. I sure don't know how we got in it," she said.

A fairly steady flow of people tramp through her kitchen to reach the living room, where the quilt frame is set up. There, in a corner, a stack of twenty-odd quilts await their new owners.

"I don't seem to have any time for anything else these days," she says of her business. "But it sure does help in the long run."