

# Pheasant Orchards a fifth-generation operation

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**  
For the Capital Press

This family-owned orchard between Soap Lake and Ephrata, Wash., is the result of generations of dedication.

“Three of us are fifth-generation orchardists,” says Darla Grubb, whose great-great-grandfather, James Pheasant, brought his family to Washington in 1901. They left their farm and orchard in Nebraska and traveled for two weeks by train to Wenatchee. James’ sons and grandsons went upriver to Tonasket in 1907, where they homesteaded and planted orchards.

Two grandsons, George



Jeff  
Pheasant

and Tom, planted orchards near Ephrata in the 1950s after the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project opened up farm land in that area. “My dad (Tom) bought his 40-acre lot in 1958. He and his brother George formed a partnership called Basin View Orchards when they put their orchards together,” Darla says.

They built a fruit stand in 1960 that was operated on the honor system.

“People picked out their own fruit from bins, weighed the boxes, and put their mon-

ey into a container,” she says.

Today people come from as far away as Seattle and Montana for apples and pears.

“It’s now second and third generations of family customers. On weekends we have people who help with the stand, but during the week it’s still on the honor system,” Darla says.

At age 83, Tom Pheasant is still actively involved, working with his children — son Jeff who now manages the orchard, daughter Jenni Bunkleman and daughter Darla Grubb — and several grandchildren, who work in the orchard.

“I retired from school

teaching (music) for 25 years in Ephrata, and came back to the farm to help with the orchard as office manager,” Darla says.

Many family members work in the orchard.

“All my nephews and nieces work here and we also have a youth crew that works in the summer. We employ about 25 men year-round and now we’ve started a women’s crew. During harvest people come all the way from California to pick apples, cherries and pears,” she says.

“I grew up on this farm and remember summers thinning trees, suckering, changing irrigation pipe while my friends went to the lakes. Yet I appreciate it now, learning how to work. I am grateful we had the opportunity and that’s why we give this opportunity to youth workers all summer,” she says.

Pheasant Orchards grows several varieties of apples in-



Courtesy of Pheasant Orchards

A picker holds fresh-picked Gala apples at Pheasant Orchards near Ephrata, Wash. The family-owned orchard also grows Red and Golden Delicious, Braeburn, Cameo, Fuji, Granny Smith and Honeycrisp, along with three varieties of pears — Bartlett, d’Anjou and Bosc.

cluding Red and Golden Delicious, Gala, Braeburn, Cameo, Fuji, Granny Smith and Honeycrisp, along with three varieties of pears — Bartlett, d’Anjou and Bosc.

“At our fruit stand I am Apple Annie, wearing an apple outfit, and I do kindergarten tours for kids, and tours of the orchard,” Darla says.

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