



The Herald

A PART OF EAST PIERCE LIFE FOR 105 YEARS



slice of life



The Duris Farm is a 53-year family adventure in fresh produce

BY CHRIS ALBERT
of The Herald

One of Sondra Andrews' favorite times of the day is when the sun is rising at the Duris Cucumber Farm in Puyallup. The co-owner and other family members like her sister-in-law Patty Duris can be seen arranging that morning's produce, including strawberries, fresh dill and their famous cucumbers.

"It's just like you're the only one in the world," Andrews said. "It's so neat to be in here."

It's been a family produce stand for more than 50 years and has become a place people go to find fresh local foods, spices and, of course, pickles.

"It really is gorgeous," Duris said.

"This stand is like going back to yesterday," Andrews said.

The season for the produce stand is winding down, but it's been a good year, Andrews said. It started out slowly with early cold weather, but as people feel the burdens of an economic crunch, the Duris family has found a niche for providing fresh, local and affordable food.

"People are just so happy to get fresh quality produce at a good price," Andrews said.

The food is coming from a place they know and supporting people that live in their communities, she said. And one of the big draws has always been the cucumbers.

"This is what my mom started years ago," Andrews said.

The Duris Cucumber Farm started in 1955 when Andrews' mother, Hazel, approached her husband, Al, about using a third-of-an-acre of his chicken farm to grow and sell cucumbers.

"She just sold cucumbers all by herself that first year," Andrews said.

She made enough money to cover her expenses, buy school clothes for her children and buy a Singer Sewing machine, she said.

The farm has been up and running ever since.

"It's a lot of work," Andrews said. "God just continued to bless this farm."

In 1983, Hazel Duris died after a battle with cancer.

"This was her baby," Andrews said.

About a month before Hazel Duris died, she asked her daughter to run



Herald photo/Colleen Carroll

Sondra Andrews works in the family business that was started by her mother in 1955. "My dad just gave us a great heritage. He taught us to be kind and fair," Andrews said.

the stand. Andrews really didn't want to. She had spent most her life on the farm and was ready to get away from it. As a child her best part of summer was going to Vacation Bible School because it was a chance to get away from the farm and drink Kool-Aid and eat graham crackers.

"Everything in me said I wanted to say no," Andrews said. "But I couldn't tell her no."

So she spent the next month learning the ins and outs of the stand. Her mom would teach her from her sick bed in the home next to the produce stand.

The day of Hazel Duris funeral was the only time the produce stand has been closed during the harvest season.

"Now I'm glad I didn't (say no), because I love it," Andrews said.

It hasn't just been Andrews that has kept this business going, she said. Her father was a rock. He died last year, but what he instilled is remembered and practiced by his children.

"So many times I'd go to him because he had such wisdom," Andrews said.

His wisdom wasn't just about farming, she said; much of it was in how to treat people.

Treat people with kindness and genuine graciousness, Andrews said. He wouldn't never yell and he would give anyone he was talking to his full attention, even if it meant taking a moment to make sure it happens, she said.

"We just grew up learning how to treat people through our folks," Andrews said.

"They were very generous."

Everyone in the family takes from those lessons and applies them to the jobs they have on the family farm. Andrews oversees the day-to-day operations of the produce stand. Duris can be found filling spice bags and designing displays. Her husband Tom, Andrews' brother, oversees the whole operation, including the families wholesale business which distributes produce to local sellers. Mark Duris works on marketing for the farm, including a Web site that should be up and running soon. Andrews' brother, Bill, and sister,



These cucumbers will be purchased from a buyer directly because stores require that they be straight with no curvatures.

Becky, also work at the farm.

And the clans' children have grown up working on the farm, just like they did when they were young. Tom and Patty's daughter Sarah is the go to for operating the bean harvester, which is the size of a combine and picks up 200 bean boxes an hour.

"They grew up here learning how to work," Patty Duris said. "They grew up her and they loved it."

As a family that works together they've

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DURIS CUCUMBER FARM

The Duris Cucumber Farm is open during the harvest season, which is usually the late spring to early fall.

► Location: 6012 44th St. East, Puyallup, WA 98371

► To be added to the farm mailing list and to be the first known about when new crops are coming in call 253-922-7635 and leave your name, street address and e-mail address.

► Keep an eye out for the Duris' Farm Web site at www.durisfarm.com. The Web site is scheduled to be up and running by next spring.

Domestic violence the focus for awareness

October events focus on educating the public that domestic violence is wrong and offenders will be held responsible for actions

