



***Get To Know Your MFVGA Board Directors
This month: Jerry Untiedt***



Good day to all of you Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers and Minnesota Apple Growers. I appreciate the opportunity to share a little information about my family's specialty crop farming operation located in central Wright County, about 35 miles west of Minneapolis.

It really seems like just yesterday, but in reality it was over 50 years ago when my wife Susan and I left the confines of the Twin Cities metro and embarked upon this new career journey. New it was, as we were and are first generation growers which presented and still presents challenges and opportunities alike.

We began growing on a small piece of farmland near the North Fork of the Crow River - our first crops being sweet corn and pumpkins, which morphed into small fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, and apples along with the addition of a full line of freshly harvested vegetables. Slowly, with two steps forward and one step backwards, we continue to grow our little farming operation. Failures and successes seemed to alternate, but we still have managed to expand bit by bit.

When we say expand, we say family as well as growing. While my wife Susan continued her teaching career, we also had time to add four wonderful daughters to our family and all worked together building our family farming business.

About 30 years ago, we began experimenting with 'high tunnel' vegetable and fruit production. Although it was very small at first, we soon realized the risk management opportunities of this culture and continued to expand to the point we are currently occupying, which encompasses about 40 acres of tunnels and covered production growing ranges.

Our high tunnel growing ranges currently are producing nearly 30 varieties of small fruits and vegetables. The growing concept has allowed us to harvest earlier and harvest later in the season, contributing to an extension of our seasonal cash flow - all very meaningful for production and financial success.

As our daughters matured, two of them (Jenna and Megan) chose to remain with our family farming operation after college and we were soon joined by two special sons-in-law and of course later by a special grandson. Reading this, it's quite noticeable that Untiedt's is truly a family farming operation.

We'd like to add, our operation has always put the need to be a participating member of the "Grower Community." That being said, we choose to be part of MFVGA, the Minnesota Apple Growers, the Minnesota Grown group sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Farm Bureau and even more. We believe in the networking process and believe it is alive and well in Minnesota. We are always willing to share our failures, successes, and challenges and ask you to do the same.

Reach out, join and contribute to these groups and learn to share and converse with your friends and grower communities. You will never forget the support you'll garner!