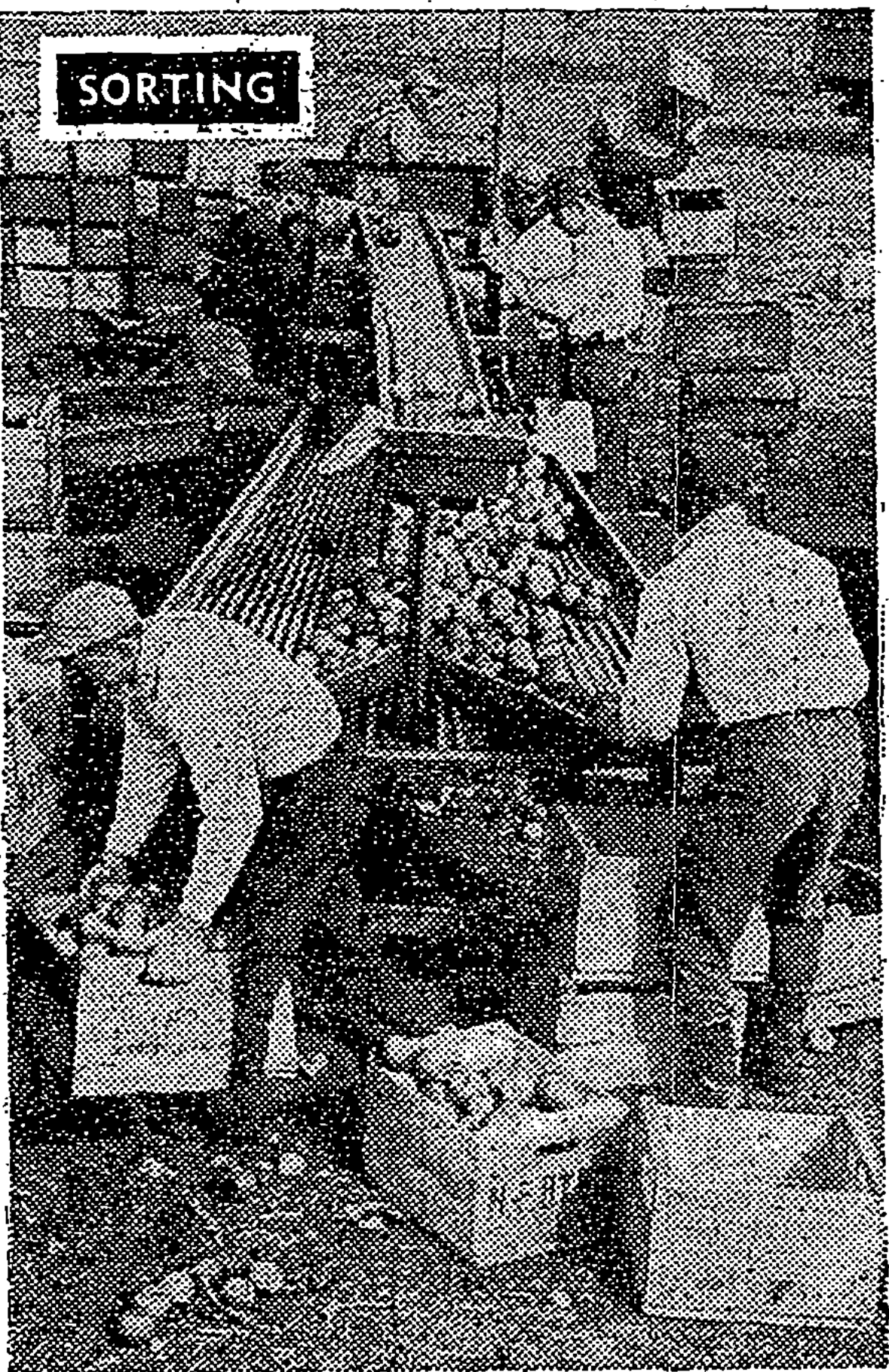


When It's Apple Picking Time in Virginia, the Byrds Are Busy



The New York Times (by George Tames)

Senator Harry Byrd, bottom left, of Virginia and his three sons—from left, Richard, Harry Jr., and B. Beverley—run one of the largest apple businesses in the U. S. The family's eleven orchards cover 5,000 acres, produce 1,500,000 bushels yearly and employ 1,500 workers at the height of the harvest season. The annual volume from eating apples, applesauce, jelly, canned products, vinegar stock and livestock feed runs to about \$5,000,000. During harvest, the Senator supervises all operations, from picking to packing and canning. He works a busy 12-hour day in season.

3,000,000 Apples a Day Keep The Senator Away, in Season

By JOHN D. MORRIS
Special to The New York Times.

BERRYVILLE, Va., Nov. 5—It's apple-picking time in the Valley of Virginia, and the sprawling orchards, the packing houses and the cannery of Senator Harry Flood Byrd are alive with activity.

For seven weeks 1,800 employes have been working up to ten hours a day to harvest the Senator's 1955 crop and start it on its way to the pantries and tables of America. Today 690 pickers were gathering the last of 150,000,000 apples grown annually in the Byrd orchards. Sales were expected to exceed \$5,000,000.

The business, which Mr. Byrd started on a shoestring forty-nine years ago, is now the largest of its kind in this part of the country if not in the world, and is still growing. Certainly it is big business by any standard.

The Byrds specialize in six standard varieties of the apples. The Red Delicious, a big apple principally for eating raw, accounts for about 20 per cent of their production. The rest is divided among the Golden Delicious, Winesap, Stayman, Rome Beauty and Jonathan.

The orchards, scattered over a seventy-mile stretch from

Charles Town, W. Va., to New Market, Va., cover 5,000 acres in four counties. The 200,000 trees produce 1,500,000 bushels, about half of which are packed and sold to jobbers and wholesale markets. The rest are canned as applesauce or sliced apples and shipped to wholesalers or institutions.

Under a five-year planting program now under way, the Byrd organization expects to increase the annual production to 2,500,000 bushels. That's 250,000,000 apples.

Raising apples has made Harry Byrd a wealthy man, probably a millionaire. While his forebears were well-to-do Virginia planters, his family was in such financial straits when he was a boy that he quit school in 1903 at the age of 15 and went to work.

Makes Paper Pay

The family newspaper, The Winchester Star, was on the verge of bankruptcy. Young Harry took it over and made it pay. In 1906 he began buying apples of orchardists in the area, packing them and selling them. By 1912 he had earned enough to buy his first orchard, a 100-acre tract in Berryville, in partnership with an Episcopal clergyman.

Within a few years he had bought out his partner and was steadily expanding his holdings. Meanwhile, he embarked on a political career that took him to the Virginia State Senate in 1915, the Governorship from 1926 to 1930 and the United States Senate in 1933.

Today Senator Byrd shares responsibility for running the business with his three sons, Harry Jr., 40; B. Beverley, 35, and Richard E., 32. All are officers of H. F. Byrd, Inc., which operates more than 2,500 acres of the orchards and the cannery.

A separate corporation owned by the Senator and a brother, Thomas B. Byrd, has 2,000 acres in Shenandoah and Rockingham Counties, Va. Several smaller orchards are owned individually by the Senator's sons.

Majority Stockholder

Senator Byrd, as president and majority stockholder of H. F. Byrd, Inc., is still the active head of the over-all operation. As usual, he had been spending nearly every day during the current harvest in the orchards, warehouses and plants until last Monday, when he left for a trip to Europe. As usual, he drove his battered Chevrolet thousands of miles over the bumps and mudholes of his orchard roads.

A typical day for the Senator

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IT'S APPLE SEASON IN BYRD ORCHARDS

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in apple-picking time starts at 5:30 or 6 A. M. with a cold tub at his white-columned Georgian home in Berryville. By 9:30 A. M., breakfast time, he has already made an inspection tour of near-by orchards or the packing house and cannery here.

Breakfast at his home, "Rosemont," is combined with a business conference with his three sons. After another tour of the orchards he is in his office at Winchester, ten miles from here, at 12:30 or so for two or three hours of paperwork punctured by a quick lunch. Then it's back to the orchards, always winding up at one of the packing houses when it closes at 6 P. M.

Son Handles Details

Harry Byrd Jr., who resembles his father in looks, voice, demeanor and business and political acumen, is secretary of the apple company. He handles most of the business and financial details. He is also president and publisher of The Winchester Star and a leader in the Virginia State Senate.

B. Beverley Byrd, who looks and talks like a dirt farmer, is the company's vice president in charge of production. Richard E. Byrd, who bears a striking resemblance to his uncle and namesake, Admiral Byrd, is vice president in charge of the canning division.

Like other closely held corporations, the Byrd family company keeps much of its financial affairs to itself, largely for competitive reasons. The capital investment is one of the family secrets. Profits are another.

Profit Put at 4 Per cent

Harry Byrd Jr. is the authority for the \$5,000,000 sales forecast. He also says that a "rough estimate" of profits would be about 4 per cent on investment over the last six years.

Stockholders and directors are the senior Mr. Byrd, his wife and their three sons. No dividends have been declared since the corporation was formed in 1947. Instead, all profits have been plowed back into the business.

Until two weeks ago, even business men of this area had only a vague conception of the size and scope of the Byrd apple business. Then Beverley Byrd, in a speech to the Martinsburg (W. Va.) Kiwanis Club,

astounded his listeners with such figures as the following:

PAYROLL: \$20,000 a day during the harvesting season and \$2,700 a day for the rest of the year. That would add up to an annual payroll of about \$1,600,000.

EMPLOYEES: 300 year-around workers plus 1,500 during harvest.

PROPERTY: Eleven orchards, five packing houses, one cannery, three cold storage units with a total capacity of 550,000 bushels and five camp houses accommodating 100 transient workers each.

EQUIPMENT: Sixty two-ton trucks, twenty-three orchard wagons and tractors, fifty-three high-pressure sprayers, 400,000 bushel-picking boxes, 750 picking buckets and ladders, twenty-two buses ranging up to fifty-passenger capacity, twelve pickup trucks and 25,000 smudge pots.

PRODUCTION: An average of 30,000 bushels a day during the picking season. That is 3,000,000 apples. Oct. 13 was a record day, when 61,000 bushels were picked, 24,000 bushels were packed for the "fresh" market and 19,000 cases of canned products were processed. The remaining 18,000 bushels went into cold storage for future handling.

PLANTING: 15,000 trees set out last year and 16,000 scheduled for this year.

Several varieties are blended in a secret formula for their applesauce. The Rome Beauty is used extensively for canned sliced apples. About 1,000,000 cases of canned sauce and sliced apples are processed in the three months of cannery operations.

From the trimmings and cores are pressed 750,000 gallons of vinegar stock and 50,000 gallons of apple juice concentrate for jelly. What's left is dried into 600 tons of pomace for sale to dairy farmers as livestock feed.

The Byrds' market for fresh or cold-storage apples covers much of the South and extends to New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Washington, D. C.

Their canned goods are sold under the Byrd label in the South and Midwest. National grocery chains also buy them and sell them under their own labels.

Thirty years ago about 80 per cent of the Byrd apples were shipped abroad. Today less than 10 per cent are exported, mainly to Cuba and Venezuela. Harry Byrd Jr. blames the drop on retaliation against high United States tariffs. Regaining a share of the foreign market, he says, is hampered by the additional problem of converting foreign currencies into dollars.