



Newsmen Jim Herrington's son, Doug, relaxing in the corn patch (Photographed by Craig Newman)

WXYZ nurtures inflation-fighting garden

By JOAN S. WEAVER

It's not unusual these days to see families with their favorite garden tools heading for the dark expanse of rich soil at the rear of the WXYZ-TV station.

Or, to see television engineers, secretaries, news men, and talk show hosts leave the main building dressed in blue jeans—carrying plants, small shovels and hand cultivators—going in the same direction.

They all are heading for WXYZ's inflation-fighting vegetable garden which occupies just over an acre of ground, staked out in 25x50 foot plots.

The "company cabbage patch," as some call it, is half-hidden behind a lane of trees with the 1,072 foot orange and white antenna towering above the garden scaring the crows away.

Right now, it doesn't look like much. But seedlings are breaking through the ground and the green tops of newly-planted tomatoes, peppers, cauliflower and eggplant herald the harvest to come.

THE GARDEN is there because Hank Rutowski, a television engineer, sent a suggestion to Jim Osborne, vice president and general manager of WXYZ-TV.

And the garden is there, also, because Osborne thought Rutowski's suggestion was "a sensational idea."

Osborne recalls the note saying something like this: "With the way prices are going up today and so many people living in apartments, wouldn't it be nice if the company made some of the land available to employees for vegetable gardens."

Broadcast House and its surrounding buildings occupy over 100 acres on Ten Mile Road near Northwestern Highway. Some of the grounds are carefully landscaped and some are in their natural state of woods, fields and a stream.

Rutowski recalls how gratified he was when a memo came out saying the land would be plowed and water made accessible for anyone who wanted to plant a garden. That was last year. They got started late in the season on a small scale, and those who weren't flooded but had a pretty good harvest.

With this year's prices in the supermarkets making last year's prices look like bargain days, twice as many people wanted plots this spring, and twice as much land had to be prepared.

THERE WAS SO much inter-

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est—42 people signed up for plots—that someone had to be put in charge of the garden.

Lowell Newton, television editorial director, is not sure how he ended up in that role. "I was in Osborne's office one day and he said to me, 'Why don't you take it over?' I didn't have a good answer and I thought it would be a snap because I grew up on a farm," he said.

Newton found out that being 'the man in charge of the garden' meant:

- Making a chart of the garden and assigning plots.
- Keeping track of who had which plot and settling land disputes because some of the plots were under water.
- Answering the question, "When will the garden be ready for planting?" a dozen times each day.

- Being budgeted for \$200 and spending \$192.40 for a cultivator.

- Finding that there is only \$7.60 left, which necessitates negotiating the loan of a disk from the Ford Motor Company experimental farm.

- Getting the maintenance crew, headed by Charlie Beebe, to take time out from their regular duties to plow and disk the stubborn wet land that lived up to its reputation as a 'high water' area.

- Answering the question, "Is the tractor stuck in the mud again?" a dozen times each day.
- And getting out on that acre on all fours to stake out the individual plots.

- Both Newton and Beebe (neither of whom signed up for a plot) are finished now with their garden

chores for the year, perhaps forever as a matter of fact.

And the queries of "When will the garden be ready for planting?" have changed now to "How does your garden grow?"

Perhaps because one of their own, Hank Rutowski, got the whole thing started, the engineering department (the unsung heroes of the television industry)—is abundantly represented in the garden. Twelve engineers are growing every conceivable variety of an almost endless list of good things to eat.

CLYDE ADLER, one of the engineers who used to play White Fang on the old Soupy Sales children's show, has the only dill in the garden and—after a bit of haggling—thinks he probably has enough to give some to everybody.

Zack Lee's garden is easy to spot and the envy of less resourceful gardeners because he commissioned the black plastic cover of a friend's swimming pool, and all his seedlings are growing up through holes in the plastic which acts as a mulch.

Television news is well represented, too, with Jack McCarthy, Dave Wittman, Jim Herrington and Kelly Burke all having plots. "Yesterday I was called out of

the garden to go out on a story, was out there working, in jeans and very little else," Wittman says. The quick change artist, a rival at his assignment to find there was no story after all. "But he quips, 'at least they know where to find me.'"

Herrington, one of the successful gardeners from last year, still de-frosting and dining on last year's harvest. He does his gardening with his two teen-age sor whom he calls his "somewhat reluctant migrant workers," an says, "it's good therapy for an one—nothing monumental of there—no big problems."

Herrington points out the view of the garden from the news room window. It's very handy for checking the agricultural industry of back.

There are plans to enter WXYZ-TV's vegetable garden in the usual gardens of America contest conducted by Burlington Industries.

"The company should get all the credit for responding the way they did," Rutowski says.

His wife Betty no slouch when comes to ideas either, says: "Wouldn't it be nice if arrangements could be made to distribute any excess crops somewhere—like Mother Waddles Kitchen?"

Her vocation isn't work It's fun!

By BETTY ROTHBONE

Marge West, well-known antique-flea market dealer, is a walking advertisement of her own philosophy: "If more people my age would get involved with life, they would be much happier."

The blonde Mrs. West, seated at an early American kitchen table in her shop at Cider Mill Village in Bloomfield Township exclaimed, "I don't call this work, I call it fun."

Surrounded by memorabilia of the past, the grandmother of two explained how it all began. Six years ago, she retired from her job as a business office manager. "I had worked since I was 16, and I was tired," said Mrs. West, who was 44 years old at the time.

BUT HER "retirement" did not last long.

Two years later, she was inspired with an idea for a new career while she was housecleaning.

Rather than throw away the dishes, furniture and assorted bottles that had been accumulating, she decided to try her luck at a flea market.

Success encouraged her to expand her inventory. Now, four years later, the enterprising Mrs. West and her husband make three or four trips to the South every

year to replenish their antique and collectible supplies.

Collectible items are defined as scarce items that are no longer produced. A true antique must be 100 years old.

Mrs. West's husband Watt, a truck driver who spends weekdays on the road, enthusiastically joins his wife in her pursuit of antiques and collectibles. Often he spends weekends stripping furniture they have collected on their travels.

MRS. WEST recently moved her location to Cider Mill Village to be with similar shops. Mrs. Ethel Brown, developer of the village calls it a "new concept in retailing."

Anything from a shaving mug to an antique Victorian chair may be found in Mrs. West's shop.

Often she will leave a piece of furniture in its original state and let the new owner do the stripping, thus saving on cost.

Other interesting pieces included an empire-style hutch of the early 1800s with the original blown-glass windows, a Victrola dated 1901 with a little gadget that makes its own wooden needles and an 80-year-old wood-burning cook stove in mint condition.

Some of the collectible items included old beer signs, post cards, Jim Beam and Avon bottles,

pocket knives, hunting-cam watches, Planter's peanut jar butterchurns and hall trees.

Mrs. West used to drive to garage sales and flea markets in her car, but it wasn't long before she realized that she needed a big vehicle.

NOW, SHE AND her husband travel the back roads of Georgia and Florida in a maxi-van searching for the Victorian marble b/w washstands, wooden butterchurn, and plantation dinner bells that are so popular.

Mrs. West admits she has made errors. "But once you make mistakes, you don't make the same ones again," she said.

For example, when they were first starting out, she and her husband bid for and bought a cast iron bean pot at a price higher than the going rate for the relics.

Because they'll never be able to make their purchase price, it's not a high-priced memento of their early days.

Mrs. West said she knew nothing about the business when she started four years ago, but studied magazines and books to learn the trade.

In that time she has progressed to being one of the exhibitors the prestigious Steiner antique shows.



Marge West: Playing the Victrola (Photographed by Art Emanuel)