

The Pulse of Washington County

FREI'S MARKET

a Southern Utah Institution

by Lyle Hurd

Since relocating to St. George in 1990 shopping at Frei's Fruit Market has become a tradition with our family. However recently live learned that Frei's Fruit Market has been a tradition for tens of thousands of individuals from California to Colorado and Salt Lake City for 50 years.

Wanda Graf Frei, 90 years of age, and her husband Landon Frei, 91, are both decedent from the pioneers who settled Santa Clara. In fact, Wanda's grandmother was the Staley baby rescued by Jacob Hamblin during the great flood of 1861.

Wanda and Landon grew up a few blocks from each other and according to Landon she was the prettiest girl in the neighborhood. They were married in 1936 and will celebrate their 70th anniversary this year. They have four children, ten grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren.

Having both grown up in families whose heritage was in the produce business and living in homes on Santa Clara Drive, which at the time was highway 91, the main road from California to Colorado, it only seemed natural, some 50 years ago, to put out a chair and table and offer a few seasonal fruits and vegetables for sale.

Today, Frei's Fruit Market has become a landmark. In talking with Landon we estimate well over 50 million cars and trucks have driven by the market since its inception. Buses to and from California would stop to allow their passengers to buy fruit and a soft drink. Truckers and automobiles would stop and stock up with produce as they passed through. And Wanda made sure they had a bottle of water to take along in case their radiators ran dry. It became a place where everyone felt like a member of the family and even travelers today will detour off Interstate 15 to introduce their spouses, children, and grandchildren to the place they remember from their childhood journeys up and down old highway 91. The place where everyone, no matter what their age, race, religion, or status in life, was equally as welcome as the person next to them selecting what they considered as the best looking peaches on the stand.

Today, 50 years later, Wanda and Landon are still two bright,



Vicki Lasswell and Bryce Frei with Wanda and Landon Frei in front of their market on Santa Clara Boulevard where the business has operated for the last fifty years. Stop by and wish Wanda and Landon Happy 70th Anniversary..

healthy, energetic, and interesting individuals who consider each day a gift. Landon continues to manage his own gardens and remain involved with their farms, which grow a significant amount of the produce. On most days Wanda can be found greeting old friends and new customers, helping people with their quest to find apples, peaches, squash, etc. to meet their needs and still, according to her daughter, finds time to bake the best pies you will ever taste. It seems that the only concession they have made to time is they have recently turned over the management of the market to two of their children, Vicki and Bryce.

All in all, in today's world Frei's Fruit Market and the Freis are both a unique connection to the history of this place we call Dixie and an example of the personal qualities, and dedication to family and community, which makes Dixie a great place to live. Qualities that we should strive to mirror and preserve.

Next time you are in the vicinity, make sure you stop and wish Wanda and Landon a happy 70th anniversary and while you're at it pick up a few peaches, apples, some honey, and treat yourself to a cold sarsaparilla.. ■