

## The Freshness Pro-Fessionals

### Linda Yinger

Whether it's trying to get long time produce folks into the computer age ("We may just about have made it into the 90's"), trying a bit of jazz dancing, or taking up golf ("It's a little frustrating") Linda Yinger is not afraid of a challenge. And she has had plenty of challenges over the past seventeen years.



Actually Linda's experience at Consumers Produce goes back to her high school summers when she would come in with her mom, Marianne Erhart – Office Manager, and help in the business office. In those days she did billing on a magnetic keypunch-billing machine, the first of many generations of technology during Linda's tenure. "She's gotten us through every technology upgrade we've done over the years," says Consumers Produce President Alan Siger.

During her senior year in high school Linda worked half days at Consumers Produce on a work study program. Then coming out of college she decided to try the commercial banking business and went to work for Equibank. But even then she didn't get far away from the produce business; Equibank assigned her to its strip district office.

From there she went on to Ponderosa where she says, "I did their restaurant computer systems programming. I was done in three hours and bored." So when Consumers Produce was struggling with its first computer system Linda says, "Alan gave me a call and I've been here for the past 17 years."

Little did she realize the challenge ahead when she arrived to manage that first IBM system. It wasn't the computer that was challenging, it was getting hardened produce people to consider using these high tech gadgets!

With a laugh in her voice she says, "We still have people who write down the order and then enter it in the computer rather than entering as they go. They are just more comfortable doing it that way." Despite the hesitancy Linda points out with pride that everyone has now taken internet and e-mail classes, "and they're all pretty good at it."

Like so many of her colleagues, Linda says that Consumers Produce is more than just a job. "It's like a big family there. Everyone knows everyone else, everyone has been there for life, and we care about each other. I think it's a great environment."

At home with her husband Harry, who works for PennDOT, and 11-year-old

Samantha, life is busy. Samantha has been taking dance classes, so Linda decided to be more than just a chauffeur. While Samantha's in class, Linda is learning jazz dancing steps nearby. "It's like modern dancing, along the lines of Broadway dancing," she explains.

She's also picking up Harry's passion for golf. "I like it very much. Harry golfs every day that he possibly can. He'll be out there in the middle of the winter if he can."

When Harry's not on the golf course, he and Linda like to take walks on the trail near their home, spend time with Linda's stepdaughter Jennifer, and their two year old granddaughter, McKenzie. And sometimes they just enjoy getting away; "We take a lot of trips, weekend trips and try to do a lot with the family."

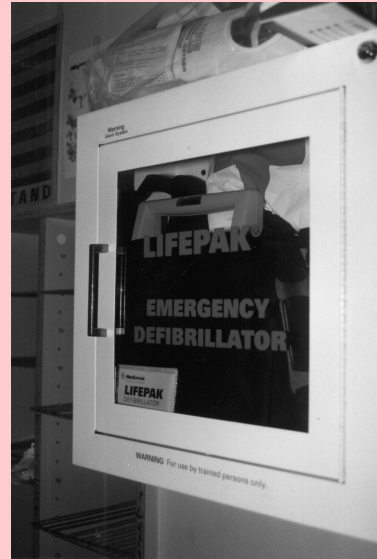
Of course whether at home or on the road Linda is always just a phone call away from Consumers Produce because there's no predicting when a computer will fail, a printer won't print, and it's Linda who will get the call. But even when those calls come in the middle of the night she says she doesn't mind. "It's just a part of what I do."

### Protecting Life

You come to work on a day like any other and suddenly a co-worker collapses with a heart attack. Would you know what to do? Would you have the presence of mind to act? You would if you were properly trained. Of course it's the kind of training you hope you will never have to use, but a dozen of The Freshness Professionals are now ready to step in and save a life if necessary.

CPR training has been around for years, but Consumers Produce is taking its on-site rescue training to a higher level, installing a portable defibrillator and training employees to use it.

Safety Committee Chairwoman Linda Yinger says with portable defibrillators now available that anyone can use, it was the logical next step for a company that has long promoted internal CPR training. "In case something would happen, time is of the essence in a heart attack and if you're able to



hook them to that machine you might be able to save someone, where you might not with normal CPR procedures."

To make sure there will always will someone on hand with the proper training, Yinger drew on all areas of the staff for volunteers to take the training. "There are all the members of the safety committee, the three members in maintenance, several of the front office staff, and a number of union representatives. The mix assures there are at least two people who are certified on duty every hour we're here working."

The portable defibrillator and an oxygen tank with a mask are now located in a small cabinet near the shipping office. While everyone is hopeful they will never be used, Yinger says the staff is ready and able if needed.



Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4405

One 21st Street



# Freshnews

## News From The Freshness Pro-fessional s



Fall 2001

### Next Stop, Consumers Produce!

Under a bright sunshine, men in stove top hats with looping gold chains reaching up to their watches nestled away in vest pockets, stood watching as the golden spike clanged as it was driven into the ground at Promontory, Utah. They were witnessing the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. No longer would it take weeks to get from the West to East coasts. Products grown in the fertile soil of the west could be shipped east and arrive before spoiling. Transcontinental rail service revolutionized our country and the produce business.

As recently as the 1970's about 80% of the produce handled by The Freshness Professionals arrived in Pittsburgh's Strip District by rail. But economic hard times hit the railroad industry, and service became inconsistent prompting 18-wheels to replace steel wheels as the primary method of delivery. Today less than 10% of the Consumers Produce stock arrives by rail.

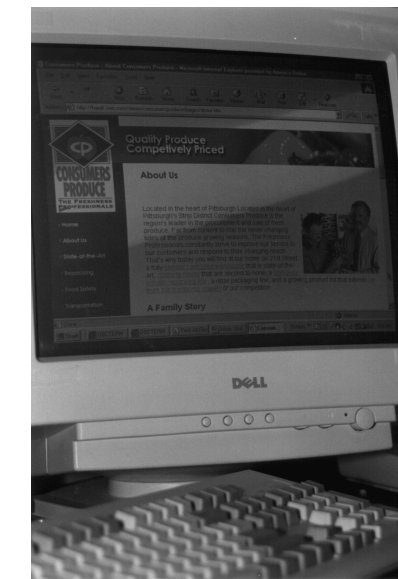
But in recent years CSX-T, Union Pacific, and the Allegheny Valley railroads have combined to improve service to the point where they are once again reliable enough to handle our very time sensitive produce. So Consumers Produce, with the help of a \$100,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Rail Freight Assistance Program, is now going to build its long planned railroad spur right to its three loading dock doors along Railroad Street.

Consumers Produce President Alan Siger says the new rail access will increase the reliability of a ready supply of products. Siger says, "In the winter time it's tough getting produce out of Idaho because of the bad weather in the Northwest. Trucks can get very scarce and (continued on Page 4)



Railroad tracks (L) will soon move across Railroad Street to the warehouse loading docks.

### Ripening our Bytes



As you sink your teeth into a luscious Macintosh apple, the flavors that rush across your taste buds are remarkably the same as those your grandparents tasted and their grandparents before them. Produce is remarkably consistent and so is the produce business. But some things behind the scenes do change.

Behind the scenes in most produce warehouses you will now find computers, orders coming in by fax, and produce moving online.

That's not to say produce is losing its personal touch - quite the contrary. Technology is simply another tool to make the process easier and Consumers Produce is taking steps to be at the forefront of that technology.

From an online brochure to an interactive experience, ConsumersProduce.com is coming of age. Since the development of our website in 1997, it has been primarily a source of information about Consumers Produce.

That will change soon when our new website goes online. Consumers Produce President Alan Siger says the new website is going to be "interactive with our customers. They'll be able to log on (continued on Page 4)

**Inside Freshnews**  
**Holiday Baskets • Linda Yinger • Responding to 9-11-01**



## *Tis the Season For . . .*



### *. . . Baskets of Holiday Cheer*

Sometimes things in the produce business amaze even the ripened professional. Tony Machi has been around the warehouse of Consumers Produce since...well let's just say a long time, and he never would have predicted how many Holiday Baskets The Freshness Professionals would wind up making last year. "We did close to 20,000 baskets in only our second year doing it and that was triple our total output of our first year."

So as this year's Holiday Basket season approaches, Machi says they will be ready. "It will mean increasing the amount of labor we need because it's very labor intensive."

Once again the Duke, Duchess, Princess, Queen, King, and Sleigh will be shipping out to grocery chains for retail sales, and to food service customers for their clients. And with every basket our customers get a guarantee of top quality produce with the longest possible shelf life.

"We look through a lot of produce to find fruits that meets our very strict criteria for the baskets," Machi says. "The product must be blemish free and have the cosmetic appearance of a perfect fruit."

To get that high level of quality Machi says Consumers Produce calls on only the best. "We use the top of the line Sunkist Oranges, we use the Rainier Apples, the Washington Extra Fancy Apples, the top premium grade of all the produce lines. We use Smokehouse Almonds, Planters Nuts and Andes Candies. Everything is done in the very best that is available."

The baskets are lovingly put together by a seasonal staff that cares. "We've already had people calling us who worked on the baskets last year and wanting to know if they could come help again." Last year's experience will come in handy as Consumers Produce adds even more staff this year to answer the demand with what is expected to be an around the clock operation.

The produce version of Santa's assembly line will crank up just after Thanksgiving so get your orders in early to Consumers Produce at 412-281-0722. The elves are waiting for your call.



*September 11, 2001*

*It changed our lives, reordered our priorities, rekindled our patriotism, and made us realize the importance of family, friends, and trust.*



## Red, White, and Blue Pride

Dwarfed by the immense size of the Consumers Produce warehouse you might easily have missed it. On the roof on the corner of 21st and Railroad it stood only about 12 feet tall. But on September 11th our flagpole and the Stars and Stripes that fluttered from its peak suddenly took on new meaning and just as suddenly seemed to be a terrible understatement.

Like the pole, the flag also seemed out of proportion to the building. At a time of patriotic unity The Freshness Professionals decided a change was needed. What was needed was a bolder statement of the pride we were all feeling in our country.

So a group of employees went to Consumers Produce President Alan Siger who recalls, "We were all in shock and they came to me and said they wanted to collect for a bigger flag pole, and a bigger flag, dedicated to those who died. We decided it was an excellent idea."

However instead of the employees collecting, Siger made it a company project. The new 35-foot flagpole, with a six-by-ten foot flag, was installed within a few weeks at the end of the front office parking lot. A bronze plaque will soon be placed at its base with the following inscription:

**DEDICATED BY THE EMPLOYEES OF CONSUMERS PRODUCE COMPANY  
TO THE HONORED MEMORY OF THOSE MURDERED SEPTEMBER 11, 2001  
THE VICTIMS OF TERROR WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN**

## How can we help?

It was a common question in those hours and days after September 11th. It was one we pondered individually and collectively and it was the question on Dick Williams' mind when he picked up the phone and called Consumers Produce.

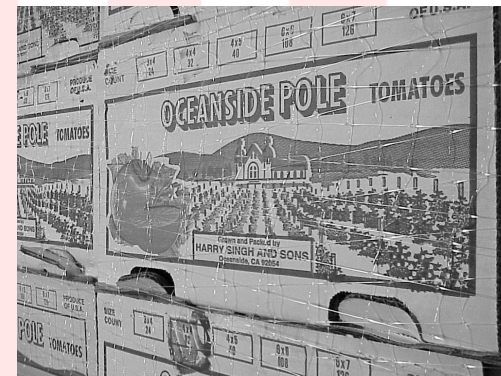
Dick Williams is the sales manager for Ocean Side Produce in Ocean Side, California. When he got Alan Siger on the phone he said, "We're sitting here like everyone else wondering what we can do and we've got these 3 X 4 tomatoes."

So The Freshness Professionals went to work and got the C.H. Robinson Company out of Bridgeville to help by donating half the freight costs. Consumers Produce handled the rest of the freight costs, as well as the rest of the expenses to get the sixteen-hundred boxes of tomatoes to the Super Value Grocery chain which paid the going market price of eight dollars a box.

With the product and the shipping costs donated, the entire proceeds for the sale of the tomatoes - \$12,800 - was donated through the United Way of New York to the September 11th Fund to help victims of the terrorist attacks.

Consumers Produce would like to thank Ocean Side Produce owner Harry Singh for his generosity, and C.H. Robinson for its assistance in making the donation possible.

\*A footnote to this story. The outpouring of help for the September 11th victims has been so overwhelming that on October 30th The American Red Cross discontinued soliciting for the September 11th Fund. The pledges and contributions of \$547 million will be more than enough to answer both the immediate and long term needs of the families.



## Next Stop, Consumers Produce!

(Continued from Page 1)  
expensive. Generally speaking weather doesn't affect rail deliveries so with the increased use of reliable rail service we will be able to assure our customers of a consistent supply, save money, and pass those savings on to our customers."

Once the new rail line is built Siger estimates the new spur will mean doubling the 100-200 rail cars that currently serve Consumers Produce in a year. "It allows us to increase our growth, and help preserve and hopefully create more jobs."

In addition to jobs, Siger says the state's interest in making sure the rail siding is affordable is to get more trucks off the road. "Each rail car can carry the load of three trucks. That's three trucks off the highways, off our city streets, tying up traffic, and wearing down the roads. It's more fuel efficient and environmentally friendly."

Construction on the spur will begin soon and will angle the steel rails across Railroad Street from its intersection at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to bring it alongside the Consumers Produce Warehouse.



## Ripening our Bytes

(Continued from Page 1)  
and place their orders as well as be able to continue ordering by phone or fax." In addition to updated information about Consumers Produce, Data Processing and Technology specialist Linda Yinger says, when the site goes online early next year, each customer will have their own password and log-on capability. "When they log on to their account they will see a personalized profile created from their past ordering history. This way they will immediately see the items they typically buy and that day's prices."

Clicking on the screen will allow our customers to place their orders. Yinger says it will be very easy. "They go down and put in the quantities they want. It gives them a review and they can check their order online." Once the order is sent online, customers will get the same personalized care from The Freshness Professionals they have come to expect.

But even customers who choose not to use the online ordering capability can benefit from the new website. In addition to current pricing, customers will also find our hot sheet items.

How many of our customers will use the new online ordering? That's a question that only time will tell but Siger emphasizes the website will be there **if** you want to use it. If not, our staff will still be waiting for your call or fax with the same friendly, courteous care as always.



### Editors Corner

## In Perspective

Since my days as a small boy sitting along the side of Runway 4 at Bluegrass Field in Lexington, Kentucky and watching the planes with my Dad, I have been a lover of flying. Seeing the Cessna 150's grease their tires onto the concrete with nary a bounce, hearing the rising whine of their engines as the pilot pushed full throttle for the take off portion of the touch and go. Or the occasional thrill of watching a Constellation, its four props windmilling, as she was settling in for a landing after dancing among the clouds in far-off unimaginable places. These were the seeds of a love that led me to a pilot's license, and have left me motionless many days gazing skyward admiring the incredible grace of a 757 passing overhead on its way to Pittsburgh International Airport. I look at them differently today.

*September 11th changed everything.*

Sitting in choir practice the other night my throat started feeling a little scratchy. I knew from so many times in the past that a stuffy head would soon follow, a slight fever was a sure bet, and I was headed for an overall feeling of yuck! But somehow this time it was different. As embarrassed as I was to admit this to myself then, and to you now, my first thoughts went to anthrax. Preposterous as it may seem, that was my immediate thought.

*September 11th changed everything.*

My son's high school band is scheduled to lead the Disney World Parade on New Year's Day. In a recent survey of the nearly 300

kids in his band, 30% of them don't want to go - including my son.

*September 11th changed everything.*

My eight-year-old daughter asks, "Daddy are the terrorists going to come back?" "Do the terrorists live in our neighborhood?"

*September 11th changed everything.*

Then the other day I walked into Consumers Produce to take pictures for our new website, and to get some information for this newsletter. Bausha greeted me with her ever-present smile. Rich Miles stopped me with a friendly "What's up John?" John Ogle joked about growing his beard to play Santa this Christmas. The grapes looked juicy as ever, the melons were plump, the tomatoes invitingly red, the bananas making that final turn to an eyepopping yellow...and suddenly I was overcome with a sense of comfort.

I get that same feeling when I look at my children peacefully sleeping in their beds, or my wife snuggled under an afghan warmed by our family room fire. It's a feeling of being wrapped in family. Never before has family seemed more important than right now. Whether it's the family at home, or the one under the roof of Consumers Produce, we need the comfort of family now more than ever, because *September 11th changed everything.*



**Freshnews**  
News From The Freshness Professionals



Fall 2001

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Editor : John Shumway

## A ROYAL SELECTION

Duke  
Dutchess  
Princess

Sleigh  
Queen  
King