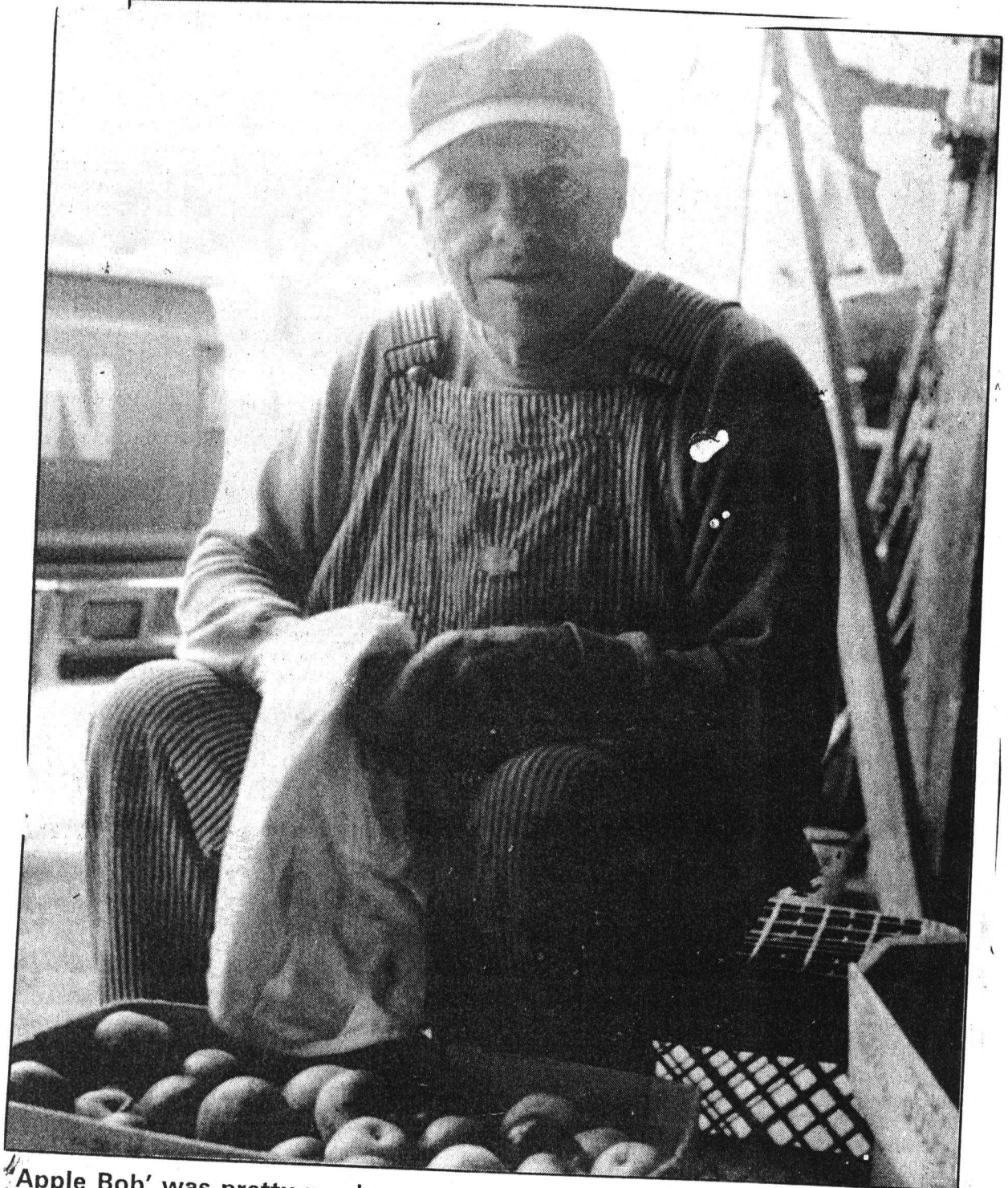


'Apple Bob' Gulardoni

A pioneer in Central Coast organic farming

By FAITH RAIDER
STAFF WRITER



'Apple Bob' was pretty much a one-man show in his orchards, according to his wife, Ann.

A MUCH loved organic apple grower who personally delivered his apples to local stores, Robert "Apple Bob" Gulardoni was a pioneer in organic farming in this area.

Apple Bob, who passed away Saturday at the age of 82, was one of the first organic growers in the county. Along with his organically grown, hand-polished apples, he was known for his old-style farming methods and having a kind word for everyone he met during his rounds.

'His were the sweetest apples around, just like him.'

— *Bill Denevan,*
friend/fellow grower

"His were the sweetest apples around, just like him," said Bill Denevan, a friend and fellow apple grower who met Apple Bob 15 years ago.

Apple Bob began farming organically in the early 1970s, fifteen years before organic farming gained widespread popularity. Gulardoni's father had used organic agricultural methods in his farm in Italy, but it was Anne Gulardoni, Apple Bob's wife, who asked her husband to stop using chemical sprays because she was sensitive to them and did not want their three children exposed to the chemicals.

"He really felt the use of the really harsh pesticides were not good for him or his friends working in the orchards," said Denevan. "He wanted to have a compatible environment for work."

Members of the organic farming community remember Apple Bob as an old-time grower who was a pioneer of the organic farming movement.

"He provided the wisdom and inspiration to a whole new generation of growers 15 years before the term organic became commonly accepted on the Central Coast," said Bob Scowcroft, the director of the Organic Farming Research Foundation.

Sean Swezey, the organic farming adviser in the agroecology program at UC-Santa Cruz, noted that it was unusual for a farmer of Apple Bob's generation who came through the

"chemical age" to be involved in organic agriculture.

"He was an established older-generation grower versatile enough to grow in a new way." Swezey worked with Gulardoni on a farm extension project to control the codling moth, the classic "worm in the apple" bug, without using chemicals.

Apple Bob was born in Lariano de Como, Italy, and moved to Soquel when he was 12. In 1945, he and his wife acquired the farm and orchard in Corralitos where they first grew bushberries and then apples.

He began working at the four-room Corralitos school as a bus driver and custodian in 1946. He then worked at the Bradley school after it was built in 1952

until he retired in 1970. In 1962, the school district dedicated the monument that stands outside the Bradley school to Apple Bob for his long service in the district.

It was after he retired from Bradley that he began stepping up his deliveries to natural food stores in Corralitos and Santa Cruz.

"The first thing I thought when he died was it's the end of an era," said Heidi Hansen, who managed the Five Mile House market in Corralitos for 10 years.

She said most memorable was Apple Bob's "old style of taking care of farms." She remembered that he used to do every-

thing himself, hand polishing his apples, packing them individually, personally delivering them, and beating everyone else's prices.

"He was such a public figure out in Corralitos," she said. "A whole lot of people are grieving."

His wife, Anne, said Apple Bob was almost a one-man show on the farm. "He got very little help except from the family."

For the last 10 years, his son, Nick, helped his father grow and sell his apples as Apple Bob cut back his store deliveries, but he remained active on his farm.

As seems fitting for a man so dedicated to his work, Apple Bob died in his orchard.
