

This column, clockwise from photo at right.

The workers rest in their dormitory at Wilmont Orchard.

Calendar Inniss sits under a tree during his lunch break.

Joseph Bradshaw and Calendar Inniss take a break in the barn at Wilmont Orchard during their last shift of the season.

Joseph Bradshaw directs co-worker Calendar Inniss while working their last shift of the season.

Wilmont Orchard's barn and trailer at night.



# End of a Season

## A Story of Two Pickers

Photos and story by Justin Greaves

An orchard is something we drive by day after day, giving it little thought. Maybe we enjoy the novelty of 'picking your own' apples or berries from time to time, but generally we don't stop to think about the orchards.

While driving by row upon row of trees, you might catch a glimpse of a worker on a ladder, picking fruit. Who is he? Where does he live? How does he cope with the strenuous work?

The life of a seasonal worker can be one of loneliness, desperation and isolation from family and friends. But employers like Wilmot Orchards in Bowmanville, Ont. have created a tight-knit community, making the workers feel more comfortable and at home.

Thousands of temporary foreign workers or TFW are employed every year in communities throughout Canada. Many come from other countries that participate in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, SAWP.

For Joseph Hackett and Athelbert Callender, it was an ad in their local paper in Bridgetown, Barbados that led them to Wilmot Orchards.

"I'm a carpenter, but I needed more work, so I saw the ad and decided to work away from home" says Hackett, who has been working at Wilmot's for over 10 years.

Both Hackett and Callender surpass the requirements of the Canadian immigration laws with flying colours. They have more than a typical salaried labourer. Callender has his own exterior painting business in Barbados, and Hackett has been working in the trades in Barbados his whole life.

In earl April, Hackett and Callender fly from Barbados to Toronto where their boss Charles Stevens, owner of Wilmot Orchards, meets them and takes them to Bowmanville.

"Both Callender and Hackett really know where their heads are at. They pick a direction and do it," says Stevens.

Stevens bought the farm in 1976, and planted his first tree in 1979. Unlike most orchards, he hires the same team of men every year to work on the farm.

Both Hackett and Callendar come early April every year to help prepare the farm for the upcoming season.

The two were chosen because of their comradery with each other and all-round ability and knowledge of farm life.

When the summer time comes, more temporary foreign workers arrive to help with the apple and berry picking. At the peak of the picking season, Wilmot will have up to 25 workers. Some bigger orchards like Algoma in Bowmanville, have over 150 employed TFWs.

"We're a close group of guys. We live in a trailer together and get to know each other," says Callender.

In late October, the frost comes and the number of the men at Wilmot starts to dwindle. Week by week they fly home, which is all paid by Stevens. But Callender and Hackett continue, taking advantage of their eight-month eligibility.

"I do miss my family back home, but I've been coming and going from Canada for so long that I'm used to it. It's just the way it is," says Callender.

"I keep coming back because this is a good job. It's part of my life now. I have friends here, some them moved here from Barbados. It's good," says Hackett.

Hackett and Callender are a lot more than just men who pick fruit. They're hard working people who give their time and effort into their work and the community.

Whether it is working in rain or shine, or supporting the town of Bowmanville, they love what they do and the country of Canada.

Hackett and Callender will return in early April to start prepwork for another season at the orchards at Wilmot.

Above: Joseph Bradshaw and Calendar take a walk down a row of apple trees.

Centre left: A group of friends from both Barbados and Canada meet up for dominos and drinks in a trailer at Algoma Orchard.

Bottom left: Calendar Inniss wears a balaclava during the final week of apple picking.