

Yampa Kraut King



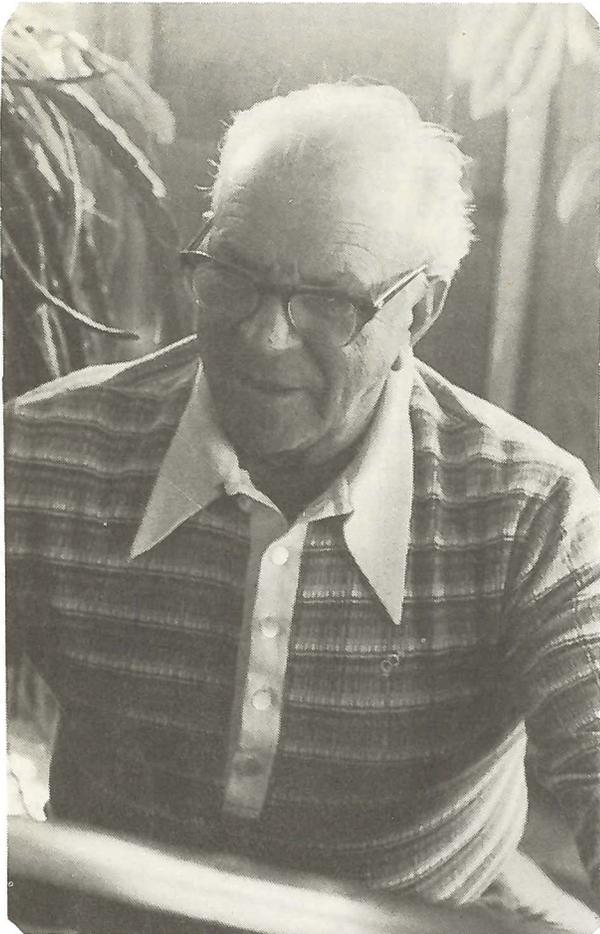
Lewis Phillips



by: Letha Mack

"My dad raised a big family, therefore we had to raise a big garden. I have been working in a garden every since I was big enough to work. My dad always said a busy boy is a good boy."

Phillips had already set the scene when we arrived. A lighted bar-b-que pit lent warmth for the semi-sheltered patio.



With us supplying the cabbage and he having the utensils he set to work to explain the art of making sauerkraut.

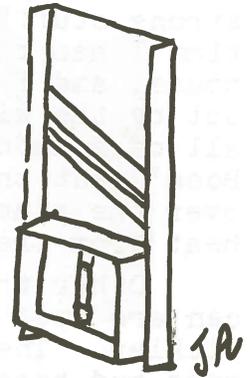
Mr. Lewis Phillips, local Yampa resident, has lived and gardened in this area for seventy-four years. Even though in March, snow still covered the ground, he willingly demonstrated the process of making sauerkraut for THREE WIRE WINTER staff members in his own backyard. Because of the distance (25 miles of snow covered roads from Steamboat to Yampa) Mr.



Mr. Phillips demonstrating old-fashioned Krautcutter.

He also uses for his demonstration: a knife, pickle salt, (non-iodized), a large keg or crock, a tamper (heavy wooden club), rock and cloth, pan or bucket, jars or containers-and lots of time and energy.

You should place this in a warm place while the fermentation takes place. This process usually takes about ten days to two weeks. When it makes it will quit foaming, then you may take it out and place it in containers to freeze or can."

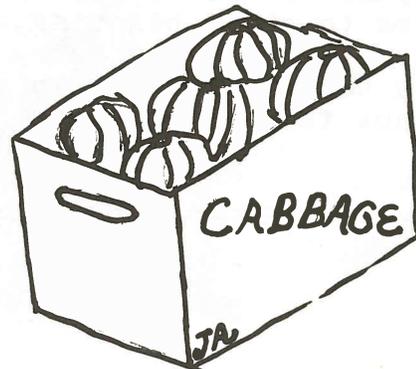


To begin the process, he cut the cabbage in half and removed the core. "If you do not remove the core, it will cause bad places in the kraut," Mr. Phillips informed us.

Next Mr. Phillips placed the cabbage in the Krautcutter (flat side down) and cut it into thin slices. "Then take a couple of handfuls of sliced cabbage and place it in the crock. The next step is to salt it; this makes the brine, and that makes the kraut. Salt it like you would if you were going to make cole slaw. The more salt you put in it, the sourer it makes the kraut."

After alternating cabbage and then salt (in small amounts), tamp (or bruise) it well. This beating of the cabbage starts the fermenting process.

We wondered about variety for the process to which Mr. Phillips replied, "You make it according to your taste. Lots of people put apples in and pound (tamp) them up, but I don't like sugar in it, I just like plain sauerkraut. Course when I lived on the ranch years ago, when I was a kid, we would eat lots of sauerkraut. We didn't have weiners to put in it, but we had pork instead, so we used spare ribs and bacon. Nowadays, of course, sauerkraut and weiners is a very favorite dish with a lot of people."



"We used to make it in thirty gallon kegs and set it out in what we called our storage room and mother nature froze it. Then when we wanted a mess of sauerkraut in the wintertime we had a little hatchet, and we would go out and chop out a chunk of sauerkraut, put it in a pan, thaw it out in the house."

Besides making sauerkraut Mr. Phillips used to make root beer. Mrs. Phillips said it was "pretty strong stuff". She recalls, "One time I had the Ladies' Aid at my house, and I had this root beer out by the kitchen firestove, when all of a sudden 'Boom, Boom, Boom' went this root beer - all over the place - because of the heat from the stove."

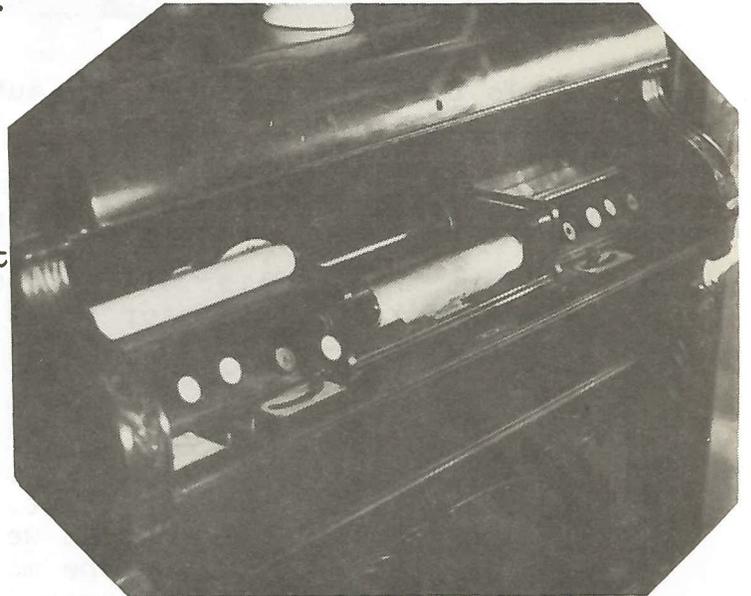
Other things that the Phillips' can are beet pickles and carrot pickles. They also freeze lots of peas and beans, but as Mr. Phillips says, "not always a sure crop in Routt County - sometimes we have beans to can and sometimes we don't." They have rubarb, raspberries and sometimes gooseberries and strawberries when the season permits. "When they (refer to first issue THREE WIRE WINTER) were raising those strawberries in Strawberry Park my older brother went down to pick. Every morning when the Moffat train would come to Yampa there would be several crates of strawberries for the Phillips family - fresh from Steamboat. They were wonderful strawberries," as Mr. Phillips remembers.

When asked if they spend winters here Mr. Phillips says, "We take trips once in a while, but I would rather be home than anywhere else I've seen. The last week in May or the first week in June is time to start planting, but you don't get in any hurry in Routt County because we have to wait for the snow to go."

About weeding he told, "Keep the weeds out with a hoe, the best way in the world to control weeds in a garden. There is things you can put on weeds to poison them, but you pret near always poison something else."

When asked about cut worms he informed us, "Well, you can get poison that will get rid of them. You just put it around your plants, and they will eat that instead of the plant, sometimes..."

Mr. and Mrs. Phillips have an antique in their home that is quite special and unique. It is called a player organ. "Mrs. Stevenson, wife of the first forest ranger for this area, gave it to Lewis because when his family used to go visit her he would play the organ. He was the only little guy who wouldn't want to get funny after a while and act silly with it. He just really liked it and wanted to play it so bad."



For twenty years the Phillips have had this unusual possession and it has been sixty years since Mr. Phillips first played it.



As we wound up the interview, Mr. Phillips who is an avid reader of the Steamboat Pilot (local newspaper) and who had read thoroughly the last issue of THREE WIRE WINTER, speculated about this country's future, "I hope you have stories about the young people around here too. Of course, this country has had two hundred years in the past, but we hope to have that much in the future."

