

PRINTED FOR MARK FREEMAN

Mike Kimura 13:56

Oh we have to look at a couple of newsletters. I think we're having a special, \$29.95 for both books or something like that. Ok. Alright thanks, by.

Freeman 15:01

Can you tell me about the plants you're cutting from right here?

Mike Kimura

Uhhmm I'm cutting from phalennopsis orchids, we raise these primarily for cut flower production. And uhhh, lets see, it's a crop we get about to bloom about three times a year under the right conditions, and most of these blooms are used for corsages for weddings and special occasions. Although a lot of times we cut the whole stem for arrangement work that florists use.

Freeman 16:03

So your customers are commercial florists?

Kimura

Both commercial retail florists and uhhh large volume wholesale florists that we ship to across the country, and we also sell to a few supermarket chains.

Freeman 16:29

What do the florists think about that?

Kimura

AT first 10, 15 years ago, they were pretty upset about it, but has time went on and more markets continued to carry flowers and get bigger the small retail florists just had to adjust, basically its part of the free market system I guess. Yea its hard for a florist because they lost a lot of that everyday walk in business from the supermarkets, just like the local bakeries and donut shops, card shops, its tough for the small retailers. I think consumers now adays when they go to a supermarket and they can see it all there at one time. You know everybodys busy and they, if they see a beautiful bouquet of flowers priced right, you know I've done it myself, its just a fast and convient way to get your flowers.

Freeman 18:13

Tell me a little bit about the picking wholesale cycle between here and L.A.?

Kimura

Are main cutting days are basically Monday, Wednesday, Friday. And uhhh still about 75 percent of our production goes to 2 local wholesale stores, we have one in Los Angeles and one in Carlsbad. We have our own driver drive it up in the middle of the night and distribute it to the two stores. In Los Angeles we still open up at middle three

times a week and work through the mornings similar to the produce business and we cater to the outlying area of retail and wholesale florists.

Freeman 19:10  
How was Mother's Day?

Kimura  
Mother's Day was a pretty good holiday, it was busy. We're finding that the local market is getting more and more competitive with all the imports coming into Los Angeles International Airport. So we're finding we have to ship across the country more, thereby extending our Mothers Day periods. We use to only concentrate Tuesday through Saturday mother's day week, now we're actually starting the Friday before so we have about 11-12 day mother's day period. So, its part of the market you just have to adjust.

Freeman 20:13  
What's the challenge of getting the blooms ready in such a small window of time? Is it a challenge to have enough products in the window that you've got it a week or so before a major holiday.

Kimura  
It is but its part of our advantage of being such an older experienced firm. My grandfather started the business 53 years ago and so the timing of the crop that's something that been passed along the three generations. Actually time for holidays is kind of like cooking once you get the formula, its not that difficult for us. Sometimes we do miss it by a few days or even a week, but most of the time we're able to supply the holiday. Individual blooms, each gets an individual water vile and we pack them into boxes of 12 or 100 blooms per box. Or the sprays we pack 10 sprays per box.

Freeman 21:55  
What about pershiable items?

Kimura  
These blooms actually should hold up, up to two weeks under the right conditions. The drawback to orchids are their blooms are really delicate so they have to be treated with a lot of fine care.

Freeman 22:57  
Any idea how many plants are in this house?

Kimura  
There's about, in the two houses here there's about 40, excuse me 20,000 plants. When its filled up, right now we have an empty bench, but when its filled its about 20,000.

Freeman 23:26  
And you manage this with about how many people?

Kimura

The greenhouse operation here has about eight employees and then two stores each have about five employees each. We're a pretty small operation its about twenty employees total.

Freeman

24:23

Is the real challenge, it can be as pastoral as it looks?

Kimura

Oh, I guess from a growing standpoint its battling the problems, even though we're inside we're still its battling the problems of disease, virus of the plants, insect control, and, but in a marketing side the battle really, the most stress lies in finding and maintaining customers and markets. Before the imports started it was more a battle of keeping up an adequate supply to feed the market and staying up with your local competitors. Now not only are you battling local competition but you have a lot of imported flowers and not necessarily the same flowers. I think consumers are very sophisticated, they know they have alternatives. They don't have to have a certain flower, they can choose which flower is best for that season, what they want to purchase at that time.

Freeman

26:38

So where are these imports mostly coming from?

Kimura

The imports are mostly coming from central and South America. I guess because our roximity is so close. Also, there's a lot of Dutch stuff unbelievable cheap with the exchange rate, and it being very conducive for them to ship we're being bombarded from all over the world now.

Freeman

27:37

What about locally are there challenges to staying here in Encinitas?

Kimura

Oh certainly, you can probably hear the bulldozers going on outside. On the street just above us there used to be three carnation growers that took up the whole street, and the last of the three recently sold out above us. Their developing custom million dollar homes right above us. Our close proximity to the ocean, it makes it, its going to be a challenge to be able to earn a living and stay put in an area surrounded by custom homes. Its kind of sad we might not be able to, be able to afford the area we grew up in, being forced out by new residents that are able to afford these homes and push up the price of the properties. Were as we're still battling with much higher energy prices, increasing payroll every year, and basically still 1970's prices for the flowers. So you got higher expenses and no ability to raise your price to adjust for the increase of the expenses. And you got people buying million dollar homes behind you complaining about what you do with your property, sometimes it feels like a losing battle.

Freeman

29:52

What are their complaints they don't like having all this open space around?

Kimura

Well just the other day we had to chase out a couple people, that I guess we're new residents up above us, but we have signs posted no trespassing and the gates. They still walk in with their dogs, they think it's a public park or something, and they get really annoyed that we're asking them to leave our property. We're trying to conduct business and you don't want people to get injured on your property, or what not, dogs drink fertilizer or something that you may be using for the flowers, yea its tough. We have to worry about government agencies now regulating how our, how we irrigate our flowers and the runoff, making sure we treat our water correctly before it runs off the property. These are all big challenges.

Freeman

31:20

You're applying for some government assistance to redevelop your water, did that happen?

Kimura

Yea we applied for it. One things that's, actually we've been pretty pleased that our local government is working pretty closely with our local farm bureau and our county extension office. The city of Encinitas was sued by the Theo Labay representative to clean up our runoff water and so the local farm and county extension have really taken an active role to get the local nurseries to start to comply, and we were able to get a more efficient irrigation system that has very little runoff, subsidized by the local government at fifty percent. So in that sense I guess that's a positive thing that can come out.....

Freeman

32:45

Are you going to put it in?

Kimura

We just got the approval this week so we'll be putting it in probably within a month or so. We have to order the system and pay for it, and the government somewhere down the line reimburses reimburses you.

Freeman

33:10

I'm from the government I'm here to help you.

Kimura 33:27

So how may nurseries have.....

Female Worker

We never talked about it. We get together for reunion and things but nobody really talks about camp and why they were originally were there. They are I think ready, they're in their 70's, mid 70's, I was hoping they get this grant and can do this. Their class had all the ordinary reunions, 5, 10, 15, 20 25, 30, 40, 50 and after 50 they had one every year. So you know this group is very cohesive and wants to be together.

Freeman 41:08  
Now what school is this?

Female Worker  
This is Topaz, well there's no such school because there's no more camps.

Freeman 41:15  
Which camp?

Female Worker  
Utah, Topaz Utah/

Freeman 41:18  
And they have their reunion in Utah?

Female Worker  
No they don't have it in Utah because it's a desolate desert so they have it all over. Most of the people are from Northern California so they had all their reunions at the beginnings in the San Francisco area. Now since their fiftieth we went to Washington D.C. for a reunion we went on a cruise, they're just going everywhere. This year they're coming down to Cardin.

Freeman 41:56  
And this is the year they're trying to get the grant for?

Female Worker  
For next year. The core group has been working already and they've, the last I heard, they needed somebody who knows how to write grants, so they're having somebody outline that all for them so when they start in September they'll pretty much most of that worked out.

Freeman 42:25  
What are they asking for the funding for?

Female Worker  
So that they can get it on film, write a book, its kind of interesting/

Freeman 42:38  
This is Joe's high school?

Female Worker  
It's Joe's class?

Freeman  
And what about yours?

Female Worker

Well mine I have a different story. I'm writing my Dad's story which is a different one. Everyone is kind of like in the mood to do this because all of us that were there, all the elders are gone, so we're feeling like we need to do this. 've started mine too, but a little different than Joe's. I think Joe's class is unique in that forty of them still get together. They've got a lot of interesting people in their class. They have two Caucasians in their class, one is a creative writing teacher at Ohio State, the other is a retired professor for Penn State, and both their parents were administrators for the camp, but the parents did not want them to go out of camp to go to school so pretty much forced, not forced them, insisted that they go to school with them. So Paubel and Gene Sanford stick out in this group, but they have a whole different story. Like I said this group is an interesting group. So they'll probably get whatever grant they're going for.

Freeman 44:12  
And how were you, you were in high school?

Female Worker

No I was not in high school I was 10. Not so much that they were in camp, well that's a big part of it, but what they did with their lives after camp. Now they're pretty much retired so they know what they've done.

Freeman 44:42  
Joe says he's shy you think he's going to talk about this?

Female Worker

NO, he keeps saying he's to drive everybody. He's saying he'll drive the spouses to where they want to go. So I keep saying no you're not going to do that. SO what I thought I'd do with him is put him on the tape before they come just in case he chickens out.

I just have a sheet of questions for each person. I've already done seven interviews the past three weeks. Because we've been traveling and I've been purposely going were my Dad's friends are because they're like 90. So I have like a sheet and I ask them these questions, so usually they take off and I have to draw them back.

Freeman 45:41  
So they've been telling you things about your Dad that really surprise you?

Female Worker

Yea, Yea, they really surprise me, lots of things. Or things were I got the stories, I thought it was a real authentic story in my mind, but it really wasn't.

Freeman 46:02  
What's the most surprising thing you've discovered so far?

Female Worker

Well, there was a period when the people were in camp when the government made them say if they were loyal or not. If they said, that was what they called no-no, if you said you were not loyal or patriotic to the United States they shipped you to Tubey Lake. I thought one of my family members went to Tubey Lake, all these years I thought they went there but they didn't. That was surprising, I remember my father fighting them about it , and I just thought they did , but they didn't, so that was kind of surprising.

Freeman 58:32  
Are they doing them all at once?

Construction Worker  
There's two phases.

Freeman 58:42  
When is the second phase.

Construction Worker  
As soon as we finish this house they want us to start another one, that's what they said , I don't know its true. If they want them we do them.

Freeman 59:05  
How many bedrooms are these houses.

Construction Worker  
Upstairs three, 2 bathrooms up top, and two more bedrooms on the bottom. That's it. OK amigo take it easy.