

Fruits of life many and varied

William James (Bill) Joyce

Apple grower, community service

Born: May 13, 1940; Adelaide

Died: August 4, 2005; Adelaide

BILL Joyce was one of South Australia's unsung business heroes, building one of the nation's most successful horticultural companies during his long career in the apple industry.

The final step in the development of his family's Joyson Orchards came in May when Mr Joyce bought Fruits of Batlow in New South Wales, more than doubling the size of the company.

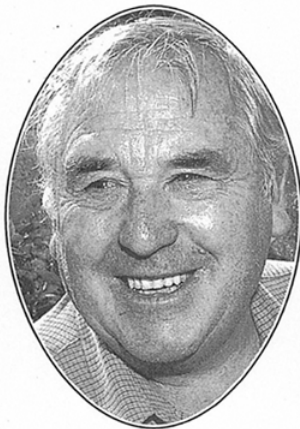
The deal made Joyson Orchards the largest family-owned apple-growing company in Australia, producing an astonishing amount of apples each year.

Today, the Joyson apple orchards in SA and Victoria total more than 480ha and produce 8000 tonnes of apples a year, before the new Batlow holdings are taken into account. Joyson Orchards also holds extensive plantings of cherries and grapes and owns Balhannah Nurseries, the largest and oldest deciduous tree nursery in the state.

Yet for all his remarkable business success, it was only half his life.

"His business life was mirrored or surpassed by his life in the community," Mr Joyce's eldest son and Joyson Orchards general manager, Mark Joyce, said.

"He was a community icon, involved in virtually everything in the local community at one stage or another. He was very energetic, he lived life to the full and he had the support of a wonderful woman. It was amazing what he crammed into his life."



His involvements ranged from his early days in Rural Youth to the local council, the national apple industry, presidency of the football and cricket clubs and he was instrumental in the formation of the Australian Horticultural Corporation.

Mr Joyce gained great satisfaction from growing quality apples and believed his company's greatest skill lay in developing major horticultural projects.

Shortly before his death, he put the reasons for his success down to ambition, energy, hard work and, particularly, having

good people around him. Yet the house Mr Joyce grew up in on the family's original 14ha apple family at Lenswood had no electricity or running water and there was no mechanisation or refrigeration.

Mr Joyce was 14 when he left school to return home to work on the family's farm with his father. They worked it with horses for more than two years before buying a little grey Ferguson tractor.

The family's journey from those early days of his youth to today has been a long and winding road. Mr Joyce was 22 when they expanded by buying another farm, followed by another a few years later and then others.

In the 1990s, the Joyces pioneered large-scale apple growing in the South-East at Kalangadoo and then moved to fill a market niche for early-season apples with a substantial farm at Blanchetown.

Mr Joyce believed that a major part of the family's success was due to the support of his wife, Kay, sons Mark and Brett and their families, working together in a family business. A man of passion, strong will and a true industry leader, he contributed to the SA and Australian industry for more than four decades.

He was a member of the Apple and Pear Growers Association of SA state executive from 1980 until 1991 and president from 1984 to 1987. Mr Joyce was president of the Australian Apple and Pear Growers Association from 1986 to 1989. He is survived by his wife, Kay, sons Mark and Brett, daughter Carolyn and their families.

Nigel Austin