

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

Summer-Fall 1999

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

—*Kevin Irvin*

Another growing season has come and gone. Each season seems to be different and the only constant being the daylight hours. Seems most apple varieties ripened later than the norm, at least here in East Anchorage. However, my Valiant grapes didn't seem to have a problem ripening this year, and they kept getting sweeter the longer I left them on the vine, even after the tasting at the end of September. The pears didn't fair so well this year and I attribute that to a couple of things. Sour cherries did fine as usual, seems no matter what the weather is like in a given year the pie cherries always come through. Still waiting for the apricots to blossom, maybe next year. And as for plums, still waiting for some of my varieties to bloom as well. I think we all know the variety to grow now, Opal.

With the change of seasons comes the start of our indoor meetings, and of course Officer elections. At this writing I have not contacted the other Officers to see who will be willing to stay on, but we *will* need to find another Newsletter Editor. Dwight will no longer be continuing, I for one will miss his great newsletters, but he has been burdened with the job long enough. It's time for another member to volunteer for this job. The newsletter is an important part of our association and I hope someone will step forward and take over for Dwight. Another need is a Secretary, we have been operating for too long without one.

I think our association is a benefit to all of us as members and also to the public. If it wasn't for us, many more people wouldn't think apples can grow in Alaska, let alone any of the other fruits. For our association to continue

into the new Millennium we desperately need more volunteers to share in the duties of keeping our association alive.

I will volunteer to one more year as President (note I said ONE more year) should you as a group decide to keep me in this position. I will not however, assume the newsletter duties also.

MILE 108 APPLE

—*Kevin Irvin*

The Mile 108 tree on the Seward Highway (about 10 miles south of Anchorage—*editor*) came to my attention via Verna Pratt this past spring. It was originally found by a lady who does nothing but search and enjoy the "big outdoor" garden. This tree has endured many a winter along the inlet and it is obviously a seedling from a discarded apple core. The tree is known to others besides our group as it has had branches sawed off and it looks as though the main trunk at one time has been sawed off. This tree obviously wants to grow, as today it has about 6 main trunks growing up. Height of the tree is around 20 feet and probably 10 to 15 feet wide, as some of the lower branches have adapted to growing along the ground and in some places it is trying to root itself. My best guess as to the age of the tree is 15 years plus.

I went down this past spring and located it (which took a couple trips and a couple calls to Verna) and took some pollen with me. This tree is unique in that it has adapted to two different climates if you will, one climate just on top the ground and the other in the upper reaches of the tree. The blossoms were out only on the lower branches the first time

down, and were just beginning to break in the upper part. I pollinated the lower branches on the first trip then 2 weeks later I went down and the upper part was in full bloom. I proceeded to pollinate this part of the tree which was somewhat of a losing battle as the winds along the inlet kept carrying the pollen off in different directions. However I spotted a bumblebee and proceeded to cover it with pollen from my duster, it didn't seem to care at all. My hope was that the bee would take the pollen up to the top of the tree and get the job done that the wind was preventing me from doing.

I didn't get back down to see if my efforts had succeeded until July when three carloads of our group met and went down to look. To my surprise there was some fruit set, about 20 or so apples were forming. While we were there we got a lot of looks from travelers along the highway and one curious individual even stopped to see what all the fuss was about. Of course none of us mentioned anything about the apple tree to this guy and at the time he stopped we were well away from the tree. He eventually left without a clue as to what we were doing.

Through out the rest of the summer a few group members paid visits to see how the apples were coming along. It seems as though the ones that made it the longest before being picked got to be about 2" in size. Each trip down there were fewer apples on the tree. Needless to say we were unable to harvest any apples from the tree as the traveling public seemed to do this for us. My efforts to see if this apple would be good to grow in our orchards failed. One thing for sure, the tree is very hardy, with what mother nature sends it during the winter along the inlet.

The only way it seems we will know if this seedling will produce an apple of any quality will be to get some scion from it and graft it to some of our trees and see what comes of it. Being it's location along the Seward Hiway, and the large pullout there, it is doubtful if we will ever get any fruit to maturity on the mother tree. I believe it has a good potential given the size of the blossoms and the last reported size of the apples before they were all picked.

I guess we will need a couple volunteers to get some scion wood from it next spring and spread it around into different locations and see what the results will be. It may never ripen for us, but it is such a unique tree that I believe it's worth the try.

KIWIS IN PENNSYLVANIA — *B. Boyer*

In June, Marianne and I visited David Kuchta in Nesquehoning, PA (humblebe@Ptd.net). We talked about bees for pollination and about Kiwi varieties.

David has 32 varieties of kiwis on 1.3 acres, fenced with 3 strands of electric fence. He said the deer get in when he turns off the electric fence during the day or when he forgets to turn it back on. Even then, the deer only eat leaves, not stems. He trellises kiwis on 5-foot posts with a 6-foot 2"x6" header with holes evenly spaced for trellis. He had 3 wires but 5 would be better. Wires are high enough that you can walk under them. The kiwis are planted 15 to 20 feet apart with preferably a male between 2 female plants. He lets 2 or 3 main stems come up from each plant up to the wires, then trains them along the wires.

For fertilization he mulches and uses Peters 20-20-20 when flowering. He says that roots are too close to the surface for dry fertilizer. He also uses green sand for potassium. David also recommends painting the trunks with white latex paint mixed 50% with water. His favorite varieties of Anaasaya are Geneva, Michigan State (largest), self-pollinating Polygama (hardest).

Mr. Kuchta also experimented with bumble bee nests. He recommends that nests aren't as important as food for the bees. He says the queen will burrow in the ground in the winter. But it is very important to have flowering plants and weeds that have continuous flowering throughout the spring, summer and fall.

ANNUAL TASTING OF ALASKA-GROWN APPLES

— D. Bradley

1999 Results

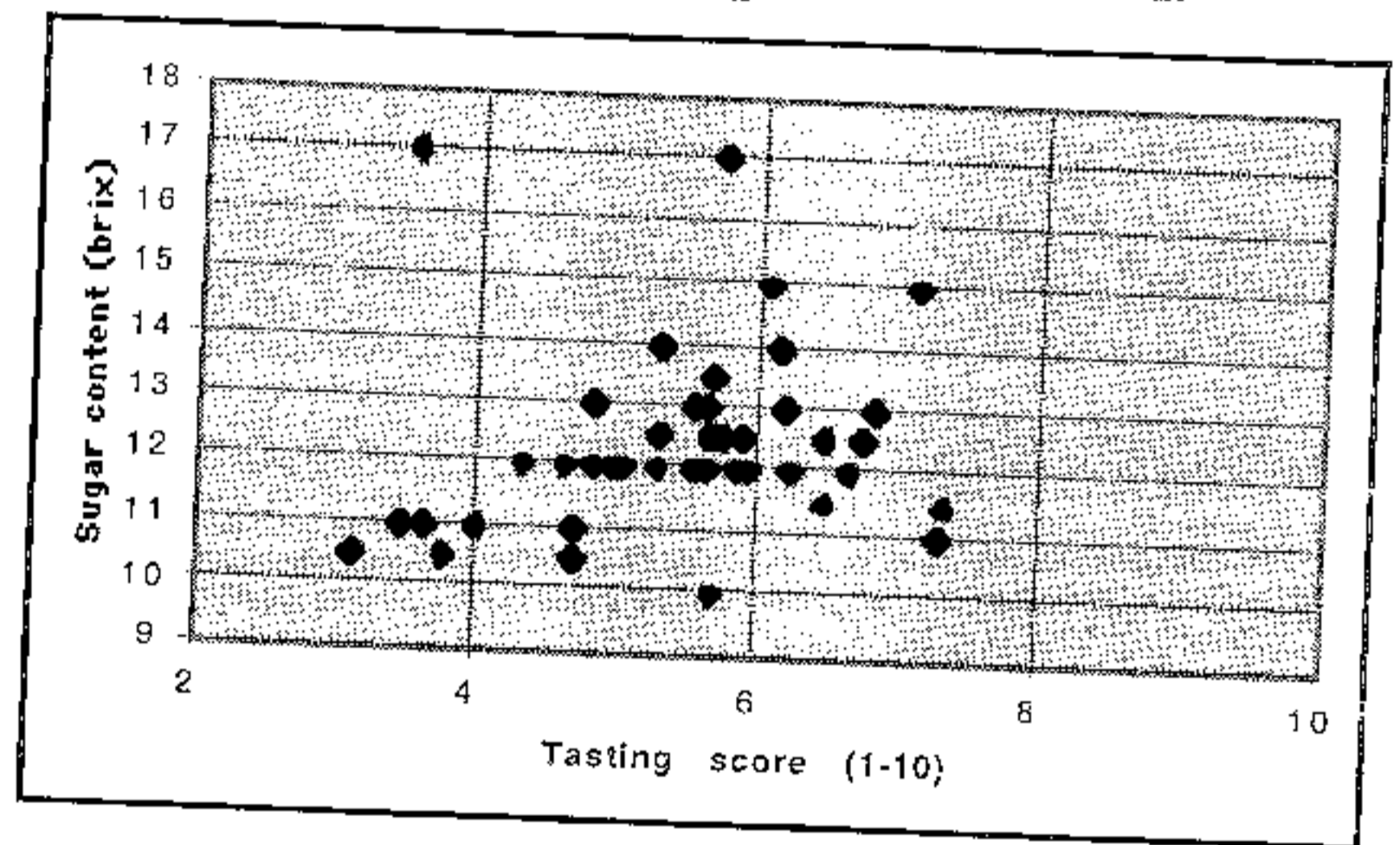
The annual Alaskan-grown apple tasting was held at Bradley's in Peters Creek on Sept. 25, 1999. About 30 people were there, and 19 rated the apples. We tasted 31 varieties of apples, a dozen repeats of these same varieties, two varieties of pear, and one each apricot and plum. The highest-rated apples this year were Red Duchess (grown by Tom Marshall), Norland (grown by Patrick Carney), Parkland (grown by Bob Boyer), Oriole (grown by Tom Marshall), and Viking (grown by Bob Boyer). Pat Carney brought two Norlands which we tasted blind. His "Patrick #2", grown in a pot, was the more highly rated of the two, and second overall.

No.	Variety	Grower	Score	Sugar content
9	Red Duchess	Marshall	7.32	11.5
29	Norland ("#2")	Carney	7.28	11
18	Parkland	Boyer	7.11	15
17	Oreole	Marshall	6.82	13
11	Viking	Boyer	6.74	12.5
2	Mantet	Boyer	6.63	12
13	Pristine	Boyer	6.47	11.5
16	September Ruby	Carney	6.45	12.5
23	Norland ("#3")	Carney	6.21	12
45	Rescue	Elliott	6.18	13
19	Parkland	Bradley	6.13	14
40	Trailman	Bradley	6.06	15
35	Lodi	Vochoska	5.94	12
3	Red Mantet		5.92	12
1	Norland	Franke	5.89	12.5
12	Summer Red	Irvin	5.84	12
34	Norland	Bradley	5.75	12.5
6	Centennial	Boyer	5.71	17
10	Early Mac	Monson	5.68	12.5
37	Hickel	Franke	5.68	10
14	Golden Transparent	Butcher	5.66	13.5
31	NY 394	Boyer	5.65	12
32	15th St. Mystery	Original	5.64	12.5
20	Parkland	Franke	5.63	13
5	Mantet	Yassick	5.55	12
27	Collett	Boyer	5.53	13
21	8th & M	Original	5.29	12.5
41	Joyce	Boyer	5.28	14
38	Rosthern 15	Franke	5.26	12

42	Westland	Franke?	5.03	12
22	8th & M	Yassick	5.00	12
4	Roda Mantet	Franke	4.95	12
30	Wynoochee Early	Boyer	4.82	13
15	Yellow Transparent	Marshall	4.82	12
33	Westland	Vochoska	4.69	10.5
7	Summer Mac	Boyer	4.68	11
39	Yellow Transparent	Franke	4.62	12
25	Harris Mystery	Harris	4.33	12
26	Heyer 12	Yassick	4.00	11
36	Westland	Boyer	3.78	10.5
8	State Fair	Olsen	3.63	11
43	Dolgo		3.53	17
28	Liberty	Boyer	3.44	11
24	Red Transparent	Franke?	3.11	10.5

Sugar content

Bob and Marianne Boyer tested each variety for sugar content; we were surprised as usual at some of the results. Out of curiosity, I plotted the tasting score (horizontal axis) versus sugar content. In the graph below, there is at best a weak correlation between sugar content and score. Eight out of 9 apples with sugar as low as 10.5 or 11 scored among the lowest for taste. However, the two ringers with sugar content of 17%—Dolgo and Centennial—don't fit the pattern too well.



Six-Year Results

The next table ranks the Alaskan-grown varieties that have been tasted over the past six years, since I've been keeping track. The order is highly subjective, based on years in the top ten, and number of years ranked in the top three. Ginger Gold, Oriole, Parkland, and Norland are the clear front-runners. Mantet, Viking, and Red Duchess have each placed first, but other years they have barely been edible — they don't ripen every year and when they don't they are worthless.

A caveat on Norland and Parkland. These apples have, indeed, finished in the top 10 most years and #2 or #3 fairly regularly. However, we usually sample three or four Norlands and Parklands, and it is only the highest scoring ones that finish in the top 10. Although the highest-rated Norland ranked second, the average score of four Norlands would have ranked eighth. Likewise for the three Parklands: one was rated highly, the rest back in the pack.

Variety	Years in top ten	Years # 1	Years #2	Years #3
Ginger Gold	4	2		
Oriole	5	1	1	2
Parkland	6		1	2
Norland	5		2	1
Mantet	3	1		
Viking	2	1		
Red Duchess	1	1		
15 th St. Mystery	3			
Roda Mantet	2		1	
Lodi	2			
Harris Mystery	2			
Sunrise	2			
September Ruby	2		1	
Geneva Early	1		1	
State Fair	1			1
Vista Bella	1			
Karl Franke Mystery	1			
Golden Transparent	1			
Canada Red	1			
Arvid Miller Mystery	1			
Whitney	1			
8 th & M	1			

Mystery				
Rescue	2			
Novo-sibirski Sweet	1			
Joyce	1			
Red Mantet	1			
Pristine	1			
Patrick #3	1			

FRUIT GROWERS FESTIVAL, EDMONTON — B. Boyer

The Fruit Growers Festival was held at Devonian Botanical Gardens on Sept 11 and 12. Devon is on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta. Clair Lammers and I attended from Alaska. On Saturday from 9 to 11 AM, we set up our fruit displays. Clair didn't take any fruit this year. I took Parkland, Carroll, Collet, Mantet, Liberty, Wynochee Early, Joyce and 15th. Only Parkland and Mantet were ripe. (As of this writing on Oct. 6, my Wynochee Early, Joyce and Liberty are not ripe).

At 11 o'clock, a meeting was held talking about "Apple notes" and how it would be continued. Then we were served lunch. From 1-4 PM the following sessions were held:

- Fertility of Soils - Dr. I. R. Evans
- Nuts for the Prairies - Jim Coult from Unity, Saskatchewan
- Processing Fruits (apples) - Garry Wetanko
- Saskatoons - Thean Pheh

Following this, we had a blind wine tasting of home made wines. I think that Clair Lammer's Apple Dew came in first. This was followed by a pot luck dinner.

Sunday was Public Day at the Devonian Gardens. We got to taste each other's fruits as did the public. I would guess that there were 250 to 300 people who came through the exhibit. Growers had plums, apples, cherries (Evans variety was most prevalent) and pears. There were many apple varieties that we don't have here. A number of the growers are crossing their own varieties plus some of them are test-growing for Saskatoon Experimental Station. These varieties are not released yet.

Varieties not released yet include Prairie Sun, (18-10-32) very good, 18-8-9. Other varieties you probably can't find here are P3, Marshall, Mazur 1, Mazur 2, Praire Moon, Coult's 294, 298, 163, 291, 287, Diebel, Pink Crisp, Prolific, Fence, Skiba, McPhee #1 and many more.

There is no charge for the festival. In fact they are glad that we attended. I stayed at the LeDuc Motor Inn, near the airport, and rode with Clair to the Botanical Gardens each day. Clair spent a couple of days before the festival with Bernie Nikolai, and we visited his test orchard.

ADAMS COUNTY NURSERY, PENNSYLVANIA

— *B. Boyer*

On my Pennsylvania trip, I visited Tom Callahan at Adams County Nursery. We toured their sweet cherry blocks. They have Hudson, Black Gold, NY 13-791, Hedelfigen, Ulster, Summit, Schmidt, Stella and Emperor Francis. He rates Hedelfigen #1, Summit #2, and Ulster #3. Tom was surprised to find out that my Sam cherry survived -32°F this past year. The apple trees that I bought from Adams County Nursery were the best looking and the cheapest that I ordered this year, including shipping.

1998 ORCHARD REPORTS

Anchorage—*Bob Boyer*

Although this was a cold spring and summer, I had more varieties of fruit this year. First I had about 2 pints of kiwis and I harvested over 28 quarts of service berries. I didn't get as many raspberries this year. I bought a "Fall Red" plant this year. I liked them real well. I bought a John's Prairie gooseberry. It had a few on this year in a nice size.

Sour cherries that produced included Suda Hardy, Earlimont, Mesabi and Galaxy. My Evans didn't flower this year. The 2 Sam cherries were loaded with blossoms but evidently didn't get pollinated. Even though they are self-fertile, they must have bees going blossom to blossom to pollinate itself. There

were no pear blossoms this year. I bought a few apple trees this year and a couple of them fruited - Winochee Early, Apricot, Pristine and Summer Mac. Of the other trees I have, Ginger gold died. My Sunrise showed signs of stress and did not fruit. The 15th fruited but this is an off year. (Biannual) Joyce had lots of fruit. Mantet had fruit. Carroll had fruit as well as Collett. Parkland fruited. Centennial crab fruited. I liked that one. Liberty fruited. The Siberian C peach at Keller's blossomed this year. It is self-fertile and it set about 8 peaches which at this time have not ripened but one is about 2".

I finally got my acre (in south Anchorage, near Dimond Center — editor) cleared and the stumps pulled and ground up. The fence will go up next spring.

Fairbanks—*Clair Lammers*, 10/7/99

I had a good year (a little on the dry side). I bloomed about 7-10 days later than normal but the surprising thing was that the fruit ripened 7-10 days earlier. Started irrigating the first week of May and stopped the first week of August. Excellent plums and cherries again this year. Poor pear crop but the apples were great. Two new varieties ripened for the first time. I had seven apples of Prairie Sun and two of NY 394. Prairie Sun (just released from U. of Sask. in 1998) is a good all around apple and fairly early (1st week of Sept) for me. NY 394 is a deep red cooking apple. Also, I had very good saskatoons this year and I harvested a single nut (Hazelbert).

Peters Creek—*D. Bradley*, 10/24/99

It was a moderately successful growing year in Peters Creek. Forty-five out of 90 trees bloomed and 33 of these eventually set fruit; by way of comparison, in 1998, 57 out of 78 trees bloomed and 53 of these eventually set fruit. One possible cause was that some trees overset last year and decided to take a year off. Another possible cause was the extended cold snap of the winter of 98-99, which may have killed some blossom buds.

I continue to regard **Parkland** as my all-around best variety. It fared better than Norland this year, and I like the taste and

texture better than Norland. It *definitely* benefits from thinning. **Norland** had an off year. Not one tree out of 26 produced as well as it had the year before. There was some minor tip dieback on a few trees. A couple of trees produced fruit that was stunted — the size of a crabapple. Winter injury? I have two trees that supposedly are **Rescue**. Both did well this year but they are not the same. One produces long, deep red apple-crabs that are fairly big when thinned. The other produces smaller, nearly round apples that are essentially a pale yellowish green with more or less red striping, depending on the amount of direct sunlight each apple received. On the other hand, both trees bloom early, shut down early, the apples have the same tangy taste, crisp texture, and they disintegrate into the same dry mush in a few weeks unless stored in a sealed bag in a very cool place. If these aren't different varieties, I'd say that at least there are two very distinct strains of Rescue being propagated in the Anchorage area. I see no point in propagating the smaller kind. I got scionwood for both trees locally. My impression of **Trailman** improved in this, its second year of production. Last year almost every fruit split open during August. This year, although August was just as soggy, only one or two (out of 50-100 apples) split. It ripened about Sept. 25 and seems to keep at least a month in a cool garage. It has a tendency to watercore, and I noticed several watercored apples that had started to ferment. Trailman has a pendulous branching habit. One tree in particular is a real problem: *it won't grow up*. **Norda** ripened for the first time this year (two apples). I wonder if my scionwood was incorrectly labeled or something, because the apples looked and tasted a lot like Trailman to me— small, yellow, oblong, tangy taste with a hint of Golden Delicious flavor. **Arbor Dale** bore about five fruit, but none of them ripened enough to be palatable, even though I was able to hold off the final picking until Oct. 5 or thereabouts — so uncommonly warm has our fall been so far. **Yellow Transparent**, **Heyer 12**, **Morden 359**, and **Crimson Beauty** all failed to produce; each of them bore fruit in 1998. I lost two young trees to the past winter: **Norcue** and **Yellow Jay**, both on Bacatta.

Palmer

Jay Dearborn of Palmer reported a heavy apple crop. The Dearborns sold 2200 pounds of apples and pressed about 6 gallons of cider.

NAFEX ONLINE

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ODDS AND ENDS

—*contributed by Bob Boyer*

- Agriculture Canada in Ontario is working on genetically transforming apples and cherries to produce a gene which would keep the fruit from browning. Then cherries and apples would not have to be treated with sulphur dioxide when drying.
- Zesta Apple is now called Zestar.
- Appalachian Fruit Research Station, Kearneysville, W. Virginia, has developed a dwarf pear and also a columnar peach to be released in a couple of years. This might be a good idea to grow in a heated greenhouse or to put in the garage for the winter and a heated greenhouse in the summer.
- Add cinnamon to unpasteurized cider to stop *E-Coli*.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR NEEDED

—*D. Bradley*

This will be my second-last Newsletter. I'll be contacting some of you for contributions to my final edition, which I'll aim to publish in early January, 2000. After that we'll need to find a new editor in time to get the Spring 2000 issue out on schedule, in May. Please get in touch with me or Kevin if interested.