ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2003 Volume 18, Number 4

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Association News

It is time to renew your membership dues once again. Please send \$16 per family to Alice Brewer at 1201 W. 45th Ave. Anchorage, AK 99503. 563-6734 You can also bring payment with you to the meeting.

Our November meeting is at Boyer Photography again, 7 PM Thursday, Nov. 13th. If you have not been there before, it is behind the Mat-Maid Dairy

just west of Benson between Benson and Northern Lights. We will be electing new officers, so come ready to vote. Also, please be ready to support whoever steps up as our new newsletter editor with your articles, review, recipes – whatever! I will continue to contribute news from my garden and travels.

Freasurer's Report

September 25, 2003
By Alice Brewer

Bank balance 7/24/03 Deposits (dues) Withdrawls (dinner for visiting speaker – Bernie)	\$5889.31 \$72.00 \$120.00
Bank balance 8/22/03 Deposits (dues) Withdrawls (part payment for spring 2004 rootstock)	\$5859.31 \$16.00 \$104.77
Bank balance 9/25/03	\$5770.54

Welcome new members Barbara & Gunt Bach of Anchorage, Dominic Maurico, Jr. of Anchorage, Greg Groeneweg of Anchorage, and Annie Benedict of Wasilla.

The Road to Hana

By Tami Schlies

I missed the October meeting this year, but with good reason: I was in Hawaii with my family, basking in surf and sun. No, I am not writing this to rub it in, but to share with you my sense of the vegetation and especially the fruit. Our first island was Maui, which was surprisingly dry and brown when we arrived. This was my first visit to the islands, and I admit I was expecting lush, green jungle, so I was dismayed.

Then I learned that we were on the dry side of the island, which made sense since there were cacti, of all things. They stopped growing sugar cane on much of Maui 4 years ago, and the vast fields spreading up the hills that had once been green due to irrigation were now nothing but dead, brown grass. No trees, no shrubs, no cacti - just grass.

On our last day on Maui we were given the opportunity to enjoy a driving tour to the rainforest side, otherwise known as 'the road to Hana', by a local named Nobu. Nobu has lived on Maui all his 78 years, and knows scores of people along the way. He is well read, and full of tidbits of information he was more than happy to share. One item of interest to me was that Maui has always been known for its dryness, and that settlers wrote of dust storms sweeping across the middle of the island and covering everything in thick layers of red topsoil. People complained about the smoke from the sugarcane, but now that they are no longer irrigating, people are complaining about the dust!

Sugarcane is interesting in itself. The plants get to be about 30 feet tall, though you would never guess because the canes fall over and then curve back up to the sky again. They are VERY thirsty, requiring one ton of water in

order to produce one pound of sugar. In order to harvest the cane, they burn the field, since the stalks do not burn, which removes the sharp leaves and other vegitational debris before the machines move in.

The other crop we tend to think of from Hawaii is, of course, pineapple. My son, who does not like pineapple because it "hurts his mouth" discovered that he does like pineapple in Hawaii, likely because we were eating Maui Gold pinapple. Maui Gold pineapple is well known throughout the islands. It is a very golden color, matched by a buttery flavor low in acid (so it does not burn your mouth). We made sure to visit the farmers market several times to replenish our supply.

On the way to the rainy side, we stopped at one of Nobu's friends houses in the higher elevations and picked a fresh chermoya. You may have seen these fruit at extraordinary prices in the specialty section of the grocery store. I had never known what to do with one before now. It is a funny looking scaled green fruit, best served chilled. When ripe, it is a dirty green and yields to the touch like a ripe peach. You peel it and remove the big black seeds, then eat it! Mmmm. Rather like tangy custard.

Before reaching the rainforest, we traveled through land belonging to the native Hawaiians that was still natural and undeveloped. Even the road became unpaved and narrow. The beginning of October is the beginning of their rainy season, but the rains had not come yet, so much of the vegetation was dormant and leafless, making the desert even more desiccated looking. It was dry red earth, filled with large black volcanic stones. The ancient Hawaiian kings would parcel out

land to their nobility, and the boundaries of each parcel were outlined with short walls built of this rough stone. Many of these walls still stand today, without the aid of mortar, running from the tops of hills clear down to where the breakers meet the coastline.

The view to our right was fantastic, undisturbed coastline and black lava flows out into the ocean. There are no water sources on a year round basis in this area, so the few meager houses had rainwater storage systems (okay, big covered pits with signs warning water thieves away.) Water was a feast or famine situation, here, for flash floods had carved deep ravines through the land from mountain top to ocean, but they held no water during our tour.

The line between rain forest and desert was abrupt. A line of green appeared ahead, and suddenly the wiliwili trees that had been bare around us were the lime green of new growth. Things only got greener from here on out.

We passed by numerous celebrity homes on this side of Maui, though I cannot remember specifically whose (Nobu was not friends with these people!) I do remember multitudes of mango trees, with fruit popping under our tires. I held my hand out the window, joking that I would catch one, until Nobu pulled over and I scoured the fallen for acceptable snacks. Oh, I have never had such wonderful mango in my life as those small, freshly fallen gems. I pulled the thick flesh away with my teeth and didn't even mind the strings that caught between my teeth as I slurped the pulp from the seed.

With a few mangoes in my backpack for later, we continued on, Nobu now realizing how into the FRUIT I was, as much as the scenery. He stopped at a wild lilikoi vine (we call them passionfruit) and pulled several for us, cutting hem in half so we could savor the tart, pulpy seeds inside. He rambled on about lilikoi chiffon pie and preserves that he made which I

would not get to try because we were leaving tomorrow.

We stopped at a church to use the restroom and Nobu picked some fragrant plumeria for the ladies to tuck behind our ears. A wild noni plant grew at the edge of the cultivated graveyard on a cliff overlooking the ocean. The fruit of this plant has long been used medicinally by natives, and is now gaining more popular and scientific scrutiny as to its properties. It contains a natural healing element called 'xeronine' and has been used for everything from sore throats to fever reduction to bruises. It grows on a shrub, and the fruit is called a syncarp, which is the result of many flowers developing into one fruit.

Next stop was a house with a gigantic breadfruit tree in the front yard, the pavement before it littered with splotches where the fruit had fallen. Nobu introduced us to Mr. Kestrel, who graciously gave me a ripe breadfruit and instructions on how to cook it. We were told it tasted like sweet potatoes, which was not entirely untrue, but it tasted like so much more than that. I have no words to describe it but 'tropical.' The native Hawaiians feed ripe breadfruit to their babies as a first food, and attribute it to ensuring the survival of their children.

To reach Hana, one must travel a one lane road around the twists and turns of the coastline, with a sheer wall on one side and a steep cliff on the other, reminiscent of how the Seward highway between Anchorage and Girdwood used to be before they renovated it. Slim bridges cross multitudes of gullies and waterfalls, requiring a stop and a horn blast before crossing to alert any oncoming cars around the bend that we were coming.

Wild coconuts, guava, papaya, lilikoi, banana, coffee beans and many other fruits dotted the hills along with the beautiful, yet highly invasive introduced African Tulip Tree.

Hawaii has stringent agricultural restrictions

because EVERYTHING grows there, and grows well. I even saw cool weather crops - broccoli and cauliflower - at the botanical garden, and they were beautiful and flourishing. The Hawaiians are fighting a serious battle against several plants that are taking over the native plant life.

Most of the fruits we think of as Hawaiian were introduced at some point in the past, even if it was ages ago by the Polynesians when they migrated to the islands. I have never really cared for papaya, and found I did not like it any better fresh, not even the 'strawberry' papaya. But I did learn that papaya are actually herbaceaous plants, not trees, though they can reach 30 feet in height. They have separate sexes, with the male tree producing long flowers and the female short flowers, though most plants cultivated in Hawaii are bisexual. The plants are interesting in that they just keep growing straight upwards, dropping their branches so they look kind of like palm trees. New flowers emerge at the juncture of new stems. The fruits cluster along the scarred trunk at the top. A papaya plant reaches peak production at 18 months and is pretty much done by 4 years, so commercial growers tear them out and start over very regularly.

Once we reached the vicinity of Hana we were given a tour of the dump, of all places. It was beautifully landscaped in such a way we would never have guessed it was a dump. Instead, it looked like the yard of a plantation home, and while the operator/landscaper was not there for our visit, Nobu informed us that luncheon was a regular occurrence with locals at the operator's invitation.

We stopped in Hana for a picnic lunch, sitting at a picnic table right on the crashing coastline. The wind had kicked up, and Nobu suddenly told us we'd better gather up and run. We could not see it, but his eyes were accustomed to interpreting a rainstorm. Sure enough, before we even crossed the road to the car, a

downpour had drenched us and our loaf of bread. We laughed and finished our meal in our seats before beginning our tour of the agriculture of Hana.

An staple of the ancient Polynesians was the taro plant. They ate the roots much like potatoes and cooked the leaves much like spinach. It is the main ingredient for that famous Hawaiian dish called 'poi.' Taro has to be grown in continually refreshed (ie. flowing) fresh water, which is a lot of work. It is a disappearing item in agriculture, as the young Hawaiians would rather be growing marijuana, according to Nobu. We saw many abandoned fields of terraced water, but we also saw a few that were obviously in production (of taro, not marijuana).

Cattle also abounded on the lands around Hana, and the melodious mooing sounded almost like singing from the high hilltop we stopped at for pictures. The town itself is very tiny, but the fields around it are vast. Rooms are at a premium, running around \$275 per night in the off season. As much as I would have liked to stay and investigate more, I was glad we had not opted for an overnight.

Back on the road, we were going to complete a circuit of the island. In the deep shade under the canopy white ginger grew in profusion. Nobu stopped and picked a bouquet for the ladies to sniff the rest of the way home. Rose apples lined the edges of the road, but overhung the drainage ditch too far for us to easily reach them, so I did not get to sample this.

There were several fruit stands we stopped at, selling everything from the giant Chinese orange to whole bunches of bananas. I got to try 'apple' bananas, which are pinkish inside and tangy, and widely loved all over the island. This type of banana grows shorter than traditional bananas and is less prone to the wind damage which is common on Hawaii. I also ate 'lady finger' bananas, which were tiny

yellow bananas with more starch than we are used to but very tasty, too. There are many types of bananas, and not all of them are edible. Flowering bananas are very popular landscape plants with beautiful flowers in many shapes, sizes and colors. Other varieties are grown to use in ropes, cordage, paper, and cloth.

We completed our journey with a stop at Coconut Willy's, where we picked up freshly baked banana bread still warm from the oven, some killer 'coconut candy', and the water of a green coconut. These coconuts were sitting on a bed of ice in an ice chest with the top portion

of the husk removed. We picked our coconut, and then watched as the booth owner put an ice pick through the monkey's "mouth" (look closely at the end of the coconut and you'll see a monkey face.) She then inserted a straw and we got to enjoy the fresh, sweet fluid before she cracked it open for us to try the "spoon" meat, which is very different from the meat of a mature coconut.

Bellies full, we headed back for the other side of the island. I hope I was able to give you a little taste of my wonder and excitement on this journey. If you travel to Maui, the road to Hana is a definite must see.

Member Fruit Updates

Alice Brewer finally got some beautiful little pears off her pear tree Bob Purvis gave her years ago.

Neither Alice Brewer nor Lawrence Clark had apricots produce this year.

Dan Elliot says his best apple this year for flavor was Simonette 1847.

Member to Member

- We have had some requests for the recipe for the rhubarb-raspberry-oatmeal dessert that someone brought to the orchard tour in August. Please let us know how to make it!
- Northwoods Nursery this year. These are plants at wholesale prices, and we need a minimum order, so if you are interested in anything specific, let me know. Tami Schlies 688-5711 or schlies@gci.net

Featured Fruit Coconut

Cocos nucifera

Coconuts are so common throughout the world's tropical regions that the exact origin is unknown. The fruit can float for long periods of time, following ocean currents to colonize new lands. Coconuts were the Polynesian way of carrying water to drink on their long, migratory canoe trips. A coconut can store its water (not milk – coconut milk is the product of the water inside combined with the shredded meat and then squeezed) for up to 6 months. It is better than Gatorade – full of electrolytes and nutrients – aiding kidney and bowel function. In emergency situations it can be used in the place of blood plasma intravenously. It is also a good source of food, all in one package. The shells can be used for bowls and utensils, the fibers from the husks can be twisted into rope, and the leaves can be woven into baskets, mats, or hats or used for housing materials. Coconut oil can be used for soap and lotion. And then, of course, the usefulness of the shells for coconut bras is irrefutable.

Coconut Willy's Candy

Take one coconut and find the monkey 'face' on one side. With an ice pick or screwdriver poke the 'mouth' and drain the water. The water should be clear and have no off odors or oiliness. Save for cooking or drink it fresh. Hold the monkey face in one hand and with the FLAT of a hammer hit the coconut sharply several times while rotating it – it should split in half. Place coconut on baking sheet in a preheated 400 degree oven for about 15 minutes to loosen the meat. Let it cool a bit, then with a sharp knife score it into manageable pieces to remove it. Don't worry about the brown side, it tastes fine. With a sharp cheese slicer or vegetable peeler, shave coconut meat into slices. Toss the shaved meat with raw sugar to coat (light brown will also do.) Spread evenly onto a cookie sheet. On the lowest temperature your oven can be set at (170 to 200) bake the coconut over night – 12 to 18 hours. The sugar will melt and may get syrup like, but will dry out. Check it at 12 hours and stir if necessary. The finished product should be golden brown and dry to the touch, but give off a wonderful creaminess when bitten. Store in an airtight container

STATE of ALASKA

Frank Murkowski, GOVERNOR



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Reply To:

Point Mackenzie Correctional Farm
P.O. Box 873889
Wasilla, Alaska 99687-3889
Phone: (907) 376-2976 FAX (907) 376-0725

September 23, 2003

On behalf of Superintendent Beegle and the Pt. MacKenzie Correctional Farm, I extend many thanks to the Alaska Pioneers Fruit Growers Association for their efforts in helping us establish an orchard at our facility.

Some time agó, I was tasked with establishing a hydroponics system at Pt. Mackenzie and to date, with the help of inmate workers, have developed three different systems each somewhat larger than the next. Today, we have 150 tomato plants and nearly 700 lettuce plants growing successfully. We are also growing currants, gooseberries, fall gold raspberries, red raspberries, and Aronia Berries. We have just of few of each plant but hope to take cuttings and harvest seeds to expand production.

Three years ago I had the idea to create an orchard as a means to further develop inmates' job skills while also providing fresh fruit for consumption at the farm. With some research I learned that the skills needed were not that difficult to learn and project cost could be minimal. With this knowledge, I submitted a proposal to fund the project.

Initially, the Superintendent was not sure that we could make this work so I gathered more knowledge and information from books and the internet. At the time the Superintendent decided against going forward with the project. Confident I could make this plan work I resubmitted my proposal the following year but once again was unsuccessful.

It was then that I was put in touch with APFGA, gathered yet more information, and was told that APFGA could help me make this project a success. I once again submitted a proposal for an Apple Project and approval was granted.

So I ordered the rootstock which I was told would be the best choice for beginning growers. As springtime grew near, I realized I still had not secured any scion wood and needed more information about varieties that would grow in our climate. Things started coming together when I learned of an upcoming grafting seminar at the Diamond Greenhouse. I requested for an inmate worker and myself to be sent to learn how to graft. With newly attained knowledge we were able to instruct inmate workers in the grafting techniques we had learned. We went to work grafting, labeling, and planting our new orchard starts.

Thanks to the efforts, information, and donated scion we received from APFGA, we have grafted 518 new apple trees this season. Fifteen varieties were grafted to Renetka root stock and we have had good results. With an average of 72% successful starts over all, I don't think we did too badly. We hope for a high survival rate of the grafts over the winter.

In the spring we will transplant the surviving young trees into a permanent orchard and re-graft rootstock that didn't take.

Superintendent Beegle has said that he would like to extend an invitation to APFGA to visit our orchard on a yearly basis. We would also like to reach the point where we will be able to donate scion wood back into the community. The facility is considering future expansion of our orchard to contain pears, cherries, apricots, and plums.

All in all this has been a very exciting, fun, and educational endeavor for both the immate workers and for me. Thank you so much, APFGA, for helping us off to a successful start on this project. I/we look forward to working with APFGA to expand our orchard. Your contribution affords us the opportunity to help our immate population develop skills that they can take into the community allowing them an opportunity to be successful part of society.

Thanks again,

Murray Conklin II COII
PMCF

Varities	# of Grafts	# Successful grafts	# Unsuccessful grafts	% of Successful grafts
Trailman	106	82	24	77 or Succession grants
Norland	101	57	44	
Parkland	102	86	16	56
Norlove	6	4		84
Westland	27	18		66
Kerr	57	······································	9	66
Rescue	 	29	28	50
	12	11	1	91
Sommer Red	10	9	1	90
Centinial	6	5	1	83
Norden #395	13	9	1	
Carroll	10	9		69
Hyer #6	29			90
Pommer D'Ro		23	6	79
	13	13	0	100
Novosrbirski	24	20	4	83
Drew Brock	2	0	2	0

JERRY APPLESEED EXPERIMENTAL ORCHARD

APPLE VARIETIES FOR SOUTHEAST ALASKA

Jerry & Joni Koerner P.O. Box 6292 Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

October 25, 2003

Tami Schlies P.O. Box 672255 Chugiak, Alaska 99567

Dear Tami,

Enclosed are the results of this years trials of early ripening apple varieties at my nursery here in Ketchikan. The spring conditions here were the best that we have had in years. Spring temperatures reached 60 F by late April and our earliest apple varieties began blooming by May 15th, and they all were in full bloom by May 26th. Precipitation was below normal for the period and pollination was excellent. The summer months were good and our ripening dates were finally back to normal again. Ripening was further enhanced by a week of 70 F weather in late September that helped alot of our later varieties reach full maturity.

We ripened a total of 70 varieties with 18 of these ripening here for the first time. New varieties of note include: Paulared, a commercially grown variety from the east coast and Slava Pobeditelyam, a nice red and yellow apple from the Ukraine.

The highest ratings for dessert quality apples were given to Exeter Cross. CMR2T13, Laxtons Fortune, Sansa and Williams Pride. Other varieties that were given higher marks this year due to our improved weather conditions included: Early Gravenstein, Late Transparent, Mertons Worcester, Northfield Beauty, Red Melba, Summer Queen and Worcester Pearmain.

We have had a couple of varieties here that we had just about given up on ever producing a ripe apple. They are both from the United Kingdom and not very widely grown due to their small size. They are Pitmaston Pineapple and Kerry Pippin which both developed wonderful sweet-tart fruity flavors by late October.

Since summer ripening apples are notorious for not keeping very long, we frequently get asked

what are the best keepers. By far the best keepers in our collection are the Akane, Northfield Beauty and Wynooche Early.

We will continue to share our grafting scionwood and we will continue to report on our apple trials here in Ketchikan. Write or send us an e-mail at j.f.koerner@worldnet.att.net. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Jerrold F/Roemer

Apple Varieties and Their Characteristics Grown in Ketchikan Alaska 2003

Color: C=Cream, G=Green, O=Orange, P=Pink, R=Red, Y=Yellow

Size: S=small less than 2", M=Medium 2"-3", L=Large more than 3"

Texture: S=Soft, M=Medium, H=Hard

Rating: 1=Inferior, 2=Fair, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent, 6=Superior

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