

To: Friends of Old Apples
From: Tom Brown

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Apple Search---2009

Some of the apples I found this year included the following: Aunt Jane, Barrel, Bergy, Blue Ridge King, Butter Cup, Candy, Choke, Corn, Courtney, Day, Finn, Greasy Ball, Leatherman, Lorraine, two different Morgans, One Sided, Prissy Gum, Red Cheese, Shocklet, and Vagabond. Helping save a historic 1876 home cut into the apple finds, but 2009 will allow for more searching for lost apples, with cheaper gas---Yeah!

This year I would like to share with you some of the animal encounters I have had while looking for heritage apples. Last year I told you about rescuing a skin and bones little dog in Alexander County when I had gone to a home to get cuttings from a Green Russet apple tree. We named her Lucky and she is now resting at my feet as I write this. Lucky and our other five dogs immensely enjoy their daily ride in our 1995 Subaru station wagon. I was especially proud that I had driven the car over 200,000 miles without the slightest dent, no major scratches, and of course no accidents.

Oops, Cows---I went to Ashe County, NC, to visit Glenn Mash and to look at his apple trees. Glenn owns a large farm about a mile from his home. At this site is an old home, an immense pasture, and way across the pasture is a fenced-in area with some old apple trees: Red Pippin, Nursery (apple), Anne, Pokey Seedling, and others. To get to the apple trees, I opened the gate and then drove about 300 yards to reach apple trees; in a distant corner of the pasture I saw about fifteen cows. I spent the next 20 minutes collecting apples; just as I was about through I heard a muffled sound. As I went to my car I saw that all the cows had moved near the orchard. I then drove out of the pasture and across the road to where a Red Jordan apple tree was located. As I went around my car I noticed that a cow had butted it---RATS! No more pasture parking for me, ever!

The original transmission in the Subaru finally failed when I reached about 243,000 miles. I checked around and found that it would cost me \$3,100 to get the transmission repaired. I thought that I could not justify spending that much on such an old car. I started car hunting and found a year-old Subaru which was in perfect appearance condition and had low mileage. Soon after buying the car, it finally dawned on me, "Tom, you can't haul the dogs in such a nice car." I then dutifully had the transmission repaired in the old Subaru. Today Lucky and her buddies get a special ride every day in the "doggie wagon" which is still running great two years later.

The Friendly Moth---One hot summer day I went to the home of Ralph Clanton who lives in northwestern Iredell County, NC. Ralph has a Red Potts apple tree and he has taken me to neighbor's homes where I found a Pearmain, Powder Spring June, and Half Acre apple trees. I especially like to stop by Ralph's home just after the Blackberries are finished; because this means that his Elderberries are ripe. They make a great tart pie if you don't mind spending an hour separating the small stem debris from the BB size Elderberries. Ralph and I were standing near the Elderberry bush and I had my arm extended making a gesture. A small moth landed and started drinking the sweat on my arm. This was really surprising since insects are instinctively afraid of humans and this moth showed no signs of flight; thus I held my arm motionless. This continued for at least five minutes. My sweat was actually just a thin film and since Ralph was holding a Cola bottle I asked him to put a big drop on my arm near the moth. I nudged the moth

over two inches to the Coke and he started drinking. I then thought that Coke is very acid and perhaps this would not be good for the moth. I asked Ralph to get some water. He then fashioned a “cup” for the water from a Polk leaf and held it against my arm near the moth. I then nudged the moth onto the leaf and he started drinking again. The moth was different from any I had ever seen; all other moths hold their wings horizontally, but this one held its wings vertically and would on a precise 10 second interval flap the wings once. Finally the Friendly Moth flew away. Here was a small creature, about an inch long, which made an indelible impression on me!

Meeting Dogs---When I go to new homes looking for old apples, I frequently find many dogs. I would make a poor first impression if I sat in the car and honked my horn, expecting a stranger to come out and see what I wanted. To initiate contact I need to calmly make it to the front door. Thus I get out of the car and confidently walk across the yard as if I owned the place; this disarms even the largest dogs. My Confidence Method does have its limits. I remember one Mitchell County home with two large apple trees, a silent man behind a screen door, and two large snarling dogs---I would have never made it across that particular lawn in one piece.

An Embarrassing Moment---In Yancey County, NC, I went to Clifford Silvers’ home to look at his Summer Ladyfinger and Morton Sweet apple trees. There were many apples both on the trees and ground. Swarming over the apples were hundreds “bees” the size of Japanese Hornets (Carpenter Bees?). I tried to collect some apples, but I was stung twice. About a week later I was in the area and stopped by again. The “bees” were still there, but this time I was smarter and used my 12 foot apple picker to reach the apples while standing well away from the trees. All went well until I felt something crawling up inside my pants, just as I was about to say “Oh no”, I was stung. I then quickly dropped my pants. Standing there in my underwear was very undignified.

Important Ceremony---I went to Avery County for two purposes: to check on apple trees at several homes and to spend a solo camping night in Linville Gorge. After a long hike into the gorge I ended up on a very large flat rock cantilevered over the river. I happened to glance down at the rock to my left. I saw six ants; one stood motionless and the others circled, constantly stroking him with their antenna. I watched the ants for at least 8 minutes, during this time the ants never stopped stroking the motionless ant. In a very different world I was observing a very important ceremony. Finally I looked away for a couple of minutes. When I looked back the ants were gone. For the remainder of my life, I will always wonder if the center ant walked away or was carried away.

God’s Gift---I remember visiting a home in the Virginia Mountains to talk about old apples. The man, who lived alone, had a dog someone had given him. It was a large dog and part Husky. It was a very friendly dog, with which bonding was immediate. As we sat on the porch talking, the man kept trying to shoo the dog away when he approached for pats. I asked if he ever let the dog in the house, his reply was “No dog will ever get into my house”. He also talked about the dog running off with hunters. I thought to myself, “This man only thinks that he has an animal; he should realize that he has a World Class Dog which can bring him immense joy”. God gives us many incredible gifts, but we need to be alert enough to recognize them to fully benefit from these gifts.

I hope 2009 will be a prosperous one for you and your family!

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