

To: Friends of Old Apples
From: Tom Brown

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Apple Search---2018

Some of the apples found during the past year include: Banana (very large, yellow, sheepnose shaped), Biddick Sweet, Hall Stripe, Kinnaird's Choice, Possum, Sam Apple, and Sharpshin. I am making changes in my nursery operation so I can have more time to "apple search" next year.

On a personal note, we were fortunate enough to be able to visit Scotland: Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands, Edinburgh & Rosslyn Chapel. Our trip started in very late April so we could attend the Shetland Folk Festival, the United Kingdom's northern most music festival, featuring Scottish and international bands.

Another memorable event was going to Greenville, SC, to observe the total solar eclipse of August 21. Greenville was in the "Path of Totality" for over two minutes (2:09). It is a beautiful city where we enjoyed visiting the Falls Park on the Reedy. We were fortunate that the sky was clear for the entire eclipse cycle.

I would like to share with you interviews that I conducted with four older apple growers (ages 81-90) from the Brushy Mountain area of North Carolina. The "Brushies" is a low mountain area in southern Wilkes and northern Alexander Counties, an area which once had a large apple production, 96 fruit growers in 1939. These counties are also my most productive area for finding lost apple varieties. The rich apple heritage of this region is celebrated every first Saturday in October at the Brushy Mountain Apple Festival in North Wilkesboro, NC.

Lowell Hendren (age 81)---Lowell had a family history of growing apples that goes back to the mid-1800s. His great grandfather, Enzer Hendren, made legal government apple brandy. His father, William Hendren, had an orchard of mostly Limbertwig apples on 4 or 5 acres; the Limbertwigs provided a good late crop which would keep all winter. Lowell grew apples himself from 1961 until 2012, with a total orchard of 35 to 40 acres.

Lowell's parents were Clarence & Zella Hendren who had a family of fourteen children, twelve of which were home at the same time. Family gatherings frequently involve more than one hundred people.

His mother Zella was an amazing person. Every morning she would fire up her wood stove and make 36 biscuits plus many other nourishing breakfast items. Once she finished cleaning up from breakfast, she would go out and work in the field until about 11:00 a.m., when it was time to start lunch. Every day she made a pie or two—blackberry, apple, cherry, pumpkin, or raspberry. After lunch she worked three more hours in the field. With such a large family she canned in half gallon jars. Lowell's dad bought beans and flour in 100 pound sacks. Zella lived until age 96. Her specialty was Cinnamon Yeast Coffee Cake.

Lowell is an excellent tree grafter, predominantly using the bark grafting method. He also did some cleft grafting. He showed Ryan Lowe how to bark graft and Ryan used the technique to convert old large Rome trees into Old Fashion Staymans. Lowell also taught me how to bark graft.

In 1946, a severe freeze wiped out much of the apple production on the east coast, but his family still had a good crop of Limbertwigs, about 1,200 bushels. Lowell's dad sold them for a high price in Cherryville. With this profitable sale he was able to purchase a 1946 Chevy truck, one of the first to be made after WWII. There was a freeze in 1964 that caused the loss of the apple crop except for a few Limbertwigs and Goldens. In 1955 the freeze was much more severe, destroying the entire crop.

In the spring of 1952, there was a severe hail storm. The hail balls were hen egg in size, and a few were so large that you could not reach around them with your hand. His dad had a new '52 Plymouth. He went out to move it to the garage, but the hail was so bad that he had to retreat back to the house. The hail ruined that year's apple crop, and because of limb damage, the next year's crop was also impacted.

Linney Bryant Lowe (age 84)---"Lowe" is a prominent apple growing name in the Brushies and is represented by the Sugarloaf Orchards (Bobby Lowe), Perry Lowe Orchards, and Brushy Mountain Orchards (Tom Lowe).

Bryant's great grandfather, Isaiah Lowe, brought in Limbertwig trees from Bowling Green, KY. Later he owned many thousands of acres and became the Sheriff.

Grandfather Robert Lowe set out a Red June apple tree in 1870 which lived until 1992. There were some big Abram trees on the site when Robert bought the farm. Robert Lowe managed the immense Smoot

orchard, the largest in the area at that time. The typical worker there was paid \$1.00 per day. Bryant's father Linney Lowe carried water to the apple pickers for 50 cents per day.

Initially no one sprayed their apple trees, but as time went by, problems arose with scab and other diseases. One of the first spraying demonstrations occurred at the Lowe Orchard. A Professor Hunt came from Raleigh with his spray equipment in a surrey. He had traveled by train to Taylorsville and hired a surrey to take him the 8 miles to the Brushy Mountains. He sprayed part of the Limbertwig trees—"some with trunks as big as saw logs, 15 to 16 inches". He used a Bordeaux mixture: lead arsenate, blue stone, and lime. In the fall he returned and compared the sprayed trees with the ones left unsprayed. The sprayed trees had apples which were free from scab, but not those of the unsprayed trees.

The early spraying involved lead arsenate, and for this they had no breathing protective devices. The only protective attire was a long sleeved shirt and a hat. Three of the four older growers interviewed never used any protective respiratory equipment and the fourth used it only very late in their career, "when the Government made him." They all lived long lives—81 to 90 years and counting. It did not affect their memories because they all had astounding memories and can remember exact dates for family events.

Mary Woodring, Bryant's grandmother, performed the following treatment for earache. She would go into the woods and in a rotten log find a "Bess" Beetle, which was broken open to give a "drop of oil" for the aching ear. People would heat turpentine and put it on a person's chest for congestion.

Uncle Bart Davis said that he killed a man in the Civil War. His commander told him to shoot a sniper out of a tree and all that could be seen of him was the glint of his shiny buttons. Bart shot and the Union sniper fell. When he would later tell the story he would break down and cry, hoping for forgiveness someday.

In that area there were men who did not want to go and fight in the Civil War. One was Bryant's granddad's brother who was traveling with Aunt Mann. The Home Guard (Confederate) caught him. That night, when they were not alert, he eased into the woods. A little later he could hear boots on gravel as they were coming after him. He went to his Uncle John's place. The Home Guard knew where to look and showed up at the home. Uncle John told them to leave or some of them would be killed. They left.

On a nearby mountain a very large rock slid down over other rocks making a shelter you could walk into, plus there was water at the back. A Hodges man who wanted to avoid the war was hiding out there. The Home Guard found him and he was shot. They call this place "Hodges' House".

Jonah Parker (age 90)---Jonah bought his farm in 1948 and set out his first apple trees the next year. He ordered 100 Double Red Staymans. His bundle turned out to include 9 Blacktwigs and half the remaining ones were regular Staymans. Some of these full-sized Blacktwig trees took about 20 years to have a full crop of apples. Fortunately the farm had a tobacco allotment, and so he could grow tobacco until his apple orchard was well established. He set out peaches to have some production before the apples. Jonah eventually had about 300 large apple trees in his orchard, Parker's Orchard on the Brushy Mountain Road. Jonah and his wife Helen did all the farm work for the first 15 to 16 years, except for some help during apple picking time. Later they had three children who would assist them: Edmond, Carolyn, & Randy.

Jonah taught a grafting class at the Wilkes Community College for 10 years, educating hundreds.

Jonah fondly remembered a long-gone White Buckingham apple tree. One day he went into Stanley Smithey's store in Wilkesboro and was surprised to see a bin of apples labeled Buckingham, the white ones that he had wanted to find. The store manager said that Wilburn Anderson brought in some unknown apples, and later Roy Lowe came in and said that they were Buckinghams. Jonah was able to get Buckingham cuttings from Wilburn's old tree, and now he has 10 large trees in his orchard; his favorite pie apple.

In 1950 Jonah started preaching as a Baptist minister. For about twenty years he was the pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Elkin, NC. He kept detailed records of his ministry and has preached 1,400 sermons, and conducted 240 funerals and 88 weddings. Jonah frequently incorporates his apple knowledge into his sermons. For instance: "Why does a fruit tree grow? To make seeds to reproduce itself. Our purpose as Christians is to make more Christians." He likes the old time hymns, with meaning for every verse as compared to the more modern hymns where the same phrases are often repeated. "The old apple varieties are like the old hymns, with much more character. Modern apples are like the newer hymns, shallower in

nature, being just sweet or sour.” Jonah also said, “When an apple tree is grafted, its nature is changed. When a person accepts Christ, his nature is changed.”

When you go into Jonah’s apple house on the Brushy Mountain Road, you will see many tools and implements of yesteryear. You will also see photos of a Border Collie, Traveler. He was very friendly to visitors, and he would frequently put an apple in their cars. People thought that he wanted to go home with them, but he wanted them to toss the apple so he could chase it. Traveler loved Royal Limbertwig apples and would eat an unlimited amount of thin slices. If offered a slice of Golden Delicious apple he would refuse to eat it. If an apple was placed on Traveler’s nose, he would toss it into the air and catch it.

Jonah told some stories about his grandfather, John Parker. John made government inspected brandy and would go to the railroad depot in Statesville to deliver the brandy. He would hitch up his team of mules, load the wagon with brandy, and start at 4:00 am down the mountain for the 29 mile trip. On the return trip he would lay down in the wagon and go to sleep. The mules knew the route so well that they would take him right back to his home. John would wake up when the wagon reached a steep part of the road near his home. **Jesse Henry Tevepaugh** (age 82)---Henry bought the farm in 1957. He added part of his parent’s farm in 1973. He eventually had twenty acres of apples and peaches. He also raised tobacco, soybeans, wheat, rye, and corn. Plus he worked as a full-time carpenter. When he came in from the carpentry job, he would then work until dark on the farm. Bryan can remember Henry’s ploughing all night and then returning to his carpentry job the next morning. Clara and a daughter and four sons all pitched in and helped: Debbie, Howard, Tony, Joel, & Bryan. Having a variety of crops was helpful in case they had a problem year with their apples, peaches, or tobacco. Henry passed away in 2012 at the age of 82. The stories here were told to me by his wife of 53 years, Clara, and his youngest son, Bryan.

There was lots of work to be done: fruit tree care, tobacco harvesting, five gardens, two cows to milk, a work horse (Nell) that was used in tobacco work to care for, hogs, chickens, ducks, and hunting dogs. It was not just hard work, but valuable skills were being learned. “I know how to work” said Bryan. “Dad taught us how to build, farm, garden, and hunt, and mom taught us how to cook and sew. I know how to milk a cow, bake biscuits, and light a fire. We learned growing up what it took to survive.” Bryan could remember spending two hours in the early morning emptying a tobacco barn, going to school, coming home and working with apples until dark, doing some more tobacco barn work, and finally his homework. Someone asked Henry about working the kids so hard. He replied, “If both their hands are busy then they can’t get into trouble.”

They were fortunate to grow up in a trusting era. They did not lock their doors until the late 1980s. After a day of sawing wood they would often leave the chainsaw on an apple crate in plain view of the road and a week later it would still be there.

Bryan said, “When I was growing up, on rainy cold Saturdays when it was too wet to work, Dad’s friends—Fred Barnett and Bob Wiles, plus others—who were old men at the time, would come over and talk and whittle under the apple house front shed roof. It would be like nothing for them to set out there for half a day. I would listen to them talk. I will never forget listening to them.”

“On one of these rainy Saturdays, my son Jesse, who was 4 or 5, and I were at the home visiting my parents. Bob Wiles showed up. Bob and Dad sat down under the shed on apple crates. I sat down with Jesse on my lap. Jesse just kept wanting to talk.” I told him to “Be quiet, be quiet because you are in school now.” “School?” “You are in Apple Crate School now,” I said. “Listen and learn about doing things the old way.”

For colds and congestion, Clara would make “Onion Juice” by alternating layers of onion slices and sugar. After setting overnight there would be an onion liquid that could be given to the sick person.

Like the other apple growers, Henry had been in the military, serving in Korea. He had one of the most dangerous jobs imaginable—a forward observer. These are soldiers who go near or behind the combat lines, observe enemy positions, and then call in artillery fire. It was just him with a radio, rifle, and a pistol out there by himself. Henry told them about the intense cold of the winter and about being supplied by food air drops. If they found a damaged food container they would still eat it because they were so hungry.

Henry was wounded twice. Both times he patched himself up and kept fighting. Once he was running away from danger when a mortar round blast knocked him down. He could not figure why it had knocked him

over. He could not get his rifle up because it kept hanging on his arm. There was a large piece of metal sticking in the butt of the rifle stock. As he was running, this big piece of metal hit his gun stock instead of hitting him. The family still has the piece of metal. He got shrapnel in him twice. When he left Korea there was still shrapnel in him. Henry was in one of the four foxholes of forward observers in the Taegu battle.

The road in front of their home has a very long hill. It is straight and of uniform downward slope, about 1,000 feet long. "Used to be when it snowed everybody and his brother would come and sled down the hill. Neighbors would take their tractors and pull us up the hill. We used to get on inner tubes and sleds and slide down the hill. People had bonfires lit all down the hill. You would be coming down the hill so fast it would make the water come out of your eyes, and we would go way up the next hill"

"One time it started snowing and it was really snowing. A tractor had gone back and forth, up and down the hill and that night when we got there the snow was mashed down in the middle and the sides were up, making a track for us to slide in. You talk about FAST."

Zella Hendren's Cinnamon Yeast Coffee Cake

1 c. warm milk (100°-110°F)	1 egg
1 pkg. dry yeast	Approx. 3 ½ c. sifted bread flour or all-purpose flour
1/2 c. margarine	1/3 c. margarine (for later melting)
1/4 c. sugar	1/2 c. sugar (for coating dough rounds)
1 tsp. salt	1 ½ tsp. cinnamon

To the warm milk, add yeast. Mix well and let stand until softened. Mix margarine, 1/4 cup sugar and salt together until fluffy. Beat in an egg. Add the yeast mixture. Stir in enough flour to make a soft dough. Knead until smooth and elastic on a lightly floured board. Place in a greased bowl, cover and let rise until double in size, about 1 hour. Turn out on lightly floured board and knead lightly 1/2 minute.

Roll the dough to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut into rounds with a 2 inch biscuit cutter. Dip each in melted margarine, then into the remaining sugar mixed with cinnamon. Stand up in a well buttered 9" coffee cake ring pan, until ring is filled (or use a Bundt pan). Make cinnamon rolls with remaining dough. Cover and let rise in a warm place until double in size, about 1/2 hour. Bake the Coffee Cake in a 350 degree oven for 35-40 minutes or until done. Yield: 1 cake, plus 6-8 rolls.

Valley Pharmacy's Orange Aid

Dillard, GA is an entry point for Rabun County where I went searching for the Fort's Prize apple. It is a special small city because I always looked forward to stopping at the soda fountain of Frank Cathey's Valley Pharmacy (now closed). They had delicious sandwiches: egg, tuna, & chicken salad, plus pimento cheese. My favorite treat was their "Orange Aid" drink. I spoke to Anita Chastain who worked at the Pharmacy for over thirty years and she told me how they made the Orange Aid. First make the "Simple Syrup": pour 5 pounds of sugar into a gallon container and fill with hot water, making sure that all the sugar is dissolved. [A small-scale equivalent would be two teaspoons of sugar in a tablespoon and then fill with hot water.] Next fill a 16 ounce glass with shaved or chipped ice (the ice should be as fine as possible). Add the juice from 1.5 fresh squeezed oranges and 1.5 to 2.0 teaspoons of the Simple Syrup. Stir. [The quantity of the orange juice and Simple Syrup is slightly variable according to the orange size, juiciness, and sweetness.] Then finish filling the glass with water and stir to mix thoroughly. DELICIOUS.

PS: A special treat was to hear our neighborhood owl calling to another owl, way off in the distance, who answered with a different call. There were at least fifteen rounds of calls between them---Pure Magic.

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