

To: Friends of Old Apples  
From: Tom Brown

January 1, 2021

### Apple Search---2021

This past year was unique, like none other of my life-time. I typically go to about fourteen festivals a year where I have a heritage apple display (actual apples); there I meet people and we have many enjoyable conversations about apple trees of long ago. The year started out normally in January with my exhibiting at the indoor Farm Expo near Kingsport, TN. Then as Covid-19 started to spread across the country, my remaining festivals were cancelled.

Health concerns also limited my normal routine of visiting people in the search for lost apple varieties. I did find one apple a Dog; or I might more properly say that I confirmed its identity. A friend in Yadkin County (NC), Tim Martin, called to tell me about some of his apples, one of which was named a Dog apple at its original location. The unusual name resulted in its identity to be questioned. I took some of the apples to show the early breakfast crowd (7:00 am) at a restaurant in Wallburg (NC), the trees' original location. There I met a man who confirmed that long-ago there had been Dog apple trees in the community. This adds to the animal named apples found: Sheep, Goat, Possum, Cow, Cat, Buffalo, Frog, Horse, etc.

In 2020, I was pleased to donate several apple trees to the Natural Bridge State Park in Virginia. The key feature of the Park is a natural limestone arch, 215 feet tall with a span of 90 feet; it is the remains of a cave roof. It is an important historical site: a sacred place to the Monacan Indian Nation, the area was surveyed by young George Washington (the initials G W were found at two places carved in stone), and the site was owned by Thomas Jefferson, who purchased 157 acres from King George for 20 schillings in 1774. An important tree I donated was the Maryland (also called Maryland Red Streak). George Washington once had an apple tree by this name. I found the original Maryland tree about two miles from my home; it had been sold in an adjoining county (Yadkin) by the Cedar Cove Nursery from 1875 to 1903.

The other tree donated was a Robinson apple tree found in western North Carolina. Thomas Jefferson had a tree by that name; also called Taliaferro and Robertson. I am not at this point claiming my Robinson is the famed lost Taliaferro apple tree, much more research needs to be done. This year I did do follow-up investigating, but it was slowed by pandemic restrictions. More heritage apple trees will be donated to Natural Bridge State Park this year.



**Maryland**



**Robinson**

Another significant apple variety that I am investigating is the Kittageskee. A possible candidate has been found but more study is needed; it should be grown in my warmer location, as it ripens so late at its mountain site it never fully gets ripe before fall freeze. I am still searching for the very elusive West Virginia apples: Upside Down, Peggy, and Smoke Hole.

In the future, I will be focusing increased effort on apple preservation. I would like to get five trees of each variety found “out there” in known locations. You can have your own preservation orchard, even if it is only three trees, if you keep them labeled so you are positive of their identities and are willing to share cuttings with others. An orchard map is also helpful.

Our beloved dog Tina passed away in November; for the first time in thirty years we are without a pet. We plan to adopt two shelter dogs in the spring. A pet can be very helpful in these times; a happy, loving companion who knows nothing of the outside world’s insanity.

We have all been fully occupied this year with the pandemic and its devastating health and economic consequences. I eagerly look forward to getting the vaccine and some return to normalcy, which probably will not fully happen in 2021. I wish that the pandemic was the only challenging thing facing the world. The Amazon rain forest is very important to the health of the planet; last year 4,381 square miles of forest were cut down (equal to a ten-mile wide strip of forest the length of Tennessee). The planet now has a population of 7.8 billion people and it is expected to be 9.2 billion in 2075, on a planet made less habitable by global warming. The world needs very wise leaders who can put us on a more sustainable future path and since the problems are global, they must fully cooperate with each other. Our planet’s future requires it!

Now, on a lighter note; when my son Chris was young, I would frequently tell him bed-time stories. The one below was told about 1973 and finally recorded in writing in September of 1991. I shared it with at least two storytellers who I met at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, TN. These stories had a unique format, Chris would tell me what he wanted to hear about; in this case he requested, “Tell me a story about a boy named Jimmy, a dog named King, and a Teddy bear.” I would then start storytelling, making it up as I went along, never in advance knowing the ending. This is my all-time favorite story.

### **A Midnight Rescue**

Laughter echoed off the wall formed by the dense forest. Jimmy ran through the deep grass, tripped and rolled over. Lying on the ground smiling, he watched his German Shepherd, King, bound past in long graceful leaps. This was a magic day. A rain storm had just passed; dark clouds covered the sky. To the west rays of sun light streamed from under the edge of the clouds casting the trees and the meadow with an eerie glow. The meadow was Jimmy’s favorite place—where he and King often came to play. Here the forest partially circled it forming a natural amphitheater. Even though he often came to the field to play, he never ventured into the forest.

The two friends continued their care-free play—running, jumping and rolling in the damp grass. “Jimmy. Jimmy, come to supper. Your supper is ready.” His mother was calling from the porch of their house. Her voice was faint because she was far across the field. Jimmy gave one fleeting glance at the dark forest. Then there was a wild race back to the house. Of course King won. Mom was standing on the porch when they arrived. “Jimmy I have fixed your favorite dessert for supper, German Chocolate Cake.” “Wow” thought Jimmy as he stepped up on the porch giving King one final pat. Supper was a fun time at Jimmy’s home. Mom was a

great cook and everything was prepared with such love. Best of all supper involved telling fun stories about the day's events. Every family member wanted to make the evening enjoyable.

As they were finishing their dessert Jimmy asked his Dad once again about the forest, "Dad why can't I go into the forest?" His Father replied, "Jimmy, even I try to avoid that dark forest. Late at night I have heard strange noises and muffled screams coming from the forest. My mother also told me stories of scary sounds and evil happenings. To be safe, our family should avoid the forest entirely." Jimmy nodded his agreement as he got up from the table, turning to thank Mom for the great meal.

After the dishes were finished, the family sat on the porch and watched a spectacular sunset. This indeed had been a wonderful day. With a wave and a "good night", Jimmy headed for his bedroom. As he prepared for bed, Jimmy glanced out the open window. He could dimly see King in the yard. As he pulled the covers up around him, he grinned as he looked across the room at Patches his Teddy bear on the dresser. He was too old for stuffed bears now, but he had certainly enjoyed many hours of fun-filled play with Patches.

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"Wake up!!!" "Wake up!!!" "Jimmy! Please, wake up!!!" From a sound sleep Jimmy gradually started to open his eyes, feeling a strong tug on his arm. To his amazement, Patches was frantically trying to wake him. Also he kept mentioning King. Now fully awake, Jimmy stared at Patches. "Jimmy hurry we have to save King. Please hurry! Follow me! Hurry! Hurry!" Patches climbed out of the window and quickly started across the yard—all the time he kept saying—"We have to save King."

Jimmy finally crawled out of the window and started after Patches who was now entering the grassy field. Jimmy was amazed at how rapidly the small stuffed bear moved through the tall grass. He would answer none of Jimmy's questions, but instead moved forward with determination, saying over and over that they had to hurry to save King. Jimmy suddenly realized that they were headed straight for the dreaded dark forest. "Wait," Jimmy futilely said as Patches entered the forest. Jimmy had no choice but to follow. By now Patches had quit talking, rapidly he was running through the forest. I said running, but he was actually going as fast as a little bear could go with short unbending legs.

Jimmy was in a dream world as they rapidly penetrated the dark forest. A sharp jab to his shin from a broken branch convinced him that this was a real adventure. Deeper and deeper they went into the dense forest. On this moonless night the forest was completely dark. The dread darkness was terrifying. Nothing in the world could ever get him to enter the forest on a dark night, but at this very moment he was very deep in the forest on a pitch black night just because of the insistence and determination of a small stuffed bear. Jimmy wondered where they were and even more seriously he wondered if they would ever find their way out of the forest. He was totally and completely lost. Further and further they went. Jimmy's legs ached and he was breathing hard as the result of the long trip and the very fast pace. Jimmy thought that Patches would never stop. With tireless determination the little bear moved onward, deeper into the dread dark forest.

Suddenly Patches slowed and held up one of his small arms. Jimmy looked ahead and saw the vague outline of a cabin. Patches and Jimmy crept closer and peered through a bush. They were startled. In front of the cabin was King, chained to a tree. Near him was a roaring wood fire with a large pot being heated in the fire's edge.

The two friends crept forward quietly to reach King without him barking and thus alerting anyone in the house. King saw them, but he made no noise. When they reached King they could see that he had been beaten. They were appalled. There was no way to free him, because he was secured by a heavy lock and chain.

Slowly they realized that something else had to be done to free King, something much more dangerous. Jimmy whispered to Patches, "Let's look in the cabin window. Be extra quiet." Through a dirty window they could see an evil old man sitting at a table. They were frightened by the cold, hard, and sinister features of his face and by his shabby, dirty clothes. There was definitely evil in this house.

Quickly they pulled away from the window before they were seen. They quietly moved back to the edge of the forest where they would not be seen or heard. Jimmy asked, "We need to save King. The chain is very heavy; how can we ever set him free?" In a soft voice Patches said, "Jimmy here is an idea. When I peeked into the window, I saw a key hanging on the far wall. The key probably fits the lock on the chain. I could go up on the roof and make some noise. When the old man comes out to see what is going on, you could run in and get the key and free King. "Patches that is taking a big chance," said Jimmy. Patches strongly insisted that he distract the old man. Eventually Jimmy reluctantly agreed.

When they left the bushes, Patches crossed the yard, climbed a tree and then slid over onto the tin roof. He then proceeded to make as much noise as was possible for a small bear. The noise did get results. The old man ran out of the house. Jimmy was horrified, because in the old man's hands was a rifle. The rifle was quickly aimed. The loud sound of the shot filled the forest clearing and Patches tumbled backward off the roof.

Seeing his friend shot, Jimmy suddenly forgot that he was a young boy. With blind emotion and anger, Jimmy charged the old man. The man did not see him and so when Jimmy hit him he was not prepared. The impact caused the old man to fall into the fire. With loud screams, the evil man ran off into the forest with his clothes ablaze.

Jimmy quickly got the key and freed King. After a hug, Jimmy and King ran around the house to look for Patches. He was not on the ground beside the house, nor was he in the nearby bushes. They called and looked, eventually searching further from the house; but the little bear could not be found. They sadly turned homeward without their friend Patches.

Jimmy had no idea of how to find his way home through the dark forest. Somehow King found the way and finally the exhausted two came to the edge of the forest. Across the field they could dimly see the outline of their home. The sky was just starting to lighten as Jimmy wearily crawled through the window and fell into his bed.

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"Jimmy. Jimmy. Wake up. Your breakfast is ready," called his Mother. Jimmy was very tired and slowly opened his sleepy eyes. His awakening was aided by beams of sunlight which streamed into the room, filling it with light. Jimmy thought about the events of the previous night, of the wild adventure. Then a bark interrupted his thoughts. He looked out the window and he saw King playing in the yard. He quickly turned and looked across the room.

Jimmy's soft laughter filled the room. Boy had he been fooled! His wild adventure had only been a dream—a fantastic dream; for there was Patches right across the room on the dresser just where he had been the night before. Quickly he dressed because he could not wait to get into the kitchen to tell Mom of his wild dream. As Jimmy was leaving the room he glanced again at the dresser. Suddenly he froze in his tracks.

Just three feet away, he could clearly see the bullet hole in Patches' arm.

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I sincerely hope that 2021 will bring renewed well-being and health safety to your family.

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