Win Cowgill Retires After Thirty-eight Years at Rutgers University

Wesley R. Autio
Stockbridge School of Agriculture, University of Massachusetts

Win Cowgill, one of the country's best known extension pomologists, retired from Rutgers University on April 1, 2016. Everyone who knows Win realizes that he cannot truly retire, so it is no surprise that he has begun a fruit consulting business, Win Enterprises International, LLC.

Win grew up in the suburban community of Metuchen, New Jersey, but very early on, was exposed to agriculture through his grandfather, Paul Drummond, a dairy farmer in Middletown, Delaware. Because of his grandfather's influence, Win fell in love with agriculture. He attended Delaware Valley College and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture in 1974. After a bit of time landscaping and farming, Win enrolled in a summer course in systematic pomology taught on Saturdays by Drs. Fred Hough and Catherine Bailey, of Rutgers University. He was hooked and began an M.S. program in the Department of Horticulture at Rutgers the next fall studying cold hardiness of apricots with Drs. Hough and Bailey. To help get through the program, Win received a part-time Gerber Baby Food assistantship and later worked full time as the strawberry and blueberry technician for the breeder Dr. Gojko Jelenkovic.

In February 1978, Win began what would become his career, taking the job of general agricultural extension agent in Warren County, New Jersey. A year later he became the North Jersey Area Fruit Agent. To obtain tenure and promotion within the New Jersey extension system, individuals are required to conduct research and publish results regularly. Because of this requirement, Win began an active applied research program that was focused on enhancing the sustainability of New Jersey farms. He conducted vegetable, nursery, strawberry, and grape research but focused mostly tree fruits. The results of this large body of work were published widely and were the focus of many educational programs for farmers.

Win was fortunate to work with and be mentored by some of the greats during his early career, including Fred Hough, Ernie Christ, Norm Childers, Gojko Jelenkovic, Rich Marini, Jack Springer, Steve Johnston.

In his very first year on the job, Win attended an International Fruit Tree Association (IFTA) summer meeting, which began a lifelong association. Through IFTA, Win met North America's best research and extension pomologists (including Dave Ferree, Bob Carlson, Steve Blizzard, Charlie Embree, Bruce Barritt,

Ron Perry, Pierre Fillon, Raymon Granger, and Gary Couvillion) and growers (including Ron Metzler, Don May, Evan Milburn, Gary Mount, Bob Petch, Dennis Courtier). Win, with Jon Clements, oversaw the IFTA website for many years, and they were recognized for that contribution with the 2006 Outstanding Service to the Industry and Organization Award. In 2013, Win was recognized by IFTA with their Outstanding Extension Award.

Win's involvement with the Multi-State project NC-140 has spanned the last 25 years. He has represented New Jersey on this important committee focused on tree-fruit rootstocks. He has been involved in 14 of the multi-location NC-140 trials, each requiring about 10 years of study. Win and Jon Clements have given tremendous service to NC-140 through the development and maintenance of its website and email listserve. Win's participation in NC-140 brought a great deal of information back to New Jersey growers, but through it, he also contributed significantly to the knowledge of the committee. The committee's influence extended throughout North America and throughout the World.

In 1993, Win spent three months on sabbatical at the University of Vermont. Win collaborated with Joe Costante and Jon Clements to initiate an email discussion group called Apple Crop. This discussion group, 23 years later, is still active and serves an important function to allow tree fruit researchers and growers to exchange information and ideas worldwide. They also developed one of the first apple-related websites, the Virtual Orchard. This forward thinking created one of the first 500 websites on the World Wide Web!

Win addressed his job with dedication, enthusiasm, and a great deal of work. He managed the 14-acre orchard at Rutgers Snyder Farm with the same goals, concerns, and constraints that any commercial grower has, and he credits this activity as one of the most important accomplishments of his career. It allowed him to understand the grower needs and relate new approaches with a background of true experience.

Win will be sorely missed, but he will still be active consulting commercial growers and industries, conducting research, editing *Horticultural News*, and giving talks internationally.

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