Presidents Message July 2012

The grass is a little greener outside this morning after some rain overnight.

It is amazing how soon I complain to myself when we are trickle irrigating and need to daily turn the zones on and off. How quickly I forget those hot afternoons carrying irrigation (or, as the employees called it, irritation) pipe. Now there is fresh well water which doesn’t even contact the fruit compared to scummy pond water being sprayed over the peach trees we were picking the next day! Definite improvements on this farm! However, my grandchildren are being denied the fun of running through the sprinklers…and I no longer get to work a dead mouse through the sprinkler head.

Perhaps you caught the food safety reference in the last paragraph. It wouldn’t be appropriate to publically say what a hassle compliance is, yet along the way there have been plenty of ways we have improved our growing and packing practices for the better. I had always thought our operation to be very neat, but a new set of eyes-my husband-has helped me to see the weak points. Scott comes from a background working with automotive safety compliance which is helpful in navigating through the regulations and gives him more patience than I have. There surely are days I want to throw it all in, not because of the weather, insects, diseases or work but because of the regulations. Everything else is fighting against what nature throws at us but this is what man makes. Fortunately there are farm advocate organizations that are there to work toward a middle ground.

I had no idea how useful card games I played as a child would come into play as an adult. Some days I feel like life is a big game of “Go Fish” as fellow growers and I go back and forth with questions like “do you have any peaches?”. Hopefully as the season goes on there will be enough fruit to keep everyone in business. We do a lot of different things now because of crop losses on the farm in the 80’s from hail and winter freeze damage. Having one’s back up against the wall with farm payments and young children to feed makes for creative thinking. A wise commencement speaker I heard this spring talked about the importance of knowing when to pivot. He was talking about surgery (hopefully not mine or yours) going badly, but the same lesson can be taken by growers. Change is so uncomfortable. Most reading this are living on the same ground on which we were born and to look at our business in a new light usually takes a lightning strike not unlike the weather conditions of this season or last fall. May we all have the courage to pivot when necessary!

Wishing you lots of sunshine and gentle rains overnight as needed,

*Carolyn McQuiston*