**President’s Message January 2012**

It is with mixed feelings that I write my last message as President of SHAP. Eight years ago as I was beginning this journey when elected to serve on the board of directors for your organization, I was very apprehensive and uncertain how many years I would want to serve. However, I soon saw the rewards of serving the fruit industry in this way. I feel that I have benefitted tremendously from the relationships that I have developed with board members, research and extension scientists, and numerous other industry related personnel that interact with the SHAP board. I want to thank each of you for this great opportunity.

Through this experience I have gained a new and much broader perspective of the fruit industry. I especially have gained a sincere respect for the Fruit Research and Extension Center and all those that work in research and extension on our behalf. Through several visits to Washington D.C. with U.S. Apple, I have a new appreciation for their legislative efforts that benefit the industry. I learned there is a close connection to the Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Program and am very thankful for the professional work of their executive director, Karin Rodriguez, and her connection to the SHAP board. I am thankful for the way many of you, the members of SHAP, step forward in various ways to help make our organization strong. Each year we see many persons donating valuable time to serve at the Farm Show to raise money for research and extension, and I say thanks!

I was privileged to build new relationships with leaders form the PA Vegetable Growers Association, the New Jersey State Horticultural Society, and the Maryland State Horticultural Society as we met to plan the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention each year. The committed joint effort by each of these organizations over the years has resulted in the MAFVC becoming one of the best attended and respected conventions of the east coast. I encourage you to send in your registration soon for the convention to be held on Monday, January 30- Thursday, February 2, 2012. I call your attention to the pre-convention workshops on marketing and food safety to be held on Monday.

We have seen many changes over the past few years and faced many new challenges. We have great concern for our future in areas like labor, food safety, new pest pressure and marketing. Yet through programs like the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) grants, to name only one, there are many new important research projects in place. It is exciting to see the research being done in tree systems (CIG), Comprehensive Automation for Specialty Crops, and recently the efforts to find solutions to the rise of the brown marmorated stink bug. I am optimistic that there is a great future ahead for the PA fruit industry. I believe that as we rise to the challenge of producing quality fruit, there will also be an increase in the value of these crops.

I have really come to appreciate the excellent work that Maureen Irvin, our Executive Secretary, does for our organization. Her expertise was evidenced during the IRS audit that SHAP went through in 2010. She was commended by the auditors for her work that was in their words “impeccable”. We are fortunate to have her in this role with SHAP and as MAFVC Convention Coordinator.

I end by saying best wishes to our next president, Carolyn McQuiston of Dawson Orchards in Lawrence County and the officers and board of directors as they continue to lead our organization through the challenges of the next few years.

Wishing all of you a Happy New Year and many prosperous, fruitful years ahead!

-Ed Weaver

“If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples, then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.” –George Bernard Shaw