

## **President's Message 5-19**

**Mid-April 2019:** *[A little less than a month in, and things seem to be going fairly well around here. Sure, we're working 60 or 70 hour weeks, just like you, but for all intents and purposes we're in good shape in terms of planting, fertilizing, spraying, etc. I hope you can say the same.*

*The field labor situation seems to keep getting shorter, though. We were 4 people short in January, 8 short in February, 12 short in March. You get the picture. Some blocks will just have to go unpruned. We plan to extend our 2019 H2a contract in hopes that next year will be different.*

*Peaches are in full bloom here today and things are moving along rapidly. Last year at this time it was snowing.]*

That's how far I got on my April message before I got called out to one emergency or another last month. I never finished writing it.

I don't think I can start a May message with quite such an optimistic tone. I'm no longer counting how many fireblight rains we've had. It's cold and rainy (again) today, and I think anyone who comes through this spring scab free must be in good with the man (or woman, if you like) upstairs. We are not yet finished peach pruning, and will not finish apple pruning.

A light bloom on some varieties, and what looks like a poor set on others, has me quite concerned. I hope you are seeing more positive signs. Maybe, when I can get out in the orchards without needing to wear a pair of hip boots, it will look better.

Things seem to be going along well for SHAP. I have to say, this whole president gig hasn't been all that bad. There are a few extra emails every month and a handful of email marketers who want to sell me/SHAP one thing or another, but for the most part it's all been very positive. If you get the opportunity to serve, don't shy away. It's a great experience.

As I reported in the March newsletter, Penn State University plans to construct a new fabrication shop at FREC. This new building will provide the engineering department space for tools and machinery required to build equipment designed to keep our growers up to speed in the fields of automation and precision agriculture. I think this is exciting news for us and brightens the future of our industry. I also reported last month that your board approved a pledge of \$50,000 to kick start this project, provided ground is broken by June of 2020. I am happy to report that I have received a call from the University, and that ground is to be broken in September or October. They are not requesting that forms be signed on our part until then. This is a good sign of their faith in us. Our relationship with the University is, at this point in time, excellent, due in part to an outreach by Dean Roush and in great measure to the prior leadership this organization has enjoyed. I am thankful that I get to ride on their coat tails, and I certainly hope we can maintain this relationship.

In other news, David Peters has agreed to replace my brother John, who has served 20 years as chairman of the Endowment Committee. John will remain on the committee to mentor David for a year before stepping away completely. If you get the opportunity, thank both David and John for stepping up to serve your organization.

I hope all of you can find a little time to rest, vacation or otherwise, between now and harvest.

Wishing you all clear skies, fair breezes and timely rains (nothing more).

Chris Baugher  
SHAP President