President’s Message

As I sit down to write this column the month of August is coming to a close, and with it the winding down of peach season. Looking back, this season has been a rollercoaster, as it often is. From heavy bloom early on with a few risks of frost, to the months of May and June pushing our irrigation systems to their limits, smoky haze making outdoor work less than desirable, and then all the rain we did not get showing up in the month of July, I feel like we came out of this year having grown a strong, quality crop. As always, there are lessons to take from this year. There were certain varieties I should have thinned harder, and others I should have been more aggressive in harvesting before summer storms showed up without being forecast. It always amazes me how different each variety can behave year to year. One year something looks like a great variety that has few problems, and the next you are pulling your hair trying to understand what changed to make it one of your most problematic crops.

While the end of peach season is in sight, apples are just revving up. This week we should finish up Premier Honeycrisp and begin rolling into Gala and normal season Honeycrisp. So far, I am happy with what we are bringing out of the field, but problems still exist. One of the biggest problems I have seen this year is sunburn. It seems like varieties I have never worried about sunburn in have issues. A large amount of it seemed to occur at the same time that we were blanketed by the smoky haze from the Canadian wildfires to our north. Hopefully that situation does not become a regular occurrence for the future.

While harvest is underway and we get to see the fruit of our labor (pun intended) for the year, that is only half the fight. Growing a high quality crop and getting it to the packing house means nothing unless there are avenues to get that fruit into the hands of customers for a price that makes it all worth it. As we hear year after year, other regions continue to increase their production of apples. All these apples need to find a home, and often we are in competition with them in our own markets. To me, this shows we have a need for assistance in developing marketing plans and exploring other avenues to help in moving our crops. While many of us enjoy growing that high quality crop, it does us no good if it sits in a cooler rotting away.

Wishing a safe and productive harvest to all!

Andrew Schwalm

SHAP President