

July 9, 1998

Hudson Valley Laboratory Celebrates 75th Anniversary

by Joe Ogrodnick

Highland NY - Threatening skies and on-and-off-again rain did little to dampen the spirits and festive mood of over 230 people who showed up to help the Hudson Valley Laboratory celebrate its 75th Anniversary on Tuesday, July 7. Guests visited laboratories, viewed various exhibits and displays, and walked, seemingly oblivious to the wet grass and intermittent drizzle, through the research orchards.

Weather-along with its effect on this year's fruit crop-was just one of many subjects discussed during the orchard tour. Among the victims, the Bosc pear, injured by frost; cherries that split due to excessive moisture; and apple trees that had a higher incidence of scab than usual, also due to excessive moisture. One participant, shaking his head, said, "This year, Mother Nature is taking no prisoners."

Praise for the HVL ran high among those in attendance. Bill Yonnetti, Manager of Hudson Valley Farms commented, "These guys help me a lot. Sometimes, I'm here every day asking questions. We'll have lunch together once in awhile, and they'll come out to my orchard at the drop of a hat!"

Alice Tipp, an Ulster County Legislator, remarked, "This is a fantastic program, and they do wonderful things for the growers. It's just a great resource for both the community and the farmers."

After the various tours and laboratory demonstrations, lab superintendent Dave Rosenberger kicked off the formal program. He introduced the staff and noted that Dick Straub, who has the longest tenure of all the HVL employees, is able to run the Entomology program and still play golf and handball. Rosenberger made some brief remarks about work at the Hudson Valley Lab, adding that without support from Cornell and the Geneva Station, they would not be able to operate.



Jim and Oliver Kent of Milton, New York, stand alongside some "now antique" farm equipment they used in the 1930s.



Dave Rosenberger leads a tour through the research orchards.



Dave Fraleigh, President of the Hudson Valley Research Laboratory Inc., offered a short history of the Hudson Valley Lab, and Tony Moriello, Chairman of the New York Apple Research and Development Program, talked about "Fruitgrower Perspectives on Agricultural Research and Extension." Director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Jim Hunter, noted that the "Hudson Valley Lab has played a vital role in keeping agriculture strong in Eastern New York, and the work done at Geneva and Ithaca has been an important part of this effort." He talked briefly about the challenges of the past 25 years since he came to help celebrate the Lab's 50th Anniversary, and outlined some of the challenges for the next 25 years including the Fruit Quality Protection Act, marketing issues, and the globalization of agriculture.

A young guest helps her grandmother with a microscope exhibit.



Displays about various insect pests were just one of many stops on the guided tour of the lab.

Dean of Cornell University College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, Daryl Lund praised the Hudson Valley Lab, calling it "a good example of cooperation and collaboration between the public and private sectors," and he said, "This type of partnership is a model for the past and a direction for the future." He stressed the importance of revolution in biology, stating that "Cornell is making an investment in this revolution."

After the program, a barbecue dinner was served, and Dr. Domo's Cajun Swing Orchestra provided music.



Fritz Meyer shows a group of visitors the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station Web site.

PHOTOS: J. Ogradnick, Cornell Univ.

The next morning, Rosenberger summarized the event. "The 75th Anniversary Celebration at the Hudson Valley Lab was a great success. It provided an opportunity for the scientists and staff at the Lab to showcase the facility and explain some of their on-going research programs. Perhaps more importantly, it served to bring the agricultural community of eastern NY together for an enjoyable social event. It was a real honor to have Dr. Jim Hunter and Dean Daryl Lund present to celebrate with us.

"We sometimes are so busy maintaining programs that we don't take time to celebrate meaningful milestones. Even though planning the 75th Anniversary Celebration was a lot of work, I felt the effort was worthwhile because it provided a focus for reviewing and recognizing the long history of industry-university cooperation in the Hudson Valley.

"Planning and working on this kind of event makes one keenly aware of the human resources that are the heart of any effective institution or organization. Most of the credit for the success of our 75th goes to the lab staff who put in many hours of preparation work. The assistance provided by Communications Services at Geneva was invaluable. Most of the fruit growers in the community lent a hand by bringing antique equipment, loaning us picnic tables, and assisting in the planning of the

event. I bid thank-you to everyone who had a part."

Hudson Valley Lab was established in May, 1923, to enable Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, to establish a field station in downstate New York for agricultural research. The purpose was "for the experimental study of the problems of increasing the production and controlling the diseases and injurious insects of the horticultural crops of the Hudson River Valley."

Today, Hudson Valley Lab consists of over 7,000 square feet of laboratory space and 20 acres of research orchards. The research staff specializes in tree fruit horticulture, plant pathology, and entomology, and is focused on improving the production of fruit and vegetable crops grown in eastern New York.

The soils, climate, and topography of the lower Hudson Valley are well suited for fruit and vegetable production. Despite increasing urbanization, the Hudson Valley supports more than 150 fruit farms with a total of 15,700 acres. Farm-gate revenues at these farms exceeded \$42 million in 1996. The lower Hudson Valley also encompasses several river-bottom and black-dirt regions that support a concentration of sweet corn and onion farms. Approximately 5,000 acres of fresh-market sweet corn are produced in the Roundout and by an ancient lake now support more than 60 black-dirt farms and an onion industry that encompasses 5,200 acres and generates \$20 million dollars in annual revenues (based on data from 1993-1996).

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Contact: Linda McCandless, Communications Services

Telephone: (315) 787-2417

e-mail: llm3@cornell.edu

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