

The following is a summary of the trip taken by Ross and Kate Penhallegon, March 17 – April 3, 2008 to Bishkek and Karakol, Kyrgyzstan. This is the fourth trip to Kyrgyzstan in an effort to help teach growers the proper tree fruit growing techniques, and proper pruning and grafting.

March 17, Monday - Off from Eugene to San Francisco at 3:00 pm (1½ hours to S.F.). We had been following a father and daughter who were on their way to London for the week and ran into them at different points along the trip. Two hours later we flew off to London Heathrow for a ten hour flight ☺.

March 18, Tuesday - We had a two hour layover in London, then a 9 hour flight from Heathrow to Yerevan, Armenia, and then on to Bishkek. I talked to Fred Huston who was the country director of Euraminerals. His company wishes to help the communities where the different mines are located. He heard what I was doing and was very interested in finding someone (like me) who could help coordinate the country development efforts. He was also interested in the Winrock organization. He had worked for USAID earlier in his career. We talked about the importance of pruning and economic development opportunities. Small one hectare farms need low interest loans of 2-5% and they would grow very quickly.

March 19, Wednesday – It was 6:30 a.m. when we arrived in Bishkek. We went through customs and headed to find our baggage. It all arrived OK. Out the door and was mobbed by taxi drivers. We just said Nnyet or no. Ten minutes later our interpreter arrived, Ehrmeck and the driver. The driver took us to a new hotel, The Grand Hotel near the center of town. The room was very nice and spacey. We went to the Winrock office at 2:00 p.m., checked in with Zarina, the program person and reviewed our assignment for the next two weeks. Tim Stevenson, a native Grant Pass person who now lives in Bishkek, had been looking for pruners and saws for almost a year. Today we went to go see the fellow who found the pruners, his name was Cygon. We gave him 18,100 soms, as a down payment to get the 300 pruners and 300 saws by Saturday. We bought two apple trees across from the market for our tree fruit class tomorrow. We found a new fruit called Phoenix (from a date palm) and a salty, hard cottage cheese while walking around the Alamedian market. The markets are fascinating. You can find almost anything! They have new and old stuff, from knives, to bolts to old motors, car parts, on and on.

March 20, Thursday - To the office and off to the Department of Ag station north of town. I brought along 111 scab resistant apple scion wood of Prima, Freedom, Dayton, Liberty, Jonafree and MacFree. I also brought along two saws, an OSU hat, two hand lenses and one grafting knife for the ladies at the research station. We met Tim Stevenson at the American University and his ten students. When we got there Aibek's father (Karabaev Nurudin Abylaevich) and the forestry director came in and wanted us to go to the national walnut orchard in Osh and they would set up all for the arrangements. Wish we could, but no time. We gave a class on tree fruits and then how to prune apple trees. Then we decided to go plant the trees in their orchard. After planting the trees, they

had a “gave away” of the last tree. One student got the tree after answering correct horticulture questions. Her family usually plants a tree on the March holiday so she was very happy. She said to come back in two years and she would give us an apple. We headed back to the university to get our backpacks. I presented the Abylaevich with a saw and hand lens. He was very pleased and told us the instruments would be used by students and thanked us for the gifts and invited us to come back to help them with horticulture programs.

March 21, Friday - The weather has been very warm for March. We met Tim, his two sons and his wife, Barb, then off to the Jallalabat restaurant and a mix of great food. During the day we bought four pruners for 400 soms as we wandered around the market looking for more pruners.

March 22, Saturday - Met up with Aibek. We are going to get the pruners. We headed out of town to get the pruners, 2 km away in an out of the way place, down a dusty road, through a big iron gate. Several people were just standing around. What are we getting ourselves into here? We viewed the pruners and the saws. This one fellow kept playing with the saws feeling how sharp they were. Good thing there were five of us (there were more of them!). We counted the hand saws. A van came and we loaded the pruners into the van, about 600 pounds of pruners and saws. I paid 56,000 soms. We then asked Cygon to look for the long handled pruners. We went to the Osh market where we found hard cottage cheese balls, all sorts of fruits and vegetables, plus every candy type known to man. The meat department was “raw”, literally. However, we did find some nice beef steaks for Tim.

March 23, Sunday – At 11:00 a.m. the van with our 600 pounds of pruning saws and pruners arrived. The road to Karakol was very bumpy. We had lunch at the Kyrgyz Pass restaurant. Here we saw one of the growers from 2007. Small world! The van had to be traveling at over 110 km/hour and it still took six hours. We arrived at 6:00 p.m. at the same guest house that my son Tristan and I stayed in back in 2006. Along the way I started to count the number of gardens/orchards that had been pruned or that had been planted in dwarf trees. There were a surprising number that had done one or both. I start counting from Lake Issykul to outside of Cholpon Ata. Dwarf trees in gardens = 24. Pruned gardens/orchards = 41. We past the school outside of Cholpon Ata where my daughter Hettie and I had taught the Hilary Cooperative back in 2005. Kate saw a fellow in the top of a tree pruning with a saw, then I saw a fellow pruning his currants, and then two gardens that had been pruned very well. Success!

March 24, Monday - The guest house serves great breakfasts. Bektemir showed up with two journalists from Karakol and I did interviews for the local newspapers. “The life standard in the Karakol area is increasing due to the increased apple and apricot production, due to pruning and tree fruit classes.” Bektemir S., UNDP. At Village-1 Bektemir said that I had been to this village before and gave them rootstock and scion wood in 2006. The six trees with scion were growing well. They planted 20 rootstock and had 15 growing well. Another huge success.

We went on to the local school to teach. We then did the pruning demonstration on an old tree. The owner asked if he could help, and he began cutting branches, and then the worker got the saw and cut more branches. In 2005 it was thought that pruning KILLED the trees. They have come a long way. The growers are being very forward now. I said the tree should produce 100 kg of fruit and the owner lady said it only produced 20 kg, and then she asked if I would prune MORE of their orchard, a huge compliment. I now see pruning being done all over the area once I started to look. Three more garden/orchards pruned!!! Over 48 people showed up for the first pruning class. “Thank you for coming to our village and teaching us how to prune.” I give my short speech on where the pruners came from and that the growers and volunteers from Oregon wanted the local growers to have the equipment so they could prune their trees. Plus, that they need to share the equipment with other growers. “Thank you for sharing how to prune and how to graft. Now we know how to best prune.”

March 25, Tuesday – Two different villages attended this pruning session. The house was small so we held the sessions outside in the warm sun. I actually got sunburned on my arms. Lots of people attended. We ate lunch inside with half of the people. “Thank you for coming. We had heard about pruning but now we understand why it is so important. Rauth-math (Kyrgyz Thank you).” The tree wasn’t too difficult, but it was a big one, and then off to a smaller tree.

March 26, Wednesday - Village-3, back to the north area. The class room was very cold. Then outside into the warm sunshine to prune. The trees are always huge and unpruned. “Thank you for coming to our small village. We will use the pruning equipment to prune our village trees.” Villages visited – Enchilesh.

March 27, Thursday - We didn’t get started until around 10:45 a.m. There were 12 people in a nice auditorium. I spent about an hour talking tree fruits. It was really cold in the auditorium and I had to put on my coat. They really wanted to learn about pit storage. Then off to do a pruning demonstration class near the nursery center. The trees were small, neglected and smushed together in a very small space. When I started to graft and bud, the people just crowded in as close as possible to see how to do this. They were very interested in grafting and budding. We gave out pruning equipment to every attendee. They were all really happy. I told them that the pruners came from growers and volunteers in Oregon. The growers wanted the Kyrgyz growers to be able to prune their trees. If they have neighbors, give them a pruner or share. They would all shake their heads and smile. Then off to lunch of lamb and long noodles. I was given the tenderest piece of lamb, the part of the lamb that is saved for an honored guest. I also HAD to sit at the head of the table. Each time I tried to sit on the side, I was ushered to the head. The village leaders said, “Thank you for coming to our villages. We appreciate you coming and teaching us. We are very satisfied at learning pruning.” The village was Orgochor. “The information was very good,” he said.

March 28, Friday – I found out there wasn’t any hot water this morning ☹. Off to a village 40 kilometer west of Barskoon. One lady walked up and said she remembered me and my son Tristan from two years ago. The group was very talkative. We went outside

to do the demonstration. They picked a really old apple tree that should have been pruned years ago. An hour later, the tree looked pretty good. We taught grafting and budding which really got their attention. After giving out the instruments, we took a group picture. The Village leader said "Thank you for coming to our village. We appreciate you bringing the pruning equipment. We will use it." Two villages: Kajysay and Dontala. On the way to the villages today, I noticed 12 more garden/orchards with dwarf trees, 5 garden/orchards with great pruning jobs. New dwarf orchards = 4 and many near Barskoon where we were last year (in only one year and they were pruning correctly!)

March 29, Saturday - Up and breakfast of porridge which looked like cooked rice. I had 90 pruning sets left so calculated two more stops. The village was near the mountain foothills so I did an outside talk in the orchard on tree fruit technology and the pruning demonstration. When I cut the top out of a 5 meter tree, people got really excited. Then I showed them that there wasn't any fruit on the lower branches and then they listened. There were 54 people attend this class, a record. They really get very close when I did the grafting. Village – Chulpic. Lunch was water and hot milk, rice and lamb, and lots of little fry breads. I loaded up Bektemir with 30 pruners which he could use with 7 other villages. Bektemir said that this village was the most horticulturally oriented of all of the local villages. One lady received rootstock from me in 2005, but animals broke the tree down. At the end, the village leaders said, "Thank you for bringing the tools. Have a great trip home. Please come and visit again, soon. We will use the pruning and grafting instruments soon."

March 30, Sunday - We took a taxi down to the animal market (25,000 som for a cow with calf; 25-27,000 for single cows, 28-46,000 for a good horse). Kate wanted to buy all of the animals. We watched a local ferrier put on horse shoes. On the way back to Bishkek, we stopped by to see Gulmira and Adelit (2005), south of Cholpon Ata. Adelit was pleased to see us. He took us to see the nursery. Gulmira prepared bread, jam and apricot juice for us. We stayed for a little over an hour and then had to leave. Gulmira was very appreciative of our gifts and she invited us back.

March 31, Monday - 10:00 a.m. Winrock office to turn in my final reports. A person from Bishkek Information Services arrived to hear about what I had been doing. We had a new interpreter, Asel, and she tried to interpret, but was unfamiliar with horticulture terms. The office administrator stepped in with Bolot. The information rep didn't believe what I was doing and questioned how I was able to do what I was doing. Bolot and the assistant then started telling her about all that I had done in the last four years. The interview went on for almost 1 ½ hours. I told of very big changes happening, that this work was preventing children from having to be sold into slavery because now their parents could raise enough apples to support the family. These growers could NOW have an adequate income for their families, for a mere \$20 pruner. (Most farmers make less than \$20 per month.) I talked about scion wood and rootstocks, and what was happening with them. I talked about the training we were giving the growers to help them produce more and better fruit. Over 41 garden/orchards were pruned and 21 were planted with dwarf trees. We discussed the difference between natural (Kyrgyz) vs. chemical (Chinese) apples. The reporter couldn't find any Kyrgyz apples, but the growers can't sell

scabby apples. I suggested growing apricots and sell them worldwide. Yes, Kyrgyzstan can be saved, one pruner at a time. In the end, the info rep thanked Kate and myself for helping the Kyrgyz people. She now understood the impact that simple pruners were having on the people of Kyrgyzstan. She said, "Thank you for sharing. I appreciate what you are doing." She volunteered to write a letter of support for the Winrock program.

April 1, Monday – Off to the Osh market and Zoom department store today. We helped Tim to prune another bunch of trees with Tim's boss from Europe. They were impressed. We had a farewell dinner with Zarina.

April 2, Tuesday - Up at 4:00 a.m. and out front by 5:00 a.m. and off to the airport. BMI said that the rules had changed and our baggage would cost 214 pounds or \$428 dollars to ship. Wish we had known earlier. It would have been Ok if the flight was all the way through to Eugene, but stops change the weight requirement!!! On the airplane, there were only eight people and we were charged extra. In Yerevan, only ten more people. We arrived in London and off to Customs and Passport control. We decided to see if we could check our baggage back onto United since there were so many plane problems at Heathrow. All U.S. flights had been cancelled on the 777 planes, plus Terminal 5 was having huge luggage delivery problems. Looks like tomorrow may be tough. We were told we couldn't check in until tomorrow, plus there were several hundred people still trying to make arrangements ahead of us. We looked for a shuttle bus, but we were at the wrong end of the airport, so took a lorry taxi. Thought that it would be spendy but it only cost 7.50 pounds (\$15 US) to the Park Inn, 15 minutes from the airport. We asked about the "Underground" to downtown London but it was a 30 minute bus ride. We checked into the hotel, walked around looking for a place to eat. (A simple dinner was \$29.95 per person or \$59.90 US per person and for two = \$119.80 U.S. Oh my!) We found a small store and bought our meals.

April 3, Thursday - Up at 4:40 a.m. got ready and headed to the airport. We figured if there were going to be problems we should be in line early. We arrived at the airport after a very over crowded bus ride. Through check-in and then a wait for the gate number to show (it didn't show up until 30-45 minutes before boarding). The plane was a huge double decker plane and our seats were clear in the back of the plane. The plane ride was still 9½ hours to S.F. In S.F. it took four hours for another Customs and Passport check. Since we had been on a farm we were diverted to have our shoes checked for mud and dirt, but not a problem. We still had a two hour wait. We stopped off at the right gate, which of course then changed one hour later. Good thing we checked the gate monitor every hour. The right gate was three gates away. Onto the plane, back to Eugene in a little over an hour, and home sweet home.