

The following is a summary of Ross Penhallegon's trip to Kyrgyzstan in 2007

Sunday, Feb. 11 – To the Eugene airport, then off to San Francisco. From SF we flew to Chicago/O'Hare. Walked around the airport and got on another plane, then off to Munich, another nine hours. We arrived in Munich, walked to the next gate and 20-minutes later we were loading the plane. This plane goes to Istanbul, great city to visit and tour. From Istanbul, off to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, another 5-hour ride.

Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2007 – Arrived in Bishkek at 1:30 a.m. VISA stamped, then got our baggage which arrived. Yeah. Off through customs. We went outside and looked for the Winrock International (WI) driver. We got the wrong driver and that is a story in itself. Off to the WI office. Talked with Ulan and the director about our assignment. We had some time so we walked to several stores, an old museum with old military photos and relics, then to the American Central University, then to Zarina's University to talk with her teachers. We then walked around the government parliament and the white house buildings.

Wednesday Feb. 14, 2007 – Breakfast was unique: omelet, bread, yogurt, tomato, cucumber, cheese and sausage. The drive to Barskoon is about 4-hours and it is very beautiful with tall snow covered mountains, rivers and quaint little villages along the route. At Lake Issykul we headed to the south side. We arrived at around 1:30 pm. at one of those places in the middle of who knows where. The host's house is almost right on the lake and out the front door you view the beautiful mountains. (At night the stars are SOOOO bright and being on the 44th parallel, the stars and the constellations are all in the same place as at home.) The North Star and Big Dipper are brilliant.



“Ria-jah” is the leader of the agriculture growers in the Barskoon area. They have 2-3 hectares of apricots, a nice apple and apricot nursery with young apple plants with semi dwarf and dwarf rootstock. They also have over 100 sheep, four horses, three milk cows, cats and dogs. Riajah has a very nice farm. They grow most of what they consume. They also grow currants, strawberries and a large vegetable area. Image, life on a nice farm, no running water, but the pit toilet was upgraded to where you could at least side down! We were shown our rooms. Take a deep breath. Camilla and Zarina had the end room, or should I say floor. I had the office and the floor! Oh my. They did bring in portable heaters so we did get heat eventually. They use coal and cow chips to do all of their heating. We got three meals per day, and the “ambiance” was great.

We talked with Riajah about my vision for Kyrgyzstan. The growers have issues with excessive height of fruit trees, insect and disease problems and lack of pruning. To help them, I am working on bringing in pruners, so they can prune regularly and reduce the height of the trees to ease picking and the thinning of the fruit, which would decrease problems and increase the fruit quality; plus at some point bringing in scab resistant scion wood. This would help change the whole economy by providing more and better fruit for the villages, the region and the surrounding countries.

We were told we would be visiting 6-9 villages, so I needed 12-18 pruners. I was told that these would be given to the poor farmers. At the first seminar, we only had a few men leaders. Our interpreter told them to get more people. She is really good. She also knows what I am trying to do for the villagers and she really pushes the village leaders to have more people attend the seminars.

Thursday Feb. 15, 2007 – Up at 6:30 a.m. and outside to visit the outhouse. It is VERY QUIET other than a few chickens, and the stars were so bright. Riajah wanted a set of pruners so I gave her a set. Breakfast consisted of

milk and porridge and bread. Headed out to **Jenish** village at 9:00 a.m. We stopped off at their nursery and they started asking questions. How to bud graft? How to water? How to fertilize? How to develop a stool (where nursery trees are grown) bed? Then around the corner to see if the seed beds were developing correctly. They were nice and weed free and covered with sawdust, then to the apple stool beds, then to another house to show how to prune small pear trees and general pruning techniques, and then to a large pear tree and how to deal with it.

It was 12:30 p.m., headed to have lunch (a typical meal consisted of carrot salad, pepper salad, bread and/or fry bread, then usually rice or a potato, plus meat and more carrots). Lunch was a full session of all sorts of questions about GMO, apple varieties, how to grow apricots, peaches, apples, pears, and all sorts of other questions about their problems. By the end of lunch we had 12 people listening. Then out back for a lesson on grafting trees and pruning a large apple tree. The apple tree was easy, I made several cuts. By the time I made 10 cuts the tree was under 8-feet and still was under the 20% wood removal. Then I showed them how to cleft graft and whip graft apples.

Friday, Feb. 16, 2007 – Off to Village **Akteret**. It was windy and it snowed several inches. Eventually we had 29 people at the demonstration. We did continuous demonstrations all day long, pruning apricot, pear and apple trees; showing cleft and whip grafting; then followed by T and chip budding for August. They were very pleased after listening to what was said. They realized that by pruning and grafting they could do a better job of raising fruit. At the end, we had lots of “rrrrathma” or Kyrgyz “thank yous.” The village leader said, “We didn’t know about these great things. Thank you for sharing with us.”



Lunch – another opportunity to discuss trees. Each lunch has different food and different numbers of people.

Ending comments indicated that “many people did not know these great things about apple and apricot trees.” Off to the village leaders’ nursery of prune, pear, apple and apricot trees. Later we went to the “baunya” for a nice hot sauna and to do some laundry. .

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2007 – Today we left at 10:00 a.m. and headed to the village of Jargylchak, which was up on the hill overlooking the lake. Upon meeting the villagers, we decided to do a sit-down discussion since yesterday everyone kept asking the same questions. This way we could cover all areas of tree fruit production at once for everyone. We went to the school and took over a class room. I showed them pictures of apples and apricots and how to produce these fruits properly. Farmers from two villages showed up to hear my talk. They were very intent on watching and listening. When I prune I get up in the tree and bring it down, usually to under 10-feet. When I do this I hear them say that “there goes the fruit.” So I just continue to show them that the fruit is way up on top of the tree. Then I show them that there isn’t any fruit in the middle or near the bottom of the tree due to shading. Then I take the cut branch and show them that on a 10- foot branch, there are usually only 3-6 apples. Then I show them the disease that is caused due to too many branches and not enough sunlight. I start to see heads shake in agreement. Soon I have another group that thought I was crazy that now understand WHY pruning is so important.

They are always so interested in the budding and grafting part especially when we go into showing the cleft graft and whip graft. Afterwards, I gave pruners, saws, sharpening stones, grafting knives and gloves to the agriculture head and the village government head. Off to lunch. This time there was only the Ag and village leader so we had a nice casual lunch discussion. We spent time in the village leaders’ orchard showing him how to prune his huge apple and apricot trees. He got up in the tree and did the cutting. Then off to visit the Ag leaders home orchard

and his bee farm. We went up the road to visit his NEW orchard. He has 10 hectares of land and he is planting apples.

Sunday, Feb. 18, 2007 – I was told that Riajah's son, Ulan, was going to go to the animal market. Off we went to the animal market to look for pregnant sheep and goats, and what I call "jelly bum" sheep. They have huge rolls of fat on their back end. The cost of a pregnant sheep or goat ranged from 1500 to 2500 soms. Less than one-year old cows were \$100 USD and a pregnant cow was over \$450. That is really spendy for a not very good looking animal. Ulan got a phone call, we were late to visit the journalist who had been waiting for two hours. We went inside and had lunch and talked with the Bishkek journalist for an hour about my pruning classes. I provided six nice pictures for a major Bishkek newspaper.

At 3:30 p.m. we started to train the group from Riajah's farm. We talked about the pruning of small and medium apple trees. Then down by the road we pruned at least another six trees showing proper pruning techniques. Riajah wanted to learn how we graft scion wood. She and Zarina then rated all of the different apples in the Issykul oblast as to scab susceptibility. I was amazed that 80% were rated scab resistant, yet at the training sessions this was one of the biggest issues with growing apples in Barskoon, Karakol and Cholpon Ata!!!

Monday, Feb. 19, 2007 – Headed to Karakol with Ulan, Riajah, CA and Zarina. As we drove through the small villages we could see all of the kids converging on the school. The kids were walking down the road from the north and from the south, meeting at the school. We arrived in Karakol at 7:55 a.m. The state offices opened up at 8:00 a.m. We walked in and announced our entrance. We were told to wait. We headed to the second floor and met with the deputy to the governor. He wanted to know what we wanted, our issues and what we were asking for. We said that Issykul was great place to grow apples, pears and apricots. However, since the demise of the cooperatives in 1991, the trees have not been pruned and production is decreasing due to the lack of equipment, knowledge, and too much disease. Our goal was to test new and old varieties; to bring in more equipment; and to get paperwork for the import and export of different scion and rootstocks. We then went to the third floor to talk with the assistant governor and then to the fourth floor to talk with the governor of Issykul.

I presented my ideas to the governor and seven of his staff, a very high powered meeting. He liked what he heard and directed the director of quarantine to show us how to import scion and rootstock. Talk about potential impact! No longer were we just working with the local growers, we were talking with everyone up the chain to the very top – the Minister of Ag!!! At the end, the governor said, "Thank you for coming, we appreciate the work you are doing and the sharing of your information! Please work with other nurseries." From here we went to visit the director of quarantine to look at the paperwork. It was standard phyto-sanitation information. They were most interested in keeping the rootstock and scion wood free of fall webworm, San Jose scale, apple maggot, and fireblight.

While standing at the farm store, a young fellow walked out with a yellow liquid in a water bottle and put it into his trunk. He then got a cloth and wiped his hands and smelled it. Obviously he had spilled some kind of herbicide onto his hand. He didn't wear gloves, and probably didn't even know what he was doing. He DIDN'T have a label to tell him what to do or how to use it. Oh my! I gave the owner my card and asked him to email me if he had any questions, and to please make sure each person has a labeled container. Please!

Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2007 – The first village was just down the road not more than a few hundred yards. Here we started off with three people, but soon had 14. We talked about pruning single leader and open center trees; how to prune apple, apricot and pear trees; how to make different grafts; and various other information. This session lasted for about an hour and a half. Then we were off to Tamga where we had 14 more people to discuss pruning old apple and apricot trees, how to graft; and how to take care of fruit trees. There were three men who drove from Karakol who wanted to listen.

Off to the third site, Barskoon to the north, which was again just a short distance. We had ten people learn about how to renovate a very old apple orchard which was very diseased. I cut on one tree and found that most of the tree had anthracnose. I told them about copper sprays and pruning and how to renew the tree by making a lot of

cuts. They hadn't fertilized in a long time so the trees had stopped growing. I told them about the fertility of manure and compost. They needed it twice a year. I also showed them how to graft from root suckers if they didn't want to do heavy pruning. At the end, they thanked me for coming and sharing with them this great knowledge.

Thursday, Feb. 22, 2007 – On the way back to Bishkek, I thought it would be good to visit a grower I had worked with in 2005. I didn't think I would remember where Gulmire lived after two years and no address. We stopped at the gate and Gulmira finally showed up to see what was going on. I recognized her and she finally remembered me from two years ago. The grandfather took us on a tour of the nursery of apples, apricot and walnuts. Of course there had to be a celebration, so inside we went. It looked almost exactly as it had two years ago so I took more pictures. I had the computer so I showed her pictures from 2005. We talked about what we had been doing and what we wanted to do in the future. She was excited. I gave her some pruners, saws and grafting knives. She was like a little child with all of the gifts. An hour and a half later we had to leave. We drove 655 km today.

Saturday, Feb. 24, 2007 – Up early and flew to Osh. I wanted to see the market so off we went to see their huge market of apples, vegies, apricots, seeds and grains. One can tell a lot about the country by looking at the market produce. The grain was full of weed seed. Apricots were wonderful, along with all of their nuts, peanut, pistachio and almonds. Off to dinner with Claire and Mark and we talked for several hours.

Sunday, Feb. 25, 2007 – Had a good discussion with Miles and Claire about potential projects, how to work with growers, pesticides being used, etc. Nice ride for 1 1/2 hours. Jalalabat is a good size town of 80,000, small but large enough to find services. We went to the Mercy Corp office, visited with the staff, used their computer to check email, then off to the bazaar to look at the fruit and vegetables. I saw lots of apple scab and San Jose scale, but nice new dried products. It was a very nice market. Then to the new guest house, unloaded and off to dinner downtown, where we had more local food "plauff," the rice and lamb dish!

Monday, Feb. 26, 2007 – These guest houses have huge breakfasts, we can barely eat small portions. We were going to get a tour of the local area, but it started to snow heavily at 9:00 a.m. We walked in and they were already training. Then two and a half hours later they broke for lunch and were still asking questions. I felt strange taking the time of the local consultants, but they asked me to answer questions and the consultants were helping. Lunch – discussion and grafting. We gave the association and the consultant a set of all of the equipment. This worked out nice since the Association would SHARE the equipment. Out in the parking lot one fellow was already pruning a tree!!!

Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2007 – Off to Nookat and Kalamjia. It had snowed three inches so the drive would be slow. The driver did a good job of driving. The roads actually were packed down. Many of the cars had no windshield wipers or heat to clear off the windshields. We were near the Uzbekistan border and saw several border crossings. Kalamjia has a population of about 100,000 people. We met with the local raspberry growers at 11:30 a.m. They wanted to know all about me, how to process raspberries, what a marketing plan was, how to grow a variety of crops, etc. For lunch we had borscht and beef and rice. Back to teach more classes. We showed the computer PowerPoint of apples, apricot and raspberries, and then a board talk on pruning. A demo would have been so much better. The growers responded with, "Thank you for coming to share with us your great knowledge. We appreciate you coming all the way from America to help us grow raspberries better."

Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007 – There were two heaters, one in the bedroom and one in the front room. The front room stayed cold all evening and night. As I walked into the bedroom, the electric socket was smoking. So I jerked the cord out. The cord was melting into the socket. The hot water tank had been turned off and the water not turned on, so with some fiddling, the shower dripped. It was like a "spit shower." There was NO water pressure at all. Later we found out that the water gets turned off at 7:30 a.m.

The growers talk of growing raspberries in a small areas called "setka." When I brought out the tools, I got everyone's attention, for a while. Off to lunch at a special "plauff" center. The place was beautiful, with a creek

running through it, nice place. First comes the bread, then a bowl of nice pickles, then a plate of “fried fat” with a few sliced onion, then a sour salad with sour cream, diced radishes and cilantro, then of course the “plauff” of rice and lamb meat.

I talked about: who I was; my tree fruit experience; climate similarities; how to market; disease; fertility; and why pruning is important. I asked if they had pruners or saws and they said no, so out come the equipment, three more pairs given away. They were so surprised and grateful when the equipment came out. At the end of each seminar, I give a small talk about thanking the growers, Winrock and Mercy Corp for allowing me to come to Kyrgyzstan. They then usually stand and express their gratefulness that I came all this way from Oregon to bring equipment, to teach them and help them grow fruit better. At the end one grower said that I was correct that the biggest thing the growers could do was prune their trees, and they just aren't doing it. Then he said if I came back next year, the trees would be pruned!!

Thursday, March 1, 2007 – Our driver came at 9:00 a.m. and we headed off to a village near Kahapeh. Off to do a demonstration on pruning. The seminar had 20 people, but outside half the town was watching me prune one of the cities trees. Of course, there were about six others that were trying to teach the class. I was able to teach them the new pruning techniques and that really got their attention. At the end, we gave away the last of the pruners. A lady from USAID was there to sit in on the program and do an evaluation. We had a rally nice discussion of possible programs for Kyrgyzstan. Bektybek gave us a big bottle of homemade raspberry jam and two bags of dried apricots. She also raised very good Asian pears.

Friday, March 2, 2007 – Met and talked with John Fitzgerald from Arkansas, talked about our similar projects. Met with Ulan and then off to the Kyrgyz Fruit Testing Center. We met with the director on how to bring scion wood into country, legally. I got a list of all of the apples already being grown in Kyrgyzstan, which is a bunch and they have been tested. I was told that Oregon Rotary was helping build a processing plant in Kyrgyzstan. We then went to their local Fruit Testing Center, 25 km from town. We looked at semi dwarf apple rootstock, M111. The M9 is too small and falls over. Two older ladies showed us their apple collection of coopert, red, golden and ida red.

Saturday, March 3, 2007 – We had a great conversation with Claire and finally met a lady by the name of Robin who I have been emailing for three years, a grad student from Florida. We had a great time talking about Kyrgyz growers. At 10:30 a.m. we headed to several markets looking for pruners. After four different markets we did find a market that had small pruners and could be ordered later. We were packed and ready to head out. Off to dinner at 5:30 p.m. to a nice Lebanese restaurant for a 10 course meal, light of course. Tim, Zarina, CA and I had a great closing dinner. We are packed and ready to go.



Sunday, March 4, 2007 – Off to the airport at 1:30 a.m. Got through town in less than 30 minutes. At the airport we got our tickets and our entire luggage weighed only 52 kg and we were allowed up to 60 kg. International flights are 30 kg and in country are 15 kg. Off to Istanbul, Munich, San Francisco and home! By the time we landed, we had been traveling over 31 hours.