

Report to Citrus Grower Associates, Inc. Membership August 7, 2007

There is included with this report a newsletter written by Bruce Nearon. Professionally, Bruce is a remarkable man, as you will see if you “Google” his name. But, there is much more to him.

Bruce and Mrs. Nearon are also owners of a Lake Wales grove where they plan to grow organic fruit and sell it, directly, through a mail system. They, then, are growers of the old school, intimate with their trees and fruit and not simply investors, industrialists, or holding for future real estate profit.

For the most part Bruce’s topic is “greening” though he gets into other subjects much as Griffiths used to do.

Bruce brings a passion to his citrus. Griffiths did, too. I think of a few others around, today: Marvin Kahn, Jay Clark, Bob Behr. These are people with convictions, concerns and, above all, willingness to speak up and shout their beliefs.

After retirement, 25 years ago, Griffiths thought of, and formed, Citrus Grower Associates. It was a way for him to speak out. He did that so well, his portrait now hangs on the wall of the Department of Citrus conference room. The portrait is there, of course, because of Griffiths, but no less because Marvin Kahn cared enough to get it there.

Several years ago Griffiths asked me to be president and he would never accept my resignation. Over those years we worked closely, though I never interfered with his management style. We often disagreed. While Griffiths interest was to create information and cast it upon the waters, I maintained the real problems were (and they still are) political. That is, how to get people to act together in their own interest.

One of the things we did was to create a research (study) project seeking new avenues for growers, especially small ones, to market their fruit. That resulted in the grower direct selling system (for which Duke Chadwell was instrumental). It also resulted in a Packer proposal to rejuvenate chain store fresh juice operations. The DOC budget required would not have gotten through the Commission without a concerted grower petition campaign. I am sorry to say the program was, finally, killed. Tender flowers need to be protected from a harsh environment.

So, now we have Citrus Grower Associates and no Griffiths. What to do? First, we felt a need to change the way CGA operates. That meant closing the CGA office. Second, we have created a web site. Its address is “www.citrusga.org”. The site has been masterminded by John Jackson and Elizabeth Cross. For 30

years Jackson was a citrus extension agent. He is retired from that and is now the state citrus research guru. Cross is a computer genius and the daughter of Phil Cross of Conserve II fame.

Our website is an ingenious thing. It provides links to reprints of most of Griffiths' newsletters. We think they are invaluable to anyone interested in anything doing with Florida citrus. There are links to other organizations, a calendar, and still other items of interest.

We think a most interesting feature is a series of what are called "blogs". These are a way for a grower to read the comments of others and, if he wishes, leave his comment.

Our website can be invaluable. It can be a way for growers to get informed, exchange ideas, voice opinions and combine their opinions into action.

Many say it won't work. Maybe not, but it is worth a try. Griffiths left us CGA. It is a unique institution. It has an impeccable 25 years reputation, a bank account, is an approved non-profit corporation and it is ours. Citrus Grower Associates could never be created again. Now, let us use it to provide a vehicle for the future good of the small Florida citrus grower.

That brings me to a few other matters. The last membership meeting, last November, was attended by only 1 non-Board member. At that meeting the Board opined that dues were a natural source of membership information.

Therefore, I am going to request that anyone wanting membership and news info mailed to them please send a current address and \$50 to CGA, PO Box 8, Yalaha, FL 34797.

Anyone having an e-mail address please send it to the same address.

Anyone with ideas, comments, suggestions please send them to me at frank@bouis.org or to PO Box 8, Yalaha, FL 34797.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Bouis, President