2020 Maple Weekend by Eric Lee

The fifth annual IMSA Maple Weekend was held on March 14-15, 2020. The following 16 sugarhouses were scheduled to participate:

- Beachler’s Sugar Bush
- Country Lane Sugar Camp
- Fisher’s Sugar Camp
- Front Porch Sugarhouse
- Harris Sugar Bush
- Hinkle-Garton Farmstead
- J&A Farms
- Joe’s Sugar Shack
- Miller Family Sugar Bush
- Maplewood Farms
- Rutherford Sugar Camp
- Stenger’s Sugar Shack
- stix2°brix
- Twin Lakes Camp
- Treehugger Maple Syrup
- Zimmerman Sugar Bush

Less than 24 hours prior to the event, President Trump declared a national emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Truly a “Friday the 13th” omen of what was to come over the next few weeks. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) was strongly encouraging “social distancing,” a new but now permanent phrase in our vocabulary, to slow the spread of the disease. Gatherings of more than 50 people were prohibited.

Not knowing whether to proceed or cancel, our family decided to proceed since the contagiousness of the virus was not fully comprehended, and if we canceled, we had no time to get the word out before visitors would start showing up. A few people did call Saturday morning to inquire if the open house was still happening. Yes!

Saturday started cold, dry, and breezy. We had set up two market tents for frying pancakes and sausage and making cotton candy. The wind blew stronger, so we attached the sides to both tents. Then the snow started. There were such big flakes that the surrounding landscape was soon white, which added to the festive atmosphere. Kids were throwing snowballs outside the sugarhouse while the parents visited with our staff inside.

This was stix2°brix’s second year to participate in Maple Weekend. Last year we had around 90 visitors show up before a gushing rainstorm shut down the event around 2 p.m. This year we had close to 240 people attend, thanks to the assistance of the Madison County Visitor’s Bureau promoting the event. Towards the end of the afternoon we had to start rationing the sausage to make it through the end of the day. Luckily, we didn’t run out of food, but it was close. There were three sausage links left!

Faithful volunteers at the stix2°brix open house (left to right): Holly Bowman, Trent Brooks, Ellie Brooks, and Tonya Riffey.

Many of the attendees were local, mainly from Madison, Hamilton, and Marion Counties. However, to our surprise, first cousins from Pennsylvania showed up unannounced, and friends from Union City,

(continued on p. 3)
I hope all of you had as good a season as I did. We tapped early, boiled for the first time on January 29, and boiled for the last time on February 29. During this short season, we boiled 13 different days and made 50% more syrup than our yearly average.

But, there are more serious matters to consider. What a difficult time that we are currently experiencing worldwide with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In 1776, during the American Revolution, Thomas Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men’s souls." Those words are as appropriate today as they were way back then. Closures, cancellations, postponements, and restrictions exist throughout the country that affect us all. I cannot, with certainty, predict that Canning Day will go on as scheduled or even if the Indiana State Fair will be held on time.

Because of these concerns, and to keep our membership informed of all significant IMSA happenings, I am going to create a “phone tree.” It is easy for me to send a notice to all members who have email, but it is not so easy for those who do not have that media exposure. Approximately one third of IMSA’s members do not have email, or it is not listed on the member roster as such. If you have email capability and are not getting The Tapline through that medium, please send the appropriate information to me and Eric Lee.

Most of our non-email members are in the 574 area code. If five or six of those members would be willing to call four or five other IMSA members when needed, it would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our communications greatly. There are few other non-email members in the 765, 812, and 260 area codes as well. If I had one member in each of these area codes step forward, it would be great. I envision the phone tree would be activated by the IMSA president when necessary.

The phone tree is something that needs to be established now. We don’t know what the future holds or how long this pandemic will continue. I believe things will improve, but it may get worse before it gets better.

Please call or email me if you are willing to captain a branch of this phone tree. With your help, I can put this communication system together rather quickly and email or mail a copy of the phone tree to the entire IMSA membership. IMSA members have always stepped up to the plate in times of need, and this is one of those times.

I hope all of you are well and stay vigilant.

Dave Hamilton
Home phone: (765) 836 4432
Cell phone: (765) 524-1565
dave@rutherfordsugarcamp.com

A Trip Down Memory Lane...

These photos of the Rutherford Sugar Camp were included in the April 4, 1971, issue of the Muncie Star. The Rutherford/Hamilton family has been sugaring since 1912. More historical photos on page 8.
2020 Maple Weekend

Ohio, drove an hour to attend. At the end of the day, we were tired, but the reward was certainly worth the effort. With volunteer help from extended family and friends, we couldn’t have pulled off such a successful event by ourselves.

Michael Ramer reported that pancakes covered with maple syrup and hot coffee were a hit with visitors to Front Porch Sugarhouse near New Paris. Michael even provided entertainment for the children - a barrel train and coloring.

Alan Stenger was interviewed by the local media before Maple Weekend. Watch the interview at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmz4azkJRmA.

Special thanks to John Metzger for assisting with photography at different sugarcamps.
Harris Sugar Bush by Eric Lee

Art Harris’s experience as a sugarmaker started back in his childhood days on the family farm in Putnam County just north of Greencastle. A sugarcamp has existed on the property for around 135 years. As a small child, Art helped his father, who was a dairy and grain farmer. The sap was kept cold in a cistern on a hill and then boiled over an open fire. When he was around nine or ten years old, Art started making syrup on his own. Over time the operation grew to 300 to 400 taps on buckets. In 1961, he built his own evaporator. At that time, a quart of maple syrup sold for $4.

After graduating from high school, Art spent several years in southern Illinois. He returned to the family farm in 1987. In 1992, Art built the house he and Rebecca currently live in. They lived in the basement while the rest of the house was being constructed. About this same time, Art started up the sugaring operation again. For three years, he used a flat pan for boiling and finished up the syrup in the kitchen of the newly completed house. After Art boiled the syrup over and created a big mess, Rebecca insisted that the sugaring operation had no place in her kitchen, so Art started building the existing sugarhouse, which was completed in 1995.

At the same time, the Harris’s started expanding the business, which grew from 800 taps on buckets in 1994 to 4,000 taps on tubing a few years later. During this time, four evaporators have been utilized. The first evaporator was made of copper and oil-fired, which Art purchased from Sugar Bush Supplies in Michigan. It was 75 years old when he bought it. To this day, Art wishes he had kept it. The second evaporator was 5x14 and oil-fired. Art drove to Canada to pick it up. When he got home, he found out the flue pan leaked. The third evaporator was only a few years old and purchased in Pennsylvania. It was a 4x14 stainless steel Waterloo Small, also fired using oil. The fourth evaporator is the one currently in use—a 4x14 Lapierre oil-fired stainless steel evaporator. This evaporator was purchased new in 1999.

Art installed his own vacuum tubing system in 1994 after learning about the technology and process from Patterson’s Maple Farm in Pennsylvania. Feeling he had overspent on the cost of the vacuum system and having received no instructions on how to run it, Art decided to design and build his own vacuum pump, which launched him into another line of business—Indiana Vacuum. Art estimates that Indiana Vacuum has sold around 1,000 vacuum pumps since 1994. Just this past year he sold Indiana Vacuum to Marty Jasenski, a sugar-maker from New York, who had heard Art was cutting back on the vacuum pump manufacturing business due to his age and having too many irons in the fire. The new owner will continue to build and sell vacuum pumps under the Indiana Vacuum name.

Currently Harris Sugar Bush has 6,000 taps, which are all on vacuum tubing with 11 vacuum pumps and 13 sap releasers. For the 2021 season, the Harris’s plan to put in 7,000 taps. There are 80 acres of woods surrounding the house. A separate, 240-acre woods, which belonged to Rebecca’s father, is only a few miles away. The reverse osmosis machine being used is the Leader Extreme RO, which can process 1,200 gallons of sap per hour.

In 2012, Art built a retail store to sell the syrup and other maple products that he and Rebecca produce. The charming, country-style store also stocks locally made products such as pickles, mustards, apple butter, honey, dipping sauces, jams, candy, pottery, and brooms. Sales have increased year after year to the extent the Harris’s purchase around 3,000 gallons of syrup from other producers to blend with their own in order to meet demand. Sales have increased primarily due to value-added maple products, such as a maple pecan topping. Besides running the evaporator during the sugaring season, Rebecca oversees the store, and she credits the Internet for the boom in sales. Syrup is shipped to customers in all 50 states as well as U.S. military bases. Maple products have also been shipped to foreign countries, such as the United Kingdom, Israel, and Japan.

Besides in-store and internet sales, Harris Sugar Bush’s maple products are sold in health food stores and meat markets throughout the state, including the gift shop at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Each year the Harris’s set up a booth in the FFA Building during the Indiana State Fair to sell their maple products. Art and Rebecca also volunteer many hours during the fair to sell syrup at the IMSA’s Sugar Shack. The maple sugar, cream, and candies sold by IMSA at the fair are produced by Art and Rebecca.

The couple have known each other since their high school years. Rebecca graduated from Bainbridge High School in 1969. Art graduated from North Putnam County High School in 1970. They were married in November 1992.

The maple business is not the Harris’s primary source of
income. Art is a home builder. From 1987 to 1993, he was the foreman for a local builder, and then in 1993, Art started his own building business. He is also a licensed home and commercial building inspector. Art estimates he’s inspected over 5,000 buildings all over the United States. Rebecca taught high school math for 34 years at Western Boone High School near Thorntown. She retired in 2007.

Art has three children – Christy, Joshua, and Mary. The children help with the maple business during the sugaring season, and Joshua has been instrumental in helping build vacuum pumps.

Art’s role during the sugaring season is tapping and collecting sap. He enjoys the reward of production – seeing barrels filled with syrup. For him, the worst part of the job is cleaning up, and the amount of work is the same whether the season is good or bad. At the end, he’s just plain TIRED! Rebecca’s role during the season is running the evaporator and keeping the helpers fed. She also dislikes the clean-up process. Being a Lapierre dealer, the couple are also busy with selling maple sugaring equipment and supplies.

In Art’s opinion, the biggest challenge for Hoosier sugarmakers is finding enough maple trees in one woods. Demand for local maple syrup is increasing, yet most available woods in his area are already being tapped. As for advice to a new sugarmaker, Art feels a “newbie” should have a long-term plan. Grow the business first. Build up a market before heavily investing in equipment.

Art’s other interests include making lumber with a portable sawmill. He uses the lumber for his own building projects. Recently the sawmill was used to make lumber for the new IMSA Sugar Shack at the fairgrounds. Art also restores antique tractors. Art rebuilt a 1962 International 660. Currently he is working on restoring a 1954 International Super WD9, which is a very rare model.

When Rebecca isn’t running the store, keeping the accounting up to date, or ordering supplies, she likes to cook, read, crochet, make other handcrafts, complete jigsaw puzzles, and help Art with restoring the antique tractors. The couple also enjoy breeding and selling golden retrievers. Louie, Madeline, and Roscoe like to welcome visitors to the sugarcamp. The pet menagerie at the Harris homestead also includes a Chihuahua named Lucy, two fainting goats - Sassy and Fernando, and numerous unnamed cats.

The day *The Tapline* visited Harris Sugar Bush, Art and Rebecca were hosting an open house. Friends Keith Ruble, John Garrison, and Blaine Berry were onsite demonstrating their wood carving skills. Blaine joked he comes to the open house each year for the free food. The wood carving is just his “excuse” to show up. With much lively storytelling and conversation, it was a good, enjoyable, down-home visit.
2020 Maple Weekend

Zimmerman Sugar Bush

Michael Ramer

Zimmerman Sugar Bush

Doug Hamilton explains vacuum tubing at Rutherford Sugar Camp

Dave Hamilton explains the evaporator.

Rebecca Harris greets visitors on Maple Weekend.

Glen Ramer cranks out the pancakes at Front Porch Sugarhouse.

Display of maple products at stix2°brix open house.

Shades of amber beauty at Zimmerman Sugar Bush.
Maple Meringue Pie

Ingredients:
- 9 inch pie shell
- 2 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1/4 c. water
- 1 c. maple syrup
- 1 c. heavy whipping cream
- 2 lg. egg yolks, slightly beaten
- 3 Tbsp. butter

Meringue
- 3 lg. egg whites
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
- 3 Tbsp. maple syrup

Directions:
1. In a heavy saucepan, combine corn starch and water. Add maple syrup and whipping cream. Cook, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and cook for 2 more minutes. Remove from heat.
2. Stir a small amount of hot mixture into egg yolks and then add the rest of the hot mixture. Stir constantly. Heat the mixture again and bring it to a gentle boil, stirring constantly. Cook for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in butter.
3. For the meringue, beat the egg whites, cream of tartar, and vanilla until a soft peak forms. Add maple syrup. Beat until stiff and glossy.
4. Place syrup mixture in pie shell. Top with meringue. Bake at 350°F for 10 to 15 minutes until golden brown. Let set for one hour to cool and then refrigerate.

Source: Rebecca Harris
**News Bulletin**

- Canning Day for the syrup sold at the Indiana State Fair has been rescheduled for June 27, 2020, at Harris Sugar Bush in Greencastle. Mark your calendars. Help is needed. Lunch will be provided. If the event gets rescheduled again or canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, IMSA members will be notified by email or the phone tree.

- Please keep Bill and Kim Owen in your thoughts and prayers. Kim has had serious health issues in the last several months.

- Former IMSA member Ken Pumphrey passed away on March 13, 2020. He was also an active member of the Pioneer Village at the Indiana State Fair.

  Carol Hamilton bottles syrup in 1971. Lewis Rutherford, Carol’s uncle, tests syrup for density.

**FOR SALE! WANTED!**

Do you have maple equipment for sale? Are you in need of a particular piece of equipment? IMSA members can place a “for sale” or “wanted” ad in a future issue of The Tapline...for FREE! Simply send a description of the item and your contact information to the editor.

---

**Winger’s Sugarbush & Supplies**

Winger’s offers D&G equipment and supplies. Winger’s also stocks glass jugs from Artisan Printing with the state of Indiana outlined. Marcland products are also available.

**Early Order Discount!**

Contact Dan Winger by May 25 for prices on discounted equipment and supplies. **Discounts up to 35%!**

Dan Winger
11471 N Ogden Rd
North Manchester, IN 46962
(260) 578-7382
(260) 982-7382 (fax)

---

**Sweet Beginnings Maple**

Sweet Beginnings Maple is a family-owned business that provides a full line of CDL maple equipment and supplies right here in the Hoosier state. Our services also include custom tubing installation. Tubing with vacuum system significantly increases sap production.

Spring sale going on **through May 15**! Call for pricing.

Sweet Beginnings Maple is committed to providing superior service to our customers, whether you have 10 taps or 10,000 taps. Contact Silas Beachler for your equipment or tubing installation needs. Feel free to call at any time. No question is too big or too small.

Sweet Beginnings Maple
9569 S 600 E
Claypool, IN 46510-9019
(260) 578-1625

---

*The Tapline* is the quarterly newsletter for members of the Indiana Maple Syrup Association (IMSA), Eric Lee, editor (eric.lee@privategarden.org). The latest IMSA information, archives of issues, and much more is available at IMSA’s website, indianamaplesyrup.org. Also, please “like” our two Facebook pages: facebook.com/IndianaMapleSyrupAssociation and facebook.com/IndianaMapleWeekend.