



TOMATO INFO

Retiring soon

The time has come for me to retire. The end of June 2018 will be my last official work day. If you have a chance, please stop by our office between 11am to 2 pm for an open house. We're hosting a light buffet-style luncheon as a thank you. Casual, informal and simple. Come as you are.

What: Retirement luncheon- Gene Miyao

When: Thursday, June 21, 2018 from 11 am to 2 pm

Where: Norton Hall, 70 Cottonwood Street, Woodland. 95695

Directions: NW side of town. From Interstate 5, take West Street exit and head into town. Right on Kentucky Ave. for 0.5 mile. Left on North Cottonwood Street for 0.5 mile.

No charge: but a RSVP to our office would help with meal planning. 530 666-8143 with number attending. Or email KMChurchill@ucanr.edu

I started as an energized younger person in February 1980. My predecessor Mel Zobel had retired; and I was a grade-school student when I first read some of his newsletters. Mel was instrumental in guiding tomato growers to transition from hand to mechanical harvesting. Many changes were needed during that period: varieties, seeding rates, plant densities, twin vs single lines, bed preparation, irrigation management including cut-off, planting and harvest schedules. In the 1970's, a 35-ton yield was considered impressive when historical averages were below 25 tons per acre.

In my early days, I felt overwhelmed and ill-prepared to help at all. But Mel remained supportive. He'd visit occasionally, but wrote often with notes of encouragement and enthusiasm. Ever supportive, he'd compliment a research effort and advise on questions. For that I'm forever grateful.

I've always had generous support, but in the earliest years, when help was essential, there were several folks who stand out. My first research field trial was with Tony Turkovich who welcomed an unknown advisor to his ranch, and the welcome continued with many experiments on the Button Ranch thereafter. Jack and John Meek made accommodations for test plots in those early years; and the relation built further with Steve Meek, foreman John Pon and Sam Meek. Other growers included Harlan, Muller, Payne, Heidrick, Beeman, Richter, Barrios Merwin, Wilson, Dettling, Hatanaka, Aoki, Sagara, Borchard, Timothy, Viguie, Kimura, Klein, Best, Rominger, Mast, Gnos, Gnos, Gill, Robben, Yeung, Park, Reiff, and Wetzal amongst the many. I apologize for missed names (which is a more frequent occurrence for me and an added reason to retire).

I am glad to witness several farming families with a new generation returning to the ranch and given substantial responsibility. I've interacted with four generations of the Harlan family, with each providing insight and wisdom. On a farm visit with a father and his preschool son, after assessing and diagnosing a plant problem in their field, the youngster asked his father, "who is this fellow and what is his job?" The father replied, 'Mr. Miyao is a scientist and he's here to help us.'

From the Davis campus, plant pathologist Ken Kimble urged me to learn about tomato diseases. He organized several trays of 35-mm slides depicting pathogens of which I should familiarize myself to be better equipped. He was generous with his time both in the lab and in the field by accompanying me on many farm calls. He especially focused on *Phytophthora* root rot and *Fusarium* wilt. Those lessons were valued to this day, especially with *Fusarium*. In that time, he also showed me some scenarios that would likely never be encountered since they were rare events. About 10 years later, I was able to identify lightning damage from the slides and descriptions Ken provided. Of course, his early teachings were reinforced and furthered by UC pathologists Dennis Hall and later by Mike Davis and seed company pathologists Hasan Bolkan, Jon Watterson and Petoseed lab members. I shall remain forever grateful for such expert support.

On one of the first farm calls, Esparto-area growers Hideo and Mas Sagara asked for a visit to their field. What I learned was Hideo wasn't looking for information at the time, but rather was educating me by showing this newcomer the unique and tough growing conditions encountered with Capay clay soils in the area. It was a generous and warm gesture from a master to a new pupil. Who could forget that act of kindness?

I'd be remiss not to mention the support from seed dealers TS&L especially from the very beginning by Kim Timothy; who provided seed, planting plates, transplants, connections with growers, harvest help and created an atmosphere of support that extended throughout the company for me. As well, Ag Seeds through Scott Sullivan and Lance Stevens provided resources of seed and transplants and much guidance. Clearly, our seed retailers are very customer oriented; and I'm a fortunate recipient of their great help.

From allied industry, many dedicated individuals have been helpful. George Johannessen, Chuck Rivara and currently Zach Bagley from CTRI have all contributed as well as CTGA managers Zollinger, Welty, Siragusa with a special salute to Mike Montna. So many PCAs have gone above and beyond for me. I've been well stocked with fertilizers and pest control materials from Robert Imbach, Curt Leathers, Ken Johnson and Chuck Buckingham. All tomato processor field reps have been grand especially from local Campbell Soup, PCP, Morningstar and OLAM. Much custom harvest support has been provided by Morningstar.

UC colleagues were abundantly helpful. I was so fortunate to have had a guiding local administrator in Carl Schoner to settle me in my startup years, to nurture and advance my career. Local administrators Kent Brittan, Diane Metz and currently Morgan Doran were valued. Within our office, agronomist Tom Kearney was like an older brother. From Tom, I learned about experimental plot design, scientific inquiry, crop production and effective communication. The standout local field assistants were Mark Kochi and Ben Leacox. Within our office, secretarial support was effective over all the years: Mary Reyes, Cheryl Lopez, Mimi Rose, Teresa McClellan, Kathy Berrettoni, Anna Payne, and Katie Churchill. Neighboring advisor Mike Murray and I joined U.C. at nearly the same time, sharing experiences and stories. His superior writing skills challenged my own simple style. The senior tomato advisors at the time were Don May, Bob Mullen, Phil Osterli, Jack Orr and Larry Clement. Specialists in the program were Bill Sims who preceded Tim Hartz. Tim was invaluable. Weed ecologist Tom Lanini was interested in nightshade control and

bindweed management. His enthusiasm for weed control and fishing were infectious. I've worked more closely with pathologist Mike Davis than any other in our system. Highly efficient yet patient when assisting me. The current team of tomato advisors are a productive group. My counsel in the last many years came from advisor colleague Brenna Aegerter. With close proximity to UC Davis, I have been fortunate to receive campus assistance from many- notably Bob Gilbertson & his lab, and Frank Zalom.

Among the changes I've witnessed include: switch from open-pollinated seed to hybrids; switch from direct seed to transplants; major reduction in Phytophthora root rot while rapid spread of Fusarium wilt race 2; slow initial spread of Fusarium wilt race 3; near complete loss of varietal resistance to bacterial speck; higher incidence of Tomato spotted wilt virus; widespread use of nematode resistant varieties; spotty breakdown of varietal resistance to root knot nematode; vine training and/or trimming as the norm; greater harvester capacity with few manual sorters; and of course, widespread use of buried drip irrigation.

Of the research results that I am proud include: assisted with transition to transplants; benefit of cover crops, benefit of supplemental applications of potassium and of phosphorus; benefit of composted poultry manure; cooperating with a team of advisors to demonstrate value of sulfur dust for powdery mildew control, demonstrated the risk of spreading Fusarium wilt from infested stems pieces, helped narrow the timing and application rate of Matrix for nightshade control; cost of production studies with UCD ag economists; and assisted with introduction of IPM for worm control in tomato.

I plan on working part time to complete some 2018 field projects. I will continue to reside in Woodland, but spend time traveling as my Donna wishes to visit national parks and other destinations. I have several home projects as well. Fishing in local waters will be a part of retirement. I can't recall not working, so mine will be an interesting transition into the unfamiliar. Looking forward to it.

Our organization has ranked this vegetable crops position as a high priority along with many others. I don't know the timeline, but suspect that before the end 2019, a talented new advisor will be in place. I am hopeful that much support will be generously provided once more to the new advisor.

Best wishes for a productive 2018 season and beyond.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Miyao
Farm Advisor, Vegetable Crops
Yolo, Solano & Sacramento counties

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