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# Hartley Finds Fickle Blueberry Bearing Half Crop

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CRANBERRY ISLES, Me. -- The good word is out. The blueberries are in, wild and cultivated, but alas it is only half a crop.

Blueberries skip years. The fields bear one year and the next year due to any one of a dozen reasons, they fail to bear their fullest.

This is an off year. They are as native to Maine as lobsters. But lack of rain, good soaking rains which make them plump with their succulent blue blood, has cut the output.

They broke onto the market about three weeks ago at 75-cents a quart, if those little wooden baskets really hold a quart. Then the price dropped to 59 cents, still considered high, but as an old blueberry devotee, I have seldom seen them, even in lush years, lower than 50 cents.

In a bearing year our pasture is loaded with wild berries most of them only a little larger than bee-bee shot. But the wild ones have the tang and most exciting flavor.

Picking them is a backbreaking job. The posture is one of prayer. Their little bushes about eight inches tall hug the ground and the berries are on the underside.

They come in clusters but you always get a handful of leaves and green berries, which are red until they are ripe. So it is easier to pick them one at a time until you get handful. Then you drop them into a tin cup, the kind they [used to hang on] the old town pump on the public square. When the cup is filled you empty it into a saucepan. Then you unkink your back and move to another spot always hoping it will get easier. It never does.

Commercial blueberry farmers up around Cherryfield use blueberry rakes for the harvest, but they, too, get the green ones and the leaves unless the harvester is experienced enough to know the exact gentleness of touch to drop the ripe ones into the pan on the rake and let the red ones hang until they are ripe.

Blueberries, which make the world's best pies, excepting Indiana apple and persimmon, will accept a little man-made help in the way of fertilizer and moisture, the latter supplied by small irrigation ditches. They drink a lot, those blueberries.

The third essential for blueberries is honeybees for cross pollenization. Without honeybees blueberries do not amount to much.

The honeybees get their honey from the blossoms but nature has worked it out so the bees take pollen from blossom to blossom and, as they would say in a nursery rhyme at bedtime, that is where little blueberries come from.

## 'Going My Way?'

I had a long talk with Pink Stanley [*Charles E. Stanley --BK*] down on the dock. Pink and I were waiting for the mail, the biggest social event of the day.

Pink has spent all his life here. And he passed 80 last May 23.

He still has his baby blue Packard. She has lost her gloss and has turned a chalky blue. But like all good Packards that have been taken care of she hums along up and down the road, never gets off the island "or wants to," as Pink would put it.

Pink has been a sea captain man and boy, a caretaker of summer homes. Now he recanes chair bottoms in his garage.

He is right proud of his Packard. He does not push it much for speed, for the main road, only hard road on the island, is just a mile long. It is a 1935 model. "I had a Ford. I sold it. I thought it was even better," he said.

"What model?"

"1931. Ran like a charm. Not a spot on her nickel plate."

Maine wit is brittle. Pink explained what a "college bred" man is made of.

"It is a simple recipe," he said. "You mix the flour of youth with the dough of old age."

He was ready for the next question, "How do you live so long up here?"

"Time goes by something awful. Twenty years is nothing. I try to keep my feet dry and my head cool. I never hurry or worry. Yesterday is gone forever. Tomorrow may never come. So I just live a little today."

"When I am driving up the road and I pass someone, I figure he is going my way, so I pick him up. No danger here where everybody has known everybody else for years. So I figure no harm is done."

This is one of the ways Pink makes a little deposit in his Account Hereafter each day.

## Trimming Time

This is not the time for it. But stripped to the waist in the blazing sun, they are getting ready for Christmas up here.

Crews of young men are in the woods trimming trees for next Christmas so they will be shaped just right when they show up on the corner lots next December.

They work under umbrellas in the fierce heat of the Maine sun unpolluted by factory smoke and clear as sparkling water.

The trees are kept trimmed and marked so they will bring the best prices when millions are busy shopping and hiding presents in the attic or basement to put under the trees on the Silent Night.

## Sloan's Biographer

John McDonald, an editor of Fortune Magazine, is here. He has been working for five years on the story of General Motors Corp. which will be mostly a biography of the business life of Alfred Sloan, former chairman of the GM board.

The biography of the 89-year-old Sloan, who is taking off for Europe, has been a tedious, painstaking job, five installments of which will begin in Fortune in December.