

ART DAVIS

Presented January 23, 2006 by Tony Biggio

Art Davis grew up in Jeffersonville, Fayette County, Ohio. Washington Court House is the county seat. His first job in the 8th grade aroused his curiosity and set the stage for his life's adventures. Art worked in a steam-powered flourmill with line shafts, belts and a four story high vertical axle run by a huge cogwheel. His pay was 50 cents per day.

The mill had a railroad siding where his boss pumped water to fill the water tower for steam locomotives and a coal bin to fuel the tenders. Art had already started a love affair with steam locomotives and the railroad. His boss was also a beekeeper.

Art was a beekeeper for 60 plus years. He paid his tuition with "honey money" for the first year at Indiana Technical College in Fort Wayne, but "starved otherwise." Later, honey products became his principal occupation.

He worked for the railroad and then International Harvester as an apprentice millwright. During this period he bought a farm and, by his own admission, "accidentally backed into farming ass backwards." There was already an orchard planted on the farm, so he began attending classes at the Research Center and the Ohio Fruit School in Wooster. He eventually became a horticulturist.

In the early 1960's, Art came to Wooster and first managed and later owned Melrose Orchard. He expanded his operation to include Moreland Orchard in Moreland, Ohio. Art retired from most of the orchard business in 1988.

Art's real passion is steam locomotives and railroad cars. As a kid he dreamed of Lionel trains and that railroad derrick in the catalogues. Art had the real derrick, four of them. Three are steam and one is diesel. He bought a railroad siding off of South Crown Hill Road in Orrville, Ohio. There he stores box cars, Pullman cars, U.S. Mail cars, cabooses, flat cars, a special diesel engine, and a wonderful steam engine, with tender.

Sometimes they fire up the steam engine and run it down the straight track while towing a passenger car and a caboose. It is great! You will get dirty. To stand in the engine and watch the fireman and engineer stoke the firebox and blow that steam whistle is pure joy. It is probably more a guy thing. Art buys and sells and dabbles. He said "I had to buy the derrick just so they would not cut it up."

Art has been married to his wife Barbara for 42 years. He has been on the Board of Directors of the Salvation Army and President of the Board of Directors for Goodwill Industries. Art has been a Rotarian for 28 years.