



NJCTGA News

Fall 2019

President's Message



Chris Nicholson

In the blink of an eye Summer is over, Fall is in full swing and opening day is closing in on us. If you are like me your anxiety level begins to creep up with each passing day. I would have hoped after ten years of selling trees that by now I would be a little more relaxed about the upcoming season, but that doesn't look like it will ever happen.

I hope you are all aware that there is a major shortage of cut trees. If you were looking to purchase a few hundred 8' Fraser fir to resell you are probably out of luck. We sell pre-cut trees on our farm and although I will have them from my supplier this year it has been like pulling teeth to get them. The financial recession nine or ten years ago led to a surplus of trees from major growers. This surplus didn't allow these growers to replant their fields and years later we have a serious shortage. If you were ever going to raise your prices this would be the year to do it. This is also a reminder to us all to keep planting every year. You can't sell what you don't have.

Our winter meeting is still in the planning stages. We are turning over every stone to find some good speakers for the meeting. Every year this becomes more difficult to find suitable speakers. If you have any good ideas please share them with us, we are all ears.

The Wyckoff family has once again represented not only themselves but all NJ growers in their reserve Grand Champion win in the National Christmas Tree Associations tree contest. The entire family will have the honor of presenting a tree to Vice President Mike Pence for his home

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How I Survived a DEP Pesticide Control Program Routine Inspection

by: Tim Dunne,
Woodsedge Tree Farm

It began one day in early June when I saw a sheet of paper jammed into a crack in my barn door. I wondered who had left it there - UPS, FEDEX, a neighbor??? As I unwrinkled the water damaged sheet, a similarly water damaged business card fell out. I could see it was from an employee of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection. I could read the name, but not the person's title or bureau. Further inspection of the sheet of paper revealed it was a "Notice of Attempt to Contact" from an Environmental Specialist with the DEP Bureau of Pesticide Compliance and Enforcement - sounded ominous! What had I done wrong...who reported me to DEP...why me!!!

The scary paper informed me that DEP could: "Enter any building for the purpose of investigating an actual or suspected source of pollution..." In addition: "Failure to allow inspection...may be a violation of N.J.A.C. 7:30-1 and could result in civil action or a penalty of not more than \$25,000 for each offense, with each day constitut-

ing an additional, separate and distinct offense". I immediately thought of that old joke - what are the 11 most feared words in the English language? "I am from DEP and I am here to help you".

The DEP inspector had been here at my farm -- when I was not at home -- about a week prior to the day I saw the crumpled, water damaged paper stuffed in the barn door. There was no notice in my mail box, nor in my home door (about 100 yards away), nor any message on my phone which is listed in local phone directories. The notice gave me two weeks to contact DEP or I assume the \$25,000-a-day fines would begin! During the summer season I sometimes do not go in this barn for weeks at a time since it is mainly used during the Christmas tree sales season. Luckily I still had a few days to contact DEP when I found the paper.

My fears were mostly eased when I spoke in person to the DEP inspector on the phone. She assured me this was really a routine inspection, no one had reported

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JANUARY 2020

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Save the Date! 2020 Annual Winter Meeting Planned

Mark your calendars for the 2020 (that's right we are entering a new decade!) annual winter meeting. The meeting will be held on **Saturday January 25, 2020** at the Rutgers EcoComplex in Columbus, NJ. The meeting will be an all day affair (9 AM until 3 PM) and include a light breakfast and a full lunch. Speakers are still being arranged. Vendors will be invited. We hope to have pesticide continuing education credits available as we normally do. Look for an email from Donna Cole, NJCTGA Executive Secretary, about the meeting, including a full agenda, right after the New Year.

August Summer Meeting Review

It was a beautiful summer day at the Exley's Christmas Tree Farm in Sewell, NJ on Saturday August 17 as about 60 NJCTGA members gathered to hear several speakers, tour the farm and network with fellow growers.

Association President Chris Nicholson welcomed members and praised the Exley's for their television spots last fall about spotted lantern flies and Christmas trees. Bill Exley and his father Bob talked about the farms history and their current operation at this farm, one of two farms the Exley's operate. Local Gloucester County Ag Agent, from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Hemat Gohil discussed phytophthora in Christmas trees and relationships with soil moisture and soil fertility. The Exley's showed the group most of their tractors, sprayers and tools they use on the farm. Bob gave a shearing demonstration and explained how he hires and trains local high school students during the summer. The former school teacher has a way with teaching youths how to shear and swears by their shearing techniques after he spends a few hours with them.

After the morning sessions the group was taken by hay wagon



ride to a beautiful new building on the far side of the Exley farm. The building is used for events at the farm and we enjoyed a great lunch from a local food truck vendor, "Beast on the Street". After lunch Pat Hastings from Rutgers University gave us a presentation on pesticide safety. Pat had lots of props and engaged the group as she always does. Pesticide continuing education credits were provided to the members with pesticide licenses.

Thanks to the Exley Family for volunteering to host the summer meeting. They came through with a great site, nice lunch and overall a superb day. The NJCTGA appreciates your efforts!

How I Survived a DEP Inspection *continued from page 1*

any problems. I was still worried about the upcoming inspection and what problems would be uncovered. I did feel fairly well prepared since we regularly hear about NJ DEP and federal EPA pesticide regulations at NJCTGA meetings and I have kept my license up to date with sufficient continuing education credits each year. She made an appointment to see me at the farm for the inspection the following week, and I began to worry again.

During the week before the DEP Environmental Specialist arrived, I spoke with several nearby Christmas tree growers about DEP inspections. To my surprise, growers I spoke with had also been visited by the same inspector recently. One grower informed me that DEP was "making the rounds" in Warren County and they had visited many farmers, not just Christmas tree growers in the last few weeks. The local Christmas tree growers I spoke with had good records of pesticide applications, clean pesticide storage facilities, properly operating equipment and the inspections went pretty well. There were some minor violations noted but no enforcement actions were undertaken by DEP.

Fast forward one week to my visit from DEP. We began by examining my pesticide storage area. I had signage indicating pesticides were stored at the site. I had a spill cleanup kit at the storage area. All of my pesticides had labels in place or available in the storage area. The DEP inspector took some photos of the storage area.

One minor violation: I did not have a fire extinguisher at the pesticide storage area. The DEP inspector instructed me to send her a photo of the new fire extinguisher (I needed to purchase) at the pesticide storage area.

We next reviewed my pesticide application records for the year. I thought I had pretty good records of the pesticides applied, the amount of active ingredient, rates, field locations and date of applications. My records were pretty good, but DEP would like us to use a format that includes a little more data, such as the time of day of the application and any field re-entry limitations. Also EPA registration numbers for all pesticides must be listed on the sheet for every application record. She provided me a copy of the form we should use in the future. Also I had sent a copy of the pesticides I have on hand to my local fire company as I do each year, but this year I had failed to keep a copy in my records! Another document provided to DEP after the inspection.

Overall I found the DEP inspector very professional and she did not give me a hard time about a few minor violations at my farm. She made some good suggestions about improving my storage area, about disposing of empty pesticide containers and keeping better records. I will implement the suggestions and continue to pay close attention at NJCTGA meetings when speakers discuss pesticide safety and regulations.



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njchristmastrees.org

Contact Donna Cole, Exec. Secretary, at (908) 735-4658 or email execsecretary@njchristmastrees.org

DESIGNED AT ROWAN COLLEGE AT BURLINGTON COUNTY

Grower's Spotlight:

LITTLEWORTH TREE FARM

Petersburg, Cape May County

By: Tim Dunne



Tim Dunne

Littleworth Tree Farm in Petersburg, Cape May County is the home of Karl and Janet Yunghans, and has hosted many happy local Christmas tree customers for the last 12 years. The farm was purchased by the Yunghans in 1990 and tree planting soon began. The next generation – son Konner and daughter Kasey help with farm operations, especially during the busy Christmas tree sales season.

Tree sales started in 1997 and are still going strong

with about 300-350 trees sold each year. The farm has about 6 acres of trees of all ages. A small gift shop open each Christmas season also provides wreaths, grave blankets and white birch reindeer. More recently, the farm has begun producing strawberries and blueberries during the spring and summer.

Tree species available at the Littleworth farm include Colorado blue spruce, Norway spruce, Douglas fir, Canaan fir, white fir and Nordman fir. Karl also buys about 150 pre-cut trees each year to supplement the trees growing on the farm. The

farm allows tagging and most of the trees sold each year are tagged on the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Karl has been a member of the NJCTGA since 1992, soon after planting began. He credits the Association meetings with helping him identify pest and disease problems in his trees, and develop strategies to control the problems. One specific problem he encountered was a nutrient deficiency, discussed at an annual Association meeting. He was able to identify the problem that was causing trees to be off colored and got recommendations from meeting speakers on fertilizers needed to correct the nutrient deficiency. Without that meeting “we may have never discovered the problem and how to solve it”, Karl said.

Karl advises new growers when beginning to sell trees that “customer service is number one!” Karl does no advertising and sells out of trees every year. He credits his friendly attitude towards his customers and “word of mouth” advertising generates all his business. He may receive 1 or 2 complaints each year about a tree and he immediately gives a full refund to keep the customer happy. He said “you simply have to be a nice guy” when selling trees. His formula for success – “produce a good product, have a fair price and provide customers good service”.



Herd of homemade reindeer ready for sale.



Karl cuts a fresh tree for a customer.



Snowy scene at Littleworth Tree Farm.

Tim Dunne, owner of Woodsedge Farm, Belvidere, Warren County, visits farms throughout the state and writes the Grower's Spotlight.



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NJCTGA Officers

Chris Nicholson, President

Cnicho6345@aol.com

973-865-6362

Tim Dunne, Vice President

tandmdunne@emabarqmail.com

908-453-2818

Donna Cole, Executive Secretary

execsecretary@njchristmastrees.org

908-735-4658

NJCTGA Directors

Andrew Alpaugh

frstree@comcast.net

609-397-0615

John Curtis

curtistreefarm@gmail.com

908-387-1225

Anne Edwards

wedwards@rcn.com

609-758-7729

Jim Giamarese

giamarese@comcast.net

908-813-9904

Matt Martini

cherryvillefarms@earthlink.net

908-806-4580

Bryan Stimpson

bryan.stimpson@nj.usda.gov

Larry Toth

ltnatoth@comcast.net

609-758-5855

John Wyckoff

wyckoff@emabarqmail.com

908-489-2186

President's Message

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this year. Well done John, and thank you for showing the country that great trees are grown here in New Jersey.

Good luck to you all this season. Be safe and I hope we all have the best season ever.

Merry Christmas to you and your families.

– Chris



NJCTGA Newsletter Ad Sizes & Rates

FULL PAGE

7.75" wide x 9.875" high..... \$100

HALF PAGE

7.75" wide x 4.863" high..... \$60

QUARTER PAGE

3.795" wide x 4.863" high..... \$35

If possible, ads should be submitted in PDF format. Contact Exec. Secretary Donna Cole for additional details.

EPA Takes Action to Provide Accurate Risk Information to Consumers, Stop False Labeling on Products

Editors Note: Due to several recent well publicized lawsuits, questions about glyphosate (Roundup and many other products) came up at our summer meeting when Pat Hastings, Rutgers Extension Pesticide Safety Education Coordinator was speaking. Pat informed us that EPA is standing behind their risk assessments that show no evidence that glyphosate is a carcinogen when used according to the label. Pat provided us with this EPA news release about glyphosate.

EPA is issuing guidance to registrants of glyphosate to ensure clarity on labeling of the chemical on their products. EPA will no longer approve product labels claiming glyphosate is known to cause cancer – a false claim that does not meet the labeling requirements of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The State of California's much criticized Proposition 65 has led to misleading labeling requirements for products, like glyphosate, because it misinforms the public about the risks they are facing. This action will ensure consumers have correct information, and is based on EPA's comprehensive evaluation of glyphosate.

"It is irresponsible to require labels on products that are inaccurate when EPA knows the product does not pose a cancer risk. We will not allow California's flawed program to dictate federal policy," said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. "It is critical that federal regulatory agencies like EPA relay to consumers accurate, scientific based information about risks that pesticides may pose to them. EPA's notification to glyphosate registrants is an important step to ensuring the information shared with the public on a federal pesticide label is correct and not misleading."



In April, EPA took the next step in the review process for glyphosate. EPA found – as it has before – that glyphosate is not a carcinogen, and there are no risks to public health when glyphosate is used in accordance with its current label. These scientific findings are consistent with the conclusions of science reviews by many other countries and other federal agencies.

On Feb. 26, 2018, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California issued a preliminary injunction stopping California from enforcing the state warning requirements involving glyphosate's carcinogenicity, in part on the basis that the required warning statement is false or misleading. The preliminary injunction has not been appealed and remains in place.

California's listing of glyphosate as a substance under Proposition 65 is based on the International Agency on the Research for Cancer (IARC) classifying it as "probably carcinogenic to humans." EPA's independent evaluation of available scientific data included a more extensive and relevant dataset than IARC considered during its evaluation of glyphosate, from which the agency concluded that glyphosate is "not likely to be carcinogenic to humans." EPA's cancer classification is consistent with many other international expert panels and regulatory authorities.

Registrants with glyphosate products currently bearing Proposition 65 warning language should submit draft amended labeling that removes this language within 90 days of the date of the letter.

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Christmas Tree Promotion Board's 2019 Campaign Begins to Take Shape



With summer just barely in the rearview mirror, CTPB's Promotion Committee and campaign team have been incredibly busy working on details for the 2019 campaign. Here are some updates that should be of interest to Christmas tree producers:

- **Photo Contest Planned** - In partnership with Red Tricycle, a popular on-line family website and e-newsletter, the CTPB will be announcing a "Real Trees, Real Memories" photo contest, where consumers can share their best real Christmas tree experience photos and videos and qualify for a \$1,000 grand prize as well as weekly cash prizes throughout the season.

Christmas tree producers and retailers can get in on the action by encouraging their customers to share their photos. The CTPB is designing a poster that you will be able to download and print to post at your cash register or other high visibility location. The downloadable design will be upcoming.....stay tuned!

- **Social Media Sharing** - As in previous years, the CTPB Facebook and Instagram pages will be continually updated with interest-

ing and fun content. Growers, retailers and friends are all encouraged to follow these pages and SHARE posts that you enjoy. The CTPB has a budget to "boost" posts and to engage more followers, however organic sharing is the most effective way to increase the reach of our messages. Our team will be sharing plenty of new content, including more family videos!

www.facebook.com/ItsChristmasKeepItReal/
www.instagram.com/christmaskeepitreal/

- **Satellite Media Tour ON LOCATION** - 2019 will mark the third year that CTPB has included a satellite media tour in its campaign mix. The satellite media tour allows us to schedule 25-30 individual television interviews all across the country in one half day. We always feature an industry member along side a professional spokesperson to ensure a quality interview that is also authentic. This year, we are upping the authenticity by planning to host the interviews from a retail Christmas tree lot, rather than a television studio. The backdrop of fresh Christmas trees displayed in an attractive retail setting ought to make quite an impression!

News from The National Christmas Tree Association



It's time to Join the 2019 Trees For Troops Program

The 2019 Trees for Troops is underway, we are seeking to expand the number of Real Christmas Tree donated by Christmas Tree growers

and customers from around the country. Our partnership with FedEx to deliver Real Christmas Trees to active duty military members and families has brought a farm fresh tree to 225,319 Christmas celebrations. This year, with your help, the program will deliver 18,000 more family memories.

Imagine a smiling group of U.S. troops gathered around a Christmas Tree that was grown on an American farm and shipped to arrive fresh and green somewhere on the other side of the world, just in time for Christmas. Or, imagine a spouse and children sharing joyous memories of Christmas through the gift of free, real Christmas Tree while their family member is away serving our country. Trees for Troops® makes this vision a reality!

Trees for Troops counts on donations from the public to make this program succeed year after year. You can support Trees for Troops through your tax-deductible donation or by becoming a sponsor. The Christmas SPIRIT Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity. Your tax-deductible charitable contribution will help those in service to their country and their families receive a Real Christmas Tree and keep the spirit of a traditional Christmas celebration alive. Since 2005, Trees for Troops has provided more than 208,720 Christmas Trees to military families and troops in the United States and overseas.

Please contact Ann O'Connor, Executive Director, Christmas Spirit Foundation, ASAP at (800) 965-1653 or info@TreesforTroops.org, if you have trees to donate to the program. She can schedule a FedEx pick up or can help find transportation for your trees to a FedEx pick up. If you would like to participate in Trees for Troops Weekend, December 6-8, please get on the list for a FedEx Trailer as soon as possible.

Voice of the Industry

Doug Hundley, former extension agent from North Carolina, will serve again as the seasonal Voice of the Industry. Historically, the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) has served as the preeminent source for information regarding farm-grown Christmas trees leading up to and during the Christmas season. NCTA has also been the source for information on the safety, care and disposal of farm-grown Christmas trees. Reporters, others in the media, officials and even consumers regularly turn to NCTA as the "voice of the industry," and in many cases, NCTA has effectively addressed concerns at an early stage, minimizing potentially errant and damaging stories. The National Christmas Tree Association will continue to supply a full-range of organizational communications support and assistance on behalf of the farm-grown Christmas tree industry during the height of consumer and media interest in the industry (November 1 – December 31). NCTA has secured Doug Hundley to serve as the seasonal NCTA spokesman. The spokesperson's responsibilities will include, serving as the official spokesperson for NCTA, responding to media inquiries regarding farm-grown Christmas trees, responding to public officials' and building managers' inquiries about farm-grown Christmas tree safety, connecting media with NCTA's network of farm-grown Christmas tree technical experts, and responding to consumer inquiries regarding farm-grown Christmas tree care and availability.

NJCTGA and Farmers Against Hunger

Once again this year during the Christmas tree season the NJCTGA is supporting Farmers Against Hunger (FAH). This program successfully helps needy families in New Jersey. Every \$1 donation = 10 pounds of fresh produce delivered to neighbors in need. Thirty NJCTGA member farms and their customers last year donated thousands of dollars to FAH which meant tens of

thousands of pounds of produce delivered. If you have participated with FAH previously use your posters and collection jars from last year. If you need new materials, call Virginia Baker at **856-655-6624**. If you have not participated before, consider doing so this year. It is a very worthy cause. You can use the form below to register.

REGISTRATION FORM

farmers Against Hunger



The New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers' Association and Farmers Against Hunger invite you to join our holiday fundraiser
POUNDS FOR PENNIES
 by hosting a collection jar at your farm!



Farm Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Contact Number (cell and/or farm): _____

Number of Indoor Jars: _____

Number of Outdoor Jars: _____

Number of Large Posters (indoor/outdoor use): _____

Number of Small Framed Posters
 (8 x 11 to sit on counter): _____

Farmers Against Hunger will drop off or mail to you the supplies listed above.
 We will also provide you with an addressed envelope for remittance of collected funds.

Please complete this form and send via e-mail to:
fah.gleaning@gmail.com or call Virginia Baker at 856-655-6624

SPECIES PROFILE:

Meyer Spruce

Picea meyeri

by: Bob Girardin

reprinted from the Exotic Conifer Association website

Over the many years of growing Christmas trees, including exotic conifers, I met a few growers of true firs that felt that growing spruce as a Christmas tree was not a good choice. They told me that this sentiment was prevalent among fir growers in general; with the main reason given being that spruces will not hold their needles very well as a Christmas tree.

Having successfully grown spruce myself, and knowing others who have done so, I have decided to try to change some minds on growing spruce as a Christmas tree – in particular *Picea meyeri* (Meyer spruce), which is native to China.

The Facts - I have been growing Meyer spruce for 18 years and have received feedback from all over the United States and Canada. This is what we know:

- Beautiful blunt blue foliage
- Unsurpassed needle retention
- Very little shearing needed
- Makes a great ornamental
- Perfect for a pot in pot growing system
- Transplants easily
- Fibrous root system
- Hardy to -50F
- Does well on heavy soils
- Drought tolerant
- Does not break bud early
- Upright branching habit that will support heavy ornaments
- One of the top sellers at my farm in Sanbornton, NH
- Responds well to fertilization
- Responds well to basal pruning which will promote top growth
- Rate of growth depends on soil quality and ample rainfall
- It has been successfully grown in Zones 2-7 and has been grown in Zones 8-9
- Known to be resistant to spider mites and aphids
- No reports of needle cast diseases
- It has survived serious droughts when Blue spruce failed
- Has taken top prizes in the spruce category at some state contests

Negative Feedback - The main reason that many growers were unhappy with Meyer spruce was that the plants they ordered as Meyer spruce turned out to be Wilson spruce or Dragon spruce. In both cases these species were slow growing with light green needles and broke bud early. In China these three species grow side by side and the seed size is about the same, which makes it difficult to identify. In the nursery, the nurseryman must have a keen eye to make the correct identification in a plug form. Bill Sayward of Itasca Greenhouse in Cohasset, MN was one of the first nurseries to grow Meyer spruce. I obtain my first plugs from Bill in 1993. Bill can identify Meyer spruce as a plug when it is mixed in Wilson spruce or Dragon spruce. This is not to say that Itasca Greenhouse is the only plant nursery with this capability, but it is critical that you are getting Meyer spruce when you make your order. Conclusion – I know of no other conifer that has the attributes that Meyer spruce possesses. Everything about this tree will benefit you as a Christmas tree grower, and your customers will love it. All I ask is that you give it a try.





Interesting Articles and Photos from NJCTGA Publications From Years Gone By

From the March 1991 Needle Points

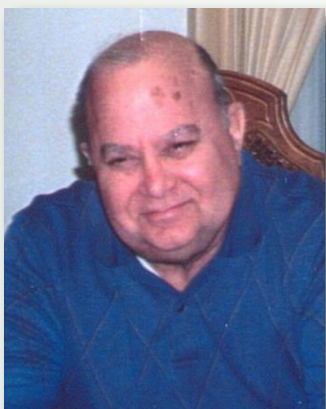
Glut of Trees. The regional recession in the New England area, combined with a national glut of Christmas trees has dampened the spirit of tree sales. Pam Dwyer, the Executive Secretary of the New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association reported that "the wholesale market was down". "Buyers didn't want higher quality trees; they were looking for cheaper trees at the lower end of the quality range". This market enticed landowners with old neglected trees to take advantage of that demand and to flood the market for regular growers, Dwyer stated. With the wholesale market off, many growers who usually only market wholesale trees, opened their lots for choose and cut or they retailed their own trees.

Six days before Christmas Dwyer stated "in the retail market, I think there will be a lot of leftovers", there is much price discount-

ing and many retailers are not making much of a profit margin. In Northern New England, with many more growers than usual retailing their trees, people were driving around and pricing trees before purchasing.

The national glut of Christmas trees is the main reason for the slack season and the regional recession not only led to a demand for lower priced trees, but also led to increased number of retailers. However Dwyer stated "the real surplus is coming from the West Coast". For the third year in a row eastern markets were flooded with western trees. "All the Douglas fir not labeled from Pennsylvania are from the West Coast – Oregon. As long as they can truck in trees and wholesale them at \$9 a piece we are going to have a problem".

In Memoriam:



NJCTGA member, Alan M. Perry, 67, of Bayville, NJ passed away at RWJ University Hospital in New Brunswick on October 5, 2019.

Alan was born in Perth Amboy in 1952 to the late Helen R. and John B. Perry, Sr., where he graduated high school. He went on to graduate from Stockton University with a B.S. Degree in Environmental Science. Alan was employed by the Ocean County Soil Conservation District until he retired in 2006. Alan was a partner in the Yuletide Christmas Tree Farm located in New Egypt for forty years with his brother John. He was a member of the N.J. Farm Bureau, N.J. Christmas Tree Growers' Association and the Ocean County Agriculture Development Board.

Alan is survived by his brother John, sister-in-law Donna, sister Joan Zuboy of Colorado, nephews Glenn and Dean Perry of New Egypt and nephews Jarett Zuboy of Colorado and Jason Zuboy of Germany.

Memorial contributions in Alan's memory can be made to the RWJ University Hospital Foundation (www.rwjbh.org/rwj-university-hospital-new-brunswick/giving/).



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