



Crafton Clift & Larry Schokman at The Kampong: January 22, 2015

### Origin of the 'Oasis' Avocado.

While working in Miami, I was looking for a specific variety of fern that I wanted planted in the central courtyard of the Mayfair in downtown Coconut Grove. I came across a ten-acre orchard nearby containing many Avocado trees owned by Annette Way, a retired aviatrix, a female pioneer like Amelia Earhart but who chose to be a 'free spirit' in her own way. The Avocados had not been fully harvested in years and had re-seeded themselves from the fallen fruit. The 'seedlings' were so large that I couldn't tell which were the 'original' trees and those that grew from seed. I quickly clipped scions from twelve of the trees which still had fruit on them in July. I successfully grafted scions from the twelve, calling them 'Way Late #1' through '#12' in memory of Annette. The twelve varieties were grafted and only existed at the Kampong.

Sometime later while working at The Kampong, I returned to the orchard only to find a large wrecking ball still suspended from a crane which had literally just leveled Annette's house. The orchard was in the process of being destroyed. Annette's personal papers and photos were blowing in the wind. Annette had recently passed away never receiving the respect owed to her. Instead, her son was only interested in subdividing the property and selling them as building lots.

Some years later #12 at The Kampong, died. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, I still remember the day, Larry Schokman and I went in search of the 'original' #12 tree in the portion of Coconut Grove where I believed Annette's orchard had been. There were several million-dollar homes; one very architecturally pleasing house with plenty of glass had been built on what I believed was Annette's orchard. I was fascinated by the way I could see clear through many portions of the house. The occupant, an architect, identified himself as 'Oasis' (I'm not sure if it was his first or last name). The man which I believe was Egyptian was very cordial and invited us in. To the rear of the house was the original #12 tree of which I was able to take replacement scions. At the rear corner of the neatly manicured property stood a very large mature avocado tree with plenty of ripened elongated black fruit hanging on the tree in July. We were permitted to take scions from this previously undocumented Avocado tree but as the lowest branches were some forty to fifty feet above the ground we needed a ladder. We returned with a high-reach pruning pole, (you know the type, one that you need to pull on the cord) and an extension ladder. We set about collecting the desired materials by placing the ladder against the tree's trunk, but with no lower branches it was very unstable. I begged Larry not to attempt it, but he insisted on climbing up with the pruner in hand. I tried to hold the ladder steady the best I could, as Larry now on top of the ladder managed to free both hands to hold the pruning pole with one and pull the cord with the other. We went away very happy knowing that we were successful in gathering the scions and that Larry was still alive. Most of my grafts took and I named the variety the 'Oasis' Avocado to honor the man from whom we had obtained the scions. Three of the grafted 'Oasis' Avocado trees were planted at Eric (Scott) Cohen's home, Echo in North Fort Myers, and the Kampong. I know that the tree at The Kampong still exists [*in the area designated J-2, just west of the Orchid House*].

Recently, I searched that same portion of Coconut Grove again, hoping to reconnect with the architect named 'Oasis.' I found what I believed to be his house, but it had changed. The glass front door had been replaced with a solid wooden one. The exterior brick walls had all been painted white. It just wasn't as I remembered it. The front garden was not well kept. The current occupants were cordial, but as the ownership of the house had changed, I was unable to pay my respects to the architect I only knew as 'Oasis.' I wish that after twenty-five-years I could find 'Oasis' again and introduce the 'Oasis' Avocado tree throughout the World.

I found out that Mr. Matthews in Fort Myers came to the Bonita Springs workshop meeting with a branch of his 'Oasis' Avocado on Tuesday (March 24, 2018). I am desperately looking for a source of 'Oasis' scions, because it is an outstanding Avocado that we have never been able to evaluate well because the squirrels eat all the fruit as it is off-season to other avocados. The commercial season of Florida Avocados finishes in January, and this one goes into July. The 'Oasis' fruit gets black in December, so by law in Florida any avocado that changes color is legal to harvest. The original tree when we first saw it on the fifteen of July had a few hundred black fruits on the tree and none on the ground; no seeds, no fruit. You know the squirrels. So, when I called Mr. Matthews he said the he got it at a Bonita Spring Rare Fruit meeting several years ago as a door prize. I believe Mr. Matthews doesn't have much space except for container plants.