



**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**Fruits of No Labor**

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Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. I'm in Palm Springs for a few weeks, basking in sunshine while my neighbors in north Idaho are freezing their potatoes off.

Many of you know I spent the first two decades of my life living in southeast New Mexico. It is a land of plains with little water. Trees are at a premium. So are green plants and grass.

At our local grocery store in my hometown, Miss Hill's Market, most of the fruits were considered delicacies. They were trucked-in from lush California or exotic Florida. As I write this piece, to think that I can walk outside our house in Palm Springs and snip-off a lemon or an orange from a tree was beyond my comprehension in those past days.

Yet lemons and oranges must grow somewhere, but it never entered my mind that they could grow in my vicinity. And they didn't. In more ways than one, a lemon was beyond my reach.

No longer. I am happy to report that my home in Palm Springs has fruit on trees that can be taken free. I point out this fact especially to my former classmates, who have chosen to settle on the arid terrains of New Mexico or Texas. I now have fresh fruit for the taking, as seen in the two photos below. Former school pals, eat your lemons out!



I had picked this juicy lemon to offer to a house guest as part of her favorite drink: a gin and tonic. I proudly announced to her that the lemon came from the fruits of my non-labor. As I held the lemon in my hand, getting ready to cut it open for her drink, she informed me, "I prefer limes."

Ingrate. I served her a gin and tonic sans any fruit. I later made some lemonade which I did not share with our former guest.

I am still taken with the idea that I can fight off Beriberi by eating fruit that can be plucked off a nearby tree. My wife, Holly, is amused about this aspect of my enthusiasm. She grew up in Southern California, a land of oranges, grapes, and other fine fruits. She looks at me with accepting bemusement, as I go about snipping down more lemons.

But not just lemons. Consider this, my vitamin C-deprived classmates, those of you who are living in the dry, stark, and fruitless plains around Midland and Dallas.



**Tangerines!**

In my mind, oranges at Miss Hill's were in the luxury section. I had no idea whatsoever about a tangerine. Yet, here they are, just outside my door. Hundreds of them whose taste is beyond my ability to describe. Not tart, like a lemon. Not too sweet, like an orange. Just deliciously in between the two. I have grown to love the taste of the tangerine. It is second to the banana on my list of top ten favorite fruits.

So, just imagine this fantasy come true: A couple days ago, this fruit crazed man (me) ventured into the common area of our condominium unit looking for a lemon tree. As I walked around the complex, stalking trees, I spotted one that had those orange-looking fruits as seen above. I plucked one down. To my astonishment, it was not an orange. It was a tangerine, one of the forbidden fruits in Miss Hill's sparse inventory of imported rarities. I pulled down more of them, placing them into a basket.

Using a fruit picker, as seen on the next page, I not only picked tangerines and lemons, I also snagged grapefruits. The grapefruit was close to being a forbidden fruit in my childhood. It was hard to come by, and Ms. Hill charged a lot for it. I recall those times when each of us boys had one half of a grapefruit for the beginning of our breakfast. No more, another section was not

allowed. Six boys surrounded the breakfast table. The three grapefruits, cut in succulent halves, sat as silent hostages to our impending attacks.



Six hard-to-come-by offerings for six youthful eaters. Even though the grapefruit was sour--- usually masked with sugar sprinklings---we treasured this fruit because it was so rare.

Holly is accustomed to having fruits as an everyday commodity. I'm sure she thinks my fruit fixation is a bit harebrained. But she says nothing and steps aside as I bring into the kitchen more tangerines, grapefruits, and lemons.

I do not understand why any tangerines are left on the trees in our condo complex. There are over 100 homes here. I suppose my neighbors, like Holly, are accustomed to the fruits of life.

For my classmates from my high school in Lovington, New Mexico, and my classmates from UNM in Albuquerque: Again, eat your hearts out, but stay away from my tangerines.

But if you happen to have a banana tree around your home, I'll trade you two tangerines for one banana.

There it is. You know my weakness: bananas. It has been said: The belly talks but doesn't listen.