

The Aims and Accomplishments of the California Avocado Society

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When the Directors were arranging the program for this annual meeting, one of them insisted that I make a brief presentation on the aims and accomplishments of the Society. For those who have been members for years, this is hardly necessary, but for those present whose interest in the avocado is quite recent, it may not be amiss.

Why I should be on this spot is not clear, unless it be that I have been a director longer than any other member of the board. The director who put me on this spot promised to outline my speech for me, but failed to do so, probably because he recently acquired a new wife.

The California Avocado Society was organized in 1915 "to promote the advancement and general welfare of the avocado, and other subtropical fruits, as a horticultural industry." This society is the oldest and most widely known organization concerned with the avocado. While primarily Californian, its membership and recognition are world-wide. In 1947 we had 805 members, of which 44 were in other states of the union, and 54 were in 14 different foreign countries.

The international aspect of the Society is illustrated by the pilgrimages in 1938 and again in 1948 to Atlixco, Mexico, the home of the parent Fuerte tree, as well as exploration trips by certain society directors and members to study avocados in their native homes in Mexico and Guatemala.

The Texas Avocado Society has recently been organized patterned closely after our own society. Whatever success the production of avocados in Texas may develop will probably stem largely from their new society.

With pardonable pride, and without undue exaggeration, we may claim considerable credit for the development of our avocado industry to its present extent and soundness.

Let us recount some of the Society's more important activities which have contributed to the advancement and welfare of the industry, and continue to do so.

Early in its history the Society's Variety Committee began its effective work in bringing order out of chaos in classifying the hundreds of varieties in accordance with their relative quality, climatic adaptability and marketability. Since 1935 systematic registration of promising seedlings, followed by periodic observation on their behavior, has been a regular function. More recently, the report of this hard-working and representative committee is the standard for growers and nurserymen alike.

Another committee has in recent years, been doing similar work on other subtropical fruits which are becoming, or may become important in southern California.

While the society itself has never been directly concerned with marketing, in 1924, recognizing the necessity for coordinated effort in developing a marketing system that would keep pace with the steadily increasing production it "gave birth" to the Calavo Growers. While having different responsibilities, the two organizations continue to complement each other's efforts, for the general benefit of all growers.

For example, the two organizations collaborated in getting a state standardization law to prevent the marketing of immature fruit. This was followed by the development of the refractometer test for quick and inexpensive determination of oil content.

Research work on cultural problems was "sparked" by Dr. Coit's article in the 1928 Yearbook describing and naming Sunblotch. Since then, the Agricultural Experiment Station, both at Riverside and at U.C.L.A., has carried on extensive research work on many problems which have arisen and continue to arise, in the growing and handling of avocados. In 1944 the Society raised \$3000 through grower contributions, which was turned over to the College of Agriculture for research on root rot. Time does not permit the listing of all these projects, nor the many helpful results obtained. Suffice to say that the research work of the University has been definitely stimulated and enhanced by the cooperation of the Society, in financial assistance, in orchard test plots, and in periodic conferences between Society directors and members with University staff members.

Dissemination of the information developed during this research has been another Society responsibility, in cooperation with the Agricultural Extension Service and the Avocado departments of the county farm bureaus. Only recently, the California Avocado Research Committee has been organized to better coordinate the research interests of all.

The Society Yearbooks provide more complete documentation than in the case of any other industry of similar nature. Under the able editing of Dr. Coit, the Yearbook records all research work and advances in avocado culture. No student of the avocado can afford to be without the Yearbooks.

While the directors and officers of the Society have always served without pay, still it costs money to carry on its various activities and to print the Yearbook. Revenue is confined almost entirely to the \$3.00 annual dues.

To those of you who are already members, continue to pay your dues. To those who are not already members I earnestly recommend that you join. We need your interest and support. You need the benefits that continue to come, both directly and indirectly, from Society activities. \$3.00 a year is certainly a small fee for such service, and you can enter it as a deduct when you compute the income tax on your grove.

The Society's accomplishments, past, present and future, are not the result of any hired help or the expenditure of much money, but are due to the fine work that so many members have done over the years. On their own time and at their own expense these men have worked effectively for the advancement of the industry. With them it has truly been a labor of love.

Ten years ago the Society decided to recognize such service by awarding an honor emblem "for outstanding meritorious service in behalf of the avocado industry." Since then this emblem, in the form of the Aztec pictograph meaning "Place of the Avocado

Tree," has been awarded to 23 men for their work with avocados.

Today it is my pleasure, on behalf of the Society to present this award to two more men who have richly earned it:

First, a native of California, a pioneer avocado grower, long-time member of the Society's variety committee, important member of several explorations and pilgrimages to Mexico, modest but earnest worker for the advancement of our industry: Carl Crawford;

Second, a Californian by adoption, owner of large acreage in both Los Angeles and San Diego counties, member of the Society and its variety committee for many years, our President during the past two years, President of the United Avocado Growers, leader in several explorations to Mexico and Guatemala, generous contributor of both time and money in the search for knowledge of benefit to our industry: Harlan Griswold.