

## **Report of the President**

**Lois M. Todd**



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The stated purpose of the Society has been to improve the culture and production and to promote the advancement and general welfare of the avocado industry.

This is what the Society has been quietly working on over the past several years. Now, what have we done recently toward furthering these goals?

We have contracted with the California Avocado Commission to oversee the research programs chosen by them last year—a tremendous responsibility. The committee of the Society performing this function is known as PRAC.

Yesterday, a new concept of exposing the research activity to all growers, instead of a select few, took place to hear the presentation of the scientists from the University of California at Riverside. All growers were invited to participate, to question representatives, and to give the production research committee the benefit of their opinions. We were delighted at the attendance and the interest shown. There were 107 people who came to that meeting. There were many, many faces we had never before seen at research presentation meetings; and it certainly shows an interest in research. And there were several people who thought we should be spending more money than ever on research because we feel you can study the market all you want, and advertise all you want; but unless you have some product to market, what good is it? You 'll be out of a job.

We feel our responsibility for this program very strongly. There's a need for a holistic approach to avocado research. As holistic medicine treats the whole person, it will be our aim to encourage a holistic approach to avocado research in an integrated manner,

the bottom line of which is to produce more quality avocados on less land at less cost...is it not? That we see is the current challenge.

The avocado Society administers the rootstock program, and we collected twenty-two thousand dollars for UCR and two thousand for the Society for forty-three thousand and something propagation units of G-6.

We will continue to do this as well as oversee the G-755, which gives one dollar back to the university for every propagation unit sold.

In 1976 the Society started their own search for salt-tolerant rootstocks, with excellent results. The program was designed by Dr. Jim Oster and carried on at the Brokaw Nursery. From that project has developed the Borchard strain, an outstandingly salt-tolerant rootstock. Now, by way of holistic approach, Dr. Coffey is testing it for resistance to root rot.

We've given out two scholarships to students who will work on projects beneficial to the avocado industry.

The Variety Committee, chaired by Oliver Atkins, working with Dr. Bergh has developed a seven-acre variety plot at the South Coast Field Station.

It is interesting to note that there are now 500 acres of Gwen and 50 acres of Whitsell planted throughout the state.

If anyone has a backyard tree of unknown origin which produces quality fruit, please see that it gets to the Variety Committee, via your farm advisor. Remember, all of the current commercial varieties were once chance seedlings.

We have funded Dr. Schieber, in Guatemala, in a search for root rot-resistant stock. So far, his most significant contribution has been the G-755—by far the best in resistance to root rot.

We have taken a stand on maturity, with a dry weight test so simple the grower *could* take responsibility for the quality of the fruit he delivers to his packer. In Australia, the grower is responsible for his own fruit quality; and the penalty for foisting, or attempting to foist, immature fruit on the market is severe. Why couldn't we police our own industry? Whatever it takes to assure the consumer of quality avocados all year 'round, we support.

As a lady concerned with fruit quality back in 1919 wrote, in the California Avocado Society Yearbook: "As with the pudding, the final conclusive test of the ripe avocado is in the eating."

Along those lines, I want to tell you about something that happened last week, which came as a shocker. The Avocado Society has always stood for quality and putting a good fruit on the market. Well, last week the dry weight of the Zutano and a few other varieties was dropped back to the 1984 standard; and lots of people worked very hard to get that increased. You may or may not be aware that eight percent oil became law back in 1923 or '24. It was a number that everybody felt, well, we could live with it; however, at that time the Zutano wasn't even around, and there was much pressure brought to bear to lower the dry weight. Now, historically, as the Zutano goes it sets the stage for the price you're going to get for your Hass avocados and anything else you

have for the rest of the year. It takes a lot of work to get the price up. I understand, right now, they're picking avocados in the San Joaquin Valley; and you know from experience that an immature fruit will not ripen properly, and if it does it's going to take three weeks. You heard Carolyn Leavens say that as a consumer, if she bought an avocado that didn't ripen and turned to "rubber" and shriveled, it would take a long time before she went back for another avocado. So I just want you people to be alert to what is going on and to contact your Commission member, your board member if you belong to Calavo or index