

California Avocado Society 1989 Yearbook 73: 16-17

Award of Honor 1989



Charles Gilman Henry

(Presentation of Award of Honor was made by Director Emeritus Jack Shepherd with the following remarks.)

It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to make this presentation. I have known today's honoree for more than forty years. Actually, I knew his father before I knew him... in the 1930s; but then, I knew *everybody's* father, and some of the grandfathers!

Our honoree is a second generation player in the avocado industry, having grown up on his parents' avocado ranch. I first met him soon after he returned from World War II service in the U.S. Army to join his father in the family's enterprises. Our first encounter was adversarial, and that often-challenging relationship persisted for the next three decades. Notwithstanding our disparate points of view, I came increasingly to respect and admire my "adversary," and I have throughout the years considered him my friend.

The native Escondidoan of whom I speak is Charles Oilman Henry... usually known as "Gil." His father, C. C. Henry, developed an avocado grove in Escondido in 1924, and thereafter formed the Henry Avocado Company to pack and market his own and other growers' avocados. Gil became actively involved in both the grove and the business when he joined his father; and following the untimely accidental death of his father in 1953, he managed both enterprises for his mother. In that same year, Gil's younger brother Warren also came into the business, and the two young men developed the Henry enterprises into their present position of importance in the industry. The brothers are now not only major handlers of avocados, but are also major producers who have planted hundreds of acres of land to avocados.

The Henrys' business was built on the traditional American formula: long hours of hard work, attention to details, keen observation of the marketplace, an abundance of imagination, willingness to take risks, and the earned loyalty of their grower

constituency. It proved to be a winning formula.

Gil Henry's talents and energies that have made him highly successful have been used also for the good of the industry. He was a member of the first California Avocado Advisory Board when the avocado marketing order came into play, and he was prominent in shaping its basic objectives and policies. He has powerfully influenced the accomplishments of CADO ... the handlers' California Avocado Development Organization. He has been in the forefront of development of better avocado handling equipment and innovative packaging. He has taken an active role in industry affairs ... not always to my personal pleasure, it is true ... but always for the right reasons as he saw them. Most recently, he has been the prime mover and a major practitioner in the industry's "Pre-Ripe" program that some believe will become the universal practice in the industry. It would not be too far off to call this important development the "*Gil Henry Pre-Ripe Program*."

This is but a sketch of Gil Henry's involvement in our avocado industry. There is not time to itemize the numerous contributions of his that have benefited this industry. They are real, however; and the board of directors took them into account when they determined to confer upon Charles Gilman Henry the Society's Award of Honor for Outstanding Meritorious Service to the Avocado Industry.

I would now like to have Georgia Henry come forward, bringing Gil with her. She has to put up with this fellow all the time, and it seems only right that she should stand with him as his partner in this moment of honor by this Society. I would also like to have Barbara and Warren Henry come forward to join in this ceremony. We do not have a medal for Warren; but we recognize that he has helped to make Gil's contributions possible. Perhaps Brother Gil will let him wear the medal on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Georgia and Barbara are appropriately up here also simply because I know how very important are the unheralded supportive contributions of loving wives.