



## 2002 Award of Honor

### Charley Wolk

Fallbrook, CA

Award presented by James McCormac.

It is a distinct honor and privilege to present the California Avocado Society's AWARD of HONOR at this, the Annual Meeting of 2002. I consulted the Society's by-laws to refresh my memory - and yours - of what this award is about. The awards section is short and succinct: *"At the discretion of the board of directors, an Award of Honor may be bestowed at an annual meeting upon one or more persons who have given outstanding, meritorious service in behalf of the avocado industry. Said award shall entitle its recipient to be an Honorary Member of the Society. "*

Next I looked in the recent Yearbook to see who has received the Award of Honor. From this list of Awardees emerged the history of the avocado industry in California. You find the early founders of the industry - J. Eliot Coit - George Hodgkin - Wilson Popenoe - members of the Thille family - and members of the Brokaw family. The Award of Honor has been given to academics who have added to our understanding of avocados, such as -- George Zentmyer, Art Schroeder, Tom Embleton, and John Menge. The society has honored those who have distinguished themselves as teachers to avocado growers - Farm Advisors like Don Gustafson and Bud Lee. And the Society has honored its leaders who, through a body of work, have been the path finders of our industry - the list names people such as Jack Shepherd, Gil Henry, Oliver Atkins and Mark Affleck.

To my thinking, the "outstanding meritorious service" of the Award of Honor refers to a distinguished career whose achievements have risen to meet the challenges encountered. This is not an award given to outgoing presidents — or traded around the boardroom table. It is awarded to those whose works have had a long-lasting, positive effect on the avocado industry.

This year's awardee was the unanimous choice of the society's Board of directors because he fits this description well. It is Charley Wolk.

Charley received his bachelor's degree in engineering from Marquette University - His master's, also in engineering, from George Washington University.

The first part of his Career was spent as a Marine Corps officer. Charley's service alternated between combat infantry and logistic/ construction posts. One of his infantry posts was as a company commander in Vietnam during the year that is remembered as the Tet Offensive. Charley had risen to the rank of Lt. Colonel when he was called to other pursuits.

Charley established a farm management company initially filling the niche market of managing small orchards. There is an old saying — if you want something done, ask a busy man. Many of us would find Charley to be a busy man, indeed. He has worked with the Fallbrook Chamber of Commerce and served as president. He has been active with the Farm Bureau and rose to serve as president in San Diego County and was recognized as Farmer of the Year (1986). About a decade ago when Fallbrook was making a run toward cityhood, Charley achieved a unique position. He was on the ballot running for Mayor. He won the election, but the city status was voted down. I guess you could say that Charley was a "virtual Mayor". During this period Charley was a board member and president of the Fallbrook Public Utility District. His work on water issues was recognized by then Governor Wilson, who appointed Charley to the Regional Water Quality Control Board for Region 9.

Charley was elected a commissioner of the Avocado Commission in 1987. To give you an idea of how steadfast this man is in his work — for seven years I was Charley's Alternate. During that time I was seated at the Board's table only twice when Charley was late to a meeting - and he was never that late because the only votes I cast were to approve the minutes. During this period, Charley was appointed by the Chancellor at UC Riverside to be a member of his Agricultural Advisory Council. He was an active member of the Nutrition Advisory Committee, which successfully positioned California avocados as part of a healthy diet.

The list of accomplishments goes on and on. Of special note for the avocado industry was his work as CAC Board Chairman. Mark Affleck has stated that Charley understands the blend between board politics and organizational success more than anyone that he has seen in his 20-year professional career. Additionally, because of Charley's experience in political lobbying, gained during his Farm Bureau service, Charley was well suited to be CAC's Chairman. He was called upon to educate members of Congress, the White House, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, The Office of Special Trade Representative and other agencies too numerous to mention. Charley's expertise was critical to holding USDA's feet to the fire regarding Mexican avocado imports and his personal contact with legislators was the linchpin that enabled the enactment of the Hass Avocado Promotion Order.

For his body of work - for his meritorious service - Charley Work is hereby given the Avocado Society's highest accolade. Charley, please come forward and receive the Award of Honor.