



2008 Oliver Atkins Award of Excellence

Betty Bohrk
Newport Beach, California

Award presented by
Rick Shade

I am honored today to present the Oliver Atkins Award of Excellence of the California Avocado Society. Early in my career in the avocado industry I had the pleasure of knowing Oliver Atkins. He was an innovator in his own right. He loved to pass along the information he developed as a nurseryman and avocado grower. He did so in order to help the industry as a whole. It was in this spirit that this award was created – to honor those who give above and beyond their personal interests to advance our California avocado industry.

It is my privilege to present the Oliver Atkins Award of Excellence to Betty Bohrk. It is appropriate to honor Betty. In a few years the Society will celebrate its one hundred year anniversary. We have growers here that represent decades of experience and multi-generations of avocado cultivation. In many ways Betty typifies this long view as she has been working for our industry since 1971.

Betty comes out of the dairy farming area of New York State. She did not stray too far from her roots by finding work in the avocado industry. She and her husband moved to California in 1969. She initially worked for our industry part time, but by 1975, she was a full time employee. She has served in a variety of capacities, always with distinction. She initially worked for the California Avocado Advisory Board and subsequently for the California Avocado Commission. She has worked for every CEO of the Commission – from Ralph Pinkerton, to John Bartelme, Mark Affleck, and now Tom Bellamore. Fourteen different Chairmen of the Commission knew of and supervised Betty's contributions to the avocado industry.

John Bartelme noted that "...Betty was a true believer in California avocados and an untiring warrior and goodwill ambassador for the entire California avocado industry."

For many growers, new to the avocado industry, attending grower meetings meant an encounter with the friendly smile of greeting from Betty and an offer of the various publications of the Avocado Commission and Avocado Society.

Betty has been a part of the avocado industry every step of the way from Advisory Board to Avocado Commission, from inception to fruition. She has performed her work with modesty, compassion, and dedication to every avocado grower. In recognition of her devotion to our industry, I am pleased to present her with the Oliver Atkins Award of Excellence.