

Presentation Ceremonies at Antigua, Guatemala

CARTER BARRETT

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: Mr. Griswold has described to you many of the interesting points about our visit to Guatemala, and I will try to keep my speech within the time allotted to me.

When we made up our mind that now was the time to go to Guatemala, I did my usual stint of preparation. I never go on these trips without getting hold of everything I can read and everything that I can see in preparing my mind for the details beforehand so that I can have a fuller and keener appreciation of what I do see, and a much better understanding of it. So one night, late in December (and you can see how short the time was because we left on the last days of January) I sat there reading a letter from my friend, Wilson Popenoe, written in 1939.

At that time I was in correspondence with him regarding a projected trip to Guatemala. That was the year following our trip into Mexico to commemorate the parent Fuerte tree. In that letter, Wilson remarked that he thought it would be a very fine thing if the avocado growers would give the recognition to Guatemala which we had already accorded Mexico.

That no sooner struck my mind than I went into action. I'm somewhat noted on the Board of Directors in the past for some of my impetuous actions, and I conceived that we had two past Presidents and a long-time member of the Variety Committee going on this trip and there wouldn't be, I didn't think, a better opportunity to provide Guatemala with the recognition from the California Avocado Society to which it was entitled through its early contributions to our industry.

So I immediately got in contact with an organization which could provide the bronze plaque which was necessary and found that it was possible to get it done in spite of all the delays and difficulties of getting things done in this post-war period. Then I appealed to my good friend, Art Christie here, and he worked out a suitable inscription in English, which he got translated into acceptable Spanish. We took this marker down there with these inscriptions in English and Spanish—something to this end: "Presented by the California Avocado Society, 1946, in recognition of the great contribution to the California industry by Antigua and all of Guatemala."

We got down to Guatemala, as Mr. Griswold has told, with a minimum of adventure and a maximum of comfort for that sort of a trip. When I arrived there, I had this heavy cold that he mentioned to you, and developed a cough and practically could not talk (certainly could not talk in public) for about a week, and it was very inadvisable, due to the high altitude and the dust of this dry season, to make these trips.

Mr. Griswold and Carl got rather restive and went down to Antigua. As soon as I got on

my feet I went out to the Embassy and consulted them. Well, they said, "You'd better get down to the office of Protocol in the national palace. They have been scouring the country for you. They knew you were coming in. They haven't seen anything of you." So the Ambassador came in about this time. It had been reported to me that he was a rich Kansas farmer and I approached him on that basis. He looked me in the eye and said, "Down where I come from, Suh, they shoot people for less than that." He happened to be the dean of Texas A & M. He is very sympathetic to agriculture and fits in the picture finely down there.

I spent an hour or two a day for three or four days in the office of the protocol in the national palace and found them most charming and polished diplomats. We arranged a program with the Minister of Agriculture, Senor Roberto Guirola, who is a very fine and charming young man, and one of the first really agricultural Ministers of Agriculture they have had.

The program was set for the fifteenth of February and then we held our breaths, because, due to the time element involved, we had to leave the plaque up here to be shipped down by air, and the Ambassador had just told me that it had taken him three weeks or more to get a hat shipped down from the States, so we were rather in fear, but Pan-American did a fine job and the plaque arrived on the thirteenth.

The Government, through the Ministers of Agriculture, gave us an official car on Thursday and we went around Guatemala City. Then on Friday morning they called for us and took us down to Antigua. The ceremony was set in the council chamber upstairs in the municipal palace. They had the band out there and gave us a real welcome as we came up.

The local group of agriculturists were gotten together by the Minister and there was quite a little ceremony in the chamber. Practically all of it was in Spanish except the speech by the Mayor of Antigua who does a very good job of speaking English. The formal acceptance of the plaque, which by the way didn't arrive in Antigua until evening, was by the Minister, and we made the dedication speech in Spanish.

Immediately after the ceremonies, they took us out to the El Rancho Finca, which is a very beautiful place a short way outside of the town itself, and entertained us with a state luncheon. There were about a hundred present. We had an orchestra all through the affair. We had about an hour and a half of highballs and cocktails before dinner and four courses of wine. You can imagine a teetotaler like me struggling through that!

Now, in the early afternoon, about 3:30 or four o'clock, they gathered us into the car again and took us out to the Carmona Finca, which is a very remarkable place. It has citrus and coffee and a beautiful dairy herd, one of the very fine dairies that I have seen, and we were entertained with more highballs and coffees, etc.

They brought us back in the afternoon to the hotel and in the evening we attended the graduation exercises of the school for boys, and Mr. Crawford and Mr. Griswold were sitting there and all at once I got up and burst forth in Spanish, and I don't think they have ever quite gotten over it. The following day the municipality took us around to some of the very fine coffee plantations, one of the best there is there, the Ratona Finca, which is very modern. They showed us the drying field and all of the operations.

Then we went back to the hotel and had another official luncheon, and this time with all that goes with it. About the time we got down to the coffee phase of this luncheon at the end of it, one of the local lawyers got up and made a speech. He started on it three times. I think he had a little bit too much of that pre-dinner festivities; but at any rate, in order to stop this flow of language from him, I got up and handed them some more of my terrible Spanish and that succeeded in doing it.

The next day the government gave us an official car for three or four days. As Mr. Griswold has told you, they took us up to Lake Atitlan, which is one of the most beautiful spots in the world without any question, then on up to the Indian market at Chichicastenango.

Our activities officially did not cease until Wednesday, following the ceremonies. We were guests of the Rotary Club at Guatemala City on Wednesday noon and on Wednesday afternoon the three of us proceeded down to the national palace, which is one of the remarkable buildings of the world. The Minister told us he had a little surprise for us down there.

At this time I wish to present formally on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture of Guatemala, this parchment scroll which was given to us in appreciation. Those of you who have a chance to see this closely will appreciate the beautiful art which has gone into this work. I might say that the Republic of Guatemala, through the Ministry of Agriculture, could not have been more gracious and more kindly and more profuse in its hospitality under any circumstances than it was with us.

This Society has left a very pleasant impression, I am sure, in Guatemala through our activities. At least I was so assured in a later letter by the Ambassador, and I want to say that this Society with this effort has already become famous for its good neighbor gestures to our Latin American friends south of here, and we are planning already a final gesture in regard to the Fuerte tree in Mexico, which will take place in 1948. Those of you who may be fortunate enough to be able to go on that trip will benefit very greatly by the work that has been done in preparing the way for you.

I want to reiterate that Mr. Griswold couldn't have overdone at all the beauties, the hospitality, the gracious courtesy, of the people of Guatemala to us; and a great deal of it comes from the fact that we were your representatives.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIE: Thank you very much, Carter. I think we have all particularly enjoyed this culmination of our program, both the very interesting story that Mr. Griswold told you and the ceremonies and festivities that Carter told you about. It was the most remarkable non-alcoholic exhilarating effect that I have ever enjoyed.

Well, I didn't do so bad. Jim France got through right on time and they handed me a half hour handicap, and said I had to get through at four. At least I didn't lose a lap in this race at any rate. It was very kind of all of you to stay so long this afternoon and help us finish up this program. The delay was not of our making at all.

Those of you who are not already members of this Society, three dollars isn't much

these days; so why don't you join? It's worthwhile. You help us put on this meeting, you help us do the many things that we do during the year that you heard about today and you get a copy of the Yearbook.

California Avocado Society's Tribute to Guatemala

Because the fruit which the Society studies and promotes originates in Central America, the California Avocado Society is becoming well known for its gestures of good neighborliness to the Latin American countries.

In 1938 the Society placed a bronze marker at the base of the parent Fuerte tree in Mexico.

In 1946 two past presidents, Carter Barrett and H. B. Griswold accompanied by C. S. Crawford on behalf of the Society presented the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Guatemala a bronze marker, bearing an inscription in English and Spanish, paying tribute to the contributions of Guatemala to the California Avocado Industry.

The bronze plaque was dedicated February 15, in the city of Antigua with appropriate ceremonies. The Minister of Agriculture, Senor Roberto Guirola, presided and accepted the plaque on behalf of the people of Guatemala. The dedicatory speech was made by Mr. Barrett in Spanish, and the plaque is placed in a small park contiguous to the famous home of Dr. Wilson Popenoe.

THE INSCRIPTION

Presentada Por La Sociedad Aguacatera De California

En El 1946

En Reconocimiento Y Aprecio Por La Gran Contribucion De Antigua Y Toda Guatemala Por El Desarrollo De La Industria De Aguacates En California.

Un Joven Saludable, Saluda A Tan Generosos Padres

Presented by California Avocado Society—1946

In Recognition and Appreciation of the Great Contributions of Antigua, and of All Guatemala, to the Development of the Avocado Industry in California.

A Healthy, Growing Child Salutes a Generous Parent.