

## The Retailer Is On Your Team; Cultivate Him!



### **Kenton Kidd**

*Vice President, Western Field, The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, Inc.*

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I thank you, "The California Avocado Society," for my invitation. In wondering why I was invited, the thought occurred that possibly a correlation may exist between "The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company" and your avocado industry. It appears both of us have had our ups and downs the past several years.

We strongly feel that now, after seven long years of crisis and reorganizational pains, A & P has turned that exciting corner, back to profitability.

It would likewise appear the maturing avocado industry has experienced some very profitable peaks, as well as unprofitable valleys. Our industries need each other's assistance.

*We need* a consistent piece of "quality fruit" in every box.

*You need* our consumer salesmanship and marketing of your product.

*We need* more stability in pricing, not wildly fluctuating prices that confuse the retailer and the consumer. I'm not speaking of low pricing, but of stable pricing.

*You need* wider distribution of California avocados internationally, as well as in the Midwestern and eastern sections of the United States.

In 1982 we are living in a "service based" economy, with only 4% of our population involved in the growing of food products. The pressure is greater than ever. We must have skills.

One skill we should aggressively pursue is "salesmanship and marketing." If necessary, reorganize and strike out on a new path rather than traveling down the same old one.

It has been said that life is often filled with a number of accidental but opportune events. Something happens, and we suddenly find ourselves following a path we never expected to pursue.

We need a continual stream of new, innovative ideas which will insure "new sales highs!" These are areas we can work on together.

We need profitable avocado sales and *you* must have a decent return on your investment. I know your California Avocado Commission is constantly searching for new ideas, sales techniques, and indicators of emerging consumer trends, as well as the answers behind questions like, "Why avocados sell greater one time of the year than another?"

Here are some facts and figures you may find interesting:

1. We have over 80 million households in our United States.
2. 64% are located east of the Mississippi River and 36% west, pointing again to the need for eastern penetration of western avocados. These 160 million eastern people are buying only 30% of our avocados. What a marketplace to develop!

Other figures of interest when advertising is considered would be that:

1. 20% of all U.S. children under 18 live with only one parent. 90% of the time it's Mom. That's 12.6 million kids.
2. 35% of all women over 18 are single.
3. Unmarried household couples in 1980 amounted to 1.8 million, up 246% since 1970.
4. 51% of all married women are working, and 63% of all women between the ages of 18 and 64 are working.
5. 41% of the people eating out are ordering more salads, another perfect tie-in with avocados.
6. 77% of the consumers are interested in "nutrition," dramatically higher than just a few years ago. That's great news, since we know how nutritious the avocado is...low in carbohydrates, saturated fats, and sodium; but high in vitamins, minerals, and no cholesterol. Not to mention eating avocados for a beautiful complexion and as a skin toner.
7. 78% of the consumers are attempting to improve their diets.

A number of items considered important in our A & P produce operation include:

1. Variety.
2. Training.
3. Reducing shrink by selling quality produce.
4. Controlling expenses.

5. Enthusiasm (good attitudes and high morale are essential.)

We feel the bitterness of "poor quality" remains long after the "sweetness of price" is forgotten.

Communication failure is a major cause of people failure, and we do not want this to happen to any of us. It has also been said that success in any venture is the intelligent use of failure.

Unfortunately, we are living in the age of slower pay and tougher credit and we seem to need recognition for doing just a "good" job.

With larger and larger avocado crops becoming the norm of the future, we must go for teamwork in marketing and sales efficiency as well as creativity in advertising ideas.

Let's share these ideas, successes, or failures, and hope each segment of our respective areas will turn out to be winners.

California avocados are such delicious, nutritious, wonderful fruit, they deserve continual growth throughout our nation and the world. They provide great profit potential for any retailer willing to give them a rightful year-round spot as a major staple produce item.

It is up to you, the growers, packers, and shippers, to scrutinize closely each of your own operations and determine to place high quality standards above all else. The growers should insist their packers pack nothing but quality fruit. Strict quality control is a must if you are to build a great future with profitable returns.

With proper handling, creative advertising, and good follow through of merchandising on the retailer's part, consumer demand should continue to increase at a strong enough pace to sell every avocado produced without the use of depressed prices.

It is said, life after 40 presents challenges we can't afford in this business, such as beginning to outlive enthusiasm or looking forward to a dull evening. If dialing long distance wears you out, think seriously about reorganizing.

I've said nothing you haven't heard before unless maybe it's from a retailer.

You have very professional people involved in your boards and commissions, excellent advertising programs, and the "Greatest Little Product in California!"

But, remember Socrates. He was a wise man. He gave people good advice, and they poisoned him. (I'm glad lunch was earlier!)

Well, it's said...

the way to be seen is: STAND UP!

the way to be heard is: SPEAK UP!

and the way to be appreciated is: SHUT UP!

Thank you very much.