

## **Report of the Variety Committee**

The year 1984 will be remembered as the beginning of the demise of the Jim, the Zutano, and to a large extent the Bacon as commercial varieties. The only survivor in the fall-winter "greens" will be the Fuerte. This strong-growing, hardy hybrid tree when grown in areas where it produces well stands out above the other green thinskins. This survivor of the introductions by Carl Schmidt in 1911 for the West India Gardens, in Altadena, went through the 1913 great freeze and for 70 years since has remained a commercial variety.

The high cost of water coupled with poor returns has caused several thousand acres of the green thinskins to be abandoned or grafted over to Hass or other newer acceptable varieties, and the process is continuing. The handwriting has been on the wall for several years and clearly tells the avocado industry that the only surviving varieties will be those that ship well, ripen to give consumer satisfaction, and return a profit to the grower. There will be areas where land and water cost factors are within reason in which the green thinskins will survive. This would include the sheltered areas of the San Joaquin Valley.

Fortunately, Dr. B.O. Bergh's breeding program, now approaching the end of its second decade, is starting to produce results. Besides the three patented varieties recently introduced, many more are on the horizon. They are mostly Hass equivalents that will outbear the Hass with less alternation. Many of these will be smaller trees that can be planted closer together with higher per acre production and lower picking costs.

There are now approximately 800 bearing acres of the fine quality Pinkerton variety. The growers of this variety have a special pioneer program organized this year to help move the production of this heavy bearing variety. W.H. (Hank) Brokaw and Warren Currier are the prime movers in this program. The Variety Committee will be watching the progress of the program closely. We see a parallel need to deal with the heavy production in a few years of the Gwen variety, requiring special promotion and education. Other varieties introduced in the future must be carefully evaluated and tested under varying conditions to be sure they are satisfactory before they are recommended for commercial planting.

Besides the CAS variety plot and Dr. Bergh's other experimental plantings at the South Coast Field Station and on the Riverside campus of the University of California, there are approximately 30 or 40-thousand progeny seedlings from outstanding selections from Bergh's breeding program that have been planted in cooperators' groves. These are scattered through the main avocado growing areas of southern California. To evaluate, keep records, tag, and check all these trees is a monumental task each year. The Variety Committee and the Society will do all they can to assist Dr. Bergh and his associate, Robert Whitsell, in this project.

The sale of graftwood from the three newly patented varieties has helped considerably

to provide funds to keep this going. It will also require additional funding. Due to the demand of higher priority projects, there are no funds available from the industry-supported Production Research pool. The Society provides the funds, from members' dues, to take care of the variety plot at the South Coast Field Station. It is hoped additional funds can be provided to assist in the evaluation of the cooperator-grower test plots and other areas that need help.

Highlights of the year were a well-attended meeting at the South Coast Field Station and special meeting and tour of Crawford Teague's variety plot in Corona.

We had the usual help and cooperation from Variety Committee members and growers for our variety display at the CAS annual meeting at the Bahia Motor Hotel in San Diego. Many of the varieties displayed were immature specimens of the coming new crop, as the mature fruits of those varieties were already marketed. In spite of this, we came up with a well-received display.

Your Variety Committee is well aware of the frustrating and discouraging year that growers and all segments of the industry have just gone through. The committee's thinking and plans for the future will be to encourage the planting of, or grafting over to, quality varieties; and we will do all we can to discourage the planting or continuation of the varieties that won't stand the test in the market place.

Thanks to all who attended our meetings, provided facilities, and helped. Thank you for your support.

Respectfully submitted,  
Oliver Atkins, Chairman