



2005 Award of Honor

TOM MARKLE

Escondido, CA

Award presented by James McCormac

It is privilege to present the Award of Honor for 2005. This award is given to a member of the avocado community for a distinguished body of work.

The Avocado Society has honored researchers and marketers who have made singular contributions. We have honored volunteers who have moved the industry forward. It is from this group that we have selected the awardee for 2005. It is Tom Markle.

Tom comes from the Mid-west. He graduated from the University of Illinois at Carbondale. After college he served in the Navy – and it was the Navy that brought Tom to San Diego County.

In the business world, Tom was a software engineer, a systems engineer, and a manager.

He began his career in avocados in 1972 with a one-acre plot of Zutanos. Four years later he acquired ten additional acres in Highland Valley. When he moved there, Tom and his first wife had three daughters, and later adopted two sons.

In the early 1980's, Tom married Mary and blended her two children into a family that comprised seven offspring. The support of our families should never be overlooked, and I would like to acknowledge Mary and her role in Tom receiving this award.

In the mid-1980's, Tom acquired 20 acres that he developed with a promising new variety – Gwen. The grove was top-worked and not all the grafts took – an experience most of us have had. The stumps that reverted to Zutano led Tom to an important contribution. He noted the increase in production of the Gwen trees in close proximity to the Zutano trees. He wrote up his observations of cross-pollination and published them in the *Avocado Grower Magazine*. One Cooperative Extension agent noted that the design of this project and the presentation of the findings were worthy of a seasoned agricultural researcher.

In the late 1990's, Tom acquired additional acreage. The Gwens are now gone, and Tom grows some Hass, but he emphasized to me that his Lamb Hass trees outnumber the regular Hass by two to one.

During more than 30 years in the avocado industry, Tom has been fully engaged.

- He co-founded and was President of the Gwen Growers Association;
- He is a co-founder of the Lamb Hass Association, with Charles Froelich and Mike Saunders;

- He served for 14 years on the Avocado Society Board of Directors – three years as the President of our Society;
- He chaired the Production Research Committee for three years and remains a voting member to the present;
- He has been active with the California Avocado Commission over the past ten years serving as a Commissioner and as an alternate Commissioner;
- Tom was present at the formation of the Hass Avocado Board where he serves as an alternate member of the Board of Directors.

Our awardee is a family man, a businessman, an avocado grower – and an avocado activist.

Tom, please come forward and accept the Award of Honor.