

## **In Memoriam**

**Walter R. Beck  
1908-1972**



The thriving avocado industry he left behind him is indeed a living memorial to the many years he has given to it. He has grafted literally thousands of avocado trees, which today show his gifted skill. He developed a tip-graft technique on nursery stock in containers, and was the first to commercially grow trees in this manner.

Walter Beck served in nearly all organizations responsible for the industry's impressive growth. He was a leading member of the Avocado Society, serving as its president in 1965-66, and was presented the Society's award for meritorious service to the industry in 1952.

During the late fifties, when returns to growers sank to their all-time low, he led the drive to form a State marketing order for promotion and advertising in an effort to build the necessary demand to market the burgeoning crops at a profit to the grower. Throughout these trying times Walter Beck was respected by all. His fairness and willingness to consider everyone's point of view undoubtedly was responsible for the final emergence of the California Avocado Advisory Board. No one was better suited to serve as chairman of the Advisory Board. He served in this position for the Board's first nine years, retiring in the 1969-70 season.

His father George W. Beck, emigrated from Illinois, and his mother, Frieda Fischer, was a Swiss immigrant. In 1911 George Beck purchased property in La Habra Heights and planted his first avocado trees in that area. Walter was born in Compton and grew up in this environment and had a natural talent in agriculture. He attended Washington Grammar School, in La Habra, and the Whittier and Fullerton High Schools. As a young man he purchased acreage and planted avocados, cherimoyas, and limes with which he thoroughly enjoyed working.

He was married in 1937. In 1943 he purchased acreage in South Fallbrook Hills with his wife Jennett, and lived at 3664 Palomar Drive. Walter was an active leader in the Farm Bureau for more than forty years. He served as chairman of the La Habra and Fallbrook centers, chairman of the San Diego County Farm Bureau, and chairman of the Avocado Section of the State Farm Bureau.

He served as a director of Index Mutual Growers Association for many years. In 1964 he was named "Mr. Agriculture" by the Fallbrook Farm Bureau, and the following year "Farmer of the Year" by the San Diego Union Tribune.

For several years he had been an advocate of amending the State Marketing Order to permit growers to cooperate in financing research for a cure or control of root rot. This leadership succeeded a year ago.

Walter Beck has served in many important positions in his community. He was chairman of the board of the La Habra Heights Mutual Water Company from 1940-52. He served twelve years on the board of directors of the San Luis Rey Heights Mutual Water Company, and for ten years was chairman of the board. From 1965-72 he served as director, secretary, and chairman of the board of the Rainbow Municipal Water District. He was on the board of directors of the San Diego County Water Authority since 1962. From 1967 until his death, he served on the board of directors of the Southwest Bank. He was chairman of the newly formed San Diego County Environmental Development Agency appointed by the Board of Supervisors. He had served on the board of the Fallbrook Chamber of Commerce and the Fallbrook Planning Committee. He was a member of the Palomar Orchid Society, the Fallbrook Exchange Club, the Council of California Growers, the California Macadamia Nut Society, the California State Chamber of Commerce, and the Commonwealth Club.

At the time of his death he was serving as an alternate director on the California Avocado Advisory Board, and was an active member of the International Trade Relations Committee.

He is survived by his wife, Jennett, a daughter Mrs. Virginia Davis of Ventura, two sisters, Ethel Beck of La Habra and Alice Weber of Sunnymede, and two brothers, Edward Beck of La Habra and Albert Beck of Los Angeles.

His statesmanship in the California avocado industry will be long remembered. The inspirational leadership he so willingly gave and his unselfish desire to help others is an inestimable mark few men are able to leave behind them.