

AWARDS OF HONOR — TRIBUTES TO THE LIVING

The first awards of its Medal of Honor were made by the California Avocado Society (then the California Avocado Association) April 17, 1938, at Atlixco, Mexico. The awardees were Sr. Alejandro Le Blanc, owner of the parent Fuerte tree, and Mr. Carl B. Schmidt, its "discoverer" for commercial propagation.

A month later, three additional awards were made on the occasion of the Association's twenty-third annual meeting in San Diego. Recipients on that occasion were Dr. J. Eliot Coit, Judge F. D. Halm, and Dr. Herbert J. Webber—giant names in the history of the California avocado industry.

At the annual banquet, Association president Dean F. Palmer established the significance of the awards of appreciation for industry service in these words, from his address to the members:

"One of the most regrettable phases of all early history has been the failure to recognize while still alive those individuals who have made valuable contributions to society. This organization does not subscribe to the belief that all of our heroes are dead. It has therefore adopted a policy formulated with the idea of expressing gratitude to those living individuals who in the past as well as in the future are outstanding contributors to the advancement of the avocado industry. Those individuals selected as having made outstanding contributions will receive our award of honor. This award will be in the form of a small avocado upon which has been embossed the Aztec hieroglyph representing the avocado tree. The value of these emblems will not be of an intrinsic nature, but will represent the sincere respect and appreciation felt by all the members of this organization for those who possess them."

In the thirty-eight years since the conception of the Award of Honor, the Society has recognized sixty-one distinguished individuals. One or two recipients have been selected by the Board of Directors in most of the years since 1938, though three honored in 1939, three more in 1940, and another three in 1941. The Directors set an unofficial "limit" of two awards in any one year, beginning in 1942. In six years, no award was made.

Two special Awards of Merit have been given by the California Avocado Society to individuals already in possession of the prized Award of Honor. J. Eliot Coit and Marvin B. Rounds were the special awardees in 1956, in appreciation of their continuing major contributions to the advancement of the avocado industry. The special awards were in the form of a cluster of avocado leaves, to be attached to the basic Medal of Honor.

All recipients of the Medal of Honor automatically become honorary members of the California Avocado Society. Their names will be found in a special listing of the roster of members in each Yearbook. If there are indeed heroes in our industry, their names will surely be found in that list.