

REPORT FROM THE VARIETY COMMITTEE OF THE CALIFORNIA AVOCADO SOCIETY, 1977

1977 has been a most rewarding year for the Variety Committee. We are beginning to achieve many of the goals we had set up to work toward.

We have continued our usual monthly meetings of our executive group at Rancho California. At some of the meetings we were pleased to have variety-minded guests join us. We are always grateful for their input and suggestions.

Our Rancho California variety plot has made good growth this year. Many of the two-year-old grafts bore their first fruit this year. In March we grafted more of Dr. Bergh's plant breeding selections as well as several chance seedling trees from various areas that show promise. Thanks to Hank Brokaw we have two clonal Fuerte outstanding strains, one from Ventura County and one from San Diego County, replicated several times. These special trees are planted in available spaces or where we have replaced unsatisfactory trees.

At this time we have sixty-two scion tops and fourteen rootstocks. The scion tops vary from two to as many as nine of each. These are all mapped and labeled at the tree site. We also have a Lulu Waldin Mexican Zutano rootstock plot with scion tops of Zutano, Fuerte, Hass, Bacon and Reed replicated several times. This plot is being evaluated by Bob Platt. We need several more years of observation and measurements to derive information that will be extremely valuable to the industry. When you combine all the scion and rootstock combinations and the work that has gone into them, your Society's variety plot has become an asset that is impossible to put a dollar value on as it could not be replaced.

During the past year Kaiser Aetna dissolved their partnership and the new owners are Kacor Realty Incorporated, a subsidiary of Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical. At this time we are negotiating with them to insure that the plot will be monitored and maintained by the Society in the years ahead.

We had two combined Variety Committee and nurserymen's section meetings this year: one at Rancho California and the other in the San Joaquin Valley. The one at Rancho California was devoted mostly to cultural problems.

The San Joaquin meeting September 16th and 17th was most interesting. The growing of avocados in this climatic area opens up a whole new group of problems and challenges. Our hats go off to this group who have worked hard and have come up with many new ideas and innovations.

Jim LaRue, Farm Advisor for Tulare County, escorted us on a tour of the variety plot at the Lindcove Field Station and several groves in the area that comprises the bulk of the production for this area. The Susan variety in all areas were loaded heavy and were causing a serious small size problem with a decline in tree vigor. The Zutanos had

reasonable crops but the Bacons were disappointing. This area needs an improved fall variety as the Susan variety has too many shortcomings to be planted on a large scale; however, at this time it is the most profitable.

In November, CAS director and Variety Committee member Arthur Edgerton conducted us on a tour of his Israel varieties, grafted on large stumps. Be sure and read a description of these in the current yearbook.

A highlight of our year was the variety display at the annual meeting. There were over a hundred plates of various varieties on display in the area set aside for us. Many thanks to all committee members and cooperators who assisted and brought fruit. All the areas were represented. This display was enjoyed by all members attending, and it kept the Variety Committee busy answering questions. This serves a most useful purpose. It affords one time a year when we can visually observe the differences in varieties when grown in the various climatic areas of our industry.

This year we harvested our biggest crop of all time and received good prices. This coming year with a third less fruit should also show good returns. What do we face in the years ahead? One thing is obvious: Mother Nature with freezes, winds, hot spells, drought, brown mite, and other pests, has a way of equalizing our yearly production. Your Variety Committee is constantly aware of these facts and as we evaluate the various new varieties, we not only look for commercially acceptable varieties, but also how they set crops in the face of the challenges stated above.

In closing I would like to invite any Society members who are interested in varieties to join us at the Rancho California Golf Resort for luncheon on meeting dates. After discussing varietal business we usually adjourn to the variety plot. Because of root rot danger we can only handle small groups by prearrangement.

Many thanks to the Variety Committee for their help and cooperation this past year. We look forward with much optimism for the avocado industry in the year ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Oliver H. Atkins

Variety Chairman