



Report of the President

Robert G. Platt

September 24, 1983

I wish at this time to report to you on your Society's activities this past year.

First and foremost is support of research. This has been an important function of the Society and was reaffirmed as a high priority goal by the board of directors.

The board this year, on recommendation of the Research Committee, chaired by Crawford Teague, authorized two research gifts. One was in the amount of \$8,500 to Dr. Michael Coffey, Department of Plant Pathology, UC-Riverside, for investigations into the cause or causes, in some locations, of the poor growth of young trees with root rot resistant rootstocks. This problem has been of growing concern. Trials are now established, and we should have answers in the near future.

A second research gift of \$1,000 was made to Dr. J.D. Oster, Extension Soils and Water Specialist, UC-Riverside, to continue his investigations, with the cooperation of Brokaw Nursery, on the relative salt tolerance of avocado rootstocks.

Of particular interest are those rootstocks which are root rot resistant. Some differences are becoming apparent, and the results should provide valuable information where salinity may be or may become a problem.

Closely linked to the research program of the Society is the scholarship program, through which two \$1,000 scholarships are available annually to graduate students doing avocado research. Chaired by Jack Shepherd, the Scholarship Committee recommended, and the board authorized, two scholarships during the past year. One

was awarded to Mr. Mark Fenn, at UC-R, for help in his investigations of the fungicide Aliette and components of Aliette in their effect on root rot control. The second scholarship was awarded to Mr. Michael Tiffany, also at UC-R, to support his investigations into the potential of viruses in avocados as the possible agent of black streak disease.

The Variety Committee, under the chairmanship of Oliver Atkins, has had an active year. Approximately three acres, out of four acres available, of the Society-funded variety and germplasm plot at the University of California's South Coast Field Station are now planted. Included in the plot are: the most promising of Dr. Bergh's selections from his breeding program, present standard varieties for comparison, varieties of proven and potential use for breeding purposes, selections of the most promising seedlings registered with the Society, and clonally-propagated trees of root rot resistant rootstocks. All trees are planted on Duke 7 clonal rootstock to remove one source of variability when comparisons are made.

I think that at last we have a "one of a kind" variety and germplasm plot that will be of real value to the industry in the years ahead. Many of your directors have spent hours and days putting this together. The chairmen of the Variety, Research, and Nurserymen's Committees represent the Society on the operation of the plot.

In addition, the Variety Committee and the Nurserymen's Section have been assisting in the initial distribution of propagation material of the three new UC patented varieties: Whitsell, Gwen, and Esther.

Also, this year, the Variety Committee registered six new seedling varieties submitted by grower members as having potential as new varieties. These will be evaluated for their commercial possibilities.

The Nurserymen's Section, chaired by Gene Mehlschau, has continued to monitor the G-6 contracts. (The G-6 is one of the root rot resistant rootstocks.) This is a program wherein the Society, in an agreement with the University of California, collects a fee for each propagative unit sold and returns this fee to the University for Root Rot Research. The Nurserymen's Section has also been urging research on a faster indexing method to detect sunblotch.

Jack Shepherd, chairman of the Publications Committee and editor of the *Yearbook*, has again published an excellent *Yearbook—Volume 66*. This is no small task, requiring long hours, days, and weeks of tedious detail before the book is published.

We hope you've noticed the monthly Avocado Society column in *Avocado Grower* magazine which first appeared in the August issue. Jack Shepherd is the author of this. We hope it will provide another means of reaching members with information and encourage non-members to join.

The Annual Meeting Committee, under the co-chairmanship of Lois Todd and Barbara McGilivray, has worked long and hard to plan this annual meeting. I think the results are well worth their efforts, and hope you all agree.

The other committees of your Society have been equally active. The Awards Committee, under Chairman Bill Catlin, has had the task of selecting a recipient for the Award of Honor. The Historical Committee, chaired by Jack Shepherd, is continually

looking for avocado memorabilia and will welcome any leads to old photographs or items of historical interest pertaining to the industry. This same committee is also in the planning stage for a pilgrimage to Central America early in 1985. The primary purpose will be to place a plaque, in Antigua, Guatemala, at the grave of Dr. Wilson Popenoe, a pioneer plant explorer who was responsible for the introduction of many avocado varieties to California. Also included will be the opportunity to visit avocado orchards and talk with growers in Central American countries.

A new committee, recently established by the board, is the Rootstock Committee, chaired by Hank Brokaw. This committee will investigate and suggest research on the several factors involving avocado rootstocks — disease resistance, salt tolerance, compatibility, vigor, and others.

The Goals Committee, chaired by Hank Brokaw, and your board have spent considerable time this past year discussing, evaluating, and adopting goals for the Society. Briefly, these include:

For Research: continue to provide "seed" money for research that later may be completed by CAC Production Research funding; foster research that has important future implications; formulate research that is immediately important to grove management and development; and require periodic, reportable progress reports from funded researchers.

For Varieties: oversee our funded variety and germplasm plot and see that it is fully utilized; work with Dr. Bergh on goals for breeding; arrange for wider dissemination of promising varieties; and review and revise our Recommended Varieties List with special regard to marketability and current status.

For Publications: publish a quarterly newsletter or monthly column; solicit articles from foreign avocado-producing countries for the Yearbook; consider an updating of the Avocado Bibliography; proceed with the Grower Handbook; and, of course, continue and maintain the excellence of the Yearbook.

For Annual Meetings: design the content and context of our meetings to further the goals of research and dissemination of meaningful information.

And for Membership: use every practical means to increase membership in the Society.

In spite of the efforts and hard work on the part of the Membership Committee, headed by Lois Todd, membership in the Society has continued to decline this past year — down 263 members from a year ago to a total of 1,514. Not a very good showing with a total grower count in California of 8 to 9,000. To make matters more bleak, the total domestic member count is only 1,300 — the difference is made up of foreign members.

Perhaps we don't blow our own horn enough — are too low key, and don't let people know what we're doing.

Perhaps we're not controversial enough to be noticed. But an organization for the growers and the industry as a whole can't afford to be controversial and continue to provide the benefits it has over the past 69 years.

If you believe in the Society — what it stands for — what its program and goals are — supporting research, information and education, variety evaluation and improvement,

publication of the *Yearbook* — check with your neighboring avocado growers. If they're not members, urge them to join and help support your organization and the industry. Don't be afraid to twist an arm or two. Your Society needs your help.

To maintain a progressive and vital program for the Society requires funds. Funds to operate in the face of rising costs of everything required to run an organization effectively — funds to adequately and positively carry out the goals of the Society. For a number of years, the president's and treasurer's reports have alluded to the probable need of a dues increase. This year the board has taken the bit in its teeth and is proposing changes in the by-laws and a raise in dues. I hope you will give it serious and favorable consideration — to keep the Society strong and viable — when the changes are presented later in the meeting.

Thank you very much.