

California Avocado Society Award of Honor 1984



Lois Todd

Remarks of Presenter Theodore J. Todd, Past President, October 6, 1984

It is indeed a privilege to have been asked by your president to make the award of honor today.

At the annual banquet of the Avocado Society held in San Diego in 1937, then-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 contribution 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 intrinsic nature, but will represent the sincere respect and appreciation felt by all the members of this organization for those who possess them."

Our honoree today is a translocated native of Connecticut, having been born and raised in Fairfield, near Bridgeport. She attended schools there, and then started college at Oberlin. During World War II, she put in a stint at Remington Arms, then went on to North Carolina State, where she earned her degree in Chemical Engineering. In those days, women chemical engineers were not in as much favor at places like Standard Oil, so she took a position with John Robert Powers in the cosmetics field. Later, she

married, started raising a family, and moved to Santa Barbara. Not being satisfied that raising the five children was enough to keep her busy, she got involved in the avocado growing business.

Since today's honoree is probably now aware of who she is, I now ask Lois Todd to come and stand up here where you can see her.

Lois's activity in this Society started when she was a member of the Nurserymen's Section. Because of her interest and activity, she was soon elected to their three-person governing board, and was subsequently appointed by that group to be their representative on the California Avocado Society board. Her talents and energy were recognized, and so she was appointed and later elected to a directorship on the Society board.

As a board member, her interest and zeal were soon recognized. Lois has served enthusiastically on most, if not all, of the committees of the board — the Annual Meetings, Awards, Membership, Nurserymen's Section, Publications, Scholarship, and Variety Committees — sharing her enthusiasm, energy, and wisdom so that the Society might better serve the industry. Lois is the first of her gender to serve as president of the Society, which she did in 1977 and 1978.

In 1974, while on a market and production study tour to South Africa, Lois Todd noted that the producers of that country were using a simple system of dry weight determination to set standards for the threshold of maturity, rather than per cent of oil as was being used in this country. She attempted to have the Society fund a study by the university on the effectiveness of the dry weight method, but it wasn't until she again observed this method being used successfully in Australia that she prevailed. The research was done by Steven K. Lee, Roy Young, Paula Shiftman, and Charles W. Coggins, Jr., all of the University of California at Riverside's Department of Botany and Plant Sciences at the time. They were honored earlier this year by the American Society of Horticultural Science as recipients of the 1984 Wilson Popenoe award for excellence in research with tropical and subtropical evergreen tree fruits and nuts.

If this work had not been done, the industry would have been in complete chaos when the method of testing employing Halowax had to be terminated. Today, because of the simple dry weight test, a grower can pick samples and rapidly determine whether his fruit is ready for harvest by using a microwave oven, simple scales, and a plastic plate.

One concern which has been close to Lois's heart, and one which she has devoted many hours of work and study to, has been the improvement of fruit quality. She feels very deeply that, in order to market larger and larger crops of California avocados, we must ship only avocados which will give consumer satisfaction. She had an opportunity to put her convictions into effect when serving on the industry's A.I.C. sub-committee on

maturity standards under the chairmanship of Charles Froelich. She did extensive research which has resulted in convincing the industry of the importance of raising the maturity standards to those now in effect. The bases for the new standards are the results of the very fine work done by the university.

Lois Todd has given unselfishly of her time and talents and has made outstanding contributions to the advancement of the avocado industry. I, therefore, bestow upon her the AWARD OF HONOR for 1984.

(Note- Mr Todd, the husband of the awardee, was given the Award of Honor in 1966. The Todds are uniquely distinguished as the only couple, both of whom have served as president of the Society and both of whom have been given the Award of Honor.)