

Marvin B. Rounds Research Fund

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The origin, purpose, and operation of the Marvin B. Rounds Research Fund have become fuzzy with the passage of time, as Research Committee Chairman George Zentmyer discovered when he sought definition of the responsibilities and authority of that committee. Since the history of the Fund is probably unclear to most members of the Society, it has been pieced together here from old records and the memory of the author of this essay. It all began almost fifty years ago.

The financial statement of the California Avocado Association for October 31, 1940, showed a balance of \$8.00 in the "Research Fund." The balance remained puny during the next few years, nourished only by very small and infrequent donations. Professor William T. Home, of the Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside, was among the donors: the minutes of the February 6, 1942, meeting of the board of directors of the renamed California Avocado Society note his contribution of \$3.00, given in lieu of the annual dues from which his status of Honorary Member made him exempt.

Professor Home thereafter made a much more substantial donation in the amount of \$500.00, with which the Society enriched its impoverished Research Fund.

In 1943, the University of California estimated that \$3,700.00 in private funds would be needed if its fully budgeted "avocado decline" research program were to be expanded as the industry was requesting be done. Not having so large a sum, the Society (and others in the industry) appealed for donations to expedite "decline" research and deposited the resulting contributions in its (still so-named) "Research Fund."

Professor Home died in 1944. At the annual meeting of members of the Society on May 6 of that year, a resolution was adopted "... that the research fund that was initiated by Prof. [Wm. T.] Home, and which is now held by this Society, be named the Wm. T. Home Research Fund of the Avocado Society." And that was done.

In 1945, the Society contributed \$3,000.00 from the Wm. T. Home Research Fund to the University of California for research on avocado root rot ["decline"]—the first of many significant grants that would issue from that fund in the course of time.

In 1948, the members of the Society in annual meeting recommended to the board of directors, by passage of a motion, that the annual dues of the Society be increased from \$3.00 to \$5.00, with the added \$2.00 to be used specifically for research "as the directors see fit." The recommendation was duly adopted by the board, and the \$2.00 per member annual allocation has persisted to the present.

We haven't come to the Marvin B. Rounds part yet, but bear with me.

In 1952, the Society created within the library of the Citrus Experiment Station, the Wm.

T. Home Memorial Collection of avocado literature and artifacts, and established within its own structure the Wm. T. Home Library Fund. The old "Wm. T. Home Research Fund" became simply the "General Research Fund," and so continued for several years. As withdrawals were made from the General Research Fund from time to time, the directors replenished it from uncommitted reserves as required.

Marvin B. Rounds died in 1964. He had been a director of the Society since 1944, was its president in 1948 and 1949, served continuously as chairman of the Variety Committee from 1946, and in 1948 headed the Society's newly-formed Avocado Research Committee. He was twice the recipient of the Society's Award of Honor (1943 and 1956)—one of only three persons ever so honored. In 1966, the board of directors chose to recognize the late Mr. Rounds once more, though posthumously on this occasion, and did so by establishing the "Marvin B. Rounds Research Fund" to replace the old General Research Fund.

And that is how it is today.

The MBR Research Fund is not rich. It currently holds \$16,609.02— quite a bit over the \$8.00 on hand 47 years ago. It still is far too small to fund even a single major research project, but it does provide the means to "seed" special projects from time to time, or to provide some critically needed manpower or equipment or supplies that will otherwise not be available. And it serves as the repository for private donations of funds to finance urgently needed research for which there are presently no other funds available, such as those currently being solicited to expand root rot and thrips research.