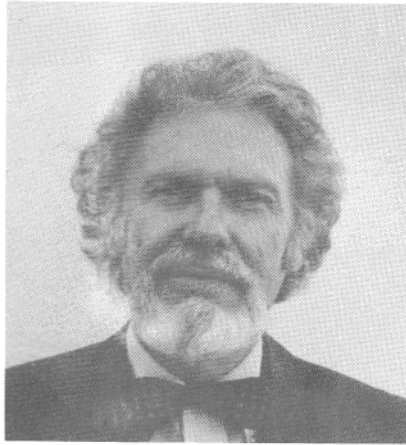
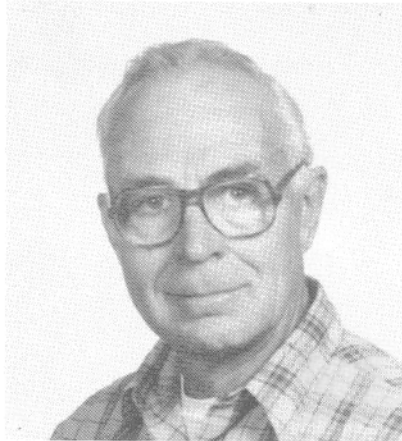


California Avocado Society 1988 Yearbook 72: 20-23



Warren Currier



William 'Henley' Brokaw

Over the past 50 years, the California Avocado Society has honored 73 individuals—three of them twice—for outstanding meritorious service to the California avocado industry.

The board of directors has chosen this year to honor two outstandingly meritorious individuals.

Each of these two awardees is remarkably different from the other in many ways. What they have in common, however, is that both have the ability to see the "Grand Picture" and both are dauntless "doers."

And one other characteristic shared by the two is that neither, I think, knows that an honor is about to be conferred.

I prefer not to call our two heroes up front until I have told you about them. It is embarrassing to stand before an audience with nothing to do but listen to someone giving your eulogy while you are still breathing.

The first of this year's awardees is a man whose contributions to our industry are numerous and diverse. He is an articulate intellectual, bold, outspoken—and not infrequently controversial. He says what he thinks, and he says it in public and says it in print; but what is important is that he is right more often than he is wrong, and he is effective. This industry is far better off with Warren Currier a part of it, than it might have been without him.

Warren Currier is a native of Hollywood, California. His early schooling was in California, and his college education was acquired at the University of Texas and Tulane University during a four-year hitch in the U.S. Navy. When he returned to civilian life, Warren entered the world of securities and investment and was active in it for 24 years. In the interest of time, I will jump over that portion of his life history and identify for you the most significant of his activities since he entered the avocado industry—those, at least, of which I have knowledge.

Warren Currier is, among other things, an avocado grower. He is also the chief executive of Agrocado Management Corporation, headquartered in Escondido, managing properties that produce avocados, limes, dates, and figs. He is an officer of the Agricultural Management Avocado Trade Association.

Warren is a director and the executive secretary of Avocado Growers Association, of which he was an organizer and which he also serves as editor and publisher of its sometimes contentious but always thought-provoking weekly newsletter, "The Market Report."

He is a member of the operating committee of the Pinkerton Growers Association and a director of the Gwen Growers Association—organizations he had a major role in founding to establish appropriate positions in the industry for these new varieties.

He is the secretary of the California Avocado Development Organization—CADO—that has been rejuvenated, with much credit due to Warren, into a constructively useful association of handlers.

He is treasurer of California Avocado Advocate, the small but rather important political action committee for our industry.

He is a commissioner on the California Kiwifruit Commission—and those of you who attend meetings of the California Avocado Commission would take oath that he is a member of that Commission also; but he isn't. And he is a member of the agricultural advisory council at the University of California at Riverside.

Somehow, he has time for other activities—tennis, bridge, and extensive reading being among them. I don't want to tire you by reciting all of them, but I must mention one more.

Warren Currier is a director of the California Avocado Society, first elected to a seat on the board in 1986, though he frequently attended board meetings earlier. His contributions as a director have been prolific and invaluable. More important, they have had and will continue to have much to do with the new, aggressive, productive programs of the California Avocado Society. A recent example of a product of his energy, is that the registration in California of Aliette® for use on bearing avocado trees is close to reality. The program he devised and personally developed to obtain thousands of petitions to the California Department of Food and Agriculture did the trick.

Let me introduce the second honoree, who is to receive a very special award—one that only three other individuals have ever been given: Dr. J. Eliot Coit, Marvin B. Rounds, and Dr. George A. Zentmyer.

This gentleman has already received the Society's award of honor—ten years ago. He has continued to make mighty contributions to the advancement of the avocado industry, worldwide. Many of them are recorded in the Yearbooks of the Society.

In the 53 years I have been involved in the avocado industry, I have never met a man more selflessly dedicated to its advancement and improvement. I have never met a man more generous with time, counsel, and material goods. I have met very few whose vision and energy and capacity for positive thought can equal his, and we are the beneficiaries.

William Henley—Hank—Brokaw is an avocado grower and one of the industry's premier nurserymen. He is a scientist, an innovator of propagation techniques, a plantsman without a peer in the world of avocado culture.

Hank is a director of the California Avocado Society—has been, for 20 years. He has twice served double terms as our president—in 1973 and '74 and in 1986 and '87. In recent times, he has threatened to "retire" from the board—but we cannot afford to let him do that. He is a leader in our industry, and we dare not let him go.

Hank's life story is an interesting one. I can offer you only tidbits from it.

He is, like Warren Currier, a native son—born and reared in Whittier. He attended Harvard University, from which he graduated in 1951 with a pre-med B. A. Two years later, he received from the University of Chicago an A.M. in anthropology.

In his own words, Hank declared:

"The choice for anthropology was a result of a missionary bent. I felt that I could be useful in solving problems for people with other cultures. . . . I, in my great wisdom, was to be aid, helper, and understander of backward peoples in a period of rapid social and technical change. . . . At Chicago, I learned that most anthropology students are more scholars than saviors, and that applied social engineering was not a concept that automatically elicited support. Further, I found that, for me, tracing potsherds and correlating them with bones and other relics was kind of a bore. So, after earning an A.M., I got out and made my way back home to California to prepare for teaching in the secondary school system."

While at Chicago, incidentally, Hank met and later married Ellen McGiffert. That was a good move.

Hank became a teacher of high school students in Ventura County—math and science—and while so occupied, began growing avocado, citrus, and kiwi nursery plants. He and Ellen purchased 500 avocado seeds, planted them in their backyard—and so was born Brokaw Nursery, Inc. Over the years, the nursery prospered and became famous for products of the finest quality.

With his own resources and in cooperation with university researchers, Hank has made Brokaw Nursery a virtual laboratory from which has come knowledge to benefit avocado growers everywhere. How many nursery trees the Brokaw Nursery has provided to researchers and to industry causes without compensation, I cannot even try to estimate. I am confident, however, that the number is a very large one.

Hank is active in several organizations, and has held a variety of offices in them. He has produced many papers on avocado culture—some of which the Avocado Society has published. I have already told you that Hank is a "doer." There isn't time to recite his many accomplishments. Trust me: it would be an impressive list.

Hank Brokaw really never ceased being a teacher. He is one still—to growers and students of horticulture and, especially, his fellow members of the board of directors. During the past two years, as the president of a Society he felt was atrophying, Hank laid out a course for the board that would rebuild the California Avocado Society into an essential, cause-minded, action-oriented educational institution that would attract into its

ranks the large numbers of California avocado growers who— unfortunately—do not seem to know or care that the Society exists and is serving their interests. Hank's dream is still in progress, but I think it is going to come true. I hope all of you do, too—and will help make it so.

Now, Warren Currier and Hank Brokaw, I would like you to come forward—and I would like you to be accompanied by Marion and Ellen. They had just as much to do with what you have accomplished as you did; and I want the audience to recognize them, too—even though we don't have for them the medals they richly deserve.

—*J.S. Shepherd, Director Emeritus*