

Award of Honor 1991



Clifford A. Ranney

(Presentation of the Award of Honor was made by Director H. Leonard Francis with the following remarks.)

Everyone appreciates someone who selflessly gives of himself for the benefit of others. What I appreciate is when a person tackles a problem that is thankless. Even if he is successful, most people will not know of the problem's significance and the solution's benefit to them.

Our Award of Honor is given today to a man who heard of a problem, volunteered to solve it, and even once it was solved had to debate time after time after time its technique and validity.

Every year at the start of the season, every one of us wonders when we can legally start picking our fruit. Our fruit must meet a maturity standard. It used to be 8% oil. We used to have a method to determine oil percent of fruit. The analysis required use of a material called Halowax. Suddenly, the world was not going to have any more Halowax; its manufacturer stopped making it. State and University of California people—Dr. Charles Coggins, in particular—devised a technique of measuring the percentage of dry weight but could not correlate this to maturity levels of the various avocado varieties.

Up stepped Cliff Ranney—in 1984, I believe.

Thousands of fruit samples later, hundreds of taste tests and committee meetings and debates later, all by a volunteer with other volunteers at no compensation, dry weight standards were determined.

Cliff Ranney has spent all of his 63 years in California except for the years he spent at Yale University obtaining his degree in chemical engineering and his two year stint in the Army Chemical Corps. Immediately after graduation from college, he joined Cal-Compac Foods, a major producer of chili powder and paprika, where he was employed until his retirement in 1981. Besides instituting new testing procedures in the laboratory, he was instrumental in developing new seed strains and dehydration processes for the

company. He supervised the construction of an oil extractor and expanded the dehydration to two other areas. At forty, he became president. The company still taps his expertise on all facets of the business.

Cliff is also a volunteer in the International Executive Service Corps, an organization that sends retired executives into developing countries to give technical help to businesses. He has been on assignments in the Philippines, helping a candied pineapple company, and in Guatemala, giving assistance in vegetable dehydration.

Agriculture—particularly Mediterranean climate agriculture—has always been one of Cliff's interests. His agricultural background runs the gamut from plant genetics to dairy to citrus. In the early 1970s, he developed his avocado grove in the San Luis Rey area. In order to make all forty acres of his virgin terrain plantable, he cleared away every boulder and hired land moving equipment to relocate the clay soil and develop an underground drainage system. Everything on the grove is measured metrically—even the tree spacing. At any given time, you will find several agricultural experiments going on in his grove or in his home laboratory.

It was my pleasure to serve with Cliff on the Avocado Commission's Production Research Committee. No one evaluated our projects more intensely than Cliff. His education in chemistry and developmental work on other agricultural products helped our Research Committee relate more directly to the researchers. Always, his concern has been for work to benefit the avocado industry.

The industry is indebted, and the California Avocado Society honors Mr. Cliff Ranney.