



Richard, Nick Sr. and Nick Jr. Stehly of the Stehly Ranch in Valley Center.

## 2006 Oliver Atkins Award of Excellence

### The Nick Stehly Family

Valley Center, CA

*Award presented by Gary Bender*

The California Avocado Society's award for meritorious service to the California avocado industry (the **Oliver Atkins Award**) was presented to the **Nick Stehly** family of Valley Center. The award was given to this family at the Avocado Society Annual Meeting of 2006.

The award honors their participation in numerous University of California research trials. These include:

- **Avocado Pruning Trials** conducted from 1998 – 2005 with farm advisors Gary Bender, Ben Faber, and Cal Poly professor Greg Partida.
- **Salt Tolerant Rootstock Trials** conducted from 2000 – 2006 with

researchers David Crowley, Mary Lu Arpaia, and Gary Bender.

- **Avocado Bloom Spray Trials** (2000 – 2006) with Gary Bender.
- **Root Rot Rootstock and Irrigation Trial** (2004 – 2006) conducted with John Menge and Gary Bender.

The Avocado Society recognizes and appreciates the time and energy donated by the family members and their employees in making these projects successful. The contribution of land and trees for experiments is especially appreciated.

The Nick Stehly Ranch has about 400 acres of avocados and 200 acres of citrus. Nick Sr. planted the ranch in the early 1950's after selling the family farm in Orange County and moving to Valley Center. Nick and his wife Judy have eleven children. Nick Sr. and his sons Nick Jr. and Richard run the ranch, and one of the daughters (Pauline) runs the office. Five of his other sons run the Stehly Brothers Well Drilling Service which is based at the ranch.

The Nick Stehly Ranch is the perfect location for research projects for many reasons. Nick and his sons are very interested in research and helped tremendously with all of the trials. Whenever I was at the ranch to prune, several members of the family would grab chain saws to assist. They were of tremendous help when it came to the harvests because I had to weigh and count the fruit from each tree: a job I could not have done by myself.

In addition to their help, their ranch had many of the conditions that we needed for research. Most of the trees were overcrowded (Pruning Trials!), several spots on the ranch have root rot (Root Rot Rootstock Trials!), some of the areas at the ranch appear to have low fruit set (Bloom Spray Fertilizer Trials!), and all of their ground water is salty (Salt Tolerant Rootstock Trials).

We are pleased to present this award to a family that is well-deserving, interested in research that will further the industry, and epitomize the qualities of an avocado-producing farm family in California.

Congratulations to the Nick Stehly family!