Changing of the Guard

In 1993, Ted Batkin was hired as the director of the California Citrus Research Board. He broadened the scope of CRB research from a narrow focus of research issues such as quality control, clonal protection, new variety development and general research to what it has become today. Ted became the CRB President and research visionary for the industry.

Ted Batkin has done an exceptional job in leading the Board through years of critical issues as well as expanding the scope of the Board. As his tenure comes to a close, new leadership will be asked to fill his shoes in midyear of 2013. It is a time to reflect on the challenges and visions of Ted’s career as our President.

Ted’s major challenge has been to chart new waters amongst ten different chairmen, four Governors, five California Secretaries of Agriculture, numerous CDFA officials, UC Presidents and Vice Presidents for Agriculture and Natural Resources, many campus Deans, world-renowned researchers and Center Directors from the USDA /APHIS, Los Alamos National Labs, California and national universities -- all of whom have assisted our program.

Ted has served on almost every state, national, and many international committees supporting the research efforts of the citrus community. He has tirelessly worked on our behalf for two decades, and we are better off for his efforts. Some of the highlights of the two decades of research, progress, and issues are as follows:

Ted Batkin currently serves as Chairman of the California Specialty Crops Research Team, member of the USDA-APHIS Huanglongbing Technical Advisory Committee, and Co-Chair of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Huanglongbing Task Force. He is past Co-Chair of the CDFA Diaprepes Task Force, Chairman of the National Citrus Research Council, and Chairman and founding member of the National Plant Pathogen Research Consortium. He was a key participant in the development of the Citrus Health Response Plan (CHRP), the effort led by USDA-APHIS aimed at protecting citrus production nationally.

He is a member of the UC President’s Advisory Commission for Agriculture and the UC Riverside Chancellor’s Ag Advisory Council. He co-chaired the Governor’s Exotic Fruit Fly Task Force overseeing the Medfly sterile release program and was involved with the development of the brown citrus aphid and ACP/HLB national task forces.

He also served as a member of the CDFA Pierce’s Disease Task Force and Chairman of its Citrus Subcommittee, Chairman of the California Citrus Tristeza Research Coalition, and member of the Program Advisory Committee of the University of California’s Exotic Pests and Diseases Research Program. He served as Co-Chair of the Safeguarding Review of USDA-APHIS’ entire Plant Protection and Quarantine Program; the report became the guiding document for the reorganization of APHIS.

Ted guided the CRB’s creation of the Education and Outreach Committee and the subsequent development of the mobile education lab and many grower seminars. These efforts were important in the education of growers about glassy-winged sharpshooter and its effects on citrus and grapes. The CRB now has an

As we anticipate the transition to new leadership, we can be proud of what the CRB has achieved under Ted’s leadership and guidance.
An Eye Towards the Future

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annual presence at the World Ag Expo (Tulare Farm Show) for the benefit of growers and the education of the general public. The Citrograph magazine was re-established and is now published by CRB and has become an internationally respected journal.

During Ted’s tenure, funding for scientific research transitioned from field level to molecular and genetic issues, which is allowing for the development of disease detection and diagnostic platforms for the pathogens facing the industry.

Ted was instrumental in setting up a rapid response to ACP in California. He aided in the formation of the ACP-HLB operations program, commercial field trapping, the establishment of our own nationally certified laboratory for citrus disease detection, especially of ACP and HLB. At the CRB, he established the research committee structure and the method in which the Board evaluates research proposals. Ted will be leaving us with a revised and current strategic plan for the CRB.

As we anticipate the transition to new leadership, we can be proud of what the CRB has achieved under Ted’s leadership and guidance. We have an internationally respected program. We give Ted our thanks for his service and leadership. The industry will formally bid farewells during 2013.

Dan Dreyer and Justin Brown – the chair and vice-chair of the CRB Communications Committee – have had the lead roles in making plans for the California Citrus Conference, which will take place in October (see pages 12-19).

Dreyer joined CRB as an alternate in 2009-2010, and Brown came on as an alternate in 2010-2011, both representing District 1. Each comes from a family with deep roots in California citrus. Justin is a fifth-generation grower, and Dan is a fourth-generation producer whose family began growing citrus in San Diego County in the 1920s.

Based in Exeter, Dan has wine grapes and some olives and pomegranates in addition to his citrus, and he also owns and operates Ag Services, Inc., a farm management company. Justin, whose family is a fixture in Tulare County citrus, grows several varieties along with table grapes south of Orange Cove.

When it comes to industry issues and research interests, both are in leadership positions on the CRB Production Efficiency Committee. Dan lists other main interests as new variety development, pest and disease management, and “irrigation innovations in combination with water supply issues and nutrient management.” Justin’s interests include marketing issues, and he notes with respect to variety development that “we must never lose sight of, or compromise, the high quality flavor and other characteristics that California citrus is known for.”