Tony Kofranek To Be Inducted Into the California Floriculture Hall of Fame
by Heiner Lieth, Chair, Dept. of Environmental Horticulture

It is my pleasure to announce that Professor Emeritus Tony Kofranek, one of our department’s founding members, is being inducted into the California Floriculture Hall of Fame. As you may be aware, Tony has done an immense amount for the floriculture industry and this is obviously a just reward for his many years of service.

The California Floriculture Hall of Fame is administered by the Kee Kitayama Research Foundation and its education committee, the California Ornamental Research Federation. This award was established in 1986 to honor those individuals who have made outstanding and permanent contributions to the floriculture industry in the areas of production, marketing, transportation, research and legislative activity. Recipients are honored at each of the California floral markets where their names appear engraved on permanent plaques located at the San Francisco Flower Market, the Los Angeles Flower Market and the San Diego International Floral Trade Center.

Contributions to the California floral industry
Dr. Kofranek’s contributions to the California floral industry span half a century, starting in the early 1940s and including 18 years at UCLA and 17 years at UC Davis; since 1987 he has been Professor Emeritus. During his career he made innumerable contributions to teaching, research, and extension in the industry. Students who were mentored or advised by him can be found throughout the industry. His commitment to students was always a major element of his work. One example of this was the spearheading of a chapter of the national horticulture honor society (Pi Alpha Xi) and taking undergraduate students to flower judging competitions throughout the United States.

Professor Kofranek’s dedication to the floral industry has resulted in a legacy of research information that is still in use today. He worked on photoperiodic control of a number of the ornamental crops including chrysanthemum and Majestic daisies and pioneered the use of cyclical lighting which is used widely to reduce the energy costs of photoperiodic lighting. He also explored the effect of salinity on ornamental crops. He did pioneering work on fertilization and plant nutrition of a number of ornamental crops, an area that is becoming particularly relevant again as growers are finding it more important to recirculate irrigation water. The resulting information on deficiency levels in chrysanthemum, rose, and azalea is still in use today in diagnosing tissue samples for nutrient deficiencies. Prior to moving from UCLA to UC Davis he also worked on drip irrigation technology and fertilizer injection.

In the mid 1960s, Professor Kofranek was part of the group of UCLA faculty that moved to the (then new) UC Davis campus to form what is today the Environmental Horticulture Department. The founding faculty was responsible for developing research, extension and teaching programs with statewide focus and were instrumental in achieving an international reputation for the new department.

Professor Kofranek’s focus at UC Davis included continued work on production of ornamental crops such as chrysanthemum,

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rose, and azalea, as well as research and extension work on postharvest physiology. This coincided with the emerging needs in the industry for shipping floral products. He was involved in pioneering work on the use of silver thiosulfate (STS) in extending the vase life of flowers and forced-air cooling to reduce the adverse effects of shipping flowers long distances.

His work had an enormous impact in the industry and led to him writing the textbooks on cut chrysanthemum production and potted azalea production.

In addition to mentoring students, Tony was also a mentor to new faculty in the Environmental Horticulture program as it was taking shape. This was particularly true for Professor Michael Reid and myself. His dedication to the industry and the relevancy of his work helped Professor Reid and I as we built our research and extension programs.

Last year I invited Tony to join me on a two-day class field trip in the industry (a decade after his official retirement). At virtually every stop on the tour, a grower, production manager, or owner recognized Tony and dropped everything to greet him. Many had been either his students or collaborators on research projects with him, or met him at one of his many talks. At that point it became clear to me that Tony had made a lasting impact and his record of accomplishment is clearly of the caliber that the California Floriculture Hall of Fame is designed to honor.

Leadership in local, state and national floral associations

During his career, Dr. Kofranek was a member of the leading horticultural science societies and worked on research under funding from virtually all flower grower associations nationally and in California. His significant contribution to floriculture resulted in his receiving the highest honor bestowed by the American Society of Horticultural Science, the prestigious Fellow of the Society awarded in 1978. Other important awards bestowed on him include the California State Florist Association Award of Merit in 1966, the Monterey Bay Flower Growers Award in 1987, and the prestigious Alex Laurie Award in 1993.

Biographical information

Anton Miles Kofranek was born in Chicago in 1921. He was in the army from 1942 to 1945. He obtained his BS from the University of Minnesota in 1947. He then studied under Prof. Kenneth Post at Cornell where he received his MS in 1949 and his PhD in 1950. He soon joined the faculty at UCLA as an instructor of floriculture. In the mid 1960s, the University of California realigned its horticulture program and the primary focus on agriculture was shifted to the new UC campus at Davis. Tony relocated and established a distinguished career as Professor in the Environmental Horticulture Department at UC Davis from 1968 to 1987. He is currently Professor Emeritus and frequently travels internationally with his partner, Wyn Floyd.

The ceremony for Tony’s induction into the California Floriculture Hall of Fame will occur on October 7 in San Jose in conjunction with the Kee Kitayama Golf Tournament at the Cinnabar Hills Golf Club. Call 831-724-1130 for details.