



## *2011 Agricultural Award Winners*



*Left to right Bob Barca, David Peck, and Brent Hazen*



AGRI-BUSINESSPERSON OF THE YEAR  
MICHAEL DEAN DRAPER (POSTHUMOUSLY)

Michael Dean Draper was born January 8, 1954 in San Luis Obispo to Jim & Edna Draper. Mike attended schools in Santa Maria, graduating from Santa Maria High School in 1973. Many locals may remember him as quite an accomplished athlete – a triple threat: In football, wrestling, and baseball. As a result of his incredible high school athletic accomplishments, Mike was named CIF Southern Section Athlete of the Year and was inducted into the CIF Southern California Hall of Fame.

Mike went on to graduate from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a degree in Crop Science in 1978. He was employed by Frank J. Olocco Company of Guadalupe as a pest control advisor and later left to become part owner of Santa Maria Valley Crop Service, where he led the company for more than 15 years. In 2005, Mike acquired full ownership of SMVCS with his son Mikey as his partner.

Mike built up his company over the years as a place where his customers were treated with honesty, integrity, and respect. Mike was extremely knowledgeable in his business and would never promote anything that was not necessary and only wanted the best for his customers. To Mike, the relationships established were more important than what he could do for bugs and disease.

Mike's success also allowed him to give back to his community in many ways, but this was most evident at fair time during the Junior Livestock Auction. (To quote Mike) "You're never gonna believe this one, but..." on several occasions, Mike would stay throughout the entire day to make sure those kids were supported and, though few may know this, Mike was one of the largest supporters financially, coming in second only to a foundation in Santa Barbara.

When asked what legacy his father had left him in the business, Mikey replied, "I've got the bug and fertilizer stuff figured out. What my dad taught me was how to treat people. That is the most valuable lesson he taught me and his legacy."

Mike was taken from us September 12, 2010 at the young age of 56. Mikey carries on the business of Santa Maria Valley Crop Service. He and his wife, Jessica gave birth to Michael Deacon Draper just a few months after Mike's passing, but he was already his Grandpa's pride & joy. Mike also left behind his beautiful daughter, Alyson; his parents, Jim & Edna; his Brother Jimmy & sister-in-law, Karen; sister, Vickie Draper and Joeline Strozzi; and Lisa, the mother of his children, along with many nieces and nephews, and numerous friends who will continue to miss him.



## FARMER OF THE YEAR

DAVID PECK

Born in Minnesota, David Peck was raised in California. Both of his parents came from farming families, wanting no part of that for them, his mother was a teacher and his father was in the military and a Civil Engineer. Although the farming gene skipped his parents, David found a compelling desire to keep that farming history alive. David obtained his Pest Control Advisor's License in 1976 and he earned a bachelor's degree in 1980 from Cal Poly Pomona in Agricultural Biology. He worked for eight years as a crop production consultant, then for several farming operations in Oxnard, Carpinteria, Oceanside and Santa Barbara growing strawberries and raspberries. In 1992, David moved his family to Santa Maria, and in 1995, was hired as General Manager of Manzanita Berry Farms.

Manzanita Berry Farms produces premium strawberries exclusively for WellPict, Inc. and while known for growing quality fruit, David has become a leader in industry innovations. One of the most significant steps he has taken was to completely eliminate the use of methyl-bromide from his growing program, several years before the mandatory U.S. phase out. He is also recognized for his extensive use of biological agents to control spider mites and worm pests, as well as his use of organic growth stimulating proteins which reduce the need for pesticides and promotes healthier crops.

Over the years, David has opened his fields up to allow various trials. What has truly set David apart as a farmer is that he shares his knowledge with his peers. Whether the trials work or not, he opens up those findings to help other producers when making decisions regarding their production techniques. In 2006, he added 60 acres of Certified Organic strawberries to his operation and he continues to try different varieties trying to hit peak production at a time when the markets are high. Currently, David is also working on various methods of waste-water reclamation and new techniques in irrigation.

Manzanita Berry Farms was voted the Santa Maria Valley Strawberry Grower of the Year in 1998 and is a former nominee of the prestigious IPM (Integrated Pest Management) Innovator of the Year, awarded by the California Department of Agriculture.

David's motivation to continually try new methods comes from seeking to produce premium fruit in a method that is safe for his employees and safe for the consumer. His willingness to share his knowledge comes from his desire to leave his industry in a better position than when he began and that would be his legacy. David's wife, Diana is the Office Manager for Manzanita Berry Farms. They have five children (4 daughter/1 son) and eight grandchildren.



2011 LIVESTOCK PERSON OF THE YEAR

ROBERT (BOB) BARCA

Robert (Bob) Barca was born in 1929 in Santa Maria, Ca and is a third generation rancher on their San Antonio Road Ranch south of Orcutt. Bob's Grandfather, Bartolomeo Barca, was born in 1860 in Canton, Ticino, Switzerland and came to California in search for a new beginning and farming opportunities. In 1903 Bartolomeo bought the land Bob ranches today on San Antonio Road and started a dairy along with dry-land farming of beans, sugar-beets and hay. Bob's father, Peter continued the dairy until 1951 when Bob's father and uncle focused more on beef cattle and farming.

While attending Santa Maria High School and Santa Maria junior college, Bob played some baseball and football. Bob met Marilyn, his wife of 61 years, through mutual friends and Bob would often run into the younger Marilyn while Bob was playing sports in Junior College. The Santa Maria Junior College teams used the Santa Maria High School sports facilities and Bob would make sure he ran into Marilyn often while he was on the campus. Bob and Marilyn married in 1950 and had two children, Richard and Leslie.

Once married, Bob started working for a local farming company then known as Ferini and Ardantz and ran their cattle operation. Bob worked for 12 years for Petrolane a propane distribution company, but found himself drawn back to full-time cattle operations. When his father died in 1973, Bob took over the family cattle operation and again worked the herds for the Ardantz and Ferini family, which he continues to do to this date under the newer company name Betteravia Farms.

Bob has largely concentrated his personal cattle operations to include Angus and Limousin breeds. His cow-calf operation now consists of 60 mother cows. The Betteravia Farms cattle operation consists of about 250 mother cows, of mostly Angus and Charolais crossbreds. Bob feels the key to successful cattle operations is to buy good bulls.

Through the years, Bob became well known for his roping, hunting and trap shooting skills. Bob no longer ropes and considers himself now a "quad-runner" cowboy, but Bob is well known for his wealth of knowledge and experience and can be found at many brandings throughout the year, being the experienced cow-hand that is needed to make sure the cattle are properly handled.

Bob has been an Elk for over 47 years and has been involved with nearly all aspects of the Elks rodeo, but enjoys working the roping shoots the most. Bob has also been involved in the boards of the Santa Maria Sportsmen's Association, the Santa Maria Gun Club, the Santa Barbara County Cattlemen's Association and is a member of Rangeland Improvement Association.



2011 DIRECTORS CHOICE AWARD

BRENT HAZEN

Brent Hazen was born and raised in Iowa. His youth and spare time was spent farming, playing sports, animals in 4H and participating in calf roping in rodeos. In 1980, he sold his farm and moved his wife Cheryl and twin boy's Blake and Bryon to Lompoc. Bryon and Cheryl passed away in 1997 and 2004 respectively.

When arriving in Lompoc Brent began working in a fast-growing company that his father-in-law, Donald Willis started in 1973, Wilco Distributors, Inc. that produce gopher and squirrel baits. In the thirty-one years he has been with Wilco Distributors, Brent has helped bring about some new products and assisted in ex-panding the company. Along with Donald now deceased Brent owns Fort Dodge Chemical, Inc., Hazen Suppli-ers, Inc., Noris Chemical Corp., Southwest Chemical Company Inc. Donald passed away on August 24, 2007.

Brent retired from Wilco Distributors on January 1, 2011. He still keeps aware of the company happenings, and acts as an advisor.

Brent is still very involved in different organizations including Friends of The Santa Barbara County Fair, Lompoc Community Bank Advisory Committee, Lompoc FFA Ag Advisor, Lompoc Kiwanis, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Wilco Distributors has been a Sponsor of Agriculture and Cattleman's Day at Santa Barbara County Fair for several years.

Brent and his wife Margo enjoy following the PRB (Professional Bull Riders) events. Brent also enjoys deer, duck and elk hunting.

They also love spending time with their granddaughter and awaiting the arrival of their new grandson, children of Blake and Jennifer Hazen.