



Hall of Fame

Class III



NATIONAL
Watermelon
ASSOCIATION



The Innovators Class

Matt Dietz - Laredo, Texas

Arnold Mack - Lake Wales, Florida

Bruce Price - Hinton, Oklahoma



Matt Dietz

Matt Dietz began his career with his brother Bob, in the produce business working for his father's firm Chicago-based R.H. Dietz & Co. That beginning led to a career of inventions and ingenuity.

In 1960, Matt revolutionized the winter melon deal. Working with Tony Hudler on International Paper, they invented the first watermelon carton that held 3-5 watermelons. Recognizing the carton's benefits, the design was adopted and soon became an industry standard.

In 1963, Matt helped to develop the first automatic bulk watermelon loading and grading machine, once again creating an advancement that revolutionized the industry.

In the mid-60s, Matt founded his own produce company, Matt Dietz Co., in Laredo, Texas. The company grew and shipped watermelons, onions, honeydews and cantaloupes.

Matt served as an officer and Executive Committee member of the National Watermelon Association, as well as with the Texas Chapter. He passed away on July 27, 2008 at 83 years of age. His contributions to the association, and to the industry are felt still today.



Arnold Mack

A native of McCullough, Alabama, with family roots back to Ireland, Arnold Mack began a life-long career in the produce business by partnering with a friend to grow watermelons in south Alabama. He began this career following a short stint in the family's funeral parlor business.

As Arnold told it, "We couldn't put 'em in the ground fast enough to grow the business, so I decided on a different approach. Getting 'em out of the ground."

In 1972, he began brokering watermelons and vegetables, followed by purchasing a farm east of Lake Wales, Florida that today exceeds 4,000 acres and grows watermelons, potatoes, cabbage and corn.

Arnold served as an officer and on the executive committee of the National Watermelon Association, and multiple state chapters, for many years. Most notably, he served as the Chairman of the Auction Committee, with results that were admired by other commodity groups.

Arnold was called home on April 20, 2016 at 72 years of age. His Legacy has become legend throughout the National Watermelon Association, and it will live on with us for many years.



Bruce Price

Following graduation from Oklahoma State University with a degree in Agronomy, Bruce Price began a storied career in the produce business. His first job out of college was with the American Seed Trade Association, which acquainted him with the developer of the seedless watermelon, Dr. O.J. Eigsti. Soon After, Bruce became a seed grower, and part-owner of American Seedless Watermelon Seed Corporation. In 1986, fifty percent of the company was sold to Sun World of California, and Bruce was named General Manager. Grower contracts were instituted, and seedless watermelons became a consumer favorite nationwide.

As a representative on the National Potato Promotion Board, Bruce was convinced that the commodity promotion system would help to reverse a twenty year decline in per capita consumption of watermelons. He drafted a proposal to create the National Watermelon Promotion Board in 1983. Following an extensive vetting process with the Association's leadership, legislation was introduced into the U.S. Congress, rule making with USDA was begun, and outreach meetings were held across the country. Bruce gives much credit for the assistance, leadership and formidable clout of Mr. Buddy Leger (Cordele, Ga) to get this deal done.

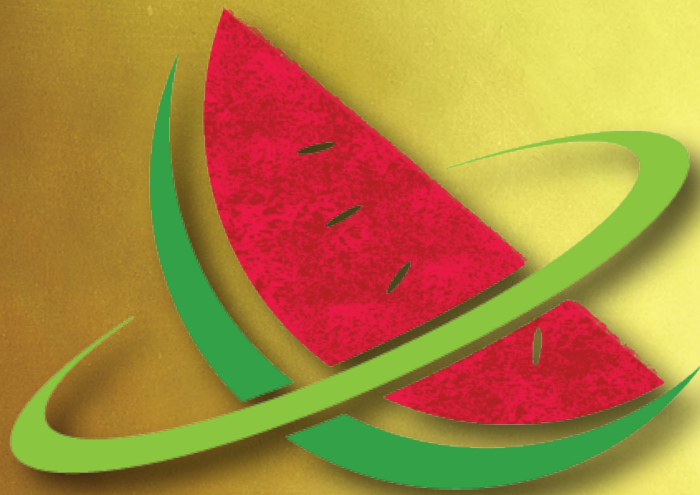
Bruce served as an officer and Executive Committee member of the National Watermelon Association, and also with the Texas Chapter. He was elected by hi constituents and served as a State Senator in the Oklahoma Legislature from 1992 - 2004. It is with great pride and thanks that we honor Bruce Price for his contributions to our Association, and to the watermelon industry. Job well done!

The Inaugural Class

B.G. Anderson Eustis, Florida	Bob Deitz Chicago, Illinois	Harmon R. Lawson Morven, Georgia
Tom Ayooob Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	J. B. Easterlin Montezuma, Georgia	Buddy Leger Cordele, Georgia
Bob Bloebaum Clermont, Florida	Gordon Etheridge Raleigh, North Carolina	J.D. Lowe, Jr. Henderson, Texas
Percy Bunch Murfreesboro, North Carolina	Gerald Funderburk Jefferson, South Carolina	Wallace Luffman Salisbury, Maryland
John Campbell Lakeland, Florida	W.W. "Coonbottom" Glenn Marianna, Florida	Ralph Meitin Zellwood, Florida
Nancy Childers Morven, Georgia	Al Harrison Nogales, Arizona	Howard Sorrells Arcadia, Florida
Oren Childers Cordele, Georgia	Vern Highley Fresno, California	Vincent 'Jim' Vitale Detroit, Michigan
John Cooper Centre, Alabama	Josephine Hughes Houston, Texas	C.C. Winkler Vincennes, Indiana
F.H. Dicks, Jr. Barnwell, South Carolina	Dallas Jones Clermont, Florida	Ernie Zaferis Los Angeles, California
	Bill Knowles Leesburg, Florida	

Our Founding Fathers

Capt. E. Bell Wade & Bell Trenton, Florida	Frank H. Johnson Hilton, New York	D.H. Gilbert Monticello, Florida
David Brown Shackelford & Brown Albany, Georgia	E.H. Kalmon Albany Produce Company Albany, Georgia	Fuller Groover Fuller Groover Company Quitman, Georgia
Mercer Brown Johnson & Brown Albany, Georgia	James Leonard Leonard Crosset, Riley Cincinnati, Ohio	W.A. Gullede Gullede Brothers Verbena, Alabama
B.J. Christman Georgia Fruit Exchange Atlanta, Georgia	Henry Mabbett Whipple & Mabbett Quitman, Georgia	V.L. Hansen B.D. Anguish Chicago, Illinois
Ike Cohn Chicago, Illinois	J.A. Murrell J.A. Murrell Company McIntosh, Florida	R.L. Higgs Fitzgerald, Georgia
S.G. Gay Trenton, Florida	Robert H. Pennington Pennington - Geissler Company Evansville, Indiana	O.K. Jelks O.K. Jelks and Sons Quitman, Georgia



NATIONAL
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The National Watermelon Association has stood the test of time for 104 years. With its beginning in March of 1914, eighteen (18) people assembled in Atlanta, Georgia with an idea to come together to expand watermelon's horizons. Today, we assemble to honor three (3) individuals who have led, supported and taken great care of the Association across its first century of service.

We all stand at the convention to congratulate the third class of inductees. They have all played a huge roll in the success of the Association, and for that commitment we place their names into the highest honor that we can bestow. The honorees will forever be honored and earned members in the National Watermelon Association Hall of Fame.