



## **HARVEST TIME IN BRENTWOOD**

**P.O. Box 810**

**BRENTWOOD, CA 94513**

### **A Little History** *(Roy Gursky, Secretary-Treasurer)*

In the East County area a need was perceived in the early 70's to do something more than just sell produce to packers. This feeling was probably intensified by a year or two of unusually low farm prices. However, farmers then did not organize well, for that meant jeopardizing their individuality and independence. They overcame that, and with the help of the Contra Costa Farm Bureau, set out to develop a set of by-laws and organize themselves into a marketing group.

They then organized, pursuant to the General Nonprofit Corporation Law of the State of California. Articles of Incorporation were then filed and recorded with the Contra Costa County Recorder May 17, 1976. Harvest Time, Inc. was born, and although the official name was Harvest Time in Brentwood, Inc., any farm or ranch in Contra Costa County was welcome to join, regardless of whether or not they were in Brentwood. Today, we call this the Brentwood Area, which includes Byron, Oakley and Knightsen.

From the by-laws: purpose was to improve business conditions of producers of agricultural commodities in Contra Costa County, operating retail marketing outlets on or near the place where such commodities were produced.

First Directors:        Jack Bloomfield  
                                  Tino Bacchini  
                                  Lee Laird  
                                  Glenn Stonebarger Sr.  
                                  John Slatten

Of these five, only Bacchini still operate under Harvest Time, the others have ceased to exist due to retirement, development of their properties, moved from the area, or decided to go on their own without our marketing expertise.

At the beginning, there were probably not more than ten members, however the records I've salvaged go back no further than 1981. By that time, the group had grown to 29 members, only 8 of which remain today. Others have replaced them and we now stand at 35 members.

Reasons for turnover: Death, land sales for non-farm purposes, business failure, non-suitability to public marketing, failure to maintain respectable image to continue membership, divorce & other family problems, retirement, entire change of operation, loss of leased land whereupon their operations existed, out-growing the small farm situation and need for retail sales.

Reasons for joining: better exposure for existing business  
new markets for existing products  
establishment of new operation  
less advertising expenses for ongoing operation  
maximize income

From 1984 through 1988, the directors organized fund raising BBQs held alternately at George Nunn Farms on Sunset Road and the Gursky Ranch on Apricot Way as a means to finance advertising, a public relations person, and to offset the cost of publishing the annual farm trail map, all with the goal to keep membership dues down, thus attracting new members.

Under the leadership of Ray Harris, a very astute merchandiser with an innovative eye to advertising in the mid 80's, Harvest Time made several changes. Not the least of which was the introduction of advertising in the annual map/brochure. The first advertiser in 1985 was Brentwood Café, which has continued to be a strong supporter of the group to this day. Other changes involved switching printers and a total redesign of the map. In 1986 the Harvest Time signs were redesigned and a new color scheme adopted. This was changed again in 2003 with a more forceful and attractive design which should replace existing signs within a few years.

By 1993 the organization no longer felt the need for monthly Director meetings, and the offices of Secretary and Treasurer were combined. Meredith Nunn of the Farmer's Daughter Produce Stand was elected President, Roy Gursky of Gursky Ranch assumed the added duty of Secretary to his then office of Treasurer. Both have been re-elected to those positions since and handle the day-to-day operations for the organization. (This changed in 2005, Roy is still the Treasurer, but Cathy Wolfe is now the Secretary). Ken Hagen of the Bacchini Ranch has been our President since 2004, and has been a forceful leader, reviewing our by-laws and determining that not just two people should run the organization. We now have a full directorship of five farmer-members with one alternate running our organization and making our day-to-day decisions, the biggest one being the review of the annual brochure/map before it goes to print.

Since 1995 the members decided to eliminate print advertising in newspapers from the budget and reduce membership dues. The largest contributing factor was the success of distribution of the map by the operators of U-Pick cherry farms and ranches in the area. While in 1981 there were only seven members offering U-Pick cherries on less than 90 acres, today there are over twenty-one offering over 290 acres (about 1,500 tons in an average year). These members account for distribution of over 50,000 of our annual map/brochure. The purpose of distribution of the map, of course, is to expose folks to the rest of the farms and ranches that make up Harvest Time and offer more than just cherries. Placement of maps at the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and new housing developments contributed another 20,000 maps distributed. The balance of 10,000 maps printed in 2004 came from the rest of the members at their operations *after* cherry season. The reason they distributed so few was that their

customers were already supplied with a map picked up during the cherry season! Our web site now gets over 350 "hits" a week, which may also contribute to the fact we are sending out less brochures now than in the past.

While the Harvest Time members offer over 640 acres for U-Pick fruits and vegetables, some prefer to market their produce strictly as Picked from over 200 other acres at various fruit, vegetable and nursery stands located throughout the area. Some of these same folks are now participating in the Downtown Brentwood Farmers Market, since that was established in 2004 to further expose their outside-of-town venues, and get the "locals" to see where the produce comes from.

The current map/brochure lists all of the members, what they offer and when their offerings are available. Typically, most roadside stands get going around the middle of May at the start of the cherry season and the balance of the U-Pick offerings after that. The current map should be available in the first part of May and can be requested by sending a stamped, self-addressed #10 envelope to Harvest Time, PO Box 810, Brentwood, CA 94513. Folks can also visit our website: [www.harvest4you.com](http://www.harvest4you.com) to get most of the same information.

With the continued growth of the area comes added pressure to continue farming at all by many of the members, but those that survive should see increased demand for their products from the increasing population as long as the "newcomers" are aware that Harvest Time exists as one of the "Biggest Farmer's Markets" in the East Bay and is just around their corner and down the road no more than four miles away.

## **29th Anniversary**

Since 1976 the original ten members of Harvest Time have grown to over 35 members, still dedicated to offering you the freshest, ripest, and tastiest produce available anywhere. Although development in the area has eliminated many of our growers, the remaining farms and ranches offering their produce as either U-Pick or Picked are still going strong. Take the time and visit the members during the week or weekend with your friends and family for a unique opportunity to see where the produce you see in the stores originates and take home some of the freshest produce available. Please, also support our advertisers that make this brochure possible at no cost to you!

Sincerely,

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