



Steven H. (Doc) Blizzard, Ph.D.

Doctor Blizzard is a native West Virginian and a fifth generation Eastern panhandle fruit grower. His family home is in the Shenandoah Valley of the Eastern panhandle. After leaving his family orchard, he attended West Virginia University and, upon graduation, joined the University faculty at age 23 as an instructor. In 1974, he received his Ph.D. in Plant Pathology and served the university for nearly 20 years as professor and assistant director of the Division of Plant and soil Sciences.

In 1988, he left the university and migrated to the hill country of Texas to serve as president of Texas Hill Country Orchards. He established a 620 acre (300,000 trees) high density trellised orchard and built a packing facility and cold storage. This orchard was located on the 30th parallel and was the southern most largest commercial orchard in the United States. After the new orchard was destroyed by an uncontrollable soil born disease, the project was discontinued. In 1995, he moved to California where he was involved in the establishment of a large Pink Lady apple planting.

Later, Steve joined the Lagomarsino Family Farming operations serving as General Manager of Valley Sweet Packing, a year-round packing operation handling two million boxes annually of grapes, stone fruit, and apples. For the past ten years, Steve has served as Director of Farming for the Lagomarsino Group located in Tulare, California where he manages several thousand acres of grapes, blueberries, stone fruit, and almonds.

Steve joined the IDFTA in 1968. During the last 40 years of his involvement with the organization, he has had 27 yearly educational speaking assignments, emceed 17 annual conference banquets, served 12 years as a director and two (1999-2000) as president, presided over the organization's first annual conference outside of North America in New Zealand in 2000, making the IFTA a truly international organization. Steve served 8 years as chairman of the rootstock research committee, set up and hosted 3 summer tours, and missed only one of Bob Carlson's international tours (his first), and photographed thousands of fruit trees over the world.

Steve considers the IFTA the premier tree fruit organization in the world and contends it was a major factor in his career. "This organization has over the years allowed growers, researchers, extension, and industry support folks to meet on common ground and form an international network that transcends the traditional barriers, allowing an open forum for sharing ideas. Without the IFTA, I could have missed a great career in fruit production, its successes and failures, as well as, some of the greatest minds in the business. However, above all, due totally

to the IFTA, Sandy and I have met and continue to meet a multitude of lifelong friends for which we are thankful daily.”

Steve has served on three different state horticulture societies or association boards: West Virginia, Texas, and California. Currently, he serves as chairman of the board for the California Apple Commission. He has, as a result in large part to IFTA, had speaking engagements in 23 states, 4 Canadian provinces, and 13 country's horticultural societies. His most memorable was the 1986 Batjer Memorial Address at the Washington State Horticultural Society and the Bob Carlson Memorial Address at the IDFTA winter conference in Niagara Falls, New York.

Steve and his wife Sandy live in Visalia, California.