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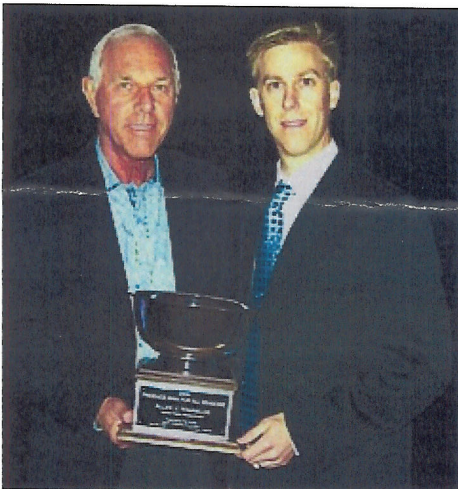
Vangelos named Produce Man for All Seasons

Published on 04/22/2009 06:00pm By Bob Luder

LAS VEGAS — **The Packer's** honoree at the 2009 United Fresh Produce Association annual conference couldn't be handled with a "Man of the Year" designation.

A five-decade-plus career of achievements and milestones makes Al Vangelos a Produce Man for All Seasons.

The Packer editor Greg Johnson bestowed the award on Vangelos, 75, during the general breakfast session at the United Fresh conference April 22 at the Sands Expo and Convention Center in Las Vegas. It was the first time since 1997 that **The Packer** named a Produce Man for All Seasons.



Dawn Withers

Al Vangelos, left, chief executive officer of Sun World International, Bakersfield, Calif., receives **The Packer's** Produce Man for All Seasons Award for lifetime achievement April 22 during United Fresh Produce Association's convention in Las Vegas. **The Packer** editor Greg Johnson presented the award.

"I've sat in this audience many years watching this award given out to others," Vangelos said as he accepted his award in front of a crowd of 700. "I never thought it'd be me."

In his speech introducing Vangelos, Johnson summed up Vangelos' career when he said, "There have been many produce industry icons over the years, even those who have led major associations and have led more than one giant in a given commodity.

"But to be called on to lead so many different kinds of companies is exceedingly rare."

Today, Vangelos is chief executive officer at Sun World International, a position he's held since last summer after serving on the company's board of managers and as interim chief executive officer. But the road to get there has been as varied and vast as anyone in the produce industry.

His history in the fresh produce industry began back in 1956 when Vangelos began working at the Birds Eye division of General Foods. In 1962, he joined Dole, a company in which he eventually would serve two stints until the mid-1980s.

Beginning in 1986, he took over Calavo Growers in California and began what would become a trend throughout the rest of his career — he took what was a cooperative and turned it into a profit-making business.

After 12 years running Calavo, Vangelos tried the only thing during his career in which he was proved not very good — retirement.

"Some people have called me a glutton for punishment," he said. "The day I retired from Calavo, I told (his wife) Mary, 'The last thing I want is to bump into you every day, and I'm sure you feel the same way about me.'"

"So, I opened a little office, just to get me out of the house and give me something to do. And, that evolved into what I'm doing today."

While "retired," he continued serving on the boards of directors of several companies and helped found a consulting firm. He also directed the growth and development of a produce distribution center in Russia.

In 2000, Vangelos officially returned to work full-time when he was named chairman of the board and chief executive officer of dried fruit and nut companies Premier Valley Foods and Treehouse Farms and within a year,

moved those companies from processing and packing to raw product procurement, sales and marketing.

He became chairman of the board at BC Hot House Foods, Vancouver, British Columbia, three years later and hired a president who, again, turned the cooperative into a for-profit sales and marketing company.

Eventually, Vangelos found his way to Sun World, where in his short time he's restructured the leadership, moved the headquarters (he did the same with Premier Valley Foods and Treehouse Farms), redesigned the company logo and re-energized the company's marketing focus.

He also currently serves as chairman of the grower-shipper board at United Fresh.

Along his entire journey, he always made time for family. He and Mary, his wife of 54 years, are parents of six children, five sons and a daughter. Mary and his son Jim Vangelos attended the award presentation.

"I'm an unbelievably blessed person," Vangelos said. "I have a wife who's supported me, and six great kids who have supported me the entire way.

"I'm honored by this award bestowed upon me and truly appreciate it."