



IN MEMORIAM

Kiyoto "Kay" Uriu
Professor of Pomology, Emeritus
UC Davis
1917 - 2008

Kiyoto "Kay" Uriu was born on May 25, 1917, in Berryessa, California. As the eldest son of a family of 12 children, his dream of earning a college degree was long delayed, first by the need to help maintain the family farm, and then by the relocation of Japanese- Americans during World War II. After the war, he worked his way through college, eventually earning his Ph.D. degree in Pomology at UC Davis in 1954. Kay worked in the Department for 32 years until his retirement in 1987.

Kay is survived by Alice, his beloved wife of 59 years; children Don and Keiko Uriu, Margie and Jon Paul Nocifera, Jan and Tom Adams, and Bob and Noriho Uriu. He is also survived by five grandchildren and five siblings.

Kay's research was both field- and mission- oriented, and he focused on the mineral nutrition, irrigation, and water relations of deciduous fruit trees with emphasis on cherries, prunes, apples, walnuts, almonds, and peaches. With respect to tree nutrient status, Kay was among the world's experts in his ability to utilize foliar visual symptoms to help diagnose mineral nutrient deficiencies and imbalances. In that vein, he played a key role in establishing critical nutrient element values in leaves based on the expression of deficiency symptoms. Those values are used widely in the diagnosis and correction of nutritional problems in fruit trees.

Kay is considered one of the pioneers in the development and implementation of low volume irrigation systems in California orchards.

Important studies conducted by Kay and his colleagues included comparisons of water consumption by peach trees under flood- and drip- irrigation systems, and alleviating the debilitating effects of potassium deficiency in heavily cropping European plum (prune) trees. His work was foundational in stimulating the shift to low volume irrigation systems in the deciduous orchards of California. The impact of that work in reducing water consumption for irrigation in orchards has, perhaps, greater relevance today than when originally published. In research, as in all aspects of his University service, Kay exemplified complete dedication. Thus, in working with Dr. Uriu, his research collaborators came to expect and appreciate his insistence on thoroughness, accuracy, and relevance.

Kay was broadly viewed as the Pomology Department's principal link with Cooperative Extension and the fruit industry. Outside the University, he might have been considered the most visible champion of the Department's mandated problem- solving research. He exhibited a strong desire to work with others and share his vast knowledge and field experience in Pomological research. As a result, he was an invaluable resource to farm advisors and extension specialists throughout his career.

In the 1970's, his participation in the joint University of California, Davis- University of Chile program to increase Chilean fruit production and quality contributed significantly to the success of that venture. It also contributed to an increased respect for UC Davis personnel among the Chileans with whom he came into contact.

Dr. Uriu was known widely as an outstanding teacher, and was recognized by The American Society for Horticultural Science with that Society's "Outstanding Undergraduate Educator Award" in recognition of his distinguished contributions to undergraduate education in horticultural science over a period of ten years or more. His teaching proficiency transcended the classroom at UC Davis and was utilized effectively at fruit grower meetings, farm advisor training conferences, and virtually all tree fruit Pomology Production short courses.

Dr. Uriu's unique effectiveness as a teacher was attributable to 1.) His considerable knowledge of the many facets of pomology were based on his years of field experience; 2.) He had the ability to communicate effectively in group situations; and 3.) His work ethic is what brought his desire to be a good teacher to fruition. Until his last lecture before retirement, he could be found regularly at his office until 10:00 PM the night before, revising and refining the lecture he was scheduled to present the next morning.

Dr. Uriu had a reputation for always being fair and patient in his interactions with students, and he was said to be generous to a fault with his time for the many students who sought him out whether for information or advice. Similarly, in the broader community, he always found time to listen and to help... giving equal consideration to colleagues, students, growers, and (Cooperative Extension) farm advisers. His many achievements were undoubtedly made possible by his tremendous capacity for work.

Kay was quiet and reserved, especially in large groups, but he was undoubtedly a "people person." He was fond of saying that seeing old friends was more important to him than seeing new places, and he leaves behind a long list of family, friends, and colleagues built over a lifetime.

Kay had the kindest, most gentle character imaginable, and he will be greatly missed.

Steven A. Weinbaum
David E. Ramos
Patrick H. Brown