

Honoring the legacy of Dorcas Thille (November 3, 1931 – September 4, 2024)

By Annemiek Schilder and Ben Faber



Dorcas Hardison Kimball Thille was a Santa Paula farmer, mother of six, and supporter of the University of California. She passed away recently at the age of 92. Dorcas was a trailblazer in many ways and well respected in the community. She was known to give no-nonsense advice. We honor and thank her for her dedicated service to the University of California as board member and chair of the UC Hansen Trust and board member of the Agricultural Issues Center at UC Davis. She also served on the UC President's Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, advising then President Richard Atkinson on a variety of agricultural issues.

Below a personal reflection on her legacy by UCCE Advisor Ben Faber:

There are all kinds of expressions: "We stand on the shoulders who have come before us", "No One is an Island", and "We learn from those around us." I made that last one up, but it really is true. And it's true in Cooperative Extension. We learn from the people we work with, in order to better help them and the community. Dorcas Thille was one of those people who was a great teacher and community builder. I thought it would be fitting to share a few of my experiences with her.

Dorcas was a friend of mine. She was also a mentor and guide to the workings of Ventura County agriculture and the people here. She contacted me the first week I was in my position as a farm advisor and made sure I was invited to the next Calavo and Saticoy Lemon Association Board meetings. She was a mover and shaker. I once saw her at her home orchard and after leaving saw her at the Saticoy post office. I asked her how she had gotten there so fast, because it was only 15 minutes since we'd last seen each other. She said her BMW was fast, the fastest tractor in the area!

I always found her to be considerate and thoughtful. There was once a Hollywood company wanting to do a history of avocados in Ventura County. They had asked me to talk on avocado biology in the field and Dorcas to give a little family history at the same time. It took several

takes to get it right. It was a hot, late August morning and the sun started to get to me. I started sweating, and Dorcas rose to the occasion and brought out her handkerchief so I could wipe my forehead. She was cool as a cucumber.

I worked with her on the UC Hansen Trust Board and always appreciated her defense of the local needs of the agricultural community, but also the needs of the larger community of citizens in the county. Karen Ross, Secretary of the CA Department of Food and Agriculture, said Dorcas had the needs of all of California in mind. Dorcas shared: “We make the community we want to live in.”

Thank you, Dorcas, for being our teacher and for everything you have done for Ventura County and California agriculture. May you relax in heavenly orchards!