

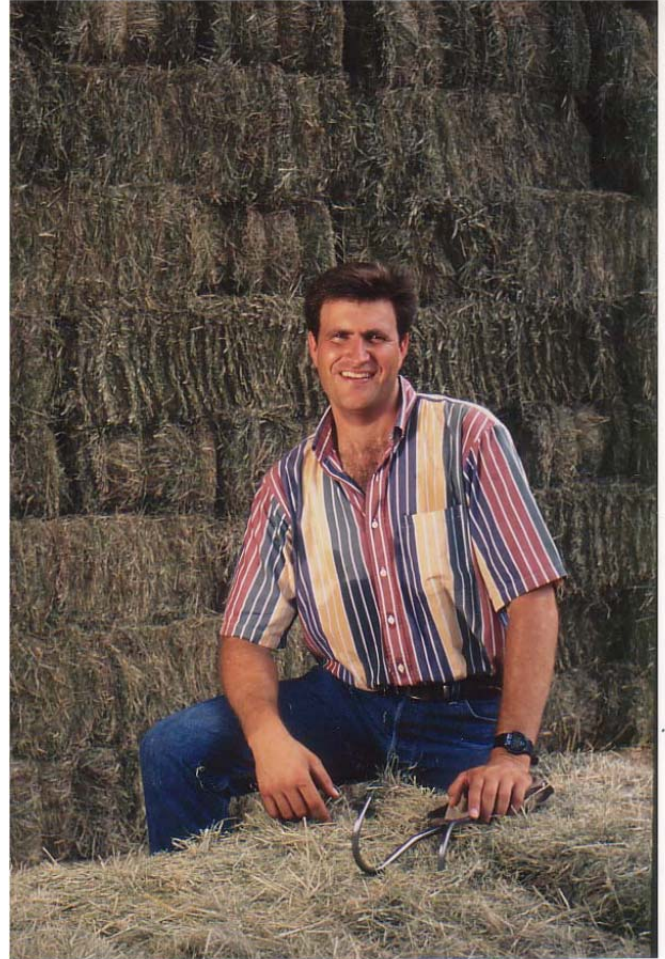
## JIM KUHN ANNUAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

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The Board of Directors of the California Alfalfa & Forage Association (CAFA) has established an annual Jim Kuhn Award in honor of his memory. An innovator and industry leader, the 41 year old Kuhn passed away on August 29 of 2005 in a vehicle accident near his ranch in El Centro, CA.

The “Jim Kuhn Annual Leadership Award” will be presented each year to a grower or industry member who makes a significant and lasting contribution to the California alfalfa and forage industry. The 2005 award will be given posthumously in Kuhn’s name at CAFA’s annual meeting breakfast on December 14 in Visalia.

A founding member of CAFA who served three terms on the Association’s Board of Directors, Kuhn was known throughout the alfalfa and forage industry as an innovator and astute businessman. Kuhn Farms, Kuhn Hay and KF Dairy were widely recognized for their innovative approaches. Jim was often approached for advice, which he willingly gave. Jim was the first to commercialize Kleingrass in the Imperial Valley and Kuhn Farms pioneered the compressing of hay for export. Jim made frequent trips to Japan to open the export market for California growers. He was continually looking for ways to contribute to the economy of the Imperial Valley and recently partnered with a Utah Company to establish the Imperial Valley Cheese company.



Kuhn was also an accomplished photographer and his passion for photographing birds lead to the establishment of the Salton Sea International Bird Festival. His many talents and dedication to the area where he lived made him a highly respected member of both the agricultural and non-agricultural community. His friend and CAFA Board member, Danny Walker of JCSD Farms of Westmorland, CA paid tribute to Jim by saying: *“The most significant thing about Jim was his ability to build relationships and reach out and not exclude anyone. He saw value in every person no matter what his background. Jim touched so many people and made an impression on everyone he met.”*

--Aaron Kiess  
California Alfalfa & Forage Association Exec. Director

# IN MEMORIAM

**Jim Kuhn  
1963-2005**

## **Call to Leadership**

These proceedings of the California Alfalfa & Forage Symposium are dedicated to the memory of Jim Kuhn, hay grower and entrepreneur from El Centro, California. Jim died tragically in an automobile accident late summer, 2005. Although Jim died young, he has given long and distinguished service to his community, his employees, and to the alfalfa industry as a whole. This is why this volume is dedicated to his memory.

Farmer, entrepreneur, innovator, dairyman, Jim was a close friend of the University of California Cooperative Extension, and he is haymaker, cheesemaker, international businessman, family man, speaker, wildlife photographer, adventurer, and agricultural leader, all of these words accurately describe Jim Kuhn's multi-faceted life. The grandson and son of farmers who pioneered in the Imperial Valley in 1915, Jim was president and chief executive officer of Kuhn Farms, and built what many consider among the strongest farming operations in the Imperial Valley. He was described as a man who took chances in agriculture based on his belief in the future of the Valley. His wife, Heidi, said her husband was a man of vision who loved the Imperial Valley, and was proud of identifying new market opportunities. He was instrumental in developing export markets for high quality sudangrass and kleingrass (introduced by Juan Guerrero in the 1990s), of starting a dairy and a cheese plant in the Imperial Valley, and of exploring alternative forage products. His ability to create jobs was widely appreciated in the Imperial Valley.

His father, Fritz, was a loyal participant in the California Alfalfa Symposium going back to the 1970s, and Jim continued with that tradition after he returned to the Valley to take over the farm in 1985. He has contributed not only as participant, but as key speaker at several symposia. If anyone doubts his many talents, read his passionate argument for the formation of California Alfalfa & Forage Association ('In Order to be Heard, One Must Have a Voice', J. Kuhn, California Alfalfa Symposium, 1997 [http://ucanr.org/alf\\_symp/1997/97-16.pdf](http://ucanr.org/alf_symp/1997/97-16.pdf)), or his paper recognizing the importance of alfalfa and wildlife ('Alfalfa helps Wildlife on your Farm', 1996 [http://ucanr.org/alf\\_symp/1996/96-33.pdf](http://ucanr.org/alf_symp/1996/96-33.pdf)). was a major impetus for developing educational materials related to wildlife and agriculture.

Jim's interest in nature and wildlife photography was a major impetus for developing educational material related to wildlife and agriculture. He founded the Salton Sea Wildlife Festival and developed a brochure of his own photos for identifying birds. UC Alfalfa Workgroup Members worked closely with Jim during the development of 'Alfalfa, Wildlife and the Environment', a 24-page color publication documenting the importance of alfalfa to both soil and wildlife published by CAFA in 2001 (see <http://alfalfa.ucdavis.edu>). His ideas, his many photographs, and his keen interest in reaching out to a non-agricultural audience made this book possible.

Leadership and entrepreneurship are perhaps the words which most succinctly describe Jim's contribution to agriculture and alfalfa in particular. This is why CAFA has elected to establish the 'Jim Kuhn Memorial Leadership Award' in his memory.

In 1997, a group of growers met with Marc Reisner, the now deceased author of 'Cadillac Desert'. Reisner had been a regular critic of agriculture, particularly alfalfa, as being a 'water waster'. The growers provided him with an alternative perspective on alfalfa, describing a number of attributes often ignored (protecting soil, nitrogen fixation, taking up nitrates, insect diversity, wildlife habitat as well as food). Jim was one of the most articulate of that group. Reisner later incorporated some of these ideas into his writings, recognizing the importance of crops such as rice and alfalfa towards environmental stewardship. This meeting directly led to the formation of CAFA by Jim Kuhn and others who decided: "we must have a voice" to speak for alfalfa growers.

On a personal note, although we work with each other as colleagues, farmers, business partners, and educators, we must recognize each other not only in those roles, but also as friends, as human beings. Akira Saito of Zen-Raku-Ren, who worked with Jim to develop the kleingrass business with Japan mourned the loss of not only his business partner, but his friend. "It is hard to realize he is not there now. I still hear his voice in my head—he is my best friend and that will not change". As we say goodbye to this friend, let us take a moment to consider the call to leadership

*--Dan Putnam and Juan Guerrero  
on behalf of the University of California Alfalfa Workgroup.*