



Meet California Strawberry Growers

## Glenn Hasegawa

If you could imagine a big silver pick-up truck cruising down a southern California coast highway with a German shepherd on one side of the truck and a surfboard sticking out the other side, you have a fairly accurate picture of what Oxnard strawberry grower Glen Hasegawa looks like on any given day. It's just not always immediately clear if he's heading to the beach to squeeze in a surf session or on his way to check on the status of his strawberries at one of his gorgeous strawberry fields.

A third generation California strawberry farmer, Glen's grandfather – and then father – laid the groundwork (literally) back in the 1960's for what Glen now considers his life. What started out as a small, 15 acre farm has now blossomed into a 600-acre family business. And it looks like there's no end in sight to this family tradition, with most of his family in the business and signs that the next generation is poised to take the helm in the years to come.

Strawberry farming is a natural occupation for Glen who thrives on working with people and being outdoors in the elements. He appreciates working in the fresh air and has no problem dedicating about 50-60 hours a week needed to successfully grow strawberries. When it comes to the people, he says he loves working with his employees and says that harvest workers are the "hardest working, most humble and honest people

around." He feels committed to the workers who are an integral part of his operation and feels a strong sense of giving back. Glen contributes to the California Strawberry Scholarship Fund and personally assists some of his field workers with their children's college tuition. He also lends a hand by purchasing books and other necessities related to school costs.

With all the industries Glen could have gone into, his heart and his passion has always been grounded in growing strawberries, and after 25 years he still looks forward to farming every day. His face lights up with a smile when he talks about the anticipation he feels about seeing the very first strawberry of each season. He appreciates all things that grow and thinks it's always fascinating to nurture plants – especially strawberries - through the various stages of growth.

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But while it can be one of the most rewarding jobs in the world, Glen – like all growers – is well aware of some of the challenges. One annoyance is the problem of birds that flock each season and each day to eat the berries – in particular the seeds. “It’s amazing to find berries that are missing all the seeds because the little birds swoop down and can take all the seeds without even breaking the skin of the strawberries.” His solution to this problem is to have a person on each field devoted to distracting the birds away from the strawberries.

And of course there’s the weather. Glen says that strawberry farmers are the biggest gamblers and relates the occupation to playing high stakes games in Las Vegas. He explains that it’s like putting everything down with the risk of losing it all because of circumstances completely beyond your control. For example, he talks about how one good rain can wipe out an entire month’s crop and says, “You can’t do anything about bad weather and that’s one of the toughest things about this job. To lose something that you’ve grown from a tiny little plant is very disappointing and stressful.”

But despite these challenges, Glen firmly believes that the “good aspects outweigh the bad by a long shot,” and that these types of problems are trivial compared to the joy he experiences when he looks out over his acres of beautiful red berries that he raised from little plants. And it turns out, Glen doesn’t just have a passion for growing and gazing at strawberries, but for eating the sweet and juicy wonders. He admits to noshing down about a small basket of strawberries a day.

Glen’s philosophy for growing strawberries lines up with his overall attitude in life. He firmly believes that if you pour goodness and hard work into your passion that good karma will help balance out the things you can’t control, like weather.

If Glen weren’t a farmer, he says he’d still be growing things. Although he has a staff that handles the day-to-day planting, plowing and harvesting, he says he still enjoys jumping on a tractor every now and then.

When he’s not growing California strawberries, Glen likes to travel and check out a baseball game when he can. He’s a Dodgers fan during baseball season and when basketball rolls around, it’s all about the Lakers. An avid surfer, one of his favorite things to do is hop in his truck with Sparky – his 100 lb. German shepherd “puppy” and head to the beach.

