

2002
Woman of the Year
in Agriculture



Annette Barnett Land

Dear Friends of Agriculture:



The “Woman of the Year in Agriculture” award ceremony is always a much-anticipated event, adding to the excitement of opening-day festivities at the Florida State Fair. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has been proud to sponsor this prestigious award in conjunction with the Florida State Fair Authority since 1985.

It is my pleasure to present the “Woman of the Year in Agriculture” award for 2002 to Annette Barnett Land of Branford.

With roots in Suwannee County, Annette Barnett Land is a fifth-generation Florida agriculturist who has spent her life raising cattle, growing and promoting produce, and selling agricultural real estate. With her husband, Raymon, she went to work in the watermelon and trucking industries. During her more than 30 years of supporting the Florida and National Watermelon Associations, she has traveled extensively working on watermelon promotions and currently serves as a director of the National Watermelon Promotion Board. She is the owner of Land Brokerage Realtor. A devoted supporter of youth organizations, she is involved with Future Farmers of America and Florida Agriculture in the Classroom.

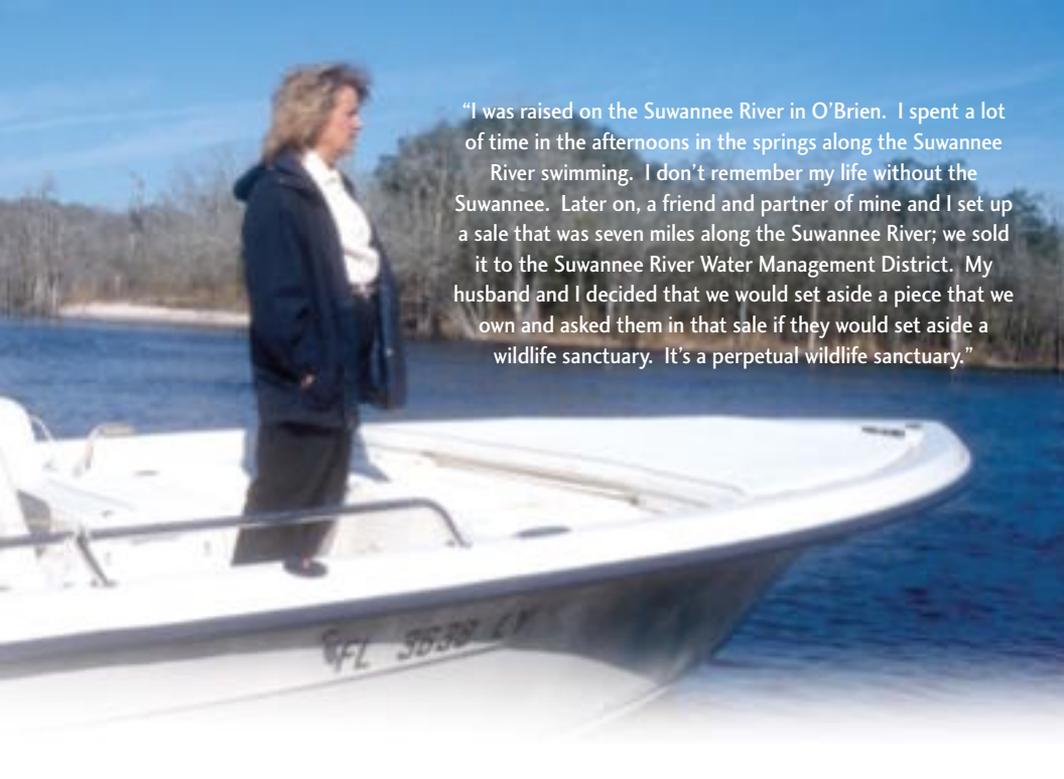
As the most recent inductee into this exclusive group, Annette Barnett Land joins 18 other women who have earned the respect and admiration of their peers by making outstanding contributions to Florida agriculture.

Again, it is my great pleasure and honor to congratulate Annette Barnett Land for being named “Woman of the Year in Agriculture” for 2002.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles H. Bronson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Charles H. Bronson
Commissioner of Agriculture



“I was raised on the Suwannee River in O’Brien. I spent a lot of time in the afternoons in the springs along the Suwannee River swimming. I don’t remember my life without the Suwannee. Later on, a friend and partner of mine and I set up a sale that was seven miles along the Suwannee River; we sold it to the Suwannee River Water Management District. My husband and I decided that we would set aside a piece that we own and asked them in that sale if they would set aside a wildlife sanctuary. It’s a perpetual wildlife sanctuary.”

Annette Barnett Land

When asked where she is from, Annette Barnett Land is likely to answer by singing “Way down upon the Suwannee River.” With roots in the Suwannee County town of Branford, Annette is a proud fifth-generation Florida agriculturist who has spent her life raising cattle, growing and promoting produce, and selling agricultural real estate.

Annette was born February 8, 1941, and spent most of her youth working on the family farm that produced tobacco, peanuts, corn, watermelons, and cattle. Her father, L.L. Barnett, invented many farm implements, including the first tobacco setter. Her family owned the first tractor in Suwannee County. During World War II, her family produced peanuts for American soldiers.

Second in her class at Branford High School, Annette's education went on to include attendance at Edison Community College, the University of Florida, Lasalle Accounting School, Sante Fe Community College, Bert Rogers School of Real Estate, University of Central Florida (GRI), and H&R Block Tax School.

During the 1960s, she was in charge of accounting, fertilizer formulas, and weights and measures for Henry Ward Feed and Fertilizer and facilitated that company's move to Branford, which provided a major economic boost for the Suwannee River valley. In 1966 Annette and her husband, Raymon, went to work in the watermelon business with Annette's uncle in LaBelle, and began an active involvement in the watermelon and trucking industries.



Moving to Immokalee, the Lands grew pepper, cucumber, squash, and watermelon. During these years, Annette became involved in agricultural politics and began working with the Florida Department of Agriculture to spread the message that Florida produce was the best in the nation and to promote her favorite product – watermelon. The Lands moved back to North Florida, and their business continued to expand while Annette gained experience in both cattle production and the growing of fruits and vegetables.

Much has changed since Annette was a young girl and her family sent their products to northern markets by loading them on trains. Today, Land Truck Brokers, Inc., loads semi-tractor trailers that haul produce directly to Eastern, Midwestern, and Canadian markets.

Groundbreakers in the watermelon industry, the Lands changed from shipping only bulk loads to also loading cartons, bins, and boxes. They also led the move from large-seeded melons to smaller-seeded and seedless melons. In North Florida years ago there were no irrigated watermelons, and the Land family led the way from walking rigs to overhead irrigation as well as to the use of plastic mulch used with drip irrigation as a means of saving

“When I was a little girl my granny played the piano in our church. She showed me about the piano and I learned to play. I took music lessons and my mother and I picked up pecans and bought my first piano. I was probably five years old when I got my first piano. It was a big upright piano. We moved several times after my husband and I were married, and the piano managed to get thrown out of the truck because it was a huge piano; so my husband bought me a beautiful Spinnet. I love to play for the church. In the past year I’ve been learning the Clavinova and it’s a lot of fun.”

“Our life blood is watermelons. We’ve been involved in the National Watermelon Association for around 39 years. I’ve helped set up conventions, I’ve helped work with the queens, both Florida and national. We have friendly faces all over the country that are watermelon people. It’s kind of like an extended family. Two years ago the National Watermelon Promotion Board selected me as a director and secretary-treasurer. I’ve had a ball; I’ve enjoyed it a whole lot. I’ve met people from all over the country and I feel like some goals have been met in promoting watermelons.”

water. Because of consumer demand for packaged product, the Lands premiered the idea of a watermelon packinghouse and opened facilities throughout Florida and in other states.

In 1974, Annette became a real estate broker and the owner of Land Brokerage Realtor, a company specializing in the sale and service of real estate in the Suwannee River Valley. She is involved in legislative activity concerning real estate in Florida and in the Florida Ag in the Classroom programs that bring awareness of Florida agriculture into schools.



“The children of today are the adults of tomorrow. Not only do we need to teach them math and English and sciences, we need to teach them about real life and the daily walks in life. First God and family and then their businesses. We like to teach the children in the classroom about the land, about the future of America, and how we were established in this country, people searching for new lands and the freedom of religion and the freedom to farm and to till the soil. We like for the children to learn that. I’ve always been involved in that.”

Annette has served as a public health director in Lafayette County. She helped organize the Bank of Florida in Chiefland, where she served as bank director. A devoted supporter of youth organizations, her love for agriculture is evident when she talks about Future Farmers of America, where her two sons and eldest grandson have excelled in their chapters' programs. She is an active member of FFA alumni and in 1990 was awarded the prestigious Honorary American FFA Degree.

In 1987-88, Annette worked on the "Save Our Rivers Act" and through her real estate business was able to set aside more than seven miles of preservation lands along the Suwannee River. Raymon and Annette gave a portion of a sale of property located at the confluence of the Sante Fe and Suwannee River as a perpetual wildlife sanctuary to remain native and protected while open to the public for hiking and horseback riding.

Today, the Lands own one of the larger beef cattle operations in North Florida and one of the largest watermelon businesses east of the Mississippi. Annette serves as a director of the National Watermelon Promotion Board, a position appointed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman. Annette was then

"From the time I can remember as a child, we grew watermelons. To begin with, we shipped them on trains there in Branford and O'Brien, where I was raised. After I grew up, I went to University of Florida, married my husband, Raymon Land, and we were still involved in the watermelon business. My husband started trucking with my daddy and then got involved with my uncles who were in the watermelon business in Labelle. From Labelle we moved on to shipping watermelons with the DalDon produce company. We worked with them for a while and then we started our own business. It was at that time Land & Walker Farms Inc., and then later we became Raymon Land Watermelon Sales."

"Under all of us is the land, and if we don't preserve our land then we could destroy what we enjoy so much, particularly the water. I have been very interested in keeping our rivers clean, and to make sure that we have good drinking water, and that the land stays in good condition. It's very important that we preserve what we have."



selected by fellow board members to be secretary/treasurer. During her 30-plus years supporting the Florida Watermelon Association and the National Watermelon Association, Annette has traveled extensively throughout Florida and the United States working on watermelon promotions and advertisements and tirelessly propounding the health message that “Watermelon is good for you; it’s loaded with vitamins A and C and lycopene.” In recognition of the Land family’s long service, the 1985 proceedings of the National Watermelon Association were dedicated to Raymon and Annette Land.

The entire Land family is involved in the Watermelon industry. Raymon has served as president of both the state and national

associations. Son, Jody, assumes the office of president of the National Watermelon Association in February 2003. Raymon is an ex officio of the Florida Watermelon Association, while Jody serves on the executive council, and the Lands' other son, Adrian, serves on the board of directors.

Annette has served her community through her work with schools, civic and church groups. She and her husband support the PanAmerican Health Service mission in Honduras as well as a Baptist mission they are helping to build in Rosewood, Florida. Believing that the future of Florida agriculture lies in the education of the young agriculturist to think smarter than ever before, she has supported youth in athletics, agriculture, music, and reading.

Some of Annette's other association memberships include the Florida Cattlemen Association, National Angus Association, Florida Cutting Horse Association, National Cutting Horse Association, and Suwannee River Riding Club.

Her favorite hobbies include music, playing the piano, swimming, horseback riding, snow

"We go into the schools and we also bring the children from the schools to the packing house and teach them about the value of watermelon and that is good for them. Not only is it good to them, it's good for them. It's loaded with Vitamin A and C and lycopene. We work with the FFA students. At auctions we buy their steers that they've produced through the years, and then that helps them to further their college careers. We've also worked with the children in music and I particularly enjoy that because that's teaching and furthering the arts and music."

"When I was in high school, girls were not in FFA. We could be the queens of FFA but not actually FFA members. Then my son, Adrian, become involved in FFA producing his steers and then proficiency awards. He won quite a few awards, state and regional and national levels. Through him, I became more interested in the FFA. We support their leadership proficiency programs, the steer program, and that helps to encourage them to do something besides just study a book. They're learning about agriculture."

“In watermelons, which is the number one product of my world, we started out years ago shipping on box cars and trains. You didn’t have irrigation in North Florida, and as time went on we had to develop better fertilizer practices, water saving and preservation. We had to learn more about how to supply the demand of the market. We now ship in trucks and the train tracks are gone. We now do boxing, binning and cartoning of watermelons. Years ago we just put them on those box cars and they went north, so a lot has happened to the watermelon industry. We used to ship big old Congo melons and Charleston Grey watermelons, and now we’re down to a smaller watermelon that the housewife can carry easier. Today we probably ship around 2,400 or 2,500 semi-loads – sometimes as much as 2,800 – of watermelons a year. That is summer watermelons rather than year-round watermelons. There’s no time to stop.”

skiing, and growing plants. Annette’s favorite fun times are spending time with her family, playing the piano and Clavinova for her church, sharing stories and cooking southern meals, where her table will display beef and fresh fruits and vegetables – usually produced in Florida, of course.



“My mother always told me to rise above whatever you are in, every day make it a better day and I’ve kind of stuck to that. No opportunity is a problem you can’t solve, it’s an opportunity. I love life. I would like to see my family continue the businesses we’ve started. Both of my sons are in it. I would like for the grandchildren to go on to college and yet be able to come back into the business and reap the benefits of what we’ve worked so hard for. I’d like to go on vacation and ski and ride my horse and watch great-great-grand-babies come up.”



Previous Winners

- 2001** Barbara Carlton, of Sidell
- 2000** Helen Houck, of Perry
- 1999** Vina Jean Banks, of Balm
- 1998** Nancy Gurnett Hardy, of Winter Haven
- 1997** Gertrude "Trudy" Carey, of Hillsborough County
- 1996** Norma Stokes, of Highlands County
- 1995** Louve "Vee" Frierson Platt, of Clewiston,
and Patricia Robbins, of Miami
- 1994** Anne Wardlaw Dickinson, of Frostproof
- 1993** Sarah W. Bailey, of St. Johns County
- 1992** Carol C. Murphy, of Volusia County
- 1991** Ruth M. Tucker, of Brevard County
- 1990** Jeanette Barthle, of Pasco County
- 1989** Belle Jeffords, of Alachua County
- 1988** Carolyn Reed Kempfer, of Osceola-Brevard counties
- 1987** Dorothy Conner Shipes, of Lake County
- 1986** Ruth Wedgworth, of Belle Glade
- 1985** Jo Ann Smith, of Marion County

**Florida Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services**

CHARLES H. BRONSON, Commissioner