

**2006**  
**Woman of the Year**  
*in Agriculture*



*Iris Pollock Wall*



## 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. Since 1985 the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has proudly sponsored this prestigious award in conjunction with the Florida State Fair Authority.

It is my pleasure to present the Woman of the Year in Agriculture award for 2006 to Iris Wall of Indiantown.

A fifth-generation Floridian, Iris was born in 1929 in Indiantown. In 1948 she married Homer Wall and they started a family that eventually included three daughters. The Walls started a small cattle and timber operation, High Horse Ranch, located just outside of Indiantown. The couple went into the lumber business in 1962, opening W&W Lumber in Indiantown. The business thrived, and today includes locations in West Palm Beach, Jensen Beach, Okeechobee, Lake Placid and Sebring.

In the early 1970s, Homer and Iris purchased and restored Indiantown's historic Seminole Inn. Today, the inn – which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places – is filled with period antiques and serves authentic Southern food.

Iris serves on the board of the Florida Cracker Cattle Association, the Florida Cracker Horse Association, and the Cracker Trail Association. She keeps a herd of Cracker cattle on the ranch and still rides a Cracker horse. Iris took part in the Great Florida Cattle Drive of 1995 and helped organize a second cattle drive in 2006. She is a member of the Florida Cattlemen's Association and the National Cattlemen's Association, and has been inducted into the Florida Cracker Hall of Fame.

Iris lives in Indiantown, where her authentic Cracker tales have put her much in demand as a speaker and storyteller. Homer died in 1994, but Iris is surrounded by her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and many friends.

Iris joins 22 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 Iris Wall for being named Woman of the Year in Agriculture for 2006.



Sincerely,

Charles H. Bronson  
Commissioner of Agriculture



## Iris Pollock Wall

A fifth-generation Floridian, Iris was born in 1929 in Indiantown. She spent most of her childhood on the back of a horse, cowhunting with her father or just riding for the fun of it. During the 1940s, when the screw worm was at its worst, she rode every day, roping her family's cows and calves and "doctoring" them with medicine she carried in her saddlebags.





In 1948 she married Homer Wall, her high school sweetheart, and they started a family, which eventually grew to include three daughters. Today, Iris owns a sprawling ranch and six lumberyards, but she and Homer started with nothing except an eagerness to work. They began their life together in the Everglades, hunting alligators and cutting fence posts. They made their living fencing other people's ranches, living frugally and putting money aside to buy their own land.



They were soon able to start a small cattle and timber operation, High Horse Ranch, located just outside of Indiantown. Over the years it grew and prospered. Iris has always been a good steward of her land and has worked with her local forest service, water districts, county extension office, and farm service agency to ensure the best management of the ranch's resources. She still rides through the pastures and hammocks almost daily and offers tours to school and civic groups. The tours often include a big barbecue and lots of storytelling about Florida in the old days.

Iris and Homer got into the lumber business in 1962 when they partnered with their friends Jack and Fay Williamson to open W&W Lumber in Indiantown. After three years the Williamsons sold the Walls their half of the business. W&W Lumber thrived, and today it has expanded to include locations in West Palm Beach, Jensen Beach, Okeechobee, Lake Placid and Sebring.

A ranch and a flourishing lumber business might be enough to keep most people busy—but not Iris. In the early 1970s, Homer and Iris purchased and restored the historic Seminole Inn, where her mother once worked as a cook. The inn was built in 1926 by S. Davies Warfield, a Baltimore financier who dreamed of turning Indiantown into a railroad hub until his plans were dashed by the Great Depression. The inn is one of the few reminders of Indiantown's boom years in the twenties, and Iris and Homer intended their careful restoration of the landmark to be their gift to the city. Today, the inn is filled with period antiques and serves authentic Southern food in its dining room. It was recently named one of Florida's top 20 inns by the St. Petersburg Times, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.





Preserving the best of “old Florida” is a passion for Iris. She serves on the board of the Florida Cracker Cattle Association and the Florida Cracker Horse Association, and is dedicated to conserving these rare old breeds as living links to Florida’s history. She often hosts the Cracker Horse Association’s annual meetings at High Horse Ranch, treating everyone involved, her friend Nelson Bailey says, “to generous helpings of genuine old-style Southern hospitality and food.” Iris keeps a herd of Cracker cattle on the ranch and still rides a Cracker horse.

Iris is also an active member of the Florida Cracker Trail Association, a non-profit dedicated to preserving Florida’s cattle and horse heritage and to providing an east-west greenway from Bradenton to Fort Pierce. Each February she participates in the group’s annual cross-state horseback and wagon ride, telling stories

around the campfire about her cowhunting days and helping to keep Florida's history alive. As her friend David Reed, president of the Cracker Trail Association, says, "With a gentle ease, she delivers us into the old world of woods, cows, camps, rare nights in town, and long, lonely months on the prairie. Were it not for the participation of people like Miss Iris, who actually lived the life growing up, it would be far more difficult, if not impossible, to promote our purpose."

Iris took part in the Great Florida Cattle Drive of 1995, which celebrated Florida's 150th year of statehood. She was part of a group of cattle ranchers, farmers, and historians who drove 1,000 head of Cracker cattle across the state in a historical reenactment of Florida's 19th century cattle drives. In 2006 Iris helped to organize a second cattle drive, this time to benefit the Florida Agricultural Museum, and she rode again, at the age of 77, accompanied by family and friends.



Iris is a member of the Florida Cattlemen's Association and the National Cattlemen's Association. She was recently elected to the board of the Martin County Farm Bureau and has been inducted into the Florida Cracker Hall of Fame.

Iris Pollock Wall lives in Indiantown, where her authentic Cracker tales have put her much in demand as a speaker and storyteller. Her beloved husband, Homer, died in 1994, but she is surrounded by her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and many friends. Today, her daughters and sons-in-law manage the family lumberyards and the inn, which is just wonderful, Iris says. The arrangement leaves her with plenty of time to devote to her first love: High Horse Ranch.





## Previous Winners

- 2005** Marlene Strickland of Sarasota
- 2004** Martina "Teena" Borek of Homestead
- 2003** Jennie Lee Zipperer of Fort Myers
- 2002** Annette Barnett Land of Branford
- 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 County
- 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**