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Hall of Fame recipient shares insight



Don Quincey Jr. is seen at his desk during an interview Wednesday (Nov. 16). He is one of the two men named as the 2023 Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame inductees

Story and Photo

By Jeff M. Hardison © Nov. 17, 2022 at 3:12 p.m.

LEVY COUNTY – It's no wonder to people who know him that Donald J. "Don" Quincey Jr. was one of the two men named as the 2023 Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame inductees.

As noted in a previously published story in HardisonInk.com, Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried and the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame Foundation announced that Quincey and Dr. John T. Woeste were this year's inductees.

The induction ceremony for the two men to be added to the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame is set to be at the Florida State Fair's Agricultural Hall of Fame Banquet in Tampa on Valentine's Day (Feb. 14, 2023).

Quincey is the first Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame honoree from Levy County.

This fifth-generation Florida cattleman founded the Quincey Cattle Co. in 1992, and it has blossomed as a diversified cattle-feeding operation in Levy County. The operation has grown in size and scope to meet fellow cattle producers' needs and goals, providing services to improve marketability, and options for Florida cattle.

Many letters written to the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame Foundation capture the essence of this 66-year-old man, who may be thought of as the Florida cattleman of cattlemen, as well as being a thoughtful businessman who cares about people.

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Before reviewing the comments of several people who supported this nomination to the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame, a brief conversation with Quincey in his office in Levy County offers still more insight about the down-to-earth, common sense, on Wednesday (Nov. 16) reflects that he is a reasonable gentleman who understands people.

Quincey served on the Governing Board of the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD). He was appointed in April of 2008 to represent the Lower Suwannee River Basin. Quincey was reappointed on Aug. 2, 2016, and his final term expired in March of 2020. One comment that carries through many of the endorsements for this business owner is that he is a leader.

That held true at the SRWMD, where he served as chairman for some years.

Letters show he started as a leader at Chiefland High School in the FFA and carried through his adult life in many industry-oriented associations.

On Wednesday, when he was asked for a message he wanted to share with people, he spoke about the need for people to understand the balance required for sustaining life.

While on the SRWMD Governing Board, Quincey saw the full spectrum of people from all walks of life come to the Board with requests. Some people understood agriculture, some did not, he said.

“Most people today know very little about how their food is produced,” Quincey said, “and what it takes to produce it. And then, if you didn’t have it, what that would mean to our society and our country.”

There must be a balance, Quincey said, for people to have water to drink and food to eat, while maintaining an environment in which to live as well.

He saw that people must straddle the fence between environmental concerns and the needs of the farmers who grow crops and the ranchers who raise livestock that become the food for people to eat so that they can continue to live.

“When people came there with an agenda, either way, it was difficult,” Quincey said.

Therefore, as he sat there among the decisionmakers for the water management district, he knew he must take both sets of interests into consideration before making a motion, seconding a motion or voting one way or another on those requests.

When asked if he saw a person who was on one side or another who came not awareness enough of the other side to change their stance.

Quincey provided a cattle story to show it is possible to bring people into awareness of facts, even if they may have presumed or prejudged a situation.

A person had noticed a calf had died on the ranch, he said. And since she passed the area often, she noticed another calf had passed away.

She became concerned and called him to let him know there must be something terribly wrong on the ranch. She called a couple of times.

“It became obvious that she didn’t really understand what we were doing,” Quincey said. “She thought that we were probably mistreating the animals.”

Quincey had an employee call the woman and invite her to the ranch to see everything that happens on the ranch. She spent 90 minutes to two hours learning about the process there.

She found out that the cattle ate every day, all they could eat.

She learned there were veterinarians on staff to help the sick calves. She saw there were riders who went out on the pastures once or twice a day to assure the animals were all OK.

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“And when she left,” Quincey said, “she had a whole different concept of what happens at Quincey Cattle Company than she did when we first talked to her on the phone.”

Helping people see what really exists rather than what they believe exists is a kind act by anyone. This is just one of many fine human qualities of this award-winning cattleman.

The man set to be honored at the upcoming ceremony at the Florida State Fair in Tampa said he was surprised and humbled when he learned of the honor to be bestowed upon him.

“When they called me, I was flabbergasted,” Quincey said. “I had no idea I could ever fill the shoes of the people who have gone before me in this thing (the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame).”

Quincey said he feels like he is not of the same stature as other agriculturists who have been placed in this hall of fame.

“I am humbled to get it,” he said. “I’m happy that somebody thought I deserved that honor. I will accept it. But I will tell you this – I’ll accept it on the backs of people that have worked for me; people that have taught me through the years; and the people who have gone before me in this hall of fame.”

Quincey said that his success in his profession is not just from his work, but from the effort of all of the people who sought the same goals.

“We were just trying to do the right thing,” Quincey said as he downplayed his honorable and successful accomplishments. “We were just trying to make a living.”

Quincey earned the distinction of being inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame from a lifetime of service to the admirable profession of ranching.

He served on a wide variety of committees of the Florida Farm Bureau and Florida Cattlemen’s Association. As for the Florida Cattlemen’s Association, he served in all state level officer positions, including as president in 2011-2012.

On the national level, Quincey served on the board of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association representing Florida, as well as in the role there of Region II Vice President Policy Division.

Don Quincey was noted as being “... a passionate, but humble agriculturalist with a drive to leave a legacy of empowered forward-thinking and innovative solutions to the challenges faced in our community and our industry.”

Quincey is a lifelong learner who demonstrates grace under pressure.

Letter writers noted that when he is faced with opposition Quincey finds a way to make the seemingly impossible, a sustainable plan of action. That’s what he did when creating Quincey Cattle Co., a diversified cattle-feeding operation in Chiefland.

This dream of Quincey’s grew to become “... an operation curates and adapts to meet fellow cattle producers’ needs and goals, providing services to improve marketability and options for Florida cattle.”

Among the many other noteworthy actions Quincey has shown in the ranching profession is the support for local commodity growers and ranchers across the nation.

He pushes to keep products grown in our great state viable, local and beneficial to the communities.

This action serves as fuel for the local economic engine, and this practice extends into helping programs for youths as well as for all agricultural industries.

Florida Cattlemen’s Association Executive Vice President Jim Handley is among the

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people who wrote letters in support of Quincey to be recognized in the hall of fame.

“He has given countless hours of service and financial support to the industry,” Handley noted. “Mr. Quincey has been involved and a vocal leader in North Central Florida Agriculture for over 40 years.”

Handley noted that regardless of the job or position assigned to him, Quincey’s commitment is guaranteed, and his service is unwavering.

“His bulldogged determination and outspoken demeanor” have proven to be quite effective in helping Florida agriculture with the respect of elected officials and a multitude of agencies that interact with agriculture.

The president of the Florida Cattlemen’s Association wrote much more, including “His record of service and leadership is tremendous and well documented. He is an outstanding leader with a focus of advancing the industry and helping fellow citizens.

In addition to Handley, there were many other people who supported the Quincey’ nomination to the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame. Some of them are noted below.

DeAnne Maples, the director of marketing and promotion of the Florida Beef Council, said on behalf of the Council, she is delighted to support the nomination of Quincey to the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Advocacy is among his best qualities, Maples noted.

Quincey Cattle Co. is a favorite tour stop, Maples noted, when the Florida Beef Council conducts tours several times annually. The Quincey Cattle Co. hosted the Florida Beef Council’s 2021 Farm-To-Fork Tour, she noted as an example.

“From highlighting the animal nutrition and wellness programs at Quincey Cattle Company to showcasing the fresh beef sales operation,” Maples said, “the tour guests enjoyed a favorable behind-the-scenes look at Florida’s beef industry and its sustainable role in food production, and environmental conservation.”

Hugh Thomas, the executive director of the Suwannee River Water Management District, noted that for nine of Quincey’s 12 years on the SRWMD Board of Governors, the cattleman served as chairman of the board.

As chairman, Quincey led the District in efforts to address water supply issues, Thomas said.

Quincey was instrumental in the development of a water use monitoring program to assist agricultural water consumers in reporting actual use rather than estimated use, Thomas said.

“Another major District program that was initiated by Mr. Quincey is the District’s Cost Share program to assist stakeholders across North Central Florida to increase the efficiency of water use and reduce water quality impacts to groundwater and surface water resources,” Thomas said.

Thomas listed a number of other positive impacts that are a direct result of Quincey’s participation on the SRWMD Board of Governors.

Randy Blach, the chief executive officer of CattleFax of Centennial, Colorado, noted that he has known Quincey for almost 30 years now.

CattleFax is an economic analysis and market forecasting industry organization.

“Don’s passion, drive and leadership,” Blach noted, “have allowed him to overcome obstacles and create new opportunities that ultimately the rest of the industry benefited from.”

Blach noted that Quincey was among 13 founding members of the Florida Cattle Ranchers, which is a group focused on providing customers with high-quality beef that

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was born, raised and fed in Florida.

This is among the agricultural products marketed under the Fresh From Florida label, "... and is a farm-to-fork program that is a sustainable solution for producers and consumers alike," Blach noted.

Beyond his leadership roles in the cattle industry and his service in the SRWMD, serving as chairman for several years, Quincey has been involved with FFA since Chiefland High School, from which he graduated in 1974.

Blach noted that Quincey is a lifetime supporter of FFA, as well as having been heavily involved with the University of Florida's agricultural and athletics programs.

"During my 40-year career with CattleFax," Blach noted, "I have had the opportunity to work with many of the greatest leaders in the history of the cattle and beef industry. Done clearly is one of those leaders," Blach wrote.

Blach went on to note that Quincey constantly gives back to local, state and national communities by sharing his time, his wisdom and his treasures.

"He is an all-around great human being that is a joy to be around and work with," Blach wrote. "His energy is contagious!"

Don Bennick of North Florida Holsteins of Bell was another contributor to a very large stack of correspondence sent to Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried and the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame Foundation.

Bennick noted in his letter of Aug. 28, 2021, that his first contact with Quincey was 41 years ago when he moved a dairy farm from New York to Florida. Bennick noted that Don Quincey Sr. and Don Quincey Jr. became leaders in the dairy industry by providing support to new and established dairy farmers.

Bennick said the father-son team would send dairy farmers to other places on planes to learn best methods in their industry.

Like others, Bennick noted the pioneering spirit of Quincey who has now started marketing beef directly to consumers.

Quincey's lifelong support of Florida agriculture and Florida products is a success story, Bennick noted.

"As is Don's way," Bennick wrote, "he is not doing this just for his ranch; he is helping other ranchers in the state do the same. Many have thrived that might not have been able to in recent times."

In another letter that included notes of Quincey's lifelong service to agriculture, Gene Lollis, the ranch manager of Archbold Biological Station Buck Island Ranch in Lake Placid (Highlands County), Lollis also details of the diversified cattle operation at Quincey Cattle Co.

Lollis, too, addressed the benefit to the people in communities going outward from this Levy County business.

"Today, through is innovative spirit," Lollis wrote about Quincey, "he obtains approximately 80 percent of his commodity needs from within 20 miles of Quincey Cattle Company by partnering with his local farmers and using corn as part of the other farmers' crop rotation – a win-win for farmers and making feeding cattle in Florida sustainable and feasible."

Dr. John D. Arthington, professor and department chair of the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences' Department of Animal Sciences is a veteran beef cattle scientist serving research, extension, and administrative responsibilities with UF since 1998.

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Dr. Arthington, in his Aug. 21, 2021, letter of endorsement for Quincey to be in the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame noted that Quincey “is a supporter of our education, innovation and leadership in our agricultural community.”

The UF/IFAS Department of Animal Services chair noted that Quincey supports all of the mission areas of teaching, research and extension.

The cattleman has been highly supportive of UF students by offering internship opportunities as well as the resources of the Quincey ranch and feedlot to expand their learning.

“Don has an undeniable passion and dedication to the cattle industry and environment,” Arthington noted.

And as other writers noted, Quincey is not shy about pushing the boundaries and taking chances to improve the quality of life for everyone in a community.

Another of the many people endorsing this prestigious honor to be awarded to Quincey was Jim Strickland, owner of Strickland Ranch in Myakka City (an unincorporated community in southeastern Manatee County. Strickland noted Quincey’s leadership skills and his ability are what leads him to be a well-respected person of great integrity.

On Aug. 30, 2021, when he was president of the Florida Senate, Wilton Simpson also wrote a letter to endorse Quincey’s indoctrination into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame.

On Nov. 8, Simpson was elected to be the next Florida Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services – as he takes the place of Commissioner of Agriculture Fried.

“It is a special privilege for me to extend my highest personal and professional recommendation for Mr. Don Quincey’s nomination to the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame,” Florida Senate President Simpson noted.

Like others, Simpson noted innovations by Quincey that contributed to the sustainability of the cattle industry.

“As a lifelong farmer, entrepreneur and business owner,” Simpson wrote, “I am acutely aware of the skills and qualifications needed to succeed in the agriculture business. I can personally attest to Don’s career-long commitment and many significant contributions to our industry.”

One of the best known bankers in the area wrote his endorsement for Quincey to be in the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame.

On Aug. 25, 2021, Drummond Community Bank Chairman of the Board Luther Drummond penned his nomination for Quincey to be in the hall of fame.

“I can think of no one more deserving of being honored for promoting the advancement of agriculture,” Drummond wrote.

The bank chairman told the nominating committee about Don Quincey Sr.’s lifelong history of promoting agriculture as being the beginning of Don Quincey Jr.’s story.

Drummond wrote about a New York dairyman discovering many daunting obstacles to establishing a dairy near Chiefland, including rezoning, community opposition to dairies, and people quickly spreading misinformation.

The father and son team stepped up and volunteered to help the dairy owner, including with the establishment of one large tract of land. Don Sr. and Don Jr. became the unpaid spokesman for this dairy farmer, Drummond said.

They began by organizing community support, Drummond said. They introduced the dairyman to “the right people” politically, and they bought the property they needed,

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and it was rezoned as required.

“Their support didn’t stop there,” Drummond said.

Don Quincey Sr. was a member of the Drummond Community Bank Board of Directors, and he arranged financing for the dairyman, Drummond said.

“This dairy still exists today,” Drummond wrote, “and it is an agricultural showcase for everyone in the way they have balanced agriculture with a strong strategic plan to protect the environment, and the way they give back to the community.”

The template for dairy development established by the Quinceys, Drummond said, helped bring other dairies to the Tri-County Area of Levy County, Gilchrist County and Dixie County.

The banker noted the importance of peripheral industries from the dairies, including farmers who grow corn, agricultural supply stores, and hundreds of other jobs that were created from the dairy industry in the area.

The sudden and unexpected death of Don Quincey Sr. in 1992, Drummond said, ended that father-son partnership, but Don Quincey Jr. did not stop. He continued the family legacy of promoting agriculture whenever he could do so.

Drummond said it is without any hesitation whatsoever that he nominates Quincey to be inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame.

To read the first story announcing the two inductees, click [HERE](#).