

2011

Cinda Francis

“I was blessed to be raised by parents who instilled in me the values that have allowed me to accomplish many things. As one of two daughters, it was very apparent to me early in my life that my parents, especially my Dad, never really differentiated between women’s and men’s work. I have always lived in rural areas, but in high school FFA I discovered my passion for agriculture and natural resources. This passion led to my career in the forest industry and my desire to help others better understand the dynamics of our forests and the importance of our forest industry. Whether I am working with school children or forestry professionals, I am guided by these values instilled in me by my parents – work hard, stay true to yourself, and never pretend to be something you’re not.”

Jane Tabb

“I grew up in the Maryland suburbs of D.C. and absolutely loved spending the summers on my aunt and uncle’s dairy farm in Illinois. I loved the farm so much that I changed majors and colleges to obtain a BS in Dairy Science. I worked as a summer intern on the Tabb Dairy Farm and joined the family farm when I married the eldest son, Cam, the following summer. The farm has been a wonderful place to raise four children where life lessons are learned: if you do a job halfway, it will be there tomorrow; the animals are fed before you come in to eat and you are responsible for your actions. While farming is a way of life, it is also a business, so farmers must constantly adapt and change in order to survive economically. We now raise antibiotic and hormone-free beef, we have a recycling operation and give educational farm tours. I have a passion for agriculture and value our land as a precious resource. Promoting agriculture and its multiple benefits to the community has been a focus of my life.”

Pam West

“I reflect on how women in agriculture in my own family have evolved over the years. Every generation was a new generation in agriculture. Commodity crops, quotas and conventional tillage were replaced with specialty crops, ‘value added’ and sustainable farming methods. Today we raise 120 varieties of cut flower, 40 different vegetables, strawberries and sheep. We raise our diversified specialty crops in high tunnels and fields and have an extensive marketing plan for all. I believe to be a successful woman in an agriculture profession today, it is vital to possess both grace and grit, to be able to balance both field time with family time, to be able to work physically and mentally hard and then push a little harder to have the abilities to be both sensitive and sensible, to be a great salesman and stockman; to have the goal to make a profit, and protect a profit. Women in agriculture have to be silently smarter than our counterparts who are still the norm in this profession. We have to be respectfully outspoken when appropriate, to be calculative and a master of multitasking. Today we have to be all this, and still get the meals made, house chores done, pets fed, soccer games watched and keep the home fires burning.”

Jennifer Ours Williams

“Women have always been an integral part of the agricultural enterprise, but it has not been until recent years that society has fully recognized their contribution. Growing up on a farm in Hardy County, where both parents were full partners in the farming operation, it never occurred to me that women were viewed differently. My parents instilled in me a sense of pride in being involved with the dedicated individuals who love the land and feed

the world. In part, their legacy is my passion for and commitment to the agricultural industry. I count it as an honor and a privilege to be able to advocate, in some small way, for this most noble profession.”