

Posted on Sun, Feb. 10, 2008

HOMESTEAD

South Dade avocado grower to be awarded for work

Avocado grower medora krome is being honored for her shrewd business sense -- and for being a woman of distinction in farming.

By Risa Berrin

Special to The Miami Herald

Hear "Krome" and most think of the avenue or the detention center.

But in the agriculture world, it means avocados -- and a smart grower named Medora Krome.

The 56-year-old *does* belong to the South Florida pioneer family Krome, who first gained prominence at the turn of the century when her grandfather, William J. Krome, was one of the chief engineers of the railroad to Key West.

But she has made a name for herself for her plump avocados and savvy management of roughly 300 acres of her family's land in South Dade.

On Friday, the Women's Committee of the Dade County Farm Bureau will honor Krome as its Woman of Distinction in Agriculture during the third annual Women in Agriculture Luncheon 11 a.m. Friday at Schnebly Redland's Winery, 30205 SW 217 Ave.

"She is an incredibly shrewd businesswoman. She is very generous as far as her time goes with the community. She is a true-blue, homestead grower," said Katie Edwards, Farm Bureau's executive director.

Krome is immersed in South Dade issues and organizations from the widening of Krome Avenue to the Redland Christian Migrant Association, Florida Avocado Administration Committee and the Everglades Restoration Task Force.

Krome doesn't know how to sit on the sidelines.

"I feel compelled to be involved," she said. "You cannot complain how water management handles water if you are not willing to talk to them and explain the issues and at least debate and participate."

Edwards says the award was created to acknowledge the important women in agriculture, such as Denisse Schnebly and Sally Stribling, the first two recipients of the award.

"This is a way to recognize those women who are outstanding," Edwards said. "They are not on Forbes 500 list. They are just doing what they do best."

While Krome said she is honored to be acknowledged, she's not sure why she was chosen.

"I don't think they should make a fuss about it. All I'm doing is a job," she said.

Colleen Boggs, owner of Pine Island Nursery in Redland, said she is not surprised by Krome's humble reaction.

"She just does it, never sought attention. She's not out advertising or promoting herself. She does things quietly and gets them accomplished," said Boggs, who has done business with the Krome family since the 1970s.

Krome says joining the family business was just a natural choice for her after she returned to Florida upon graduation from the University of the South in Tennessee.

"I really had no subject or calling. I hung around and started working in the office. It was familiar to me," she said.

Krome said she "acquired a passion for the land."

"I love the land. I am truly fond of the trees," she said. "I worry about them if they look hungry or if they have a bunch of bugs chewing on them."

Krome says her father, William H., taught her that the key to being a successful grower is to find "good people" -- and to let them do their job.

One of those "good people" is Mike Hunt, a tropical fruit grower for Krome.

He said she is maintaining the "fine legacy" left by her father and grandfather.

"She's precise, she can be demanding. But it's a reflection of the demand she places on herself," said Hunt, who has known the Krome family for the past 25 years.

Theresa Smith, an administrative assistant at Farm Bureau, says that Krome is an important resource for the agricultural community.

"Everyone in South Dade knows her. She is the go-to person for so many things. The powers that be respect her opinion because she is so knowledgeable."

Smith said Krome is very unpretentious.

"She doesn't pull any punches. She's not into the Homestead social scene," Smith said. "She gets her self-worthiness out of the work that she does. She does not search for approval."

Despite her visibility in the agricultural community, Krome prefers to keep to herself.

"I'm a private person. I don't have any bosom buddies," she said.

Krome might not have "bosom buddies" but she has longtime, admiring friends.

Boggs says she remembers first meeting Medora in the 1970s and being struck by her sense of humor.

"She always had the driest, most unique wit of anyone I've ever known," she said. "I recall early on that I would really have to pay attention to what she was saying. Otherwise, I'd be nailed in a second."

The Dade County Farm Bureau is selling \$30 tickets for the luncheon honoring Medora Krome. Call 305-246-5514 for more information.



ALLISON DIAZ/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

Medora Krome, descendant of the Krome family known well in South Dade, will be honored with the title Woman of Distinction in Agriculture on Feb. 15th by the Dade Farm Bureau.