

TRANSCRIPT: DELMAR DETERLING INTERVIEW

Mr. Delmar "Del" Deterling · Former Executive Editor - The Progressive Farmer Magazine

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Interview with Delmar "Del" Deterling, Former Executive Editor - The Progressive Farmer Magazine. Deterling is a 1959 graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

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Mr. Delmar Deterling | Transcript
Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry | Department of Agricultural Economics | Texas A&M University

Could you please introduce yourself and tell us a little about your career?

Howdy, I'm Del Deterling. I'm a 1959 graduate of Texas A&M with degrees in agricultural economics and agricultural journalism. After I graduated, I spent three years in the Air Force, and then spent three and a half years with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service as an information specialist, and then 36 years...a little over 36 years with The Progressive Farmer magazine as an editor. I retired in 2002, and I continued to serve Progressive Farmer and other publications on a freelance basis.

Why did you choose to study agricultural economics?

Well, actually I didn't start in agricultural economics. Like a lot of students, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I started in agricultural engineering, and it didn't take me too long to find out I didn't have the smarts or the math background to be an engineer. And, about two weeks into the second semester, after being totally be followed by analytical geometry, and calculus, and engineering drawing, I marched into Dr. Dean Potts' office, and said he could either get me into some courses that suited me better or watch me flunk out. And, I had knew several people who majored in agricultural economics, and that appealed to me, so he enrolled me in, in some agricultural courses, and of course that was the turning point in my career.

Would you comment on some of the highlights of your career?

Well, actually there are so many that I've really been blessed. Serving as a... as an editor with Progressive Farmer magazine. I was president of the American Agricultural Editors Association, which is an association that represents all of the farm magazines in the country, which is probably over 150, and twice I was named 'agricultural writer of the year' along with, with several other editors and our staff, and then was the... named distinguished alumnus of the College of Agriculture at Texas A&M, and of course then finally also I was named to the Ty Timm Honor Registry. So, I feel like I have really been blessed in my career.

What activities at Texas A&M most influenced your career?

Well, I was in the Corps of Cadets, and that certainly helped me in, in leadership, and in helping to, to take direction as well as to, to take command, and in my course work, particularly in agricultural economics, received a good background in all the phases of agriculture plus the business, and then I also, as I mentioned, received a second degree in agricultural journalism, so I have received a good background in that field. And, so all those together I think really have served me well in my career.

What are your thoughts on being selected to the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry?

Well, certainly that was quite an honor for me, and as I look at that list of nominat—of people who have been named to that registry, why I'm always overwhelmed to be part of that group because there are so many people who are on that list that... that are doing great things, that have done great things, and some... some are quite notable in politics, and in banking, and in various fields, and so I am both, both humbled and greatly honored to be a part of that list. Dr. Timm ... he was a.... I've always enjoyed him. He welcomed me with open arms when I... when Dr. Potts introduced me to agricultural economics. Dr. Timm grew up in Hallettsville, and I grew up in Schulenburg, and those two towns were just next to each other, and they were great football rivals. So, every Monday morning, Dr. Timm would always catch me and give me a hard time regardless of which team won, and, and we always had a great time about that. Dr. Timm was just, just very open and friendly. He knew the names of all his students, and knew their backgrounds, and, and he took, he took care of them, both while they were part of the, the...while they were students and also as graduates. He tried to help them find jobs that suited them. In my case, when I was in the Air Force, why he—and I was getting ready to get out—he wrote letters to a number of different potential employees—employers, and, including the Texas Agricultural Extension Service where I ended up at my first job. One of the funny things was that after, some years after I graduated, at a meeting someone tried to introduce me to Dr. Timm, and Dr. Timm just said, "Aw shucks I know old Deterling." He said, "Why,

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when he came to A&M, why he had a sausage in each pocket." So he was, he was not only a great teacher, but he was a great mentor, and he was also a good friend.

What advice do you have for a student unsure of career decisions?

Well that is always a challenge, and of course for those who know what they want to do, you know, if you, they want to be a veterinarian, or if they want to be an agronomist, or work in animal science, I certainly encourage them to, to study those fields. If they're not sure I think they can do no, no worse than to major in agricultural economics because they would have an opportunity to background themselves in both agriculture and business, and then even, regardless of what field they later go into, they will have a good background. And even if they want to go into law later, or become a doctor, or whatever, why they will have a good background.

What advice do you have for students looking to match your own successes?

I think certainly you need to work hard, you need to work hard to, to learn whatever job you're going to take, take, and to master that job. But, at the same time, I think...I think it's very important that you develop your people skills, that you net—do a lot of networking, and that...as the opportunity presents itself, that you become a part of organizations, and, and meet a lot of people, and it always amazes me how people that you meet at one level, a number of years later, why, you meet them again at another level. You know, they may be a sales representative or field representative for a farm organization or a chemical company when you first meet them, and, and a number of years down the road, why, they may be... they may be a state senator or congressman or an assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture, so work hard. Master your job, but do a lot of schmoozing, too.

In your opinion, what does it take to achieve success?

Well, success certainly is not all money. I think success is doing something that is worthwhile, that contributes to society, and it, it's also doing something that you feel good about, where you enjoy going to work every day and feel like you're accomplishing something, and that you're contributing to, to your family, you're contributing to your... to the field that you're working in, and you're contributing to, to the agriculture or whatever field that you're in, and you know you're doing something that's worthwhile.

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Transcribed by
Isabella Garza
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