

TRANSCRIPT: EDWARD “ED” UVACEK INTERVIEW

Dr. Edward “Ed” Uvacek Jr. · Professor and Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

TRANSCRIPT

An interview with Dr. Ed Uvacek, a retired professor and livestock marketing specialist at the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service. Uvacek is a Class of 1966 Agricultural Economics graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

This video was posted September 10, 2018 on the Tyrus R. Timm Registry YouTube Channel.

Please introduce yourself and tell us about your career.

My name is Ed Uvacek, and unfortunately, I am a Yankee. My career has been basically around agriculture. I grew up on a horse farm in Upstate New York, and I've worked for meat packers. I have worked for the Department of Agriculture. I've pretty much covered most of the agricultural field.

What do you value most about your experiences at Texas A&M?

I guess the most valuable thing here I got was exposed to all these professionals. One thing about A&M you could find a professional in any field. It could be the left wing of a Tsetse fly, and you would have two or three people working in that area. So you never really had to worry about the fact that you might not know everything. You could always find somebody around that knew it backwards and forwards, so you'd just consult with them.

What is your "Aggie Story?" (How did you get to Texas A&M?)

I came in originally by mistake I guess is what you'd say. I was working for a meat packer up in Chicago, and they sent me to Texas to do feasibility studies on two meat packing plants: Fort Worth and Amarillo. I stopped by A&M to get some data, and I met a fellow by the name of Bob Cherry. Bob was in the Department, and we talked for a while in there, and he said, "Well, we'd like to have you to come here and join the staff," but they didn't have nobody. So I said, "Ok, you know, fine." I went back to Chicago, and about two weeks later, Bob called me and said, "We want you to come down for an interview". Ironically, I came down, and Ty Timm wasn't there again and neither was Hutcherson, so I got to talk to several other Junior Administrators, and I got the job as an Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist, and so my wife and I and the kids came down here in 1961.

What has been the biggest challenge in your career, and how have you faced it?

The biggest challenge—I was a Yankee. Now that may sound a little funny to you, but back in 1961, it was a pretty important issue. Ty Timm was our department head, and Ty never really trusted me because I was a Yankee. But he'd sort of oversee everything, and he liked a happy family, so you either got in line or you got out. It was a little bit of a challenge, not so much here on the campus but out in the field any way. A little bit of prejudice I get, but we finally got over that after years of talking.

What is your proudest accomplishment within your career?

Well my proudest accomplishment, if we're in all these years, is the awards that I've received for the position that I held here at A&M. I think I've got every agency or association award that they give, and it's on my wall. But I moved up from a livestock worker in New Jersey and New York to one of the top slots in the United States in Livestock and Meat Marketing.

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Besides hard work, what does it take to be a successful professional?

Even professionals have a tendency to quit in five, and you can't do that. If you really want to make your name in that field, you just have to keep going. I have spent many, many hours on the road after midnight coming home for a nine o'clock meeting. I didn't make eight o'clock meetings. I always got in a little bit late, but there is really no time lock if you really want to move up the system. You either work and stay working or pick another occupation.

What kinds of goals do you continue to set? How do these help you to grow?

Well, probably the one goal that I try to set is: continue to keep up with the industry. After I retired, I kept up with most of the industry leaders, continued to write chapters. I've written more chapters in magazines than anybody I know, unfortunately. I don't know how I kept on doing it.

What advice do you have for Agricultural Economics students who are about to graduate and start their careers?

Ag[ricultural] Economics is extremely fortunate. Most of our graduates get out of here with much higher pay, much more opportunity. They've got so many different fields that they can go into that you can't compare with others. See you've got to remember that I've got two degrees in animal science, and it's nice if your daddy has a ranch, but if he doesn't, it's kind of tough to find a job after you get that degree, so I think kids today have to start looking at their opportunities after they get out.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Well other than I enjoyed A&M. I probably retired too early, but after I retired, I became a consultant, and I stayed up with the industry, and unfortunately I'm old, and most of the guys that I knew and worked with were gone, and some of them were great, and some of them were not so great, but the majority of them were pretty darn good guys and smart.

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September 16, 2020