

# TRANSCRIPT: **RUSSELL BOENING** **INTERVIEW**

Mr. Russell Boening · President of Texas Farm Bureau

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## **TRANSCRIPT**

An interview with Mr. Russell Boening, President of Texas Farm Bureau. Boening is a 1981 graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

This video was posted May 13, 2019 on the Tyrus R. Timm Registry YouTube Channel.

Please introduce yourself and tell us about your career.

My name is Russell Boening and I'm a 1981 graduate of Texas A&M and agricultural economics. I've farmed and ranched my whole life with my family, right south of San Antonio. We have a diversified farming, ranching, dairy operation my brother and his wife, my wife, and my parents are still active. That's my, kind of my agricultural production of a background, and I serve as Texas Farm Bureau president, and this is my fifth year serving as Texas Farm Bureau president. We're the general — largest general farm organization in the state of Texas and we do things to advocate on behalf of Texas farmers and ranchers.

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

You know, my experiences at A&M, I think, I really, what I value the most for me was just the opportunity to be here. I was the first in my family to attend college and I'm talking immediate family, talking aunts and uncles, and even first cousins. So, being the first in my family to, to attend college, it was kind of a new experience for myself, and my family as well, just the fact that I had the opportunity to attend a university such as A&M, and of course being here, you know, why you're here, to campus life, and everything about it, the education you get, that I think overall, for me, I thought about that quite a bit — it's just the fact that I was able to attend a university like this, be here four years and get such a great education.

What impact has your degree from Texas A&M had on your professional career?

Well, you know, it's it's, your... you get a degree in something and you really wonder if you use it a lot in your career and, you know, you go back home and, for me, going back to farm and ranch, you think, "Well, do I really use it that much?" You do because, because an ag economics degree teaches you how to look at things on the economic basis, and you know, the thing you learn about early on in economics is opportunity cost, and no matter what decision you make, whether it's a production decision, whether it's a decision on hiring somebody, hiring somebody, everything has an opportunity cost, so I, I think sub — kind of subconsciously you use your degree a lot more than you think. So, I think that's where it helped me a lot.

What has been the biggest challenge in your career? How have you faced it?

That's a tough question, you know, because challenges come in all shapes, sizes, forms. I think what I had to learn early on — I'm kind of a perfectionist, and I think what I had to... as our operation grew, as our, our enterprises grew, you have people that... you have employees and stuff, and I think what I had to really understand is, is people have different priorities in their life, now they have different goals in their life and even though they might work real hard or, you know, you have expectations that they have different priorities, maybe, that, that I did, so I think, I think that was one of my biggest challenges, was able to, to understand that and, and channel those people to best use their talents for the priorities that they set for themselves.

What is your proudest accomplishment in your career?

My proudest accomplishment, no doubt, is, is being part of our family operation, our family farm. You know, I mentioned earlier about my brother, and my sister-in-law, and my wife. A lot of family operations don't survive, for whatever reason, you know, and just being able to be part of that, you know, I was able to actually, I didn't mention my grandfather, but my, my grandfather lived to be quite... in his mid-90s, and

I was able to farm with my grandfather, and to, to be it to be part of that family operation, that family succession on our place, without a doubt has, has been the highlight of my life.

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

Good people around you and good relationships, the relationships that you make with people. I mentioned just a minute ago about the relationships that you have with you... people that we work with, whether they're family, whether they're your employees. No one, in my opinion, no one's successful on

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their own. I mean, you hear a lot about self-made people, self-made man. That, to me, maybe there are some out there. I definitely don't look at myself that way. I think, I think it's... you have to have good relationships. Whether it's, for instance, on our farm and operation in my professional deal with Texas Farm Bureau, we have so many good folks with our staff and our membership that works on things for agriculture, so it's about building those relationships with the people that can help you do the things that you think need to be done.

What kind of goals do you continue to set? How do they help you to grow?

And now, I think I'm at a point where my goals have changed they're more along the lines of what can I do, what can I do to help the industry? What can I do to help agriculture? What can I do, maybe, to help Texas A&M University? How can I give back, I guess. You know, and whether it's a community, whether it's your, your industry, whether it's my church, anything along those lines are really where I set my goals now to be more productive, and I think that keeps me going.

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

Advice for anyone, I guess, whether you're getting a degree and going out into the job force, the old cliché of, you know, "find what you love and you'll never work a day in your life" is, is I think it's true, but don't over think that cliché. I mean, look for it, but be ready at first to maybe take a job, or do something that may not be your passion, but you know what your passion is. You can always work toward that passion. That's one thing. And, the other thing is, is lean on people that you can lean on: friends, family, mentors, your professors here at A&M. Somebody's there for you to lean on.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

It's an honor to be to be selected for this, for this registry, for this honor registry. When I was, when I was an 18-year-old freshman in 1977, I would have never thought that something like this could happen to me. This university opened a lot of doors for me. This university was good to me. Take full advantage of whatever opportunities you have while you're here. Don't, don't ever underestimate what they're going to provide for you in the end.

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