

TRANSCRIPT: ZAY W. GILBREATH INTERVIEW

Mr. Zay W. Gilbreath · Retired President of Cargill Commercial of Cattle Feeders

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Interview with Mr. Zay Gilbreath Ret. President of Cargill Commercial of Cattle Feeders. Gilbreath is a 1962 graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

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Mr. Zay W. Gilbreath | Transcript
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My name is Zay Gilbreath. I live in College Station. I retired about four years ago from Cargill. I was running Cargill — it was a cattle feeding operation then, and then liked, liked College Station and, have, have, have made our home in College Station now.

Could you tell us about your career?

Started my career, I went to graduate school at Kansas State University after A&M, after graduating from A&M. Went, went to work for Cargill, worked for 'em 41 years. The first 13 years I was with Cargill, I was, I was in their soybean processing operation and in travel — and moved to about four different locations during that time. In the last, the last 28 years, I was in their cattle feeding operation. In roughly the last 25 years, I was president and general manager of their, of the commercial cattle feeding operation, which at that time was called Caprock Industries and now it's called Cargill Cattle, commercial cattle feeders.

What experiences at Texas A&M helped you the most in your career?

The Corps of Cadets was very important to me. The leadership that I learned in the Corps from, you know, from freshman year up until the senior year and the different, different ranks that I had were very important to me. I, I was also, I remember the student council while I was at A&M and also president of the the Ag Economics club, so the, the school and also the, the other activities were, were important to me while I was here.

What advice do you have for a student of agricultural economics today?

I think in, whether it's in ag economics or anything, of somebody that's coming out of school now, the one thing that I'm involved in in the ag economics group is just having dinners with students and discussing business ethics, and I think integrity and character are extremely important. It just seems like day after day, with, and maybe because of the environment were in with the, with the subprime mortgages and all that that it's biggest, brought it to that, brought it to the to the floor again, but you can't underestimate character and ethics. My other, my other advice would be, would, would be to execute. Whatever you decide to do, whatever position you're put in, execute, execute, execute. You don't have to be smartest person if you're the hardest worker and you put in the time.

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

And that's tough, but, but most of us were unsure when we came out of A&M, or, you know, whenever we came out of graduate school, wherever we came out of. I think you just, you try to find a company that you respect, and, and go to 'em, go work for 'em. The one thing is, when I was interviewing students, I'd always ask them, "Now, you look at, you look at Cargill as hard as we're looking at you because it's got to be a mutual benefit. If you, if in the interview you have some things, something you really don't like about the company, don't take the job regardless of how much money it might be, and I think be willing to start at a pretty low level if it's a company that you really like. If you like it, you like the, what they're in, there's a good chance you'll do very well.

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

So, basically, somebody told me one time how to be successful in Cargill, and I think it's the same way in life, is work hard and keep your nose clean.

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