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Tribute to Rod Gangwish and Mark Gustafson
Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement Annual Banquet
by John C. Owens
April 16, 2004

President Williamson, honored guests, and friends, it is such a "pleasure" to be here with you tonight, and such a "privilege" to deliver this tribute to our 2004 Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement "honorees", Rod Gangwish and Mark Gustafson. ALAN MOELLER

Driving to the East Union this evening, Virginia and I were talking about tonight's awards and tributes. I told her that I had only 15 minutes to speak and asked her: "How can I possibly tell the audience everything I know in 15 minutes?" She answered me: "Speak very slowly and maybe it will take the full 15 minutes!" To describe succinctly the achievements of two remarkable Nebraskans is a huge challenge, so I cannot take Virginia's advice and speak "very slowly"!

These are tremendous men. Talented men. Men of intellect and integrity. We are especially fortunate to have Rod and Mark "among" our agricultural leaders in Nebraska. I count myself very

fortunate to have had the opportunities I've had to work with them since coming to Nebraska and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University over three years ago now. I count myself even more fortunate to call each of these men "my friend."

Now, Mark told me I should keep this light tonight, so I'm going to begin with a joke that I think combines the savvy of knowing who you're working with, which is an integral part of successful leadership, with agriculture – something that seems particularly fitting for these two agricultural leaders.

Many years ago before Nebraska agriculture became so mechanized, it seems a city-fellow was driving down a muddy country road. He wasn't used to driving on anything but concrete and asphalt, so he was a novice on wet soil and gravel. When he hit one muddy spot too many, he slid his car right into the borrow ditch.

He got out and was surveying the situation when a farmer came down the road leading a sturdy work horse. The man

asked the farmer if he could help him get out of the ditch, and the farmer said, "Well, sure." He hitched his horse to the car's bumper and called, "Pull, Duke, pull."

The horse never moved.

Next the farmer called, "Now, Bess. Pull."

The horse never moved.

A third time the farmer called: Gee up, Nellie. Pull."

No movement at all.

Finally the farmer called, "Pull, Buddy, pull."

The big horse stepped forward and easily pulled the car out of the ditch.

The city fellow thanked the farmer profusely, then hesitated and asked, scratching his head a little as he did so, "You know, I don't know much about farming, but – Why did you call four different names when you only have the one horse here?"

The farmer replied, "Oh, that's not farming, that's psychology. You see, Old Buddy here is blind, and if he thought he was the only horse pullin', he wouldn't even try."

Rod Gangwish and Mark Gustafson are the type of leaders you always can depend on to be in there pulling with you. They lead by example, and I think their examples boost in others the courage and strength, the commitment and enthusiasm to pull. Both are known for their willingness to work with others and to listen to what people are saying to them, to consider what is said carefully, and to develop plans based on the best available information. I highly value their opinions and their advice. I know many-others do, as well.

Booker T. Washington once said "Character is power," and that being true, we have a couple powerful people we are honoring here tonight. They certainly are characters – that is, have character. Their commitment to agriculture and the beliefs they hold, their willingness to work on behalf of agriculture, their communities, their state, and their nation, is evident in the brief biographies included in the program we all received tonight. It's my pleasure to expound a little further on their many activities tonight, knowing that this is far from a full-review of all they do.

I'll begin "alphabetically", with Rod Gangwish.

Rod and his wife Jane "farm" near Shelton. They have for 30 years. They grow corn, seed corn, soybeans, even peas, as part of a 1,700 acre irrigated operation. They have three children. Son John and his wife Megan are involved in the farming and trucking business. Daughter Erin is a cosmetologist in Omaha. Son Steve is a senior here at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, majoring in civil engineering.

Rod's work on behalf of the nation's corn growers is extensive. He is a past president of the National Corn Growers Association, as well as a past president of the Nebraska Corn Growers Association. Rod also has served as chairman of the board of the National Corn Growers Association. He also has chaired the National Corn Growers Association's "government relations" and "market development" committees.

Rod has worked "extensively" in Washington, D.C., representing the National Corn Growers Association in the development of policy and legislation for GATT, NAFTA, and the 1996 Farm Bill.

He has been honored for his service to the Nebraska corn industry with the "Golden Ear Award" presented by the Nebraska Corn Growers Association and the Nebraska Corn Board. He received the "Service to Agriculture Award" from KRVN radio in 1997, and was elected to the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement in 2002.

From 1988-1996, Rod served on both the Agricultural Advisory Committee of the Chicago Board of Trade and the Agricultural Advisory Committee to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission in Washington, D.C. He also has served on the board of directors of the U.S. Feed Grains Council and as a member of the Trade Policy Committee.

He is on the board of directors for Agriculture Builders of Nebraska Inc., and served two terms as ABN president.

Rod serves on the Presidents Advisory Council for the University of Nebraska, and represents Nebraska as one of three delegates to the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET). He is a past chairman of the board of directors of the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council, which

directs the Nebraska Leadership Education Action and Development (LEAD) Program, and has served in a variety of leadership positions at the local and state level.

Active in the Gibbon Baptist Church, where he is the Lay Moderator, he is a past president of the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska. He serves on the Board of Finance and Investment for the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska.

Rod serves on the Board of Directors of the Kearney Area Ag Producers Alliance, or KAAPA, and was instrumental in the development and building of the KAAPA Ethanol Plant at Minden. He serves on the board of Managers of KAAPA Ethanol L.L.C. and as board secretary. He is a member of the board of managers of KAAPAMEX L.L.C., a joint venture in the development of a business in Mexico that will open a supply chain for grain into the Mexican market and will import U.S. grain.

A member of the Nebraska Agricultural Relations Council, the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, the Nebraska Corn Growers Association, the Nebraska Soybean Association, and the Nebraska Cattlemen's Association, he is active in community

affairs, including the Buffalo County Extension Board. He has served as a 4-H leader, and I must say, what a terrific role-model Rod is for the young people of Nebraska. Rod earned his bachelor of science degree in agronomy here at the university. We are so very proud of this College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources alumnus.

I am sure you agree with me that Rod Gangwish is well-deserving of the honor we bestow upon him tonight. Let's give him a hand.

Now it is my pleasure to tell you about Mark Gustafson.

Mark and his wife Dianne Travers-Gustafson have a grain-and-livestock farm near Mead, where they have lived since 1978. They have two children. Son Chris, a graduate of our College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, is a Fulbright scholar in Italy at this time, studying Italian consumer attitudes toward genetically modified food. This is a key issue in Italy, and one with implications for agricultural producers worldwide.

Daughter Anneke is an agricultural economics major with us in our College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

She follows in her father's footsteps; he earned both his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in agricultural economics here in 1967 and 1968 before going on to the University of California-Berkeley to earn his Ph.D. in agricultural economics and natural resources in 1974.

In 1994 the Capital City Kiwanis Club of Lincoln and the Nebraska-Iowa District Kiwanis Club both named the Gustafson family their Outstanding Farm-Family of the Year. Mark was elected to membership in the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement in 1996.

Mark is a fellow of the Nebraska LEAD program and was a member of class three. He serves on the Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc. board of directors, and has served three-terms as ABN president. He is on the board of directors for the Center for Rural Affairs, and on the Ag 40 Group's Action-Committee.

Mark is one of the three Nebraska delegates to the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching, or CARET, of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. He serves as president of the North Central Regional

CARET. CARET is a national advocacy organization made up of representatives from the various states to support agricultural extension, research and teaching. From 1996-98 Mark served as the CARET representative on the Board of Agriculture FY99 Budget Committee for the USDA National Budget. I personally believe Nebraskans can proudly say our CARET representation is second to none.

Mark does a great deal of work on behalf of the university. He was named to the Chancellor's Committee of Visitors at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1994 and chaired that committee in 1997. In 1998 he was named to the University of Nebraska President's Advisory Council. Mark is known for his willingness to speak on behalf of agriculture and the university, for the careful thoughts he puts into his advice, and for his willingness to pitch in to get things accomplished. He's also known for the great ability he has to clearly explain the mutually beneficial relationship between agriculture and the University of Nebraska.

Mark has served on university search committees for the

NU VICE PRESIDENT +

Vice Chancellor of IANR and the Agricultural Economics Department Head, and he's a member of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Future Nebraska Task Force, as well as the UNL Future Teachers Task Force. He serves as "co-chair" of the IANR Task Force on Agriculture Diversity. He also is a member of IANR's Agricultural Economics External Networking Committee, and of the Citizen's Liaison Committee for the Agricultural Research and Development Center at Mead.

Mark is "co-chair" of the Domestic Marketing Committee of the Governor's Task Force on Trade and Traceability.

From 1981-1994 he was a member of a local cooperative board of directors, serving as secretary, vice president, and president. He has served as "secretary" of the Land O'Lakes Policy Committee and chair of the "three-state" Land O'Lakes District 16 board of directors.

Like Rod, Mark is "active" in his community. He was elected to the Mead Public Schools Board of Education, is a board member of the "new" Mead Educational Foundation, and treasurer of Marietta Township. He also has served as "chair" of a county-

wide strategic planning committee for health services. These days he's "running" to represent the 23rd district in the Nebraska Legislature. Mark, if I lived in your district, you'd have my vote.

I am sure you agree with me that Mark Gustafson is well-deserving of this honor. Let's give him a hand.

Thank you all for the pleasure of presenting this tribute to Rod and Mark tonight. I am so very, very pleased to see you "both" honored in this way. My congratulations, also, to "each" new member of the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement who we inducted tonight. With "leaders" like you serving Nebraska agriculture, I am confident that we will successfully meet all the challenges and unending opportunities that are ahead of us.

Thank you.

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