

TRANSCRIPT: CRAIG SHOOK

Mr. Craig Shook · Former Director of Farm and Ranch, Oil and Gas operations for the Robert and Julia Driscoll and Robert Driscoll, Jr. Foundation of Corpus Christi

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An interview with Mr. Craig Shook, Former Director of Farm and Ranch, Oil and Gas operations for the Robert and Julia Driscoll and Robert Driscoll, Jr. Foundation of Corpus Christi. Shook is a Class of 1975 Agricultural Economics graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

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Mr. Craig Shook
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?

Well, my name is Craig Shook. I was... I came to Texas A&M in the Fall of '71 and graduated in May of '75 in Ag Economics. I came from a background that included a grandfather -- he had a farm in Lockhart, Texas. So, I started at about the 4th grade picking cotton, and chopping cotton, and killing Johnson grass, and all those good things that... develop character and a desire to go to school because you don't want to keep doing that every day of your life, I guarantee you.

My career mainly encompassed... Starting in August of 1979, I became the Farm and Ranch Manager for the Driscoll Foundation in Corpus Christi It's a large foundation that owns a children's pediatric hospital there, and I managed all the ag[ricultural] properties -- about a hundred thousand acres of farm and ranch land and. [I] took care of all the marketing, crop insurance, and stuff like that, that... that had to be managed for them as well as some oil and gas, and pipelines, and easements and all kinds of stuff that go along with managing large blocks of land. And I've done that, and I still do that today. I'm still a consultant for the Driscoll foundation as we sit here today, so I've been employed by them since 1979. Before that, I was with Farmland Industries for a couple of years in crop production in the Rio Grande Valley.

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

Yeah, my experiences were really pretty well driven by studies, going to school -- I was not in the Corp. But when I came to A&M I got a note when I went to the Registrar to see Dean Potts. Before I signed up for anything, in which I did. Dean Potts had a job for me with... Through the Ag Eco department. Ty Timm was part of that team and Dean Lard and those three guys helped me immensely. At the University they helped me stay on track. They supplied me with a job where I could make a little spending money, and buy books and do things like that, that they knew I couldn't afford otherwise. My dad passed when I was seven years old. My mother never remarried. and... I was strapped for financial... the abilities to finance my college and all that kind of stuff and those three guys helped me immensely to do that.

Can you describe your early career?

In my early career, I was in crop production: fertilizer, seed, feed, Ag chemicals, and stuff like that in the Rio Grande Valley, which was a real eye opener. We grew everything from broccoli, to carrots, to grain sorghum, cotton, sugarcane, and a few other odds and ends. That gave me a really good opportunity to learn about production, crop production, the decisions that farmers had to make about fertilizer, Ag[riculture] chemicals, seed... The big money crop though was -- as it was in the coastal bend -- was cotton, lots of cotton production. And then after I did that for a couple of years, then I got hired by the Driscoll foundation. And I just came up to the coastal bend area -- Corpus Christi which is where I was from and went to work for them and helped oversee their properties and... worked with their tenants and lessors to maximize the income that we could get off those properties for the benefit of the children of South Texas.

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

First of all, you kind of have to have a love of the -- a love of the land, and a love of the...people that are in Agriculture, I think. That's one of the main reasons I was driven to the degree is because I like the people that are in agriculture, they are the... salt of the earth kind of people, they're hard, hard workers, they're honest people, and they are responsible for themselves which I think is an important thing

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today, and... and if you're a student going to Texas A&M in Ag Economics, you need to look at the kind of people that you associate with and surround yourself with and pick people that are -- got three or four really good qualities, mainly they got to be smart. You want to surround yourself with smart people, people that have integrity, people that work hard and people that love the university.

How do you balance your career with your family life?

Well for one thing, I have a very understanding and loving wife, my wife Annette. I have two children, Cy and Sara and I missed a lot of activities, because of things I was doing in my career, mainly in the cotton industry. National Cotton Council, Cotton Board, things like that that I was involved in, and took me away from the house, many many times for many many meetings. Overseas travel, Brazil three times, China, Vietnam, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, lots of places to talk about and discuss cotton with merchants and mills and our customers overseas and... It was tough, but they were pretty understanding and loving and caring. They gave me the latitude to do what I needed to do to be what I thought was successful.

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

First of all, you've got to be willing to work hard. You've got to be willing to stay after it. You don't go home at five o'clock every day, and you get there early, and you do the job, and you try and grow and develop yourself into a person that got the brainpower and the --willing to sacrifice to get the job done. That's number one. You've got to have a good background in whatever your endeavors are -- if you're in the Oil and Gas business or in the Ag business, or in the beef business, or whatever you've got to know your trade. and you've got to be able to work hard and achieve the goals you want to achieve in whatever endeavor that is.

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

Well, I was one of the lucky guys that got to know Ty Timm. As I mentioned, I worked for the department for eight semesters. A lot of the time I was running errands for Ty Timm, -- for Dr. Timm And I got to watch Timm firsthand and got to know him personally. And for that I feel very very blessed. You know, he was a even-keel kind of guy, but this time of the year right now as we sit here in the spring of the year, he would get excited about going to Europe for the summer Because that's what he was studying , he was a-- common market kind of guy, studied all their-- all the intricacies of that program they had over there. And he enjoyed leaving right after school was out, going to Europe and and endeavoring to understand what was going on over there and be able to articulate that back here in the states and help with policy decisions that wrapped around those kinds of things. So, I'm proud to be the recipient -- a recipient one of many but -- probably not the most deserving but I'm still proud because I knew the guy and I know what kind of person he was, he was a great person.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Oh, just that if you're a young person and you're starting out I think you need to you need to develop some people that you call mentors that can help you go in your life. I've got three or four of them, two or three of them are going to be here tonight at my table that are great people. They really blessed me a lot. They're smart, they're hard workers, they're honest, and they love this university, all three of the guys I'm going to talk about a little later today but... you just need to -- as a young person you need to watch who you associate with and pick winners and don't hang around very much with losers because

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they're not going to get you anywhere. They're not going to bless your life I guarantee you. But the good people will bless your life a lot.

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