

TRANSCRIPT: JAMES DODSON INTERVIEW

Mr. James F. Dodson · Tenth District Farm Credit Council

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An interview with Mr. James F. Dodson, Chairman - Tenth District Farm Credit Council. Dodson is a 1974 graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

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Mr. James F. Dodson | Transcript
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?

I'm Jimmy Johnson. I'm a Texas Aggie from class of 1974. I was born in Corpus Christi, Texas, and I'm the third of my family to graduate from A&M.

Why did you choose to study agricultural economics at Texas A&M?

My father farmed for all of his life in the Corpus Christi area, and his dad before him, so I had always wanted to be involved in agriculture, somehow. When I graduated from high school and came to Texas A&M, we entered an era when the dollar had been devalued and agricultural exports from the United States were going all over the world. It was a time of prosperity and agriculture, and I really wanted to be involved in it as a producer but didn't think that there would be an opportunity for me because there was so much competition for land and resources, and so I came to A&M and thought that agricultural economics would be a good avenue into agricultural support industries or banking. I really, frankly didn't know what I would do in my career if I couldn't farm, and so I studied undergraduate work here and got ready to send out my resumes. About the same time, I went home to Corpus Christi during my senior year and visited with my dad, and he informed me that one of our neighbors had decided to retire from farming, and had offered him all the land to rent, and all of his equipment to buy. My dad told me with kind of a sad look that he was going to have to turn the opportunity down because it was too much for him to do by himself, and so I asked him very quickly, had he ever thought about a partner, and he had a little gleam in his eyes and said, "Yeah I've got a partnership agreement in the house if you'd like to go back in and visit with me about it." So that's how I got started in farming. That's how I didn't get a graduate degree at Texas A&M, and how I moved back home and started my career.

What activities at Texas A&M most influenced your career?

Well, I think the... all the knowledge that you pick up and the subject work that you do obviously is good preparation for any career that you might choose. I think some of the friends that I made, and some of the friendships, and some of the mentoring that happened with me and some of my professors made a big difference in my life. When I was evaluating whether or not I was going to take this opportunity to farm, I talked to Dr. Curtis large... at length about it, and he did a thumbnail sketch of the opportunity and encouraged me to pursue it. He felt like it was a good place, a good time, and a great opportunity for a career if it's what I really wanted to do. I think the traditions here at A&M were very important because they gave a sense of meaning to a lot of, a lot of students including myself and brought a close kinship and a bond between people that has lasted till this time in my own life. Lots of good friends, lots of people that I can rely on.

What experiences influenced you in your life the most?

Well, apart from finding the perfect person to marry and having great children, I would say that the opportunity to serve as a director in the Farm Credit System has been very influential in my life, with a chance to grow professionally by participating as director and working with the good people in farm credit, and having a diverse set of experiences from challenges, financial challenges at an association level to being able to serve on district bank board with some great people there as well. All those opportunities have been very important, and I think, in addition to that, serving with the National Cotton Council, and the excellent staff there, and the great leadership there that I met, and the networking that I've been able to do with the people at both those locations has really enriched my life and helped me to focus, and hopefully I'm going to be a better manager and a better businessman.

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

Well I knew Dr. Timm. My older brother was an ag eco student as well here and thought the world of Dr. Timm, and I... it's just a huge honor to be considered in, in a group that that honors him. There are a lot of great students here. Some of the inductees I know were friends of mine when I was here at A&M, and I followed their careers, and they've been exemplary people, and I'm just - it's a great honor. I hope that this will be another opportunity for me to get to know these people better, and to get to know people here

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at the university better, to stay connected because I think that's very important. There's a lot of energy here, and there's a lot of creativity here that's infectious. It's great to be around it, and this has been a great opportunity for me to get reconnected.

What advice do you have for students looking to match your own successes?

Well, I think I think that you need to be prepared. You need to work hard. The academics are very important, but you need to have balance in your life, and by balance I mean develop relationships. Get outside of your comfort zone to meet other people, and to befriend other people, and to have relationships with other people that can broaden your horizons, to help you see the world a little differently. Diversities in friendships adds richness to your life. I think that people are very, very important in sharing this walk, and this is a great concentration of wonderful people here at Texas A&M, and so don't spend all your time on studies. Focus on clubs, focus on outside activities and just, just friendships with people that have common interest with you and, and look for balance in your life. Don't... my uncle Clayton used to say that some people go to seed on certain things. What an onion produces the seed that the fruits not any good to eat anymore because all the energy goes up to the seed, and basically by not going to seed, it just means don't focus all of your energy on one spot to the point to where you're not balanced and useful in other parts of life. And then, keep your head up at the horizon. Have a long view of things so that you can see that there are opportunities out there. A lot of people walk right by opportunity and miss it, Keep focused on, on the positives of the circumstances that you're in. If you're in a bad time, don't get discouraged. Press on and keep your eye up on the horizon looking for the next opportunity because they're they're all around us.

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

Well, I didn't know what I was going to do the week before I was supposed to mail out my resumes, so I'm not a very good example for someone that had a clear career path and could tell you with certainty what I was going to do with my life. So, I would say don't get too uptight about it. You can be so worried about the... the question marks in your career path that you'll miss opportunities that are right at your feet. Be honest, work hard, develop character, be dependable, and do the very best at the opportunity at hand, and wait for the next opportunity as it arrives because it, they surely come for people like that.

How have you managed to balance time for family, work, and other commitments?

The answer is not very well. If you're not careful, you will either work too hard or play too hard and leave your family out, so you just have to continually take your own pulse and look at your calendar, and another way to do it is look at your checkbook register, or look at your QuickBooks, or whatever you keep your records on, and see where you're spending your money, and that's a pretty good indication of where your where your focus has been. And, make sure that you keep those priorities straight and that you value your family and value your people around you. I've had several friends recently that have passed away. None of them call for their accountant or their attorney on their deathbeds. They all call for their family, and they all call for their friends, and the people that we have in our lives are so very important, so we shouldn't neglect them.

Is there anything else that you would like to tell A&M students?

Enjoy your time at Texas A&M, but remember that learning doesn't end when you leave here; it's only beginning. This whole journey of a lifetime, if lived... if lived well, will be a journey of education, and learning, and asking questions, and growing every single day, and sometimes you can learn things from the most unlikely sources, so enjoy learning. Enjoy experiencing life. Have a good time.

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