

# TRANSCRIPT: PAUL BRACHER INTERVIEW

Mr. Paul Bracher · Chief Banking Officer, Frost Bank

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## TRANSCRIPT

An interview with Mr. Paul Bracher, President of Cullen/Frost Bankers, Inc. and Chief Banking Officer at Frost Bank. Bracher is a 1978 graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

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Please introduce yourself and tell us about your career.

My name's Paul Bracher. I grew in Uvalde, Texas, a small town west of San Antonio, about 70 miles, and I came to Texas A&M in 1974 and studied Agricultural Economics. During that time, I spent my summers working in a community bank back in Uvalde, and after I got out of A&M I went to work for the Texas Banking department. I did that for about three years. I was stationed in Dallas most of the time, although I spent part of that time in Austin, Texas and traveled about a 200-mile radius of Dallas examining state-chartered banks. I got on with Frost Bank in 1981 and have been there ever since, doing a variety of jobs, mostly in the commercial lending area.

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

Yeah that's my friendships, the people that I've met— I was in the Corps my freshman and part of my sophomore year. I enjoyed that part of it, really got to, got to know Texas A&M, although my father graduated from here, my brother did, I had a sister that was here at the time, and, but it was, it was, it was good being in the Corps, and learning all the traditions at Texas A&M, but I also enjoyed my non-Corps years and the friends that I met— a lot of friendships out of West Texas, which I still hold dear today.

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

You know, they... when I think about that question the things that come to mind were my statistics course, my appraisal course that I took under Dr. Schmedemann, economics that I took, uh professor Graham, and just some basic economics to do with... deal with supply and demand and banking in, in all the different industries. That's the one thing about being in banking is you're not an expert in any one industry, but you have to adapt to a lot of different industries, and so I think my degree really helps and the, the classroom work that I did really helps in that regard.

What has been the biggest challenge in your career, and how have you faced it?

You know, the biggest challenge in my banking career was in the '80s and that's when the... we were seeing a lot of bank failures in the state. The 'bank that I was fortunate to go to work for was not one of those. Cullen Frost actually made it through. I was only, the only one of the top ten banks that made it through without having to sell out or go broke, but it was a very humbling experience. You just saw a lot of, lot of folks that really had rough times, and that made a big impression on me to, to make sure that, you know, when I was dealing with people and their business to make sure I was making good — helping them make good decisions for their own, their own business.

What is your proudest accomplishment within your career?

You know, proudest is we set up a training program. We... another guy that started work in the same in 1981 in Frost, he stayed on the credit side, and I went on the customer relationship side, but about... I could spend about eighteen, seventeen, eighteen years ago, he and I sat down and we said that we really'd like to start a formal credit training program, and through that we've probably hired and trained I'm thinking over four or five hundred college students and people second, third year out of college to become bankers, and I think that's probably the most lasting and most fulfilling, to see, you know, to see us create some value in them.

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

Yeah, to me, it takes surrounding yourself with other professionals that want to achieve the same success. You know, one of the things that... that I've always believed in is in collaboration. It's not about self, it's about working with others, finding the strengths, strength in others, and, and working together to find really great solutions.

What kind of goals do you continue to set, and how do they help you to grow?

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You know, the goals that I set to do are mainly for the organization, and that's around continued growth. We're a publicly-traded company, New York Stock Exchange, so that's what the, the market wants us to see, you know, continues, wants to see continued performance out of our company and so that's what I expect out of our people, and we're in some great markets, we're in a great state of Texas, and we'll just keep, I will keep channeling — challenging our people to do more and to serve more across this great state.

How do you balance your career with your family life?

The best play is to put my phone up. It's a distraction. It's tough, and it's not only career and family, it's, it's, you know, maintaining your own health and really getting some time away, so, but it's a, it's a, It's very difficult. We're so connected. I joke about the phone, but we're so connected today that, you know, sometimes you just have to turn the thing off, and go sit, and do some other things, and, you know, read a book or just, you know, just think about, contemplate issues that you may.... may have or may need to think about, but it's, it's a tough one. You just have to work at it every day.

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

My advice to the, any student out there is... it's really twofold. It's 1. find a passion, find, figure out what it is that you want to do with your life, and secondly, find a group of people or a company that you want to spend, spend that life with because if you're, if you're not following your passion or your dream, then I think you're going to be miserable, and, and the same thing about the group that you work with. If you're not working with people that you really enjoy, getting up every morning and going to work with, then I think that's going to be a challenge and I think at the end of your career it's, it's, it's not going to be as successful as you would have hoped it would be.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

The only thing else I'd add is... know your own weaknesses, and, and, and again see the strengths in others that you don't have, and be honest about that, and it's okay. It's okay to have weaknesses. We all have 'em, but recognize that and the, and the earlier on that you can recognize that, I think the better off you'll be as a person.

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