

I am honoured to accept this award tonight. To be considered in the same class as Ralph Vold, Roy Routledge long with the other previous winners and to be selected from such a deserving group of nominees is truly humbling.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brock Taylor and Scott Anderson for nominating me for this prestigious award.

I would also like thank my family for their support and the sacrifices they have made so that I could pursue my career in the livestock industry. Without their support and understanding of my passion for this business, I would not be in the livestock business. I know for sure.... that any other job would not be as enjoyable for me as this one has been. I like to get up in the morning and go to work and I love this industry.

I am not going to bore you with a long story about my life, those of you that know me, know that my life is rather dull and none of you here tonight have consumed enough alcohol to make my story interesting.

Instead I am going to talk to you about some of the people that helped and influenced me. They gave me sound advice that helped me get to where I am today. Maybe some of their advice will service you as well.

My mother and father had a great influence on me. My mother was a former school teacher and very involved in the family business. She taught me that you finished what you started, take pride in what you do, anything short of your best effort is unacceptable.

Most of all she made sure that I was enrolled in public speaking and the performing arts,much to my dismay at the time.

However it gave me the confidence to be able to speak in the public forum, which in turn allowed me to work in radio and television my first career choice and evening try auctioneering.

My Dad was an auctioneer, cattle farmer, entertainer and most of all a deal maker every day. He had a successful auction business that was built on is exceptional customer service, a reputation for treating his customers honestly, fairly and equally. He worked hard for all of his customers large or small. He was well liked by his colleagues, customers and his opinion was always respected in the industry and community.

My dad was humble, soft spoken and tried to be a diplomat every day. He believed in putting back into the communities that he lived in and the industry that he made career from.

My dad always told me that “your reputation is worth more money than you will ever have in the bank. You have to earn it and you can never buy it!”

I was 24 years old and had just started as the manager of the Virden Auction Mart when I went to my first Manitoba Auction Marts Assoc. meeting in 1980. One weekend after two Sat. meetings I was at the farm and I told my dad those meetings were a waste of time. They are were nothing but a bunch of old guys sitting around complaining about all of the things wrong with the business and provided no solutions to correct them. With that, I said I was going to quit going to those association meetings. They were a waste of time!

He advised me that before I made any firm decisions there were two opinions I should consider.

He said option 1, was to do what I had said, not get involved and just quit attending. Pay the fees and leave it that. That would be

the easy option but there could be consequences. If you chose this business as your career and you walk away, some one else will be at the table to making the decisions as to how, where, when and who you can do business. Can you live with that? Will you be happy with someone else determining your future of your career and industry?

Option 2 is the difficult one because it will take hard work, commitment, compromise, patience (which you are a little short of) and maybe even some money out of your own pocket. You will need to go back to the group and get to know them get a better, get a better understanding of those issues, get involved and work with them to develop positive change for the industry . You will need to work with the group because you will never be able to make it on your own, to get things done you need a strong voice, voices of many through an organized group. That unified voice with common goals will produce results!

This scenario is like riding on a train, you can just ride along in the caboose and let some one else decide what track you take, how fast you go, where you stop and how long you spend at each stop.

Or you can be part of the group that drives the train and decides the route, the number of stops and the speed at which you get there.

If you choose this as your career, would you sooner drive or ride!

Well friends I when back to those meetings and here I am today 34 years later.

Don Ransom is a cattle buyer from Boissevain, many of you know him. I have known him all my life, he was one of my Dad's best friends and some time business partner. Some of the words I used to describe my dad, such as humble, a diplomat and soft spoken,

don't really apply to Don but that IS OK because I learned a lot from Don.

From Don I learned it was OK to have your own opinion!

It was OK if that opinion was different than others,

It was OK to express that opinion.

It was OK to challenge authority if you believed the path those in charge were taking was not in the best interest of what you believe in.

It is OK to demand accountability from those in charge.

I also learned from Don that you may not be popular with everyone every day when you have an opinion that may not match everyone else's, but it is a small price to pay if you believe in your cause and have the facts and science to back it up. Don and I didn't always agree but he was a friend and mentor that I always respected.

Gene Parks was the best boss I ever had, not because he is a great guy, we all know that he is a great guy. What made him a great boss was that when he hired me to manage Pipestone he put his complete trust in me and allowed me to operate like the market was my own. He allowed me to think outside the box and try different marketing options, promotional ideas, and different approach to running a market. We were the first to introduce co-mingled sales in Manitoba, to conduct direct sales, preg test yearling heifers at the market prior to sale, use horses in the alleys to reduce the stress on the employees. He supported the concept of superior customer service and involvement in LMAC and other industry groups. There was no micro managing, he allowed me to try new ideas or use ones that we had seen in other markets on our travels. Most importantly he allowed me to grow as a manager in both business and personal areas. He encouraged me to promote team work with the staff and recognize their contributions. There was always an open line of communication with Gene, after every

sale we had a quick meeting to discuss the days' events and what I had planned for the next days and weeks. Regardless of my plans or decisions I knew that had his support. I used Gene's example with my own employees. My days at Pipestone were, where I really feel I developed my skills as a market manager. In a few short years we doubled the business with cattle coming from all over the province. Buyer support was the strongest in the Province and the village of Pipestone was back on the map. The day I had to tell the staff that I was leaving Pipestone to take over the market in Brandon was one of the toughest days in my life. I felt I like was letting my team down. One of the fellows from the back, who was a man of few words shook my hand and thanked me for what we had accomplished at Pipestone. He said don't worry Rick you are just like Gretkzy ! Rick you got bought by another team but you still get to play the game.

John Middleton was the owner of Prairie Livestock in Moosomin. When I took over Virden in 1980, we only had two buyers and producers didn't think there was enough competition and were reluctant to deliver cattle to Virden. I went to Alberta and Ontario in search of orders. Everywhere I went I was told they purchased cattle from John Middleton. I was told he knew cattle and ran an honest and professional business. Most all his reputation was impeccable and the industry had the highest respect for John. After doing business with John at the markets my opinion was the same. I made up my mind that one of my goals was that when I retired, I would hope to have the same respect that both my Dad and John Middleton had from their peers, customers and industry.

Being awarded this award tonight has allowed me to take a giant step toward reaching that goal.

I hope that when I retire which is not too far away that I will have the respect of my colleagues and will be remembered for making positive difference in the livestock marketing business.

For our business to be sustainable and successful in the future you as market operators must want to drive that train and not just ride long in the caboose.

Once again thank my family you helped get me here today and everyday. Thank you to LMAC for allowing me to serve you and recognising my contribution to your organization. However the real reward that I have received from LMAC is the fantastic group of people that I have met over the years. Whether it be the Raffan family from B.C. to Rob Bergevin and Jim Able in Alberta, Mike Fleury and Jacobsons from Sask to Larry Witzel and John Meilhousen from Ontario; and Mario and Therese from Quebec. They just a few of a great many people I have met and worked with, that is truly is the greatest reward and will last longer than any plaque.

It has been my pleasure to serve the membership of LMAC and I look forward to serving you in the future.

With that said thank you and good night.

Rick Wright

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Judging LMAC at Kamloops

