

TRANSITIONS

A new president takes the helm at Texas Farm Bureau...

By Jessica Domel
Field Editor

Farmer. Rancher. Dairyman.

Many words describe Russell Boening. The latest is "president."

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) delegates from across Texas elected Boening to replace retiring TFB President Kenneth Dierschke at TFB's Annual Meeting Dec. 6-8 in Corpus Christi.

"It's an honor. I greatly appreciate the opportunity," Boening said. "This is the greatest agriculture organization in the state of Texas."

Boening received over 50 percent of the vote in a four-man field during the first round of voting to replace Dierschke, who retired after serving 12 years.

"For the delegates to overwhelmingly pick Russell and myself, I was blown away," Russell's wife, Margie, said. "The warmth that we felt and to know that they supported us, that was awesome."

Boening has been a TFB member since the early 1980s when he and Margie were invited to a Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) event. At the time, Boening's grandfather served on the Wilson County Farm Bureau board of directors. It didn't take long for Boening to follow in his footsteps.

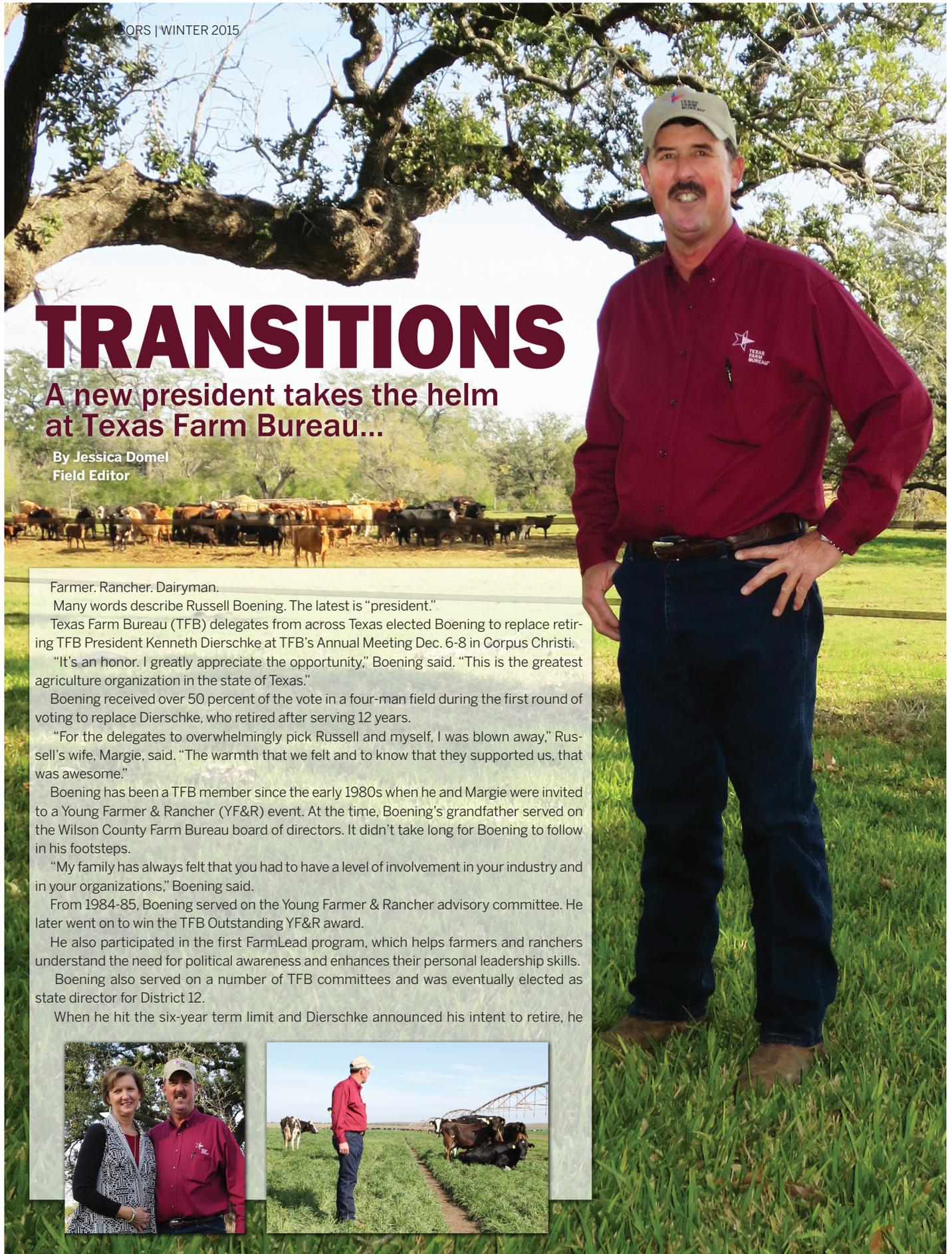
"My family has always felt that you had to have a level of involvement in your industry and in your organizations," Boening said.

From 1984-85, Boening served on the Young Farmer & Rancher advisory committee. He later went on to win the TFB Outstanding YF&R award.

He also participated in the first FarmLead program, which helps farmers and ranchers understand the need for political awareness and enhances their personal leadership skills.

Boening also served on a number of TFB committees and was eventually elected as state director for District 12.

When he hit the six-year term limit and Dierschke announced his intent to retire, he



decided to throw his hat in the ring for the presidency.

"I enjoyed working with folks in my district and everywhere else across the state," Boening said. "I feel like it's a good opportunity."

Boening said being involved is important. He, his father and brother own Boening Brothers Dairy and Loma Vista Farms in Wilson County. The operations include a dairy, a beef herd, 4,500 acres in cultivation and 3,000 acres dedicated to grazing and hay.

They grow corn, grain sorghum, cotton, wheat, oats for grazing and watermelons. Although he stays busy helping his family run their farming operations, the newly-elected president is thrilled to lead the state's largest farm organization.

"I think we have a very unique organization," Boening said. "We have to keep working hard for the industry and try to keep things on the right track. We may have a few things that need to be tweaked, but that's with any organization, every year. I look forward to working with county leaders and our excellent staff."

One priority is placing more emphasis on connecting with consumers through technology.

"A lot of folks are on Facebook," Boening said. "More and more people have Twitter accounts. That's the way information is being exchanged. If we want to get our information out to consumers and to our members, we have to embrace it."

Another priority is ensuring the organization moves forward while stimulating responsible growth.

"In 2013, we reached a goal of over 500,000 members, and I feel that our grassroots method of establishing policy enables our county leaders, the state board and staff to effectively work toward enacting the wishes of the entire organization," Boening said. "We must keep working to promote these policies so that our lawmakers

and the public have a better understanding of agriculture."

Just a few days into his presidency, Boening is still humbled the TFB delegates placed their trust in him.

"I feel like you learn the most when you're listening," Boening said. "I feel like this is a team effort. I know it's an old cliché, but there's no 'I' in team. I'm always open to new ideas. I'll do my best to keep this organization on the right track and representing agriculture."

Boening is a 1981 graduate of Texas A&M University. He holds a degree in Agricultural Economics.

He and Margie have been married 32 years. They have three grown children: Megan and her husband Sherman; Braden and his wife Megan; and son Ethan. They have one granddaughter, Emerson.

"I believe that my varied background will help me be an effective voice for our organization and agriculture," Boening said.

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