

Good evening everyone. It is my great honor to welcome Bill and Gertie Hickman into the Hall of Fame tonight. Agriculture is best defined as feeding people. And Bill and Gertie have been feeding the people of Arizona for 65 years now. At a time when agriculture is coming under attack from so many angles, when those of us in animal agriculture are often compared to ruthless dictators because we use the animals God has given us to provide food for His people and at a time when more and more people are worrying about having enough money to buy food for their families, it is so right to honor these two for all they have done to provide safe and cheap food for Arizona's men, women and children. But I would also like everyone in this room to turn around and shake the hand of the person close to you for all of you deserve credit that is so seldom given to the farmers and ranchers of this country. All of us who have grown up in Arizona and have raised our families here are indebted to each and every one of you.

Working for Hickman's Family Farms has given me much to be thankful for, but one of the best gifts it has given me is getting to know Bill and Gertie. Seldom a day goes by that Bill doesn't stop by my office and tell me another story about the evolution of Hickman's. I am sure a lot of you here are familiar with the broad story. Bill's mom and Gertie started selling eggs off their back porch in 1944. From that tiny business venture, Hickman's has grown to be one of the largest egg

producers in the country. Bill and Gertie's children, Glenn, Billy, Clint and Sharman are now putting to use the knowledge they learned from their parents. Lessons that taught them to treat all employees, customers and vendors with respect. Lessons that taught them to never rest on their laurels but to continue to look for ways to improve.

I would like to give you an example of that last lesson, and my favorite story of the development of Hickman's. As some of you might know, chickens will peck at each other. It is a fact of nature. The standard method to keep this from ruining your flock is to trim the beaks of the baby chicks. Well, Bill and Gertie heard about a less invasive way to minimize the damage caused by this pecking. They were sold on the idea that if you would put little tiny red contacts on the chicken's eyes, they wouldn't peck their cage mates. So, with the help of a friend, they put contacts on all of their chickens. I don't know about you, but I just cannot imagine holding a chicken and inserting a contact onto each eye, but they did. This soon led to hundreds of eye infections. So, back into the chicken houses they went and removed these contacts. As poorly as this turned out, it was exactly this determination to try to improve their business regardless of the

amount of work involved that has enabled Bill and Gertie's small back porch egg operation to grow to the millions of eggs per day operation it is today.

One of the reasons that I am so proud to wear that famous dapper chicken on my shirt everyday is Hickman's commitment to the community. Gertie set the tone early by becoming a member of the Peoria School Board. And kids who grew up playing Little League in Glendale know there was always a Hickman's sponsored team. Of course, my theory as to why Bill supported little league is that he figured these kids could become cheap labor helping out during the constant depopulation and repopulation of the chicken houses. One of these kids, Bartt Underwood, who is now the softball coach at Centennial High School has told me stories of being drafted into helping move chickens from one place to another. It is a story that I have heard from numerous people who grew up in Glendale. But each and every one of them re-tells the stories with a smile and with at least one humorous episode to relive. I believe that Jim Whitehurst, Billy and Glenn could script a long running TV show based on their escapades growing up in early Arizona agriculture. I am not sure though, that they would like their parents to

know about some of what they did. Bill and Gertie and Bob and Judy Whitehurst might decide their boys are not too old for a swat on the butt.

Dedication to family, dedication to community, provider of safe and economical food for millions of people, considerate employer, hard working, inspirational; would we not all be proud to have these phrases describe us? Well, they do describe tonight's inductees into the Arizona Farm and Ranching Hall of fame, Bill and Gertie Hickman.