

# Outside the Box

## Devoted to building.

by Tom Field, University of Nebraska–Lincoln



- ✓ Unexpected powerful conversations ...
- ✓ Small acts of kindness or support ...
- ✓ Advice and a few hints about the business ...
- ✓ Full-blown mentorship ...
- ✓ Being invited to the table ...

These experiences have had a significant influence on my career. They have fueled professional and personal growth, and they have been the key to the development of my faith, role as a husband and father, and abundance mindset.

### Humbling list

Build a list of all those you can think of who were helpful, encouraging, challenging, inspirational and influential on your life. My guess is that the list will be lengthy. Undertaking the exercise has left me feeling humble, grateful and overwhelmed by the blessing of a large and eclectic set of relationships that have shaped and guided me.

My list ranges from cowboys to techies, musicians and artists; athletes to shepherds; novices to the wise and mature. It includes some of the brightest without a diploma on the wall, and represents nearly every season of life.

I have tried to find the connection — the common ground. My conclusion: They individually and collectively are citizens — active members of the community seeking to make a difference and operating with a deep faith that our best days are ahead.

Certainly, strong citizens continue to be in abundance in this country. Yet, there is a fascination with activists instead of citizens these days. Many institutions seem to lift people fueled by anger rather than those driven by purpose.

We embrace the activist pathway at great risk to society. Never has it been more important to model our behavior and expectations on the principles of citizenship.

### Principles of citizenship

The citizen is characterized by the following attributes:

- ▶ Desires to build, not to destroy.
- ▶ Understands and practices the duality that rights always require responsibility.
- ▶ Listens to understand, and uses the power of discernment to set a course of action.
- ▶ Gives more than receives.

- ▶ Bridles deep passions and convictions with reason, self-restraint and reflection.
- ▶ Attacks problems, not people, realizing that achieving a solution is more important than “enjoying” the fight.
- ▶ Sees the potential in others, and speaks words of aspiration and affirmation.
- ▶ Intentionally makes the decision to not be easily offended, to not accept every invitation to a confrontation, and to not participate in a culture of anger.
- ▶ Stands on principles, not emotions. Keeps first things first.
- ▶ Ponders deeply before speaking or responding.
- ▶ Practices active curiosity, seeks continuous

learning and grows from understanding both the successes and mistakes of the past.

- ▶ Desires to be in the yoke; to share the load; and to do the difficult, sweaty, daily work that ultimately leads to a life of joy.
- ▶ Endeavors to make life better in their community via personal investment of time, talent and goodwill.
- ▶ Takes the long view and seeks continuous improvement through word and deed.
- ▶ Practices the virtues of diligence, hospitality, courage, justice, temperance and wisdom.
- ▶ Learns from history without malice, while remaining steadfastly focused on the future.
- ▶ Seeks win-win opportunities and outcomes.
- ▶ Acknowledges that duty, honor and love of country, community and family are fundamental to our liberty.

In 1804 Thomas Jefferson offered his position on citizenship and politics when he penned, “I tolerate with the utmost latitude the rights of others to differ from me in opinion without imputing to them criminality. ... Both of our political parties, at least the honest portions of them, agree conscientiously in the same object — the public good.”

In honoring those who have shaped our character and path, may we never forget our duty as citizens to uphold that sacred trust bestowed upon us by the sacrifice of previous generations. Let us return to the principles of citizenship! **ABB**

Editor’s note: In “Outside the Box,” author Tom Field shares his experience as a cattleman and his insightful perspective on the business aspects of ranching. Field is director of the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where he holds the Paul Engler Chair of Agribusiness Entrepreneurship.