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Contact:

Jack Reich, president
(701) 880-0487

Julie Ellingson, executive vice president
jellingson@ndstockmen.org

Sheyna Strommen, communications director
sstrommen@ndstockmen.org
(701) 223-2522

Stockmen's Association to name honorary members

The North Dakota Stockmen's Association (NDSA) will welcome two new honorary members during its 81st Annual Convention & Trade Show at the Holiday Inn in Minot, N. D., Saturday, Sept. 25. Both honorees have become familiar faces at NDSA events throughout the past 15 years.

The first honoree is Peter Mesling of Dickinson, N.D., a man whose diverse career includes aviation and autos, cattle feeding, financing and real estate.

Mesling's agriculture career dates back to the 1950's, when, at the age of 17, he started farming and raising Shorthorn cattle on shares with his father. "I've always had an interest in cattle feeding," said Mesling, who shipped calves to Iowa for custom feeding for more than 27 years.

As a teenager, Mesling trained to become a spray pilot, a business he operated until the 1960's. When he was 20, he purchased two combines and custom combined off and on until 1992. In the 1950's and 1960's, he also went into the trucking business and purchased the Ford Auto and Case IH Tractor franchises in New England, N.D.

Three years later, he and 11 others launched American State Bank in Dickinson, N.D., where Mesling was employed as a managing officer and later managed the trust department for 12 years.

In 1964, he married Clara Kathrein of New England, N.D. The couple raised two daughters, Chena and Carla and one son Pete, who is the fifth generation of first-born Mesling sons to share the name.

The secret behind Mesling's success in so many different fields is that he never shied away

from risk. "I've always liked a challenge," he said. One of the more notable challenges he faced in his 20-plus years as a banker came in 1973 when Governor Art Link appointed him as a director for the State Banking Board. During Mesling's term, the state's bank examiners closed the only bank in North Dakota and in the nation that didn't have Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation insurance.

"I am proud that the actions of the State Banking Board helped save all of the deposit accounts in that bank," he said. The day the new bank operation opened, there was not a penny of deposit or loan loss, thanks to the board's work.

Throughout his varied career, agriculture took center stage. "I've always been drawn to the cattle business," he said.

In 1990, he and Clara built up a 480-head Red Angus cowherd, an enterprise they disbursed in 2002. "The number one thing I appreciated about Red Angus is their disposition," Pete said. "Anyone who has raised them will tell you they're good milkers and great mothers."

He said he has learned a lot in the past 82 years, but some of the most important lessons have been to be confident in your decisions and avoid negativity at all costs. "When faced with a challenge, you've got to correct what you can and then just keep going," he said.

"Pete is an avid supporter of the NDSA. His wide array of experiences has given him a broad and unique perspective and we've appreciated his input on the NDSA Feeder Council," said NDSA Executive Vice President Julie Ellingson of St. Anthony, N.D. "He is a true gentleman who is always ready to answer the association's call."

The next honoree, NDSA President Jack Reich, a cattle producer from Zap, N.D. Reich has dedicated more than a quarter of his life in service to the NDSA and its membership. In fact, his NDSA service is just one year short of his career as a full-time rancher.

"I've always had a passion for being a cowboy and ranching, but the NDSA has brought out a desire in me to help make the beef industry better for future generations," he said.

Reich was elected to the NDSA board of directors in 2000. Since then, he has chaired the NDSA's Membership Committee, the NDSA Brand Board and several policy committees.

"Jack is a good hand who has become a great leader for the NDSA," said Scott Ressler, NDSA environmental services director. "His honest, level-headed, likeable leadership style has earned him the respect of ranchers and policy makers alike. He isn't afraid to stand up for what is right and what is the best answer for the cattle industry."

Throughout his tenure, Reich has been an advocate for developing export markets for U.S. beef and protecting private property rights. He also helped the association provide assistance to North Dakota ranchers after one of the most catastrophic winters on record.

Reich, his wife Mardee and their three young children, Vander, Kaydee and Will, raise registered Angus cattle along the Knife River along with Jack's father, Delvin. The family hosts an annual production sale each February.

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For 81 years the North Dakota Stockmen's Association has worked to unite, protect, promote, educate and serve North Dakota's beef industry.