

Reflections from WT- Carol Lovelady

- Randy Ray: Welcome to episode number 11 of Reflections from WT, the heart and soul of the Texas Panhandle. I'm Randy Ray. I'm joined today, sitting right beside me is the president of West Texas A&M, Dr. Walter Wendler. Good morning.
- Dr. Wendler: Good Morning Randy. It's good to be here. I appreciate the opportunity to visit.
- Randy Ray: Yeah. I always enjoy our talks. I was talking to someone yesterday and they said, "So I guess the university is closed over the summer." And I said, "Far from it," right?
- Dr. Wendler: Far from it.
- Randy Ray: We have a lot of things going on.
- Dr. Wendler: A lot of things going on. I have a load of things going on right now and part of it is my fault. Around March, I start saying that people will deal with that after graduation. I don't have anything to do with the graduation except attend and shake everybody's hand, but I start putting stuff off. Well, what happens is the week after graduation, I look at this pile of stuff on my desk and I say, "I've got a lot of work to do." We're busy. We've got a lot of things going on.
- Randy Ray: Yeah. I asked you this morning and I said, "Does it get any better in the summer?" And you said, "No, it gets worse."
- Dr. Wendler: That's the honest truth, but thank God I love to work and I'm thankful to be over here every day with the opportunity to work with the faculty and staff of the university and the nice programs we have and of course our students.
- Randy Ray: Yeah. I think summertime is a good time for recruiting future students, don't you?
- Dr. Wendler: I do, and I get a chance to visit at NSOs. I have to tell you a story. We're working on a plan whereby if three family members attend WT at the same time, they'll get a scholarship equivalent to one third of the cost of all three. So that it basically is you pay for two and get one free if they're all in the same family. We're working on the details of this right now, but last week at an NSO, and I find this, this is so so West Texas to me, a fella comes into my office to see me, see if he can visit, and he's got his son with him and he introduces himself. He happens to be from Tulia. He introduces himself and says that his son makes the third of his, I think seven kids, that are now enrolled in WT.
- Randy Ray: Wow.
- Dr. Wendler: Yeah, that's what I said. Wow. And then he said-

Randy Ray: What's he do for a living? That's what I'd like to know.

Dr. Wendler: Well, he works at Tulia ISD. He's a business manager down there or something. But anyway, I'm sure he has to work hard and be careful with his resources but this is West Texas. That's what people do. But what was interesting was he was at going through the financial deal as somebody mentioned that the president had a new plan where they were going to try to get a break for family members that had three people enrolled. And I said, "Well, that's true." I said, "We haven't rolled it out yet." I said, "Are you interested in being number one?" He said, "Yeah, I am." I said, "Okay, you're it."

Dr. Wendler: So we're figuring out exactly how to do it now because we have to find a way to do it consistently and fairly, but if there are three family members that attend WT simultaneously for the time they're concurrently enrolled, they'll get a tuition discount or scholarship is what it's going to be, just because they have three family members. He was very excited about it. He liked the idea very much of attending to families that have multiple, usually it's children, but graduation this year we had a mom and two daughters. One of those daughters had walked the stage twice. They all graduated together. One of them had walked the stage in her mother's womb the first time the mom was pregnant when she graduated and now she walked again the second time with a bachelor's degree. I think maybe a master's. I can't remember the details.

Randy Ray: I love those stories. I love those stories.

Dr. Wendler: Well, it's West Texas. We're trying to tend to the needs of families here. It's not just about turning out a certificate for somebody. We're trying to be a human organization that deals with real people that have real needs. And it's a wrestling match sometimes because we got all these bureaucracy. There's just a lot of stuff to deal with, but we're going to fight through all that and find ways to deal with people where they are and try to help them get a good education, which we provide here.

Randy Ray: Yeah. Well we talked about how things are really happening on campus in the summer. One of the things that I enjoy is camps. Let's talk about camps for just a minute. People tend to think that a college campus is just for college students, but it's really not, is it?

Dr. Wendler: It's really not, and I'll mention, give you two examples. One, and John Mark Beilue just wrote a very nice piece on this called peg the pig. If that wasn't the piece that was, it was about peg the pig. Poor Peg was born actually with a peg leg. One of her legs was a shorter somehow. So the students in the engineering camp in our college of Engineering, mathematics and computer science designed a wheelchair for peg the pig. That was there charge for the camp, and I don't know what the final results look like, but the concept was interesting. They were led by a former student of ours, an engineering graduate mechanical engineering who is now at Southwest studying the, I can't even say what the name of it is, devices.

Randy Ray: Prosthetics.

Dr. Wendler: Prosthetics, thank you Randy. You want to be the president of the university? I couldn't even say-

Randy Ray: No, thank you.

Dr. Wendler: Prosthetics, but anyway, and that was an interesting example. That's one example of a case where the university is not for traditional age university students pursuing degrees. I'll tell you another one that really just is heartwarming to me. We have a program, it's called Where The Learning Continues, WTLC, and it is for young people who have various kinds of learning disabilities to come to WT and earn a certificate that says they attended WT. It requires a number of years and at graduation, after all the other graduates walk the stage, they walk the stage. We had four in May and it grips my heart to see these young people who are challenged in some ways ... We're all challenged. You and I are challenged, Carol's challenged. I'm probably the most challenged guy in the room, but the point is they find a way to reach these young people and typically they're kids, and they get them some experience.

Dr. Wendler: But here's what's better. Aramark, our food caterers promised to hire every one of those kids that wants a job. I think to myself Aramark puts out good meals and all that stuff, but this is something that's even more important than that. It's a way that the university extends itself. So yes, summer camps and other nontraditional educational activities, we are invested in doing that and we're invested in the community of the Texas Panhandle, the extending community.

Randy Ray: Yeah. I think that's part of WT being the heart and soul.

Dr. Wendler: I would say so. Yes sir. That's exactly right.

Randy Ray: I like coming to work in the summer and seeing elementary school kids, high school kids. It'll be maybe music students and maybe it's some kind of sports. Maybe it's an engineering camp. One of the things we're working on is actually doing a radio camp maybe next semester, so we're excited about that.

Dr. Wendler: I think that would be great. A lot of kids are interested in communications and that sort of thing.

Randy Ray: What about NSO? NSO is something that we do here. It's new student orientation. How are you involved with that?

Dr. Wendler: Well, honestly, usually what I do is come and give a greeting because I don't know all the details of getting students registered and they have tours and there's a lot of welcoming activities. I get a chance, I usually try to get to the event when I have to greet people early and just try to visit a little bit with families.

Dr. Wendler: Last summer, I visited with a family from down in the big bend area somewhere and I said, "Gosh, you've come a long way to go to school." Well, he said, "This is a school that caters to smaller communities." He said, "And that's what we're used to." He said, "As a matter of fact," he said, "I had a real challenge when I was teaching my daughter to drive." He said, "I had to drive for 30 miles to get to a red light so that she would understand how to make a right turn on red." That's the way it is, but he really liked the WT and the daughter I think was very pleased. I wish I could remember all these people and find them and say how's it working out for you? But I get to see them once and if somebody tells a story like that, that captures my interest, I remember them.

Randy Ray: But the people that don't have kids may not realize what a big crossroads sending your kid out to college is. It's huge.

Dr. Wendler: Yeah, it is huge.

Randy Ray: And it's, man it's so important to find the right place.

Dr. Wendler: Right.

Randy Ray: When I took my daughter around visiting different colleges, but she knew within 10 minutes if it's the right place or not.

Dr. Wendler: I'll tell you another story that is interesting to me. The first year I was here, I met a family at an NSO. They were walking across the campus and I was out and about even more than I am now because I didn't have anything else to do. I didn't even know what the job was. I had been on the campus for a few weeks. I could do whatever I wanted.

Dr. Wendler: I met a family. They were from Tampa, Florida and they had set out a plan. They were going to visit seven schools and their plan was to fly from Tampa Bay to Amarillo, rent a car and drive back and go to all the seven schools. I met the mom and the dad, and the dad told me the plan but he said the plan's off. He said, "Our son was here for 15 minutes," or 20 minutes whatever a good 10 minutes, whatever it was, and the boy said, "There's no need to go anywhere else. This is where I want to go to school so we can drive back to the Amarillo airport when we're done here and fly back to Tampa Bay. I'm coming to WT".

Randy Ray: I think there's a lot of stories like that.

Dr. Wendler: Yes, there are. Yes.

Randy Ray: People don't know about WT and the atmosphere that we have here until you visit.

Dr. Wendler: That's right.

Randy Ray: So then I would encourage people to come visit, come visit.

Dr. Wendler: I agree with you, Randy. Couldn't agree more and I'll tell you when you get to these great schools, Oklahoma State, the University of Oklahoma, Texas A&M my Alma Mater, the University of Texas another Alma Mater of mine, and the many other great schools that are within 500 miles of Canyon, there is still something special about WT. My goal is to never lose that by trying to be like some other place. We need to be like who we are and let that shine as a place of compassion and concern and interest in people.

Randy Ray: Yeah, I agree. Well then, now we're going to take a break. We'll be back in about 60 seconds.

Speaker 3: West Texas A&M University is a student body that learns by doing and is always seeking opportunity, talented and accomplished faculty that teach both in and out of the classroom, programs that provide timeless information and meet the challenges of today's world, facilities rich in technology as well as WT history. It's our alumni and donors that make the big difference and set us apart from other universities. With your support, WT will continue to award scholarships to deserving students and strengthen our programs, which means a better campus, more in-depth education and a lasting cultural and economic impact on our region. Now is the time to strengthen connections. Support students and open doors for tomorrow's leaders. Share your experience. Share your heritage. Share your pride.

Randy Ray: Welcome back to Reflections From WT, the heart and soul of the Texas Panhandle. Dr. Wendler and I are joined by a special guest. She is the director of the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum here in Canyon, Texas, Miss Carol Lovelady. Carol?

Carol Lovelady: Good morning. Happy to be with you two.

Randy Ray: Well, thank you for being here. I read your bio and it's very interesting. It said that you traveled to the museum for the first time on a train?

Carol Lovelady: I did.

Randy Ray: Tell us about that.

Carol Lovelady: Growing up in Amarillo, I was born in '55. So children who were going to school in Amarillo at that time, especially if you went to kindergarten and that was way back when, if you went to kindergarten, it was a private kindergarten. It was not offered to the public schools and it was the ultimate field trip. We got to come to the Canyon with the Panhandle ... You got to come on the train to Canyon and then visit the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum and go to the basement and eat your sack lunch in the basement. I still, I see people, lots of people who say to me, "Oh, I came to the museum on the train. It was wonderful."

Randy Ray: Yeah, and I was lucky enough to go to the museum and get to go to the basement. The basement's just an amazing place. it really is.

Carol Lovelady: I know. It's kind of a step back in time.

Randy Ray: Yeah, it really is.

Carol Lovelady: It's a lot of what a lot of us remember. It has the dioramas that are down there. It has the longhorn, the stuffed longhorn and the coyotes and a lot of those things that are back in the days when they did taxidermy with arsenic in it, and everybody worries about it now.

Randy Ray: Some of my earliest memories are driving through Canyon, Texas, and I can remember the white buffalo, I can remember the big cowboy Tex Randall, and I remember going to the museum. Growing up for the longest time I had a Billy the Kid poster in my bedroom that I bought at the museum.

Carol Lovelady: At the museum, in the museum store.

Randy Ray: So it's a special place.

Carol Lovelady: It is.

Randy Ray: It really is a special place.

Carol Lovelady: It is and it's such a wonderful building and that's one of the things. Every day when I walk under that sign that says, "Dedicated to the Pioneers," it makes my heart beat fast and with all those brands up above it, and that is what people remember about the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, is that entrance. They love it and that's the original entrance, the doors, everything. The room was restored, the Pioneer Hall that was restored in about 2000 I believe. That room is what was the original Panhandle Plains Historical Museum.

Randy Ray: Do you know what year the museum opened?

Carol Lovelady: Museum opened in 1933. The historical society, which is what gave birth to the museum, the historical society was chartered in 1921 by a history professor at West Texas State Normal College named Hattie Anderson.

Randy Ray: Yeah. I read a story the other day, it was really interesting. Old Tascosa, which was where Boys Ranch is located now, which was one of the first communities in the Panhandle. There was a famous saloon girl there by the name of Frenchie McCormick and she actually visited the museum later in her life. I thought that was neat to hear.

Carol Lovelady: Yes, yes. We've got things that relate. We are getting the bar from Old Tascosa. A family in this area has kept the bar that was at Old Tascosa, and there's a

picture that many people are familiar with that shows a lot of dusty dirty cowboys bellied up to the bar and that bar is coming to the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum.

Randy Ray: wow. That's very exciting, You let me know because I want to come see that.

Carol Lovelady: I will. It's a great story.

Randy Ray: What is your favorite thing at the museum?

Carol Lovelady: Oh my goodness. There's so many things. I think so many people relate to Quanah Parker's headdress. That's a wonderful thing. It's a privilege to work some place where every day I see something new and I learned something new.

Randy Ray: So tell us about that new exhibit that's coming in. I think it's really interesting

Carol Lovelady: Oh my goodness-

Randy Ray: Yeah, it's exciting.

Carol Lovelady: It's here. It's already here. We are incredibly privileged to have Teddy Roosevelt's shotgun. It was his favorite shotgun and it was made especially for him and he took it on his famous 1909 African safari with him. He shot mostly birds with it that went to the Smithsonian Institution for their natural history.

Randy Ray: Wow. So are you guys always changing? Is there always new exhibits coming in? How does that work?

Carol Lovelady: There are always exhibits. We turn over exhibits about once a year, but we also ... It's on a schedule. It's staggered where everything doesn't turn over all at once, but there's a tremendous comfort in coming to the museum too, because when you come into the museum, you see a lot of things that you've always seen at the museum like when they say, they don't take the Mona Lisa and put it in storage for a while.

Randy Ray: One of my favorite things is you get to go through the old town over there. I've done it a hundred times and I still, I get a kick out of it every time.

Carol Lovelady: It's wonderful. People love Pioneer Town.

Randy Ray: So tell me what you do as a director.

Carol Lovelady: As a director, I have the privilege of working with a wonderful staff and planning everything that we do that is designed to bring people to the museum to help them understand how this area was built, to help them understand how people learned to live on this land and to help them learn about the people who built this area.

Randy Ray: I was having lunch with a fellow yesterday and I told him today I was doing a podcast with Dr. Wendler and you, and he said, "Did you know that Carol's dad used to be the mayor of Amarillo?"

Carol Lovelady: He was. That's correct.

Randy Ray: When was that? Was that-

Carol Lovelady: He was on the city commission and he was mayor of Amarillo in the 1970s, the early '70s. He was mayor during a time when Amarillo was really struggling and it was-

Randy Ray: That's what they said. They said Carol's dad really helped bring big change to Amarillo.

Carol Lovelady: He did. He was very instrumental in bringing Iowa Beef and here I am at WT and Paul Engler has the College of Business and the College of Agriculture is named Paul and Virginia Engler colleges. When I was visiting with him one day, I said, happened to say something about my dad and I said that he was Ray Vahue and he said, "I worked with Ray Vahue. I worked with Ray Vahue to bring Iowa Beef to Amarillo."

Randy Ray: Well, that's a big deal. So you have administration in your blood and your genes?

Carol Lovelady: Well, I have a love for the area in my genes. My grandmother came here in 1901. Her father was a telegraph operator on the Pecos valley line and they were sent to Amarillo and he passed away while they were here in Amarillo. So my grandchildren are the fifth generation of the same family living here in Amarillo and enjoying Canyon and going to West Texas and good things happening.

Randy Ray: Well, if you are listening to this podcast and you have never been to the museum, you need to go. It is fantastic. Is it the largest historical museum in state of Texas right?

Carol Lovelady: It's the oldest and the largest history museum in Texas. And one of the things that we hear all the time when I'm walking through the museum visiting with people is, "Oh my goodness, I had no idea this was here." People are astounded by the quality, but going back where you and Dr. Wendler were talking about the generations of families. I want to tell you really quickly about that Roosevelt shotgun and how that gun came to the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum.

Carol Lovelady: There was a young man who went to WT in the 1990s. His name was Jason Roselius. He was from Panhandle Texas and his family had all gone to West Texas and he wanted to continue his study of history. He loved history and his history professor, Dr. Pete Peterson said to him, "I really think that you would

make a fine attorney and that your interest in history would fit with being an attorney." And so he went to law school in Oklahoma. He became an extremely successful plaintiff's attorney. He settled some landmark cases and he was able to become very wealthy and he purchased Teddy Roosevelt shotgun for close to a million dollars at auction with the sole intention of bringing it back to the Texas Panhandle and putting it at the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum because he wanted the people of this region to be able to see that shotgun and to love that shotgun.

Randy Ray: Wow. It's a great story. Carol I always throw Dr. Wendler and our guests what we call a curveball. So I'm going to ask you both a question and this is a tough one. This is a tough one, I think.

Dr. Wendler: Oh you said that before.

Randy Ray: Yeah, we'll see. We're talking about museums. If you guys, if the both of you were to give an item to a museum that really represents you, what would that item be?

Carol Lovelady: Well, mine would probably be a diet Dr. Pepper, but it wouldn't last very long.

Dr. Wendler: That's funny.

Randy Ray: Yeah.

Dr. Wendler: That's funny.

Randy Ray: Is that it? Diet Dr. Pepper. There you go.

Carol Lovelady: Oh really. If I was going to give something that represented the Panhandle Plains to this region, I have a pen that I inherited from my grandmother that was from the Texas centennial. That's what I would give.

Randy Ray: That's a good one. Dr. Wendler, what would Dr. Wendler's item be in the museum?

Dr. Wendler: Gosh, that really is hard.

Randy Ray: I got you finally.

Dr. Wendler: You did. You did get me. I have this short, but very to me, very personal and deep relationship to the Texas Panhandle. I've come to just love the Texas Panhandle in three short years. I don't have the item, but I would get it and it would be a series of photographs of people here at West Texas A&M. People like Carol, people like you who have made their life's commitment to serving the Texas Panhandle through West Texas A&M University. And my picture would be among the lot, but it would be a very short duration of a contribution that I

have, but you all have a lifetime of contributions here. That's what my gift would be.

Randy Ray: Well sometimes length doesn't matter, yeah?

Dr. Wendler: Maybe.

Randy Ray: Yeah.

Dr. Wendler: Maybe, maybe.

Randy Ray: So you've done a lot of great things. When I was asking the question, one of the things I thought about was maybe one of the pens, because you've signed a lot of good stuff into being since you've been here.

Dr. Wendler: Yeah. Yeah. You can do that with a 19 cent. Well that's going to show my age. Carol, I remember when the big pens was 19 cents but you can do with a 19 cent big pen. Yeah, it's the people that make west Texas so special. We just put a new exhibit in the president's conference room and it's a pretty good size room. We have pictures that we have taken from the old yearbooks of WT, a mirage, and we framed them and we have little explanatory cards. Well, the carpenters, I'll say Amos the carpenter was in there the other day helping hang these pictures to make sure they were all straight and everything and he did a very fine job by the way. But he told me at the end of this, he said, "I've read every one of those little cards underneath the photograph, describing J.A. Hill and James Cornet and the basketball program when they went to New York and just one thing after another." And he said, "This place really is interesting." And he was like he had seen it for the first time.

Dr. Wendler: It's about the people that are in those rooms. I have an old picture of, in there of Dr. Hill, President Hill and a number of others standing at the site where Kimbrough field would be. It was just a dip in the ground out there. And I thought this is interesting, especially now because we're getting ready on September 7th to have our first home football game on the campus in 60 years. And I thought those guys, they were doing a great thing. They've done a great thing. Kimbrough's a great place. We're moving from there now because it seems the right thing to do and I really do believe it is the right thing to do. There's just a lot going on here and I'm proud to be just a little part of it.

Randy Ray: Well that's going to about wrap up our time for today. Next time I would like to talk to you in detail about that opening day of the stadium. That's a-

Dr. Wendler: That would be good. It's a big deal.

Randy Ray: Yeah, it's a big deal.

Dr. Wendler: By the way, we've eliminated all other events that day. It's only the football game.

Randy Ray: And that's going to be a lot.

Dr. Wendler: Yeah.

Randy Ray: It's going to be a lot.

Dr. Wendler: It's going to be a lot, be a lot.

Randy Ray: Well listen, we appreciate all the nice comments and letters and everything that we've gotten about our podcast. We really do appreciate it. You can get this podcast on Google podcasts, Apple podcasts, SoundCloud, YouTube, Spotify, and there's even an app out there called Stitcher you can get it on. So it's all over the place and we appreciate you taking the time to download it and listen to Reflections From WT, the heart and soul of the Texas Panhandle. We'll see you next time.