



## HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

### *Giving Back to Education*

## ***HHS Alumni Recognition Feature!***

*Dear HHS Alumni and HPS Foundation Supporters,*

Holdrege High School is fortunate to have many very successful graduates. We are excited to continue sharing the stories of some of those HHS Alums thanks to the journalistic talents of Kristine (Long) Jacobson, Class of 1990.

We also welcome your suggestions and comments and encourage you to join the Duster Alumni Association (*see form below*).

Sincerely,

*Matt Allmand, Chairman  
HPS Foundation Committee*

## **Tom Carlson- Class of 1959**

### ***Holdrege graduate seeks Nebraska governor nomination***

by Kristine Jacobson

A 1959 Holdrege graduate is running for governor of the state of Nebraska. Tom Carlson, a current state senator, announced in July that he would seek the Republican nomination for governor for the 2014 election. He is among several Republican contenders vying for the nomination in the May primary.

Tom and his wife, Margo, just celebrated 50 years of marriage, and are by no means thinking of slowing down with all the work it takes to run a campaign and potentially be governor.

Tom, 71, said a friend recently told him, "The first 60 years are just a warm-up." Tom challenges anyone to keep up with him during his three-times a week exercise routine, either at the YMCA of the Prairie down the street from his house in Holdrege or at the Cooper YMCA in Lincoln, which is near where he lives when the Legislature is in session.

"The good Lord has given both me and Margo good health and energy," Tom said.



Senator Tom Carlson

Tom is used to a strong work ethic, even in his younger days. Tom attended the District 52 one-room rural school north of Holdrege during elementary school. His family lived 15 miles north of Holdrege, and his parents, Vinny and Harriet, wanted him to attend high school in Holdrege since that was their alma mater. To do so, Tom had to live with his grandparents in Holdrege during the week.

Although Tom enjoyed his studies at Holdrege, he couldn't wait to play sports. "I wanted to play every kind of ball there was in school," Carlson said. He has many fond memories of high school sports, including playing for legendary coaches Jess Keifer (football) and Merle Bauer (basketball). Jim Van Marter, who taught typing and coached, was a positive influence on him as well as Mr. Yanike, vocal music.

He said Mrs. Boentje, who taught math and Latin, was an excellent teacher. "Everyone was scared of her

so we listened in her class, and we learned," Tom said. He also had fond memories of Bernie Schuller and Mr. Headberg, the industrial arts teacher.

"I know I had a good education in Phelps County," Tom said.

After high school, Tom earned a football scholarship to play at the University of Northern Colorado (which was Colorado State College at the time). His freshman year in college he continued to play every kind of ball - football, basketball, and baseball. His sophomore year he tried to slow down a little and just play football. But then the track coach urged him to try pole vaulting. "And I did (try it)," Tom said. "And I lettered in track." He was starting quarterback for the football team his junior year, and the coach gave him permission to play spring baseball again. He helped his team earn a trip to the College World Series at Rosenblatt Stadium that year.

Tom met Margo while attending the university. He graduated with a bachelor's of science degree in math and physical education in 1963. While waiting for Margo to finish her education, he earned a master's degree in physical education in 1964.

Tom and Margo then moved to Iowa City, Iowa, where Tom taught, coached baseball, and earned a PhD in physical education at the University of Iowa. He spent the next ten years teaching and coaching football and baseball, first at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh and then at Taylor University in Indiana. His strong work ethic and love of sports prompted him to accept the head coaching job for both football and baseball during the same season at Taylor University. With a young family that included three children, he and Margo

decided to make a change after three years at the college. "We asked, whose kids am I spending time with?" Tom said. "It wasn't my three."

So, the Carlsons moved to Holdrege, where Tom became an agent for Bankers Life of Iowa, which later became Principal Financial Group. He enjoyed a successful 30-year career in the insurance business and was inducted into the company's Hall of Fame.

Tom has been actively involved in all aspects of community life in Holdrege, serving on many boards and being chosen or elected as president or leader of nearly every group he joined. His community leadership experience included Optimist Club president, School Board president, Rotary Club president, Chamber of Commerce Board president, State Board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes president, and president of his church board.

"I do have the gift of leadership," Tom said. "I've had many people tell me that." In 2006, long-time friend Ed Schrock, who was a state senator at the time, urged Tom to consider hitting the campaign trail to take his place representing District 38 in the Legislature. "After a lot of thought and prayer, I thought, 'I think this is what I'm supposed to do,'" Tom said.

Running a campaign was an eye-opening experience for both he and Margo as they enjoyed the positive part of the process and learned to roll with the punches on the negative parts. "My athletic background and coaching background was helpful, because you learn to get back up when you get knocked down," Tom said. Tom won the election by 1,100 votes in November 2006 and started his term as senator in January 2007. Even in the state Legislature, Tom's leadership abilities continued to shine. In 2009, he was elected chairman of the Agriculture Committee and held that position for four years. He recently was elected chairman of the Natural Resources Committee and is working to help protect the state's water resources. "Water is the lifeblood of agriculture," Tom said of his decision to leave the ag committee and lead the natural resources committee.

Tom has one more year that he can serve as senator in the Legislature before term limits force him to retire. Tom was planning to put his support behind Sen. Mike Flood in his run for governor. But, after Mike decided not to run because of family medical issues, Tom and Margo prayed for guidance and decided that God was leading Tom to be governor of Nebraska.

Tom has five main areas that he feels qualifies him for the job: 1) Experience; 2) Leadership; 3) Common Sense; 4) Integrity; and 5) Faith.

"I don't shy away from telling people that I believe in the Bible and the God who made it," Tom said, about his fifth point.

Tom enjoys talking about all kinds of issues important to Nebraskans and has put a lot of thought into different scenarios. His financial background comes out when talking about "big government" and how to control government expenses.

Tom's years of work in the financial industry are apparent when he analyzes decisions, such as the realization that when government adds one position to the payroll, it takes on average 10 private sector jobs to pay for that one addition. Tom and Margo and their supporters have already hit the campaign trail with the plan of visiting each of Nebraska's 93 counties. "Serving in the Legislature had been a real privilege," Tom said. "Serving as governor would be the icing on the cake as far as service is concerned."

You can follow Tom's campaign by visiting the web site at [tomcarlsonforgovernor.com](http://tomcarlsonforgovernor.com), or you can become a fan on his Facebook page.

## About Us

*The mission of the HPS Foundation is to support and enhance the educational efforts of students and teachers of Holdrege Public Schools by providing funding for innovative and challenging programs, learning experiences, and activities.*

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