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Steve McKeand's Remarks Gov. James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Service December 2, 2016

Thank you Chairman Bissette, Mrs. Nelson, President Spellings, and members of the Board of Governors for the 2016 James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Service. I am honored and humbled by this award. I struggle with how a lowly tree breeder and professor from NC State could be recognized for such an honor. I told my department head, Tom Gower, who nominated me that there must be a future for him in the used car sales business. Anyone who could convince the selection committee that I was deserving of this recognition must really know how to sell “stuff”. I have said this many times to many people, when I tell people what I do for a living – I’m a tree breeder – they either look at me in stunned silence or they giggle. I’m not sure which reaction the selection committee had to my nomination, but I thank you for making the decision you made.

I do want to thank Chancellor Woodson and all my colleagues at NC State for supporting my nomination. In particular, thanks go to Dr. Gower and my colleagues, Tori Brooks and Anna Giuli, who spearheaded my nomination. They solicited input and letters of support from members of our program and many others who know about the Cooperative Tree Improvement Program at NC State. This award is mainly a recognition of that Program, its members, and the incredible faculty, staff, and students who have made the program such a success for over 60 years. I have not been around for all 60 years of the Cooperative, but I have been here for most of them. Spending my entire career at NC State and working with our Cooperative members has been challenging, frustrating, exhilarating, and incredibly rewarding – often on the same day. It is a unique program that combines the highest science and scholarship with an emphasis to put our findings and outputs in the hands of foresters and landowners who utilize the results and directly benefit from the work. There are not many programs that do a better job of combining the research, education, and outreach missions that are hallmarks of our land grant institution. I can’t think of a better place to have worked for over 35 years than in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources where I have received the support from other faculty, staff, and students. As our Dean, Mary Watzin, always likes to remind us, the College of Natural Resources is the “go-to” place for solutions to natural resource challenges. I think our program epitomizes that spirit, and thanks to all of my professional colleagues for the many years of support.

And of course, I must recognize and thank my wonderful family who have been my rock of support for these many years. I want to thank my parents, who have blessed me with their presence today. Thanks Mom & Dad for giving me the love and support and occasional kick in the pants to get me going in my career in forestry. And to my four children, Heather, Theresa, Anthony, and Tim who are able to be here

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this morning. The down side of being so engaged in research, teaching, and outreach around the South and much of the world is that Daddy sure was gone a lot. Fortunately, they all turned out pretty well, probably because I *wasn't* home all that much (and by the way, all are graduates of this great University system). And of course to my lovely wife, Lou, also an NC State alumna – thank you. Your many years of love, kindness, and support have kept me incredibly happy and reasonably sane at home and have allowed me to have the modicum of success that I have had in my career.

And finally, I want to leave you with a quote I saw last week when I was at the Hunt Library on the NC State campus. It is one from Governor Holshouser who was an incredible supporter of education and the UNC system, and he states:

“We can dream of a better world; or we can use our brains and our arms to build a better world. I urge you today to be dreamers; but be builders too.”

What wonderful words that should be inspirations to us all. To “Think and Do” – the NC State mantra.

Thank you again for this honor.