

From Runways to Renewables: Ralph Holzfaster's Lifelong Mission

Ralph Holzfaster's story reflects a life guided by service, innovation, and community spirit. A U.S. Air Force and Korean War veteran, Nebraska farmer, and advocate for renewable energy, Ralph has spent every chapter of his life helping others move forward, whether through aviation, agriculture, or advancing rural development across the Great Plains.



His love of flight began early. In 1946 he earned both his driver's license and pilot's license on the same day, a fitting start for someone whose life would be defined by ambition and exploration. Five years later Ralph joined the U.S. Air Force, where he served as a pilot with the 315th Air Transport Squadron before becoming a Launch Officer with the 11th Tactical Missile Group. His duties took him throughout Japan, Korea, and Vietnam during a period of global transformation that shaped both his outlook and his leadership style.

Among Ralph's most memorable assignments was his time at Cape Canaveral, Florida, where he contributed to the early development of America's missile and aerospace programs. Witnessing those pioneering efforts firsthand sparked a lifelong appreciation for technology and progress that would later define his civilian career.

When his service ended in 1956 with the rank of Captain, Ralph returned home to western Nebraska determined to keep building and improving. Together with his wife Beverly, his partner for more than sixty years, he raised five children near Paxton and turned his attention to advancing modern agriculture. In 1969 he established a center-pivot irrigation dealership that revolutionized local farming. By 1995 his company had sold more systems than any other in Nebraska and was recognized as one of the most successful irrigation businesses in the world.



Ralph's influence extended far beyond his own operation. He went on to serve on the boards of the Nebraska Ethanol Authority and Development Board, the Nebraska Public Power District, the Keith County Economic Development Board and Foundation, and the Mid-Plains Community College Foundation. Through these roles he became a key voice for bioenergy, ethanol expansion, and rural economic growth across the Midwest.

His decades of service and innovation have earned Ralph significant recognition, including induction into the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement and, alongside his family, the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame in 2023. These honors celebrate his lifelong dedication to stewardship, entrepreneurship, and the betterment of rural communities.

Today Ralph continues to share his experience and leadership through his work with Mid America Agri Products / Wheatland LLC in Madrid, Nebraska. His insight and optimism continue to inspire the next generation of agricultural and renewable energy leaders. Those who know him understand

that while his journey began in the skies, his true mission has always been here on the ground, driving innovation, opportunity, and the future of America's heartland.