

DRAFT REMARKS FOR KENNETH QUINN AT NORMAN  
BORLAUG MEMORIAL

- Norman Borlaug was imbued with a double dose of the Norwegian tenacity you would expect from someone born and raised in Iowa and educated in Minnesota

- And it was on the wrestling mats at Cresco High School and the university of Minnesota where he developed that never-get-pinned attitude that would carry him through life.

- It is not surprising, then, that after being presented the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 that Norm approached the Nobel committee with a proposal that they establish a Nobel Prize in Agriculture. After all he argued with characteristic Midwestern humility, and with what he was sure would be convincing logic, that there were many others beside him who deserved recognition for what was being accomplished.

The Nobel committee, courteously I'm sure, explained to Norm that this could just not be done since it was not provided for in Alfred Nobel's Will, nor was there any money for such a prize. It was then that the normally phlegmatic farm boy turned plant pathologist gritted his teeth set out to create his own award.

It took him 16 years, but in 1986 Norm found a partner at the General Foods Corporation and so the World Food Prize was born. And in 1987 his friend and research partner from India, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan was the first World Food Prize laureate.

- Norm told me how pleased he was that this new honor looked so firmly in place. So it was with great horror that only three years later he was confronted with the fact that General Foods was being taken over by another large corporation and that several men in suits, often the bane of his existence, had decided that the World Food Prize could be eliminated.

- It was then that Norm returned to Des Moines and in 1990 formed a partnership with John Ruan who like Norm had been born in a small Iowa town in 1914 and had gone to amass a large national trucking business. If Norm had a dream that the World Food Prize might one day be seen as the Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture, then John Ruan had a dream that the American Middle west and in particular his hometown of Des Moines could become the food and agricultural capitol of the world.

- Just imagine the audacity of these two 76 year old men sitting out together with the idea that they could create a Nobel Prize. But the last 20 years has proven once again how much that Iowa / Minnesota tenacity and grit can get done. It will forever be my honor to have spent the last 10 years of my life trying to make their dreams come true.

- Every October individuals from more than 70 countries travel to Des Moines for the annual Borlaug Dialogue which addresses cutting-edge issues in global food security and the struggle to ensure adequate food and nutrition for all. Bill Gates will be there next week. As will the CEOs of major agribusiness companies, deans of agriculture, research scientists and hunger advocates—all drawn by Norm.

- And each October 16, the eyes of the world turn to the Iowa State Capitol building as Norm and John Ruan would present a beautiful sculpture and a \$250,000 Prize to a succession of laureates from Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Cuba, Denmark, India, Mexico, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and the United States. Everyone knows Mohammad Yunus as the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, but 12 years earlier Norm had presented him the World Food Prize.

- I often tell people that the past 60 years are the single greatest period of food production and human production in all of history. It should be an enormous point of pride that it was led by an individual whom both Iowa and Minnesota claim as their own. And if Norm was the captain then the Laureates are the All Star Team.

- But Norm Borlaug's greatest pleasure when coming to the World Food Prize each year was being with the young high school students who were invited to attend the Borlaug Dialogue and then would present their papers to Norm and an array of laureates and experts whom Norm would cajole and convince to remain on Saturday to be with the students.

- Whenever he phoned me, or arrived in town the first thing he would always ask about was how these young students were doing especially the ones we sent abroad as Borlaug-Ruan interns to work, as high school juniors or seniors, at international agricultural research centers in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

- Norm loved students. He saw them as his greatest legacy and he took great pride in their success.

- It had to be a great satisfaction to him when first the President of Mexico and then later the President of Germany both called the World Food Prize the "Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture." His dream had come true. But there was still more to be done.

- I flew to Dallas to visit with Norm three days before he passed away. He was very weak and couldn't say very much but when I talked to him about our efforts together over the past ten years to build the World Food Prize he found the strength to urge me to "Have patience. That it will take a long time."

- There was still a little of that tenacity in his voice. He was telling me the lessons he had learned on that Iowa farm and on the University of Minnesota Campus. Don't give up. Keep on fighting. Hunger can be defeated. The Green Revolution can come to Africa. Reach for the Stars You can do it.

- But I know we can't do it without Norm.

- So, next Wednesday we will dedicate a building to Norm in the heart of Des Moines. It will be the Dr. Norman E. Borlaug Hall of Laureates a new home for the World Food Prize. Inspired by Norm's grit and determination, we have taken a 100 year lease on the building so that at the beginning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century Norman Borlaug will still be inspiring great achievements in confronting world hunger just as he will still be inspiring students at the University of Minnesota to great heights in agricultural science.

--It is just like Norm, he is going to be as busy in the next 95 years as he was in the last.

Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn  
President,  
The World Food Prize Foundation  
666 Grand Ave., Ste. 1700  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Ph: 515-245-3770  
Fax: 515-245-3785  
[www.worldfoodprize.org](http://www.worldfoodprize.org)