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TO THE HAROLD R GORDON MEMORIAL AWARD COMMITTEE:

I consider it is a great honor to support the nomination of Shirley Hutzler for the Gordon Award. I first met Shirley in 1992 at the TAHU Convention in Dallas, Texas. She was in charge of the vendor show, and she made an impression on me as a friendly, funny, organized, forceful person who people wanted to follow. The next year, Shirley was President of TAHU, and I was on that board as President of my local chapter. Oh what a year that was. We were fighting for our lives here in Texas as Governor Ann Richards had her eye on small group reform and her plans did not coincide with ours. Shirley had back surgery that year, and at one meeting, she came in like Hannibal Lector in a braced bed. She could sit for a while, but many times would go over to her stand-up bed and lean against it for support. We had done research into hiring our first lobbyist, and during one really emotional meeting, Shirley led us through with calmness and understanding. We did hire our first lobbyist, and thenceforth, became a powerful entity to be dealt with at the state capitol.

A few years later, Shirley actually became our lobbyist. She hung around that Texas Capitol during Session, and became well known in the circles that counted, like the Texas Department of Insurance. I used to love her written reports that sometimes came daily to TAHU members. She put her humorous spin on each report, but the information always came through. She went on to be a consultant to our future lobbyists for many years.

Not only did Shirley hold numerous positions of leadership at the Austin Chapter and the Texas Chapter, she went on to be Region IV Regional Vice President for NAHU. She represented our Region IV with aplomb, and although she lost in her bid to be NAHU Secretary, we were so proud to have her represent us as the Regional Vice President. She would have made a fabulous NAHU Officer.

No matter what endeavor she undertook for TAHU and NAHU, she was all-in with her efforts to be successful. Whether it was fundraising, leading a committee, speaking engagements, leadership training, she was always the epitome of professionalism and humor, which so endeared her to TAHU and NAHU members.

For me personally, she became a mentor and friend that I miss to this day. We had so much in common, such as our love for NAHU and TAHU, love of dogs, love for our sports teams (Aggies and Longhorns), and our senses of humor, that sometimes it felt like we were sisters. As Shirley aged, it became routine to go see her each time I was in Austin. She never changed, and she was always dedicated to our profession and industry, and if she was your friend, she never wavered from that friendship. I feel we were blessed with having Shirley to lead our fight to keep our industry at the forefront of knowledge and lobbying for what is right and best for the American public.