

Eric Wanjura, # 25
TALL XIII
Session 5 – Houston / Gulf Coast
July 23 - 26, 2013

Session 4 Narrative:

Day 1 – Tuesday, July 23, 2013

Scotts Miracle Gro Company – The Woodlands, TX:

TALL XIII classmate Mark Slavens welcomed us to his company in the Woodlands. Scotts Miracle Gro Company is a very innovative/progressive landscape product company. In fact, they are the largest marketer of branded lawn and garden products in the world. Founded in 1868 in Marrysville, Ohio, the company operates primarily in North America, but also has operations in Europe and Asia. Scotts retails its products through major retailers such as Home Depot, Lowes, and Walmart as well as many others.

Several members of the Western Region management team gave presentations to our class covering all aspects of their business model; covering corporate culture, ethics, product development, marketing strategies, supply chain management, and much more.

The interesting thing about Scotts Miracle Gro, is that they face many of the same problems that rural agriculture faces, but in urban and suburban settings with consumers that are far removed from agriculture.

Scotts Miracle Gro hosted an ‘Urban Agriculture Night’ where we heard remarks from Jim Bates, President, US Western Region and Latin America for Scotts Miracle Gro, as well as Lloyd Potter, Texas State Demographer. Todd Staples, Texas Agriculture Commissioner, also addressed the group.

Day 2 – Wednesday, July 24, 2013

Glueck’s Nursery & Tree Farm – Alleyton, TX: We started the day at the Glueck’s Tree Farm near Columbus, Tx. Charles and Mickey Glueck welcomed TALL XIII into their home for a wonderful breakfast of homemade kolaches – they were terrific! Charles and Mickey gave us an overview of their family operation which includes several of their children. Charles and Mickey are somewhat retired, and the next generation in taking over the tree business. They produce several tree varieties, but most of their volume is in liveoaks. The trees are containerized, and are very susceptible to strong winds. Not only can the wind damage the trees, but it also wastes valuable time in having to pick up young trees after a strong wind has blown them and their container over. The Glueck family operation is the essence of a true family operation.

Next, we were off to visit RiceTec Inc. RiceTec is a hybrid seed rice company in Eagle Lake, TX. The Gulf Coast rice industry is facing huge water problems. The drought has caused the LCRA to severely reduce irrigation water releases downstream from the highland lakes in the

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Texas Hill Country. The rice producers have drilled irrigation wells, but this is an expensive proposition and the aquifer, though large, can only sustain so many rice acres.

John Gertson spoke to the class about water issues involving the Colorado River water as well as ground water. John is very intelligent, and an outspoken advocate for agriculture along the Gulf Coast. Water seems to be a scarce resource...even along the coast.

Michael Goudeau, TALL XII, gave us a tour of his family's hay operation. What a beautiful family operation in a gorgeous setting. Michael markets his hay to the niche 'Horse Hay' market in Houston. He is able to produce high quality hay and market to a consumer that is willing to pay a premium for the scarce product. Michael also hosted TALL XIII to a lunch on the farm, and then gave a tour along with Coleman Locke, of JD Hudgins Inc. JD Hudgins Ranches are famous for their purebred Brahman cattle. We got to see the stuffed mount of their famous bull 'Manso', to which over 80% of all Brahman cattle can be traced.

Prasek's Hillje Smokehouse – we toured the smokehouse and retail store next. The Prasek Smokehouse is a family-owned business that produces high quality smoked meats and sausages. The family has expanded over the years, and their new modern facility is very impressive. They have been able to market their products in a great location right along a busy highway corridor between Houston and Victoria.

We wrapped up the day with a wonderful 'Cattleman's Night' social and dinner. Dr. Charlie Graham provide the terrific steak dinner. There were several speakers and dignitaries from the community, and the keynote speaker was Richard Thorpe of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association.

Day 3 – Thursday, July 25, 2013

On day 3, we left Houston, headed to Galveston island. Our first stop was at Texas International Terminals. Todd Sullivan, President and sister of classmate Kelley Sullivan, was our host. Todd gave us a tour of the massive terminal operation where they handle petroleum, fertilizer products, building aggregates, and many other bulk products. TIT has a double rail loop to handle unit trains. In fact, they were just finishing offloading a unit trade of crude oil to be reloaded onto barges, and then sent to a refinery up the Houston ship channel. The Sullivan family has been very progressive in developing their port facility, and has situated themselves to benefit from the expansion of the Panama Canal and the increase in throughput through the Port of Galveston.

Next, we took a boat tour of the Port of Galveston. The Port is very busy. We saw a roll on-roll off facility that handles all sorts wheeled agricultural and construction equipment – John Deere and Caterpillar. Another famous port facility is the banana dock where tons of fresh bananas are

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received and shipped inland each year. Agriculture dominates the port facilities. Raw fertilizer and grains are the main commodities that are shipped through the port each year. There was also a cruise ship in port during our visit. Galveston has become one of the busiest disembarkment points in the country.

Texas A&M University – Galveston Campus: Rear Admiral Robert Smith and Dr. Mike McClain gave us an overview of Texas A&M University – Galveston, and the importance of Galveston and maritime trade to the US and World economies. One project they spoke about in depth was the Ike Dike project. The project is based off a similar system in the Netherlands that protects the harbor from hurricane storm surges. The system is a mechanical gate apparatus that closes to hold back the storm surge and ensuing damaging effects.

Next, Kelley Sullivan treated the class to a great tour of the island. She highlighted many of the historical aspects of the community, as well as the current economic drivers. We then headed for Evia, a Sullivan family residential community developed primarily by Kelley. What a beautiful neighborhood concept and vision. The entire Sullivan family was very hospitable and welcoming to TALL XIII. They are very proud of Galveston – with good reason!

We finished up Session 5 with a ride-along program with the Houston Police Department. Most of the class was teamed up with a Houston Police Officer, and spent the over-night shift shadowing the officer as he or she encountered the events of the night. I was teamed up with a wonderful young officer named Freddy Croft. While our night was not as eventful as some of my other classmates', I still was exposed to several domestic disturbance calls, a couple of dangerous drug related situations, prostitution, and a few routine traffic stops. It is quite amazing the variety of calls the HPD officers have to deal with, even on a slow night. Officer Croft was very professional, and I admire him for his compassion towards the people he has deal with in sometimes very desperate situations.