

TALL XIII
Tyler/East Texas- Session #7
“Production, Producers, Progress”
January 20-24, 2014
Sally Oglesby Harris #9
Narratives

Tyler/East TX was the next to the last session that our TALL XIII class will experience, so I decided to run at this narrative by the day instead of sessions. This was my very first time to this amazing part of Texas and I was not disappointed in any way. The scenery, people and agriculture was something to appreciate and learn from on this session.

Monday, January 20th :

Nine hours of driving brought me to Tyler, TX. I somehow was only minutes in front of the gang from Lubbock driving into the hotel. We were to meet at 6pm for a dinner with our host and TALL XII, BET- VP, owner of **Rozell Sprayer Mfg, Red River Specialities, & Rozell Peach Farms, Darren Rozell**. It never fails that these gatherings are nothing short than wonderful. The steak and fixings were great and the opening hospitality was pure Texas. Conversations all over the place and learning, laughing and concerns filled the barn. It was another great opening to Session #7.

Tuesday, January 21st :

Dr. Jim met us downstairs with Olga & packets for the week in hand. We were introduced to **Chad Gulley, Co. Ag/NR Agent, Smith Co**. Chad would be our guide and helper for the week. He told us about some to the high points of the area, that Tyler/East Tx was second only to the High Plains in agriculture production. Who would have thought that out there behind all those TALL TREES was very productive farm land, cattle and poultry. I got the lumber idea! I was getting anxious to see all these ag related businesses.

Our first stop of the day was **Cavender's Boot City**. **Mike & Clay Cavender** were there to welcome us and give a bit of history. You know, sometimes you think stores are just stores until you hear how things get started. I love the fact that they tested products with real cowboys & cowgirls to see if they withstand use and comfort ability. This brings me to the gorgeous Stetson hat that I was given, by **Hatco** with reps, **Ricky Bolin & Will Cooper**. The team made sure we all had a perfect fit guided by **Terry Cooper** and shaped by **Cavender's staff**. It was the first new hat I've had since rodeoing in the late 70's! YeeHaw! I'll have to find a turkey feather! The great blade knife gift has already opened lots of feed since I got home! It was a blast and then we got to do some shopping which was perfect. I found a great pair of Justin calfskin boots with lime green uppers for my son's 28th birthday! He loves them! Thanks ladies and gentlemen! What great supporters for the TALL program!

A short bus ride found us pulling into the **Lone Star Rose Nursery**. Owner and operator, **Sam Goldwater** & wife, **Kathy**, greeted us. The weather had taken a drastic change from flip flops to parkas! I swear the weather is bipolar this year! The lunch was sponsored by the Goldwaters and it was absolutely the ticket. Mr. Goldwater had whipped up some beef stew, cornbread and lots of different desserts. I almost foundered myself on the stew & cornbread! Delicious! After lunch, **Ted Conover, TALL Advisory Board**, welcomed us to Tyler & then introduced Mr. Goldwater. He took time to give us some background on his business. The first roses grown in Smith Co. were in 1860. The area was renown area for fruit until a disaster his in 1920's ruined the fruit. At the peak there were roughly 30 million roses grown in Smith Co., but freezes in the '80s and again in the '90s put many producers out of business. Majority of roses are grown in Arizona and shipped in & then distributed. I really liked the way Mr. Goldwater dealt with problems with his plants. After seeing the operation up close, the unloading to final boxing, every plant has ID and can be tracked. They would rather replace X 2 than have a displeased customer. I got tickled when

Mrs. Goldwater stated that the “same” folks usually complain..... maybe they’re like me & should just plant “silk flowers”. This was a great stop.

Next stop was **Ran Pro Farms, Robert W. “Bob” Cartwright**. What a nice gentleman. He climbed on the bus and gave a brief overview of the business. They have 156 greenhouses with one that is 3 acres with a retractable top! Oh my, some NFL teams don’t have that! They maintain 2-3 yrs. of tree crop in inventory, around 400K. 260K are in seed liners! There were 2 water wells to water facility. Lots of thought went into concrete channels that help drain houses, runoff and conserve water. The ponds are filled with tilapia annually to eat away the algae and clean naturally! This way the water is reusable. Mr. Cartwright sells directly to customers or independent growers, stays away from the Big Box market. Quick yet very informative tour.

Just down the road we found ourselves pulling into the **Rio Neches Ranch, (Cutting Horses)**. Having Kevin Proctor, TALL XIII, along to tell us how things use to look at this place was really cool. This is his stomping grounds. **Mr. Harry Leatherwood** purchased this old place & gave it a face lift that any woman would be proud of! As we pulled up to the barn area and covered arena I knew I was in heaven. Nothing better than the smell of a sweaty horse! **Jennifer Leatherwood & Jonathan Oland, Mgr.** were waiting on us for a most unexpected treat. They had a cutting horse exhibition planned and while we watched we were invited to taste Mrs. Leatherwood’s own wine, grown right there on the property. It was delightful and the 4-legged athletes were breathtaking. The Leatherwoods don’t hold competitive events here, but they do a lot of fundraising benefit type gatherings. Appreciated their support for our TALL group visit. Gorgeous!

We also had a guest speaker, **Becky Dempsey, Regional Dir., North TX Region, TDA**. What a delightful lady. Mrs. Dempsey was a judge in Tyler for many years

and then was whisk away to work with Todd Staples. She gave us a great overview of what is going on with TDA at this point & what their main focuses are for Texas.

They really are working hard to make things easier on the producer with more things offered online, such as pesticide license. Many reports can be submitted by internet to same time & expense. This region is in the same boat as all of Texas in the water issue and so is working closely to help solve problems instead of looking only at the needs of this area. Thankful for her time.

Climbed back on the bus & headed to **John Soules Foods**. I have used this product for parties and it was great to see where it all originated. **John Soules, Jr. Co-CEO** and **Tom Ellis, Exec. VP of Operations** were our guides for the tour. We were given some history of the company from the start up to the burn down to where it stands today! Outstanding perseverance! We split into groups and got a personal tour of the warehouse & products. Mr. Soules is most proud of the Research/Development, which is working hard to speed conversion time of beef & poultry. Soules produces 75 million #s of meat products annually. They are educating the public on chicken safety. I learned that "pink chicken" isn't always raw... if meat pulls away it is ready, meaning that it has enough heat to change the proteins. Biggest challenge is the government regulations, which stifles all producers. Great tour!!! Wonderful to have Soules onboard with TALL program.

Well, as you know, Dr. Jim always gives us plenty of time to get back to the hotel, have a nap and freshen up prior to a formal reception. NOT!! We were running a little behind schedule & then hit Tyler traffic. By the time we got back to hotel we had exactly 25mins! Gotta love this pace!

Debra Barrett, TALL XIII, held the door as Mary Jane & I ran down the stairs to get on the bus for our evening dinner reception at the **Hollytree Country Club**. A long day, but a delightful ending. The reception room filled quickly with supporters for

our TALL XIII and the TALL program. It really makes you feel special and honored to meet so many other agriculturists from across the state. Once you take a deep breath and realize that you are all striving for the same goals, it's an opportunity that cannot be matched. Much mingling was done & I got to have a short visit with **Dr. Steele**, who had said he just went through Ozona the day before! Nice to know someone really knows where you are from. We were asked to find a seat. How often do you randomly seat yourself at a table with 2 Texas State Representatives, 2 District Judges and then 2 rookies?! Ha! Lindsey & I were there! To top off the evening, one of our own, Linda Galayda-Jorden, TALL XIII, received a scholarship from this area of supporters! Way to go, girlfriend! Every area should follow suit! Especially far West Texas, as we usually cover all costs of this very worth wild educational opportunity. The meal was wonderful, conversation interesting and the speakers outstanding. Off to hotel, early to rise and good-bye Tyler. It was most memorable.

Wednesday, January 22, 2014:

I don't care who you are, 5:45 am with your entire luggage is challenging. We do it every time! Our first stop today was **Brookshire's "Fresh" Store**. **AgriLand Farm Credit** had breakfast & coffee ready for all upon arrival. So nice! Thanks! We were met by **Greg Nordyke, VP Corp. Development & Scott Reilly, Sr. VP Logistics** for **Brookshire**. We listened as these men told us the history on the **Brookshire Grocery and Warehouse**. It was interesting to understand how they separated themselves from the Brookshire Brothers that I am familiar with in my area. After breakfast we loaded on the bus to head to the warehouse facility. It was amazing and very well organized. Runs like a well oiled clock. Reminded me of the Food Bank facility in High Plains on a much bigger scale. We returned to the main store for a tour of this unique layout. They allowed us to shop on our own & boy were we ready! Carts in hand & when they said, "Go!" - Well, didn't have to tell the ladies twice. This was our last oasis before we got to the **PWCC**. So fun & these stores are functional & enjoyable! Good job! Hope TALL XIV gets to see this!

The bus pulls over and we unload again at our next tour, **Color Spot Nurseries, Inc.** This was an expansive operation of all types of ornamental plants. **Tom Giddens, Tech. Ser. Team Leader** was our guide. We were given a little safety talk and then off we went. We saw how the baby plants grown from seed to sprout were replanted into containers by hand and then placed in trays to be moved into greenhouses for maturation. Each house handles the growth steps and the process of growing until they are shipped out. The whole process can be as short as 2 weeks and as long as 6-8 wks. We saw every week! Now I know where the poor plants that I kill every spring originate! If I could only figure out how to make bitter weed a product that folks would want! I grow that just fine! Beautiful facility and all the employees looked so happy. Flowers!

Next on our days stop was **Stephen F. Austin State University-Poultry Research Center**. We arrived and were welcomed by several really nice folks. **Joey Bray, Ph.D, Asst. Prof., Dir. of Poultry Science, SFASU**, was our session leader. He invited us to get a plate & enjoy some chicken and/or catfish sponsored by **Agriland Farm & Credit Services**. It was AWESOME! We ate and listened as Dr. Bray explained what goes on in the SFASU center. They have managed to learn/teach poultry science while making money for the University. After the brief talk he turned to the mic over to **Dr. Dale Perritt, Chiar. Dept. of Ag, SFASU**. Such a gentleman. He thanked the lady that prepared the wonderful lunch and gave her accolades for the many times she has prepared meals for guests. Dr. Perritt gave a nice slide show presentation about the poultry research being done at SFA. His presentation covered all the aspects of the program from research & development to growth and economic effects for the area. East Texas has been and will remain a leader in the agriculture industry by striving to bring in producers for the climates that work well and by educating young agriculturists to stay home and continue the legacy that is in this region. Before leaving the center we were treated to the research area & told about how the eggs are handled and hatched. Eggs to 18 days to chicks! Awesome! We were allowed to see the chicken houses, which for me was a first.

The feeding & watering automation was really cool and I was not discouraged about cleanliness. Even when you do your best in any livestock business you will have to deal with death loss. It is a part of the business. They are doing an exceptional job. The vessel compost will help with disposal and odor, while they are looking for new usages for wastes. Excellent place to see. Thank you, SFASU!

Back in our vehicles on down the road. **Pilgrim's Processing Facility, John Henry Hollaway, Prod. Mgr.**, was to be our last stop of the day. Entering the facility we were put through intense security and safety procedures. A little intense or the end of a long day for all involved. Once we were introduced to the tour leaders, mine was Salvador. Very impressive young man. We were allowed on the floor of the plant, which I understand isn't afforded to most groups. We had a very up close view of the process in poultry from literally start, which is kill, to end, which is no waste. The people that work here are mostly immigrant/visa labor and glad to have the work. They do an awesome job and the precision of each process is admirable. The only job I saw in the whole process that I think I would be able to do was at the beginning simply placing the bird on the stake! I thought it interesting that positions are not changed (boredom) because they feel they have failed to achieve if management moves them. Constant is better. As I thought about this later, I too, like things to remain constant, but sometimes that causes us to become stagnate. Management is key. Was an impressive tour and so glad I got to experience this. Thank you to the **Pilgrim** folks that made this possible.

Nice drive to our next meetings and lodging. I enjoyed interesting conversation about our sessions with my classmate & navigator Jon Mixon on the drive to **PWCC. Piney Woods Conservation Center** was way in the middle of nowhere! And I thought I lived there! Ha! This was the coolest place and perfect for us to finish our session. As we arrived at the lodge, we checked in and unloaded stuff in rooms that were dormitory setup. Just like camp! At 57 this is a trip back to childhood! I got the top bunk!!! Okay, so I was a little over anxious!

Dinner was at 6:30pm. Absolutely worth the every bite! Thank you, ladies! We meet the hosts, **David & Jo Treadaway, Dir. PWCC**. Man, do these folks know how to treat people! They are all about service and want anyone that stays there to understand the ecosystem that is represented there. After dinner we had a great speaker, **Wesley “Wes” Moorehead, TX A&M Forest Service Dept. Head**. The overview of the job that the Texas Forest Service does was very important. I know from the recent grass fires in our area that they are there to help all of Texas when needed. Having supported them, I now know where my monies have gone. Expertise in the forestry protection and preservation is key, but knowing how to handle fire is so necessary in Texas. His Q & A was great in answering many questions. I wish I had asked more questions on running livestock for underbrush control. Great speaker.

Our evening ended with the presentation of the **100 yr. Anniversary of the TFA, Susan Stutts**. Mrs. Stutts did a great job filling in for the speaker, **Ron Hufford**, that was unable to come at the last minute. Her presentation covered the history of how the TFS came to be and continues to present. Very admirable job and interesting chronological gathering of information. Nice ending to long day.

Thursday, January 23, 2014:

Well, good morning! Pack your lunch and get going! Brief overview of the logging industry during our breakfast by **Charlie Gee, TX Logging Council**. What a nice man. Mr. Gee gave us an idea of what we were to see upon going into the woods. He worked so hard to make sure we got to see the lumber industry from the roots up! Mr. Gee was on the phone constantly to check location & weather conditions. This man got it done! We headed out to a location in the woods to see logging trucks, cutters, loaders, and the whole field process. The people in charge showed us how the areas are cleared, then cutters go in to get from 2 to 4 trees, pile, picked up and then loaded on trucks. Those loads are up to 84,500k lbs to meet road rules and head to the saw mills.

The trucks have digital scales so some looked full & others didn't, but the scales determine the load. Great visual... rain & all! Glad I packed the umbrellas, even though Dr. Jim broke one! JK!

After leaving the timber field we caravanned to the **Georgia-Pacific Sawmill at Pineland, TX** which was the coolest thing I've ever seen. All of the amazing mechanical manipulations of product to get it to the place of process was too neat. **Mr. Don Ledford, Plant Mgr** led us through the process that the lumber goes through to end up in the lumber yard we know. All the improvements to the process of making sure the boards are straight, good or usable. The laser technology that helps to get every bit of the tree used is just amazing. All the steps that the log goes through to become a product useful to the public without waste are astounding. No waste! I loved every step up & down of this tour. Thank you for allowing us to see this process!

We had an opportunity to enjoy the sack lunches in the conference room of GP and discuss what we had just observed. It was perfect way to complete the morning of tours.

Back to our vehicles and onward. Next stop was the habitat of the endangered Red Woodpecker at the **U.S. Forest Service/Sabine National Forest**. We were met deep in the woods by **Jamie Sowell, Fire Mgmt. Officer & Ernie Murray, Info. Officer**. These two guys are so dedicated to what they do. We learned how the habitat of the woodpecker has been helped to keep them safe and growing. As long as all these practices are helping the wildlife and not hindering the progress of agriculture in a "common sense" manner I am all for it. Agriculturalists were the first environmentalist.

Once again our schedule was so full that our "free time" was nonexistent. We arrived back at **PWCC** just in time for another fabulous meal. **Ms. Jo**, you and your ladies rock! Cajun stew & budan! Yummy!

We filled our tummies and retreated to the conference room to hear **Dr. Steven Bullard, Arthur Temple College of Forestry & Ag, SFASU**. Was a wonderful discussion on the processes and effects of the forestry industry. Dr. Bullard was interesting and informative. He spoke about the monies and job opportunities that the forest industry brings to our state. He talked about the amount of absentee owners that hold interests in the East Tx lumber industry. The idea that this industry is becoming an “investment” type for land buyers was an interesting subject.

Last but certainly not least, **Mr. Rob Hughes, Campbell Timberland Management**, was our last speaker of the session. Mr. Hughes had traveled in bad weather to give us a presentation on how trees are determined ready to harvest. He stopped on his way to take core samples showing us the readiness of trees, aging showing the strength and other qualities. Loved his presentation and openness his to questions from folks that didn't know a thing about trees other than shade. We learned how to age a tree, see the stress areas and how to trace that back to past happenings (you can do the same thing with wool breaks) of the times. I really liked this talk. Great last lecture! Oh, and did I mention that our lodging was taken care of by the **TFA, Texas Logging Council & Ron Hufford**. Appreciated!!

In Summary:

Astonishing. East Texas was a surprising experience. My first but not my last visit. Met some wonderful people that I will see again. We have much to share from all parts of this great state. Every step of this TALL journey has been worth the cost and the time invested. I once again pinched myself and thank God that I've been blessed with this opportunity. It has made me a better “shepherd”. I look forward to the international trip to Brazil with an open mind and eyes of a child. I will forever cherish 18 month transformation. Thank you to ALL that have made this possible!

Respectfully submitted,

Sally Oglesby Harris #9

TALL XIII –Ozona, TX

