

January 17, 2012 - Tuesday

Cavender's Boot City

The session started in Tyler at Cavender's Boot City. The class took the time to browse and even purchase some western wear. Mr. Terry Cooper briefly spoke to the class about the history of the family owned business that James Cavender started in the late 1950s in Pittsburg, Texas. He started out by opening a dairy mart and then several years later opened a retail western wear store. The company now has over 40 stores and proudly employees over 800 people.

While at Cavender's Boot City, the class was fitted and received black felt hats from Hatco. The company was extremely gracious in donating each class member a new hat. In checking out the company, I was also surprised to hear that Resistol Hats started in 1927 in Dallas, Texas and then expanded to Longview to operate a plant where the entire felt hat making process is achieved. Today the company is the largest manufacturer of headwear in the world and operates as part of Hatco, Inc.

Both companies have deep Texas roots that provide much needed products to agriculture producers across the world.

Lone Star Nursery

The Goldwater family hosted the TALL class for a wonderful home cooked lunch at the nursery. While the class ate, Mr. Sam Goldwater gave a brief history about the Tyler area and roses. I was astounded to hear that roses were in existence 40 million years ago. Roses were first grown in Texas in 1875. By the late 1940s, there were 300 growers in Smith County area and during peak production there were 25-30 million roses grown. Today, 75% of the field grown roses come to the Tyler area for processing that generates \$60-70 million in revenue. Due to the climate, the majority of the field grown roses are now grown in Arizona. The roses are harvested and shipped to Tyler where they are stored in coolers until ready for the January through May sales season. I was amazed to hear that a nursery plans three years out on the roses grown. A 40 acre tract will grow approximately 800,000 roses. The wholesale nursery continues to grow their business with a new contract to the recently expanding Aldi supermarkets/grocery stores. Additionally, the nursery is making creative new shipping boxes that create an in-store display. The tour was very interesting and encouraged me to plant some roses.

Ran Pro Farms

The next stop was at Ran Pro Farms with Bob Cartwright. Ran Pro Farms started in 1980 to provide customers with high-quality, ready-to-sell plants, on time and fresh. This nursery focuses on planting and caring for container hearty grown plants. Plants are carefully monitored during the growth process to ensure a high quality process. The farm consists of 280 acres, with 150 acres of production and 60 full time employees. There are 750,000 square feet of greenhouse space and white poly covered plants outdoors. The nursery grows a wide range of plants that include: citrus, fruit, ornamental and shade trees, ornamental landscape plants, roses and grasses.

Mr. Cartwright explained their new approach to giving customers support with a new eye-catching merchandise tags. The tags include the now familiar 2D tag, which when used with phones gives the customers instant information about the product in as much detail as one might need. Marketing is playing a very important role in the nursery's business. One impressive part of the nursery was the water reservoirs and

recycle/recovery water system. Each greenhouse was graded so that water could exit the greenhouse to a concrete conveyance which directed it to one of the water holding ponds on the property for reuse. Another very interesting part of the farm was the use of white poly to cover the plants that were outdoors. The poly can keep the temperature between 10-20 degrees higher than the outside temperature. This allows the farm to grow more plants by utilizing the space on the property without a greenhouse.

Rio Neches Ranch

The next stop for the class was Rio Neches Ranch, a cutting horse operation owned by Mr. Leatherwood. The beautiful ranch has various horse traps and a covered working arena with lounge. The class watched a cutting horse demonstration from the lounge of the arena. Mr. Leatherwood spoke to the class about his operation and how the trainer works the horses.

Texas Department of Agriculture – Adopting 2M2N Culture

While at Rio Neches Ranch, Ms. Dempsey with the Texas Department of Agriculture discussed with the class the concept of 2M2N. This stands for second mile-second nature. Ms. Dempsey spoke to the class about the merge of TDRA with TDA. The recent budget cuts have drastically reduced the staff at the agency. In doing so, the agency also went through character development to provide the upmost in customer service. When you call the agency she explained the goal was not to pass you from one person to another but to find you answer to your question or at least find you someone that could help.

Ms. Dempsey explained that the character development concepts from www.characterfirst.com were used to further develop the concept of 2M2N. Dan Cathy, owner of Chick-fil-A, explained this concept to Character First as their philosophy on service was based on the second mile, second nature approach. The Chick-fil-A company looked directly at the first mile with a customer as a transaction and the second mile as what they could provide to the customer that was not expected in the transaction. For example, the company provides fresh ground pepper, will carry a person's tray to the table, and making the drive-thru process an experience also. Their goal was to move from a transactional mindset to a transformational mindset. To achieve this goal, each new hire is required to watch a video that trains their employees to consider the "story" behind each person they serve. The video can be viewed at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2v0RrhvZ3lv&feature=youtu.be>

While I am a beef producer and supporter for the industry and Chick-fil-A is a direct competitor, I definitely appreciate the business concepts and morals by which the Cathy family operates their business. I believe it is what has made his business so successful. I also appreciate the fact that our Texas Department of Agriculture is taking on the same concepts to provide customers of their agency a good experience. Whether a service or regulatory role, each person should be treated with respect and provided the same assistance.

Texas Rose Horse Park

Kathy Brunson gave us a tour of the Texas Rose Horse Park. The equine show facility was built in 2007 and consists of 500 acres with 350 stalls and three outdoor areas. The multipurpose facility focuses on equine events for all disciplines; however, the facility also hosts music concerts and other venues. The outdoor arenas have special designed footings. The arenas are worked daily to ensure the footings are maintained to specifications required by the horseman. Ms. Brunson explained that each design or facility expansion is carefully planned and looks at the five year future plans. The expansions utilize state of the art equipment and utilities. The amount of planning that went into the special footings for the outdoor arenas were intensive. Ms. Brunson explained that the arenas are living creatures and must be worked each day to ensure they meet the expectations of the exhibitors.

A 2012 calendar of events surely indicated the facility is booked almost every weekend. Ms. Brunson indicated that her goal is to build the community and provide economic benefits to the area. I was surprised to hear

that the facility is operated with very few employees and primarily rely on contract workers during the scheduled events. It was a very interesting tour and a very impressive facility that focuses on growth and the future.

Wild Pig Management

During on visit to Texas Rose Horse Park, Dr. Billy Higginbotham discussed wild pig management with the class. He explained that all areas of Texas were experiencing issues with approximately 83 billion acres with deer and pigs. A survey was conducted five years ago, that indicated landowners spend around \$7 million to correct issues involving wild pigs. I was surprised to hear that there are 90 buying stations in Texas that deliver to three processing facilities. While in most cases, the pigs are a nuisance condition there are times when hunting operations and landowners can earn income for pig hunts during the hunting off seasons. Many counties are working to control the wild pig population with contests to see which counties can trap and deliver the most pig to the buying stations. In my personal area, the wild pigs are a huge problem and have done economic damage to area farms and ranches.

Reception-Dinner

The reception was held at the beautiful Hollytree Country Club. The class got an opportunity to meet the people from the East Texas area. At the reception, I personally meet civic leaders, members of the extension, area agriculturalists and family members of fellow TALL classmates. During dinner, several awards were given to well-deserving individuals in the area. Additionally, the Build East Texas (BET) group awarded a TALL 12 class scholarship of \$1000 to Ms. Linda Ryan.

January 18, 2012 – Wednesday

Joe Parsley Deer Farm

The first stop of the morning was at the deer farm. While Mr. Parsley was unable give the class a tour, two fellow TALL classmates discussed with the class how a deer farm operates. The operation sounds very similar to a purebred cattle or horse operation. The animals are specially selected to improve genetics and hunting qualities. Earnest and Jose discussed the extreme paperwork involved in operation of the farm and breeding program. Each facility has a license to operate with biologist approved construction plans for pens. The inventory of animals must be submitted yearly and movement is allowed only after proper notifications have been made to the Fish and Wildlife. I was surprised to hear the strict regulations involved with the deer farm operation.

Color Spot Nurseries, Inc.

The class traveled to Color Spot Nurseries in Troup, Texas. The tour was given by Mr. Tom Giddens, Technical Service Team Leader for Color Spot Nurseries. The company has been in business for over 30 years with multiple locations in various states. The Troup location employees 150 year round employees and 100 additional employees during seasonal times. Each year Color Spot Nurseries supplies to over 2,000 retail and commercial customers. They produce over 2,500 varieties, specializing in bedding plants, vegetables, herbs, shrubs, blooming plants, ground cover and more. Mr. Giddens explained that the Troup, Texas location averages shipping 40 truckloads a day during their peak season.

One interesting part of the tour was the potting soil. Mr. Giddens explained the soil is received by truck in 25 cubic foot bales. The soil is a peat moss variety that comes from Sun Gro which harvests the peat lands in Canada. The company uses upwards of 2,500 bales. The peat moss is used to pot over 52 million plugs per year at this facility. Our tour included watching employees placing plugs in containers. The rate at which this occurs is amazing. We move in and out of various greenhouses, while Mr. Giddens explained the growing

process and their management. Very interesting tour/stop for the TALL class. I plan on looking for the Color Spot products and branded products at Wal-Mart and Home Depot.

Stephen F. Austin State University-Poultry Research Facility

The class traveled to Nacogdoches to the Stephen F. Austin Poultry Research Center. The farm consists of 160 acres with specifically boiler houses that operate as contract growers for a larger poultry operation. The houses were donated by Pilgrims. Additionally the farm has two other research barns with a feedmill and classroom building. Dr. Joey Bray gave us a tour of the research facility and contract barns.

During our lunch at the research facility, Mr. David Alders discussed with the class the issues he faces as a poultry grower and also as a member of the Texas Water Development Board Regional Planning Group. Mr. Alders explained that the poultry industry has moved feed efficiencies to new levels. In 1935, the 16 week birds weighed 2.8 pounds with a 4.4 feed to gain rate. Today the 7 week birds weigh 6.4 pounds with a 1.8 feed to gain ratio. This efficiency is primarily driven by the fact that 82 pounds of chicken is consumed yearly per person. Shelby and Nacogdoches Counties are in the top 10 in the US in production. While his main job is a poultry grower, Mr. Alders is also part of the water planning group. Texas Senate Bill 1 created regional water planning groups to evaluate the water resources and future needs. The projected population of Texas is expected to be 46 billion by 2060, an 82% growth. The existing water supply is expected to drop 10% by 2060. Mr. Alders discusses some important issues that are part of the plan submitted in January 2012, such as desalination and reservoirs. The process of desalination must be figured out to meet future water needs. Also in the plan, many reservoirs for water storage area proposed to be constructed. This will require land acquisitions and inevitably draw up some opposition.

Pilgrims Processing Facility

While in Nacogdoches, the class visited the Pilgrim's Processing facility. Mr. Billy Clark met with the class to explain their facility. Pilgrims operate 24 fresh processing plants and seven prepared food cooking plants. At one fresh processing plant, approximately 330,000 head of poultry are harvested each day. Each plant has USDS food safety and inspection to ensure all products meet all federal food safety standards. The plant works in two shifts with around 1700 employees. The plant focuses on efficiency and product recovery. For example, the feathers and blood are sold for use in feed rations/meals. There are value added products in the 25-27% trim generated on the floor. While an actual tour was not allowed, Mr. Clark did allow the class to view the activities on the processing floor from management windows. I was impressed with the amount of automation that takes place in the fabrication process. The accuracy of the machines create a very consistent product for processing.

Welcome to Piney Woods Conservation Center

The class traveled to the Piney Woods Conservation Center near Broaddus. The facility is owned by Stephen F. Austin State University. Our stay at the facility was sponsored by the Texas Forestry Association. The camp facility has been operated by Mr. and Mrs. Treadway for over ten years. The center is located in the Angelina National Forest. The facility is used year round by the university for teaching, private group retreats, reunions and church groups.

During our first night at the center, Ms. Susan Stutts with the Texas Forest Association and Mr. Joel Hambricht with the Texas Forest Service meet with the class. The Texas Forest Association is a trade organization that supports the forest land/landowners of Texas. The forest sector of Texas contributed 16.4 billion of industry output to the economy and employs over 63,000 people. The wood-based industry remains one of the top manufacturing sectors in the state. The two main products are the mixed hardwoods and yellow pine. While I have been to the Nacogdoches area, I was amazed that the amount of timberland in the area. Individuals still control the largest portion, about 7.9 million acres (66%) in East Texas. The corporate landowners or investors own 3 million acres (25%). The remaining is federal or state owned. The industry is vitally important to the

East Texas area. Mr. Hambricht discussed the possible effects that the wildfires and drought can have on the industry. While the survey is still being done, revenue is expected to be down.

January 19, 2012 - Thursday

Logging Operation

Our first stop on Thursday morning was at a logging operation. Mr. David Grant with Campbell Timberland Management LLC and Mr. Charlie Gee with the Texas Logging Council gave us a tour. He explained that for many years the forest land was owned by the sawmills; however, several years ago the sawmills sold the land to various management companies. The land is now owned by a group of investors. The group manages over three million acres of timberland across the western and southern US. Mr. Grant discussed with the class how genetics have improved timber harvest by 30%. Also the nearby Boyd Lake Nursery grows 30 million trees annually for replanting purposes in the managed timberland.

The logging observed was explained as a management or thinning operation. The machinery used to cut, trim and load the timber was unbelievable. The contractors also work very quickly in order to move from job to job. It was interesting to see in the timber, the mature trees with a much younger seedling tree a couple of feet away. It was also interesting to hear how the companies utilize aerial images and other GIS information to get an indication of trees and growth of trees.

Temple-Inland Sawmill

Upon arrival, Mr. Alan Jones, plant manager at Temple-Inland Sawmill, gave us some history about the mill and its current operations. The mill started back in 1894 in Diboll, Texas and moved to its current location in 1910. Today the mill primarily cuts dimension lumber totaling 217 million feet and stud lumber totaling 115 million feet in 2010. The mill operates five days per week with two shifts that employ 275 people. Temple-Inland buys from the management companies and individual landowners. An interesting fact he shared was that even during the depression, the mill was selling all the lumber they could make. Several employees took the class around for a tour. The plant utilizes automation in almost every aspect of production. This provides a more consistent product to the consumers. The company is known for the "pink" stud and some contractors require that product.

A recent article indicated that International Paper has won the U.S. antitrust approval to buy rival Temple-Inland Inc. for \$3.7 billion on certain conditions. This deal makes International Paper the largest North American producer of corrugated packaging. It will be interesting to see if the new buyer will keep the mill operating to make dimension lumber.

Sabine National Forest

Our next stop gave the class a different perspective on timber management. Mr. Jamie Sowell, a fire management officer for the U.S. Forestry Service, gave us a tour and educational talk about the Sabine National Forest. Mr. Sowell discussed how the Forestry Service handles thinning and timber harvest. The difference in management from an industrial perspective to a natural resource conservation perspective of the timberland was apparent. The class got to see various varieties of pine trees. Mr. Sowell also discussed his role in fire management to thin timber and stressed that proper protocol should always be followed during prescribed burns. It was a very educational tour.

Dr. Steven Bullard – Stephen F. Austin State University Forestry Department

Our last night at the Piney Woods Conservation Center included a presentation from Dr. Steven Bullard. While I was expecting a discussion on the forestry department and the college, Dr. Bullard gave the class a very good presentation on leadership and how he applies the leadership principals to the department. The framework of rigor/relevance is used to measure the progress of college students in adding rigor (challenge) and relevance

(applicability) to their learning to meet achieved goals. However, Dr. Bullard takes it a step further to stress the importance of building relationships. He discussed that the society has become inherently fragmented or disconnected. Students must build relationships to obtain knowledge and provide solutions. This is one of the best leadership present get desired results.

Conclusion

As the week closed and as I looked back on the week, I am overwhelmed with the amount of knowledge and information that I gained about areas of agriculture that I knew nothing about before my trip. East Texas proved to have agricultural industries that are much different than the Panhandle or North Central Texas regions. We went from nursery plants and roses to a forest of mature timber all in the same region, but the one main message is heard during each session. All industries in agriculture are looking forward to what the future holds in store for their agriculture enterprise and are working hard to utilize the most innovative skills and new technologies to keep the agriculture here and growing.

Tanya Foerster, #2
TALL XII
Session 7- East Texas
January 16-20, 2012

Monday, January 16, 2012

As with all of the other TALL sessions, I was excited not only to learn about East Texas agriculture but to also reunite with my TALL classmates for the next-to-last session of our program. I have bittersweet emotions as the program has been absolutely incredible but at the same time, I will miss my classmates and all the wonderful times we have shared over the past one and a half years.

Classmate Darrel Rozell, hosted our class at his business and served steak with all the trimmings. The hospitality was incredible and we picked up from where we left off when departing from California.

Tuesday, January 17, 2012

We began our day in Tyler at Cavender's Boot City headquarters. The Cavender family is a great supporter of TALL and other community programs. The company began in 1965 and currently has 58 retail stores with four more under construction. The Cavender family also has five working ranches and Joe Cavender is a well-known Brangus breeder. Terry Cooper, part of Cavender's senior management team, even mentioned that Joe used the retail store's inventory system to inventory his cows! I was most impressed that the Cavender's have never borrowed any money and run a very lean retail business and tout that their word is their bond. We also enjoyed some shopping and a hat fitting, as Hatco was generous enough to give all of us a black, felt cowboy hat.

Sam and Kathy Goldwater, owners of Lone Star Rose Nursery, hosted lunch and toured us through their facility. Smith County is a huge contributor to Texas agriculture with a \$140 million a year industry. As most of the state, East Texas also suffered from the drought in 2011. Their lakes are down, trees died and normal hay production fell significantly.

Tyler is known for roses which make up 80 percent of the horticulture in the area. Roses first appeared in Tyler in 1875. Rose growers and production peaked in the early 50's and represented 30 million roses grown. However, a severe freeze damaged rose production in 1951, drastically reducing the number of producers in Smith County.

The rose processing facilities have evolved and approximately 75 percent of field-grown roses are sent to Tyler for packaging and shipping. Tyler-packaged roses are sold to home centers and other retail stores. Roses remain in coolers until the orders are written. Then, they get trimmed, dipped in wax and packaged for shipment. Rose vaults must stay between 34 and 36 degrees and the roses are hand watered every day.

Next, we drove through Ran Pro Farms with Bob Cartwright serving as our tour guide. His nursery started in 1980 and spans 280 acres. They capture and recycle water in cement ponds and grow many varieties of roses, shrubs and trees. In peak season, Ran Pro Farms loads 15 semi-trucks a day with their products shipping to various businesses in the area. They even have a three-acre greenhouse with a roof that retracts in seven minutes!

Ran Pro develops custom product tags and works hard keeping up with customer demand to optimize their nursery business. Mr. Cartwright mentioned that the biggest hit to their business is shrink because leftover trees won't sell.

We then visited Rio Neches Ranch for a cutting horse demonstration. Rio Neches has a long history of raising, breeding and selling quality cutting horses and their facility is second to none. Ms. Becky Dempsey, with TDA, also spoke to our class about 2M2N or “2nd Mile, 2nd Nature.” We can all benefit from this attitude to work extra hard, do what’s right and help your fellow man.

Our last tour of the day was the Texas Rose Horse Park, owned by Kathy Brunson. This magnificent facility hosts numerous events throughout the year and greatly contributes to the Smith County economy. The family-owned business operates 2,000 acres and they focus on hospitality. Horse owners enjoy the facility in part because of the wide-open space it provides for horse exercise and owner tranquility. In addition to events, other services provided include boarding, training and riding lessons.

Dr. Billy Higginbotham spoke about the growing problem of wild pigs. He referred to them as four-legged fire ants with approximately 2.6 million in Texas alone. They are extremely hard to contain and manage and they totally destroy agricultural land. However, a new product is on the fast track for approval to use in depopulating wild pigs, and I will be anxious to see the results.

The jam-packed day ended with a reception and the Honorable Kevin Eltife as the keynote speaker. East Texas TALL supporters came out in full force and it was a very enjoyable evening.

Wednesday, January 18, 2012

We began the day at Joe Parsley’s deer farm where we learned about high-fence operations. Fellow classmates, Jose Luis and Ernest shared information on their deer-related businesses and were great resources. I learned a great deal about an industry I was completely ignorant about. The high-fence deer operations are much more complicated than I thought. There are many regulations and huge consequences for those who don’t abide by the law. Deer farming is very expensive and time consuming and you must do your research if you wish to start.

Next on the agenda was Color Spot Nurseries, a 65 acre facility that grows bushes and various plants, packages and sells to retail companies. They mix their own soil and average 40 trucks a day in and out of the facility. It seemed to go on and on with millions of young plants in various life stages. Color Spot owns a hail blaster to lessen the damage hail can do to their inventory. When used, the hail blaster goes off every six seconds and affects the hail particles in a six-mile radius. It costs the company about \$1,000 every time it goes off but that is much less significant than the loss they face during a full-blown hail storm.

The Poultry Center, at Stephen F. Austin University, hosted our class for lunch and Dr. Dale Perritt gave an overview of the university’s department of agriculture. Their agricultural department is very diverse and there are many student-managed livestock facilities, including the poultry center. We also heard about water issues from David Alders and while East Texas doesn’t suffer from plummeting underground water like the South Plains, they still face many challenges.

I had never experienced the sight or smell of a chicken house before and I am not sure I will willingly do it again! Learning about the poultry industry was fascinating and I was amazed at the whole process of raising, feeding and processing poultry. Nacogdoches is number eight in chicken production in the U.S. Technology in feed and housing and other related efficiencies have greatly improved the poultry industry. Broiler chickens are fully raised to optimal market weight in approximately seven weeks, cutting feeding costs and gaining a higher return of profit.

The folks at the Pilgrim's Pride processing facility were gracious enough to host our class. It was amazing to tour this facility, learn the steps of processing and understand their business. Billy Clark, portioning manager, said that Pilgrim's Pride processes 330,000 birds a day and utilizes every part of the chicken but the cluck! They ship to various grocery stores and restaurants throughout the U.S. and also to international markets. Workers must be precise and efficient or Pilgrim's Pride loses money. Meaning, if any meat left on the bird during the deboning process varies the total meat weight by 1 percent, it equates to a loss of \$150,000 a week. Therefore, Pilgrim's Pride offers many incentives to their workforce, who processes an average of 36 birds a minute.

The next leg of my trip took me out of my comfort zone to say the least! This flatlander got a little anxious traveling through the deep East Texas woods. We stayed at the Piney Woods Conservation Center and were 60 miles away from modern conveniences.

Thursday, January 19, 2012

Two of the coolest stops on our trip for me were the logging operation and tour of the Temple-Inland Sawmill at Pineland, Texas. The logging industry is big business in East Texas. Even through adverse impacts due to the drought, the Texas forest sector directly contributed \$16.4 billion of industry output to the Texas economy in 2009, including 63,000 jobs with a payroll of \$3.5 billion. Texas forest products are exported all over the world.

Forest industry people are very passionate about their livelihood and nurture the land. Logging is a huge investment as equipment costs upwards of \$250,000. Once a tract of land is harvested, seedlings are replanted to begin their 25-30 year life span.

The Temple-Inland sawmills began in 1894 with the Pineland facility opening in 1910. The Pineland mill produces lumber for studs and other lumber types. The mill employs 275 employees and is currently going through a buyout with International Paper. Lumber prices fluctuate like other commodities but typically have a two month lag time up or down.

Jamie Sowell, Fire Management Officer with the U.S. Forest Service, met us at the Sabine National Forest. He taught us about the different varieties of pine trees and their most desired care. The long-leaf pine is actually highly fire resistant and needs to be burned every couple of years to grow at an optimal rate.

The U.S. Forest Service also plays an important role protecting the Red-cockaded woodpecker, which is on the endangered species list. Their population has increased 15-20 percent largely due to the U.S. Forest Service's assistance.

Rounding out the day, we learned how to bore a tree with Rob Hughes and listened to a talk on leadership and the forest industry from Dr. Steven Bullard.

Friday, January 20, 2012

Since Dr. Jim allowed us to finish our homework assignments and other agenda items the night before, we were able to leave after breakfast for our 10 ½ hour drive home.

Summary:

My East Texas session was bittersweet, as I mentioned before. Two years in TALL have flown by and I will cherish my experiences and contacts for a lifetime. I am grateful to all the many generous hosts and speakers and continue to be amazed at the camaraderie and bond TALL alumni and supporters have.

Texas agriculture is so diverse and it is very enlightening to experience all the many facets of it. I am excited to travel to India and round out my TALL experience.

**TALL XII – Session 7
East Texas Agriculture**

Tuesday, January 17, 2012

This is it. Our last trip together in the United States. I can't believe how quickly the last two years have passed by. I am so honored to have been a part of this group. I am excited about, and looking forward to, these last 2 trips together.

Our first trip this morning was to Cavender's Boot City in Tyler, where we were treated to new cowboy hats. Thank you to Cavender's and Hatco for your warm hospitality and generosity.

Tyler, Texas is known throughout Texas as the home of roses. As a result, I have been excited about this trip for some time! Lone Star Rose Nursery was my first introduction to the production perspective of the commercial rose industry. Mr. Sam Goldwater, Owner of Lone Star Nursery, provided a great historical summary of the rose industry. I was surprised by the fact that today, Tyler is actually more of a center for rose processing, rather than rose production. In fact, most of the roses that are processed at the Lone Star Nursery facility are grown in Arizona, shipped to Tyler, Texas, for processing, and then delivered to Lone Star's customer base throughout the United States. Lone Star Nursery processes approximately 2 million roses a year. And, Mr. Goldwater estimated that five similarly-sized facilities exist in Tyler. So, Tyler is really the home of rose-processing facilities. The tour throughout the Lone Star facility was very enjoyable; Mr. Goldwater's passion for his work and the rose industry is self-evident. Certainly, East Texas agriculture is lucky to have Mr. Goldwater as one of its own.

I first met Bob Cartwright last year, while doing some work with the Texas Nursery Landscape Association (TNLA). At the time, Bob was the incoming Chairman of the Board. He is now looking forward to passing on that title; but, if Ran Pro Farms' appearance is any indication of his work ethic and dedication to his TNLA leadership position, the association is sad to see his tenure end. Ran Pro Farms is an impressive facility. Our tour was a "driving tour" so that, in our short time scheduled for this visit, we might see most of this immaculate farm. The product lines that are shipped out of Ran Pro Farms include roses, ornamental grasses, fruit trees, ornamental trees, and one of my favorites – crape myrtles. Bob explained that they too, are faced with the same challenges that other segments of production agriculture are faced with – for example, obtaining sufficient water, discovering ways to conserve water, and dealing with unpredictable weather.

Our next stop was to Rio Neches Ranch, where Harry Leatherwood and Jonathan Oland hosted our class and provided a cutting horse demonstration. I did not realize, prior to this trip, that the recreational and working horse industries had such a large presence in East Texas. While

enjoying the Rio Neches Ranch setting, Becky Dempsey, Deputy Commissioner for Rural Affairs with the Texas Department of Agriculture spoke to our group. Becky provided us with a quick update of the recent restructuring of TDA and TDA's role in rural development. The mainstay of Becky's talk, though, was her perspective on what impact workplace "culture" can have on its employees, and the people the workplace serves. For example, Becky's initiative within TDA is to adopt a "2M2N" culture – that is, a "second mile, second nature" culture. This culture rests on the notion that once it becomes our second nature to go the "extra mile," not only have we, as agricultural businesses – or government agencies – provided an enhanced level of service; but, we have also created an example by which others can follow. Throughout our time in TALL, we have had several speakers touch on the importance of character. Becky's talk confirmed that within an organization, such as TDA, character does matter; and, by putting character first, we become and develop new and better leaders.

Kathy Brunson, owner of Texas Rose Horse Park, was our next host. Ms. Brunson provided us with a tour of her amazing facility, and spoke to our class about her experience in the recreational horse industry. Ms. Brunson is certainly very dedicated to the industry, and she was a most generous hostess this afternoon. Dr. Billy Higginbotham, an Extension Wildlife and Fisheries Specialist, then spoke to our group about Wild Pig Management issues in Texas. Without a doubt, nearly every county in Texas is faced with a proliferation of wild pigs over the last few years. Dr. Higginbotham explained some of the causes of the rise in pig numbers, as well as several types of control methods that are being researched. I was interested to learn that sodium nitrite – an ingredient that is used in many processed meats, and safe for humans – is toxic, at some level, for wild pigs. As a result, this is one possible means of controlling the large population numbers. It may not be as fun as shooting from a helicopter, but, it could be a new control method nonetheless.

Our final event today was the Social and Reception, sponsored by Build East Texas. What a nice event; the hospitality of East Texas was apparent all day today, and tonight was no different. I am grateful for the opportunity to meet so many TALL sponsors and supporters across the state, because they have enabled our class to enjoy the last 2 years. Thanks again to the strong East Texas supporters.

Wednesday, January 18, 2012

We started today at the Joe Parsley Deer Farm. Once again, until this trip, I was unaware of the true scope of this segment of production agriculture – wildlife breeding and stock farms. Kudos to our classmates, Jose Luis Garza and Ernest Bailes, who, in Joe Parsley's absence, provided thorough explanations of their experience in, and the regulations associated with, the wildlife breeding industry.

Color Spot Nurseries was amazing. The sheer size and scope of the facility was impressive. Nolan Jeske and Tom Giddens walked our class through the facility, explaining how each greenhouse is specifically designed for a certain level of growth for the plants that are in that greenhouse. Again, just like the nursery facilities that we visited yesterday, water availability, water conservation, and erratic weather are all challenges that affect the viability of this operation. In terms of weather, the highlight of the tour was to see the machine that “stops hail.” As larger storms roll in, Color Spot Nurseries can activate this particular machine, which, by emitting a certain level and type of particle in the air, can reduce the likelihood that the conditions are favorable for hail development. Didn’t I see this in “Back to the Future” in the 80s?

Nacogdoches is home to Stephen F. Austin State University. And, SFA is only 1 of 2 universities in Texas that offers a degree plan in poultry science. We spent this afternoon learning more about the SFA Department of Agriculture, and more specifically, SFA’s poultry science program. The SFA Department of Ag is certainly broader than poultry science alone, as Dr. Perritt, the Department Chair, explained to our class. Out of approximately 13,000 total students at SFA, 675 are enrolled as agricultural majors. The Department of Ag has several production agriculture enterprises for education and research; and, the students are engaged in a variety of extra-curricular activities. From a poultry science perspective, SFA is a contract grower for Pilgrim’s. This is a unique arrangement for a university, and a great learning opportunity for the students.

Water issues are as prominent in East Texas as in the rest of the state. David Alders, a poultry grower, and a member of the Texas Water Development Board planning group, spoke to our class about water issues in East Texas and the current recommended strategies for water conservation and meeting water demands in the region. Mr. Alders’ provided his pragmatic perspective about the need for water in agricultural production, while recognizing the long term benefit of conservation.

Our last stop in Nacogdoches was to Pilgrim’s poultry processing facility. While we were unable to tour the slaughter side of the operation, due to food safety and sanitation concerns, Billy Clark provided a very thorough explanation of each step that occurs on the slaughter floor. We were able to view the processing floor, and we learned about Pilgrim’s further-processing line that is unique to this plant.

After traveling deep into the Piney Woods, we arrived at the pristine Piney Woods Conservation Center. Thanks to the Treadways for your hospitality. Our evening program was led by Susan Stutts, Program Director for the Texas Forestry Association. Susan provided our group with a great overview of the Texas forest industry, and TFA’s work to support that industry. Joel Hambright, with the Texas Forest Service, then spoke to our class regarding Texas Forest Service’s involvement with forestry in East Texas.

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Charlie Gee is a passionate advocate for the Texas logging industry; Charlie's excitement about today's schedule was readily apparent. The tour of the logging operations was phenomenal. The sheer size of the equipment that is used is astounding; as is the relative speed that an area of forestry can be cleared. After our tour of the logging operation, we arrived at the Temple-Inland Sawmill in Pineland, Texas. This, too, was one of the most exciting tours of our TALL experience. I've never been in a sawmill before; I'm not really sure I've ever really thought about how one might operate. We were able to see nearly every square inch of the facility, and I think we were all amazed at the process.

The Sabine National Forest is managed by the U.S. Forest Service, and Jamie Sowell, Fire Management Officer, provided an explanation of his work within the Sabine to use prescriptive burning to manage the forest. Jamie was a wealth of knowledge regarding forest health and basic timber production, so his presentation quickly turned into responding to a litany of questions. Thanks, Jamie.

After returning to the PWCC, Rob Hughes, with Campbell Timberland Management, spoke to our class about tree identification and he demonstrated how to perform increment boring, to age a tree. Again, as with Jamie, Rob's presentation quickly turned into responding to rapid-fire questions.

I think we "saved the best for last." Dr. Steven Bullard, Dean of SFA's College of Forestry and Agriculture. He certainly pulled the short straw by landing the speaking time after dinner on the final day of our trip. But, Dr. Bullard's presentation was so entertaining, and so full of contemplative, thought-provoking material, that the room forgot that we were yet again exhausted from a week of TALL travels. Among the challenges facing agriculture – and agricultural education - that Dr. Bullard addressed, I was most intrigued by the concept of teaching in "trans-disciplinary" ways, in order to give agricultural students an early perspective that the world is not divided into subject areas. And, we can't stay still and stagnant in our own areas of discipline, either. As Dr. Bullard reminded us, "If your community sees you as relevant, it makes things a whole lot easier to get accomplished."

A solid final speaker to a great trip to East Texas. Only a few more months until we are international – bound!