

Clifton Castle, #7  
TALL XV  
Session 2 – Lubbock/Amarillo  
October 25-28, 2016

Tuesday, October 24, 2016

### **PYCO Oil Mill Tour**

We were greeted by Robert Lacy Senior VP of Marketing and Ronnie Gilbert and what a way to start off this incredible week! All my life I have been working in the Panhandle of Texas and never have stepped foot in the Cotton industry. Finally, here was my chance to get the 101 on what it all entails. I learned 1<sup>st</sup> hand the importance of the COOP and how PYCO works to insure cotton growers that their cottonseed continues to be a valuable commodity. From cottonseed oil, which is a great healthy source for cooking foods, all the way to a great supplement for cattle feed! There are many uses for cottonseed and it always fascinates me that people find a way to use it to the best of their knowledge. From the way they are able to ship around the world the massive amount to food processors to dairies. From rails to trucks, PYCO works hard to move their product and they make sure it's great quality.

We heard the challenges they face with public perception about cottonseed oil being bad because they have Gossypol. First off, I learned that this has been debunked because PYCO's process takes it out of their products. We also learned for feeding cattle cottonseed is high in fiber, energy and protein. A great combination for feeding happy cows! Another cool product is cottonseed linters which is used in the medical industry, furniture, cleaning products to circuit boards. How cool is that?

### **Heinrich Brothers Farms**

We took the short ride down to Burt Heinrich's cotton field south of Lubbock and also met with Agronomist Eric Best from Monsanto. They spoke to us about their drip irrigation system and its effectiveness in the cotton industry. Makes it much easier to get the right amount of water down to the roots and not waste the precious water source Lubbock has. Eric spoke to us about his role with Monsanto and the benefits of new GMO technologies which Burt is able to benefit from. Every day I am getting a clearer picture on the importance of GMO's for the world. We can't survive without these great people, who are working tirelessly with GMO technology to supply maximum output of efficiency for crops!

I was also taken back by the beauty of the fields of white staring at the sun. Shelley and her husband were so gracious with their time and we couldn't be more proud of their success and their continued support for TALL.

## **Lubbock Cotton Growers Co-op Gin Tour**

We had the pleasure of meeting with Jerry Butman who was very gracious with his time to give us the awesome tour of the Gin. It's amazing how this is just one of many Gins across the area that produces many bales of cotton per hour and the tonnage that is produced per year! After he gave us a rundown on the Gin we walked over to the production facility which was an incredible sight. People working together diligently with awesome machinery. First thought that came to my mind is the people who created these types of machinery. You get an amazing sense of pride for the American people who come up with this technology! To process cotton, get them out to the hands of factory workers and lastly, to the end consumer. We learned that his Gin produces roughly around 100 bales per hour.

## **Fiber & Biopolymer Research Institute**

The next phase that connects to the whole process of Cotton is determining the quality. Which led us to Dr. Dean Ethridge (King of all Cotton researchers) who knows his industry! I was impressed by his passion to keep making cotton processing prosperous and efficient. It's funny because myself, being a semi-outsider looks at farmers as "the old timers." The famous line I'm accustomed to hearing is, "If it aint broke don't fix" mentality. I learned quick to the contrary they are actually, very progressive thinkers. We saw the different labs and were educated on the different technologies that spin these fine fibers. One was Ring spinning which accounts for 75 percent of production, and the other, open end rotary spinning which accounts for 20-25 percent. A newer technology is Air jet spinning which is picking up at 5 percent currently. Yarn spinners buy the most of the cotton that is produced. I learned that people use the HVI system which puts cotton in its different class group. In other words, how good the quality. That led us to the Phenomics lab where they test the fibers. It is a temperature controlled room filled with cotton fibers from all over the world to get tested by the greatest lab researchers! All testing is in ambient temperatures to make sure testing is universal.

I learned that Pima is the best type of cotton you can get. The tour then ended in the spinning area where Dr. Ethridge showed us the end result after everything is tested, and the cotton now ready to be rolled up, to continue being the fabric of our lives.

## **Texas Tech Animal and Food Sciences Building**

After spinning yard talk we headed to the Texas Tech Animal Science and meat dept. for a great lunch that included beef fajitas and sweet Texas tea! Dr. Steve Frazee welcomed and educated us on the department and what they do every day making advances in meat technology! Michael Clawson the County Extension agent for this area made a great statement. "Challenge yourself to build a relationship with your local Extension agent." Then Extension agent Mark Brown came up to give us an overview of South Plains Agriculture.

Lubbock Cotton Growers Executive Vice President Steve Verett showed us a slide presentation about his organization. They started in 1956 and are a non-profit organization. We were shown a slide on the topography of Texas and the High Plains. We also learned how the organization is doing more with less with water usage and the regions in Texas where cotton is produced. They also help represent the Cotton industry with research, promotion, service and legislative. That segwayed us to Tom Sell who is a lobbyist for the industry. He helps with Ag policies in Washington. His key point was producing affordable and an abundance amount of food as the goal for passing Ag policy.

Next we had Angie Martin from the Texas Corn Producers Board explain to us what's happening with her industry. The TCPB is also a great advocate for getting people involved in Ag. They do a great job in educating the public how instrumental corn is to the world.

Tim Lust, CEO of National Sorghum Producers was next in line to explain to us about his role in the industry. Explained about Servant leadership which is a type of leader who finds a time and place to serve. He discussed Policy Vs Politics. How we are great in Policy but real poor in Politics. Since NSP is a non-profit, they can't lobby. Another important topic that was important for me to learn being a "bug guy" is the Sugar Cane Aphid problem that is rapidly increasing in this area. These are some bad bug dudes doing harm and has fired me up into helping out on our end, to introduce lacewing populations as a tool.

Halley Bertrand was next to come up to speak about the Texas Peanut Producers Board. She filled in for Shelley Nutt the Executive Director, who was busy showing some prime Peanut growers in Mexico some of the U.S. operations. Halley mentioned Texas was #4 in peanut production and that Seminole County was the largest area of peanut production.

## **Animal Science Building Tour**

We had the pleasure of touring The Animal Science building. We got the chance to see lab rooms where they test their meat. We also toured the meat processing area where they keep and process Beef, Pork and Lamb. They showed us the different cuts they do and how they test with different seasonings as well. The dept. even has a store where they sell their meats and seasonings.

## **USDA – Agricultural Research Center**

John Burke was our speaker. One of the things that caught my interest was Mycelium. By using Gin trash to create this foam packaging material. He also spoke on the different methods of irrigation throughout the region. Water is something we have to look at in this area especially since water is continuing to get scarce. He talked about their research in making crops push out better yields using less water. Again GMO's playing a key role in the development of these type of crops. This is the kind of positive feedback the public needs to hear when they hear GMO's. Not that it causes cancer or being the cause of food allergies. Make the argument first that what they are saying isn't factual and rather explain that GMO's help saves the planet by using less water. GMO's is the only way to feed the world!

## **TALL Reception Bayer Ag Museum**

After a long productive day, we closed the night with the TALL reception. Met with inspirational people from the Ag industry. Always reminds me how grateful I am to these people and also the businesses that help sponsor TALL. Mary Jane Buerkle was our Master of Ceremonies and did a great job. Tanya Foerester also gave us a warm welcoming and let me add did a fantastic job helping put together the Lubbock portion of our trip! On a side note I will soon be on a mission to try her famous Poppy seed cake! The man of the night was Barry Evans who was recognized for his deep commitment to TALL and being a leader in the industry. His incredible story of surviving cancer and his fight was an inspiration to us all. He has a beautiful family who is so proud and employees that have been loyal to him for years. That says a lot right there about a man and his commitment to his team. We then were introduced to our dinner host and I had the fine pleasure of dining with TALL Alum Scott Piercy. I had a great time hearing his experiences with the TALL program. The foreign trip stories seem to be the best ones yet!

Wednesday, October 26, 2016

### **Diamond Ethanol Plant**

We woke up to a beautiful brisk morning and ready for another jam packed day! We started the day visiting managers, Calvin Sharp and Donnavan Smith! Calvin started off the tour with some history. I didn't realize that the country has been producing ethanol since the 80's! All this time I thought that this was a new thing for the past 5 to 6 years. They use a 95% corn and 5% milo ratio for producing their ethanol. They make 124,000 gallons every 24 hours. That is pretty impressive. We toured the facility and I'm always amazed by all the pipes and buttons that are involved. It's incredible the team they have to make this place work. Then we get the pleasure of meeting Donnavan Smith who is in charge of the Pellet mill. This is a fairly new technology and Diamond Ethanol is leading the fore-front! They also sell liquid syrup feed. They use dry DDG to make the pellets. 31% protein and 9% fat. That's in its pure form. There's no bi product and there's only 3 companies in the entire world that are doing this.

### **Muleshoe Vet Clinic**

We got on the bus and on to Muleshoe we come! We visited with Dr. Steve Kennedy. I have seen this company grow as the years gone by since I've been growing up working around this area. They have been in business for 50 years and cover around a 75-mile radius. One thing that really stuck out visiting this fine group is they are setting the example for new Vets who want to find a way coming back to small towns and practice. They have a great business model where they cater to large and small animals, carry an array of supplies and they also do lab testing. We tend to see a trend with people who go to vet school, graduate, and then go to bigger cities to practice rather than small towns. For a while there has been some worry about a big reduction in large animal vets. I think this type of model Muleshoe Vet Clinic shows is what's going to attract the new generation of Animal Veterinarians.

### **Stonegate Farms**

I was so happy to see Joe Osterkamp for our next stop! In full disclosure I have to mention he's one of my great customers. We provide him a fly management program. Joe showed us his wonderful 6,000 head dairy operation. We spent the majority of the time in his milking barn where we learned that he ships 4 loads a day of milk to the Southwest Cheese plant close by. That's accounts for 6,000 gallons of milk per load so a total of 24,000 gallons of milk a day! Joe also educated us on his usage of water. He is real big on conserving water and has a system in place to recycle their water at least 3 times! I'd like to mention that Joe along with dairy industry leaders sponsored our lunch. We were very grateful!

## **Lunch**

During lunch Jason Coleman from High Plains Water District spoke to us about the water situation in the area. We received some really important data sheets on water level changes, list of water districts throughout Texas, Water level changes around some counties and an irrigation assessment program report. We also learned about the Dockum Aquifer. I learned that it is actually below the Ogallala Aquifer. They continue to monitor the aquifer and get us updated on data.

## **Bammert Seed Co.**

We were excited to visit one of our cohort's family operation! We had the pleasure of meeting Brett's Dad, Nick Bammert and his brother. I was impressed by their knowledge of the seed business. Of course that is their lively hood but nonetheless you can see they don't do things halfhearted. We learned some of their mix blends. We saw their seed cleaning machinery which to me was awesome. Noticed the different types of screens they have to use for cleaning their seeds. It's an impressive process.

## **Burch Family Vineyards**

We later were in for a treat meeting a husband and wife duo team Keith and Brenna Burch! They make a great fine wine and are only starting! We learned that Keith and Brenna get their root stock from Washington. It is a very delicate process once they receive the roots. They plant them right away and grow they go. I was impressed by their humbleness telling us their story of risk and struggles. Brenna went to school for Chemical Engineering and Keith is an avid farmer. Although, both didn't know about the wine business, they took a chance and with their backgrounds, I don't doubt they will be successful.

## **Caviness Beef Packing Plant**

We dashed to Caviness Beef plant and met up with Trevor Caviness. It's always nice to see a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation family continuing their family legacy! Reminds me of my family business and gives me the motivation and courage to keep being better at what we do. I was so impressed by the cleanliness and the whole harvesting system. I guess when you have a family that has been doing this for 50 years, they've learned a thing or two. With that experience they have built a great relationship with their customers. They harvest around 1,500 head a day and on average process 900,000 lbs. of beef weekly ready to feed happy mouths across the country. They impressed me also with their variety of programs. Whether its Wagyu beef, all natural or "whatever the customer wants" type of business. We also learned of their recent partnership with Simplot to build another state of the art facility in Idaho. Currently they employ around 800 people. What's impressive is the employees have been with the company for a long time and have built a great family type culture. Lastly, I learned they are ahead of the curve by doing a lot of extensive testing. They want to make sure the beef you eat is the safest meat in the world. Also Terry told me this plant was Temple Grandin approved!

## **Sharyland Electrical Sub Station**

We had Jason Avent also a TALL alum, jumped on our bus and steered us to a field full of windmills and one of their power stations. I understand that they sell energy with their wind turbines. He explained to us a bit about the grid system. How they can produce 440,000 megawatts with their wind turbines currently. He assured us that Texas is becoming a leader in the wind energy movement. Wind is going to stay for the long term and it isn't going to go away. Very exciting for Texas!

## **Scott Seed Co.**

Our last stop for the day was a great one. We met some important people who produce seed for people all over the world! They also were so gracious enough to cook us hungry TALL class member's dinner! We met with Coby and Chad Kriegshauser and Chuck Cielencki. It's amazing that a small town of Hereford has a company that plays a big role in production of grain sorghum, Triticale just to name a few. They told us about some of their projects in South Korea and Costa Rica. They also shared their issue with the Sugar Cane Aphid that seems to affect them as well along with many in Texas.

Thursday, October 27, 2016

## **Timber Creek Vet Clinic**

I have to say I was in for a surprise when we met the well-known and famous Dr. Gregg Veneklasen! Here I am in the same room with the industry leader of reproduction and cloning. This could be a big thing and the fact that I am seeing the beginnings is quite remarkable! He says that he and the team are bringing Tech to the west. I particularly liked his statement that you can have an opinion but make sure you have the facts. Dr. Veneklasen touched a little about his ADD and how he embraced it. I respected that and especially for myself being a person with ADD, it was refreshing and inspirational to hear him open up about it.

Dr. Veneklasen explained to us the possibilities, and currently has been proven, being able to grow cattle at half the time as conventional. That means saving more water, feed and reducing the "carbon footprint." Amazing things to come indeed! Another amazing trial is making a genetic chip to yield Prime and High choice meat! Of course he mentioned there's still issues on some things like Hepi Genetics. Looking outside the DNA and trying to understand. He's been working with big players in the industry to test his work and I'm confident amazing results are in store for the future!

## **WTAMU Nance Ranch**

A perfect segway to our next stop was WTAMU Nance ranch which puts Dr. Veneklasen research to work. The Nance ranch definitely lives up to its mission statement. To create and sustain high plains livestock, range, and crop agroecosystems for the betterment teaching students and community! What a team they have with Dr. Ty Lawrence at the helm along with Dr. David Lust and Kody Anderson. Dr. Lawrence presented us with a slide show on quality grading, yield grading. He made a distinction about quality and yield. Both are antagonists. Dr. Lawrence also explained to us the process of cloning. How it works. Where you have the cell donor and the Oocyte Donor, bring together their properties and make a clone embryo. Then you have the lucky cow recipient and voila, you have a cloned animal! We saw the results walking about 50 yards away from the classroom to the outside pens. There they had stock of cloned cattle that looked beautiful and stout.

## **XCEL Energy**

After experiencing history in the making at the Nance Ranch, we took a short ride to the XCEL Energy plant. I was looking forward to this visit since I have very little knowledge on the process. The speakers didn't disappoint! One of the first statistics they mentioned is they fill about two AT&T Stadium's worth of coal to their plant! First off to show my complete ignorance on energy, I didn't know Texas used coal. I was always under the impression that Kentucky, West Virginia, those Appalachia areas were the only places that produce and use coal. I also thought converting coal to energy was a job that was in a dirty environment and emitted a lot of pollution. To give you all an idea, we had casual suits touring the facility, and walked out of there clean as nickel! I was so happy and optimistic about learning the process. It gives me more awareness and education to pass on until my next plane ride somewhere with someone who is anti-coal. I now have ammunition to explain the new technology and steps companies are taking towards clean coal energy! I also learned the geographical map of the different energy territories. In this area they have two, the ERCOT and SPP territories that they provide from their energy grids. I was so proud again, that this Texas company is able to switch from Coal, Wind or Natural gas to serve energy more efficiently.

## **WTAMU Classroom at Chase Building in Downtown Amarillo**

The Dean of Ag and Natural Sciences from WTAMU, Dean Hawkins, welcomed us and educated us on their new Ag research building being built. It's going to be a great expansion for WTAMU and it encourages more students from around the area to come, in my opinion. He touched on a program they are creating for Dairies and Feedlot operations. It's a safety program and also teaches basic humane principles for animal welfare. This is a great idea since Animal rights activists are increasing in numbers and are looking at animal operations figuratively under a microscope.



Ross Wilson CEO of Texas Cattle Feeders Association came up after Dr. Hawkins giving us an update on the cattle industry in Texas. The markets aren't very good right now but are optimistic for the future. They are leading the charge for beef production innovation by producing 13% more beef from 30% fewer animals! That is compared from beef raised in 2007 compared to 1977. 19% less on feed, 33% less on land, 12% less on water and 9% using less fossil fuel energy. The carbon footprint of beef was reduced to more than 16%! This is great news and are positive talking points to the person who believes cattle operations are not doing enough to produce beef efficiently. People in Ag do care about the environment and are doing their part every day to be great stewards of the land for all. Ben Weinheimer, Vice President of TCFA has been helping lead a program called U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef. It's a website helping to market sustainable beef. The program was launched in 2015.

Next we had Rodney Mosier from the Texas Wheat Producers Association to give us an update on what he and the producers are working on this year. They work tirelessly maintaining and increasing U.S. Wheat exports and market development. They are looking at Cuba for increasing their markets. They host international trade teams to tour American wheat businesses. Example they hosted a group of South Africans and gave a tour of the ports in Corpus Christi, TX. They continue to educate the consumers and sponsor and participate producer meeting across the country. Rodney touched on legislative priorities like TPP and the Embargo on Cuba. They support farm programs and crop insurance. Texas alone produces an average of 90 million bushels of wheat. I also learned some interesting facts about some alternative uses for wheat such as, for industrial use, polymers, charcoal, fuels and even skeet pigeon clays to name a few!

### **Dinner Reception and Dinner Hosts**

In the same building we moved up to the top floor to meet the best in the ag industry. President of TCFA David Baumann, Sponsors of TALL, TALL alumni and a long time boss and friend of the family, Chip Newell. I hadn't seen him in years. He is now retired from the cattle industry but still keeps up with current events. My dinner host was Dustin Cleavinger who is a member of the TALL class XIV. I made a great friend that night along with his wife. I also would like to mention after the dinner, most of our class met up at the hotel bar to have a few and I was able to pull out my guitar and sing a few songs. We had a lot of fun bonding and sealing a great friendship between us all. Music is a great catalyst to bring us all together. It also gave us an opportunity to speak with hotel guests about our experiences with the TALL Program and practice our talking with people who may have bad perceptions about agriculture.

Friday, October 28, 2016

### **Cargill Cattle Feeders Bovina**

We woke up that morning to one of the most beautiful sunrises the Texas panhandle has to offer! We drove out to one of the best managed feedlots in the country Cargill Cattle Feeders Bovina. We were greeted by Cassie Roberts and the General Manager of the feedyard Andrea Payan Phipps. Let me tell you she is a pistol! They couldn't have picked a better lady to run the yard. She knows the in's and out of this yard. Currently they raise 50,000 head but are permitted for 60,000 head. They feed 32 tons per hour to cattle. Cattle put on about 2 1/12 pounds per day and average about a 100-pound gain per month. She talked to us about employee retention. Most employees have worked there for years and have had little turnover. They employ 6 cowboys that watch over all the cattle. Roughly 1 cowboy to 8,000 head of cattle.

### **NW Compost Part of South Plains Compost – Steven Acres**

Steven jumped in our bus and gave us the 5 cent tour of the compost facility adjacent to the feedyard and the Sweet Bran facility. Cargill Cattle feeder's contracts South Plains Compost to compost their manure. It makes a great partnership and also makes it convenient for local farmers to have SP Compost deliver the goods to them.

### **Bovina Sweet Bran Facility**

Cassie Roberts escorted us to the Sweet Bran facility and introduced us to Jessica Zaharia and Mike Williams. We were taken away by the comradery they have for one another and how well they work as a team. They showed us a commercial about their product and how all over the country they provide a great consistent product to producers. We broke into groups and toured the plant. One of the awesome things I saw and experienced was the Train cart dump station. That's what I call it. Basically the train cart never goes off the rails when product comes through. They have a patented system that is able to grab the train cart and flip it into a large bin and put back on the rail. Really cool invention and way to get product out fast! We were also impressed by their preparedness for inclement weather. For example, the Texas Panhandle experienced one of the worst winter storms in history. This Sweet Bran facility was one of the only feed companies prepared for the storm and were able to deliver to their feedlot and dairy customers! This was a great lesson to learn for any type of business. Always think ahead! Last we toured their lab area. A big attribute to Sweet Bran sales is their testing. They are able to deliver a consistent product because of their aggressive testing program.

## **Closing Remarks and Adjourn**

This has to be one of the best programs out there and I'm so blessed to be a part of it! Since we are in election season and we tend to hear a lot of bad press and negativity, this couldn't have been a better time to escape the madness. I realized that the government doesn't necessarily have as much power, rather it's the hard working people. Let me explain. The people I met at the energy plants, The progressive farmer, the ag community, that cotton producer or researcher. They make the world turn! They don't have a choice or the time because it's their responsibility. They are here to feed the world and are constantly finding ways to do it better or adapt to the problems. You can hear a lot of doom and gloom on Facebook or other social media types and of course the mainstream media. But they don't talk about the people I just met this week. I get emotional writing this because I'm so proud. The pieces of the puzzle are coming together in a lot of ways and I can't wait to keep going on this wonderful journey with my TALL group. I can't thank Jim and his staff enough for taking us on this journey. Till next time folks!