

TALL XV

**Session 4 – Washington, D.C., Maryland,
Pennsylvania, New York**

April 22-29, 2017

COHORT NARRATIVES

Patrick Dudley

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A Whirlwind Tour of the East Coast or Washington, D.C. to New York City in 80 days! (I mean 8 days!)

Throughout my journeys with TALL, I continue to be most impressed by the subtle lessons coming to me from the observations of minute details of life. If paying attention, one can take a boring moment waiting for a subway train and turn into a beautiful lesson in tolerance.

A Grand Capitol and a Forgotten Heritage

Seeing the nation's capitol and its monuments after dark is, I believe, the only way a person can truly appreciate what our forefathers accomplished for us. Reading the words of Thomas Jefferson at the Jefferson Memorial, seeing soldiers walk silently through "rice-paddies" at the Korean War Monument, and detailing the location of every war the Marines have fought and died in at the Iwo-Jima Monument tightens your chest and raises your chin just a little higher. Touring the monuments at night gives them a weight and gravity you cannot experience in the daytime. When things slow down and you are able to take time to reflect, you also realize how far from our heritage we have strayed.

Some factions of leadership in this country would have you think America is an intolerant land. I would argue we are merely a country, like many other countries, who would like to keep its own heritage and its own history intact, even as we shape the future of our nation. Just a walk around Washington D.C. and you will see we are far from intolerant. On our free day, I took the opportunity to walk through local neighborhoods and markets, watching and interacting with everyone in their own environment. I saw all races and creeds walking together through Eastern Market, talking together, and eating a variety of foods from a multitude of countries.

One special moment that spoke to me was while waiting for a Metro train. Not far from me there was a man and a woman standing next to one another. It was apparent they were not together; they had simply ended up side by side one another in the station. Each was as different as two people could be. I heard them begin a pleasant conversation. In answering a question posed to him, the gentleman answered, "I am Jewish". She, I believe, was Hindu. Through the crowds, through the noise of the Metro, these two people chose to speak to one another, and were able to openly speak about their religion, their faith, and exchange ideas. They spoke several minutes until the train

arrived, and then parted ways. The scene was beautiful to me, poetry in motion. How many places in the world can two people of two different faiths walk together and converse together so freely? This experience merely confirmed what I have believed for a while now; while no place is perfect, the United States is a tolerant and accepting nation with more compassion than hate. Yet the rhetoric at times leads with a false narrative that the United States is an intolerant nation; propaganda used by internal and external enemies with an ulterior motive; the expressed purpose of tearing down and dividing.

In thinking through the number of issues our country is facing in this day and time, I couldn't help but think of the Founding Father the city we tread through was so lovingly named for. Upon the day of his farewell address in 1796, our first president noted he felt it wise to, in his words "...offer your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments; which are the result of much reflection..." Concerned for our Nation's welfare, General Washington issued a number of warnings. Within this address was his counsel against the "...baneful effects of the spirit of Party." Washington warns, "The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissention, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries, which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an Individual: and sooner or later the chief of a prevailing faction more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns his disposition to the purposes of this own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty." Washington goes on to tell us, "...that the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of the Party are sufficient enough to make it in our own interest and our duty as a wise People to discourage and restrain it (the Party)."

Perhaps a slightly different outcome intended from this trip, but the time spent in our nation's capitol and with the news stories flooding our airways, it does not take long to see we did not heed General Washington's warning. In fact, if you continue to read through his farewell address, one can easily see Washington has predicted correctly what can happen if two parties are allowed to rule a governing system. The Party as Washington put it, "...serves always to distract the Public Councils and enfeeble the Public Administration; it agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through channels of party passions. Thus the policy and will of one country, are subjected to the policy and will of another."

A divisive political party line could be found in and out of the buildings we entered. Take a Congressional Committee or Congress in general; terms like Majority Members, Minority Members, Majority Leader, and Minority Leader are divisive by nature. Why

no one can see why signs in our Congressional buildings like “democratic staff offices” are an issue is beyond me. The very act of creating separate committee staff offices, whether it is for democrats or republicans, instantly creates division. The sign, in my opinion, should read “committee staff offices.”

Division does not end in “the spirit of Party”. One experience I know we all shared was a great representation of how most of the Agriculture community feels when dealing with the government - particularly the EPA. The difficulty it took an Agricultural Leadership Team, who had submitted their person identification two to three weeks in advance, to enter the EPA headquarters was symbolic of how the Ag industry has felt for many years.

Speculate to our Detriment or Just Calm Down; It Looks Like Sonny Days Ahead!

In life timing is everything, and we were very fortunate to be able to attend Secretary Perdue’s reception in the Whitten Building the day he was sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Patiently waiting until we could line up for the peach cobbler (Georgia peaches, of course), I listened intently to Secretary Perdue and watched as he shucked his coat and tie, and rolled up his sleeves indicating he was ready to go to work. As this moment unfolded, I couldn’t help but think of the months leading up to this speech.

Following the presidential election and until a Secretary of Agriculture was announced, the world of agriculture was beside itself; speculating about who would be confirmed, what it would mean and what could they do before he or she was confirmed. Article after article, blog after blog, meeting after meeting, was consumed in a speculative tizzy. In fact, so much time and energy was expended on this banter and speculation, quite frankly, to our own detriment. I believe many times the best thing for us to do in these situations is just calm down and keep a cool head. Yes, we (particularly those in leadership positions) must be prepared for action, but we cannot let speculation and “what if scenarios” get the better of us taking the place of completing the work needing to be done. All speculation does is get everyone riled up and frothing at the mouth, but rarely identifies the actual scenario pending to unfold or adds a substantive value to those involved.

Since our eight day blast through the east coast, the proposed budget has come out, and for the first time in many years there are substantive cuts to programs, including many USDA programs. Again, everyone is losing their minds. One, legislation very rarely gets through the process looking like it did when it first came in and two, I believe this really separates true constitutionalists and conservative thinkers from those who talk about a competitive industry and marketplace, but do not want to enter into the waters of global agriculture without the safety nets they have come to rely on as a part of their business model.

We have really only become to rely on these programs in the last sixty to seventy plus years of farming, compared to the last 400 years of farming that has been a critical part of this continent and long before government safety nets. Our time in D.C. helped crystalize my thinking, that perhaps we as an industry should rethink some of these programs and supports. As an industry, many of us would rather the government stay out of our hair, except it would seem, when there is money to hand out to address problems we unfortunately help create or contributed to in the first place, such as over production in markets, the dust bowl, etc.

Due to these programs our industry has become dependent on the federal government's support (regardless of what you call the program). This reliance on government funding has hurt us far more than we may realize and I would argue, worse than any government cuts could. This reliance has taken our independence away and has placed us in the control of what the government could or could not do to us.

I would like to revisit the subject of subsidies, which I have brought up in previous articles, and during our TALL journey have changed my stance on dramatically. I now believe subsidies to be stifling to our industrious and creative nature, and view them as a divisive tool to fracture the industry and set the various agricultural sectors against each other. My notion became clearer to me when I returned home and attended a commodity board meeting. Conversation lead to a historical perspective on fighting between commodity groups stemming from the writing of the Farm Bill. A good example of this being how the cotton and dairy industries were pitted against one another during the crafting of the 2014 Farm Bill. During this conversation it occurred to me, we spend more time, money and social and intellectual capital trying to out-manuever the other, than what was is usually received in the legislation. In a country where less than 2% of the population is actively engaged in production agriculture, there can be no profit in fighting amongst ourselves. Let me be clear, this does not mean I disregard the unity shown in our industry on many different occasions. There is a sense of pride, purpose and passion in all sectors of agriculture that is rare across an industry and very special in ours.

I believe our conversations with the Heritage Foundation were very productive on both sides and the speaker really did not say anything I did not agree with. Our cohort had already had a strong reaction by a few articles regarding this group before the speaker addressed us, including comments claiming the Heritage Foundation was against farmers and ranchers. What was made clear to me during the session with the Heritage Foundation, was their intended focus is less federal government involvement in the market place and less federal government involvement in general. "Tax payers are not responsible for which businesses succeed," our speaker said at one point. The Heritage Foundation went on to share they believed in keeping disaster assistance and was not against state assistance. I also agreed with their belief the United States should be more

aggressive with trade deals to make sure free trade is fair trade. My conclusion regarding our speakers comments were the Heritage Foundation believes in less government involvement in the markets, being aggressive on trade deals, and decreasing regulations burdening our farmers and ranchers. All of which would widen the margins considerably. The conversation prompted me to pause and reflect on who we are as an industry.

After sixty or seventy plus years of assistance programs, shouldn't we look at a different method of operandi? New Zealand, as I have mentioned before and as our speaker brought up, did away with subsidies. Since this decision, New Zealand's agricultural industries have flourished. One comment I remember hearing from a fellow cohort, "Do we know if that will work on a larger scale though (i.e. the United States)?" What's the risk and do we want to take it, I believe was the jest of the question. I would argue, and I know it was true of my grandfather; none of us would be in our business at all if we or our grandfathers decided not to go into business because of potential risks involved.

Getting Back to Our Roots; 1,800 Miles from Home.

Travelling onward from D.C., I could see our nation's sense of heritage strengthen ascending into farmland. Throughout our travels through Maryland, Pennsylvania and later Upstate-New York we learned that they aren't much different from Texans when it comes to caring for the land. There are many of the same issues Texas encounters and some issues, like the preservation of farmland, that are compounded due to the proximity of urban areas and the land size of the states.

I saw strength and heritage in a barn built on the Holloway Farm in 1881. Timber brought in by the river and hauled by wagon to build an expansive structure created to house hay and cattle. Still in use today, this barn spoke not only of the needs of yesterday, but to the forward thinking nature of those who settled the region.

Rigbie Farm showed me the courage of a woman who powered through the loss of her husband and took a chance at coming back to the family farm to make it work. Having only 20 horses on the farm when first returning, today Sharon Clark oversees 150 horses who reside year-round at Rigbie and the over 200 head moving through the farm's number of offered equine services like CEM quarantine, rehabilitation and mare care and foaling.

Though Maryland's largest commercial industry is agriculture, we learned the largest issue facing Marylanders is the preservation of farmland. At ten to fifteen thousand dollars an acre, it is daunting for the younger generation to consider working the land as a career option. This did not stop David and Kate Dallam's daughter from coming back to her family's dairy operation after college. Full of energy, this young woman inspired all of us with her passion and commitment to her family's dairy.

I like to think we were welcomed home in Pennsylvania. The greeting of warmth between the two states shown as a bright as the Lone Star hanging over Texas. As industry leaders it is so important to make friends not only in Texas, but across the United States and the world.

I didn't know what to expect when traveling to the Riehl Farm, I now know after visiting Amish country everyone can learn something by going to the Riehl Farm. As we stepped off the bus at Riehl Farm we heard sounds. Predominately quiet, an occasional moo of a cow, children laughing and playing, and farm machinery. What we did not hear were electronic devices, cell phones, or any real traffic to speak of. It was just "farm quiet". I breathed in the air and smelled the sweet aroma of silage, saw waves of wheat swaying in the breeze, and saw two blond headed boys of about four and six playing together. You couldn't help but feel a sincere sense of family. As we visited with the patriarch of Riehl Farm I developed an esteemed amount of respect for him and his family.

Bos-Haven Farms and neighboring dairies in Upstate-New York was another great example of tenacity and ingenuity. Seeing the dairy industry struggle in the current market, they made their own market. Creating a cooperative and producing such a high quality of milk unlike and holding each of their cooperative partners to high standards in the production of that milk, they are able to receive four to five dollars more for their product. Their milk and cream is in high demand and desired in all independent coffee shops in New York City. Compassion came from an apple orchard now in the hands of the fourth generation. A magnificent orchard with state of the art refrigeration units actually making apples hibernate until the consumer is ready for them, line of and cares about their employees. To ensure their employees are with work throughout the year, they will stretch the season to allow full time jobs for their packers, instead of part-time labor.

Each farm tour we went on solidified my earlier thoughts in D.C. and reminded me why we succeed. Seeing these families made me proud of our industry and proved my point. As the Holloway brothers pointed out, "We wouldn't notice if subsidies went away, because we don't use them." As an industry in general we are cut from a different piece of cloth than everyone else. We are survivors, industrious, full of compassion, creative and passionate.

The Big Apple

Arriving in the Big Apple directly after having been in Amish Country was a rude awakening. Thirty minutes in and I soon realized something, I would much rather be at the Reihl's Amish farm in Pennsylvania. With around 26,000 people per square mile, it doesn't take long to realize you are surrounded; there are people in front of you, people behind you, people above you, and people below you. Needless to say it surprised me to learn one of the most robust agricultural producing counties in New York came from the

most densely populated area. Who knew the heart of the nursery and floral industry came from the NYC area.

It was interesting to learn of the symbiotic relationship the Hudson Valley has with NYC. How does one get water to 8.5 million people? As we found out, through tunnels ninety miles long and as wide around as a house. While many New Yorkers may take it for granted, their water and their life source, is carefully guarded by the farmers in the Hudson Valley. A water treatment plant being both financially and geographic too enormous an undertaking for the City to take on, NYC instead shifted energies to the source of the water, rather than the delivery point. Consequently, when a farmer or an operation such as a dairy ninety miles away would like to make improvements or expand their operation, NYC will cover 80 or 90% of the costs. Through this relationship NYC is providing incentives to the agricultural community to implement best practices and be proactive creating water, nutrient and environmental management plans. This unique partnership reminds everyone involved to both think up-stream and down-stream when considering our how actions can impact water quality. It also illustrates just how critical water is, both in agriculture and in one of the largest cities in the world.

An additional takeaway from the Big Apple was how encouraging it was to meet some of the families and leaders engaged in agriculture in the area, and to be reminded some issues we face in the agriculture industry are common challenges regardless of geography. The West Harlem Community Kitchen and Mosner Family Brands in the Bronx were not locations I thought would discuss educational classes engaging consumers to give them more insight regarding the food they eat. This balance of high-end brands and charitable food support system illustrates the vast spectrum of life in a major metropolitan area. All of the people we visited spoke about education and engagement being important to their operation, community, and to them personally. From the Mosner Family Brands events for New Yorkers who want to buy and prepare Mosner Family Brand products, to the garden and cooking classes for clients of the West Harlem Community Kitchen, there is a desire by both groups to highlight where food comes from. These efforts are great strides toward addressing the challenges Americans face living in a food desert. Agriculture needs to keep forming and expanding these forms of relationships, and be an active part of connecting the farm to the consumer, regardless of where they get their groceries. This is the only way we can get our message across as an industry regarding what is happening in agriculture, how and why it impacts everyone, and why being informed and engaged is important.

Meeting Victor, Director of Security, at the New Fulton Fish Market and hearing his backstory as an NYPD officer coordinating rescue efforts directly following the attacks on 9/11 shifted the tone of the trip in NYC for me a bit. The feelings that surfaced as we went through the National September 11th Memorial and Museum are beyond expression. It also struck me that there was an interesting coincidence of memorials in a

small geographic area. As a few of my cohort and I walked to the location of Ground Zero, it was a surprise for me to look up and see Alexander Hamilton's gravestone. From contemplating the role Hamilton played in creating the country, being immersed in the events and motivations behind the 9/11 attacks, to walking outside of the 9/11 Museum to see three of New York's finest protecting NYC mere blocks from each other was an emotional whirl wind in itself. Leaving the 9/11 Museum, I was compelled to shake the hands of the three officers standing century.

Our heritage and culture in America is something we should protect. We should all be proud of our heritage and our history. Throughout this trip I saw numerous examples of what built this country and was reminded what we are and what we stand for. We are country full of compassion; full of empathy; full of sweat and blood; a country that stands up for what is right even if it means it isn't popular. We do not back down or give up. At a time when we seem to be constantly re-evaluating who is worthy of a monument or statue, there is the very real risk that our history could become blurred and changed to the point we forget from where we were born, forget our heritage. This is something we cannot do.

From Wall Street to Walden, we had the chance to experience some very different dynamics while exploring agriculture in the Empire State. The takeaways from the start of our trip held true for me throughout; agriculture may look different across this country, but the challenges we face and the need for innovation are a common bond. This innovation is not always about modern technology; it is the sense of balancing faith things will work out, taking a risk to be independent, and living by the principles we hold dear.

Heath Reeves, #21

TALL XV

Session 4 – Washington D.C., Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York

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Saturday, April 22, 2017

“Washington After Dark” Tour

The after dark tour of the monuments in Washington D.C. was our first stop of the trip. This history and tradition of D.C. is something that will stick with me. Each monument is immaculately maintained and is larger than life.

Sunday, April 23, 2017

Meet the Press

Jennifer Blackburn, TALL XV class member, was able to get us tickets to watch the filming of “Meet the Press”. This was my first time to see the filming of a TV show. The host, Chuck Todd, took time after to answer questions relating to agriculture policy and the new administration.

Monday, April 24, 2017

“EPA Regulations – Too Much, Too Little, or On Track”

The Environmental Protection Agency was our first stop on Monday. Security at the EPA was extremely tight. Come to find out, it would be the most strenuous security screening of the trip. The guards were extremely intrusive and took their job to the extreme. Government overreach was on display from the top down at this agency. While speaking to the higher ups at this agency, it became clear to me that a change in policy and leadership is needed at this agency. I asked a few pointed questions surrounding section 18 chemical approvals and the answers they gave didn't make me feel good about their agency. To answer the questions posed by the title of their session: Too Much.

Pentagon Tour

Security at the Pentagon was a breeze after the EPA stop. This tour took us through roughly 1/3 of the Pentagon building. We could see where the plane impacted the building on September 11, 2001, as well as the internal memorial. I thought it was interesting that the building recently underwent substantial renovation project, the first in its nearly 70-year history. To say this building is massive would be an understatement. It is the largest office building by floor area in the world.

House Agriculture Committee

The next stop was the Longworth Building for a meeting with the House Agriculture Committee Employees. Callie McAdams and Trevor White spoke to our group and gave us an overview of function of the committee.

American Farm Bureau

Dale Moore, Executive Director of Public Policy, and Bob Young, Chief Economist and Deputy Executive Director, of the American Farm Bureau each spoke to us about issues facing US Agriculture Domestically and Globally. They painted a picture that was fairly mixed, but mostly positive.

Kurt Shultz, Senior Director of Global Strategies for US Grains Council spoke to us about the international grain markets and how US Grains Council Programs help to alleviate some of the strain on US grain farmers.

“Working with Congress and the New Farm Bill”

Jeff Harrison of Combest, Sell & Associates spoke to our group during dinner about working with the congress towards the establishment of a new farm bill. It is amazing how fast things change in D.C. At the time of his talk he thought cotton seed would be added as an oil seed crop to the current farm bill. As of now, one week later, that has been scrapped.

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

Secretary of Agriculture Sunny Perdue Welcome Ceremony

Senator John Cornyn’s office was able to get our class entrance into the welcome ceremony for Secretary of Agriculture Sunny Perdue. Sec. Perdue gave a speech about his vision for the USDA. I couldn’t help but be inspired by his speech. One of the things that stuck with me was a quote from his dad about liming rented land with a year-long contract. He said, “Whether we rent or own, we are all stewards of the land and we are going to leave it better than we found it.” Sec. Perdue stated that he has tried to live by that motto throughout life and he will continue to use it while Secretary of Agriculture. After talking with those leading the EPA, this was a refreshing experience.

“National and Global Issues Effecting Economic Stability”

After the ceremony, we made our way to the Capitol Building where we met with Senator John Cornyn. Sen. Cornyn spoke to us about some of the issues facing agriculture and the country, but the thing that struck me about him is how genuine he seemed. He was open and honest with our class and genuinely cares about the United States.

Longworth House Office Building

After our meeting with Sen. Cornyn we returned to the Longworth House Office Building. We heard talked from multiple entities included the FDA National Cattle Buyers Association. The most contentious of these was a presentation from Daren Baskst of the Heritage Foundation. Their organization views Ag policy very differently than most of those in the United States.

Ford's Theatre – "Ragtime"

Dr. Mazurkiewicz was able to get our class tickets to see a play in Ford's theater. It was a fun experience, but an odd one as well. It felt surreal to be sitting in a place that changed the entire course of our country in a split second while watching a play. Overall, this was one of the highlights of the trip.

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

Holloway Brothers Farm

On Wednesday, we left D.C. behind and headed north into Maryland. Our first stop was at the Holloway Brothers farm. This is a 4th generation farm in Northeast Maryland. We spoke to the owners about some to the issues they face growing corn and soybeans. Maryland is very restrictive state in terms of nutrient management. The state requires livestock and crop setbacks around streams and other open bodies of water. They are trying to limit the nutrient runoffs into the Chesapeake Bay. This is all part of the Chesapeake Restoration Program. The growers were very much in favor of this program, but were quick to add that the vast majority of the water in the bay comes from New York and Pennsylvania. They spoke about how those states aren't as restrictive when it comes to agriculture and that they felt the other states needed to increase their efforts to clean up the bay.

While at Holloway farms, we also learned about the conservation and agricultural land trust programs available to farmers. These are powerful tools used to keep land in production. These programs will pay a farmer half the value of his land to buy the development rights of the farm. This ensures that the land will stay in agriculture production forever.

Rigbie Farm

The Rigbie Farm was established as a 10,000 acre grant in 1732, but today is much smaller and is used as USDA certified horse import quarantine center. In 2016, they were responsible for quarantining 200 mares and 55 stallions. Most, if not all of these were show horses.

Broom's Bloom Dairy

Our next stop was Broom's Bloom Dairy for lunch. They own a small restaurant and midsized dairy. While here we had a presentation from the local branch of Farm Credit. They spoke about the makeup of the local Ag economy and where they see future growth and future problems arising. After lunch, we toured the dairy.

Riehl Farm

After finishing at Broom's Bloom, we crossed the state line into Pennsylvania and drove to Amish Country. This area of the State is picturesque and there is beauty around every turn. It feels like you have stepped back into time when you start to look at how many people are still living in rural areas, and how many are involved in agriculture. Mr. Riehl gave us a tour of his farm and dairy operation as well as an overview of the Amish culture. This was a very eye-opening experience.

Thursday, April 27, 2017

New Fulton Fish Market

After leaving Amish Country, we made our way to New York City. New Fulton Fish Market was our first stop on Thursday. This is the second largest fish market in the world. Every type of seafood imaginable could be found under the roof of this building.

Mosner Family Brands

Mosner Family Brands is a family owned specialty meat packaging facility specializing in veal and pork. Mr. Mosner and his son Seth each gave a talk to the class about where they see the business going. They are moving into a vertically integrated business model. They are contracting with growers to provide the facilities and labor, but the company owns the hogs. They feel they can provide a better product to the consumer by doing this and marketing it under their brand.

Community Kitchen and Food Pantry of West Harlem

Seana Weaver and Marquise Spencer gave us a tour of the Community Kitchen and Food Pantry of West Harlem. This was a great stop to learn about how these organizations run. This is something I will keep with me due to the glow that everyone had that worked there. They were all very proud of the difference they were making in their community.

“Funding American Agriculture through the Farm Credit System”

Kathrine Falconi, Managing Director of Risk and Research for Farm Credit spoke to us about the structure of the Farm Credit System and how it differs from other credit systems. She also spoke to us about how this system is beneficial to farmers and US Agriculture.

“Three Decades of Commodity Market Evolution”

Sal Gilbertie, President of Teucrium Trading, gave this talk. His ideas about the stock market were enlightening. His positive long-term outlook on agriculture was nice to hear. Most investors shy away from ag stocks due to their history of being unpredictable.

Friday, April 28, 2017

Crist Orchards

Crist Orchards is an apple orchard in upstate New York. They are one of the most technologically advanced orchards in the area. We were able to tour their processing facility where they were packaging apples for sale in local stores as well as for distribution to local schools and prisons. Something that stood out to me is that we send the highest grades of apples to stores, but we send the same grade of apples to kids and prisoners. The amount of technology used to grade apples was very interesting. Not only are they using physical labor to pull out the rotten apples, they are also using computers to measure light penetration as well as the color and size. Apples are then separated by grade and size for packaging.

Kelder Farms

Kelder Farms was an interesting approach to Ag. This was my first experience with a pick your own farm. People from the city pay to be able to come out and pick their own produce. A premium is then charged over what you could buy the same produce for in the store. They referred to this as “Agri-tainment” It was a fascinating look at how the general population is coping with being so far removed from food and fiber production.

Bos-Haven Farms

Our final stop was the micro-dairy Bos-Haven farms. This was a family owned operation that was about to shut down when the current business partner came around looking for a place to start a dairy herd. The owners maintained ownership of the facilities while making a deal with their partner to buy the cattle. He provides the labor and they have a profit sharing system in place. I believe that this is where the majority of agriculture is headed.

Lauren Echols Decker #10

TALL XV

Session IV

My biggest takeaway from this session came from our visit to the Riehl farm in Lancaster, PA. When the group met with Sam, I was in awe of his love for the land and his family. I longed for the same kind of peace in this hectic world in which we live. When someone asked about the process for choosing a new preacher in their church, Sam said that new pastor nominees came from the congregation and they each chose a hymnal. In one hymnal, there was a piece of paper that designated this person to be the new pastor. Sam said, "God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies those that he calls."

In a small way, I feel that way about this TALL program. I am constantly in awe of the people in my cohort and all that they have going on in their personal and professional lives, yet I feel that I belong in this group. I'm so thankful for my cohort and the friendships and experiences I've gained from it.

Washington, DC—

It felt so good to be back in Washington, DC. After nearly a decade of work there, I am always happy for an opportunity to return for a few days.



After a night tour of the monuments on Saturday night, the cohort went to Meet the Press on Sunday morning. As a Sunday morning political TV junkie, this was a real treat for me to see the behind the scenes action.

On Monday morning, we traveled to EPA and had the most grueling check in with security. Those folks were on a real power trip. Once in the building, the cohort had a good meeting with EPA staff and asked a lot of questions about pesticide registration and the proposed WOTUS rule.

From EPA, we traveled to the Pentagon, where Kyle Watts' brother Nathan did an impromptu tour and answered many questions about his service in the Navy and his work in the office of Congressional affairs. Lt. Colonel Watts discussed the appropriations process for the Department of Defense and ongoing national security issues like North Korea.

Some in the group stayed behind for a formal Pentagon tour while a few of us went on to Capitol Hill.

On the Hill, we had a brief meeting with the staff of Rep. Jodey Arrington before a meeting with the staff of the House Ag Committee. From there we went to the American Farm Bureau Federation where we heard from Dale Moore and Bob Young on their staff. Kurt Schulz from the U.S. Grains Council then addressed our group.

At dinner, Dr. Jim arranged for Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell to be sat at a table right outside our door.

We heard from Jeff Harrison of Combest-Sell and Associates and also Matt Schertz and Bart Fischer of the House Ag Committee. They discussed farm policy and how the next farm bill will take shape in 2017 and 2018. Our cohort had some thought provoking questions for the three of them.

Lauren Echols Decker #10

TALL XV

Session IV



On Tuesday morning, we started our day at USDA at the reception for newly confirmed Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue. Hundreds of USDA employees gathered with well-wishers from across the country to welcome the new Secretary. The highlight of the speech was when he took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves and pledged to get to work for America's Agriculture producers. The crowd roared with applause. As a bonus, they had Georgia peach cobbler for us after the Secretary finished his remarks!

From USDA, we traveled to the Capitol Visitor Center and a meeting with Senator Cornyn. We thanked his staff profusely for helping us secure tickets to the USDA reception earlier in the day. Our senior senator gave us an update on the work of the Senate and their legislative goals for the year.

After our meeting on the Senate side, we went back to the House Ag Committee and heard from representatives of the International Trade Commission and the FDA. One of the more eye-opening sessions was from Daren Bakst of the Heritage Foundation. When I saw he was on the agenda, I circulated some policy papers with our cohort so that they could be aware of Heritage's views on agriculture policy. I was very proud of the thought provoking, yet respectful questions that our cohort asked. Daren made the point that Heritage sees things differently, and that they are committed to that cause. We may disagree on the purpose of Ag policy and the government's role there, but I am glad that we got to see firsthand that not everyone agrees with how we see the world.

NCBA's Kent Bacus and Scott Yager rounded out our meetings by giving an update on beef industry issues like trade and regulatory challenges such as the WOTUS rule.

Tuesday night we were treated to a performance of Ragtime at Ford's Theater. In all my years in DC, I never caught a performance there and it was really special to enjoy that with my cohort members!

Maryland and Pennsylvania—



On Wednesday morning we woke up and boarded the bus to Maryland and started our day at the Holloway Brothers Farm. It was a pleasure to learn about their family operation and the conservation efforts they've undertaken to preserve the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. My favorite part of their farm was the barn they'd built in the 1800's from logs floated down a nearby stream.

Next, we visited the picturesque Rigbie Farm, where we heard about their specialty horse testing facilities. Sharon showed us some of the beautiful horses on their property and told us all about the history of the farm they purchased and the innovative solutions they employed to adapt to changing times.

Also at Rigbie, Dr. Holloway talked to us about Maryland's work to preserve agricultural land through the purchase of easements. The public investment by the state has been around \$682 million to preserve the agriculture heritage of the state.

Lauren Echols Decker #10

TALL XV

Session IV

Later, we stopped at Broom's Bloom farm where we had a wonderful lunch and amazing ice cream. The niece of the farm owners David and Kate Dallam, Ariel, gave us a tour of their dairy barns and feeding operation. She was a most impressive young lady. They grow all the feed for their dairy cows on the farm and then raise replacement heifers as well. The heifer calves in the barn were being bottle fed next to the milking parlor.



During lunch, John Stump with Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit talked about regional farm credit issues. He also discussed his experience in the Maryland LEAD program.

On the drive to Pennsylvania, we crossed the Allegheny river and saw a lot of bald eagles. I didn't get any good pictures, but it was beautiful to see those majestic creatures.

Our next stop was at the Riehl Farm in Lancaster County. You could tell we were getting close to the farm when you saw more horse and buggy teams along the country roads. Sam and his family were in the fields when we arrived, so Jean Lonie and Secretary Redding gave us the welcome to Pennsylvania from Penn State and the PA Department of Ag. When Sam arrived, he talked about the lifestyle of the Amish around Lancaster county. We toured his barns and learned about the crops on their farm. His family are all nearby working on the farm or in Amish owned businesses nearby. Their simplistic way of life really resonated with me in this season of busyness we continue to dwell in. We all enjoyed the lovely store on the Riehl farm. Sam and his family are truly blessed to live and work together.



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NYC—

The cohort began our morning at 5:15 a.m. with a trip to the Fulton Fish Market. We met Victor, the director of security who took us on a tour of the facility. While the market hustles and bustles from around 9 p.m. until 5 a.m. it was quiet while we were there. The kinds of fish on display were quite impressive, even at the end of their day.

The building is owned by the city, and rented by the cooperatives who operate on the premises. Because of their mob past, they had to move the fish market from their historic location on South Street. Individuals can come to the fish market to purchase items for their own kitchen, as well as small restaurateurs. Most their traffic is large tractor trailers shipping fish and other seafood throughout the tri-state area.



Lauren Echols Decker #10

TALL XV

Session IV

From there, we went to Mosner Family Brands to learn about their beef, pork and veal business. Seth and Benjamin talked about the history of their business over 3 generations and discussed their plans to expand in the future. They are ambitious about growing their heritage pork brand and gave us an update on the farmers they are working with to source premium duroc hogs for slaughter.

Later we toured the Community Kitchen in West Harlem. Seana gave us a tour of their facility and explained their mission to serve the people in and around their neighborhood. She told us of their partnership with the food bank and the ways they help young people who come to work for them. One of those young people, Marcquise, shared his story with us. Some companies with community service days volunteer their time serving in the kitchen. One company was in the kitchen that day and they served us a nice lunch that the kitchen staff had prepared. For future TALL Cohort trips, I hope they would have the opportunity to serve lunch to the needy rather than be served!

During the break between meetings, a few of us toured the 9/11 memorial plaza. I had been to NYC numerous times during the construction of the memorial and the Freedom Tower, but had not seen it completed. It is a fitting tribute to the victims of the plane crash and the heroes who gave their life trying to save others.



When we made it down to Wall Street, Katie Falconi with the Farm Credit Bank Funding Corp gave an overview of the structure of farm credit loans throughout the country. She shared the mission of her organization and explained how they take on farm risk through their commitment to agriculture producers. Katie discussed the rising standards for lending business after the loss of trust with the Wells Fargo scam. Farm Credit banks across the country are proud to work alongside their producers and earn their trust.

To wrap up our day in New York City, Sal Gilberti from Teucrium spoke to us about the history of commodity trading. An innovative trading expert, Sal explained that the oil trade started as an illegal buy and sale from Iran. During the cold war, the CIA used Cargill and their commodity trading to help keep tabs on Russia. Sal got started on his own when he saw a niche market in ethanol swaps trading. His company, named after the herb teucrium is an ETF for oil and grains- their trading sigs are CRUD for oil and CORN for grains. He suggested that if we want to more know about the boom and bust culture of Wall Street that we read the book Flash Boys.

As we adjourned to take our picture near the famous Bull on Wall Street, Sal asked if we had heard about the little girl statue that had been placed near him recently. The news has been abuzz recently about what the little statue meant and Sal explained that it is actually an advertisement for an ETF focused on women- run companies!



A couple of the girls went to go see a musical on Broadway, which was another highlight of our trip.

I can't help but love a good musical!

Lauren Echols Decker #10

TALL XV

Session IV

On our last day, we departed for the Hudson River Valley to tour an orchard, family run farm and dairy. During our bus ride, Larry Van de Valk talked about the LEAD New York program and how it mirrors some of what we do in the TALL program.

At Crist Orchards, Jeffrey Crist showed us their apple packing facility and how they ship apples to schools, prisons and grocery stores in their area. We also toured the orchards and heard from the brew master at Angry Orchard who purchased one of their orchards to brew their hard cider. His father showed us the new trees about to go in and estimated that it would take several years before those trees bore fruit. We left with a bag full of snapdragon apples and they were so fresh and tasty!

At Kelder Farms, we toured their “pick your own” facility and learned about the experience they offer their city neighbors each summer and fall. Chris Kelder gave an overview of their operation and talked about the dairy cows, donkeys, llamas, goats, and chickens. City and suburban travelers come to the Hudson valley where they can see agriculture production up close and develop an appreciation for it. The Jewish community is particularly fond of their farm—they bring the family up to play around the farm, eat a simple meal and pick their own fruits and vegetables. The Kelder family has also developed a community supported farm program where they have farm fresh veggies available for pick up for CSA members.



For our last stop of the day, we stopped at Bos Haven farm where we saw their dairy milking parlor. Tim and Brian gave us a tour of their calving facilities as well. Sam Simon from Hudson Valley Fresh talked about the co-op they formed with Hudson Valley dairies in response to continued low prices. In turn, they've developed a niche market where the milk they produce goes to coffee houses throughout New York City. Brian Crittenden from nearby Dutch Hollow Farm said that his operation of mostly jersey cows had directly benefitted from the partnership in the Hudson Valley Fresh partnership. As we wrapped up, we enjoyed freshly baked cookies and milk!

Scott Irlbeck 15

TALL XV

Session 4 – Washington DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York

April 22-29

What a busy but great trip TALL XV just finished in Washington DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York. I especially enjoyed the contradicting aspects between major population centers mixed with rural agricultural areas and the delicate balance the two sides have achieved so far. It was also interesting to see the different state and county programs in place to help small farms and dairies keep their land designated as agricultural use while urban sprawl not only approaches, but in many cases surround the farm. It is certainly not a problem I face in the Texas Panhandle but I was grateful to see other issues agriculture faces in this very different part of the country than where I farm.

We also had the unique opportunity while in Washington, DC to see the first speech given by new Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue at his welcome reception at the USDA. Secretary Perdue had just been sworn in the day before.

Washington After Dark – Saturday, April 22, 2017

After everyone arrived in Washington, DC, we gathered that evening to do a Washington After Dark Bus Tour. We stopped at the major memorials honoring our country's heroes. Even though I had done a tour similar to this on a previous trip, it is still an amazing experience. Some of the memorials such as the Lincoln and Jefferson make me feel fortunate such great leaders were in a position of power to influence and shape our young country. Other memorials such as the Vietnam, Korean and Marine Corps are more humbling knowing many have died protecting and defending our democracy.

The next day was a free day for our group but Jennifer Blackburn was able to arrange for us to be in the studio during the taping of *Meet the Press* on Sunday morning. Having worked in broadcast journalism during the first part of my career it was especially enjoyable for me to experience a national broadcast in person. After the program we were able to speak with host Chuck Todd and ask him questions about how agriculture can command a higher placement in the national political narrative.

In keeping with a media theme after *Meet the Press* I decided to tour the Newseum, one of the newer museums in Washington, DC. I had not had an opportunity to visit and was thoroughly impressed. The museum had many great exhibits chronicling the major news events for the last several hundred years

and how newspapers and broadcast outlets covered them. One exhibit that caught my attention was an exhibit showing a huge world map on the wall indicating which countries had a free, not government-controlled press. To my surprise, only a small portion of the globe actually had a completely free press. By far the majority of countries across the world had an either fully or partially controlled government press.

Washington, DC – April 24, 2017

Our first stop of the morning was at the Environmental Protection Agency. It was a good thing we arrived early since security was extremely tight. Once inside we met with administrators in charge of chemical, waste, water and air quality. They explained it takes about 18-24 months to review and test a new chemical before the registration is accepted. Otherwise they receive two to three thousand applications a year just for review. We also visited about the review process when certain chemicals have their application denied. The administrators said it is important to provide input to the EPA in the form of a letter if you believe strongly in a re-registration of a particular chemical taking time to why and how their decision would directly impact you. In an encouraging sign to me, they said they tell their investigators to follow scientific reviews and evidence over fear and popular opinions.

After EPA, the group boarded the Metro and headed to the Pentagon. After a long security check-in process, we were able to meet with Nate Watts, the brother of Kyle, a fellow TALL XV class member. Mr. Watts has worked on an aircraft carrier and shared stories of what it is like and also how the process works to become a commander in charge, something he is in the process of becoming. Later we were able to do a quick overview tour of the building where we saw the area where the hijacked plane of 9/11 crashed into a part of the building. We also learned some of the amazing facts of the building itself like how it has more than six million square feet of space and has a population around 20,000 daily.

Then it was back to the capitol to meet with representatives from the House Agricultural Committee. The committee is very busy crafting a new farm bill hopefully ready for 2018. Trevor White and Callie McAdams emphasized farmers have more pull and credibility than they might think so it is important to become involved in the process. They also explained that more listening sessions would be in the works for the upcoming farm bill.

The American Farm Bureau conference room was the site for our next couple of speakers beginning with Dale Moore, Director of Public Policy. Mr. Moore talked about the importance for becoming involved with the organization. He said the organization tends to take on issues that have the broadest range of

impact to the agricultural community. Next economist Bob Young visited about the state of agriculture in 2017 and said he thinks we have found the bottom of the farm economy but he is worried about the disruption of trade in the midst of the current political environment. In an interesting twist, he said Farm Bureau is becoming shareholders in companies like Whole Foods, Con Agra, etc. so they can have some input and better understand the policies and directions of some of these companies. Next Kurt Schultz with U.S. Grains Council talked about the organization and their focus on international market and export market development working to maximize market exports. He also expressed concern on the current political environment citing how Mexico is now more willing to pay tariffs for commodities from other countries than buy American. Our final speaker of the night was Jeff Harrison with Combest, Sell & Associates where he discussed the many obstacles involved with forming a new farm bill.

Tuesday, April 25

Secretary of Ag reception

We had the unique opportunity on Tuesday to attend the welcome reception for the new Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. It was neat for our group to be in attendance for such an important to agriculture. Secretary Perdue gave an inspiring speech about the vision and the work he wants to accomplish. After his speech, there was a reception complete with Georgia peach pie in honor of the secretary's home state of Georgia.

Next stop was the Capitol building to meet with Texas Senator John Cornyn. He serves on many important committees including the senate finance, intelligence and judiciary committees. Senator Cornyn also serves as the majority whip in the senate. He spoke to us briefly about the current state of politics and what he hopes can be accomplished during this session. He also spoke about what he sees as challenges and blamed the media for not treating his party fairly and only covering negative stories and other typical talking points you hear from politicians.

Patrick Kirwan, Director of Trade Promotion with the U.S. Department of Commerce next talked about trade in a world economy. He told us in 1959 only 9% of the U.S. economy was involved in trade. By 2017 that number has grown to 25% of the U.S. economy. He also talked about how trade agreements have helped with tariffs. What used to be an average of 25% tariff has shrunk to around 4%. China is the number 2 export market for the U.S. and the number one or two import market into the U.S.

In a change of pace with most of the rest of our trip, the next speaker was Daren Bakst from the Heritage Foundation. The purpose of the group is to shape policy by working to reduce regulations and

reshape federal policy. More of their controversial policies stem from working to remove federal agricultural support programs. Obviously this was not a popular topic with our group, however, I feel it is important for those of us involved with promoting agriculture to know what everyone is saying or lobbying for concerning agriculture. By knowing everyone's position; helps us to better manage and market our own pro-agriculture message. To wrap up this long day of speakers, Kent Bacus and Scott Yager with National Cattlemen's Beef Association where they talked about tariffs being their biggest barriers from exporting beef into other countries. Approximately 85% of the beef currently produced stays in the U.S. but they are trying to tap into southeast Asian markets. The evening was reserved for our group to see the play "Ragtime" at Ford's Theater.

Wednesday, April 26

For this part of the trip, we hit the trail from D.C. to Maryland and the Holloway Brothers Farm. Mr. Holloway started with 400 acres of beef cattle, grain and hay. It was here that we learned about the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Project. Since most farms in this area are near waterways that lead to the Chesapeake Bay, the area has critical restrictions concerning runoff into the waterway. The Holloways said great strides have been made in cleaning up the waterway due to incentives and fines enforced by local authorities. The next farm was Rigby Farm where owner Sharon Clark told us the farm was established in 1732. The farm imports horses from the European Union and tests them for disease. The horses include show horses, jumpers and dressage. We departed the horse farm for Broom's Bloom Dairy. The dairy has to work in cooperation with neighborhoods that come up right next to the dairy. They have weekends where they open up the dairy to the public where they can help with chores. This helps to foster a better relationship between the dairy and neighborhood. The dairy also has a restaurant offering home cooking and homemade ice cream using milk straight from the dairy. John Stump from Farm Credit also spoke to us about ag lending issues in the area including the land preservation programs in place. One such program can place easements on the land to make sure the land cannot be sold for commercial development. The can do certain zoning allowances for things like restaurants, wedding venues and breweries. He said lands are accepted into the program based on things like size, development potential and soil. Currently around 50,000 acres are enrolled in this program in the Maryland area.

It was back on the bus in the afternoon only to arrive at Riehl Amish farm in Pennsylvania. Jean Lonie from Pennsylvania State University College of Agricultural Sciences greeted us at the farm. She talked about issues facing Pennsylvania agriculture where again rural and urban areas are often right next to

each other since approximately sixty percent of the population of the U.S. is reachable within a days drive. In Lancaster County they receive fewer nuisance complaints than most places because urban and rural groups work early to manage their relationships together. Sam and Susie Riehl were next to greet us and welcome us to their dairy and grain farm that contains 36 acres of double-cropping no-till. Mr. Riehl explained to us various aspects of the Amish culture. Family time and togetherness is very important to their way of life and they are quick to guard against doing anything that might jeopardize taking time away from their family and their faith. After a quick look around, we spent some time in a small store they have on their property where they sell hand-made items and canned goods. After our tour we boarded the bus bound for the big apple.

Thursday, April 27, 2017 – New York

Our adventure in New York City began early at the Fulton Fish Market. This is one of the largest markets in the world where fish from all across the world comes into the market. Distributors, restaurant chefs, and even the public can come and shop for any kind of fish imaginable. The fish are displayed over ice and deals are being made everywhere. This was a really unique experience and despite the early morning wake up call, I am glad we had the opportunity to do this. The next stop at Mosner Family Brands had us in a meat locker observing the packing operations of veal, lamb and other meats. It was interesting to see how this family brand was adapting and changing as the younger generation of family was taking over. What was once only a processing plant is now moving into more specialty areas including some higher end products. Next, we boarded the bus and headed into Harlem to visit the Community Kitchen in West Harlem. This food bank serves nearly 800 meals each day to disadvantaged residents. They keep costs as low as possible and have made it so donating just one dollar can create five meals. We were fortunate to meet a young man named Marcquise Spencer who had turned his life around as a direct result of the food bank and now works there and helps others who were in his same situation just one year ago. We also observed the food store pantry – a small grocery store where residence were able to purchase low cost food items donated by businesses and individuals. After a delicious lunch at the food bank, we were on our way to downtown Manhattan.

For the next series of speakers, we settled into the Cornell Financial Engineering Center in downtown Manhattan. Katherine Falconi visited with us about the farm credit system and how that helps with the various funding activities of agriculture. She explained the farm credit system would be the 7th largest bank in the U.S. if they were a commercial institution. Instead they are a government-sponsored enterprise and are 100% funded through borrowing. The next presenter was Sal Gilbertie, President of

Teucrium Trading who had a unique history that started with trading ethanol futures and moved into commodity trading. However a series of events culminating with the Dodd Frank rules ended the financial success of the commodity trading.

Friday, April 28, 2017 – Upstate New York

Our final day of scheduled tours began by boarding a bus heading north to upstate New York with a first stop at Crist Orchard where we met Joel Crist and his dad Jeff. This apple orchard has recently made massive upgrades to facilities and equipment including a state-of-the-art packing line. The orchard has also recently entered into an agreement with Angry Orchard ciders. They also talked about water issues. Currently they are using water from a nearby river, but that might be limited in the future. The next stop was Kedler's Farms. This was originally a dairy farm but was turned into a pick your own farm a few years ago with things like raspberries, strawberries and pumpkins. Chris Kedler said they are always looking for ways to get the more urban residents out (the farm is about an hour and a half away from New York City) to learn about where their food comes from. They have also recently started a CSA (community supported agriculture) program where participants pay a set fee at the beginning of the growing season and then get to enjoy garden fruits and vegetables from the farm on a regular basis. In addition, there was a corn maze, mini golf and other family-friendly activities. The last stop of the trip was to Bos-Haven farms. This dairy farm is a member of Hudson Valley Fresh, which is a partnership of dairies that promote their area and premium dairy products.

There were two themes that really stood out for me on this trip. One involved the transfer of the agricultural operation from one generation to the next. Several of the operations we visited were in the middle of this transition, which is not always an easy one and is one that is happening in my situation at home. For this reason I was extremely interested in hearing some of the hurdles they are facing and how they are overcoming certain barriers. The other theme that stood out to me was how urban encroachment on rural areas is a very real problem in the northeast. I am lucky if I see anyone besides my family during a typical day working on my farm in the Texas panhandle, but in these areas, some farms were right next to neighborhoods. In moving equipment they worried about other vehicles, buses, pedestrians, etc. At Broom's Bloom Dairy, one of the employees said she could see through the window of a house and see the TV of a home in a neighborhood just while standing in the cattle pasture. It was really unique to see how these two very different entities (agriculture vs. urban areas) are working to preserve their ways of life while learning to live with a changing population around them.