

Lance Gilliland #9

Session #5

July 19 – 23, 2021

Session 5 – Houston / Gulf Coast, Texas

Monday, July 19

It was finally time again for all the cohorts of TALL XVII to meet up for another session. This session took everyone to Houston and the Gulf coast region of Texas. We all knew it would be a full four days of interesting topics.

The majority of Monday was for travel, we all met up at the Wyndham/Wingate Hotel in Houston, Texas. We all gathered in the lobby about 6pm to get in our personal vehicles to drive over to the NRG center for our first dinner and speakers consisting of Chris Boleman, President and CEO of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo; TALL Alumni Oscar Taylor and Brian Gilbert, but first let's eat. Dinner was sponsored by Bonfire Restaurants which is owned by Oscar and Denise Taylor. They served us two different flavors of wings, fried shrimp, fried fish, and fried boudin balls which was all excellent.

As we were finishing up our meal, Chris Boleman stepped up to begin speaking to us. Chris is a very smart person, and I can tell he was the right man for the job of president / CEO of the HLSR. Chris gave us a very in-depth view of what he does daily to keep the HLSR on track and heading in the right direction. I was very interested in his presentation because the HLSR has been around forever and is part of the history of Texas. Next, we had TALL alumni Brian Gilbert, President / CEO of Members Trust of the Southwest Federal Credit Union. Brian added a little to the history of the HLSR since he has been a part of it for 30+ years. He then spoke about his time as a TALL cohort and how much an opportunity it was to be a part of such a great program. His message to all the current cohorts was to be very, very thankful for what you are blessed with daily because you never know what curve balls can be thrown your way, so just be thankful every day. Next, we had Oscar Taylor who is also a past TALL alumni and is also on the TALL advisory board. He too wanted to express how great it was to be a part of the TALL program. Oscar has worked in the agriculture industry for many years and then he and his wife Denise decided to open Bonfire restaurants. They explained it wasn't easy and they had some challenges along the way, but they stayed hooked and now have several around Houston and are starting to offer franchises for sale.

This evening was a great way to start off the week. Now back to the Hotel for some rest.

Tuesday, July 20

Today started early as we all met in a meeting room at the hotel for breakfast burritos and coffee. We were welcomed by Gary Joiner, Director of Communications and Julie Tomascik, Associate Director of Communications – editor, both with the Texas Farm Bureau. The topic of this morning's session is all about communications. Gary and Julie shared with us the importance of knowing where to go for the truth. They explained that so many news outlets may or may not have the whole truth when they are

interviewing someone. Julie told us about many sights to go to for “fact-checking”. Gary said there is a growing crisis in confidence of the news media these days. People only have 21% confidence in the newspaper, 16% in the television news outlets. The last topic they discussed with us was tips to get us ready for interviews if we ever were to get in that position. Gary and Julie set up mock interviews for us and gave each of us one of three topics to discuss in an interview conducted by Gary as the reporter. This process was very interesting and eye-opening, although the interviews weren’t for everybody, including me.

As we wrapped up the morning session, we grabbed a box lunch provided to us by Brian Gilbert with Members Trust Federal Credit Union. We took our lunch to go as we boarded the bus to NASA.

When we arrived at NASA, Johnson Space Center, we were ushered inside through the museum to the upstairs meeting room where we were welcomed by Director John T. Sims, and Deputy Director, Michelle Frieling both lead the Human Health and Performance department along with Mr. Scott Smith of the Nutritional Biochemistry Lab. Also, we have Dr. Grace Douglass, manager of the Space Food Systems Lab. Together all these very educated individuals work together to ensure the food for the astronauts are safe and nutritious to send up with them to the space station where they will spend several months at a time. The vision of NASA is and always has been this, “Reaching for New Heights and reveal the unknown”. The Johnson Space Center is responsible for training all the astronauts in the space program and is home to mission control for the space station.

After the NASA lesson, we loaded the bus to travel over to Cargill at the Port of Houston. Here at this Cargill, they are responsible for receiving grain and then load cargo ships with the grain to export to other countries. We had the pleasure of listening to Colson Reames, production supervisor and Sean Ryan, superintendent of Exports Cargill, Inc. as they spoke to us about the daily operations here at this division of Cargill at the Houston port.

Wednesday July 21

Today will be a long day as we assembled on the bus about 6:30 am, and then departed for Glueck’s Nursery. We did not eat breakfast before we left because Dr. Jim said that Mrs. Glueck is famous for her Kolaches and we definitely did not want to miss her breakfast. After about an hour bus drive, we finally arrived at Glueck’s Nursery where we were welcomed by the entire Glueck family. As we assembled in the back yard, breakfast kolaches were served and Dr. Jim was right, these kolaches were the best I had ever eaten. As we ate breakfast, we listened to Mr. Glueck tell us the history of his family farm. They started out in the corn and row crop farming business, but has times changed and the family grew, there came a time for a change that would support the growing Glueck family once again. That is where they decided to turn their farmland into a full-blown tree nursery and farm. Jeff Glueck is now the owner and the general manager of the tree farm. Doug and Jacey Glueck have branched away from the family farm to start a Spanish pig farm. The oldest son, Chris Glueck also branched away from the family farm to become the site manager for RiceTec, Inc. This company is responsible for hybrid seed rice. They produce this seed and partner up with local rice farmers to grow their rice for them. That is where we go next.

Gertson Farms Partnership is also a family farm run by the Gertson brothers and cousins. They are producing the rice for RiceTec. In addition to farming, the Gertson's also own and operate Lissie Fyling Service. The flying service offers dry fertilization from the crop duster style planes they use. The Gertson's are very diversified and knowledgeable in the rice farming and crop-dusting services.

If you haven't caught onto the theme for the day, it is all about family farms or family-owned agriculture businesses. It leads us down the road to the next family operation. We are not at Hlavinka Equipment company which is a Case IH. / Farmall tractor dealership. Terry Hlavinka, owner, and partner of the company. His father started this dealership several years ago and now Terry's son and daughter are all involved in the daily operations of the business.

It was time for lunch, so we loaded up on our bus and headed to Goudeau Farms owned by Michael Goudeau. Michael is part of the J.D. Hudgins Inc. which is a family-owned seed stock ranch producing the best Gray Brahmas in the nation. J.D. Hudgin has been in business since 1918 and is still a family run operation, however they now have separate ranches, but all still sell cattle under the JD Hudgins Inc operation. We ate and listened to John Coleman Locke which is the president. He explained the history of the ranch over the years. We then toured the facilities and went to look at the show cattle and the bulls and females that are for sale private treaty.

Next, we went to a fish farm, where we met Mark Kubecka. This was a unique business. He talked to us about the growing business of catfish farming as we watched the fish being fed in each pond. This very interesting and I am thankful we were able to see this.

After that we went to Prasek's Hillje Smokehouse. Very interesting business as they produce dried sausage and jerky among other items they sell in their convenient stores as well as some major grocers such as HEB.

To wrap the day up we went to the El Campo civic center where the Cattleman's Night social, dinner and program. The host and MC was Mr. Ed Irwin. He introduced the Keynote speaker which was Mr. Dan Gattis, Jr. Mr. Gattis is a rancher, trial lawyer and a recovering politician. He delivered an awesome presentation about the cattle industry, more specifically talking about where are and where are we going in the cattle industry today and in the future. This was an awesome ending to another very interesting day.

Thursday July 22

This morning we are heading to HEB where we were welcomed by Jody Hall, vice president of sourcing. Jody along with James Harris, Public Affairs Director gave us an impressive presentation of the history of HEB and how they are now putting a lot of focus on local suppliers. They began the "Quest for Texas Best" campaign. This is where they find local Texans producing food or food products that are the best in t=Texas and then give those people shelf space to sell their product. After they finished up, we

listened to Miguel Calatayud, owner of Qualitas Health Algae Farm and the CEO and founder of Blencor Corporation.

Next stop was the Greater Houston Partnership to hear about the economic impact of the Houston Region and how the international investment and trade affects the growth of Houston. Jeffrey Blair presented an excellent overview of this. I found the information to be very interesting. As we were eating our lunch, the next speaker arrived which was Matt Barr, Director of Government and Public Affairs for Cheniere Energy. He gave us an overview of Cheniere Energy and the impact of LNG.

Once again, we loaded the bus to our next stop, Sysco Corporation. We were welcomed by a panel of speakers consisting of Brian Sell, Chad Supan, Joe Don Eilers, John Kaler, Charles Leftwich, and Tammy McElroy. Each gave us a presentation in each respective job role or division of the Fifty plus year old company. Sysco Corporation has an annual sale of \$60B in food sales with 62% sold to restaurants and the remaining sold to healthcare, education/government, food service management, and leisure/vending. The purpose of Sysco corporation is "Connecting the world to share food and care for one another". Their mission, "Delivering success for our customers through industry-leading people, products, and solutions". Their Identity, "Together we define the future of food service and supply chain". It was very interesting to hear about this company and how they bring food to the people.

To wrap up our day as well as this week's session in Houston, we went back to the hotel to get ready for the night rides with the Houston Police department. I, for one was excited about this part. As I jumped into the squad car with the policeman, I was eager to see what was in store for us this evening. As the policeman quoted Forrest Gump, the night shift is like a box of chocolates, you just never know what you'll get. He went on to say some night s are very boring and un-eventful while others are full of excitement. Well unfortunately, this evening was one of those un-eventful nights. However, I did learn a lot about what goes on and how dangerous our law enforcement agents face. The police are needed, and we should never forget that.

This week was great as all the other sessions have been. As always, I hate for the week to end, but I always look forward to the next session. I am very thankful for all who was responsible for making this week possible.