

**Governor Dolph Briscoe Jr.,
Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership
(TALL) Program**

**Cohort XVIII
Session 5
Houston/Gulf Coast
July 10-14, 2023**

“Exports, Energy, Environment”

Session Narratives

TALL Narrative – Houston/Gulf Coast

After missing the previous session to Washington D.C., New York and Pennsylvania due to the Texas Legislative Session, I was so excited to be back with the cohort. I was jealous hearing them reminisce about their time on the trip. That feeling emphasized how big of an impact the program and my cohort members have had on me.

It is hard to believe that we are over halfway through the program. I knew it would pass quickly, but I wasn't prepared for it to go this fast.

Day 1

Our first afternoon began with the history of various personality tests and then completing the Myers-Briggs assessment. I've taken this before, but it has been quite a while. I was interested to see if the results would be the same. As it turns out, they are. I'm a strong ESTJ. Since we know each other fairly well at this point in the program, I don't think anyone was surprised by the results. What was fascinating was to see who was "strong" on a personality type and who leaned more moderate. Dr. Grant did a great job discussing how each of the personality types can help benefit the other and how to maximize productivity in a team.

After our personality assessment, we headed out to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo to hear from Dr. Chris Boleman. Dr. Boleman has such a unique perspective on the trials and tribulations of a large nonprofit since HLSR was greatly impacted by the pandemic. I appreciated his insight to navigating waters that none could have dreamt. We were treated to dinner from Oscar and Denise Taylor. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor shared how their careers and lives transitioned from corporate to restaurateurs. Mr. Taylor interviewed me for the program and I have enjoyed getting to know him.

Day 2

The second day of this session began with engagement training with the Texas Farm Bureau. Mr. Joiner gave us statistics regarding the trust people do or do not have in various news mediums. I don't think that this was surprising to anyone in the room. The media training provided by Mr. Joiner is invaluable. As someone who can benefit from these resources, but doesn't have the resources to research and vet news sources, this is extremely helpful to me. Mr. Joiner gave us some excellent resources to use going forward. Mr. Joiner also discussed the challenges that newspapers are seeing such as staffing and resources and the difficulty to produce original material. The issues they face are the same that many other industries are facing.

I was nervous about the mock interview because being in the public eye is something I try to avoid at all costs. Even as an extrovert, I much prefer to be the workhorse behind the scenes. I was extremely grateful to be pushed into completing a mock interview. I wouldn't say it's something I'll seek out or that I'm comfortable doing, but I will be better prepared should the situation arise.

After our morning training, we had the opportunity to hear from Mr. Robert Hodgens, CEO of King Ranch, and California ag leadership program participant. Mr. Hodgens shared the vast diversification King Ranch has ranging from crops, such as almonds and turfgrass, to livestock production of 24,000 cow calf pairs, and energy production and transition. Mr. Hodgen took an approach that I was not expecting to hear. His job is not to focus on the details of the operations but to manage the people hired to do those jobs. He focuses a lot on creating a culture that is desirable. "Culture is driven by behaviors which are

Jennifer Bremer - #5

TALL Narrative – Houston/Gulf Coast

driven by values. Culture times talent times team. If culture, talent, or team are zero, you will not see any results.

Our first trip out into the field almost resulted in me getting left behind for the first time. But I would like to make note, that I was on time! Dr. Jim tried to leave early every time this trip!

We had the amazing opportunity to visit the Goya plant in Brookshire. While there, we met Mr. Bob Unanue. Mr. Unanue shared his family's history and how his grandfather purchased the Goya brand for \$1.

This is not your everyday canning location. The technological process they have in place are incredible. The efficiency should be desired by everyone. It was evident how proud Mr. Unanue was of his company and to be able to carry on his family business. Most interesting was the label maker that can label more than 1,000 cans per minute!

In addition to learning about Goya and their food products and services, we were able to learn about the charitable contributions Goya and Mr. Unanue make.

Next, we headed to the Blencor facility. This facility was similar to Goya in that it is a food packing facility, however Blencor handles frozen produce. It was really interesting to learn about the products we see every day in the store, such as H-E-B's Blendables, that they have a part in. One unique aspect about Blencor from the other food facilities we have visited was that it does not operate all day.

Finally, we were treated to a private tour of the new San Felipe de Austin Museum. They treated us to a barbeque dinner. I highly encourage anyone in the area to visit the museum.

The last stops of the day were new to the TALL program. I really enjoyed learning about and seeing the facilities and hope that these stops will remain in this session.

Day 3

We spent Wednesday of this session out of the classroom, which was greatly appreciated. It was a full day that started with the most incredible breakfast spread we could have ever imagined. Kolaches, cinnamon rolls, pig in the blankets all made from scratch by Mrs. Glueck. They graciously opened their home to us to enjoy the feast and learn more about the beginnings and transitions of their family business – Glueck Farms. Like many other agribusinesses, water remains their primary input, but they have learned to manage the use.

At the Glueck home, we also met their son, Chris, who works for RiceTec. He taught us about the rice breeding practices they facilitate and showed us the fields. We were able to see the different male and female plots of rice where they grow their seed.

Next, we visited Gertson Farms. The Gertson's are a fully vertically integrated farm with a few extra businesses. They also own Lissie Flying Services. Mr. Gertson visited with us about how they receive their water. Unlike other farms we have visited with wells, the Gertson's and farmers in this area are interruptible customers of Highland Lakes water. They do have the ability to water some acres with groundwater. We were able to see their grains storage bins and learn about how he and his brothers engage with their sons/nephews in the farming business.

TALL Narrative – Houston/Gulf Coast

Mr. Gertson also discussed a recent land purchase he made to protect his family's livelihood. While I'm sure it happens more than I am aware, it was refreshing to see someone who understood the importance of protecting the land by purchasing it even when not in optimum timing.

Our next stop of the field trip day was at Hlavinka Equipment. Here we learned about their equipment operations and services they provide to African countries. The Hlavinka's have diversified not only their equipment dealership, but also their overall portfolio. We learned they also own the Typhoon Texas waterparks.

Our next stop was at J.D. Hudgins. I was excited to visit this ranch. I've heard a lot about their operations and extended family, but didn't know about the unique business structure they have. All cattle are marketed under the J.D. Hudgins brand, but are owned by the different family branches. The marketing firm is what the business evolved to over time as it was passed down from each generation.

After a picture with the Grand Champion Bull, Mr. Michael Goudeau took us on a tour of his hay operations. He is the hay supplier for the Houston Zoo. After a quick tour of the field and showing us his storage barns, he took us to the holding pens that J.D. Hudgins uses for pricing/ranking the cattle. I found it very interesting that all branches of the family work together to determine the monetary value of the cattle. I think the cohesiveness of the family shows that they all appreciate exceptional quality Brahman cattle.

We ended this portion of the day with a quick stop at their ranch headquarters to look at all of their awards.

Our final stop of the day was a first for me. We visited a catfish farm! The capital-intensive catfish industry began in Texas in the 1970s but made a comeback in the 2000s. There are approximately 4,000-5,000 acres of catfish in Texas. Due to the proximity to petrochemical plants, the catfish industry struggles to maintain its workforce. They use H2A workers to alleviate this issue.

Day 4

We began the fourth and final day at the Port of Houston. The staff of the Port gave us a detailed overview of the current operations and offerings of the port. The port is currently undergoing a channel improvement project. They are deepening and widening the 52-mile ship channel. The cargo ships are getting much bigger and the port needs to make these changes to continue to handle 70% of the gulf traffic. We learned all about the exports (plastics) and imports (vodka and fertilizer) and the economic impact the Port plays on the world. The staff discussed the importance of their advocacy team. Their advocacy team is able to advocate for projects in ways that the US Army Corps of Engineers is not able. In turn, this allows projects to move faster. The port, like many other businesses, is working to be carbon neutral by 2050.

Next, we headed to the Greater Houston Partnership, the Houston area chamber of commerce. I was aware of the organization from my experience in the legislature and Houston in general, but hearing the numbers was staggering. There are over 5,000 entities involved in international business and 18 national banks. Houston really has something for everyone, except available land.

Next, we heard from Ronan O'Malley of the World Affairs Council. I can only imagine how interesting his job is each day. Mr. O'Malley is very well educated on the Ukrainian war. We learned about what started

Jennifer Bremer - #5

TALL Narrative – Houston/Gulf Coast

the war, where it is today, and what is expected to happen, or not happen. He also focused the end of his presentation on how the war has impacted the agricultural sector and the demands Russia has put in place.

This trip ended with a once in a lifetime opportunity. I really don't think there are enough wonderful things to say about the night rides the Houston Police Department so graciously hosted us for. Being the "true crime" junkie that I am, I was really excited for this opportunity. After dinner, we departed to the HPD Headquarters. We were greeted by many officers and staff. After a brief introduction, snacks and photos, we loaded up in vans of about six cohort members each and two officers to set out on our adventures. Shortly after we loaded up, we learned of a double homicide call. What a way to start our evening. It wasn't even dark! Throughout the night, we saw a car get pulled from a bayou, witnessed another shooting scene, met some Constables, and visited another police station. This was certainly a night that I will never forget.

I greatly appreciated that this session wasn't just about information and facts. It was about real leader's experiences on maintaining successful family businesses. Each business showcased a variety of functional methods to operate a family business.

I am looking forward to our next trip in cooler temperatures in California.



Courtney Schmidt (#17)
TALL XVIII
Session 5 – Houston/Gulf Coast
July 10 - 14, 2023

The Gulf Coast is my home region so I was excited for the cohorts to see the agriculture in our area and how it differs from other parts of the state. This session was a nice mix of personal training, commerce, food processing and production practices.

Below is an overview and highlights from each day of our third session plus some fun facts.

Monday, July 10, 2023

Dr. Richard Grant started the session off with the Myers-Briggs test for each of us. My result was ISTP (Introversion, Sensing, Thinking, Perceiving). Dr. Grant discussed and provided exercises that showed how to work with different personalities to improve teamwork. I initially felt my rating of introversion could be perceived as weakness to others, but Dr. Grant pointed out the strengths that come from introversion, including the detail way they process information.

Tip: Extroverts prefer verbal communication and Introverts prefer written information

Our evening reception was held at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (HLSR) board room and sponsored by **Oscar and Denise Taylor**. The HLSR is one of my favorite events and I try to attend each year. I was very interested to learn how the HLSR continues its success each year. **Dr. Chris Boleman** discussed “the secret sauce” of the show and how the show continues to evolve and adapt each year. HLSR and other shows around the State are one of the most important connections agriculture has with our urban consumers.

Oscar and Denise discussed their journey to success with their careers and restaurant business. They are true entrepreneurs that take risks and have overcome many different challenges including Covid shutdowns.

Fact: HLSR is the largest event in North America. It has 140 full time employees and 3,500 volunteers. It provides over \$600 million to the youth of Texas.

Fact: Part of the “secret sauce” of HLSR is the 3 year term limit on their committees. The turnover helps stimulate change and innovation.

Tuesday, July 11, 2023

Gary Joiner with Texas Farm Bureau provided us with media and communication training on Tuesday morning. This was a great opportunity for the cohort to improve our skill set. Gary walked us through options on finding neutral or more unbiased media sources. Given the divided political climate and untrust in media, this was very helpful information. Artificial intelligence such as ChatGTP was debated, which was a very timely and relevant topic.

The cohort also got to step in front of the camera and test out our media skills. Gary did a great job of providing constructive feedback and boosting your confidence.

Fact: Only 16% of American's have a great deal of confidence in newspapers and 11% confidence in television.

The iconic King Ranch was discussed by their CEO, **Robert Hodgen**. As a ranch that has evolved and survived many different generations, it was powerful information to hear how the business continues to thrive. They have a thoughtful approach to capital allocation with new opportunities and how they diversify their operations. Legacy and culture are an important component of the ranch with its employees. The company board is similar to a public company and they have a careful structure and vetting processes to continue the family's involvement into the future generations.

Fact: The King Ranch in the 8th generation of ownership.

Fact: The King Ranch is the 10th largest landowner and largest private owner of coastline in the U.S.

After lunch, we loaded the bus and headed out for two plant tours. Our first stop was Goya Foods, which is a well-known brand of canned foods and Latin cuisine. We received a special treat when we were greeted by the CEO, **Bob Urane**. While we were disappointed to miss the tour of the plant, the company showed videos and explained the steps to canning beans. I had no idea that the beans cooked in the cans! Goya went above and beyond by leaving us with goodie bags filled with their products.

Fact: The U.S. is the 2nd largest Latino country in the World, behind Mexico.

Fact: Goya has over 2,500 products that they produce.

Our second stop was at Blendcor, which is a frozen fruit and vegetable processor. While I wasn't familiar with Blendcor, I was familiar with some of their products, such as the smoothie blendables sold at HEB. **Miguel Caltayud**, the CEO, explained how the company is based in Spain, but its first expansion was this Texas facility. The company uses proprietary AI technology to sort and blend various fruit and vegetable mixes.

Fact: Blendcor's proprietary blending machine can sort and blend 40,000 lbs per hour with less 1% deviation.

We ended the day with a delicious BBQ meal and historical tour of the San Felipe De Austin Museum and site.

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

The cohort started the day early with a morning bus ride to **Glueck's Nursery** in Alleyton. The Glueck Family provided a real treat with homemade kolaches and baked breakfast items. This was one the best breakfast of the trip! The Glueck family realized in 1996 that they needed their farming operation to evolve for it to survive, so they started a nursery. The family also shared some of the challenges and hurdles they have overcome as a family operation. A key message was the importance of family.

Chris Glueck hopped on the bus as we made our way to the next stop. He discussed the seed Rice industry that is prominent in the area.

Fact: Helicopters are used to assist seed rice pollination.

We wrapped up our morning tour with stops at Gertson Farms and Hlavinka Case dealership. **John Gertson** operates a vertically integrated rice farm and owns a flying service that sprays crops. John gave us a tour of their rice fields and headquarters location. The decline in seed acres of rice and lower water allocation this year due drought conditions are major challenges the regions is dealing with.

Terry Hlavinka and his team provided an overview of their diverse operations. They are the dealer for several different equipment companies and they have a large farming operation. One unique service that they provide is selling and servicing equipment to Africa. They have employees that follow the equipment to Africa and teach the new owners how to operate and service the equipment.

Our lunch stop was at the well-respected J.D. Hudgins Brahman cattle ranch. After a delicious lunch of chicken-fried steak, **Mr. Locke** provided us history and background of the ranch. The ranch has a carefully crafted structure that preserves the reputation of their cattle but allows each branch of the family flexibility in the production of the cattle herd. The family is a great example at how families can creatively maintain a long-lasting family business. **Michael Goudeau**, part the Hudgins family, provided a tour of his branch of the cattle herd and his vertically integrated hay operation.

Fact: The Houston Livestock Show was started when a group of Brahman cattle breeders weren't allowed to show their Brahman cattle at the Ft. Worth Livestock Show.

Our bus made its way towards my stopping grounds in the El Campo area to tour a catfish farming operation. **Mark Kubecka** explained how fish farming is the "South Texas version of a feedlot". The similarity to cattle feedyards was striking with daily feedings, constant monitoring of the fish health, daily rates of gain evaluated and transporting the fatted fish to a processor for harvest. The fish farming industry has several challenges it is currently facing. Redfish farming is still trying to recover from the population and demand destruction caused Winter Storm Uri and catfish must be transported long distances to processors in Louisiana.

Fact: Oxygen levels in fishponds are monitored 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Due to the large amount labor involved in fish farming, H2A labor is heavily utilized.

The final stop of the day was **Prasek's** meat processor. While I have stopped at the storefront many times, I have never had the behind the scenes tour of the meat processing facilities. They process different meat products including various types of sausage, beef jerky, and smoked briskets. HEB is a top customer of the company. The processing facility is larger than you would expect and a major economic driver in the area with over 300 employees. They company also has plans to expand their facilities in the near future.

Thursday, July 13, 2023

The **Port of Houston** was one of the top agenda items for me during this session and it did not disappoint. The Port of Houston is one of the most important areas of commerce for the State of Texas. A team from the Port of Houston spent the morning with our cohort giving us detailed information about the Port, including the large expansion project currently underway. Houston is the narrowest

shipping channel of all the major U.S. ports. Project 11 is working to widen the channel to allow for larger ships and safer passing of ships in the channel. Security is another high priority with technology like facial recognition used for each truck driver that enters port.

Fact: The Port of Houston is the largest U.S. port by tonnage and the 5th largest by container volume.
Fact: The Port of Houston can handle 5,000 to 6,000 trucks per day. The port has roughly 10,000 containers on site.

We had the opportunity for a closer view of a grain ship at our next stop, Cargill (Now called TEMCO). TEMCO is a partnership between CHS and Cargill. **Sean Ryan**, Plant Superintendent discussed the TEMCO facility. The location primarily loads wheat for export but will handle 10-11 different commodities. Sorghum is the second largest volume product. Approximately 95% of the wheat comes down the rail system from areas major production areas such as Kansas. Sean explained some of the logistic details of loading a large grain ship.

Fact: The TEMCO export facility in Houston unloads over 550 miles of rail cars each year.
Fact: It takes 1-3 days to load a ship.
Fact: Grain dust can be 10 times as explosive as dynamite.

The bus headed to downtown Houston for our next stop with the Greater Houston Partnership. **Jeffrey Blair** gave us an overview of the Economics of the Houston area. Houston has one of the fast growing populations in the U.S., growing by 3.6 million people since 2010. Growth is being driven by low cost of living and a strong infrastructure. The Houston economy is a mix of energy, both traditional and renewable, medical and tech industries.

Fact: Houston is one of the most diverse cities with one in four Houstonians being foreign born. Over 145 languages are spoken in the city.

Ronan O'Malley, Chief Program Officer with the World Affairs Council, gave us an overview of the Ukraine War and the impacts. He gave us background and history between Russia and Ukraine. Putin's vision of a Greater Russia and his views of Ukraine being part of Russia are a large driver of his attack. Putin and China also have the shared goal of weakening the power of the U.S. and West. Russia is facing a population crisis and the war is making the situation worse with young Russians leaving the country.

Fact: The Russian economy is currently estimated to lose 3-4% of GDP in 2023. The Ukraine economy estimates are 35% lower GDP.

Fact: There is an average of 10 years difference between men and women in Russian. The male population in Russia suffers from a high rate of addiction.

We ended with one of the highlights of the session, the ride-along with the Houston Police department. We split into small groups and our group spent the night riding around with two officers, Sgt. Ricky McNeil and Officer George Guerrero, in the Southeast part of Houston. The crime scenes we stopped at included a murder scene, drive-by shooting, stolen car wreck, and retrieval of a car from the bayou. The experience really gave me a hands-on understanding of what law enforcement is experiencing every day, including crime problems and the impacts from understaffing. Law enforcement is a vital part our

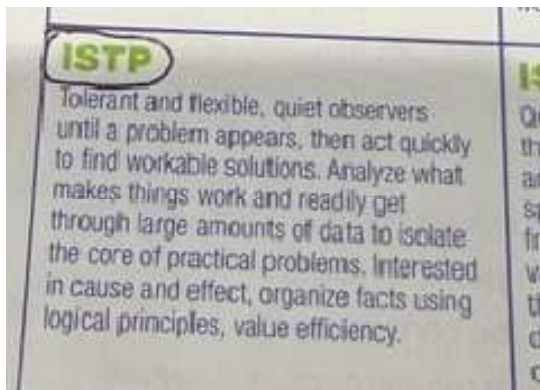
society and it is currently facing many headwinds. The opportunity also gave me the chance to see the needs within the Houston community.

Fact: Despite a similar population, Houston has 5,000 police officers compared to Chicago with 13,000 police officers. Houston PD's staffing goal is 7,000 police officers but faces problems with recruitment.

Conclusion:

Despite the heat, session 5 in the Gulf Coast was a success. The cohort was able to see how Houston is one the economic engines that drives our robust Texas economy. While the Panhandle of Texas has the largest reputation of agriculture in Texas, the stops in the Gulf Coast showed a different side of Texas agriculture to our cohort class. As the population of Texas continues to grow, this area will be an important link to serving the urban population but will also face challenges from that growth.

Pictures:







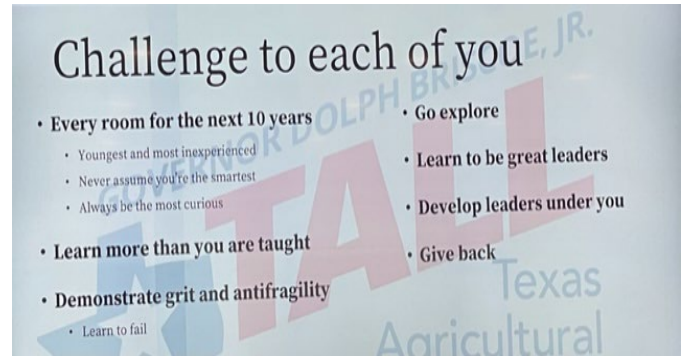
Lance A. Barnett (#2)
TALL XVIII
Session 5 – Houston/Gulf Coast
July 10 – 14, 2023

We met on Monday, July 10th at the Hilton Plaza in downtown Houston to start our 5th session. After a brief overview of the session by Dr. Jim, we jumped into the Myers-Briggs personality and leadership workshop. I had taken the test several times in my career and nothing had changed (perhaps the strength of preference). I’m an ENTJ, Extravert, Intuition, Thinking, and Judging. Even after so many years of use, this personality test is widely used and applicable. Key learnings from Dr. Grant were how our style applies to our teams and adjustments each of us might need to make to get the most out of our teams. Additionally in building a team, research shows that a mixture of different personality types maximizes results. The important factor is maximizing each person’s strengths and managing weaknesses. That evening, we met at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (HLSR) boardroom for dinner and to hear from Chris Boleman, president and CEO. The HLSR’s mission is to promote agriculture in urban areas with a commitment to education and the local community. Last year, \$10 MM went to the local community while \$5 MM went to FFA and 4H education initiatives. The HLSR is one of the top attractions in Houston and Mr. Boleman continually promotes innovations in growth, volunteer expansion, and promoting agriculture. The dinner was sponsored by Oscar and Denise Taylor, owners of Bonfire Wings. The wings, fixings, and gumbo were delicious!



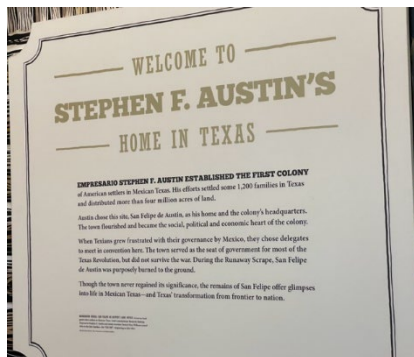
Gary Joiner, Director of Communications with the Texas Farm Bureau, spent the 1st half of the day with us on July 11th discussing media and news source options, communication tips, and how to interview with the media. This session was outstanding. He provided a great list of websites that fact check news sources and indicate left and right bias trends. He also gave us training on television interviews including tips such as wearing a solid shirt, keeping your hands out of the frame, being in control of your message and understanding the location, sound, and

lighting. We will be representing our companies and agriculture so making the most of the opportunity is important.



Robert Hodgen, President and CEO of King Ranch had lunch with us. He gave us an overview of the King Ranch and its 11 separate business units. Each of these multi-million-dollar businesses are challenged to produce growth and stand-alone profitability. Mr. Hodgen primary focus is to lead his 1000+ employees and build a world-class team. He also focuses on driving business results, influencing policy and industry leadership endeavors. I especially appreciated his challenge to us as industry leaders and encouragement to give back to our industry.

We loaded the bus and headed to Brookshire, TX to visit Goya Foods. Goya Foods produces 32 types of beans and 720k cans per day. We were fortunate to hear from Bob Unanue, president, CEO, and grandson of the founder of the company. Goya successfully markets their products to the Hispanic communities around the world. After Goya, we went to Glencor Corporation in Sealy, Texas. Miguel Calatayud, CEO and founder met with us and gave us a tour of their facilities. Blencor produces a multitude of blended, frozen, and processed foods. They focus is on food safety, quality, and efficiency.



We visited San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site west of Houston that evening for a catered meal and tour. The museum has amazing artifacts and interactive displays showing the

history and life of early Texans. We enjoyed the tour and greatly appreciated Toni Franklin and Jordon Anderson coming in on their day off to host us.



On Wednesday, July 12th, we visited the Glueck family in Alleyton, Texas. Mrs. Glueck made delicious kolaches, pastries, and breakfast for us. The theme for the day was family businesses and how families work through ownership, management, and succession. There doesn't seem to be one formula or proven methodology for successful family operations and at times not every family member is happy with the outcomes but family businesses persist and make Texas agriculture what it is today. The Gluecks turned their family grain farm into a successful nursery many years ago and sell high value trees and shrubs into a growing urban market in SE Texas. Afterwards we visited Gertson farms to see rice production, drying and storage facilities and the Lissie Flying Service which sprays crops in the region. Terry Hlavinka, distinguished TALL alumni, hosted us for lunch and a presentation and overview of their family run lumber, hardware, and construction businesses. The family concentrates resources to support large scale agriculture in Texas and abroad. We visited Goudeau Farms and saw their Brahman cattle operations including their coastal Bermuda hay farm. They have raised numerous grand champion Houston Livestock bulls. We heard from Coleman Locke, president of JD Hudgins. Mr. Locke has had a lifetime of commitment and service to the ag. community in Texas and shared with us his many experiences. We met Mark Kubecka, TALL XII and partner in M&W Kubecka Fish Farms. We got to see them move fish from one pond to another, learn about the marketing aspects of aquaculture, and the production challenges. Afterwards, we visited and toured Prasek's Smokehouse in Hillje, TX. Prasek's, a family operated business dating back decades, is known statewide and beyond for high quality meats. I was surprised at the size and scale of their production operations. They have extensive on-line, delivery, and in store sales and produce most of their products in house.



On Thursday, July 13th, we started the day at the Port of Houston. The port of Houston is the number one port in petrochemical exports and deep-water vessels in the US. They are investing millions in a deepening project that will even increase capacity and efficiency. We met with Sean Ryan at the Cargill facility. They had a put through of 191 MM bushels this past year and set a record in rail cars unloaded. They handle 10 different commodities with hard red wheat being approximately 60% of the volume.

We visited the Greater Houston Partnership in downtown Houston and heard from Jeffrey Blair, Senior Director of International Investment and Trade. Houston is the most internationally diverse city in the US (145 languages spoken and 25% of population being foreign born) and the fastest growing major metro center. Houston also boasts one of the lowest costs of living, excellent restaurants and entertainment, and a young and talented work force. Houston is the energy capital of the world and has the world's largest medical center. Ronan O'Malley, Chief Programs Officer for the World Affairs Council, gave us an overview of the Ukraine war. Led by Vladimir Putin, Russia initiated the war to gain territory that he sees as Russian. Many Ukrainians had already favorable views to join the EU and NATO. The Russian invasion has already seen a strengthening of NATO and large world support for Ukraine. Peace remains a distant possibility and attacks on civilians continue.

The highlight of the trip was the night rides we did with the Houston PD. In groups of 4-5 per van, we paired with 2 officers and visited some of the worst crime areas in Houston. We listened to the police radio and then visited the crime scenes of a shooting, robbery, and disturbances. The best part of the evening was talking with the officers. I have even more respect for the job these officers do every day. They face a seemingly unending challenge of dealing with crime and poverty. My group went with Sgt. Lahar and Officer Beaty. They were patient, professional, and incredibly impressive in their abilities.

