

Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program

Class XVII

Scribe Notes

Seminar 11

November 4 - 6, 2015

“Northeastern Oklahoma Agriculture and Industry”

Wednesday, November 4

Scribe: Brian Forrester

The first day of our final three day trip out touring the state was a bitter sweet event. The bus departed from the Stored Products Research and Education Center at 7:00 a.m. I met up with the class at the Port of Catoosa at 8:30 a.m. The weather was perfect for a light jacket and stayed that way most of the day.

Chairperson of the day was Crystal Cowan and she started off the morning introducing us to Jeff Yowell from the port of Catoosa who gave us a brief history of the rivers of Oklahoma and how the port came about. He discussed how two men, Robert Kerr from Oklahoma and John McClellan from Arkansas felt that the Arkansas River could be beneficial as an international passage way. One of the many benefits was barge transportation. At the Port of Catoosa there are 72 private industries and 4,002 employees. This dream today started with the construction at a cost of \$1.2 billion and was opened in 1971.

As a group, we traveled to the Newt Graham Lock and Dam 18. There we met David Ford who spoke to us in regards to the operation at the lock and dam. A tugboat and barge will enter the lock going down stream and the gates will close. Then the water level is lowered slowly until the barge is at the same level as the downstream current. The gates will then open and the barge moves to the next lock downstream. The procedure is reversed for upstream travel. He explained that it is a ten day process to get from the Port of Catoosa to New Orleans. All locks take about an hour to fill and drain. Each lock contains 10-11 million gallons of water. A trust is set up to operate the locks.

Lunch was held at the Miller Amish Farm. Our meal sponsor was Farm Credit Services of East Central Oklahoma. Patrick Zeka and Beau Sheffield were two representatives there to greet us. The meal was fantastic! If you left hungry, it was your own fault.

We then departed for the MidAmerica Industrial Park in Choteau where the bus drove through and Rick Reimer discussed the numerous businesses there, one of which is Google. I was in my truck and was not able to listen to the commentary.

At the Pensacola Dam, we watcher a short video of the dam being built. It was the first hydroelectric facility built in Oklahoma. The idea to build started in the 1800s but construction did not begin until December 1938 and was finished in March 1940. This was a time when depression labor was abundant. Along with power generation, it was also used for flood control and recreation today. Construction cost was estimated at \$21 million. It is known to be the longest spanning multiple-arch dam. The six generator units at the dam have a combined generation capacity of 120MW. It has 21 floodgates on the main spillway and another 21 on the

east spillway. We were able to take a tour down under the dam to look at the massive generators and the back side of the dam. It truly is astonishing when looking at it.

We then headed to the farm of Scott and Kim Johnson in Afton, Oklahoma. Scott spoke to us about the multiple crops he produces and took us out to the field to watch six combines harvesting soybeans.

We then went back to his farm and had dinner provided by Jay Franklin of First National Bank in Vinita. While eating, Jim Shelton of Class I spoke to us in regards to Holistic management farming. Jim is very passionate in regards to preserving today's farmland.

Jay Franklin spoke in regards to the State Board of Agriculture where he sits as a member. He answered questions from the class and spoke of future issues that has him concerned.

Once finished at the Johnson's farm, we headed to Miami for our last stop of the night. We visited the Coleman Theatre on Route 66 downtown. Our tour guide, Dan Dillon, described the history of the theatre and how it came about in its glory days of the late 1920s. It was billed as the most elaborate entertainment facility between Dallas and Kansas City. It was a dream of a local mining magnate, George Coleman, who financed the building. The theatre was donated to the city in 1989 and with tons of community help and funds, the theatre is back to its original look providing local shows monthly.

We departed the theatre and headed to the local Hampton Inn to call it a night.

Thursday November 5

Scribe: Preston Simic

We started Day 2 of this session at J-M Farms, Inc. to take a tour of their mushroom business. We had a welcome from CEO Curtis Jurgensmeyer and company history from Growing Operations Manager Scott Engelbrecht. Following the video, we broke into two groups to take a walking tour of the facility lead by both Scott and President Pat Jurgensmeyer. My group started at the beginning of the process with Scott explaining that each day they start a new batch of mushrooms with grinding 120 large straw bales with water to begin a composting procedure. After several days, the hay, mixed with several other inputs like lime and fertilizer, will be ready to put into wood crates and topped with a mixture of peat soil and mushroom spores to begin the growing process in large temperature-controlled rooms. After touring a couple of the growing rooms, we continued to the picking area where the mushrooms, a couple of weeks old, are hand-picked to match specific size and color order for each customer. After picking is finished, the compost material is set aside to be used by local farms and nursery owners to improve soil or growing conditions. Upon finishing our tour, we were given a gift bag that included a coffee thermos and blanket with the J-M logo and some snacks for the road.

Our next stop was at Hibbard Farms, a contract egg grower for Tyson. Owners Clay and Melissa Hibbard helped us get suited up in protective clothing before touring the egg sorting and storage area. The Hibbard's explained how they started the business after moving from the city and needing a way to make their small farm more profitable. They also explained the complete egg process beginning with chicks raised off-site, and ending with eggs leaving their farm to be hatched and used for meat production by Tyson growers. We were allowed to see into the laying area and even watch the Hibbard's collect and sort some of the day's eggs. The Hibbard's were very good spokespeople for the industry and gave a great tour of their farm.

On our way to our next stop at Greenleaf Nursery, we had a box lunch on the bus provided by P&K Equipment of Owasso.

After arriving at our third stop of the day at Greenleaf Nursery, we were welcomed by President Randy Davis and given a welcoming gift and some refreshments. Randy then gave us a brief history of the company and how it has grown. Next, we broke into two groups and boarded vans for a driving tour of the over 600 acre nursery with a rolling terrain of hills and rocks. They showed us the many different plant varieties and explained how they are both grown and delivered to customers. Randy also explained how they have built retention ponds to catch and reuse almost all of the water on the property that sets just off the shore of Lake Tenkiller near Park Hill, Oklahoma. We finished the tour with a look at how they were preparing for an approaching storm by closing up most of the hundreds of hoop houses on the large property. The two groups met back up to ask any final question of Randy and his team before boarding the bus to our next stop.

Our next and final stop for the day was for a community service project at the Piney Creek Baptist Church near Stilwell. Our goal was to help with some clean-up in and around the church as well as to dig a drainage ditch along one side of the church to help with some flooding issues. Our other big project became pulling floor tiles up from a community building on the end of the church. The group worked very hard while having a fun time together as several youth and youth teachers from the church prepared an Indian taco dinner for the group. After finishing our work we set down for a fun meal and fellowship with the youth and church members. The tired group said our goodbyes in the pouring rain and headed back to our hotel in Claremore.

Friday November 6
Scribe: Bill Steinert

Viewing of Milking at Swan Brothers Dairy

The optional viewing at the dairy only attracted five participants. The dairy was just up the street from the hotel in Claremore. The milker allowed us to enter the parlor. He indicated that he spoke little English but I think it was more than we spoke Spanish.

Swan Brothers Dairy - Diane Swan Williamson

The dairy was started at this very location in 1923 by her grandfather. They milk four cows at a time in a herringbone style which is 1980s technology. The cows are washed and fed in a prep stall. They are currently milking 72 cows twice per day at 2:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. It takes three hours to milk the cows which produce about 3500 pounds or 450 gallons per day of Grade A milk. They sell 2000 gallons per week as raw milk. The rest of the milk is made into cheese which they try to sell all of it through the on-site store.

The son is working at the dairy and the daughter is in veterinary school. The son-in-law is going to work at the dairy in the future. Diane's dad still helps some at 84 years young. Her uncle fills in when needed. They have room to expand to accommodate the next generation although I do not think they have a formal succession plan in place.

Nabatak Outdoors - Kara Rowe

The company started in 1968 and has been in its current location since 2004. They began by selling worms to bait shops. It is a family owned business. Kara's dad passed away 8 years ago. Her mother owns the business now. Kara is one of the buyers and is the retail manager. Their operation is two businesses - Nabatak [National Bait and Tackle] Outdoors and Nabatak Wholesale Inc. In January 2016, they are starting online ordering for the wholesale business. There is no online site for the retail side.

They have a warehouse in Mountain Home, Arkansas. Their second biggest year was 2015 with 2009 being number one. They are looking forward to 2016 and the BassMaster Classic on Grand Lake. Their business concentrates on fishing. They have no hunting supplies. A clothing line is being explored. Worms come from Toronto, Canada. Crickets come from Mississippi. Fish are ordered from Arkansas.

We were surprised by the lack of disease issues in the live bait. Turnover is the key. They now have back-up generators. Chicken livers are supplied by the same truck that goes to Church's Chicken. The shrimp supplier goes to Long John Silvers on the same route.

Break at Cappuccino Corner

The Banking Industry - Matt Mason

Last stop on the morning walking tour of Claremore was to Cappuccino Corner where we heard from Matt Mason, Senior Vice President for RCB Bank in Claremore. RCB started in Claremore in 1936. They have 180 employees in Claremore with total bank assets of \$2.5 billion. There are 40 branches total with 600 employees. Federal government regulations are ruining the industry and banking margins are thin. It is starting to be very difficult to qualify for a home loan.

Selman Farms LLC - Chad Selman

The farming operation was started by father in 1977 with pecans. The cattle enterprise began in 1982. His dad traded his labor to other growers in return for getting his trees harvested. They now run five harvesters. They have nine employees in the field and two in the shop. Harvest is going to be late this year. They have one of the largest warehouses in Oklahoma. They can store 1.8 million pounds in a refrigerated building utilizing super sacks. They utilize H2A laborers who stay for 10 months each year and then go home for two months. Most of their 40,000 trees are native pecans. The pecans are grown on mostly leased acreage where they have a 25-33% crop share. They usually spray for pecan scab and pecan weevil. They have 1-2 harvests per tree per year and each tree produces 50-100 pounds of nuts on average. There are 14 trees per acre. It takes about 20 years from planting to have an economical harvest. The pecans are cleaned with an optic sorter. Pecans can be stored in the shell for two years. They can be stored longer after being shelled. In the summer months, the farm is run with a generator on natural gas from their own gas well.

Scissortail Farms - John Fulton

Scissortail Farms is the aeroponic farming of lettuce, greens, and herbs. They have been open for one year although it has been a work in progress for five years. Their focus is on local produce and service oriented. There is no forced air because it spreads mildew and they use radiant heat when needed. The crops are exposed to 14 hours of daylight in summer and 9 hours

in winter. In the irrigation room, they filter out the chlorine and impurities from the water supplied by the city of Sapulpa by using reverse osmosis. The result is pure water to which they add a dry nutrient and mineral mix as needed. They are looking for ways to re-use their water. Their mantra is organic/sustainable and “Consumer Aware.”

Reflections and Announcements

There are 452 OALP alumni of which 10 are deceased. About 20-22% of alumni contribute back to the program each year by donating \$30,000-\$32,000.

Some class members are not sending thank you notes.

Most class members thought this seminar was one of the best in Oklahoma.

Accountability documents will be reviewed at the next seminar.

Those not native to agriculture may be the best spokesmen.

There will be a Christmas Banquet in Stillwater on Dec. 5. The cost is \$49 per person. Recruits for the next class will have no charge for the banquet.