

# Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program

## Class XVII

### Scribe Notes

#### Seminar 2

October 1 - 3, 2014

“Southwestern and West Central Oklahoma Agriculture and Industry”

**Wednesday, October 1, 2014**

**Scribe: Janlyn Hannah**

Class members met for Session 2 on Wednesday, October 1, 2014. Group members met in Stillwater and traveled to Oklahoma City and met others at the Oklahoma County Extension Office. From there we traveled to Altus, Oklahoma for a tour of the Plains Cotton Cooperative Association.

At the Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (PCCA) facility, Randy Squires and Joy Cowart met with our group and took us on a tour of the cotton storage warehouses. We learned about a variety of topics such as productivity of the facility and procedures in place for preventing fires, which are the number one threat to the cotton crop once stored. The PCCA sees 18% of the cotton crop yearly. They operate under a “marketing pool” system which protects producers’ interests. Jay and Randy discussed the 10-15 classing offices and the system for classifying cotton. The warehouse is capable of holding up to 345,000 bales. Unfortunately, southwestern Oklahoma hasn’t made a substantial cotton crop in the past four years. The ongoing drought was discussed in detail as well.

After the tour, the class made its way into the conference room for lunch. Our meal was provided by AgPreference: Raylon Schumaker, Ira Hopkins and Monty Thornbrough. Class member, Matt Sandmann offered a prayer. During lunch, Dr. Randy Boman, Research Director and Cotton Extension Leader for the Southwest Research and Extension Center was our speaker. Dr. Boman discussed differences between stripper and picker cotton. He also discussed cotton crop projections in respect to past years. Dr. Boman’s information concluded that this year’s cotton crop should yield approximately 320,000 bales.

Following Dr. Boman’s presentation, the OALP class headed to Martha Valley Farms. The farm is owned and operated by the Muller family. We met with Matt and Kellie Muller. The couple showed us his cotton stripper and picker equipment as well as seeds from various other crops such as wheat, cotton, and mung beans. Mr. Muller discussed the use of lime on his farms to restore the acidic balance of the land. Many expenses and inputs are in use at the Muller’s farm. After examining the equipment, we traveled to one of the Muller’s cotton fields and learned about the irrigation system in use.

After leaving the irrigated cotton crop, the class traveled to the Cotton Growers Cooperative in Altus. The group toured the cotton gin. We learned about how the cotton is tracked and delivered. Mr. Kenneth Helton showed us the different machinery inside the gin and described the process of cleaning and processing the cotton modules into bales. Mr. Helton explained the tagging process and explained how cotton is kept separate from other producers.

At the conclusion of the tour, the class loaded up into the vans and traveled to Eldorado to visit the Eldorado Farmers Cooperative. Barry Trammell gave us a tour of the grain bins and loading station. The facility is state of the art and moves the wheat grain from the two bins, which hold a half million

bushels of wheat each, into train cars. The facility was the first in the area and offers a closer storage cooperative to area producers to keep from having to travel farther north or into Texas.

After leaving the Eldorado Farmers Cooperative, the group traveled to meet with the Holder Family at their hunting lodge and cabins. Mark and Tanner Holder greeted us and took us on a tour of Rio Rojo Outfitters. We learned a great deal about the sport of hunting and how area agriculture and weather affects their profitability. Upon completion of the tour, we followed the Holders to their home for a wonderful meal. Mark and Rick Holder and their families hosted us and made us feel very welcome. We were able to know them better over a terrific steak dinner under the stars. After the meal, we thanked our hosts and headed back to Altus to check into the hotel for the evening.

**Thursday, October 2, 2014**

**Scribe: Chad Hartin**

### **Phelan Ranch – John Phelan**

The Phelans run a stocker and sheep operation in Mt. Park that consists of 2600 owned acres and 1000 acres of lease land consisting of native grasses. Mr. Phelan uses rotational grazing to maximize the amount of grass that is available for his livestock. Hot wire paddocks are constructed to keep the animals contained to 80 acres. When Mr. Phelan determines that the grass has been used to its full potential, he will move the animals to another paddock that has been resting to allow for the current paddock to begin to re-establish itself.

### **Wood and Waters Winery – John Pound**

The winery was started in 1998 when John moved from Colorado to Anadarko. He planted 11 different varieties of grapes consisting of 18,000 vines. The area was a perfect fit for grapes because of the dry and harsh conditions. He installed a drip irrigation system from a 17 acre watershed lake used to water the vines. Mr. Pound had his start when he was in Germany by living and working part time at a vineyard. The vineyard is the largest in the state of Oklahoma making 60-80,000 bottles per year. The harvest is 100% automated and he is able to harvest 4 tons per hour. They also have an Italian steak house on the property serving fine cuisine three nights per week and also host an occasional wedding.

### **Allen Mindemann – No-till farming operation**

Allen Mindemann uses an extensive no-till operation to grow many different crops such as, wheat, corn, buckwheat, red millet, rye, white milo, red milo, mung beans and cow peas. Soil health is a big concern on the farm and Allen has determined that no-till is a leading factor to create drought tolerant soil and ideal soil health to get the highest yields with corn on average yielding 125 bushels per acre and milo at 125 bushels per acre. Gary Scott was also present to discuss soil health by having part of the class climb into an excavated hole.

### **Jahn's Pumpkin Hill**

Mary Beth Jahn was a member of Class VI of the OALP. With a grant from Oklahoma Agritourism, Mary started the pumpkin patch on 80 acres that she and her husband own. She gets her pumpkins out of Texas because she tried to grow pumpkins herself and it didn't work out so well. She markets her operation by sending out letters to the local schools and by putting ads in the local newspapers. The kids that come to her farm are the driving force in doing what she does, with every child who visits receiving a free pumpkin.

### **Horn Canna Farm**

Horn Canna Farm was started in 1928 and has been at the present location since 1946 which consists of 110 acres near Carnegie. In 1954, the farm started using irrigation to produce the canna bulbs. Harvest begins October 1 and lasts 6-8 weeks. About 75% of the products are sold to distributors, 20%

are sold direct to the public, and 5% are sold on the internet. They plant on 10-12" centers. When harvest begins, they cut off the foliage and bale and dispose of it. They then dig the bulbs and let them set on top of the ground and dry for 3 days.

### **Red Rock Premium Beef**

The operation consists of 900 head of cows and crop production along with an all-natural feed yard that handles 2,500 head of cattle fed year round. When the fat cattle are ready for harvest, they send the cattle to a local packing plant for rendering where they are killed and the beef is aged for 14 days. The meat is brought back to the feed lot where it is sold to the public. The beef is marketed at local farmers markets and out of their own USDA inspected meat market onsite. The operation grows all of its own feed so that they can maintain their all natural status.

### **Lucille's service station**

We visited the historic station that sets on the historic Route 66 in Hydro where Allen Entz told us of the history of the station. We then went to Entz Auction where we were served a wonderful meal which was provided by the area OALP alumni. We heard stories and experiences and then left with our host families for the night.

### **Friday, October 3, 2014**

#### **Scribe: Bob Mulligan**

We meet at the Centennial Bridge in Hydro where Allen Entz talked about the history of the bridge and about the Hydro Community Free Fair. The community donates their time to run the rides and concessions to earn money for the community. He also discussed the area landmarks and history along with area land values throughout the day as we traveled from place to place by bus driven by Jack Pitzer.

**SS Farms** - Dean Smith talked about the crops they produce there: peppers, potatoes, soybeans, wheat and teff. Peppers are the main crop for the farm. He explained the Hydro area water availability as it sits over the Rush Springs Aquifer. He also gave a tour of the building where the peppers are stored, and explained the equipment and suits worn during harvest for the workers' protection. Those who were interested drove different auto-steer tractors. Keith Brownback the area Crop Care Professional spoke about the services he provides, which includes various trainings.

Kent Switzer also talked about water issues and how his irrigation pivots are electric and have internet connections to be able to send text messages to his phone if a pivot shuts down unexpectedly or to be able to start or stop them at any time.

**Triple S Farms** – Triple S Farms provided the group with coffee and donuts while Dale Beerwinkle, a consultant, presented the group with a slide show and talk about their farming business. They grow potatoes, cotton, watermelon, sweet potatoes, wheat, peanuts, pumpkins, and spinach. Dale talked about food safety and food safety rules. Virgil and Dennis Slagell gave us a tour of the warehouse where pumpkins and watermelons were stored and explained more about food safety and food safety audits.

**Eichelberger Farms** - Doug Eichelberger and Marla Eichelberger talked about their peanut collection station and the large amount of paperwork involved with tracking the sampling and grading data. In their area commercial and seed peanuts are grown. The farm uses foreign laborers and must provide them with transportation and housing. The maximum amount of time they can stay at one time is 10 months.

**Schantz Farm** - Lindy Clay from the Oklahoma Water Resource Board discussed water issues and permits requirements.

Representative Dan Fisher of District 60 talked briefly about Agenda 21.

Dr. Lynn Brandenberger, a Professor at OSU, works with vegetable crops. He explained the Land-Grant system which provides information and research regarding all types of agriculture. He helps get proper labeling for chemicals for vegetables.

Dr. Jim Motes, Retiree from OSU Horticulture, talked about pepper production and breeding peppers for their hotness. The hotter the peppers the more economical they are to use and the more consistent the products are that are being made with them.

Merlin Schantz gave a history lesson on the land runs in Oklahoma and the requirements of keeping the land. Merlin is the 4<sup>th</sup> generation on the Centennial Farm.

**Hydro** – The class split into two groups and volunteered their time at the Hydro Fire Department and the Hydro Food Pantry.