

# Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program

## Class XVII

### Scribe Notes

#### Seminar 6

February 28 - March 7, 2015

### “Understanding National Government and Its Influence on Agriculture”

#### **Saturday Feb. 28**

**Scribe: Chad Hartin**

It was a very cold start to our week in Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. It started with everyone meeting at the airport in Oklahoma City so we could board the airplane together. At 10:15 a.m. we boarded the plane for our week long adventure. It was a good flight and we arrived at the gate at Dulles airport on time. We then went to the luggage claim where we waited a long time and Bill's luggage still didn't come out so he went to the lost luggage counter to file a claim (weird since we had a direct flight). We then waited for our bus and finally boarded to travel to Gettysburg. We arrived in Gettysburg where we had a wonderful meal at the Dobbins House Tavern. After our meal, we went to the hotel and checked in. After everyone had settled in, we took a walk through the Soldier's National Cemetery at dark and it was a very nice evening.

#### **Sunday Mar. 1**

**Scribe: Bambi Sidwell**

OALP's first full day in Pennsylvania was beautiful! Although the weather conditions caused our tour of Gettysburg Battlefield to be canceled, our group turned the situation into a great Gettysburg adventure, thanks to our leader Edmond.

The snowy Sunday morning was probably one of the most beautiful snows I have ever seen. The snowy day didn't keep our group from exploring all we could in Gettysburg. Some of the group woke up early and braved the weather to see where Abraham Lincoln stood to give his famous Gettysburg Address while others took advantage of the breakfast provided.

Since our tour was canceled, Edmond was able to get us into the Gettysburg Heritage Center! It was across the street from our hotel. The Center was recently re-done and it was amazing. We were able to walk through the halls telling the stories of the Civil War and bringing to life all the events we have once read in history class. The Center had several videos and interactive 3D images. The hearse that carried Abraham Lincoln to his final resting place was on display as well. When we arrived to the Center, the sound was not working in the theater area, but as we were ending our tour, the sound started to work again! I am so glad it did, as the show and display they had put together in the auditorium was really amazing and helped us understand what it may have been like to be present on the battlefield.

Around 12:15 p.m. we departed the Gettysburg Heritage Center and headed to lunch at General Pickett's Buffet Restaurant. The food was an amazing spread! We were very grateful for the All-U-Can-Eat Lunch. I think everyone went back for thirds!!

After lunch, we boarded the bus. Our driver was so kind to take us to see a portion of the battlefield we could see without entering the park due to the closure. Although we didn't get the full tour, the small amount of the battlefield we did see brought chills just thinking of what it may have been like to survive such a horrific war.

The remainder of the day we road tripped to Fontana, PA where we would meet our host families for the evening. The bus trips are always great; as we were all able to catch up from the last time we were together. I really enjoy getting to spend time with each and every one in Class XVII!

About 3:00 p.m. we pulled into the Fontana Union Chapel where Stan Bucher met us to give us our host assignments for the afternoon and night. He made a few comments about a few of the stays and then started reading off the names of the list as the host families arrived. I think everyone was a little nervous and excited to see what the night ahead would hold!

I can only speak for Crystal Cowan's and my afternoon and evening. We absolutely fell in love with our Family of Four! When we were picked up, we jumped in the pickup and off we went. As we drove into the driveway, we could not believe how beautiful the landscape of the area was! The barns that have been around forever were simply breathtaking and so well kept. We immediately dropped our stuff off and out the door we went to do chores and see all the children's projects. It was so interesting how so many things in Oklahoma relate to exactly how it is done in Pennsylvania, except the land is much more expensive and the yields are exceptionally higher than yields in the Sooner State! We had a great night with this 4<sup>th</sup> generation family on their continuously growing operation. We had a wonderful dinner and great conversation, well past all of our bedtimes. Crystal and I definitely look forward to seeing them again!

## **Monday Mar. 2**

**Scribe: Robert Rana**

After spending the night with our host families and sharing breakfast with them, the group gathered at Umberger's. Janlyn was our chairperson for the day and quickly got everyone gathered and on the bus for our next stop at Founders Hall at the Milton Hershey School. (By the way as a side story, Bill's luggage still has not caught up with the group.)

On the way to the school, the group shared their stories and experiences they had with their host families. The experiences ranged from touring local dairies and poultry farms, snow mobile riding, and even attending local church services.

When we arrived at Founders Hall, our host Ken Palovitz greeted us. Ken is a 1950 graduate of the school. He is very proud and passionate about the school and its history. Ken gave us a brief history about Founders Hall. It was completed in 1970 and was built to honor Milton and Catherine Hershey. The administration and business offices are housed within the hall. The hall is used for various functions through the year such as graduations, ceremonies, and has even been used for governor balls in the past. The hall has approximately 50,000 guest visits each year. Ken went on to tell us about how the flags hanging in the hall represent different states from which students have attended. He also explained each mural and the story they represent pertaining to the Hershey family and the school. Also connected to the hall is a 2,500 seat auditorium. This is considered to be one of the largest production stages on the east coast. Each Sunday at one quarter to nine the students gather in the auditorium for service. After service, the students have the option to attend any church in the area.

Mr. Palovitz talked to us briefly about the upbringing and struggles that Milton had along the way. We learned that Milton was very close to his mother, and she was the one who first introduced him to candy making. Ken shared that Milton got his first funding for a business from his mother, Uncle Abe, and Aunt Mattie. Milton tried various businesses in Philadelphia, Denver, and New York. Milton failed and went bankrupt three times before he was thirty. After his failure in New York, he came back to Pennsylvania and was able to receive funding to start Lancaster Carmel Company. From that point on, Milton was a success. We learned that Milton once escaped a near tragedy. While abroad, he had a ticket to travel back to America on the famous Titanic. Fortunately, three days prior to the launch of the ship, he had to leave early due to an emergency. Ken spoke and told us the story of how Milton and Catherine met. Ken explained how the two were deeply in love with one another; however they were never able to conceive a child. It is reported that the two traveled to specialists all over the world in search for an answer and solution to their difficulty. Eventually, upon arriving back to the states, Catherine and Milton decided to open a school for orphan boys.

In 1909, the school was opened. The school was to be for orphaned young boys with financial or other needs. The first class consisted of two boys. As of today, the school has had over 10,000 graduates. Upon his death in 1918, Milton left his fortune in a trust to the school. At that time, the amount was \$60 million, and it has grown to approximately \$12 billion.

In 1967, the school was open to all nationalities, and the school was open for females in 1976. Today, there are five more girls than boys at the school with a total enrollment of approximately 2,000 students. The school is open to anyone to apply, but preference is given to children from low-income families being located in Dauphine, Lancaster, and Lebanon Counties in Pennsylvania and then others from Pennsylvania. However, there are students from many states. Students can attend at any grade if they are approved. For final acceptance, the school considers financial situation, motivation to learn, and character. The students cannot have severe emotional or behavioral issues. This is primarily considered for the benefit of the overall student body.

While at the school, the students (typically ages 8-12) will stay in age-appropriate housing. There are 175 student houses located at the school. Each house has a host family. This family must be married for three years prior to being considered as a host family, and can have no more than two children of their own. While at the school, the children receive free health care, clothing, and food. The host family, on average, are paid \$65,000 a year and have many of their personal needs met. The host family can also pursue a higher education and the school will bear the financial cost for it. One thing we found very interesting is that each student must learn a trade before graduating.

After listening to Mr. Palovitz, we moved from the forum to the Gold Star Room where we watched a short video on the history and the curriculum at the school. Next, we had Crystal Huff speak to us. She is the director of Agriculture and Environmental Education. She spoke to us about how agriculture was utilized in the past and is currently. At the farm, they have multiple animals, greenhouses, and labs for the children to learn and experiment with. She spoke of the challenges that they face in getting children involved in agriculture. One of the things they offer is an internship for sixty kids a year. These children not only learn about various forms of agriculture through the program but also learn life lessons.

Our next speakers were David Morris and Wendy Langan. These two discussed the process that they take in purchasing nuts, and other inputs for the Hershey products. They discussed the worldwide demand for these inputs along with the strong effect that the weather has on them. They discussed how the droughts in California can and have had an effect on their products. We

learned that 80% of the world's almond production is located in California. We also discussed the effect and concerns over the current demand and policies for water use. They discussed how they try to leverage and plan ahead within the market for price and supply changes, along with how they determine to raise the cost of their products.

Next we left for Hershey's Chocolate World. The class took an animated ride, which is meant to help inform people of all ages of the processes taken to produce their products. There were many people that took the opportunity to purchase souvenirs and a lot of chocolate.

We left for lunch at Hoss's Steak and Sea House. Everybody took a quick glance at the menus on the way to Hoss's. After Hoss's we departed for an Amish dairy owned by Elam and Sadie King. On the way, Stan Bucher explained some of their culture and farming techniques. Thanks to the lovely weather, we were unable to drive up to the farm but that was not about to stop this class. Everybody slipped on a pair of plastic boot covers and down the long driveway we went.

We were greeted by Elam and Sadie. They gave a brief description of how their farm operates and some of the functions that take place on their farm. They allowed everyone to tour the farm on their own. Some went to the horse barn, while others looked at the equipment and other buildings. Elam and Sadie were happy to answer any questions. Sadie took those inside who wanted to see the interior of her home while others stayed outside in the horse barn and discussed the differences in agriculture practices between the two areas and cultures.

After the long walk back to the bus (half of the rubber covers did not make it through the entire walk), it was off to the Holiday Inn Rosslyn in Arlington, VA. I am glad to say that we arrived safely and even better news - Bill's luggage had arrived! The group broke off into separate smaller groups for dinner. Many groups went to local favorite places for dinner while others went to try new cuisine.

### **Tuesday Mar. 3**

**Scribe: Amanda Horn**

We departed the hotel at 7:30 a.m. and walked to the nearest metro station. After purchasing tickets, we all boarded the metro and rode to the Capitol Visitor Center. We arrived at the Center around 8:30 a.m., went through security, and then settled into the Congressional Meeting Room North. Because the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, was speaking to a joint session of Congress that same morning, many of our sessions with the legislators were cut short.

We began the session at 9:00 a.m. with Mr. Mark Piland who is a legislative assistant to Rep. Jim Bridenstine. Mr. Piland noted that one of Rep. Bridenstine's goals is to hold the EPA accountable against Waters of The United States (WOTUS) act. When Kirby Smith asked about some of the Representative's other goals, Mr. Piland noted constitutional integrity and determining whether issues should be dealt with at the state or federal level. Rep. Bridenstine feels that a "government close to the people is better for the people".

At 9:20 a.m. Representative Markwayne Mullin thanked us all for coming and described his district. Josh Payne asked Rep. Mullin what his top water issues were and Rep. Mullin explained that he hasn't "dove too much into that fight" but Oklahomans need to have discussions about their water resources. He explained that many in the southeastern part of the state (where his district is) do not want to touch water, however they greatly benefit from the oil and gas industry in the western side of the state, so a discussion about resources needs to occur. Rep. Mullin also explained the WOTUS rule and its wording and explained to the group about a 404 permit. Any

body of water that is “navigable” and deemed “hazardous” by the EPA will be required to have a 404 permit at the land owners expense. This could include ponds, ditches, streams, and other bodies of water. Rep. Mullin mentioned that in his district the convenience store Quick Trip told him their biggest business expense is a 404 permit. If a large business like Quick Trip can barely afford the permit it will be very hard for small farmers to afford it.

The Legislative Director for Senator Jim Inhofe, Luke Holland, spoke with us next at 9:37 a.m. Mr. Holland expressed that one of Sen. Inhofe’s biggest concerns is our military. He stated that protecting the U.S. from our enemies overseas is becoming harder as our military presence and military funding is eroding under President Obama. When asked about agriculture policies, Mr. Holland replied, “We believe you all know how to take care of your land, and we know you know how to take care of your livestock. We trust you.”

At 9:45 a.m. Senator James Lankford addressed the group. He explained some of the committees he is a part of and some of his goals as a newly elected Senator. When asked about his role on the regulation committee, Sen. Lankford explained that they do not make regulations but rather work with agencies to make sure regulations are being followed. When asked about the Keystone Pipeline and President Obama’s recent veto, he said that the President does not want to make a decision on the pipeline so he keeps coming up with excuse to postpone it. When asked about some the President’s recent executive orders, Sen. Lankford stated, “Our constitution was set up for honorable men who follow the law. It is not set up for men who work in the gray areas.”

Representative Frank Lucas addressed the group at 10:08 a.m. He first talked about some of the issues he had passing the current Farm Bill. He said one the main points of the new Farm Bill was making sure all commodities were treated in the same manner. When asked about some agriculture regulations and who we should be listening to he stated, “I trust you, I trust Extension, I trust the land-grant colleges, I trust the Noble Foundation.” Lastly, he was asked if the Farm Bill and SNAP would ever be passed separately. Rep. Lucas said “No” and that the Farm Bill needs SNAP to pass because there are many urban legislators who do not care about agriculture but they do care about making sure their urban constituents have food. Rep. Lucas stated that if they ever are separated, the SNAP bill will pass but the Farm Bill will not.

At 10:27 a.m. Senator Jim Inhofe echoed his LA’s comments that we have to better fund and support our military. If we do not have boots on the ground it will be hard for us to gain new alliances. He is disappointed with our President noting that this is the first time in 96 years Ukraine does not have a communist in their parliament, yet we are not supporting them against Russia. Sen. Inhofe stated that he is worried that “liberals” want to take the word “navigable” out of the WOTUS rule, which would give them even more control of our water.

We lastly met with Cody Hoefler who is a legislative director for Representative Steve Russell. He said one of the biggest agriculture issues their office is working on is a horse slaughter bill. He also discussed some of the offices Rep. Russell is getting set up in his district.

After meeting with legislators we walked to Café Berlin for lunch. The rest of the day was designated for free time and we all broke into groups to see different things. We met back up at Union Station at 7:00 p.m. and took a group tour of the memorials at night.

**Wednesday Mar. 4**  
**Scribe: Shawn Norton**

Class XVII met in the Rosslyn Hotel for an 8:30 a.m. departure for the metro, where we packed into an already crowded metro train. Upon arrival at the USDA, the class proceeded through security and was greeted by Kathryn Hill. Kathryn escorted us to the meeting room then we gathered for a group photo.

Michael Alston, Associate Administrator and Deputy Manager for USDA/Risk Management Agency, gave a short overview of his job then dove into the Federal Crop Insurance Program. He quickly opened the meeting up for questions and there were several. RMA is trying to work out the glitches as they arise. Currently, there is no coverage for “cover crops.” RMA is working on ways to separate irrigated and dryland areas for insurance purposes. RMA, USDA, and FSA have a working group to try to become one voice. Michael gave a brief highlight of his involvement in the Illinois version of OALP.

Jeff Cohen, Deputy Associate Administrator for SNAP, Food and Nutrition Service, explained the SNAP program to the class. SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps, is a small group but has the largest budget due to Food Stamps. SNAP has a website [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov) containing facts and numbers related to SNAP. They have the ability to track usage in order to catch fraudulent use. There has been a decrease in trafficking in the program. There is a push for Framers Markets to be added to the system. Application qualification and processes vary by state.

During lunch in the Secretary’s Dining Room we had an impromptu visit from two members of WIFE (Women Involved in Farm Economics). Linda Newman, National WIFE President, gave a quick overview of the organization.

The class departed the USDA to meet with NCBA. Kent Bacus, Associate Director of Legislative Affairs at NCBA, provided an overview of NCBA and some of the issues in which they are involved. NCBA is the largest national organization in the U.S. They are funded 100% by membership dues and 140,000 cattle producers are represented. The Dietary Guidelines Committee Advisory wants to take lean meat out of the food pyramid and NCBA is fighting the issue. Kent suggested looking at [www.beefusa.org](http://www.beefusa.org) for more information. After several great questions we departed for Monsanto.

Upon arrival at Monsanto we were introduced to Jeremy Stump and Kasey Gillette, Directors of Government Affairs. They provided an overview of their job and then addressed any questions. Producer data is not shared, it is used only by Monsanto. They struggle to get the organic groups to believe that GMOs are safe, and they also struggle with how to get that message out to the public. Anytime a case goes to court with Monsanto vs. producer, Monsanto returns monetary settlements back into the surrounding community. The majority of Monsanto’s research dollars are spent internally. Jeremy suggested these websites for additional information: [www.gmoanswers.com](http://www.gmoanswers.com) and [www.discover.monsanto.com](http://www.discover.monsanto.com). Discussion was concluded and we departed for a wonderful dinner at Capital City Brewing Company where the discussion was centered on the day’s events.

**Thursday Mar. 5**  
**Scribe: Brad Lyle**

We left the hotel and headed to the National Milk Producers Federation office building for our morning session. We were greeted by Karen Kafer who works for the National Dairy Council

and works with the Gen Youth Foundation. She is a register dietician by trade. She was a gracious host to all of us. Our first meeting was with Chris Galen, the Sr. VP of Communications with the National Milk Producers Federation. Very interesting speaker. He told us that 85% of US dairy farmers are in a milk cooperative. He told us that Braum's is not part of the cooperative because it is a privately held family company. NMPF members market 20+ billion gallons of milk per year. NMPF membership dues are based on volume by participant. They are watching a couple of environmental issues that are out there-WOTUS (Waters of the U.S.) and the Nutrient Recovery Project. They are working hard on trade policy. They currently have 12 countries that are in the Trans-Pacific Partnership. In conclusion, the NMPF is working hard for their members and also working to include all social media to put forth their efforts in increasing milk use nationally and abroad.

The next speakers via phone conference were Margaret Speich, SVP for U.S. Dairy Export Council, and Al Levitt, SVP for U.S. Dairy Export. They are in the Communications part of the USDEC. They first discussed how important the communication was to get out in the public because of consumer anti-groups and EPA fighting for rules and regulations on the dairy industry. They commented how important it is to reach out to your representatives and senators since a lot of them are displaced from the ag industry and really know how and why things are done the way they are. The USDEC is an independent membership organization. The checkoff dues are 15 cents/cwt. The USDEC has a very big global presence throughout the world. The dairy industry struggled for a long time to increase milk production but in 35 years milk production has increased by 85 billion gallons. U.S. exports for milk have been up 10 of the last 11 years. U.S. is the world's third best dairy exporter in the world behind New Zealand and the European Union. New Zealand exports about 95% of their dairy production. They spoke of the USDEC's role in the dairy business: 1.) they help suppliers understand and capitalize on opportunities, and 2.) they help minimize the cost and risk of exports. The main focus of the group is trade policy, market access and regulatory affairs, and marketing intelligence and assistance. A fact they threw out and are working hard to keep is the fact that China is the number 2 export market for U.S. dairy products. They hope they can keep the relations positive with China since it is such an important market for the dairy producers. Very good presentation and insight into the dairy industry.

The next speaker was Michael Klein, who is the VP of Marketing and Communications for the U.S.A. Rice Federation. He informed the class that there are 2.5 million acres of rice in the US dedicated for production and 50% of the rice is exported. He said rice is always a great conversation story since most people have not been around rice production. He enjoys talking to people about it and informing them how the production/marketing take place. As in all of the ag industry, we have challenges. Their challenges are water issues and the whole food safety see-saw that goes on with challenges from anti-groups. One interesting fact he said was that rice has arsenic when it's in the ground. It is a very small trace but it is one issue that has been brought up. He told us that on average one person consumes 26 pounds of rice per year. Very interesting fact. We had a great conversation on the consumer focus group they did across the country. I did not put it my notes but I think there were 5 different locations across the U.S. for the focus groups. A few things that were gleaned from the focus groups: they had little knowledge of rice production, they had respect for family farms, conservation, origin does matter to them, and the big debate in agriculture was that they were for GMO (Genetically Modified) free rice. The only problem, as with most all consumers, when asked what GMO is, they didn't know. That is the struggle we all have with consumers thinking they know why or why not something is good for them but they are not very well informed or do their research. Like the dairy groups, the rice membership is working hard at getting online and making their presence known through social media.

The last speaker and our host was Karen Kafer, Sr. VP of the National Dairy Council. As I mentioned earlier, she is a registered dietician by trade. She really enjoys working for the National Dairy Council. The NDC, the nutrition research, education and communications arm of Dairy Management Inc., is a farmer-founded and funded no-profit organization. It was founded in 1915 and has been committed to fostering a healthier society on behalf of America's dairy farmers. The NDC is celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The NDC has been hard at work promoting dairy innovation for healthier products. They work hard at championing dairy's health benefits in five areas: 1.) dairy's role in the diet 2.) child health 3.) dairy protein 4.) sustainable nutrition, and 5.) NDC revitalization. They are also promoting to help Americans get closer to drinking three servings of milk compared to 1.7 servings in 2007. In addition, the NDC works with many experts promoting the health benefits of dairy and raise awareness for it. Karen also heads the GENYOUth Foundation. The mission of the Foundation is to nurture children's health and wellness in the school environment and surrounding community by raising funds, uniting partners with shared goals, and empowering youth to own change. Their goals for the program are to create movement, aggregate partnerships/activate programs and raise funds for these programs. The one big advertising campaign and program for the Foundation has been the NFL Fuel up to Play 60. The premise of the ads is to promote a healthy lifestyle of getting outside and exercising and having dairy as part of a kids' nutrition program. The NFL has been a great promoter of this as well. Karen was a very good speaker and the class really enjoyed her presentation.

We enjoyed a great lunch at the office. Because of the weather, we were not able to have a Capitol tour because the federal government was shut down. When we went back to the hotel, we gathered as a group and shared our thoughts and experiences for the week. As always, it was great to hear what everyone had to share about the experiences so far for the week what stood out for them. After the class meeting, we all met in groups to sightsee and find dinner later that evening.

## **Friday Mar. 6**

**Scribe: Susan Murray**

Due to weather, our trip to Mount Vernon was delayed. We began by going to the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. While we were not able to go inside, we were able to walk around the cathedral and also see the surrounding parks.

Next, we headed to Mount Vernon where we toured George Washington's home, grounds, and museum. The group took a guided tour of Washington's house where we learned about the different visitors who may have come, the uses of the various rooms, and Martha and her children. We were also able to see a few of the different shops and buildings on the grounds which included the slave quarters, kitchens, and blacksmith shop. Following our tour, we were able to walk through the museum which included history on each of the battles or wars that Washington was a part of, the signing of the Constitution, and Washington's family background.

After lunch at Mount Vernon, we visited Miller Farms in Clinton, Maryland. The Millers began farming tobacco in the mid-1800s. Currently, Brad Miller along with his parents, Phil and Shelley, and extended family including aunts, uncles, and cousins are responsible for running the farm. The Millers farm about 300 acres of fruits and vegetables and also have a farmers market, bakery, seasonal décor, free range chickens, and a nursery with plants and flowers. In the mid-1960s they slowly moved to growing fruits and vegetables and transitioned to a "pick your own

farm.” In the 1980s they opened their greenhouses. Since 2001, they have added multiple greenhouses to include annuals and perennials.

In 2007, a bakery was added to the farm. Shelley had always wanted to add a bakery, but did not want to take away business or compete with the neighbors down the street. When the neighbor decided to close several years back, the Millers were able to buy their machinery, supplies, and recipes and open their own bakery. They make and sell a variety of desserts including homemade donuts, pies, breads, and ice cream.

They have divided up the jobs and each person oversees a specific area or job on the farm, whether that may be crops, the bakery, the farmers market, or the nursery. In addition to having many family members work on the farm, they have also had two members named Miss Maryland Agriculture.

Amy Cawley (LEAD Maryland Class X) spoke to the group on the Farm to Food Bank program through the Maryland Food Bank. Amy is the coordinator for this program. In Maryland, there are approximately 770,000 people who are considered food insecure. Cawley wanted to begin a program where food that went to waste on farms could be decreased and utilized by people at the local food bank. Cawley utilizes donations of all kinds and volunteers including pre-release inmates. Cawley works with distributors through the food bank and others across the state. In some cases, foods will go across state lines and travel throughout the nation. In 2011, only two farms participated in the “Farm to Food” program; now over 60 farms participate. The food bank’s busy season for collecting donated food begins in May during strawberry harvest and goes through winter. The Maryland food bank also participates in school pantry programs and school lunch programs.

Following our speakers and farm tour, the Millers hosted dinner for the class to end the night.

### **Saturday Mar. 7**

**Scribe: Preston Simic**

Everyone got around very early at about 4:45 a.m. Bus driver Hestrun Hargrove drove us safely to the airport. We arrived in warm and sunny Oklahoma City at approximately 11:30 a.m. Everyone said goodbye and made plans for our next trip. (Bill’s luggage made it all the way this time!)