Ag Leadership’s Impact on Business and Employees

We grow leaders who make a difference.
Chair Message

Class 45 is half-way through its leadership journey as applications have been accepted for Class 46 and screening interviews have just concluded. Almost 50 years have passed since J. G. Boswell, Dean Brown and a handful of agricultural leaders set their vision into action, creating the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation. They envisioned a future disconnect between ag and urban, and as we know, that is more true than they ever realized.

This year, applications for Class 46 are at a 14-year high. Industry, communities, farming entities and families are benefitting from the leadership of graduates. Graduates are everywhere, using their leadership skills, time and talent to “make a difference.”

I would like to thank A.G. Kawamura and Rob Yraceburu for their time and leadership on the board. Their integrity, knowledge and experience added so much, and we will miss them. Thank you for your dedication to this Foundation and its mission.

The Foundation is working well—great staff, management and the education team work hard to deliver this premier Program. Delivering a Program of this quality is expensive to run and fundraising is always a challenge. However, the Foundation board is working to make sure that the California Ag Leadership Program is sustainable for another 50 years.

Currently, the board is trying to bring the level of the endowment to at least $25 million in order to sustain it in perpetuity. We are up to $16 million and climbing, but it will take help from everyone to achieve this monumental goal. “It takes “teamwork” to make a dream work!!”

Let’s work together to make the dream work and keep this Program going for the next generation.

- Loren Booth (27)
Chair, CALF Board of Directors
L4 Sessions Offer CONTINUAL GROWTH AND PROGRESS

CALF has enjoyed some great interaction with the two life-long leadership learning (L4) presenters this past year, and learned in the process that they (Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge) were themselves collaborators on an educational initiative to bring systems thinking into schools. This was an unexpected connection in their thinking and advocacy. In April, Dean Mary Holz-Clause hosted Dr. Senge at a private luncheon with her advisory board and CALF leadership before the L4 seminar in Pomona. Some of his insights are likely to find their way into the taught curriculum in the future (his book, The Fifth Discipline, is already recommended reading). We thank Dean Holz-Clause for making this intimate interaction possible.

We also want to thank Driscoll’s and Reiter Affiliated Companies for making it possible to bring thought leaders of this stature to California and put them in front of Ag Leadership fellows and alumni and our partner campus audiences. Our next presenter will be Rosa Brooks, who will address leadership lessons from the American presidency. As a popular and influential columnist in addition to a scholar, her byline has appeared in publications all over the world, ranging from Harper’s Magazine to the Washington Post. Brooks wrote a weekly column for the Los Angeles Times from 2005 to 2009, and is an expert on national security, international law and human rights issues. The date is October 19 on the campus of the University of California at Davis. Stay tuned for more details over the summer.

I am particularly fond of the wisdom of one of our founding fathers, Ben Franklin: “Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.” The L4 series is designed to offer that. These sessions are designed for you and for your continuing development.

CALF BOARD MEMBERS STEP DOWN

A.G. Kawamura and Rob Yraceburu have stepped down as California Agricultural Leadership Foundation (CALF) board members.

Kawamura (Class 20), joined the CALF board in 2011. He is the former Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (2003-2010). Kawamura has been active in water policy and serves on the boards of the Southern California Water Committee, WateReuse California and is a founding member of the Delta Vision Foundation. Through his company, Orange County Produce, LLC, Kawamura is engaged in building an interactive 21st century agricultural solutions showcase at Orange County Great Park in Irvine.

Yraceburu, a fourth-generation farmer, began serving on the CALF board in 2009. He is currently the chief operating officer for Wonderful Orchards. Previously, he was executive vice president and division manager of Wells Fargo’s National Food & Agribusiness Division. Yraceburu has served on numerous boards and community organizations, including the Boys & Girls Club of Capistrano Valley, the Kern Economic Development Corporation and the Kern Agricultural Foundation, among others. Yraceburu received the CALF Honorary Fellow award in 2013 and was also part of a California Ag Leadership Program’s candidate screening committee.


Bob Gray, President & CEO
Ocean Mist Farms has had a long history of encouraging employees to apply to the California Agricultural Leadership Program. This tradition dates back to Class 3, when Ed Boutonnet became the first in a long line of Ocean Mist Farms employees to complete the program. Through the years, Ocean Mist Farms has encouraged many of its employees to apply to the program, and has supported them during many days away from the office and farm. Today, Boutonnet and his team recognize the profound impact Ag Leadership has had—both personally and professionally on the business and its employees.

The largest artichoke operation in the United States, Ocean Mist Farms has been in operation since 1924. Early on, a group of five partners set up business in a wood and tin shed at what was then called Del Monte Junction. They leased some land about a mile south of Castroville and began raising artichokes and brussels sprouts. In these early days and through the late 30s, many ranchers had no electricity or telephone service, consequently much business was done by a handshake or through the mail.

Although things are very different today, Ocean Mist Farms still has a commitment to high quality and superior service. Much of that is dependent on employees, many of whom have gone through Ag Leadership in the program’s 46 year history.

We spoke to six current and former Ocean Mist employees about their experiences and got their perspective about how the California Ag Leadership Program impacts both the business and the individual.
Ed Boutonnet | Class 3
CEO, Ocean Mist Farms

The Boutonnet Family is in its third generation of farming and is active in the running of Ocean Mist Farms. Since the early 1980s, asparagus, cauliflower, celery, corn, fennel, green onions, leeks, iceberg lettuce, mixed lettuce, romaine hearts, rapini and spinach have been added to the menu at Ocean Mist Farms.

Ed Boutonnet was a member of Class 3, and even though it’s been more than 40 years since he went through the program, he still feels the impact Ag Leadership had on him and his business.

“Ag Leadership helped us raise the bar in our organization,” said Boutonnet. “We continue to support the program because of what it helped us do over the years.”

Boutonnet says the program gave (and continues to give) him a different perspective on the world. For their international trip, Class 3 went to Japan, the Philippines, South East Asia and China.

“That trip was a real eye-opener for us in those days. In that time, the world wasn’t as close as it is now—now with all the technology, it’s like being across the street.”

He describes the program as “life-changing” and lists it as one of the biggest moments of his life, “It’s like getting married, going into the service…you have four to five life-changing events in your life, and for me, Ag Leadership was one of those events that made a huge difference in my life.”

At the time he went through the program, Ed was a young man, just 33 years old and farming. Now, after completing the program more than four decades ago, Boutonnet says his confidence in the program is stronger than it has ever been. He continues to support and encourage those Ocean Mist employees who he believes should apply to and complete the California Ag Leadership Program. The benefits, Ed says, to the company and to the individual are immeasurable.

Dale Huss | Class 19
Sea Mist Farms, General Manager

At the time Dale Huss went through the California Agricultural Leadership Program, he was a harvest superintendent for Sea Mist Farms. He had heard about the program, and thought it would benefit him personally and professionally.

“I talked to ownership about it, and they were very supportive of my decision to apply to Ag Leadership,” said Huss. “The support of the ownership allowed for me to be gone and when I came back, I worked my butt off to get caught up.”

One of the biggest lessons he took away from the program was exposure to issues facing agriculture in California and across the nation.

“I came out of the program more informed. When you’re shoulder to shoulder with folks in the program, it takes you to the next level with dealing with people and issues from a broad variety of perspectives.”

Huss says his experience in Ag Leadership has benefitted him greatly on both a personal and a professional level.

“Really the benefit is to the individual and to the organization because it takes you to another level professionally by exposing you to different situations you have not been exposed to before,” said Huss. “It allows you to bring those experiences back and give you a new perspective moving forward.”

In his personal life, Huss contributes a greater understanding for other people’s opinions and beliefs to what he learned in Ag Leadership.

“I think probably just the understanding that people have a different perspective of things, and not jumping to conclusions right away, having an open mind and not rushing to judgement with people who have a different view than I do,” said Huss.

Not only has Huss felt the impact of Ag Leadership on himself, but he also sees it in his coworkers who have also gone through the program.

“Their confidence was improved and they take on new leadership roles in the organization and in the industry.”

Art Barrientos | Class 24
Vice President of Harvesting, Ocean Mist Farms

When Art Barrientos started his career with Ocean Mist Farms, he began in the field as a truck driver and worked his way up the ladder to different positions. He’s been with the organization for 40 years and now serves as Vice President of Harvesting.

In the early 1990s, Ed Boutonnet began encouraging Barrientos to apply. He had already known of several people who had gone through the program, and knew Barrientos would benefit greatly from the experience.

“Initially after being inaugurated, I felt intimidated,” said Barrientos. “But as I got to know my classmates and develop confidence, I could begin to sense a change in myself.”

He explains a feeling of being overwhelmed, but knowing that he had made the right choice by going through the program.

“Past graduates would ask me ‘how do you feel?’ and I’d say, ‘you know, I can’t answer that right now, ask me five years from now.’”

Looking back, Barrientos says that he clearly sees the impact the program had on his life.

“It opened quite a few doors for me,” said Barrientos. “I saw that I had the confidence to call someone in the industry and have a conversation about a certain subject— prior to my Ag Leadership experience, I would’ve hesitated to do that.”

Like fellow alum, Dale Huss, Barrientos also noticed a change in individuals who have gone through the program.

“Without a doubt, you see a change after they’ve come out of the program,” said Barrientos. “We push each other, we challenge each other and it’s all good because it makes Ocean Mist that much better.”

For Barrientos and his colleagues who have gone through Ag Leadership, he says working for Ocean Mist has become much more than just a job.

“Going through the program and being at Ocean Mist Farms, it’s a lifestyle—it’s what we’ve chosen to do.”
Joe Pezzini describes his Ag Leadership experience as having a “profound impact personally and professionally.”

Joe had looked at the program for years and knew several individuals, including Ed Boutonnet, who had encouraged him to apply for the program. Once he made the decision to apply, he knew that he had made an important investment in his own future and the future of Ocean Mist Farms.

“We have a unique perspective at Ocean Mist because of Ed, who went through program early,” said Pezzini. “He encouraged us and allowed us the time and flexibility to go through it.”

Joe says his Ag Leadership experience couldn’t have been scripted any better. When the spinach industry was faced with a food safety emergency, he was called on to answer media questions and even testify in front of Congress.

“I relied on my training while dealing with the media during a food safety issue,” said Pezzini. “I was an example of what Ag Leadership should be.”

“It’s life-changing for sure—it helped me develop as a leader, and I came out of the program with lots of opportunities to get involved and I took that in stride.”

Pezzini realizes the positive impact Ag Leadership has had on the business.

“Ag Leadership has had a big impact on Ocean Mist Farms,” said Pezzini. “We’ve adopted some best practices for being a good leader and have set a really critical tone for our organization.”

“It’s an investment in the future of the organization—we’ve had many people on the management team, who are helping to guide the organization, go through Ag Leadership,” said Pezzini. “It’s been a tremendous value for everyone involved.”

Jeff Post | Class 32
Fleet and Equipment Supervisor, Valley Pride

In 1993, Jeff Post began working in a shipping job for Ocean Mist Farms. He eventually moved into a marketing position, then quality assurance. He left the company for a short time and eventually went back to work on the sales team. When he returned to the organization, he had already started Ag Leadership and had the support he needed from Ocean Mist Farms to continue through the program and begin his new job.

“They were supportive of me going through the program from the beginning, but it was difficult,” said Post. “There’s a lot expected—from the program and from Ocean Mist. So I had to learn to balance my responsibilities while I was taking time away.”

Post relies on the skills he learned through Ag Leadership on a daily basis in his job.

“I’m borrowing from skills that I learned and employ these techniques when I’m dealing with people,” said Post. “Ag Leadership taught me to stay calm, never jump to conclusions and to be confident—I use that everyday. To be honest, I’m proud of this.”

Not only does Post recognize Ag Leadership’s impact on Ocean Mist, but he also sees that the program has benefited from the contributions of Ocean Mist’s employees as they’ve interacted with fellow classmates.

“It’s a symbiotic relationship with the success of Ocean Mist and Ag Leadership,” said Post. “Ag Leadership learned from us and Ocean Mist employees have had a positive influence on classmates and the program. I employ many of the strategies that I gained from my Ag Leadership training, even to this day.”

Ag Leadership gave Post the experience and leadership training he needed to excel on a professional level.

“For me, Ag Leadership and Ocean Mist Farms go together congruently,” said Post. “The program provided me with tremendous leadership opportunities and education that help me succeed in my work.”

Jorge Suarez | Class 41
Former Director of Strategic Planning and Human Resources, Ocean Mist Farms

For Jorge Suarez, a former employee of Ocean Mist Farms, the decision to apply to the Ag Leadership Program was an easy one. He had met with Ed Boutonnet, who encouraged him to do what he could to gain a greater understanding about the issues that impacted Ocean Mist Farms, even outside of agriculture.

Through his meetings with Boutonnet, Suarez realized that running an agricultural operation was dependent on understanding a wide spectrum of issues.

“As a farmer, if you close your eyes to the external pressures of business, you might as well close your business,” said Suarez.

After graduating from the program, Suarez challenged himself to leverage what he had learned and to make a serious impact on Ocean Mist Farms.

“After our national trip to Washington, D.C., I had an emphasis on immigration reform,” said Suarez. “I wanted to represent the ag community on a local, state and federal level and wanted to learn more about comprehensive immigration reform.”

Suarez says that being able to understand himself and make a “change from the inside out” better allowed him to focus on some of the issues facing Ocean Mist Farms and its employees.

“I was able to ask myself how I was going to impact the people at Ocean Mist Farms who are from another country,” said Suarez. “How can I use my knowledge and help the company move forward?”

While at Ocean Mist, Suarez was able to develop a program within the company which helped employees understand issues outside of agriculture.

“We had to make our employees more aware and understand issues,” said Suarez. “Things like relationships, leadership and issues that impact operations and management.”

In addition to helping his fellow coworkers, Ag Leadership helped build Suarez to the point where he was able to speak on behalf of the company.

“Univision started talking to me about labor issues. They would come to me and ask me about laws and issues that, had I not been trained through Ag Leadership, I wouldn’t have been as effective as I was able to be. I gained so much knowledge.”
LEARNING COMMUNITIES

By Dr. Michael W. Thomas, CALF Director of Education

Dr. Peter Senge effectively destroys the notion that a corporation needs senior management to do all the thinking and instead outlines the effectiveness of learning communities to energize and effectively direct growth. Similarly in educational settings, he does away with the thought that educational plans and requirements come from off-site administrators. Learning organizations engage all employees or students to create ideas to design and build the community under the general guidelines of liberty, humanity and a collective will to learn.

Learning organizations are places “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together”—Peter Senge, (2006) The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of Learning Organizations, p 3, New York: DoubleDay.

Dr. Senge was our fifth speaker at the Lifelong Leadership Learning (L4) event in April. The presentation was held at Cal Poly Pomona, sponsored by Reiter Affiliated Companies. (see article in this issue on page 16). Before being invited to this event by Bob Gray, Dr. Senge was not familiar with the California Ag Leadership Program. He expressed an appreciation and respect for our organization as he learned what we do — perhaps because the principles of Ag Leadership and our attempts to set up a learning community, have a lot in common with his well-published principles on this topic.

Senge encouraged observing and learning from children in their natural use of shared vision, team learning and systems thinking. An impromptu video was shared, demonstrating children’s use of feedback loops to model the dialogue and problem-solving aspects of a productive learning community. In many cases, children are conditioned to look only to adults to solve their problems. When taught that they must learn only what they are given, (ex. you will do math for the next 30 minutes and only using the methods we prescribe), we may discourage collaboration and dampen the inner desire for learning. (See link to video in sidebar).

Individual problem solving is still important. We need to take time for personal reflection/individual creativity as well as teamwork. Mozart worked alone to create concertos; Einstein was not the leader of a large corporation, but he was a leader. But at times, teamwork is needed to inspire improvement and it can be utilized to create a better learning community — in our jobs, at home and with other organizations we influence.

We all have the advantage of experiencing a learning community because of our involvement with Ag Leadership. Lifelong Leadership Learning seminars have been a way for us to rejuvenate that experience and continue to learn. Returning to the first point on self-mastery upon which all of these principles are based, Senge stated, “self mastery begins by becoming committed to lifelong learning”. It is a life-long process that requires work every day. It is my hope that we will all remember the importance of a continual effort to learn.

Please take time to look up a few references that will help you appreciate Dr. Senge’s thoughts and how they correlate to your Ag Leadership experience. You might search with key words such as “Senge learning organization”. One such article summarizing many of his key points from “Fifth Discipline” is the article “What is a learning Organization?” by Moya K. Mason. It can be found at:

» www.moyak.com/papers/learning-organization.html

» http://watersfoundation.org/resources/firstgradestudents/

This two minute video shows how even children can work together to solve problems that affect them. During Dr. Senge’s April 22 presentation, audience members identified factors that contributed to the success of their collaboration, such as: their desire for improvement; a way to represent graphically symptoms they were experiencing; shared understanding of cause-effect relationships; a common vocabulary to inform their problem-solving process; active engagement of each team member; and the absence of an authority figure telling them what to do.

» http://watersfoundation.org/resources/firstgradestudents/
On Monday, March 2nd, the 24 fellows of California Ag Leadership’s Class 45 began their 10 day national seminar. The trip began with a two-day seminar in Davis and Sacramento where the group learned about how to engage with local and state governments while meeting many government and industry leaders. After the seminar, the class headed to the East Coast for an eight-day trip to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and Gettysburg.
DAY 1: Travel from Sacramento to Washington, D.C.

Tired from a full day of traveling, Class 45 fellows arrive in Washington, D.C.

“With much anticipation to walk the halls of Capitol Hill; see the historic landmarks; meet our elected officials; converse with Justice Scalia; tour Independence Hall and Gettysburg and further understand the leadership actions taken by our forefathers and the way those actions impacted the leaders following them.”

—Excerpted from travel blog by Tou Her, Justin Spellman and Brian Neufeld.

DAY 2: The Supreme Court - A Once in a Lifetime Experience

On their first morning in Washington, D.C., the group woke to sleet, heavy snow and uncertainty about how they would maintain their scheduled agenda. Although there was a federal government closure, the Supreme Court remained open, and the class was relieved that their meeting with Justice Scalia was still on schedule.

“It was an honor and a privilege to sit in the nation’s highest court with Justice Scalia,” said Class 45 fellow, Cameron Mauritson. “To sit in the same courtroom where so many important decisions have been made on behalf of our country’s future, is an experience we will never forget. I can’t stop thinking about what Justice Scalia meant when he stated: ‘If you don’t get the reasoning right, you have got it all wrong.’ ”

After a bus ride through a winter storm, the class arrived safely in Philadelphia and enjoyed dinner and a presentation about the Founding Fathers at the City Tavern, the place where the Constitution was celebrated after the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention.

DAY 3: Taking the Alternate Route

The class had planned on a full day with Dr. Spero, a history and leadership professor at Williams College and incoming Director of the American Philosophical Society (APS). Spero had arranged for the class to review more than 150 original letters penned by the Founding Fathers. However, a storm moved through Philadelphia and dumped the biggest snowfall of the season on the area—prompting several closures. One of those closures: the American Philosophical Society.

Not wanting to miss their opportunity, the class made arrangements to meet with Dr. Spero at the University of Pennsylvania, an Ivy League school founded in 1740 by Benjamin Franklin. The group walked, in 12-degree weather, past the sites of the 18th and 19th century stock exchanges; the first national bank, established by Alexander Hamilton; the site of the first Pentagon building; Benjamin Franklin’s grave site and through Independence National Historical Park (home of the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall).

When they arrived at the University, they settled in to their afternoon session with Dr. Spero, who shared stories about George Washington as a noted innovative farmer.

“What hit home most for us was how the lessons we learned about Washington matched what we’re beginning to learn in sessions about how to empower others so that they actually want to go where you lead.”

—Excerpted from travel blog by Lucas Espericueta, Tyson Heusser and Abby Taylor-Silva.

DAY 4: Leadership Lessons at Gettysburg

The day began with a presentation from Bruce Rice, a leadership specialist and certified Battlefield Guide. The class didn’t let record amounts of snow hinder their experience. They walked out in the snow, reaching many of the critical locations they had hoped to visit.

“One of the more profound themes of the day centered on the idea that leaders of both sides were able to instill inspiration in their soldiers—to the extent that they sacrificed everything in the name of what they believed. The conversations the class had continually came back to the importance of conveying to others why we do what we do instead of just what we do or how we do it.”

—Excerpted from travel blog by Stanley Kjar, Yvonne Sams and Devon Yurosek.
DAY 5:
Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church and D.C. Exploration

On their fifth day of the trip, the class visited the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. where Reverend William H. Lamar IV delivered a rousing and powerful sermon that resonated with the class.

Rev. Lamar talked about the Civil Rights struggles in Selma, sacrifice, power, authority, consumption and harnessing anger over injustice and converting it into action.

“Our experience today has added another spoke to the leadership wheel we are building. I believe his quote, ‘Some people are born on third base and say they’ve hit a triple,’ can be linked to the idea that we owe a debt to others that have sacrificed for us and for our nation. Whether they are the soldiers that perished on the fields of Gettysburg, or the Founding Fathers that were sequestered in Independence Hall during the summer of 1787, or Ernest Green, an inspirational Civil Rights icon we met at the Metropolitan A.M.E. church today. Over and over again, we have seen the power of sacrifice. It is a timeless and powerful force that binds our nation. Today, we witnessed the embodiment of that sacrifice.”

—Excerpted from the travel blog by Chris Jensen, Cameron Mauriton and Jason Schwartz.

DAY 6:
Leadership, Media and Advocacy

The class started their day with a visit to the State Department for a meeting with Colonel Stephen Randolph, The State Department’s historian.

“It was an honor to have access to one of the most prestigious war historian’s perspectives on leadership lessons. As we listened to his presentation and analysis of successful, as well as failed, military interactions, familiar themes emerged. Communication, relationships and motivation are essential tools for effective leadership.”

—Excerpted from travel blog by Matt Efird, Stephanie Gonzales and Brad Lindemann.

The focus of the afternoon presenters centered on Media in America and Advocacy. One of Class 45’s fellows, Brad Lindemann, a producer of The Laura Ingraham radio show, arranged for a meeting with the show’s host, Mark Stencel, the former managing editor of National Public Radio (Washington Bureau) discussed the changing nature of journalism in democratic societies.

“We gained insight into the evolution of today’s news media culture. He described society’s desire for more rapid delivery of current events and news. This demand has created the widespread popularity of internet and mobile news feeds, blogs, and firsthand accounts (Twitter, Facebook, etc.). This trend has forced traditional media outlets to reinvent their form of delivery.”

—Excerpted from travel blog by Matt Efird, Stephanie Gonzales and Brad Lindemann.

Later that afternoon, the class met with a panel of agricultural and land conservation lobbyists which included: Ryan Yates, American Farm Bureau Federation; David Anderson, Nature Conservancy and Maximilian Merrill, Esq., Western Growers Association.

“As we progress through our DC visit, an overarching theme is clearly evident. Leadership is not a title, status or destination, it truly is a journey. We must have the courage to be vulnerable to change and even possibly fail, in order to improve our leadership skills.”

—Excerpted from travel blog by Matt Efird, Stephanie Gonzales and Brad Lindemann.

DAY 7:
A Day on Capitol Hill

Fellows took to the halls of the U.S. House of Representatives. Meetings included a section chief from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Kyle Lombardi, Legislative Director for House Majority Leader, Kevin McCarthy; Congresswoman Lisa Sanchez’s legislative assistant and staff from the Agriculture, Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee, Natural Resources and the Intelligence committees.
“As we walked across the Capitol to our last meeting of the day, we were each in awe of the knowledge that had been shared with us and the opportunity to interact and have dialogue with each one of them. Our day ended with a brief discussion with Senator Feinstein’s office regarding the water situation in our State. Fellows were able to discuss the impact of the issue on their businesses. Although the discussion had its tough moments, the Senator appears to have high hopes and a positive outlook on the future of water in California. Following a picture with Senator Feinstein, fellows were off to celebrate the success of the national trip at the finale dinner.”
—Excerpted from travel blog by Jeff Milinichev, Justin Morehead and Lauren Reid.

DAY 8: The Final Day

The last full day of the National Seminar took Class 45 fellows to U.S.A. Rice Federation to meet with their CEO and president, Betsy Ward; COO, Bob Cummings and director of international promotion, Sara Moran.

“We had the opportunity to ask about the rice industry in Vietnam and Thailand (two of the countries we will visit for our international trip) and heard about the challenges the rice industry has with unfair trade barriers in those countries they believe are in violation of WTO.”
—Excerpted from travel blog by Correen Davis, Rob Goff and Rick Rhody.

After a quick lunch in Arlington, the class met with USDA representatives: Dr. Catherine Woteki, Under Secretary of Research, Education and Economics; Ed Avalos, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs; Jason Hafemeister, Farm and Foreign Ag Services; Kirk Hanlin, NRCS and Irene Lin from Rural Development.

“We were welcomed into the Williamsburg Room that houses a table built in 1983 by Ronald Reagan for the summit of industrial nations. The table is so big that our entire class fit around it. A former DC Exchange Fellow hosted us, Ven Neralla, Director of Congressional Affairs, Research, Education & Economics. Ven shared with the class his sincere appreciation of the DC Exchange program and how the program gave him the opportunity to learn about Indian-American families in CA ag who are multi-generation farmers and an integral part of California Ag.”
—Excerpted from travel blog by Correen Davis, Rob Goff and Rick Rhody.

Before heading to that evening’s reception, the fellows sat around the massive Reagan table to reflect on their experience.

“Though there was no way we could completely synthesize the entire experience of this National Seminar, we were able to recognize the importance of engaging in our political process in order to represent our industry, our environment, our families, and our future. We were told over and over again that it’s all about building and maintaining relationships. However, one of the things we realized is that leadership comes in to play AFTER we’ve built those relationships. Being an effective leader is about having the maturity not to compromise those relationships as we maneuver through controversial issues and advocate for our cause.”
—Excerpted from travel blog by Correen Davis, Rob Goff and Rick Rhody.

National Travel Seminar Picture Captions

1. Class 45 with the State Department’s historian, Col. Stephen Randolph (center).
2. Correen Davis, Rob Goff and Rick Rhody, presiding fellows for the final day of the national travel seminar.
3. Class 45 prepares to enter independence hall, following months of study about the activities that occurred there.
4. Supreme Court Justice Scalia (center) pictured with Class 45.
5. Class 45 at Little Round Top in Gettysburg, the site where the Union successfully defended against the advances of the South.
6. Laura Ingraham with Brad Lindemann on day six of the National Travel Seminar.
7. Senior staffer Kiel Weaver from the Natural Resources Committee briefing Class 45 in the Speaker’s dining room.
8. Class 45 with Senator Dianne Feinstein (center).
Father-son alums, Stephen and Garret Patricio have made it a family goal to establish the Patricio Family Fellowship Fund to support future Ag Leadership fellows. Stephen, a graduate of Class 19, is president and CEO of Westside Produce, an independent handler of cantaloupe and honeydew melons in the San Joaquin Valley. Garret, a graduate of class 38, works with his father at Westside and serves as vice president of operations and general counsel.

“We talked, my sons and I, and decided to make it our mission to pay back what was invested in us,” said Stephen. “Ag Leadership presents an opportunity unlike any other—I’m a big believer in the difference it makes in people.”

Stephen says it’s not only the importance of the program, but also the generosity of others that moved him to establish the fund.

“The other piece of this is people like Loren Booth and the Boswell family who have given in outstanding ways,” said Stephen. “So we decided to start working in our own family towards a goal and it culminated in a decision to make a commitment to Ag Leadership.”

The Patricio family has always been involved in community and charitable events close to home. Now Stephen and Garret have decided to establish the fund to contribute in a way that serves the Ag Leadership community as a whole. According to the Patricios, it’s always been a matter of when they would establish the fund, not if.

“We have been contributing individually to different areas of Ag Leadership,” said Garret. “Hosting local exchange groups or annual contributions to different programs, but this is just something we’ve had planned for awhile—we made the promise, and now we’re following through with it.”

Both Patricios feel the impact Ag Leadership has had on their business and have been genuinely impacted by the program.

“The program was of tremendous value to both of us,” said Garret. “I went through it at a time when it really served me well both as an individual and in this business. I’m a family man too, and I can translate some of the lessons to my family as much as I can in my day-to-day work.”

“We’ve both made connections across many different industries—not just the industry we operate in,” said Garret. “We’re all interconnected through a web of great individuals and it really has been more about leadership development and knowing when to utilize those skills.”
A little bit of rain didn’t stop alumni and their families from having a great time at this year’s all class reunion, April 24-26, at Loren Booth’s Minkler Ranch. Approximately 65 people were in attendance and enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with friends and fellow California Ag Leadership alumni.

“My family and I have attended all of the class reunions in Minkler so far,” said John Schaap (Class 39), who attended with his wife and four kids. “It’s a great time to reconnect with alumni and share some of our experiences.”

Some of the weekend’s activities included a hay ride to the pond and equestrian center, bass fishing, a piñata for the kids and lots of great food.

“This year all of my kids caught a fish, and my daughter caught her first fish ever! They enjoy fishing, learning from the Bug Lady, going on the hay ride, and seeing the horses. They always have a lot of fun with the other kids too,” added Schaap.

Five families setup camp for the weekend on the ranch, including Noelle Cremers who attended with her husband and kids. “It was nice to catch up with classmates and other alumni in a relaxed environment,” said Cremers. “It is so nice of Loren Booth to share her beautiful place with us and I feel lucky to be invited because it is such a special place.”

The weekend was also an opportunity for alumni to reflect about their time in the program.

“Ag Leadership had a great impact on me—I grew a lot through the program and I really committed to becoming a lifelong learner,” said Schaap. “My participation has helped to equip me for some great challenges that have come my way. I am tremendously grateful for the experiences I had, the things that I learned, and all of the people that I met through Ag Leadership.”

Next year’s all class reunion will also be held at the Minkler Ranch. The date will be announced later this year.

“This was our second reunion at Minkler and we will definitely go again,” said Cremers. “Ag Leadership is such a valuable program and the reunion is a great way to stay connected and be reminded of all the benefits it provides to the fellows and alumni.”

THANK YOU! Booth Ranches for hosting the event at Minkler Ranch. Nick (39) and Reana Hill for the delicious BBQ dinner.
EVENT VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION
March - May 2015

March 26
Common Threads
Marsha Vucovich, Chair
Karen Musson, Co-Chair
Ross Borba, Jr.
Gary Brunsvik
Carol Chandler
Shannon Fast
Alcidia Freitas Gomes
Jackie Giacomazzi
Sadie Hemsath
Emily Lazzerini
Debbie Raven
Kim Rogina (25)
Louise Silacci
Rod Stark (29)
Annie Stuhr
Cristel Tufenkjian
Mai Vang
Betty Young
Cindy Myers (22)
Soapy McCarthy Mulholland (25)

April 16
Common Threads
Manpreet Bains (43)
Hillary Bertagna
Nicole Darraçq Bert (37)
Terry Bressler (30)
Judy Culbertson
Sarah DeForest (39)
Stephanie Etcheverria (43)
Sharlene García
Ria de Grassi (21)
Annie King (30)
Shelley Macdonald
Lynn Martindale (31)
Elisa Noble
Lynnel Pollock (14)
Dana Welch

April 19
Region 5 Recruitment
Melissa Duflock (40)

April 21
Region 8 Recruitment
Todd Snider (41)
Jensen Devaurs (43)

May 15
Region 7 Recruitment
Lisa Bodrogi (39)
Dan Sutton (40)
Talley Family
In late April, Dr. Peter Senge, a senior lecturer in leadership and sustainability at the MIT Sloan School of Management and founding chair of the Society for Organizational Learning, was the featured speaker at the Life-Long Leadership Learning Seminar (L4). Senge, who authored “The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization”, spoke to the group of 150 Ag Leadership alumni, fellows and students on the Cal Poly Pomona campus.

Senge spoke about the theory of ‘systems thinking,’ which he describes as “The capstone for true organizational learning.” The tone of his presentation was thoughtful and relatable, which gave many attendees the feeling of having a highly valuable one-on-one conversation with the acclaimed author and management guru.

“He was very enthusiastic, energetic and at the same time, open,” said Bob Atkins (Class 17). “He was a great presenter with a good sound message and was very dynamic in the way he handled the subject.”

A point that stuck with many of the L4 attendees was how well Dr. Senge’s message aligned with what they learned during their Ag Leadership experiences.

“Dr. Senge’s reference to systems thinking aligns extremely well with the principals of the Ag Leadership program,” said Jorge Suarez, (Class 41). “Looking at things from different angles and developing a system that relies on different perspectives to come up with the best solution for what you’re working on.”

For Bob Atkins, Senge’s message of embracing other ideas and approaches to problem solving, really stuck with him.

“The key point I latched onto is respecting ideas that are different from your own,” said Atkins. “Realizing that people are likely coming with different perspectives and taking that into account as you approach problem solving with them.”

Atkins was also impressed with Senge’s ability to make him stop and think about the way he interacts with groups of people and how he can become more effective.

“One of the things that I’m working on, and that was supported by his talk, is looking for ways to positively and constructively complain about things,” said Atkins. “It’s not enough to keep your mouth closed or criticize. It’s much more effective to say what could be done better and to have open dialogue on changing—that’s one of the things I have to work on all the time.”

For Suarez, who’s reading Senge’s book for the third time, the lessons he took from the L4 have helped him immensely as he begins a new job with new challenges and new personalities.

“I’ve followed Dr. Senge for years and I’m trying to be very disciplined as I apply systems thinking to my job—it’s been a great help to me,” said Suarez.
Dr. Peter Senge Speaks at L4 Seminar

For 36 years, Dr. Peter Senge has been a leader in agriculture and natural resources. He served Merced County growers specializing in tree fruit, grapes, and farmland and Mariposa counties, retiring on July 1. As the extension director and advisor in Merced farming industry, the honor recognizes agricultural leaders who are guiding forces in preserving, protecting and propelling Sonoma County's $4 billion farming industry.

Maxwell Norton (12), UC Cooperative Extension director and advisor in Merced and Mariposa counties, retired on July 1. Specializing in tree fruit, grapes, and farmland preservation, he served Merced County growers for UC Agriculture and Natural Resources for 36 years.

Paul Martin (10) was inducted into the Sonoma County Farm Bureau Hall of Fame in July. The honor recognizes agricultural leaders who are guiding forces in preserving, protecting and propelling Sonoma County's $4 billion farming industry.

Bob Lilley (22) was reappointed to the 16th District Agricultural Association, Mid-State Fair board of directors, where he has served since 2012.

Margaret D’Arrigo-Martin (24), was honored by Tom Torlakson, California state superintendent of public instruction, during a forum at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas. She was recognized for her leadership in the Let’s Move Salad Bars to California Schools campaign. Statewide, more than 1,000 schools have received a salad bar in the past three years.

Glenda Humiston (25) was selected to lead (as vice president) the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR). She has been the California state director of the USDA Rural Development since 2009. The ANR head oversees 1,350 people working in 60 county offices, nine research and extension centers, and three administrative centers.

Kim Rogina (25) was appointed to the 35th District Agricultural Association, Merced County Fair board of directors.

Cherie Watte (25) was one of eight industry leaders profiled in The Packer’s sixth annual Women in Produce issue (April 20). The women were recognized for “working tirelessly to contribute to their organizations’ success and increase consumption of fresh produce.”

Michael Kelley (31) was elected to the board of directors (vice chairman) of the Western Agricultural Processors Association. He will serve a two-year term.

Tim Vaux (31) was named vice chairman of Kansas City, Mo.-based FreshXperts. He is also a partner in the company, which consists of produce industry consultants.

Chad Garone (34) and his wife, Ravelle, were among four couples named 2015 National Outstanding Young Farmer award winners. The NOYF program is the oldest farmer recognition program in the United States. Four national winners are chosen based on their progress in an ag career, extent of soil and water conservation practice, and contributions to community, state and nation.

John Arellano (35) was appointed to the 38th District Agricultural Association, Stanislaus County Fair board of directors.

David Shabazian (41) was one of three leaders honored on May 14 at the 2015 Legacy Feast as a leader in environmental sustainability. He was recognized for his work as the manager of Sacramento Area Council of Councils of Governments’ Rural-Urban Connection’s Strategy.

Brenda Farias (42) was appointed to the 37th District Agricultural Association, Santa Maria Fairpark board of directors.

Brad Lindemann (45) and his wife, Kate, welcomed son Henry Stephen on July 1.

MULTIPLE CLASSES

Jason Peltier (16) will take over as executive director of the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority beginning Jan. 1, 2016. He will replace Dan Nelson (14), who is retiring at the end of 2015. Nelson will leave after 24 years as executive director of the organization. Peltier was previously the chief deputy general manager of Westlands Water District.

Bonnie Fernandez-Fenaroli (19), Craig McNamara (28), Michael Dimock (31) and Karen Ross (Honorary Fellow) were speakers at the 2015 Symposium on Food Systems and Public Health, May 13-15 in Sacramento.

Dan Sutton (40) and Abby Taylor-Silva (45) are members of the 2015-16 Communications committee of the California Leafy Green Products Handler Marketing Agreement (LGMA). Sutton was appointed chair.

IN MEMORIAM

Bhupinder Singh “Sonny” Kalkat (33)

Sonny Kalkat passed away on April 7 at the age of 45. Born in India, he migrated with his family as a child to Live Oak. He attended California State University, Chico and went on to the University of California, Davis to complete his bachelor’s degree in agricultural and managerial economics in 1991, followed by an MBA in 1993. Sonny found his passion early in life while helping run the family farming business. He helped expand the family business while also growing his own farming operation. His philanthropic efforts included setting up a fund to help local patients who could not pay for expensive brand name medication and supporting numerous local service organizations. Sonny also made substantial donations to a cause dedicated to helping those who needed eye surgeries in the poorest parts of India through the Sankara Eye Foundation. He enjoyed being an active member of his community, as well as spending time with friends and family. Sonny is survived by his wife, Kamaljit Kaur Kalkat, and his children, Jaspal Singh Kalkat and Karen Kaur Kalkat. Memorial donations may be made to the American Heart Association.

Thomas Anthony Heffernan (4)

October 25, 1944 – April 27, 2015

Tom Heffernan died of complications from Parkinson’s Disease at his home surrounded by family. Born in Detroit, the family moved back to the Borchard family farm in Santa Ana when Tom Sr. retired from the FBI. Growing up on the farm, Tom participated in 4-H, raised rabbits and steers, and assisted in farm tasks. He graduated in 1966 from UC Davis with a bachelor’s degree in agricultural production, then served in the U.S. Army until 1968. In 1970, he earned an MBA from UCLA (where he met his wife). During his career, he worked for the Federal Intermediate Credit Bank, Production Credit Association and Wells Fargo Bank. In 1972, the family moved to El Centro to farm on land the Borchard family continued to work. In 1988, they moved to Red Bluff and Tom was general manager of Pacific Farms in Gerber until he retired in 1998. Tom was recognized as a leader in agriculture and his community, serving on numerous boards, committees, local groups and causes. He was named 1993 Tehama County Farmer of the Year by the Red Bluff Kiwanis Club. Tom is survived by his wife, Claire; five children and their spouses; and 17 grandchildren. Donations may be made in his honor to Mercy High School and Sacred Heart Catholic School in Red Bluff.
THANK YOU

Pledge Payments Received
The Otis Booth Foundation: $1,000,000
Vessey and Company, Inc: $10,000
John Eisenhut: $1,666.67
Victror Packing, Inc. “Madera Brand Raisins”: $1,666.67
Matt & Julie Fisher: $1,000
Matt Toste: $500
Lauren Grizzle: $250

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Class 45 Treasury for the class project**

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Fatima Yriarte*

Up to $100
Sue DiTomaso
Marianne Peluso*

In Memory of Paul Couture
Carol Neel: $100
Patsy Stoebner: $100

In Memory of Sonny Kalkat
Reason Farms: $500
North Valley Ag Services: $300

In Memory of Tom McGrath
Dempel Farming Co.: $100

Alumni Fundraising Events
World Ag Expo Leadership Alumni Breakfast: $93,000

In-Kind
Darlene Din: $20,550
TMD Creative: $5,750
Meredith Ritchie: $420
Kelley Parsons: $372
Jensen Deavurs : $360

*Class 44 project: Donations help Class 44 build a library in Kliptown, South Africa. The money will be used to purchase bookshelves, tables, chairs and to cover shipping costs of books and supplies from the Port of Oakland to Kliptown.

**Class 45 project: Donations contribute to Class 45’s goal of purchasing a food truck for the Poverello House in Fresno. The truck will make hot meals and fresh produce available to rural communities in need.
FOUNDERS’ LEADERSHIP CIRCLE
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Denise Godfrey Family / Olive Hill Greenhouses
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Class 43
Gary and Jan Circle
Class 41
Craton Capital
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Errotabere Ranches
Finch Farms
Gail Gray
George and Janice Higashi
Jeana and Larry Hultquist
The James R. Moffett Family Foundation
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Peter Peterson
Peter & Jim Peterson
Prudential Ag Investments
Rain for Rent
Meredith Rehrman Ritchie
Supima Cotton
Pierra Tada
TM Bunn Trust
Victor Packing- “Madera Brand Raisins”
John Weller / Oji Brothers Farm Inc.
Woolf Farming & Processing
Ken Zimmerman

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Matt & Julie Fisher
Blue Diamond Growers
Syngenta Corporation
Wegis and Young / Mike Young, Rick Wegis, Greg Wegis
Westside Produce
Douglas and Jan Circle
Class 41
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World Ag Expo Ag Leadership Alumni Breakfast
>>Major sponsors ($15,000 and above):
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Dean Brown Golf Tournament
>>Special thanks to Hampton Farming Company
Region 9 Golf Tournament
>>Major sponsors: Calavo Growers and Paramount Citrus
Colusa Farm Show Breakfast
Common Threads, Fresno
Life-Long Leadership Learning Seminar/ Dr. Daniel Goleman

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