

TEPAP

The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers

2023 Report by James Walker, 2012 Scholar

It was great to be welcomed to the 2023 TEPAP Program at the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort and Spa at Lost Pines, Texas. Just outside of Austin the course stands for The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers and attracted leading family offices and executive farm business owners from all over the United States with one Australian, two Canadians and one Argentinian.



The course has significant standings in the US and is prized for anyone that attends or has attended. The course has been refined over the years to continually improve the offering and the organisers are ruthless on presenters if they underperform much to say the presenters were of high calibre owned their farms or businesses and, in some cases, held significant going concerns and investments Agriculture.



An initial observation was the encouragement and respect held for the presenters with no time at the breaks for the presenters to rest and reflect as the participants were eager and hungry for help and guidance in their respective businesses. A particularly interesting aspect was the after dinner fireside business furnace that was hosted by the presenter. This was extremely popular apart from some of the younger crew that partied in Austin if the opportunity presented. The debates at the business furnace were critical in nature and collectively the group would supportively try to openly solve individual business dilemmas which is an endearing trait of the American condition at TEPAP.



The most significant item at TEPAP was labour attraction, retention, and efficiencies. This was reflective of the perceived global skilled labour shortage in Agriculture. The way they were overcoming this had no real groundbreaking aspects only to be enlightened by the Story Telling angle of what we do and why we do it and how we enjoy what we do by Coleen Stewart of Pitch Perfect Consulting. This seemed to resonate, and I use Coleen's angle regularly in attracting staff in our business which we have just bought the local veterinary clinic in Longreach. The US has sophisticated HR businesses with Standard Operating Procedures for most activities for their staff.

One aspect of TEPAP was the diversity of businesses including a whisky business from Colorado called the Whisky Sisters (Stephanie and Felicia Ohnmacht) that were value adding their rye to great success, there was another family business from Omaha that had 80000 acres of irrigation and for the entrepreneurs there was a bloke that left wall street to become a farmer in Kentucky called Quint Pottinger from his connections in NY he bought a farm and what followed was what could be compared to as a real life version of SIM Farm where a bourbon distillery was built down the road and the land and plant acquisitions have been over the past few years at the click of a button. Quint flew over some whiskey for me to take home and I promised to visit him back over there. An example

of the investors that he has supporting him is that one of them bought some full Oil Tankers in the first few weeks of Covid and parked them in the Mediterranean waiting for the market to come back. Every year Quint has an investor batch which he sends appreciation bottles to his investors.

What I took away from the course was the high regard Nuffield Scholars are held with at Tepap its almost as though they place a learning value on having the Nuffield Scholar there in the lessons as presenters continually asked for input from the scholars. Unfortunately, the first night I had arrived the organisers wife of Mr. Mark Welch, at the welcoming dinner collapsed and was rushed to Hospital. Saddened, I checked in every day to see how she was going and once she arrived home to their residence in Austins countryside I sent on behalf of Nuffield Australia some flowers and a hamper with a though full card.

My takeaway for the business are business models constructed whilst over there and during travel for our agricultural enterprises including the Longreach Vet Clinic, 3R Ultrablacks Bull Genetics Program and Organic Cattle Backgrounding Operation. It also highlighted the constraints and freedom North American Farmers operate under with reference to the software our business Agrihive is developing for triple bottom line farming.

Another interesting point was that:

‘Good Operators in Northern America are in a holding pattern with their cash reserves so as to take opportunities in a volatile economy’.

Presenters thought of the Australian case this would be applicable also.

For this opportunity I would thoroughly like to thank with Appreciation Nuffield Australia for the opportunity to fulfill a Nuffield Scholarship and the post scholarship opportunities that have been presented including joining and Chairing the Queensland State Nuffield Committee which is extremely valuable and rewarding.

I would like to acknowledge the TEPAP programme, its organisers and legacy that they should be highly commended on their approach to professionalising Agriculture and I look forward to staying in touch with the people and the presenters that have become great colleagues.

