

## The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers – TEPAP

### January 2020

It was an honour and privilege to attend The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers in Austin Texas from January 5-11, 2020. TEPAP. I am extremely grateful for the “Lorna and Bert Kelly Memorial Award” which covered much of the course costs, and ITravel Griffith who provided return flights to Austin. These generous contributions have enabled this opportunity and the further leanings of many returned scholars.

TEPAP, instigated by Danny Klinefelter over 30 years ago, is held in high esteem throughout the US and Canada. The number of participants is limited to 90, with an application process determining who is accepted. As the curriculum is so extensive, two years of attendance are required to absorb all of the content. TEPAP delivers an intense, all-encompassing program for farm business owners and managers with a goal to turn family farms into professional enterprises. A large number of the faculty have been presenting at the course for many years in conjunction with Danny. The harmony and cross referencing of presentations as a result is seamless, with presenter understanding what content has been delivered prior and what is still to come. The calibre of presenters is extremely high, both in terms of material and their ability to engage their audience.

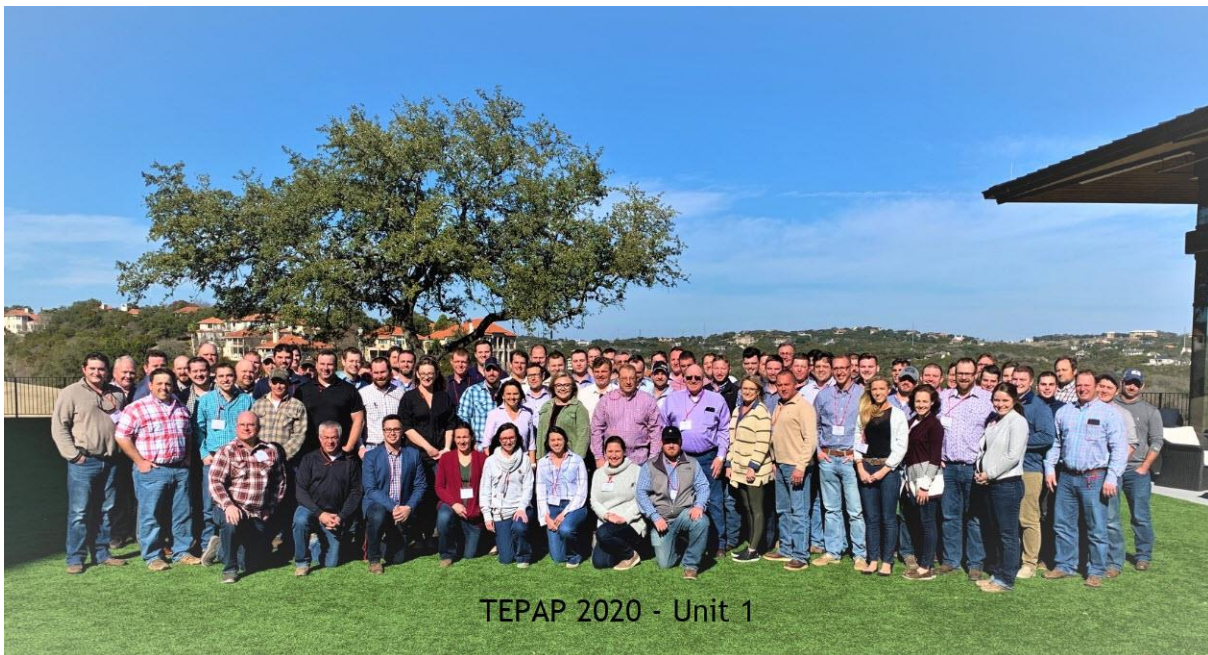
### Topics Covered

- Family Business Management *by Lance Woodbury*
  - Financial Management *by Dick Wittman*
    - Megatrends *by David Kohl*
  - Understanding yourself *by Barb Dartt*
- Human Resources Management *by Michelle Painchaud*
  - Process Improvement *by Dick Wittman*
  - Strategic Management *by Allan Gray*
- Peer Advisory Groups *by Danny Klinefelter*
  - Grad Panel Discussion
  - Macroeconomics *by Ed Seifried*
- Business Storytelling *by Colleen Henderson*
  - Key Challenges *by Michael Stolp*

People and relationships were one of the key focuses of the course. Lance Woodbury spoke about managing family business dynamics and the need for structure and clearly aligned goals – something echoed by Dick Wittman in his later sessions. Lance was able to share tools from his history in conflict resolution, to help attendees have more productive difficult conversations their family environments. Michelle Painchaud highlighted the value of having clearly defined expectations and creating regular, considered feedback loops with employees and team members to effectively manage performance. TEPAP included DISC profiling as part of Barb Daart’s session on Understanding Yourself, which is something that we undertook prior to our Nuffield GFP tour. The larger group session allowed for plenty of discussion about the conflicts, challenges and harmonies about how each behavioural types interacts. These sessions are highly rewarding, yet can be challenging when a mirror is held up to your behaviour.

The strategic management and economics sessions were extremely interesting. Alan Grey discussed the importance of taking time out of the day to day business to focus on strategic thinking. He stated “the general creates the strategy, which the infantry then executes. It is very hard to be the general and the infantry as you only become the infantry. You need to carve out time to be the general”. Good strategic thinking can position your business as a more profitable market leader, which is more responsive to changes. Dave Kohl, tied the people aspect into broader market factors when discussing Megatrends, urging attendees to invest as much in human touch as technology. He outlined the distractions of the modern world were reducing productivity significantly, and that the skill of indistractability should be the best skill to teach our children.

For me one of the highlights of the week was Business Storytelling for influence by Colleen Henderson. We acknowledge that our agricultural dialogue can be directed by other sector participants who are more organised in their efforts. Colleen provided tools in how to build trust and engage with an audience while transferring information through storytelling. Stories are the best way to open the audience to a new perspective, though vulnerability is essential for real connection. The concept of ‘The Hero’s Journey’ was used to outline the method of storytelling to best share new information and perspectives. Colleen shared several introductions to a story which encourages the listener to relax and pay attention, such as “let me tell you a quick story to explain...”



As with many of these courses, much of the learnings and best moments are outside the classroom. The Bear Pit sessions held after dinner with the days speakers returning to answer questions and discuss scenarios was extremely enlightening. Likewise, the opportunity to meet and engage with the other attendees from Course I and the returning Course II attendees. TEPAP was a fantastic opportunity to gain a further insight into agriculture in the US, globally, and develop some real skills to take back to my own business.

**Andy Clarke**  
**2015 Nuffield Scholar**  
**Victoria, Australia**