

## **MARL CLASS VIII - Session 7 - Moorhead, MN**

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Well, it's been a while! The last time our class was together was back in June where we gathered for MARL Class VIII Session 6 in the Duluth area. So having to drive about the same distance as Duluth, our last session was in Moorhead, MN - which is about a five-hour drive for me. Here's a recap of Session 7:

I was on the road by 6:00 a.m. on November 11. Once we all assembled, the afternoon was spent talking and learning about how committees work and various facilitation skills. We were also updated on our international trip to Vietnam that we will be embarking on in February, 2016. I would say most people are excited about this trip and opportunity. Other than the exact days, we really don't know much more about our Vietnam itinerary.

Thursday was our big day of tours. We started with touring [Case New Holland](#) in Fargo (Fargo is right across the border in North Dakota). Even though our farm "bleeds green (John Deere)" it was great to see how tractors are manufactured. Case New Holland is the largest manufacturing company in Fargo, employing about 800 people and they are also the fifth largest employer in the area. Not only do they manufacture tractors, but they also manufacture machinery used in construction. One "feather in their hat" at this facility is they are the most profitable Case IH. Are you wondering why (I was)? They attribute part of the factor to their workforce and the midwest work ethic. And I can't disagree with that. As for myself who has a background in working at a manufacturing company, I truly enjoyed the tour.

The next stop of our "day of tours" was the downtown campus of [North Dakota State University](#) where we met with [Dr. Bill Wilson](#). Let me just add that anyone that knows anything about NDSU and their agricultural program knows about Dr. Wilson.

*He is an icon. Period.* My daughter is a graduate of NDSU and she kept telling me this guy was special.

And boy was she right.

We were all stunned by his knowledge and wisdom. I heard numerous comments from the MARL class that we all could have talked to him all afternoon. Interesting fact - he has been to Russia 88 times. Along with his teaching, Dr. Wilson does a significant amount of consulting.

He is brilliant and I must say, academia needs more "Dr. Wilsons."

During our visit at NDSU, we were fortunate to see the [Commodity Trading Simulator](#)." The advancements in electronic commodity trading is amazing.

Our last tour of the day was [Appareo](#). They are a technology firm specializing in the aviation and agricultural fields. They specialize in custom design, development and manufacture of innovative electronic and software solutions for original equipment manufacturers, as well as direct-to-market consumer products.

*I loved their company's vision. Their purpose? To innovate, create, inspire and grow.*

*And their core values? To encourage risk taking, tolerate failure and reward success and contribute to community and society. Think about it. How many companies tolerate failure? But this is why they are on the leading edge of technology.*

Our day ended with a banquet with our keynote speaker, former Secretary of Ag (under Carter administration) [Mr. Bob Bergland](#). Mr. Bergland is 88 years old and we were all intrigued by his wisdom and worldly views. Much was learned by this agricultural icon.

The final day would entail an in-depth analysis of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza crisis in Minnesota this past spring. A panel of [Mr. Steve Olson](#) (executive director of MN Turkey), [Mr. Mike Starkey](#) (Emergency Planning Director from MN Dept of Ag), Dr. Bill Hartmann (MN Board of Animal Health), and Jes Westbrook (turkey producer) enlightened us to the devastating effects of the bird flu. Jes and her family farm lost 195,000 birds. So sad. And as a farmer, when one farmer hurts, we all hurt and I know I was affected by the AI crisis.

Here is a list of interesting facts:

- Minnesota's economic loss - \$650,000,000
- 9.3 Million birds deaths in Minnesota - (5 million turkeys, 4.3 million chickens). These numbers equal about 10% of the poultry population in Minnesota.
- 110 farms affected
- Out of the 4000 migratory birds tested, only two tested positive for AI.
- Iowa was also affected - one of the largest farms resulted in a composting pile 6 miles long.

Steve Olson shared a video entitled, "Better Days." The video shows the story and pain of what people when through during the AI crisis, but also the hope for the future. Please take the time to watch it - it will be worth your time.

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Many of us agreed that this was one of the best MARL sessions. Our next session? Rochester, MN in December. To be continued . . .