

2002-2003 National Officer Journals

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Photo Albums

[Japan - Jan. 27 - Feb. 5, 2003](#)

Where I'll be this week:
 Indianapolis, Indiana

August 3, 2003

After SPC I enjoyed some much needed rest and relaxation. Seth Heinert and I enjoyed some great times back in my home, the wonderful state of California. We went water skiing, wakeboarding, went to the beach, played guitar, and went to one of my personal favorite events: a Dave Matthews Band concert! It was an honor to show him a good time back home.

Following that fun and relaxing time, it was time for me to pack up my bags once again, and head to Kansas City, Missouri, for some Business and Industry Visits. I arrived on Sunday night to meet up with Dustin and J.J. as well as Jason Givan, who works for the National FFA Foundation, for dinner. We spent the next three days visiting companies in Kansas City, and various places in Kansas. We visited DeLaval, Dairy Farmers of America, National Crop Insurance Service, Farmhouse Fraternity, Blakely Rain and Hall, DeBruce Grains, Kansas Livestock Association, Excel, and Dave Guymann with New Dominion Farms.

It was a great time, and another reminder of the incredible support we have from the agriculture industry.

July 26, 2003

The morning after we finished board meetings our team found ourselves yet again in the airport, this time boarding a plane headed for Washington, D.C. It was time for the much anticipated State Presidents' Conference.

State Presidents' Conference is designed to bring the state FFA president as well as one other officer from each association into one location. The conference is held in Washington D.C. We had a great attendance as two individuals from each association came, with only one coming from Hawaii and Virgin Islands. We had a complete blast participating in the first ever episode of "SPC Street Smarts", and enjoying the perspectives from people all over the United States and beyond!

The primary reason we have SPC is to develop the national convention delegate process. Each state was allowed to submit issues they felt were pertinent to FFAs future, and then the issues were voted upon. Based on that vote, nine committees were selected for delegate consideration this year. Following that, the committee leadership was formed, and work was started to get the committees ready for delegate consideration in October.

A highlight of the conference was a special meeting we were able to set up. One morning all 102 participants, as well as the national officers' families (who are also invited to the conference), and all other SPC guests, received a unique invitation to the old executive office, which is connected to the White House via underground tunnel. We entered a pressroom where we sat down facing a podium and door both wearing the seal of the President of the United States of America. We were soon called into a back room where we were greeted by someone we had met earlier in the year, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman. Dustin (Clark) did an outstanding job of introducing her to the audience. She spoke and answered any questions the state officers had.

Following Secretary Veneman's speech we were called back to the room again, this time to wait for the president to show up. To our excitement we only waited a few moments when President Bush walked in the door. We met him and talked to him for a few moments before it was time for him to speak. I will never forget the thrill I felt to stand on stage with such a prominent and powerful man.

SPC was filled with excitement. Not because of anything we as national officers did, but because of the dynamic state officers you have serving you states. Thank you state officers, for caring enough about this organization to make SPC a big success!

July 20, 2003

One exciting part of a national officer's responsibility that many aren't aware of is that we get to sit as the student board on the National FFA Board of Directors. Which means that we get to make important decisions that guide the future of our organization. It's neat that we really are a student run organization

Our entire team met together on Thursday evening to prepare for meetings on Friday. It was such a great feeling to be back together as a full team for the first time since May! We exchanged stories from state conventions, NLCSOs, and other conferences as well. Soon, however, it was time to get down to business and prepare for meetings.

Friday consisted of meetings to make sure that we were fully educated and prepared to tackle the issues on our agenda. Following that, the next few days consisted of discussion, debate, and votes on major decisions facing our organization. Knowing the members of the adult board, I can tell you that the FFA is in very good hands!

July 13, 2003

Georgia is on my mind!

Following the North Carolina SLC, it was time to move south for my third and final National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLCSO) in the beautiful city of Savannah, Georgia. It was amazing to see the dramatic differences in every NLCSO we did even though it was the same conference.

Georgia was definitely a great NLCSO to end strong! We had three states in attendance: Georgia, South Carolina and Florida. I had attended Florida's State Convention so I knew those officers already, so I was excited to see them and meet the Georgia and South Carolina officers.

The conference took place in historic downtown Savannah on the same street where Forrest Gump was filmed sitting on a bench at a bus stop. The conference ran really smoothly, and J.J. and I both were very impressed with the maturity, ability and sincerity of the officers in attendance.

One of the things we enjoyed was swimming on the hotel roof at night. We even started a "three flies up" game. It was quickly halted as the football was thrown nine stories down onto the hood of South Carolina's Suburban (I won't mention any names). On the last night we were treated to a riverboat cruise, which gave everyone a chance to relax and reflect on a wonderful week. We concluded the conference on Thursday, and J.J. and I were off to Indianapolis!

July 6, 2003

After a few days in California, I was packed up and ready to head back out on the road! I knew I was embarking on an important stretch in my year, including two NLCSOs, a conference in North Carolina, our second National FFA Board Meeting, and the State Presidents' Conference. My bags were full and I was ready!

My plane this time was heading from Sacramento, Calif., to Syracuse New York. After spending the night in Chicago because of airline difficulties, I met J.J. in Syracuse Saturday afternoon. We headed up the beautiful road to the wondrous Camp Oswegatchie in the Northern part of New York State, which was the home of the 2003 "New England" NLCSO.

We were immediately greeted and given a full tour of this incredible FFA Camp Facility. Before we knew it we had set up and our participants were rapidly arriving. The next few days were filled with fun, excitement, and hopefully some learning for all of us. In attendance we had state officers from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. We had a blast playing basketball, (except when Jeff tripped me!), learning about a new top-secret club J.J. and I are now a part of, playing signs, and just enjoying the beautiful setting for an eventful NLCSO!

Thanks to all of you up there for a great week! We hope you enjoyed the ropes course!

WOW! Have I got an incredible few days to tell you about! I just finished up a conference called the State Leadership Conference in beautiful White Lake, N.C. Every aspect of my time there was incredible and eventful! It all started with just getting there...

I booked a ticket with our travel agency in advance to Fayetteville, N.C. (or so I thought). I boarded the plane from Syracuse to Cincinnati in order to connect to Fayetteville. Well on the flight there I was bored, so I was looking at my ticket from Cincinnati. It read "Fayetteville...Northwest ARKANSAS Airport"! I pulled out a map and looked. Sure enough I was headed to Arkansas NOT North Carolina where the conference was already going on! I kept my composure and figured it out, and finally landed that night in Raleigh/Durham Airport, over 2 hours away from the camp.

All that craziness turned out to be a blessing in disguise because in Fayetteville, N.C., there was a severe storm that would have prevented me from flying in at all that night. But on to the fun stuff: my amazing time in North Carolina!

I thought that it was by chance that all of the North Carolinians I had met were some of the nicest people around, but it wasn't chance at all. My experience in N.C., proved that Carolinians are some of the most friendly, welcoming folks around. I was hosted at a camp bought by what was known as the "Tarheel Farmers" even before FFA was in existence! We ate in a dining hall and played Ping-Pong in a rec hall that were both built in 1928!

Even more impressive than the history, the people at the North Carolina Leadership Conference were second to none. I loved hanging out and eating watermelon and homemade ice cream, playing water volleyball, dancing the night away, and watching the amazing state officers work their magic all week!

It all ended too soon as everyone departed Friday afternoon. I was fortunate enough, however, to stick around for an extra day and celebrate the 4th of July with the State Officers and Conference Staff. We watched fireworks while swimming in White Lake, and played basketball and "putt putt" golf until late into the night. What an amazing experience the conference was. I'd like to send a HUGE thank you to all of my friends in North Carolina, I look forward to seeing you all again soon!

June 29, 2003

I feel truly privileged and blessed to have experienced the last couple of days. I have spent Friday and Saturday in Washington, D.C., attending one of the most incredible conferences I've ever been to, the Washington Leadership Conference.

I have a special place in my heart for WLC, as it was life changing for me when I attended it the summer after my sophomore year. But this was a different conference; a new and improved conference. Participants discovered what authentic leadership truly is, and created plans of how they're going to influence their communities in the coming year. It was fun for me just to be a participant. I got my own conference t-shirt and was made an honorary "Little Rascal". I was greeted at the conference by WLCers pouring into the door drenched with water after being rained on at the Arlington Cemetery. I enjoyed touring around with everybody; and I even got to do a flight simulation in the Air and Space Museum!

Friday night consisted of a dynamic reflections at the FDR Memorial, and Saturday we rode on a bus to a strawberry farm. We participated in what's known as gleaning. This is a process in which a farmer harvests their crop of the highest quality product, and then leaves the rest for those in need of food. What we did was go through the field and pick all of the other strawberries, and then donated them to those who would not otherwise have something to eat. What an amazing service learning project in an amazing week at WLC.

On Sunday WLC was all over, and most of the participants had boarded planes and buses to their respective homes. It was time to set out on a new adventure for me. This experience took me to the southern part of Virginia for the Virginia State FFA Convention.

I rented a car in Washington, D.C. and drove about 4 ½ hours to a town called Blacksburg, Va., home of the infamous Virginia Tech Hokies. It was a pleasant surprise that I would get to attend the Virginia Convention, as it was not originally on my calendar, but it worked out perfectly!

I drove down to meet the state officers and conference staff for dinner, before heading back to the campus to find my dorm room for the next few days. I was lucky enough to have two visiting state officers hang out with me as well: Rudy from Florida (who I've known since their convention), and Melissa from Washington.

I enjoyed the convention immensely! The sessions were fun, the state officers did an outstanding job, and the FFA members down there were incredible! I particularly enjoyed meeting all of them as they registered for contests, playing ultimate Frisbee at 10:30 pm, listening to a CD of a really cool band some FFA members are in, and staying up late playing guitar with Abram, a retiring Virginia state officer.

It was such a fun convention that the time flew by, and I was sad to have to leave the convention early.

June 22, 2003

I jetted out of Wyoming as fast as I could, because I was late for my next state convention. As a matter of fact, I was VERY late! Because of scheduling difficulties I was only going to be able to make one single session of the Indiana State FFA Convention.

I arrived late Thursday night into Indianapolis, and was greeted by some of my greatest friends and visiting state officers to the convention, California past state officers Audrey Denney and Anne Marie Diener! Mr. and Mrs. Diener had also come to look at the Purdue campus, so they were nice enough to give me a ride to Lafayette, Ind., where the convention was held.

I awoke early the next morning to have breakfast and be early to the final session of their convention. As I was meeting some Indiana FFA members, Jeremy, one of the retiring state officers, greeted me. We talked and I found out the game plan. From there I got to know some new FFA members, and saw some friends that I had already known as well. In that last session I observed that Indiana does things differently than my home state, and was able to see the pride, tradition, and enthusiasm for the FFA that runs through all of the Indiana Association.

I was privileged to see some chapters I visited during FFA week, like Kouts, STAR Academy, and Franklin (who I have spent a few days with already this year). It was great to be back in Indiana, the "home" of the National FFA Center. I was honored to attend the old/new State officer luncheon and get to know both teams. It sounds like the current state officers are in for quite a year!

Unfortunately it wasn't long before I had to say goodbye. Although I saw only a limited amount of the convention, I could tell that Indiana FFA is an extremely dynamic Association, with members that have a passion for the organization.

June 15, 2003

I arrived in Cody, Wyoming late Thursday night and was met by my good friend and long-lost teammate J.J. Jones! It was great to catch up with him and exchange stories from the road. We spent the next couple of days finalizing our preparations for our first National Leadership Conference for State Officers!

The conference hosted the state officers from North Dakota, Montana and Wyoming at the beautiful camp facilities outside of Cody, Wyoming. J.J. did have to escape briefly before the conference for some bonding time at Yellowstone National Park not far away.

The conference kicked off Sunday afternoon. We had a blast with the crew as we explored workshops and teamwork, two vital aspects of a state officer year to attempt to master. The officers were incredible, and thirsty to learn, grow, and serve the members of their states to the best of their abilities! It was great to work with such talented people! When we weren't at work we enjoyed horseshoes, ping-pong, and enjoying the beauty of northeast Wyoming.

One morning I rose early with Adam, Ryan, Riston and Tyrell (the North Dakota boys), to go horseback riding. It was beautiful to watch the sun rise, and pretend that we were cowboys. All of that lasted until I was bucked off the horse on the way up a hill. I calmed it down and got back on like the "real cowboy" I was, and tried to keep the guys from laughing at me too much.

When it was all said and done, the conference was a huge success! When it came time to leave, I felt like I was leaving not only 24 amazing state officers, but now 24 good friends as well. I can't wait to hear what an outstanding job they do this year!

June 8, 2003

After an amazing time in Colorado, I had trouble thinking that a convention could compare to it in terms of fun, excitement, and just great people, but I was proved wrong as I arrived in Orlando, Fla., for the 75th Annual Florida FFA Convention!

I was picked up and "hosted" for the week by a past state officer and new friend of mine named "Moe". I was a little early so nobody was there yet except for the candidates, state officers, and conference staff. From the moment I stepped off the plane I knew I LOVED Florida! The weather, the beauty, and the laid-back people made me feel right at home! I spent the evening talking briefly with the busy state officers, and hanging out with the "future state officers" (the candidates). We had a "blast" putting together the trophies and plaques for the convention.

I was so excited to wake up the next morning and greet the truck, van and busloads of FFA members that poured into the hotel. I met people from all over Florida, from Miami to Pensacola, and everyone I met was incredible. I felt so at home the whole week because the people I was with were so down to earth, friendly, and very similar to me! I was lucky enough to meet and get to know the Pine Ridge Chapter, which treated me to numerous meals throughout the week. I especially enjoyed talking to people from Miami, and learning how they learn about agriculture, and what it's like to live down there. Shout out to the M-I-A! I was also adopted by the Coral Reef Chapter, and I loved hanging out with all of them throughout the week!

While in Florida, I also had a lot of new experiences! I swam in the Atlantic Ocean late at night during "shark feeding time", I saw a real gator, and I discovered one of the coolest camp facilities I had ever heard of: The Leadership Training Center (The LTC)!

I was so sad to have to leave Thursday afternoon, I would have given anything to stay until the end of the convention and see more of the state which I had quickly grown to love so much!

June 1, 2003

After spending some time resting at home, I'm ready to hit the road again! This time to Burlington, Colorado, for the Colorado State FFA Convention!

I arrived in Denver on Tuesday afternoon and was treated to a ride, tour and wonderful hospitality by a nice family who took me from Denver to Burlington. We arrived at the school in time to join the state officers and their parents for dinner before the convention started the next morning. I enjoyed meeting and talking to each one of the officers as well as continuously learning more about the way Colorado does things. After talking to all of them I retired to my room for a good night's rest before the "big event"!

The next morning I was granted a ride by a chapter that I ended up spending a lot of time with that week. They were kind enough to "rescue" me from the rainy walk to the convention site. I spent the rest of the day getting to know numerous members from all over the state as everyone arrived. I watched the FFA Creed Contest and saw some INCREDIBLE speakers at a young age, show us how it was done! Later that day I saw the amazing state officers kick off the conference with a bang! Something I had never seen before included a Patriotic observance with a fly over and skydivers escorting a giant American Flag down from the sky! It was an incredible sight to see!

I spent the next few days truly getting to know the amazing members of the Colorado FFA Association. Whether I was hanging out with them at the park, watching the volleyball tournament, riding the carousel, hitching rides, or stealing pizza lunches, I was constantly having the time of my life. To the state officers: Congratulations on a job very well done, and to all my new friends: Thanks for everything, and I can't wait to see you all at the 2003 National FFA Convention!

May 30, 2003

What a BLAST I had these past few days! WHOA it has been AWESOME! I've enjoyed the scenery of "The Leadership Center" (TLC) in beautiful Aurora, Nebraska, with my friends at the COLT Conference!

I arrived Wednesday afternoon and had lunch with Andy Osten, a good friend of mine and past Nebraska State FFA Officer. Beau and Jill, two current state officers who picked me up and escorted me to the convention site, then met me. I enjoyed talking and getting to know all of these dynamic officers. Not only Beau and Jill, but Megan, Ryan, Adam (Wallace), Becky and Miranda did an OUTSTANDING job throughout the entire conference! They even made me feel part of the team for the duration of my stay, which was especially cool for me!

The conference started Thursday morning. I enjoyed making new friends like Jared, Jon, Shane, Amy, Eric, Beverly and Megan. I had a blast playing football with the guys (even though we were accidentally late to a session), and sitting in on the different breakouts, admiring the state officers at work. I even enjoyed getting made fun of about being sweaty (Tyler).

Whether I was playing football, kickball, learning to play pitch (10 pt.), or swimming in the pool, this

conference was a nonstop great time! The reflections were especially powerful to me and the members involved. Thanks to the chapter and state officers, Amy, "Sport" and Donnie for making this so memorable for me!

May 25, 2003

What an experience in Aggieland, USA!! I had an amazing time visiting Texas A&M University and piloting NLCSO! J.J. and I both had a blast with our class. We spent four days presenting the National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLCSO) with college students. It was a blast to get to know the students find out about all of the tradition that the University has, and see the huge campus!

The most rewarding experience, however, was the fact that our team together completed our very first NLCSO's and we're ready to now present to excited state officers! I can't wait until a few weeks from now when we're presenting to Officers in Wyoming!

From Texas I immediately flew home to Santa Rosa for the Elsie Allen FFA Annual Chapter Banquet. It was a lot of fun to see old friends and be home with my chapter and where my entire FFA experience took began. I enjoyed seeing my advisor, Mrs. O'Kelley, and watching my sister and the rest of her officer team in action. Great job, Elsie Allen, keep up the good work!

May 18, 2003

I arrived in College Station, Texas, home of the Texas A & M Aggies on Sunday afternoon. However, it was a short stay for the time being. I spent the next couple of days preparing myself for NLCSO, as well as learning quite a bit from Dustin about what "Aggie Pride" was all about!

On Wednesday afternoon I departed College Station in route to Buffalo, New York for the New York State FFA Convention. Mrs. Moore picked me up from the airport and we made the drive to the site of the 2003 State Convention in beautiful New York State.

Now for this California boy, realizing that New York was more than just a huge city was a big leap for me to make. But I LOVED seeing the beautiful agriculture and landscape that abounds New York. The only thing better than the scenery was the people I met. The New York State Officers were extremely friendly and a lot of fun to hang around. In New York I addressed the Nominating Committee, watch the talent show, give my speech and workshop, and meet a TON of great people! One highlight was getting to meet the band "Disparity" and hang out with those guys, they were awesome!

My departure from New York came way to quickly, but it was time to get back and help J.J., my NLCSO partner with our conference. David, an old friend from New York, drove me back to the airport Friday afternoon so I could start teaching at Texas A & M on Saturday.

May 11, 2003

What a trip! I just came back from the smallest state in terms of land mass, but one of the biggest in terms of heart and hospitality. I had a wonderful time at the Rhode Island State Convention.

My adventures began when I arrived on Friday afternoon. Shane and Cheri escorted me to the school where some of the activities were taking place. I watched some of the awesome demonstrations by the members. Whether it was changing brakes, installing irrigation techniques, floral arrangements or making cribbage boards, I learned a lot! The officers and I spent a lot of the afternoon hanging out together before we went to dinner. It was amazing to see the Atlantic Ocean in full bore! We had dinner at a nice little seafood place on the water.

The next day was packed full of their state convention. I watched contests, gave a speech and a workshop, and enjoyed watching the dedicated officers at work. A highlight for me was getting to watch the incredible talent acts they had there. I saw Cowboy Bob sing and play guitar, watched the state officers go nuts with silly string, and was blown away by the fun spirit of these fantastic members! That night we wrapped up the conference by having a big dinner with some of the retiring and incoming officers. I was sad to leave my new friends early the next morning to Texas.

May 4, 2003

These past few days have been filled with yet more "eye-opening" experiences. All year I have witnessed the power of the organization from a member's perspective. This past week I have seen the amazing power of our organization from an industry perspective as well.

I flew into Atlanta, Georgia, on Sunday, and was picked up by my good friend Joel McKie. Joel and I

grabbed some food and headed to our hotel. The next day included two visits: INJOY and Merial. We started at INJOY, joined by National FFA Staff Members Jana Jaure and Andy Armbruster. We visited with the staff of this John Maxwell owned organization. It was very insightful to discuss leadership philosophy as well as learn about what the company is all about. Next our good friends at Merial treated us to lunch. We then headed down to Joel's home just in time for a good home-cooked supper by his mom.

The next day I got the awesome privilege of attending a chapter banquet with Joel. Great job to Mr. McKie and all of his crew!

Finally the week ended with a trip back to Indianapolis for some meetings. On Wednesday I saw two friends from Tractor Supply Company, Jerry and Gina, and we met about FFAs brand and what our organization was all about. Thursday included the Sponsor Board Meeting and a tour of downtown Indianapolis. A great time was had by all!

April 27, 2003

"Unbelievable!" Is definitely a word I would use to describe my experience at my last state convention. I spent the last few days in one of the most intriguing and beautiful states I've ever attended. Palmer, Alaska, was the home of the 2003 Alaska State FFA Convention, and an experience I will never forget.

My plane arrived an hour late into Anchorage on Tuesday afternoon. Colton and Justin, two of the state officers, were waiting for me. They escorted me to the Palmer Train Depot, where I met the other officers Calvin, Amy, Cameron and Brad, as well as the visiting state officer Rick from Washington. I helped them out where I could with their preparations and tried to stay out of their way as they prepared for the events scheduled to occur the next few days.

The next couple of days were packed full of friends, fun, contests, more friends, and some exciting and inspiring sessions by the state officers. I met people like Rory, Ryan, Morgan, Matt, Jessica, Lynette, Bryan, Clint, Hal, Luke and Katlin. I hung out with new friends like Jarod (aka "Chef Ja-rod"), who called me "Tim the Tool Man Cool Man" and Timitude. I loved presenting workshops with Rick, and getting to play a role in the convention. I had unforgettable times playing Frisbee with the KCC crew, juggling soccer with my new Palmer friends, and guitar with everyone (thanks Katlin), playing "signs" with whoever would play, and just getting a chance to make more Northwestern friends than I ever could have thought possible.

The last day of the conference included many incredible experiences. It started off with a flag raising and a convention session. Then I hung out with all of the contest participants and enjoyed their nervous company. A while after lunch a group of Palmer FFA members took me to "The Butte". It was a small mountain outside of town that we could hike up, (well, at least I thought I could hike up it). After seeing my first reindeer farm, we took off up the mountain. Soon after you could find me in the back of the pack huffing and puffing like someone who had just finished a marathon. But thanks to the encouragement of some inspirational (and athletic) FFA members, I was able to make it to the top! Following that, Megan Meekin, an FFA member from Palmer, took me to meet her dad. He was an experienced pilot, who frequently took people on aerial tours of Alaska, and I was going to get one! We went up in the two-seater, saw mountain goats and moose, and a huge glacier! It was most definitely an experience I will never forget! Following that, it was time for the awards banquet, where I spoke and rooted on my new friends as they received awards for their hard work. After a few minutes of the short dance, it was time to head off to the airport for my 1:20 a.m. flight.

April 20, 2003

On Wednesday morning I loaded up the Nissan Frontier and set out for my only state convention that I'm going to get to drive to from my house this year. I picked up Joel at the Fresno Airport and we were settled in to the Radisson Hotel, ready to start the 75th Annual California State FFA Leadership Conference.

We met up with the State Officers, and were able to join them for the "last supper" before the activities were to commence. The next day you could find Joel and I wandering around contests that day. I did exactly what I was looking forward to doing: finding all my old friends, and meeting new ones as well. I got to meet up with friends like Greg, Abigail, Gracee, Brendan, Summer, Elissa, Heather and Luis, not to mention my old friends from Orestimba FFA! We then attended the Executive Committee Meeting where I met all of the newly elected region presidents and learned about what's been happening in California. Friday my time was spent preparing for workshops, watching Parliamentary Procedure, and hanging out with some great people.

I was honored to attend the President's Dinner with the 61 dynamic State FFA Officer candidates, the nominating committee, state officers and state staff. Following that Joel and I assisted with the Candidate Screening Process, getting to know each candidate better. I was glad I didn't have to be

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the one making the decisions! We taught the candidates the Standing "O", originated by our crazy National Officer Team. A lot of Saturday was spent in the lobby of the hotel, welcoming FFA members as they came in, having long conversations with good friends, and just enjoying the outstanding company of California FFA members! That night I stepped out of my O.D. and into some regular dress clothes to attend the past state officer reunion and join about 180 other past state officers in a reception and dinner. It was an incredible sight to see and to be a part of.

Saturday night held the opening session of the conference. Seeing the officers rappel in from the arena roof, being blown away by the fireworks, and being showered with confetti were some of the amazing and special aspects of the conference the officers added on this year. Each session of the conference made an impact with the Ras of each officer and six of my greatest friends, Tyler, Audrey, Mark, Amber, Anne Marie and Bryan, was a highlight for me. I was extremely impressed also with the candidate speeches given by the 12 individuals slated for state office. Congratulations and best of luck to the new State officer team: Nicolina, Collette, Erica, Lindsey, Megan and Tommy, you'll do a great job!

I can't describe how wonderful it felt to be back with the members of California FFA. Thank you to all of you for being my friends and my California FFA Family!

April 13, 2003

After Massachusetts I spent a couple of days in New York. In which I was able to fulfill a personal dream of attending a Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds acoustic duet concert in Rhode Island. I was also able to see sights in New York City before heading down to Washington, D.C., to begin the next week.

I arrived in D.C. on Sunday and met up with my cohorts Dustin, Joel and eventually Seth. We spent the week making visits around our nation's capital. We visited congressmen, organizations, the USDA, and even had the opportunity to have lunch with Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman. The week was intense, but we were able to really spread the message of what the FFA does to some key decision makers. It was enjoyable to see how many people in D.C. are familiar with FFA and have some sort of tie to the organization.

Being in Washington, D.C., reminded me of how proud I am. Proud to be a part of an organization based around agriculture; an industry that sustains our livelihood; hard working, under-appreciated vocation that is among the most honorable of professions. I was reminded of how proud I am to be an American; of our traditions, principles and values. I hope all of you are proud of the same things.

April 6 , 2003

I woke up at about 8:30 in the morning. I was expecting some cold, overcast weather, so I was surprised to see the sun peeking through my hotel window. I went over to the window, looked outside, and saw something incredible. A beautiful white lake with people standing on it fishing! I was taken back and just had to sit in awe of it for a while.

This, in a way, symbolized my week at the Massachusetts State FFA Convention. I was in awe of many things that week. How kind and welcoming everyone was, how cool the members were, and how outstanding of a job the state officers did. My day began by meeting up with Ms. LaFleur and the state officers to get my information about the conference. Tim, Tiesha and the other officers showed me around. The rest of the morning and afternoon was a blast as I presented a couple of workshops and met some incredible members from the great state of Massachusetts.

That night kicked off the first session of the convention. Melanie and the rest of the officers did an outstanding job conducting the session. I was honored to bring a few remarks on behalf of the organization and enjoy the energy of every person present. I spent the rest of the evening in casual clothes conversing with some of the friends I met during the day and meeting new ones around the pool and atrium area around the hotel. I spent some time getting to know the state officer candidates as they spent their time waiting outside "the room." Candidates like Danielle and Prissy inspired me with their love for the FFA and desire to serve as an officer.

The next day held more fun, excitement, and friends. I presented four workshops to outstanding people, and met friends like Bri, Dan and Cara. That night I attended the awards banquet and watch excited members from Norfolk win some big awards. I presented a keynote there, and then boogied down at the dance!

The last day was amazing. I will remember it for a long time for many reasons. To see the state officer team who I became friends with be replaced by the state officer candidates that I got to know as well was really cool. I walked on the lake that afternoon too! It was hard to say goodbye to all the wonderful friends I made out there, but I made all of them promise to be at the National FFA

Convention this fall! Thank you Massachusetts!

March 30, 2003

Joel and I arrived into Indianapolis on Friday evening. Saturday kicked off the beginning of a new event to hit National FFA, Spring Training Academy. At this academy us, the National Officers were joined by the presenters of the Washington Leadership Conference and the Blast-Off Conference. We were given dynamic training by people such as Mark Reardon, a teaching and presentation specialist.

Saturday was spent planning and preparing for the National Leadership Conference for State Officers. We planned activities we were going to do at the conference, and went over the curriculum we're going to present. Sunday was spent learning key presentation skills, concepts and techniques to help us as we present our conferences. Then I had the opportunity to present a chunk of the curriculum to the rest of the members of the conference. I had a blast and was blown away by the quality of people and presenters that represent National FFA at these conferences.

I ended my Sunday by hopping on a plane headed for TF Green Airport in Providence, Rhode Island. Arriving there a little after midnight, I rented a car and made the two hour drive to a beautiful part of rural Massachusetts for my next state convention experience.

March 23, 2003

Although it faced some pretty tough competition with the Michigan State Convention, my next week of chapter visits was extremely enjoyable. We began the week by heading back to North Carolina where we got to visit NASCAR! Other visits included Carquest, jobhog.net, Michelin Tires, Murphy Brown Hog Farms and Lowe's.

Out of North Carolina, I was excited to go to one of the greatest cities in the world, New York City, for the very first time! It was quite an eye-opening experience! Joel and I joined Jana from the FFA Foundation to visit companies in the city such as AOL Time Warner, Pfizer, and Alphaarma.

March 16, 2003

We flew into South Bend, Indiana from North Carolina on a Thursday evening. Joel and I drove the next day up to Cassopolis, Michigan, for our team's Winter Retreat. We stayed in stationary boxcars in a place called the Edward Lowe Foundation.

Our retreat included training as well as time to really focus on State Conventions, National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLCSO), and some personal growth. I was only there for two days before having to depart my team for the organization's first state convention.

I drove the rental car from Cassopolis up to Lansing, Michigan, the home of the Michigan State Spartans, and the Michigan State FFA Convention. Words can't describe the incredible time I had there. I was hosted by past state officers like Jeremy. Everyone was so welcoming! I met state officer candidates Seth, Greg, Katy and Amanda. They were awesome, and I know that the new team will do a fantastic job! I made some great new friends like Aaron, Scott, Samantha, Jessica and plenty more! I gave a workshop on Monday, and from there was free to meet and hang out with the wonderful members of the Michigan FFA Association! One of the highlights for me was the outstanding Junior Banquet. This is a program only for juniors, recognizing them for their accomplishments in the FFA. Each one was well deserving and model FFA members. From dancing with everyone at the dance to being harassed by Cass (about my ducks) to talking to nervous contest participants (you know who you are) to just talking with sitting and talking with FFA members, Michigan State Convention was the ultimate way to kick off my convention experience!!

Special thanks to all of the state officers, and to the Butters family (all of you) for making me feel so welcome!

March 9, 2003

This was first time in Nashville, and it is awesome! We were there visiting the company of our sponsor board's chairman, Mr. Jerry Brase. He showed us an amazing time in the capital of country music. Although not a HUGE country fan before then, seeing things like the Grand Ole Opry, the Country Music Hall of Fame, and CMT changed my perspective. Guess what?! I actually got to meet John Michael Montgomery too! Jana, who works for National FFA, and I had our picture taken with him! It was random, but really fun! We had a blast exploring the city and learning about how to act on business and industry visits.

One of the highlights from the weekend was Sunday evening. We were able to hang out with a

dynamic group of state officers who represent the great state of Tennessee! Every one of them that was there was just an incredible person, and have now become what I would consider good friends. We ate, conversed, and played arcade games with all of them. E-mail Seth or one of them and ask who won the air hockey tournament!!!!

From there we went right into our first week of business and industry visits. Joel and I headed for Atlanta, Georgia. From there we worked our way up to North Carolina, visiting companies such as Home Depot, Georgia Pacific, BASF, Ag Data, and Bayer. We learned a great deal about how the corporate world works, and how diverse and great our industry truly is.

March 2, 2003

Nothing could have prepared me for my FFA week experience! I was all ready the weekend before. I was going to spend a couple of days in Washington, D.C., visit my congressional leaders, USDA, and USDE. From there I was off to two exciting days in Maryland and Delaware. I was pumped.

However, as some of you may know, that very same week Mother Nature had something very different in mind. Washington D.C., Maryland, Delaware, and most of the Eastern United States were hit with one of the worst storms they'd seen in a long time. The airports were closed, schools were shut down, and people were snowed into their homes. I sat in Indianapolis, hoping for something to change so that I could still carry on my week. Well, that miracle didn't come, but another one did.

After I accepted the fact that it wasn't going to be possible for me to go east that week, I contacted the Indiana FFA Association. They provided me with some chapters in the state that would host me for a day or so. I ended up going up to land of the infamous Indiana FFA Jug band! I had a blast listening to them play during breakfast, and we were actually on to the radio station! Congratulations to Matt and the guys! I spent the rest of the day visiting the two surrounding chapters and learning about some great ag programs up there. The next day I was able to set up a visit with Star Academy in Indianapolis. What a cool program that was! It's in urban Indy, and they have some awesome students who are doing some great stuff in FFA! I enjoyed talking with a couple of the classes, and hanging out with some new friends! I ended my FFA Week Experience making some pancakes with the members of the Franklin FFA Chapter. We all hung out in the shop turned kitchen, making sausage, eggs, and pancakes, and just having a great time. I wish I could have stayed longer because I was having a blast! It was great to meet a lot of members there, and see friends that I had met from my previous trip to Franklin.

I ended my week recording a couple of videos for the USDA website, and the soon to come WLC website, before hopping in the van with some of National FFA Staff, and making my way to my next adventures in Nashville, Tennessee!

Feb. 23, 2003

I arrived in Indianapolis from Japan on Wednesday evening for the State Staff In-Service. Over the next two days, I enjoyed catching up with some state staff friends, making new ones and learning about how different states function. I really enjoyed talking to each one of them, and thought the In-Service was a huge success!

On Friday evening I flew from Indianapolis to Charleston, West Virginia. Nathan and Roger, who are past West Virginia State Officers, met me there. They took me to Jackson County, for the West Virginia Winter Leadership Conference. I loved the scenery, and while driving to the facilities we actually got hit by a deer! (Strange how that works). I had a BLAST at the conference the next day! The people of West Virginia were so awesome! Only the state officers knew that I was coming, so they introduced me to the rest of the members on Saturday morning at the flag raising ceremony. The rest of the day I was able to just hang out with some really cool members, while we enjoyed outstanding workshops by the state officers, past state officers and Mr. Burdette, the WV Executive Secretary. I want to say again great job to Charlie, Jessica, Eden, Amanda, Nona, Kaela, Tim, Jess, Laura and all the other presenters!

After the workshops I had the opportunity to join some FFA members in the flag lowering ceremony, which placed special emphasis on the loss of our space heroes in Columbia. Then I gave a keynote address that night and answered questions from FFA members. The conference concluded for me with a fun dance before retiring to bed.

The next day was a flight for me from West Virginia on home to Sacramento, CA. The next few days consisted of rest, relaxation, and getting caught up on some of my e-mails and work I had to do. Until next time!

Feb. 9, 2003

Konichiwa! Konbanwa! Tim Hammerich des. Hajemimashite. Yoroshko ona gei shimas! I just experienced a week in one of the most intriguing places I have ever been.

Ohayo Gozaimas (Good Morning)! The day after the Board Meetings the team and I, along with our two managers, Melinda Findley and Tiffany Sanderson, and Marshall Stewart from North Carolina, made the 14 hours or so flight to Tokyo, Japan. We were greeted by the ultimate sensei (teacher), our guide Hiro. We went to the hotel and slept off the jet lag to get ready for a wonderful week in Japan.

Go Sho Shin Wa? (Where are you from?). We spent the next day visiting the U.S. Embassy in Japan, and sightseeing around Tokyo. Then we woke up bright and early the next morning to go to an awesome fish market, where they would auction off huge tuna! It was a sight I will never forget! We then visited the Japanese company that was nice enough to sponsor our trip, Mitsui. We learned all about the company, met the C.O.O. Satosan (Mr. Sato), and attended a social that night. I ate a TON of Sushi, and we all had a blast! But that wasn't it! From there we went to Kareoke Kan (karaoke house) and joined the "young Mitsui crowd" for a great night of singing!

Onaka ga Edimashita (I'm hungry)! The next day we had the opportunity to visit some Japanese farmers, and learn first hand what Japanese agriculture was all about! We visited a farmer who grew lettuce using hydroponics in greenhouses, and a farmer who grew strawberries and rice. The hard work and innovation of these two farmers blew me away! We also went up a tower and saw Tokyo from "bird's eye view".

Arigato Gozaimas (thank you)! From there we took the infamous Japanese "bullet train" down to Kyoto, Japan, to the hotel that we would be based out of for the duration of the rest of the trip. That day we saw some AMAZING sites, including the Nijo Castle and the Kiyomizu Temple! I definitely learned a lot from this day, and have pictures in my head that I will never forget.

Ikimasho (Shall we go?) The next two days consisted mainly of two fascinating visits to Chita Futo and Yanmar Tractors, two very successful Japanese corporations. My eyes were opened to the Industrial side of Japanese agriculture. The businessmen who hosted us were very courteous and answered all of the questions we had!

Sayonara (Goodbye!). If you can't tell already, one of my favorite parts about Japan was getting to learn about the intriguing language, writing, and culture that they have there. Most of this is due to our brilliant tour guide, Hiro. He did much more than show us the sites, he taught me more than I thought I could ever learn about a culture in one week. I called him my "Sensei" or teacher, and he sure was! Japan was definitely a trip I will never forget!

January 27, 2003

It was a brisk dark morning when I packed my stuff in the car, and departed Grass Valley for the Sacramento International Airport. Excitement was in the air as my time at home was finished, and I was about to embark on another journey full of experiences that I had never encountered before. National FFA Board Meetings, a trip to Japan, a National aged in-service, and a conference in West Virginia were all on my mind, and I couldn't wait to get started!

I connected flights in Chicago to find three other funny looking guys in FFA clothing on the flight! Of course it was Dustin, Seth, and J.J. returning from their excursion to the Denver Stock show (I thought the plane smelled a little funny).

We arrived in Washington, D.C., retrieved our luggage (except Seth, poor guy), and took the metro to the hotel we were to stay in for the National FFA Board of Directors Meetings that weekend. The next day we had the opportunity to be hosted at the US Department of Education. We learned a lot about how the Department works and how agriculture education fits into it. That night we had dinner with Dr. Case, Ms. St. John, and Mr. Harris, along with some of their family at beautiful Mt. Vernon. We had a blast socializing and enjoying dishes such as Peanut Soup!

The next few days held our first experience as the Student Board on the National FFA Board of Directors. We talked about key and pertinent issues facing the FFA, got some training in demographics and trends, discussed the reports submitted by the delegates of the 75 National FFA Convention, and made key decisions to ensure even more future success of our organization. We spent much time in thought and deliberation to be sure every decision we made was the best for all FFA members. It was absolutely incredible to sit in a room with individuals who cared about this organization and its members so passionately.

January 20, 2003

It was definitely not easy to leave such an amazing week in Pennsylvania. However, coming back together as a team that weekend was a blast! We told stories of each one of our experience state weeks, and were energized and ready to dive into another week of intense training. The week flew by quickly; with trainers like Mary Kane and Amber Haughlin flying in help prepare us for the upcoming events. The highlight of the week, however, was when all six of us were able to present a workshop to National Staff employees who work at the Center. We had a lot of fun at workshop, which we titled "Larry D. Case High School". After that I was fortunate enough to get a little training from teaching extraordinaire Mark Reardon, who we look forward to working with more throughout the year.

From there it was a flight home for me, where I enjoyed a night of Bible Study in Chico, spending time with the CA State Officers, and enjoying the company of my closest friends and family.

Jan. 13, 2003

Did you know that the largest farm show under one roof is in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania? How about that the town of Hershey actually smells like chocolate? Yeah, like the whole town! How about that W. B. Saul High School is an all ag school in the middle of Philadelphia? Finally, did you know that Pennsylvania FFA members are some of the coolest people there is to hang out with?

Can you tell where I've spent the last week? That's right, I learned all of this as J.J. and I spent an AMAZING week in the beautiful "Keystone" state of Pennsylvania!

I returned to Indianapolis on the 1, and met back up with the team at the hotel. It seemed like FOREVER since I'd seen them, (even though it had really only been a week). We laughed, talked and shared our wonderful holiday experiences. For the next few days we worked at the FFA Center preparing for our experience state weeks. We could barely wait for January 6 to come, time to set out on our first official adventure as national officers.

What an experience! J.J. and I left Indianapolis and arrived in Cleveland just in the nick of time to board our plane to Harrisburg, Pa., (or so we thought). Unfortunately, because of weather conditions, we were unable to fly in on time, and they closed the airport! We enjoyed some quality time (almost six hours worth) in the Cleveland airport, before we were finally able to fly to Harrisburg. We reached our destination just in time to attend a conference at Cumberland High School. Amy and Brian did an awesome job with their ceremonies, and we had a blast presenting to great people from all over the region.

That night we also met the state officers David, Mary, Mark, Tim, Julie, Emily, Andy, John, Courtney and Tony. They were awesome, and we spent a good portion of the next week with them.

The next day was spent at W.B. Saul High School in Philadelphia. We toured the amazing all ag school and presented to some classes. We enjoyed meeting all of the wonderful members and learning about how their agriculture programs work. I ate a REAL PHILLY CHEESE STEAK there! It was awesome! From there it was off to Manheim High School for another conference, where I presented a workshop, learned how to make paper footballs thanks to Manor FFA. I met tons of cool people, like Andrew, a super cool FFA member who's considering running for state office!

Wednesday and Thursday included some fantastic meetings with supporters of the PA FFA, another conference similar to the previous two, and experienced Hershey, the town named after the chocolate factory. One of the highlights, though, was going to two chapter visits: Bermudian Springs High School, and New Oxford High School. We loved the schools and the members, hanging out with people like Heather, Amber and Stevie.

Thursday night included an exciting reception provided by Secretary Hayes that included trade representatives from more than 70 different countries!

Sadly, Friday was our last day. We took a tour of the Farm Show facilities, and then were forced to say goodbye to David and Mary, the state officers we traveled with all week, and Mr. Brammer. Then we headed back to Indianapolis.

Thanks to all of Pennsylvania, I won't forget your HOSSpitality (we went to HOSS'S), nor the wonderful friends we made!

Jan. 6, 2003

Happy New Year! I've just come off of a wonderful week at home for the holidays! Since the last time I made a journal entry I finished up training here at the National FFA Center, and went home for a restful holiday season.

Our training couldn't have ended on a better note! We had the opportunity to visit schools on Friday, December 20. Seth and I attended Franklin High School near Indianapolis. We had an absolute blast! Everyone there was a lot of fun, and we were excited to present some workshops we had been working on. We had fun and made some great new friends. Thanks Franklin for letting us spend the morning with you!

That night we had the neat chance to go see the Indiana Pacers tear up the Chicago Bulls, although neither team could match my Sacramento Kings, it was a great evening with friends from National FFA and Dow Agrosiences. We had more great training the next day, then packed our bags and flew out Sunday, December 22.

At home I enjoyed resting while having a wonderful Christmas and New Years at home. I played a lot of Pinochle and Spades, enjoyed the company of my family and close friends. I spent a little time up in Grass Valley where I went on a hike with my cool new backpack (thank you to the Brownings), but mostly I was home resting and reflecting on the training we had.

Since then I spent New Years Eve at home (I didn't quite make it to 12:00, I was tired), then on New Year's Day I boarded the plane back here to Indianapolis. I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season! Until next time!

Dec. 15, 2002

Whooo weeee! What an amazing "blizzard" (it's cold here in Indiana) of emotions the past few months have been! I will never forget the amazing moment of November 2, 2002, when Nominating Committee Chair Christy Windham introduced me to an incredible team and an amazing year of serving FFA members! That moment seems like just yesterday, as the events of November and the first part of December have truly flown by!

Following the tenth general session of the national convention, my teammates and I were treated to three days of introductory training. But before that started we had a night free to enjoy the time with our families and friends, and reflect a little bit on the events of that day. There was also a reception that night with us, the past national officers, members of national staff, and parents and friends. The next few days consisted of training. I was overwhelmed with excitement and gratitude for all that the year had in store for me.

I don't think it really set in for me until I returned to my home state of California, and saw all of my friends and family. I was lucky enough to be greeted in the airport by some of the coolest people I know; the California State FFA Officers Tyler, Amber, Bryan, Anne Marie, Mark, and Audrey, as well as my friends Angela and Leeman, and our Assistant State FFA Advisor Mr. Charles Parker, and his wife (my other mom) Sonya. We went out for some late night ice cream before I made the hour and a half drive from Sacramento to Chico, Calif., where I was living and going to school at the time (Go Wildcats!).

Speaking of which, I think this is probably a good time to tell you a little bit about myself. I am 20 years old, and a sophomore at California State University, Chico. I'm an agriculture science/education major, and I hope to someday teach agriculture. I'm originally from a town called Fulton, which is really inside of the city of Santa Rosa, Calif., (about an hour North of San Francisco). I come from a family of four; including my dad and mom Jim and Joyce (who are now proud foster parents to many), my older sister Stacey who has the coolest son in the world, Adrian, and I have a younger brother, Andy, and a younger sister (who is also an FFA member), Lisa.

November was filled with tying up loose ends in one life and starting a new lifestyle as a national officer. In terms of FFA, I had the opportunity to attend two wonderful conferences, one in Indio, put on by the southern region officers, and the other in foggy Lemoore, put on by the Mighty Mean San Joaquin officers! Both outstanding conferences where I was able to hang out with old friends, meet new ones, and have a great time! After the Southern Region's Conference I had the cool opportunity to go with the California State Officers to the happiest place on earth: DISNEYLAND! I also helped present one Greenhand Conference in Visalia, Calif., with my friends from Excellence in Presentations, and traveled to Maxwell, Calif., for the Opening/Closing Ceremonies contest.

One of the coolest things that happened to me when I was home was a reception for me put on by my biggest supporters, the Elsie Allen Ag Boosters. All I knew going into it was where to be, and what I was supposed to be wearing. I soon found out that they had rented a reception room, invited hundreds of people, and put together a wonderful event. The support I felt there was overwhelming, but it was symbolic of the amazing support that I'd been receiving from them my entire FFA experience. Thank you Mrs. O'Kelley and the Elsie Allen Ag Boosters for all you've done for me!!

Much of my time in November was spent in Chico, getting my one class: Ag Education, finished up, with the greatest professor in the world Dr. Brad Dodson. I also hung out with my roommates Joe and

Daniel, and my closest friends Angela and Luke Browning (who is now supposedly growing his hair out until I get back, cool, huh?). In order to prepare for national office, we had home assignments to learn more about how we can serve better this year, they were occasionally challenging, but always a lot of fun! Other than that, I moved out of my apartment, and made sure college wasn't going to forget about me in the next year, and before I knew it I was off!

After a wonderful Thanksgiving at home, I flew out on December 2 to icy cold Indianapolis to begin our December training. The past two weeks have been full of the most beneficial teaching and training that I've ever experienced. Based on John Maxwell's five levels of leadership, we've had the pleasure of learning from outstanding presenters like Andy Armbruster, Melinda Findley, Seth Derner and Kelly Horton. I never knew I could learn so much and stay engaged so easily in a short time span. As if that wasn't enough, one of my favorite parts about this training is the immediate closeness our team is experiencing. We love having deep conversations on what it means to be an FFA member, and where we can best serve each other and the almost half a million other FFA members nationwide. We each are also designated one night to take the team out to an activity we love to do; so that's been a great way to get to know each other and just relax and enjoy the company of our team. This weekend was especially cool, because after our training on Saturday, we took a road trip to Julie's house in Ohio, and had a wonderful time talking with her parents, eating some amazing food, and playing basketball with her brother Mike. On our way back, we even had a chance to stop by and enjoy the company of the Ohio State FFA Officers at their Christmas party! What an incredible weekend!

I can't say how extremely excited I am to spend the year with all of you. Take care, God bless and I'll be posting my next entry soon!

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