

WFA Convention, Marriott Hotel, January 3rd 2016

After Sue King picked up all our registration information Jody Belgard and I was able to just check into the hotel and proceed on to the tour of the NICO/ SYSCO tour. Dave and Woody was also on the bus tour and we left 10 minutes late and after several miles down the road someone yelled " you are going the wrong way"! So we had to turn around and back track 7 miles. Quiet a way to start off the tour. Needless to say we did finally arrive at the SYSCO large facility located in Riverside. There were 45 guests on the bus so we were broke up into groups of 15 and proceed on with a tour of the facility. The first section was where all the dry products were stored, next came the cold storage and lastly the freezer compartment, the coldest being -9 degrees for ice cream.

We were informed of the usage of green technology used at the plant, all machinery uses hydro for fuel. A lot of the orders are filled by a large robot machine. The orders are all filled in the different departments by 4 and are ready for shipment by 5 or 6 pm. There are 61 bays, where the trucks load and deliver the supplies to the LA area.

After the tour we were given a great lunch and then had several speakers talk to us, the best one was a butcher from England showing what a front shoulder of beef could deliver in the form of meat cuts such as: Bristol Filet, flat Iron, Club house Roast, Chuck Tail Flap, and Short Rib. It was very interesting, but I felt the presentation was geared towards the venders, not the fair board. But it was a learning experience for us since we all buy meat.

We drove on the Victoria Memorial Hwy. Castle Rock and Garden Grove, for me it was the first time I had been in the area. Thank god for the Santa Cruz County, I like our peaceful area!

The meetings started and something new this year was fair meetings by size, this is a good one, each fair talked about what they were doing such as landscaping for the drought, livestock area " No wash" using recycle water/ reclaimed. Getting sponsorships for water change all toilets to low flow. Since some of the fairs employee 150 people it is hard to relate to them. The high light was the 10 Jr. Fair Board members from San Bernardino they were great! Very energetic, some good speakers and a delight to see the enthusiasm they had, a great leader, produce a great board. They talked about the different contest they put on each year such as the shaving cream, name that tune and ALL work at the livestock department. And most of them show animals. What impressed me both of the boys names were Zachary! There were 8 girls and 2 boys.

At the first General session Fiona Maul was the speaker, she talked about do not ignore us embrace us and mostly invite us. She was talking about being involved with the elected members of the county and state, they are the ones who can help you. Jim Tucker informed every one the national convention is moving from Las Vegas after 40 years to San Antonio Texas in 2018. Arizona informed us they have 15 fairs and there are 8 new managers, and something I did not know, Our Governor, Jerry Brown has a sister who is Governor of Oregon! They have 36 Co. Fairs and took in 24.3 million dollars the payroll is 9.4 million dollars and the Jr. Livestock took in 9.5 million.

They honored Cotton Rosser for his 60 years of service, plus Hot Dog on a Stick. Of all the things Jim Tucker talked about the most impressive thing he said was "Live your life with a purpose"

We had been talking about doing something different with the Patty Smith park and when we attended the meeting of "If Momma ain't happy... nobody is" our thoughts were cemented. The vision of a family park was what we were talking about. The Solano Fair is doing what we were talking about, the Sun Flower Saddle Ranch, and the Growing Grove. We need to have it well branded, serve a purpose, and shade is the KING. Simple things like rocking chairs and music is a must. A Mommy Zone, wash station and garbage is also a must. I was very impressed and hopefully we will be able to get a sponsor for the new area we want to develop. Contra Costa was really the spearhead for the speech.

The area meeting was well attended, San Benito was up 12 percent and they added one day! The livestock took in 2 million dollars and 84,000 on the heritage hog. They had a quilt of honor made, a good idea. Santa Clara was up in as well as their carnival, cow Palace is improving, Salinas Valley is working on their 3rd project and a Master Plan. Mid State fair CEO has retired and Pat Kress will be the temporary CEO until a new one is found.

On Tuesday each of us went to different classes, mine being Cal Poly professionals series, the speaker needed to better, something I have learned over the years not to say, Huh! Something she constantly did! Cal Poly has been supporting the fairs for 50 years.

We were all treated to dinner by Read and Steve, they always give us a welcomed treat and we appreciate it very much.

Our room was used each night by all who attended the convention, and I hope everyone one appreciated the time we spent together.

Director, Loretta Estrada