IT HAPPENED IN KC!!!

by
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State FFA Reporter

The stage was set for what proved to be one of the best National Conventions our organization had ever seen. On Tuesday, November 8, taxis and vans came rolling into the Holiday Inn, Kansas City, Missouri. It was such a thrill to see so many enthusiastic young people, all of them wearing Blue and Gold, and many of them with "Alabama" sewn on the back. The Alabama delegation moved in. We claimed the nineteenth and twentieth floors of the Holiday Inn.

For most of us, Tuesday was a day to get over the flight or the ride and get ourselves ready for business and ready for one of the highlights of our FFA career. For Jayme Feary, Jess Drummond, and Wayne Wootten, our delegates, this was a day of meetings and hard work.

After everyone was settled into their rooms, we got ready for a good night's rest, some of us earlier than others. Out of a group this size always emerges a group notorious for keeping late hours and always having to be herded into their room. This year it was the group from Selma, with the guys from Auburn running a close second. Mr. Newton was kept on his toes policing our two floors. He kept us all in line.

Wednesday was full of more arrivals and registrations. By Wednesday at Noon, the Holiday Inn was bulging with people. A major point of interest was the elevators. There are only three in this high-rise motel. This is about half as many as were needed. We often had to wait ten to fifteen minutes for an elevator. Team photos were made and the Courtesy Corps workers attended an organizational meeting. The first business session was opened. Now, the real convention was ready to begin.

Wednesday evening we attended what proved to be one of the best vespers programs I had ever seen. The National Officers put together an excellent vespers program that put us in a nice, mellow mood and made us appreciate our country and its freedom.

Thursday was a big day. It was finally time for the first general session. We witnessed a stirring, emotional presentation on the life of Senator and former FFA member, the late Jerry Litton. We also heard an inspiring address by Zig Ziglar, the author of See You at the Top. For five teams from the Alabama Association, Thursday was a very nerve-racking day—the day the contests were held. The contests lasted throughout the day, and Alabama was represented well.

Thursday afternoon, several of Alabama's best were presented the highest honorary degree in the FFA, the Honorary American Farmer Degree. We also heard two excellent retiring addresses. At the Thursday evening session, we were shown a slide presentation about our National Foundation sponsors. We also witnessed the massing of the state flags, a beautiful ceremony.

Friday morning came early for some of us. William Scott, the Today Show's nationally acclaimed weatherman did the weather live from the convention stage at 6:00 a.m. To our knowledge, Tom Whitehead was the only one who made this early date. Later in Friday morning's session, Mr. Scott gave a keynote address on his philosophies of life and life abundant. Wendell Jefferys, National Vice President, gave his retiring address, and Mr. Byron Rawls, retired National Advisor, was recognized for his faithfulness to the FFA. We were also proud of our National Chapter and BOAC winners who were recognized.

Friday afternoon, Bryan Stamps, our Regional Vice President, gave us an excellent and touching retiring address. We were also proud of our eleven American Farmer recipients who were presented with their certificates.

Friday evening we watched as Mell Price from the Danville Chapter was awarded first place in the Poultry Production Awards Program. We also watched as the four regional winning speakers presented their speeches.

It was already Saturday and who could believe it was the final day of the Convention? Our five judging teams attended award breakfasts.

We heard from Bob Moawad, an inspirational speaker who challenged us to love ourselves. We also heard from Cara Doyal, National Vice President, who gave her retiring address. Charlie Pride addressed the convention and entertained questions.

Saturday was FFA Day at the American Royal, but most of us were ready for some good football. We couldn't get the Auburn or Alabama game but were happy to hear of our teams (be it the Tigers or the Tide) winning. The Auburn crowd was talking "Sugar".

The Saturday night session arrived. We wondered what could be better than a week of great speakers, the fine national chorus and band and all the great talent. Let me tell you Saturday night's session was the BEST of all. The highlight was the emotional retiring address by National President Jan Eberly entitled simply, "Keep the Fire". We watched the installation of newly elected National Officers and then...the 56th National Convention was closed. It was a very emotional night. We hugged a lot of people and said a lot of sad good-byes.

On Sunday, though we had experienced an unforgettable week, we were ready for the "Heart of Dixie". We arrived in Montgomery in early afternoon. Although we left each other, we were still united by spirit and by a week of growing closer, a week full of love, unity and learning. I think I can safely say for my fellow State Officers, the 56th National FFA Convention is one we will not soon forget.
Mr. George White, Northeast Central District Specialist, received his Honorary American Farmer Degree at the National Convention. Pictured with White is C.W. Reed, (right), State FFA Advisor.

Alton McFarland, teacher at Jackson High School, received his Honorary American Farmer Degree for his dedicated service to the FFA.

American Farmer Degree Recipients attending the National FFA Convention in Kansas City were (front row l-r): Larry Sowell, Abbeville; Mark Lane, Russellville; Bret Johndrow, Auburn; Darnell Fields, Millport; William Ashmore, Pickens Co. (back row l-r): Tim White, Ider; David Johnson, Auburn; Stanley Jewell, Rogersville; Jeff Britnell, Russellville; Bobby Holt, Lineville, and Barry Bailey, Sand Rock. Our congratulations to these American Farmers.

Three of Alabama's best supporters of the FFA were presented with Honorary American Farmer Degrees. Shown with their medals and plaques are (l-r) L.W. Crook, Southwest Central District Specialist, Montroeville; Joe White, Vocational Director, Lee County Board of Education, Beauregard, and Wesley Grant, Assistant Superintendent, Baldwin County Board of Education, Fairhope.

Alabama Agribusiness is definitely blessed with excellent ag teachers. Shown here are two of our fine teachers, Joe Brown (left) and Turner Porter, who received the Honorary American Farmer Degree.
The state-winning Ag Mechanics Team from the Rogersville FFA Chapter represented Alabama at the national contest. Team members (l-r) Norman Mason, Alex Nafe, Barry Berryhill and David Barksdale were accompanied by their Advisor/Coach, Ross Smith. Pictured with the team (left) representing the sponsor, The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company, is Eugene L. Van Auker.

The West Limestone High School Livestock Judging Team competed at the National contest held at the American Royal. Shown with the team representing the sponsor is (left) Don Mauery, Director ofRalston Purina Operations-Kansas City/Ralston Purina Company. Team members (l-r) Glen White, Kevin Simpson, Greg Lovell and Mark Marbut were accompanied by their Advisor/Coach, Darwin Siniard.

The Auburn High School state-winning Dairy Judging Team represented Alabama in the National Dairy Judging Contest at the American Royal. Team members are (l-r) Ted Hunkes, Mark Dyer, Garth Crow and Steve Martin. The team was accompanied by their Advisor/Coach, James R. Hatchcock. Shown representing the sponsor, Associated Milk Producers, Inc., is (left) Ardith Saverwein.

The Cullman Co. AVC FFA Nursery/Landscape Judging Team competed in the National Contest in Kansas City. Team members (l-r) Jami Story, Barry Buchanon, Daniel Hipp and Bruce Harris were accompanied by their Advisor/Coach, Bobby Thomas. Shown with the team from the left representing the sponsors are Andy Klapis, Rick Brenes and Paul Cook.

The Arab FFA Floriculture Team represented Alabama at the National Contest in Kansas City. Team members (left to right): Sheila Couch, Sissy Tripp, and Jodi Holman were accompanied by their Advisor/Coach, Randy P. Britnell. Pictured with the team (left) is Doug Butler, Assistant Director, National FFA Foundation Sponsoring Committee.

The Scottsboro FFA Chapter received special recognition for the chapter’s achievements in the National FFA Safety Award Program. Shown representing the sponsors are (left) Joseph L. Downey, Dow Chemical U.S.A., and Mervyn H. Manning, of Farm and Industrial Equipment Institute. Accepting for the chapter is Perry Bellomy and advisors Wesley Hardman and John Black.

The State Officers had a busy week in Kansas City. Shown here are our 1983-84 officers accompanied by David Skidmore, State Star Farmer (l). Officers are (l-r) Tom Whitehead, Jayme Feary, Jess Drummond, Wayne Woonsten, Terry Holder and Steve Martin.

The West Blocton FFA Chapter received national recognition for achievement in community development activities at the National Convention. (l-r) Mr. Frank W. Naylor, Jr., U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and M. Laird Wilson, representing R.J. Reynolds Industries, Inc., greeted Terry Holder, Chairman of the chapter’s BOAC committee and George Cargile, FFA advisor.
Keith McCaghren, of the Danville FFA Chapter, was named the National Proficiency Award winner in Poultry Production. The Poultry Production program is sponsored by Kentucky Fried Chicken of Oklahoma and the General Fund of the National FFA Foundation. Pictured with McCaghren is Richard M. Cloyd, of Peoria, Illinois, representing the sponsor. McCaghren's advisor at Danville High School is Andrew McCay.

James Taylor of Midland City was recognized as the Alabama winner of the Future Farmers of America Achievement in Volunteerism Award recently at a dinner in Washington, D.C. As the state winner, he received a plaque and $200 for his chapter from the FFA's Building Our American Communities (BOAC) program sponsor, R.J. Reynolds Industries, Inc. Taylor met with Congressman Bill Dickerson in Washington to receive his award. Taylor's advisor at Dale County High School is Mike Casey.