
Early History of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program



Jack Hagarty
Patricia Mighton

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Early History of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program

By Jack Hagarty, First AALP Executive Director

Introduction

Established in 1984, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) is a leadership program for men and women who want to broaden their horizons and expand their networks to help shape the future of the agriculture and food sectors in Ontario. AALP is now administered by the **Rural Ontario Institute**. Class 16 is beginning in September 2015.

Getting started: Part 1 – the Kellogg Foundation

AALP is modeled after the Kellogg Foundation programs in the United States. The Kellogg Foundation funded rural and agricultural leadership programs in a number of states and was interested in accepting proposals from other countries. A number of leaders in Ontario, among them Dr. Clay Switzer, Dean of the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC); Peter Hannam, President of the Foundation for Learning (FRL); Ken Knox, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF); and Lyle Vanclief, who would later serve as Canada's Federal Minister of Agriculture; took the initiative here. They brought together the leaders of several agricultural and rural organizations in Ontario to explore the idea of submitting an application for Kellogg Foundation funding for a program in Ontario.

In the USA there were 30 state leadership programs funded by the Kellogg Foundation. Each year the foundation sponsored a conference to bring the Executive Directors of these programs together to share ideas. The Kellogg Foundation published a booklet that was available for study by all states and provinces wishing to learn more about the program.

A special conference was held in Pullman, Washington in November 1980. Ontario leaders were invited to attend. It was called "Leadership Development for Rural America: Building on Success." Those attending from Ontario were Ken Knox (OMAF), Lyle Vanclief, Mike Jenkinson and Valerie Gilmour (both from OAC), and Ken McGregor from Ontario Institute of Agrologists (OIA). There were a total of 258 rural and agricultural leaders from 50 different states as well as Ontario, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Over a 50 year program, starting in 1930, the Kellogg Foundation made grants of \$530 million on four continents. Such grants included \$60 million for programs on agriculture. Those attending the conference were encouraged to submit an application to fund a leadership program in their state or province.

The Ontario delegates returned home and over several months developed a proposal to fund a leadership program in Ontario. It was submitted to the Kellogg Foundation in 1983. The Foundation asked for additional information over a period of months; each time a revised version was submitted.

In 1984 the Kellogg Foundation changed its funding policy. They decided to fund programs only in the USA and developing countries. Ontario no longer qualified for a Kellogg Foundation grant.

Getting started: Part 2 – building an Ontario model

Based on the planning done to date the Ontario group decided to proceed without Kellogg funding. They recognized a real need for leadership development beyond what was offered through 4-H, Junior Farmers, the United Cooperatives and other programs. They reasoned that with the cooperation of several organizations they could create a program that would meet Ontario's needs. They would develop their own leadership program and they would call it **Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP)**.

With no Kellogg funding, however, they faced a major challenge - how to fund their program initially and sustain it over the years. No existing organization could take on that challenge. They needed a new organization, one that would involve members from over one hundred provincial agricultural and rural organizations in Ontario plus the many agricultural corporations involved. It was decided that four organizations would form a partnership to administer AALP. Thus the **Agricultural Leadership Trust (ALT)** was created.

The founding partners were Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF), University of Guelph (U of G), Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), and Foundation for Rural Living (FRL). Each of the four organizations agreed to take on specific roles. OMAF provided the first Executive Director, Jack Hagarty, who was seconded from the ministry; an Administrative Assistant, Judy Feil; and office space. U of G provided a Curriculum Coordinator, Dr. Doug Pletsch, on a 40% of his time basis. Doug was in that role for Classes 1 and 2. Dr. Neal Stoskopf was involved for Classes 3 and 4, and Rick Upfold assumed the role beginning with Class 5. FRL, with its charitable status, agreed to do the fundraising. OFA agreed to use its human resource system to administer any future staffing needs.

A board of directors was formed with each of the partners appointing two board members. Representing OMAF were Dr. Clare Rennie, Assistant Deputy Minister, and Ken Knox, Director of the Rural Organizations Branch (ROS). Representing U of G were Dr. Freeman McEwen, Dean of OAC, and Mike Jenkinson, Assistant Dean. Representing OFA were President Harry Pelissero and Executive Director Harry Zwerver. Representing FRL were President Peter Hannam and member Murray Stewart. Dr. McEwen chaired the board. Hon. William A Stewart, a well-known and respected former Ontario Minister of Agriculture and Food, accepted the position of Honorary Chairman of the Board. Mr. Stewart's endorsement was important in establishing credibility as AALP was launched.

A management committee was formed with Mike Jenkinson as chair, and Ken Knox, Harry Zwerver, and Murray Stewart as members. Executive Director Jack Hagarty was recording secretary at board and management committee meetings. ALT established a

bank account to receive and disperse funds. Two signatures were required on cheques, those of the Executive Director and the Chair of the Management Committee.

As with any new organization, AALP needed to develop strategic and business plans, create a logo, and produce letterhead and promotional materials.

In September 1984 Jack Hagarty did a study tour of agricultural/rural leadership programs in the USA. He met with Gary King of the Kellogg Foundation and the Executive Directors of programs in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New England and New York. They provided copies of curriculum, itineraries, program applications, fund raising approaches, and reports from their years of conducting leadership programs.

In 1984 Jack Hagarty was invited to attend the annual conference of the Executive Directors of US state leadership programs in Hawaii. Each of the 30 state programs were reviewed in detail and information shared. The information was especially valuable to those programs that were in the early planning stages. From that point on each Executive Director of AALP participated in the Kellogg sponsored annual conference.

All state programs were somewhat different but most involved 30 participants in each class with 10 seminars, a North American study tour and an international study tour. The California program started a new program each year, conducting two classes at the same time. The majority of the Executive Directors were faculty members of the Land Grant Colleges within a University. Most programs had an alumni association that provided volunteer support in conducting seminars, study tours and fund raising.

The state programs provided the “software” information that allowed Ontario to pick and choose from the best approaches to developing a leadership program, then weaving them into a program unique for the province. Ontario had the hardware, the classrooms, hotels, buses, and human resources needed to make such a program work.

Two of the Executive Directors from USA, Dr. Gene Trotter of the Michigan program and Dr. Daryl Heasley of the Pennsylvania program, made trips to Ontario and briefed officials of the founding organizations. They provided advice to the ALT board of directors based on their experience using the Kellogg leadership model. They also agreed to provide advice throughout the early years.

AALP Class 1 – Funding

Each of the four founding organizations provided \$25,000 toward the costs of the program for Class 1. Participants Class 1 paid \$2000 over the two years. This was one quarter of the cost to fund the seminars and study travel. Participants were required to provide transportation to the seminars, which were conducted over three days at different locations around the province.

The Foundation for Rural Living was challenged in the first years to raise funds for the balance of the funds. Peter Hannam, then FRL President, deserves a lot of credit for his efforts in raising the balance of the funds. Janet Horner, using the 4-H motto “learn to do by doing” worked on a part time contract to coordinate fundraising and to write a report about how to fundraise called “Fund Raising - Not for The Faint of Heart.”

AALP Class 1 – Promotion and Marketing

AALP was publicly announced at the 1984 International Plowing Match with the Minister of Agriculture and Food, Dennis Timbrell, and the leaders of the four founding partners signing an agreement to sponsor the program. Later the Agricultural Leadership Trust conducted a ‘*Premiere*’ in Toronto where leaders of agricultural organizations were invited to learn about AALP. They were presented with a slide show featuring photos of program events at several state programs. Guest speakers were Ross Daily of CFPL TV, Jim Byrum a participant of the Michigan Rural Leadership program, and Dr. Clay Switzer, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Staff of the ROS branch, including Amber Underwood and Chuck Jacobs, helped to develop the program and produce a brochure called, “The Best Thing That Ever Happened to Me” that was widely distributed throughout the province. The title was a quote from a graduate of a Michigan Leadership program. The brochure outlined details of AALP, stating the goals and benefits of becoming a participant in the program. The brochures were available at OMAF offices and distributed by staff of OFA. Brochures were mailed to agricultural and rural organizations throughout the province.

Staff members of these organizations were encouraged to approach leaders in their county with the suggestion of applying for the program. Agricultural Representative Barry Fraser of Kent County made it a mission to seek out candidates who would be ideal for the program. It turned out that 12 of the 60 applicants for Class 1 came from Kent County. A portable exhibit was used to promote the program at several public events around the province.

Members of ALT spoke at a number of events such as OFA directors meetings, and meetings conducted by agricultural and rural organizations and service clubs. At one of these meetings an attendee said “if Bill Stewart, your Honorary Chair, says it is a good thing, that’s good enough for me!”

Peter Hannam and Jack Hagarty promoted the program during a TV interview with Ross Daily on his show *This Business of Farming* which was broadcast from the London and Wingham TV stations.

AALP Class 1 – Selection of participants

The criteria stated that the participants were to be in the range of about 25 to 40 years of age. A detailed application form of several pages asked about past leadership activities, educational levels, work experience, types of employment, past and current occupations, previous travel experience, goals, and why they wanted to participate in AALP.

All applicants were invited to an interview at one of several regional locations across the province. There were three interview members in each panel, made up of two board members and a management staff person from one of the founding organizations. The applicants were graded based on the established criteria. This information was compiled in a report for the provincial selection committee

The ALT Board of Directors served as the provincial selection committee which made the final selection. They had access to each of the applications, together with results of the regional interviews. They took into account the need for a balance of occupations, commodity associations, regional distributions, along with the scoring from the regional interviews.

In 1985 nine women and twenty-one men were selected; AALP Class 1 began.

AALP Class 1 – Curriculum

The Executive Director and the Curriculum Coordinator developed the curriculum, taking into consideration needs and situations unique to Ontario. Dr. Doug Pletsch, with his background in Extension Education, developed overall objectives for the program and specific objectives for each seminar and study tour. This formed the basis for the learning experiences at each event. Speakers were invited and activities planned around the objectives.

Ten three-day seminars were held, each in a different location in Ontario. Municipal, provincial, and federal systems were each considered, as well as the regional issues and resources of each of the seminar locations.

Speakers were asked to leave one third of their allocated time for questions and answers. This was an essential part of the learning experience. Participants from different sectors of the agri-food industry asked questions from their own perspective, thus learning from each other as well as from the speaker.

Participants were active in chairing sessions, introducing and thanking speakers. After each break in the morning and afternoon sessions a participant was selected to give a three minute impromptu talk on a topic they moments earlier drew out of a container. It allowed them to practice thinking on their feet in the friendly environment of the class, in preparation for the future in the real world where as leaders they would be asked to respond to media questions on a range of topics.

Two travel study opportunities were included in the curriculum - two weeks in North America in the summer of the first year, and ten days or two weeks of travel outside North America in the winter of the second year. Class 1 traveled first to western Canada and California, then to Britain, France and Belgium. The cost was included in the tuition fee.

Each participant was required to research an agricultural or rural issue in depth and make a presentation to the class, near the end of the program. They were expected to become an expert on the subject, identifying the pros and cons of various possible solutions, and responding to questions from fellow class members.

Spouses of the participants were invited to take part in two seminars over the two-year period, to better understand what their partners were experiencing and to get to know the other members of the class. The bonding and friendships formed are a valuable result of the program. Respect, understanding and ongoing communication are important as participants take on leadership roles upon completion of the program.

The sessions were video taped and participants were encouraged to request a copy from the AALP office, so that they could share certain speakers with their spouses in the quiet of their home following a seminar.

Program evaluation

At the end of each seminar participants filled out an evaluation sheet. These were reviewed by staff and a summary was made available to the management committee.

In 1995 a major study to identify the cost benefits of AALP was conducted by a University of Guelph team consisting of Dr. George Brinkman, Dr. Jim Mahone and Dr. Doug Pletsch. They found the financial return, based on business, community and organizational activities, to be a benefit/cost ratio of 11:1 net gain to the agricultural/rural sector, and a net gain to society of 8:1 with a projected net gain to society of 25:1 by 2005.

Beyond Class 1

During Class 1 Jack Hagarty became the Director of the Rural Organizations and Services Branch of OMAF. He continued to participate in the seminars and study tours until the completion of Class 1.

Pat Mighton was hired as Assistant Director to organize seminars and study tours. Her attention to detail, organizational and communication skills were critical at those early stages of the program.

Funding for Pat's salary was provided by OMAF, through a grant to OFA. In keeping with the initial ALT partnership agreement she was placed on the OFA payroll. Officially, she was an employee of the Agricultural Leadership Trust and reported to

Mike Jenkinson, chair of the ALT management committee. Such arrangements were possible through memorandums of understanding among the founding organizations. Pat took over as Executive Director after Class 1 and remained in that role through to and including Class 6. Ann Gordon an AALP Class 2 graduate became Executive Director beginning with Class 7.

Establishment of an alumni association

An alumni association was established in 1987, called the Ontario Agricultural Leadership Alumni (OALA). It kept the past participants involved socially and engaged in activities such as recruiting new participants and fund raising. Its mission was to support leadership in the alumni, AALP and agriculture. It held an annual conference for alumni of AALP. OALA played an important role in the first ten years of AALP.

Wm. A. Stewart Endowment

The Wm. A. Stewart Endowment was initiated in 1991 through a Steering Committee chaired by Brenda Trask. The activities of the Steering Committee were wound down in 1994 and a Management Committee chaired by Peter Hannam was appointed. A fundraising Garden Party at the farm of Bill Lowen near London, Ontario, in August 1993 raised about \$24,000 toward the endowment.

The Endowment pays tribute to the late Ontario Minister of Agriculture & Food, Honourable Wm. A. Stewart. The goal is to recognize and honour his legacy of public service, community involvement, and leadership. Every other year the William A. Stewart Lecture and Reception is held in the London Convention Centre with proceeds in support of AALP.

AALP Dream Auction – a fundraising success story

The AALP Dream Auction is held in Guelph every other year with proceeds in support of the program. The auction was the brainchild of Cathy Bartolic of Class 5. Proceeds have grown through the years. In 2014 alone over \$110,000 was raised. This brings the total raised to \$625,000 since the first auction was held in 1997.

Cathy Bartolic recalls the early history of the Dream Auction. “Class 5 was unique and had special moments as I am sure is true for each and every AALP class. One of our special moments was the auctions we used to do at our workshops. I can’t remember for certain who or why it started but I think it had something to do with some wonderful chocolate that showed up from Eastern Ontario. There wasn’t quite enough for everyone so it was decided to auction it off. That went so well that several people brought items to the next workshop and they were auctioned as well. All funds raised went back to the AALP program to assist the classes that were following us.

Not too long after we had graduated in 1995, I was at a fundraising meeting for AALP. I had always thought that the auction idea could be taken to another level. As a program

developed for agricultural participants, an auction seemed to be a natural fundraiser and could potentially be a lot of fun. The meeting was facilitated by Chuck Bokor. He seemed interested in the idea when I raised it at the meetingand the rest they say is history. Well, not quite.

I was very keen to make this work. I felt it was a way I could give back to an organization that had meant so much to my leadership skills development. I soon had Gary Johnson, (boyfriend at the time and now husband) on board as well and we started putting together ideas and notions. Brenda Trask joined our little committee soon thereafter and we set to work. I really wanted something for everyone, not just big items that only a few could afford. So it was important to have a live auction as well as a silent auction and toonie pails, where people could simply buy tickets and put them into the pails beside the item(s) they most wanted. I envisioned the evening to be memorable, classy but affordable to participate. That may be a bit of an oxymoron for a fundraiser but still, it seemed to work out well.

Fellow class members were great at securing donations and helping with decorating. We also pulled in a few family favours and got them involved in creating a memorable evening. The event took place in the lobby of the brand new OMAF building at 1 Stone Rd. in Guelph. We had three auctioneers and close to hundred donations (not sure of this figure). It was a magical evening. Everything just seemed to click.

Can't remember final numbers but Gary and I both think between \$40,000 and \$50,000 was raised that evening. The most exciting part is that the tradition has continued. Gary and I were involved in a couple of subsequent auctions but have graciously bowed out as new and enthusiastic AALPers came on board. We have continued to donate and help any other way we can. It's a huge job to do properly but well worth the effort. Wishing AALP continued success with this event that we had the honour of getting off the ground."

In 2014 the AALP Dream Auction won the Best of CAMA award in the Special Event category. CAMA is the Canadian Agri-Marketing Association and the Best of CAMA awards celebrate the great work done by marketers and advertisers Canada's agricultural industry.

Paying tribute to the early leaders

It is interesting to note that among the early leaders of the program there are four who are in the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame: Clay Switzer, Clare Rennie, Lyle Vanclief and Peter Hannam, and another, Ken Knox, in the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame. They themselves were leaders in many programs across Ontario. They identified the need for leadership development and did something about it,

Special mention goes to Mike Jenkinson who died in 2010. Mike retired in 2000 after 34 years as Assistant to the Dean of OAC. He was chair of the Management Committee and on the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Leadership Trust from 1984 to 2000. In

reviewing the archives of AALP it is obvious that Mike provided the constant glue and timely advice that held the many pieces together, helping to make the early history of AALP a success.

Appendix A**Significant contributors to the development of the
Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program**

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Role played</u> |
|--------------------|--|
| Bartolic, Cathy | Class 5 graduate, Host of first dream auction |
| Bokor, Chuck | Fundraiser, dream auction |
| Brinkman, George | Program evaluator |
| Byrum, Jim | Program promoter, Michigan Leadership Program participant |
| Daily, Ross | Broadcaster |
| Feil, Judy | First Administrative Assistant |
| Fraser, Barry | Program promoter |
| Gilmour, Valerie | Program initiator |
| Gordon, Ann | Class 2 graduate, Executive Director, Class 7 to 9 |
| Hagarty, Jack | First Executive Director |
| Hannam, Peter | Program initiator, Founding director |
| Heasley, Dr. Daryl | Program consultant, Director of the Pennsylvania Leadership Program |
| Horner, Janet | First fundraiser |
| Jacobs, Chuck | Program marketer |
| Jenkinson, Mike | Program initiator, Founding director, Management committee chair |
| Johnson, Gary | Fundraiser, co-host of first dream auction |
| King, Gary | Program consultant, Kellogg Foundation |
| Knox, Ken | Program initiator, Founding director, Management committee |
| Lowen, Bill | Program supporter |
| Mahone, Jim | Program evaluator |
| McEwen, Freeman | Founding director |
| McGregor, Ken | Program initiator |
| Mighton, Pat | Executive Director, Class 2 to 6 |
| Pelissero, Harry | Founding director |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Pletsch, Doug | First Curriculum Coordinator |
| Rennie, Clare | Founding director |
| Stewart, Hon. Wm. A. | Honourary Board Chair |
| Stewart, Murray | Founding director, Management committee |
| Stoskopf, Neal | Curriculum Coordinator, Class 3 and 4 |
| Switzer, Dr. Clay | Program initiator |
| Timbrell, Hon. Dennis | Ag. Minister who announced creation of AALP |
| Trask, Brenda | Chair of the WM.A. Stewart Endowment steering committee, Class 6 graduate |
| Trotter, Dr. Gene | Program consultant, Director of the Michigan Leadership Program |
| Underwood, Amber | Program marketer |
| Upfold, Rick | Curriculum Coordinator, Class 5 |
| Vanclief, Hon. Lyle | Program initiator |
| Zwerver, Harry | Founding director, Management committee |

Appendix B**Significant events in the development of the
Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program**

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Significant event</u> |
|--------------------|---|
| 1980 | Small group of leaders from Ontario attended a conference in Pullman, Washington to learn about funding for leadership development programs |
| 1983 | Ontario group applied for funding from Kellogg Foundation |
| 1984 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Kellogg changed its rules. No funding outside US or developing countries.· Decision made to carry on without Kellogg funding.· Agricultural Leadership Trust was formed.· Jack Hagarty studied U.S. leadership program models· AALP was publicly announced at International Plowing Match |
| 1985 | Class 1 began with Jack Hagarty as Executive Director and Doug Pletsch as Curriculum Coordinator |
| 1987 | Ontario Agricultural Leadership Alumni was formed |
| 1991 | Wm. A. Stewart Endowment was established |
| 1995 | Brinkman study showed 11:1 benefit/cost ratio and 8:1 net gain to society |
| 1997 | First Dream Auction was held |

Appendix C**Program Directors of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program**

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Term</u> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Jack Hagarty | 1984 – 1987 |
| Pat Mighton | 1987 – 1997 |
| Ann Gordon | 1997 – 2003 |
| Dan Legault | 2003 – 2006 |
| Rob Black | 2006 – Present (as at September 2015) |