



City Boy Gone Ag

Agriculture. For some it is a lifestyle and their livelihood. To others it is simply a matter of having clothes and food. It is common for people born and raised in a rural agricultural setting to continue with the same values, and beliefs as others living in that setting. It is rare for a city kid to turn country but that is exactly what happened to Henry Ruiz.

Ruiz grew up in Eagle Pass, Texas, Eagle Pass is a border town to one of the metropolitan cities in Mexico called Piedras Negras, Coahuila. Ruiz spent his childhood dreaming of being an engineer and always imagined he would attend Texas A&M University. A friend's advice and the decision to join 4-H at the age of 13 changed his life forever.

A friend suggested that he try showing goats, it was described to Ruiz as being pretty fun. After enrolling in 4-H the passion for agriculture soon developed. He became involved in FFA his freshman year in high school.

Ruiz described himself as reserved and quiet. One thing he remembers vividly from his first year in FFA is his agriculture teacher telling him he had to break out of his shell to be successful in the organization.

His junior year in high school, Ruiz started taking his goats to the major stock shows in Texas, he ran for chapter, district, and area offices.

Through being involved in FFA and 4-H Ruiz also started judging livestock.

"I was horrible at judging, but I enjoyed it and I wanted to get better and learn," Ruiz said.

Seeing the dedication and passion Ruiz's advisor, Charles Lynn Purcell, asked him if he would like to continue judging in college. Purcell judged at Clarendon College in 1996 and was close friends with the livestock judging Coach Johnny Treichel. Treichel was immediately intrigued by Ruiz's work ethic and drive to succeed.

"I knew Henry was a very intelligent person. I offered him a livestock judging scholarship knowing that was where he was comfortable," said Treichel. "I knew he would make a great judge for meats as well."

Upon arrival at Clarendon College Ruiz began judging both meats and livestock after a little tough love from Treichel. He was almost immediately successful at meats. He also became very involved in school activities.

"I was involved in everything on campus, well except for the sports and rodeo teams," Ruiz said.

Through his junior college career Ruiz was a member of the National Champion meats team, graduated with honors, and gained numerous opportunities.

After Clarendon Ruiz came to Texas Tech University where he majored in Animal Science with a Meat Science option, he was also a member of the 2009 National Champion Meat Animal Evaluation team. He also competed on a meats team that also earned a National Championship. Most students would stop after judging meats especially as a transfer student, but Ruiz kept his passion for livestock judging and judged for Tech in 2010.

"I enjoyed judging I had a great time, and gained tons of contacts. Not to mention, I have met friends that I will have for the rest of my life," said Ruiz.

Out of high school Ruiz received a number of different scholarships through his local 4-H and FFA chapters. He was also a recipient of the Texas FFA scholarship and also the National FFA scholarship.

"If I had not been involved in 4-H and FFA I know I would be in debt, and might not have had the opportunity to attend graduate school," says Ruiz.

At Tech Ruiz received the opportunity to do undergrad research under Dr. Mark Miller and Mindy Brashears. He traveled to Mexico three times as an undergraduate to Veracruz, Merida, and Yucatan. Ruiz collected samples and data. He also played a huge role in communication because he is bilingual.



"I love coaching, honestly I feel I am a better coach, than I was a judge," said Ruiz. "It feels good to teach students about meats; judging is something that will more than likely forever change their lives. I am happy to be a part of it for them."

"Besides my success with meat judging, I am most proud of the opportunity I had to do undergraduate research," said Ruiz. "There are not many students that have had the chance to do that."

Ruiz is coaching the 2012 meats team at Tech; alongside his former teammate and close friend Collin Corbin.

"I love coaching I feel I am a better coach, than I was a judge," said Ruiz. "Judging is something that will more than likely forever change their lives. I am happy to be a part of it for them."

Miller is extremely appreciative towards Ruiz's contributions to Texas Tech.

"I am so blessed to have Henry here to work with our Meat Judging team and in our Food Safety research program," Miller said. "Henry is a real team player who is so unselfish and helps in many ways to make those around him so much better."

Ultimately, Ruiz would like to be a professor at a university. He realizes what being a part of agriculture has done for him. He wants to continue to be involved for the rest of his life, and he would like to eventually start raising show stock. It is hard to think that an individual, that would have not otherwise have been involved with agriculture, became a true agriculturalist by a simple suggestion to show a goat. 🐐

