

ike many other kids who grow up involved in 4-H and FFA, Kevin Brinkley dreamt of a career as a ranch manager. Like many, our childhood dreams don't become our career. For Brinkley, it did pave the way to finding a path that encompasses his strengths and interests.

Today, Brinkley sits behind a large, oak desk at Plains Cotton Cooperative Association working on ways to add value to members' cotton, much like the value he gained from his education at Texas Tech University and the various agricultural programs he was involved in.

Kevin Brinkley, president and chief executive officer of PCCA, grew up in the farming and ranching community of Burnet, Texas. Brinkley credits a lot of his success to the 4-H and FFA programs because of the leadership skills he gained from them.

"From the time I started 4-H as an elementary school student, all the way up until I was a senior in high school, I stayed active in FFA and 4-H, and that really is what guided me the rest of the way," Brinkley said proudly.

It was at a 4-H camp in Brownwood, Texas, that Brinkley first became interested in Texas Tech. At that camp he met a man named E.L. Caraway who was a student recruiter for Texas Tech's College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources. Caraway, being the upstanding recruiter he was, took the initiative to walk up and talk to Brinkley. Caraway was a mature and genuine person and he unknowingly changed Brinkley's college plans on that day.

"I just thought, if this is the kind of folks that go to Texas Tech, this is where I want to be," Brinkley said.

Like most teenagers, Brinkley's childhood dream job changed when he got to college. In 1982, Brinkley started his first year at Texas Tech as a range and wildlife management major. After one semester, he changed to agricultural economics because of a strong personal draw towards the business side of the agricultural industry.

"If you really apply yourself to learning at least the basics of your major, you would be surprised how many times it comes back to you, especially if you get the chance to work in your field, which I am very lucky to do," Brinkley said, with a smile on his face.

In 1986, Brinkley graduated from Texas Tech with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics and continued his education through graduate school. During his time as a graduate student, Brinkley spent quite a bit of time looking at potential employers and knew he really wanted to work for the National Cotton Council because of their upstanding reputation.

Three years later, he walked across the stage for the final time with a Master of Science in Agricultural Economics, and in that same year he began his

first career in the cotton industry as NCC's field representative for the Texas High and Rolling Plains. As a field representative, Brinkley spent a lot of time traveling to gins, communicating issues facing the industry and soliciting support. "Meeting people, understanding how things

work, and getting a fundamental understanding of the mechanics of an industry, to me gives you an advantage you can't replicate if you just go step into something," Brinkley said.

In 1990, Brinkley was promoted to an agricultural economist position at NCC's headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee. As an agricultural economist, Brinkley conducted farm policy analysis and provided marketing support. Through the 10 years in that position, Brinkley became well informed about the challenges farmers,

ginners and distributors face in relation to the shifting cotton market.

In 2000, Brinkley took on the position as marketing manager of The Seam, the world's first completely online, neutral exchange for cotton trading. This positon allowed Brinkley to combine his interest in

technology and the cotton business.

"It was really strange how all of my experience up to that point came together," Brinkley said. "It made me a great fit for the job."

Brinkley held many different positions within The Seam, which all provided him with new and valuable experiences. Brinkley was promoted to vice president of marketing and development in 2003 and to senior vice president in 2011. In 2015 he was named chairman and chief executive officer. Through the years with The Seam, Brinkley not only worked to market the company, but also got a chance to manage and process people, which in turn exposed him to the world wide industry.

On July 1, 2015, Brinkley was hired on as the president and chief executive officer of Plains Cotton Cooperative Association. His college education and many years of experience in the cotton industry have made him well suited for the job.

"Kevin is forward thinking, and I think that you couldn't have a better fit," said John Johnson, director of public and legislative affairs at PCCA. "Kevin certainly understands the cotton market and all the angles, nuances and certainly the terminology."

Serving as president and CEO of PCCA is still surreal to Brinkley because he can recall being a young college graduate walking into the building for a delegate body meeting and wondering "what happens here?". Brinkley fondly remembers people within PCCA taking him under their wing and training him at the start of his career.

"PCCA has really been a huge part of my life, and I am glad to be able to get to the point where I can directly give back to the organization," Brinkley said, with sincerity in his voice.

Lloyd Arthur, cotton farmer from Ralls, Texas, said he and his family have been using PCCA's cotton marketing services for as long as he can remember. He said he is completely sold on PCCA's process and comfortable with the way they do business.

"I think PCCA does a great job at being on the forefront to change and adapting with changing times," Arthur said.

Arthur said PCCA's services help him out tremendously because they take a lot of risks out of watching the market on a daily basis and have substantial relationships with buyers overseas. He said having contacts worldwide in a global market is an avenue a farmer can't easily do on his own.

According to PCCA's website, the mission of the company is to add significant value to the cotton marketed

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for their members by being the supplier of choice to their business partners in terms of quality, service and value. Brinkley's job as president and CEO is to support PCCA's management staff and every employee in executing their job and making sure, as a team, they fulfill the company's mission.

"The staff here is very eager to see improvements and change in every area that they can," Brinkley said. "That is why the company is in the shape that it is today, because the staff has been doing that for a long time."

Today, PCCA has been around for 63 years, and with the dedication and hard work of Brinkley and others within the company, will continue on for decades to come.

Brinkley is driven to be a better man every day and believes we were made to love our neighbor. Every day when Brinkley comes to work, he wants to do what is best for his teammates and for PCCA's members and customers.

"It is so important to hold your neighbor's best interests at heart and to make that a center point in your life," Brinkley said. "That is what drives me every day when I come to work."

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