

Notes from the President

Georgia Institute of Technology

G.P. "Bud" Peterson, President

2018 Georgia Tour Day One — June 18

06/19/18

<https://youtu.be/E6wKMD2dFns>

Off to an early start on our 10th Annual Georgia State Tour. What started out as an effort for Val and me to learn more about our state has become an annual event that involves people from all across campus who come together to plan and execute a truly remarkable trip. It is a logistical nightmare, but one well-suited to an enthusiastic group that somehow finds a way to squeeze an incredible number of events into four short days.

When Val and I first arrived at Georgia Tech in 2009, we looked forward to it as a way to get to know our new state so that we could better serve its needs on behalf of Georgia Tech. At the same time, we eagerly anticipated connecting with the large number of spirited Yellow Jackets who, as we have happily learned over the years, are integral parts of communities in every corner of Georgia.

The first nine Georgia Tours have been invaluable in helping us get acquainted with the state's citizens, community leaders, current and prospective students, and people whose businesses Georgia Tech had helped create or improve. Each year, our weeklong road trip just seems to get better, and the enthusiasm for our little "road show" grows.

Starting at 7:30 this morning, we headed southeast from campus a couple of hours to Hawkinsville, Georgia, to visit with some of our alumni and friends. After that initial stop, we'll follow sort of a meandering U-pattern on the Georgia map that takes us as far east as Augusta near the South Carolina border and as far north as Toccoa, Georgia in the north Georgia foothills.

In addition to those three cities, we'll have stops in Fort Valley, Macon, Milledgeville, Sandersville, Elberton, Athens, Carnesville, and Gainesville during our four days on the road. Some of those will represent a return to cities we've visited on previous Georgia Tours, so it will be enjoyable to reconnect with familiar friends and supporters.

When we finish this year's tour, we will have travelled nearly 7,500 miles through virtually every one of Georgia's 159 counties, and held 250 events or meetings in more than 100 cities throughout the state. This year alone, we will travel nearly 650 miles through 27 counties with 30 events or meetings in 12 cities.

Along with interacting with the many enthusiastic Yellow Jackets and other Georgia Tech supporters, another enjoyable part of the Tour is hearing about the distinct history and characteristics of the areas we visit. The communities are justifiably proud of their uniqueness, and we always learn lessons about our state that we didn't know.

Our first stop, Hawkinsville, is a city of 5,000-plus and home of the late Mansfield Jennings (IM '56) and his wife, Genelle. Hawkinsville is known as the "Harness Horse Capital" of Georgia. The city owns and maintains the **only Standardbred Harness training center** in Georgia. A Harness Festival is held each April before the locally-trained horses head north for the harness racing season. Named for Benjamin Hawkins, a delegate to the Continental Congress,

Hawkinsville has been the county seat of Pulaski County since 1830, the year it was founded. Its city motto — “Where Progress Sets Pace” — is reminiscent of Georgia Tech’s motto: “Progress and Service.”

From Hawkinsville, we traveled west to Fort Valley, where we also stopped in 2010, and attended a luncheon set up by our Government & Community Relations folks at Lane Southern Orchards. This is actually also our second appearance at Lane, which we visited once before during our 2010 Georgia Tour. We enjoyed lunch there with several local lawmakers and representatives of Georgia Tech’s Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI₂), our main business-outreach organization. EI₂ is the nation’s largest and most comprehensive university-based program of business and industry assistance, technology commercialization, and economic development. We were joined for lunch by Alan Barfoot, the manager of the EI₂ Central Region, which serves 28 counties in middle Georgia. We were also glad to see Georgia State Sen. **Larry Walker** III, who represents Georgia Senate District 20 and his father, former Regent Larry Walker Jr.

Because this visit to Lane wasn’t a full-fledged company tour like we sometimes do, we didn’t get to experience the full operation on this trip. But it’s worth noting how a dynamic business like this serves as an economic pillar for the local community. On its 6,000 acres in the heart of Georgia peach country — and the appropriately named Peach County — Lane’s operation is a marvel of efficiency that grows more than 35 varieties of peaches and several varieties of pecans. It started in 1908 and has been an important part of middle Georgia’s economy ever since. The word “orchards” doesn’t do it full justice — it is a diversified and thriving business enterprise that also harvests strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, and muscadines from its extensive fields and surrounding areas. In addition, Lane’s Southern Kitchen offers BBQ pork, homemade ice cream (in many varieties, but peach is my favorite), breads, and other local favorites.

From Lane’s, we traveled a short distance in Fort Valley to visit **Super Lawn Trucks Company**, which manufactures trucks engineered specifically for the lawn and landscape industry. SLT offers six different series of specialized trucks, all of which can be customized to meet their clients’ distinct needs. When Super Lawn relocated from Bonaire, Georgia, to Fort Valley in 2008, Georgia Tech’s EI₂ **helped the company implement** best practices in the manufacturing process for the then-new facility. And later, when SLT needed assistance with manufacturing issues, experts from the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP), a division of EI₂, applied lean manufacturing principles and design-engineering expertise to **help the fast-growing company develop** a lighter, stronger, and more efficient hydraulic ramp system for the specialized trucks it builds for landscaping companies.

It’s very gratifying to visit businesses and industries like SLT that have benefited from the relationship with Georgia Tech and learn about them firsthand.

Following our tour of SLT, we headed for Macon and a meeting with alumni and friends, after which we drove to Milledgeville, our final city destination of the day. In the evening, we attended an alumni reception in Milledgeville at The Club at Lake Sinclair, where about 100 enthusiastic Georgia Tech alumni, family, friends, and several incoming students joined us. We were joined by a number of our faculty who are participating in the “Emerging Leaders Program. They will be joining us for several of the events during the next few days.

In August 2017, we launched the **Georgia Tech Scholars Program**, which offers automatic acceptance to Georgia high school valedictorians and salutatorians from any accredited Georgia public or private high school with 50 or more graduates. It is designed to increase exposure and

access to Georgia Tech for the state's most prepared students. For the incoming class of 2018, we have 169 students enrolling from across Georgia, many of them from rural Georgia, and throughout the day we were able to meet and talk to several of them.

As an aside, The Club is in a beautiful setting, built in 1957 alongside Lake Sinclair, a manmade 15,330-acre lake that was created in 1953 when the Oconee River was dammed. Operated by Georgia Power, Lake Sinclair provides both electricity and recreation as it stretches through Baldwin, Hancock, and Putnam counties. Georgia Power is owned and operated by Southern Company, which ranks No. 6 nationally among the most frequent employers of Georgia Tech students. Currently, Southern Company has 955 Tech alumni among its employees.

G.P. "Bud" Peterson

For a look at the public gallery of photos from the Georgia Tour, visit: <https://gtgcr.smugmug.com/2018/GeorgiaTour>

Photos from Day One:



Lane Southern Orchards sorters make sure only the best peaches make it to market.



Georgia Tech's contingent and other visitors were made to feel right at home at Lane Southern Orchards. From left, State Senator Larry Walker III, Regent Larry Walker, Mrs. (Val) and President G.P. "Bud" Peterson, Gary Lee (alumnus), Jim Elliott (alumnus), Lee Evans (alumnus), Alan Barfoot (EL₂ regional director), Lynn Durham (Assoc. Vice President and Chief of Staff to the president), Dene Sheheane (Georgia Tech Government & Community Relations Vice President).



Lane Southern Orchards worker makes sure only the "cream of the crop" makes it through the sorting process.



A luscious box of Lane Southern Orchards peaches, ready to head to market!



The Petersons speak with Super Lawn Trucks President Tony Bass, along with El2's Alan Barfoot, who has worked with the company to connect with Georgia Tech.



Tony Bass shows President Peterson a battery-powered trimmer -- much quieter, lighter, and more eco-friendly than gas-powered -- inside a solar-powered Super Lawn Truck.



El2's Alan Barfoot, Super Lawn Trucks President Tony Bass, and President Peterson.



The Ramblin' Wreck at The Club at Lake Sinclair in Milledgeville.



President and Mrs. Peterson with Toombsboro Mayor Joyce Denson and Baldwin County Commissioner Emily Davis.



President Peterson enjoys chatting with Georgia Tech alums.



President Peterson speaks to the crowd in Milledgeville.



The Petersons speak with an alum in Milledgeville.



The Petersons with Jenny and (alumnus) Larry Moore and Rep. Rick Williams of Georgia House District 145.



The Petersons with alumnus Johnny Grant, a former state senator and current Georgia College & State University director of economic development, and his wife, Carol.