

## **Synopsis of Rhett Laubach Interview**

### **August 17, 2011**

Rhett attended high school in Laverne, Oklahoma, where his dad was ag teacher  
He served as chapter reporter twice, then president  
Then NW District VP as a freshman in College

“If you have any inclination of wanting to run for state office ... run for chapter office. Make sure you get that position. It does make a difference in terms of your electability as a state officer.”

“The speaking part of it is going to be very big. (For state office, especially). Take advantage of every speaking opportunity to speak and improve your speaking skills. It takes work ethic, it builds confidence, and you just become a better communicator. There are just so many positive outputs to going through the speaking training. It’s also a really big part of a leader’s role. “

“The first and most important thing is just getting involved. Then having speaking experience. And be a nice person, someone that other people enjoy being around. These are things that will help you in FFA, and that you probably should do for the rest of your life.”

Are leaders born or made? “It’s a combination of both. Leaders are born and then unmade. A lot of the major things that you need to have to be influential with people are things you were born with. Look at children. Children are happy, they’re creative, they’re imaginative, they’re friendly, and they’re trustworthy. But as we grow up we lose our creativity, we lose our imagination, our ability to take risks, to talk to a stranger, sometimes even to just enjoy the day. Those are fundamental things that get switched off, because life switches them off. And that diminishes, dilutes and deletes our ability to be influential with people.”

How do we regain those fundamentals? “There are four key things you need to work on: You need to work on your influence – make it positive. You need to work on your spirit – make it energetic, make it joyful, make it engaging, and make it friendly. You need to work on your class – their etiquette, their integrity, they’re classiness, being a classy person. These three will feed in to the fourth one, which is legacy – having a legacy of influence.

For a chapter officer this means “for influence, you need to be involved, you need to be active, you need to have weekly duties where you are helping to grow the chapter and helping other members get involved, get sponsorships, get community support.

“For spirit, you need to make sure the FFA classroom looks good. You need to make sure the FFA is doing community visual things – like Adopt a Highway” or make a Welcome sign outside of town. You need to be enthusiastic about the FFA.

“For class, you need to make sure that you are stand-up person, that you are a positive leader in the jacket and out of the jacket.

If you do all these things and do them right, “there will be a legacy of excellence in the chapter.”

In the best-case scenario, the chapter advisor ensures that the officer team has ample opportunities to exercise their leadership muscles. The Program of Activities defines to a large extent what many of those opportunities will be. And then it’s just a matter of applying the four fundamental principals to those opportunities.

Officers must see themselves “as the servants of the chapter. You are out there working on their behalf.”

But ultimately, each officer must assume personal responsibility for their individual growth as leaders.

For influence, ask yourself, “What have I done as an officer? What has been my activity? Who have I met with, what meetings have I gone to, what meetings have I coordinated?

For spirit, “it’s both personal as well as public. Am I someone who others enjoy being around? Am I a person with a smile on my face and love in my heart?” Am I sharing those good feelings with others? Am I communicating with others the good things that my chapter is doing?”

Class is about “being honest, staying away from drugs and alcohol . . . having a strong work ethic, looking good in your FFA jacket. The language you use with others is clean, powerful and positive.” Remembering that whenever you wear that jacket, you are representing FFA to the world.

And as we said before, all three of those things together contribute to having a legacy of excellence. And “chapter officers can actively create that by not being so concerned about everything good happening their year.” Sometimes you just plant the seed, but the fruits of your labor may not be obvious for several years. That’s a legacy.

## Obstacles

“There is a difference between being able to be elected to a position and being able to serve in that position - a big difference. The biggest barriers are priorities.”

Chapter officers are often involved in a lot of activities besides FFA. “They’re concerned about their grades. A lot of them have jobs. They have their own SAF projects. They’re very busy.”

We're not saying that FFA always has to be your number one priority, that wouldn't always be a good thing, but "it needs to stay up there pretty high, particularly it needs to trump anything that you could do at a later date, or that the meaning and purpose of it just isn't as great." Sometimes you need to "make a distinction between what you need to do and what you just want to do." Sometimes you just have to say "no" to other things.

"A couple of other obstacles are making decisions that you're only thinking about yourself . . . putting the little world of self before the big world of others. Even the best leaders have those selfish wants, needs and desires; they just don't act on them" because they have the discipline and the sense of responsibility about their positions to put their selfish desires aside.

### Rewards

We've talked a lot about the responsibility, the sacrifices, the time you have to put in to do a good job. What's the upside?

"You get to make a difference. You are building skills that will help you throughout your life."

Beyond that, it looks really good on your resume. It can help you qualify for a scholarship or a job.

It's important for chapter officers to understand that their responsibilities as an officer are just like the responsibilities they have for their plants or animals or businesses. There are positive results when you take those responsibilities seriously, and definitely negative consequences when you don't.