



GIPSA News

A newsletter for the employees of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

January 2002

2001 Review Branch Contributor Award

Jan Hart and the Review Branch Staff Members

Sixty-three FGIS field-based employees have volunteered to work on details with the Compliance Division's Review Branch. Of these, 20 assisted during onsite compliance reviews during calendar year 2001. They worked during 14 onsite compliance reviews that evaluated 2 FGIS field offices, 2 FGIS suboffices, and 16 State and private agencies.

We recognize everyone individually for his or her contributions. The Review Branch also provides special year-end recognition to the persons contributing the most to our program. As a group, we decided that **Jimmy Cadle** and **Joe Hearn**s would receive the annual "Review Branch Contributor Award." Each receives a cash award and USDA Certificate of Merit.

Again, our thanks to all of the employees that participated in reviews this past year. Here's to a great review program in 2002!

2001 Review Program Participants

Don Akers, QAS, Corpus Christi
Chuck Britton, QAS, Sacramento
Jimmy Cadle, ACG, Jonesboro
Mitch Doak, ACG, Kansas City
Cleve Ellis, ACG, Portland
Gary Erskine, QAS, League City
Danny Harpole, ACG, Jonesboro
Joe Hearns, QAS, League City
Judy Johnston, OSA, Wichita
Donnell Keith, ACG, Portland
Denise Ruggles, OSA, Cedar Rapids
Lynette Scalise, ACT, Moscow
Roy Shepherd, shift supervisor, New Orleans
Dave Skallerud, ACG, Cedar Rapids
Tom Steele, ACG, Portland
Jim Tullous, assistant manager, Grand Forks
Mary Vick, ACG, Kansas City
Mark Wooden, ACG, Kansas City
Mohsen Younes, shift supervisor, Toledo
Gary Zella, QAS, Stuttgart

Names in the News

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

PERSONNEL

On January 3, 2002, **Steve Bright** retired after 34 years of government service. **Steve** joined the P&S Omaha office in 1981 as a marketing specialist. In 1987, he transferred to the Atlanta Regional Office as the supervisory packer and poultry specialist. **Steve** held this position until the reorganization eliminated his supervisory title and he became a Marketing Specialist. **Steve**'s USDA career began in 1971 when he joined the USDA Meat Grading Service. His assignments included stints in Oklahoma City, OK; Hereford, TX; Laredo, TX; Honolulu, HI; and Omaha, NE. It is uncertain why **Steve** transferred from Hawaii to Omaha, NE, hence his nickname of Not-So-Bright. **Steve** is a graduate of Louisiana Tech University and served for more than 3

years in the Navy. **Steve** and his wife, Joy, have a son, **Stephen Jr.** **Steve** plans to continue to live in the Atlanta area, at least until his son graduates from college. His other plans are still open, but will include some travel.

Congratulations to **Kevin Smith**, Atlanta, and his wife Mary who became the proud parents of **Marguerite M. Smith** on November 29.

AWARDS

Tracy Gerke and **Lynn Polston** received time off awards for developing a more efficient time and attendance worksheet for the ARTS Branch.

Carey Cook, **David Morris**, **Ganga Murthy**, **Thomas Weber**, and **Lynn Polston** received time off awards for extra effort and outstanding performance in validating the GIPSA fumonisin reference method.

25-Year Service Award

Alfred Broussard, Jr., Beaumont
Perry C. Smith, Jr., Beaumont

15-Year Service Award

Barbara McKee, Atlanta, GA

10-Year Service Award

Tim Brennan, Jackson, MS
Deirdre Holder, Washington, DC
Jacques Meadows, Atlanta, GA
Duane Short, Des Moines, IA

At some time, unplanned rescheduling happens to everyone when traveling on official business. If you're at the airport and miss a flight or connection, call your travel management center's emergency number that is listed on your itinerary. The travel agent can help you rebook quickly and ensure compliance with regulations. If you can't reach your travel management center, contact the airline's ticketing desk. Remind the ticket agent that you are a Federal employee and should be charged the Government-contracted City Pairs fare to your destination.

Remember that there is a retail block on all purchases made by USDA employees on their Government-issued travel credit card. If you have a delay in your travel schedule and need to purchase retail items, you are limited to \$100 per day. Please be aware that all retail purchases made are the cardholder's responsibility, even when made due to an emergency situation.

In This Issue	
Undersecretary in NOLA	3
More Rail Gauge History	3
Letter of Appreciation	4
For Your Health	4
Valley Pride Bankrupt	5
Land Grant Workshop	6
GIPSA Verifies Agri-Screen.	6
Designation Activities	6
EEO/CR Ratings	7

Help is within reach.

For confidential assistance,
call your Employee
Assistance Program

Washington, DC personnel, call...
3 0 1 - 5 7 0 - 3 9 0 0
or 1 - 8 0 0 - 2 2 2 - 0 3 6 4

Field personnel, call...
1 - 8 0 0 - 2 2 2 - 0 3 6 4

Under Secretary Hawks Visits NOLA

Kerry Petit, New Orleans

On November 30, 2001, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Bill Hawks and his wife Diane visited the New Orleans Field Office. APHIS' state plant health director Bill Spitzer and agent Vernon Foret accompanied Mr. Hawks. Under secretary and Mrs. Hawks, Mr. Spitzer, and Mr. Foret met with field office manager John Shropshire and me, assistant manager, to discuss GIPSA's role in the Gulf

Region and the interaction between GIPSA, APHIS and other government agencies serving the grain trade. Mr. Hawks then met with the New Orleans Field Office staff where he gave a brief overview of his past experiences in the private sector, and defined his current position and role. Mr. Hawks entertained

a short question and answer session, followed by a reception that gave Mr. Hawks a chance to mingle and meet some of the staff on a more personal basis. Following the reception, Mr. Hawks traveled to GIPSA's laboratory located at ADM/ Destrehan's export elevator. Under Secretary Hawks met with the employees on duty, toured the lab, and saw demonstrations of the automated weighing system, CCTV, time lapse recorders, and the automated Cu-Sum system. Mr. Hawks then toured the ASIST (Automated Sampling and In-

spection) project located adjacent to the lab. I described the system to Mr. Hawks and fielded questions from the group.

All NOLA employees enjoyed Mr. Hawks' visit and appreciated the genuine interest he showed in the work being done by the field office and its employees.

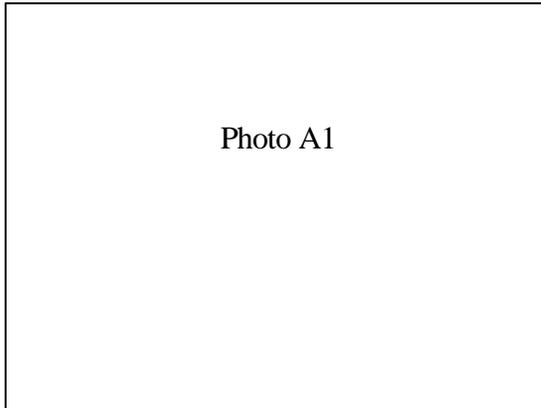


Photo A1

From left to right: GIPSA's Kerry Peti and John Shropshire, APHIS' William Spitzer, Diane Hawks, Under Secretary Bill Hawks, and APHIS agent Vernon Foret.

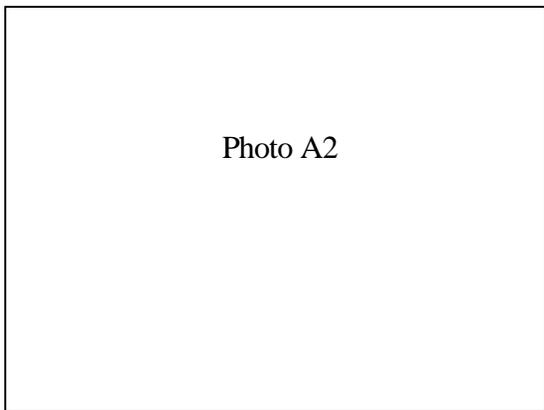


Photo A2

Under Secretary Bill Hawks and the New Orleans Field Office Clerical Staff. Standing, left to right: Rose Fremin, Carla Cambre, Amelia Gautreau, Joanna LeBlanc, Under Secretary Bill Hawks, Glenda Lasseigne, Erin Dubroc, Yohanna Lorio. Seated, left to right: Angela Roper, Angela Marine, Joanne Matherne

Rail Gauge History, Another Twist

Jim Conrad, Retired Chief, Review Branch

When we see a space shuttle sitting on its launchpad, there are two large booster rockets attached to the sides of the main tank. These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. "Thiokol" makes the SRBs at their factory in Utah.

The engineers who designed the SRBs would have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped via train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line from the factory runs through a tunnel in the Rocky Mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses' behinds.

So now consider — a major design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined over 2,000 years ago by the width of a horse's a_ _!

Are EEO/CR issues or concerns affecting your employment with GIPSA? Do you have questions? Need help? Then let your voice be heard.

Call the EEO Advisory Committee at...

1-800-639-5167

Civil Rights Hotline



From a letter sent to GIPSA Acting Administrator Dave Shipman...

Dear Mr. Shipman

Recently I discovered the educational materials that you provide on your website [<http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/reference-library/brochures/education.htm>]. I reviewed them and after realizing how good they are, I worked with Roger Friedrich [Technical Services Division] to arrange for each of our elevators to have them.

Please accept my thanks and my appreciation for providing this material. Whomever thought it up, supported it, approved it, and especially whomever did the work, deserves to be commended.

I hope that you keep producing these types of educational materials, they are very useful to us.

Besides the grain elevators, I sent a note to approximately 30 merchandisers, managers, and accountants in our office. I have attached that note below. Just thought you might like to see the note. (Your materials have received many, many positive comments.)

Thank You Again,

Lawrence Bongle
Manager, Operations
ConAgra Trade Group, Inc./Peavey Grain
Omaha, NE

Subject: USDA Grain Grading

... absolutely great materials on Grain Grading...

For anyone who has to train on grain grading, have a refresher, find the charts for grade factors, look up what a type of damage or what a certain insect looks like – etc. — these are more than just good.

It looks to me as if what they did was to take the already good PowerPoint presentations, add sound and videos, and make multimedia presentations. I wish we would have had these years ago.

As an example — the corn PowerPoint has 160 slides with - grade charts, how to cut samples, photos of types of corn, photos of damage, and a long test at the end. Good stuff.

I hope you find this useful. Feel free to share this with anyone you wish to.

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

Relax. When life comes at you from all sides, just thinking about how to relax can be stressful. Chances are, you already know how to cool down after a stressful day. Perhaps you go for regular walks at lunch, take a deep breath before answering a confrontational coworker, or laugh at something funny everyday. Take time to acknowledge the ways you currently handle stress and give yourself credit for them. When life gets overwhelming, however, you may find your defenses crumbling. That is when you need an extra boost. These suggestions may seem obvious, but how many of them do you already follow?

- Be sure to get eight hours of sleep every night. Cutting back on alcohol and caffeine later in the day will help you sleep better.
- Join an exercise or yoga class. Exercise is a powerful way to decrease stress and improve your mood.
- Plan some time with your family or friends every week. Time with people who are close to you will help to nourish your spirit.

There is no time like the present to get a handle on the stress in your life. Making simple changes in your lifestyle can help make that easier.

(Courtesy FOH Well Times)

*Continued, see **Health**
on page 5.*

Rest For the Weary. If you think you stop working when you slide under the covers at the end of the day, guess again. Your body keeps working when you sleep, recharging your immune system. If you don't get the sleep you need, your body will demand that you make it up. If you are constantly sleep-deprived, you may be weakening your immune system. You may also find it more difficult to function normally. People who don't get enough sleep (usually seven or eight hours a night) are more likely to have problems concentrating, may have impaired judgment, and are more likely to get into car accidents.

Millions of people don't get the sleep they need because they have insomnia (difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep). Insomnia is slightly more likely to affect women and increases with age. Insomnia can be temporary or long-term and is a common symptom of some medical conditions. Some causes of short-term insomnia are stress, jet lag, medication, and diet. If you suffer from long-term insomnia, talk with your doctor.

Insomnia can be a symptom of a medical problem, such as depression. Whether you are trying to tackle short-term insomnia or just make the most of your bedtime, here are some tips.

- **Keep a Sleep Schedule.** Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends. If you can't sleep at bedtime, get up and do something else. Staring at the clock will only increase your anxiety about not sleeping—which further hinders your ability to fall asleep.
- **Tune Into Your Circadian Rhythms.** You naturally feel more awake in the daylight and sleepier when it's dark because your internal body clock sets itself based on light. If you work nights, you are interrupting your natural sleeping and waking patterns. To counteract this, make sure the room you sleep in during the day is dark.
- **Exercise,** but not too close to bedtime. Regular exercise will help you sleep better.
- **Be Careful of When You Eat and Drink.** Avoid caffeine (found in cola, coffee, chocolate, and certain medications) within six hours of bedtime. Alcohol consumed within several hours of bedtime will also impair your ability to sleep restfully. A light dinner at least two hours before bedtime is better for your sleep than a heavy meal.

(Courtesy: FOH Well Times)

Training is something that is done to you or that you do for someone else. Learning is something you do to and for yourself.

— Human Resources Development Council

Valley Pride Files for Bankruptcy

On August 10, 2001, Valley Pride Pack, Inc., a meat packer with slaughter facilities in Norwalk, WI, and Tama, IA, ceased operations. Valley Pride is subject to the packer trust provisions of the P&S Act and has a livestock bond in the amount of \$505,000. When it ceased operations, Valley Pride owed nearly \$4 million to approximately 400 livestock sellers.

On August 17, 2001, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division froze Valley Pride's assets. On October 16, 2001, Valley Pride filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Western District of Wisconsin.

GIPSA received trust claims from more than 300 livestock sellers totaling \$3,601,164.83. The P&S Act requires claims against a packer trust to be filed within 30 days of the final date for making payment under section 409 of the P&S Act and claims against a bond to be filed within 60 days from the date of the transaction on which the claim is based.

As a courtesy, on November 9, 2001, GIPSA completed a partial packer trust analysis of Valley Pride and provided it to Valley Pride, as the trustee. GIPSA's partial packer trust analysis reviewed the claims for compliance with the statutory and regulatory requirements of the P&S Act.

GIPSA does not make final determination on the validity of trust claims, order the payment of trust claims, or provide legal representation to trust claimants. The final determination of the validity of trust claims and payment of trust claims are the responsibility of the trustee.

USDA Land Grant Workshop

Debbie Shipman, Washington, DC

On November 28-30, 2001, the U.S. Department of Agriculture sponsored an 1890 and 1994 Land Grant Colleges and Universities Collaboration Workshop at Tennessee State University in Nashville. It was the first event for two predominantly African American and Native American Land-Grant institutions.

Land-grant schools enroll 2.7 million students and earmark more than \$13 billion annually for teaching, research, and public-service programs. These institutions award about 450,000 degrees each year.

John Phillips, GIPSA's Tribal College Liaison, joined 100 other participants at the session. The participants included "administrators, faculty, and project directors from the entire (1890 and 1994) Land-Grant system. They came together to share their traditions, culture, expertise, and resources.

The goals of the meeting were to discuss issues of mutual interest in research, extension, and teaching; to build relationships among 1890 and 1994 Land-Grant institutions; to develop strategies to increase multi-institutional collaboration in order to better serve clientele with similar needs; and to develop joint proposals, identify potential funding mechanisms, and implement collaborative programs in research, extension, and teaching.

Five different work-teams were organized at Tennessee State University comprised of faculty staff, scientists, and Extension Service directors. Their objective was to get students involved in the community-developed project in the following subject areas: "Water Quality, Plant Science Geography, Plant Science, Geographical Information Systems, Youth Development, and Diet and Health."

This joint project symbolizes a new partnership for the future in America.

Official Designation Activities

In December, GIPSA announced the following action on designations to officially inspect and weigh grain in specified areas in Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas.

- GIPSA is asking for applicants to provide official services in the Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Des Moines, Iowa; Tifton, Georgia; Helena, Montana; Pendleton, Oregon; and Lake Village, Indiana, areas. GIPSA asked for applications by January 2, 2002.

- Columbus Grain Inspection, Inc., Farwell Grain Inspection Company, and Northeast Indiana Grain Inspection, Inc., are designated to inspect grain effective February 1, 2002, through December 31, 2004. For official grain inspection and weighing services, contact Columbus at 740-474-3519, Farwell at 806-481-9052, and Northeast Indiana at 219-639-6390.

GIPSA Verifies Neogen Agri-Screen CRY9C Strip Test

GIPSA has verified that the Neogen Corporation's Agri-Screen Cry9C Strip Test detects the presence of one kernel of StarLink corn in 800 kernels in ten minutes (test development time.) GIPSA's verification of this test was performed on grain only, as opposed to processed foods.

GIPSA began offering official testing service for StarLink on November 15, 2000, after the grain markets expressed the need for government-backed testing, and to ensure that corn export markets to Japan were supplied with corn free of StarLink. StarLink is a variety of corn developed by Aventis Crop Science that incorporates biotechnical modification to control insect damage. StarLink is approved for animal feed and industrial use only and is no longer available as seed for production.

GIPSA's evaluation of rapid test kits helps grain markets make more informed decisions about the grain being bought and sold.

For more information on StarLink testing services, see GIPSA's web site at <http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/biotech/starlink/starlink.htm>. For information on test kit performance evaluation and laboratory accreditation services, visit <http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/biotech/evalaccredit.htm>.

Achieving an “Exceeds Fully Successful” EEO/CR Rating

Dawn Cowan, Washington, DC

Supervisors and employees are encouraged to use creativity in developing ways to meet or exceed the Fully Successful level of performance in the EEO/CR performance element. Keep in mind that other characteristics can differentiate between the Fully Successful level and the Exceeds level. They include:

- Initiative
- Creativity
- Innovation
- Commitment, and/or;
- Impact of activities and ideas.

Following are examples of how employees might meet or exceed performance elements into which EEO/CR responsibilities have been incorporated. Supervisors are required to define only the Fully Successful level of performance in the employee’s plan. However, supervisors and employees are encouraged to discuss ways in which employees might exceed Fully Successful at the beginning of and during the performance year. Some employees have limited access to the kinds of events and activities described below.

- Employees may attend activities before or after regular work hours on their own time and, with prior supervisory approval, may prepare and/or present information and materials to office staff. This type of activity would reflect the performance at the “Exceeds” level. However, before any presentations are made, the employee and supervisor should agree that this type of activity is appropriate for the work unit (e.g., that access to

work related events is restricted or unusual work schedules prevent the employee from attending work-sponsored events or activities).

- Meets and deals with others and performs office responsibilities in a manner that consistently contributes to a work environment that is free from discrimination and that respects all internal and external customers (including coworkers, visitors, and callers); or Ensures that own oral and written communications are free from language or disparaging jokes that may be offensive to individuals or groups (e.g., ethnic or racial overtones);
- Participates in monthly discussions on diversity, cross-cultural relation/communication issues;
- Considers and responds to ideas of others by stating the rationale for acceptance, rejection, or adaptation of ideas, and doing so in a manner which is responsive to the individual’s communication needs or style.
- Strives to create harmony and a positive atmosphere in the workplace.
- Plans or assists in coordinating activities or events aimed at heightening the unit’s awareness and understanding of EEO/CR (e.g., invites a Special Emphasis Program speaker to talk at a staff meeting).
- Makes recommendations to management concerning identified EEO/CR barriers that, if left unresolved, could be detrimental to the work environment and Agency mission.
- Attend, conduct, or participate in

EEO/CR training. (Except where employees cannot participate for reasons beyond their control).

- When witnessing improper behavior or someone making improper statements, telling jokes, which may create problems, etc., corrects the individual(s).
- Makes an effort to be knowledgeable about EEO/CR issues and contact points in the Agency for resolution of problems or issues.
- Promotes a work environment where training, job assignments, and details are provided on a fair and equitable basis.
- Demonstrates that cultural diversity, EEO/CR are understood, respected and valued.
- Recommends ways to increase teamwork in the unit or fosters cooperation across the Agency (e.g., initiates activities that bring people together and increases feeling of participation).

GIPSA News is the employee newsletter of the USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Send your news, ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, or thoughts for the next issue to:

Dana Stewart

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by January 25, 2002!

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION
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Photo A1



Photo A2