



# GIPSA News

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

*January 1999*

## **Administrator's Awards**

*Jim Baker*

I am proud to announce the recipients of the 1998 Administrator's Awards. Congratulations to all who were selected this year, and many thanks to all who took the time to submit nominations!

### **◆ Distinguished Award -- Creig Stephens ◆**

Creig, Atlanta Regional Office, received the award for his work on the relocation and then expansion of the Atlanta office while maintaining a full work schedule, a feat which he continues to carry on today.

### **◆ Superior Award -- Dave Funk ◆**

Dave, Technical Center, was selected for this award for his leadership in implementing the pathlength procedure for standardizing NIRT instruments and his role as the Research Coordination Team Leader. The new pathlength procedure will result in significant cost savings to GIPSA and official agencies involved in NIRT grain analysis. Further, his leadership of the Research Coordination Team exemplifies his commitment to GIPSA and the agricultural community.

### **◆ Superior Award -- John Pitchford ◆**

John, Washington, DC, was recognized for his demonstrated commitment to USDA policies and programs in the area of international trade and relations. His expertise as GIPSA's national sanitary and phytosanitary expert is recognized throughout the Department. John significantly contributes to the continued success of U.S. international agricultural policies that promote export grain sales, especially to Mexico, China, Brazil, India, and Japan. He has assisted in addressing complex technical trade issues involving TCK smut, sorghum smut, Karnal bunt, mycotoxins, and protein analyses.

*Continued, see Administrator's Awards on page 3.*

## **Performance Appraisal System**

*Dave Shipman, Washington, DC*

Last year, our personnel office held several meetings around the country to gather input on whether you, the employees of GIPSA, wanted to implement a new performance appraisal system. While the meetings involved reviewing a variety of possible systems, it really came down to either retaining the current 5-level system (outstanding, superior, fully successful, marginal, and unacceptable) or converting to a 2-level system, commonly referred to as pass/fail.

You had mixed opinions. Some recommended changing to the pass/fail; others questioned the fairness of it and strongly recommended staying with the current 5-level system. Overall, a common message expressed by many was the need to improve how the performance appraisal system is applied regardless of which system is used.

*Continued, see Performance on page 5.*

# Names in the News

## Personnel

Field Management Division is pleased to announce that **Dave Grady** is the new manager of the Montreal Field Office, and **Walter Rust** is the new manager of the Portland Field Office.

Many thanks from the Compliance Division's Review Branch to the following field-based people who assisted in conducting the onsite compliance review (follow-up) of the New Orleans Field Office circuit during November: **Bob Krouse**, protein coordinator, Kansas City; and **Ted Respect**, officer-in-charge, Duluth. Also assisting on this review from headquarters were **Jeri Fisher**, secretary, Compliance Division, and **Bill Ashley**, deputy director, Executive Resources Staff.

**John Barthel** became the assistant regional supervisor of the Atlanta regional office on January 3.

**Mel Beck**, computer specialist, Office of Policy and Litigation Support, accepted a position with the Justice Department; and **Mary Lee**, economist, and **Kandee Murphy**, legal program assistant, Des Moines, accepted positions with the private sector.

**Stephanie Holland**, Compliance Division, accepted a specialist position with the USDA Office of Operations. Her last day with GIPSA was January 2.

The Technical Services Division (TSD) welcomes **Terri Liberty**, who came on board in December as a part-time, temporary employee.

**Rosemary Mayne** is the new employee development specialist with the Audiovisual, Regulatory and Training Staff.

Welcome to **Doug O'Brien**, marketing specialist, Des Moines.

**John Rollins** will join the Atlanta regional office as supervisor of the Trade Practices Unit. **John** plans to report in Atlanta the week of February 14, 1999.

**Mark Ruth**, TSD Board of Appeals and Review, received Certificates of Merit for their organization, preparation, training, and leadership skills that contribute to GIPSA's mission and support of field office quality assurance staff.

**Chuck Britton**, Sacramento, CA, received a performance award for his continuous contributions to the development and enhancement of the Quality Assurance Program in the California Federal/State Office and FGIS.

**Stuart Frank**, economist, Des Moines, received a QSI for outstanding performance and leadership in performing analysis on the effects of proposed regulations on the livestock industry.

**Jay Johnson**, regional supervisor, Des Moines, received a QSI for exemplary dedication and leadership serving as acting director of the Packer and Poultry Division while also fulfilling his duties as a branch chief.

**Larry McDonald**, TSD, received a certificate of merit for meritorious service involving support of the mission of TSD and GIPSA.

**Ken Palmer**, marketing specialist, Atlanta, received a plaque from the North Carolina Livestock Markets Association in recognition and appreciation for many years of honest and dedicated service to the livestock industry and especially for his even-handed means of administering regulations and imparting information to the livestock auction markets.

**Eurvin Williams**, TSD, received a certificate of appreciation for his leadership in organizing the 1998 Quality Assurance conference.

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## Condolences

**Joe Gros**, agricultural commodity technician, New Orleans, passed away on December 24, 1998. **Joe** worked for FGIS for 17 years.

## Awards

**Bill Azmy, Eddie Clark, Dempsey Lewis, David Lowe, Dan Murphy, Dale Phetteplace, Eric Poling,** and

## Administrator's Awards, from page 1.

### ◆ Superior Award -- Jesse Booth ◆

Jesse, Lancaster, was selected for his work with the Lancaster Regional Office's scales and weighing program. He trained members of the technical staff who had little or no exposure to complex scale investigations such as reweighing entire truckloads of poultry and testing monorail scales. Jesse put many hours into this training, including early mornings and late evenings.

### ◆ Superior Award -- Brian McKee ◆

Brian, Washington, DC, was recognized for his outstanding support to GIPSA, especially in grain transportation issues. He is GIPSA's liaison to the USDA/Surface Transportation Board Grain Logistics Task Force Working Group, and for issues involving Canadian grain transportation issues. Brian also worked closely with the Farm Service Agency on tween-deck vessels for grain shipments. He also traveled on several foreign trips on short notice to either address sensitive quality issues or to promote U.S. grain inspection and weighing services.

### ◆ Safety, Distinguished Award -- Bob Lijewski ◆

Bob, Washington, DC, was selected for his outstanding contribution, over and above assigned duties, to the GIPSA safety program. He addressed safety concerns involving mycotoxin test kits and testing procedures, and the handling of biological hazards. His actions led to implementing new mycotoxin test kits, eliminating the field TLC laboratory, and in potential cost savings for registering and monitoring the distribution of aflatoxin.

### ◆ Safety, Superior Award -- Jackie Clements ◆

Jackie, Stuttgart, was recognized for his excellent performance as the collateral duty safety and health officer and workers' compensation specialist in the Stuttgart Field Office, and most notably for quickly resolving employees' workers' compensation and safety concerns, and for his commitment to the overall safety and health mission of the Agency.

### ◆ Safety, Superior Award -- Ralph Regan ◆

Ralph, Washington, DC, was selected for his outstanding performance of duties, extraordinary efforts in furthering the Agency's mission, and for his leadership and creativity in managing GIPSA's Safety and Health Program.

### ◆ EEO, Distinguished Award -- Ruth Goff ◆

Ruth, Technical Center, was recognized for her outstanding performance and support of GIPSA's EEO/CR program, for her efforts to disseminate EEO/CR information to employees, and for assisting with the processing and coordination of EEO/CR materials.

*Continued, see More Awards on page 4.*

## New and Aspiring Leader Program Participants

The following folks were selected to participate in the 1999 New and Aspiring Leader Programs.

### New Leader Program

**Ray Kirkpatrick**, Portland  
**Shelli Lopez**, Kansas City  
**Rosemary Mayne**, Washington, DC  
**Janet Walton**, New Orleans  
**Barbara Van Til**, Technical Center  
**Anne Bullard**, New Orleans

### Aspiring Leader Program

**Martha Davis**, Technical Center  
**Tom Steele**, Portland

Congratulations and good luck to all!

  
*Best Wishes  
for a  
Happy and  
Healthy  
1999!*

## More Awards, from page 3.

### ◆ EEO, Superior Award -- Dave Grady ◆

Dave, Washington, DC, was selected based on his historical contributions to the Agency's EEO/CR program. The first FGIS EEO Advisory Committee was established thanks to Dave's efforts and commitment to EEO/CR activities. He chaired the first committee which has expanded to the GIPSA EEO Advisory Committee. Dave also has supported the Historically Black Colleges and University program over the years by providing lodging, food, and transportation for interns, and was an excellent recruiter for the USDA 1890 scholarship program while he worked at the Technical Center.

### ◆ EEO, Superior Award -- Rosemary Mayne ◆

Rosemary, Washington, DC, was recognized for her outstanding contribution to the GIPSA EEO/CR program. As a trainer and facilitator, she was instrumental in the Agency's successful and timely completion of mandatory Civil Rights training for all employees. Rosemary also trained the Marketing and Regulatory Programs' under secretary and deputy undersecretary, agency administrators, EEO coordinator, and staff. She also assisted in developing GIPSA's Civil Rights Strategic Plan.

### ◆ Group Award -- Beaumont Suboffice ◆

The employees of the Beaumont, TX, Suboffice were recognized for their extra efforts and contributions to furthering the goals and mission of GIPSA. The suboffice personnel also were recognized for their professionalism, employee relations, productivity, and superior customer service.

*It's not too early to think about the 1999 awards. Nominations for the Administrator's Awards can be submitted throughout the year — not just at year's end when a reminder goes out about the deadline. And, anyone can nominate anyone!*

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## Special Delivery to Beaumont

*Dave Shipman, Washington, DC*

photo A

On December 21, 1998, I had the privilege to visit with the staff at the Beaumont Suboffice and present to them the Administrator's Award for outstanding performance during 1998.

While the office has a variety of customers, its primary customer is the Continental Grain elevator in Beaumont, TX. Last year, the Continental facility shut down for several months for extensive renovation. During the shutdown, a number of the employees were detailed to APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine office in Houston, TX, to work on various projects. Although the detail took folks away from their families, the employees of the Beaumont office responded to this challenge in a positive manner and turned it into a learning experience. They represented GIPSA well while on detail with APHIS and brought back to the job new skills and knowledge.

The Beaumont team exemplifies the professionalism that all government officials should strive to attain. This professionalism and dedication to GIPSA is evident throughout the Beaumont operation. During my short visit, it was very apparent that the Beaumont staff prides itself in providing the highest quality service to all of its customers.

*From left to right, Beaumont's Alfred Broussard, John Blake, Deborah Bobino, Perry Smith, Paul Robertson, Cynthia Coco, Standley Narcisse, and League City manager Ron Cates.*

# Holiday Cheer at Van Ness

*Sidney Allen, Washington, DC*

On December 18, 1998, GIPSA, with other USDA agencies, brought a little Christmas cheer to the children of Van Ness Elementary School in Washington, DC. Each USDA agency played Santa for a selected age group, and GIPSA selected the 26 students in the second grade, classroom # 1. Each student received two gifts (hat and gloves, and dolls for the girls and toy cars for the boys), stockings stuffed with many goodies, and food at the party. I thank everyone who donated toward the purchase of the gifts and food. A special thanks goes to **Ralph Regan, Norma Phelps, and Duane Putnam**, for without their generosity things would not have gone so smoothly. Also, a special thanks to **Byron Reilly** who so bravely played Santa for the entire event. **Mr. Baker** and **Mr. Shipman** took time out of their busy schedules to join in on the fun. **Mr. Baker** helped Santa distribute the gifts to our second graders. **Richard Hardy** was our photographer. The entire event was successful and fun for everyone involved.

The class selected by each agency will be their adopted class for the remainder of this school year. In the spring of 1999, GIPSA is planning an outing for their second graders. Again, thanks to all who participated in this very important function.

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## Performance, from page 1.

After a thorough review of the options, we have elected to retain the current 5-level system. Any successful performance appraisal system depends on how well supervisors communicate both expected performance in terms of standards and actual accomplishments. Converting to a pass/fail system won't improve this communication. In fact, it encourages less communication between employees and supervisors.

We need to retain a performance appraisal system that reflects various performance levels. As one employee said, "if we move to a pass/fail system, I won't really know how well I'm doing and I'll be at a disadvantage when competing with my peers in other government agencies. A pass rating will be viewed as average, which doesn't stack up very well against an outstanding or superior rating."

We also need to improve communication between supervisors and employees regarding performance. We are going to tackle this by providing supervisors with additional training on how to effectively talk to employees about performance. Improving this communication should help address many of the concerns raised by employees about the current performance appraisal system.

# Fees for Official Inspection and Weighing Services

Effective February 1, 1999, GIPSA will increase fees for certain official inspection and weighing services it performs in the United States under the U.S. Grain Standards Act (USGSA). An average 3.6 percent increase will be implemented for all hourly rates and certain unit rates on tests performed at both an applicant's facility and other than an applicant's facility. In addition, an average increase of 1.2 percent is implemented to recover the salary and benefits portion of the administrative tonnage fee.

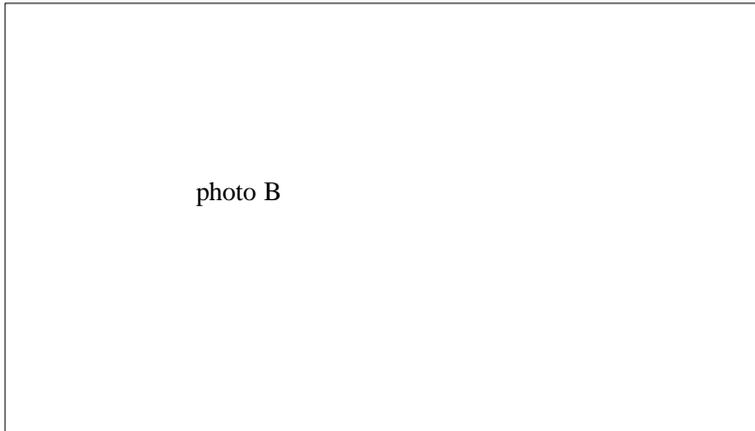
The USGSA requires GIPSA to charge and collect reasonable fees for performing official inspection and weighing services. The fees are to cover, as nearly as practicable, GIPSA's costs for performing these services, including related administrative and supervisory costs.

According to Administrator **Jim Baker**, the increase is designed to recover increased operational costs resulting from the average 3.6 percent January 1999 cost-of-living increase to Federal salaries.

# Native American Exhibit

**Evelyn Payne**, secretary, Technical Services Division's Inspection Systems Engineering Branch, put together an exhibit of Native American artifacts in honor of American Indian Heritage Month in November 1998, in the Technical Center.

The exhibit consisted of a dream catcher (which when placed over one's bed, will let the good dreams in and filter out the bad dreams); ceramic hand painted busts of a chief and squaw (created by **Evelyn's** brother **Bud West**, a retired geological surveyor from Colorado); a large hand painted, signed portrait of an eagle and buffalo outlined in authentic eagle feathers and fossils; a rain stick (used to break a drought); Indian beaded jewelry; a miniature teepee; packets of fry bread makings; a ceramic howling coyote; a large painted Indian maiden picture; a papoose in authentic garb in a fur-lined cradle; a framed Indian poem entitled "Sun of Nature;" miniature totem poles; an Indian bible and dictionary; and other books relating to the Native American culture.



**Evelyn** is a member of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe from South Dakota. Her mother was born and raised on the reservation outside Chamberlain, SD. Her father was of German ancestry. **Evelyn** is a member of the Native American Indian Federal Employment Council in Kansas City whose mission is to encourage cultural awareness, recruitment, and advancement of members of the Native American Indian community in the Federal system.

## Help when you need it..

For confidential assistance,  
call your Employee Assistance Program

Washington, DC personnel -- call 301-570-3900

Field personnel -- call 1-800-222-0364

# Travel Bits & Pieces

*Peggy Smith, Washington, DC*

As I mentioned in the last issue of the *GIPSA News*, you are still responsible for any balance you may have with American Express. Anyone with an outstanding balance will soon receive a letter, with a copy to the supervisor, stating that balance. American Express is asking for your help in getting these debts paid.

### Travel Words to the Wise:

- Only put travel expenses on the travel card. Never use the travel card for purchases when you're not on official travel.
- Check your receipts carefully. Make sure the lodging bill doesn't include charges you didn't incur.
- Use the travel management center. Their job is to know the right way to arrange travel.
- Know the travel regulations. The rules are long and complex, and it's impossible to remember them all, but they're easier to understand since many were recently translated into plain language.
- If you think you will need to spend more money than the per diem allows, get authorized for "actual expenses" before your trip begins.
- Keep paperwork. You're required to keep paper copies of all receipts over \$75, including lodging receipts, for 6 years.
- Submit vouchers early and often. You're required to turn in your voucher within 5 business days after you return from your trip.

*Continued, see **Travel**  
on page 9.*

## New Orleans Retreat

*Frank E. Jackson, Janet Walton,  
and Josh Watson, New Orleans*

The New Orleans Field Office held its first management retreat in Covington, LA, on December 2 and 3, 1998. Participants included **Dave Orr** and **Eugene Bass**, headquarters; **Tim Blackburn**, APHIS; local industry management; and the New Orleans Field Office's manager, assistant manager, area managers, supervisors, and computer specialist.

The meeting was well received by everyone. Field Management Division director **Dave Orr** discussed the report of the National Safety Committee, strategic planning, and workforce planning for the year 2000 and beyond. Director of Civil Rights **Eugene Bass** gave a presentation on EEO and reprisals. Several managers from the local staff gave presentations as follows: assistant manager **Kerry Petit** -- Inspection Automation; collateral duty training officer **Janet Walton** -- Outlook on Training; collateral duty safety and health officer **Larry Giles** -- Safety; administrative officer **Glenda Lasseigne** -- Office of Workers Compensation; computer specialist **Yohanna Lorio** -- Information Systems; and quality assurance specialist **Jim Brown** -- QA/QC Program.

The guest speakers at the retreat were Zen-Noh Grain Corporation's president **Kevin Adams** and plant manager **Rodney Duhe**. They shared information on requesting GIPSA services, grain trading, and the outlook for 1999.

A list of 35 items submitted by the local management staff were discussed. Some items were cleared up by field office manager **John Shropshire** and **Dave Orr**. Break-out group sessions were used to discuss and develop some type of action plan for resolving the most important problems from the remaining list.

At the beginning of the retreat, **Tim Blackburn**, facilitator, labeled this first retreat as "the roots of a tree, which are in need of strength, togetherness, and growth". There was a need to bridge the gap and develop trust between upper and lower management. The retreat served to provide knowledge about the mandates and policies under which GIPSA management is required to operate in order to provide a high-quality level of service to its customers.

By the end of the retreat, it was obvious that each participant had the same agenda and goal -- working together as a unit to provide strength, togetherness, and growth for GIPSA. The participants agreed that the retreat was an overall success.

**John Shropshire** and the headquarters staff who provided support for the retreat should be recognized for a job well done.

## On-Line Job Hunting

**Dawn Cowan, Washington, DC**

Did you know that you can search for jobs on the Internet?

To find Federal government jobs anywhere in the United States, visit:

[www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)

You can search all departments and agencies, or you can narrow your search to only USDA and its agencies. The site is updated each Monday. This is an easy, free way to search for Federal jobs.

You can also search for jobs at the following sites:

Career Builder:  
[www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com)

CareerMosaic  
[www.careermosaic.com](http://www.careermosaic.com)

CareerPath.com  
[www.careerpath.com](http://www.careerpath.com)

JOBTRAK  
[www.jobtrak.com](http://www.jobtrak.com)

The Monster Board  
[www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)

Online Career Center  
[www.occ.com](http://www.occ.com)

America's Job Bank  
[www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us)

Yahoo  
[classifieds.yahoo.com/  
employment.html](http://classifieds.yahoo.com/employment.html)

# Reaching Out: National FFA Convention

*John Stencel, Washington, DC*

The 71st Annual Future Farmers of America (FFA) Convention was held November 11-14, 1998, in Kansas City, MO. I enjoyed the exciting and educational experience of representing GIPSA at this 4-day event that involved over 42,000 people.

USDA agencies had 13 booths under the "Team USDA" banner. The Marketing and Regulatory Programs' booth was well-received by students, parents, and instructors. AMS, APHIS, and GIPSA employees staffed our booth. Several hundred people stopped by to inquire about our programs, pick up material, and take give-away goodies. AMS and APHIS provided bookmarks, ice scrapers, pencils, key chains, and cold can holders with our addresses and websites. GIPSA provided a USDA sweatshirt, t-shirt, and cap for a drawing held the last day. All of this contributed to our having a lot of traffic and opportunity to talk about our programs. **Mitch Doak**, Kansas City Field Office, was super in helping with the booth.

On the last day of the convention, I participated as a judge with 30 other people to select the star agribusiness person. The young man chosen from the four finalists is a beginning farmer, raising gladiolus, dahlias, bedding plants, organic vegetables, wheat, and soybeans for farmers markets.

The FFA Convention was a wonderful experience for me and a great opportunity for GIPSA to reach out to America's producers of tomorrow!

photo C

*Mitch Doak spreading the word about GIPSA at the FFA Convention*

## Are You Going?

### February Events

- 3-6 NAWG Annual Meeting, Nashville, TN
- 4-6 Farmers Elevator Association of Minnesota 92nd Annual Convention, Minneapolis, MN
- 7-10 U.S. Grains Council 39th International Value-Enhanced Grains Conference II & Trade Show, Orlando, FL
- 10-12 National Grain Trade Council/Transportation, Elevator, and Grain Merchants Association (NGTC/TEGMA) Annual Meeting, Rancho Mirage, CA
- 11-14 National Cattlemen's Beef Association Annual Meeting, Charlotte, NC
- 18-20 Commodity Classic, Albuquerque, NM
- 19-3/7 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Houston, TX
- 22-23 USDA Ag Outlook Forum, Arlington VA
- 28-3/2 48th Annual Oilseed Conference, New Orleans, LA

If you'd like to represent GIPSA at any of these or other events in your area, the GIPSA display booth and other educational materials are available for your use. For outreach assistance, contact **Dana Stewart**, at telephone 202-720-5091, via FAX 202-205-9237, or via e-mail to [dstewart@fgis.usda.gov](mailto:dstewart@fgis.usda.gov).

# Reaching Out: NGFA Meeting

Steve Adams, North Dakota Grain Inspection Service, Inc.

GIPSA and AAGIWA members joined up to help staff the GIPSA booth at the the National Grain and Feed Association's 2nd Annual Feed Industry Council Meeting/27th Annual Country Elevator Council Meeting in Fort Worth, TX, on December 7-8, 1998.

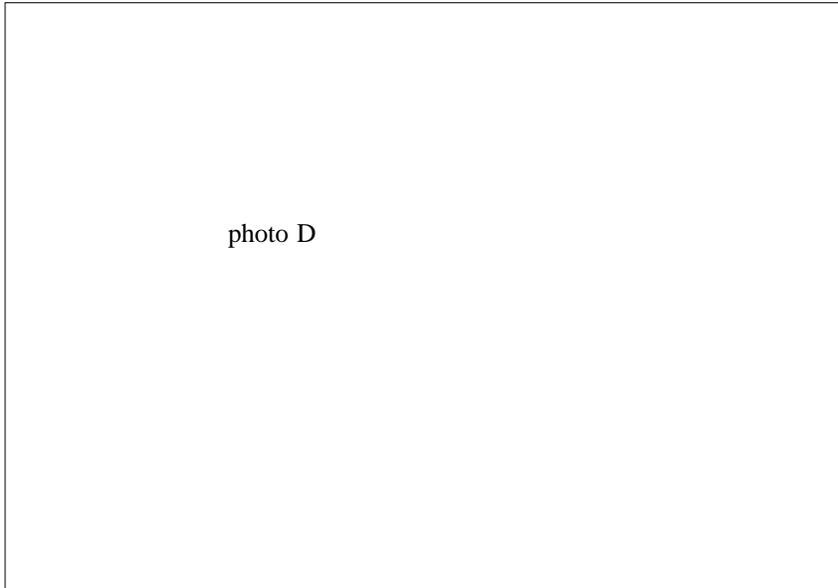


photo D

*Teaming up at NGFA are, from left to right: Gary Bothwell, Kansas Grain Inspection; David Ayers, Champaign-Danville Grain Inspection; Steve Adams, North Dakota Grain Inspection; Tim Adams, Memphis Grain Inspection; and Bob Crook, Cedar Rapids Field Office!*

Interest in the official inspection service was high. We had the opportunity to explain the system and what we do, and distributed various handouts.

It was good to see the Federal and private partners working to promote our common goal — increasing the use of the official inspection system!

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## December Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- PN-98-23, Interpretative Line Slide Upgrading, dated 11/12/98.
- PN-98-24, Interpretative Line Slide for Soybeans of Other Colors, dated 12/03/98.
- PN-98-25, Interpretative Line Slide and Caption Cards, dated 11/20/98.

**Travel**, from page 6.

- Know the hand that feeds you. If the government gives you a meal, your meal allowance will be reduced for that day, but if a hotel gives you a free breakfast, you still get the full meal allowance.
- Take your travel authorization with you. This may come in handy for getting the government rate at a hotel or car rental firm.
- Don't accept rental car agencies' offers of collision damage waivers or personal accident insurance. You won't be reimbursed for either one and you are already covered under GSA's agreement with car rental companies that offer government rates.
- If you stay with a friend or relative while on travel, you won't get any lodging reimbursement.
- Keep your work days and your weekends straight. You're expected to get to the TDY location the day of or day before the work begins and leave the day the work ends or a day later. If you travel early to avoid traveling on a weekend or stay over a weekend after your work assignment ends, you won't be reimbursed for those expenses.
- Understand per diem basics. If a location is not on the per diem list, the standard per diem for the continental United States applies -- \$50 for lodging and \$30 for meals and incidental expenses.

# 1998 Review Branch Contributor Award

*Jan Hart and the Review Branch Staff Members*

There are currently 58 FGIS employees who have volunteered to be on the Compliance Division, Review Branch's detail list. This number includes 51 technical-series and 7 administrative-series personnel. During calendar year 1998, 33 of the 58 assisted us in conducting 19 onsite compliance reviews. The reviews that the people performed went to 5 field offices, 4 suboffices, and 29 official agencies.

Over the past several years, we would not have accomplished nearly as much work without folks from outside our immediate work unit participating in our review program.

We already said a private "thank you" to each of the individuals for the work they've done for us, but many thanks again to all those who were a part of our review program this past year!

This is the third year that the Review Branch is providing special recognition to the person(s) who contributed the most to our review program. We decided as a group that:

- **Donnell Keith** (individual)
- **Frank Jackson** (leader)
- **Dave Fulks** (special)

would receive the annual Review Branch Contributor Award. Each of these individuals will receive a USDA Certificate of Merit and cash award for their contributions to the review program during 1998.

Here's to a great 1999!

## Participants in the 1998 Review Program

Don Akers, QAS, Corpus Christi  
Terrell Bailey, ACG, New Orleans  
Chuck Britton, QAS, Sacramento  
Virginia Burris, ACG, Stuttgart  
Scott Cooley, ACG, Portland (now QAS, Olympia)  
Bob Crook, AFOM, Cedar Rapids  
Mitch Doak, ACG, Kansas City  
Erin Dubroc, Clerk, New Orleans  
Ed Durgin, SACG, Portland (now IMS, Washington, DC)  
Jeri Fisher, Secy. OA, Washington, DC  
Dave Fulks, SACG, Portland  
Larry Giles, SACG, New Orleans  
Joe Hearn, QAS, League City  
Donna Hoover, OSA, League City  
Carl Jackson, Protein Coordinator, New Orleans  
Frank Jackson, Area Manager, New Orleans  
Judy Johnston, OSA, Wichita  
Donnell Keith, ACG, Portland  
Ray Kirkpatrick, ACG, Portland  
Bob Krouse, Protein Coordinator, Kansas City  
Roy Lyon, ACG, Wichita  
Rosemary Mayne, Secretary, Washington, DC  
Bob Medley, ACG, New Orleans  
Max Peterson, ACG, Wichita  
Ted Respet, OIC, Duluth  
Paul Robertson, ACG, Beaumont  
Ed Roseberry, ACG, Baltimore  
Will Schilling, SACG, New Orleans  
Dave Skallerud, ACG, Cedar Rapids  
Jim Tullous, AFOM, Grand Forks  
Ken Weaver, AFOM, Kansas City  
Donald Wray, ACG, Portland  
Mohsen Younes, SACG, Toledo

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## 1-877-286-4251

Want to hear what's going on in Washington? Try calling the new FGIS Deputy Administrator's toll-free message line.

We're borrowing this idea from APHIS' Wildlife Services, whose employees work a variety of hours in

remote locations. To overcome this communication challenge, APHIS started a toll free phone line so any employee can call from any location any time to hear what's going on. The idea works well for Wildlife Services, and it might for FGIS.

A new message about what is

happening in Washington will be posted weekly. If you'd like to leave a message for deputy administrator Dave Shipman, you can do so at the end of the recorded message.

This simple idea probably won't resolve all the concerns about communication, but it just might help!

# The Quality Team -- Working Together

*Eurvin Williams, Technical Center*

On October 27 through 30, 1998, the Technical Services Division's (TSD) Board of Appeals and Review (BAR) hosted the annual QAS Workshop. This year's program was highly successful and afforded the Quality Team (quality assurance specialists (QAS) and the BAR) a chance to discuss grading issues with management and to interact with each other in the decision-making process.

The workshop's format differed significantly from prior sessions. The primary changes were in how subjective factor 'tune-ups' were accomplished and how regional issues were addressed.

To efficiently evaluate and compare subjective grading lines, the BAR introduced the use of test strips in lieu of the traditional sample separations. Using test strips saves valuable training time, so more factors can be covered in the class. The test strips also permit direct comparisons of interpretations because everyone reviews the same kernels. Another benefit is that the test strips kernels can be clustered around the line, focusing attention on the specific line interpretation. While there is still room for improvement in our QA/QC program, the team illustrated their expertise and ability to follow and administer uniform interpretations to their customers.

To address regional issues, the BAR divided the group into regional subgroups to discuss mutual problems and/or areas of interest. This approach afforded the group a better opportunity to interact, discuss, and leave with a much better understanding of the subjective guidelines administered by GIPSA. In addition, the seminar reinforced the decision-making process.

The workshop achieved my personal objectives of clarifying quality control issues in the Quality Team, and improving communications between the BAR, Field Management Division (FMD), and QASs.

I congratulate **George Banks**, New Orleans Field Office ACG, for winning the award for being the most consistent grader/analyst at the workshop. I thank all of the QASs and FMD for their support and participation.

Also, special thanks to **Nabil Azmy, Dan Murphy, David Lowe, Dale Phetteplace, Mark Ruth, Dempsey Lewis, Eric Poling, and Eddie Clark** for their contributions to a successful workshop. Congratulations on receiving a group award for your innovation and extra effort!

*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:

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**by January 25, 1999!**

# Coming Soon! The 75th Ag Outlook Forum

USDA's 75th Annual Agricultural Outlook Forum will be held February 22-23, 1999, in Arlington, VA. The Forum provides an in-depth look at farm prospects and issues, and is a unique informational and networking event. Analysts and farmers assess farm and commodity prospects for the year ahead. Top officials, industry leaders and academics discuss the major developments shaping agriculture's future. Conference documents include advance speech texts and 10-year commodity projections prepared by USDA economists. Attendees from production agriculture, commodity groups, industry, finance, universities, and government will be on hand.

The February 22, agenda includes presentations on agricultural and trade outlook, challenges in the marketing arena, and developments shaping the agricultural outlook. On February 23, the focus will be on detailed farm and commodity outlook sessions on grains and oilseeds, dairy, livestock and poultry, fruits and vegetables, cotton, tobacco, sweeteners, and food prices.

For all of the details about the Agricultural Outlook Forum, visit the Forum's home page at:

[www.usda.gov/oce/waob/  
agforum.htm](http://www.usda.gov/oce/waob/agforum.htm)

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