



GIPSA News

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

February 2003

2002 Administrator's Awards

Donna Reifschneider

I am delighted to announce the recipients of the 2002 Administrator's Awards. Please join me in congratulating this accomplished group of teams and individuals.

DISTINGUISHED (GROUP)

FFIS Oversight Team. Amy Van Skiver, Herb Callands, Robert Soderstrom, Gerald Bromley, Ping Wu, Jerry Wadley, Genea Henson, Norma Torres, Wilfredo Rivera, Catherine Grasso, Irene Omade, Morris Johnson, Tanika Harris, Rosemary Mayne, Mary McCoy, Glenda Lasseigne, Denise Ruggles, Karen Guagliardo, Janine Goodson, Peggy Smith, and Donna Melton were recognized as members of the Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS) "Oversight Team." From April 2001 through October 2002, the team accomplished the monumental task of configuring and implementing every aspect of FFIS, a new accounting information program. The team's responsibilities included redesigning GIPSA's accounting codes; serving as liaisons with con-

tractors, NFC, and the Department; improving GIPSA's automation infrastructure to accommodate the new system; and migrating feeder systems to FFIS.

DISTINGUISHED (INDIVIDUAL)

Kerry Petit, assistant field office manager, New Orleans, was recognized for his exemplary leadership during the past year. For 7 months, Kerry served as acting field office manager. Under his leadership, the field office ran smoothly and efficiently, and set a record for volume of revenue billed. During the year, Kerry also established a load order numbering system for export logs; kept the office focused on the many changes in trends and new procedures, including the IP Protocol for Japan; served on the ASIST team; and created several database programs that have streamlined operations for the office. Kerry plays a major role in keeping the New Orleans field office running efficiently and effectively — which is no small matter for the largest agency office which provides inspection ser-

vices for nearly 75 percent of all grain exported from the United States.

SUPERIOR

Chuck Britton, quality assurance specialist, California, has provided exemplary work for nearly 30 years, with a succession of positive achievements in recent years. Chuck helped develop the "California Warehouse Association Rough Rice Collaborative," an educational program that increased the uniformity and consistency of rough rice milling appraisals in California. In 2002, his outreach and educational efforts in Taiwan facilitated the export of U.S. and California Brown rice. Through his diplomacy and initiative, he convinced Taiwan importers to use USDA official grading and certification for tender shipments, which represented approximately 30,000 tons of brown rice shipped in container. Thanks to Chuck's efforts, the shipments were successful, generating more than \$80,000 in inspection/user fees for

Continued, see Administrator's Awards on page 3.

Names in the News

PERSONNEL

Barbara Fielder is the new secretary to the administrator. She comes to the Administrator's Office from the Packers and Stockyards Programs in DC.

Cathy Brenner, Technical Services Division, is the new project leader in the ISE Type Evaluation and Calibration Group.

Dr. Louis Bussjaeger, Technical Services Division, was selected for a physical scientist position in the Biotechnology Branch.

Janelle Henehan bid farewell to GIPSA on January 24, to accept a position with the Forest Service.

Steve Payson, Economic and Statistical Support Staff, departed GIPSA on January 24, 2003, to accept a position with the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

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AWARDS

James Doak, Kansas City, Missouri, received a performance award for sustained superior performance contributing to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Kansas City field office.

Yohana Lorio and **Kerry Petit**, New Orleans, received spot awards for supporting the U.S. wheat export program for American agriculture through their quick response to prepare specimen certificates in PDF format for the Foreign Agricultural Service.

Kerry Petit, New Orleans, received an extra effort award in recognition of his outstanding performance as the assistant field office manager contributing to the successful operation and delivery of service in the New Orleans field office.

30-YEAR SERVICE AWARDS

Chuck Merkhofer, Denver
Keith Ingram, Des Moines
Ken Soderberg, Huron, SD

15-YEAR SERVICE AWARD

Bryce Wilke, Des Moines

10-YEAR SERVICE AWARD

Melba Twitty, Carlisle, PA

Julian Chapa Retires

Dannye Cameron, League City

In February 1956, **Julian Chapa III** began his 35-year government career with the U.S. Air Force. **Julian** served for more than 11 years in a variety of worldwide assignments for the Air Force.

After military service, **Julian** went to work at the Comet Rice Mill in Houston, TX. From 1967 to 1970, he worked as a quality control clerk at the company. In 1970, he left Comet to work for Riviana Foods, another rice mill located in the Houston area. At Riviana, **Julian** became a quality assurance specialist. He stayed with the company until 1978.

In 1979, **Julian** began his FGIS career in the former Houston field office. Thanks to his previous rice grading experience, **Julian** was hired as an agricultural commodity grader, GS-07. As he acquired knowledge to grade other grains, **Julian** became a journeyman agricultural commodity grader, GS-09. **Julian** spent his entire FGIS career in the Houston, TX, area.

Julian's family includes his wife **Rome**, to whom he's been married for the "last 44 quality years," according to **Julian**. **Julian** and **Rome** have 3 children and 6 grandchildren. **Julian** plans to remain in the Houston area to be near his grandchildren, and to attend as many Texans football and Astros baseball games as his pension will allow.

We all wish the "Veteran," as he is known, many, many years of prosperity and good health!

Administrator's Awards, from page 1.

the first tender. He also initiated a sample exchange program between USDA and a Taiwanese importer that facilitated first-time shipments between the two countries.

Keith Ingram, financial unit supervisor, Des Moines, is an exemplary employee and supervisor. In August 2001, while on detail working with the FBI on an extremely difficult, complex investigation, Keith kept abreast of and responded to office needs. He continually works to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of agency programs, encourages subordinates to expand their skills and knowledge; has an open door policy for any and all; has been involved in many special projects; and thrives on performing difficult assignments. His experience and knowledge are often sought out and highly respected within GIPSA and by others, such as the FBI.

Milton Hansen, resident agent supervisor, Denver, is recognized for his sustained productivity and commitment to GIPSA. In the past year, he served as acting regional supervisor of the Denver office; contributed on National investigations; and made significant improvements to program management. He also demonstrated extra effort in developing and training new resident agents in Montana, Nebraska, and the regional office. He is a gifted teacher who is always willing to sit down and provide guidance and assistance to new employees of all levels.

Ron Beukema, computer specialist, Washington, DC, is recognized for his creative efforts and

outstanding contributions to the Agency. Ron is the driving force behind the development and implementation of the automated CuSum loading plan. With no formal inspection and certification training, Ron learned the details of the complex loading plan and wrote concise programming code for a user-friendly CuSum application. An amazing feat in itself for a "lay person" to comprehend the CuSum plan, Ron accomplished the task and wrote nearly 30,000 lines of code in approximately 18 months.

SUPERIOR/SAFETY

Cleve Ellis, agricultural commodity grader, Portland, currently leads oversight of the Agency's safety and health program as chair of the National Safety and Health Committee. In addition, in FY 2002, Cleve single-handedly established a field office team that developed the new Railcar Sampling Safety CD. Cleve readily assists staff and managers in addressing safety and health problems; resolves safety and health issues; and contributed to the development of a number of new policies, including those related to railcar fall protection, odor determination, and, most recently, stowage examinations.

Kristi Pirtle, legal instruments examiner and collateral-duty safety officer, Des Moines, developed and maintains an effective safety and health program in the regional office. She conducts safety and health inspections of GIPSA-owned and leased facilities; built a safety and

health reference library for the office; maintains a working knowledge of GIPSA and OSHA safety and health rules and regulations; prepares safety checklists for all worksites; and inspects Government-owned and -leased vehicles to ensure they are safe to operate. To further improve office safety, she implemented a sign in/sign out log to account for all employees in case of emergency.

EEO/CIVIL RIGHTS

Sharon Williams, secretary and African American Program Manager, Compliance Division, Washington, DC, is recognized for her outstanding contributions to GIPSA's EEO/CR and special emphasis programs. Sharon is an excellent communicator who effectively shares a great deal of information about EEO/CR issues with headquarters and field personnel through special events, the newsletter, e-mail, and personal contacts. Sharon represented GIPSA at recruitment events, including the Professional Agricultural Workers Conference at Tuskegee University, and the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences Conference; hosted a program commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday; and scheduled speakers and entertainment for GIPSA's and the Department's Black History Month celebrations. Through a newsletter article about her experiences with the Aspiring Leader Program, Sharon inspired others to participate in employee development programs.

Management Retreat Summary

Dave Shipman

On January 6-7, 2003, GIPSA's senior management team, including division directors, branch chiefs, and several field managers got together in Washington, DC, to begin working on what will become the foundation for a new GIPSA strategic plan.

After a half day of presentations on the President's Management Initiatives and USDA strategic goals and initiatives, FGIS and P&SP managers went to separate breakout sessions to discuss items specific to their respective program areas. Here is a brief recap of what was addressed and decided in the FGIS breakout session.

Guiding Principles/Values.

FGIS managers, building on the previous day's presentations on the President's Management Initiatives, discussed the overall direction of FGIS and how the program can best position itself to respond to a changing marketplace. Managers reconfirmed FGIS' core business practices and guiding principles (values): provide market responsive service; embrace customer service; improve productivity and efficiency; preserve service credibility; and maintain a skilled and professional workforce. The management team also reaffirmed its commitment to integrating these values into program planning and delivery. As a follow up to discussions, the management team will amend the guiding principles to include the following concepts: integrity (especially important in times of change); one team, operating without organizational boundaries or obstacles; anticipating market needs; and effective internal and external communication.

E-Gov. FGIS has a tactical plan and common vision requirements document, the first steps in designing the enterprise architecture to move FGIS to a web-based inspection system. The first step of FGIS' e-gov strategy is to train program managers to be project managers with sufficient knowledge to oversee the integration of IT into our program and service delivery. Senior managers also are working to identify which component(s) of the web-based system we will bring on-line first.

Financial Management. FGIS continues to fully implement FFIS, and is setting up training for all managers to ensure full utilization of the system's features and capabilities. Our general financial management philosophy continues to be that we will drive cost reporting to the lowest level so that local managers have the information they need to effectively manage their finances.

Outsourcing. We extensively discussed our requirements under the FAIR Act of 1998, legislation intended to ensure that agencies are efficient, effective, and properly functioning organizations. The Act requires agencies to consider competitive sourcing alternatives in light of human capital/Civil Rights aspects; inherently governmental activities; existing contracts; inter-service support agreements; and closely related activities. FGIS managers began developing a strategy to meet FAIR Act requirements. I'll be sharing more information on this with you in upcoming months as the Department and GIPSA receive clearer implementation guidelines and re-

quirements.

Human Capital. FGIS managers identified two key challenges that will shape our actions in the area of human capital: (1) accelerated attrition of managerial and technical personnel and (2) implementation of the web-based inspection system.

To begin meeting our human capital challenges, managers agreed to: update the GIPSA Workforce Plan, including a detailed skills gap analysis and a formal success plan; develop a skills inventory database to allow full utilization of all staff capabilities; bring training to the front line through e-learning and other means; and implement performance measurement software.

In all human capital initiatives and decisions, the management team is committed to adhering to our guiding principles of: (1) being one team, and (2) communicating effectively.

Budget/Performance Measures. FGIS reaffirmed its full support for the Secretary's goal of expanding market opportunities. While there are measures of trade, including amount of product exported and its value, it is more difficult to define such measures for FGIS' contributions to the success of American agriculture. Overall, FGIS provides the market with tool sets to efficiently trade grain, which in turn allows the United States to be competitive in global markets. So, while we know we make buyers' and sellers' transactions more efficient, how do you

*Continued, see FGIS Breakout
on page 5.*

measure the efficiency of a sales transaction? We also know that, as the market changes, we need to ensure that our "tool set" doesn't inhibit market efficiency.

We currently measure our outputs, efficiency and accuracy, which is appropriate based on the assumption that our efficiency enhances market efficiency. Measures currently in place include cost per metric ton, billable versus paid hours, and accuracy of inspections. FGIS will continue to improve and expand upon these measures, and is considering hiring a consultant to help us define new measures.

We are looking at a year filled with many challenges and exciting initiatives, including our move to a web-based inspection system. I'll be sharing more information about these programs and initiatives in future editions of *GIPSA News*.

Regulatory Management Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- Opportunity to Comment on the Applicant for the Oregon Area - Published January 29, 2003
- Cancellation of Mississippi's Designation, and the Opportunity for Designation in the Mississippi Area - Published January 29, 2003

Meet GIPSA's Federal Women's Program Co-Managers

Linda Alston and Stefanie Osterman

Linda Alston, EEO assistant with the Civil Rights Staff in Washington, DC, has been a Federal Women's Program Co-Manager for GIPSA for about 2 years. Prior to that, she was the African-American Program Co-Manager.

Linda reports, "I am currently working toward my B.S. degree in Social Sciences at the University of Maryland University College with a minor in Sociology. I am treasurer for the Parents, Teachers, and Officers at my daughter's school. My interests are sewing, shopping, and learning about past and present cultures."

Stefanie Osterman is an economist with the P&SP office in Des Moines, Iowa. She has been the Co-Manager of GIPSA's Federal Women's Program.

Stefanie reports, "My husband and I moved to Des Moines over 2 years ago and we are expecting our first child on March 1. I am the president of Ceres, a women's agricultural fraternity at the national level."

GIPSA's Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) advise management, through the EEO Advisory Committee, about unique concerns, problems, barriers to equal employment opportunity for recognized special emphasis groups, and recommend solutions for addressing these barriers. SEPMs also coordinate observance programs, activities, and training; and educate managers, supervisors, and employees on special emphasis programs.

If you have any questions or comments about the Federal Women's program you can contact Linda Alston at Linda.M.Alston@usda.gov, 202-720-1736 or Stefanie Osterman at Stefanie.C.Osterman@usda.gov, 515-323-2541.

**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



For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

Giving Back Strains & Sprains the Slip. Do you know that the most common work injury is also the one you can most easily prevent? Injuries to the lower back affect half the nation's work force at some time during their working lives. You may think you are in a job that is not prone to back injuries, but take a second look. If your job involves any lifting, you could be at risk. Back injuries usually result from mistakes made while lifting. The good news is that you can take steps to avoid becoming a statistic even without the help of special equipment or company programs.

Before you pick up that carton or load, ask yourself these questions: Is this too heavy for me to lift and carry alone? How high do I have to lift it? How far do I have to carry it? Will this lifting be a regular part of my job? Am I trying to impress anyone by lifting this?

If a load weighs more than 25 pounds, follow these steps for lifting:

- Y Position your feet properly. One foot goes next to the load and one goes behind it.
- Y Squat down keeping your head erect and your back straight.
- Y Grip the load using your full palm. Fingers alone are too weak.
- Y Draw the load close to your body and keep your elbows and arms near you.
- Y Center your body weight over your feet, then start lifting with a thrust of your leg.
- Y If you must turn, don't twist your body. Point your foot in the direction you are turning.

Get In Shape. If your job involves lifting, a physical conditioning program could help you. Stretching exercises are important because they help prevent injuries that come from sudden jerking of muscles that are too tight. Running, swimming, aerobics and weight training all increase strength and stamina.

If You Do Get Hurt. If you do get a twinge in your back, don't panic. Most back injuries involve a sprain or strain, and the damage is temporary. Here is how you can take care of yourself... Give your injury time to heal, but don't over-rest or you'll get out of condition. If pain persists, see a doctor. Go back to work, but don't lift until you are ready to resume your full workload. Work out a modified work program with your supervisor so that everyone knows you are aiming toward a goal of a full workload again. Then work up from lighter to heavier loads. Get into a physical conditioning program to make sure you don't hurt yourself again.

Courtesy: Parlay International Health and Safety Magazine.

Employee Assistance Program

For confidential assistance,
call your Employee
Assistance Program

Washington, DC, personnel, call...
301-570-3900
or 1-800-222-0364

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

Idea Hotline Update



Norma Phelps,
Washington, DC

Here are the ideas received on the GIPSA Idea Hotline during October. If you have questions about any ideas or the Hotline, please call me at 202-720-1017.

Suggestor/Suggestion

Richard Freudenthal, Portland, OR
Give Employees a Choice
of First Aid/CPR or CPR/
Automated External
Defibrillator

Shane Minden, Moscow, ID
Post TDY Opportunities on
GIPSA Website

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via e-mail: gipsa-ideas@gipsadc.usda.gov; FAX to 202-720-1015; or telephone 800-455-3447 or 202-720-1013. **We encourage you to send ideas via fax or e-mail to reduce the possibility of transcription errors; however, ideas will be accepted regardless of the method you choose to use.**

Issuances

Fred Kelley, Washington, D.C.

New Issuances

- ❑ DON (Vomitoxin) Handbook, Chapter 12, dated December 23, 2002 (Distribution: A, C, E).
- ❑ FGIS Directive 9070.6, "Reporting Violations of the U.S. Grain Standards Act and the Agricultural Marketing Act, "Issuance Change 2, dated December 20, 2002 (Distribution: A, C, U).
- ❑ Pea and Lentil Handbook, Issuance Change 2, dated December 31, 2002 (Distribution: A, C, T).

Please call me at 202-720-0259, fax to 202-690-2755, or e-mail me at Fred.H.Kelley@usda.gov if you have any concerns or suggestions.

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

Privately Owned Vehicle Mileage Reimbursement. Amendment 112 to the Federal Travel Regulations reduced the mileage rates for privately owned vehicles. The new mileage rate allowance for advantageous use of an automobile decreased from 36.5 cents per mile to 36 cents per mile; airplane from 97.5 cents per mile to 95.5 cents per mile; and motorcycle from 28 cents per mile to 27.5 cents per mile. These rates became effective on January 1, 2003.

Grain Inspection Advisory Committee Meets

Joanne Peterson, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Inspection Advisory Committee met October 23-24, 2002, in New Orleans, Louisiana. GIPSA administrator **Donna Reifschneider** welcomed attendees. FGIS deputy administrator **Dave Shipman** outlined FGIS' core business practices as establishing grades and standards; developing analytical methods; and providing for the official inspection system. He reported on FGIS' current activities, including: the wheat standards review for measurement of end-use functionality and the structure of the grading standards; the corn standards review with an eye on the impact of future intrinsic traits tailored for specific end uses; the soybean standards review for foreign material and test weight, and the 1-year pilot project to use Artificial Neural Network (ANN) technology to test barley protein.

Following up on his May 2002 presentation "A Look to the Future," **Dave** reported on several key initiatives: FFIS (Foundation Financial Information System) came online October 1, 2002, after 18 months of planning and development; an agency team was established and has completed its initial evaluation of the Central Monitoring Laboratory concept; GIPSA is reviewing and revising inspection policies and procedures with the goal of balancing flexibility and consistency; digital imaging development continues; concept development for contracting non-export activities at export locations is underway; a new equipment approval policy concept is under review; and a new team is developing plans for moving the inspection system to a web-based environment.

Other presentations covered the Artificial Neural Networking Pilot Program; future inspection equipment alternatives; process verification; Central Monitoring Laboratory; wheat end-use functionality research; a new framework for reviewing the standards; inspection procedure changes; and a biotechnology program update.

This was the final Advisory Committee Meeting for members **Gillan Alexander, Randy Cartmill, Warren Duffy, Lowell Hill, and Paul Lautenschlager**. Administrator **Reifschneider** thanked the members for their contributions to the Committee and to GIPSA, and presented them with certificates of appreciation.

The next Advisory Committee meeting will be held in Portland, Oregon, in May 2003.

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
USDA, GIPSA, Stop 3601
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3601
Phone (202) 720-5091
FAX (202) 205-9237
dana.b.stewart@usda.gov

by February 25, 2003!

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
USDA, GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS
AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION
STOP 3601
1400 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SW
WASHINGTON, DC 20250-3601
