



GIPSA News

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

April 2003

My First Year at GIPSA

Donna Reifschneider



*GIPSA Administrator
Donna Reifschneider*

As I look back over my first year here at GIPSA, I have been very pleased to work with all of GIPSA's employees, both at headquarters and in the field. I appreciate your cooperation and extreme dedication to carrying out the mission of the Agency.

While working together towards accomplishing the overall goals and mission of the Agency, we recognize and understand that both the Packers and Stockyards Programs (P&SP) and the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) face a different set of issues. One task that P&SP will be

undertaking is the review of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921. For FGIS it will be the move to a web-based inspection system.

The Agency is pulling together as one, and I have been pleased to see that morale continues to be upbeat, communication between areas within the Agency is increasing, and the teamwork move us all forward to meeting our goals continues. We are recognizing that we as an Agency are working for not only the good of GIPSA, but for the good of the Marketing and Regulatory Programs Mission Area (MRP), and seeing the big picture: a better USDA.

A managers meeting was held in January to outline how the Agency will address on-going initiatives, as well as the Secretary's strategic plan, human capital issues, e-government, and our core business. In addition to discussions on these initiatives, the Agency's 5-year strategic plan was discussed. As we move forward on planning for the future, we saw just how changes will have an impact on

our work, from technology changes, industry changes, and even the impact of upcoming retirements. The Secretary's strategic goals and the President's management initiatives push us to address these now. I know we will keep in mind these initiatives and adapt to meet the goal of satisfying our customers now and in the future.

Ultimately, it is GIPSA's people that will make the difference. I have visited some of the field and regional offices, and I look forward to meeting more employees as I travel to other field and regional offices in the near future. I am truly impressed with the people who do the work here in the Agency.

I have to say it has been a good year—a learning year. All GIPSA employees have stepped forward; setting and achieving these goals, and continuing to move the Agency forward for the good of GIPSA, MRP, and USDA. For this, I thank each and every one of you.

Names in the News

Support U.S. Troops

PERSONNEL

The Compliance Division’s Review Branch thanks the following field-based people who are scheduled to assist Branch team coordinators in conducting official agency reviews during the third quarter of fiscal year 2003: **Jocelyn Ballard**, agricultural commodity grader, New Orleans, will help us evaluate a State agency, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture; **Jimmy Cadle**, agricultural commodity grader, Jonesboro, and **Horace Robinson**, shift supervisor, New Orleans, will help us evaluate a State agency, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, located in the Minneapolis Field Office circuit. Our thanks to these employees for contributing towards the success of the review program.

AWARDS

Wade Berteau and **Myron Hall**, ACG-9s, New Orleans, received time-off awards for exceptional performance in providing customer service.

Five New Orleans employees received the distinct honor of being the field office’s first employees of the quarter. Supervisors in each area and the field office voted on the employees. The recipients received time-off awards as well as small tokens. In addition, their pictures are being displayed on all the bulletin boards at the various locations. The honored employees are **Anne Bullard** (Area 1), **Elise Jones** (Area 2), **Vernett Knight** (Area 3), **Shirley Albert** (Area 4) and **Angela Roper** (Field Office).

David Skallerud, Cedar Rapids, received a time-off award for providing a customer in northwest Iowa with an emergency scale test, thus enabling the customer to get his scale tested and approved in order to load an official weight unit train.

Below are several web sites that may be of interest if you’d like to show your support for U.S. service members overseas.

Donate a calling card to help keep service members in touch with their families at Operation Uplink at <http://www.operationuplink.org>.

Send a greeting via e-mail through Operation Dear Abby at <http://anyservicemember.navy.mil> or <http://www.OperationDearAbby.net>

Sign a virtual thank you card at the Defend America Web site at <http://www.defendamerica.mil/nmam.html>

Make a donation to one of the military relief societies:

- Army Emergency Relief, www.aerhq.org
- Navy/Marine Relief Society, www.nmcrs.org
- Air Force Aid Society, www.afas.org
- Coast Guard Mutual Assistance, www.cgmahq.org

Donate to "Operation USO Care Package," www.usometrodc.org/care.html

Support the American Red Cross Armed Forces Emergency Services at www.redcross.org/services/afes

Please do not flood the military mail system with letters, cards, and gifts. Due to security concerns and transportation constraints, the items mailed to “Any Service Member” will not be accepted. Some have tried to avoid this prohibition by sending large numbers of packages to an individual service member’s address. This is well-intentioned but also clogs the mail and causes delivery delays.

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Correction

In the March issue of *GIPSA News*, Larry McDonald was erroneously listed as the author of the article "Black History Celebration." The article was authored by **Lucille Clark**, Technical Services Division.

Issuances

Fred Kelley, Washington, D.C.

New Issuances

- ❑ MRP Directive 4537.1, "Repayment of Student Loans," dated March 7, 2003 (Distribution: AMS, APHIS, GIPSA).
- ❑ Aflatoxin Handbook, Change No. 7, dated March 17, 2003 (Distribution: A, C, E).

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- ❑ Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection - Published March 4, 2003
- ❑ Designation for the Jamestown (ND), Lincoln (NE), Memphis (TN), Omaha (NE), Sioux City (IA), and Tischer (IA) Areas - Published March 3, 2003
- ❑ Opportunity for Designation in the Grand Forks (ND), Idaho, Lewiston (ID), Minnesota, Ohio Valley (IN), and Utah Areas, and Request for comments on the Official Agencies Serving These Areas - Published March 3, 2003
- ❑ Fees for Rice Inspection Services - Published February 28, 2003
- ❑ Fees for Official Inspection and Official Weighing Services - Published February 28, 2003

The Life of Resident Agent

Terry Ryno

Deborah Shipman, Washington, DC

Terry Ryno has been a resident agent out of the Des Moines regional office since June 1999. He began his career with P&SP in 1987 as an auditor in Memphis, TN. The resident agent position is a very high profile job with great demands.

An agent has a variety of duties. Terry reported that regional offices' resident agents and investigators frequently look for registered/bonded dealers; conduct custodial account and trade practice investigations at livestock markets; and review records to determine if buyers are paying the market on time, tariffs are properly applied, and records are complete and accurate. Agents also have to be aware of possible competition issues such as buyers working together to hold down prices. In addition, resident agents are encouraged to attend and participate in outreach activities, such as national, State, and local livestock and poultry meetings. Their involvement in a variety of assignments have made them the "eyes and ears of the agency."

Agents generally work alone but stay in contact with other resident agents and the regional office for support and ideas to accomplish their mission. They spend a great deal of time working and traveling. "Occasionally," he said, "we work long hours at night to observe weighing practices at poultry plants or at livestock markets. During a normal year resident agents will drive 15,000 – 30,000 miles and spend 6 to 10 weeks out overnight."

Terry enjoys working out of his home in Louisburg, Missouri. He explained, "It is like being a one-man regional office on a smaller scale. You choose, plan, and complete your own investigations. It is a challenging and rewarding experience and is the best job in the agency."

Terry is the first agency employee to work with a new computer-scanning device that grades and sorts live cattle to be sold in commingled lots. His work helped Jim Vanderwielen write a proposed policy statement. Terry reported that the system had two cameras that took pictures of the cattle. A computer used the pictures to measure the cattle's height and width. The two measurements including the weight, sex, and color were used to determine the grade factor. The computer later sorted the cattle by grade factor and automatically opened and closed gates to pen the livestock.

Terry has been involved in numerous projects, such as the Rapid Response Teams looking at the Missouri Price Discrimination Law, a packer trust, Tyson's cutoff of hog growers in Arkansas, and a major packer bankruptcy filing. He is a great asset to GIPSA.

Employee Assistance Program

For confidential assistance,

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 is the idea received on the Idea Hotline during March 2003. If you have questions about any ideas or the GIPSA Idea Hotline, please call me at (202) 720-1017.

Suggestor

Suggestion

Jeannene Henahan, Washington, DC

Use the STAR Web Program for GIPSA's T&As

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.

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During March 2003

This list does not necessarily indicate that the idea was implemented as suggested or that it is currently in place (it could be in the development/implementation stage). To avoid the chance of misinterpretation, please call the Hotline if you have any concerns or questions regarding the following list of ideas.



Use the STAR Web Program for GIPSA's T&As

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.

New on the Web

- ✓ **Export Elevator Directory (updated)**
http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/pubs/exp_elevator_directory.pdf
- ✓ **Grain Inspection Handbook, Book 4**
<http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/reference-library/handbooks/grain-insp/grbook4/gr-bk4.htm>
- ✓ **Official Agency Directory (updated)**
<http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/aboutus/oa-dir.htm>
- ✓ **Aflatoxin Handbook** (*Issuance Change #7: table of contents, and chapters 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 11*)
<http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/reference-library/handbooks/aflatoxin/aflatoxin.htm>

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

Travel Credit Card Cash Advance Fee. This is just a reminder that the ATM Cash Advance Fee charged by Bank of America is 1.9% of the amount withdrawn. If you use a financial institution other than Bank of America to obtain a cash advance, you will be charged that particular institution's fee, plus the Bank of America fee. These fees are reimbursable as a miscellaneous travel expense on a travel voucher.

Center Stage for Women's History Month

Gretchen VanWalbeek, Des Moines

There's an old saying that you should never do once anything you aren't willing to do twice. Well, at least that's how my mother used to say it to me.

Mom's statement kept rolling repeatedly through my head the day I was asked to be part of a 10-woman skit as part of Women's History Month. Yet, with my mother's voice in my brain, and my reservation that commitments like these have a way of being renewed year after year after year, I consented.

The assignment appeared at first glance to be right up my alley. A Bachelor's Degree in Communication/Theatre, (without a single theatre class on my transcript), combined with my admiration of women who have confronted hardships, one could think that this would have been an easy task for me.

Yet, as the mother of two sons, and the sister of three brothers, it was no small feat to find a historical woman I could realistically represent in first person to an audience of my Federal peers in 1 to 3 minutes. Immediately, I was on a search for a "perfectly, imperfect" historical woman. Someone with more spice than sugar, someone who had truly struggled, someone more like me than the often portrayed Eleanor, Jacquelyn, or Rosa. Someone more like me than the first suggested role of Emily Post.

Quick, try this, in 2 minutes write down the names of ten historical women who you believe we should all know. For fun, try this exercise with three or four of your coworkers. Go ahead, get started, I assure you it will be quite humbling.

When an ordinary 2 minutes have passed, you will likely learn that six or seven of the women on your list are the same ones listed by your coworkers. Many of you won't have a full list of 10 names, unless you cheated slightly by walking through a timeline of the presidents, writing down the names of their wives, wrote down the names of contemporary female Country singers, or used the four names I already provided.

While on a search at my local bookstore, I located a biography of an author and anthropologist who died in poverty with all of her books out of print at the time of her death in 1960. I could and would be her. Zora Neale Hurston, was a black woman author published mostly during the Great Depression, a woman very few people would know, but she became the woman I would decide we should all know.

The day of my performance came and went on March 11, 2003, with about 90 fellow Federal employees in attendance, 7 of them from P&S. I represented our agency as Zora Neale Hurston, dressed in a recently acquired fur stole, a borrowed netted black 50s era hat, and accompanying straw purse.

I spoke in first person for 3 minutes about the determination of this woman attending Howard University, Barnard College, and Columbia University at a time when only 2,232 black people were enrolled in college nationwide. I challenged the audience to recall what it would have been like for a black author in their grandmother's time. I, as Zora, challenged them to imagine that \$943.75 was the largest royalty ever received by one of the most published black writers of the 20th century.

I loved being Zora, the perfectly, imperfect historical woman. And, as you might have guessed by now, this is one thing that I would more than look forward to doing again and again.



Gretchen VanWalbeek, fourth from the left (standing), with the cast of the Women's History Month celebration.

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC



When Low-Fat Isn't Low Calories. You want to lose weight. So you choose lean meats, non-fat dairy products, and low-fat cookies, cakes and ice cream. Well, two out of three is not bad. Remember that particularly for sweet treats, low fat doesn't necessary mean low calorie. Why? Manufacturers of low-fat cookies and other goodies often pump up the sugars to boost the flavor in the absence of fat. In fact, high-fructose corn syrup, an increasingly common sweetener, now makes up 10 percent of all calories consumed in the United States.

Sugars are simply carbohydrates that spell double trouble for the dieter — the body doesn't have to burn as much fuel to use sugars, and sugar calories quickly add up and are stored as fat, leading to weight gain. So, if you are trying to lose weight and wondering why the bathroom scale isn't moving in the right direction, take another look at low-fat treats and other sugary foods, such as white bread and salty snack foods. These may be the sources of many extra calories.

What to choose instead? Try looking for "light" or "lite" labels. By law, those foods must contain at least 50 percent less fat and one-third fewer calories than the comparable product.

What You Need To Know about Herbal Supplements. Herbal supplements have been touted as natural remedies for everything from boosting memory to curing cancer. But don't assume that "natural" or "used for hundreds of years" means safe or effective. The fact is, herbal supplements are not tested or authorized by the Food and Drug Administration. And, some heavily promoted herbal remedies have been shown to be ineffective, potentially dangerous, or even fatal. Here are some notable examples:

Ephedra, which is supposed to curb appetite and boost metabolism, is perhaps the biggest offender. Also, known as ma huang or herbal ecstasy, it may cause heart attacks, strokes, seizures and even sudden death. The American Medical Association has warned against using diet aids containing ephedra.

A study done in 2000 found that a wide range of supplements including garlic, Ginkgo biloba, dong quai, licorice root, and feverfew, could boost the affect of warfarin, a common anti-clotting drug, increasing the risk of bleeding. Recent research concluded that Ginkgo biloba had no effect on memory, learning, attention concentration, or verbal fluency in older people not suffering from dementia.

The bottom line is don't take herbals at face value. If you take any supplements, tell your doctor. Your health and safety may be at stake.

Courtesy: TopHealth March 2003 Newsletter.

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



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 April 25, 2003!

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