



# GIPSA News

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

September 2001

## Dave Funk Leaves GIPSA

*Steven N. Tanner, Technical Center*

**Dave Funk**, Technical Services Division, Inspection Systems Engineering branch chief, left GIPSA for Budapest, Hungary, on August 26, 2001. **Dave** had worked for GIPSA for 13 years. **Dave** and his wife **Linda** have accepted positions as professors at the Szent Istvan University in Budapest. The sponsoring organization is Cooperative Studies, Inc. Much of the support for **Dave** and **Linda**'s work is coordinated through the International Institute of Christian Studies. **Dave** will teach physics, including grain quality measurement, and **Linda** will teach English.

**Dave** came to GIPSA from Dickey-john Corporation in early 1988 where he had spent many productive years in research and development. While at GIPSA, he was instrumental in providing significant improvements in grain quality measurement methods for the official grain inspection system. Some of his most notable accomplishments include the agency's transition from near infrared reflectance to near infrared transmittance technology, transition to improved moisture measurement instrumentation, initiating image analysis for rice

and image research on other grain quality factors using artificial neural networks (ANN), and paving the way for future use of ANN in both protein and moisture determination.

But that's not all. While working full time with GIPSA, **Dave** returned to school to earn both Masters and Doctoral degrees at the University of Missouri. You can imagine the late nights and early mornings **Dave** put in to meet research deadlines and prepare for exams to achieve that level of education. His research complimented GIPSA's goals and will lead to the development of new moisture measurement technology that will improve the accuracy, efficiency, and cost effectiveness of grain moisture measurement.

Most importantly, **Dave** and **Linda**, felt the leading of God in their lives to move on to other challenges. Their work as professors in a far away land is important, but their Christian example and being a part of the community of Budapest is equally important. In other words, **Dave** and **Linda** are missionaries.

In 1999, **Dave** received the USDA Honor Award for Superior Service and, in 1998, the Administrator's

Award for Superior Service. He also received several awards for outstanding achievements within TSD.

**Dave** has been, in every way, an outstanding and dedicated employee. He will be missed both personally and professionally. His long-lasting contributions to GIPSA will help facilitate the marketing of grain long after his departure.

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# Names in the News

## PERSONNEL

The Economic and Statistical Support Staff welcomes **Dr. Steven Payson**. He comes to GIPSA from the National Science Foundation where he worked since 1994. **Steve** worked for USDA's Economic Research Service from 1992-94. He has a B.A. in math and bio-psychology from Wesleyan University, a Master's from the London School of Economics, and a Ph.D. in economics from Columbia University. His areas of emphasis include the economics of technological change and econometrics.

**Dr. Chuan Kao** joined the Biotechnology Branch Staff. **Dr. Kao** is a former GIPSA employee, and previously worked in the Analytical, Reference and Testing Services Branch.

## AWARDS

**Gregory Andrews**, legal specialist, Des Moines, received an extra effort award for sustained dedication and willingness to contribute substantial extra effort while individually performing the workload typical of two legal specialists.

**John Barthel**, supervisory packers and stockyards specialist, Atlanta, received a performance bonus for outstanding leadership, professionalism, and sustained superior performance as acting regional supervisor in the Atlanta regional office.

**Brian Burk**, auditor, Denver, received a performance bonus for superior leadership and professionalism as the acting Financial Unit supervisor in the Denver regional office.

**Adam Fast**, auditor, Des Moines, received a spot award for excellent effort, dedication, and a professional attitude in his preparation of four investigation reports during the last 6 months that revealed significant financial violations.

**Bruce Griffith**, supervisory computer specialist, Washington, received a performance bonus for outstanding performance as the IRM coordinator and for completing numerous and complex projects in a timely manner.

**Milt Hansen**, supervisory packers and stockyards specialist, Denver, received a performance bonus for outstanding leadership, professionalism, and sustained superior performance as acting regional supervisor in the Denver regional office.

**Lynn Lancaster**, auditor, Des Moines, received a spot award for excellent performance in managing the monetary claims resulting from the Clough-Cook & Co. financial failure. Her efforts ensured an orderly, responsive, and complete processing of 280 valid bond claims totalling \$318,000.

**Maggie Mills**, marketing specialist, Denver, received a performance bonus award for her superior leadership and professionalism as the acting assistant regional supervisor in the Denver regional office.

**Joe Moore**, **Nilsa Ramos**, and **Creig Stephens**, marketing special-

ists, Atlanta, received extra effort awards for their superior leadership and professionalism as the acting assistant regional supervisors in the Atlanta regional office.

**Jackie Mougín**, student auditor trainee, Des Moines, received a spot award for excellent design, management, and implementation of the processes involved in the annual report and custodial account report filing program which contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Des Moines Financial Unit.

**Robby Obiekwe**, auditor, Atlanta, received a performance bonus for superior leadership and professionalism as the acting assistant regional supervisor in the Atlanta regional office.

**Kristi Pirtle**, **Jeani Plautz**, and **Lori Warner**, legal instruments examiners, Des Moines, received spot awards for their extra effort and initiative by providing exceptional and efficient service to the employees and external witnesses for the Excel hearing. This included three separate hearings, in three separate locations, with numerous unique and last minute requirements.

**Stuart Frank**, supervisory economist; **Gayle Pounds-Barnett**, **Gail Thuner**, and **Bryice Wilke**, economists; and **Jim Staiert**, former P&S employee, Des Moines, received extra effort awards for their sustained dedicated effort and substantial contributions during the Excel Corp. investigation and litigation.

# New Atlanta Regional Supervisor

**Elkin Parker** was recently named Regional Supervisor of P&S' Atlanta Regional Office.

**Elkin** began his Federal career with P&S as an auditor in Indianapolis, IN, in 1977. In March 1989, he transferred to Omaha, NE, and served as supervisory auditor until December 1989. On December 18, 1989, **Elkin** returned to Indianapolis where he continued his work as supervisory auditor until he was promoted to regional supervisor in 1993, a position he held until the office closed in June 1999. He then accepted a resident agent position which he held until he was selected to become regional supervisor of P&S' Atlanta Regional office.

**Elkin** earned an MBA from Alabama A&M University, with his major concentration in business management and minor concentration in accounting. He also earned a B.S. in accounting with a minor in mathematics from Alabama A&M University

**Elkin** has been married to his wife **Sherry** for 25 years. He has a 21-year-old daughter attending Indiana University and a 15-year-old son who attends Lawrence Central High school in Indianapolis. **Elkin's** hobbies include coin collecting, fishing, hunting, and investing in the stock market.

**Elkin** is a man of few words. His favorite motto is: "Do not blow your whistle too often. For it is not the whistle that pulls the train." **Elkin** tries to live by that motto.

"My immediate goals are to improve the work environment of the Atlanta Office and maximize the use of the office's human and financial resources," **Elkin** said. "I think that it is essential that we recognize the value of our human resources. It is our employees that pull the train."

Welcome to Atlanta, **Elkin!**

And, special thanks to **John D. Barthel**, for his professionalism and management of the Atlanta regional office as acting regional supervisor.

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## August Issuances

*Charlie Turner, Washington, DC*

- ❑ Directive 9180.63, "Inspection of Hullless Oats", dated 9/17/01.
- ❑ PN 01-09, "Fees For FGIS Official Inspection and Weighing Services Performed By FGIS In The United States And Canada And For Supervision Of Official Inspection And Weighing Services Performed By Agencies," dated 7/27/01.
- ❑ PN 01-10, "Near-Infrared Transmittance (NIRT) Corn Oil and Protein Calibration Adjustments", dated 9/3/01.
- ❑ PN 01-11, "Near-Infrared Transmittance (NIRT) Soybean Protein And Oil Calibration Adjustments", dated 9/3/01.

# Travel Bits & Pieces

*Peggy Smith, Washington, DC*

**Conference Travel.** Federal employees traveling for conferences often find that the per diem rate is inadequate. The rates of upscale hotels that are equipped to host conferences are usually above per diem rates. Effective January 2000, GSA tried to alleviate this problem by creating a conference lodging allowance, which permits conference participants to stay at hotels up to 25 percent more expensive than the standard per diem rate. Enter a "C" in the Code Block of the Authorized Expenditures section of the travel authorization. If this rate still is not high enough, supervisors can authorize reimbursement of actual expenses up to 300 percent of per diem.

**Mandatory Use of Travel Management Systems (TMS).** This is a friendly reminder that in January 2001, GSA implemented the mandatory use of TMS. This means that in addition to transportation reservations, booking of hotel/motel accommodations and rental cars through your Travel Management Center (TMC) is **mandatory**. USDA was granted exemption from the mandatory use of a TMC only for the following travel situations: travel for which advance reservations are impractical, e.g., when the traveler is on the road and does not know where lodging will be needed; travel situations where only a rental car is needed (travelers may deal directly with the appropriate company); or for hotel accommodations for a conference, seminar, etc., where the sponsoring organization has arranged a special rate and ensured that the facility complies with the Hotel and Motel Fire and Safety Act's standards.

## Impact of the Aspiring Leader Program

*Sharon L. Williams, Washington, DC*

I had contemplated participating in the Aspiring Leader Program several times before I actually enrolled. I had read and heard, and even observed, the many opportunities and benefits one receives from participating. Last year, I finally resolved to enroll. The decision that took a great deal of courage because I had become comfortable, if not content, with what I was doing; and I knew that it would demand that I operate on a level outside my comfort zone. Once in the program, I discovered that it was welcoming, and that it opened doors for growth and development.

Every phase of the program represented a challenge for me. Its components required learning new skills and knowledge that put me closer to obtaining my career objectives. Completing the requirements and graduating were major accomplishments for me.

Throughout the program, I learned a great deal about myself both personally and professionally in terms of my character and leadership style. I realized my strengths and weaknesses, and established plans to improve them. It also gave me resolve to approach new challenges with an open mind and to begin thinking outside of the box. Both my communications and writing skills have been enhanced as a result of the program, and it has broadened my reading interests.

The experience and knowledge I gained through the developmental and shadowing assignments, management book reviews, and interaction with front line managers were invaluable. They have provided a sense of anticipation and readiness to perform in my chosen area, and a plan of action to chart my way toward a managerial/leadership role. As a whole, the program provided me with a clearly defined career objective and the tools to achieve it.

Furthermore, the Aspiring Leader Program is a source for upward mobility and career advancement for lower level employees. It also serves the agency by providing potential leaders with skills that will be beneficial to the agency. I believe that I have benefited from the Aspiring Leader Program and will bring to the agency new skills, knowledge, abilities, and make significant contributions.

I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the many career enrichment opportunities such as the Aspiring Leader, New Leader and Mid-Level Executive Leadership Programs to enhance your personal/professional growth and development.

## New Records Management Working Group

*Tess Butler, Washington, DC*

At acting administrator **Dave Shipman's** request, **Neil Porter**, Compliance Division director, put together a Records Management Working Group to look at standardizing records management activities within GIPSA.

The group consists of: **Marty Begley, Bruce Boor, Tess Butler, Terri Henry, Karen Guagliardo, Richard Hardy, Sharon Vassiliades, Larry McDonald, Mary Long, Peggy Smith, Rose Alexander, Linda Mudd** (APHIS's records officer) with oversight by **Gerald Bromley**, GIPSA chief information officer.

The group will focus on establishing processes that:

- meet today's legal requirements for records management;
- support programs needs; and
- use current technology to make records management efficient.

As a first step, the group will update the Agency's Files Maintenance and Records Disposition Handbook. The group also plans to initiate measures shortly to reinforce awareness of records management requirements and provide training sources.

For your information here are some websites containing records management issues you can visit:

NARA: <http://www.nara.gov/records>

USDA: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/irm/records/main.html>

APHIS: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/recordsdir/records.html>

# Everything\* You Want To Know About Delegations and Designations

Virginia Roseberry, Washington, DC, and Roy Shepherd, New Orleans

Both GIPSA employees and official agencies have had questions about **delegations** and **designations**. Because of the interest, we will try to highlight the programs. GIPSA has partnership and regulatory responsibilities with the State and private agencies (i.e., official agencies) that provide inspection and weighing services in the official grain inspection and weighing system in specific geographic areas. This delegation/designation by the Compliance Division, plus the nationwide quality control

program, separates the official agencies from other independent companies inspecting grain on an unofficial basis.

Under the revisions made to the United States Grain Standards Act (USGSA) in 1976, States meeting certain requirements can be **delegated** authority by GIPSA to provide export official inspection service and weighing services. Delegations are considered "permanent," with no specified term limits; however, the Secretary of Agriculture may revoke the delegation at any time upon notice to the State agency without opportunity for a hearing.

A formal **designation** program was also established under the USGSA in 1976. State or local government agencies, persons, or private agencies can be designated by GIPSA to provide domestic official inspection and weighing services. Designation is based on the requirements of the USGSA, regulations, and the designation agreement signed by both GIPSA and the official agency. GIPSA establishes boundaries, approves fees, and renews the designations of official agencies for a period of up to 3 years. Toward the end of the 3-year designation term, GIPSA announces the end of the designation and requests applications from those interested in providing official service in the specified area.

GIPSA uses the *Federal Register* to inform the public of designation actions. The first *Federal Register* notice announces the opportunity for

competitive designation, and is published 6 months prior to the termination date. It announces the names and describes the geographic areas of the official agencies whose designations are terminating. The notice asks for applications from any interested party during a 30-day period. The second notice asks for comments on the applicants, and is published 4 months prior to termination. Comments are requested only if there are multiple applicants for an open geographic area. Comments are due within 30 days after publication. The third notice announces the selection of the designated applicant, and is published 1 month prior to termination.

Some factors GIPSA considers in determining which applicant is better able to provide service are past performance, quality and timeliness of service, commitment to excellence and customer service, cooperation with GIPSA, willingness and ability to purchase and use technology, stability and adequacy of resources, the cost of official service, comments received, and the accuracy and detail of applications.

Delegation of States and designation of official agencies helps GIPSA to ensure a fair and competitive system for all involved in the merchandising of grain.

\*We may not have covered *everything*, so if you have any questions, call **Virginia Roseberry**, Compliance Division, at (202) 720-9803, or e-mail: [vroseber@gipasdc.usda.gov](mailto:vroseber@gipasdc.usda.gov).

**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

# Aspiring Leader and New Leader Programs

## **Aspiring Leader Program 2002**

*An Interagency Leadership Development Program for Federal Employees, GS 5/6/7*

A 6-month program designed for full-time GS-5/6/7 federal employees who are self-starters with a career plan that includes leading and working with teams. ALP prepares employees for leadership positions by strengthening basic competencies in managerial skills, such as oral and written communication, problem solving, leadership, self-direction, etc.

FGIS will select 2 full-time employees for the Aspiring Leader Program 2002. P&S will also participate.

## **New Leader Program 2002**

*An Interagency Leadership Development Program for Federal Employees, GS 7-11*

A 6-month program designed for full-time federal employees at the GS 7-11 levels who have just entered leadership positions or have a high potential for leadership. These positions may include first-line supervisors, team leaders, project managers, and administrative support members of self-directed work teams.

FGIS will select 6 full-time employees for the New Leader Program 2002: two from New Orleans and two from Headquarters (including Technical Services Division), and one from each of the following groupings: (a) League City and Portland, (b) domestic offices, and (c) Baltimore and Toledo. P&S will also participate in the program.

### **Program Components:**

- Leadership Effectiveness Inventory
- 3 separate weeks of residential classroom training
- One 30-day developmental work experience
- Individual Development Plan
- Independent study

### **Nominating Procedures (for either program):**

A competitive process will be used to select participants. Application packages for either program must include:

1. An SF-171, OF 612, or Federal Resume, signed and dated. (Include your home address.)
2. A written statement explaining your achievement goals for your participation in the program, i.e., what you hope to gain with respect to your career goals.
3. A written statement from the first-line supervisor assessing your potential and motivation to complete all requirements and fully participate in all components of the program.

P&S employees should submit complete application packages to **Peggy Smith**, USDA GIPSA P&S, Stop 3642, Washington, DC 20250-3642; FGIS employees to **Mary McCoy**, USDA GIPSA FGIS, Training Staff, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 3649, Washington, DC 20250-3649. **The application deadline is October 15, 2001.** Additional information is available on the Graduate School's Leadership Development Academy website at <http://www.grad.usda.gov/lda> or from **Rosemary Mayne** at (202) 720-6242.

# ISS Isn't Simply a Technical Problem

*Carol Remmers, Washington, DC*

Continuing to build and maintain an effective information systems security (ISS) program is an ongoing challenge. Together, though, we have accomplished much — from improved technical safeguards, to improved procedures and physical protection, to formal security plans and more.

Ironically, though, the more we bolster our protection in those areas, the more likely it is attackers will focus on GIPSA employees as a possible weak link.

The respected Gartner Group recently issued a study that said before the decade is out, spending for information security is expected to rise from its current average of ½ of 1 percent of the information technology (IT) budget in most large organizations to a full 4 percent. Order of magnitude increases like that show that information security is becoming a vital cornerstone of modern business and government operations.

We must not lose sight of the fact that technology and growth in security resources alone won't be enough to protect our valuable information resources. As security expert Bruce Schneier says, there is no magical "security dust" you can sprinkle on a system to protect it. Likewise technical components by themselves won't guard against all threats. People remain the vital cornerstone to our ISS efforts.

Don't be lulled by media hype and glitzy stories of "genius" hackers and high tech high jinks. The truth is that most hackers don't use especially clever methods for their activities. Instead, they usually exploit well known flaws in systems. Often they don't even need to do that if they can convince someone to simply give them access or information that will lead to access.

Kevin Mitnick, often called the world's most notorious hacker, recently pointed out how vital the aspects of personnel security truly are. "You can have the best technology, firewalls, intrusion-detection systems, biometric devices," Mitnick said. "All it takes is a call to an unsuspecting employee, and that's all she wrote, baby. They got everything."

Neal O'Farrell, CEO of security firm Hackademia and a writer for searchSecurity.com, says that until humans begin to act like machines and not be influenced by perception, subjectivity, and a desire to be helpful, they will continue to expose their enterprise operations to vulnerabilities. Since human nature is unlikely to change (you can put that down as the understatement of the decade), we have to work to inform employees and keep them vigilant. In other words we have to continually bolster our "human perimeter" against possible attacks.

We know we cannot expect humans to protect against all threats. People make mistakes, get tired, become careless, or are fooled by circumstances or perceptions. But with continued ISS awareness we will improve the strength of our human perimeter and thereby bolster one of the key rings of defense around GIPSA information resources.

# For Your Health

*Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC*

**Computer Aches.** Sitting at a computer for long periods of time can be tough on your body. Two key causes of computer aches and pains are repetitive motions and awkward postures. The following checklist can help you ensure your computer habits are healthy for your wrists, back, neck, and other joints.

## ***Check Your Work Space Set-Up***

- Your desk should be at a comfortable height -- high enough so you don't slouch and low enough to work without overreaching.
- Your chair should comfortably support the small of your back. Use a chair with an adjustable backrest or use a cushion to support the small of your back.
- Your chair seat should support your thighs with a gap of no more than an inch or two between the end of the seat and the back of your knee.
- Your computer monitor should be 16 to 29 inches from your eyes, straight in front of you.
- Regularly switch the hands you use to operate your mouse to give your dominant hand a break and substitute keyboard commands for mouse clicks.

## ***Pinpoint Posture Problems***

- Sit up straight and don't slouch.
- Relax your shoulders?
- Bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle and close to your body.
- Keep your wrists straight or only slightly bent. If your wrists are bent too much, try raising your chair or place your keyboard on a tray below your desktop.

*Continued, see Health  
on page 9.*

# Learning Agents Equipped with Knowledge and Tools

*Rosemary Mayne, Employee Development Specialist, Washington, DC*

On August 7-9, 2001, 10 FGIS Collateral Duty Training Officers (CDTOs) attended a workshop in Washington, DC: **Art Boline**, Minneapolis; **Greg Bula**, Cedar Rapids; **Richard Freudenthal**, Portland; **Cathy Haskins**, Stuttgart; **Mary Knutson**, Grand Forks; **Roy Lyon**, Wichita; **Larry McDonald**, Technical Services Division; **Diane Palecek**, Kansas City; **Greg Tomas**, Baltimore; and **Janet Walton**, New Orleans. **Peggy Smith** represented P&S. **Dave Orr**, Field Management director, opened the workshop with remarks on the the importance of training, and the importance and revitalization of the CDTOs' role.

From the opening, the group wanted a better understanding of CDTOs' responsibilities and with the tools to perform their role. The week was structured to position them to be agents of continual learning in GIPSA and help ensure a knowledgeable, competent, and professional staff.

I started the workshop with the purpose of Government training as stated in the Government Employees Training Act: "...to assist in achieving an agency's mission and performance goals by improving employee and organizational performance." I discussed the objectives of GIPSA's training program and the difference between training and development. Each CDTO received a copy of the Office of Personnel

Management's Training Policy Handbook, and I reviewed the laws and rules regulating government training and clarified the levels of responsibility for training within GIPSA.

**Tim Blackburn**, director of APHIS Training and Development, talked about making continual learning a part of our culture. He said that "learning" is a self-motivated broadening by an individual, and that employees are responsible for their own learning. Employees need to be forward focused, he said, to see life broadly and to creatively search for options. He provided tips for the CDTOs to be learning advocates and to enjoy the opportunity to make a difference.

**Richard Hardy** demonstrated web-based SkillSoft training. Several attendees listed this as a learning highlight for the week. He showed the ease of use and the wide array of available course options. Participants recognized this as a great way to maximize a limited training budget.

Employee Assistance Counselor **Stosh Comisiak** discussed communication, and managing conflict and stress. The group agreed that the stress management strategies, which he practiced with them, were effective.

**Mark Dickson**, GIPSA Information Technology Staff, guided the group through the Training Management System software program. The CDTO's knowledge of the program ranged from minimal to very good, but all knew more with **Mark's** help. They were especially pleased with the reporting capabilities. In some cases, they realized their offices needed to make some improvements in getting all training, from on-the-job to formal, regardless of payment type, into the system.

The use of the Individual Development Plans (IDP) was a major topic. I talked about the purpose of IDPs, the stigma from past usage (or non-usage), and the essential need for a self-assessment process. Together

we looked at the form, suggested some changes, and prepared some examples. We looked at the Annual Training Plan format and discussed how the IDPs are used to complete that planning requirement.

Each CDTO talked about the operation of the training function in their unit. The group said this was very interesting and provided an opportunity to share ideas.

*Continued, see CDTO on page 9.*



*CDTO Workshop Participants: (counter clockwise from front left) Mary Knutson, Cathy Haskins, Roy Lyon, Greg Bula, and Larry McDonald, Janet Walton, Art Boline, Diane Palecek, Richard Freudenthal, Greg tomas, Mary McCoy, and Rosemary Mayne.*

CDTO, from page 8.

**Janet Walton** outlined the Excel Program, a 12-week program open to full-time permanent and seasonal employees in the New Orleans field office. Everyone chuckled when they realized that this wasn't a computer course, but a structured experience with technical training, a personal job needs and interests assessment, and observation of managers, supervisors, and program staff at work. I presented Janet a certificate of appreciation for her continued assistance and support of the Agency's training program. **Larry McDonald** discussed TSD's technical training services and asked the group for ideas for further TSD assistance.

Selecting training with an objective in mind was the last segment on the agenda. I talked about the need to consider cost and various options and sources for accomplishing an identified objective. My presentation on career planning covered individual responsibility, planning, writing a resume, and marketing oneself. "Plan and prepare!" is the message to convey to employees regarding career planning. Each CDTO took CD-ROMs of 2 courses, a resource listing of tapes, videos, books, etc. available for loan in GIPSA, a SkillSoft course directory, and other resources for their CDTO "tool kit".

Thanks to all presenters, to **Mary McCoy** for her help arranging the workshop, to **Dave Orr** for a question and answer session, and to all others who contributed to this successful event. The participants overwhelmingly agreed that their concerns were addressed and they are better equipped with knowledge and tools to fulfill their responsibilities as learning agents in GIPSA.

## GIPSA Idea Hotline Update



*Norma Phelps,  
Washington, DC*



Here are the ideas received on the GIPSA Idea Hotline during August 2001. If you have questions about any ideas or the Hotline, please call me at 202-720-1017.

*Suggestor*

*Suggestion*

Charles Britton, Sacramento, CA

Amend AMA Regulations to Allow for Resinspections of Graded Commodities

August's tee-shirt winner: **Charles Britton!**

### GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During August 2001

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.

✎ Weight Computer at Export Elevators Needs to Retain More Than One Ship in Memory

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via e-mail: [gipsa-ideas@gipsadc.usda.gov](mailto: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.**

### Health, from page 7.

- Keep your head and neck straight, not flexed or tilted.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor or on a footrest.

#### **Stop for Regular Breaks**

- Take a short break every 30 to 60 minutes. Even a 15-second break for a glass of water can help. Or, take a few moments to perform simple stretches.

*Source: George Washington University Vital Signs Newsletter.*

# Thoughts from Summer Interns

**Antonia Montgomery, New Orleans.** I am a senior at Alcorn State University majoring in agriculture economics. This summer, I was honored to be selected as GIPSA intern.

My objective was to serve as an agricultural commodity technician (ACT) in a grain inspection field or sub-field office in support of activities of the office. My main duty was to perform sampling, weighing, chemical and physical testing, as well as assist in the inspection of products standardized under the U.S. Grain Standards Act and Agricultural Marketing Act. I performed visual inspection and mechanical measurements on grain to determine the kind and or class, and the quality of grain and rice to be processed. The physical analysis included factors used in the grading process such as insect identification and infestation, odor, conditions, moisture, and other standards. I prepared the samples for official inspection by use of dockage tester, test weights, boerner divider, strand sizer shaker, and the Dickey John grain analysis computer. Samples for inspection and file sample retention were prepared by dividing gross samples of grain to obtain official work and field sample portions. A dated sample retention system was maintained for reinspection, appeal and board appeal inspection. The moisture content of the grain was determined and data logs were properly completed for all lab functions.

A variety of chemical testing was done as well. The main ones were alfatoxin and protein/oil testing. A daily check-testing procedure was

performed to determine the calibration of the analysis equipment. A bleach test was also conducted on the seed coats from kernels of sorghum and wheat to class identification of germ damage analysis.

I was trained in how to examine ships, barges, hopper cars, and other containers for cleanliness and their acceptability at storage handling facilities. I received general administrative guidance from supervisory personnel and senior ACGs and ACTs. They helped me get a better understanding of the job.

While an intern, I attended a communication (writing) class taught by the training officer **Janet Walton**. I have enjoyed my GIPSA internship. It provided me with various experiences from sampling to teamwork to conducting inspections of ships and floating rigs. It helped me to have a better understanding of what the GIPSA is all about and the agricultural services we provide.

I would like to give a special "thank you" to the employees in AREA III and IV who have made this internship a most rewarding experience for me.

**Dorothy Grigsby and Elsie Jones, New Orleans.** Great opportunities come to all, but many do not know they have met them. The only preparation is to take advantage of them is simple fidelity to what each day brings. The real truth about opportunity is this: when opportunity knocks, it always knocks too soon. The important thing is not to get stuck worrying about lost opportunities. Opportunities will continue to appear and reappear, time and again. Your task is to cultivate an open frame of

mind so you are ready for promoting opportunities when they appear. Opportunity is knocking all the time. Knowing the truth will help you change your expectations and stop waiting for the time to be perfect before you accept new responsibilities. Opportunity is a combination of circumstances favorable for the purpose.

**Yvonne Palmer, Washington, DC.** As the youngest member of the GIPSA family, I'd like to introduce myself. I started working in the fall of 2000 for **John Giler**, chief of the Policies and Procedures Branch, as an automation management assistant while attending Eastern Senior High School. I graduated from Eastern in June 2001, and received a scholarship from Eastern and the Washington Post 500 Club. The Club provides Eastern High School students \$500 towards a college education for each semester that they make all As and Bs. I am now continuing my education at the University of the District of Columbia, and have adjusted my schedule to continue to work for GIPSA part-time.

## Help is within reach.

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

# USDA's Initiatives On Native Americans

*Dennis S. Murray Sr., Washington, DC*

USDA agencies have initiated many positive education assistance programs, policies, and goals to ensure greater opportunities for Native Americans across this country. USDA agencies are taking the lead in developing these opportunities by rebuilding their alliances with Native Americans tribal leaders.

With the help of **Eugene Bass**, director of GIPSA's Civil Rights Staff, the Agency has strengthened its efforts to inform, educate, and assist in the development of American Indian students by participating in the Washington Internship for Native students (WINS) program. The WINS program was established to recruit young Native American students from colleges and universities across the country to work at Federal agencies. GIPSA was proud to have these students join us for the summer, creating long-lasting relationships. GIPSA outreach efforts helped these students discover endless possibilities in agriculture.

**Mary Honwyte**, a Native American from Arizona with ancestral roots from the Hopi tribe, joined GIPSA's Civil Rights Staff in June as a summer intern under the WINS program. **Mary's** assignments involved researching cases, designing

brochures, and witnessing complaints. She noted that her experience in the WINS program was rewarding and fulfilling, and she hopes to return. In August, **Mary** returned to continue her studies in business technology at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in New Mexico.

**Kateri Schaff**, Auburn, WA, was another WINS intern in Washington, DC. **Kateri** researched and wrote for brochures and tribal col-

leadership and devotion continues to play a major role in the Department's successful outreach efforts.

USDA's Tribal College Liaison Program includes a Plan of Action involving numerous agencies. Rural Development's grant program will provide a \$4 million grant for Native American tribes to develop essential community facilities in rural communities. APHIS is coordinating tribal colleges' involvement with Foot and Mouth Disease prevention programs.

And, USDA will hold a conference in Washington, D.C. on September 11-12, 2001, to help expand the Department's portfolio of Native American education and human capital initiatives.

USDA will plan more diversity, education, funding, and outreach programs for Native Americans with other agencies. These programs will generate recruitment and promotion opportunities, and add stability in our Native American communities.

Thanks to **Mary** and **Kateri** for sharing their cultural backgrounds and diversity with us this summer. If you have any questions regarding the WINS program or tribal colleges upcoming events or grants for Native Americans, please contact **John Phillips** (202) 720-4366 or **Eugene Bass** (202) 720-0216.



*Mary Honwyte*



*Kateri Schaff*

leges bio's. She also attended meetings on tribal college issues with her mentor and supervisor, **John Phillips**.

**John** has been GIPSA's and USDA's Tribal Liaison Officer since September 2000. **John's** detail to Haskell Indian Nations University for 4-months has become a continuous effort on his part to establish a relationship with the tribal college community and their educators. His

## Processing of Spot Awards

Currently, GIPSA's procedure for payment of Spot Awards is made "on-the-spot" through the Visa Purchase Card Management System's (PCMS) convenience check capability. Effective September 28, 2001, USDA will no longer allow convenience checks to be written for Spot Awards. Instead, Individual/Group Spot Awards will be paid nightly through a new Alternative Method of Payment for Awards System to the address/electronic funds transfer (EFT (better known as direct deposit)) account indicated on the award form as soon as it is processed.

To process Spot Awards in the future, the completed AD-287-2 is to be submitted to APHIS Business Services, Human Resources-Processing Section, in Minneapolis, MNa. Since spot award payments will be made every day, there is a very limited window for deleting these spot awards before the payment is generated.

This change is being implemented because the Office of the Inspector General conducted an audit comparing the convenience checks written for spot awards with the corresponding award forms (or lack thereof). They discovered that hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of convenience checks were written without any award information ever being entered into the National Finance Center (NFC). In other words, the awards were not processed properly. This meant that taxes were never actually paid out to the U.S. Treasury, nor was the award listed as income on the recipient's W-2. Therefore, it was decided that convenience checks could no longer be used for Spot Awards, but USDA could not implement the new regulation without a way to pay out spot awards in the future.

NFC has now developed the new alternative payment system that will ensure Spot Awards will be processed correctly, therefore, effective September 28, 2001, USDA agencies will no longer use the PCMS convenience checks to pay Spot Awards.

Furthermore, the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, requires the use of EFT for most Federal payments as of January 2, 1999. These payments include salaries, wage-withholdings, awards, and allotments. Payments must be disseminated through EFT unless employees qualify for a waiver.

GIPSA Directive 4451.1, Employee Recognition Program, dated 6/1/99, will be updated to reflect this change. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Awards Coordinator.

## GIPSA Verifies Performance of EnviroLogix Kit

GIPSA recently verified that the EnviroLogix Inc., Cry9C QuickStix Qualitative Lateral Flow Strip Kit detects the presence of one kernel of StarLink corn in 800 corn kernels in a 5 minute test development time.

In addition, GIPSA reviewed data submitted by the manufacturer and concluded that ordinary tap water can be used with this test. The performance of this test was verified by GIPSA earlier this year, but the test development time was 10 minutes, and the test required deionized or distilled water. 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. 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.

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>. and laboratory accreditation services, visit <http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/biotech/evalaccredit.htm>.

# Designation Renewals

*Jan Hart, Washington, DC*

FGIS is granting the maximum 3-year designation to three official agencies to provide domestic official inspection services under the U.S. Grain Standards Act. The agencies and the total official inspections provided by them in fiscal year 2000 are: East Indiana Grain Inspection, Inc. (10,153); Fremont Grain Inspection Department, Inc. (20,633); and Titus Grain Inspection, Inc. (6,617).

Designated agencies provide, on FGIS' behalf, front line official inspection services to the grain trade for domestic grain moving throughout the country. Here's the background on these partner agencies and their owner/managers.

**EAST INDIANA.** **Dan Gross** is owner, president, and operations manager of East Indiana. His spouse **Kristina** is the secretary/treasurer. **Dan**, a 1976 graduate of Ohio State University with an agriculture degree, started his grain career at FGIS' Toledo, OH, Field Office in 1976. He transferred to the Board of Appeals and Review in Washington, DC, in 1977, and taught grain and hay inspection across the country. **Dan** resigned from government service in 1979 to operate Winchester Grain Inspection, Winchester, IN.

**Dan** purchased some stock in Winchester in 1982. In 1983, Winchester added additional territory by buying the W. F. Christen Agency, Decatur, IN. Then, in 1985, **Dan** and **Kristina** purchased the remaining Winchester stock and founded East Indiana Grain Inspection, Inc.

In 1998, the **Grosses** relinquished part of their northern Indiana geographic area. Long-time manager of

the northern area **Steven Walker** competitively applied for and was selected by FGIS for designation for that area.

East Indiana is currently headquartered in Muncie, IN, and serves the mid-eastern section of the State of Indiana and one county in Ohio. East Indiana provides official services at one full-time and eight applicant-based grain inspection laboratories.

**FREMONT.** **Eldon Davis** is Fremont's owner and president. **Eldon** started his grain career in Des Moines, IA, in 1952, and later worked for Lincoln Grain Inspection, Lincoln, NE. He came to Fremont in 1970, and became its owner and president in 1977. **Eldon** is now semi-retired. His son **Steve** is the agency manager and works out of the Fremont headquarters and lab; **Jim Fouts** manages the Denison, IA, lab.

The Fremont Chamber of Commerce operated the grain inspection business in Fremont for many years until 1967. The inspectors then incorporated the Fremont Grain Exchange. Fremont operated as a conflict-of-interest agency until 1976, when ties to the grain trade were cut. The company name was changed to Fremont Grain Inspection Department, Inc., in 1978, when they received their first designation. In 1980, Fremont competitively applied for and was selected for a four-county area around Hartley, IA.

Fremont provides official services through mid-eastern Nebraska and in two separate areas in mid-western and northern Iowa at two full-time and one applicant-based grain inspec-

tion laboratories.

**TITUS.** **Nancy** and **Darwin Titus** own and manage Titus. **Nancy** was the only female licensed inspector in the 1960s. This family-run operation includes their son **Doug**, who studied aeronautics and aerospace engineering at Purdue University, his father's alma mater, before returning to the family business in 1983.

Professor **F. E. Robbins** initially started developing grain standards in the Lafayette, IN, area while providing inspections for the Ralston-Purina Company. **Darwin** went to work for him while attending Purdue and took over the agency's operation from Professor **Robbins** in 1963. Titus operated as a sole proprietorship until the **Titus'** incorporated it in 1978, as Titus Grain Inspection, Inc., when that agency was designated for the first time.

Titus provides official services in the northwestern part of the State of Indiana at one full-time and one applicant-based grain inspection lab.

**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 September 25, 2001!**

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