



GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act.

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- ❑ Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- ❑ PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- ❑ PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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 June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

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AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION
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GIPSA News

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June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

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in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act.

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- ❑ Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- ❑ PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- ❑ PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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Phone (202) 720-5091
FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act .

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- ❑ Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- ❑ PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- ❑ PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

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tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act.

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

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GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act .

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- ❑ Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- ❑ PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- ❑ PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act.

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- ❑ Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- ❑ PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- ❑ PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

For free, confidential assistance, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION
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GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act.

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- ❑ Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- ❑ PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- ❑ PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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Phone (202) 720-5091
FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
USDA, GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS
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WASHINGTON, DC 20250-3601



GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn, Jim Tullous, Ed Stallman, Fred Lindseth, Mark Einarson, Penny Kilbride, Mary Knutson, and Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
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Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act.

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- ❑ Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- ❑ PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- ❑ PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

For free, confidential assistance, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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Phone (202) 720-5091
FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

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



GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

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Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act .

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

For free, confidential assistance, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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
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Washington, D.C. 20250-3601
Phone (202) 720-5091
FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act.

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- ❑ Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- ❑ PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- ❑ PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

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Responding to Petition for Rulemaking

Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act .

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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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Phone (202) 720-5091
FAX (202) 205-9237
Internet: dstewart@fgis.usda.gov

by June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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GIPSA News

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

June 1998

From My Desk

James R. Baker, Administrator

On June 10, 1998, Secretary Glickman will present the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards to individuals, teams, and group leaders for their outstanding achievements. The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture, to consumers of agricultural products, and to the ability of USDA to serve rural America. The Honor Awards are the most significant awards that the Department gives. GIPSA congratulates the Agency's 1998 Honor Award recipients.

Mack Manis, Standards and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division, and **Bob Crook**, Assistant Manager, Cedar Rapids Field Office, have been selected to receive the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for their exceptional leadership in introducing the new customer outreach program of GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. This award recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission-related activities of USDA, including significant accomplishments

in improving service to both internal and external USDA customers.

GIPSA retirees **Harold Rosenberg** and **Kay Stang**, formerly with the Compliance Division, also will receive Personal and Professional Excellence awards for their contributions as members of USDA's Task Force on Grain Handling Prac-

tices. The group members are being recognized for their investigation of improper grain handling practices resulting in criminal prosecutions and statutory and regulatory improvements.

The Grand Forks Field Office Staff -- **Tom Wrenn**, **Jim Tullous**, **Ed Stallman**, **Fred Lindseth**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, and **Cynthia Butz** -- will receive a "Secretary's Award for Public Service" for their outstanding initiative and untiring efforts to assist the citizens of Grand Forks, ND, during the flood of 1997, and for the credit their actions have brought to GIPSA and USDA. This award recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service.

All of these GIPSA employees are invaluable assets to the Agency and to the Department. The U.S. Government and the public significantly benefit from their outstanding and unselfish devotion to public service. They are most worthy of being selected for the Secretary's Awards, and GIPSA is very proud of each and every one of them.

GIPSA's 1998 Honor Award Recipients

Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence:

- **John (Mack) Manis**
- **Bob Crook**

- **Harold Rosenberg**
- **Kay Stang**

Secretary's Award for Public Service

- **The Staff of the Grand Forks Field Office**

Names in the News

Personnel

Congratulations to the following folks who received promotions recently: **John Rollins** and **Byron School**, Office of Policy Litigation, Washington, DC; **Larry Haller**, Economic/Statistical Support Staff, Washington, DC; and **Jane Spengler**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC.

Farewell to **Peggy Kume**, former secretary, Industry Analysis Staff.

Welcome to **Mai Ho**, the newest member of Field Management Division's Automation and Program Services Branch. **Mai** came to GIPSA from the Forest Service where she was an Oracle Database Adminis-

trator. She is also a programmer, proficient in COBOL language. **Mai's** first task is to make the LABMIN system year 2000 compliant. She will eventually take over and maintain the CUSUM system. **Mai** has a Masters degree in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.

Interns

Welcome to all of the interns who will be joining the GIPSA team this summer. Here's who they are and where you can find them:

Maria Alvarado
Information Resources
Management Staff

Wendy Carrasco
Civil Rights Staff

Scott Renfro
Compliance Division's Regulatory
Branch

Arielle Rose
Program Services Staff

Laura Hane
Audiovisual, Regulatory,
and Training Staff

Shanna Love
Field Management Division's
Standards and Procedures Branch

Stephanie McFadden
Atlanta Regional Office

Congratulations to GIPSA's USDA 1890 Scholars graduates **Stephanie Thomas** of Florida A&M University and **Alberetta Ringgold** of Southern University.

Condolences

Verice Thompson passed away in May in Los Angeles, CA, after a brief hospitalization. **Verice** was a long-time and dedicated P&S employee, having last served in the Sacramento office until her recent retirement.

Awards

Martin Begley, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received an award for sustained superior performance as the Weighing and Equipment Branch Acting Chief, in addition to maintaining normal duties.

Luccile Clark, **Valerie Collins**, **Carey Cook**, **Gertrude Curry**, **Martha Davis**, **Brenda Evans**, **Gary Gabbard**, **Tracy Gerke**, **Sandra Lockridge**, **Russell Molloy**, **David Morris**, **Mary Ross**, **Bobby Smith**, **Glenn Terrill**, **Jason Vanfossan**, and **Barbara Van Til**, all of the Technical Center's Analytical, Reference, and Testing Services Branch, were recognized for providing consistently high quality analyses, productivity, and customer support for commodities testing through cooperation and teamwork.

*Continued, see Names
on page 5.*

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Harold Davis, Deputy Administrator, P&S Programs

In October 1996, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) handed Secretary Glickman a petition at a farm forum in North Carolina. The petition asked USDA to adopt rules to prohibit meat packers (1) from procuring cattle for slaughter through a forward contract unless the contract contains a firm base price at the time the contract is signed and the contract is offered or bid in an open, public manner, and (2) from owning and feeding cattle unless the cattle are sold for slaughter in an open, public manner.

Some may not be familiar with WORC and their interest in the environment and American agriculture. WORC, formed in 1979, is a federation of resource councils located in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado. Their focus is on protecting natural resources, family farms, and rural communities. They have a strong interest in environmental issues involving concentrated animal agriculture and land reclamation in mining areas of the West. They also are interested in sustainable agriculture and preserving the family farm.

Their petition to the Secretary sought rules under the P&S Act that would prevent packers from procuring cattle through privately negotiated contracts and from using basis and formula pricing. They want packers to engage in a public offer and bid process when cattle are bought on a forward contract; they suggest an

electronic exchange or equivalent. WORC believes that livestock producers who commit cattle to packers under formula and basis pricing arrangements receive lower prices, and that these pricing arrangements unjustly discriminate against some producers, and provide an unreasonable preference to others. They believe electronic markets could provide improved, more open competition and better price discovery. WORC would also require meat packers to offer cattle they feed for sale in an open, public market.

WORC believes the requested rules would eliminate unjust discrimination between livestock producers and undue preferences resulting from current packer feeding and forward contracting practices. They believe meat packer concentration, coupled with the volume of cattle committed to packers through packer feeding, forward contracts and marketing agreements, has given packers the ability and incentives to control prices. WORC also contends their proposed rules would encourage more value-based pricing and provide smaller producers access to forward contracts.

To facilitate a full discussion of the issues raised, GIPSA published the petition in the *Federal Register* in January 1997 seeking public comments. Those commenting were encouraged to provide specific information or economic analysis to buttress their positions. We received

over 1,700 comments from 40 States. Eighty percent of the comments were from four States: North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

A team of USDA economists and marketing specialists, working with OGC, reviewed the petition and comments along with the concentration study and findings of GIPSA investigations. The team reviewed the information to determine if there was sufficient evidence to suggest anticompetitive activity, including whether spot market prices have been affected or manipulated by packer use of forward contracts or packer feeding, as suggested in the petition. After weighing all the available information, the team concluded there was insufficient evidence that spot prices were being affected or manipulated or to indicate a violation of the P&S Act.

In a meeting with WORC in March 1998, the Secretary indicated he has not yet reached a conclusion regarding the petition and asked that we continue an open dialogue with the industry on the issues. In the interest of continuing a dialogue, the analysis of the petition and comments was posted on GIPSA's home page (www.usda.gov/gipsa/lateadd/lateadd.htm). Also, a group from USDA met with a group from WORC's leadership in Billings, Montana, on May 29, 1998, to begin a process for identifying common ground and possible alternatives.

Grain Advisory Committee Meets

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

GIPSA's Grain Advisory Committee met in Kansas City, MO, on May 13-14, 1998. The agenda included a general overview of FGIS' program activities and financial status, a briefing on how GIPSA is preparing its computer systems for the Year 2000; an overview of our research strategy and technology implementation; a discussion on how to report protein results; an update on vomitoxin testing and the concerns of barley producers; discussions on the new official moisture meter; a review of results from several wheat research projects; an announcement of new services planned for the future; and a general discussion on the impact of geographic restrictions on designated agencies in today's marketplace.

Administrator **Jim Baker** noted that the biggest challenge facing the Agency is its financial/budgetary situation. This year, the slow down in domestic grain movements and decreased international demand for U.S. grain have resulted in fewer grain inspections and less revenue for the Agency. Thanks to operating efficiencies, revenue exceeded costs during the first 6 months of 1998. The next 6 months, however, look less promising since exports are expected to drop even more.

Bert Farrish, committee member and president of grain operations for Columbia Grain, said that change will be a constant both for the grain trade and FGIS. The market will handle an increasing array of prod-

ucts, such as genetically modified organisms. Grain contracts, reflecting advancements in technology and crop development, will become more detailed and specific. FGIS, he said, must be prepared to facilitate the marketing of new products while continuing to streamline and improve. He concluded that the grain industry needs a healthy, viable FGIS, and to be viable, FGIS must evolve with the grain trade.

Tom Miller, grain marketing manager of Farmers Cooperative Company of Farnhamville, IA, provided an example of customer service at work. Just a year ago, Farmers Cooperative needed 24 hours to load each train with grain and then another day to receive official results on the grain that had been loaded. Working together, GIPSA, several official agencies, and Farmers Cooperative found innovative ways to reduce train loading time and to provide official results in 5-7 minutes per railcar.

Steve Tanner, director, Technical Services Division, reviewed the Agency's research strategy and technology implementation approach. He emphasized that our strategy is built on the belief that we must reach out to our customers -- from producer to exporter to foreign buyer to the general public -- to learn their needs. Our overriding goals in this area are: identifying/refining measurements that reflect end-use value; implementing technology that provides consistent and accurate results for official in-

spection; improving the cost effectiveness of testing; and improving the timeliness of service. He provided several examples of new technology/processes -- including artificial neural network calibrations, automation of the inspection processes, and computer imaging-based grain inspection -- that will be applied to the official system of the future.

A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Technical Center. Thanks to the hospitality of **Steve Tanner** and the **Technical Services Division staff**, attendees learned about the applied research being conducted at the Technical Center and gained first hand knowledge about the equipment and technology that serve in the standardization of testing factors in the official system.

Neil Porter, director, Compliance Division, talked about the pilot programs underway that are designed to provide information on the effect of allowing more than one designated agency to inspect or weigh grain in a single area. There is some evidence that the pilot programs have improved service delivery and spurred cooperation among official agencies. The committee will further address the designation process at their next meeting.

*Continued, see
Advisory Committee
on page 8.*

Names, from page 2.

Mark Einarson, Grand Forks, received a time-off award for efforts in recognizing the need for a DON Barley Survey in the Plains Region, and exhibiting professionalism, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

Brenda Evans received a certificate of appreciation for organizing and directing TSD's winter food drive.

Barbara Fielder, legal instruments examiner, Lancaster, received a performance bonus award for outstanding commitment, dedication, and sustained superior performance to the Lancaster regional office.

Dorothy Grigsby, New Orleans, received a spot award for her contribution and continued efforts in assisting with the collateral duty safety and health officer in identifying hazards and overseeing the construction of a concrete sidewalk at ADM/Ama for employees to walk to the FGIS lab.

Joseph Kuseck, Portland, received a time-off award in recognition of his exemplary service to our external industry customers in the Wheat Marketing Center and the U.S. Wheat Associates organization.

John (Mack) Manis, Field Management Division, Washington, D.C., received a spot award for outstanding effort in coordinating and facilitating a series of teleconferences with field offices and official agencies on implementing the Dickey-john GAC 2100 as the new official moisture instrument.

Donna Melton, administrative management assistant, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for dedication and initiative in fulfilling a variety of duties assigned to her in addition to her regular workload.

Richard Pierce, Technical Services Division, Kansas City, Missouri,

received a spot award for outstanding effort in providing technical information to field offices and official agencies during the Dickey-john GAC 2100 implementation teleconferences conducted during May 19, 20, and 21.

Amy Van Skiver, auditor, Washington, DC, received a time off award for leadership, dedication and initiative in coordinating the Winter 1998 USDA/GIPSA Food Drive.

Benny Vitale was presented with a Certificate of Merit for the extra effort he expended in saving the agency over \$28,000 by finding a cheaper source for the purchase of Microsoft Office 97 software.

35-Year Service Award

Harold Davis, Washington, DC

30-Year Service Award

Sharon Setzer, Denver

15-Year Service Awards

Chuan Kao, Technical Center
Wes Blake, Technical Center

10-Year Service Awards

Yuki Darko, Sacramento, CA
Brenda Evans, Technical Center
Tracey Paugh, Washington, DC

Oops. In May's GIPSA News, we thanked several folks for helping with a compliance review of the Portland Field Office. This detail was postponed and did not take place.

Official Welcome

Neil Porter, Washington, DC

Effective March 1, 1998, the **Memphis Grain Inspection Service (MGIS)** was designated to provide official inspection services in Arkansas. This represented a significant expansion for this official agency. To introduce themselves to the local industry and to show their appreciation to their customers, they hosted a reception on May 2, 1998, in Little Rock, AR.

The reception was well-attended by representatives of ADM, Riceland Foods, Bunge, Producers Rice Mill, J.W. Nutt Company, Bruce Oakely Grain, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau. I joined Stuttgart Field Office personnel as GIPSA's representatives.

All industry members attending this reception were unanimous in their support of MGIS. Each attendee said the service has improved significantly since MGIS assumed the designation, and all were complimentary of chief inspector Tim Adams.

From a personal standpoint, it was refreshing to attend a function where I heard nothing but positive comments about the official inspection system!

There was talk of making this an annual event. I hope that they do, and I hope that I have the good fortune of representing GIPSA at next year's reception!

AMA Contracting

Effective July 1, 1998, GIPSA and State cooperators will be allowed to use contractors to perform specified inspection services on processed commodities, beans, peas, lentils, and rice under the Agricultural Marketing Act.

Specifically, GIPSA is amending the regulations under the Act to allow GIPSA and State cooperators to contract for service work and to license individual contractors and those employed by contractors.

According to GIPSA Administrator Jim R. Baker, the agency has determined that private firms, institutions, and individuals, working under contract with FGIS field offices and State cooperators, can perform some inspection services, at certain locations, more effectively or at less cost than if those services were performed by GIPSA or State employees. This action, he added, will provide for more responsive, cost-effective inspection services under the Act.

The final rule was published in the June 1, 1998, *Federal Register*.

May Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

- Program Directive 9180.61 - Official Calibrations for the Dickey-john GAC2100 Moisture Meter (dated 05-05-98).
- PN-98-13 - Operating Procedures for the Dickey-john GAC 2100 (dated 05-15-98).
- PN-98-14 - Durum Wheat Protein Calibration Update (dated 05-18-98.)

Who's Doing What at P&S HQ

Ronny Parkerson, Washington, DC

The reorganization of P&S headquarters resulted in the creation of the Office of Policy/Litigation Support. This unit has three branches which were structured to reflect the key areas that P&S Programs addresses: trade practices, financial protection, and competition. Here's a quick overview of what each branch does:

The **Trade Practices Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding unfair and deceptive trade practices and assisting field offices in investigating such practices that do not involve anticompetitive or financial protection issues in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving unfair business-getting practices, fraud issues, misrepresentation, reparations, and scales and weighing issues should be sent to this branch.

The **Financial Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding financial protection issues and assisting field offices in investigating financial protection cases in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. All investigations involving jurisdiction and bonding, failure to pay, failure to pay promptly, packer and poultry trust claims, bond claims, solvency, and custodial account investigations should go to this branch.

The **Competition Branch** is responsible for developing policy regarding anticompetitive practices and assisting field office in investigating such practices in the livestock, meat and poultry industries. Investigations involving collusion, price manipulation, failure to compete, and other anticompetitive practices should be directed to this branch.

S&H Conference a Success

Ralph Regan, Washington, DC

This year's national safety and health conference was a rousing success. The collateral duty safety and health officers in attendance shared ideas and recommended improvements in the national safety and health program.

This year the members of the National Safety Committee attended. The members are **Robert Medley**, Chairman, **Cleve Ellis** and **Clemmie Smith**, representing the union, and **Walter Rust**, **Sam Basile**, and **Doug McEnergy**, representing management. The union-management distinction played no part in the meeting — everyone agreed that employee safety and health is too important to be a partisan issue.

At an awards luncheon, many people received recognition for their contributions to the safety and health program. Among them were **Jim Baker** and **Dave Shipman**, who were selected for recognition by the field.

The most volatile issue discussed at the meeting was fall protection for persons working on top of rail cars. The conference attendees agreed on wording of a draft directive on the subject. We expect to see the draft circulated for final comments in the next few weeks.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



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

Suggestor

Suggestion

Roy Shepherd, New Orleans, LA	Revise FGIS-922 To Be More Friendly for Export Bulk Commodity
LeRoy Baker, Moscow, ID	Establish Fee for Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
Russell Frank, New Orleans, LA	Use Telecommuting Philosophy for the Interior Markets
Raymond Minks, Kansas City, MO	Send Interim "Reminder" Letters to Firms Failing to Submit Annual Reports
Mary Carmouche, New Orleans	Change color of FGIS shirt
	Provide more opportunities for details

May's tee-shirt winner: **LeRoy Baker**, Moscow Field Office!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During May 1998

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.

- Cross Utilization of Equipment
- Offer OA Inexpensive Method For Replacing Light Source in Tecator Protein Machine
- Establish Fee For Relamping OIA-Owned Tecator Protein Analyzer
- Allow Regional Supervisors To Run Over 30 Days Extensions For Annual Report

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.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.**

New NIRT Calibrations

The Committee passed several resolutions:

- The committee recommends the continued certification of wheat protein on a 12% moisture basis, but also recommends certifying an equivalent protein on an alternative moisture basis when requested to fulfill contract requirements.
- The committee supports GIPSA's research recommendation, as presented, for changing the grading of garlic in wheat, and further recommends that the implementation of this change be made with the least disruption to the marketplace.
- The committee reaffirmed the following resolutions from prior meetings:

--The committee recommends that GIPSA undertake pertinent management measures to ensure revenue covers operating expenses and rebuilds the 3-month operating reserve in the Agency's budget.

--The committee recommends that GIPSA partnership with its Union representatives to develop better ways of adjusting labor costs to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

For a copy of the full minutes of the meeting, contact **Marianne Plaus**, 202-690-3460.

The committee's next meeting will be in later this year, in late fall or early winter.

GIPSA implemented an updated calibration for Hard White wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation on May 1, 1998. The improved calibration incorporates additional varieties of Hard White wheat that have been released recently. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for installation and verification.

GIPSA also is implementing an updated calibration for Durum wheat protein determination using Near Infrared Transmittance instrumentation. The improved calibration incorporates recent harvests of Durum wheat in order to maintain reliability and robustness of official durum wheat protein measurements. It also incorporates improved standardization technology that requires less labor for calibration installation and verification. Based on the national average, the updated calibration is not expected to change official Durum wheat protein results. Results on individual samples, however, may vary.

According to GIPSA administrator **James R. Baker**, the improved standardizing technology increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness of official inspection. He also said that this is another indication of GIPSA's commitment to improving services for its customers and to facilitating the marketing of grain.

Awards Committee Update

Catherine Grasso, Washington, DC

Last year the Department did away with Customer Service Awards. The Awards Committee recommends GIPSA managers and supervisors give Spot Awards to recognize outstanding customer service.

Spot Awards allow supervisors to grant immediate monetary recognition for one-time accomplishment or effort toward achieving GIPSA's mission or goals.

"When all doors seem to be closed,
ours is always open."

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

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

Y2K Update

Ray Hart, Washington, DC

The Year 2000 (Y2K) computer deadline is quickly approaching. The problem is that many computers and their software cannot properly handle dates after December 31, 1999.

That's because much software uses a two-digit field to identify years in computer programs (e.g., 85 = 1985), and assumes that there's only one century -- the 1900s. Such software will read "00" as the year 1900. Programs that use dates, including programs within machinery such as building security systems or HVAC systems, will fail or malfunction if these errors are not corrected.

During the past months, several GIPSA teams have been collecting data about our computers, software, buildings, telephones, and the electronic systems that help us conduct our day-to-day business. These teams have been meeting regularly to discuss solutions and plan repairs. Ensuring that GIPSA's computers are Year 2000 compliant is a major endeavor.

One of the GIPSA teams working on Y2K issues -- the Upgrade Team -- has worked out a tentative schedule to accomplish headquarters and field upgrades between now and mid-September. All desktop computers will need to be worked on. Some will only receive minor software upgrades; others will require additional attention. All computers will also be tested with special software to certify Year 2000 compliance.

In the upcoming months, the Y2K teams may be calling about scheduling, computers, software, and other Y2K issues. Your cooperation and support in meeting the Y2K challenge is greatly appreciated.

NIRT Calibration/Standardization Meeting

Dave Funk, Technical Center

On May 14-15, 1998, the Technical Center hosted a meeting of international specialists involved in the calibration and standardization of Foss Tecator Infratec NIRT grain analyzers. This was the fourth of a series of such meetings that began in 1994. This year's meeting was even more international in flavor than previous meetings, with six countries represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, and the United States. U.S. participants included the Agricultural Research Service's **Steven Delwiche** and **Franklin Barton**, and GIPSA's **Cathy Brenner**, **Larry Freese**, **Rich Pierce**, and **I.**

Artificial neural networks (ANN), a relatively new NIRT calibration approach, were the primary focus of this meeting. ANNs simulate the way the brain learns and makes decisions. ANN calibrations have been used in Europe for several products, and the most recent Infratec National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) moisture calibrations are ANN-based. ANN calibrations use very large numbers of samples (several hundreds to a few thousands) and seem to provide improved accuracy over wide ranges of sample types. Some ANN calibrations include several different grain types: wheat, barley, oats, and triticale. Furthermore, ANN calibrations have successfully combined data from several countries in Europe. Foss Tecator and several other participants expressed optimism that "global" ANN calibrations using samples from Europe, North America (Canada and the United States), and Australia could provide significant improvements in accuracy compared to existing calibrations and much improved consistency in international trade.

Meeting participants agreed to share data to evaluate the possibility of generating "global" ANN calibrations while concurrently developing "local" national ANN calibrations for comparison. Certainly, there are many questions and concerns that must be addressed before deciding to implement either local or global ANN calibrations for use in the U.S. official inspection system. One of the impediments is the incompatibility of ANN calibrations with older Infratec units. Foss Tecator offered some alternatives to make such a transition reasonably cost-effective.

Differences in reference methods are another barrier to complete harmonization of NIRT measurements. The group agreed to a collaborative study to assess the differences among the protein reference methods used by the represented countries. Europe still uses Kjeldahl as its protein reference method. The United States, Canada, and Australia are using the Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (CNA) as their protein reference method.

A considerable portion of the meeting was dedicated to standardization methods. I explained new methods for improving the standardization of Infratec units. **Rich Pierce** and **Cathy Brenner** described the current GIPSA NIRT re-standardization project. The other participants seemed impressed by the improvements in Infratec standardization that GIPSA has achieved.

The meeting concluded with a good deal of enthusiasm for further collaboration on improving Infratec calibrations and standardization methods.

Measure Your Oats Grading Quotient

The Research Department of Grain Inspection University

Send your completed puzzle to the Grain Inspection University, Cedar Rapids Field Office. There are special prizes for all entrants, and a grand prize for the entrant submitting the most correct puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Contains 4 or more for special grade
7. Badly stained shall be graded no higher than
8. Oats
9. 40 pounds or more
10. Fine seeds pass through
12. Not sound oats
13. Found in coarse foreign material
15. Good natural color
16. Other grains
17. Dusty, gray appearance

19. 38 lbs. or more, but less than 40 lbs.
20. Pieces of concrete
22. Sample grade if contains 2 or more
23. Oats has ___ grades
24. Treated with sulfurous acid
25. Interpretive line slide 0-1.0

DOWN

1. Oats obviously of inferior quality that standard factors do not request
2. 2,150.42 cubic inches

3. Hull-less oats
4. Sample Grade if contains 3 or more
5. Pass through a 0.064 by 3/8 sieve
6. Sum of percentages subtracted from 100%
9. Determination on 250 grams
11. Smut balls apply in this special grade
14. 8 or more and in excess of 0.2% by weight
18. Where theory meets reality
19. A high temperature from excessive respiration
21. Sample contains live insects



July Events



July 10. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Released

July 12-16. National Conference on Weights & Measures, Portland, OR

July 15-19. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Mid-Year Meeting, Denver, CO

July 19-22. U.S. Feed Grains Council 38th Annual Board of Directors' Meeting, Marketing for the Millennium, Minneapolis, MN

July 27-28. National Grain and Feed Association and Grain Elevator and Processing Society Joint Seminar on practical strategies for complying with safety, health, and environmental standards, St. Louis, MO

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 June 25, 1998!

TSD Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Chuan Kao, Technical Center

The atmosphere for the celebration of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month at the Technical Services Division (TSD) was set by displaying maps of China, Beijing, Japan, Indochina, Taiwan, United States and the world; and posters of Asia, including the palaces and museums of Thailand, the Great Wall and the terra cotta warriors of China, Tokyo Tower of Japan, scenery of Taiwan, and a variety of Asian cuisine. APA heritage quizzes compiled by William Tong were forward to TSD employees.

On May 14, four TSD speakers presented a brown bag seminar. I talked about Taiwan today and 40 years ago. I showed a coir raincoat (made of palm fiber) and a bamboo husk hat worn by my grandfather while farming more than 100 years ago. Alice Swaite talked about Tiger Woods and his pride in his African American and Asian ancestry. Glenn Terrill talked about the exotic animals in Australia and New Zealand. Ganga Murthy talked about Indian culture. She showed many artifacts and traditional dresses.

On May 20, Mr. Tatsuo Tanaka, the Japanese Consul General in Kansas City, toured the Technical Center and gave a very informative talk about Japanese culture and the importance of trade and relations between Japan and the United States. Japan is the Number 1 buyer of U.S. grain. Auto production by Japanese companies rivals that of U.S. companies, but many Japanese cars are produced in America. On culture, Mr. Tanaka pointed out that the Japanese people had the longest life expectancy in the world and he believed that eating great varieties of foods was the key. He said that Japanese eat anything that flies except the airplane, anything that runs except the car, and anything that swims except the boat!

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

On April 29, 1998, American Express issued a press release announcing that it has chosen not to pursue Federal Government purchase and travel card business. The General Services Administration has assured USDA that this recent action by American Express will have no impact on their current contract to provide travel charge card services through November 29, 1998. With American Express' withdrawal, there are four contractors from which the Departmental will choose its travel charge card provider.

Alamo car rental has issued "one free upgrade" coupons good through December 15, 1998, if you reserve an economy through a fullsize four-door car. Please contact me if you would like a coupon.

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