

NEWS

A Chat With Keith Kelly

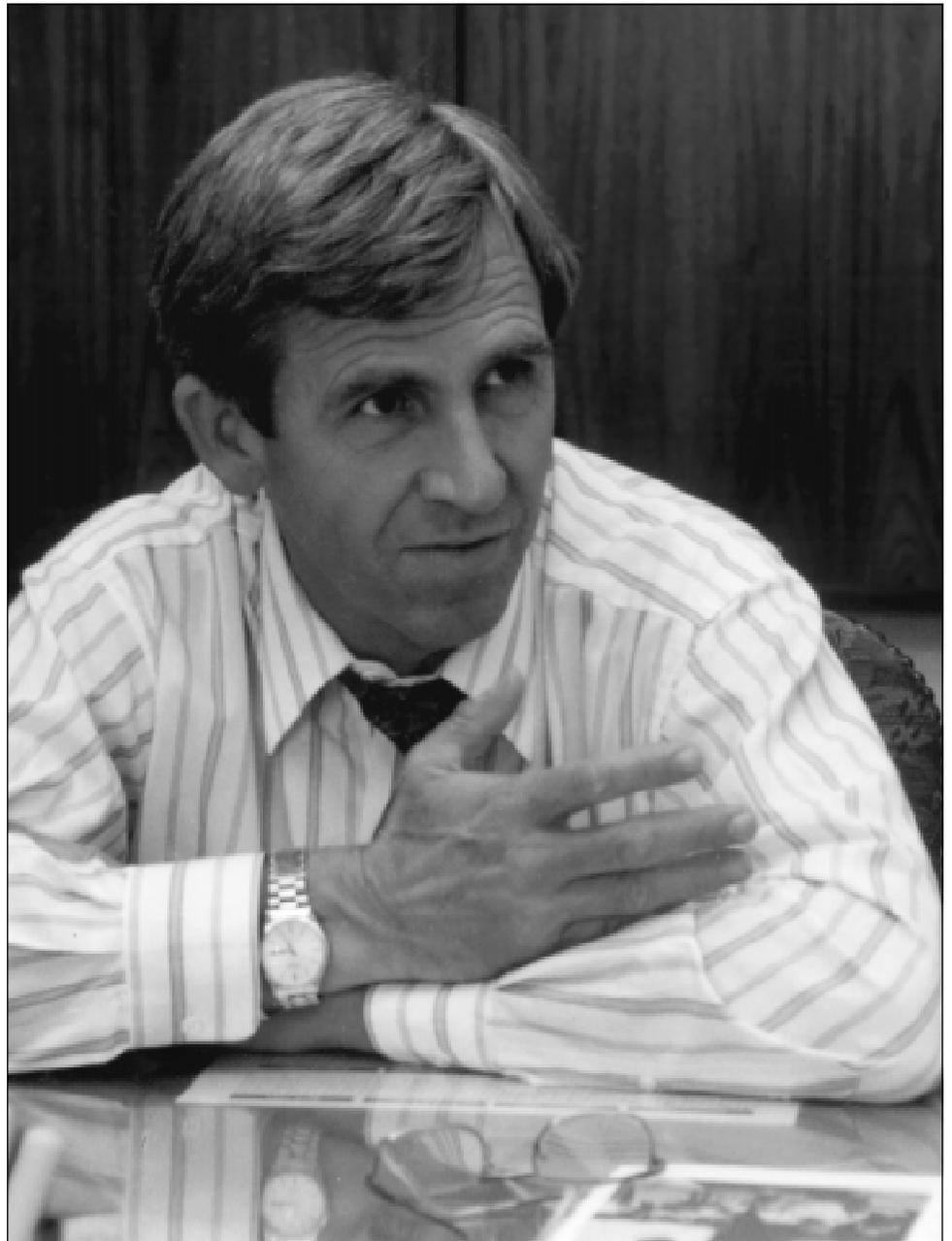
Several members of the Editorial Board of FSA NEWS sat down recently with our new Administrator, Keith Kelly, for an informal chat. Here's what we learned...

FSA NEWS: A lot of people don't know you. So who is Keith Kelly?

Mr. Kelly: Well, he is someone who was raised on a Montana sheep and cattle ranch. I worked as a marketing specialist for the Montana Wheat Commission where I developed the first toll-free Grain Market News Service in the United States—it was a huge success, and I was very proud of it. I worked there for one year and came to Washington, D.C., to work for the Western Wheat Association and spent about two years with market development programs with Foreign Agricultural Service of USDA. Then I went back to Montana to work for the Governor, which is how I got involved in public service.

FSA NEWS: You've been here almost a whole week. Any surprises?

Mr. Kelly: Actually, I spent several days here earlier, just trying to get a sense of things. What did surprise me was the depth of some of the issues that are facing the agency—which I hope to turn into opportunities. I understood this is a very big operation and has a lot of complexity. But I did not realize, perhaps, the degree of the civil rights issue here.



continued on page 5

Minnesota FSA People Come Through



FSA employees involved with spearheading the Flood Relief Benefit Talent Show were, left to right: Barb Roseen, CED; Danny Goos, PA; Iris Herling, PA; Debra Wensloff, PA; and Joni Pelowski, CPA.

Minnesota is used to severe weather, and the folks who live there are used to people going out of their way to help others when disaster strikes. Even so, the

efforts of two FSA'ers who went out of their way to help friends and neighbors stand out.

During a vicious flood/blizzard, in Norman County, Jon Peterson, an FSA Field Reporter, decided to check the county office, figuring that the CED and other employees had evacuated or were busy fighting their own flood waters. To his dismay, he found three feet of sewage in the basement. The sump pumps had failed during a power outage, and supplies, records, equipment and furniture were soaking up the frigid, filthy water.

Jon, known for always smiling, never lost his smile. He just rolled up his shirtsleeves and went to work, bringing in his own generator, pumps, and extension cords to pump the basement dry under what we imagine were less than desirable working conditions.

A week later, after the basement had dried out a bit, Jon was back to help

clean out, carry boxes upstairs, and load ruined items onto his truck for an eventual landfill dump. This was only one instance of Jon going above and beyond—he also sandbagged a county road, fixed generators for his neighbors, pulled a stuck motorist from the ice, cleared away hundreds of pounds of snow, and probably lots more.

Jon's a special guy, and the people in his community know it. His favorite saying is, "What you do, do well." And he does—REALLY well. Thanks, Jon!

Meanwhile, in Roseau County, Program Assistant Iris Herling led FSA employees in helping Red River valley flood victims by organizing a benefit concert with local talent. Over \$5,000 was raised and sent through the local Red Cross and Salvation Army. Supplemental funds from local Lutherans' organizations provided another \$5,000. The Flood Relief Benefit Program was a smashing success.

Iris was quick to give credit to the many musicians who came together to put on a musical bonanza for a crowd of more than 600. The concert went for 90 minutes, and all the participants had just one object in mind: helping their neighbors recover from the flood. Iris gave thanks to all who worked so hard behind the scenes to put on the show. "You can't do this alone," she said.

No, you can't, Iris, but it takes someone strong and dedicated to lead the charge. You were that someone. Thanks!

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... And So Do Those In North Dakota

By Scott Stofferahn, SED



FSA employees sandbagging along the Red River during flooding and ice storms in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

When North Dakota was hit with flooding and ice storms this spring, FSA employees at the State Office in Fargo didn't stand around with their hands in their pockets.

State Office employees in Fargo volunteered nearly 700 hours of their spare time to help with sandbagging against the rising waters, manning volunteer centers, and working at Red Cross and Salvation Army locations.

Office Automation Assistant Amy McAlony was instrumental in organizing the volunteer efforts of the State Office employees. While much of the community was still mobilizing, Amy had her cohorts already working. Our group of expert sandbaggers worked in numerous Fargo neighborhoods and the neighboring towns of Moorhead, Minnesota; West Fargo; and Harwood. Our claim to being the best sandbagging crew in the area—filling two bags to anyone else's one—remains unchallenged!

And in Rolette County, Program Assistant Helen Armstrong helped cook and serve meals to the hundreds of Grand Forks residents seeking refuge in her community immediately after the flood.

Meanwhile, after a huge ice storm hit the area on April 4, Steele County CED Terry Miller set up a clearing house where people with electric power generators could get them to farmers in need.

In the Grand Forks County office, employees had to deal with their own flooding problems as well as taking care of local farmers—all while setting up and working out of a temporary location in nearby Larimore.

And there are many more stories of FSA employees in North Dakota who went out of their ways to help out during those difficult days. We're mighty proud of all of them!

Labor of Love

Tooele County, Utah, CED Keith Christensen loves old farm tractors—so much that he actually enjoys spending his spare time up to his elbows in grease and rust, getting them to run the way they did when they were new.

Keith's pride and joy is a 1953 Massey-Harris Model 44 that he restored from the ground up. "I was interested in this tractor because it was like one my dad had owned," he says. "When I was six, he put me on it to plow out the corners left by a one-way moldboard plow. He later sold it, and when I got older, I began a search to replace it."

The tractor he chose to refurbish was not the ideal candidate for restoration. The engine was rusted solid, 3 gears were totally worn out, the electrical system was nonexistent, and the cylinder head needed a complete rebuild. But Keith was able to find another tractor—rusting away on a rock pile—to act as an "organ donor." It took him a year and a half, but he gradually returned the old beast to like-new condition. The tractor has seen regular farm duty since restoration.

Keith's hours of hard work were rewarded when he and his baby were featured in the 1997 "Old Iron," a calendar published by *Farm & Ranch Living* magazine that showcases restored vintage farm equipment.

Good job, Keith!



FSA To The Rescue

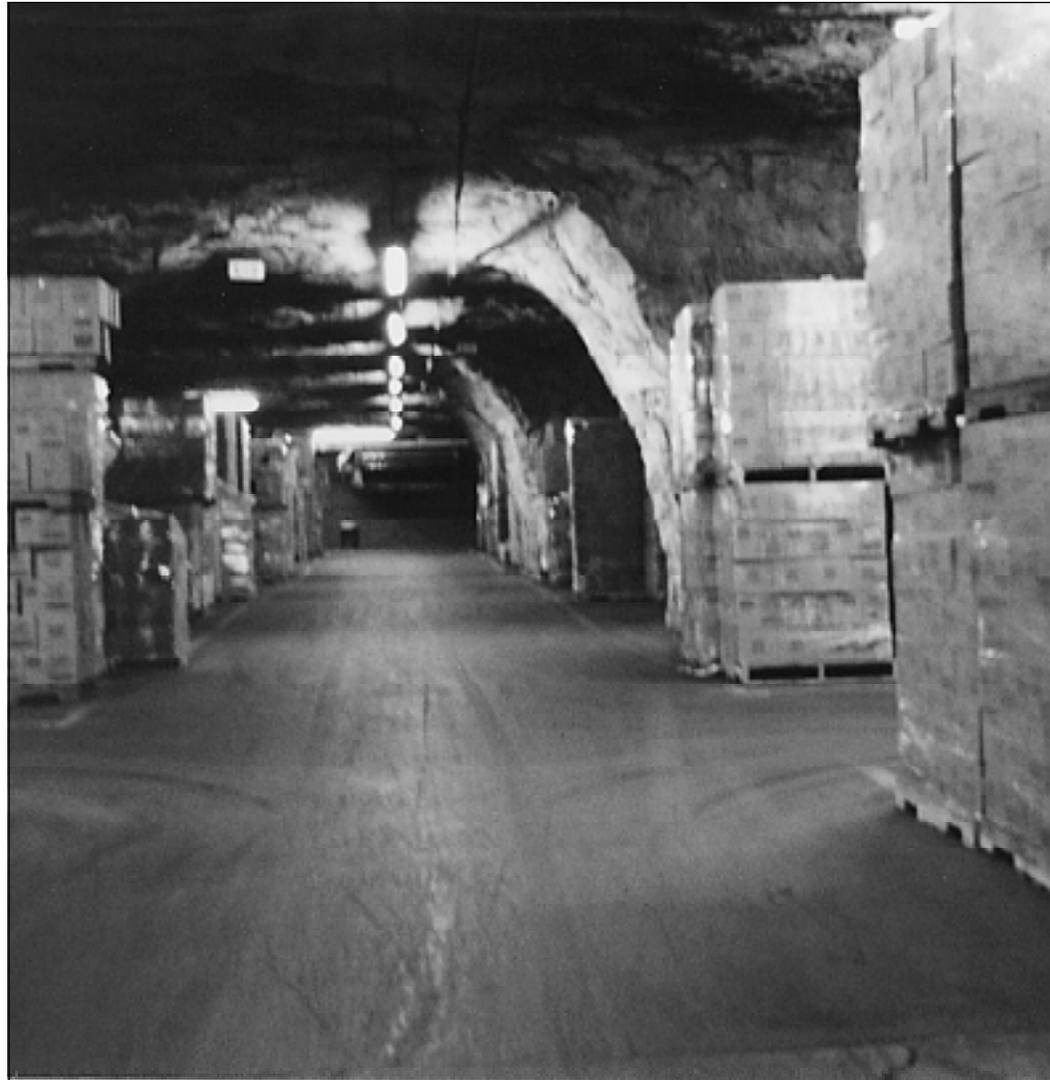
Mention the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to most people, and they usually think about its work in signing up producers for farm programs, making loans, and issuing payments to farmers. Many don't know that another important FSA function is to purchase food commodities for victims of natural disasters.

FSA employees in the Kansas City Commodity Office (KCCO) work closely with USDA's Food and Consumer Service (FCS) to purchase and deliver foods for relief to disaster stricken areas, shelters, and food centers. State recipient agencies, such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, ask for assistance when the need for food commodities is greater than the supply in disaster areas.

After KCCO receives requests for disaster assistance, KCCO checks food inventories located in warehouses across the nation and begins shipping or purchasing the requested foods. It also informs transportation and warehouse companies under contract with USDA that relief shipments will receive top priority. Most commodities are stored in FSA's primary storage facility, Americold Services Corporation in Kansas City, Kansas. This facility is a series of caves created by mining for limestone. With their constant ambient temperature of 58 degrees Fahrenheit, the Americold caves, the world's largest underground storage facility, provide ideal storage for food commodities.

When the food arrives at the disaster relief locations, state recipient agencies take delivery and distribute the food. Disaster relief is accomplished without disrupting the normal domestic food distribution programs.

Just how valuable a role KCCO plays in disaster relief was spotlighted this spring. When flooding in the Red River Valley spread destruction through



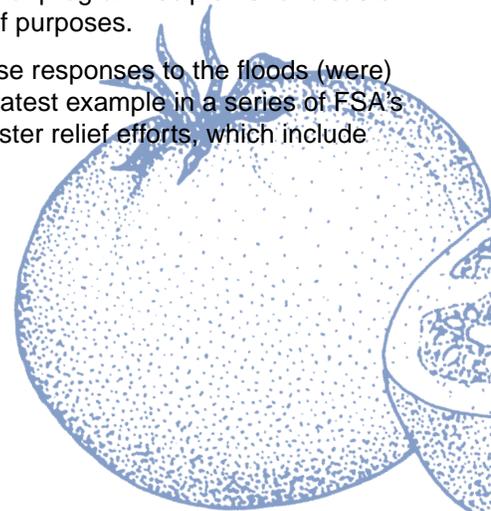
USDA commodities in underground cave storage.

North Dakota and Minnesota, it displaced a huge number of people. FSA faced the daunting task of making speedy emergency shipments of food to hungry flood victims over a large geographic area.

KCCO and FCS coordinated their efforts in the early part of April 1997 to quickly ship approximately one million pounds of food to the Red River flood victims. The food commodities distributed included peanut butter, sliced cheese, macaroni, canned beef, frozen turkey hams, frozen hams, orange juice, canned apple slices, other juices, pears, tomato paste, tomato sauce, bagged rice, frozen corn, beef patties, and frozen potatoes. These

commodities were specifically purchased from vendors, pulled from warehouse facilities, or redonated by normal program recipients for disaster relief purposes.

These responses to the floods (were) the latest example in a series of FSA's disaster relief efforts, which include



continued from page 1

I now think that the morale issue needs to be very honestly, adequately and quickly addressed, along with re-organization and other uncertainties. I certainly have the employees utmost in my mind.

FSA NEWS: The depth of things that surprised you, can you elaborate?

Mr. Kelly: I meant I have to learn the complexity of the agency. I had studied it off the Internet when I was asked if I would want to be considered a candidate for this job, and I knew it's a foundation agency coming out of the dust bowl days, but I did not realize, for example, the administrative tie-ins between FAS and FSA. I also had to learn the in-depth relationship of CCC and Public Law 480. FSA is a big organization, it reaches a lot of places I did not know about, so it's going to take me some time to get it all clear.

FSA NEWS: You were hired in Arizona to combine several programs into the State Department of Agriculture as its first director, and it's been said that you have really good administrative skills—which leads to some speculation about why you are here. Were you selected to lead the agency into the next century or are you here to "clean house?"

Mr. Kelly: If necessary to lead the agency into the next century, it takes some cleaning house, then I'm here for both. What happened in Arizona was not a marriage made in heaven between the cowboys and the plowboys, but that decision was made and I had to make it work. I know traditions and cultures are hard to get rid of, but we are one agency, and we will work together to get the job done. We all have to get on the train or get out of the way because we are moving forward. And that is how I approach it. I don't try to argue or deny budget realities. So, whatever it takes to get us to the 21st century, I'm willing to do it.

FSA NEWS: What are your major goals for your tenure as Administrator?

Mr. Kelly: I'm going to give some short-term goals here. I see this civil rights issue as a very serious thing for this agency. I don't know the full story yet, but, regardless, it seems to be awfully heavy in FSA, and I know it is not going to go away. So, I hope to work on that and in three years come back and win the award for being the most proactive leader and agency, and doing everything right on that subject, because the spotlight is there right now, so that has to be addressed as a very high priority. The second one is something the Secretary has mentioned consistently—reinventing government—how we can go about our business more efficiently.

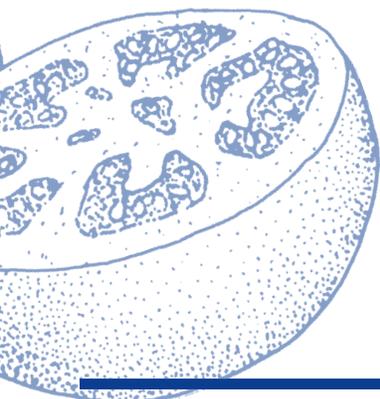
The bottom line seem to be about being customer friendly—it's the most cost-efficient way of doing business, and I'm convinced it can be done.

FSA NEWS: You mentioned dealing with the bottom line—that we will just have to make things work with whatever Congress gives us. One of the fears that employees have is office closures, layoffs, and RIF's. What can you tell us about that?

Mr. Kelly: It probably is premature from my point of view to say too much about it—we have put ourselves in a holding pattern to reassess all of those things. I believe if you approach it logically, you do not have to look at employees or number of offices. You look at delivering a product out there in the most efficient way possible and in the end, with a good plan, it will tell you the number of employees and offices to have. Right now, I don't have an idea of what that may be. My emphasis is on the system of delivery to the customer, and I'm ever mindful of the taxpayer as well.

continued on page 8

helping the victims of hurricanes Andrew and Marilyn, the Midwest Flood of 1993, and the recent Los Angeles earthquake. Such efforts demonstrate how FSA helps people throughout the country, in addition to our better known efforts to administer farm programs.



August “Gus” Schumacher, Jr., Appointed Under Secretary For Farm And Foreign Agricultural Services

August “Gus” Schumacher, Jr., was officially sworn in on August 5, by Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, as Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services.

As Under Secretary, Schumacher will oversee the Farm Service Agency, the Risk Management Agency and the Foreign Agricultural Service. Before being confirmed, Schumacher served as Administrator of USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service, administering programs to increase exports of American agricultural, fish, and forest products.

Before joining USDA, he worked for the World Bank’s agricultural lending group on agriculture sector policy adjustment, forestry, and biodiversity protection operations. Schumacher also served as Massachusetts Commissioner of Food and Agriculture from 1985 to 1990.

Schumacher is from a farm family in Lexington, Massachusetts. He has a degree in economics from Harvard College and attended the London



Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, left, swears in August Schumacher, Jr., right, as the new Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services during a ceremony held in Washington, D.C. Holding the bible is Susan Schumacher, wife of the Under Secretary.

School of Economics. He was also a research associate with the Agribusiness Department of the Harvard Business School.

Downsizing— Making it Work

As Secretary Glickman pointed out in a memo dated July 10, USDA agencies, faced with declining administrative budgets, have to learn how to share those resources they have left. This is called “Administrative Convergence,” and, like most good ideas, it is easier said than done.

However, in Casper, Wyoming, FSA employees have been helping Department offices there get a head start on the issue. Some time ago, Casper’s Federal Executive Council asked the Administrative Officers of several government agencies to look for ways to

share their resources, such as training courses or facilities. The response was the Interagency Training Committee.

The ITC was not slow to act. Brainstorming sessions produced results as representatives from Interior, Agriculture, Energy, Social Security, Veterans’, and other organizations worked together toward a common goal. Here’s some of what they’ve accomplished.

■ **CPR Training:** Three people from Agriculture took the training and taught their coworkers. Scheduled a few times yearly at no cost.

■ **Defensive Driving Training:** Interior’s folks were required to have it, and they invited any other Government employees needing it to attend. Also free.

■ **Interactive Training Facility:** Energy and Interior Departments provided a training facility for use by Federal, State, and local government agencies that includes satellite classes, teleconference communications, and computers.

■ **Retirement Training:** Agriculture employees are conducting this training for all Federal employees in Wyoming. These employees volunteered their time to ensure that all employees are informed about their retirement systems. Nine agencies were represented at the last sessions, and Social Security presented a portion of the 2-day workshops. A local financial planner dedicated a half-day to this endeavor at no cost to the government.

continued on page 8

FSA Guaranteed Loan Program Helps Minority Farmers Survive

At a time when many African Americans are abandoning the farm in record numbers, USDA personnel are getting together with the State and private sectors to stem the tide.

When Donnell and Cal Robinson, two limited-resource black farmers in Mississippi County, Missouri, ran into financial difficulties, the USDA's Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Program found a way to keep them going while helping them improve their business and farm management policies.

USDA has teamed up with Missouri's Lincoln University Cooperative Extension Service (LUCE) to provide vital training, supervision, and financial services to farmers in the southeastern part of Missouri known as the Boot Heel. Missouri's largest concentration of minority farmers is in the eight Boot Heel counties of Butler, Dunklin,

Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Scott, Stoddard, and Cape Girardeau.

Missouri's Socially Disadvantaged Training and Technical Assistance Project reaches out to eligible limited resource minority farmers, helping them acquire FSA farm ownership and operating loans. It also trains them in business management and marketing techniques, use of a record-keeping system, and other skills they will need to meet the loan qualifications required by commercial lenders. Lincoln University is working to develop a self-sustaining farm business analysis service and related expertise to assure continued support of minority farmers in the area.

USDA officials including James L. Harms, an FSA Loan Specialist, worked with Extension representatives to secure funding for the Robinson brothers through the Gateway National

Bank of St. Louis—a bank owned and managed by minority members. The loans are guaranteed through FSA's Farm Loan Programs.

The FSA Guaranteed Farm Loan Program enables lenders to extend credit to family farm owners or operators who cannot otherwise obtain credit without the guarantee, due to risk and other factors. FSA guarantees repayment of 90 percent of any loss incurred should the loan not be repaid. This has widespread benefits, not just for the farmer and lending institutions, but for the local community as a whole. Farmers can receive credit through both the FSA Operating (OL) and/or the Farm Ownership (FO) Farm Loan Program.

These loans mark the first time in Missouri's history that a minority-owned bank has lent money to minority farmers with limited resources. It's also the first time FSA has guaranteed farm loans made by a minority-owned lending institution in Missouri, and the loans are the first made by Gateway National Bank outside the St. Louis metropolitan area.

The two brothers signed security agreements for loans enabling them to purchase farmland that their father, Lynell Robinson, rented many years ago. Donnell and Cal are each buying a plot. One farm is 71.7 acres, and the other is 60 acres of farmland; both are located in Mississippi County, Missouri.

The promise of a more efficient and prosperous operation for the Robinson brothers illustrates how FSA loan programs help family farmers make efficient use of their land, labor, and other resources, to improve their living conditions and financial health, and weather periods of financial strain. "Agriculture has witnessed the gradual decline of the family farm, particularly the Black farmers," says Jim Harms. "So we were excited about the opportunity to help these people continue their tradition of family farming."



Cal Robinson, left, minority farmer from Mississippi County, MO, accepts guaranteed loan check from Tad Buford, President of the Gateway National Bank.

continued from page 5

FSA NEWS: Can you address the administrative convergence from the state, national and field levels?

Mr. Kelly: It's no secret; there have been a lot of meetings held on this. As I best understand it, when the three primary field agencies were put together between the old Rural Development, FSA and Natural Resources, they ended up becoming co-located, but still running three completely separate operations. I feel that in buying pencils and paper or ordering equipment, we need to put ourselves on a common platform, with similar policies and rules to do it, under one administrative umbrella. For example, I understand in USDA that the policy of ordering airline tickets is different between FSA and Natural Resources.

Well, there're people and there're airplanes and there're destinations. Now what's the difference? They all ought to be the same. There is a lot of history behind everything, and there are a lot of turfs and there are whole different views of how people got here. It's my feeling that if you're going to get to the 21st century, you can't go down the road looking out the rear view mirror.

FSA NEWS: How about the possible merger of FSA and NRCS?

Mr. Kelly: It's not going to happen, and the Secretary and I agree: Let's quit wasting energy and valuable resources and time. We need to spend our time and energy fixing things and providing a better and more cost efficient deliv-

ery and quit worrying about all this other stuff, because it is not going to happen.

FSA NEWS: What does the future hold for the USDA Service Centers?

Mr. Kelly: My first thought is to keep in touch with the farming public out there as best we can—with some type of logically economic sites. Reorganization has reduced a lot of offices for a whole different set of reasons. I think you are going to see service centers bring the major resource and delivery system agencies together. In the near future, we may have most of our farmers getting on the Internet without driving anywhere, although I think there will always be a need for some level of human interaction.

FSA NEWS: Is there anything that you, personally, would like to tell employees?

Mr. Kelly: I know I can't do my job by edict from above and make things happen. And so I tend to ask for help all the way down the line—from my deputies to the mail clerks, to make sure that the job gets done in a timely and efficient manner. I need everybody's help—that's the only way I can succeed. I need the whole team working with me to get there. I feel there is a difference between a boss and a leader, and I've grown, I think, in those years between Montana and Arizona, in knowing how to get things done, and you don't get them done from edicts from above.

Tarrant County, Texas Producers Win Award

For each of the past 8 years, the Fort Worth Star Telegram has honored with its Farm and Ranch Awards 20 of the most skilled and resilient Texas food, fiber and livestock producers in Texas. This year the 1997 suburban Farmer Award went FSA Tarrant County Committee Chairperson Wayne Knox and his wife Betty, of Haslet, Texas.

Wayne has served as Chairperson for most of his 21 years on the committee. His expertise, honesty, and common sense approach make him a much valued asset to the agency and the producers he serves.

Wayne started farming at age 13 and has continued for the past 58 years. He says he isn't through yet. He used to think he would outlast his farm equipment—but now he isn't so sure. Even so, he wants to keep farming until he just can't do it any longer.

Wayne and Betty are both deeply involved in their community and have hosted many agricultural events for young people of their community. Betty is the bookkeeper for their operation and serves as city councilwoman and the current mayor pro-tem of Haslet.

The Knoxes are part of the rich agrarian heritage of this country, typifying tenacity, hard work, and ambition. Congratulations!



continued from page 6

■ Special Emphasis Program Coordination: Instead of several agencies trying to organize separate activities, the ITC led the way, ensuring a larger audience for these events. During Black History Month, a very successful pot luck luncheon was held with speakers and music.

Solutions that make the most efficient use of scarce funds and assets are the wave of the future, and the ITC helps show us the way. We look forward to further creative answers from our friends in Wyoming.