

NEWS

A Tale of Two Committee Members

by Chris Bieker, Washington State Office; and Corey Cassens, Sherrie Giamanco, and Mary Kirby, Illinois State Office

Often we go from day to day, even year to year, without realizing the impact and importance of someone who is always there for us. We at *FSA NEWS* are going to remedy that a bit as we look at two individuals who deserve recognition.

Commitment to agriculture and the community is deeply embedded in the hearts of farmers, especially those who go the extra mile in helping lead their communities. This motivation is the keystone of two of FSA's finest committee members: Al Jakeway and Earl Berning. Their lives are stories of consistency and diligence that keep them going, no matter what the challenge. We salute the thousands of men and women across this country like Al and Earl, who keep going – for their families as well as their communities, and, ultimately, their Nation.

Al Jakeway, Jefferson County, Wash.

Just last April, at the age of 88, Al Jakeway retired from the FSA committee in Jefferson County, Wash. He served on the committee as an alternate and full committee member on and off since the 1970s.

Like his enduring 1946 tractor, this energetic man continues to do his part for agriculture and his community. Al's love for farming stems from a lifetime of raising hay and dairy cows.

He began his half-century career when, as a troubled 10-year-old, his mom sent him to live with his aunt and uncle on their dairy farm in Imperial Valley, Calif. "I learned to work," says Al. "It was tough at times." He got his first taste of ownership when his uncle gave him 40 acres and some cows upon his marriage in 1933. In 1951, Al and his family moved to Jefferson County to take over the care of his father's farm, where he's been ever since. Al, his wife Marie, and their three children did all the work on their 227-acre farm, including milking 45 dairy cows.

In addition to his work with FSA, Al has served on a dozen local committees over the years. A heart attack in the late 1970s convinced Al to sell his dairy cows, but that didn't slow him down either. Just as his care of his old tractor keeps it running, his adherence to proper nutrition and exercise keeps Al on the go. He's active with the local Conservation District, Chamber of Commerce, and a number of community boards. Plus, he works with seniors on issues of health and nutrition.

While committee person, Al gave his all to make fair decisions, help growers



Al Jakeway on his 1947 tractor.

understand FSA's programs, and ensure that FSA staff understood local farming conditions. Why did he give so much time working with FSA? "Simply to help farmers stay in business," he says. "To lose a farm because you can't make it is a hard place to be. If we can help some of the farmers keep their places, we are doing a service."

Earl Berning, Jo Daviess County, Ill.

Earl Berning has lived and worked on the same farm since 1952. It was then that he and his wife Rosie first moved onto the 120-acre Jo Daviess County farm that they later bought in 1958. Life was good – milking cows and tending

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ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

Budget Update

The mission of FSA to secure the long-term vitality of American agriculture has surely been tested by the tough times farmers and ranchers have encountered over the past couple of years. Secretary Glickman and I are doing all we can to reinforce the farm safety net and help farmers who are struggling with low prices and a series of weather-related disasters.

I am committed to more permanent and effective assistance to help producers cope with continuing economic stress and better manage risk. While the weakened farm economy has challenged our efforts to enhance customer service while improving efficiency, I am optimistic that the farm economy will begin to recover in 2001.

During the latest rounds of budget negotiations, Secretary Glickman and I have worked hard to ensure we meet the increasing demand for programs and disaster assistance, while maintaining adequate staffing for our dramatically increased workload. Here is an update on where we stand:

FSA NEWS

is published monthly in the interest of all FSA employees.

Editor: Jillene Johnson
Editorial Board: Anne Belleville, R.I.; Kenneth Harden, Ind.; Denise Lickeig, Neb.; Eric Parsons, DC; Becky Rios, Idaho; Dann Stuart, DC; Barry Williams, Ark.

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FSA Public Affairs Staff
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Stop 0506
Washington, DC 20250-0506

First off, I am pleased to tell you that FSA has received supplemental funding for this fiscal year, providing much-needed relief in salaries and expenses and other areas. The fiscal year (FY) 2001 Military Construction Appropriations Act was signed July 13 and included \$39 million for FSA salaries and expenses.

In the vital area of information technology, \$38.5 million was provided to help us continue working toward achieving essential connectivity of legacy systems with the Common Computing Environment. The Act also included \$10 million for the Emergency Conservation Program and \$81 million for producer marketing association loan forgiveness under the Commodity Credit Corporation.

We are also moving forward with next fiscal year's funding. The House passed the FY 2001 Agriculture Appropriations Bill on July 11. The legislation funds FSA salaries and expenses at \$828.4 million. It also includes \$3 million for the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Outreach Program, \$3 million for state mediation grants, \$450,000 for the Dairy Indemnity Program, \$100 million for loss of apple markets, and \$15 million for quality losses of potatoes and apples.

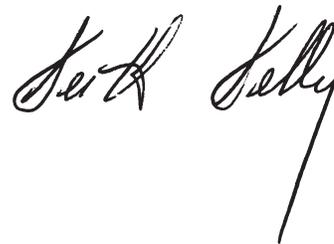
Farm ownership loans are funded at \$1.128 billion with \$1 billion for guaranteed loans. Operating loans are funded at \$3.178 billion with \$2 billion for unsubsidized guaranteed loans and \$478 million for subsidized guaranteed loans. Indian tribe acquisition loans are funded at \$2 million. Emergency insured loans for natural disasters are funded at \$150 million. Boll weevil eradication loans are funded at \$100 million.

Direct and guaranteed loans, including the cost of modification are funded at: farm ownership, \$18.887 million with

\$5.1 million for guaranteed loans; operating loans, \$129.5 million with \$27.4 million for unsubsidized guaranteed loans. Subsidized guaranteed loans are funded at \$38.99 million. Indian Tribe Acquisition loans are funded at \$323 thousand. Emergency insured loans are funded at \$36.8 million. Administrative expenses to administer the direct and guaranteed loan programs are funded at \$269.45 million with \$265.3 million to be transferred and merged with FSA salaries and expenses.

The Senate passed the Agriculture Bill July 19. Included in their amendment to the Bill is: \$450 million for crop loss disaster assistance; \$4 million for livestock indemnity payments; "such sums as are necessary" for FY 2000 hay stock losses; \$100 million for FY 1999 and FY 2000 market loss assistance for apples and potatoes – \$60 million quality loss in FY 1999 and FY 2000.

All of this will be reconciled when the bill goes to conference in September, and I'll keep you informed of future developments in legislation that affect FSA.



Civil Rights Revisited

by USDA Secretary Dan Glickman

In last month's column, I discussed some of the progress we have made to improve our civil rights performance at USDA. But I want to revisit this issue because it is so important and because the pursuit of civil rights is an ongoing journey.

On June 29, I gathered USDA senior management, administrators, human resources staff, civil rights and other employees at the Whitten Building in Washington, where I gave a speech about that civil rights journey. But for those of you who could not be there or haven't had the chance to access the speech on USDA's website, I want to share some of my thoughts with you.

I'm proud of our civil rights accomplishments – increased farm lending to women and minorities; more contracts awarded to socially disadvantaged and minority firms; a landmark legal settlement; and greater diversity in the USDA workforce, among other things. But this is no time for a victory lap. There is plenty of work still to be done, and I am committed to pushing this issue relentlessly during my remaining months in office.

I have announced several new steps that will further advance the cause of civil rights at USDA. We are going to increase accountability, making it more difficult for people to use the civil rights settlement process to avoid disciplinary action. We will be hiring outside contractors to help us manage the overwhelming backlog of civil rights complaints.

We will be sending outside investigation teams into selected areas to closely evaluate civil rights compliance in our local offices. And we are increasing the number of employee minority advisory committees, which give employees the opportunity to influence USDA civil rights policy.

These structural changes are important, but civil rights begins with basic human relations, whether it's a manager communicating with staff or an FSA county employee explaining our programs and services to a family farmer. Ultimately, for any policy or process to work, we have to treat each other with decency and respect, seeing past each other's differences. How we treat each other defines who we are.

In six months, there will be a new President, a new Administration and a new Secretary of Agriculture. But the USDA commitment to civil rights will not end there. When I sit down to brief my successor on the important issues facing the Department, civil rights will be at the very top of the list. Ultimately, I believe that the employees and customers of USDA will hold the next Secretary's feet to the fire, and the next one and the one after that if necessary, until this journey is complete.

USDA's work is critical. We help our farmers and ranchers compete in a complex global economy. We help provide struggling rural communities with adequate housing and safe drinking water. We provide food assistance to people who have no other place to turn. At the Forest Service, our firefighters throw themselves in harm's way to protect life and property. Our food safety inspectors help ensure that the meat and poultry on American dinner tables is safe to eat.

With all of these critical functions and more – some of them involving life and death – we simply cannot afford to allow civil rights problems to interfere with our work. So while this is about justice, it's also about our ability to meet our commitments to the people we serve.



As USDA becomes a civil rights leader, it not only meets a moral obligation; it becomes a more effective Department as well, better able to provide its critical services to the American people. It not only becomes a better place to work, it becomes a better working place, one that is true to its name: the People's Department.

GARLIC FACTS

- Over the past decade, U.S. garlic use has soared, hitting a record-high 3.1 pounds per person in 1999.
- No other vegetable has had stronger growth in demand over the past 10 years.
- Vigorous demand has resulted in a doubling of U.S. garlic production.

A TALE

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hogs – even though the work was hard and the days long.

Earl got involved with the former ASCS in 1954 because, as he says, “Soil conservation is an important factor in farming.” That first election to the county committee began his lengthy and successful career with FSA, adding up to 42 years of service.

That’s a long time to do anything, and Earl’s enjoyed it. He has especially valued watching the success of the various farm programs and associating with his neighboring farmers. How has the Agency changed over the years? “Although the basic ideas are still the same,” says Earl, “the programs have changed drastically from the first Corn Hog Program to the present Conservation Reserve Program.”

In between the demands of his busy daily life, Earl was instrumental in



Retired District Director Howard Kinney (left) honors Earl Berning for his commitment to FSA.

forming the Jo Daviess County Workshop for the Handicapped in 1962. Now, 38 years later, the workshop employs 88 clients and operates countywide. This means a lot to Earl because his daughter Julie is a workshop client. He was also a 4-H leader for 14 years and continues as Town Clerk of Rawlins Township.

Now, with son Tim running the family farm, Earl has time to relax a little, building model airplanes, woodworking, and playing the violin.

Earl’s utmost dedication to agriculture and the county committee has lasted over four decades, despite managing a farm and rearing six children. “I thank Rosie for the help she gave me on the farm during the busy times at the office,” says Earl. He adds that, “FSA is a well-run organization. I would encourage anyone who has the opportunity to serve on the committee.”

Wildlife is Right at Home with FSA Chairperson

by Trish Smith, Outreach Coordinator, Kansas State Office

Tim Peterson firmly embraces the Native American belief that you do not own the land – you borrow it from your children. It’s this refreshing attitude that has made Peterson, Chairperson of the Kansas State FSA Committee, an excellent land steward and a paragon of conservation.

Peterson and his wife Rebekah have planted 1,001 red cedar trees on 9 different sites on their property. Planted between 1993 and 1999, the trees are in excellent condition and are becoming a functional wildlife habitat.

The Petersons also maintain 13.4 acres of former Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) tall grass as a wildlife habitat, even after the CRP contract expired and was ineligible for renewal.

And, the Petersons have a large weedy draw running through their property, which provides a superb natural habitat for a variety of wildlife. The draw is not grazed, sprayed, or otherwise disturbed specifically for the benefit of wildlife.

“All the tree plantings were made possible because our conservation district provides an excellent tree planting service,” Peterson says. “It’s a lot simpler to grow trees using the weed barrier they provide. My dad put in trees manually and that was a lot of hard work. Today it is so much easier.”

He says that planting trees between his cultivated field and the grassy draw has been beneficial to his farming operation. “It keeps the soil and



Tim Peterson.

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chemicals on the field instead of traveling downstream. It really has improved the fields and has made them less prone to erosion. Giving up a little land to planting trees on the edge of a field next to a creek is not going to make or break you financially."

The Petersons' commitment to wildlife habitat and conservation won them last year's Wildlife Habitat Award from the state's Logan County Conservation District.

Peterson is the fourth generation of his family to farm the same land. He raises dryland wheat, milo, corn, and

sunflowers. He believes that, "While farmers depend on the land for their living, you have to take care of it, or it won't be there for the future. Conservation is necessary for our livelihood and for the future. Our world is becoming more crowded, so we must maintain our resources to prevent harm to the environment."

Radio Reaches a Wave of Hmong Farmers

How to reach out to 630 Hmong farmers with limited English skills and a wariness of government intervention? This was the dilemma faced by the Fresno County, Calif. USDA and state agriculture staffs.

It's not like the staffers hadn't tried. Over the years, they had produced Hmong language newsletters, newspaper ads, videos, and audio-cassettes. They had also tried scheduling producer meetings and making one-on-one site visits. But these attempts produced minimal to moderate success. Then, in 1998, they hit upon the best medium to cut through barriers and disseminate information – radio.

Richard Molinar, a University of California (UC) small farms advisor, and Michael Yang, a UC extension assistant, collaborated with USDA to create a 30-minute biweekly radio program on a local Hmong radio station. "We air the show in a regularly scheduled block of time when farmers are likely to be home," says Molinar. FSA, the UC Small Farm Center, and the Great Valley Center share the nominal air time cost.

Yang hosts the program with his wife, Phoua, a Fresno County FSA program technician. The Yangs present current information on farm loans, disaster assistance, market prices, and pesticide safety. They discuss crop production practices for Hmong specialty crops like

opo and sinqua (types of squash), and for common crops such as green beans and cherry tomatoes. The Yangs also leave time for listener questions.

"It's been a phenomenal success," says Molinar. "Many more Hmong farmers are now aware of our offices and the services we offer." Hmong phone calls to USDA and state agriculture offices have increased tremendously.

Laura Westerfield, FSA CED, is also quite pleased with the results. "We've seen a dramatic increase in the number of Hmong farmers coming into our office for farm loans and disaster assistance. The radio program has also helped the Hmong implement better farming practices and understand the need for recordkeeping."

The husband and wife team deserves much of the credit. "Phoua is fantastic," says Westerfield. "She's a great interpreter and makes the Hmong feel comfortable visiting our office." And Michael Yang recently received a UC employee recognition



Michael and Phoua Yang.

award for his work on the program and his collaboration with FSA. "We are so proud of him," Molinar says.

The Fresno County FSA staff has taken its success with radio even further by airing public service announcements in Hmong (and other minority languages) on other area stations.

Kudos to the USDA and state agriculture employees for their perseverance in finding just the right outreach tool!

Strong Work Ethic Personified in West Virginia

"Billy and Marge Burke may be the hardest working people in West Virginia."

So says Gail March, columnist for the West Virginia newspaper *Clarksburg Exponent*.

March is right on track. Billy, West Virginia SED, and his wife Marge each have distinguished careers leading and supporting West Virginia's agricultural industry and rural causes. Billy, who's led FSA in West Virginia and its predecessors on and off since 1978, has tirelessly served his state's farmers. Marge has worked with the 4H and FFA and on the first statewide calf marketing pool, facilitating the direct sale of calves via videoboard.

Both of the Burkes championed agricultural improvement projects while members of the state legislature, Billy as Finance Committee Chairman, and Marge as the first woman to preside over the house and the first female majority whip. The couple also finds time to maintain their 239-acre farm, 100 head of cattle, and large vegetable garden. Billy says, "Marge is the one

with all the energy. I just follow her lead."

In May, West Virginia University's College of Agriculture honored the Burkes for their service to West Virginia agriculture. The college's Alumni Association President Charles B. Sperow presented a plaque to the couple. They are the only husband and wife team to receive this well-deserved honor.

Billy Burke so moves people involved with agriculture that many have taken time to express their appreciation. The Gilmer-Calhoun County FSA Committee, for instance, wrote Billy in April to thank him for helping West Virginia's farmers cope with the recent drought and low prices. "Had it not been for your relentless efforts to get the programs to West Virginia," wrote Leonard Montgomery, Committee Chairman, "many of our farmers would not have been able to continue."

And none other than Willie Nelson, President of Farm Aid, wrote to Billy to thank him for coordinating a hay drive

during last year's drought. "Your efforts went a long way toward helping live-stock producers and dairymen in Florida hold on despite their bad luck and the bad weather," wrote Nelson.

Billy cherishes these honors and credits his hardworking FSA staff and FSA's partners. Thankfully, neither of the Burkes plan to slow down any time soon. The Burkes' lifelong dedication to West Virginia agriculture has benefitted so many farmers and communities in their state and beyond. What great



Charles B. Sperow (center) congratulates Marge and Billy Burke for their achievements.

WHAT'S THE WORLD'S MOST PRECIOUS SPICE?

The golden-orange spice called saffron is the most expensive spice in the world, as it can sell for as much as \$8 per gram. Why so expensive? Saffron's produced from one tiny part of the flowers of a certain kind of purple crocus that blooms only once each year. The yield per acre is very small, since it takes thousands of flowers to make a handful of spice.

Saffron is a versatile spice that can be used in many ways, ranging from rice dishes to sweet baked goods. There's even a potent saffron liquor from Greece.



FSAer Has Survival Tips for Nontraditional Families

Need some advice on combining two families after a remarriage? You may no longer need to scan the newspaper for Dear Abby's column. We have an expert right here in FSA. Last March, FSA employee Edward Douglas and his wife Sharon, who works for Rural Development, published an 84-page book entitled, "The Blended Family: Achieving Peace and Harmony in the Christian Home."

The Mitchellville, Md. couple based their book on the many lessons they learned combining two families when they married in 1993. The Douglasses were both working for the old Farmers Home Administration when they fell in love. Edward, who now works for FSA's Financial Management Division, and Sharon quickly found out the many problems inherent in joining two families.

Edward had two daughters and Sharon had three children, plus the couple had a daughter of their own. It boggled their minds to think of pulling their new lives together – blending all those personalities, hopes, dreams, and fears into one strong family unit.

Statistically, the Douglasses knew the odds were not good. Blended families face a 17 percent chance of divorce within three years. "It's not an easy road to walk," says Edward. But, having both been through a divorce, they decided another one was not an option they were willing to consider. Instead, they got answers from research and from others' experiences. The biggest lesson, though, came from another source. "It is as a result of our faith that we avoided becoming one of those statistics," Edward says.



Sharon and Edward Douglas

Their book covers a wide spectrum of concerns, from outside influences on a marriage to family finances. A chapter on children, though, is the one closest to their hearts.

The Douglasses' down-to-earth advice helps readers get things in the right perspective: "They are not my chil-

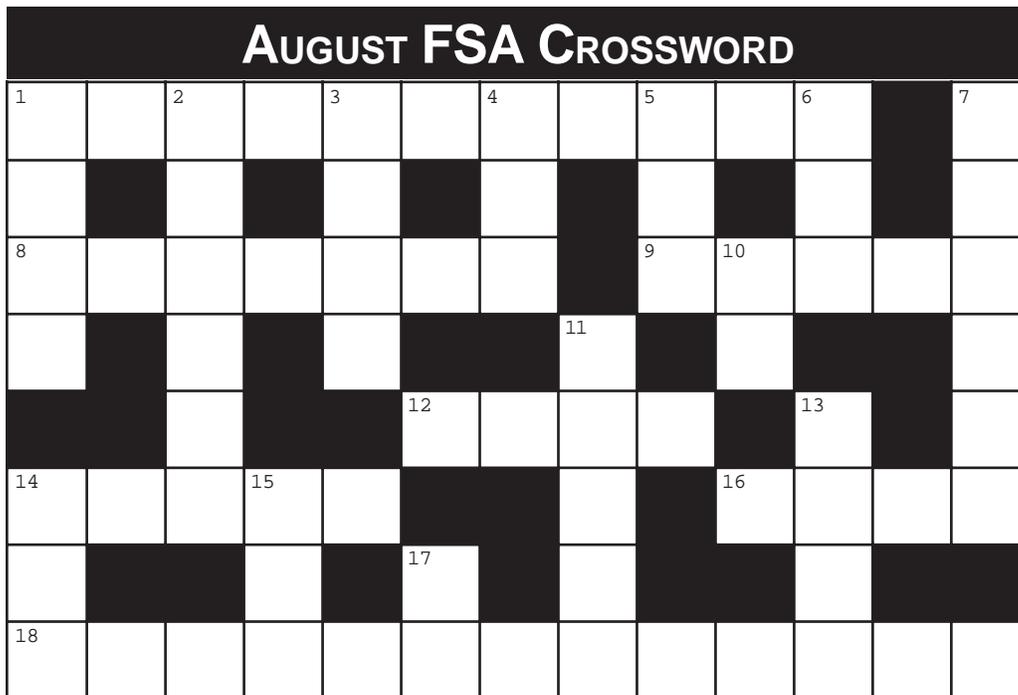
dren, your children, or our children, they are God's children," says Edward. It's getting things into God's order, Edward and Sharon believe, that enables marriages to work out, regardless of what shape the family takes.

The book is available at your local bookstore.

WHY ARE PEACHES FUZZY?

This is tough to nail down, but experts agree that the fuzz helps the peach defend itself from threats. Some feel the fuzz gives the fruit more resistance to insects and diseases. Another theory is that the fuzz protects peaches from sunburn and potential water loss.





DOWN

1. He was USDA Secretary from 1993 through 1994
2. George Washington Carver is the father of this industry
3. To be safe from harmful bacteria, don't eat hamburger meat this way
4. Because carrots are rich in beta carotene, they really do help you ___ better
5. "I ___ a bug!"
6. "I am the ___ man"
7. In ancient times, this dairy product was used less as food than as ointment, medicine, and illuminating oil
10. USDA mission area that helps provide rural housing and utilities
11. Adds a refreshing scent to furniture polish
13. Wildlife habitat occupant
14. Drink your suds here
15. If not careful, you might provoke this in bees when taking their honey
17. The department that employs us

ACROSS

1. The world eats enough wheat in a day to make a loaf as heavy as three of these buildings
8. A level, treeless, originally grass-covered plain that is among our country's most productive agricultural regions
9. Disease of rye and other cereals caused by a fungus and toxic to humans and livestock
12. Many a ___ owes its life to the Conservation Reserve Program
14. Good place for outdoor grilling
16. Production of this fruit is greatest in Europe where much of it is used to make cider called perry
18. Genetically altered food (that gives us such advances as tomatoes that ripen slower and frost resistant strawberries and potatoes) is this

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
August 2-8	St. Charles, Ill.	Administrator Kelly; Associate Administrator George Arredondo; Larry Mitchell, Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs; Carolyn Cooksie, Deputy Administrator Farm Loan Programs; and Robert Springer, Executive Director for State Operations; to attend NASCOE National Convention
August 14-18	Seattle, Wash. and Anchorage Alaska	Alex King, Acting Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to meet with officials of the Department of Education and Early Development, view Alaska operations, and visit Anchorage school district
August 28-31	Oklahoma City, Okla.	John Williams, Deputy Administrator for Management, to speak at National District Directors-SED Meeting

Note: The above is subject to change.