



THE FAR-B NEWS

Dedicated to promoting the research and education programs of the
Henry A. Wallace Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Maryland

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Incorporated P.O. Box 1061, Beltsville, MD 20704-1061

JUNE 2011

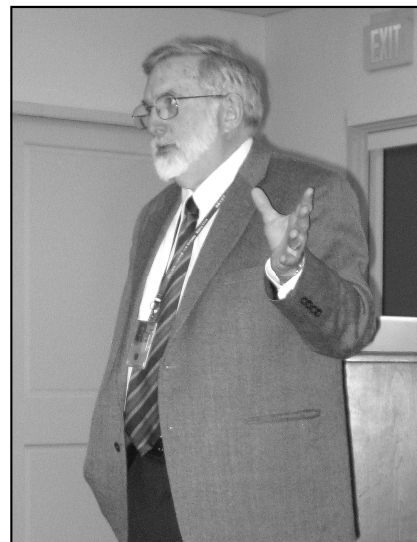
Editor: Hank Becker

President's Message

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

On May 10 the 26th annual meeting of Friends of Agricultural Research – Beltsville was held in the Conference Room of Building 005, BARC-West. The keynote speaker this year was Dr. Caird Rexroad, Jr., Associate Administrator ARS. His talk was titled *Challenging Times at ARS but Research Opportunities Still Knock*. About 50 members and guests were in attendance.

Dr. Rexroad emphasized working with stakeholders because they are ARS's best friends. The stakeholders will go to bat for the research ARS scientists do and the scientists need to keep stakeholders in the loop. Dr. Rexroad also talked a little about the budget and the impact this will have on programs. He does not see the possibility of RIF's and ARS researchers who have lost funding will be moved to other locations. After his presenta-



Dr. Caird Rexroad addresses FAR-B.



Come Join Us on Friendship Day

Meet your friends in FAR-B/BARC
Enjoy some snacks, walk through the extensive garden and just chill out . . .
There will be door prizes!

Sunday, June 26, 2011 • 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
at the home of: **The Hammerschlags**

7106 Deer Valley Road, Highland, Maryland 20777 • Phone: 301-854-2674
Off of Mink Hollow Road, between routes 216 and 108 • Please park at top of hill and walk down to house

\$12 donation per person (children under 18 free) • All proceeds to support the 2011 BARC Research Programs

Make checks payable to: FAR-B, or pay by credit card online at: www.far-b.org/friendshipday.html

Send by Friday, June 10, 2011 to:

FAR-B
P.O. Box 1061
Beltsville, MD 20704-1061

Name(s): _____

E-mail address: _____

In lieu of attendance, please accept my donation of \$ _____

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Incorporated

tion, there was a very lively discussion between Dr. Rexroad and retired and currently employed scientists.

Dr. Joe Spence made a presentation on what is happening at BARC. More details will be listed below.

At the business meeting of the Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Incorporated, outgoing president Dr. Pursel opened with a Power Point Presentation about some of the accomplishments of FAR-B. He mentioned that late winter and spring are a busy time of year for FAR-B activities. In February and March, a few of our faithful members and volunteers served as FAR-B judges at area Science Fairs held in Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's County. This has been one of FAR-B's outreach activities for the past five years. Again this year, FAR-B awarded \$10, \$20 and \$30 gift certificates to 30 Middle School students for their

superior posters.

Other FAR-B activities included: Graduate Student Agricultural Research Symposium – February; BARC Poster Day – Tent and Luncheon – April; Fitness Walk with Student Discovery Garden Season Opener – May; Beltsville Administrative Support Training Session – May; Asian Pacific Heritage Month – May; National Hispanic Heritage Month – September; National Disability Employment Awareness Month – October; American Indian Heritage Month – November; Testimony submitted to U.S. House and Senate Ag Committees in support of increased funding of research at BARC; Financial Support of three FAR-B Summer Internships – \$7,500; Financial Support of plant material Student Discovery Garden; and cash awards to High School Student Interns at BARC Poster Day.

On March 23, Dr. Murrell submitted FAR-B's annual testimony to the U.S. House and Senate Sub-



The 2011 FAR-B Board (left to right) Lew Smith, Phil Kearney, Jim Smith, Secretary Allan Stoner, Vice President Vern Pursel, President Jim Anderson, Freddi Hammerschlag, Treasurer Dick Zimmerman, Dianne Odland, Dave Chitwood, Jim Butcher and Hank Becker.

committees on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations. We are once again greatly indebted to Jim Butcher for doing the major work in composing our testimony. This year's testimony request for the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center was in line with Agricultural Secretary Vilsack's request. Please read the complete text of the testimony FAR-B submitted on the web at www.far-b.org/Testimony.html.

Election of new Officers followed. Elected were: President, James Anderson; Vice-President, Vern Pursel; Treasurer, Richard Zimmerman, and Secretary, Allan Stoner.

In closing, Dr. Pursel stressed that if you haven't already done so, please send in your membership dues. Also, don't forget to join us at the FAR-B/BARC Friendship Day on June 26, 2011.

As incoming President, I look forward to serving FAR-B and BARC in the coming years. First, I want to thank all the folks who have supported FAR-B with their generous financial support. With funds coming from membership, CFC, gifts and other sources, FAR-B could not so generously support BARC and its scientists and research programs. FAR-B is looking to add new members to the Board. Please let me know if you are interested. Our next Board meeting is noon, June 14, 2011 at the Log Lodge, National Visitors' Center.

Jim Anderson, President

Area Director's Message

This year has provided a number of surprises and we are only at the half-way point!

First and foremost, as many of you know, Dr. Tom Sexton has retired from ARS after 40 years of Federal service. Tom has left his mark on Beltsville as an outstanding researcher, former Institute Direc-

tor and Associate Area Director. He will stay in the area and hopefully will not be a stranger to his many friends here.

The new Director of the U.S. National Arboretum, Dr. Colien Hefferan, has been on board for several months now and she has hit the ground running. One of her first tasks was to deal with a controversy related to the azalea and boxwood collections. She handled that in a way that not only diffused the situation but has led to a new approach to working with stakeholders at the USNA to ensure that the research conducted there can coexist with the need of the public to visit and enjoy that magnificent facility.

Everyone knows that the Federal budget is under close scrutiny and Congress is looking at every possible way to control spending. While few would question the impact and importance of agricultural research and the tremendous return on investment that we provide, the fact is that we are a discretionary activity and not immune from the budget ax. For the current fiscal year, FY2011, ARS suffered a loss of approximately \$44million. Beltsville took its share of the cuts but we were fortunate in that the cuts were based on previously funded Congressional

earmarks and Beltsville had not significantly benefited from that method of funding in the past. In addition to the program losses, the Agency's buildings and facilities account was zeroed out. This did hurt us significantly at BARC. We had money set aside in that account to completely repair our deteriorated steam lines. This was an important project for us that would have not only improved the physical plant but reduced costs.

I am confident that we will get the funds to complete this project at some point but we are facing a significant delay in completion of this important project. If there is good news, it lies in the fact that our projects funded through the economic stimulus funding--most notably the renovation of Building 306 and the administration building at the



BARC Area Director, Joe Spence.

Arboretum--are well underway and the funding is intact. Of note is that we have our first tenants as part of the Enhanced Use Lease Authority that was provided in the last Farm Bill and we hope that that program will grow to allow for better utilization of space at BARC and to provide significant opportunities for new research collaborations.

On top of all this, we had the real possibility of a government shut down until the 2011 budget was finally passed at the eleventh hour. Literally, when people left work on the Friday, we had to have everything prepared and secured for a shutdown. While we were happy to see the shutdown avoided, there was a tremendous amount of planning and effort that diverted us from our research activities. Needless to say, morale suffered but everyone realized it was beyond our control.

On a more positive note, the Secretary has been aggressive in pursuing his cultural transformation initiative for the department. I am pleased to say that Beltsville has and continues to play a leading role in this activity and our student training program, which is a true partnership with FAR-B, has achieved enviable success.

Beyond the current fiscal year, it is anybody's guess as to what might be in store. The administration's budget sent to Congress in February contains cuts to ARS but the Beltsville Area would actually see a significant net increase in funding. I think that this is a reflection of the respect of the quality of the research that is being conducted here and the fact that we leading researchers in many of the priority areas set forth by the Secretary. The House is scheduled to mark up the FY2012 budget just as this newsletter is published, so stay tuned for the latest information.

I very much believe that the uncertainty we face presents unique opportunities for the Beltsville Area. It has forced us to be strategic in our plan-

ning and priority setting. Now is not the time to be reactive and wait for the storm to pass but to be bold and propose new initiatives. We are doing that and will continue to meet any challenge. I think there is no question that we have a solid foundation upon which to build the next 100 years of research to be conducted at BARC.

Joseph Spence, Area Director

22nd Annual BARC Poster Day

BARC Poster Day was held on April 27 with 22 high school interns and 63 Research Associates, Visiting Scientists and new Research Scientist presenting posters. FAR-B once again played a major role in supporting the event by providing the refreshments and lunch for the poster day participant, tent-rental to provide sufficient indoor space for

posters, and presenting cash awards to the top three student intern posters.

Winners of this year's student intern poster competition were: First Prize (\$300) - *No More Cryin' Over Onions* by Kulsoom Naqvi and Zurana Taluckder from Eleanor Roosevelt High School. Mentor: Dave

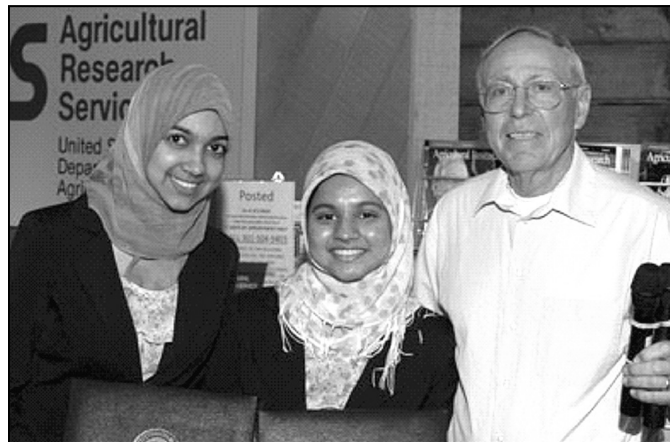
Luthria, Food Composition and Methods Development

Laboratory, BHNRC.

Second Prize (\$200) - *XRF Measurements of Phosphorus in Corn Leaves* by Kelsey Kanyuck from Eleanor Roosevelt High School. Mentors: Thanh Dao and Guy Stone, Environmental Management and By-Product Utilization Laboratory, PSI.

Third Prize (\$100) - *Effect of Storage Time and Temperature on Boar Sperm Characteristics* by Morolayo Alo and Sierra Hadley from Charles Herbert Flowers High School. Mentor: Dave Guthrie, Animal Biosciences and Biotechnology Laboratory, ANRI.

Vern Pursel, President



First prize winners (left to right): Kulsoom Naqvi, Zurana Taluckder with FAR-B President Vernon Pursel.



Second and third prize winners (left to right): Kelsey Kanyuck, Morolayo Alo and Sierra Hadley.

Financial Report

Again in 2011, FAR-B has a strong financial position enabling it to support an even broader array of activities than last year. To date, support has been provided for middle school Science Fairs in Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, the 2011 Graduate Student Agricultural Research Symposium, the Beltsville Poster Day, new plantings in the Student Discovery Garden (SDG), the International Food Festival and Fitness Walk held in conjunction with the opening of the SDG and a special program for Asian Pacific Heritage Month. Several additional programs organized by the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force this year have been approved for support, as has the Science Enrichment Program at Beltsville Academy. In addition, FAR-B is supporting three interns for research programs this summer, one in each Institute at BARC.

Federal employees, mainly at BARC, have significantly increased support to FAR-B through CFC, with the campaign in fall 2010 the most successful to date. Through the end of April, income from dues is slightly lower so far than in 2010, but income from other categories is up. We trust that all current members will renew their memberships in the next few months. In any case, FAR-B will have sufficient income and reserves to support all programs planned for this year.

Richard Zimmerman, Treasurer

Plan to Attend Friendship Day on June 26

After a successful poinsettia plant sale in December 2010, plans to raise funds for FAR-B include a second FAR-B/BARC Friendship Day gathering at the home of BARC retiree, Dr. Freddi Hammerschlag on Sunday, June 26, 2011 from 1 to 5 p.m. The cost for adults is \$12 per person and children under 18 are free. All proceeds will support the BARC Research Programs. Again, this event not only aims to raise funds but also to promote stronger ties between BARC employees and FAR-B members. You can download the flyer and send a check by mail or pay by credit card online at: www.far-b.org/friendshipday.html. Note that in lieu of attending Friendship Day, you can make a donation to FAR-B.

FAR-B will also sponsor another poinsettia sale in December with reminder notices going out sometime in August/September.

Please support FAR-B by attending Friendship Day and/or by purchasing poinsettias! Many thanks in advance for your support and thanks to all of you who have supported us in the past!

Freddi Hammerschlag, Fundraising Chairman

Mobile Science Lab Returns in Fall

For nearly a decade, FAR-B and BARC have sponsored a Science Enrichment Program at Beltsville Elementary School—now called the Beltsville Academy. We provided in-class and in-gym programs for several years, then progressed to a unique field trip experience on the school's own tarmac—a mobile Science Laboratory developed by the Maryland Ag Education Foundation (MAEF) that features kid-sized work benches and equipment where students perform experiments using scientific method. The classes are led by a retired science teacher skilled in making science come alive.

Plans have been completed to partner with MAEF again this fall for the return of their "Agricultural Products" laboratory. Funding for the week-long program will be shared by FAR-B, the

Beltsville Academy, and the school's PTA.

Please consider donating an hour or two to assist the teacher supervise students during their science enrichment classes. Contact Dianne Odland at dianne.odland@ars.usda.gov and she will keep you posted on open dates and times.

Dianne Odlan, Liaison, ARS Info Staff

IN MEMORIAM

Walter A. Gentner, Jr.

Longtime FAR-B member and weed scientist Walt Gentner died on Friday, April 15. Walt worked for 38 years as a plant physiologist for the Department of Agriculture at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Service. Walt served as president of the North Eastern Weed Science Society from 1974 to 1975. He was an expert on the effect of weed herbicides in corn production and published many articles in this and other weed science publications. He survived his wife Evelyn Gentner and many friends. A memorial service was held at the Borgwardt Funeral Home, 400 Powder Mill Rd., Beltsville, MD, on Thursday April 28 from 6 to 8 p.m. where a memorial service was held at 7 p.m. He was buried at Fort Lincoln Cemetery at a later date. Memorial contributions may be made to your favorite charity.

IN MEMORIAM

Vernon Pursel

Vernon George Pursel, 74, of Highland, Maryland died surrounded by family on May 27, 2011 at 6:51 pm in Olney. He had been hospitalized two days earlier after choking on food, which resulted in a loss of oxygen and significant brain damage.

Vernon was born on November 11, 1936 in Yer-

ington, Nevada, the youngest son of Ralph and Gertrude Pursel. Growing up on a working farm, Vernon was an excellent student, displaying both intellectual curiosity and a passion for animals. He graduated from University of Nevada, Reno in 1958 with a Bachelors of Science degree in animal science. He later earned a Masters of Science in 1961 and a Ph.D. in animal physiology in 1965, both from the University of Minnesota, St. Paul.

Vern joined the Air Force Reserves in 1962 and worked for 9 months as a meat inspector for the U.S. military in Alsace-Lorraine. He spent his career working as a research physiologist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, most notably at the Beltsville Agriculture Research Center in Beltsville, Maryland. His contributions to animal agriculture were recognized by his receipt of a USDA Superior Service Award, a USDA Distinguished Service Unit Award, the ARS Distinguished Scientist of the Year Award, the ASAS Physiology and Endocrinology Award and the ARPAS DC Chapter Distinguished Service Award. Highly accomplished during his career, he was admitted into the Agricultural Research Services (ARS) Science Hall of Fame in 2006.

Since retiring in 2002, Vernon has kept busy with such varied activities as serving in leadership roles for the Friends of Agriculture Research – Beltsville, mentoring younger scientists, website development, being a best friend and companion to his wife, tending an ambitious garden, scouring for deals on timeshares, always being there for his two

sons and their families, watching his grandchildren grow and flourish, being good company to family and friends, traveling to vacation destinations in Virginia, Idaho, and Mexico, and planning new adventures.

Vernon is survived by his beloved wife Gertrude (Louise) Riedel, sons Tim and Brad, daughters-in-law Natalie and Julie, step-children Sebastian and Alexander, grandchildren

Ainsley and Ethan, brother Melvin, and sister-in-



laws Olive and Madeline.

Other survivors include numerous beloved nieces and nephews, including Cheryl, Darrell, Karen, Loren, Jan, Stanley, Tom, and Vicki. A life-long animal lover, Vernon is also survived by his devoted canine companion and biggest fan, Wilbur. Last but not least, Vernon is survived by friends and former colleagues too numerous to name. Vernon's other two brothers, Claire and Lynn, previously died many years ago due to complications from

Huntington's Disease. His remains will be cremated. A tribute/celebration of his life will be held at a later date, which we think he would have liked very much. Vernon will be dearly missed, but he will not be forgotten.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Huntington's Disease Society of America <https://www.hdsa.org/donations.html> or to the Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc. <http://www.far-b.org/donations-bequests.html>.

Memories of Vern

Our thoughts and prayers are with retired FAR-B President Vernon Pursel and his family.

Vern's close friend and former FAR-B president Bill Wergin had these words to share regarding his memories of Vern.

"As we all know, Vern spent his professional career working with pigs. Consequently, my wife and I were always on the lookout for "pig gifties" to remind him of his vocational love. Through the years we bestowed upon him and Louise pig-lawn ornaments, salt shakers, Christmas ornaments, placemats, corn holders, paper weights and key-chains. Vern proudly displayed many of these items at their mountain house at Bryce, Virginia which contained dozens of pig-related items that he had received from his many friends around the world.

Vern was a frugal man. About four years ago my wife and I were thinking about giving up our skiing activities, which were rather expensive and risky for older individuals. However, at the same time Vern turned 70 and found out that individuals who had reached that age could ski free--so he took up the sport.

One of Vern's favorite sayings was "Don't spend

a quarter when a nickel will do." A couple of years ago he called me to say that there was a time-share, listed on eBay, in Merida, Mexico--a beautiful



Vern at cenote in Dzibichaltun.

city in the Yucatan that was conquered by the Spanish in the 16th Century. The eBay listing was for \$1.00 and he asked if I would be interested in splitting the price. I agreed. We paid a bit more than a dollar but did become proud owners of a 2 bedroom timeshare in a 5 star hotel 2 blocks from the central square in Merida. This past spring Vern, Louise, my wife and I spent a week at our timeshare in Merida--visiting the city highlights and the surrounding Mayan ruins. We visited Dzibichaltun, a word we took great pride in pronouncing once we learned how.

Dzibichaltun was a major Mayan city dating back to 700 AD. This archeological site contained a cenote--a freshwater, spring fed sinkhole that the Mayans had used for drinking and irrigation. Tourists were allowed to enter the cenote, but of the four of us, only one person was brave enough to swim in this ancient site. Since I had passed on this unique opportunity, Vern requested that I take his picture. We shall long remember the week we shared together."

Jim Anderson, President

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BELTSVILLE AREA

Area Director: Joseph Spence

National Visitor Center: Jennifer Woodward-Green

First Class

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