

**Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc.
PO Box 1061, Beltsville, MD 20704-1061**

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

THE FAR-B NEWS

June 2005

Editor: Hank Becker

President's Message

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The 19th annual meeting of Friends of Agricultural Research--Beltsville was held on May 10 in the main auditorium of the Henry A. Wallace, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. The highlight of the meeting was our quest speaker Dr. Antoinette Betschart, Associate Administrator for Research Operations, Agricultural Research Service.

Dr. Betschart spoke on the national research outlook for the agency and addressed the current issues and problems facing the agency. Her address provided a fine update for our members and the research staff at BARC. She discussed changes in the administrative staff in ARS and specifically addressed the changes in key personnel and budget thrusts in the agency and what are some of the future changes we can expect.

Dr. Phyllis Johnson, whose comments are included below in this newsletter, summarized some of the issues facing BARC. The status and activities that currently face FAR-B were briefly discussed and are as follows:

Vern Pursel, our Treasurer, submitted a budget for 2005, which has been approved by the Board. Our projected income will be around \$26,000, which will be used for research activities 68 percent, education 17 percent, outreach activities 9 percent, facility improvement 5 percent, and administrative overhead 1 percent.

The 1 percent administrative cost is for printing and mailing the FAR-B Newsletter.

Vern also handles membership duties. Our membership continues to fluctuate at about 200 members. Roughly half of our members are retirees and the other half are non-voting associate members who are BARC employees.

Phil Kearney, a former President of FAR-B, is Chair of the Goals and Objectives Committee and also serves as our Combine Federal Campaign (CFC) Chair. As you may know, Phil was chiefly responsible for making FAR-B eligible for CFC contributions a few years ago. As a result, in 2005 FAR-B will receive nearly \$8,000 from contributors who designate our organization as recipients on the CFC forms. We thank those of you who participate in this way and ask that you continue to remember us during future CFC campaigns.

Jim Butcher, who serves as our Legislative Liaison, assembled the congressional testimony to Congress. In our testimony to the Subcommittees on Agriculture in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, the importance of funding for systematic research was given the highest recommendation. In addition, we emphasized the importance of continued funding for recent "add on" research programs that were mandated by Congress. About 15 programs at BARC could be affected if these "add ons" are not continued.

The final emphasis in the testimony recommended construction funds to

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc.

complete Phase III of the Beltsville Human Nutritional Center. This year FAR-B took the testimony a step further than usual. A group consisting of Darwin Murrell, Essex Finney, and Jim Butcher presented our testimony and related information in person to staff officers of Senators Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski. We owe a depth of gratitude to those who assembled the Congressional Testimony and delivered it to Congress. They pointed out that, since 1997, while all ARS funding has increased 52 percent; BARC funding has only risen 5 percent. As a result, funding for programs at BARC has not kept up with the inflation rate and the total number of Full Time Employees has fallen from more than 1,400 in 1997 to below 1,200 in 2003.

Nancy Thrush--our newest Board member--has taken it upon herself to develop a directory of all BARC retirees. The directory, which could be used to locate old friends and colleagues, may also serve as a source for recruiting new FAR-B members. If you are in contact with any former BARC employees, Nancy would appreciate receiving their names and/or addresses. She can be reached by email at nancyethrush@aol.com.

Besides these activities, your FAR-B Board has made several attempts to strengthen the research programs in systematics at BARC. To help bring attention to the importance of identifying, preventing and controlling invasive species, FAR-B recently allocated \$25,000 as partial support to purchase a microscope and software that will allow scientists from around the world to simultaneously view on their own office PCs, images of insects that are being scanned at Beltsville.

Vice President Ralph Bram introduced the Innovative Ideas Program. This program provides a monetary award, which is meant to serve as seed money, to initiate a new or novel pursuit. The program is open to any/all workers at BARC.

FAR-B, under the leadership of Jim Smith and Jim Butcher, helped institute, at Beltsville Elementary School, a remarkable science enrichment-outreach program on human nutrition. "Helped institute" is required wording, for the well received presentations that were possible only because of the generous backing of BARC, the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, the ARS Information Staff, FAR-B members, and other volunteers. If any one person may be singled out for special recognition, she is ARS Outreach Specialist Dianne Odland of the Information Staff.

FAR-B did not have plans to sponsor a major symposium this year; however, we did work with the Tomato Breeders Round Table group, which held their successful meeting last fall in Annapolis. In addition, we provided support for the Distinguished Lecture Series, that Dr. Johnson has initiated. At the present time, we are working with Jeff Aldrich, who is Chair of the annual meeting of the International Society of Chemical Ecology. FAR-B will assist in sponsoring this meeting, which will be held in the Washington, DC area this summer.

Our annual meeting adjourned after Mort Beroza, Chair of the Nominations Committee, called for nominations for two Board vacancies and the election of a new President. James Anderson and Allan Stoner--two esteemed scientists who recently retired at BARC--were nominated and elected to the Board by acclamation. Likewise, K. Darwin Murrell, who needs no introduction to FAR-B members, was elected as your new Board President. He will take office in January 2005. Congratulations to all three individuals!

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board members who have supported my Presidency these past 3 years. Their co-operation, initiatives and enthusiasm certainly made my job an easy and enjoyable one!

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc.

As always, if you have any thoughts on any activities that you would like to see FAR-B engage in, we would be pleased to hear from you. Please feel to contact FAR-B by email or phone--listed under our board of directors.

Sincerely,

William B. Wergin, President

Area Director's Message

By the time this Director's Message goes to print, hopefully we will have had another successful Public Field Day at BARC. This year we are hopeful that it will stay dry!

Dr. Robert E. Davis, Research Leader of our Molecular Plant Pathology Laboratory, was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in early May. This is recognition comes on the heels of his receiving a Presidential Distinguished Rank Award from President George Bush. This means that Dr. Davis was in the upper one percent of all senior-level federal employees. Congratulations to Bob on both of these recognitions!

The Competitive Outsourcing process has ended since both The Facilities Services and Animal and Plant Research Support Services (officially the Research Support Services) Most Efficient Organizations (MEO) have been in place since May 15. We are expecting few glitches as these two organizations proceed in delivering services to BARC. Thanks to the tremendous support of headquarters Human Resources Division, all existing employees were employed in the new organizations.

Thirty-nine employees participated in the buy out/early retirement process which greatly helped in placing the other employees in the new organizations. Wayne Funkhauser is the Program Manager for Facilities Services and Keith

Hummel is the Program Manager for Research Support Services. BARC has created a new group of Quality Control Inspectors--managed by Frank Messineo--that will monitor the services provided by the MEO's.

The Beltsville Area Distinguished Lecture Series continues this year. In early May, Dr. Rita Colwell, Chairman, Canon U.S. Life Sciences, Inc. and Distinguished Professor at both the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University spoke on "The Dilemma of Environmental Pathogens in a Time of Bioterrorism." Later in May, Dr. James O. Hill from the University of Colorado at Denver spoke on "Obesity: The Threat to Health in America."

On June 9, the last Lecturer for the spring session will be Dr. Norman J. Rosenberg, Joint Global Change Research Institute at Battelle. He will be speaking on "Climate Change and Agriculture."

Lastly, we would like to note the retirement of Dr. Allan Stoner, Research Leader of the National Germplasm Resources Laboratory. Al came to BARC in June 1965 and held several positions including a 2 year detail as Director of the U.S. National Arboretum. Al plans on staying in the Maryland area during his retirement.

Phyllis Johnson, Director

Membership Update

Many thanks to those members who answered our January request for annual dues payment. Unfortunately, it will be necessary to resend a dues reminder note in the next few weeks to those of you who most likely set the dues notice aside with the hoard of junk-mail items that arrive in your mailbox each week.

Dues for Personal Members are still just

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc.

\$20.00 and Associate Member dues for federal employee are still \$10.00.

Remember, FAR-B dues are tax deductible. In addition, there isn't another organization anywhere that spends 98 percent of every dollar on the program and only 2 percent for administrative costs. Please mail your dues to FAR-B, Inc, P.O. Box 1061, Beltsville, MD 20704-1061. Your continued support is appreciated as FAR-B's activities are an important part of a healthy BARC!

Vernon Pursel, Membership

Financial Report

FAR-B's financial health continues to remain strong with the recent good news from the November, 2004 pledges to Combined Federal Campaign amounting to \$7,848. However, the bad news is that FAR-B will need to dip into our reserve funds to cover the \$25,000 expenditure that we have promised the Systematic Entomology Laboratory for the purchase of an entirely new computer-controlled remote microscope. This vital piece of equipment has been designed so that insect specimens can be manipulated, examined, and photographed by anyone from anywhere in the world. Our one-time expenditure will leave us with a \$21,000 budget deficit for this year. However, isn't that why FAR-B has reserve funds?

Vernon Pursel, Treasurer

BARC Poster Day—A Resounding Success

Once again FAR-B assisted in making the annual Poster Day event a resounding success by providing a tent adjacent to the ARS Visitors Center so that the high school interns could display their posters

alongside of the BARC post-docs and newer researchers. This year 23 Eleanor Roosevelt High School seniors displayed their posters that described their research efforts in BARC laboratories.

Dr. Nichole O'Neill, Intern Coordinator for BARC, assisted FAR-B in providing six judges who evaluated the posters and FAR-B then provided \$300, \$200, and \$100 cash awards to the three with the highest overall scores. The first place award went to Adelle Lykes for her project "Antioxidant Capacity of Blackberries", (mentor- Dr. S.Y. Wang, Fruit Lab.). Second place award recipient went to Ashley Robinson for her project "Effect of *Bacillus Thuringiensis* on the Mortality of Sweet Potato Whitefly", (mentor- Dr. Dale Gelman, Insect Biocontrol Lab.). Third place award went to Ugochi Madubata for her project "EST-PCR Markers in Determining the Genetic Relatedness of Rabbiteye Blueberries", (mentor- Dr. Jeannie Rowland, Fruit Lab.).

Vern Pursel, Membership

FAR-B Meets Senate Staffers Regarding FY06 Budget

For the past several years, FAR-B has submitted "Outside Witness Testimony" to support the annual appropriations process generally for ARS and especially for BARC. Our distribution normally includes the entire Maryland Congressional delegation and members of the House and Senate subcommittees for agricultural appropriations. We also submit testimony to subcommittee staff offices. In all, we normally distribute about 40 copies of our testimony to offices of the U. S. Congress.

This year, we decided to take the process a step further. Though we had received favorable feedback from Senator Barbara Mikulski and others in previous years, we decided to meet this year her staffers and those of Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland.

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc.

On March 14, a FAR-B delegation of Darwin Murrell, Essex Finney, and Jim Butcher met with staffers Tony Lawrence (Mikulski) and Jim Wood (Sarbanes) in their Capitol Hill Offices. We were warmly received. All parties, we believe, would agree the meetings were productive, filled a valuable purpose, and well worth every one's time and effort. Lawrence noted that the information we gave him would help him make the BARC case to Senator Mikulski when they discuss future appropriations.

We based our presentation on a briefing paper Darwin Murrell had prepared--drawing heavily from our prepared testimony. The paper emphasized Systematics, Add-ons omitted from the proposed budget, and Construction funds for renovating Building 307 (first human nutrition building) and building a combined swine-immunology research facility.

Both staffers alluded to regular and frequent visits by farm commodity groups to their offices. They wondered if such groups could help BARC. Darwin explained the answer is "yes," while cautioning that commodity groups naturally trend toward short-term, emergency-based perspectives rather than the long-term, structural needs at BARC.

Both speculated that the staff of the Senate Subcommittee on agricultural appropriations would benefit from a visit to BARC. Staffers are most likely to be available during Congressional recesses, Wood said. FAR-B will follow-up with BARC regarding this suggestion. The staffers asked for clarification regarding the President's budget proposals for BARC, Frederick, and the U.S. National Arboretum. BARC was following up through appropriate channels.

The crux of all this is that FAR-B has opened an effective new channel to promote the common interests of FAR-B

and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center with the U.S. Congress.

Jim Butcher, Legislative Liaison

Friends of Agriculture Come to Beltsville Elementary

Reprint April 21, 2005, *Prince George's County Gazette*.

U.S. Department of Agriculture volunteers came to Beltsville Elementary School Thursday with a shopping cart full of grocery boxes, bottles and bags.

Friends of Agricultural Research - Beltsville (FAR-B) used the shopping cart contents to teach the pupils about the USDA's new dietary guidelines and other nutritional information.



Presenters hold props that they used for presentations to students.

"How much sugar do you think is in a Big Gulp?" USDA nutritionist Kay Behall asked Kathleen Hopkins' sixth-graders. The children guessed and then counted out the sugar packets that Behall had placed inside of a Big Gulp cup. They discovered that 61 packets are the equivalent to 61 teaspoons or one and one-fourth cups of sugar.

"That's enough to kill a rat," said USDA nutritionist Daniel Scholfield. Large amounts of sugar over an extended period

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc.

of time have been shown to wreak havoc on organs, he said.

"The program teaches them about how to make smart decisions at the grocery store and read food labels," said Ginger Butcher, a parent whose father-in-law Jim Butcher is FAR-B's outreach chairman.

Above is Gazette reporter Meghan Mullen's take on a remarkable science enrichment-outreach program that FAR-B has sponsored and helped institute at Beltsville Elementary School this school year. "Helped institute" is required wording, for the series of well received human nutrition presentations that Mullen refers to was possible only because of the generous backing of BARC, the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, the ARS Information Staff, FAR-B members, and still other dedicated volunteers. Though officially the sponsor-coordinator, FAR-B drew enormously from Beltsville resources.

If any one person may be singled out for special recognition, it is ARS Outreach Specialist Dianne Odland. Dianne not only drafted the superb script that became the benchmark guide for every presentation, her apparently inexhaustible energy, drive, and good cheer constantly fueled us forward. FAR-B is evaluating this outreach activity for possible future applications.

FAR-B is exceedingly grateful to each of them for sharing their time and special talents.

By Jim Butcher

CFC Drive—A Big Success

Thanks to our many contributors at BARC, we had a very successful 2004 CFC campaign. We raised \$7848.88, our second largest total in 4 years. Several factors are responsible for this generous offering. For the first time we directly contacted all employees at BARC by e-mail. We have never had this coverage before. Using e-mail we also saved money normally reserved for printing colored posters.

Another new approach this year was to request certain Board Members to contact personnel in their former Institutes--Vern Pursel for Animal Sciences and Natural Resources, Jim Smith for Human

Nutrition, and Phil Kearney for the Plant Science Institute.

One of our strongest efforts in FAR-B this past year was our outreach program. The outstanding success of this program probably played a role in our CFC contributions. We were notified recently that FAR-B was approved for participation in the 2005 CFC campaign. This announcement reflects on the strong research and educational programs underway at BARC and the cooperatives efforts in FAR-B to assist in these programs.

Phil Kearney, CFC

In Memoriam

ANGUS HANSON

1922 – 2005



Former BARC Director Angus Hanson died on April 29. He was born in Chilliwack, BC in 1922 and obtained a BSA (Major in Agronomy) in 1944. His graduate work in the areas of genetics, cytogenetics, plant breeding and applied statistics led to the award of an MSc degree from McGill University in 1946 and a PhD from Pennsylvania State University in 1951.

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc.

Initially his career was in academia as a Lecturer and Assistant Professor at McGill University, where he taught undergraduate and graduate courses in applied statistics, forage crop management and breeding and was in charge of forage crop research program at Macdonald College. Then, in 1949 Dr Hanson took up a position as Geneticist and Agronomist at the U.S. Regional Pasture Research Laboratory, State College, Pennsylvania, which led to a distinguished career as a scientist and administrator with the USDA Agricultural Research Service.

As Project Leader in charge of grass and legume breeding and cytogenetics at the Pennsylvania Laboratory, he conducted research on the breeding behavior and cytogenetics of orchard grass, canary grasses, fescues, brome-grasses, ladino clover, and alfalfa. In 1953, he took up a senior research position at BARC, where he led a program on grass and turf research in the Forage and Range Research Branch, Crops Research Division. In 1965, he became Chief of the Forage and Range Research Branch, Crops Research Division, at the Center. In that position, he was responsible for a national program on forage and range improvement. The program included basic and applied research on alfalfa, clover, special legumes, grass and turf, humid pastures, arid pasture and range, and seed production.

Then in 1972, he was named Center Director. He was responsible for organization, operations, and administration of integrated research program involving about 450 scientists and 800 support personnel.

Following retirement from USDA in 1979, Dr. Hanson became Vice-President and Director of Research of Waterman-Loomis Co, Highland, Maryland, until 1986, with responsibility for research planning, coordination and conduct of research on alfalfa; and for organizing programs at three research stations to meet the needs of both domestic and foreign markets for

adapted varieties of alfalfa. He later joined the board of that company and served as a board member until 1992. From 1992 to 1993, he was a consultant to the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council.

During his distinguished career, Dr. Hanson received many awards. Most notable were: Superior Service Award, USDA, 1961; Merit Certificate, American Forage and Grassland Council, 1971; Medallion Award, American Forage and Grassland Council, 1972; Merit Certificate for Outstanding Performance, USDA, 1979; Distinguished Service Award, USDA, 1979; and Distinguished Grasslander Award, American Forage and Grassland Council, 1988. In addition, he was elected a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Crop Science Society of America. He served as President of the Crop Science Society of America, 1966-67. Dr. Hanson lived with his wife Helen (Crook) in Silver Spring. They have two sons and one daughter.

MAYNARD RAMSAY

Maynard Jack Ramsey, 90, and entomologists and internationally recognized beetle expert with USDA for many years died of pneumonia on March 20 at the Arden Courts nursing home in Silver Springs. He lived in Bowie.

Ramsay was born in Buffalo and graduated from the University there with a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in mammalogy. In 1941, he received his doctorate in entomology from Cornell University where he did research on the Mexican bean beetle and its damage to crops in the southwest.

In 1941, he started work with USDA and spent the World War I years on assignment in St. Paul, Minn. In 1945, he moved to New York City and served for the next 23 years as agricultural inspector

Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville, Inc.

and supervisor with the Agriculture Quarantine and Plant Health Inspection Force.

An instructor in the USDA's Four Point Program, he taught graduate and postdoctoral students from around the world on the intricacies of controlling imported insect pests. In 1968, he moved with his family to Bowie after transferring to ARS in Beltsville.

During his 36 years in government service, Ramsay was often called upon to provide his beetle expertise to the Smithsonian Institution and to entomological organizations worldwide.

Ramsay retired from USDA in 1977 but continued to consult on entomological matters. He was listed in *American Men of Science* and *Who's Who in America* and was a member of the entomological societies of America and Washington. He was past president of the Insecticide Society of Washington.

Ramsay's wife, Alberta June Ramsay, died in 2003. Survivors include five children: Paul of Manassas, Va.; Craig of Murfreesboro, Tenn.; Leigh of Poway, Calif.; Bruce of Takoma Park and Carolyn Sue Bly of Arkport, N.Y.; 10 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

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FIRST CLASS

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