

Pilot of hijacked Flight 11 was sustainable ag mentor

Family & friends mourn a man who loved flying, family & farming

Every American was affected in some deeply personal way by the tragic events that occurred in our nation on Sept. 11, 2001. People at work in U.S. sustainable agriculture may not be aware of the loss in our field of Captain John Oganowski, the pilot of American Airlines Flight 11 which crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York.

John was a fourth generation farmer who was well known in the Boston area for his work in sustainable agriculture. The Boeing 767 jetliner he was piloting on the morning of Sept. 11 was seized by terrorists shortly after takeoff from Logan Airport in Boston. It crashed about 45 minutes later. All 81 passengers and 11 crew members are presumed to have been killed.

In this issue of ATTRAnews, Hugh Joseph of Tufts University in Boston, one of John's friends and colleagues, describes John's contribution to sustainable agriculture in the Northeast.



A photo of John Oganowski in his pilot's uniform rests in front of his home at White Gate Farm in Dracut, MA. Photo from Associated Press.

Sept. 11, 2001, began like many other days for ATTRA client Hugh Joseph, a research associate in the School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University of Boston. But it turned out to be a day like no other.

Hugh rose around 4 a.m. to make final preparations for a visit by the USDA Risk Management Agency to the John and Peggy Oganowski farm at nearby Dracut, MA.

Project mentors

The Oganowskis are mentor farmers in a project which the USDA agency funds and Hugh directs – the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project. Under the project, experienced farmers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island rent farm land to Cambodian and Laotian immigrant farmers and mentor them in using sustainable agriculture principles. These immigrant farmers then raise “culturally appropriate” crops for sale to approximately 30,000 Southeast Asian - American immigrants who live in

the Boston area.

On Sept. 11, USDA officials, other project funders and the area media were to tour the Oganowski farm and a neighboring operation where the Cambodian farmers have more than three dozen Khmer crops under cultivation.

Hitch in plans

As Hugh explains in an email sent to friends last week, there was a hitch in plans a couple days before the tour. John Oganowski, a pilot for American Airlines since 1979, flew the Boston to Los Angeles route for the airline three days per week. He had tried to switch flight shifts so that he could be available for the farm tour.

“I must have called him about ten times to get a status update,” Hugh says. “The last call was on Sunday and I was informed that unfortunately this was one of those times they wouldn't allow him to do a switch.”

Peggy Oganowski, who is an
(See Pilot page 2)

ATTRA honors

Matheson praised

ATTRA technical specialist Nancy Matheson of Helena, MT, has been honored by the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture in appreciation for her farming innovations, organizational accomplishments and farmer-led policy development. The National Campaign is a policy development and education organization made up of more than 2,000 organizations nationwide that work on policy issues related to sustainable agriculture. The award was presented at the Campaign's recent annual meeting in Washington, DC.

“Nancy has been a role model for both farmers and advocates in Montana and nationwide,” National Campaign Founding Director Amy Little said. “Folks across the U.S. who are involved in the work of sustaining a future for our farms and ranches and conserving our natural resources recognize Nancy as a key leader.”

Matheson served as the Agriculture Program Manager for the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) from 1987 to 1998. She operates an organic farm in the Helena Valley where she raises certified organic alfalfa, herbs and seed spices.

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Congressional action delayed on FY02 sustainable ag budgets

Congressional schedules for decisions about FY2002 agriculture funding have been delayed by the national tragedy which occurred Sept. 11 in New York and Washington. Congress is expected to consider agriculture budgets within weeks, but it may be later.

The FY02 appropriations bills from both houses contain increases for many, though not all, programs important to sustainable agriculture interests.

House action

In June, the House zero-funded the Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, Farmland Protection Program and other conservation programs. It also cut one direct farm credit program, only slightly increased the other, and level-funded the Outreach and Technical Assistance Program for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers.

Still, the House increased funding for SARE, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Organic Transitions program, Rural Coop Development Grants and

other programs, as well as ATTRA.

Sare, Conservation programs

Senate appropriators gave many programs level funding or modest increases. The House increased SARE's Professional Development Program from \$3.8 million to \$5 million, whereas the Senate increased it only to \$4.5 million.

Nonetheless, the upshot appears to be increases in SARE for both the Research/Education and the Professional Development programs.

The Senate has not yet countered reductions to conservation funding included in the President's budget and
(See FY02 Budgets on page 4)

House & Senate differ on FY02 ATTRA funding

Currently, the agricultural appropriations bill passed by the House recommends \$2.5 million in funding for ATTRA during FY2002. The Senate committee has recommended \$2.0 million which would mean level funding for the program.

A date has not yet been set for full Senate consideration. However, Senate consideration could occur in late September and would then be followed shortly by Congressional conference committee

work in October.

"Economic uncertainty for farmers and ranchers, energy issues, and heavily increased interest in organic production and marketing have all combined to put extra demands on ATTRA's phone, mail, web and educational services," said Teresa Maurer, ATTRA Project Manager. "We have provided more than 24,000 responses in the last 11 months and expect the rising requests to continue."

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Pilot helped Cambodian-American farmers to learn sustainable ag principles

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American Airlines flight attendant, would help to conduct the tour. She had set up a cooking area behind their house at White Gate Farm where for lunch they would cook up interesting crops the Khmer grow, fresh from the nearby field. The tour would start at 10 a.m.

"As I left at 9 a.m., I turned on the car radio and heard the first reports about what was happening at the World Trade Center," Hugh says. "I listened with fascination and horror as the turn of events transpired. About ten minutes from the farm, I got a cell phone call from Paula Lyons at WBZ (local TV station) canceling their visit. They were being pulled back to cover the larger story unfolding."

Arriving at White Gate Farm

Hugh arrived at White Gate Farm. Inside the house, he found Peggy Oganowski and her mother in tears and shock. They had just received a phone call from the Pilots Union confirming that John's plane had crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center. As tour participants arrived, Joseph was faced with the wrenching task of telling them and the Cambodian farmers themselves about John's death. The distraught group decided to cancel the farm tours.

Back at his office at Tufts University, Hugh fielded many phone calls from friends, family, project participants and the media. He began to write about John, as a way to express for all project members the feelings of deep loss and sorrow. Hugh wrote:

"John became involved with this project (New Entry) at its very inception over three years ago when Paul Fischer of Farm Service Agency in Westford contacted him looking for land to make available for Southeast Asian families living in nearby Lowell who wanted to farm. John recognized this immediately as an opportunity to help a worthy group of beginning farmers

to practice another kind of agriculture. He not only made land behind his home available to these farmers, but became our first mentor farmer."

Helping immigrant farmers

John was only asked to rent land to the immigrant farmers but he went the full nine yards for them, Hugh says. "He'd rarely collect the rents and he did so much else for the growers that took up his time and created out-of-pocket expenses for which he often never asked for reimbursement," Hugh says. John used his own equipment and fertilizer to work the immigrants' plots; excavated an irrigation pond with a watering system tied to the pond and farm wells; ordered materials and helped the farmers build a greenhouse so they could raise seedlings and do extended-season production; offered his time to provide information on production, pest control and harvesting, and with Peggy hosted many project meetings at their home.

'We will miss him greatly'

Hugh in his email quoted a friend, August Schumacher Jr., a former USDA Undersecretary of Agriculture and one of the founders of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project. Schumacher said, "John was so committed to helping immigrant farmers, to assist new immigrants from war-torn Asia to make a better life farming in America. I just think how ironic it is that someone who worked so hard to help victims of terrorism should be brought down by an act of terrorism himself. John was a generous friend and partner to us all - and we will indeed miss him greatly."

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Some U.S. farmers getting into 'show biz'

Question: Generally speaking, what do such places as Disneyland, Six Flags Over Texas and Glen Fritzler's vegetable farm of central Colorado have in common?

AnsWER: They're all in the entertainment business.

The 350-acre Fritzler farm is one of a growing number of U.S. farms that devote part of their operations to what is being called "entertainment farming" or "agri-tourism," ATTRA Program Specialist Katherine Adam says.

On the Fritzler farm, tourists pay \$6 each to walk through a cornfield "Bronco" maze which is in the shape of the mascot of the Colorado pro football team. The maze was created by Utah designer Brett Herbst, who has crafted about 60 such cornfield mazes across the U.S. The Fritzler family runs the ticket booth and sells souvenirs such as t-shirts.

"The Bronco maze has put the Fritzler farm in the black for the first time in ten years," Adam says.

Free ATTRA info packet

Adam, a researcher and technical writer at ATTRA since 1989, keeps her finger on the pulse of this growing sector in American agriculture. She has visited many farms which have diversified by adding such enterprises as corn mazes, petting zoos and restaurants for the public. Her recently-completed ATTRA information packet, *Entertainment Farming and Agri-tourism*, is available free of charge from ATTRA. The 17-page packet contains photos and examples of farms with entertainment operations, and lots of advice from the experts on how other farmers can launch these type of ventures.

"Most Americans come from rural roots, and many of us welcome the opportunity to re-connect with those farm roots even if it is just for a day," Adam says.

Adam's information packet is a good starting point for interested farm entrepreneurs, and she is available weekdays at ATTRA to answer questions and track down information for callers. To order Entertainment Farming and Agri-tourism or visit with Adam, please call 1-800-346-9140 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Central Time), or visit the ATTRA website at www.attra.ncat.org.



An example of entertainment farming is this reindeer farm in Illinois. In addition to crop production, the farm features a reindeer zoo and souvenir shop for tourists.

entertainment or value-added endeavors require careful planning and lots of hard work. Also needed are some extra skills, such as the ability to work with the public. Then too, would-be farm entrepreneurs must address a gamut of special considerations, such as insurance and local or state regulatory issues.

"The number one requirement for a successful agri-entertainment venture is an abundance of energy," she says.

Adam says another good informational resource on this topic is the *Alternative Enterprises and Agritourism Tool Kit*, which is available from James Maetzold, NRCS, Resource Economics & Social Sciences Division, PO Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013, Phone 202-720-0132, Email: jim.maetzold@usda.gov.

Three new staffers join NCAT/ATTRA

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) recently welcomed three new staff members to the ATTRA project and its Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Program.

✓ **Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Program Manager Bill Sutherland** holds law degrees from Northern Illinois University and the University of Denver. In addition, he has over 15 years of extensive management experience, including overseeing computer systems, marketing, facilities management, human resources, billing, accounts receivable and staffing. He is the manager of information services and operations for NCAT's Fayetteville, AR, office.

✓ **Barbara Bellows, an NCAT sustainable agriculture specialist**, grew up in a small farming community in Wisconsin and obtained her MS and PhD degrees in soil science focusing on sustainable agricultural practices for the developing tropics. She has conducted research and coordinated international and U.S. based programs that address the interface between sustainable agricultural production and natural resource/environmental management. Her work focuses on soil management and soil quality, environmental management practices in relation to agricultural production, and food systems for sustainable communities.

✓ **Tim Johnson, also an NCAT sustainable agriculture specialist**, holds a BS in Animal Science from The Ohio State University and MS in Animal Science from North Carolina State University. He served at Michigan State University Extension as a district livestock agent in western Michigan, where he worked with livestock producers on production issues, on-farm research, farm financial management and environmental issues relating to livestock production. His topic areas at NCAT are farm management, financial management and general livestock.

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