



Happy Holidays
December 2008
IASCOE Newsletter



FROM THE DESK OF DERRYL MCLAREN, SED

It has indeed been an honor and pleasure to serve you as the State Executive Director of Farm Service Agency in Iowa. I came into the position via presidential appointment with a broad background in production agriculture, farm policy, and elected public office. I can now add executive experience to my resume.

In the 1980's, I was very involved with agriculture policy and credit issues at the national level through the National Corn Growers and the U.S. Feedgrains Council. The 1985 Farm Bill and 1987 Agriculture Credit Act were the products of a great deal of my efforts. Agriculture was facing a crisis in the 1980's of a magnitude not seen since the 1930's. Today our nation is facing a financial crisis of the same description, but this time agriculture should fare better. Agriculture is a capital intensive industry, sensitive to interest rates, and the extraordinary efforts on the part of governments world-wide to provide cash liquidity to their economies should stabilize asset values.

While with the Farm Service Agency, I have implemented policy rather than advocated policy change. I have done my best to follow the rules and regulations, while keeping all of you within the constraints of over 200 handbooks. Rather than write language for agriculture legislation, I have proudly overseen the administration of three Farm Bills and the implementation of two. We leave agriculture policy to farm and commodity group advocates and the political decision-makers.

Having spent the previous 30 years on only one side of the counter, I have developed a deep appreciation and respect for the dedicated and professional employees of FSA. To farmers across Iowa, we ARE the Farm Bill. It is our responsibility to distribute income transfers, credit, conservation assistance, and other services to an industry experiencing structural change. It is not for us to determine "winners and losers" in the delivery of government program benefits. It is our charge to determine the latitude within the rules and regulations to distribute the Farm Bill proceeds in the most fair and equitable manner to all eligible producers and land owners.

This appointment bestowed upon me a responsibility to producers and employees alike. At given times, I have been an advocate, critic, defender, operative, and mediator, while always being a member of both groups. I can only hope the product of my collective actions will serve to judge me worthy of the position.

I do know all of you deserve a Thank You for all of your diligence in implementing a Farm Bill in the same year it was passed (a first). So take a break and enjoy the Christmas Season. Surround yourself with family and friends. After all, your company has served as my family and friends on a weekly basis for the past 7 ½ years. Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derryl McLaren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MIDWEST AREA EXECUTIVE REPORT

December 2008

Thought I'd make good use of my time in the airport by writing an article for the newsletter. I can only read about the bad economy so long. The NASCOE Exec board just completed its fall meeting with FSA management. The main purpose of this meeting is to review the items that management said they would address during the spring negotiation session as well as, unanswered questions from the National convention.

We arrived Monday and conducted NASCOE business that evening reviewing the items and discussing other issues that had come up since the organizational meeting in September and our October Conference call.



These meetings were unique because as political appointees many of the department heads will be gone in two months so there is little they will be able to do. Plus the fact that there is a transition team coming in will further restrict their activities. Tuesday morning we met with Administrator, Teresa Lasseter. We discussed a few things that she was still hoping to do before she leaves in early January.

One item to get done is the PT Office review. Three counties are being reviewed in one state in each NASCOE area. NASCOE hopes that after

these reviews are completed in early December. Barbara Boyd from HRD hopes to have the findings put together and be able to report on them by mid January. Barbara reported that they are finding some positive things but it has to be determined whether they will result in a higher classification.

The administrator also emphasized that we need to show we are not making improper payments. If required forms are not completed or completed incorrectly, the payments associated with those forms are considered improper. FSA was identified as doing an excellent job improving on this however there NAP and disaster programs were still problem areas. With the possibility of USDA reorganization coming, we need to show that we can do the job and do it properly.

The Budget was a topic throughout all of our meetings. Our travel budget is 75% of last year's budget which will make it difficult to do the face to face training we all want. The limited budget will also force FSA to determine what the priorities will be for software development with some of those items put on the back burner.

Dennis Taitano, head of the Budget division, said funding for staff will remain the same as it did for 2008 however FSA needs to absorb \$56 million more because of COLAs and other pay adjustments. It is hoped that when the budget is finalized we will get pay increase adjustments. He did say that in Senate

stimulus bill S368 there is \$171 million appropriated for modernization and maintenance of computers and systems required for Farm Bill implementation. It has been emphasized to congress that the program delivery system could be a significant risk the second half of the fiscal year if we don't get supplemental income.

Patrick Hanley, head of the MIDAS project had some good news. He is optimistic that he will get funding for software development but in the mean time he and his staff are reviewing and addressing other items that will help eliminate some of the "pain points" the field is dealing with in program delivery. The 770 checklist has been revised to require only a signature by the preparer instead a date and initial by each entry. Also "by" or "for" will now be printed on the signature line for all applications. These simple changes were identified as things that caused the field offices problems during the Lean Six Sigma offices reviews last year. The changes will make us more efficient and address some IPIA issues.

Signature authority requirements are also being reviewed and it is hoped that the revised 902 payment limitation form will relieve the field staff of the responsibility of making legal determinations. It was estimated that county office spent an average of two hours verifying signature authorities. The other project his group is working on is acreage rounding between the GIS and system 36 systems. All though these could be small things in the big picture, they will help address some significant problems we are dealing with in the field.

FSA is in a state of flux right now because of the change in administration. We don't know who will be leading FSA or what the priorities of the Obama administration will be. Hopefully some of the things we have been working like PT reclassification will continue in a positive direction.

USDA reorganization is still being mentioned but the discussion of the extent and when is still a ways off. NASCOE has provided information to Chairman Peterson at his request.

During the next few months we will be dealing with a lot of new programs. We will find lots of problems and things that don't work or can be improved. I encourage you to work through NASCOE using the Programs Committee or the Negotiation process to help inform management of those issues and get them addressed. Forms are available on the NASCOE web site that can be used to submit items.

I wish to thank everyone for their support of the NASCOE leadership and encourage you to keep us informed of your concerns and issues. Enjoy the upcoming holiday season and be safe in your travels.

Take care,

Jonathan Williams

Midwest Area Exec



QUOTES

The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits. – Unknown

Success isn't permanent, and failure isn't fatal. – Mike Ditka

Looking to the Future

By Steve Kennedy, IASCOE President

Now that the election season is over, we need to begin looking at the future. No matter which candidate it was, they all seemed to tout “change”. If you are like me, you are probably wondering what changes are coming. While we may not know what the future holds, we must be involved in shaping it. That is really what the NASCOE organization is all about. It allows us to be a part of the process instead of just standing idly by.

At the 2008 NASCOE National Convention in Omaha the issue of national dues was discussed at length. Currently NASCOE receives \$40 per member annually from each state. This amount has not changed in many years and obviously costs have continually increased. While the Executive Board has taken significant action to reduce expenses, it became apparent that an increase in dues would be necessary. After much deliberation the Convention delegates voted to increase the National dues from \$40 per member to \$55 for an increase of \$15 per member per year beginning next year.

With an increase in National dues looming, your IASCOE Directors took up the issue at their Fall Quarterly meeting. (As a side note, the Quarterly meeting was held during an evening when the STO held training in Des Moines. This resulted in saving a substantial amount in travel and overnight expenses!!!). After much discussion, the Directors voted to present the following dues rate resolution to the IASCOE membership at the 2009 Annual Convention (April 3 and 4, 2009 at Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston, IA):

Grades 6 and below will increase \$20 to \$70.00 per year

Grades 7 thru 9 will increase \$25 to \$90.00 per year

Grades 10 and above will increase \$40 to \$140.00 per year

I think anytime we pay dues to an organization, we want to know what benefit we receive from being a member. I firmly believe that if we think about it just a little, we will quickly realize the true worth of IASCOE / NASCOE especially in times like these. Here are just a few things that come to my mind:

FERS Sick Leave – A majority of our members are FERS employees and as you know under current law FERS employees receive no benefit for unused accrued sick leave when they retire. For many years, NASCOE has been at the forefront in the fight to rectify this inequity. At every NASCOE Legislative Conference in Washington, DC, we have brought up this issue with our legislators. Finally, there seems to be a break in the impasse. Legislation that would give FERS employees credit for unused sick leave made it halfway through the US Congress this year. It will again come up in the new Congress this coming year. **While we do not know what form the legislation will take, it is extremely important that we (NASCOE) keep this issue front and center.** We have worked too hard to not see this change come to fruition.

PT Reclassification – The NASCOE PT Reclassification Task Force has been working with management to bring attention to the need for PT reclassification due to the increased

knowledge, responsibility, and complexity expected of PT's. NASCOE proactively hired a retired classifier to assist NASCOE in identifying and developing the position descriptions. Recently the National Office (HRD) has begun to conduct field reviews for Program Technician Classification. HRD has assured NASCOE that the field review process will be completed by the end of the 2008 calendar year.

Reorganization - Didn't we already deal with FSA Tomorrow? And very successfully, I might add!! No county offices in Iowa were closed as originally planned. But that doesn't mean reorganization has gone away to stay. In fact we may be entering a new round of reorganization discussions very soon; especially with a new Congress and Administration at hand. House Agricultural Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN) has given strong signals that he intends to address USDA reorganization when the new Congress is seated next year. A recent news article states that **Congressman Peterson "wants to reorganize the Agriculture Department to consolidate and modernize the sprawling department next year. It is very, very important that NASCOE be at the table when these discussions are being held. We have to tell the FSA story and as individuals it is difficult to be heard, but with NASCOE we can speak in one unified voice.**

These are just a few things that our NASCOE organization will be dealing with in the future. We must have a **STRONG** membership to make a real difference.

Lastly, at this time of year we rightly turn our focus towards "family". As a new first-time grandpa this year, I too am looking forward to some time to share with my granddaughter!

I also want to thank my IASCOE "family". I sincerely feel that we are a family. We share our ups and downs with each other. It is such a privilege to be your IASCOE President!! It has allowed me to get to know many of you even better. If I can be of any assistance over the next year, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you!!!



Steve Kennedy

IASCOE President



Checking Out *NASCOE Now*

By Cindy Mensen, IASCOE Vice President

NASCOE Now is added to the NASCOE website twice a month—and sometimes more often if there is a “special edition”. Each issue consists of several articles that keep all members timely informed about benefits and employment concerns that are important to all FSA employees. The information is presented by NASCOE officers, committee leaders and other members to the publicity chair. Go to www.nascoe.org and check out the latest issue! The good news is past issues are available if you missed them the first time, go to the website and then click on Publicity. Sign up for automatic notification to the website on the home page. Also, here are some topics you can learn more about in an issue of *NASCOE Now*:

In the November 21st issue:

- How to choose a healthcare program
- How to get a discount at Sam’s Club (do this before December 5th!)
- Where to obtain a negotiation/consultation form, which can be found on the NASCOE website, (www.nascoe.org) and the deadline for submission December 15. Let WDC know what forms or issues need to be fixed and offer your solutions!
- Deadlines for awards: recognize your peers for dedication to their **community, FSA or IASCOE/NASCOE**. Also, learn about scholarship applications for both employees and students.
- Info about TSP and the recent global downturn.
- NASCOE membership numbers from across the nation.

In the October 26th issue:

- Do you want credit for your unused sick leave when you retire? Did you send a message to communicate your stand on this issue? Capwiz made it easy to do this.
- Publicity awards are available for newsletter articles. Become a contributor, share your talents!
- What is a prohibited personnel practice (PPP)?
- Flexible spending accounts and 10 good reasons to enroll.
- How to donate your old cell phone and the proceeds will be used to purchase calling cards for the military.
- Tips on writing to Congress and how to **address correspondence properly**.

Stay informed by checking out the varied topics found in each issue of *NASCOE Now*. Know that your membership dollars provide support for IASCOE and NASCOE and the always changing journey to retain the jobs and benefits we now enjoy.

Also, be sure to mark down **April 3-4, 2009**, for the IASCOE Convention as we host our neighboring states with the **MIDWEST AREA RALLY!** It’s our turn to show off Iowa and the great group of employees we have in our state. Put it on your calendar now and let’s spend some time together next spring!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM SOUTHWEST IOWA

As I write this, I am sitting here very full and content after a delicious Thanksgiving dinner at our daughter's house. Our day was filled with good food and great family time.

I have to work tomorrow. In our office, we take turns working the Friday after Thanksgiving. I went shopping last year so I GET to work this year. I am going to be at Wal-Mart at 6:00 AM to get a few good buys before I head off to work. For those of you who are shopping on Black Friday I hope you enjoy your day.

We have started out the year trying to explain the new SURE program. There have been several changes from the original program but I think they are probably good changes. The ACRE program sounds a bit more difficult to explain. I hope that after more training, everything will fall into place and we will be able to supply the producer with the knowledge he needs to make the right decision for his operation. I am sure there will be other challenges during the coming months but I am equally sure as FSA employees we will exceed all expectations.

I want to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a reminder that the greatest gifts are not the ones under the tree but are faith, family and friends and can only be wrapped with love. May the beauty and magic of Christmas be carried in your heart always.



Sue Beemer

IASCOE Secretary/Treasurer

Taylor County

PLEASE WELCOME KARI BARKER
NEW EMPLOYEE AT THE MUSCATINE COUNTY FSA
BY KARI BARKER



Hi everyone!!

I am Kari Barker with the Muscatine FSA office. I live north of Durant on a forty acre farm with my husband Kevin who works at Pioneer Hi-Breed as a Shipping Coordinator. I also have a daughter Jordan who just turned six and is in Kindergarten. We just had a new baby boy named Max born on October 4th.

My Family and I raise Angus and Limonsin cattle and bale small square hay bales during the summer for extra income. I guess you can call us old McDonald's farm. We also have chickens, goats, sheep, dogs, cats and a pet rabbit. So you can say that we are always on the run at K2B Hay and Cattle.

I have a two year degree from Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo. I majored in Ag Business. For the past seven years I worked as a Shipping and Receiving Manager for Schumacher Company in Durant. They are distributors of after market parts for bean platforms, hay equipment and tillage parts.

In my spare time when I can find some I love to cook, work out in the yard and work on redoing my old farm house.

I look forward to meeting and working with everyone in the organization.

Patty Van Zyl, PT from Sioux County has been selected by *Taste of Home* to have her recipe for Coconut Graham Bars published in the 2008 *Holiday & Celebrations* Cookbook.

Coconut Graham Bars

2 cups graham cracker crumbs

½ cup sugar

½ cup butter, melted

2 cups flaked coconut

1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk

TOPPING:

1 ½ cups packed brown sugar

6 tablespoons heavy whipping cream

¼ cup butter, cubed

¾ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips.

In a small bowl, combine graham cracker crumbs, sugar and butter. Press onto the bottom of a greased 13 inch X 9 inch X 2 inch baking pan. Bake at 350° for 8 – 10 minutes or until lightly browned.

Combine coconut and milk; spread over warm crust. Bake for 12–15 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack.

In a large saucepan, combine the brown sugar, cream and butter. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Boil for 1 minute. Remove from the heat; stir in chocolate chips until melted. Spread over coconut layer. Cool before cutting.

Yield: 4 ½ dozen.

Patty said this is one of her mom's recipes and they called them "Out of This World Bars." *"These rich, chocolaty bar cookies travel well and feed a lot of people so they're ideal for potlucks."* –Patty Van Zyl, Hospers, Iowa

Pictured above is Patty with her complimentary copy of the *Holiday & Celebrations* Cookbook 2008.





Recipe Correction!!

One of our recipes in the IASCOE cookbook needs a little fixing!! On Page 205, Robin Braddock's recipe for Gluten Free Choc Banana Bread should read:

2 cups of Gluten Free Flour (not 4!)

Great News!!

After hearing from so many of you,

we have ordered an additional 100 cookbooks.

If you have not already contacted us, you still have the chance to purchase the 2008 IASCOE Cookbook

“Recipes to Crow About”

We cannot guarantee delivery by Christmas but they should be available by early January. The price is \$20.00.

Contact Tammy Pruin or Glenda Von Arb if you would like to reserve your copy today!



Lisa Smith, PT Union County,
Celebrates her 25-year anniversary
With FSA!



A 2008 Flood Story!

Carol Strawhacker works in the Des Moines County FSA Office. I asked her to tell me a little about “living through the flood”. She and her husband lived in Oakville which was flooded when the levee broke on the Mississippi River on June 14th 2008.

In her words: We started moving on Wednesday June 11th after I got home from work. We moved the larger living room & bedroom furniture out on Wednesday evening & then I spent all day Thursday, Friday & Saturday moving the rest of the “stuff” up on the 2nd floor. They say the water topped the levee some time between 6 & 7 on Saturday evening & then the levee broke through around 8. At that time we still had electricity & gas at our house & they were still saying that it was mandatory evacuation on Monday at 8:00 AM. We thought we had plenty of time to get our stuff out.

In 1993 I had left home at 8:00 AM to play in a golf tournament & there wasn’t even anyone talking about closing the road off out by the river bridge that I had left town by that morning. My son called at noon & said they told them they had to evacuate Oakville. We didn’t have as much time to move stuff then, but in about 3 days it was all over.

It was all of two weeks before we could get back to our house. It was dry, but we had 2 blocks of 4 feet of water between us and our home. A lot of the others in town had already been in their homes & had started the cleaning process of tossing everything out in the yard. It was such a relief to be able to drive up to our house that I can’t begin to explain. Then the work began. Because we both still had to work our regular jobs, we’d go in as often as we could & started hauling out all of that “stuff “ that I had stashed upstairs. Thank God for our family & friends that came & helped us or we’d still be hauling “stuff”. I never realized how much something like this could affect your memory & everything that you do in your normal life, because nothing is normal for a long time.

We have decided to tear down the old house & just wait & see what happens at this point. There are still so many unknowns about whether the levees will be repaired & how well & when & if there will be enough people left to go back for Oakville to survive.

We’ve bought a house in West Burlington, but still have to go back to Oakville, because the weeds are growing like mad. I guess we’ll never really leave Oakville.

I talked to Carol just the other day and after painting and doing a few other things to their house in West Burlington, they are starting to get settled. It has been a very, very long busy summer for them and everyone else who had to deal with the flooding.

Anna Hornbaker, PT Van Buren County FSA



2009 NASCOE Members Scholarship Program

This year marks the second year of the NASCOE Members Scholarship Program. This scholarship program is set up specifically for NASCOE Members who are enrolled in adult education courses to further enhance their careers with FSA.

NASCOE will award one deserving individual in each Area with a \$200.00 award! Please consider taking a few minutes from your studies and complete the nomination form to compete for the award! This form can be found on the NASCOE website at www.nascoe.org under the scholarship tab.

The deadline to submit the scholarship application to your Area Chairperson is January 15, 2009. Please notice that this application is completed and mailed directly to your area chairperson.....for our Midwest Area that would be:

Les Maierhofer
7775A Route 47
Yorkville, IL 60560
630-553-5821 (Office)
630-553-7442 Fax
les.maierhofer@il.usda.gov

IASCOE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

IASCOE will again this year be offering scholarships to high school seniors, graduates, or full time college students, up to the Bachelor Degree level. (Full-time is a minimum of 12 credit hours). Eligibility requirements are a minimum of a "C" average (using the 4.0 system) in **both** junior and senior years of high school or as a college student. Also the applicant must be a legal dependent of an **IASCOE** member, a member's spouse, or even be an **IASCOE** member. The **IASCOE** member must be a county FSA employee with membership during the last five consecutive years or has been a member since becoming a permanent FSA county employee, including the current year.

DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS OPPORTUNITY!! Part of your annual dues goes directly to the **IASCOE** scholarship fund. If you or someone you know is an active member and will have a college bound

student or has a student currently in college, take advantage of the **IASCOE** scholarship program. The scholarship application may be printed from the NASCOE web-site @ www.nascoe.org. Once you are at the site, click on “scholarship” and you will find the scholarship application. You may type in your information and print the application, or print the application and complete. **BE SURE TO PRINT THE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION CHECKLIST** as well as this page will assist you in making sure you have all required information submitted.

Please note the checklist return date should be **January 31st** for the Iowa Scholarships. State winners are then forwarded on to the Area Scholarship committee to be judged for Area and National awards.

Please return the completed applications to me at the address below by January 31st, 2010.

DON'T PUT IT OFF, GET YOUR APPLICATION COMPLETED TODAY!

Tammy Pruin

16316 190th St

Mason City, IA 50401

515-532-2849 (Office phone)

515-532-3506 (Office Fax)

tammy.pruin@ia.usda.gov



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The website is a great place to order gifts for Christmas, birthdays, retirements or any other special occasion. Gift certificates are available too!!

Emblems sales remain the backbone of our scholarship program. Please support this program, get quality merchandise and give a young person a great start in life!!

Visit the website www.nascoeemblemsonline.com

AH, RETIREMENT

By Alan Hilleman

CED, Marshall Co, Retired

When I finally set a date to retire (1/31/08), my wife Karen and I began talking about some of the things we wanted to do and places we wanted to see. Her dad had vicarious adventures in Alaska via the ALASKA magazine. His only problem was that he would have to leave the farm for more than a few hours to actually see Alaska for himself and that did not happen. I told Karen that a trip to Alaska was something I really wanted to do, not only for us but to bring back pictures and stories of what we had seen to show and tell her dad.

In the late fall of 2007, my niece and her husband in Denver, CO sent out an e-mail to family and friends letting us know that they would be celebrating their 20th anniversary on August 20, 2008 with a cruise to Alaska and any of us were welcome to accompany them.

They would get us in touch with their travel agent who could give us details and costs. As it turned out, Karen and I were the only two who coughed up the down payment to accompany them. Well, we had to spend our tax stimulus money somewhere, didn't we?



My niece babysat our kids many times, when they were little, and her husband is my age and we always have enjoyed the times when we have been able to get together, so with just the four of us going, we were all looking for a good time.

Our cruise left Vancouver, BC late Sunday afternoon on August 24th and would return to Vancouver on September 1st. Valerie and Dick had flown up earlier in the week to be there on the 20th for their own anniversary celebration. We flew up on Saturday the 23rd, stayed at a hotel and met them on the ship Sunday.

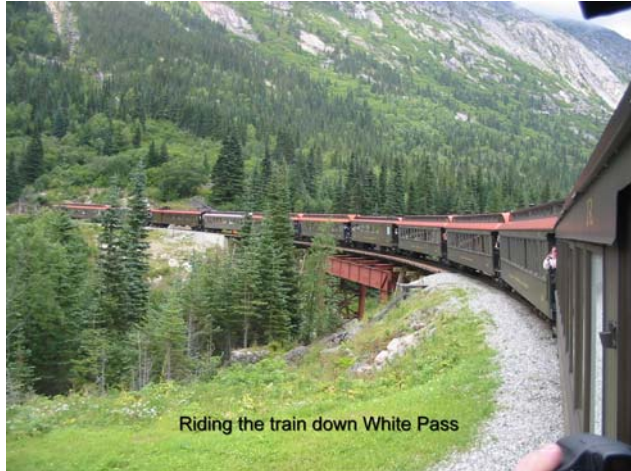
Our ship was the Norwegian Sun, which offered freestyle dining. This meant that we could eat at any of the eleven restaurants on the ship at anytime and with whomever we desired. So the four of us ate together most of the time. One was a buffet for all three meals and must have been 50 to 60 feet in length and had a variety of food to satisfy anyone. We found out they had bread pudding most of the time and it was as good as Mom used to make.

We cruised up the inside passage and stopped at Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway. We had purchased tickets for day excursions in each town well in advance of the cruise. In Ketchikan it was rainy and chilly. Well, it was chilly most of the cruise due to the time of year. However, Ketchikan is a rain forest area and averages over 160 inches (13+ feet) of rain a year, so seeing the sun there is rare. We took a bus tour of the city, seeing the lush forest, totem poles, standing and being created from huge trees, and a now closed salmon canning factory. They did show us how the canning was done, which was quite a process and very interesting.

From the canning factory, we took a boat back to the docks to do a little shopping in town. While on the way, we saw two or three humpback whales from a distance and bald eagles up close. We got some good photos of the eagles, at least.

On the way to Juneau we saw three killer whales not far from the ship. In Juneau we boarded a bus and toured the city in route to Mendenhall Glacier. The 70+ miles of highway in and around Juneau do not connect Juneau to anywhere else. To get to or from Juneau to or from anywhere, you must fly or go by boat. I thought that was strange for a state capitol, but Juneau is a beautiful city.

Seeing the Mendenhall Glacier is breathtaking. While it was not raining, it was overcast, except right over the glacier and there the sun was shining on the ice and it just glistened blue. Due to the compaction, only blue color is visible. Ice calves were floating in the lake in front of the glacier. They looked small until you saw the boat of another excursion, with a lot of people on it get close enough to compare. The calves were huge and only 10% of the ice was showing.



Upon leaving Juneau for Skagway, we cruised up Tracy Arm Fjord to see Sawyer Glacier. It was amazing to be on such a large ship and be so close to trees and mountains on both sides of the ship at the same time. We saw many rushing streams of water, from melting snow, cascading down the mountains on either side of us, all along the way. They were spectacular. Looking straight ahead of the ship, it was not evident of anywhere to go but into the trees. There were many zig zag turns to work our way back to the glacier. Soon chunks of ice were floating in the water and the ship had to zig zag avoid them. They didn't look so big from the deck.

We got only so close to Sawyer Glacier, but had to turn around due to the large number of ice chunks in the water. At this point a rescue boat with four people left the ship to take pictures, for us to buy, and got quite close to a couple of the ice chunks. It was then that we realized why the ship was avoiding them. That boat and people were dwarfed by the chunks and I am glad the ship was avoiding them. The water in the fjords was very cold and very deep.

The next morning we were in Skagway. We boarded a bus for a trip up White Pass into Canada to the summit of White Pass, into the Yukon Territory and had lunch in Caribou Crossing, just above the old mining town of Carcross. The scenery was beautiful, once we got high enough and out of the fog. The amount of water up on top is amazing. But then, they do get 100 feet of snow up there each winter and I did say feet. The aspen trees were beginning to turn yellow and that added to the beauty.

We returned to Frazer, BC just above the Canada/US border and boarded a train and came down White Pass on the opposite side from which the bus took us. I took over 30 pictures in the 20 mile ride, as I stood on the back platform of the railcar to get the best views. In one place we saw part of the trail the gold miners took up that pass in 1859. Their story is unbelievable. So many wanted so much and so few survived the climb and fewer yet found gold.

From Skagway, we cruised two days back to Vancouver, never out of sight of land, so the water was usually quite smooth. I did, however, need some Dramamine one day and that was the night of the chocoholic buffet party with gobs of chocolate entrees. Oh, well, that saved my waistline.

After we docked in Vancouver on Sunday morning, the 31st, got through customs and found our luggage, we took a bus tour of the city. Vancouver is a beautiful, clean city and the tour was worth every cent it cost. We would have loved to have spent more time in the produce market in Gastown. They had the most delicious looking fruits and vegetables. Our mouths were just watering.

Early the next morning, we flew home. As we were flying Continental Airlines, we had to go through Houston. The Captain informed us that we would be approaching Houston from the west due to Hurricane Gustov and that we may hit some rough air. Well, that turned out to be a non-event, but we had a very short time to catch our flight out. We made it but our luggage didn't. Thankfully, it was all delivered to us at our home the next day and nothing was missing.

Going to Alaska was a great trip and I highly recommend it and will probably go again; all made possible by retirement. AH, RETIREMENT!!!!

Canine Lesson Learned

Riley, my miniature schnauzer puppy never ceases to remind me of his nerve-racking life. After all, he has the imperative tasks to guard the house, to keep a watchful eye of all neighborhood activities, to play with squeaky toys, and schedule hours of peaceful rest. What a stressful life.....for a canine!!!!



On a recent Saturday afternoon, he once again proved to me a valuable life lesson. This particular afternoon I made a batch of warm chocolate chip cookies. After the last cookie was baked and set on the counter to cool I slipped onto the couch for an afternoon nap. A short hour nap later my appetite was craving one of those freshly baked cookies. As I ambled to the kitchen counter I noticed that not even a single crumb was left. Of course, I checked the door to make sure it was locked because a neighborhood cookie monster (the annoying neighbor) does like to visit occasionally. The only one that could have done this crime was the over-worked Riley. Right there he sat in the kitchen with those glaring innocent eyes! How a 18 lb dog possibly eat three dozen chocolate chip cookies!

Just like Riley, we all have many “stressors” in our life. The demands of work, family, interpersonal relationships, financial struggles, and many others. One “stressor” that we all have in common is that we all work with at the Farm Service Agency. We all are adapting to new programs/changes of delayed Farm Bill, acclimating to new team members, and utilizing new computer applications just to name a few. The following are some ideas that can help each of us manage some of the stresses in life:

1. Recognize what items cause you to become stressed and how you react to them.
2. Look at items that YOU can change in life, some things are plain out of your control.
3. Don't forget to take time to do things you enjoy - spending time with grandchildren, knit, scrapbook, cook, or read a book.
4. Exercise - go for a walk, jog or lift weights
5. Stay healthy - Avoid excessive use of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine and sugars. Eat more fruits and vegetables.
6. Practice setting goals - Utilize realistic and achievable goals to prioritize tasks. Make sure you reward yourself when your goals are achieved.
7. Don't try to be perfect - No one is perfect including yourself. Don't hesitate to ask for help when needed.
8. Refrain from criticizing others - Instead provided compliments and ask if you can help others.
9. Think Positive - Although it is easy to resort to pessimistic thoughts, becoming more optimistic will reduce anxiety and stress.
10. Have some fun! Laugh, smile, and spend time with people who you enjoy!

Even Riley knows how to treat himself with a few chocolate chip cookies every now and then after a very demanding hectic day! Be sure to take care of yourself during this busy time. Best of luck with life challenges that we all will encounter during 2009!

Submitted, by Aaron Moore, CED Webster County

IOWA GAMES

TEAM STANDINGS AFTER 4 GAMES

Team Names	Total Points
Lyonettes	2115
Flirtinis	1880
Woodbury Wise Acres	1840
Jasper CyHawks	1810
Ditsy Chicks	1670
Buchanan Brainiacs	1630
River Rats	1630
State Office Brainstormers	1610
www.waywoostwomen.com	1610
Duh	1580
The Whiz Bangs	1490
Beautiful Clayton Co	1410
Gamblers Anonymous	1400
Team Knowledge	1400
Cifoxers	1280
Cotton Sisters	1160
Franklin Brainiacs	1150
Hancock County Chicks	1150
5:00 Somewhere	1140
Brain-e-ax	1125
Team Winneshiek	930
DC Dollies	920
The Dear's	810
Poky Prodigies	740
The Five Amigos	720
Poweshiek Mavericks	350

Harvest Chronicle

Factual happenings from the harvest records of Steve Abbas, CED Franklin County

Editors Note: I keep a record of crop varieties, yields, weather conditions, and events. I wrote this “Harvest Chronicle” based on records taken from 1995.

Background: My parents purchased a farm about 3 miles south of Hampton in the early 1980’s and they moved there. My wife, Jan, and I then moved to the old home farm where I grew up. The farm my parents purchased is just north of the Maynes Grove county park in Franklin County, south of Hampton about 4 miles. The Franklin County Conservation Board purchased the park land probably in the late 1980’s and has developed the 220 acre parcel into a wonderful park. There are several man-made lakes, a beautiful 4 seasons building, walking trails, and native woods. The 4 seasons lodge hosts many function including weddings, graduations, family gatherings, meetings, and recently a funeral. We have had several district FSA meetings there.

The farm my parents purchased butts up against the park. The farm is very hilly which is pretty untypical for our area. A pond was constructed by the building site prior to my parents purchasing the farm. My parents had a number of terraces installed on the north parcel of the farm. Currently I have about 40 tillable acres and about 15 acres of CRP on this farm. Every year when I get done planting, I have to go to the highest point on the farm to make sure everything is planted due to the many terraces and contour lines.

The Maynes Grove Park and Maynes creek bring a lot of wildlife to the area. I have seen numerous deer, pheasants, wild turkey, beaver, and even eagles. The wildlife loves the crop buffet I plant for them. One year the beaver had a superhighway system constructed in the lower corn field. It seems those cornstalks are a perfect construction material for beaver dams.

I digress – the date was October 13, 1995. Mind you this was Friday the 13th. Before I go any further, I am not a superstitious person.

Event #1 – I get up early in the morning because I have a big day planned. I had a couple of loads of corn on wagons at my place that I wanted to auger into the drying bin. I have my IH 706 gas tractor on the auger. Keep in mind this tractor has purred like a kitten all summer and early fall. The tractor starts but doesn’t run well. I put in a new set of sparkplugs and the tractor sounds like new. What a wonderful day! I finish unloading the wagons of corn into the drying bin.

Event #2 – I climb up the outside ladder of the 30 foot drying bin. This bin is used to dry corn. It has a drying floor, 20 HP fan and burner, and a two down auger Sukup stirring machine. I peak through a roof hatch into the bin and the stirrator is not running. There is a gearbox on the inside end of the stirrator that drives a large screw that moves the two down augers back and forth. On further examination, I determined the gearbox was destined for the junkyard – it had stirred its last corn. This resulted in a call to the local Farm Service business that had a new gearbox. They said they would be out sometime

during the day and put the new gearbox on the stirrator. Gearboxes are not cheap – but, oh well – the day is early and things are not that bad.

Event #3 – Dad runs the combine from my place to his place and starts combining corn. I have a 6600 John Deere combine. It sure isn't fancy but is large enough for my farming operation and I try to maintain it in top notch condition. As he starts opening up the field, he smells diesel fuel. Tractors and combines have some odors but the diesel fuel smell was a bit overpowering. I use my nose to sniff out the problem and discover a fuel line on an injector on the engine has cracked. The year is 1995 and I have a cellular bag phone at this time. I have described my parents farm but I failed to tell you I call this place the "twilight zone". Phone reception is not good here and at times I even have trouble with radio reception. I stand on top of the combine to call my John Deere mechanic who has his business in Ackley. He tells me the Hampton John Deere store has the injector line I need so dad heads for Hampton. I discover that you kind of have to stand on your head in the engine area of the combine to take this injector line off. I am thinking it might be easier and quicker to completely dismantle the engine. I think of my college friend, Mark who is an ag engineer. I know that Mark wouldn't design something this impossible to repair, or would he? My other thought was that the engineer was a chimpanzee. Dad returns with the new injector line. He discovers I have a new name for the old injector line. The line gets fixed and doesn't even leak. Now I smell like a diesel refinery. Oh well – combine didn't burn up.

Event #4 – The combine is running and corn is getting combined. Life is good! I even have a bit of a confident swagger because I played mechanic and repaired the combine myself, with only a few Hail Marys. Dad has a 24 foot bin on his place with a Shivvers drying system and a 10HP fan and burner. We leave an old Kewanee 8" grain auger setup to this bin year round. I start augering corn into the bin. It is a pleasurable experience to watch that first load of corn being augered into the bin. You can hear the corn go up the auger and hit the inside walls of the bin as the grain spreader in the top of the bin spreads the corn in an even pattern inside the bin. Not too long after starting this unloading process, the auger decides it has had too much and stops working. I determine the problem is on top of the auger and climb up the bin ladder to investigate. A bearing has gone out of the top of the auger. I make another discovery that this bearing is not a typical bearing. Apparently the Kewanee company wanted to develop their own unique bearing. The only possible dealer close by is Latimer Implement in Latimer, about 15 miles away. Using the "bag phone" on top of the bin, I call and discover they have one of these bearings left. I hop in my old pickup, "ol Blue", and get the bearing – I recall asking the implement store if these bearings are made of gold (based on the price). After returning to dad's place with the bearing, I attempt to make the appropriate repair. I previously said my parents place was scenic, you can see a long distance standing on top of the bin and repairing the auger. There is also a lot of wind up there! As I was making the repair, I was thinking my parents could set up a wind turbine at this specific point and generate enough electricity to power Franklin County, maybe even Des Moines. Auger fixed – no one hurt – let's get on with harvest.

Event #5 – I have an IH 886 diesel tractor I use mainly for crop spraying. Sometimes I use this tractor to pull wagons in the fall just to put hours on it. First load of corn is finally in the bin and it is time to go out and get another load. For some reason the tractor will not go in gear. I discover the linkage in the gear system has a problem. I call my local IH mechanic on the "bag phone". If you hold the bag just right in

the “twilight zone” it works. The mechanic snickers and tells me it is a simple fix if you get a 3 foot long metal rod about 3/8 inch in diameter. “You need to bend the end of the rod and stick it down this place and then move it in this direction.” My IH mechanic is a nice guy and a friend but I have visions of where to stick the metal rod. I follow his instructions and get the gear unstuck.

Event #6 – I start unloading the second load of corn into the bin. Time to start the 10 HP drying fan on the bin. Very simple process – press the start button. These kind of drying fans, when running, reminds me of being around a jet engine. I can picture the Blue Angels racing across a bright blue picturesque sky. Hit button – no Blue Angels. I unload a couple more loads into the bin while continuing to try and resolve my drying fan issue. On the second and subsequent tries to start the drying fan, something in the back of my head says I should listen to my friend, Jim’s, advice on matters such as this - “it ain’t goin to happen”. It is starting to get dark and I tell dad it is time to quit for the day. I will call an electrician in the morning to get the fan going.

As I head home in “ol blue”, I reflect on the day. It is only a 5 minute drive home so it doesn’t leave much time for reflection. I start calculating in my head and figure we got about 13 acres of corn harvested that day. How fitting!

Event #7 – I am at home and out of the “twilight zone”. That 20 HP motor on the drying bin at home is working like it should, the burner is on and we are drying corn. The FS boys put a new gearbox on the stirrator and it is stirring away. I am in the house and telling Jan about my day. You can hear the whistling noise of the drying fan from the house. I recall a line from the FFA motto – “For I know the joys and discomforts of an agricultural life”. I had some discomforts on this 13th day of October, 1995 (Friday) but there is this joy we are moving forward with harvest. It is late and I head for bed. I wake up to an eerie sound – silence. I can’t hear the drying fan running. Through a half open sleepy eye, I look at the clock beside the bed – 11:59.



Are you looking for a painless, yet significant way to acknowledge the achievement(s) of a peer or coworker? IASCOE is offering an excellent opportunity to do just that. Simply fill out the attached nomination/cover sheet form and submit to Tom Lane prior to February 1st. The winners will receive a very special recognition at the IASCOE Convention.

In addition, please submit to Tom, the names of employees who will cross a sick leave threshold (1000 hrs, 1500 hrs, 2000 hrs, etc) so those folks can be recognized as well.

Many thanks,

ROSE WOERNER, CED
BLACK HAWK CO. FSA
rose.woerner@ia.usda.gov
ph: (319)296-3185

Awards Committee Article

Hello everyone. It is that time again—to nominate a deserving person for an IASCOE Distinguished Service Award! The three areas in which you may nominate a person are:

Service to IASCOE/NASCOE, Service to FSA-Agriculture, and Community Service.

Please take time to recognize a deserving person you know. It is important to recognize folks for their outstanding work. Please return the Nomination form and Cover Sheet to me by February 1, 2009.

An electronic version of the Nomination form and Cover Sheet is available from the NASCOE website or you may use the form I have included in this article.

You may send the information by regular mail to my address—Tom Lane 501 S 4th Street Maquoketa, Iowa 52060 or by email to one of the following email addresses: tom.lane@ia.usda.gov or trlane@mchsi.com. I believe you will need to print & scan the completed form because it does not let you save the completed document. Thank you for taking time to nominate that deserving person in your office or district. I want you to know that I appreciate your efforts and the person you nominate will also.

Lastly, I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!

Tom Lane, Committee Chair

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD COVER SHEET

RECOMMENDED AWARD _____

_____ State _____ Area

AWARD NOMINEE

Name _____

Home Address _____

Telephone _____

Office Address _____

Telephone (_____) _____

Email Address _____

FSA Position _____

PERSON SUBMITTING NOMINATION

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

Office Phone _____

Email Address _____

I CERTIFY THAT I AM A NASCOE MEMBER

(Signature/Person Making the Nomination)

I CERTIFY THAT THE NOMINEE IS A NASCOE MEMBER AND MEETS THE
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS TO RECEIVE THIS AWARD:

(Signature/State Officer)

(State Organization Position)

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

Recommended Award:

- _____ Service to NASCOE
- _____ Service to FSA-Agriculture
- _____ Community Service

State: _____

Area: _____

Award Nominee Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Office Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

FSA Position Held: _____

Person submitting Nomination: _____

Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Office Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Brief Explanation: *(see instructions)*

INSTRUCTIONS

A nomination should be brief, factual, and specific! The use of general terms, adjectives, superlatives, and conclusions not backed by facts should be avoided. Specific examples and details should be given to support the nomination.

Some recommended items to be included in each of the three categories for a DSA nomination are listed below. However, any other pertinent information can also be included.

SERVICE TO NASCOE : Years of NASCOE membership; committee activity; offices held' contribution; to the organization; FSA background.

SERVICE TO FSA-AGRICULTURE: How long has nominee worked for FSA?; what program or special project have they worked with?; size of county and number of farmers; any outstanding contribution to FSA and/or Agriculture?; has nominee received any special awards or promotions?; NASCOE background.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: What organization(s) has nominee worked with?; do they hold an office or any special committee assignment?; their church affiliation, family status, children, etc.; what has nominee done to improve the community he/she lives in?; any special recognition received?; FSA and NASCOE background.

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OASCOE State Convention

Submitted by Dee Ann Lehn

MWA Benefits Chairperson

Once again, I had the opportunity to travel to Ohio and attend their state convention which was held November 14th and 15th near Columbus. The convention began with hospitality for members and guests. After which we were treated to the music of an up and coming young country singer, Melanie May. Melanie held the audience captive with her special style and fabulous voice. Following her performance, hypnotist, James Hatfield, took center stage and hypnotized a group of volunteers from the crowd which lead into a very entertaining show.

The business meeting was called to order the following morning with a report from Vice President, Mark Van Hoose. Guest speakers included SED, John Stevenson, STC Chairperson, Dorothy Leslie, NAFRC representative, James Zumbrink and RASCOE representative, Ruthie Ritchie. NASCOE MWA Alternate Executive, Charlene Neukomm, updated dated employees on NASCOE activities and goals.

Scott Morrison, from Byrens, Morrison, Nordmann and Associates, spoke to employees about financial planning. Jim Mace from J & M marketing explained insurance policies offers through his company including Long term Care, Cancer and Dental policies. Finally, Steve Connelly addressed the group via phone conference discussing such issues as the change of administration and budget restraints. He commented that FSA accomplished a "Green Score Card" this week as far as IPIA reviews are concerned.

As always, the convention proved both informative and entertaining. Members are looking forward to attending the MWA Rally which will be held right here in our home state in April of 2009.



PERILS OF POLLY P.T.

PART 27

Written by Roseanne Woerner

Created by Dee Ann Lehn

Bang! Bang! Bang! The noise nails me as soon as I walk through the door. Unfortunately, I haven't had an appropriate amount of caffeine to get me through the earsplitting sound of hammer striking metal this early in the morning.

"What the heck," I say to the room at large. I wait for someone to explain what's going on. When nobody does, I reluctantly follow the sound.

I find Myra Stromberg in the GIS room. She's sitting on her haunches and whacking the crap out of a typewriter. There is a zealous gleam in her eye and every time she hits the typewriter, her mouth contorts from grimace to smile. "This is so cool," she says, as she offers me the hammer. "Want to whack it a couple of times."

"I'll pass," I say. "What are you doing anyway?"

"I have to destroy this before I throw it away," she tells me.

By now, the machine is severely dented and the keys are crumpled. There is an array of parts strewn across the floor. "I doubt that anyone could use it now," I say. "I think you can stop anytime."

Myra stands up and surveys her handiwork as Keely Spivine bursts through the door. "Oh my gosh, you guys, I just saw a mouse."

"So," Myra tells her. "Set a trap."

Keely is an excitable person, very high on drama. She's not from the farm. In fact, she's not from anywhere that most of us can relate to. "Eewww," she says. "I don't want to kill it. I just want it to go away."

"We have to get rid of it before it settles in and invites friends," Myra tells her.

Keely squints and hops around on her tiptoes. "Do it then," she says. "But don't tell me about it or let me see it."

Myra sighs. She hands me the hammer. "I can set the trap, if you and Fearless Fred here will take this stuff out to the dumpster?"

"Okay," I say and then to Keely I say, "Here Keely, grab one end."

Keely and I walk the typewriter through the office toward the back door. She's yammering nonstop about mice and how yucky they are and how she wishes someone else in the office, beside her,

would have experienced the brush of scuttling fur. She's not paying much attention to what we're doing so I tell her to take a breath and stop talking. We finally manage to synchronize our steps and we make pretty good progress until she sees the mouse again.

She loses her grip right away, but I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have dropped my end, had she not pierced my ear with her banshee scream. The typewriter plummets to the floor and lands mostly on my foot. I stand stone still for a couple of seconds. At first, my foot doesn't even hurt. It feels kind of frozen, like ice on skin, but when the numbness subsides...Ouch...big time.

TO BE CONTINUED...



IOWA WILL BE HOSTING THE 2009 MWA RALLY!

The 2009 Midwest Area Rally will be held April 3rd and 4th at the Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston. We will have a live band (The 8 Track Band) on Friday evening for entertainment. They are a 14 member band that plays 60's and 70's music with a mix of 50's and 80's added. There will be more information in the next few months! Plan on attending!

Contribute To the Next IASCOE Newsletter

If you have any stories, photos, jokes, quotes, or information that you would like to include in the next IASCOE Newsletter, send them to Tammy Eibey at tammy.eibey@ia.usda.gov.



*Get well thoughts to John Landgraf,
IASCOE Director and CED Sac County, Iowa*



Publicity Updates

Get Ready, Get Set...Go. It is as simple as that to submit articles for your state newsletters. So, get writing! Funny events, heartwarming stories, even tales of your family can be great reading. It sure beats interpreting handbooks!!!

NASCOE is blessed with many talented folks and it is evident when you read some of the fantastic articles published in the state newsletters. Also, don't forget the state publicity people who put together your newsletters. Collecting information and publishing it for the state takes a great deal of time and dedication. So be sure to submit deserving items for the NASCOE publicity contest.

Publicity award categories are: Best Newsletter; Best Website; Best Single Issue; Best Feature Story – Humor; and Best Feature Story – Human Interest.

Here is a summary of some of the publicity contest rules:

- Contest year is January 1 through December 31.
- Website entries must be in existence on January 1 of the contest year.
- The state must publish at least three (3) issues of their newsletter during the contest year for eligibility in the Best Newsletter category. Best Single Issue, Best Feature Story – Humor and Best Feature Story – Human Interest participants are **NOT** subject to this requirement. Articles published on websites are eligible to compete. Since websites may change prior to the date of judging, website articles must be submitted in printed form to judges for consideration.
- Area Judges must receive contest entries by **January 21 (this is just around the corner!)**
- Contest participants must be serving, or have served, under the permanent appointment in a county office and must be members, either regular or associate, in good standing, in NASCOE. Employees serving under a temporary appointment are eligible to participate in the contests providing they meet the membership requirements.
- Feature articles must show identification of author (name and county) and position held in the county office.
- Webmasters are reminded to keep their websites current. **Old news is not necessarily good news!**

So if you have a budding author in your state, a superior newsletter publisher or a wizard webmaster who keeps everyone up to date, why not submit their work for an award? Recognition is the best way to thank someone for their unselfish efforts for the association.

REMINDER: The NASCOE Newsletter will only be published in HARD COPY FORM in the Spring and Fall Issues as approved by the Executive Board in September 2008 as recommended by the National Publicity Committee meeting at the 2008 National Convention. The Winter and Summer Issues will only be found at The NASCOE website under publicity. I recommend you sign up for automatic notification to changes to the NASCOE website. This can be done on the main page. Visit www.nascoe.org

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Eibey Publicity Chair