

**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**

January 2009

Editor: Hank Becker

## **President's Message**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I hope this newsletter finds you well, warm, eager to face the New Year. I want to begin by providing an update on some recent activities the FAR-B Board has undertaken since Darwin "snookered" me into agreeing to accept candidacy for this office.

First of all, FAR-B has a new web page <http://www.far-b.org> that provides several advantages over the one previously found on the BARC home page. When you take a few minutes to check it out, you will find that it now provides the opportunity to pay your dues on line with a credit card. This capability will assist FAR-B considerably in the months ahead to collect registration fees for workshops, conferences and symposia that BARC scientists periodically host, and to receive payments for any FAR-B fundraising event, such as the BARC poinsettia sale.

The new web page also has a section devoted to Donations and Bequests. There you will find information on how FAR-B members and others can make tax-deductible donations to FAR-B, or alternatively, establish a "Donor Advised Fund" to make bequests or tax-deductible donations to a specific research activity at BARC. If you don't have access to the internet, please let me know and I will mail this information to you.

I want to also highlight FAR-B's major community outreach activity of 2008 that resulted in FAR-B receiving our fourth **President's Volunteer Service Award.**

This was our second Gold Medal Award presented by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation in recognition

of FAR-B's three-day Science Enrichment Program - *Exploring Environmental Science*, which was presented to all students of the Beltsville Elementary School. This huge effort was lead once again by Dianne Odland with assistance of FAR-B members, and BARC, NAL, and ARS Information Staff employee volunteers.

Another major FAR-B activity was the funding of seven travel grants to BARC scientists that permitted them to present their research at national or international scientific meetings. These grants provided funding for travel that budget constraints in their laboratory would not have permitted.



The Take Your Child to Work Day program was held for all children between the ages of 6 through 15 for BARC employees. The program included the showing of "Einstein Alive! The Science Show"--an Interactive Exchange Room, with lunch provided by FAR-B for the participants.

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Other FAR-B sponsored or cosponsored activities for BARC employees included: the BARC Poster Day competition for Student Interns from Eleanor Roosevelt High School and several other high schools in Prince George's County; three Distinguished Lecture presentations to BARC employees; the *Take Your Child to Work Day Program*; the *Administrative Professional's Day Training Program*; the *Leaders of Tomorrow - End of Summer Student Hire Program*; hosting of the Meyerhoff Scholars Summer Bridge Program; and the Hispanic Heritage Month -Special Emphasis Program.

From its beginning, one of FAR-B's most important functions has been to assist BARC scientists in hosting various research symposia, workshops and conferences. During this past year FAR-B assisted BARC scientists in hosting of two North Central Regional Committee meetings, one North Eastern Regional Committee meeting, and a national conference - *The Future of Dairy Cattle Genetics Research*. The latter was organized by the Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the dairy cattle improvement program in the USDA.

One of the tasks we have ahead this coming year is to assist in the planning and securing funds for BARC's Centennial celebration in 2010. Roger Lawson is FAR-B's representative on the BARC Centennial Planning Committee, and as plans are firmed up, we will attempt to keep you informed via <http://www.far-b.org> and *The FAR-B News* of the various events that are scheduled so you might attend one or more of these BARC Centennial events.

Warm regards,

**Vern Pursel, President**

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### **Area Director's Report**

It has been just one year ago that I was appointed Director of the Beltsville Area. During the year, I have greatly appreciated the support and efforts of FAR-B. It has been an exciting and interesting year and no

doubt the coming year will bring lots of challenges and opportunities.

Change seems to be a word that is heard a lot in Washington these days. We have a new President, a new administration and a new Secretary of Agriculture. Additional political appointees, including a new Undersecretary for REE (also now designated as the Department's Chief Scientist) will no doubt be named shortly. The recently enacted Farm Bill calls for a significant level of new planning to take place across a number of REE agencies, including ARS. While some of these changes were predictable, others were not. Who would have predicted the rapid deterioration in the banking industry and the resulting financial slowdown? The price of energy and food has seen wide and often unexplainable swings up and down.

No one knows where things will ultimately end up; uncertainty is a word that often accompanies change. There are things, however, that we do know for certain. As long as people require food, agriculture will remain important for the American people. Increased production is needed to feed a growing world population. We know that we need to protect our food supply from threats naturally occurring and intentional. Protection of our environment and effective stewardship and management of our resources will always be a need. We will need to ensure that our food is nutritious and promotes health. We will need to develop alternative uses for agricultural products to ensure competitiveness for American producers in an increasingly competitive global economy. All of these needs are reflected in the research activities conducted within the Beltsville Area. For that reason, I feel that the Beltsville Area has a unique and crucial role to play in ensuring that we as a nation maintain a viable and healthy agricultural enterprise.

Over the past year, Tom Sexton and I have been meeting with each of the laboratories within the Beltsville Area. This has been one of the highlights of the past year for both of us. This has allowed us to not only get to meet many employees that we had

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not had the opportunity to meet previously, but we have been able to see first-hand the incredible research that is being conducted throughout the Area. To say we have been impressed would be an understatement. Scientists in the Beltsville Area have a long history of research innovation and great impact. As we move forward in these times of change, I am convinced that the research being conducted at Beltsville today will add to that legacy and meet the challenges that face American agriculture.

**Joseph Spence**, *Area Director*

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### **Membership Update**

FAR-B's membership is currently approximately 175. As you would expect, there are continually some new members and some who don't pay their dues, but the number remains rather constant. Membership includes about 25 Patrons, 75 Personal members and 75 Associate members. In order to maintain and hopefully increase our membership, we regularly attempt to contact retirees and former and current BARC employees to urge them to join our ranks. Recently, we have also been making a concerted effort to recruit Sustaining members by contacting specific individuals associated with companies and organizations that BARC scientists are currently working with. It remains to be seen whether this effort will pay off.

Our efforts to recruit new members are often hampered by the lack of names and/or contact information of many past BARC employees and the apathy of others. Thus, we would welcome the help of all of you who read this newsletter in getting the word out to former colleagues, or other interested parties that you have contact with, about FAR-B's activities and encourage them to become members, if they do not already belong. If you wish to pass along to me names and addresses of possible new members, please do so and I will send them a FAR-B brochure and an invitation to join.

Finally, one of the benefits of FAR-B membership has always been a complimentary subscription to the *ARS Agricultural Research* magazine that is published monthly. However, I know that some of our members are not receiving this publication. If you are not receiving the magazine, and would like to do so, please contact me and I will try to get this corrected. My e-mail address is [stonerae@hughes.net](mailto:stonerae@hughes.net) or you can send a note to the FAR-B P.O. Box.

**Allan Stoner**, *Membership Chair*

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### **Combined Federal Campaign**

On May 5, 2008, the Local Federal Coordinated Committee for the Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area approved FAR-B's application to participate in the 2008 campaign. We have a number of assets that makes our application a winner for the past five years.

FAR-B has no paid employees. Our overhead is less than 3 percent. Some organizations exceed 25 percent overhead and are subject to an outside audit that can be very expensive. We are an all volunteer organization which communicates primarily via e-mail. FAR-B has elected officers that meet on a monthly basis.

Our major problem has been a decline in contributions since the general lull in the national economy.

We are optimistic about a recent approach that involves a personal letter to scientists and staff at Beltsville seeking donations. Our committee consists of Phil Kearney, Jim Anderson, Vern Pursel and Jim Smith.

One of the most outstanding activities sponsored by FAR-B has been our Community Outreach program. The educational facet sponsors an excellent program in the Beltsville area. It is one of those achievements that must play a major role in approving our 2009 application. Our application for the 2009 CFC has been sent. New regulations have been implemented by

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OPM for the 2009 approval process, which will involve the IRS.

**Phil Kearney**, *CFC Chair*

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### **Community Outreach**

FAR-B and BARC scientists are joining forces for the 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year to sponsor an all-school science enrichment program for Beltsville Elementary School. This year's program, *Chemistry in Everyday Life*, will be held from April 28 to 30 in the school's gymnasium. Four hands-on learning stations will be featured: Insect Chemistry, Food Chemistry, Chemistry and the Environment, and Power Plants (biofuels).

For several years now, this program has been honored to receive a President's Volunteer Service Award, an initiative of the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. Both the school and FAR-B take great pride in the program. The students and teachers look forward to it each year.

**Dianne Odland**, *Liaison with ARS Info Staff*

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### **BARC PLANS NOW FOR ITS CENTENNIAL IN 2010**

In 2010, BARC will celebrate 100 years of research accomplishments. The centennial year will include a series of events documenting the many contributions in plant and animal research that have made BARC an institution recognized worldwide.

Celebration plans include an event early in the year that documents the historical contributions that have made BARC a premier research facility. The speakers' committee has recommended several programs that focus on current and future research. There will be several events on selected topics consistent with the new priorities of BARC research with keynote speakers.

Presentations by keynote speakers will be followed by mini-symposia. These programs will describe the integration of current

programs and explain the innovative research plans for each major topic. A schedule of programs will be included on the centennial website.

Centennial events are intended to attract both scientists and the general public. The BARC centennial year provides an educational opportunity with emphasis on research designed to ensure a safe and abundant food supply for the 21st Century.

Kim Lewers has overall responsibility for the total program. Members of the committee include Amy Rossman, Rose Hammond, Beverly Clevidence, Joan Lunney, Lew Ziska, and Jennifer Woodward-Greene. FAR-B's BARC Centennial Chair Roger Lawson chairs the speakers' committee. A centennial website is planned. A program will probably be presented about every few months. Much of these plans are tentative, awaiting final approval by BARC Area Director Joe Spence.

**Roger Lawson**, *BARC Centennial Planning Committee*

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### **IN MEMORIAM**

#### **Harold Lindsay Barrows**

Harold Lindsay Barrows, of Chattanooga, died on Thursday, October 30, 2008, at his home at The Terrace of Mountain Creek.

He was born on Lookout Mountain, Tenn., on December 14, 1926, where he was enjoying retirement until his health declined.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty Callaway Barrows. He is survived by his son, Thomas Barrows of Dover, Del.

Harold was a veteran of WWII, having served as a sergeant in the U.S. Army. He received his BS degree in Chemistry from the University of Chattanooga and his MA in Analytical Chemistry and his PhD in Soil Chemistry from the University of Florida.

He served 38 years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At BARC, his positions included Head of the Analytical Chemical Laboratory; Research Leader for the Soil Pollution Research Program; Assistant to the Director at the U.S. Soils

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Laboratory; and Chief of the Northeast Branch-Soil and Water Conservation Research Division. He also served as Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Agriculture Research Service in Washington, DC and Chief of the Soil, Water and Air Sciences Program, Washington, DC.

As a member of the Administrator's Council, he served as the U.S. Leader for the US-USSR exchange for agricultural research and as chief negotiator in the field of soil science. He served as the soil science coordinator and negotiator for a similar program with the People's Republic of China.

Later in his career, he served as the Director of the National Soil Erosion Research Laboratory in West Lafayette, Ind. He was adjunct Professor of Agronomy at Purdue University and was named Professor Emeritus of Agronomy at Purdue University upon his retirement.

He was a charter member of the Senior Executive Service of the Federal Government. He was elected a Fellow in The American Society of Agronomy, The Soil Science Society of America and The Soil and Water Conservation Society.

### **Marc Cathey** (Henry Marcellus Cathey)

H. Marc Cathey, 79, former director of the U.S. National Arboretum and a flamboyant promoter of gardening everywhere, died Oct. 8 at a nursing home in his home town of Davidson, N.C. He had Parkinson's disease.

Dr. Cathey gave hundreds of lectures during his career that combined scientific authority with sheer showmanship.

Before the dawn of PowerPoint, he would extol the virtues of plants using multiple slide projectors, soundtracks and, on occasion, smoke machines, confetti and other special effects.

Dr. Cathey was the National Arboretum director from 1981 to 1991, a time of growth at the botanical garden and research facility in Northeast Washington.

He oversaw the expansion of the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum; the creation of the National Capitol Columns garden; and the New American Garden, a demonstration garden of perennials and grasses designed by landscape architects Oehme, van Sweden and Associates at Dr. Cathey's bidding.

His tenure also marked a period when gardening was undergoing a dynamic shift toward a more natural style, and Dr. Cathey became a leading voice in the movement toward greater use of perennials and ornamental grasses.

He coined the phrase "tough plants for tough times" to convey the need for lower-maintenance landscapes that were kinder to the environment than the former lawn- and chemical-dominated model.

After leaving the Arboretum, he was president of the Alexandria-based American Horticultural Society from 1993 to 1997. He retired as the society's president emeritus in 2005, when he and his wife, Mary, returned to North Carolina from Silver Spring.

Besides his wife of 50 years, Dr. Cathey is survived by two children, Marcy E. Cathey of Bowie and Henry M. Cathey Jr. of Chincoteague, Va.; and four granddaughters.

In spite of five decades living and working in the Washington area, Dr. Cathey never lost his lilting Tarheel voice, which became familiar to countless radio listeners over the years.

He had a weekend radio show on WWRC-AM for more than a decade until 1994 and later became a regular guest on public radio locally. He also appeared on NBC's "Today" show and ABC's "Good Morning America."

As a teenager, Dr. Cathey was also interesting in painting, and he enrolled in Davidson College, a liberal arts college, but transferred to North Carolina State University to study the commercial greenhouse cultivation of flowers.

He received master's and doctorate degrees in horticulture at Cornell University. As a Fulbright scholar, he traveled to the

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Netherlands for a year and studied at the agricultural university in Wageningen.

In 1956, he came to work for the Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville and participated in groundbreaking research on the effect of light on plant growth and flowering.

Recognizing that weather and climate patterns were changing and affecting gardening practices, he directed the redrawing of the Agriculture Department's plant hardiness zone map during his tenure at the ARS Arboretum. The map is used to determine which plants will survive in various regions of the country.

He also saw a need to track not only winter low temperatures' effects on plants, but also those of summer heat. He created a heat zone map and co-wrote the book *Heat Zone Gardening: How To Choose Plants That Thrive in Your Region's Warmest Weather* (1998).

Dr. Cathey had wide cultural interests besides gardening and art, but he was at his most passionate when preaching about the need for gardening in everyone's life.

### **Allen R. Dedrick**

Born on August 16, 1939 in Red Cloud, Neb., he graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1962.

He worked for the ARS for 45 years, including 25 years at the Water Conservation Lab in Phoenix and 7 years on the National Program Staff in Beltsville, MD. He felt very fortunate to have a career that he loved and for all of the colleagues and friends he had while working.

Al retired about 4 years ago in April 2005 after more than 42 years of outstanding service to ARS. At the time, he was Deputy Administrator on the National Program Staff, a position he had held since 1998. In this capacity Al served with distinction as the leader of ARS' natural resources research programs and also was a chief architect of several of ARS' still current national program

planning, quality assurance, and performance accountability systems.

Al came to ARS Headquarters from his former leadership position as Director of the U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory in Phoenix, a forerunner of the new ARS Arid Lands Agricultural Research Center in nearby Maricopa, Ariz. At Phoenix and other ARS locations where Al served earlier in his career, he made outstanding research contributions to advance irrigation and other water management technologies.

For these career-long engineering accomplishments as well as for his leadership in Agency wide program management, Al received from President Bush in 2002 the Distinguished Presidential Rank Award, an honor for which only the top five percent of all Senior Executives throughout the entire Federal Government are eligible. Al also received numerous other awards and recognitions from his research peers and supervisors in preceding years.

In addition to his outstanding professional career Al also excelled in his avocations. He was an avid and accomplished sport fisherman in both his pre- and post-retirement years. Along with family members and friends Al frequently engaged in outdoor ventures across the country. Among their favorite treks in recent years were annual winter trips all the way from Arizona to fish for Chesapeake Bay's famous striped bass. The circumstances of his tragic boating accident are not fully known, but clearly Al and his five companion fishermen encountered unexpected high winds and rough seas and their boat capsized into cold water and freezing air temperatures.

He was preceded in death by his son, Bradley Dedrick. He is survived by his loving wife of 49 years, Sharon, his daughter Laurie, son Craig, daughter-in-law Chris, grandson Michael--all of Phoenix.

A memorial service for Al was held on Thursday, January 22, 2009 at Shadow Rock United Church of Christ in Phoenix. The family has asked that any donations be made to: The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation ( <http://www.jdf.org/> )

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### **Beltsville Alliance Update**

The Alliance met at Behnkes Nurseries on December 1 to conduct its 2008 Board of Directors annual meeting. Here are selected highlights from the reports of Alliance President John Peter Thompson and others:

- The Alliance is grateful for the seamless transition of common purpose from outgoing BARC director Phyllis Johnson to incoming director Joe Spence. The Alliance has enjoyed the benefits of uninterrupted communications and mutual support. The Alliance and BARC will move forward together.
- Much of the past year focus was encouraging development of a BARC plan (or vision) for the future. Though the Alliance understands a plan to be nearing its final stages, the plan will remain an internal ARS document until the agency may approve and release it.
- Board member Renee Winsky reported that on October 30, 2008, the Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO)/ARS Showcase, held near BWI Airport, had gone exceptionally well, boding powerfully for a growing research cooperation. Senator Ben Cardin, the feature speaker, delivered upbeat, highly complementary remarks for TEDCO, BARC and ARS. For more on the Showcase see:  
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Business/docs.htm?docid=17792>.
- Renee reported also that the much-discussed Enhanced-Use Lease Authority for BARC is moving forward. The firm PharmAthene is the most advanced in administrative process of four interested companies.
- John Peter Thompson, representing the National Invasive Species Council, participated in the planning meeting for ARS National Program 304, Crop Protection and Quarantine. He advocated strongly and effectively for systematics research.
- Looking ahead, John Peter Thompson said that the Alliance projects to organize and convene one or more BARC stakeholders

meetings in 2009. An Autumn 2009 timeframe may work best, he said.

Then news isn't all good, however. With the New Year came a few jarring real-world interventions. The greatest intervention by far came when Alliance President John Peter Thompson announced that, because of unrelated developments in his business world, he was left with no choice but to suspend most of his Alliance activities. As of this report, the Alliance has entered a somewhat of a "standby" mode, pending new developments. As events unfold, we will provide updates in future newsletters.

**Jim Butcher**, *BARC Alliance Liaison*



### **FAR-B Poinsettias Plant Sale**

Friends of Agriculture – Beltsville (FAR-B) organized a Behnkes poinsettia plant sale in Fall 2008. Notices were sent out to all FAR-B members and to Beltsville Agricultural Center (BARC) employees in September for the poinsettias.

Pick-up was held in the National Visitor Center on December 2, 2008. The cost of each poinsettia was \$14.00 and 96 plants were sold. The money collected from the poinsettias has gone into a FAR-B fund to support BARC scientists.

FAR-B hopes to hold its 4th poinsettia sale in 2009 and will announce this in either August or September 2009. Notices are going out early as not to conflict with the Combined Federal Campaign.

Many thanks to all of you who supported this plant sale. We welcome any thoughts you may have about increasing our sales.

**Freddi Hammerschlag** at:  
[peachnfrog66@comcast.net](mailto:peachnfrog66@comcast.net)



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**FIRST CLASS**

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