

Editor's Note: IR-4 Highlights by the Executive Director is an outreach feature of the Newsletter, focused primarily on articles in this issue.

IR-4 Highlights (Partner Outreach)

The recent tragedy of the acts of war on the United States has shaken all of us in ways we will not fully comprehend for months and years in the future. During my lifetime, I have experienced several wars (World War II, Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf) as well as several tragic events. Many of you, like myself, remember exactly where we were when the news of President Kennedy's assassination was revealed. Likewise, we will probably have stamped in our memories forever where we were on that fateful day, September 11th, when our country was attacked by terrorists. Many of our Headquarters staff, like me, were in Fort Collins, Colorado at the Holiday Inn ready to start the Food Use Workshop. Over 100 of our stakeholders (EPA, CDPR and PMRA regulatory partners, USDA and land grant university researchers/extension agents, commodity organizations, growers, crop protection industry development and regulatory staff, etc) were on hand. The news came just before we started our morning session and was sketchy, at best. We decided to start after a moment of silence. More details became available during the morning break and at lunch. Groups of us gathered around TV sets in the lobby to witness the unforgettable pictures of the second plane crashing into the second World Trade Center Tower. Tears came to peoples eyes as we learned about the plane that hit the Pentagon and the other one that crashed in Pennsylvania. Remarkably, although we all had heavy hearts, we realized that there was work to be done and, somehow by working through the herbicide project prioritization, that we could put some of the horror momentarily in the back of our minds. At the end of that day, everyone was emotionally exhausted but determined that this act of terrorism was not going to shut us down. We continued the next two sessions (Entomology and Plant Pathology) with the support of those in Fort Collins and people who planned to fly in but could not due to the circumstances. Those folks joined by teleconference and made major contributions. The group was able to complete all the major A and B project prioritizations.

My personal thanks to everyone who made the IR-4 Food Use Workshop such a success under the most difficult circumstances. Special recognition goes to Jerry Baron who served as the meeting moderator, Fred Salzman, Ken Samoil and Dave Thompson who served as session moderators, Diane Infante, Karen Sims and Dan Kunkel, who handled new workshop project requests and updated the databases, Betty Lovuolo and Pat Sarica who coordinated the meeting arrangements with an extremely cooperative Holiday Inn staff, and Cheryl Ferrazoli who made our travel arrangements.

Many of us had interesting challenges making it home from Ft. Collins after the Workshop due to the airline travel restrictions. Many flights were cancelled or delayed. Some people, including several Headquarters staff drove home taking two or more long days in rental cars. I had the pleasure of driving half of the way (about 950 miles in 16 hours) with Dan and Jerry when our flight from Denver was cancelled. I will probably also remember for a long time that trip for the opportunity to get to know two great guys much better personally as well as enjoy the scenery as we drove from Colorado through Wyoming, Nebraska and Iowa into Illinois. It was apparent during that trip to the three of us that America was a great place of scenic and agricultural beauty as we viewed rangeland, irrigated agriculture and the Heartland's breadbasket of corn and soybeans. Although we certainly owe our allegiance to minor crop agriculture, the enormity of millions of acres of major row crops gave us a sense of security that everything would eventually be OK. People along the road were very friendly and kind to each other. As we passed under overpasses filled with people waving American Flags, at rest stops, gas stations and restaurants, we talked to people who were driving from San Francisco to Detroit and Philadelphia. People were somber but determined. We listened to the memorial service from the National Cathedral in Washington on the car radio and were moved to tears and inspired by the words of determination from President Bush and the biblical context of a strong foundation of faith from the Reverend Billy Graham. When we were unable to find a room in a motel in central Illinois after 16 hours of driving, Dan's parents were gracious in opening their farm home to let us stay overnight. We walked out in the cool, clear air at 10:00 pm that night for a quick tour of the buildings. I stood next to a Farmall M similar to the H that I grew up with on our farm in Central Indiana and reminisced about my childhood growing up on the farm. We went to another shed where they had a Case IH Tractor with at least 150 horsepower that dwarfed the earlier model. As I sat in the seat of that cab and was told of the capability of that magnificent piece of equipment, I marveled at the progress of U.S. agriculture over the past 50 years. We were able to get a plane the next day out of Chicago and were spared another 16-hour day of driving. Yet I will never forget the days drive and the events of the week.

Since that time, the Ornamentals Workshop in Houston, Texas was cancelled (prioritization inputs received via personal contacts) and the Annual Meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma was successfully held along with our 12th EPA/IR-4/DPR/PMRA Regulatory Technical Working Group Partnership Meeting. As a country, we are much stronger in our resolve to be a free nation and a beacon for the free world. We all hope and pray that the sacrifices of those who died in this tragedy and the suffering of their families, friends and our nation will not be in vain. As a country, we will survive and prosper as will American agriculture, especially minor crops, and the IR-4 Program which is a proud supporter of this great effort.

Article by Bob Holm