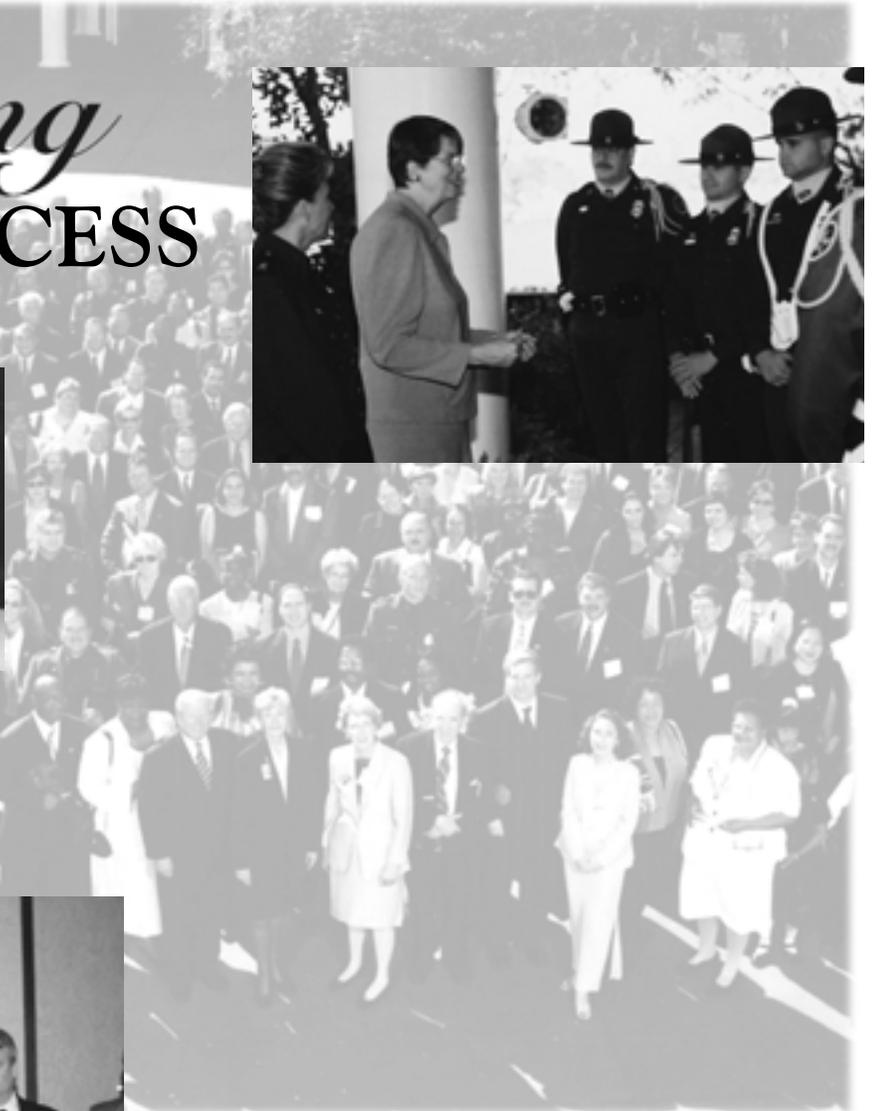




CommuniQUÉ

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HEADQUARTERS *News*

INS Commissioner Doris Meissner Announces Departure

INS Commissioner Doris Meissner announced on October 18 her plans to step down in mid-November and return to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She has served as Commissioner since October 1993, after her appointment to the post by President Clinton. Previously, she served as Acting Commissioner in 1981 and Executive Associate Commissioner till 1985. Mary Ann Wyrsh, serving as INS Deputy Commissioner since March 1998, is now the Acting Commissioner.

President Clinton stated, "Commissioner Meissner has consistently upheld the principles that have allowed this country to continue welcoming immigrants into our society. We are a nation of immigrants, and their contributions to America's diverse culture are invaluable. We are also a nation of laws. Commissioner Meissner's balanced approach to deterring illegal immigration while facilitating legal migration has enabled our nation to continue the great American tradition of welcoming immigrants to our shores."

Attorney General Janet Reno said, "I believe Commissioner Meissner has proven herself to be one of the most respected and accomplished commissioners in INS' history. Her knowledge and expertise of immigration issues, coupled with her humanity, fairness, dedication, and compassion, have enabled her to steer the agency towards a more balanced program of judicious enforcement and improved customer service. She has served the American people well."

Commissioner Meissner notes, the Service "is not only a significantly bigger

agency, it's a significantly better agency." During her seven-year tenure, the Service has become the largest law enforcement agency in the federal government. The INS annual budget has grown from \$1.58 billion



Commissioner Doris Meissner

to \$4.3 billion; the workforce, from 18,000 to over 32,000 employees. The Border Patrol alone has more than doubled in size, from 4,036 to 9,100 in the past seven years.

Border Patrol hires represent a key component in the multi-year, comprehensive border management strategy, designed to deter illegal entries to the United States.

On the service side, this strategy for "borders that work" has facilitated the legal movement of people and goods through

land and air ports of entry, where the North American Free Trade Agreement and general global trends have created unprecedented levels of activity. To this end, Commissioner Meissner has opened new commuter facilities, introduced myriad technology enhancements, and worked to forge close inter-agency cooperation and joint initiatives with Mexico, Canada, and other countries.

In tandem with control efforts at the border, the service has expanded its presence overseas in order to deter the smuggling and victimization of human cargo. At the same time, the Service has developed an interior enforcement strategy focusing on the removal of criminal aliens, combating alien smuggling and immigration fraud, and raising the costs to employers who contract illegal labor.

The demand for immigration benefits in this time has grown as never before. Accordingly, Commissioner Meissner has worked to ensure the integrity and timeliness of naturalization programs and to implement customer service initiatives. The toll-free nationwide customer service center provides toll-free assistance with accurate information on benefits and services. The Missouri Records Center brings together 25 million files in an effort to overcome problems of lost files. Technology has been brought on-line to streamline procedures and automate labor intensive processes throughout the agency.

The agency has coped with such emergencies as boatlifts from Haiti and Cuba, the aftereffects of Hurricane Mitch in

Continued on page 6

Deputy Commissioner Wyrsh, Now Acting Commissioner

The Department of Justice announced that Deputy Commissioner Mary Ann Wyrsh would take over as the agency's Acting Commissioner effective November 17, 2000, the date of Commissioner Doris Meissner's departure. Acting Commissioner Wyrsh, who will serve until a new Commissioner is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, was appointed Deputy Commissioner in March 1998. Since then, she has overseen the day-to-day management of INS operations and its more than 30,000 employees around the country and the world.



Acting Commissioner
Mary Ann Wyrsh

"Ms. Wyrsh is a talented, enthusiastic, and highly experienced manager, who already has made outstanding contributions to the agency's success on a number of fronts," said Commissioner Meissner. "With her exceptional management skills, extensive and varied government experience, and proven dedication to the INS mission, I am confident that she will provide outstanding leadership for the agency."

Ms. Wyrsh is a career employee who has served in several senior positions throughout her extensive government service. Prior to coming to the INS, she had been Chief of Operations for the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), where she provided operational direction to the programs of that agency. Previously, she served as Director of DOL's Unemployment Insurance Service, one of the largest of all federal benefits programs, and the DOL Office of Budget. Before joining the Department of Labor, Commissioner Wyrsh began working in the U.S. Government at the Office of Economic Opportunity for a period of five years.

Ms. Wyrsh holds a bachelor's degree from Webster College, a master's from Georgetown University, and a Masters in Public Affairs from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. A native of Kansas City, Missouri, she lives in Washington, D.C.

The INS *Communique* is published by INS Headquarters under a contract with *Casals & Associates* of Alexandria, Virginia. The publication is committed to informing the employees of the Immigration and Naturalization Service about official and unofficial activities. Readers are encouraged to submit articles, photographs, and letters to the editor. Write to *Communique* c/o Casals & Associates / 1199 North Fairfax Street, Third Floor / Alexandria, VA 22314 / attention: INS *Communique* Editor. Submissions in electronic format may be sent to << cbecker@casals.com >>.

Mary Ann Wyrsh
Acting Commissioner

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Cover: Scenes from the INS 2000 Commissioner's Conference held in Orlando, Florida, October 23-26, 2000.

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INS 2000

CELEBRATING SUCCESS, SHAPING THE FUTURE...

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HEADQUARTERS *News*

INS Headquarters is pleased to announce that after a 17-month hiatus, the *INS Communiqué* will resume publication in January 2001 for the first time since August, 1999. *Communiqué*, the newsletter for all employees throughout the Service, will be published under a contract with the firm of *Casals & Associates* of Alexandria, Virginia.

As the largest law enforcement agency in the federal government, the INS seeks to ensure that all employees will have regular opportunities to share their knowledge and expertise with colleagues in other offices throughout the country. Recent years have seen considerable growth in the scope and complexity of the INS mission. Consequently, the Service faces the ongoing need to improve its communications throughout the entire organization, across divisions and geographic districts and sectors, and from the bottom-up as well as from the top-down.

Many Service employees find opportunities to meet colleagues from other offices and parts of the country, but many do not. We hope that *Communiqué* will be useful to all INS personnel who need to exchange ideas and information about their work and colleagues, and that all of you will feel welcome to engage in this exchange.

Through the public affairs officers in their districts, INS employees are urged to send in brief reports on the many effective and innovative ways service is being provided and enforcement missions performed. In addition, *Communiqué* welcomes the opportunity to receive other service-related news from those of you in the field.

Public Affairs Officers should relay materials for publication either in Word for Windows™ or rich text format to << cbecker@casals.com >>. Hard-copy materials may be faxed to: "Charles Becker, Editor, *INS Communiqué*," at 703-920-5750.

Digital photographs and other graphics may be sent to the above e-mail address in PDF format or mailed to: *Casals & Associates* / 1199 North Fairfax Street, Third Floor / Alexandria, VA 22314 / attention: *INS Communiqué* Editor.

Casals & Associates publishes the newsletters *Accountability* for the U.S. Agency for International Development and *Housing on the Move* for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and it has conducted immigration policy program evaluations for the U.S. Department of Labor. Editor Charles Becker has contributed to many policy-related publications and worked on immigration research projects under the auspices of the U.S. Congress, international organizations, Georgetown University, and the University of Maryland. He is also a translator (Spanish and Portuguese) and conference and court interpreter.

Response to the IG's Citizenship USA Report

Prior to her retirement, Commissioner Meissner issued a memorandum to all INS employees in response to the findings reached by the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector (OIG) in its investigation of the Citizenship USA Initiative (CUSA), which according to the Executive Summary of the Report "was to become the largest investigation of its kind ever undertaken by the OIG."

In her memorandum, Commissioner Meissner noted:

The allegations and the OIG's findings fall into three broad categories as follows:

1. **ALLEGATION:** That CUSA was politically motivated.
FINDING: Disproven. No evidence of political motivation. CUSA was a backlog reduction and naturalization streamlining program. Both the Service and DOJ successfully resisted political pressure that arose.
2. **ALLEGATION:** That CUSA placed strains on the Service's adjudications system that compromised the integrity of the naturalization process.

FINDING: Sustained. The Service overburdened an adjudications system with known deficiencies. This magnified the weaknesses and led to reducing the quality of the naturalization process.

3. **ALLEGATION:** That the Service engaged in retaliation against certain employees who voiced concern about CUSA.

FINDING: Disproven.

The Service did not engage in retaliation.

Commissioner Meissner also notes in her memorandum that nearly four years ago the Service recognized the difficulties and failures in the naturalization program. She further indicates that room for improvement remains despite INS having restored integrity to the program through the implementation of the Naturalization Quality Procedures (NQP). The fingerprint check process, in particular, has been vastly improved thanks to investments in technology, the opening of more than 120 Application Support Centers, and coordination with the FBI. As she has

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INS NEWS *of Note*

Two-Year Naturalization Goals Met

*Progress in Other Benefit Areas
and Customer Service*

INS Commissioner Meissner announced on November 15 that the agency had met its naturalization program goals for fiscal years 1999 and 2000, while continuing to ensure the integrity of the naturalization process. Altogether 2.5 million naturalization applications were completed by the Service (1.25 million in FY 1999 and 1.3 million in FY 2000). At the same time, INS succeeded in reducing the nationwide average projected processing time for naturalization applications from an average 28 months down to 6 to 9 months.

In the past eight years (1993-2000), almost 6.9 million immigrants applied for citizenship, more than the combined total for the previous 40 years. When the INS caseload of pending naturalization applications grew to over 1.8 million in early FY 1999, the agency embarked on a two-year initiative to clear the backlog and restore timely application processing. The result is that today the Service is looking at 800,000 pending applications, the lowest naturalization caseload it has seen in four years, even though INS received more than 1.2 million new applications while the two-year initiative was in place (765,000 in FY 1999 and 460,000 in FY 2000). Both years, the agency welcomed more than 900,000 new U.S. citizens.

To accomplish this, the initiative had to set its sights on several targets: eliminating bottlenecks, improving the performance of new automated systems and their interfaces with other systems, and obtaining the funding to pay for overtime, the hiring of 200 new full-time adjudicators, and support contractors.

Outgoing Commissioner Doris Meissner commended "the extraordinary performance of INS employees," and also expressed gratitude "to Congress for providing \$176 million in FY 1999 and \$124 million in FY 2000... and to the Attorney General for her continued support."

In FY 2000, this initiative was extended in order to pare away the backlog in two other major immigration benefit programs: the adjustment of status and the Green Card (Form I-551) renewal programs.

Adjustment of Status

The backlog of pending applications for adjustment of status nearly doubled between FY 1994 and FY 1995, and increased almost eightfold between FY 1994 and FY 1999 (from 121,000 to 951,000).

Under the extended initiative, INS was able to complete 564,000 of these applications in FY 2000, compared to 300,000 the previous year, thereby surpassing its goal of completing 0.5 million of these applications.

Green Card Renewal

In late 1989, INS began issuing Green Cards with 10-year expiration dates on the front of the cards. It is estimated that each year some half million current Green Cards holders will seek to renew their cards. In the past year, new procedures have enabled the Service to expedite the work and improve customer service. Responsibility for most renewal processing has been moved to the 120 INS Application Support Centers around the country, most of which offer applicants the convenience of one-stop, walk-in service. The agency has met its goal of bringing the processing period for renewals down from 12 months to 90 days.

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INS NEWS *of Note*

Big Boost in Border Patrol Recruitment

The U.S. Border Patrol hired more than 1,700 new agents in the past fiscal year and received 91,000 applicants, 80 percent applying over the Internet, often in response to advertising on Web sites such as [Monster.com](http://www.monster.com). This recruitment is a fourfold increase over the 400 new agents recruited in FY 1999, when expansion in other labor markets had an adverse impact on general law enforcement hiring around the country.

The training of 300 new recruiters, pro-active outreach strategies, and productive coordination between the Border Patrol and the Office of Human Resources and Development at Headquarters clearly factored heavily into the successful recruitment drive.

The new recruits bring to 9,212 the total number of agents now on the Border Patrol payroll. By way of comparison, the FBI has 11,428 agents on its payroll, about 25 percent more.

The 1996 immigration reform bill authorized 1,000 new hires each year. However, with a rate of attrition of 800 agents each year, the authorized figure simply would allow the Patrol little more than to maintain current levels. Thus, FY 1999's hires represented a net decrease in the number of Border Patrol agents in uniform. So what was done?

Entrance exams were held in 10 sites around the country, mostly in the Southwest but also Albany and Puerto Rico. Furthermore, \$2,000 recruitment bonuses were offered to each recruit.

For their part, the recruiter-agents had their own professional experience to call upon in attracting new agent candidates, and every effort was made by recruiters to reach out to candidates and remind them of upcoming deadlines in the testing and hiring process.

The effort has been so successful, in fact, that after October 31, 2000, no more applications were being accepted.

INS Commissioner Departure. *..continued from page 2*

Central America, and the Kosovo Refugee crisis. INS developed the Cuban Interdiction Agreement and safe-haven policies to help prevent future crises.

The Service has faced major legislative changes over the past seven years. The 1996 law required INS to implement sweeping new mandates, including mandatory detention and expedited removal. All told, over 70 new regulations

were put in place to enforce the new laws passed by Congress.

Commissioner Meissner has stated, "The past seven years have been the most challenging and rewarding of my professional career. When I became Commissioner the tasks ahead were daunting. Thanks to the tireless dedication of INS employees, we have been able to build an impressive record of reform. I am proud of this agency's accomplish-

ments in enforcing our nation's immigration laws professionally and in providing improved levels of service to our customers. It has not been easy, and there is still much to be done. But the advances the agency has made, at times under the most difficult circumstances, have made me proud to be a part of the INS team and grateful for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Response to the IG's Citizenship USA Report. *..continued from page 4*

repeatedly emphasized elsewhere—e.g., at the annual Commissioner's Conference in Orlando, Florida and in the course of her interview with *Communiqué*—the commitment of INS personnel to delivering efficient and responsive service has been the foundation for the full range of improvements in naturalization and other programs.

The Executive Summary of the report is posted on the OIG website under the heading "Special Reports" at <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig>. The full report should become available in the near future.

INS NEWS FROM *the Field*

Operation Home Run

Human Rights Violators Held to Account

South Florida was the scene in mid-November of *Operation Home Run*, one of the largest actions ever taken in the United States against human rights violators. Twenty INS officials, joined by five FBI agents, acted on this INS sting operation, which resulted in the arrests of 14 illegal aliens from Angola, Haiti, and Peru. The targets had petitioned for asylum, but are themselves believed to have committed "multiple atrocities" prior to arrival in the United States. Several are accused of the torture, rape, or murder of many dozens of their fellow citizens, and in one case, of

directing the killing of as many as 300 persons. The 14 detainees were sent to the Krome Service Center, pending deportation. Warrants have been issued for 11 others, several of whom may have fled South Florida.

INS Chief of Special Investigations, William D. West, explained, "The cases targeted in this operation were of people whom we felt committed among the most egregious, if not the most egregious, crimes we've ever seen.... These are people who were living here within their own ethnic community, where they may have encountered some of their victims. [Their presence] constitutes a threat to those victims... Targeting human rights persecutors is relatively new. We've only been doing this during the past few years."

Chief West indicates that some of those arrested are former members of Haiti's dreaded *Ton-Ton Macoutes*. (The Macoutes, who acted as a sort of praetorian guard under the enduring dynasty of Presidents Duvalier *père* and *fi*ls are widely credited with the murder of thousands of Haitians.) As for the 11 who got away, Chief West says, "We're not going to forget about them. We're going to continue to look."

The 1996 immigration act authorizes the INS to deport anyone who committed violent human rights abuses in other countries prior to 1996. Under the law, anyone accused of committing atrocities abroad after 1996 would be subject to prosecution in the United States.

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Other Customer Service Improvements

Several other initiatives now being carried out will enable INS to become one of the most efficient, user-friendly, and customer-oriented agencies in the federal government.

National Customer Service Center (NCSC) - Telephone Information Service

For the past year, INS has provided nationwide toll-free assistance, so that customers dialing 1-800-375-5283 can receive accurate, consistent information on immigration benefits and services. Now, customers avoid inconvenient visits to INS offices, and the local offices can focus on offering superior service not available elsewhere.

Change of Address Call-In System for Naturalization Applicants

Since March 2000, naturalization applicants have had the option of reporting a change of address over the phone instead of having to submit it in writing to the local INS office. By calling 1-800-375-5283, applicants can make sure they will continue to

receive timely notices concerning appointments, interviews, and other related procedures.

www.ins.usdoj.gov

The award-winning web-site — *INS Online*, www.ins.usdoj.gov — provides information to the public on INS activities, programs, services, and procedures, as well as more detailed information on immigration and naturalization home-pages for local INS offices. Moreover, by downloading Adobe Reader™, *INS Online* users can download application forms without having to leave their homes or offices.

National Record Center (NRC)

The centralization of records and A-files in a single facility has already proved to be a boon to many INS employees and immigration customers. (See article on the NRC in this issue.) This initiative will improve the integrity of INS record-keeping and cut file retrieval times from weeks and even months to only a few days. It is also a tremendous service to enforcement personnel who often need immediate information and records in the course of their duties.

INS NEWS FROM *the Field*

The National Records Center

Breaking New Ground



The name of the place is Lee's Summit, but the real action is underground. Just 18 miles southeast of the barbecue capital of the Western Hemisphere —Kansas City, Missouri, that is— a vast cavern hums, 24-7. No, it's not an after-hours club. The subterranean movement is nonstop, not frenetic or secret. It's all strictly on the up-and-up. That's because a 200,000 square foot area at the base of this limestone grotto houses the INS National Records Center (NRC).

As many Service veterans can attest, the NRC was a long time coming. The seed of this massive underground storage facility was first planted back in 1981, when a working group chaired by then-Acting Commissioner Doris Meissner envisioned a way to surmount a major barrier that time and again thwarted the responsiveness of both the enforcement and service sides of the house.

Scott Hastings, Director of the Office of Records Services, explained that on the day he took over responsibility for Records in 1994, Commissioner Meissner asked him, why there was no Center yet. "From that day on, I updated the original strategic concept and moved out with an aggressive plan for implementation."

According to Carolyn McGee of the Office of Records Services, the "commitment and vision set forth by the team in 1981 is what Scott Hastings brought to fruition." As Commissioner Meissner explained last February at the NRC inaugural ceremony, with more than 20 million files scattered throughout 85 offices around the country, "the old decentralized system became so inefficient that records weren't just our weakest link, they were... the missing link. This meant needless detours and delays." Many staff recognized that timely access to accurate information would remain elusive until such time as INS files could be brought together in a single centralized facility. And what a facility!

Since operations began on November 15, 1999, the 200 contract and permanent NRC staff have managed and maintained some 8-to-9 million files, with an eventual holding capacity of 20-to-25 million files. In

its first year of operation, the NRC responded to approximately 370,000 file transfer requests. The NRC's standard for responding to requests (i.e., mailing off the A-File) is 3 days for a standard request and 24 hours for an expedited request.

The decision to establish the NRC in Lee's Summit resulted after a decade of extensive analysis and planning. The site, leased under a 20-year contract with Space Center Kansas City, Inc., fills the many unique requirements sought by INS. These include a central geographic location, good transportation and communications infrastructure, and proximity to a qualified labor force. The controlled climate in the cavern is ideal for the safekeeping of the documents. In addition, the Lee's Summit underground site is near the Federal Records Center of the National Archives and Records Administration, with which the INS has a close working relationship. The



Photographs — Above: Entrance to the NRC.

At Right: Enduring records. Facing Page, above: Barcoding the A-Files. Far right: Workers unpacking inbound A-Files.



U.S. Social Security Administration also rents underground storage space from Space Center K.C., Inc. These were major factors in the decision on the location for the NRC.

The mission of the NRC is to provide its customers with timely, complete, and accurate information from the A-Files and subsidiary data systems of the INS. It does this through various operations, including Records, Information Liaison, Status and Records Analysis, and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Processing.

The Records Operations Office of the NRC provides records management services in connection with physical A-Files and associated materials. For the lion's share of this work, it depends on SEIT, a private contractor. The types of records management services provided include:

- Shipment of A-Files to other INS offices that request them;
- Receipt of A-Files from other INS offices;
- Inventory control of A-Files;
- Consolidation of multiple information (temporary files, interfiling) into parent A-Files; and
- Reconciliation of A-File contents with data in the Central Index System (CIS).

The Information Liaison Division provides an alternative means for INS personnel to access A-File information and subsidiary INS data systems (e.g., CIS, CLAIMS). To this end, Information Liaison Specialists are on call to INS personnel 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in order to analyze the contents of the files and other records and report their findings back to INS staff who make the request. In most cases, the INS requester can

receive the needed information in a matter of hours rather than having to wait days, as normally is required for receiving an A-File shipment.

INS personnel can reach Information Liaison Specialists by e-mail or telephone (816-350-5560). Requests can be e-mailed to "NRCINFO, NRC". Information requests must list the A-Number, Name, Date of Birth, information needed, and the documents to be copied, along with the phone and fax numbers of the requester.

For further information on accessing the NRC's services, consult with local Records staff or refer to the NRC User's Guide in the cc:mail Bulletin Board "INS Records Roundtable," or the Office of Records Services upcoming web page on the INS Intranet.

The Status and Records Analysis Division provides services in two areas. First, immigration status information is provided to local, state, and federal benefits-granting agencies that require it in order to determine the eligibility of applicants for social benefits (e.g., Social Security, housing benefits, food stamps, etc.). Second, the Division works closely with the Records Operations Office to remedy errors associated with the NRC's A-File holdings.



The FOIA Division processes requests from the public for A-File information under NRC control.

The NRC currently employs almost 200 staff; 88 Federal employees and 100-110 contract employees. The size of this workforce is expected to increase.

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INS NEWS FROM *the Field*

Tucson Sector BORSTAR Holds Joint Search and Rescue Training

In late November, members of the Tucson Sector Border Search, Trauma, and Rescue team (BORSTAR) held a week of intensive hands-on training and instruction involving at least 58 officers from Mexico and the United States, including local law enforcement agencies of Arizona. Twenty-one members of Mexico's Grupo Beta border-crime task force received specialized training in a range of safety and rescue skills, including CPR, rappelling, and water survival. Many officers from the Sheriff's Departments of Pima, Santa Cruz, and Cochise counties, the Rio Rico Fire Department, and the Police Department of the Tohono O'odham Nation (formerly referred to as the Papago) also took part in the training.

According to U.S. Border Patrol Chief Gustavo De La Viña and Dr. Romeo Flores-Caballero of Mexico's National Institute for Migration, the training is just one component of stepped up efforts between the United States and Mexico to reduce the rising number of deaths occurring each year among persons attempting illegal passage across the harsh terrain along the U.S.-Mexico border. In FY 2000, 1,300 migrants were rescued. In 1999, Border Patrol agents rescued over 2,400 migrants from peril. Between October 1999 and mid-June 2000, 114 deaths were reported among would-be illegal immigrants. However, fatalities increase with the harsh desert summers. In 2000, illegal immigrant fatalities were reported to have risen to 369 from 231 in the prior year.

"Protecting our borders includes the obligation to protect lives. That's why the binational rescue training is critical," Chief De La Viña stated. Mexican Immigration Officer Ómar de la Torre emphasized the benefits of cooperation for more effective rescues, "Our commitment is to saving lives."

**"OUR COMMITMENT IS
TO SAVING LIVES."**

SBPA Jeff Williams provided rappelling instruction. "It's good for us to get to know these guys. Come winter, we're probably going to be seeing each other a lot out here," he explained to one local reporter.

The Border Safety Initiative

The Tucson Sector's joint and interagency training is one of many ongoing Service-wide efforts under the Border Safety Initiative. Safety measures have been carried out in three areas — prevention, search and rescue, and identification— in the two and a half years since the Initiative was launched.

Coordination with the Mexican officials has made it possible to post warnings of dangers on the southern side of the binational border. Monitoring and reporting of fatalities along the border is being stepped up in order to better allocate resources and direct safety actions. In response to many instances of migrants drowning in the All-American Canal in the El Centro area, INS posted warning signs, installed lighting, and boosted the Border Patrol presence. More agents have been deployed in eastern San Diego County, the desert areas of Imperial County, the Yuma area, and other locations where hazards arise. All nine Southwest border sectors have issued warnings. Public service announcements have been broadcast over Mexican television and radio station in order to caution would-be border runners about the risk of death from

alien smugglers and other potential dangers. The U.S. State Department has joined in some of the media outreach in Mexico and Central America.

To facilitate search and rescue, many Border Patrol sectors have established local toll-free telephone lines so that family members who believe a missing relative may be stranded along the border can communicate with the Border Patrol, which can then initiate a search. All official Border Patrol vehicles are now outfitted with extra drinking water, electrolyte drinks, and trauma bags. CPR and emergency first aid, standard training for all agents has been augmented with specialized training in techniques, such as water rescue.

Finally, procedures for the identification of migrants who perish attempting to cross the border and for contacting next of kin are receiving greater priority. Particular coordination efforts have been made with the Texas Association of Counties and local coroners' offices, so that when remains are discovered, it will be possible to secure the crime scenes and identify the dead.



U.S. Border Patrol Opens New Del Rio Headquarters

by Carlton Jones

More than 200 dignitaries, government officials, and area residents turned out on October 31, 2000, to attend the official grand opening of the new Del Rio Sector Headquarters of the U.S. Border Patrol. Administrative staff began moving from the old Qualia Drive site in June, and now that the Sector radio room dispatchers and staff had picked up stakes, the transition was finally complete.

The new Headquarters overlooks a 23-acre spread between the intersection of Dodson and Braddie and the Plaza Del Sol Mall in Del Rio, Texas. It includes Sector offices for senior management, public affairs, and administrative, communications, and financial management personnel. The first phase of construction, which also includes a building for the anti-smuggling unit, was completed in July at an approximate cost of \$11 million. These state-of-the-art facilities will help Del Rio Sector to continue strengthening its responsiveness to the growing demands of its mission.

Del Rio Sector is responsible for an area of 59,541 square miles in 41 counties, stretching 300 miles north into the Texas interior. Its area of responsibility includes 205 miles along the banks of the Rio Grand at the U.S.-Mexico border.

More than 800 Border Patrol Agents and 120 support personnel work together in the Del Rio Sector. In addition to its Headquarters, Del Rio personnel are deployed at 10 stations: Abilene, Bracketville, Carrizo Springs, Comstock, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Llano, Rocksprings, San Angelo, and Uvalde. Six traffic checkpoints are also staffed, near Bracketville, Carrizo Springs, Comstock, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde.

Construction of a garage, warehouse, and a maintenance facility has also been proposed. The projected cost of this second phase of construction is \$7 million.



Del Rio Sector Chief Patrol Agent Paul M. Berg (center) is assisted by State Representative Pete Gallego (right) and Del Rio Mayor Dora Alcala in the official opening of the new sector headquarters. Following the ribbon cutting, the more than 200 people on hand for the ceremony had an opportunity to tour the facility. (Photo by Denton Lankford, San Antonio District Public Affairs Officer)

The NRC...Continued from page 9

Carolyn McGee notes the level of enthusiasm in the Office of Records Services in view of the new level of service the NRC is now providing to enforcement officers, service personnel, and of course visiting or resident foreign nationals who can receive more responsive ser-

vice. According to Ms. McGee, ORS has "lived, eaten, and breathed" the NRC project for the past three years. "We've been excited and it's taken off. It's a showpiece and it's astounding."

During the recent key cities conference held at the NRC, Commissioner Meissner charged

senior executives to seek out new dividends. "Now that we've made this significant investment, let's get the maximum return, and capitalize on this re-engineered process."

INS NEWS FROM *the Field*

TEMECULA BORDER PATROL EXPLORERS HONOR NEWTON AND AZRAK

By Pamela Y. Kelley

After three years of effort, 33 years after the event, Border Patrol Inspectors Theodore L. Newton, Jr., and George F. Azrak were honored with a monument at the location of their kidnapping. Temecula Border Patrol Explorer Post 5150, along with the assistance of the Fraternal Order of Retired Border Patrol Agents and the Chief Patrol Agent Association, began a fundraising effort three years ago to establish a monument honoring Inspectors Newton and Azrak. The groups contacted current and retired agents throughout the country to solicit donations for this memorial. A total of \$3,100 was raised.

On November 18, 2000, all the hard work and dedication of these young Explorers were realized. An official unveiling of the monument and a

dedication ceremony were held at the former Oak Grove Checkpoint on Highway 79. The ceremony included a flag presentation of the San Diego Sector Honor Guard, remarks by SBPA Ralph Boubel, a presentation by ACPA Tom Gaines (retired), an invocation by Chaplain Brian T. Henderson, and the playing of "Amazing Grace" by SOS Michael Gregg and FOS Michael Pomeroy. In attendance and unveiling the monument for the first time following the ceremony were Margaret Newton Day, daughter of Theodore Newton, and Russell Azrak, brother of George Azrak.

As a tribute to Inspectors Newton and Azrak, the INS presents the annual Newton-Azrak award to the Border Patrol Agent who exemplifies bravery and courage in the performance of duties.



Above: The Temecula Monument dedicated November 18, to Inspectors Newton and Azrak.
Right: The plaque recalls what time can't heal.



IMMIGRATION *Update*

Changes in the H-1B Program

Last October, President Clinton signed the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act (AC21), introducing significant changes in the H-1B Program and the employment-based immigration program.

AC21 amends the caps on H-1B visas for fiscal years 2001 through 2003, bringing the total number of H-1B visas to be issued in each of the three years to 195,000. This annual cap would revert to 65,000 in FY 2004, under Section 214(g) of the Immigration and Naturalization Act.

AC21 also exempts from the cap H-1B workers employed by universities, affiliated nonprofits, and government or nonprofit research organizations. Worker transfers among educational institutions and nonprofit or government agencies would be exempt, although transfers from a nonprofit or educational institution to a commercial firm would be counted.

The H-1B filing fee has been raised from \$500 to \$1,000, but it is waived for the above mentioned non-commercial institutions.

For further information on these and other changes in the H-1B Program, check out the public affairs news release of November 21, 2000, under the Public Affairs postings on the INS webpage.

New Law Enables the Disabled

New Citizenship Provisions Allow for Severe Disabilities

President Clinton also signed into law a bill that waives the citizenship requirement of the oath of allegiance under special circumstances.

Vijai Rajan, a severely disabled woman from India, became the first new citizen under the new law. Her father, Sunder Rajan, a naturalized U.S. citizen from India, broke into tears as he watched the ceremony. He had petitioned for changes in naturalization law because his daughter, who has spent most of her 25 years in the United States and requires 24-hour care is incapable of swearing the oath. She suffers "cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and Crohn's disease," according to an AP report. Incapable of speech, her level of understanding is akin to that of a two-year-old child.

Mr. Rajan explained that without the changes in the law, he feared that if something happened to him and his wife, his daughter would be left stateless.

The new law will allow some 1,000 people to become U.S. citizens, even though they are not able to take the citizenship oath because of their disabilities.

President Clinton Signs "Child Citizen Act of 2000"

The White House issued the following statement by the President:

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 2883, the "Child Citizen Act of 2000." This act confers U.S. citizenship automatically upon certain foreign-born children, including those adopted by citizens of the United States, who do not acquire U.S. citizenship at birth. This act eliminates the need in many instances for parents to apply to the Immigration and Naturalization

Service for Certificates of Citizenship for their children who are not U.S. citizens at birth.

Under prior law, foreign-born adopted children could be subject to removal if they did not acquire U.S. citizenship after being brought to the United States — even if they had lived their lives since infancy in the United States. While this Act will not remedy past cases where adopted children were deported, it will ensure that this unfortunate possi-

bility will be eliminated for most noncitizen adopted children under the age of 18 and for all noncitizen children adopted in the future. I welcome this action to support families who adopt foreign-born children by removing an unnecessary impediment to citizenship for these and other foreign-born children.

William J. Clinton
The White House
October 30, 2000

"I WELCOME THIS ACTION TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WHO ADOPT FOREIGN-BORN CHILDREN BY REMOVING AN UNNECESSARY IMPEDIMENT TO CITIZENSHIP FOR THESE AND OTHER FOREIGN-BORN CHILDREN."

-PRESIDENT CLINTON

An Overview

This past year's annual Commissioner's Conference, "INS 2000: Celebrating Success, Shaping the Future," took place in Orlando, Florida during October 23-26. It was the seventh and final annual conference hosted by Commissioner Meissner and attended by Attorney General Janet Reno, who addressed INS staff at the Annual Awards Ceremony.

The seminars and other conference activities afforded an impressive array of opportunities for attending staff to learn where their colleagues throughout the Service were making the most headway and where further review and refinement of service and enforcement activities are still most pressing.

Presentations were made in six major Service-wide areas by the following individuals:

- Improving employee satisfaction as the means to ensuring customer satisfaction, presentation by Brian Perryman, District Director, Chicago;
- Making the most of new technologies in INS operations and throughout the Service, presentation by William R. Yates, Deputy Executive Associate Commissioner for Immigration Services;

- Creating a seamless web of immigration law enforcement, presentation by Charles "Chuck" DeMore, District Director, San Francisco, Acting District Director, Portland;
- Strengthening effective control along U.S. borders, presentation by Johnny Williams, Regional Director, Western Region;
- Ensure timely, high-quality immigration information will be readily accessible to policymakers and program managers, presentation by Michael Cronin, Acting Executive Associate Commissioner; and
- Maintain and develop the high-performance workforce required in the new millennium, presentation by Carol Chasse, Acting Director, Investigations Operations.

Many of those in attendance took advantage of the several exhibits where information was available at booths and questions on the operations of INS offices were welcomed by INS staff. The exhibits showcased the work of the Victim-Witness Assistance Program within INS Field Operations/Investigations, the Florida District Mentor and Service Star Awards Programs, the HHS Division of Immigration Health Services, the National Records Center, the Houston-based



Leadership Develop Center, the Law Enforcement Support Center, Border Patrol Recruitment, Border Safety, and the National Customer Service Center (whose toll-free line [1-800-375-5283] offers 24-hour automated service and personal assistance from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday).

The Commissioner's Awards Ceremony was held at the Epcot Center American Pavilion, where Attorney General delivered her remarks praising Commissioner Meissner's tenure and commending the development of the Service and its response to growing mandates. She also lauded the planning and heroism of many in the Service, who worked to manage and peacefully resolve the potentially explosive Elián González episode.

Distinguished Career Service awards were presented to three recipients during the Commissioner's Banquet, during which many Headquarters and field personnel delivered heart-felt farewells to the departing Commissioner.



At left: Commissioner Meissner and Attorney General Reno arrive for the Commissioner's Awards Ceremony on day two of the Conference.

Top of Page: Commissioner Meissner, Attorney General Reno, and Acting Commissioner Wyrch (partially hidden) congratulate award-winning INS employees.

Remarks of Attorney General Reno

INS COMMISSIONER'S CONFERENCE

EPCOT CENTER

LAKE BUENA VISTA, FLORIDA

OCTOBER 24, 2000

Good afternoon. As always, I'm delighted to have the opportunity to attend and address the Commissioner's Conference. During my tenure, these meetings have proven to be a source of strength and inspiration for me. Without fail, I return to Washington reinvigorated and more deeply committed to ensuring that the Department of Justice does its duty and does it the right way. And I have renewed confidence that we can do it by following INS' lead.

Your job —facilitating legal immigration while enforcing our Nation's laws to deter illegal immigration — is one of the most complex and far-reaching missions within the federal government. The remarkable manner in which you carry it out exemplifies public service at its best. Your enthusiasm and dedication have produced unprecedented successes for which I'm deeply grateful. I'm also very, very proud of what you've done and how you've done it.

The pleasure and pride I usually feel at these annual gatherings is tempered this year by a sense of loss and sadness that comes from knowing this will be Commissioner Meissner's last conference. I'm sure all of you share my feelings.

Asking her to lead INS was one of the first major decisions I made as Attorney General, and it has proven to be one of my best. That wasn't solely due to her depth of knowledge of immigration issues, which is unmatched in Washington or elsewhere. She succeeded because she coupled her expertise with fairness, dedication, and, most important, compassion. It has been her deep-seated concern for both those she works for and works with that allowed her to emerge over the past seven years as one of the most accomplished, and most respected, commissioners in INS history.

In the past seven years, a small, neglected bureaucracy has grown into a significant player on the national and international scene.

This transformation has been fueled by sweeping social, economic, and political changes, at home and abroad, that pushed immigration to the forefront of the nation's agenda. This, in turn, sparked explosive growth in resources and mandates for the



The AG hands it to you: Credit to all INS personnel for your successful enforcement and service

agency. Over the past seven years, INS' budget nearly tripled and the workforce grew by 75 percent. At the same time, Congress produced an alphabet soup of new laws — IIRIRA, NACARA, and HRIFA, to name just a few — that made the agency's always-difficult mission even more challenging.

This was more a scenario for failure than for success. But the INS flourished —a testament to Commissioner Meissner's vision, leadership, and commitment. She guided INS through these tumultuous times with great tenacity and even greater success. It was not easy. In fact, it was some of the most difficult and frustrating work she has ever done, and that I have ever done. But the results were worth every ounce of effort expended. INS is not just a

bigger agency, it's also better, much, much better. Every aspect of INS operations —enforcement to services to shared administrative support— is now conducted more efficiently and more effectively than ever before.

Recognizing that she couldn't succeed without able assistants, Commissioner Meissner made a considerable effort to attract the nation's best and brightest to work at INS. At the same time, she encouraged veteran employees to tap their considerable knowledge

and skills, which for far too long had been underutilized, if not ignored altogether.

She also recognized that peak performance requires proper equipment, something INS personnel had lacked



Attorney General Reno and Commissioner Meissner

Continued on page 16

Celebrating Success, Shaping the Future

Remarks of Attorney General Reno...Continued from page 15

for years. Through her tireless efforts, and those of many of you in this room, Congress was convinced to reverse decades of neglect that had left enforcement officers ill-equipped and many local service offices outmoded. Today, state-of-the-arts tools and technologies are in use throughout the agency, contributing immeasurably to your success.

In Texas, California, and elsewhere along the Southwest border, the rule of law is being restored, station by station and sector by sector, enhancing the quality of life for residents of these communities. At the same time, the legal flow of people and products is being expedited through ports of entry on both borders. Alien smugglers and the unscrupulous employers who hire their human cargo have never faced a greater chance of being caught and prosecuted, while businesses seeking to comply with the law have never had an easier time verifying that their employees are legally authorized to work. Record numbers of criminal and other illegal aliens are being removed, and those being detained are held in a safer, more humane environment.

On the service side, the results are equally impressive. Waiting times for naturalization have been slashed across the country, allowing a record number of people to realize the dream of American citizenship, and the agency is now positioned to reduce the adjustment of status backlog. An antiquated asylum system has been replaced with a new process that has resulted in greater fairness and less fraud. Those of you working in administrative support have made records and information more accessible than ever before, improving the agency's performance in both enforcement and services.

These are just a few examples. The list of your recent achievements is nearly endless, and each one makes me very proud to serve with you, because they haven't been created by smoke and mirrors, but by your hard work and dedication.

The depth of your devotion is inspiring, and I'm reminded of it whenever I meet with the Commissioner at INS headquarters. In the hall leading to her office, there is a plaque that honors INS officers who have given their lives in the line of duty. Since I became Attorney General, just months before Commissioner Meissner began her tenure, 19 names have been added to that plaque, a reflection of the daily dangers many of you face. The most recent name added was Tommy Chin, an Immigration Officer in the Seattle District. He died last October after contracting a severe viral infection while working on Tinian, a remote Pacific island where 151 Chinese migrants were being interviewed after they were found on a smuggling ship intercepted at sea. It was an assignment he volunteered for. When the call for help went out, he responded.

Countless INS employees do the same thing every day, and they do it with the same enthusiasm Tommy Chin had for his work. It is vital that this kind of commitment

from the men and women on the line be matched by the support and vision of the agency's leadership. This means, as I noted earlier, ensuring that people are properly equipped for the task they're asked to tackle. However, greater resources alone are never guarantee of increased efficiency and effectiveness. That requires a coherent, comprehensive deployment strategy.

Under Commissioner Meissner's leadership, INS has developed these needed strategies for the first time. Along the Southwest border, it has helped the Border Patrol to develop into not just the nation's largest uniformed, law-enforcement agency, but also its most effective. As a result, it has achieved unprecedented success in restoring integrity and safety to the 2,000-mile frontier.

Under the comprehensive strategy, border management has been linked to an interior-enforcement program that combats illegal immigration inside the United States by attacking its root causes. This web of enforcement INS is building also extend overseas, and the results there are as impressive as they have been elsewhere.

“SINCE I BECAME ATTORNEY GENERAL...19 NAMES HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THAT PLAQUE, A REFLECTION OF THE DAILY DANGERS YOU FACE.”

Just last week, Commissioner Meissner announced the results of Operation Forerunner, the largest multinational anti-smuggling operation ever conducted in the Western Hemisphere. I was thrilled to hear them. Thirty-eight alien smugglers were arrested, including one of the most wanted smugglers in Latin America, and about 3,500 migrants destined for the United States were interdicted.

I'm very pleased to see that the strategic approach taken to enforcement being adopted for the provision of services. This will ensure that service resources are used in the most efficient and effective manner possible. More critically, it will help create a better balance between enforcement and services, equally important functions that are inextricably linked in both policy and practice.

I am equally encouraged and impressed by the significant strides you have made in overhauling the Service structure of the agency. The provision of services to legal immigrants had languished in the shadow of enforcement for so long that the agency lacked a culture that recognizes the importance of good service and rewards it. Without a cultural foundation on which to build, it is not surprising that the service structure was weak and woefully

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COMMISSIONER'S AWARDS 2000

OCTOBER 24, 2000

The annual awards for the year 2000 were announced at the Commissioner's Conference in Disneyworld by INS Chief of Staff Mike Becraft, with U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, Commissioner Meissner, and then-Deputy Commissioner Wyrsh in attendance.

The individual recipients and the group recipients of awards are listed below. However, due to space limitations, only the group members accepting on behalf of their colleagues appear.

THE JOYCE CHIANG MEMORIAL AWARD:

MICHAEL D. HOEFER
Director, Statistics Branch,
Office of Policy and Planning
For Excellence in Customer Service

MARTHA MORALES
Supervisory Immigration Inspector
John F. Kennedy International Airport,
New York
For Excellence in Customer Service

COMMISSIONER'S CHALLENGE AWARD:

BRADFORD J. WING
Operations Research Analyst
Headquarters, Office of Programs
For Data Integrity

and

I-90 RENEWAL PROJECT TEAM
Service Center Operations
Headquarters, Immigration Services Division
Accepted by Cheryl Becker
For Data Integrity

JAMES C. BOOE
Assistant Regional Director for Adjudications,
Western Regional Office
For Immigration Services

PAUL MASSILLION PIERRE, JR.
Deputy Assistant Director, Adjudications, Los Angeles
For Immigration Services

**NATIONAL CUSTOMER
SERVICE CENTER TEAM and
"CHANGE OF ADDRESS BY PHONE" TEAM**
Eastern Telephone Center and
Western Telephone Center
Headquarters, Immigration Services Division
Accepted by Lyle Boelens, Nancy Radosta, Melvin
Straughter, and Gerry Yapaola
For Immigration Services

JEANNETTE L. CHU
Officer-in-Charge
Guangzhou, China Sub-Office
Bangkok District
For Border Enforcement

ANTI-SMUGGLING UNIT
Detroit District Office
Accepted by Brian Slonac,
Supervisory Special Agent of the Unit
For Border Enforcement

MARY E. ROUSSEL
Supervisory Immigration Inspector
St. Albans Sub-Office, Portland, Maine District
For Border Facilitation

I-192 PROCESSING TEAM
Port of Entry, Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan
Detroit District Office
Accepted by Special Operations Inspector
Roger L. Koistinen
For Border Facilitation

JAMES HRYSZEN
Special Agent, Honolulu District Office
For Interior Enforcement

Celebrating Success, Shaping the Future

OPERATION SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS
Office of Investigations, San Antonio District
Accepted by Thomas Homan,
Assistant District Director for Investigations
For Interior Enforcement

**ADJUDICATION DECISION IMPROVEMENT
INITIATIVE**
Residence and Status Branch
Headquarters, Office of Adjudications
Accepted by Pearl Chang
For Community Impact

RANCH PATROL UNIT
Douglas, Arizona Border Patrol Station
Tucson Sector
Accepted by Justin Bristow,
Supervisory Border Patrol Agent
For Community Impact

PERSONNEL SERVICES BRANCH
Office of Human Resources and Development
Administrative Center, Burlington
Accepted by Leslie Smail, Personnel Staffing Specialist
and
Douglas Schumpf, Civilian Pay Technician
For Infrastructure and Professionalism

**INTERAGENCY
ASSISTANCE AWARDS:**

WILLIAM O'BRIEN
Miami Chief of Police (ret.)

JOHN BROOKS
Miami Assistant Chief of Police (ret.)

DEBRA J. HOOD
Environmental Program Manager,
Federal Bureau of Prisons

**THE IMMIGRATION HEALTH SERVICES
DIVISION, U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
(PHS)**
Department of Health and Human Services
Accepted by Captain Gene Migliaccio of PHS

**EQUAL EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITY AWARD:**

DAVID HAM
Assistant Chief Border Patrol Agent
El Paso Sector

**LABOR-MANAGEMENT
PARTNERSHIP AWARD:**

VERMONT SERVICE CENTER
Accepted by Center Director Paul Novak
and
**NATIONAL INS COUNCIL,
LOCAL 2076**
Accepted by the President of the INS Council,
Local 2076, Jeff Young

**EXCELLENCE IN LEGAL OR
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT:**

SALLY ANN LEOS
Administrative Support Assistant
El Paso District Counsel's Office

**ROOKIE ATTORNEY
OF THE YEAR AWARD:**

NADER BAROUKH
Assistant District Counsel
Los Angeles District Office

**DISTRICT
COUNSEL-OF-THE-YEAR
AWARD:**

MARTIN D. SOBLICK
District Counsel
San Diego District Office

**ATTORNEY-OF-THE-YEAR
AWARD:**

MOLLY M. GROOM
Associate General Counsel
INS Headquarters

**QUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY
IMPROVEMENT AWARDS:**

THOMAS J. CONNORS, P.E.
INS Chief Engineer
Facilities and Engineering
Headquarters, Office of Administration

WEB ENHANCEMENT PROJECT TEAM
Headquarters, Office of the Deputy Commissioner
Accepted by INS Acting Web Manager Gregg Beyer and
Project Co-leader Bill McElhanev.

**THE PRINCIPALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
BORDER PATROL RECRUITING AND HIRING
INITIATIVE**

Office of Human Resources and Development,
accepted by Sidney Waldstreicher
Office of Border Patrol,
accepted by Associate Chief Pete Gange
US Border Patrol
Office of Security
Office of Public Affairs
Office of Congressional Relations
Office of the Commissioner

**EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR IN
SECRETARIAL, TECHNICAL,
ADMINISTRATIVE, OFFICER
CORPS AND FEDERAL WAGE
SYSTEM POSITIONS:**

ANA M. SANDOVAL
Secretary
Santa Teresa, New Mexico Station
El Paso Border Patrol Sector
For Secretarial/Clerical Support

ANN M. PALMER
Special Assistant
Headquarters, Immigration Services Division
For Administrative/Technical Support

PAULETTE C. RATCLIFF
Records Technician
Buffalo District Office
*For Customer Service in
Administrative/Technical Support*

**OFFICER CORPS EMPLOYEES
OF THE YEAR:**

TIMOTHY DONNELLY
Senior Special Agent
Western Regional Intelligence Office

CYRIL B. LOPEZ
Supervisory Deportation Officer
New York District

PAUL M. MORRIS
Assistant District Director for Examinations
Portland Maine District

LINDA T. PRITCHETT
Site Manager and Supervisory District
Adjudications Officer
Garden City, New York Naturalization Facility

BARTOLOME RODRIGUEZ
Senior Special Agent
Santo Domingo Sub-Office
Mexico City District

STEPHEN E. SLOOP
Transportation Coordinator
Western Region Detention and Deportation

MARIA L. SMASAL
Senior Patrol Agent
El Paso Sector Headquarters/Training.

BRADLEY D. CHISUM
Automotive Mechanic, WG-10
Alamogordo New Mexico Station
El Paso Border Patrol Sector
For Federal Wage System

SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR:

CUPIDINE EVERETT
Supervisory Applications Clerk
Miami District Office
Up to grade 8

BARRY PRIMES
Records Management Supervisor
Houston District Office
For grades 9 through 12.

HAROLD R. BEASLEY, SR.
Deputy Chief Patrol Agent
San Diego, Border Patrol Sector
For grades 13 through 15

NEWTON-AZRAK AWARD:

JESUS E. DE LA VEGA
Supervisory Border Patrol Agent
El Centro Station, El Centro Sector
and

**OPERATION REUNION:
Breach, Entry & Recovery Team**
Investigations Division, Miami District
Accepted by James D. Goldman
Assistant District Director of Investigations, Miami

MERITORIOUS SERVICE:

SILMA L. DIMMEL
Officer-In-Charge
Havana, Cuba Sub-Office
Mexico City District

SCOTT O. HASTINGS
Director, Office of Files and Forms Management
Headquarters, Office of Management

EDWARD J. MCELROY
District Director
New York City District Office

**OPERATION REUNION
Investigations Division**
Miami District Office

THE MANY MEMBERS OF THE ELIAN GONZALEZ, HEADQUARTERS SUPPORT TEAM

Accepted by:
Owen "Bo" Cooper, Office of General Counsel
Michael A. Pearson, Office of Field Operations
Jeffrey Weiss, Office of International Affairs
Russell Bergeron, Office of Public Affairs
Sarah Taylor, Office of Congressional Relations
J. Scott Blackman, Eastern Regional Office
Cathy St. Denis, Office of the Commissioner

EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE:

OWEN "BO" COOPER
General Counsel
INS Headquarters, Office of General Counsel

Spotlight on Two Who Care



**Supervisory Border Patrol Agent
JESUS E. DE LA VEGA**
El Centro Station

Recipient of the
NEWTON-AZRAK AWARD

On November 2, 1999 at about 11:20 PM, Supervisory Border Patrol Agent Jesus E. De La Vega was patrolling the border area along Interstate Highway 8 near Seeley, California. As he turned off the highway, he saw a huge white cloud of smoke covering the ramp. Through the smoke, he was able to make out a vehicle that had just crashed, rolled over twice, and come to rest on its side. Flames shot out from the front passenger compartment and from under the hood.

Looking for occupants, SBPA De La Vega spied a single male victim, later identified as a Bruce Allen Stanley, who was severely disoriented and desperately attempting to exit the vehicle. But he could make no headway, unable as he was to move his right arm, which had been injured when the vehicle rolled over.

Agent De La Vega asked Mr. Stanley whether any other occupants were in the vehicle. The victim stated that he was the only one. As the flames became more intense, Agent De La Vega, oblivious to his own safety,

attempted to open the door of the vehicle, but was initially beaten back by the smoke and heat. After a few more attempts, Agent De La Vega was finally able to pull open the door, release the man's seat belt, and drag him to safety away from the vehicle, which by then was entirely engulfed in flames.

Agent De La Vega proceeded to administer emergency first aid to Mr. Stanley and make him as comfortable as possible. Next he radioed for emergency services, and within minutes, units from the California Highway Patrol, Imperial County Fire Department, and Gold Cross Ambulance had responded. They treated Mr. Stanley for the injuries to his shoulder and arm and for smoke inhalation.

For his part, Agent De La Vega escaped injury. His selfless and heroic actions saved a life and are a true inspiration. Let us all acknowledge a deep debt of gratitude to Agent De La Vega.



**Supervisory Immigration Inspector
MARTHA MORALES**
John F. Kennedy International Airport, New York

Recipient of the
JOYCE CHIANG MEMORIAL AWARD
For Excellence In Customer Service

Forty minutes after midnight on June 6, 2000, on an otherwise typical night at JFK International Airport, the phones were ringing, secondary cases were in need of follow up, and immigrants from three flights were waiting to be processed. Ms. Morales maintained order and provided service that night to regular customers. She also brought forth a new one. In an inspections restroom at JFK, Ms. Morales helped to deliver a tiny three and a half month premature baby and stabilize it and its 17-

year old mother until medical help could arrive. The situation was complicated because the mother was still in labor with a second child when the first newborn stopped breathing. Thanks to Inspector Morales' speed, poise, and good sense, both babies and their mother are today doing well. Clearly, Martha Morales' care and concern for her customer led her in a direction few of us would ever expect to have to take. Thank you Inspector Morales from all of us for your grace under pressure.

Commissioner's Conference 2000



Summary of Commissioner Meissner's Remarks on Distinguished Career Service Awards for the 2000 Commissioner Conference

There are two criteria for receiving the Distinguished Career Service Award. First, consistent excellence and efficiency during one's career; and second, exceptional contributions to one's field during the individual's term of service. The award is granted upon the completion of noteworthy careers in the Service.



**GIDEON
EPSTEIN**
Supervisory
Forensic Document
Examiner
Headquarters,
Forensic Document
Laboratory

Gideon Epstein, the chief forensic document examiner at the INS Forensic Document Laboratory (FDL), has been leading the field of forensic document examination for decades as an innovator, educator, and advocate.

His was a distinguished career well before he joined the INS Forensic Document Lab in 1980, as the senior forensic document examiner. He had established himself as one of the world's preeminent experts during the 25 years he worked at the U.S. Army Crime Laboratory and the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms Document Laboratory. When he arrived at the agency, the forensic document lab, which had just opened, was woefully inadequate. Operating out of a small headquarters office, the lab was outfitted with only the most basic equipment and held no reference materials. The three-member staff struggled to keep up with a yearly workload of 100 cases. Today, the lab is a state-of-the-art facility that has earned a worldwide reputation as the best of its kind. It contains a huge reference library, including genuine travel and identification documents from virtually every country in

the world, which are essential for handling the some 7,000 cases it is asked to take on annually.

The remarkable transformation of the lab is, more than anything else, a testament to the deep dedication, boundless enthusiasm, and uncompromising professionalism that Mr. Epstein brings to his work, characteristics that have distinguished his entire career.

He has testified as an expert witness more than 200 times and not just on behalf of the INS. He assisted the U.S. government in its prosecution of former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega on drug conspiracy charges. For the past 20 years, he aided the Department of Justice in its investigation and prosecution of suspected Nazi war criminals. His forensic analysis, including that of handwriting on documents over 50 years old, was vital to the success of dozens of cases. The Israeli government benefited from his assistance in its prosecutions of both Josef Mengele and John Demjanjuk.

He has provided training to countless police agencies here and abroad, and worked in particular with young people, encouraging them to follow in his footsteps.

Recently, he announced his retirement, from the graduate forensic science program of George Washington University, after many years teaching there. Yet, he offered to train, free of charge, three graduate students on a weekly basis in his own home. Even in retirement, the generosity that is characteristic of his professional commitment remains undiminished.



WILLIAM G. HARRINGTON
District Director
Dallas District

Bill Harrington's 34-year career at INS began in January 1966, when he joined the agency as a Border Patrol agent, after a four-year stint in the U.S. Air Force. He quickly earned a reputation as a strong-willed person, deeply dedicated to his profession. This is a reputation that he burnished at every step in his steady rise through the ranks of the Border Patrol.

During his early years as an agent in Calexico, Bill also established himself as one of the best trackers in the entire Patrol. When other agents would lose the trail of undocumented suspects, they knew Bill could put them back on track. He excelled at tracking because he possessed the patience to learn the skills required and the perseverance to apply them successfully. He also displayed a remarkable instinct for predicting how humans would respond under various circumstances.

These attributes also account for why he succeeded everywhere he was asked to serve, whether as Supervisory Border Patrol Agent in Calexico, as Agent in Charge in Fabens, Texas, or as Associate Chief Patrol Agent in El Paso, a post he held for nearly 10 years.

When he arrived as Deputy Director in the Dallas District in 1997, it was in total disarray, rife with internal

dissent, its offices frequently working at cross-purposes. Where community relations still existed, they were strained. Bill managed to turn the Dallas District around. Today, internal rivalry has given way to unity, and the district employees are pulling in the same direction. As the internal atmosphere improved, so did the district's external relations. Its community connections have never been stronger. In fact, they are a model for the entire agency, especially the district's ties with local foreign consulates. Originally, however, few in the district looked forward to Bill's arrival. He came with a reputation for being an extremely demanding, no-nonsense person. This tough-guy image was bolstered by his big pickup truck. However, tough he was on his employees, he was just as tough on himself. He expected them to put forth whatever effort and dedication were required to get the job done, as he always did.

His loved ones as well face the same demands. His wife, JoAnn, a program analyst in the Central Region's human resources office, was unable to attend the awards ceremony because of the unfinished work she had to do.

Bill may be tough, but he is also fair and shows no favor; he has dealt with everyone in an even-handed manner. More important, as demanding as he is, he is even more caring. Beneath the tough exterior beats a big heart, something he would never admit to. He cares deeply about those who work for him and those he works for, and it shows. He seems to know everyone in his District by name, and moreover, he knows what they do, because he takes the time to talk to his employees, who know he doesn't just listen, he responds to what he is told. The best testimony about how effective Bill's management style is comes from one of his current staffers. "Once you've worked for him," she notes, "you don't want to work for anyone else."



MARK K. REED
Regional Director
Central Region

Central Region Regional Director Mark Reed, announced his retirement in mid-October. I must admit that ever since hearing he would receive a Distinguished Career Service Award at this conference I have struggled to put together fitting remarks.

Those of you who have worked with Mark understand the dilemma I faced: What could I possibly say about him that he hasn't already said about himself? He's very intelligent? He's extremely dynamic? He's highly motivated? He's deeply dedicated? He's results-oriented? He's always successful? You've heard it all before.

I was at a loss until I finally began to think like Mark, and asked myself, "So what? So what if it has all been said before?" It's worth repeating because it's true. You don't have to take Mark's word for it, or even mine. He has proven it with his actions, and he has done at every step of his 26-year career with INS—from his first job as an immigration inspector in Blaine, Washington, to his final assignment as regional director.

At the conclusion of the Distinguished Career Service Awards dinner, Commissioner Meissner turned to Mark K. Reed. Although the final course of the meal had by then been served, this particular tribute indicated that ample appetite still remained for a roast. Indeed, Director Reed found himself served up in fine style. Vegan dieters beware: the recipe called for full measures of tongue in cheek.

Just saying he is intelligent is not enough to explain how his smarts contribute to his success. There are plenty of people at INS who are equally intelligent, some even more so. Very few people, however, have been as successful as Mark. It's the way in which he applied his intelligence that sets him apart from others. He uses it to make those around him work smarter, and his favorite way of doing that is by asking, "So what?"

Many people in the Service, including me, have had their bubble burst by that simple but pointed question. Just when you think that you've come up with the ideal solution to an existing problem in the perfect new program, Mark would ask, "So what?" It was his way of getting you to focus on the big picture. He wanted to know whether your proposal would produce an outcome that is going to best serve the agency in the long run and not just meet your immediate needs. While his questioning could deflate you, Mark never left you flat. He would work with you, analyzing and refining your proposal so that it could pass the "So what?" test and bring lasting benefit to INS.

Although he demanded thorough analysis, he knew it is possible to have too much of a good thing. He frequently warned about the dangers of "paralysis by analysis." He also recognized that occasionally you don't have time to analyze a situation, so you need to let your instincts guide you. Mark was fortunate to have excellent instincts that allowed him to fly by the seat of his pants and always end up at his desired destination with a soft landing.

Mark also had an uncanny ability to develop the drive in his workers to meet the challenges he set for them. I believe it is a combined result of a dynamic personality and high personal performance standards. He is so dynamic that some people feel compelled to follow his lead, while others see what he expects of himself and raise their self-expectation to a higher level.

There is no one Mark pushes more than he pushes himself, and he likes to challenge himself physically as well as intellectually. When he was inspecting new Border Patrol facilities in Marfa, Texas, he suddenly stopped the tour when it reached an old garage that agents had converted into a gym. Before anyone realized what was happening, Mark had removed his suit jacket, loosened his tie, stretched out beneath the barbells and began pumping iron.

Even with all of his outstanding attributes, the weight of the job sometimes got the best of Mark. That's right. I know it is surprising to some, but he is not perfect. One particularly terrible time for him came when I accompanied the Attorney General on her first visit to San Diego, not long after he had taken over as District Director. After touring local Border Patrol facilities, we headed to the port of entry. Because it was evening, Mark expected our visit to be a quiet one. Was he ever wrong.

When we showed up in the break room, there must have been 40 off-duty inspectors present. Mark dutifully introduced the Attorney General to his troops. She pulled out her yellow legal pad and asked: "What can I do for you?" She had opened a floodgate, and Mark couldn't close it, no matter how hard he tried. At one point he announced that the Attorney General needed to leave because she had had a very long day. She pushed him aside and said she had all the time they needed. By the time we left, about 45 minutes later, the Attorney General's legal pad was nearly filled with the inspectors' concerns, which ranged from pay and training to staffing and equipment.

Mark may have lost his composure during that visit, but he gained the respect of his workers. He saw that their concerns were legitimate and he worked earnestly to ensure that they were addressed. And they were. Within a year, the port of entry had 300 new inspectors, 200 new computers, new furniture and much, much more.

We've already discussed what made Mark's career a success, but I can't end without noting the attributes that made him, as one adoring co-worker described it, "one of the biggest characters at INS."

If absentmindedness is, as they say, a sign of intelligence, Mark is truly a genius.

No talk about Mark would be complete without at least mentioning the way he dressed, which was always impeccable. Given his great sense of style, I had to laugh when I heard all he wanted to do in retirement is play golf. I just can't picture him in white shoes, plaid pants, and matching shirt. The only thing more difficult to imagine is the INS without him.

The following individuals received the Distinguished Career Service Award earlier this year:

JOHN A. APODACA, JR.
(posthumously)

Criminal Investigator
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Omaha District Office

SHIRLEY K. BALLARD
Staff Assistant
Headquarters, Office of the
Commissioner

MILDRED A. BANKS
Management Analyst (Enforcement)
Headquarters, Office of Policy and
Planning

ARTURO BRITO
Supervisory Border Patrol Agent
Santa Teresa, New Mexico Station
El Paso Border Patrol Sector

JOHN W. CUMMINGS
Deputy Director, International
Affairs
Headquarters, Office of Field
Operations

ALAN D. DWELLEY
Supervisory Border Patrol Agent
Dublin, California Station
Livermore Border Patrol Sector

ROBERTO S. LOPEZ
Supervisory Border Patrol Agent
Harlingen Texas Station
McAllen Border Patrol Sector

JAMES L. MARTIN
Special Assistant
Western Regional Office

ARTURO E. MORENO
Supervisory Border Patrol Agent
Brownsville, Texas Station
McAllen Border Patrol Sector

LOREN W. NICHOLS
Supervisory Aircraft Pilot
Border Patrol Air Operations
El Paso Border Patrol Sector

DENNIS L. PAYNE
Supervisory Border Patrol Agent
Las Cruces, New Mexico Station
El Paso Border Patrol Sector

VICTOR R. PEDREGON
Maintenance Mechanic
El Paso Border Patrol Sector

Remarks of Attorney General Reno...*Continued from page 16*

inadequate to handle the demands placed on it. I'm encouraged and impressed by the significant strides you've made in overhauling the service structure. The improvements the agency has made in this area are truly remarkable, and make me very proud.

Nowhere have these improvements been more evident than in the naturalization process, which you have made more efficient while strengthening its integrity. At the beginning of FY 1999, when the national average stood at 28 months, you set a goal of reducing processing times to just 12 months. I was skeptical, which I'm sure you can understand, because to achieve the goal you had to complete more than double the number of applications processed the previous year. You

proved that my doubts, which were shared by many others, to be unfounded. You were able to do it because everyone came through with incredible efforts, especially the people in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Miami. These efforts continued unabated through the latest fiscal year, assuring me that, once the final numbers are in, you will have met your goal of completing 1.3 million citizenship applications, enough for another dramatic drop in processing times.

Clearly, the goal we all share—an INS that enforces the nation's immigration laws in a firm but fair manner, while providing world-class service on a consistent basis nationwide—is now within reach. Achieving it is the finest tribute we can pay Commissioner Meissner.

Taking the few final steps will not be easy, especially with the uncertain times that lie ahead. Fortunately, Deputy Commissioner Wyrsh will be at the helm, and I know her strong, steady hand will keep the agency on course. But what makes me fully confident that this remarkable transition will be completed is the unwavering commitment, enthusiasm, and pride you and your INS colleagues bring to your work.

Again, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for making my job much easier. I'm deeply indebted to you, as is the nation you serve so well.

PEOPLE ON *the Move*

Reflections from Commissioner Meissner

After INS Commissioner Doris Meissner announced her departure from the Service, *Communiqué* asked her to reflect on different aspects of her service with the agency. Commissioner Meissner plans to return to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace where she worked prior to her appointment as Commissioner in 1993.

What have been the major challenges you have faced as the head of the Service?

The INS is a large agency that has gotten much, much larger with a growing range of missions. Getting those missions and responsibilities together so the ship is being rowed in the same direction is the internal challenge. I think we've been able to bring strategic thinking and a sense of priorities to the agency. We have also mobilized resources and efforts around these priorities in a way that was not evident or practiced in the past.

There has been more hiring and new building, including a new training academy. As a manager, you aim to get the resources allocated and to coordinate technology and acquisitions as part of the overall resource picture. You move construction along and focus on coordination, good planning, and effective implementation.

Has the mission of the Service grown significantly with the H1B program, for example?

H1B expansion is more recent. In areas such as asylum reform, there has been a need to write new regulations, build new offices, develop training, and work closely with non-governmental organizations, human rights organizations, the U.S. State Department, and international organizations.

We were able to achieve greater coordination in asylum reform, working with lawyers' groups, the U.S. Catholic Conference, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and lots of local human rights groups and ethical societies.



Commissioner Doris Meissner

Another example of reform has been the overhaul of the naturalization procedures. The redesign was not only an issue of productivity and guidance on the service side of the house; there were also changes in the way we processed fingerprints and worked with the FBI. INS is the FBI's biggest client for non-criminal records check. The effort was a good example of the way we need to work closely with different agencies, but it did require a level of discipline and rigor in procedures that was unprecedented. And now, with an enormous amount of effort from both sides, this process is working very well.

Under your watch, the number of staff on the INS payroll has doubled, and its budget has grown almost threefold. Are these kinds of increases likely to continue or has the agency hit a plateau?

The increases in budget and staffing were critical in terms of the capacity, infrastructure, and ability to handle a sharply increasing workload. The agency is still growing, it has received a budget increase of about \$500 million. This is a lot of money, but it presents larger challenges of having to manage these resources well. We're certainly not seeing cuts in the overall budget. However, some internal areas are getting cut back, because we have got to manage more carefully.

What have been some of the other major challenges?

We saw extraordinary levels of immigration and a very, very polarized debate over immigration, when Proposition 187 was up in California and during the debates around the 1996 Immigration Law and the Welfare Reform Law, which affected immigration in many ways. We were dealing with a highly unsettled political landscape, which makes it much harder to manage an agency. But I think we have weathered those storms in ways that contribute to preserving our immigrant heritage. And I think that the efforts of the INS need to be seen as work that can reduce the tensions that surround immigration. I think we have become much more cognizant of how we can function in a way that demonstrates how government can be effective in this arena.

World population has grown from roughly 4 to 5 billion in the past 20 or 25 years. What does that portend for the agency's enforcement mission?

The increases in legal and illegal immigration reflect our strong economy. Immigration control faces a classical law enforcement dilemma: Whenever there is a valuable good that people want, there will be efforts to get it sub rosa. From the standpoint of the government, there is a need to uphold its laws, society's principles, and Congress's formal voicing of those principles in legislation. The problem of illegal immigration and the need for enforcement are a function of disparate living standards and political freedoms around the world.

It is possible to mediate or reduce the reasons that people are coming, but that's not something law enforcement can do. It must focus on the most serious abuses and on trying to dismantle the business enterprises living off them. But we still have a very unsettled political debate about how much must be invested in these efforts. The public supports strong border control and decisive action against criminal abuse of the law. But it's not clear what the public and Congress want INS to do in terms of employers. The statutes are weak and funding to implement them has never really been provided. And those are ultimately the measures of commitment.

In 1996, we did not see agreement around an approach for employer verification. It's voluntary for everyone.

“WE HAVE SHOWED THAT GOVERNMENT CAN WORK IN MANAGING THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM AND I THINK THAT THE PEOPLE IN INS ARE VERY COMMITTED ABLE PEOPLE.”

Where will decision-makers need to focus in the coming years?

In looking ahead, effective management is absolutely critical. What we've been able to do in the past few years is to bring strategic focus to the work of the agency. And we still need to focus on our own people, to realize they are our most precious resource. We need to hold more training, more effective day-to-day supervision, and provide more career planning. We are an agency that touches on more wide-ranging areas of American life than any other. We will need more outreach with all the constituencies affected by the INS's work.

The agency has been opening up more, but we need to work harder at respecting each other in our different sections in order to be more effective in carrying out the mission of the agency. The directions set have been paying off, we are moving along proven procedural paths. Our real challenge is to continue building the professionalism of the agency, and to maintain the focus that guides most of the agency; to continue with programs in a way that can be measured, that creates results, and that is open to new ways of thinking about how we do our business.

The challenge of effective management, supervision, and communications with the public never stops. Everything we know about effective organization today is that one has to develop a culture of continuous improvement, and if that remains the attitude, INS will continue to succeed.

When you mention the Service having opened up, do you mean between management and staff in the field, or across the different divisions?

The Border Patrol, Interior Enforcement, Airport Inspections, the Officer Corps, the support and administrative personnel: All have a role to play and there needs to be a true teamwork approach. That means constant attention and building a customer focus to what the agency does. We still have too many esoteric and bureaucratic procedures. Sometimes, this is the case because of the statutes themselves, but there are many ways that the procedures could be made simpler and more straightforward. Of course, in this we look to better technology, which is of primary importance. But this needs to be used to ease the customer's difficulties, as well as to meet the needs of the people in the agency.

There has been a sea change in the agency, but there is still a tremendous amount of potential to tap. This way of thinking—the customer focus—has to be fully incorporated into the way the agency works. It is a regulatory responsibility, it is a service we must renew, but by doing it with accurate information, by letting the person know what's expected, and courteously.

This has been a difficult job in very difficult times. At the same time it's been an absolutely wonderful opportunity, because I've had the opportunity to make a difference and to leave an agency that is much stronger than when I arrived. We have weathered a period in our immigration history that has been very negative and counter-productive. But we have showed that government can work in managing the immigration system and I think that the people in INS are very committed able people. And I would hope that the work we've been able to do together continues to improve the overall work that the agency needs to perform.

I regret that the agency is referred to as a “troubled agency.” INS needs to work hard to tell its story and to improve the consistency of its performance, but I also think that the agency is fully on the right track. If it continues to move along the track that it's on, it can become one of the most outstanding agencies in the federal government.

A number of women who have made their mark have come from Milwaukee, your hometown. Is there anything particular about that place that drives achievement?

The mid-west is called the heartland for a reason. It is where the values that have guided the nation's beliefs are in evidence: belief in hard work, participating in government, the idea that government exists to make people's lives better. And I have been heavily influenced by them.