

Our roots

Glimpses of  
history...

Around the  
halls...

Student  
stuff...

Horizons

FYI ...



AGRONOMY  
Fall 2001

## Headlines... "Purdue Agronomy"

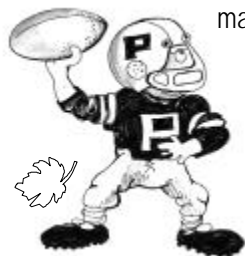


What thoughts come to mind when you think of the phrase "Purdue Agronomy?" For many of you with whom I visited these past few months, it elicits a sense of family among faculty, staff and students; where advisors and mentors showed a sincere interest in your personal and professional goals. It represents a place many called home for several years, where the familiar and smiling faces from individuals like **Sandy Spitznagle**, **Fred Patterson**, and **Ben Southard** helped start each day.

**Purdue Agronomy** conjures up pleasant thoughts and memories for lots of people. One thing is for sure, **Purdue Agronomy** is one of the most recognized and highly respected departments in the country and you have helped develop that reputation. To be sure, faculty and staff have changed and programs have been redirected as societal needs dictate. However, the consistency over the years is the departmental commitment to developing and providing outstanding teaching, research, and outreach programs that improve the quality of life throughout the world. To this end, the entire faculty and staff will be dedicating much of their time this year, assessing the future direction of our programs within the department. We will be reflecting on our departmental mission and articulating our value system to provide a focal point for future decisions. We will likely be contacting some of you to give us input about the quality and impact of our programs and to provide us some additional guidance.

**Purdue Agronomy** is recognized and respected worldwide because of the professional excellence and departmental pride that our alums and friends of the department convey to others. As part of the **Purdue Agronomy** extended family, your encouragement and continued support of departmental initiatives are valued contributions to the success of our programs and the continuation of our mission. One of our commitments is to keep you connected to the department through this semi-annual newsletter. This issue of *Agronomy* is packed with lots of information about people, programs, and some history. We will introduce you to four faculty new to the department as well as our graduate student leaders and the Agronomy Club. We will take this opportunity to brag on some of the accomplishments of our students and faculty and say goodbye to one faculty member who recently joined the emeritus ranks. You will also learn what some of your previous classmates are doing; which answers the age-old question: is there life after Purdue? **Jim Ahlrichs** waxes philosophical about the prairie land farm of his youth and we provide you excerpts from Fred Patterson's weekly departmental newsletter contributions entitled "Glimpses of History," historical vignettes about people and programs that impacted the department and Purdue.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Agronomy*. Please drop us a line and tell us what you are doing so that we can keep others informed in future issues of this newsletter. Better yet, we would be delighted if you could attend the **Agronomy Harvest Reunion** on **Saturday, October 27, 2001** at the **Daniel Turf Center**. We would love to see you and visit about old and new times. It will be a great opportunity to see many of your classmates and teachers from the past.



*Craig Beyersitz*

Head, Department of Agronomy

**October 27, 2001**  
**Agronomy Harvest Reunion**



## Our roots....

Being a Purdue Agronomist you know that the eastern deciduous forest ended and the grand, contiguous prairie started at the Agronomy Farm. In July, I drove W by NW from here for 500 miles observing the environment ("the aggregate of things surrounding") and mentally compared the 2001 environment with that of my youth on a prairie land farm, seven decades earlier. What amazing changes between then and now.

Now (2001) the natural environment is very simple and uniform for 500 miles, corn-soybeans, soybeans-corn with only an occasional field of hay, oats or wheat. The corn, 30,000 plants in 30" rows, 6-7" between stalks, promises 150 to 200+ bu/a. And, the perfect fields of soybeans show the dark, high-chlorophyll green of these nitrogen-fixing wonders. All are with no weeds and all are done with two or less tillage passes before planting and with spraying treatments of only ounces of herbicide.

Then, we had corn, oats/wheat, hay and pasture fields plus chickens, pigs, cattle, horses, etc. Corn was check planted at 12-14,000/A with at least three tillage trips before planting and 3-4 cultivations after, and we still suffered serious weed control problems; weeds in the corn, weeds in the oats. Corn yields were low. Nutrient deficiencies (N and K) were rampant. The soils were already quite depleted. We first grew low-yielding, N-fixing soybeans for forage in the 1930s.

Then, there were about ten towns per county. Schools were located every four square miles (1st-8th grades). Each township (36 square miles) thus had nine grade schools, mine was Bellvue #8; 90-100 of these schools per county! Plus, there was a high school in each of the towns. Train lines passed through all towns for passengers and freight.

Now, these very rural counties often have as few as one or two high schools and grade schools, all with declining enrollment. The 2000 census shows most counties, on the prairie-land, losing population. Most of their towns have nearly extinct business districts and no trains. Difficulty in shipping out grain depresses local grain prices. Yet, farm places are tidy. Grain farmers have more free time as they have little or no livestock; almost no livestock in many counties. Half or more farmsteads have been abandoned; reverted to farm land, or sold as acreages.

Then the prairie was already gone and most wetlands were drained. Corn and oats replaced the big blue stem, the switch grass, sideoats grama, etc.; and, wildlife had more diverse nesting and feeding areas than now. Prairie remnants did remain along unimproved dirt roads.

Now, the fences are gone, a deer could walk miles before needing its "standing leap" to clear a fence. With less tillage operations, and less disturbance many species thrive. Now our soil is more fertile, the yields are 4x greater at least, the landscape is more open, we burn much less fuel in tillage. We may have less diversity in our

environment. However, I did see more filter strips of native grasses. I walked the 160 acre Kalsow Prairie Preserve one mile from my mother's birth place, visited an 8000 acre prairie restoration at Prairie City, Iowa which includes Buffalo. I saw road side shelter belts and marveled at the trees farmers, past and present, had planted on the prairie homesteads (hundreds of trees on many homesteads); so many, a clear view of the horizon (the true test of prairie land) was often blocked by trees. What changes in one lifetime! (Call me for a tour of a beautiful prairie--the five-year old 100 acre restoration at the museums at Prophetstown near Battle Ground, IN when you next visit Purdue.)

--James Ahlrichs, Professor Emeritus

## Around the halls...



**Brad Lee** joined the department in January as Assistant Professor of Agronomy (Soil and Landscape Processes Related to Land Use and Environmental Quality). A native of Enid, Oklahoma, Brad replied "What leisure time?" when asked what he liked to do when not working. If time permitted, Brad would indulge in mountain biking and hiking. Having a dog might be nice too.



**Cliff Weil**, Associate Professor of Agronomy (Maize Genetics) arrived in August with his wife **Ann**, and daughter, **Hannah**, along with a pair of old cats, a tankful of fish and a horse trailer full of corn seed (horse to follow later). Cliff took a long winding road to Purdue from UC-Davis, Cornell, Ohio State, U. of Georgia and the U. of Idaho. Ann will start in October as a clinical anesthesiologist at the Vet School.

**Wilfred Vermerris**, (Assistant Professor, Maize Genetics) has a joint appointment with Ag Engineering and Agronomy. Wilfred matriculated from North Carolina State University. He joins his wife, **Lauren McIntyre**, who is also on staff in Agronomy. They are proud parents of daughter, **Deidre**. Wilfred is formerly from the Netherlands so you may hear him muttering unintelligible things in the hallway.



The department welcomes **Scott Jackson**, his wife **Julie**, and two daughters, **Emily** and **Alyssa**, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Scott is Assistant Professor of Agronomy (Soybean Genetics). He spent two years as a postdoctoral fellow in the lab of **Ronald L. Phillips**—'63 MS, at the University of Minnesota.



Scott is a multi-state veteran having lived in Minnesota, Colorado, Illinois, Nebraska, South Carolina, Wisconsin,

### Goodbye to a long-time friend...

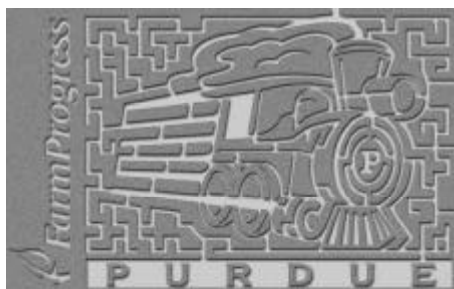


**Charlie and Roberta Roth** talk to Bob Dale and Charlie's twin brother, **Jim Roth**.



June 30 was the Summer Picnic. This was also a time to celebrate the career and retirement of **Charles Roth**. Charlie's leadership was key in moving Agronomy into the computer age. For 31 years Charlie served the department and school very well. He was unselfish in his work on numerous committees and in serving on the University senate for many years.

### Amazing...



**The Purdue Boiler Mazer** is a five-acre corn field maze designed especially for the 2001 Farm Progress Show which will be held in Tippecanoe County, Indiana on September 25-27. The maze features miles of trails to explore and contains

educational exhibits and crop trivia challenges. Maze travelers will have an opportunity to navigate the maze using global positioning satellite receivers, hand-held computers and navigation software.

**Turf Field Day:** Over 750 turf professionals met at the Daniel Turf Center on July 31. It was an opportunity to view the latest in turfgrass research, talk to specialists about turf and ornamental issues, and visit with 45 companies displaying the latest in turf equipment and products. Morning tours visited the Daniel Turf Center and Kampen Golf Course. Topics for the research tours included gray leaf spot, seeded zoysia and bermudagrass for Indiana, herbicide use in seeding grasses, fertilization, clover control, summer diseases, aquatic weed management, and geese control.



### CONGRATULATIONS...

**Linda Lee** and **Brad Joern** were promoted to full professor, and **Zac Reicher** to Associate Professor. **Suzanne Cunningham** and **Charles Mansfield** were advanced to Professional Rank 6.

**Cliff Johnston** was awarded the Marion L. and Chrystie M. Jackson Mid-Career Clay Scientist Award by the Clay Minerals Society during the Clay Minerals Society Annual Meeting in June.

Congratulations to **Rebecca Doerge** and **Linda Lee**, selected as University Faculty Scholars.

**Linda Lee** has received the Gamma Sigma Delta Award of Merit. Thirty staff and students were inducted as members into Gamma Sigma Delta.

### John D. Axtell Memorial Fellowship in Plant Breeding and Genetics

Last December Purdue University lost one of its most distinguished faculty members, **John D. Axtell**. An eminent research scientist, Dr. Axtell was a member of the National Academy of Sciences and internationally renowned for his work in sorghum genetics. His contributions to agricultural sciences and to global sorghum improvement research to improve the quality of life in the developing countries are a profound legacy. To honor his life and extend the legacy of his work, Purdue University seeks to establish the John D. Axtell Memorial Fund in Plant Breeding and Genetics in the Department of Agronomy.



If you would like to contribute to this fund, please send your check payable to: **Purdue Foundation** and write "**John Axtell Fund**" on the memo line of your check. Send your memorial gift to: Purdue Foundation, 1801 Purdue Memorial Union, West Lafayette, In. 47907-9988. For additional information about this fund please contact: Bret Rush, Assistant Director of Development, Department of Agronomy, Purdue University, 1150 Lilly Hall, West Lafayette, IN. 47907-1150, 800/718-0094; e-mail: [rushb@purdue.edu](mailto:rushb@purdue.edu)

# Student stuff...

Sixteen new graduate students have started their graduate studies since January of 2001. In early summer elections were held for new graduate committee representatives. **Mercedes Murua, Don Livingstone, Derek Nussbaum-Wagler, and Darek Bulinski** were elected by their fellow graduate students. To start off the fall semester, and to welcome the new students, a picnic was held in the middle of August. The turn out was record-breaking.

To cushion the blow of starting classes, the committee organized a canoe/camping trip for the weekend of August 25. Twenty or so students drove out to Turkey Run State Park and embarked on a perilous, 11-mile canoe trip through the raging, piranha-infested white waters of Sugar Creek. They camped in the wild, untamed forests of Shades State Park. Future adventures for the graduate students will include a fund raiser at the upcoming Farm Progress Show and perhaps, if everybody plays nice, a few, random, free meals throughout the semester.

--Darek Bulinski and Don Livingstone

## Meet the new grad student reps...



**Darek Bulinski** calls Ottawa, Canada home. Darek was born in Poland and still speaks Polish since all except his immediate family remain in Poland. Cycling, basketball and camping are favorite leisure activities. "Stay-at-home-Dad" was the profession he would like most after Environmental Microbiology that he is studying with **Cindy Nakatsu**. (No, he is not married yet!)



**Mercedes Murua** came from Buenos Aires, Argentina to study polymer coatings on corn seeds for her MS degree with **Tony Vyn**. Mercedes likes mountain hiking, racquet ball, tennis, and roller blading. As well as missing her family (which includes four sisters) Mercedes misses her horse "Bonita" which means "beautiful" in Spanish.



**Don Livingstone** graduated from Rose Hulman with a degree in chemical engineering. He is studying enzymes in soybeans with **Niels Nielsen** for his PhD degree. He comes from Dyer, Indiana and likes rock climbing, roller blading and sports in general, as well as being a big "Scooby-Doo" cartoon fan.

**Derek Nussbaum-Wagler** studies with **Brad Joern** about "runoff from soils amended with manure." In other words



Derek says he spends a lot of time "collecting pig poop." Bicycling is one thing he likes to do when time allows. Derek's wife, **Tina**, is a lab tech in Botany. He is originally from Hutchinson, KS and did his undergrad work at Goshen College in Indiana.



## Agronomy Club...

**Brad Shelton, Andy Linville, Eric Ott, Jeff Bradford, and Tara Wesseler** work at the *Eli Lilly Wildlife Habitat Project*.



**Sherry Fulk-Bringman and Krista Echterling** serve at the *Chili Supper*.

Several Agronomy club members took a dip in the Sugar Creek during their canoe trip before the Agronomy Club callout-cookout-volleyball game kicked-off the fall semester. Work session, Genetics Speaker, Farm Progress Show Hands-on Tent, Soils Judging Contest (at the Lilly Wildlife Habitat), Fun Night and Speech contest are events planned for the first month. The club works hard and plays hard!

The club has had several requests from club alumni who have lost touch with friends in the club during their time at Purdue. We are in the process of collecting club alumni information to help you keep in touch or find a long lost friend. If you would like to be included you can send your name, address, or e-mail and we will contact you. Your information can be sent to the Purdue Agronomy Club, 1150 Lilly Hall, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1150, or e-mail your info to [sherryfb@purdue.edu](mailto:sherryfb@purdue.edu).

# Glimpses of history...



**Fred Patterson**, renowned wheat breeder, and one of our department historians, has been sharing some of his memories for the department weekly newsletter. Enjoy a selection of them here. Usually Fred can be found in the greenhouses, still hard at work on his research after many, many years.



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Our Agronomist, **Keller Beeson**, was a leader of Indiana's growing seed industry in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. He served as secretary and treasurer of the Indiana Crop Improvement Association which was a leader in developing a hybrid corn seed industry in Indiana. This group took the leadership in approaching the State Legislature for a new building for Agronomy. **President Hovde's** reaction was to expand the plans to house the life sciences. The concept was that more interactions among disciplines would occur if the faculties of broad areas of plant, animal and soil sciences were housed together. The current departments in the Life Science Building were the original occupants, but each has grown in size.

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Did you know that the first large meeting in Stewart Center was the August 1958 annual meeting of the American Society of Agronomy? **J. B. Peterson** was president-elect of the Agronomy Society. I was general chairman for local arrangements. We had two major problems with the management of Stewart Center. There were areas where no one seemed in charge and other areas where two groups each thought that they were in charge. Room 105 in the Life Science building was available for large groups. The Agronomy family produced an operetta, "The Grasshopper," for entertainment. The meetings were a great success.

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Westwood, current home for Purdue presidents, was the home of **Dr. and Mrs. R. B. Stewart**. Upon his retirement after a long career as vce president and treasurer of Purdue University, they donated the property to Purdue. Previously the home for Purdue presidents was near the hilltop on South Seventh Street in Lafayette. When **President and Mrs. Hovde** lived there, the Grounds Department maintained a putting green in the back yard for Dr. Hovde's exercise and relaxation.

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**J.B. Peterson** was head of the Agronomy department from 1948 to 1971. The department still has the department characteristics that he fostered. By the end of the 1960's Dr. Peterson had personally appointed most of his staff. In order to get more personal interactions and unity among the staff members he organized square dances, a softball team, department picnics, and frequent staff meetings. **Mrs. Peterson** organized the wives for their special activities. The agronomy softball team dominated the league of departments. Dr. Peterson was accused of hiring staff by positions on the ball team after he hired **Drs. Glover and Lessman** in 1961, both pitchers or pitcher and catcher in turns. Dr. Peterson said he played first base in the 50's and 60's until his young staff got too old to play. We still have a friendly cooperative staff. Look around you. Dr. Peterson's department still exists.



Fred L. Patterson, Professor Emeritus

## Just Think What You Could Do...

### Philanthropy in Agronomy

Early this year I was fortunate to make a huge career change and become the Asst. Director of Development for the Department of Agronomy. Many people have asked me what would possess one to completely change directions at the age of 40.

For 20 years I've had an ongoing, close, and wonderfully satisfying relationship with Purdue University serving as a volunteer and advisor. The Department of Agronomy has a rich history of research, teaching, and outreach. I'm sure that I'm not alone in feeling that I owe Purdue's Department of Agronomy a lot for the great start that I received there. When the opportunity was presented to me to join the staff to help advance the programs of the department, I jumped at the opportunity.

My goal is to expand Agronomy's private funding base, a responsibility that is very important to the growth and ongoing strength of the department. The generous support of our donors helps provide scholarships, graduate student assistantships, start-up money for new faculty, student travel to professional meetings, new research equipment and much more. For example: the **Carol A. Thiele** Memorial Scholarship supports women in agriculture studying water and soil conservation; the **Becks** Foundation Scholarship funds three outstanding students in crops and soils; and the **George D. Scarseth** Fund helps support travel expenses for graduate students attending professional meetings. These, and many other donor-established funds have helped make Purdue Agronomy a world-class department. It is my hope to help build on that heritage of excellence by asking you and many others to join with us in supporting the excellent programs in the department. Certainly, I will ask your help in the future, but please don't wait for my call to be in touch with Purdue Agronomy.

*Bret Rush, Assistant Director of Development  
Department of Agronomy*

# HORIZONS

...alumni news, this and that, and miscellaneous

**Dennis R. Rouse**—'49 Emeritus Dean, Auburn University was very happy to hear **Javad Bazergani**—'64 PhD from Iran had visited **Marion** and **Marilee Baumgardener**. Dr. Rouse was instrumental in convincing Javad to attend Purdue. He wishes he could show Javad the R. Dennis Rouse Life Science Building at Auburn.

**Albert E. Ball**—'51 who spent his entire career working in the farm fertilizer industry, reminisced about **George Hoffer**, **George Scarseth** and **Howard Lathrope**. Al added that Dr. **Joe White** was his favorite Purdue professor. He wrote how much he enjoyed the Alumni Newsletter.

**Ted Sherbeck**—'67 PhD, MS wrote he was very happy to read about **Javad Bazergani** in the last issue of this newsletter. He sent along a new address for **Harriet** and **Al Ohlrogge** who have moved to Evanston, IL.

**Patricio Parodi**—'69 PhD sent greetings from Chile. He has a new position as director and associate dean, School of Agriculture and Forestry of the Catholic University of Chile. He told of the kindness of **Tom Odle** during his years at Purdue. He sends Tom a hug!

**Paul Grogan**—'71 has moved to Minneapolis, MN to be the superintendent at TPI.

**Robert J. Tullock**—'72 PhD wrote they will make a super effort to be at the Agronomy Harvest Reunion on October 27.

**John**—'72 PhD and **Jan Roberts** sent their web site address: [www.crconsult.net](http://www.crconsult.net).

**Kathy Latz**—'81 MS is Coordinator with Wood-Land-Lakes Resource Conservation & Development, Inc. in northeast Indiana. The Land Committee has established the first local farmland preservation group. Three farms have been protected with conservation easements in the past seven months.

**Peter H. Hill**—'87 MS, BS will be stationed in Brussels, Belgium for a two-three year assignment with Monsanto starting in September. Pete will be in charge of conservation tillage technical programming in Europe and Africa.

**Ryan Fisher**—'90 is now the golf course superintendent at Woodstock Country Club.



*If possible, please let us know if you are coming to the Agronomy Harvest Reunion.*

**Pat Hickner**—'90 has accepted a position with Bayer Corporation. Pat is a field sales representative covering the Midwest area.

**Rich Shamo**—'94 is superintendent at the Lafayette Municipal Golf Course, Lafayette, IN.

**Tom Manges**—'95 is a county conservationist for St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District. Troy assists local landowners with soil and water resource issues. He and his wife, **Melissa**, and son, **Evan**, live in Breman, IN.

**Maurice Bohman**—'96 is now the golf course superintendent at Greensburg Country Club.

**Ben Schmidt**—'97 MS and **Jean Brokish**—'98 MS headed to Lesotho, Africa in May for two years in the Peace Corps.

**Jeff Parker**—'97, AS, Turf Science, and his wife, Christa welcomed their first son, Christopher Andrew on August 18, 2001. Jeff is currently the assistant superintendent at Pine Valley Country Club in Fort Wayne, IN.

**Seth Szobodi**—'98 is golf course superintendent at Juday Creek, South Bend, IN.

**Kyle Johnson**—'99 is assistant superintendent at Grandfather Golf Club, NC.

**Anthony McCammon**—'99 is superintendent at Coyote Crossing, Lafayette, IN.

**Matt Rolfes**—'99 is assistant superintendent at Purdue Birke Boilermaker Golf Complex, W. Lafayette, IN.



**Lee Sommers**, a former colleague from the halls of Agronomy (soil microbiology), sent a picture of his extended family--grandkids and all. Lee and **Mary Kay** live in Ft. Collins where Lee is with Colorado State University.

# HORIZONS

*...alumni news, this and that, and miscellaneous*



*Volleyball competition.....we don't remember who won!*



*Ben Carter and Ed Stath tend to the "hog" at the summer picnic.*



*Roberta Roth, Bill McFee and Charles Roth*



*The food was great--just ask the Rhykerd's.*



*Don Franzmeier, Charlie McKee and Ozzie Luetkemeier*

## Summer Picnic & Roth Retirement



*Kaitie Housley, Tom Housley, Bob Dale, Wyman Nyquist*



*The Hayride--the Keith Johnson family enjoys the front row seats.*

Photography by Sherry Fulk-Bringman

## FYI ...

Homecoming and Agronomy Harvest Reunion - October 27  
December Commencement - Sunday, December 16  
ASA Meetings - Charlotte, NC - Oct. 21-25  
Boilermaker Reception- Monday, Oct. 22, 5:30-8:30 pm in  
the North Carolina Hall of the Charlotte Hilton Hotel.  
CSREES Review - April, 2002

## In Memorium:

**Leslie T. Hendricks** passed away June 14, 2001. Les was a technician for **John Roberts** for many years.

**Russell Miller** died in April, 2001. Russ was a technician with Drs. **Nelson** and **Sommers**.

This newsletter and back issues are available on the Web:  
<http://www.agry.purdue.edu/newsletter/index.html>

## Why not write us?...

Department of Agronomy **Alumni Newsletter Committee:**  
Sandy Spitznagle, Jim Ahlrichs, Don Franzmeier, Dan Weisenberger, Ed Stath, Tom Housley, Sherry Fulk-Bringman, Lou Jones, Bill McFee, Bret Rush. Lou Jones (illustrator), Dan Weisenberger, Sherry Fulk-Bringman (photographers).

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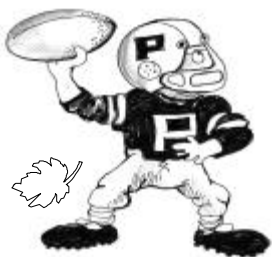


**You are always welcome to visit the department.**

Here **Fred Patterson** and **Bob Lucas** talk over old times. Bob, a Purdue

alum ('39 BS, '41 MS), is professor emeritus in Crop and Soil Science at Michigan State.

1150 Lilly Hall of Life Sciences  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, IN 47907-1150



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

October 27, 2001

## Agronomy Harvest Reunion

Daniel Turf Research Center

45 minutes after the

Purdue/Northwestern football game

(Kickoff tentatively scheduled to begin at 11:00 am)