History

of the

U. S. Food and Drug Administration

Interviewee:	Claudette Guilford
Interviewer:	Ronald T. Ottes Robert A. Tucker
Date:	July 28, 1994
Place:	Rockville, MD

DEED OF GIFT

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Claudette Guilford

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INTRODUCTION

This is a transcript of a taped oral history interview, one of a series conducted by the Food and Drug Administrations History Office. The interviews are with persons, whose recollections may serve to augment the written record. It is hoped that these narratives of things past will serve as one source along with written and pictorial source materials, for present and future researchers. The tapes and transcripts are a part of the collection of the National Library of Medicine.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Food and Drug Administration
Rockville MD 20857

TAPE INDEX SHEET

CASSETTE NUMBER(S) 1,2

GENERAL TOPIC OF INTERVIEW: History of the Food and Drug Adm.

DATE: July 28, 1994 PLACE: Rockville, MD LENGTH: 90 minutes

INTERVIEWEE	INTERVIEWER
NAME: Claudette Guilford	NAME: Ronald T. Ottes/Robert A. Tucker
ADDRESS: [redacted]	ADDRESS: Food and Drug Adm.
[redacted]	Rockville, MD

FDA SERVICE DATES: FROM 1968 TO 1994 RETIRED? Yes

TITLE: Director, Consumer Affairs and Information Staff
(If retired, title of last FDA position)

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RO: This is another in a series of interviews on the history of the Food & Drug Administration. Today we are interviewing Claudette Guilford, retired director of FDA's Consumer Affairs & Information Staff in her home in [redacted] The date is July 28, 1994. Present, in addition to Ms. Guilford is Robert Tucker and Ronald Ottes. This interview will be placed in the National Library of Medicine and become a part of the Food & Drug Administration's oral history program.

Claudette, to start these interviews, we like to begin with a little autobiography. Would you start with your early years, where you were raised, educated, any work experiences you had before coming to FDA? And then we'll talk about some of the positions you've held in FDA.

CG: OK. Well, first I would like to say this is an honor, and I'm real pleased to have you all here. My early beginnings, I was born in Beaumont, Texas, February 5, 1934. My parents moved to Youngstown, Ohio, when I was about fifteen years old. The plan was for me to finish high school in Youngstown. However, I was fifteen and in the eleventh grade, and during those days, children did not graduate at such an early age. I went back to Beaumont and stayed with my grandmother until I graduated from high school at sixteen. Upon graduating from high school, I immediately moved to Youngstown with my parents and enrolled at the university there. I have one sibling, a sister, who is two years older.

At the time, my desire was to go to Wilberforce University. But having been away from my parents for such a long time, it was decided that I must go to a college in Youngstown. And it was a very, very different experience for me, because I had not gone to an integrated school during my early years. So I was one of five blacks at this university.

RT: Is that the University of Ohio or . . . ?

CG: Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio. So it was a very, very different experience for me. I had planned to be a teacher, a teacher of business education teaching shorthand, because I was very good at that and had an interest in business courses. So I did do my student teaching in my third year, and being at a young age and looking very young, I did not do very well with high school students. So I decided to delay college. I got my first job with a certified public accountant, Abe Harshman.

RO: You didn't graduate then?

CG: No, not at that particular time. I had three years and later completed my undergraduate education at the University of Maryland, College Park.

While working for Mr. Harshman, I met my husband, Ira Guilford, and we were married July 10, 1954. After the birth of my first son, Darryl, I started work as a secretary at a very exclusive dress store in Youngstown. Back in those days, it was very unusual for blacks to have positions such as secretaries. The name of the store was Livingston's Women's Apparel store, a very exclusive store. It made the *Youngstown Vindicator*--first page of the *Vindicator*--"Black Employee ("negro" at the time) Hired To Be Secretary At Livingston's." That was one of the most rewarding jobs, because I did like clothes. I was secretary to the president and vice president, husband-and-wife team. And they also made me the personal shopper, because it seemed like they knew I loved clothes, and I just loved that work. However, my take-home pay was only about five dollars, because all of my money went to pay my bill at the store. (Laughter) So my husband said, "Look. If we're going to buy a house, if we're going to do these things, you have to stop buying clothes."

So after my second pregnancy, I said, "Well, I can't go back to my love at the store, because . . ." It just did not make really good sense to spend all the money on

clothes. I took the civil service test and got a job at the Youngstown Air Force Base, at clerk/typist GS-2. Again, I was in a very precarious situation being the only black.

And I can remember there was this colonel, who seemed to be very hard on me. He wanted everything to be perfect. Every "t" had to be crossed in the proper way; every "i" had to be dotted. And there were manuals for everything. Everything I did, I had to do over again. But when I look back, it was the best training that I could ever have had. It helped me to develop my skills; it helped me to do things to my highest potential. And it ended up when I left the air base, I was secretary to the commander.

That was when my husband got a job in Washington, D.C., working for VISTA. It was really a peace corps organization. So we transferred to the Washington, D.C., area, and having worked at an air force base, I was able to transfer to the Pentagon working for headquarters USAF (United States Air Force). And I worked there as a secretary. Fortunately, I was able to get a job with the then-President Johnson's nephew, Donald MacArthur.

RT: Was that headquarters Q Staff?

CG: Headquarters USAF, United States Air Force.

RT: Oh, I see.

RO: Donald . . . ?

CG: Donald MacArthur. Yes. He was married to Lady Bird Johnson's niece, her favorite niece. So that was quite an experience, because it was at a very high level. He was in charge of research and development. And again, that was an unusual situation. They had never had any minorities to be secretary to such a high staffer. We were in the prestigious "E" ring of the Pentagon, and I got to meet the president

and his family, because on social occasions, I was invited to a number of things. So it was a great experience for me. I thoroughly enjoyed that.

And then with the change of administration, we were living in Rockville, and that meant I was driving to the Pentagon every day. So I watched the Parklawn Building go up and thought how nice it would be to work so close to home. So one day I stopped at the Parklawn Building and waited all day for an interview. Even though I was a GS-9 as a secretary, I gladly accepted a position as a GS-5 clerk in the Bureau of Drugs in Dr. Marvin Seife's division.

RO: What year was that?

CG: I think it was '68. And I really did not like that kind of work. It was just so dull for me. I worked in that office for two weeks, reviewing jackets, typing information from INDs and that kind of thing. And at the time, a lot of vacancy announcements were being circulated. So I was applying for everything that I thought I was qualified for. The commissioner at the time was Dr. Charles Edwards, and he needed a secretary. So I applied for the secretarial position in the commissioner's office. Mickey Moure was the associate commissioner for administration. Mickey interviewed me on a Wednesday, and then they called me later that day and asked whether I could come back to be interviewed by Dr. Edwards on that Friday. Dr. Edwards asked me to start working the following Monday. I was totally excited. (Laughter) I started working there, but he had a secretary at the time who had been with the agency for many years, Beulah Sink. She had been secretary to a number of commissioners. A very efficient lady. So it ended up that I was more or less secretary to Beulah. And, of course, that bothered me.

But I went in to Dr. Edwards, and I said, "Well, Dr. Edwards, I thought I was to be your secretary." And he was rather taken aback. At the time they were talking about forming an executive secretariat, and Maurice Kinslow was Dr. Edwards' associate commissioner for policy coordination, and Phil White, and others, Ernie

Brisson, and George White, they were all on the commissioner's staff. So he asked that they immediately get this office started. And, at the time, they moved Mrs. Sink to that office to become the first executive secretariat, and I moved into the position as secretary to Dr. Edwards. And that was my second most rewarding job. I thoroughly enjoyed working for Dr. Edwards. He was a fantastic man. A real gentleman.

And I worked there until Dr. Edwards went downtown to be the assistant secretary for health. He did ask me to go with him at the time, but I couldn't. The thought of driving back, I just did not want the long drive again. He then suggested that I may want to consider getting into the Management Intern Program. So that is when I got into the Management Intern Program, and I think that was around 1970. It was a two-year program. And Moure and Dr. Edwards were my advisors and mentors. Before completing the program, I did different assignments throughout the agency, budget assignments, personnel assignments, and planning and evaluation, and I worked over at Consumer Product Safety. During the same time Consumer Product Safety, which had been a part of FDA, became an independent agency with Mack Jensen heading that agency.

So just prior to my graduation from the program, I had met another person that I thought of as a mentor, and that was Paul Hile. He was the EDRO (Executive Director of Regional Operations) at the time. I was so impressed with Mr. Hile. It was then that he asked whether I would be interested in setting up an office to coordinate what we called at that time a Consumer Affairs Program for the field. And I was very much interested in that, another challenge for me. And was it Charlie Armstrong? I think Charlie Armstrong was the director of field investigations. So I was to report directly to Mr. Armstrong. I can remember he was a very interesting man.

And I started off. He and I interviewed one person--well, several people, in fact--to be our secretary, and we ended up with Barbara Quattrone as my secretary at the time. So it was just Barbara and me heading this office.

RO: What year was that, Claudette?

CG: That was in '72, right after I graduated from the intern program.

RO: Was that Patrone, P?

CG: Quattrone. Q-U-A-T-T-R-O-N-E, Quattrone. And my first assignment was to start working on a conference. At the time, there was another consumer affairs related office in the agency. It was the Office of Consumer & Professional Affairs, and Charles Dick was heading that office. It was an office that reported directly to the commissioner. Charles Dick had recruited a deputy, Alex Grant. I can remember Mr. Hile briefing me about Alex and telling me that he would like for me to work closely with Alex Grant. Alex Grant is a black man, and our first project was to set up a conference for the consumer affairs officers. That conference was held at the Ramada Inn in Rockville. Several of the consumer affairs officers had talked with me on the phone, but others had not. So nobody really knew who I was. I didn't realize that there was a lot of hostility when Mr. Hile selected me for this position. I did not know that until my first encounter, and I can remember--this is so vivid in my mind--when I walked into the hotel that evening.

We had gone over to the hotel that evening to greet the consumer affairs officers, and these were well-educated ladies. They had a very good program going on, and many were former college professors and had been used to doing things their own way. They had a lot of autonomy, and they were doing their own programs the most effective way that they knew how. Most of the programs at the time were foods programs, because we had not gotten into all the other product areas of the agency. So . . . And here I walk in to be the coordinator--the headquarters coordinator--with no field experience. That just did not set too well with these ladies. And then you have to remember the time, the setting back then: me, being black, and most of

these ladies were well-educated white women. It just did not go over very well with them. They had a very, very difficult time dealing with that, dealing with me.

There was a lot of hostility. I still feel it sometimes when I think about it. But again, I guess I looked young, I projected a very softness about me, but people did not know that I was a real fighter, and I really did . . . I took all of that in, I dealt with the hostility, because I had learned very early in my life to cope with those kinds of situations, and I worked at getting to know them and for them to get to know me as a person. I worked very hard at developing that relationship, and it was difficult. There were a number of stories that I could tell, but I don't want to go into that. But in the end, I formed some very good relationships, and I think earned the respect of most of them.

RO: At that time, Claudette, who developed the programs for the consumer affairs officers?

CG: At that time, they were developing their own, and the intent of my office was to bring in some unity. The office was to work with other centers at headquarters to have some uniform programs. This was going to be a change for the consumer affairs officers, a major change, because they were used to doing it on their own. So, as you know, a lot of it changed. You know, it's very difficult to deal with change. The objective of my office at that time, was to work with other headquarters components to bring some uniformity to the programs, to try to get all of the field consumer affairs officers to speak the same language, to give them some guidance from headquarters, from our centers, or the centers working with EDRO to get some uniformity in the programs.

RO: But you were a one-person staff, really.

CG: I really was, but Barbara and I worked very hard, and at the time, the weekends . . . I loved it! It was such a challenge. However, a few years later . . . I think about maybe five years later--I'm not too clear on that date--but it was decided that we could have at least one additional person, an FTE (full-time equivalent), and we did have several consumer affairs officers to apply, and I can remember it was Julia Hewgley and Hope Frank. And by then, Charlie Armstrong had retired, and Tony Celeste was then my immediate supervisor, and Al Gottlieb was Tony's deputy. And, Ron, you were the deputy EDRO. But then at that particular time, that's when we hired Hope Frank. Hope had been a consumer affairs officer at our Richmond resident post, and that is, of course, a part of the Baltimore district office. So Hope Frank came in to work with us and to help in coordinating these programs.

Then I worked with each of the centers, because it had been suggested that each center would have a consumer affairs-type person that we could liaison with so that that person working within the center would be able to give us all of the information from every other component within their respective centers to develop these consumer education programs. They actually were called Consumer Education Compliance Programs. But really ours was more or less just education programs, because there was no requirement that consumers comply with anything, but it was an educational effort that we were trying to do. So each of the centers established positions to have a consumer-type person work with us, and we were very successful in doing that.

We developed a system where we would meet with a consumer representative and assist in the planning and the development of these programs, and the programs were processed more or less the same as our other regulatory compliance programs. They would go to different parts of EDRO to be reviewed to insure that we had the resources to implement the programs.

RO: Do you remember, Claudette, how many consumer affairs specialists you had at that time?

CG: At that time, we had about eighteen.

RO: So it was just about one for every district.

CG: Right. One for every district.

RT: You mentioned, I think earlier, that two people were joining the program, and Hope Frank was one. Julia was . . .

CG: Julia Hewgley. But Julia was not selected. She remained in Kansas City, because we only had one slot that we could fill at that particular time, so . . .

RT: So she never did get into the headquarters route then?

CG: Right, she never did. But . . . So, as I said, we had like eighteen positions in the field, and we were always fighting for additional positions, and we were doing studies, and we were really advocating the need to have more people if we wanted to have an effective consumer education program. Even though we only had eighteen, those eighteen made a big, big difference, because out in the field they worked with community organizations, colleges, universities, and they had the multiplier effect, and they really worked hard. In fact, I can't remember the year, but their was a Roper poll that said that FDA's Consumer Education Program was the most effective among all the other federal agencies with similar-type programs.

So from that point on, we started really expanding all of the program areas to include all of our regulatory activities: foods, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, you know, veterinary-type drugs, human drugs, et cetera.

RO: Were each one of the bureaus at that time about equal in preparing programs?

CG: No, they were not equal. I think Foods and surprisingly Rad Health, CDRH (Center for Devices & Radiological Health), because CDRH already had a very good educational unit, and they were very good at working with us and providing technical information, because most of our people, as I said, were former dieticians or nutritionists, and so they were very well educated in the foods area. But in drugs and radiological health and medical devices, they were limited; so we worked with those centers to get special technical-type training. And I can remember Rad Health, they put on a series of training programs, developed excellent manuals, and that served us very well, because they were so limited in that area. It was a brand new area for them. And then we had special programs in the drugs area, as to how the drug approval process works and the different type drugs that consumers should certainly be informed of.

(Interruption)

CG: But our major program was still foods, and the second program was human drugs, and then medical devices, and radiological health products, and veterinary medicine. That was our smallest--I guess I should say--smallest program, because there's not a lot of consumer interest in that particular program other than medication for their pet.

RO: Let me ask you this: you've mentioned the bureau's role in developing these programs and your role more or less in coordinating all this, but we also had an associate commissioner for consumer affairs. What was their role in this?

CG: Right. That was the office that I had mentioned earlier that Charles Dick headed, and it did change from Office of Consumer Affairs to Office of Professional & Consumer Affairs, and now it's associate commissioner for consumer affairs. They worked at the national level with national organizations. And, of course, they reported directly--"they" being the head of that office--reported directly to the commissioner. They would set up programs with such organizations as AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) or Consumer Federation of America, and they would keep the pulse of what was going on with the consumer demands through those organizations. Then they would work with us to say, "Well, there is a need for a certain educational initiative in a particular area." So they had no oversight responsibility for our field consumer affairs officers; they only worked through EDRO in order to get programs implemented that they felt there was a need for, based on their interacting with national groups, such as the American Medical Association and those type organizations. So that was the difference. That was the FDA office where consumers would write if they needed information, brochures, or something like that.

RO: Wasn't that also being done in the field where consumers in the area would write into the local FDA office?

CG: Right. That was always confusing to people, because consumers did write in to all of our field offices, and our consumer affairs officers were also responsible for responding to inquiries. Since we didn't have 800 numbers at the time, each district would deal mainly with the people in their local area. However, the headquarters Office of Consumer Affairs dealt with the national groups that may have had associations or affiliated with local groups in the field offices. For example, if there was a local AARP organization, the headquarters Office of Consumer Affairs office would work with the national, and a national AARP would give information to each

of their local chapters, who would in turn liaison with our people and our field offices.

RO: You mentioned that the field offices didn't have an 800 number. At one time, didn't they have some consumer phones that they tried out in the district office?

CG: Right. They certainly did. They had what we called Consumer Information Phones. These phones were located in most of our field offices, and if there was a hot issue that was being discussed at a particular time, the Public Affairs Office would prepare a message for the field to record on their local phones, the numbers which had been publicized in their local areas. Consumers could call in to listen to the recorded message. If additional information was needed, they would contact the local FDA office. The consumer phones were quite helpful during that time. They served a real need. However, with all the new technology we moved into a new area of communication, answering machines and 800 numbers. Today most offices have voice mail or some have 800 numbers.

RO: Most of the thrust then at that time for the consumer affairs officers was dealing with the consumers or consumer groups.

CG: Right.

RO: Not necessarily press and things of that kind.

CG: No. We only started dealing with health professionals when again the headquarters Office of Consumer Affairs headed by Charles Dick and Alex Grant came into existence. Because they were the ones who were dealing with the national professional organizations. Subsequently our people in the field started dealing with

the local components of those national community organizations and health-related professional groups.

Several years later the Office of Health Affairs was established. One of their functions was to work with health-related professionals, and that function was removed from the Office of Consumer Affairs. The Office of Health Affairs provided us the contacts to work with health-related professionals at the local levels. They, of course, would work with health-related professionals at the national level. And then on the other side of that, Alex Grant's office continued to work with professional consumer and community organizations at the national level. So that's where that division came in.

RO: Was this relationship always smooth?

CG: No. There was a lot . . . Well, you know, like anything else, when you go through transitions like that there are a lot of growing pains, there are a lot of things that happen. Everybody's got to stake out their area that they're supposed to work in, and they would sometimes overlap, and it was not a very good time. But it eventually did work out, and it worked fairly well.

RT: In terms of consumer affairs activities of FDA, did you have a relationship with similar activities in USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), for example, where they, you know, at least now have some consumer alerts? Was there any cooperative effort at either agency at the federal level?

CG: Very much so. In fact, if I remember correctly, there were a couple of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that we had with USDA where we would do cooperative programs. We had a popular program going way back that was called Consumer Exchange Meetings, and we would quite often coordinate with the local USDA Extension people to conduct Consumer Exchange Meetings. My office met

with headquarters USDA people to just exchange ideas and do some program planning and development for cooperative USDA-FDA participation.

RT: How about any other federal agencies other than USDA? I'm sure that was a principal one.

CG: Yes, USDA was the principal cooperating agency. However, Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) coordinated cooperative exchange meetings with us. At these meetings, each agency would discuss their regulatory responsibilities and elicit comments/concerns related to their respective agencies.

RO: What were these Consumer Exchange Meetings?

CG: Alex Grant's office had oversight responsibility for Consumer Exchange Meetings. The way the meetings worked was if there was an issue that the administrators were working on at headquarters, and they needed some feedback, Alex would issue an agenda topic. And that would mean, go out and talk with consumers, get us some feedback. What the consumer affairs officer would do was have a list of consumer organizations that they would work with. They would send letters out to these people, and these meetings were also announced in the *Federal Register*, recognizing the fact that the average consumer just does not read the *Federal Register*, but that there were consumer organizations who were more or less watchdogs for consumers. They certainly would get and read the *Federal Register*.

So these meetings were announced in the *Federal Register* with the date of the meeting, the location, and the agenda topics, inviting consumers to participate. And they started off being half-day meetings, and in the early, early stages, we would even provide stipends to consumers in order to get them to come out, because there was

the need for maybe parking or gas mileage or something like that. But because of budget constraints, we had to discontinue that part of it.

But these Consumer Exchange Meetings went on for a good seven years, I would think. The public consumer affairs officer would conduct the meeting, along with the regional or district director, because the intent was to also provide consumers with access to the highest decision maker in the agencies, which in our field offices would be the regional director or the district director. So those meetings were conducted by the consumer affairs officer and the regional or district director. They would have agenda topics that they would discuss providing information, try to elicit feedback from consumers, what their thoughts were, what their concerns were, what they didn't like about this proposed issue or proposed regulation, and then there would be open discussion with any issue that consumers wanted to bring up themselves.

They were very, very structured at first, and that was a big concern about our people having to be so structured, because there would always be a recorder there. After the meeting, there were copious notes taken, so the notes had to be sent in to headquarters, and if it was a foods issue, they were sent to work with the Center for Foods to say, "Well, here is what consumers are saying out in Chicago about food labeling" or something like that. So it was a way for the agency to get good feedback from consumers that would assist in whatever decisions that were going to be made at headquarters.

And in some areas, they worked well; in others they didn't. Because in some areas, it was very difficult to get consumers to come out to meetings like that, and in other areas, they loved them. So they did serve a purpose, but we no longer have as many. When I left, there were still some districts where they were popular; but there were others that believed it was too time-consuming for the return. They didn't feel that the return was as good as it should have been with the resources that they had to put into conducting those meetings.

RO: At one point--I forget how many years ago it was when the FDA was considering nutritional labeling--didn't FDA hold a number of regional or sectional meetings on nutritional labeling?

CG: Right. We called those hearings. They were held in a number of states throughout the country, and the commissioner and other top agency officials participated, and consumers who wanted to comment would submit their comment prior to the meeting and would present their concern at the meeting. Those were quite helpful in developing what we have today in the food labeling regulations.

RO: Did the ethnic makeup of the consumer affairs officers change from the time that you originally came to the program until you retired?

CG: Yes, it did change considerably, because when we first started, I can only remember maybe two minorities--two African-Americans, Hazel Wallace and Georgia Singletary, and I think there was one Hispanic . . . No, two Hispanics, Minerva Sanchez from San Juan and Juan Tijerna from San Antonio. And when I left, out of forty-two there were maybe ten African-Americans and maybe seven or eight Hispanics. So over the years, it did change.

And that was a real big concern very early when I got there, because I felt that some of our communities were not getting the information that they needed, because there were some consumer affairs officers who did not feel comfortable going into inner-cities or working with the different minorities. They just did not feel comfortable. So we made a special effort to get consumer affairs officers who could respond. It wasn't the intent to get them to exclusively support those different minorities, but we wanted to make sure--try to ensure--that all of those different communities were getting the information, you know, and being served by FDA. So I think we did a very good job doing that.

We also felt there was a need to have training for our consumer affairs officers, so we contracted to have multi-cultural diversity training provided to them. That training--I can't remember the date, but it was held in Cleveland, Ohio--and I think it was quite beneficial for all of us, because it helped people to open up their eyes and to understand that we are all human beings. At that time, I could see the difference that it made in the outreached efforts that our consumer affairs officers were doing in going into the different neighborhoods and providing programs.

RT: I seem to recall that--within the agency, too--that there was some training for staff awareness of multi-culture employee situations, and I think . . . Were you not involved in that also and some of those training of our own manager personnel, mid-level managers?

CG: Yes. It was an ancillary duty that I had as . . . The associate commissioner for regulatory affairs selected me to be the Black Employment Program representative for ORA (Office of Regulatory Affairs). I served in that capacity for four years. And when I first took on that challenge--because it was another challenge--I felt that . . . I wanted to accept what was going on in ORA, because there were a lot of undercurrents and, you know, a lot of dissatisfaction among blacks, so I felt that before I could even develop a program, I needed to know what those concerns were.

So I got approval to conduct what I refer to as focus group meetings, but they were not focus groups in the truest sense. I got a facilitator to facilitate the meetings--Dr. (Percy) Thomas, because that's his expertise. And we held these meetings first with just the black employees and asked them if they'd tell us what was going on with them. And we wrote up a report along with some recommendations. Then I told Mr. Chesemore we have one side of the issue, and there's always two sides to every story. So I needed to know what the managers' concerns were: What were they thinking? What were their problems, that they thought were problems,

working with blacks? So he said, "OK." So then we conducted these same type of assessment meeting for all of the managers, Bob, and you participated, did you not?

RT: Yes.

CG: Very good meetings. We evaluated those meetings, wrote up recommendations. Then the third step going by our recommendations to Mr. Chesemore was that it seemed that there was a need for some diversity training. And there was a need for black employees to get some additional training to tell them what their responsibility was, because it seems that the basic theme was miscommunication, ineffective communication. So Mr. Chesemore agreed that we could have this multi-cultural diversity training and . . .

RT: That diversity training . . . Well, you've mentioned the minority, the black minority. This was even more extensive, wasn't it, as I recall, involving all kinds of multi-culture mixtures in employment situations.

CG: Right. See, my focus really was just blacks, so that's what I was about to say. We did not get around to just having this multi-culture training in ORA, because then the agency decided that we all needed to have some multi-cultural diversity training. So with that in mind, we decided, well . . . Chesemore says, "Let's participate in that training agency-wide." But I was really pleased to see that we had the foresight to see that there was that need and then, of course, it came down from the commissioner that everybody needed multi-cultural diversity training. So I don't know how that's going, but I understand they have had some courses. But I think we were the leaders in saying, "Hey, we need to start communicating. We're not doing a very good job of talking to each other. We don't know enough about each other." And there's that fear.

RT: I think it was quite revealing. Some of the material that was presented--having attended it, you know--that there is a great diversity and change in the population, not only in this area, but, you know, nationally and in coastal areas, and without such training, folks just wouldn't have thought much about it.

CG: Sure. That's for sure. And he made it kind of mandatory . . . And after they got there, they felt very comfortable, because, you know, people feel uncomfortable in those seats, but that's the only way I think the whole world will change if people get to start talking, you know, not being afraid. And I felt real honored, because I did get an award for that. So I was pleased.

RT: Was that an award by the commissioner?

CG: Yes. Yes.

RO: What were the grade levels of most of the consumer affairs officers? Like the entrance level, and then as they gained experience, what could they really attain in the field?

CG: Well, the grade level, because of the ones who were there when I got into the program, they were seemingly stuck at the GS-11. So we worked very, very hard to at least get another grade, and we did get the journeyman grade up to a GS-12. And along with that, we were all in the 301 series. And, Ron, you may remember that time when there was a big RIF throughout the federal government of all public affairs-type jobs, and those who were doing those type jobs were RIF'd. They were in the 1035 series, and our people were still in the 301 series. So we were more or less protected. None of our people were RIF'd, but we did have to take some people in from other agencies. I can remember a couple of them. One guy, who is still with us, Al Gonzales. He was RIF'd in New York. You may remember him. He's

now in San Juan. And another guy, Bill Martinez. He was in the New York area and was RIF'd, but he's no longer with us.

But, anyhow, we didn't want to put our people in the 1035 series, because that was just glaring, you know. If you want to cut back on your budget, what is the best place to cut back on? Public affairs-type jobs. So . . . But we lost that battle. I can remember attending numerous meetings down at OPM (Office of Personnel Management), along with Blanche Erkel. They brought people in from the field to attend those meetings. But it ended up we had to put them all in the 1035 series, and that is the public affairs series.

But getting back to their grades, most of them were GS-11, the ones who had been there. Entry level people, they were coming in at the GS-7, based on their experience, maybe at the GS-9. But we were fortunate to get the journeyman grade raised to the GS-12, and in the last seven years, we were fortunate enough to get regional, even though we had regional consumer affairs officers before. But when they left, they were phased out. But we thought the only way to get another grade, thirteen, is maybe to have one regional consumer affairs officer--well, now they are called public affairs officers. I can't remember the date that the name was changed from consumer affairs to public affairs officer, but we do now have GS-13s, one in each region, even though we only have six regions now. Back, way back when we first started, as you all know, we had the ten. So we were fortunate in getting that through.

RT: I noticed in reviewing the roster of folks in this particular activity that, at least originally, they were mostly women, as you I think mentioned earlier. And then, of course, some men now have gotten into this work. What were the circumstances for men getting in an apparently female-dominated activity? Was there any recruiting or equal opportunity initiatives to get both sexes involved?

CG: No, there was no special recruiting. And, of course, now Juan Tijerna was a former FDA chemist, and he was there when I started. And we've had men come and go, and I think a couple of the men that we have now, they were former inspectors. But I don't think it was any special effort to keep them out, but I just think men kind of felt, "Oh, that's a female-type job," because of the TV and the glamour. And most people thought of that work as being very glamorous, which it was. I didn't mention too much about the media, but our people do a lot of media. And several of them have their own television programs. I just think men may have shied away. But those who are there with us now, they do like it. When I left, we had five to seven men. And they do enjoy it. But, again, I think they just looked upon it as a female-type job. You know, how people used to looked on secretaries, which they still do. It's a female-type job. Yes. So it's been interesting to see how all of that evolved, you know?

RO: So it was the Office of Personnel Management that forced you then to change the series on these, because we fought that for years.

CG: Right. They were the ones who forced us to do it, because OPM had what they referred to as regional personnel offices. The regions report to OPM, and they were told that all federal positions had to be in the 1035 series. But what I find interesting, there is still one region where there is still 301 series, and I think they were hit so hard in this New York region, so they are refusing to change their public affairs specialists is what they're called now. They're still in the 301 series in the Northeast region.

RO: Did that change cause any grade level difference?

CG: No, it did not. We thought maybe it would help, but it didn't, because again, when the regional personnel office said, "You can only have one GS-13 . . ." When

we went to them and asked whether we could upgrade the position based on the kinds of things that they do, and they reviewed the proposal, the PDs and everything, and then it was decided just one GS-13 for each region, and that's what we ended up with.

RT: In terms of the leadership of the agency, there have been several commissioners since, of course, you first got into this work. Have the commissioners in general been supportive of this or have they been unusually supportive or possibly less supportive in your experience?

CG: Well, there was . . . Don Kennedy was very supportive of the consumer program. And Schmidt . . . I don't know whether he knew we were there. (Laughter) But Goyan was supportive.

(Interruption)

CG: At one time, the consumer movement was really in high gear. Alex Grant's office was responsible for having what they referred to as National Consumer Exchange Meetings, and those meetings were held downtown here in Washington--always here in Washington--at the department. And some commissioners really liked those meetings. As I said, Kennedy liked them; Goyan liked them. And when Young came on, he may have had a couple, but he started focusing on having exchange meetings with health professionals. And now since Kessler has been there, we have not had any National Consumer Exchange Meetings, even though he does meet with consumer organizations; but it's not like the open meetings that we thought were very effective. Because again, with the consumer affairs, public affairs specialists, they were in the field offices meeting with consumers, but there needed to be a forum for these national organizations to meet with the highest person in the agency, the commissioner. And, as I said, those commissioners who liked them really

did enjoy them. But then others, you know, had other priorities. So those meetings were discontinued at the national level.

RO: Your staff when you started here was one person. What did it grow to by the time you retired? And did your role as far as that staff is concerned change any over those years?

CG: Yes, the roles certainly did change, and as I said, we brought Hope Frank on board, and after Hope, we brought on Ada Nelson, a public affairs specialist.

RO: Now Ada was not from the field, though, was she?

CG: No, Ada was not. She had not worked in the field office. In fact, none of my staff ever worked in the field office surprisingly.

RO: Julia was the only . . . I mean, Hope was the only one.

CG: Hope was the only one, yes. And Hope, as I said, brought a wealth of knowledge having been out there on the front line dealing with consumers. So when Hope left, it was a real big void in our office. But we have, as I said, Dr. Kadar, Ada Nelson, Betty Dodson, and Marlene Swider, and Amy Buckingham, and, of course, our secretary.

RO: But you've got at least five professionals?

CG: Right. Yes.

RO: Do they have a division of responsibilities then as far as liaison with the public affairs specialists?

CG: Right. What I did, I drew on their strong areas. Like Dr. Kadar being a medical doctor, I assigned him to work with the Center for Drugs and Biologics. And when Hope was there, she was with Foods. So after she left, Betty Dodson took on the Foods area. And Ada worked with the Center for Veterinary Medicine and the Office of Public Affairs. And Marlene Swider, she worked with CDRH.

RO: So it was really along product line.

CG: Product line. Excuse me.

(Interruption)

CG: They were divided along product line. And, of course, we had additional kinds of things that we did do. We were responsible for annual training conferences for our field people, and those were usually held at headquarters, but in the last five years, we have been able to go out, and we have been having our meetings outside of the headquarters. The first meeting was in New Orleans where we would bring all of our people together, and we would work with the centers to develop the agenda, and each center would make a presentation about their ongoing activities and planned activities, and then we always tried to have some technical training.

One year, we did have media, because we had started, again in the last five or six years, we started focusing on media, because, as you know, you get more bang for the buck as they say working with the media. And a number of our people had not had any media training. One year right after Dr. Kessler came on board, he was working with a contractor locally for his immediate staff, to develop them to work with the media, interviews and that kind of thing. So we were fortunate enough to get a contract with that same company, and we had some of our people who had no on-camera experience to take this trip. It was a five-day training course. And it certainly did help, and that was conducted over at the Radiological Health Studio.

But then, of course, we worked with Foods to develop food labeling training for the new food labeling. So we had to work with Foods to have training for all of our people, all of the public affairs specialists, and that was a real intense course, because, you know, there were just major changes. Because in recent years, we did hire people who did not have strong foods backgrounds. We referred to them more or less as generalists, and those were people who may have had strong journalism experience or even teachers and some were social workers. Whereas before, we kind of looked for people who were either nutritionists or dieticians or with some scientific background. Because there was at one time a movement maybe to have thirty hours of science requirement for consumer affairs officers, but we were able to keep that out of the requirements.

RO: You've mentioned the media. Did your office have any role in making sure that press releases and the talk papers and things like that got disseminated to the field in a prompt manner, or was that all taken care of by the press office?

CG: Yes. There was a time when the AP Wire Service would get all this information before our field offices. You can probably recall that. And it just created a problem when the media started calling and our field people didn't know. But we worked with the press office, and they brought on new people there in the press office, and we became automated in new technologies. Now, whenever there is a press release that is issued to any wire service, it immediately goes out to our field people so they're getting it at the same time. We don't have that problem any longer.

RO: But you don't have to handle press releases to the field?

CG: No, we do not handle that. The press office handles that.

RO: At one time, a number of the consumer affairs officers developed what were called talk papers or something like that along their specialty line. Do they still do that, or is that pretty much done in headquarters?

CG: It's done in headquarters. In fact, if they developed a press release or a talk paper that they're going to use with the general public, it has to be cleared by headquarters. So most of them do not do that locally anymore. They use what the press office issues. We ran into a lot problems, because someone in New Orleans might interpret it one way and in New York another way. The field could call in and read a proposed release to the press office, but it does have to have headquarters' clearance, unless they are just excerpting from some pre-approved information that's already out there.

RT: As far as presentations made by the field staff and public affairs officers, they're pretty much on their own are they? As long as they follow the guidelines that you've just enumerated?

CG: Right.

RT: There wasn't a headquarters editor per se for each presentation. I can remember earlier that there used to be a lady in headquarters, and she reviewed everybody's speech before it was made, and we haven't reverted to that in Consumer Affairs.

CG: No, I think that would be hard. The only thing, like I said, they like for them to use information that's already approved, and our office always sends major speeches, like the commissioner's speeches, the deputy commissioner's speeches, any center director's speeches. We send those to them so they can use a lot of information out of that to develop their own speeches. There have been occasions

with very sensitive issues where the press office would say, "Well, before you make any media statement, even though you may have a press release or you may have a talk paper, call us, because it's a fluid situation. Things are changing real fast." So there are a few occasions where there was a need for that kind of guidance from our press office to our field people. Yes.

RO: The field was always very work-plan oriented. Were the consumer affairs officers a part of that work plan, or did they develop these programs in the field and implement them as they saw fit, or did they have to prepare kind of a work plan?

CG: We were a part of the EDRO work plan, where they were told that they should do a certain number of hours in a particular program area, and they reported into what was referred to as the PODS system. Program Oriented Data System? And they would have to tell us what their accomplishments were by the hours, you know, in a particular program area, and at the end of that reporting period, we would be able to determine what percent of their programs they accomplished compared to what they planned to do. We were a part of that system for a number of years, but I think it was recommended by a committee that consumer affairs officers, as well as some other position classes, be taken out of PODS, because again we weren't a compliance-type program; we were an education program. So it was kind of difficult, because how can you say, "Well, you're going to develop an education program," and you just can't get anybody to come. So it kind of made it difficult to say that we were compliance. But, anyhow, we were taken out of the PODS system.

However, we still did program planning. They're still in the work plan. We tell them, you know, the number of hours that should be expended for the foods program on down the line. But they don't have to report back in. It's up to their local managers to determine just how well they are doing in their respective programs. But at headquarters, we don't evaluate that any longer.

RO: What about target groups? You know, some of the specialists enjoy certain target groups and others have more success with others. Does the public affairs specialist have the freedom to make those choices or . . . ?

CG: Well, again, when the center writes up their programs, they always indicate the target groups, and then we have a strategy sheet, and we tell them in that strategy sheet the different target groups that they should be focusing on. It's just like we've said in the past five years, "Media. Use the media more than doing these one-on-one meetings." So that's all included in the program strategy that is provided to the public affairs specialist. But, again, it's up to that local manager. They know the demographics of their local area better than people at headquarters, because, you know, they're all different, right? So that manager should ensure that his public affairs specialist is serving the needs of the local area.

So I guess we've more or less kind of decentralized as much as possible without losing some kind of uniformity for the overall program. And I think it works better that way. Because even with the Consumer Education Compliance Programs, they are more general. The centers will say, "These are some of our major priorities." And throughout the years, supplements are issued if hot issues come up, you know, the centers have the authority to say, "Well, we want you to focus on a particular area, vis-à-vis another area."

RO: Has there ever been any measurement of how effective these programs are in the various groups, Claudette?

CG: That has been the hardest thing. We contracted with a lady from Johns Hopkins (University), because we always felt there was a need to find out just how effective our people were. But she came, and it was a two-day meeting she had with our advisory committee--I didn't mention that we do have this advisory committee. And it was decided . . . Because we don't work with controlled groups, it would be

very, very difficult to measure just how effective we are unless we worked with controlled groups.

In some areas, like in New Orleans, I can remember their Consumer Exchange Meetings ended up with a group that met monthly, and they were able to kind of determine just the level of understanding that this group had reached over a certain period of time, because they were constantly working with those people. But as you can see, if you talked to one group today and another group tomorrow, unless there was some follow-up, you wouldn't know whether you reached the people or not. If there's an article in the newspaper with the byline of a public affairs specialist, and maybe at the end of the article, she might say, "If you need additional information, call the local FDA office." Well, based on the number of inquiries or follow-up calls that you may get, that would at least tell you, "Well, somebody out there read my article." You know. "They're calling for it." But as far as changing behavior, which educational programs are designed to do, we have no way of really measuring that.

RT: I think there's a number of programs and agencies that have that difficulty. In the office in which I worked, Federal-State Relations, it is somewhat similar. It's a little different than strictly compliance activity.

CG: Right.

RO: Well, I guess the reason I was thinking of this was the new nutritional labeling. And, of course, the emphasis is to be able to inform the consumers so they can buy more intelligently. And I've wondered if there's ever been any way of measuring whether after these programs if the consumer is buying more intelligently or not.

CG: Well, you know, that's something that they had talked about maybe after a year or two to do something like focus group sessions. Because focus group sessions helped determine the need to change the label. They had the focus group sessions, and consumers told them, "Well, I can't understand what's on this label. And I don't read it, not only because I don't know, it's all scientific jargon, et cetera." So when I was serving on this food committee, they said, "Well, maybe"--and I don't know whether they're going to follow up on this--"after two years of the new label being in the marketplace, they could go back and have focus sessions and determine just the level of understanding or to see whether people are really reading our labels when they go to shop or whether they are better informed than they were before." So, hopefully, they'll do that. Because I think it's a good point. It's needed, because otherwise you just keep maybe throwing good money after bad if nothing ever changes. I know I find myself reading the labels. (Laughter)

RO: But then do you buy differently?

CG: I really do. I compare, and I really do.

RO: Well, you're health conscious.

CG: Yes.

(Interruption)

RO: Well, Claudette, is there anything else you want to add to this? We've covered a lot on the consumer affairs program and . . .

CG: The only thing I would like to mention that I did an assignment for FAO, Food Agriculture Organizations, in Rome. I was selected to participate in a

conference on integrating consumer affairs into the food control, and I was asked to come and assist in setting up the conference and also to present a paper to discuss what FDA had done and how we did it. And I spent six weeks over there at FAO . . .

RO: In Rome.

CG: In Rome, Italy, and it was a very interesting, very rewarding experience. There were nine different countries represented. I worked with Dick Dawson, John Lupien, and Tony Whitehead, all former FDAers, in setting up the conference, and then presenting the paper. And out of that, there is an article in one of the international magazines on the paper that I did present. There is supposed to be some follow-up, because those countries who were present at this conference, they are interested in expanding or getting consumer programs started in the foods. This is focusing mainly on foods.

And Malaysia, they seem to be the leaders right now. I arranged for Julia Hewgley--at the time she was a consumer affairs officer in our Kansas City district office--to go to Malaysia three years ago to work with the Malaysian government. So Julia did come to Rome to participate in this follow-up conference. She was there for one week just attending the conference and observing. So I think there will be some additional follow-up, hopefully the first of next year where these other countries will be asking for assistance, and it will probably be FDA public affairs specialists.

RO: A few years ago I interviewed Lorena Myers, and it seemed to me that she mentioned that she had been working with someone from Japan on a consumer affairs program.

CG: Through FAO?

RO: No, through FDA.

CG: Yes.

RO: Was there anybody else from the United States that was a presenter at this conference?

CG: Sherwin Gardner, former FDA deputy commissioner, represented Grocery Manufacturers of America (GMA), and he gave the industry's perspective. And that was the only one from the United States. All the others were from other countries. And, as I said, I'm looking forward to going back hopefully. And Kenya, they were very much interested in getting me to help them with their program, but I haven't heard anything yet. So I'm hoping that I'll be able to do something like that in the near future.

RO: Interesting.

CG: Yes. But the only other thing I'd like to add, my years at FDA have been so rewarding and so fulfilling. I've enjoyed every minute of it, and it's just been a real ups and downs, but with everything that happened, it made me a lot stronger.

RO: Well, great. We appreciate your consenting to the interview for the history program, and unless there's something else, we'll close this, Claudette.

(Interruption)