

## **HOW FAR HAD HIS FAME SPREAD?**

### **(JIM POPHAM EXPERIENCES A REALITY-CHECK AT WENDY'S)**

On April 3 in New Orleans, I received the 2002 Award for Career Contributions to Educational Measurement from the National Council on Educational Measurement. The award was made at the Association's Wednesday breakfast meeting during this year's annual convention in New Orleans. It is an important award, and I was most pleased to have been chosen to receive it.

Later that day, and into the evening, a large number of folks attending the meeting came up to me and offered their congratulations. I responded with the usual "Thank you" or some synonymous phrase. As I said, the Career Award is a significant one---and it even was accompanied by a check---so I really was pleased when folks tossed a "Congratulations" at me. I was happy to have received the award.

The next morning, because I cannot stand to pay \$25 for a room-service breakfast or even \$9 for a muffin in the hotel lobby, I walked a half-block from the Marriott Hotel to Wendy's where I had two egg-biscuit sandwiches and a glass of orange juice for under \$3. Happily basking in my thriftiness, I was about to dump my tray's leftovers into one of Wendy's trash containers when I spied an old, raggedy woman in a corner watching me. If she had been accompanied by a shopping cart, I would have sworn that she was a down-on-her-luck bag lady. Well, she looked me straight in the eye for a moment and then said, "Congratulations!"

Although I responded with a knee-jerk "Thank you," I really was perplexed. How on earth had this old woman learned of my award? Her attire suggested that she was not a regular attendee at national meetings of measurement researchers. What was going on?

I suspect that my confusion must have been evident to her because, after a moment, she explained, "You're the first man today who's bussed his own tray."

And thus I learned that Jim's measurement fame had not spread to the fast-food crowd. I returned to the conference---a suitably humbled awardee.