

Fall 2000

INSIDE ESF

*The magazine of SUNY
College of Environmental Science and Forestry*



SUNY
ESF





Inside ESF is published four times each year for alumni and friends of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

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The State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry offers a diverse range of accredited programs and degree options in chemistry, construction management and wood products engineering, environmental and forest biology, environmental resources and forest engineering, environmental studies, forest resources management, forest technology, landscape architecture, and paper science and engineering.

The College's mission is to be a world leader in instruction, research, and public service related to: understanding the structure and function of the world's ecosystems; developing, managing,

and using renewable natural resources; improving outdoor environments ranging from wilderness, to managed forests, to urban landscapes; and maintaining and enhancing biological diversity, environmental quality, and resource options. As such, ESF has maintained its unique status within SUNY's 64-campus system as one of only five specialized colleges and one of only eight doctoral-granting institutions.

ESF takes affirmative action to provide equal opportunity for all people and to build a campus community that reflects a wealth of diversity.



James M. Hassett

Puzzles and Problems

by James M. Hassett

Our undergraduate program in forest engineering is up for reaccreditation this fall, and we have been involved in an intensive self-study in preparation for the team visit. The study has caused me to think again about engineering education and more broadly

about the differences between science and technology. By the way, I consider engineering and technology to be synonymous.

I've been thinking about this for some time. Several years ago, I participated in two Ph.D. defenses in two weeks. I served as the examiner for Dr. Kapil Singh who created a computer program to better understand the wet pressing of paper, and served as the defense chair for Dr. Sandra Palmer, who studied populations of Nothroid mites. The two dissertations were certainly dissimilar — obviously different problems, references to two separate bodies of literature with no common citations, and a very different set of questions in each defense. I began to wonder how ESF would differ if it existed in an alternative universe where paper had never been invented. (On some days, I find this thought very attractive.) I decided that the study of mites would probably exist in the paperless ESF, with results recorded on clay tablets or magnetic media. Why would the study of mites be present but not paper engineering?

Consider now the remarkable image of a Roman aqueduct, reproduced from a postcard I bought at the Canadian Centre of Architecture in Montreal. I went to an exhibition of images created in the 1850s and 1860s by the French photographer Edouard Baldus. Baldus invented a process using salted paper prints from paper negatives to create images of the emerging modern landscape.

I show the image to debunk a common and pernicious misstatement: technology is applied science, and engineers put into practice that which our colleagues in the sciences discover. This

statement is partially true, but hides a much more complex relationship between science and technology.

The Romans built the aqueduct in the first century A.D. to solve a problem: convey water from where it was found to where it was needed. An engineer designing an aqueduct to solve the same problem today would start with Newton's Laws (circa 1650) to describe the forces on the structure. The engineer would then apply Manning's equation (circa 1890) to design the open channel that conveyed the flow along the length of the aqueduct.

Baldus invented his photographic process to solve a different problem: document features of his landscape. An engineer interested in imagery would begin with an understanding of Maxwell's equations (circa 1880). Clearly, both the aqueduct and Baldus' wonderful image preceded the science on which the technology is based.

Why does the myth persist that technologists are applied scientists? The two activities do share a similar approach; that is, an organized methodology by which to achieve a result. Scientists, of course, use the scientific method, while technologists use an organized approach to problem solving. However, technologists and scientists work to different purposes: the scientist works to achieve general theories, while the technologist works to create a specific example within a general type. Consider again the two dissertations: Dr. Palmer related her field observations of Nothroid mites to the theory of evolution, while Dr. Singh's model was used to improve the performance of a particular paper-making process. Dr. Palmer worked toward the general; Dr. Singh toward the specific.

Furthermore, scientists are motivated by questions, while technologists are motivated by answers. A scientific study that produces ambiguous results but raises new questions is considered a success. A technological effort that did not solve the posed problem, e.g., remediate a hazardous waste site to an appropriate level of safety, would be considered a failure irrespective of how many new questions were raised. In this sense, scientists are puzzle solvers and technologists are problem

Continued on next page

solvers. The puzzles are, in theory anyway, independent of the political system in which a scientist works; a scientific result from China is as valid as a scientific result from anywhere else. Technological results are related to the society which generated the technology, and are not easily transferable from one political system to another.

I think of science and technology as parallel activities, each drawing from the other as needed, but with far less interaction than most people suppose. Perhaps that is not always ideal, but I find it to be generally true.

What does all this have to do with engineering education? We have to help our students become adept problem solvers. They have to have a rich knowledge base (which, of course, includes science, but also economics, policy, management, etc.), know and practice formal problem-solving methodologies, and be aware of the social and political constraints under which technology operates. Are we doing that? I think so, and I hope the accreditation team feels the same way. We'll know soon enough.

Of course, lawyers are different than both scientists and technologists. But please don't get me started on that.

Hassett joined the college faculty in 1981. He was named chair of environmental resources and forest engineering in 1999.

CAMPUS UPDATE

30 Years Labor of Love Recreates Historic Fire Tower

A group of Ranger School alumni and friends gathered in Wanakena this summer to dedicate a fire tower that had been painstakingly dismantled and moved to the site from Tooley Pond Mountain. The project took nearly 30 years to complete.

The tower's formal dedication took place during the annual Ranger School alumni weekend in August.

The project dates back to the early 1970s, when the tower was slated to be dismantled as the state moved to more modern methods of detecting forest fires. Kermit Remele, a longtime faculty member at the Ranger School, spearheaded the effort to move the tower to Cathedral Rock, a favorite gathering place for students.

It took just three weeks for Remele and a crew of students and friends to take apart the tower. Each piece was meticulously marked and stored in a barn at the Ranger School. Eventually, a road was constructed to ease the transport of all those pieces up the hill to Cathedral Rock.

The project was reinvigorated after Remele retired in 1991. A crew of volunteers and students spent many hours over the next few years reconstructing the tower,

replacing the windows and stairs. The tower is topped by a replica of a stan-helio, an early surveying device used by legendary Adirondack surveyor Verplanck Colvin. The replica was made by Wanakena resident Paul Peacock, whose father, Roy, was a member of the Ranger School's first graduating class in 1912.

The tower, which stands 60 feet and offers an impressive view of the northwestern Adirondacks, is dedicated to "all rangers, observers and wardens who have watched over our forests."

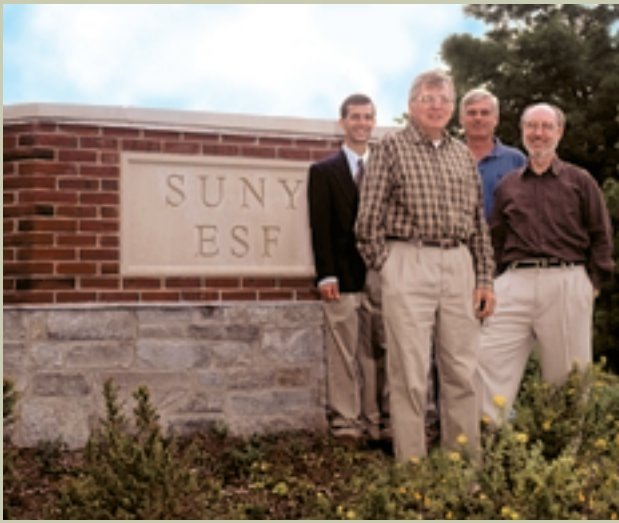
A Class Act

Beginning May 12, visitors to ESF's Syracuse campus using the Irving Avenue roadway were greeted by a handsome new college entry sign surrounded by plantings highlighting native New York species.

The sign was the product of five years work and about \$15,000 in funding from five senior class gifts. College administrators also set aside funds from the ESF budget, and the Alumni Association contributed \$18,000.



The Tooley Pond Mountain fire tower in its new home at the Ranger School.



Signed, sealed and delivered: contributors to ESF's new campus entry include, left to right: Jonathan Logan '00, Donald Ferlow, Howard Bruse, and Richard Hawks.

But the real beauty of the new sign, said both Connie S. Webb, vice president for administration, and Julie L. Rawls, director of student activities, was the number of campus individuals who contributed time and effort to the project.

A renovated campus entry at Irving Avenue was the brainchild of Gregory M. Bubniak, Class of 1996 senior class chair, who believed the college needed some formal indication to visitors that they were on the ESF campus. The north end of campus borders Syracuse University's Carrier Dome and, except for the Forestry Drive roadway between the Dome and Illick Hall, there is no distinct separation between the two institutions.

Richard S. Hawks '72 and S. Scott Shannon '82, '88 of the landscape architecture faculty provided the basic design concept for the sign. LA graduate students, primarily Stevie Famulari '00 and master's candidate Daniel A. Reeder, created presentation drawings.

Several Physical Plant staff members worked on construction drawings and site preparation, including Brian D. Boothroyd, John Joyce, Howard A. Bruse and Clarence Glenn.

And, not least, Professor Donald Ferlow's senior site design studio developed the planting scheme with assistance from Dr. Donald J. Leopold of the environmental and

forest biology faculty. "This really is a clear example of how most things should be done," said Rawls. "It was collaborative across several faculties and departments, and involved students throughout the process."

New Doctoral Program Available in Structural Biology, Biochemistry and Biophysics

ESF, Syracuse University and SUNY Upstate Medical University have joined forces to create a doctoral program in structural biology, biochemistry and biophysics open to students at all three institutions.

The program, called SB3, is one of fewer than 20 in the nation that include structural biology. It also marks the first time all three universities have collaborated on a single academic program.

SB3 has its basis in biotechnology, particularly in medical and biomedical research. Structural biology looks at the three-dimensional, molecular structure of biomolecules and, says Dr. Philip Borer, "is one of the bridges that will enable scientists in multiple fields to make sense of the information uncovered by the human genome project." Borer is an SU chemistry professor who directs the new program.

Scientists from all three institutions say the joint program will enable them to pool faculty and other resources to apply for major federal funding for research, graduate training and new high-tech equipment that would otherwise be out of reach for

the individual departments within each university. They also believe the program will help attract some of the nation's top scientists in the field to Central New York, as well as talented graduate students who will supply the growing demand for structural biologists in the nation's public and private sectors.

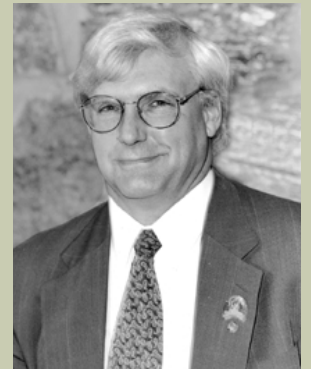
ESF Alumnus Chairs Paper Science Program

ESF has selected an alumnus as the new chair of the Faculty of Paper Science and Engineering.

Dr. Thomas E. Amidon earned his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees at ESF between 1968 and 1974. He served as an instructor for a computer programming and process control course from 1974 to 1976.

Amidon had been employed with International Paper since 1976. He most recently served as laboratory manager at the company's Corporate Research Center in Tuxedo Park, N.Y. In that position, Amidon managed a staff of 74 people in facility operations, business technical support, engineering and capital management.

ESF's program in paper science and engineering was established in 1920.



Dr. Thomas E. Amidon

CAMPUS UPDATE

Studio in Style

All nine classroom studios in Marshall Hall used by the Faculty of Landscape Architecture were renovated this summer.

The hallmark of the renovations was the creation of a 23-workstation computer classroom with projection capabilities.

The classroom will be used for courses in digital design and production, and as a computer lab for students when individual classes are not in session.

The classroom and working design studios all received new flooring and a fresh coat of paint over the summer. In addition, project funding allowed for replacement of the studio partitions and the addition of several new computers to the studios.

Each station is outfitted with electricity and Ethernet/Internet access for students who wish to bring in personal computers. Some cubicles are designed on a newer "office model" style while others contain traditional drafting tables.

Class of 1993 alum David Dumont of Serenity Scapes in Franklin, Tenn., visiting campus at the start of school, commented the new studios "look just like a real office now!"

186 Freshmen Enroll at ESF

ESF marked the 10th year of its renewed freshman entry program by welcoming a freshman class of 186 students this fall. The figure represents an increase of nearly 60 over last year's first-year class.

The 1,600-member student body at ESF also includes 250 transfer students who are new to campus, and about 600 graduate students who are pursuing master's or doctoral degrees. Thirty-nine students are studying forest technology at



Erin Reynolds, David Seyfried and Kerry McElroy, third-year LA students at work in a renovated lab.

ESF's New York State Ranger School in Wanakena.

ESF spent 12 years as an upper-division college before it resumed educating freshmen and sophomores in 1990. That year, the college enrolled a freshman class of 50 students.

Susan H. Sanford, ESF's director of undergraduate admissions, said the college's planned enrollment increase led to the larger size of the current freshman class. She said the college initiated broader outreach and recruitment activities, with a special focus on personalized attention for applicants.

The college also enjoyed a 30 percent increase in freshman applications this year, showing the highest growth of any SUNY campus. At the same time, the quality of the applicant pool has remained high, with ESF freshmen among the highest-ranking students in their high school classes. They also continue to be students who are active in their communities and committed to the future of their world.

"We are very pleased at the results of our recruitment efforts.



Jo Anne Ward, right, a senior environmental studies major, was chosen this fall as a member of the under-23 U.S. Junior National Women's Rugby Team. Ward, a native of Vestal, N.Y., joined the team for the Canada Cup tournament in Winnipeg in September. Ward plays fullback. She also plays with the Syracuse University women's rugby club, where one of her coaches is Gregory Fuhrman '90, left.

The college is very lucky to have this number of bright young people join our community," said President Cornelius B. Murphy, Jr.

The freshman class comprises students from nine states and the District of Columbia. Eighty-eight percent of the freshmen are from New York.

Study Finds Species Diversity Increases In Utility Transmission Corridors

ESF researchers looking at a utility right-of-way in Oneida County for Niagara Mohawk Power Corp. found species of shrub-dwelling birds inhabiting the area that are on the decline elsewhere in New York.

Bird species found nesting along the right-of-way — located on a portion of a 345,000-volt transmission line linking

Volney to Marcy — include the alder flycatcher, American goldfinch, American robin, chestnut-sided warbler, common raven, common yellowthroat, eastern kingbird, eastern towhee, field sparrow, grey catbird, indigo bunting, killdeer, song sparrow, wild turkey and yellow warbler.

In all, the researchers found more than 90 species of birds in the right-of-way corridor.

"Several of these species have been declining. Some of the species that are of concern are on the right-of-way," said Dr. Larry W. VanDruff, professor of environmental and forest biology, and one of the team of researchers working on the study.

"Shrubby habitat is declining across the state and across the Northeast. Birds that have traditionally benefited from pastureland and shrubs have seen their habitat decline," VanDruff said. "It's kind

of fortuitous that we have right-of-ways. They don't cover a lot of acres in New York; nevertheless, there's a diversity of habitat because of them."

"This wildlife study shows that properly maintained transmission line right-of-way corridors may have a variety of environmental benefits that we are only now beginning to appreciate," said David H. King, Niagara Mohawk's executive director of environmental affairs. "When compared with transmission right-of-ways, the forested area around the power line right-of-ways support less than half the number of bird species."

The study was conducted over three years.



Grandmother's Tree 'Still Looking Good' After Lightning Strike

The "Grandmother's Tree," the tallest and most popular white pine in New York, is "still looking pretty good" after a March lightning strike that cut a two-inch gash in the trunk that runs from the top to the bottom of the tree.

The tree sits in a grove of white pine at ESF's Charles Lathrop Pack Demonstration Forest in Warrensburg, N.Y. It is listed on the state's historic tree register.

Forest Property Manager Bruce W. Breitmeyer said college workers are keeping an eye on the tree to see if the lightning strike killed it or only damaged it. "This

(summer) should have been the crucial time," said Breitmeyer. The wet weather this year "most likely kept stress to a minimum and, we hope, helped keep the tree alive."

As of the first week in October, the Grandmother's Tree was still bushy and green. Forest officials may not know the true impact of the lightning strike for some time to come. "We're still optimistic the tree did survive and will continue to survive," said Breitmeyer.

The 315-year-old tree stands 175 feet tall and is adjacent to the Pack Forest's popular public hiking trail. It was named for Margaret Woodward who, legend has it, chained herself to the tree to save it from the loggers' saws in the early 1800s.

Redesigning New York

by Claire B. Dunn

W

hen Thomas Balsley was studying landscape architecture at ESF, then-Professor George Earle wrote a letter commending Balsley for his “unusual natural talent.”

Thirty years later, Balsley '68 has proven Earle right.

Balsley, who has won numerous awards for his design work, has made a name for himself in the field, particularly in New York City, where a new green park on Manhattan's Ninth Avenue bears his name. His firm, Thomas Balsley Associates, has been a major player in an effort to enhance the many small, open plazas that dot the city.

One such parcel, the third of an acre on Ninth Avenue that was once called Sheffield Plaza, has been renamed Balsley Park in his honor. “These smaller parks have been the focus of my life for more than 25 years,” said Balsley. “It's really touching someone would actually name a park after a landscape architect.”

The plaza between 56th and 57th Streets once featured an amphitheater and stage. Privately owned but open to the public, the plaza had become a troublesome, somewhat dangerous spot. Balsley was hired to rehabilitate it. His design included a curving lawn, a café and a playground.

Balsley, who says he's dedicated his career to improving the quality of life in New York City, credits a lot of his success to learning how to work within the design review process and “make it work for” him.

“Design freedom comes not only from the space itself, but also from the client,” he said in a recent telephone interview. “But in New York City, with parks — small or large — you've got to go through the process. So, in effect, you can have 5,000 clients.”

A small waterside park in Chelsea took 14 years to complete from his initial contact with a community group to help them develop their goals for the project through an open design competition (he won), to the park's final design and completion.

The park was dedicated October 18.

His firm has been involved in numerous similar projects, including the \$10 million renovation of a 100-foot-long arcade on Third Avenue. He has also worked on projects at developer



Balsley Park

Donald Trump's properties: planning an impressive waterfall at the famed Trump Tower, improving a courtyard at Trump International Plaza on Fifth Avenue, and designing a new park along the Hudson River at the developer's Trump Place.

Closer to his alma mater, Balsley left his mark on downtown Syracuse. The fountains in both Clinton and Hanover squares are examples of his early work. Both were done after Balsley's graduation by his newly established NYC firm.

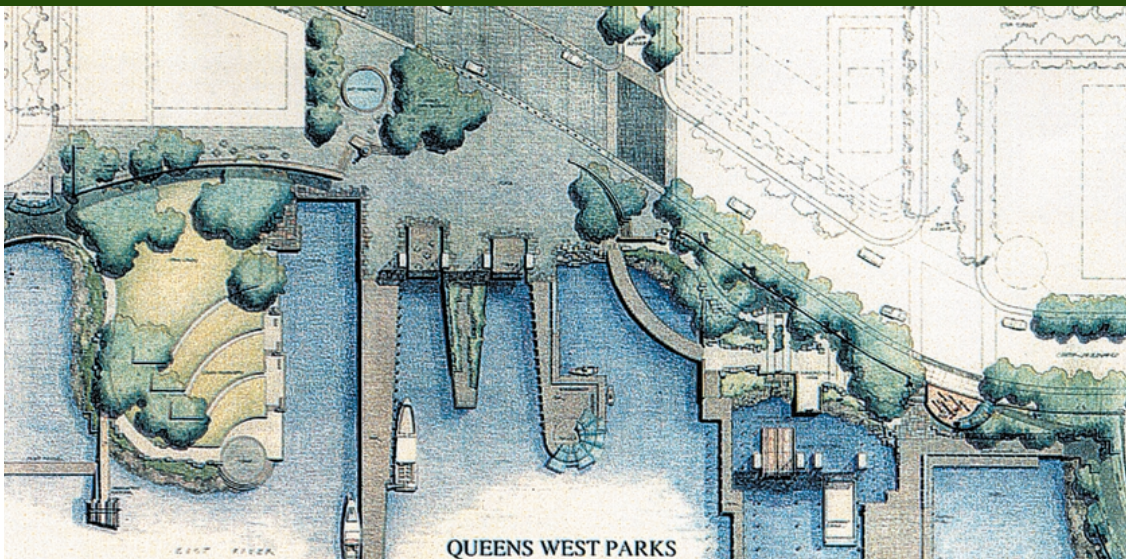
“My experience at ESF was rather unique,” Balsley said, as he talked about his need to “drop out” of school every other year in order to work to earn enough money to return to school.

Through his ESF professors he was able to get a job with the Syracuse firm Glavin & Kotz, owned by ESF alums James E. Glavin '48 and Anthony W. Kotz '59.

“Jim hired me and really gave me a lot of design responsibility,” Balsley said. As a result, Balsley was able to weave together both practical and academic education into “an experience that was really beneficial.”

Balsley also credits the opportunity to work with such outstanding ESF professors as Earle, Bradford G. Sears '39, Robert G. Reimann '54, and the pioneering George Albrecht as part of his inspiration.

Balsley founded his firm in New York City in 1969. Much of his work centers on designing private and public gardens and plazas. His work has taken him all over the United States.



“These smaller parks have been the focus of my life for more than 25 years,” said Balsley. “It’s really touching someone would actually name a park after a landscape architect.”

Queens West Parks

He has also been honored for work he did in Japan. And although he concentrates on urban settings, he was honored by the American Society of Landscape Architects for work he did at the summer home of domestic doyenne Martha Stewart.

Balsley’s two brothers are also alumni of ESF’s landscape architecture program: James graduated in 1963, Douglas in 1974. “They are

all highly respected,” said Richard S. Hawks, chair of the Faculty of Landscape Architecture.

Hawks credits Balsley’s influence with steering him into the field. Balsley was a college buddy of Hawks’ older brother, who attended Syracuse University.

“Tom came to my house one time,” Hawks said. “I was probably in ninth grade. I never looked back. He was an exciting guy.”

Hawks said Balsley is one of the most talented and most widely known people who ever studied landscape architecture at ESF.

“He’s unbelievably talented. He’s the kind of person creativity oozes from,” Hawks said. “He’s not the corporate type. He has done it his own way.”

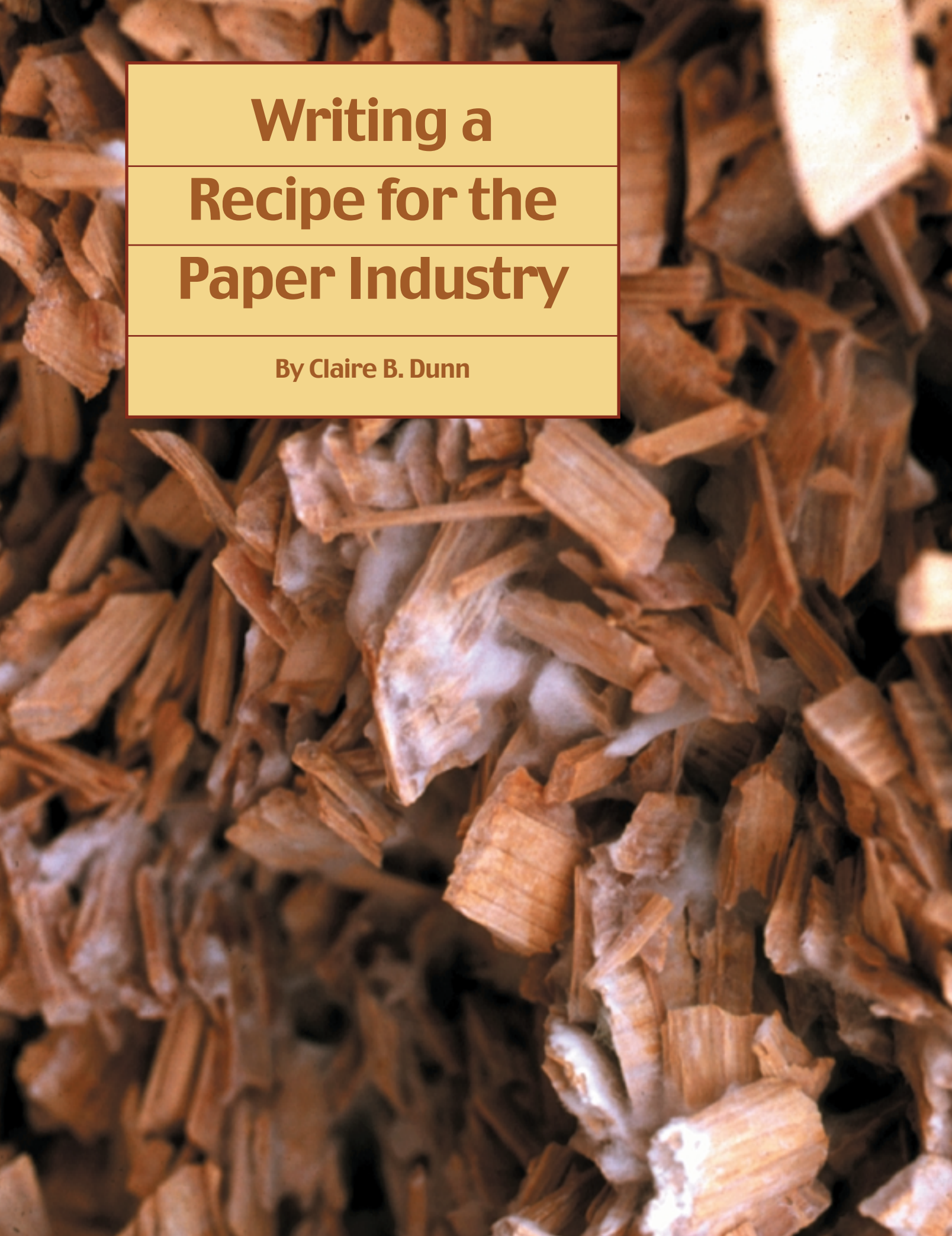
Hawks said Balsley has agreed to present a lecture at ESF this fall. He is also the subject of a new book published by Spacemaker Press.

“It’s really very flattering and exciting,” said Balsley. “Would you like to buy a couple copies and donate them to the [Moon] library?”

Dunn is assistant director of news and publications at ESF.

Thomas Balsley



The background of the entire page is a close-up, high-angle photograph of wood chips. The chips are light brown to tan in color, with some showing a fibrous texture. They are scattered across the frame, creating a dense, textured pattern. The lighting is warm, highlighting the natural grain and edges of the wood.

Writing a Recipe for the Paper Industry

By Claire B. Dunn

**Take a generous pinch of
sticky white fungi.**

Mix with corn steep liquor.

**Add a couple double-
handfuls of wood chips.**

Stir.



This could be the recipe that helps set the course for the future of America's \$60 billion-a-year pulp and paper industry. Left to stew in a big plastic bucket in Walters Hall for a few weeks, the fungi munch their way through the lignin that binds the cellulose in the wood. When their meal ends, some of the gluey lignin is just about gone. The softened chips that remain are ready to make the trip into the refiner, where they will become the main ingredient for a newspaper or grocery bag.

The process taking place in the Walters Hall laboratory is the work of Dr. Gary M. Scott and graduate student Laura Villalba. They are investigating the merits of biopulping, defined as treating wood chips with a natural, wood-decaying fungus before the wood is pulped. There is no question such treatment would reduce the huge amount of energy and chemicals swallowed by pulp and paper mills. There are questions, however, about what the fungi are doing to the structure of the wood and the properties of the paper that are the end product.

"This is the beginning of the kind of things we have to do to make the paper-making process more subtle, more sophisticated and more profitable," said Dr. Thomas E. Amidon '68, '74, the new chair of ESF's Faculty of Paper Science and Engineering. "SUNY-ESF is the ideal place to make this gain because this is where industry involvement, through the Empire State Paper Research Institute, and academic excellence meet."

Scott's research is one arm of the Faculty of Paper Science and Engineering's collective effort to guide the industry toward sustainability. His colleagues and their students are investigating new bleaching and de-inking techniques, and looking for other ways to improve both the quality of paper and the process that manufactures it.

Villalba said biopulping is part of a process that is easier on the environment than traditional pulping techniques, either mechanical or chemical, because it mimics what happens in nature.

"You can see it happening in the forest," she said. "The fungi are on the trees and they are breaking them down. Scientists took that idea into the lab to make the fungi work for us."

At ESF, the fungi work in a no-frills laboratory on the first floor of Walters Hall. First, Villalba drops a small dollop of the fungi into a Waring blender and purees until it resembles a foamy milkshake. She mixes it with the wood chips in a bioreactor — essentially a big, translucent bucket — and adds a bit of corn steep liquor as a nutrient for the fungi. The buckets go into a homemade incubator — a standard-issue metal cabinet about 7 feet tall. It is outfitted with insulation, a small heater that keeps the temperature close to 27 degrees Celsius, and an air circulation system. The buckets sit there for two to six weeks.

"The chips don't look that much different when they come out," Scott said. "What you notice is a slight darkening in color."

But their appearance is deceiving. With the lignin reduced, the chips are easier to break into tiny pieces through the pulping process. When a mechanical process is used, pretreated chips require less grinding than their untreated counterparts. In a chemical pulping process, pretreated chips need a smaller amount of chemicals, which means the mill has less wastewater that has to be treated.

The chips are dried, bagged in plastic and labeled. The bags are put in a chest freezer to stop the action of the fungus.

"The fungus just goes dormant," Scott said. "When you think about it, these things are from Wisconsin. They have to be able to survive three months in a freezer."

Villalba has reached the point where she is satisfied with the quality of the wood chips after treatment with the fungus. Now she is trying to determine which of four pulping processes is best for the chips. She is also studying how the treated pulp reacts to bleaching.



The wood chip on the left has been treated with fungus, making it easier to break down in the pulping process. The chips on the right have not been treated, and will require more chemicals or a longer treatment when they are pulped.

Scott, who joined the ESF faculty in 1998, has been working on biopulping since 1993, when he joined the USDA's Forest Products

Laboratory in Madison, Wisc. Before he arrived, microbiologists had already identified the fungus that was most effective for pre-treatment. It is a common wood-decaying fungus called *Ceriporiopsis subvermispora*. Its advantage is its ability to devour lignin while leaving the cellulose virtually untouched.

As a chemical engineer, Scott's focus is the engineering aspect of the project. Working with the fungus is the purview of microbiologists at Biopulping International, a Wisconsin-based company that supports Scott's research in the hopes of commercializing the technology.

"It took me quite a while to be able to say the names of the fungi," Scott joked. "When I need fungus, I just call the people at Biopulping International and say, 'Send in the fungi!'"

In Madison, he worked on "scaling up" the trials, bringing the research out of the laboratory and into more of a real-life situation. In an effort to work with the huge amount of chips that would be processed through a working mill, Scott and his co-workers set up a makeshift laboratory in a corner of a parking lot.

Villalba is the newest addition to the biopulping effort at ESF. In her native Argentina, she teaches in the paper science master's program at the University of Misiones. She came to ESF for her doctorate, planning to concentrate on some aspect of recycling. But once she arrived, she couldn't find the perfect topic. She sought advice from Scott, who steered her toward the biopulping work.

The research done by Scott and Villalba was foreshadowed more than 20 years ago by research initiated at ESF by Dr. Chun J.

Wang, a mycologist who is now professor emeritus, and the late Dr. Renata G. Marton, an acclaimed researcher in the pulp and paper field.

"At that time, nobody was really doing it," Wang said recently. "Renata Marton and I talked about it. We had been collecting wood-decaying fungi for years. This place is famous for it."

With the help of a post-doctoral associate, Ed Setliff '70, Wang experimented with the effect of fungi on wood chips. She looked for ways to speed up the process. Although she was excited about the idea's potential in those early days of biopulping, the project did not generate financial support.

"The pulp and paper people were not enthusiastic about it then because the process was too slow. It was a novel idea that took too long," Wang said. "They didn't think it was practical."

But at the dawn of a new century, Amidon says the biopulping research puts ESF right where it belongs: at the forefront of an international effort to make the pulp and paper industry more sustainable and profitable than it is now.

"This is a spot of light where the future is beginning to happen," said Amidon, who took over as chair this summer. "I would like to see ESF as the lead player in the development of the pulp mill that also produces large quantities of valuable organic raw materials."

We're going to need these badly, starting in about 20 years. This is part of the simple certainty that we have to become a renewable-based society in order to be a sustainable society."

Dunn is assistant director of news and publications at ESF.

ESF's Mischievous – Mysterious – Eustace B. Nifkin

by Carol Boll

Dr. Harrison H. Payne '50 remembers the encounter with "Eustace B. Nifkin" quite well.

"He was full of hijinks, and a great outdoors person," recalls Payne, who at the time was ESF's dean of students. "He was going to climb the side of Marshall Hall — until security caught him. They sent him to me, and I thought we got things all straightened out. Then about four or five months later, he was caught again — trying to climb another building."

OK, so it wasn't actually Eustace B. Nifkin that Payne remembers scaling the walls of Marshall Hall that day. But it's through high-spirited students like that building climber that Payne, retired vice president for student affairs, sometimes catches a glimpse of ESF's own mischievous — if elusive — campus "mascot."

For more than half a century, Eustace B. Nifkin has called SUNY-ESF home. Freshmen first meet him in the student orientation video, where he is introduced as the school's original "stumpie." Campus lore calls him the patron saint of all foresters, but he seems to have a particular affinity for ESF, from which he is rumored to have collected more than one degree over the course of 50-plus years of "study."

Commonly depicted in classic lumberjack garb, wielding an ax in one hand and a jug in the other, Nifkin makes his presence known periodically on class registration forms (Exploratory Anatomy with Dr. Groper, for one), magazine subscriptions ranging from Playboy to Field and Stream, anonymous contributions to the school, and in the occasional Knothole article.

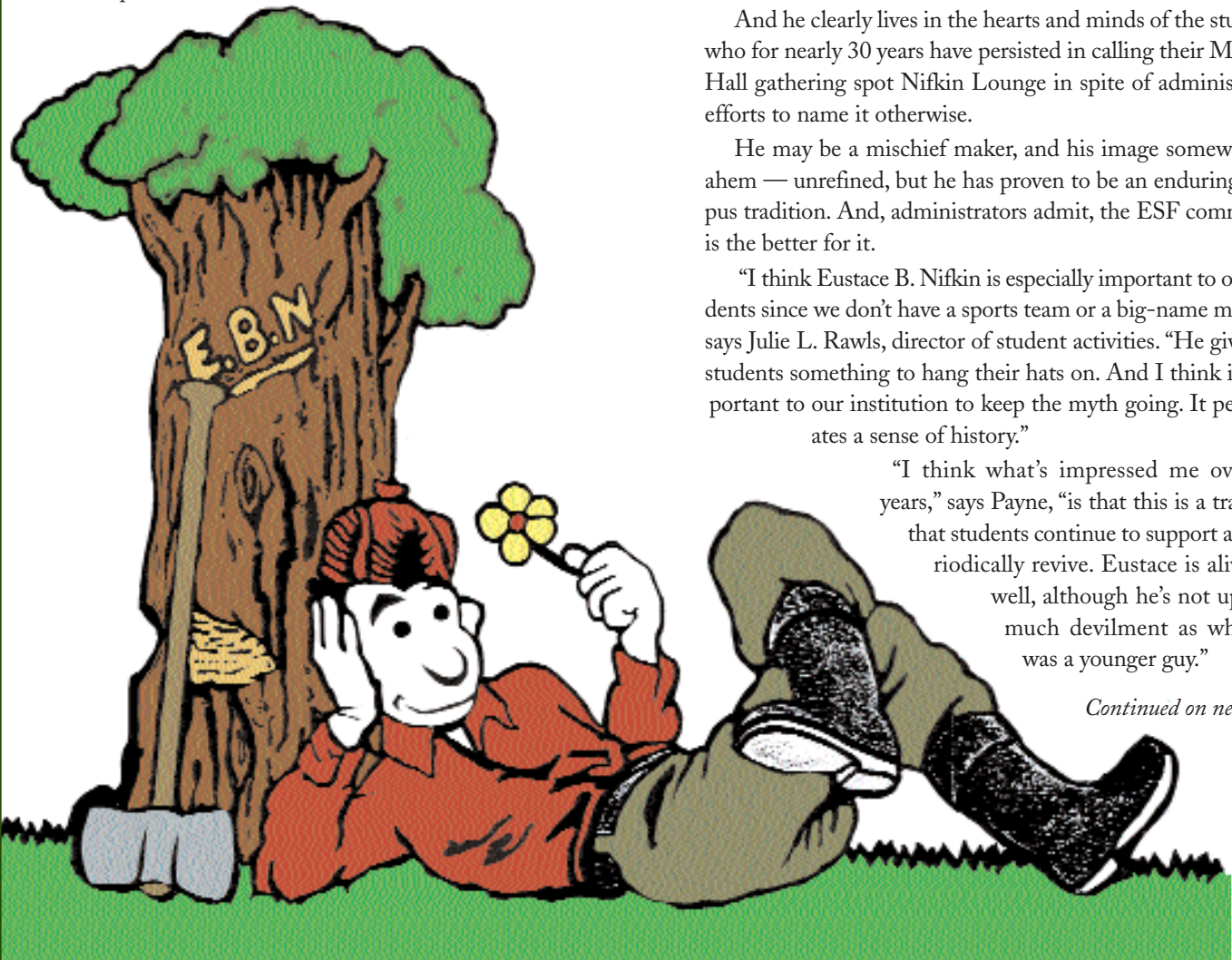
And he clearly lives in the hearts and minds of the students, who for nearly 30 years have persisted in calling their Marshall Hall gathering spot Nifkin Lounge in spite of administrative efforts to name it otherwise.

He may be a mischief maker, and his image somewhat — ahem — unrefined, but he has proven to be an enduring campus tradition. And, administrators admit, the ESF community is the better for it.

"I think Eustace B. Nifkin is especially important to our students since we don't have a sports team or a big-name mascot," says Julie L. Rawls, director of student activities. "He gives our students something to hang their hats on. And I think it's important to our institution to keep the myth going. It perpetuates a sense of history."

"I think what's impressed me over the years," says Payne, "is that this is a tradition that students continue to support and periodically revive. Eustace is alive and well, although he's not up to as much devilment as when he was a younger guy."

Continued on next page



But he does have a lady friend, Elsa S. Freeborn, who joined him on campus in the early '70s, Payne says — about the same time the ranks of women at ESF began to swell.

As the widely acknowledged resident expert on Eustace B. Nifkin, Payne has been on the front lines of the lunacy — er, legacy — for the better part of 30 years. “Some people even accuse me of keeping the tradition alive,” says Payne. “Well, I don’t have time to do that.”

Most sources agree that Nifkin made his first appearance on campus in the early '40s, although the exact year is unclear. In a letter to James M. Heffernan, vice president for student affairs and educational services, one alumnus several years ago said the character materialized in 1942 or '43 out of a brainstorming session to conjure up a namesake for the campus ball. The foursome settled on the name of Eustace B. Nifkin — because it had a nice ring to it — and the Nifkin Ball was launched.

For his part, Payne says Nifkin appears to have simply emerged from the woods one day and happened upon a summer camp session at Cranberry Lake Biological Station.

Whatever his origins, Nifkin over the next several years was warmly embraced by war-weary veterans who comprised much of the then-named College of Forestry’s student body at the time. Cartoon images found their way into the yearbook, and the mischief began.

“The World War II vets were certainly older and more mature than people coming right out of high school,” says Justin F. Culkowski '73, director of alumni affairs. “But they liked to play pranks...After seeing the horrors of war, for some of them this was a way to have some fun.”

And the pranks perpetuated by — or in the name of — Nifkin over the years have always been “innocent humor, innocent fun,” Culkowski adds. Like slipping Nifkin’s name onto a class registration form, where it would make its way onto the class roster of some unsuspecting professor.

“Every now and then, I would get a call from some concerned faculty member,” recalls Payne, “and they’d say, ‘I’ve got this Eustace B. Nifkin in my class, and I haven’t seen him here at all.’ I don’t know how the students beat the system (to get him registered), but our students were — and are — very ingenious.”

As a “student” himself, Nifkin appears to be “a fun-loving person more than an academic,” says Culkowski. “He’s not (intellectually) bad enough to kick out of school, but he’s not the brightest light bulb in the laboratory.”

On file in the school archives is ample evidence of some of his shenanigans over the years: nearly a dozen invoices from magazine companies seeking payment on subscription requests submitted under his name (and one invoice for pantyhose ordered for Elsa). As vice president for student affairs for 17 years, Payne had to write more than a few apologetic explanations.

Over the years, Nifkin has had his occasional detractors, who contend that the rough-hewn woodsman is not the most fitting representation of the school. The objections were particularly evident in the early '70s, as the school was evolving from the College of Forestry into the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

The way the detractors saw it, “We were going from this quaint little college to a world tradition,” says Culkowski. “And it was felt that Nifkin was a vestige and needed to be treated as such.”

“In the eyes of some faculty, Nifkin was a demeaning image” agrees Payne. “Early on, most of the images of him were as a forester. And they didn’t want to think that was the image of the school.”

Nifkin — who penned the dedication in honor of alumni in the 2000 yearbook — still has his anti- and pro-factions, says Payne. But he also has a permanent place of honor in Alumni Lounge, so named “In the Spirit of Eustace B. Nifkin” in 1994.

And multiple diplomas or not, he shows no signs of leaving campus anytime soon. Administrators say that’s just fine with them.

“Our students are hard working and focused,” says Heffernan. “It’s nice to have a little levity. And this is a good symbol of campus life and school spirit.”

No doubt that’s been the rogue’s real objective all along.

Boll is a veteran newspaper reporter who now works as a free-lance writer. She lives in DeWitt, N.Y.

PLANT A SEED AND WATCH IT GROW

More than 80 cents of every dollar contributed to the ESF Annual Fund is directed to scholarships that meet students' financial needs and reward students' academic achievements.

The remaining 20 cents supports academic programs, helping to provide a solid foundation for student learning, faculty development and program staff assistance.

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ON CAMPUS

Books and Monographs

Turner, J. Scott, *The Extended Organism, The Physiology of Animal Built Structures*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 256 pages. July 2000. ISBN 0-674-00151-6.

Awards and Honors

Bentley, William R., named to the USDA Forestry Research Advisory Committee.

Coufal '60, James E., Award for Meritorious Service, Council of Forest Technician Schools Annual Meeting, August 2000. Wanakena, N.Y.

Farrell '91, John M., elected president, New York Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, effective January 2001.

Hawks '72, Richard S., elected Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects for service to the profession. Investiture ceremony scheduled October 28, 2000. ASLA Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

Palmer, James F., 2000 Professional Merit Award for Research, American Society of Landscape Architects, for "Conserving Dutch Landscape Spatial Diversity." October 2000. ASLA Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

CAMPUS CALENDAR

November 3

Installation of Dr. Cornelius B. Murphy, Jr. as ESF's third president.

November 4

Ranger School Fall Open House for prospective students. Wanakena campus. Additional information: Office of Undergraduate Admissions, 315-470-6600.

November 10

College Information Session for prospective students. Syracuse campus. Also: November 13 and December 1 and 8. Additional information: Office of Undergraduate Admissions, 315-470-6600.

November 17

Alumni Reception, Society of American Foresters annual meeting, including alumni from Washington, Virginia and Maryland. Washington, D.C. Additional information: Office of Alumni Affairs, 315-470-6632.

December 10

December Convocation and December Soiree. Additional information: Office of Student Activities, 315-470-6658.

January 14

Orientation and registration for new students.

January 27

Alumni Reception, Hollywood, Fla. Additional information: Office of Alumni Affairs, 315-470-6632.

March TBA

Alumni Reception, Greater Atlanta, Ga., area. Additional information: Office of Alumni Affairs, 315-470-6632.

April TBA

Alumni Reception, Northern California. Additional information: Office of Alumni Affairs, 315-470-6632.

April 7

Spring Awards Banquet. Additional information: Office of Student Activities, 315-470-6658.

May 12-13

Commencement Weekend. Additional information: Office of Student Activities, 315-470-6658.