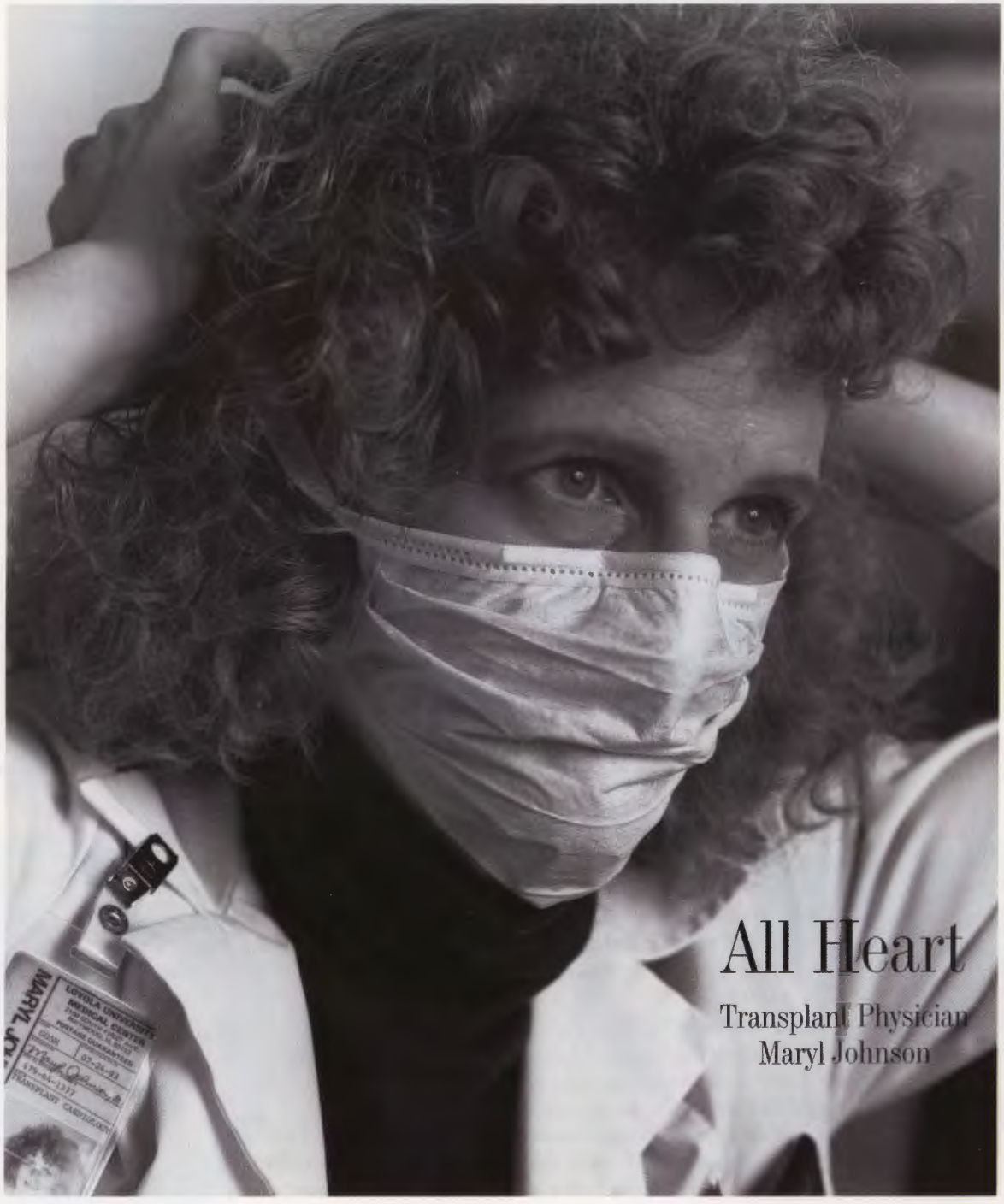
VISIONS

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY'S ALUMNI MAGAZINE • WINTER 1992



All Heart

Transplant Physician Maryl Johnson

THIS IS ANOTHER IN A SERIES OF MESSAGES EXPLAINING THE MANY PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE ISU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION.

(LEFT TO RIGHT): SENIOR GORDON BLAIR, AMES ARCHITECT RICHARD ROSELAND, '72, SENIOR MELINDA WEBB.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Is there a more sinking feeling in all of student-dom?

Second semester, sophomore year. For the past two years, "Undeclared" has tagged along behind your name like an unwanted little brother. Now you fidget outside your adviser's office, with seven minutes to answer one of the three or four most important questions you'll ever face: What am I going to do with my life?

There is help, oh muddled of mind.

The Iowa State University Student Alumni Association's Career Awareness Committee is run by a group of students who've stared uncertainty in the eye not so long ago. To help students contact alumni working in myriad fields, the committee maintains its Career Contact File. If a student is interested in, say, doorknob design, the computer file can turn out a list of alumni in the field. One call or letter can open the door to an entire industry.

And there's more. The committee also sponsors Career Preview Days, which allow students to "shadow" for a day a professional in a specified career.

In addition to bringing The Real World into sharper focus, both programs are keen examples of how alumni — through the sponsoring ISU Alumni Association — can help fellow Iowa Staters of the future.

Career Awareness Committee: Just one of dozens of programs made possible by your Alumni Association membership.

LINE UP

FEATURES

20

20
A Change of Heart
An ISU alumna plays a vital role in employing cardiac transplants to build bridges to tomorrow.

BY DAN DAVENPORT

26

26
For Land's Sake
ISU's first-of-its-kind sustainable agriculture center plows new ground in promoting environment-friendly farming.

BY DAN DAVENPORT

34

34
One Voice
VISIONS focuses its lens on opera superstar Simon Estes' week-long campus visit.

BY JIM HEEMSTRA AND STEVE SULLIVAN

DEPARTMENTS

4 FRONT ROW SEAT

6 LETTERS

8 THE HUB

14 FRONTLINE

16 INQUIRY

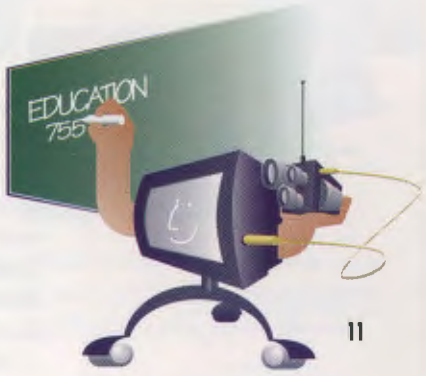
18 REPORT CARD

40 THE ASSOCIATION

42 ESPRIT

44 WORKOUT

46 FRAME OF REFERENCE



11

▸ COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM SEED

VISIONS

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY'S ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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Free Spirit

WELCOME HOME, TOM SUTHERLAND. Trifling words, perhaps, to a man who has spent the past 2,347 days on soiled mattresses in dark, dank cubicles. But I suspect common courtesies were in short supply during those frightening days and nights; maybe graciousness is as welcome a commodity today as steamy hot showers and thick, soft linens.

As millions of us raced yesterday to the nearest CNN screen and caught a glimpse of your extraordinarily healthy-looking, composed face, free at last, we were struck—nearly dumbfounded—by your own grace and dignity. You, who have every right to lash out at the world for all the degradation and isolation you have suffered at the hands of your Shiite Muslim captors these past six-plus years, were *thanking* your alma mater for thinking of you. *Praising* Iowa State University for tolling its campanile bells these past 72 months in your remembrance. Reminding us all of the strength and integrity that must have sustained you when little else could.

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Jean and Tom Sutherland, November 19, 1991

Today we're poring over newspaper accounts of your long-delayed release from that Lebanese hell, marveling at your clear-headedness and your fortitude. We chuckle as we read interviews with your family members, who cite your Scottish stubbornness as a primary catalyst in your ability to emerge so physically and emotionally intact. And we stop short when we realize that perhaps the grandest of those family members missed, by just hours, the opportunity to share in the release for which he had fought so diligently.

William Murray must have been a father-in-law to cherish. His attitude was straight out of a vintage Disney movie—eternally optimistic, forever the cheerleader. Television cameras gravitated toward the two-story house on Ames' tree-lined Oakland Avenue whenever "local color" was needed for a hostage-related byte.

And William Murray never let them down. He spoke forcefully and eloquently of his daughter, your wife (Jean Murray Sutherland, '56) and her convictions that you would return safely. And he talked, always with fondness, of you, the man who shared his love for agriculture and teaching. He even lent his emotions to this magazine (*"A Family Held Hostage," Winter '89*) in an effort to further educate the nation of your plight. More than one reader swallowed hard at the end of his essay: "... There are some indications that ... [the hostages will be freed] by the end of the Reagan administration. ... I write this in November 1988. You can't blame me for hoping."

So it was with shock and irony that we faced the news yesterday morning that just 30 hours before your release, William Murray lost his 17-year battle with cancer. There are those who treat the incongruous timing as preordained: Who better could have championed your cause in this part of world, in the stead of that quixotic ISU professor emeritus?

A few weeks ago, members of the Veishea central committee voted to invite you and alumnus Terry Anderson, now the longest-held American hostage in Lebanon, to serve as grand marshals for April's traditional parade. How I look forward to that bright, crisp Saturday morning, when I, and thousands like me, can shower you both with the "welcome home" that has been welling in our throats for these many years.

I write this in November 1991. You can't blame me for hoping.

—Debra Gibson

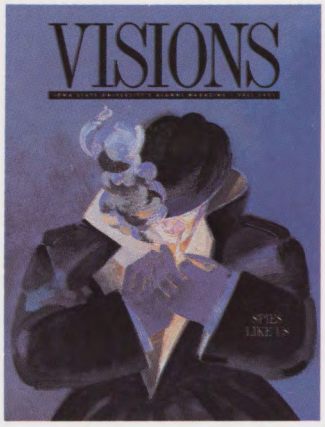
ROY REIMAN LIKED OUR STORY.

So he renewed his membership in the ISU Alumni Association. As president of Reiman Publications — publisher of hugely popular magazines like Country, Country Woman and Reminisce — Roy subscribes to the strength of Association programs like student recruitment, student leadership and ISU clubs. And he knows benefits like VISIONS magazine, the university events calendar and merchandise discounts are the genuine article.

So take it from Roy: Stay on the right page when it comes time to renew your Alumni Association membership.

WHEN IT'S TIME TO RENEW, THINK ISU.

The Spy Who Left Them Cold



Dan Davenport's "I Spy" *(Fall '91)* is certainly not positive commentary on either Tom Twetten or the CIA, although it was of interest to learn that the man is a product of ISU and from my own era. It was interesting enough, in fact, to keep me reading to the second-to-last paragraph. Here we discover the real Dan Davenport: "For 90 minutes I knocked around CIA headquarters, where intelligentsia like Ollie North and Bill Casey and George Bush had clustered in smoky rooms, masterminding tangled plots to spy on the world, *and I fear, much worse.*"

Allowing Dan Davenport, or anyone else, for that matter, carte blanche to publicize his personal political views in VISIONS must have, in the long run, an adverse impact on the university. Here's why: From the mail I receive, it appears that at least one goal of the Alumni Association is to help raise funds for the university. Given that the graduates of Iowa State are a politically diverse group of people, it would seem prudent to not publish material that might alienate any sizeable number of them. Additionally, there must be at least a few politicians in Des Moines who do not share Dan's political views and who are called upon to vote for or against funding for university programs. Do we want a university publication making political statements with which they strongly disagree? I think not.

If you wish to make political commentary, and I argue that you should not, at least present a balanced view. May we assume that Dan will soon be taking a sabbatical to help Mr. Harkin in his campaign for the presidency? I hope so!

Dennis Hart, '59
San Jose, Calif.

I was deeply offended by [*I Spy*]. Policy or no, Tom Twetten was right not to dignify this effort with a response. Surely this cheap shot, in poor taste, is not Iowa State journalism in the tradition of Carl Hamilton — please take me off your mailing list.

John V. Heires, '55
Millersville, Maryland

Those Were the Days

My wife, Charlotte Langworthy Forsythe, '44, and I were in school at the time discussed in "War and Remembrance" *(Fall '91)*, and remember many of the incidents. By late 1942, Char and I wanted to get married before I left for the service, but I could not afford an engagement ring. I was the head waiter and Char was the hostess in Welch Hall at the time, and it was against Miss Guthrie's (the beloved but strict supervisor of the women's dining halls) rules to date co-workers, but we managed.

A popular radio guest interview show of the time, *VOX Pop,* was scheduled to appear at Iowa State and interview students who were involved in the war effort. I was working for Dr. George Stewart for the Armed Services and was invited to appear for an interview on the show. Some of the other participants on the show knew of our hopes, and even knew the ring we wanted. They made this known to *VOX Pop,* and I was given the ring after my interview. We may be the only Iowa State couple to have its engagement announced on national radio. It was news to our families and certainly to Miss Guthrie, who had assembled all of our co-workers in Welch Hall to listen to the broadcast. I am happy to say that after 49 years, Char still has the ring.

The article "And The Band Played On" brought back other memories. When I came to Iowa State in the fall of 1939, I tried out for the band, as I had been a member of the National Championship Griswold, Iowa, High School Band. Professor Alvin Edgar told me he had enough sousaphone players, but could I play the cymbals? I wanted to be in the band so badly I said yes, and only later did I discover how lonesome it can be to be the only single instrument on the field! Later, in the 1960s, Professor Edgar asked me to be a member of a faculty committee to schedule musical events, but I am sure it was not because of my excellence with the cymbals.

Richard H. Forsythe, '43, PhD '49
Fayetteville, Ark.

LETTERS

Grammatically Speaking

Is Iowa State short of English teachers, or do they approve of grammar like "They've Got the Look" (*Front Row Seat, Fall '91*)? I read this to mean "They Have Got the Look." Why not abbreviate into better grammar with "They Have the Look," unless they maybe don't got it at all.

Edward F. Winter, '39
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Eye for Detail

I would like to call to your attention that Shelly Coldiron is probably in violation of your university's safety procedures by working in a lab environment without safety glasses (*Earth to Mars, Fall '91*). At 39, that is all she needs to splash some chemical into her eyes, and she can kiss her $24,000 grant goodbye. As a blind student, she may find that Ph.D. a little more difficult to obtain. I can't believe you allowed this picture to be published.

You may also wish to inform the young fellow on page 34 (*And The Band Played On*) that some idiot has put his front drum bracket together backwards. That is why he now has all the aluminum crap over his nice uniform. One wonders who won the game that day.

Stephen D. Rohde
Sunnyvale, Calif.

Adding to the Time Capsule

(Re: Time Capsule, Summer '91)

My days at Iowa State College spanned from 1923 to 1930 to obtain my degree in civil engineering. I also worked on a part-time basis for the building and grounds department, headed up by Mr. Schlosser. One of my duties was to lay out the corners and set bench marks for contractors of new buildings. When the Memorial Union Phase I construction was started, I did the survey work to run the center line of the heating tunnel from the central power plant to the Union. One criteria in running the line was that no existing trees were to be removed or damaged by excavation for the heat tunnel. When I laid out the center line as it was shown on the contract drawings, it soon became apparent that two trees were in jeopardy. In order to save these trees, I made a field change in the layout of the tunnel center line by using a very slight curvature in the center line, thus saving these trees. The contractor was unaware of my altering the center line and as he proceeded with the construction he could not understand why his forms, designed for straight alignment, would not fit when he followed the altered center line. I do not think to this day too many people from the university or the contractor's representatives were aware of what when on. But I do know that no trees were lost because of the heating tunnel construction, and the Memorial Union never went without heat or lack of any other utilities delivered by the tunnel.

E. H. Luetje, '30
Satellite Beach, Fla.

Stand Up and Be Counted

I take this opportunity to especially thank Iowa State University alumni for their advice, assistance and hard work in helping Iowa State University meet and even exceed 1991 enrollment projections. As interested readers of VISIONS know, high school demographics indicate smaller enrollments, and extraordinary efforts must be made to recruit new students. I am pleased to report that as a result of significant enrollment initiatives and the hard work and dedication of you, our loyal graduates, we were able to meet our projected enrollment (25,250 students).

Iowa State University is very fortunate to have loyal graduates who clearly serve as role models for college-bound women and men.

Earl E. Dowling
Assistant Vice President
Office of Enrollment Services

VISIONS magazine strives to celebrate the power of thoughts and ideas. You, the reader, are the ultimate judge of success in this endeavor, making your opinions highly regarded and your letters greatly encouraged. Please send letters to: VISIONS editor, Alumni Suite, Memorial Union, 2229 Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50010-7164

EGYPTIAN'S DRAMA RAISES CURTAIN ON STUDENT AWARENESS

JIM HEEMSTRA

Karim Alrawi

A SEVEN-MONTH RESEARCH project set the stage for an experimental ISU Theatre production that debuted last November.

Dreams...Deep As Rivers, scripted by Egyptian playwright Karim Alrawi for the Theatre, was inspired by an intensive workshop he conducted on campus last spring. Twenty students and faculty members participated in the powerful exercises, all structured to unearth a sense of being "the other" — different from the rest. From the frank discussions that followed, the 38-year-old Alrawi began crafting a drama depicting the story of Nels and Latifa, an interracial Iowa couple who contemplate their ancestries. Through their explorations, the couple confront violence, rape, slavery, racism and war.

"The play is a search, really," Alrawi, now back in Cairo, explains. "Through the workshop process and a great deal of outside research, I came up with a history of Iowa during the past 150 years that reaches some conclusions, but certainly isn't all neatly tied up. These ideas don't apply to all of Iowa at all times, but they do accurately represent the ideas that came from the workshop."

Alrawi came to Iowa State at the invitation of assistant speech Professor Gregg Henry (*VISIONS, Spring '89*). The two met in Cairo in 1989 while Henry was on a teaching assignment at the American University. Alrawi, whose work has been performed by Britain's Theatre Royal Stratford East, the Joint Stock Theatre Company and the Royal Court Theatre, had employed his workshop techniques with professional acting companies in the past, but never with students.

"It was nerve-wracking, but not intimidating," says the boyish Alrawi. "I'm used to working with no more than 12 participants, and all of a sudden I have 20 sharing their experiences with me.

"The first two weeks of the workshop were a complete write-off," he remembers with a laugh. "But eventually, when people realized they ultimately could stay in control of a situation, they began to divulge what it is like to be 'an other' in Iowa. This state certainly is a very homogenous one, but we've all felt exclusion.

"I think perhaps the students found the final play authentic — I understand there have been plenty of arguments regarding, 'No, that part in the play is about *me*!'"

HE PLAYED TILL KNIGHTFALL

Siamack Bondari is the second-ranked chess player in Iowa, but in one day last fall the mathematics Ph.D. student lost to three players.

But he beat 23 others.

In the intellectual equivalent of a body builder kicking sand in the faces of so many 98-pound weaklings, the national chess master simultaneously took on 30 opponents in the Memorial Union. Walking from board to board around a U-shaped set of tables, Bondari pondered no longer than 15 seconds on any one move. His record after nearly five brain-numbing hours: 23 victories, three losses, four draws.

"The hard part is keeping the plans in your mind, and remembering each board when you come back around," says Bondari, a native of Iran who also has conducted chess

awareness-raising "simuls" in malls in Ames and Des Moines. "I usually play pretty fast, but then they told us we had to clear out of [the Sun Room]. I started playing faster and faster, and that's when I got into trouble."

ANYTHING FOR A BUCK (CONT.)

JIM HEEMSTRA

Amy Putney

(Editor's Note: As tuition climbs faster than the vines on Carrie Chapman Catt Hall, more and more ISU students are scrambling to make ends meet. As a follow-up to our "Anything For A Buck," [Summer '91] photo essay, VISIONS occasionally will unearth yet another Iowa Stater taking the innovative route to paying the bills.)

AMY PUTNEY HAS SEWN UP an ingenious way to stay in school without passing the hat—she makes 'em instead.

The 22-year-old Des Moines native *cum* milliner scours antique shops, consignment stores and attics for vintage fabrics (old velvets are her favorites), and then stitches the textiles into original headpieces sold in specialty shops. To date, the fine arts senior has constructed nearly 100 hats, which she sells for $20 to $50 each.

Putney credits a stitchery course taught by associate design Professor Elsa Sreenivasam as the springboard for her venture. "She [Sreenivasam] really let me go my own way," says the slight, softspoken Putney, "and she encouraged me to go on to pursue and then receive a FOCUS grant."

A loner most of her life, Putney shaved her head a year ago to emphasize the "beauty of the neck" when modeling her creations. She categorizes her clientele as "typically females like me—most tend to be themselves and are into ornamentation." Which would Putney claim as her favorite brim to date? "The cat hood with ears, because it illustrates my spiritual togetherness with animals," she says. Her least favorite? "The pillboxes—I've OD'd on pillboxes."

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE JUST THE PUSH OF A BUTTON AWAY

In the latest in a series of efforts to increase safety on the Iowa State campus, last fall the university installed six emergency phone booths. Persons needing help simply can push a button to hook into the ISU Department of Public Safety's 911 line. They then talk into a speaker phone. The university's 911 system allows DPS officials to trace the call's origin.

"When you combine the phones with the increased lighting we've gotten on campus, we've really done a lot to enhance safety," says DPS Assistant Director Jerry Stewart.

Total cost for the phone project was about $35,000. Interest accumulated from student fees provided initial funding, with various student organizations contributing the remainder.

◄ STATE STATS: INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR ►

Number of American minority students enrolled at Iowa State University, fall 1991: 1,321

*

Percentage of total enrollment: 5.2

*

Percentage of minority students in Iowa population: 3.5

*

Number of black students enrolled: 593

Number of Asian or Pacific Islander students enrolled: 394

*

Number of Hispanic students enrolled: 300

*

Number of Native American or Alaskan natives enrolled: 34

*

Number of international students enrolled: 2,347

Percentage of total enrollment: 9.3

*

Number of international graduate students: 1,393

*

Number of countries represented by ISU students: 113

*

Country with largest representation: Taiwan (288)

Countries with smallest representation: Benin, Bolivia, Chad, Chile, El Salvador, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritania, Myanmar, Niger, Rwanda, Uganda, British Virgin Islands, Northern Ireland, Wales (1)

*

Number of international faculty/staff: 417

SOURCES: IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH; ISU OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS.

THE RIGHT ONE, BABY

When Diet Pepsi sought to transcribe its irreverent jingle to marching band style, Roger Cichy knew the score. Last fall, just a week after being contacted by the soda's monster New York ad agency, Cichy whipped out a brassy 60-second piece called "Diet Pepsi Fanfare."

Pepsi, whose Ray Charles-led "Uh-huh!" campaign already had shown great legs, planned to distribute the tune to college marching bands nationwide. "Fanfare" made its world debut in Ames

Oct. 26, at the Oklahoma State-Iowa State Homecoming football game. "Their jingle has been so successful, I guess they wanted to take it to another level," Cichy says. "They want to get it out there in every form possible."

Cichy declined to divulge his take, saying only that he was paid "in four figures." Because he sent New York a tape of ISU's band performing the song, he made a donation for the cash-starved organization's annual banquet.

Guess he figured the least he could do was pop for the beverages.

PETER KRUMHARDT

Robin Wright

JOURNALIST SAYS ROAD TO DEMOCRACY FULL OF OBSTACLES

Could Iowa State have chosen a more qualified keynote speaker for its November Institute on World Affairs: "The New World Order"?

Journalist Robin Wright is a recognized Middle East expert — during the Persian Gulf war, she provided commentary for all three TV networks. When the Los Angeles Times' Washington correspondent stepped to the podium, she was just days removed from a reporting jaunt to the Soviet Union — where the fall of communism has been the most dramatic episode in that much-ballyhooed NWO. Even her most recent book — *Flashpoints: Promise and Perils of a New Era* — hardly could have been more in tune with the institute's theme.

While the world generally cheers the change ricocheting through country after country, Wright presented a veritable laundry list of caveats. "The transition," she said, "[will be] very *dis*orderly."

She said that while the world has more democratic nations than at any time in history, independence faces mighty challenges. "Many Third World countries," she said, pointing to disturbing struggles in Poland and Peru, "do not have the funds, the expertise or the technology to sustain democracy."

The Cold War's demise curtails the likelihood of "an East-West, apocalyptic showdown," but Wright said "Lebanonization" — intersocietal warfare in countries like Pakistan, Yugoslavia and Iraq — likely will intensify. Most troubling, she said, is that many of these countries have acquired nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Though she admittedly presented her views "in the starkest terms," Wright stopped short of painting an entirely bleak picture. "We have control over the direction and pace of change as never before," she said. "We have choices."

CONSERVATIVE AUTHOR: CAMPUS "P.C." ISN'T OK

The "politically correct" movement, so much the rage of late on college campuses, took a pummeling from a best-selling author during a September speech at Iowa State.

Dinesh D'Souza, author of *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Sex and Race on Campus,* said the "p.c." movement threatens to create a "police atmosphere" that squelches open debate.

"Very often," he said, "truth is sacrificed for politics." Such an atmosphere "chills the debate" on issues like abortion. The result, he said, is that "students are taught not how to think, but what to think."

D'Souza, a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., also spoke of his disdain for campus affirmative action policies. Calling them "a new form of racism," he said such policies are an example of how campuses have "moved away from the original goal of the civil rights movement."

Illiberal Education spent more than four months on The New York Times best-seller list.

AND RUTH, TOO

While three of the Burkhalter sisters (*Sibling Revelry, Fall 1991*), graduated from Iowa State University, the fourth — Ruth Bosley — attended ISU for four years in the 1970s. The four teamed up to write *Four Midwestern Sisters' Christmas Book.*

ADMINISTERING A NAME CHANGE

It may be a slight alteration, but another ISU academic college has changed its name. To better reflect its programming, the College of Business Administration dropped the final word and goes by simply College of Business. The State Board of Regents approved the change last fall.

"What our college does is much broader than just the administrative aspects of business," says college Dean David Shrock. "This name is more reflective of what we do."

In 1990, the College of Sciences and Humanities changed its name to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

BEAM ME UP, PROFESSOR

IOWA STATE EDUCATION professors are sparing few superlatives when speculating on future applications for an experimental interactive video teaching system.

Last fall, four College of Education graduate classes were taught using the innovative system. While a professor teaches a class in Ames, his or her voice and image are zapped via phone lines to a TV monitor in another class in Des Moines. At the same time, the professor has his own monitor on which to see and hear students at the remote location.

"You've been able to take correspondence courses for years," says education Professor Roger Volker, who, along with Professor Michael Simonson, helped develop the system. "But this isn't just listening to or watching a tape. Where both the teacher and the students need to show and tell, this is the only way to go."

What Volker calls "a beautiful pedagogical experiment" was made possible by US West's loan of $80,000 worth of computer and video equipment. Already, ISU has used a similar system to bring together student teachers and school administrators. Other potential applications:

- Establishing "satellite campuses" in major corporate headquarters such as Principal Financial Group or Meredith Corporation.
- Developing a student-teacher consortium between Iowa State and schools around the world.
- Offering college-level courses to advanced high school students.

"You tell us where you want to be, and you can be there," Volker says. "What a tremendous way to make Iowa State accessible to the world."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DANIEL WALLACE

RANDY MOORE

Darrell and Martha Mangas of Rockford, Ill., were guests of honor during the Oct. 4-6 weekend of festivities marking Parents Weekend 1991. Both are 1951 Iowa State graduates — they met in a freshman English class. And after this summer, when senior Mary Mangas graduates, five of their six children will have graduated from ISU. Parents Weekend is sponsored by the Iowa State Alumni Association.

◄ HUB TOP TEN ►

Top 10 "educational" programs conducted in Department of Residence:

10. Hayrack Ride
9. Pictionary
8. Yogurt/Do-Biz Run
7. How Was Your Break?
6. Monday Night Football
5. Coloring Easter Eggs
4. Balloon Shaving
3. Nail Care by Michelle
2. Lambada Night
1. For Those Who Have Never Had Plumbing

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF RESIDENCE 1990-91 ANNUAL REPORT

PHOTO COURTESY PARKS LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

"Tama" Jim Wilson

NEWLY ACQUIRED COLLECTION SHEDS LIGHT ON 'TAMA' JIM

PLENTY HAS BEEN WRITTEN and said about "Tama" Jim Wilson, the turn-of-the-century Iowa State professor and dean of agriculture and 16-year U.S. secretary of agriculture.

But no longer must armchair Iowa historians rely on musty hearsay. Last August, Wilson scion Erika Lehninger Whitmore — representing the Society of Wilson Descendants — presented the Parks Library Special Collections with stacks of the family's "Tama" Jim correspondence, speeches, newspaper clippings and photos. Studying the material uncovers nuggets about the illustrious Scotsman who's been called the father of modern scientific agriculture, including 1897 excerpts on:

• George Washington Carver: "His life ambition was to fit himself in doing what the world wants done. He ... took special interest in looking after the morals and spiritual growth of his fellow students, and stood higher with all good students than any professor in college."

• Cabinet preparation: "My training [at Iowa State] fitted me for this work. ... I find in many directions places where I can infuse some prairie breezes into the abstract sciences and set them to do something for the fellow who works in the field with his coat off."

• President William McKinley, who nominated Wilson to the post: "[He] is what I suppose President Lincoln was — his administration starts out with the wind behind it." (Both administrations ended the same, of course — at the hands of an assassin.)

Wilson served under McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH 12,747,350 QUARTERS ANYWAY?

From our Easy Come, Easy Go Department: Last August, ISU student Greg Collins hit a major jackpot on a Las Vegas slot machine. But before he could collect the $509,984, he hit a minor snag. Literally.

Far be it for anyone in Las Vegas to cast the first stone, but there is the small matter of Nevada's 21 gambling age. Did we mention that Collins was only 19? Thus the fisheries and wildlife biology sophomore from Logan, Iowa, couldn't pocket the cash he'd won after slipping maybe a dozen quarters into a Lady Luck Casino machine.

But all wasn't lost. Though Lady Luck officials scolded him on the spot, two months later Collins was shocked to receive word that the casino would pick up the tab for him and his family to come back — when he can hit 21 someplace other than the blackjack table.

"I've thought about all I could do with the money," says Collins, who went to Vegas to help celebrate his folks' 25th wedding anniversary and a brother's wedding. "But I shouldn't have been playing, anyway. Now it's not a total loss, I guess. I'm ready to go back."

THE BIG PASTURE IN THE SKY WILL HAVE TO WAIT

OLD HORSES NEVER DIE, THEY just move to retirement homes.

At least Little Joe Cody, Iowa State's resident equine old-timer, did. The spry 32-year-old quarterhorse that predated the W. Robert Parks administration (not to mention JFK's) was a euthanasia candidate last October. But a touching Iowa State Daily story drew a raft of calls, and one from ag education sophomore Rhonda Schultz ended up being his reprieve. Schultz had Little Joe Cody shipped to her parents' farm near Brighton, where he lives with a 26-year-old mare.

"We call them Grandma and Grandpa," says Schultz, a lifelong horse lover.

Just how old is 32? More than 100 in people years, says ISU Horse Barns manager Sara Garr. Little Joe was retired in 1988, after a productive career that saw him used as a show horse, an instructor's assistant and a cattle horse. In later years Garr says he also "was a babysitter for our yearlings. Not many horses can do all those things."

Little Joe recently had developed arthritis, and Garr says the barns simply had no room to spare a retiree. "And we didn't know if he could handle another winter outdoors," Garr says. "But [euthanasia] was a last resort."

Now he doesn't have to worry. In Brighton, he and Grandma have their own personal stalls, plenty of oats, hay, water and love. Says Schultz, "We just decided, let's see how long he can go on with the right kind of care."

TWO WITH ISU TIES EYE WHITE HOUSE

THE RACE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC Party's nomination in the 1992 presidential election has taken on a distinct Iowa State flavor. Among those campaigning for the right to run against President George Bush are:

- Iowa Senator Tom Harkin, a 1962 ISU graduate;
- and Nebraska Senator Robert Kerrey, son of deceased Iowa State graduates Elinor Gonder Kerrey, '35, and James Kerrey, '36. Robert Kerrey also is a former Nebraska governor.

REGENTS ON TUITION: TAKE A HIKE

Tuition again was the hot topic addressed by the State Board of Regents in November.

With Iowa's budget woes showing little sign of relenting, Regents President Marvin Pomerantz said the 7 percent increase in resident tuition for 1992-93 was necessary to ensure continuing quality of education. "We were really compelled to do more than we would have liked," Pomerantz said after the board approved the raise at its November meeting in Ames.

The increase bumps Iowa State's in-state, undergraduate tuition to $2,088 from $1,952. The Universities of Iowa and Northern Iowa also saw their in-state tuitions raised by 7 percent.

But in a move bucking recent decisions, the regents approved different out-of-state increases. Iowa and UNI non-resident tuition will increase by 9 percent, while pleas from ISU President Martin Jischke resulted in a 7 percent non-resident tuition hike in Ames. Jischke successfully lobbied that a larger increase would work against the regents-mandated goal of increasing minority enrollment. Jischke called the regents' decision "one small step that will help ISU [increase its diversity]."

Although students from all three universities decried the increases (they had pushed for a 4 percent raise) ISU Government of the Student Body President Michael Noble (page 18) commended Jischke for "standing up for diversity."

"I'm glad that the increase was across-the-board at Iowa State," said Noble, a native of Indiana. "That's good for Iowa State, and Iowa State should be pleased."

ISU's out-of-state tuition increases to $6,894 from $6,406.

The regents also voted to raise the student health fee to $60 from $40.

Mack Attack

Barbara Mack

Though her feisty reputation precedes her, President Jischke's new assistant swears she's a Girl Scout at heart

Circa 1956: A plucky 4 year old, set loose on the Catholic school playground while her mother supervised the lunch room, concentrates valiantly on the challenge issued by her older sister's cronies: Take on the hand-over-hand bars. Midway through the attempt, a concerned nun rushes to the scene, crying out, "Barbara, be careful. You're too young for that." To which the preschooler replies, in a most patronizing tone, "Oh, sister, be sensible."

Circa 1970: ISU journalism Professor Ed Blinn, leaning back in his office chair, his ever-present pipe clenched between his teeth, contemplates his next media law lecture when the phone rings. Through the receiver, he hears the loud voice of a teenaged girl ask, "You Ed Blinn?"

"Yes," he responds warily.

"Well, I've heard you're a pretty good adviser, and I think you should take me on," the booming voice continues. "I'm on my way over to see you, sweetie."

Circa 1991: The newly hired assistant to ISU President Martin Jischke yells into her car phone, on I-35 enroute to campus, that she'll be late—again—for an interview, this time because the technicians installing the new baby grand piano in her "world's best house" were 90 minutes late. When quizzed a few days afterward about her piano-playing abilities, she tosses off a quick, "I play as well as any girl who went to Catholic school. I finally got to quit taking lessons because the nun had gas all the time."

And Barbara Mack claims she really doesn't know what all the fuss is about.

Jischke's self-professed "utility infielder" has been calling the plays in 117 Beardshear Hall since last September, freeing up her boss to work on driving in the winning runs. While he's speaking before the Iowa Farm Bureau, Mack is tending the campus fires, spitting out reports to Regents, overseeing affirmative action functions and managing such special projects as the potential sale of WOI-TV. And working hard one fall afternoon to convince a reporter that she may be feisty, but not *that* feisty.

"Look, I behave like a lawyer," Mack the lawyer says while fidgeting constantly behind her cluttered desk. "I don't go through life elbows out; I try to work toward building consensus more than I try to work toward getting people to sue each other. But at the same time, I am firm and I am demanding. And I think it's fair to say that a lot of people are taken aback when they deal with someone who has a very lawyerly style."

Watch Barbara Mack blow into a room and cut loose her salty tongue, and it becomes obvious why eyebrows lifted when Jischke announced her appointment as his *chargé d'affaires*. At 39, the lifelong Des Moines resident has earned a reputation rivaling that of Murphy Brown. A favorite of the ISU journalism students she taught for nearly five years before assuming this administrative post, Mack entertained

classrooms with her truck driver vocabulary, shocked them by *arranging* to have pies thrown in her face and bowled them over with her knowledge of reporting and the law. Even her own mother admits, "Barbara can tell you off real good—but she's still a great kid."

PERHAPS THERE ARE NO professions more competitive than academics, journalism and law—and nothing attracts Mack more than knock-down, drag-out competition. But it's a rare colleague, past or present, who will castigate the towering, big-boned woman with the messy dark brown hair.

"Barbara was as unforgettable a student as I've ever had," Blinn recalls, "and I continued to hold her in awe when she shared the office next to mine. She is a wonderful teacher, but I wasn't surprised when I heard she was getting restive and wanted the next challenge."

Her mother says Mack has spent her whole life "noticing what other people don't." The youngest of three children born to Eddie, a venetian blinds maker, and Helen Mack, Barbara grew up "a studious child," her mother remembers, much different from her older brother and sister.

"Barbara was never a little kid, always aggressive and one for doing just what she pleased," Helen Mack, now 81, remembers. "Her [late] father, who thought the sun rose and set on her, still couldn't understand why she was always so old for her age."

And yet it was a protective father ("He didn't think she was worldly enough to start college at 17," Helen Mack says.) who made Mack wait to enroll at Iowa State for more than a year after graduating at 17 from St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines. While in high school, Mack talked her way into a copy runner job for the Des Moines Register and Tribune. She continued her half-time work with the newspapers all two and one-half years it took her to get a bachelor's degree in journalism, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1974.

"I can't ever recall knowing a student with more drive, energy and basic intelligence taken to such an extraordinary degree than Barbara," Blinn, now retired and living in New Hampshire, remembers. "But she was never her feisty self in the classroom—she never argued. She did tell me once, though, that she didn't like my course. When I asked her why, she replied, 'I don't like any course unless I get an A.' She got a B, and I don't know if she ever forgave me. I forgave her."

After graduation, Mack worked full time as a reporter for the Register, and then as an assistant copy editor. In the meantime, she determined that a law degree "would make me a better reporter." So she enrolled at Drake University, attending classes while working full time. She finished her JD in two and one-half years. While at Drake, Mack earned honors for her moot court debating talents—and earned the wrath of a classmate who competed fiercely for the same awards.

"We hated each other," Jim Giles says. "We were set up to be rivals, and we were. I'd been very good in that area, and someone had the audacity to suggest she might be better. We didn't speak for several years, and that was quite satisfactory for both of us."

In what should come as no surprise, in 1984, Mack married Giles, now a corporate attorney for the Principal Financial Group in Des Moines. "Barbara claims to be the romantic in this relationship; she says she realized I wasn't the warthog she thought I was," Giles recalls. By then, Mack was general counsel for the Des Moines Register and its first female executive. She had established a solid national reputation as an expert on First Amendment law. When the Gannett chain bought the Register in 1985, she explored countless options—and chose to return to Iowa State "to take over Ed Blinn's job teaching comm. law and baby reporting." Shortly after moving into what is now Hamilton Hall, Mack arranged to have Blinn's office repainted—while he still occupied it, and without his knowledge. "She told me later she never did like the color," Blinn says dryly.

PHOTO COURTESY BARBARA MACK

Mack's "baby," Chip

When presented with the paradox that is Barbara Mack—the reckless but driven over-achiever—the subject seems honestly at a loss to explain the phenomenon. "I had the great good fortune to have some incredible people touch my life at very vulnerable moments," she says in a quiet, almost soft voice, citing her mother, Girl Scout leaders, her favorite nuns, Ed Blinn. "I truly believe that God works in mysterious ways, and I have a pretty firm belief in the forces of good and evil in this world. So far, I've been lucky. Fate has been more than generous to me."

Circa 2002: Staring the half-century mark square in the face, she lives in Not Des Moines. She continues to cut a wide swath through life and quotes often the words that first belonged to Robert Louis Stevenson, words that have driven her these first 50 years: "The world is so full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

And for once, she has nothing to add. ◐

Look, Up in the Sky...

PROFESSOR-STUDENT TEAM TAKES CRASH COURSE IN HOLDING KILLER ASTEROIDS AT BAY

TURN YOUR EYES TO THE heavens and ponder this: As you read the next few lines, a killer asteroid hurtles 200 miles through space, hell-bent for a cataclysmic rendezvous with Earth packing the power of millions of nuclear explosions. Your chances of survival: Nil.

Unless, that is, researchers — including two Iowa State asteroid hunters — can find a way to stop it.

John Tannehill oversees Manuel Suarez's work as one of eight ISU students funded through the NSF's five-year, $1.3 million Research Careers for Minority Scholars.

Aerospace engineering Professor John Tannehill and senior Manuel Suarez, united by a National Science Foundation (NSF) program, are penning their own chapter of this sci-non-fi thriller. They're trying to learn how to aim a nuclear missile at the so-called "doomsday rock" so as to knock it off its path of destruction.

"It's easy to view this as *Star Trek* stuff," says the 21-year-old Suarez, a longtime Trekkie. "But this is the real thing."

Dinosaurs could attest to that — were they among the extant. Though the theory has its naysayers, it's widely believed that a killer asteroid smashed to Earth some 65 million years ago, pitching millions of tons of dust and debris into the atmosphere. With the sun obstructed for years, dinosaurs — and perhaps 90 percent of all life — were wiped out. "It may be tomorrow, it may be 10 million years from now," warns Tannehill, "but it will happen again."

If scientists needed any extra push, they got it recently. Twice. In 1989, a half-mile diameter asteroid screamed through the Earth's orbit, missing us by 400,000 miles — a mere six hours. And last January, a 30-foot rock missed the planet by just 106,000 miles — a galactic eyelash.

Astronomer Clark R. Chapman, a senior scientist at the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson, Ariz., and the chair of last summer's International Conference on Near-Earth Asteroids, says those two rocks have plenty of company. He estimates that our solar system holds as many as 2,000 asteroids larger than one kilometer in diameter with the potential to zoom relatively near the Earth. "They'll be readily findable when we develop an international program to search the heavens," he says. "From there, we better have thought about this problem of deflecting [the asteroid]."

NASA agrees. This month, it begins a congressionally funded study that, like the Iowa Staters', aims at:

- deflecting the ballistic boulders;
- blasting them into so many benign pebbles, and
- landing an engine on the meteor to reroute its orbit.

Suarez is writing a computer program to predict where and when an Earth-bound asteroid would enter missile range. He'll then create a computer model placing the holocaust wannabe in the cross hairs of a nuclear warhead.

"We'd like to turn this into a proposal for [NASA] funding," says Tannehill, an astrodynamics expert.

Says Suarez, whose parents were born in Spain but emigrated to Ames: "I loved dinosaurs when I was a kid, so when I read about these asteroids, I wanted to know more. When I heard about those near misses, it was like, wow." ◐

Headin' NORTH TO ALASKA

Enjoy the grandeur of America's Last Frontier June 10-17, complete with Iowa State camaraderie and Royal Cruise Line's incomparable service aboard the new *Royal Odyssey*. Visit Anchorage, then cruise through the spectacular glaciers in College Fjord and Yakutat Bay. Stop in Skagway, Juneau and Ketchikan, then cruise the scenic Inside Passage to Vancouver.

o o o

This popular seven-day cruise is a great value, with group fares discounted 30 percent until Feb. 15—as low as $1,449, plus air. Optional extensions to Denali and Fairbanks are available.

Please note the following updates in the 1992 alumni tours, as announced in the Fall '91 VISIONS:

o o o

The *Treasures of Costa Rica* tour and *Siberian/Alaskan Expedition* have been cancelled. *China's Cultural Triangle* is scheduled for May 30 - June 17; *Russia's Magnificent Heartland* will be Aug. 21 - Sept. 3.

o o o

For more information, call the Alumni Association at (515) 294-6525, or write to:

Iowa State University
Alumni Association Tours
Alumni Suite, Memorial Union
2229 Lincoln Way
Ames, IA 50010-7164

Noble Cause

Michael Noble's high-school nickname? The Ram – "I always wanted my way."

WITH AN EYE ON A LOFTIER PRIZE, ISU'S STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT PURSUES A CAREER OF PUSHING THE LIMITS

SOMEONE HAD RIPPED OFF Michael Noble's new sport coat.

His mother had warned him this could happen. She and his father hadn't wanted him to transfer his senior year to the Gary, Ind., Lew Wallace High School. All those years of parochial education had been for a reason—to protect Michael from the dangers of an inner-city public school, and to allow him to learn from as many cultures as possible. And now he had to go home and admit that his new coat had been stolen.

No way.

In record time, Noble had the school sealed off. Literally. Doors were locked, friends doubled as bouncers. Nobody could leave the building until the jacket had been found. Administrators cooperated, as did the school's security guards. And Noble eventually recovered his coat.

Not to mention his reputation. Everyone at his old school (Bishop Noll Institute in Hammond) knew of the renegade who had challenged the teachers and took pride in "pushing the limits." But the Lew Wallace crowd hadn't yet been indoctrinated in the ways of Michael Noble—until, of course, he closed down the school.

Iowa State students experienced the same baptism by fire last spring when Noble decided to run for Government of the Student Body (GSB) president. Although he had spent the previous year as a GSB senator, the 5-foot-9, 200-pound former football walk-on remained virtually unknown around campus. He and his running mate, Mark Foley, changed all that during a month of saturating the campus with a concise platform and the assurance that they were the best.

Students bought into it; the Noble-Foley slate won, by 80 votes, in a run-off election last April. Several months later, the young man who is inspired by Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King Jr. faces the reality of running a 25,000-member student body.

"I spent all last summer researching GSB, and I realized that in the past, the presidency has been more of an honorary title," Noble, 21, says in his soft, rapid-fire voice. "I expected to do more. So now, once again, I'm pushing the boundaries, the expectations people have for the president. But I'm finding that most of the time, I'm listening to other peoples' problems—I guess I wasn't expecting that."

"Michael has learned a lot on the job," says Mary Beth Snyder, ISU dean of students. "He knows now that leaders need to learn compromise, and that you never get as much as you want. I saw him inspire real leadership when GSB voted to support the continuance of the *Bomb*. He knew when to step back and let the Senate debate the issue, but he also knew when it was necessary to return to the Senate with a very persuasive speech in favor of funding it.

"Michael realizes he has a vision, but now he also knows that he can't fulfill those dreams unless the people he leads buy into them, too."

Noble describes his leadership style as "charismatic, outreaching, understanding,

patient;" his detractors call him brash and argumentative. He admits that members of ISU's black student community aren't always supportive of him or his presidency.

"A lot of black students believe that staying only within the black community, being involved only with the black organizations, is fine, and that's what they're content with," Noble says. "But I want to learn what my limitations are. Am I limited because of my skin color, or because of the content of my character? I just want to push those boundaries and find out exactly what the best is that I can be. Some black male students in particular say I'm a little homebody," a child who never spent a night away from home until he left for college. A youngster who would sit at her knee for hours asking questions while the other children played, or who would perch beside his father, a construction company owner, hashing over that day's sports. A son who called home daily his first year at Iowa State, often in tears, because he was lonely and couldn't find his niche.

"Those were very, very difficult days for all of us," Maxine Noble says from her Gary home. "But we all knew it was time for Michael to grow up, to be a man on his own. And, of course, he has achieved.

GARY CLARKE

Noble counsels members of TULIP, an ISU leadership program.

[Supreme Court Justice] Clarence Thomas, but that's not the case at all."

Those critical of Noble's demeanor would be surprised to hear Maxine Noble's reminiscences of her middle child. The longtime public school teacher speaks warmly of "her When he called to tell me he was running for student body president, I already knew he would win. I truly believe he was chosen by God to do special work here."

Noble's primary causes these days include promoting awareness programs to combat sexual harassment and sexual assault, pursuing increased student representation on the Ames City Council and cultivating campus diversity. But when his term expires in just a few months, he'll simply move on to the next phase of his personal, long-range blueprint. Upon graduating from Iowa State within the next two years, he plans to attend law school, and, by the end of the decade, be elected mayor of Gary. What precipitated such a dream? That highly-debated senior year at Lew Wallace High School.

"I wanted to transfer to Lew Wallace because although I'd grown up in Gary, I never really knew the city," Noble explains. "I felt it was important to get that experience. What I got was a firsthand look at the quality of education in Gary public schools, and it made me think of all the possibilities that exist for that city. There are so many things I could change."

"This is a child who literally came into the world with his eyes wide open, a sight that caused the nurse to jump right back," remembers his mother. "And this is the same child who, at age 9, after playing with his Little League team on Wrigley Field, crawled back into the car, closed his eyes and said, 'If this is what heaven feels like, I've been there.'"

A kid can dream, can't he? ◐

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EXIT

A CHANGE of HEART

Transplant coordinator Maryl Johnson offers ailing cardiac patients a precious commodity: Hope

JEROME JESLIS, THE TAIL OF HIS T-SHIRT HIKED UP TO HIS WHISKERY CHIN, IS TALKING ABOUT LIVING AND DYING. SPECIFICALLY, THAT TINY ISLAND IN BETWEEN, THAT TRACT OF EXISTENCE OCCUPIED BY FRIGHTENED SOULS PONDERING BOTH AN APPOINTMENT WITH THEIR MAKER AND A LAST-DITCH MEANS OF POSTPONING. HE'S BEEN THERE, YOU KNOW. "I WAS SENT HERE TO DIE,"

Jeslis says in a broom closet-sized examination room at Loyola University Medical Center in suburban Chicago.

With his bright eyes and steady hands, he's clearly back on the mainland of the living. And Dr. Maryl Johnson, a 1973 Iowa State University zoology graduate who's helped rescue scores of castaways from that island, has called in Jeslis to make sure he stays here.

Like a well-trained beagle, Jeslis hops on the table and raises his shirt. Underneath, a light pink scar bisects his

BY DAN DAVENPORT PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM SEED

fleshy, alabaster chest like the leather threads of a football. Should you cut along that dotted line, split his sternum, spread open his rib cage and peer inside, you'd find a two-pound crimson ball jumping every second or so.

In the 10 minutes Jeslis will spend praising his cheery, ruler-thin doctor, that astonishing chunk of flesh will pump 150 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of arteries and veins.

Not bad for a second-hand heart.

Cardiac transplants are the stuff of syrupy People magazine pieces and network Movies of the Week: *Miracle transplant rescues man on death bed. Man is eternally grateful to doctor.* But "syrupy" and "miracle" don't play in blue-collar Chicago. And true to his roots, crusty, 67-year-old Jerome Jeslis saves the gooey platitudes and dives right to the, well, bottom of things.

"This lady," he says, tossing a glance toward Johnson, "saved my butt."

The doctor chuckles and gives him an I-bet-you-say-that-to-all-the-doctors shake of her head.

Loyola's annual report, flush with terms like myocardial infarction and accelerated arteriosclerosis, might put a more genteel spin on it, but the truth is this: Johnson and the rest of the hospital's renowned cardiac transplant team will save three dozen butts this year.

Forty-year-old Maryl Johnson, the spirited associate medical director of Loyola's cardiac transplant program, hardly blushes at such vernacular. The onetime Iowa farm girl rolls her eyes at melodrama and fidgets when asked about playing God. When you've seen ravaged hearts discarded and virile ones soaking in gleaming metal pans, you come to view the muscle as a mechanic views a carburetor: If you can't fix it, stick in another one.

"If I sat down," she proposes in a rare ideological tangent, "if I took the time to think about what's going on, it probably would overwhelm me."

So she just doesn't take the time.

Johnson is a transplant cardiologist. She is not a surgeon; "doesn't sew," as she puts it. But she saves butts as surely as if she split open chests, carved out languid, overworked hearts and spliced in younger, robust ones.

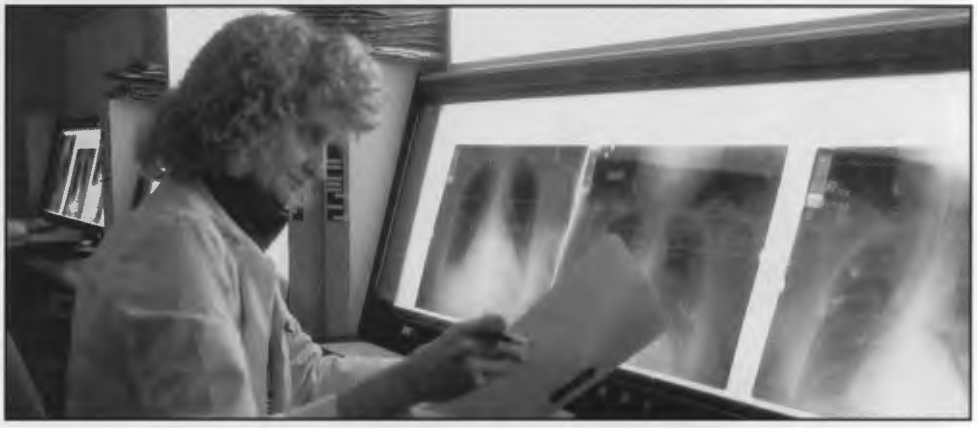
How? She evaluates heart patients for transplant viability. She's a conduit from patient to donor to surgeon. She prepares patients — physically and emotionally — for the O.R. And perhaps most significantly, she guides them along that frightening, never-ending journey to recovery.

The actual process of subbing good hearts for bad, miraculous though it may seem, is relatively basic. "A bypass is easier," says Dr. Robert Iaffaldano, a Loyola cardiology fellow. "It's pre-operative and post-operative management that gets tough."

As manager, Johnson constantly helps patients strike a precarious balance to keep at bay their most feared enemies: rejection and infection. Without immunosuppressant drugs like cyclosporine and prednisone, the body's defense system would race to ward off a new heart. But with the drugs, the body is often unable to battle otherwise conquerable infections. "We trade old problems for new ones," Johnson says. "At least the new ones are manageable."

Patients like Patricia Lee, who received her new heart last July, initially return to Loyola weekly, where doctors like Johnson perform the most telling test: heart biopsy. Using a procedure which Lee swears isn't as uncomfortable as it sounds, Johnson winds a catheter through the jugular vein down into the heart itself. She passes a tiny pair of jaws through the tube, then snips off a speck of the actual heart muscle. Signs of rejection will appear under the microscope well before the patient develops symptoms.

So, no, Maryl Johnson doesn't sew. But she is a crucial thread in this tapestried business of second-hand hearts.



"WE CAN'T PUT THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH THIS IF WE DON'T THINK THEY HAVE A CHANCE AT SUCCESS."

When you choose cardiac transplant, you choose to worship a relentless, six-hour clock. Noon, midnight, a.m., p.m. — all as meaningless as Swahili in Tulsa.

In cardiac transplant, six hours is a lifetime. From the second a donor reaches brain death, the heart has six hours to find an open chest cavity and two waiting atria. Much longer and the heart is headed for the classroom — and the patient could be bound for the hereafter.

That's why there's a phone in Maryl Johnson's car, a phone in her bag and a beeper all but surgically attached to her hip. The beeper finds her at the swimming pool, at the theatre, at her piano. It finds her in the bathroom. The beeper — and the fleeting throb of the pre-owned heart it

represents — has no conscience.

On an otherwise lazy fall afternoon in Maywood, Ill., it's the bleeping beeper that refuses to let Johnson start rounds. Like a 3-year-old child, it never runs out of questions: Where are these biopsy results? Can you give this doctor a referral? What about that patient's rejection?

Finally, she is ready. Iaffaldano, two residents and the cardiac transplant nurse surround her like huddling football players. Johnson, in her lab coat of a uniform, is the quarterback. They'll make a two-hour pass through the country's first unit solely dedicated to heart transplants. They'll stop in 10 rooms, checking in on 10 past or present candidates for death. Loyola assistant hospital director Wayne VerGowe says that, since the unit's 1984 opening, it has not had an empty bed. "If we had 20," he says, "we'd fill 20."

Some patients are hopeful recipients set back by rejection. Others wear tired, gray faces as their feeble hearts struggle to move blood. One woman, a prototypical transplant candidate, barely musters a whisper. Her weakening heart cannot keep fluid from building up in her lungs. She fights for each breath as though a heavyweight wrestler was sitting on her chest.

She is running out of heartbeats.

A bad pump is only the most obvious prerequisite for transplant candidacy. Johnson and a team of surgeons, cardiologists, nurses, psychologists and social workers must answer scores of questions, including: How old is the patient? (Sixty is often the cut-off age, but 67-year-old Jeslis would beg to differ.) Can the patient survive surgery? Will a transplant exacerbate pre-existing conditions? Is there a history of cancer or lymphoma? (Anti-rejection drugs can sap the immune system's cancer-fighting strength.) Does the patient smoke, drink or use drugs? Is the patient emotionally and socially ready to follow the recovery regimen? (Johnson says ability to pay isn't a question at Loyola. A no-surprises heart transplant goes for $50,000-$100,000, with medication and follow-up work eating up another $10,000-$20,000 annually.)

"It's tough when you have somebody suffering, and you essentially have to say, 'Sorry,'" Johnson says. "But we can't put them and their families through this if we don't think they have a chance at success."

THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF SUBBING GOOD HEARTS FOR BAD, MIRACULOUS THOUGH IT MAY SEEM, IS RELATIVELY BASIC.

This woman gasping for life has cleared all the hurdles. With a call to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) in Richmond, Va., Johnson commences the '90s' version of a selection process followed nearly 20,000 times since Dec. 2, 1967, when Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the world's first successful heart transplant in Cape Town, South Africa.

If anyone plays God here, it is UNOS.

Scores of Maryl Johnsons across the country feed the UNOS computer such factors as urgency, blood type, body size and geographic location. Then, using a point system, UNOS constantly reshuffles candidates. When it catches wind of a donor heart — in most cases, when a donor commits suicide or is killed in an accident — it crunches the numbers and spits out the winner like a lottery ticket.

This is an ironically cruel take-a-number routine. A routine that gives most patients ample time to ponder their mortality and the haunting prospect of snatching the joy of life from another human being's tragic death.

The average Loyola patient waits 140 days for a heart. (UNOS puts the national average at 141.) Jerome Jeslis waited five months. When Lysle Oveson of Long Grove, Iowa, was flown to Loyola last August, he was, in a perverse sense, lucky. His heart was on its last legs. Receiving a UNOS 1 rating, he had a new heart in four days.

As of November, Chicagoan John Olis and 70 others were on hold at Loyola (UNOS then had 2,219 on the heart list). Olis, then in his 18th month in limbo, faced a triple whammy: His heart is among the best of the worst, he is a big man and he has a common blood type. Most donors are young — more die from accidents, fewer from diseases that would render their hearts non-transplantable — and thus smaller in body size. Little people, little hearts. As for blood type, a more common type means more competition for the organ.

Transplant candidates perhaps more than any other patients know that great medical truism: Waiting is hell. "They're all afraid," Iaffaldano says. "Maryl knows how to recognize that fear, how to help them cope."

During one "rounding" swing she stops in on a middle-aged man who looks far too vital to have a heart on death row. But his pump, like a child's top, is winding down. Under the status quo, he will die of coronary failure.

"You have to decide if you're ready [to be put on the UNOS list]," Johnson tells him. She spares him the syrup, reminding him that his blood type (A-positive) and weight

'I WOULDN'T BE HERE IF NOT FOR THAT DONOR'

It's 6 o'clock on a Thursday, and the sad-eyed, gray-haired piano man at The Lobby Bar & Grill in Ames is finishing his regular, 90-minute set with "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." A timeless piece, for sure; to many, a classic. But as it floats out over the Happy Hour crowd, the song appears to carry no special meaning.

But it has struck a chord with the pianist — his eyes just got a little sadder.

Tom Jorgensen plays here three times a week, closing each set with Tony Bennett's trademark tune. And each time his own heart goes out to San Francisco, to a young man he'll never know and a family who'll never grasp the depth of his gratitude.

JIM HEEMSTRA

Tom Jorgensen

Jorgensen is alive because, when a troubled San Franciscan committed suicide nearly three years ago, his family reached for a glimmer of sense in an excruciatingly senseless episode: They allowed his organs to be donated.

Sixteen hours later, at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., Jorgensen received the liver that the young man left in San Francisco. "I was basically dead, on my last minutes," says Jorgensen, who had been in a coma for more than six days. Advanced primary biliary cirrhosis (PCB), doctors said, had given him 12 hours to live. "You can talk about the mental attitude, the prayers, the support, the doctors. But I wouldn't be here if not for that donor."

Today, 45 pounds heavier and able to enjoy hikes with his wife, Jane, the 1973 ISU master's graduate devotes several hours per month to talks promoting organ donation. He is never without a stack of organ donor cards, and, along with his wife and two daughters, is a veritable transplant almanac. Two of "Jorgy's" key points:

—More than 20,000 Americans are waiting for organs — corneas, kidneys, hearts, lungs, pancreases and livers. Each day, several thousand potential donors are buried. And each year, thousands of potential organ recipients die on the waiting list.

—Filling out an organ donation card is important — but only a first step. The next of kin still has the final say. Those wanting to be donors must make their wishes known.

"People always think [donation] is a good idea, but they don't pursue it until it hits close to them," says Jorgensen, who will have his "third birthday" on April 30. "I feel like I have an obligation to change that."

At the Mayo, piano playing was part of Jorgensen's therapy. Before he could sit up, before he could talk, nurses strapped him in a wheelchair and rolled it to the keyboard. Today his Lobby gigs are for fun; he's back at Ames High School full time, teaching sociology and American history. He'll assist with the girls' track team this spring — his first coaching assignment since his 1982 PBC diagnosis.

"I'm not a different person," he says. "But maybe the air's a little sweeter, the sunsets a little prettier. Every time I go back to [the Mayo Clinic], they say, 'Here comes our walking miracle.'"

"I'm sorry if this is a cliché, but I don't know how else to say it: Organ donors really do give the gift of life." Then he laughs. "Just look at me."

—*D.D.*

Jorgensen says those interested in becoming donors should contact their doctors or local medical facilities.

(more than 200 pounds) could mean a long wait. "People in your situation have waited years," she says.

His forehead tightens. Panic flashes across his square face. He speaks disbelievingly: "I know I've got to face it ... but ... hell ... it's not like going out and buying a car ..."

Before Loyola can decide to put him on the UNOS list, *he* must decide.

Some prefer death over the island. Others, like fallen mountain climbers hurtling down the face of a cliff, grasp for every shred of hope.

Maryl Johnson doesn't know why she ended up molding hope out of the dark clay of desperation. She grew up on a northwestern Iowa farm near Fonda, where doctors squeeze penicillin into soft rumps and pull tonsils from red, swollen throats. She says she was drawn to the heart through biology class, but never imagined she'd see one pulled from an ice chest and planted into a human one. Her parents — Marvin Johnson graduated from ISU in 1948, Beryl White Johnson in '47 — remember only a little girl who played the church organ, studied hard and "always liked helping people."

She came to her folks' alma mater leaning toward medical tech work, but an adviser encouraged her to pursue med school. That she did, at the University of Iowa, earning her M.D. in 1977. She originally planned on general practice, but that fascination with the heart hadn't died. By the mid-'80s she was medical director of cardiac transplantation at Iowa, smack in the middle of history: The state's first heart transplant.

For Johnson and the entire transplant team, the June 1985 Emerson Martin surgery and subsequent recovery was a rush. More successes followed, as did some failures. But by 1988, her dedication to cardiac transplant had reached a critical juncture. "Believe me, I think the [University of Iowa] is wonderful," she says, "but I believe heart transplants should be done in centers that make a major league commitment to doing them."

Hello, Chicago.

Confidentiality prohibits UNOS from publishing rankings of heart transplant centers like so many college football teams. But a UNOS

official allows that Loyola is on its list of America's 20 "most active" units. Perhaps half that number approach 300 total transplants, which Loyola should hit this year.

Twenty-four years after the world's first transplanted heart kept Louis Waskansky alive for 18 days, Loyola's one-year survival rate is nearly 90 percent. Five years after receiving new hearts, seven of 10 Loyola patients still kiss their grandchildren, still complain about taxes, still read the Sunday paper. One patient calls it "a blessed miracle."

But Johnson, like any sagacious physician, rarely becomes enamored with success. As Iaffaldano says, "When you can have whole weeks without much good news, you learn to stay pretty grounded."

Case in point: Jerome Jeslis' near perfect exam. In four days he leaves for a two-week trip to Canada. A few weeks later, the man who 10 months ago couldn't walk across the kitchen will cruise across the Caribbean. But after he leaves the room, Johnson, crossing fingers on both hands, allows only, "So far, so good." Her lean face showcases her usual wide smile and lively, blue-gray eyes. "You temper everything by the knowledge that they can always develop problems. You temper everything."

Of course it wasn't always so. "That first time, that first transplant in Iowa City, my heart stopped for a second," she says, not bothering to acknowledge the statement's irony. She and transplant nurse Barbara Rakel danced as Emerson Martin's new heart sang like Pavarotti. But just as that history-making loaner pump steadily warmed to its new digs beneath Martin's ribs, Johnson gradually grew more adept at flattening out the emotional curve. After their first transplant death, Rakel, a close friend, remembers, "Maryl hadn't established that distance that physicians need to protect themselves. She wanted to go to the funeral, but realized that would step over the line."

Today Johnson toes that razor-thin line like a tight-rope walker. At home not long ago she got a middle-of-the-night call about an available heart. She phoned the necessary people, started the dominoes falling toward transplantation, and ...went back to bed. One advantage of not sewing.

Her seasoning is obvious in the transplant unit, too, where she smartly handles a spectrum of patients. Some aren't leaving this island any time soon, others are here for brief layovers. Others won't see their beloved Chicago skyline again. But no matter what the prognosis, nurses, doctors and patients marvel at Johnson's approach. "At first I was upset, I didn't know what to think about this heart inside me," says Patricia Lee, recovering from a temporary rejection setback. "But Dr. Johnson doesn't let you get depressed or upset."

> "I TREAT THEM LIKE PEOPLE. NOT SICK PEOPLE OR DYING PEOPLE."

Says Iaffaldano: "At 9 o'clock at night, I'm not sure I want to be stopping to talk about so-and-so's dog. But that's Maryl. She talks with patients, not at them."

Maybe it's the Fonda G.P. *redux*. Whatever, Johnson knows no other way. "I treat them like people. Not sick people or dying people. That doesn't mean you treat them like friends or family. When you're young, you say, 'I'm not a hard person, I care, I can get close to them.' And you drain yourself. I can't. I have to be 'up' for every patient. If I'm emotionally wiped out, I lose that.

"A while ago we had a gentleman here on support for about six months. An excellent candidate for a transplant. We pulled him through quite a few complications, then he died before we found a heart. Just died. That bothered me, but I had to leave his room and go to another patient. Do you see what I'm saying?"

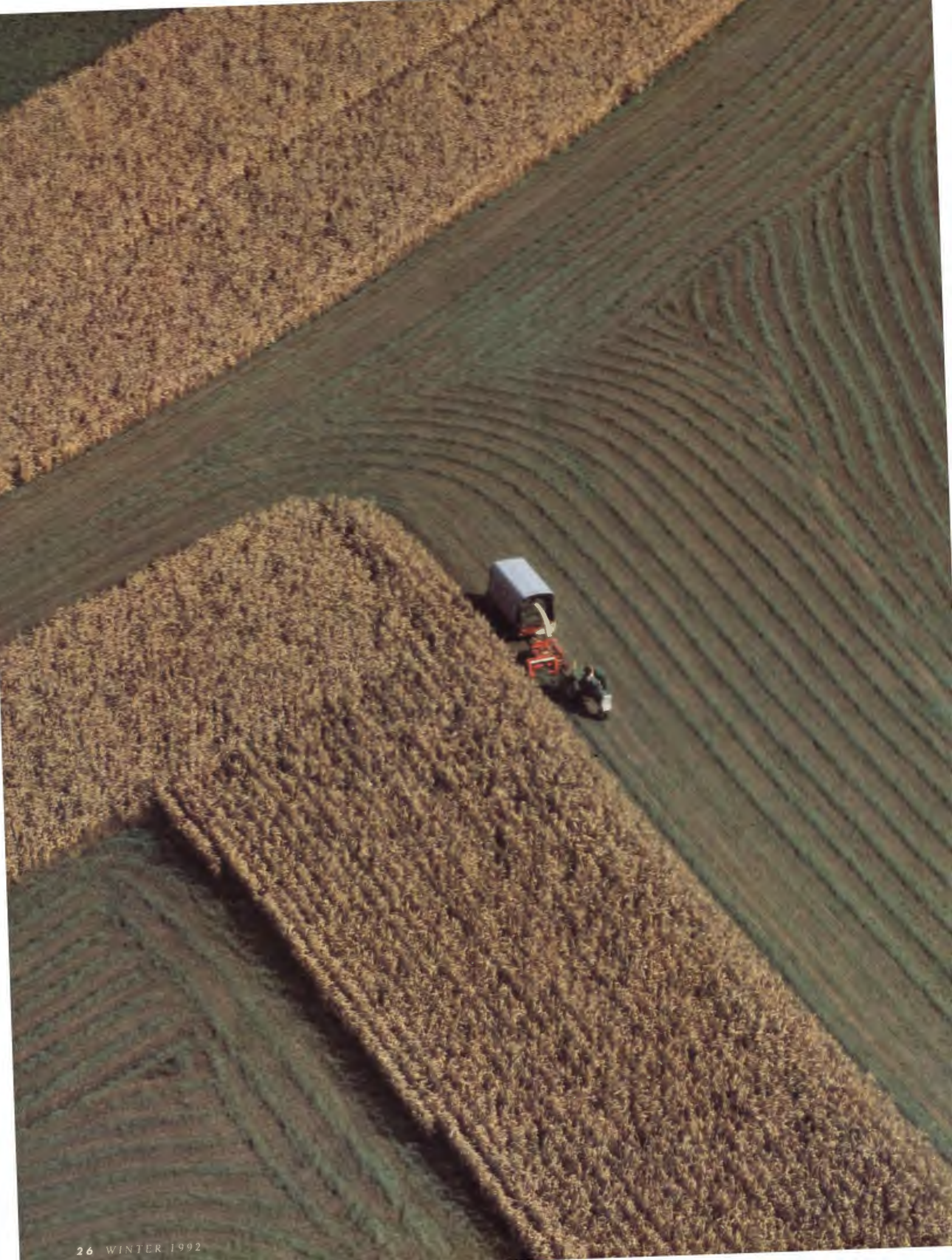
What she's saying is that it's possible to tightly mete out your emotions while pouring all of yourself into your work. "I've never seen the level of devotion she's willing to give," Rakel says. "She absolutely sacrificed all of her social life."

Little has changed. She's still single. Still months behind on her piano practice. Still harboring a long list of musicals and orchestras she'll see when the beeper relents.

"She has to be the most dedicated doctor here," says 61-year-old Chicagoan Rex Chilton, a retired Sears mail order clerk. After five months on the UNOS computer, he had a 44-year-old heart installed last July. "Everybody says she's a workaholic, but when she comes to see me, she has the time. You know why? Because she's got a good heart."

Rex Chilton, Loyola Med Center heart transplant No. 245, should know. He's got a good ticker, too.

Now. ◐



For Land's Sake

Four decades after the publishing of Aldo Leopold's A Sand County Almanac, *a namesake sustainable agriculture center helps ISU carry out his environmental message*

BY DAN DAVENPORT

CHARLTON PHOTOS INC.

A system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided.

—Aldo Leopold

For 10,000 years it was so simple: Scratch the earth. Drop in a seed. Feed your family. Then along came the 20th century, chock-full of technological wizardry bent on antiquating millennia of proven, environmentally benign techniques. The growling stomachs of an exploding world population reverberated in the farmer's ear.

When the world — and the United States government — cried, "Produce!" the farmer answered not why or how, but how much? The answer always came back the same: More.

Crop rotations became passé. Hilly, erodible pastures fell victim to the moldboard plow. Wonder chemicals and federal subsidies — two-faced though they were — cozied into the farmers' inner circle, nudging out such faithful allies as topsoil and clean groundwater. Red and green iron elephants roared across prairies once plodded gently by horses, spewing black breaths into virgin atmosphere. Behind them scurried grand contraptions as sharp as scalpels, baring the rich, sweet soil to the unrelenting elements.

To quote one fed-up environmentalist, we treated the soil like dirt.

After waiting impatiently for centuries, environmental molestation swaggered in the door, welcomed under the guise of progress.

The land suffered, sure. But its whimpers were swallowed by the roar of the diesel-guzzling pachyderms and the unrelenting fiscal buzz emanating from the Board of Trade.

But finally, in this, the last decade of an environmental bane of a century, even the most yield-crazed farmer detects an eerie wail piercing the din. It is the land, moaning in agony.

Aldo Leopold always heard it:

A system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided. It tends to ignore, and thus eventually to eliminate, many elements in the land community that lack commercial value, but that are ... essential to its healthy functioning.

... Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and [a]esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

From just that short excerpt from Leopold's wondrous *A Sand County Almanac*, is it any wonder that Iowa State University named for him the country's first major higher education center aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture?

A Sand County Almanac was published in 1949, decades before some agrarians would even consider a radical act like forsaking continuous corn for crop rotation. While farmers were searching for more carbon-belching horsepower, Leopold was kneeling, gently placing an ear to the earth.

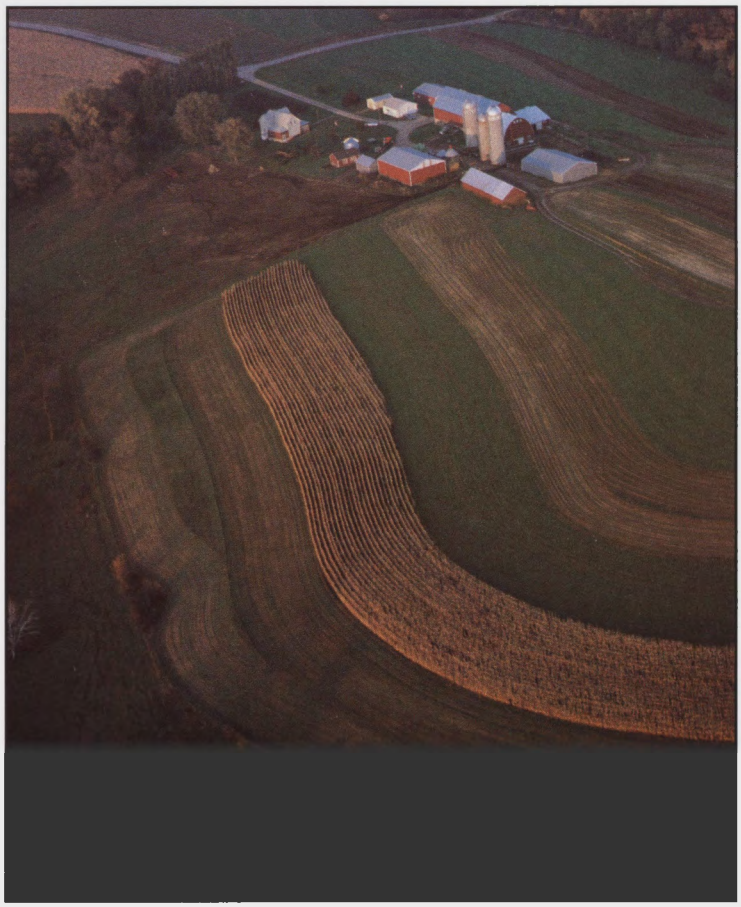
What he wrote in response could not have been a more profound statement of purpose for ISU's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, had he climbed from the grave and penned it himself:

The Leopold Center will seek out and promote *gentler and more objective criteria for its [farming methods'] successful use.*

Hamstrung by campaigns and revenues, the Iowa Legislature hardly belongs in Leopold's class as a visionary. Still, do not overlook its farsightedness. The state still reeling from the farm crisis, in 1987 the leaders said yes when Iowa State administrators asked for permission — and millions — to build one of the country's first centers aimed at following Leopold's preachings.

"For Iowa State to have the Leopold as part of its land-grant operation is amazing," says John Haberern, president of the Rodale Institute in Emmaus, Pa., arguably the country's foremost center for alternative farming research.

Says Leopold Director Dennis Keeney, from the center's on-campus headquarters in the U.S. government's National Soil Tilth Laboratory: "We hope to be the forerunner of change in the land-grand concept. Maybe that's the most important thing they could put on our tombstone: They changed the way people think about agriculture and the land-grant institution's contribution."



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To be sure, ISU scientists under the Leopold umbrella are plowing new ground (perhaps *minimum-tilling* new ground would be more politically correct) with a raft of innovative projects. *(See "Aldo's Army," page 31).* But Keeney stresses that "nobody is developing stacks of new technology. It's often a matter of taking things already known and looking at them in a different way."

Thanks to legislators, plenty of scientists are looking. The 1987 Groundwater Protection Act hatched the Leopold Center, providing nearly $1 million per year to sustainable ag research. (The center actually receives 35 percent of the state's Agricultural Marketing Account, which collects a percentage of all Iowa fertilizer and pesticide sales.) Another $600,000 annually comes to the center via the General Assembly's ISU ag research outlay.

"We looked at it and realized the alternative is more insult to the environment," says state representative David Osterberg, chair of the House Energy and Environment Committee and an author of the '87 bill. "When we did this, there was nobody even close to making this kind of emphasis on sustainable agriculture. Finally, people have woken up."

There are many who think the farmers' sleep has been greatly exaggerated. Dean Kleckner, president of the American Farm Bureau, is adamant that "we [farmers] are doing things to better take care of the land and the environment than we were a generation or a half-generation ago. That's not to say there isn't more to do. But I'm critical of all the environmental organizations that are trying to create more strife by pointing out everything's so bad. ... It appears to me [the Leopold Center] is taking it in the right direction, and that's realizing that we're not going to change the world overnight. They're encouraging farmers toward a long-term outlook."

In doing that, Keeney, a former Iowa farm boy who returned to his alma mater after serving as a soil science professor at the University of Wisconsin, has established a unique m.o. for the center. He's built a sturdy foundation around three major thrusts:

Competitive grants

The center has awarded more than $3.2 million to more than 65 projects throughout the state. (Since most projects are funded by other agencies, as well, Keeney says the figure for funded sustainable ag research is nearly tripled.) ISU scientists receive the bulk of the money, but, as per direction from the General Assembly, grants are sought from researchers from all Iowa colleges and universities, as well as private non-profit organizations and foundations. (Center policy does not allow scientists to be funded by corporations holding vested interests in the research.) The 1991-92 total for 37 projects: $887,899.

A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community.

—Aldo Leopold

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... economic feasibility limits the tether of what can or cannot be done for land. It always has and it always will.

—Aldo Leopold

Interdisciplinary Research Teams

Six teams — Agroecology, Animal Management, Animal Waste Management, Cropping Systems, Human Systems and Integrated Pest Management — are composed of farmers, researchers and conservationists from around Iowa. Though the long-term, big-money research grant has gone the way of the thresher, Keeney says the research teams help provide continuity to the center's work. The "interdisciplinary" aspect also is crucial, he says, because sustainable ag by its nature requires seemingly disparate fields to work in concert.

Education and Demonstration

This is where Keeney's "tombstone" remark comes in. As he points out, "You can paper your walls with all the research that's been done. But we have to take that information out there." As mandated by the state, the center works closely with the Iowa State Extension Service and other organizations like the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Practical Farmers of Iowa, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. Awareness activities include: satellite courses taught to more than 300 farmers and farm consultants; field days showcasing alternative practices; education delivery "teams" employing extension workers, farmers, bankers and other specialists to demonstrate the advantages of sustainable ag; and the EXNET system, an electronic bulletin board listing statewide education events.

"The term 'sustainable agriculture' is probably accepted as widely here as in any state in the country," says Rich Pirog, the Leopold Center's education coordinator.

Twenty years ago, anyone calling for millions in sustainable ag dollars would have been summarily dismissed as a kook. Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture (LISA) was the fashionable moniker then, but many farmers saw only the negatives of high-input: management, awareness, initial investment. Yet it couldn't guarantee more of the only thing for which farmers were programmed to aspire: Yield. So why not rip out fencerows? Why not drain wetlands? More acres equals more bushels equals more income, right?

Such attitudes, Keeney says, were blatant signs that farmers were being deprived of a freedom of choice. As Leopold wrote, *... economic feasibility limits the tether of what can or cannot be done for land. It always has and it always will.* That tenet, almost unbeknownst to farmers, backed many into a wicked Catch-22: Produce more or lose the farm; mortgage environmental vitality and lose the land.

"We lost all sense of balance," says Garth Youngberg, a former ISU political science professor and now executive director of the Institute of Alternative Agriculture in Green Belt, Md. "I can sit here and say, 'You farmers were wrong for putting all your eggs in one basket,' but they've been given only one basket."

Finally, as the environmental message became more palatable worldwide, the sustainable ag "kooks" began merging into the mainstream. Even older farmers, to whom their fathers' and grandfathers' methods always had been "good enough," were at least willing to listen to sustainable aggers. How could they overlook the silt in the ditches, the high nitrate levels making tap water dangerous for newborns? How could they overlook the profundity in Leopold's words: *The marvelous advances in technique ... are improvements in the pump, rather than the well.*

And a final question comes into play: How could they overlook the specter of governmental regulations? To date, production-incentive farm bills have greatly overshadowed federal programs encouraging stewardship. As the country continues flocking to the cities, Keeney expects an increasingly higher proportion of voters to say: If a sizeable chunk of our taxes bails out farmers every time the creek rises and international markets fall, why should we sit back and watch them use that money to pillage our resources? Is cheap food worth all of this?

"When the government acts, they usually swing the pendulum too far," says the Farm Bureau's Kleckner. "They come up with too many laws, and in this case, it's like going after a fly with a sledge hammer. They're seeing elephants."

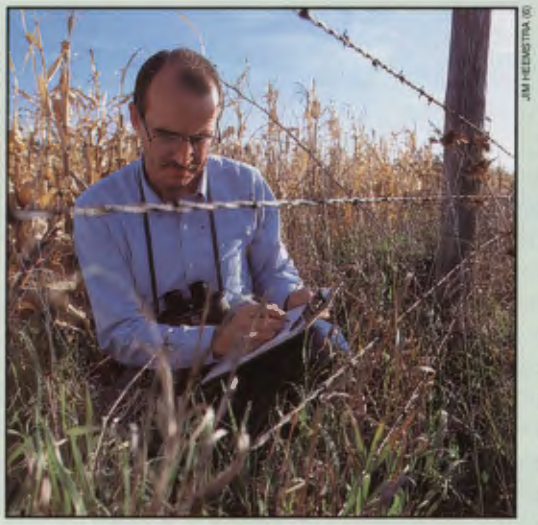
Says Keeney, who received agronomy bachelor's (1959) and doctoral ('65) degrees from Iowa State: "We've got to work to get ahead of that [government regulation] curve. We're making a start, we're shifting some attitudes. But it's going to be a long time — maybe a generation, maybe more — before we've changed practices as much as they need to be changed. During that time a lot of bad things can happen."

Certainly plenty of ill has befallen the land since Aldo Leopold sermonized. But revisited today, his message only takes on more urgency. Like any effective writer, Leopold so rarely shrieked; he cautioned readers by letting them see and touch and smell and taste and hear their world as if for the first time. In *A Sand County Almanac* he recounts a poignant episode in which he and friends shoot a wolf and *watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes.* He writes of *her deep chesty bawl ... an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world.*

Of course he speaks of the environment. Of course he challenges man. *Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the wolf. ... The [farmer] has not learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have dustbowls, and rivers washing the future into the sea.*

Aldo's Army

"No important change in ethics," Aldo Leopold wrote in A Sand County Almanac, *"was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis ..." The following seven scientists in his namesake sustainable agriculture center push with all their intellectual might to bring about the change in land ethics Leopold championed decades ago. And there are scores of others, all able to tap into wondrous discoveries and techniques and equipment of which Aldo Leopold could not possibly have dreamed. Or could he?*



JIM HEEMSTRA

Louis Best

Habitat Forming

Louis Best isn't one to say, "I told you so," but ....

For years he's been preaching his own sustainable agriculture sermon. Finally, it looks as though the congregation is warming up to his homily.

Best doesn't work in sustainable ag glamour disciplines such as soils and groundwater. But his specialty — wildlife ecology — has scratched out its own position in the movement.

"You talk about sustaining — wildlife is as much a natural resource as the soil," says Best, a professor of avian ecology. "We're looking at this holistically. In the '70s, a lot of agriculture people viewed us as some sort of adversaries. We were only saying, 'Consider the impacts to wildlife.' Now they see we can be compatible."

With binoculars around his neck and clipboard in hand, Best has tromped through untold acres of corn and soybean fields, painstakingly recording the impacts of conventional agriculture on bird populations. His disturbing findings: Many species, such as the dickcissle and the grasshopper sparrow, are losing population because of farming methods. These and other species maintain their numbers only in areas adjacent to traditional rowcrop and alfalfa fields — like fencerows, grass waterways and roadsides. Since these areas are more common under sustainable ag practices, Best says farmers who change their customs to protect the soil and the groundwater also will be protecting birds such as the meadowlark and red-winged blackbird.

"These birds have felt the downside of overproduction and overspecialization," Best says. "But now we're entering into a much more encouraging environment."

Not to mention a more habitable one.

To the Nth Degree

Imagine insuring your home without the slightest idea how much it's worth. You certainly don't want to underinsure, so you purchase, say, a $100,000 policy. Only years later, when fire destroys the house, do you get the word from the assessor: It's valued at only $50,000.

All those years. All those premiums.

A similar but even more troubling scenario is being played out in our farm fields. Farmers, knowing nitrogen fertilization pays, are pumping huge amounts of the powerful elixir into the soil. Granted, plants gobble up much of the nitrogen and subsequently flourish. But what of the so-called "insurance" nitrogen?

That it's money wasted — like those doubled premiums — is a given. But most discomfitting is that the extra N winds up polluting the groundwater.

"We should be able to cut that [nitrogen] use by a third without affecting profitability one bit," says agronomy Professor Alfred Blackmer. "And in many cases, we can increase profitability."

How? Just like the homeowner: By making assessments before we insure. In the farmer's case, that means testing the soil for nitrogen content before applying the fertilizer. Sound ridiculously simple? The process is not — Blackmer developed it several years ago — but the idea is. It just took the sustainable ag movement to make agriculturalists take notice.

Blackmer recently completed his third year of studying the effects of reduced N prescribed by his soil test. Some of the results are amazing: In 1989, he dropped the fertilization rate from 123 pounds to 47 pounds per acre with no drop in corn yield. 1990 showed a slight yield fall, but the decreased fertilizer cost more than made up the difference.

Blackmer now hopes to train fertilizer dealers, farm consultants and farmers in using the test. In addition to spreading new technology around the state, he's also gaining more testing sites.

"Before, if you didn't know how much to use, it probably was good practice to put down more [nitrogen]," Blackmer says. "Now we can take the guesswork out of the system."

And the insurance nitrogen out of the groundwater.

Alfred Blackmer

Eric Hoiberg and Gordon Bultena

The Human Factor

All right, let's say this sustainable ag movement does catch on. Say the use of nitrogen fertilizer and pesticides is slashed, that farmers espouse many of these innovations being hatched under the nurturing heat lamp of the Leopold Center.

What then?

It's that question — and hundreds of smaller questions within it — that Gordon Bultena is determined to answer.

The sociology professor leads the Leopold Center's Human Systems Team. While his fellow SA'ers are measuring runoff and soil nitrate levels, Bultena is measuring human factors.

Yes, sustainable ag is about changing farming practices like tillage systems and chemical use. But, as Bultena points out, "[Sustainable ag] is more than a movement promoting new practices. A whole set of ideologies and philosophies go along with it, beliefs that have to do with the kind of society that rural communities and farm operators want to create. There's a socioeconomic agenda driving this movement, too."

The preceding is not just one sociologist's polysyllabic opinion. When (if?) sustainable ag practices become just plain ag practices, it's a lock farm communities will feel the effects. To learn the extent of those ramifications, Bultena and fellow sociology Professor Eric Hoiberg, not unlike their agronomist and entomologist friends, took to the field.

Their field was more than 1,000 Iowa farmers. Through telephone and follow-up mail surveys, they polled sustainable ag practitioners and conventional farmers to learn the potential consequences of a switch to sustainable ag. Among their findings:

- SA'ers tend to be younger, more educated and less indebted and farm fewer acres than conventional farmers;
- SA'ers predict a switch to their way of thinking would result in improved profits and reduced risks, while conventional farmers foresee the opposite;
- conventional farmers see a jump to SA resulting in higher food prices, reduced ability to feed the world's hungry people and diminished international competitiveness of the U.S.

Just as an increase in average farm size has been the bane of many farm communities, Bultena is trying to determine if a transition to sustainable ag — and the accompanying decrease in farm size — might bring about a small-town revitalization.

"As farmers grapple with their own issues, there are other issues the whole society must grapple with," Bultena says. "If sustainable agriculture succeeds, there will be many changes. We want to know what those changes will be."

Field of Seams

As mentioned earlier, the "low-input" in the sometimes-used phrase "Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture" cannot be used too broadly. Its practitioners may seek to use fewer herbicides, for example, but one commodity they can't afford to cut back on is management. Agronomy Professor Richard Cruse's work in strip intercropping is a prime example.

Viewed from a passing jet, one of Cruse's three strip intercropping test farms would look like long rows of yarn. That pattern is formed by three crops — corn, soybeans and a small grain — planted alternatively in 12- to 30-foot rows. Such a system relies heavily on an age-old sustainable ag custom — crop rotation — to potentially increase yields and unquestionably decrease erosion, pesticide use and fertilizer use.

"We took a look at the problems [in conventional agriculture] and tried to put together a system where we could use as many indigenous resources as possible to enhance productivity while remaining environmentally safe," says Cruse, who has worked on the project for five years.

Rotating from corn to small grain to soybeans each year keeps pests and fertilizer use down and production up. The narrow strips allow all the crops to take advantage of the "border effect." Because of a variety of crop interactions in the borders — such as decreased competition for sunlight, increased water availability and increased windbreak and shade — crops in outside rows of each strip show increased yields of more than 10 percent. Of course narrower strips mean more borders. Overall, corn and small grain yields increase markedly, while the verdict is still out on intercropping's effect on soybeans.

But there's one more increase required—more management.

William Crumpton

Richard Cruse

op and say, 'The back 80's got quackgrass problems, go take care of it,'" says Cruse, who has used the system on three private farms and several research plots. "And you can't plant and cultivate and harvest with some of this huge machinery. But some of that's positive. You have to carefully consider everything you do."

Isn't that what this whole movement is all about?

Fertilizers and pesticides must be applied more carefully, and planting and harvesting obviously take on a new look. "You can't just call the co-

Down the Drain

Perhaps no other aspects of this sustainable agriculture movement have drawn more attention than wetlands and groundwater. Botany Professor William Crumpton's latest project smartly melds both, with the potential for increasing the number of the former and the quality of the latter.

Crumpton and fellow botanist Arnold van der Valk have built 48 "mini-wetlands" — 11-foot-diameter cattail marshes called mesocosms — to study how effectively wetlands remove nitrates from the soil.

Scientists have long known that wetlands, by converting excess nitrate to harmless nitrogen gas, serve as effective drains to remove the noxious material from the earth. Just how effective — and just how many wetland acres are needed to serve any given area — has remained unknown.

"The question is, *How big a wetland do you need to attain a certain water quality?*" Crumpton says.

After two years of study, he's found an answer: One acre of wetland can remove virtually all the nitrate from 100 acres of continuous corn. That 1 percent sounds minuscule until you hear Crumpton point out that, since Iowa was settled, the state's wetland acres have plummeted from an estimated 3 million to 50,000. Suddenly, many farmers and environmentalists would give anything for 1 percent.

"The goal isn't to maintain environmental quality, but restore it," Crumpton says. "Now we know that's easily in our reach when it comes to nitrate."

The scientists hope to find similar information about wetlands' effectiveness in removing other substances such as herbicides and insecticides. They hope these studies, like the nitrate research, also show that wetlands can help farmers pour these poisonous substances right down nature's drain.

Bugs vs. Bugs

Pouring noxious chemicals on crop-munching insects isn't unlike swallowing two aspirin for a migraine. The tablets might ease the pain, but they undoubtedly won't be a lasting panacea.

But while headache sufferers can see a doctor, in the past there's been few options for farmers besieged by bugs. Entomologist David Orr is employing some unlikely helpers — other bugs — to give farmers an environmentally sound option.

Orr has been conducting side-by-side field tests to determine the economic viability of a relatively new biological control for European corn borers. While some of the corn is sprayed with a common commercial insecticide, the rest will have hordes of tiny, parasitic wasps turned loose on it. The stingless wasps only attack the eggs of other insects, and can be unleashed via aerial application or by hand.

Though Orr has yet to compile his findings, he says it's becoming more and more accepted that biological controls are the wave of the future.

Why? In a word, resistance. Insecticides work fine for today, but bugs like the corn borer and corn rootworm possess the uncanny ability to develop resistances to the chemicals. Orr says more than 450 insect pest species have developed resistance to the most commonly used insecticides.

Other chemical downsides: They often unintentionally kill desirable insect species, resulting in the insurgence of other pests; and, perhaps most frightfully, eventually they wind their way into the groundwater supply.

"Biological controls are extremely benign, partly because they already exist in nature and partly because they're very host specific," Orr says. "It's just a matter of making them economically feasible. Right now, it's looking like the costs are very similar. Of course farmers aren't sure about it, but we're trying to show that these can be viable alternatives."

David Orr

ONE VOICE

THE SONOROUS SOUNDS OF SIMON ESTES FILLED THE CAMPUS WITH BUT A SINGLE VERSE: CHAMPION THE DREAMS OF GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

PHOTOS BY JIM HEEMSTRA

TEXT BY STEVE SULLIVAN

There is a strong possibility that the deep, resonant bass baritone of Simon Estes is still echoing at Iowa State.

The Centerville native and international opera star sang and spoke volumes during a week-long residency in October, capping the university's celebration of the 100th anniversary of George Washington Carver's enrollment as ISU's first black student.

An established presence in opera houses in Europe and America, Estes commanded ISU's Music Hall during rehearsals with student musicians. His voice boomed across a chilly Cyclone Stadium, where, despite the concerns of his mother (who didn't think he should sing in inclement weather), Estes performed "The National Anthem" prior to the Homecoming football game. And he put a resounding finale on his visit by thrilling an enthusiastic audience at C.Y. Stephens, where he performed an SRO-concert with Iowa State singers and musicians.

Estes, who now resides in New York and Switzerland, had a special reason to return to close the Carver celebration.

"Growing up in Centerville, we seldom had anything mentioned in our textbooks about anybody of color," Estes said. "The only person I

LSU
LSU

learned about as a child was George Washington Carver.

"Carver believed that any gift we have must be developed, educated and cultured. He truly carved a place in society and made contributions that will forever help the development of children."

Not unlike Simon Estes, who spent much of his ISU visit talking about his experiences as a professional singer, offering students advice on their music careers and critiquing their performances.

"I want young people to realize there is someone who really cares about them, who wants to share experiences with them, who wants to make a contribution that will help them become more dedicated," Estes said.

Just as Estes can attest to the contributions of Carver, so can Jodi Frisbie, a soprano in Iowa State's vocal music master class, vouch for the tutelage of Estes. After hearing her perform, Estes immediately requested an encore.

"If someone like Simon Estes from Centerville, Iowa, can do what he has done, then maybe someone like Jodi Frisbie from little Lake View can, too," she said. "He's the reality of the dream so many of us have."

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WILSON SCORES ANOTHER GEM FOR IOWA STATERS

WHO AMONG US CAN'T vividly recall the wonderful sights and sounds of winter on central campus ... the brilliant white snow sparkling in the bright, low winter sun, the hustle and bustle of those precious, 10-minute interludes between classes? Against the calm backdrop of central campus and the echoing sounds of the carillon, it's a snapshot we carry with us always.

Thanks to the efforts of the Stanton Memorial Carillon Foundation and some generous alumni and friends, the carillon will continue to be a part of the tradition for future generations of Iowa Staters to enjoy. Another tradition lives on, as well—the music of Iowa State.

Who among us hasn't played, sung, hummed or listened to "The Bells of Iowa State"? It's a part of all campus reunions, enjoyed at off-campus alumni functions and heard in residence halls, Greek houses and just about everywhere Iowa Staters live or gather.

PETER KOLMAROT

Jim Wilson

It often brings a tear to one's eye and always produces a warm glow in the hearts of those who cherish their Iowa State experience. The late Carl Hamilton, '36, probably stated it best when he said, "'The Bells of Iowa State' has had a powerful influence on the atmosphere and character of this institution and the lives of its students." Composer Jim Wilson of Polk, Neb., is not an Iowa State graduate, but he certainly has endeared himself to all who are. He is fondly remembered by his former students of English composition from his short time on the Iowa State faculty in the late 1920s. In 1983, Iowa State University officially named him an honorary alumnus.

Last November, Wilson, 91, returned to the campus for a concert in his honor. That concert featured the premier performance of "Gotta Go To ISU," his latest Iowa State piece, sung with rousing spirit by the ISU Men's Glee Club. The Music Department and the Alumni Association hosted a reception in Jim's honor following the performance.

For all of this, we say, "Thank you, Jim Wilson. You've *made our spirits great, true and valiant like the Bells of Iowa State."*

Jim Hopson

James Hopson
Alumni Association
Executive Director

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

The ISU Alumni Association welcomes the following new lifetime members who joined during the months of July, August and September. If you would like to convert your membership from annual to lifetime, and receive a complimentary gift, call (515)294-6525 for more information.

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These discounts are in addition to Alamo, Avis, Hertz and National car rentals and Hilton and Ramada hotels. You receive all of these benefits because you are a member of the ISU Alumni Association!

TICKET

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The ISU Student Alumni Association program has spawned some of the university's most innovative and productive young alumni. VISIONS catches up with an SAA alum in each issue.

Stephen S. Nicholson

Cyclone Guide, 1977-78

Age: 35

ISU majors, grad years: Farm Operations/Agricultural Education, 1979; master's, Agricultural Economics, 1989.

Hometown: West Des Moines.

Job title and description: Commodity research analyst, sweetener/ingredient purchasing, Coca-Cola USA, Atlanta. Evaluate and analyze commodity markets for purposes of forecasting, advising and developing strategy for purchasing sweeteners and ingredients.

What I like most about my job: I'm able to see the impact agriculture has at the corporate level.

What makes commodity research exciting: You bring so much data together to form an opinion about a market — an opinion that is important to corporate decision-making.

If I weren't doing this I'd be: Working in the public policy arena.

Favorite ISU class: Econ 451 (Agricultural Law).

Favorite ISU professor: Harold R. Crawford and Michael Duffy.

Most prized ISU accomplishments: Co-chair of Veishea 1979; recipient of Farm House Fraternity Doane Award.

What I miss about Iowa State: The friendliness, the competence, the energy and the educational values of the people.

If I learned one thing at Iowa State it was: The importance of possessing a responsibility to serve, in my case agriculture.

Person I admire most: Agricultural economics Professor Neil E. Harl.

Hobbies: I'm into newspapers, politics and bicycling.

Jane A. Hilton
Joseph H. Hineman
Kenneth L. Hodson
Marjorie J. Hoffman
Steven R. Holverson
Jeffrey J. and Stacy L. Hornacek
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Head Count

LEN RIZZI

Randall Parmer on working at the U.S. Census Bureau: "Gathering information on all these people gives us great insight into the status of the country."

IN MEASURING U.S. POPULATION, THIS GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN KEEPS HIS CENSUS ABOUT HIM

NEARLY EVERY DAY, Randall Parmer counts on the people of America.

Not counts on as in depends upon, but counts on as in *1 ... 2 ... 3 ...*

Parmer, a 1982 ISU statistics graduate, counts for the U.S. Census Bureau. And the bureau counts everything from the nation's homes to its homeless, its income to its output. In 1990, of course, the U.S. Census Bureau counted the U.S.

As co-workers geared up for the decennial custom, Parmer continued with his usual work: overseeing surveys in such areas as education and housing. But after the census' — and the follow-up Post-Enumeration Survey's (PES) — completion, Parmer helped evaluate the evaluation.

The job garnered reams of press, as states and cities decried undercounts that would cost them millions in federal aid. In surveying about 70,000 people, Parmer's evaluation found "considerable evidence" that the PES was correct in estimating that the census undercut the U.S. population by as much as 2 percent (about 5 million). It also shed light on why the count was off — a finding U.S. Secretary of Commerce Robert Mosbacher relied upon in opting not to order an adjustment. "People have to realize that, with any survey, there are likely to be some errors," Parmer says from his Suitland, Md., office outside of Washington, D.C. "[Mosbacher] looked at [the follow-ups] and decided that the accuracy was acceptable. The evidence of an undercount just wasn't clear cut."

After the post-post-survey, Parmer returned to digging up figures such as teacher salaries and satisfaction and housing and utility costs. As a statistician, Parmer doesn't actually gather the material; rather, he selects fields and produces estimates. Though the Census Bureau took its share of shots in '91, he says the entire census process "created an exciting atmosphere around here."

TYPO ALERT: Statistics? Exciting? In the same paragraph?

"I know [statistics] intimidates a lot of people," Parmer says, "but I've always loved it. It makes sense out of the data. It's a powerful tool."

Thus, if you're taking a poll in light of the recent raft of census-bashing, put Randall Parmer down for the count.

For Forest Ecologist, Tree's Company

LYNDA RICHARDS' FONDEST childhood memory is tromping through the woods in the Ledges State Park west of Ames.

These days she's paid to tromp.

Richards, a 1965 Iowa State entomology graduate, last summer became the first-ever forest ecologist for the Mark Twain National Forest in southern Missouri's Ozarks. The 1.5 million-acre Mark Twain is a wood-producing forest, but the Ames native says her hiring indicates that, "We're still interested in

ODELL MITCHELL

Lynda Richards

wood fiber production, but we want to make it more sensitive to ecosystems. There's a real revolution going on." Richards works with forest rangers to help manage sensitive, threatened and endangered plants; she also meets with the public to answer questions about plants.

Since an Iowa State botany professor gave young Richards a magnifying lens to study plants, she's had a fervent interest in protecting wildlife — and not just the green stuff. After earning her zoology Ph.D. from Washington State in 1973, she worked as a technician in the then-fledgling insect zoo at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of History in Washington, D.C. But after three years, Ledges pangs finally got the best of her. She fled D.C. concrete for Missouri pine needles, working as a forestry technician near Rolla for eight years before her 1991 promotion.

While Richards' work takes her to all corners of the largest national forest in the northeastern quarter of the U.S., she says her favorite areas are the calm, lucid streams. "I fell in love with [Ledges'] streams," she says. "I guess I'm kind of still there."

And still carrying her magnifying glass.

Of Pig Pens and Pavarotti

SINCE HIS 1987 IOWA STATE graduation, David Raim has continued work on a most unusual farm op program.

Not farm operations. Farm *opera*.

Just as he coaxes tiny corn plants into producing robust ears, Raim (pronounced rhyme) forever is honing his velvety baritone. That voice took him to Carnegie Hall as an ISU student, and in the summer of 1990 it led him back to New York for an opera apprenticeship.

Today you can find him singing as he fixes fence or sorts cattle or guides a tractor across his family's eastern Iowa farm near Oxford. It might be his favorite aria from "Faust," a Brahms work or a '60s pop smash. For audiences a bit more sophisticated than feeder pigs, he turns to his church choir, the Cedar Rapids Symphony and the Chamber Singers of Iowa City.

He has trained independently since leaving ISU and voice teacher Julie Simson *(VISIONS, Winter 1990)*. Often that means working with wife Michele Page Raim, ISU '88, with an electronic keyboard in their mobile home. "When I went to [the Chautauqua Opera in New York], they were all voice students, from places like Julliard or the Manhattan School of Music," Raim says. "But pretty soon, I fit in. I could sing with them. But you know, some of them still didn't know what to think."

He drew the same reaction when he chose an ag studies major and a music minor at ISU. Now he draws the same reaction at the local co-op. Folks don't know what to think about David Raim and his singing. *David Raim* doesn't know what to think about David Raim and his singing.

"That summer in New York was my first summer away from the farm," says Raim. "I helped my dad and brother plant the crop, then left. That was strange. Now, the singing pulls me at me. Sometimes I find myself up on the tractor, wondering about it all." ◐

JON VAN ALLEN

David Raim

And to the Republic...

Ron Blums is an All-American-caliber decathlete and a dean's-list-caliber business major. He's believed to be ISU's first Soviet bloc athlete.

IN AFTERMATH OF COMMUNISM'S FALL, LATVIAN DECATHLETE HAS ONE-TRACK MIND: INDEPENDENCE

CALL RON BLUMS A Russian, and be prepared to duck.

Russians murdered his grandfather for having the gall to espouse freedom.

Russians drove his father and grandmother from their home.

Russians, with bullets and prison bars and fists of steel, stomped the independence out of his world.

Make no mistake: Ron Blums wears the stoic mask of the Soviet. His handshake could crack walnuts. His glare could penetrate walls. The Iowa State University sophomore trains for the decathlon with a seething intensity sheathed in an armor of calm. Years of study have honed his English, but his accent is vintage *Dr. Zhivago*: "My best event is *ze pole wault*."

But Ronald Clarke Blums is a Latvian. Call him a Russian, and be prepared to duck.

These are heady days for Blums (pronounced Blooms). When CNN beamed shots of quivering hard-liners fleeing Moscow after their botched *coup d'état* in August, he rejoiced not only in promise for himself but in requiem for his grandfather. No more will the mention of Siberia — where Nikolai Blums, a Latvian army officer, starved or froze to death in 1941 — terrorize the Latvian spirit.

A year ago, Latvians knew terror like a boorish uncle. When Blums left his hometown of Riga for Ames last January, terror had moved in and unpacked its bags. As he left the city last Jan. 13, Soviet tanks lurched across the capital city's bridges. A day earlier, Mikhail Gorbachev-backed soldiers had slaughtered 15 citizens in neighboring Lithuania.

What a difference an aborted coup makes. A year later, Blums worries not that Latvia's push for independence will go the way of his grandfather, but that he won't be in top shape when he competes for a spot on his republic's 1992 Olympic team.

Oh, how his father must dance with pride. Himself a former Latvian decathlon champ, Peter Blums named his son after Australian distance runner Ron Clarke — a man he knew and idolized only by repute. Peter Blums, a government ornithologist, and his wife, Maija, a pediatrician, encouraged Ron not only to pursue track, but to exploit it to take him to Europe and, later, the U.S. and a coveted "American education."

Their son's mask cracks at the edges when he ponders the irony of competing under maroon and white flags once cached in attics and behind walls. As he grew from credulous boy to skeptical man, he found he was never so free as when he sprinted and leaped. A thick, gray fog of depression

hung over Riga, but on the track he could run from invisible Russians, jump over them, thrust the spear-like javelin into their icy hearts. On the track they couldn't steal what they couldn't see: Freedom pulsing red and blue through his arteries and veins, freedom woven into his muscles, embedded in his bones.

"Before, if I say something against the system," he says, "I could be the world record holder and they would still say, 'OK, you can't have this job or go to this place.'"

No longer is freedom confined to the depths of his athletic skills. "Latvia is free," says ISU Department of History chair Andrejs Plakans, who emigrated from the Maine-sized republic as a youth in the 1940s. In 1990, Plakans helped ISU track coach Bill Bergan correspond with Blums, after one of Peter Blums' Washington contacts had facilitated the East-West alliance. With Blums staying at Plakans' home during school breaks, the compatriots have formed a close union.

"I cannot imagine," Plakans says, "that Ron will ever have to go back to before 1991."

But Blums wants to go back. To a time before Russia savagely stripped Latvia of its identity. "My [maternal] grandfather told me, before the war, you could go into a store and get anything you want," Blums says. "You could think and talk what you want. That's how it will be for me."

Prophets are a ruble a dozen in this milieu of runaway change, but one does struggle to imagine Blums finding anything but a better Riga upon his eagerly awaited return. He says he's been slow to warm to Americans, particularly their superficiality. "They say, 'Hello, how are you?'" he mutters, "then they don't want to hear you answer."

But he has found many friends, and the bright lights of capitalism have caught his eye. "With my [business] degree, I can help my country," he says, adding, "I can help myself by making money, too."

A smile peeks out from behind his mask of stolidity. Not a wide smile, not a particularly warm smile. But a smile, nonetheless.

A Latvian smile. ◐

SPORTS BRIEFS

JEFF^2 Two of the most celebrated basketball players in Iowa State history — Jeff Hornacek (No. 14 in photo, left) and Jeff Grayer (No. 20) — returned to Ames' Hilton Coliseum last October. A National Basketball Association exhibition game between Hornacek's Phoenix Suns and Grayer's Milwaukee Bucks brought the former Cyclone teammates together, and gave ISU officials the opportunity to formally retire Hornacek's No. 14. Grayer's No. 44 was retired in 1988, immediately following his acclaimed career. The two Jeffs helped make 1985-86 the most successful season in school history, leading ISU to the NCAA's final 16.

EYE OF THE TIGER Former Cyclone baseball star Tom Vantiger was one of nine U.S. amateur players nominated for the 1991 Golden Spikes Award — his sport's Heisman Trophy. Vantiger and ISU coach Bobby Randall traveled to New York last November for the award ceremonies (the trophy went to Arizona State's Mike Kelly). Vantiger, who played in the Cleveland Indians farm system last summer, set nine ISU records last summer, including career batting average (.385), hits (271) and runs batted in (180). Last semester he was back on campus to continue working on a degree in mathematics.

• • •

ACTION JACKSON Former Iowa State wrestler Kevin Jackson claimed the 180.5-pound title at the World Championships of Freestyle Wrestler last fall in Varna, Bulgaria. Jackson, an ISU assistant coach, also won a gold medal at the Pan Am Games in Havana, Cuba, last summer.

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- Coach Johnny Orr

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Iowa: A Place to Grow (on You)

ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN EBERT

By David L. Roochnik

Some months ago, The New York Times ran a lengthy piece on the city of Seattle. Its conclusion: Seattle is a victim of its own success. It is such a desirable place to live that too many people have moved there and Seattle is no longer quite as wonderful as it used to be. Instead, it now is troubled by typical problems of urban congestion.

Reading this, I was struck by how different Iowa is from Seattle. Our population is shrinking and aging; theirs is young and growing. Their economy is booming; ours is precarious. They have mountains and seas and moderate temperatures; we are on the plains, pelted by wind, exposed to wild extremes of heat and cold, and as this year makes clear, subject to bizarre alterations of drought and deluge.

But Iowa is a paradoxical place. It is precisely because ours is a difficult place to live that we are relatively untroubled by the woes that plague most cities. To be blunt, it is because Iowa is an undesirable place to live that it is a desirable place to live.

Obviously, Iowa is excellent for farming, and most people born here have one tie or another to the farm. But there aren't that many farmers anymore, and their number is in decline. What, other than farming, would bring someone to Iowa? I suppose my reason is typical: I came because I got a decent, and quite unexpected, job offer.

Before arriving at Iowa State University, it had never occurred to me to live in Iowa. I'm sure that I never would have chosen to do so without the job. But now I've been here 10 years, and I find that to my surprise, I've grown to like it. I like it because Iowa is open and expansive, clean, uncrowded and unpressured. While always well-tended, at times it seems almost desolate. Here I'm far from the madness of the cities. I like it here because Iowa is a place that people don't typically choose. Here we mostly have only ourselves: our work, our families, our thoughts and friends, none of which will be applauded by the New York Times.

We are far from the expert opinion-makers, so we have to think for ourselves. This is not a place of high style, so what we do has to have value for itself, and not because it is in fashion. Iowa is a wonderful place to test the proposition that virtue is its own reward. Here satisfaction has to be generated by our own energy, and measured by standards that we claim as our own. There aren't many people here, there's never much of an audience to pretend to, so people aren't that pretentious.

One of the paradoxical features of living in Iowa is that often what is best about it is identical to what is worst.

What's best is that we can live in small, quiet towns where most people know each other and there are few surprises. Life is friendly, comfortable and reasonably safe. What's worst is that we live in small, quiet towns where most people know each other and there are few surprises —comfort and safety can often be suffocating.

It's totally different in Seattle. There, if you list the good things — being near the sea in a temperate climate, great restaurants, films and theater — you find they are different from the bad things, which include heavy traffic and two-bedroom houses costing $300,000. If you compare the goods and the bads, the pluses and the minuses of living in Seattle, you easily can find out if you want to be there.

But at least for transplants like me, it's always hard to figure out if we want to live in Iowa — our goods are often so similar to our bads. We can't quite figure out why we're not in Seattle.

No one I used to know will move to Iowa because they want to live in Iowa. Instead, when those of us from out of state do come, it is usually because of a surprising, and perhaps even a disappointing, whim of the job market. It's perplexing being here.

But when we choose to stay, it is because we have discovered a kind of life that we could not find elsewhere. It is a life that is far from ideal, and so it is not one that many will choose.

But precisely because it is not an obvious choice, Iowa turns out to be a good place to live, a place to learn that life is rarely a matter of choice and that good things often can be found where few would think to look. ◐

David L. Roochnik is an associate professor of philosophy and foreign languages at Iowa State.

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