And We're Proud of It| I.

Ames Forestry Club

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And We’re Proud of It . . .

or

What to say when someone asks you
why there is a forestry school in Iowa!

I t might have been that we sprang
full blown from the forehead of
Zeus or that some outside-of-the-
galaxy empire attempted to colonize
Earth in pre-glacial time when there
were spruce forests in Iowa. Actually,
of course, we got here because the
founders of the State Agricultural
College and Model Farm required
that forestry be taught and Section
1621 of the Code of Iowa for the
Ninth General Assembly formalized
that requirement back in 1880. That
still doesn’t answer the “How
come?”

I suppose that it is enough to
remind ourselves that the men and
women who brought Iowa State into
being were, themselves, products of
the pioneer settlement period where
the scarcity of wood for fuel, con-
struction, variety, and protection
from the sun and wind still loomed
large in memory. It suffices that
dwellers of the prairie states were
and are more appreciative than most
of the comfort and rewards offered
by trees. This interest brought forth
the Forestry Department in 1904 as
one of only a tiny handful of the
original forestry schools still in
existence in America.

So much for our origins. What
accounts for the success of Iowa
States as they have taken their
places in American forestry? Or,
terrible thought, is our success
visible only to us and are the cries of
congratulation only our own? We had
better look to the nature of our
laurels before we explain how we
went about earning them.

There are no annual playoffs be-
tween Forestry Schools and, even if
there were, there are no set rules to
the game each forestry school elects
to play. Some schools are known for
research, some for service, some for
undergraduates, some for size, some
for diversity, some for the number of
graduates who become executive
officers or advisers to presidents.

It would be ill mannered and
presumptuous for one forestry faculty
to set itself above some other in-
titution’s faculty. Department
executive officers realize this so the
question of who is better simply
never comes up. After all, one
wouldn’t wish to lose a faculty
member to another school that had
been ranked as inferior. Of course
the play is, if such an unfortunate
event takes place, to say, “Oh, yes,
so-and-so left here to go to
_________. It improved both in-
stitutions.”

The Society of American
Foresters, with the sometimes
reluctant support of the school and
university involved, accredits each
forestry program in the United States
on a periodic basis. Withholding or
withdrawing accreditation is not
fatal, but is embarrassing. Contrary
to common assumption, however,
forestry schools are not ranked by
the Society of American Foresters or
by any other body, Iowa State is
proud to have retained its ac-
creditation from the very beginning
of the system.

If there is no official ranking and
forestry schools don’t talk about it,
what basis does the alumnus of any
institution have for feeling his or her
school has done a recognizably
superior job in preparing its
graduates for the professional world?
Since this could get pretty lengthy
let’s stick with those things that
apply directly to the undergraduate
program where the final product is
the Bachelor of Science. The
following are some questions that
one could ask.

What have past graduates ac-
complished?

What is the quality of the parent
institution that surrounds the
forestry school and what is its at-
titude to its foresters?
What is the record of students
presently enrolled in respect to work
experience, moral and enthusiasm,
grades, extra-curricular activity?
What is the raw material from
which the student body comes?

These questions are not in order of
importance, but do notice that they
descend through a sequence of the
alumni track record down through
demographic factors over which the
institution has almost no control.
We can look briefly at each of these
questions and take modest pride in
the answers.

The Graduates
Our alumni and alumnae are our
pride. Presently there are 2024 living
graduates of this department. The
majority have spent a considerable
part of their careers in forestry or
work that developed from forestry. A

memory check through the list turns
up three USFSA Experiment Station
Directors, two Deputy Regional
Foresters, three Forest Supervisors,
twenty-six USFS Rangers, three
industrial vice presidents, two BLM
State/Regional Foresters, a State
Forester, twenty-seven members of
forestry school faculties, eight
department heads at forestry
schools, and a beyond-counting
number of ranking staff personnel,
company owners, consultants, and
their ilk. No state is without an Iowa
State forester in some position of
influence.

Not only have these people
established the reputation of Iowa
State Foresters but they have also
continued to contribute to our well-
being through their contacts,
suggestions, financial gifts, and
unending support and friendship.

Alumni are a powerful resource
that sustains and challenges every
new graduate.

The Faculty
Intelligence, diversity, diligence,
and dedication to the profession and
to education are the characteristics
that one looks for in a faculty
member. Any three of the foregoing
without the fourth makes a faculty
less strong than it should be. While
the oft-enheld myth of Iowa as part of
the great American Desert
sometimes makes recruiting more
difficult than one would like, the
reputation of excellence of the
university and sustained prosperity
of the state has allowed us, through
the many years, to cultivate and nurture
a strong faculty of high morale. This
is a pearl of great price and
something to be guarded jealously by
administration and student body
alike.

The Parent Institution
The excellence, recognized around
the world, of Iowa State’s depart-
ments of statistics, economics,
agronomy, and the other sciences
contributes to a desire to be a part of
this excellence and to enhance the
reputation of the institution. This
feeling of pride makes itself felt by
students, faculty, graduates, and
friends. As with a great orchestra
where even the lowliest fiddler
wishes to do well, so is it with even
the least recognized member of a
great school. It is significant to all of
us that George Snedecor authored
“Statistical Methods” at Iowa State,
that Jay Lush is known the world
around as unparalleled in animal
breeding, that Lyle Watts, once Chief
of the Forest Service, was an Iowan from Iowa State, and that just last year we were recognized as third in the U.S. of Schools of Agriculture and Forestry.

The Student Body

Although winning the last-place bear skin in Midwestern Forestry Conclave may seem a burden sometimes too heavy to bear (no pun intended) it diminishes to nothing in relation to the recognition and reputation that ISU Forestry students have attained as they have become known through our far-flung summer camps, through excellence on summer jobs, through the long-standing reputation of the Ames FORESTER, and through the amazing excellence of VEISHEA.

The forestry student body is known for the cohesiveness, high morale, and effort of its individuals. Nothing should be allowed to dishonor that reputation.

Raw Material

A much revered Dean of a neighboring forestry school once said, "I don't actually know that Iowa State does any better job than the rest but it seems to be continually blessed with students who come from homes where the work ethic is important and the desire to succeed is ingrained." Some combination of Grant Wood's Midwestern Gothic and Meredith Wilson's Iowa Stubborn seems to pay off and even those of us too long in the vineyard who recognize the axiom, "If you can't help them at least don't hurt them," are aware of the potential that we inherit in every freshman or transfer that appears on campus.

Maybe you will have to suffer the slings and arrows of such outrageous statements as, "I didn't know there were any trees in Iowa" or "What do you do, cruise corn stalks?" but it may be of comfort to you to repeat the statement from a shrewd old professor from the West Coast who once said, "The quality of forestry education increases in direct proportion to the distance of the institution from the woods." And that was not an Iowa Stater who said that.

But regardless of the raspberries that you may have to receive and all of the self-plaudits that you can hear from Iowa Staters who have gone before, one paraphrased truth remains—the fault lies, not within our past, but within ourselves, if we be underlings.