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And That's The Way It Was . . .

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Iowa State University, and the Forestry Department in particular, have seen many changes take place during the last 75 years. Students, instructors and curriculums all change along with the world for which we are being prepared.

Even though change occurs, and in fact is inevitable, it is not always something that carries a negative connotation. Throughout the last 75 years the Forestry Department has gone from better to best. Instructors and students have come and gone, and in their passing, each has added something to the Department to make it what it is today.

To get a better idea of some specific changes that have occurred, alumni have sent us some special memories and reminiscences of their years as a forestry student at Iowa State.

In the early years of Iowa State College, forestry students were among those called to defend our country. Paul Dunn, '23, remembers "registering at ISU in the fall of 1919 following two years with the U.S. Army in World War I with service on the Mexican border and in France." Victory Kreimeyer, '43, recalls "skipping morning classes and drinking coffee with friends in the Memorial Union, December 7, 1941, listening to FDR and wondering how soon we would all be drafted" and "hunting for and finding my name on the orders calling 400 ISC Air Force reservists to duty at Jefferson Barracks, February, 1943."

One facet of life at Iowa State that doesn't seem to have changed is the constant dislike of walking across campus, especially when the elements are not cooperating. Victor Kreimeyer reminisces about "hiking across the intramural fields, referred to as 'Little Siberia' at 5:30 a.m. every Monday morning to sing with the 'Woodland Warblers,' a forestry quartet that was on State Forester Guy Ramsey's weekly WOI radio program."

Gary Firch, '64, has a special memory regarding "Little Siberia" as it was still called in the sixties. He says, "... I made the trek many times across the cinder path to Marston Hall, then to Beardshearing Hall, and on across what was then termed 'Little Siberia' to Curtiss Hall. 'Little Siberia' was an apt description as I found out one winter quarter when Dr. Bensend's Wood Technology lab was held at 8:00 a.m., Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday. In the sub-zero temperatures the sidewalk between Beardshearing and Curtiss appeared to grow in distance and then there seemed to be an excessive number of steps to climb before I could finally reach the welcome radiators of the foyer.

"In contrast, this same walk in the spring and fall was perhaps the finest on campus. The maples, larches and large grassy spaces led appropriately to a large, sweeping American elm paying homage at the 'feet' of Curtiss Hall. Or perhaps the hall was in abeisance to the grandeur of the elm." He also remembers, "once after studying until around midnight for a test in Professor Leonard Kellogg's forest protection class, I stepped out into a spring downpour. Having an aversion to umbrellas, I reached maximum saturation long before I reached home. Another time I spent the night typing a paper for English 414 and left Curtiss about 7:00 a.m. It was foggy and damp, which was appropriate considering my frame of mind and low physical ebb. This particular walk to Beardshearing, past the Hub, to Marston, and on across the cinder path to home was one of my longer ones.

"However, I usually enjoyed these walks. They served as a kind of 'cooling off' period when one could relax and enjoy the stillness of the night; the night air with its assorted messages; newly mowed grass, crushed leaves, the freshness after a rain, signatures of spring flowers, etc. Although in the midst of many, one was very much alone."

One of the main highlights and a "true test" to the forester at Iowa State was summer camp. Beginning as three months traveling around the country, summer camp tested the forestry student in the real forester's skills. Now camp is only six weeks in length but still serves as a "challenge" for the future forester.

Harold Scholz, '29, says, "Surely one of my most memorable interludes as a student at Iowa State University was the six weeks I spend in Freshman Forestry Camp during the summer of 1925 at Cass Lake, Minnesota. Summer camps in those days provided the two basic needs for

George Thomson studying some girl across campus!
survival, namely food and shelter. “Two students shared an Army surplus tent. One improvised a bed. Mine was a combination of poles for a frame and ‘supple’ branches to sleep on. The fact that these were nailed to the frame on only one end supposedly gave them enough flex to be comfortable. But, in fact, they had about the same elasticity as a platform of planks.

“Weather permitting, our days were spent on the Chippewa National Forest doing cruising, surveying and other related activities. The mosquito population that summer was horrendous, and at that time there were no effective insect repellents on the market. So we made our own from oils of citronella and pennyroyal mixed with pine tar derivatives. A small hand towel secured with one’s hat or cap ‘protected’ the back of the neck.

“And what did this experience of a lifetime cost each one of us besides our time? My recollection is that we paid less than $100 to enjoy this premiere ‘outing.’”

John Hubbard, ‘34, attended summer camp at Paulina Lake on the Deschutes National Forest southeast of Bend, Oregon. “Because of the elevation, water froze in the bucket in the tent every night. No rain fell all summer. The dust was a foot thick on the woods roads and we had some fire fighting experience.

“Prof. D. S. Jeffers, who impressed us with his good physical condition, initiated us into foot travel by leading us over and under dead lodgepole windfalls around Paulina Lake. He also led a Sunday morning church service under the trees.

“In Skipper Larsen’s thinning exercise our crew debated on cutting or leaving one certain tree. After finally deciding to cut the tree, the spot looked pretty bare so we planted it in the same location. When Prof examined our work he suggested that one more tree should have been cut, so we pulled it out.”

Don Meyer, ’64, has this to say of his year at summer camp. “I’ve known the wrath of Dr. Thomson after I ‘missed’ several days of summer camp at Winter Park . . .”

Today the faculty in the department is one of its major assets. This seems to be another fact that has not changed over the years.

Harold Scholz says, “The same close relationship existed between students and faculty. G. B. MacDonald, Head of the Department, was ‘Prof Mac’ to everyone from freshmen to graduate students. Likewise for other members of the teaching staff: D. S. Jeffers was ‘Prof Jeff’; Perkins Coville was ‘Perk’ Coville, and J. A. Larsen was ‘Skipper Larsen.’”

John Hubbard recalls, “Skipper Larsen grading a silviculture exam by dropping the exam papers down the rotunda in Ag Hall—the paper that landed furthest from the center got the best grade. This speeded up the grading process.”

Vic Kreimeyer remembers “being reassured by Professor Hartman that everything would work out OK after a not too encouraging quarter” and “having Skipper Larsen chastise us in silviculture class for being not very good scholars, as only Skipper Larsen could.” On the lighter side, he also recalls “marveling at the way Professor ‘High Pockets’ Goodspeed could avoid hitting students as he assaulted the sidewalk between Beardshear Hall and the Ag building on his bicycle.”

Don Meyer tells us, “there is a special fondness for the quality of the faculty at Iowa State. At times it was a stress on us as students, such as when Dr. Ware came to the Department straight from research and attempted to turn us into mathematical statisticians in mensuration class with nothing to help us except long hours and hand crank Monroe calculators. Or at times it was humorous, such as hearing the same lecture twice from Doc Aikman in dendrology. But his enthusiasm was still bright after many years of bringing in branches out of the cold from the fire escape in Botany Hall.”

Paul Dunn says, “Prof. G. B. MacDonald (Prof Mac) was very helpful with his wise counsel; also Dr. D. S. Jeffers and Prof. H. J. Andrews.”

Gary Firch, in reminiscing about the many hours spent in Curtiss Hall has this to say about the faculty.
"Thus, although this structure tends to be the focal point of my memories of undergraduate years, it is only because of my fellow students and teachers: they, who gave the old building life. Another building; in another place; in another time; would recall fond memories if it were graced by such as George Thomson, Dwight Bensend, Fred Hopkins, Gordon Gatherum, Carl Stoltenberg, Leonard Kellogg, Bill Bentley and Ken Ware."

Speaking of Curtiss Hall (location of the Department before Bessey was built in 1967), alumni also have special memories of the building on campus where most of their time was spent.

Don Meyer recalls, "The facilities were none too plush in Curtiss Hall, but that did not diminish our camaraderie as we prepared to respond to tests in forest protection on the latest technology of logging locomotives or how to keep the chickens out of the woodlots."

Before Curtiss Hall was used as a location for the Department, old Botany Hall, otherwise known as Ag Hall, was the headquarters.

Vic Kreimeyer remembers "standing around the second floor rotunda in Ag Hall between classes hoping to catch sight of a well-turned ankle—remember the male to female ratio then was 6 to 1!"

Forestry Club was as active years ago as it is today. As a matter of fact, it would almost seem appropriate to say more active. Harold Scholz describes the annual Foresters' Hoedown. "The annual Foresters' Hoedown...was more nearly a well-organized riot than an evening of dancing. Forestry students dressed in field clothes, carried side arms loaded with blank cartridges (which were fired at will), sheathed hunting knives, etc. 'Dates' wore appropriate garb. The first year or two I was in school, this annual 'bash' was held in downtown Ames in the basement of a church—the name Saint Cecelia comes to my mind. However, by 1929, this event had become somewhat more conventional and it was moved back to the campus. By then enough participants in past years had suffered powder burns and temporary loss of hearing to ban firearms as a part of the evening's apparel."

Vic Kreimeyer remembers "Forestry Club picnics in the North Woods and being entertained by classmate George Thomson's juggling exhibition, stapling paper napkins to chicken netting on the Forestry Club float for Veishea and tending bar and spiking the cider at a Forestry Club Hoedown."

The Forestry curriculum has gone through its own set of changes through the years to keep up with modern technology. Harold Scholz says, "It would surprise me if you still do not have a course in Wood Technology (the 'Spit and Whittle' laboratory of the 1920's). On the other hand, I am virtually certain that you do not have to master tying the Diamond-Hitch on an ersatz horse as we did in order to get a passing grade in one of Prof Jeff's courses. Having been a Forest Supervisor in the west prior to coming to Iowa State, Professor Jeffers felt that every Forestry student should know how to load and secure a pack on a horse or mule."

Vic Kreimeyer recalls "taking time out during Civil Engineering Lab in the North Woods hunting golf balls, going to the Ledges State Park with Prof. Aikman's Ecology class, and sitting in Forest Management class and dreaming about working in the big timber in Oregon."

It was very enjoyable to learn of some of the extra-curricular activities and "pranks" displayed by the forestry students of yesteryear. Vic Kreimeyer remembers "watching the Ag Engineering building burn and having foresters tell the firemen they should set a back-fire in the Physics building to keep the fire from spreading to the rest of the campus."

He also recalls "dropping down to the restaurant for a cup of coffee midway through night studies to listen to Bing Crosby singing 'Blue In the Night' and the Ink Spots harmonize 'If I Didn't Care' on the juke box." As an extra-curricular activity he remembers "slipping off to Nevada to a tavern where beer was two-bits and boiled eggs were free."

Have you ever skipped a class and later that day seen the professor of the class you skipped? Vic also remembers when he was "hiking the cinder trail from our apartment downtown with my wife of two months and meeting Prof. Mac the morning I had cut his 8 o'clock. He smiled knowingly; always the gentleman!"

Gary Firch says, "In the fall of 1960 it was my good fortune to be sitting near the north goal line at Clyde Williams Field when fullback Tom Watkins burst up the middle on a fourth down and goal. After the players were unpiled I could see Watkins' upper body and the ball, on the goal line. This resulted in Iowa..."
State's first victory over Oklahoma in quite some time, and was such an occasion that classes were cancelled for the following Monday morning.” Gary also has a special memory of a particular final week. “On November 22, 1963, I was faced with my last exam of the week, Forest Economics 470, taught by Dr. Fred Hopkins. Shortly after dinner I was in my third floor room doing some last minute studying when some fellows watching TV yelled up that the President had been shot. Several hours later, a subed group of forestry seniors took this examination; one which was more than just another event in our academic lives; it marked the time of an undefinable change in the American scene.”

Jim Porterfield, '74, saw many changes take place even during the time he was attending Iowa State. “The 70's as I viewed them at ISU were full of change... new buildings included a dorm, a meat lab, a seed lab, veterinary complex, design building, stadium, three buildings in the ISU Center, and an addition to the women's gym, among other things. Even the old landmark smokestack at the physical plant from which many of us were taught to measure heights on aerial photos was torn down and replaced by a new stack.

“Changes that weren't as noticeable, but equally as important occurred within. Coed dormitories appeared at ISU, that's right—even at good ol' Iowa Straight—women and men living on the same dormitory floor (women on one end and men on the other end of the same floor). The number of women in forestry also grew tremendously from two in 1971, to a substantial portion of the department by 1978. What's that, do I detect a few groans of horror—or was it a sigh of cupidity from the long-time alums.”

Jim continues, “Fortunately, there's also a certain quality about a midwestern education that makes an ISU student usually welcome in most any part of the country. Dr. Thomson I'm sure will appreciate the comments of Ellis Peters, a long-time rancher, farmer, lumberman, forester in Mazama, Washington. Mr. Peters related the following story to me in a taped interview during one of the summers I worked in the Methow Valley. (He's talking about forestry students who'd come out for the summer to work on the Okanogan National Forest to get some practical experience.)”

“An I had five one year, and two they was from Iowa and Minnesota (He was from Iowa and Minnesota)-Boy, they'd just work up the whole deal like that! I studied for Range Management! And he said, ‘That's the kind of job I studied for an' I'm goin' ta get it!'”

“An' do you know, that fall he got a job over here in Montana ... I think it was for $5,000/year ... that was good money at that time, ya know. He said, ‘See, I told you I'd get a good job!'—An' he did!”

“But they was two of those kids—they was farm boys from back in there (Iowa & Minnesota)—Boy, they'd just work up a storm!”

The last three-quarters of a century have been special years in the lives of Iowa State foresters. Many memories lie in those years of the past but continue to live in the hearts of those who hold them dear.

Vic Kreimeyer says, “As you can tell, most of the times remembered were good times. There were the other kind, too. But then college is supposed to prepare us for ‘life,' is it not?”

So, the good times will be remembered because of the fun, friends, and special memories they hold; the tough times because of the courage and maturity that developed our professional character so highly regarded in the world today. Because of the prestige bestowed on those who have graduated from our Forestry Department we are all able to feel the same as Don Meyer who says, “I will continue to cherish those years in Ames and say with pride ‘Yes, I went to Iowa State.'”