24th Annual Midwest Foresters' Conclave

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October 17th was a beautiful sunny Friday afternoon when the 10 of us left the ISU Forestry greenhouse. How could it be cold in Carbondale, Illinois? After all, we were going south. The trip took about 11 hours and wasn't exactly uneventful. John Jennett's car blew a front tire while going down the freeway passing a truck. I was driving Mark Rediger's car when a friendly small town policeman stopped me for having a headlight out. No ticket was issued but he sure shook up the contents of the car.

The Conclave site was difficult to find because rain had demolished several of the direction signs. Half-way through the captains meeting, in the dark of night, we arrived. Most of us choose to immediately fall asleep on the bumpy army cots to get some shut-eye before the events that would begin later that same morning. Mark (Bear) Chicoine was dedicated to axe sharpening and antifreeze disposal. He slept perhaps an hour while we all ate breakfast. Maybe that explains his performance in the event, for that matter, we all could have sharpened axes all night.

The tobacco spit was scheduled for 8:00 AM Saturday morning. Contestants were slow to show up, but who could blame them with sausage and eggs still in their mouths and Red-Man waiting to be chewed.

As the day progressed, our score didn't... I must explain that ISU is a greenhorn at Conclave games. This was our third year to take part in the extremely competitive events. Many of the other teams have much better equipment and practice the events like a true team for months in advance.

It was dark, cold, and our last chance to score any points when the special event, log burling, took place. All the pressure was on a freshman, John Natvig, a very courageous and dedicated forester for falling off that log into icy cold water. John hadn't practiced burling for years, as a matter of fact—never, and the result of the day's activities found us tied for last place with Ohio State.

Now the clincher. Last place is an insult and disgrace to get. The prize is a greasy, moldy, moth eaten bearskin. We all sat patiently through the awarding of some really decent prizes, none of which we got, and anxiously waited to see who would get the bearskin. A yelling contest with ISU having more support was the deciding factor that awarded the incriminating bearskin to Ohio State.