Spring break in Costa Rica, with its miles of black volcanic sand beaches, means perfect waves are littered with surfer dudes from all over the globe. The sky is clean and cloudless. Temperatures meander into the mid-90s each day, and humidity hangs right there, too. And boy, is it cheap.

A group of Purdue students and staff from the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources found accommodations ($15 a night) that were perfectly priced for their college crowd. Bring in a couple of rock bands nobody has ever heard of, and you’ve got yourself a Spring Break MTV special.

But for these six people, Costa Rica was anything but a beach party. They were in the heart of Central America to build 50 sets of desks and chairs for school children. The furniture would utilize technology developed at Purdue to create inexpensive furniture able to withstand Costa Rica’s relentless heat and humidity, not to mention the steady abuse provided by elementary school students.

An advance group of three travelers — assistant professor Rado Gazo, graduate student Henry Quesada, and volunteer woodworker Bob Leavitt — arrived in the capital city of San Jose on March 2. An eight-hour car ride on roads that would make a mountain trail look like the Autobahn got the group to the work site, but it had none of the lumber and few of the tools promised them.

The lumber, 650 board feet of gmelina (pronounced ma-LEAN-ah) wood valued at about $300, was donated by Steve Brunner, owner of the Tropical American Tree Farm in Costa Rica. The wood was delivered to the work site near the town of Dominical on the Pacific coast in January so it would be dry enough to cut and shape into the desks and chairs the group would assemble in March.

But now the wood was harder to find than a Costa Rican icicle. It had vanished.

It seems the wood lacked the proper paperwork to be where it was. And with neither the donor nor the Purdue contingent on site to explain the wood’s purpose, the local police did what they thought was proper … they arrested the lumber and hauled it off to jail (really). It took two jail cells to hold all the wood that was supposed to make desks and chairs for needy school children.

Quesada (pronounced KAY-see-ah), a Costa Rican native, had spent the better part of the past seven months organizing the details of the project as a major part of his master’s thesis about design of a manufacturing system for construction of school furniture.

The technique uses standardized parts made with simple tools from inexpensive wood that normally wouldn’t be satisfactory for making furniture. The pieces fit together with round mortises and tenons, made using a deep hole saw attached to an electric motor. The design takes advantage of the humidity, which destroys other furniture: After the desks and chairs are assembled, moisture causes the joints to swell, creating a strong, tight fit.

But instead of making school desks and chairs, Quesada spent his first day in Costa Rica making 30 phone calls trying to locate the wood and expediting its release from jail. He was unable to find the necessary paperwork to appease the police, however, so new wood had to be purchased.

But new wood would still be wet when Eva Haviarova, manager of Purdue’s wood research laboratory, and undergraduates Ike Slaven and Ryan Bradford joined the group on March 9 to begin their version of Furniture Building 101, Caribbean style.

“It just made it difficult to work with,” says Leavitt. “Every time you would try to drill into it, water would squirt out. Sanding all the wood took much more time than we anticipated because of the moisture.”

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So the crew was way behind schedule, even before they had begun. Locals, or Ticos, dropped by to watch. Gazo recognized the looks on their faces.

Continued on Page 2
“Nobody down there thought we could accomplish what we set out to do,” he says. “You could just see them scratch their heads and say ‘crazy Americans, it will never work.’” Perhaps they were crazy. A goal of assembling 50 sets of desks and chairs in one week, under these circumstances, was, at the least, ambitious. But the problems they faced before the first piece of wood was even cut only strengthened their resolve. “It’s like playing cards,” says Slaven, a junior. “You’ve got to do your best with the cards you are dealt.”

Says Gazo: “We used every single hour of daylight to work. If the sun was shining, we were working.”

And boy, did the sun shine. “It was in the mid-90s every day,” Slaven says. “We were all just coated with sweat and sawdust from head to toe.”

The Pacific Ocean, so close they could hear it whenever the saws, drills and Sanders were shut off, became the world’s largest sawdust removal system. A saltwater bath left them feeling less than clean, but it was better by far than wearing a layer of sweat and sawdust.

“At the end of the day, I felt like I was wearing a fur coat made of sawdust,” Slaven says.

Meanwhile, Quesada was making a valuable new friend in Arturo Mora, owner of the only phone in the entire district and president of the local school’s parent/teacher organization. Mora was able to round up several volunteers to help in the manufacturing process.

“They were great,” says Bradford, who also is a junior. “They did a lot of the sanding. I’m not sure we could have finished without them.” The group did have some time to play tourist, but not as much as planned.

“We thought we were going to work hard for four days and have the rest of the time to play,” says Bradford, a building construction management major. “It didn’t work out that way, though. We ended up working most of the time, but that’s OK. After all, that’s what we were there for.”

“We reached our goal,” Gazo says with pride, “but it was like climbing Mt. Everest without oxygen, very difficult.”

Their hard work was rewarded with the gastronomic treasures of Costa Rica. “We joked that we would like to eat crocodile, snake, iguana and lobster while we were there,” says Gazo. “Well, we got to try two of them.”

Fresh lobster was a treat, but the iguana was the real surprise. “Tastes like chicken,” says Slaven. “It was great.” It’s no wonder the iguana is called gallina de palo, or chicken of the tree.

But the real rewards came when they delivered the finished furniture to the students at the Centro Educativo Baru.

“Before we could even get out of the truck, all the kids came running out of the school and pulled the chairs out of the back and started dragging them back into the school. They were so excited to see us,” says Bradford.

Adds Slaven: “Watching the kids sprint over, pick them up and drag them to the room was neat to see. They were as happy as can be. When I was in school and got new furniture, I could care less, but these kids were just so happy. It was amazing. We were superheroes to them. That was a pretty good feeling.”

Maybe it would make a pretty good MTV special after all.

Photo gallery available at: http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/connections

The mountain of tenomas cut by Purdue junior Re Slaven (left) produced 50 sets of desks and chairs made for school students in Costa Rica. Eva Havisanova, manager of Purdue’s wood research laboratory, sits with the proud new occupant of a new classroom furniture (right).
BY STEVE TALLY

For the first time, soybean farmers have a way to fight back against their No. 1 pest, the soybean cyst nematode.

This tiny parasitic worm, often known simply as SCN, is a microscopic roundworm that infests the roots of soybeans. The worms feed on the roots and cause up to a 40 percent loss of yield in a growing season.

Nationwide, the losses from SCN are estimated to be $270 million a year; losses in Indiana are estimated as $30 million to $50 million annually.

To seek an answer to this problem, Purdue scientists formed a research team of an agronomist, a nematologist, and two entomologists. They combined high-tech genomic techniques and years of traditional bench science to develop a soybean gene line that is completely resistant to nematodes. The technology was called CystX.

For their efforts, CystX team members received the 2001 Agricultural Dean’s Team Award for outstanding research conducted by an interdisciplinary team. Recipients of the award are Jamal Faghihi, research nematologist in the Department of Entomology; Richard Vierling, adjunct associate professor of agronomy and director of the Indiana Crop Improvement Association; Virginia Ferris, professor of entomology; and, posthumously, John Ferris, professor of entomology, who passed away in January 2000.

The award, which includes $10,000 to further research, was presented at a campus ceremony May 3. CystX is a licensed and patent-protected soybean line that crop breeders can cross with elite, modern soybean varieties. Some varieties are already on the market, with many more soybean lines, including the top commercial lines, expected to include CystX for the 2002 planting season.

Vic Lechtenberg, dean of agriculture at Purdue, says that when people from different areas of expertise and different departments come together to work on a problem, great discoveries can be the result. “The Team Award is designed to encourage and reward outstanding research, Extension, and education efforts that would not have happened without interdisciplinary cooperation,” Lechtenberg says. “The members of the CystX team are to be commended for their collaborative efforts and for an outstanding piece of science.”

To develop CystX, team members bred plants that were a cross of a nondomesticated soybean that is completely resistant to nematodes and a domesticated variety that produces much better yields. They then used genetic markers to identify plants that contained the resistance gene and the desirable genes from the domesticated soybeans. The CystX line of soybeans was then crossed with other lines through standard breeding practices.

“Strictly speaking, this isn’t old-fashioned plant breeding, because we used molecular markers to find the progeny plant line that had the resistance,” says Virginia Ferris. “But the breeding itself is just regular breeding, and this isn’t a genetically modified line of soybeans.”

Faghihi and John Ferris tested the CystX soybeans on 150 populations of nematodes, including several highly virulent races created in Ferris’ laboratory. “We’ve never found any population that can overcome it,” Virginia Ferris says. Purdue, the Indiana Soybean Board, and the National Science Foundation funded the CystX research.

BY STEVE LEER

Two School of Agriculture alumni have been appointed to posts in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

James R. Moseley, BS ’73, of Clarks Hill, Ind., a 1992 Purdue Distinguished Agricultural Alumnus (DAA) and former director of Agricultural Services and Regulations in the School of Agriculture, has been appointed to the second-highest position in the USDA.

As deputy to Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, Moseley will serve as an advocate for U.S. farmers and assist in forming agricultural policy.

After Moseley graduated from Purdue with a degree in horticulture, he established a thousand-acre grain and hog farm near Clarks Hill, an operation he still owns.

He served as an assistant secretary of agriculture for natural resources — a position now known as undersecretary of agriculture — under President George Bush from 1990 to 1992. He also served as an adviser to William Reilly, former administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Moseley returned to Purdue in 1992, when he was named director of Agricultural Services and Regulations.

His responsibilities included representing the School of Agriculture to the Indiana General Assembly and Hoosier agricultural organizations, and administering agricultural regulations assigned to Purdue.

In 1997, he took part in the eight-month-long National Environmental Dialogue on Pork Production. As lead negotiator for the National Pork Producers Council, Moseley worked with federal and state environmental officials to develop a set of environmental recommendations for the pork industry.

Purdue Dean of Agriculture Victor Lechtenberg says Moseley’s wealth of knowledge and skills will be an asset to the USDA and American farmers.

J.B. Penn, PhD ’73, has been selected undersecretary of agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services.

Penn lives in McLean, Va., and was named a DAA in 2000. He is senior vice president of Sparks Companies Inc. and co-author of one of the leading textbooks on agricultural policy. “J.B. is a key leader in agriculture and has maintained close ties to academia, Purdue in particular,” says Marshall Martin, Purdue associate head of agricultural economics who attended graduate school with Penn.
Plants could yield crop of plastic

BY STEVE TALLY

A Purdue biochemistry professor has received the 2001 Agricultural Research Award from the university’s School of Agriculture for a discovery that may open the door to producing new types of plastics from plants.

The professor, Clint Chapple, and Knut Meyer of DuPont and Co. have cloned a gene from the common laboratory plant Arabidopsis that will allow plants to produce and store the raw materials for plastics in crops without damaging the plant’s health.

Currently, petroleum is used to make nearly all plastics. But crop plants such as corn or soybeans hold the potential to provide the starting materials to make the plastics we already have and to make new plastics with never-before-seen properties, Chapple says. A patent application, in which both Purdue and DuPont have rights, has been filed on the use of the Arabidopsis gene for the production of monomers.

“Plants are really amazing chemical factories that produce a mind-boggling number of interesting chemicals. We can exploit that ability by using genomics to identify the genes required to make those compounds and by using biotechnology to insert the genes into crop plants,” Chapple says.

“Plants produce such a wide variety of natural compounds, Chapple says new products that aren’t even being currently considered might soon be possible.

“In the future, we may still use polyethylene to make some plastics. But we may be able to develop plastics with such special properties that we find new uses for them,” Chapple says. “Maybe it’s exactly the right compound to use in synthetic heart valves or in parts for jet aircraft, for example. It’s very exciting to think about what may be possible with this research.”

Meyer says DuPont is constantly looking for new monomers to build new plastics.

“DuPont produces nylon and many related products,” he says. “But some monomers are difficult to make from petroleum using traditional chemistry, so we’re looking at monomers produced in higher levels in plants. Dr. Chapple’s work helps us stabilize these monomers in plants and produce them at higher levels.”
BY BETH FORBES

It was billed as “Hail to the Chief,” but the precipitation falling inside this year’s annual Ag Alumni Association Fish Fry took a more “fowl” form.

It seems you can take the fish out of Fish Fry, but you can’t take out the corn.

In a salute to new Purdue University President Martin C. Jischke — and our country’s new head of state, George W. Bush — the event poked fun at politics and presidents. With an impressive stage set, the front of the armory was transformed into a likeness of Hovde Hall, complete with a bald-headed eagle flying high over the podium. Characters resembling former presidents Bill Clinton, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan paraded around the room.

Last President Jischke think he had a lock on his position, a mock election was held, pit “Slick Maurie Williamson” against “Frisky Jischke.” Throughout the lunch, voters were called to the stage to cast votes for president, in a voting booth that looked strangely like an outhouse. Surprisingly, Williamson was tallying up quite a lead.

Just when things looked bleak for the honored guest, President Jischke decided to cast his vote. “I’m not worried at all,” he said. “I’m from Chicago.” Moments after entering the john — or booth — lights began to flash and his vote total started quickly increasing. With a dramatic come-from-behind finish, Jischke was pronounced the winner by a single vote.

He was immediately whisked to the podium to take the oath of office. Earlier in that same spot, the eagle overhead had relieved himself on treasurer Robert Ferling, causing him to give the “crappiest treasury report ever.” In order to protect President Jischke from incoming bird droppings, an umbrella was found to shield the Purdue chief from incoming bird droppings.

Pledging to uphold the reputation of the Ag Alumni Association, Jischke paused just once during the swearing in, asking, “Do I really have to preserve the ‘dignity’ of the Fish Fry?”

After taking his oath, Jischke took a few moments to reaffirm his support of the School of Agriculture. “Ag will always be one of our major focuses at Purdue,” he said.

Noting how Purdue has helped Indiana develop its agriculture, Jischke said the university was ready to do even more for the state. “Today we would like to put our missions of education, research and outreach to work to help foster a new, high-technology economy in the state of Indiana,” he said. “And no university in the country is better positioned than Purdue to play a major role in this knowledge-based economic development.”

Kicking off the lunch, Donya Lester, executive secretary of the association, surveyed the 1,500 in attendance and announced that this was the third Ag Alumni event in the past year that had attracted more than 1,000 alums. The other events were the Ag Tailgate (Homecoming) and the Rose Bowl reception in Pasadena, Calif. This was the third year in a row the Fish Fry menu featured pork tenderloin furnished by Indiana Packers Corp., Delphi, Ind.

Lester, who claims it is a rare moment when she has nothing to say, was surprised with her honorary Commissioner of Agriculture award. The presentation was to have been made by Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan, who missed this year’s event because his car was involved in a minor accident on the way to campus.

In addition to the Certificate of Distinction honorees, (see story on Page 3) others were surprised with recognition of their efforts. Joan Hutself, Purdue food stores clerk who helped get the food donated for the event, received the Caroline Shearer Award for “doing whatever it takes to get the job done.” And Purdue Musical Organizations head Brian Breed was made an honorary member of the Ag Alumni Association in recognition of his contributions in support of agriculture.

View Jischke’s Fish Fry speech at: http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/connections
Agricultural Communication

Jennifer Doup, BS ’00, has joined the department as a news writer. She had previously been an agricultural reporter and broadcaster.

Agricultural Economics

Michael E. Johnson received the department award for outstanding PhD dissertation for 2000 for his dissertation “Adoption and Spillover of New Cassava Technologies in West Africa: Econometric Models and Heterogeneous Agent Programming.”

Christine Welch Stair received the department award for outstanding master’s thesis for 2000 for her thesis “An Economic Analysis of Alternative Methods of Corn Rootworm Control: Soil Insecticides, Areawide Pest Management and Transgenics.”

Agricultural Education

Elisha Priebe received an Indiana Vocational Education Postsecondary Student Award for Excellence from the Indiana Commission on Vocational and Technical Education. The award is based on scholarship, character, leadership, employability and vocational skills. Priebe will graduate this month.

Agronomy

Ben Carter, BS ’72, has been appointed assistant director of the Crop Diagnostic Training Center in West Lafayette. While working on his master’s degree, Carter will assist director Greg Willoughby. Between 1,200 and 1,500 people receive training each summer at the facility and at two Purdue Agricultural Centers in northern and southern Indiana.

Animal Sciences

Professor Mark Diekman has received the Faculty Citation Award from Vincennes University. Diekman, a 1968 Vincennes graduate, was recognized for his efforts in directing Purdue research programs in improving reproductive efficiency in swine production and for serving as a liaison for students in agriculture transferring from Vincennes to Purdue.

Hilary Houin, a junior, and Angela Jinks, a senior, have received the first LOUJA Award for undergraduate students. Jake Krider, professor emeritus and former department head, established the $1,000 scholarship in memory of his wife, Louise. The Kriders had established the LOUJA Awards for graduate students in 1979.

Biochemistry

Barbara Sanchez-Neri, a sophomore, has received a $1,300 scholarship from the Hispanic Scholarship Fund made possible by Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation.

Botany and Plant Pathology

Steven Hallett and Kevin Gibson have joined the staff as assistant professors of weed science. Hallett will research the biological control of weeds.

Biochemistry professor becomes head of department

BY TOM CAMPBELL

Jim Forney knows the task ahead of him. The single biggest objective facing the new head of Purdue’s Department of Biochemistry is to fill faculty positions.

“In the next three to five years, based on the age of our faculty, we will be looking at a few retirements,” says Forney, who was appointed department head in February.

“Coupled with the three openings we have right now, I think finding the right kind of people who will really strengthen our department for the future is the single biggest job ahead of me.”

Forney succeeds Mark Hermodson, the emeritus and former department head, who will really strengthen our department for the future. Forney, an avid runner in his spare time, joined the staff in 1989 as an assistant professor, became associate professor in 1994 and professor in 1999. He hopes to team with faculty to set and achieve department goals.

“The faculty must be involved in this process, because it will impact their most precious resource, how they spend their time,” Forney says.

“Departmental priorities should determine resource allocations and influence decisions regarding new opportunities. Setting goals is the only way to gauge progress.”

While Forney looks to build the biochemistry department from within, he also looks to further strengthen its reputation by cooperating with other campus departments.

“It’s important for me to help make sure the department is interfacing with the new technologies that are going to be a part of biochemistry,” Forney says.

“That may be accomplished, in part, by hiring people who are going to use those technologies and in part by just making sure we interact with people in analytical chemistry or engineering, for example, on campus, all those places that are going to be bringing new approaches to bear on biochemistry.”

Interdepartmental cooperation may be something that comes naturally to Forney. His wife, Nanci, is coordinator of student development for the Krannert School of Management. They have a daughter, Kristen, 17.

Forney can be reached at forney@purdue.edu
with emphasis on the discovery and development of bioherbicides. Gibson’s research will be in the area of weed ecology and control. Both also will teach.

**Food Science**

Department Head Philip E. Nelson, BS ’56, PhD ’67, has been named a Fellow of the Institute of Food Science and Technology (United Kingdom). Founded in 1964, the institute has a worldwide membership and serves the public interest by furthering the application of science and technology to all aspects of the supply of safe, wholesome, nutritious and attractive food.

Bruce Applegate, a food microbiologist, has joined the department as an assistant professor. Applegate has also received an Agricultural Research Program assistantship. Assistantships help new faculty build their research programs by providing support for graduate student research. A primary objective of the assistantship program is to promote research ideas that may be developed into proposals for outside funding.

Professor Bruce Watkins received $99,425 as part of the 2000 Trask Technology Innovation Awards. Watkins’ research is in nutraceuticals as therapeutic agents for bone health and diseases. The Technology Innovation Awards program is a continuation of the Trask program, established in 1974 to support short-term projects that will enhance the value of intellectual property disclosed to the Purdue Research Foundation. Awards in the program are up to $100,000 for a period of one year. Watkins is one of 13 principal investigators to receive the award in 2000.

**Forestry and Natural Resources**

Professor Carl Eckelman and Eva Haviarova, manager of the Wood Research Lab, were awarded the Woodworkers Helping Others Award for creating school furniture that helps developing countries use local labor and materials to build inexpensive desks and chairs (see story on Page 1). The award was presented at the 2000 Midwest Extravaganza.

**Horticulture and Landscape Architecture**

The American Horticulture Society has named Professor Jules Janick, MS ’52, PhD ’54, winner of its 2001 horticulture writing award. Janick, the James Troop Distinguished Professor of Horticulture, has authored or co-authored nearly 100 volumes covering horticultural subjects, including books, monographs, journals, reviews and various collections. He also has written some 20 book chapters and hundreds of scientific papers. Janick, director of the Indiana Center for New Crops and Plant Products, holds six U.S. patents for horticultural technologies and 17 plant patents.

Assistant Professor Angus Murphy is investigating how the plant hormone auxin is transported within tissues and between cells. Auxin plays a major role in regulating many aspects of plant growth and development, including elongation, branching, fruit development and rooting. Murphy joined the faculty in January. He was an assistant research biologist at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Professor Bob Joly received the 2000 Regional Food and Agricultural Sciences Excellence in College Teaching Award. Joly received the award at the annual meeting of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges in San Antonio, Texas.

For his work in historical preservation in Lafayette, Ind., architect and urban planner Kent Schuette has earned the 2001 Suzanne Stafford Award, presented by the Tippecanoe Arts Federation. The award, named after a former director of the Lafayette Museum of Art, is presented to an outstanding local volunteer in the arts.

**Notes continued from Page 6**

John Nidlinger, BS ’76, on June 4 will become Indiana’s executive director for the Farm Service Agency. The Decatur, Ind., farmer already has set some lofty personal goals.

“I know things are going to be rather hectic in the first year, but I would like to try and visit every county office as soon as possible and meet the county committees within the first 12 or 14 months,” he says.

Nidlinger, who served as agriculture liaison for Sen. Richard Lugar from 1991 to 2001, will continue to operate his 2,300-acre family farm near Decatur.

He also has served on the American Farm Bureau soybean and wheat advisory committees and the

Dean’s Advisory Council and the Farm Policy Group at Purdue. The Farm Service Agency works to ensure the well-being of American agriculture, the environment and the American public through efficient and equitable administration of farm commodity programs, farm ownership, operating and emergency loans, conservation and environmental programs, emergency and disaster assistance, domestic and international food assistance, and international export credit programs.

**“Unretired” continued from cover**

Ross, who also serves as president of the Noblesville Senior Citizens organization, never would have become a teacher had he been able to find a job after graduating at the top of the 1953 Punnell High School class of 15 students.

“It was the Depression,” Ross says. “I worked on the family farm for two years. All the money I was making was going right back into the farm, so I decided to go to college. I had no money to go to school, so I had to work the whole time I was at Purdue.

“I did everything from cutting grass to working in the Memorial Union. In fact, I’ll bet I washed every window and wall in that place. And I did it all for 25 cents an hour.”

Ross also farmed while he taught, working a 110-acre farm in Clinton County where he raised corn, wheat, soybeans and clover, in addition to milking 20 head of dairy cows and feeding 150 head of hogs. A combination of bad prices, poor health and long hours drove him out of the farming business, but not out of teaching.

Until his retirement in 1975, Ross taught vocational agriculture and biology in four different Indiana school systems, most recently serving a 16-year stint at Sheridan High School. A substitute at the Noblesville schools for the past 26 years, Ross has no immediate plans to retire. After all, how many teachers can boast of having the opportunity to teach their own grandchildren (Brian is a freshman) in high school?

“I tell these kids there’s no reason, what with the advances in medical sciences, they can’t live to be 120 years old,” Ross says.

“I’d like to think I can live to be 100 and teach until I’m 90. I don’t see anything wrong with that.”

Neither does Noblesville High School principal Tony Cook.

“The students really seem to enjoy having Noble around,” says Cook.

“So many of the great experiences he has had in his life, he shares with them on a daily basis. Many of the students in the high school have had Mr. Ross as a substitute going all the way back to their elementary school days, through middle school, and now they are still learning from him here at the high school level.

“So many of them have formed a bond with Mr. Ross, not only as a teacher, but as a friend, too.”

Contact Ross at: pluto@indy.net

**Someone you would like to see profiled in “UNRETIRED?” Send suggestions to: Connections editor; 1143 Agricultural Administration Building, Room 204, West Lafayette, Ind. 47907-1143, or e-mail: tc@aes.purdue.edu.**
BY TOM CAMPBELL

Simeon and Mamou Ehui (pronounced EH-whey) have a marriage that distance cannot destroy. Which is a good thing. They are separated by eight time zones and 8,000 miles. Simeon, MS ’83, PhD ’87, is leader of the livestock policy analysis program for the International Livestock Research Institute in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. His wife of 17 years (or 12 years, by some reckoning...but more on that later), Mamou, MS ’85, PhD ’89, is an agricultural economist with specific interests in marketing, economic development and policy research. She works for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, although she is currently on a 12-month exchange with the World Bank in Washington, D.C.

That kind of separation would put a strain on any relationship. But Mamou jokes that they probably couldn’t get a divorce, even if they wanted. Simeon and Mamou, both 43, were recently reunited on campus to accept their Distinguished Agricultural Alumni Awards, the first couple to be so honored by the Purdue School of Agriculture.

They began dating as undergraduate students at the National University of Cote d’Ivoire (the French name for Ivory Coast) in Abidjan in 1978. The Ivory Coast is a country of 16 million people speaking 60 different languages located on the western edge of Africa.

“I knew from the beginning that we were meant for each other,” Mamou says. She followed him to Purdue, where they both pursued their postgraduate degrees. They shared the common dream of returning to the Ivory Coast to teach and research agricultural economics.

In the eyes of Judge David J. Crouse and two witnesses, Simeon and Mamou were married March 5, 1984, in the Tippecanoe County Courthouse, just across the Wabash River from Purdue’s West Lafayette campus.

But in their celebration (a quiet dinner of Chinese food provided by the two witnesses), the Ehuis neglected to inform the Ivory Coast government. That was performed only after the bride has been sequestered indoors for one week, pampered and preened by family members, as per custom.

“After all of that,” Mamou jokes, “I don’t think it is even possible for us to get a divorce.” At least not without causing an international incident that would send court clerks on two continents on a paper chase that could take years to unravel.

They have kept their family (daughter, Marie Danielle, 4) together by long-distance phone calls several times a week and by occasional visits that test their resourcefulness.

Simeon recently logged more than a few frequent flyer miles on a business trip to Peru by laying over in Washington on the way back to Ethiopia to spend time with Mamou.

“We seem to meet quite a bit in airports,” jokes Mamou.

But Simeon, to say the least, is resourceful. How else would you describe a man who saved enough of his own money to buy himself a bicycle at the age of 12? Or secured a gift of $40,000 from Rotary clubs in Lafayette and Carmel, Ind., to feed victims of the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea?

Simeon and Mamou are now trying to figure out how to use some of their income to establish a scholarship program to send promising Africans to the United States to study, in much the same way they did in the ‘80s.

“I come from a very modest family,” Simeon admits. “If I had not gotten scholarships to go to primary and secondary schools and the university, I would probably be somewhere back in Ivory Coast doing almost nothing. I was a lucky one. Being in the position that I am, and, thank God, I am earning a decent income, I can help others who have not been as fortunate as myself.”

To date, Simeon has helped three students further their education in the United States, at Purdue, Cornell and Williams College.

But none of those is as important as the first person he helped to take advantage of the American education system, his girlfriend, Mamou Kouyate.

Mamou was a year behind Simeon at the National University of Cote d’Ivoire, studying agricultural economics while looking for a way to be reunited with him in the United States.

Simeon had already graduated with honors from the same school and had spent time in California sharpening his English skills before starting graduate work at Purdue in 1981.

A year later, Mamou graduated and began to look for scholarship assistance that would enable her to join Simeon in the United States. But the best she could find was a Ford Foundation grant to attend the University of Illinois. Simeon and Mamou were now on the same continent, but separated by 90 miles of farmland. Then, a meeting with matchmaker Lowell Hardin, BS ’39, got them on the same
Couple continued from Page 8
campus.

In the early ’80s, Hardin, professor emeritus of agricultural economics and assistant director of Purdue’s International Programs in Agriculture, was chairman of the board of the Ford Foundation’s Agricultural Development Council.

“We’ve got to do what we can to get you two together,” Hardin told the couple. He arranged for her grant to be transferred to Purdue, where she applied and was accepted, working with professor Paul Farris to investigate approaches for measuring the efficiency of marketing systems in developing countries.

“Purdue was a wonderful place for us,” Mamou says. “We really enjoyed our time there. We made so many great friends while we were at Purdue.”

The feeling is mutual, according to Wally Tyner, head of Purdue’s Department of Agricultural Economics.

“Simeon and Mamou certainly are a multi-dimensional couple,” says Tyner. “Both are extraordinarily accomplished in their professional career and both are extraordinarily nice people. You don’t find too many like them.”

Mamou did get her chance to return to the University of the Ivory Coast as an assistant professor when she taught for one year. Simeon, however, did not. Just as he was finishing his PhD in 1987 working with professor Tom Hertel, the Rockefeller Foundation offered a fellowship that would make Simeon the first African assigned to an international agricultural research center (the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Badan, Nigeria).

“It really was an offer I could not refuse,” says Simeon, who is responsible for the overall policy of the research programs of the institute, which aims to improve the livelihood of the poor throughout the world by improving their access to technologies involving livestock.

Mamou’s career has been groundbreaking, too.

In 1995, she became the first female special assistant to the executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, a post she held for five years. Mamou’s appointment to the World Bank ends this month. She looks forward to returning to her job with the United Nations and her family in Ethiopia.

“It says so much about Mamou, but really, about both of them, that she is making a professional sacrifice in order to serve the family,” says Tyner. Their return trip to campus to accept the Distinguished Agricultural Alumni Awards in April was the first since 1999 for Simeon, although they both remain in contact with the School of Agriculture through several research projects his institute oversees.

But if all goes as planned, Simeon and Mamou will be making regular visits to campus around 2015, about the time their daughter enrolls at Purdue.

“Oh, yes, Simeon boasts, “already she is a Boilermaker.”

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Edgar Hackman, BS ’47, Seymour, Ind., received the Hardee’s American Heritage Award at the 110th annual International Association of Fairs and Expositions conference in Las Vegas, Nev. The award recognizes the achievements of outstanding volunteer fair managers. Hackman has been a member of the Jackson County Fair Board for 47 years and has served as president, secretary-treasurer, and director-at-large. Individuals from 19 different states have received the award since it originated in 1994. Hackman is the first person from Indiana and the first person from Zone 3, which consists of Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan and Ontario, Canada, to receive the award.

Samuel Thompson, MS ’61, PhD ’65, Rebecca, Ga., is retired from the University of Georgia Extension Service. He currently works with the Boy Scouts of America as Southwest Georgia Council vice president.

Alan Swartz, BS ’65, Buena Vista, Colo., was co-chairman of the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents 2000 Conference in Denver and is president of Park County Vision 2020 Summit Toastmasters.

Robert Harris, PhD ’66, Carmel, Ind., has been named a distinguished professor at the Indiana University School of Medicine.

Edward Beste, PhD ’71, and Robert D. Williams, PhD ’72, have been elected Fellows of the Weed Science Society of America. Beste directs research and Extension activities in vegetables, small fruits and ornamentals for the University of Maryland’s Lower Eastern Shore Research and Education Center. Williams is a plant physiologist with the USDA-ARS Grassland Research Laboratory at El Reno, Okla.

Charles Tubesing, BS ’75, Chesterland, Ohio, has been elected a Fellow in the International Plant Propagators Society, Eastern Region (North America).

Jay Branson, BS ’76, Kildeer, Ill., has joined DraftWorldwide as a senior vice president and director of corporate communications.

Continued on Page 10
Six hundred and forty Purdue Agriculture alumni, the largest tour group in the school’s history, traveled to Pasadena for the nation’s premier college football event, the Rose Bowl.

The Ag Alumni Association and the Ag Development Office organized the tour that sold 500 packages within 24 hours of the conclusion of the Purdue/IU football game. “Demand was tremendous,” said Donya Lester, executive secretary of the Ag Alumni Association. “We managed to secure another 140 packages after the first sellout, and they sold quickly too. My only regret was that we finally hit the wall on the number of available packages, so we were unable to help those who called later. It’s the toughest game in the country to get tickets for.”

The four-day tour included round-trip travel, hotel, the game, the Tournament of Roses Parade, float construction, a religious service and Glee Club performance at the Crystal Cathedral, lunch at Knotts Berry Farm, private concerts by the Glee Club, and spectacular California sunshine. Unfortunately, it did not include a victory for the Boilermakers, who lost to the University of Washington, 34-24.

Even so, what stood out most for many alumni was the chance to renew acquaintances with classmates and even a few faculty members whom they’d not seen for decades.

“Housing the ag folk in two nearby hotels was a great move,” said one alumnus. “It helped us to really catch up with friends.” Myron Davis, director of ag development, said that what struck him was the absence of serious problems.

Davis said events of this nature are important to Purdue Agriculture’s development efforts. “Purdue Agriculture’s philanthropy needs are served any time we assemble groups of alumni and friends. Our people are reminded of what Purdue did for them, they manage to catch up on current campus news and needs of the school, and they catch a vision for where the school is headed,” Davis said.

“Alumni who understand what the school is doing and how they can play a role are likely to get involved as donors. My job is to inform and give them opportunities to step forward when needs arise.”

Contact Myron Davis at: mdavis@purdue.edu.
Eight named distinguished alumni

A husband and wife from western Africa are the first couple to receive Purdue University’s prestigious Distinguished Agricultural Alumni Award.

Simeon K. Ehui and his wife, Mamou K. Ehui, joined six other honorees receiving the award from Dean of Agriculture Vic Lechtenberg during the ceremony held on campus April 20 (see related story on Page 8).

The Distinguished Agricultural Alumni Award honors mid-career graduates of the School of Agriculture who have made significant contributions to their profession or to society.

“This year’s eight distinguished alumni are tremendous examples of what it means to be successful. Through hard work and talent, each one has made significant contributions to his or her field,” Lechtenberg said. “We are proud to call them alumni and pleased to honor them with this award.”

This year’s award winners represent wide geographical and professional backgrounds. Honorees are from Indiana (2), Alabama, Colorado, California and Minnesota, as well as western Africa. The recipients:

Simeon K. Ehui, MS ’83, PhD ’87, is program leader for the International Livestock Research Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, responsible for all ILRI research in that area of western Africa.

Mamou K. Ehui, MS ’85, PhD ’89, is an agricultural economist with interests in economic development and policy issues. She has served as Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Eric A. Brown, BS ’68, is group vice president of Hormel Foods Corp., Austin, Minn. A decorated Vietnam War veteran, Brown oversees both the grocery products (SPAM, Dinty Moore stew, Chi-Chi’s food products), and specialty products divisions (soup stocks and gelatin desserts) of the company. He and two brothers are owners of the 5,500-acre Tip Top Farms in his hometown of Battle Ground, Ind.

John S. Castrale, BS ’76, a nongame wildlife biologist from Mitchell, Ind., is an expert in the restoration of raptor populations, particularly peregrine falcons and bald eagles. Castrale works for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife.

McArthur Floyd, BS ’74, PhD ’76, has been research director and professor in the School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at Alabama A&M University since 1976. Floyd oversees more than 80 ongoing research projects and 60 graduate students.

Larry R. Rueff, BS ’76, DVM ’79, is the founder and president of Swine Veterinary Services, Greensburg, Ind. Rueff’s customers annually produce approximately one million hogs.

Henry L. Shands, MS ’61, PhD ’63, is the director of the National Seed Storage Laboratory, Fort Collins, Colo. He received the USDA Superior Service Award in 2000.

Robert W. Wotzak, BS ’77, MS ’79, since 1999, has been vice president of research and development for ConAgra Grocery Products Co., Fullerton, Calif. In his first nine months with ConAgra, Wotzak produced $4 million in savings, moved an entire department to another city, realigned the research and development department with the company, and launched 10 new successful products.

Looking Ahead

Autumn events bring alumni together

Purdue’s Ag Alumni office is coordinating a pair of don’t-miss events in September — a bus trip to the opening football game of the season in Cincinnati and a reunion of international alumni of the School of Agriculture during the Farm Progress Show.

The overnight bus tour to attend the Boilermakers’ opening game at Cincinnati on Sunday, Sept. 2, will kick off the 2001 Purdue football season in a style befitting a Rose Bowl team.

The tour will leave West Lafayette on Saturday, Sept. 1, and return on Sunday evening, following the game. Total tour price has not been finalized, but it is expected to be approximately $150 per person based on double occupancy.

For more information on itinerary and registration procedures, e-mail Debby Jakes, djakes@agad.purdue.edu, or call the Ag Alumni office at (765) 494-8593. You can also check the Web site at www.agriculture.purdue.edu/agalumni/ for a link to tour information.

Alumni attending the Farm Progress Show in Lafayette on Sept. 25-28 also are invited to attend special international reunion events scheduled Sept. 22-28.

Five days of tour activities are planned for September 24-28. One tour day is devoted to the facilities of the Purdue School of Agriculture, including the research farms in the Lafayette area. Two tour days, Sept. 25 and 26, are scheduled for visiting the Farm Progress Show. Two days will be devoted to agricultural production and processing facilities in northwest Indiana. For information about registration, costs and itinerary, contact Donya Lester, executive secretary of the Ag Alumni Association, at (765) 494-8593 or djcles@agad.purdue.edu.

Let your classmates know what you are doing through Class Notes. Include births, weddings, job changes, family, and community activities, etc. Please complete this form and send it to: Debby Jakes, Purdue Agricultural Alumni Association, 1140 AGAD, Room 1, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1140. Please specify the complete names of any acronyms you include in your news, because some may be unfamiliar to us or to our readers. You also may e-mail your Class Notes information to Debby at: djakes@agad.purdue.edu.
Amy Petersen flips through the pages of her physics textbook, killing those long, last moments of class before the bell sounds, triggering a stampede that will send 1,700 students scurrying out of their classrooms.

Petersen stops at a page about gravity, complete with a graphic explaining Galileo's findings at Italy's famous Leaning Tower of Pisa.

"I've been there," 87-year-old substitute teacher Noble Ross, BS '39, MS '59, tells Petersen.

At his age, some students may believe Ross was at the bottom of the tower catching objects Galileo dropped over the edge. While that is not true, Ross' 60 years as an educator do make him a living historical reference to students in the Noblesville school district just north of Indianapolis.

"It's neat having someone like Mr. Ross as a substitute. He tells us great stories," says Petersen, who plans following in Ross' footsteps by pursuing a teaching degree this fall at Purdue.

Ross' remarkable teaching career, which began in 1939, recently drew a commendation from Indiana Gov. Frank O'Bannon.

"I am impressed by your dedication to helping students reach their full potential," O'Bannon wrote in a letter to Ross.

"On behalf of the citizens of Indiana, thank you, Noble, for all that you have done and continue to do to help our children achieve their dreams. Your students, and the State of Indiana, are lucky to have you."

His teaching style relies on his storytelling ability, as he mixes his lifetime of teaching, travel, learning and living into evenly distributed doses of history, common sense and subject matter.

"His stories aren't just about what he's teaching, but about his life experiences, too. That's what makes him so special," says Petersen.

Living history, and teaching it, too.