No heat, no water, no problem for Peace Corps volunteer

by Tom Campbell

“We cannot claim to be an institution of global prominence if we don’t make an intentional and proactive effort to address the international dimensions of what we do in the agricultural sciences and related disciplines.”

Dave Sammons, associate dean, director, International Programs in Agriculture

Winter has hit Moldova like an unexpected punch in the gut. And Benton Wisehart’s adopted hometown of Nisporeni is doubled over in its clutches, motionless and helpless.

There are no lights on in Wisehart’s one-bedroom flat. In fact, there has been no electricity for some time. The small European nation whose main industry seems to be manufacturing the national debt, turns the electricity off during peak hours to save money. It has been snowing nonstop for two days. But the snowplows sit idle, too. Another cost-cutting effort. And like the national debt, the snow outside just keeps piling up.

The wind roars around and through Wisehart’s $10-a-month apartment like a freight train. But it’s not the wind that wakes Wisehart from his deep sleep. His small, mostly empty refrigerator has come alive with the unmistakable rattle and hum provided by electricity.

The refrigerator is Wisehart’s electricity alarm clock. “I am surprised that my little refrigerator will wake me out of a sound sleep,” Wisehart says. “I am equally surprised that I can get together enough self-motivation to go out in a blizzard at 1 a.m. and finish writing a grant proposal.

“We rarely have electricity. When we get some, it usually is turned on in the middle of the night.”

Wisehart pulls the blankets tightly around his head. The 1998 Purdue grad and Peace Corps volunteer would love to stay under the covers. But the refrigerator motor is a siren’s song. He knows he must get up. There is work to do.

Purdue’s International Programs in Agriculture (IPIA) led Benton to the Soviet Republic. While most of Purdue’s study abroad students may not feel compelled to join the Peace Corps, Michael Stitsworth says studying abroad can be a valuable tool in building a résumé.

“International Programs is responsible for cutting across the institutional mission in teaching, research and Extension by assuring that there is an appropriate international dimension to all of those mission areas,” says Sammons, himself a Peace Corps volunteer in the 1960s.

“One more tool in the tool kit,” says Stitsworth, associate director of Purdue’s IPIA. “It makes our graduates better prepared to compete in the global arena of agriculture.

Moldova owes millions of dollars to its neighbors (Ukraine to the north, east and south, Romania to the west) for utilities. Without notice, power throughout the country is shut off. The Moldovan government turns on what little electricity it can get at times when the government can utilize the power and Moldovans, and Wisehart, cannot.

So when the refrigerator hums, Wisehart knows there is electricity in the city. He quickly gets dressed and runs out his apartment door, bound for his office. Once there, he will type a report, a grant proposal, or perhaps just a letter home.

The temperature in his office, as in most buildings in Nisporeni, is in the mid-40s. Until spring, Wisehart must get used to being cold and uncomfortable. At the office, Wisehart will type until he gets too cold, too tired, or the power is shut off again. Whenever comes first.

He does not feel threatened by the political unrest of the area so much as by the frigid winter temperatures both inside and outside his office. “Last year, Peace Corps Moldova’s medical officer said that her biggest problem concerning the safety of volunteers in Moldova was hypothermia,” he says.

Wisehart is a volunteer at one of Moldova’s “agro-inform” centers. He is setting up a marketing group for the area grape growers as a tool for educating farmers and addressing their agricultural concerns. He is also working with a Moldovan agriculturist to set up a farm store where farmers can buy seed, chemicals and equipment for their farms.

A native of Los Osos, Calif., Wisehart became interested in foreign cultures while traveling through Africa, South America, Europe and Asia. He completed a 10-week internship program in Russia in 1997 through Purdue’s IPIA.

It was the return trip home that convinced him to join the Peace Corps.

“When I climbed on board that KLM flight in St. Petersburg and smelled the coffee and felt the air conditioning, a small part of me felt like I was abandoning the people in the former Soviet Union. I felt like I had made a mockery of how difficult their lives are. It was as if I was saying to myself, ‘I lived in Russia, I did your life and all its hardships, and it was quaint. But now I am going home to my supermarket, my car and my real life.’ That is what gave me the drive to want to do more in this part of the world.”

Clearly, studying and working abroad has its hardships. The Peace Corps has volunteers in 40 countries. But most don’t tax the volunteers as physically and emotionally as Moldova.

The water Wisehart draws from his faucet is an inkly black. Schools in Nisporeni were quarantined for nearly four weeks last fall due to dysentery. Clean drinking water must be retrieved from the town well, a 30 minute walk from his apartment.

And while the Peace Corps does not suit everyone, more and more students are taking up the challenge of international agriculture.

Only one School of Agriculture student participated in the study abroad program in 1990. Dave Sammons, associate dean of Agriculture and director of IPIA, says Purdue will send about 90 students overseas this year, participating in 20 different programs in 15 countries, “enhancing,” as Sammons says, “their understanding of agriculture as a global activity that binds us together as people.”

Approximately 11 percent of Purdue Agriculture’s 1999 graduation class completed an overseas program.

“Moldova” continued on page 2
“Moldova”, continued from page 1

“It is hard to do business here,” Wisehart admits. “We are not digging ditches to irrigate crops, we’re trying to red the entire country for Europe and the West. We’re writing grants worth tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of U.S. dollars, but most aspects of the business environment are still inching along like it was the 1800s. It’s very hard to get stuff done when getting somebody to sign a document takes all day.”

But don’t blame Wisehart if he is frustrated by the process.

“I got to address the farmers at a town meeting to try and drum up some interest in a grape growers association,” Wisehart says. “Most of them just yelled and screamed at me and spit in my direction, saying that an association was a return to state controlled agriculture and collective farms. They were not upset at me, just my idea. I feel the grape growers association will be an uphill battle.”

Things got off to a slow start because nobody in town knew who he was.

“All of my projects could collapse today, in a matter of seconds,” he says. “But I have some goals set for myself now and something to work for. I truly enjoy what I am doing, even though results are not always measurable.”

Contact Wisehart at 652/828320@hotmail.com.

Wisehart first visited Russia as a participant in the Russian Corporate Fellows Program in 1997.

“Part of our institutional goal is to graduate students who will be successful in the world they will inherit. We want them to be good in a technical sense, but we also want them to be good and responsible citizens in the world they will lead in the future.”

For Wisehart, however, the future is moving along slower than molasses in Moldova.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

The article written by Barbara Robertson about Dean Freeman was very well done and interesting. During my years at Purdue (1959-63), the trio of Butz, Freeman and Pfendler was very much in control of Purdue Agriculture.

I now realize how privileged I was to be a part of those times. Through my campus activities I had the opportunity to work closely with all three men. Dean Freeman was my mentor when I was president of Ag Council. He was helpful, kind and inspiring. What wonderful days.

The history of Purdue Agriculture is rich with the tradition of these great people and those who came before them. Dean Freeman was my mentor when I was president of Ag Council. He was helpful, kind and inspiring. What wonderful days.

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Sincerely,

Ben R. Edmonson
Agronomy '63

Dear Sir,

Thank you and Barbara Robertson for the wonderful tribute to Verne Freeman in the article “Freeman’s gifts to Purdue Agriculture live on.” Following my graduation from Fort Wayne South Side High School, my father brought me to campus during the summer of 1938 for the purpose of discussing curriculum and my disability (weak knees).

The first person we contacted was Verne Freeman. That was the start of a very good relationship. Later that day, I decided that Verne would be my father on campus.

I came to Purdue to learn more about the orchard business. After doing a thesis under Dr. J. A. McClintock, I changed my lifetime career to orchard business. After doing a thesis under Dr. J. A. McClintock, I changed my lifetime career to orchard business.

During my four years on the Purdue campus, I had conversations with Verne Freeman on several occasions. I knew he was there and always available when I needed him.

Sincerely,

Roger S. Young, BS'42
National FFA officer settles back in at school

by Tom Campbell

After taking two years off from school, Abby Dougherty jokingly calls herself the oldest sophomore on campus.

She’s not, of course, but she may have earned the title of most traveled sophomore after logging more than 130,000 miles as a state and national officer for the FFA (previously known as Future Farmers of America).

When Dougherty returned to campus and classes this semester, she became reacquainted with some luxuries she missed during her traveling tenure as national secretary of the FFA.

“It was great to have my own closet and drawers again,” Dougherty says, “because it seems I lived out of a suitcase all of last year. It’s kind of nice to finally have some stability.”

Dougherty grew up on her family farm in Whiteland, just south of Indianapolis. She joined the FFA in 1992 and served as state secretary for a year after graduating from Whiteland High School in 1996.

“Taking a year off from school to work with FFA really helped me mature,” says Dougherty, who was able to improve her communication and leadership skills by visiting 70 FFA chapters and working at 10 camps and workshops during her sabbatical.

Dougherty enrolled at Purdue in 1997 with ambitions to pursue a career in agrisales or become an agriculture teacher. After three semesters at Purdue, Dougherty was elected national FFA secretary at the 1998 convention in Kansas City.

She survived a grueling interview process and was selected from a pool of 37 candidates to fill one of six leadership positions.

Dougherty visited with FFA members in 30 states, observing agriculture as diverse as the pineapple fields in Hawaii, cotton fields in Alabama, and cranberry bogs in Massachusetts.

Dougherty also spent two weeks in Japan, hosted by members of the sister organization, the FFJ (Future Farmers of Japan).

Dougherty admits she missed more than just two years of school.

“I missed Purdue, my family and friends more than I thought I would,” Dougherty says, although she wouldn’t trade her experience for the world.

“So few people have an opportunity to travel as much as I did, to see so much and learn so much about different areas of agriculture. It was a tremendous experience.”

Through her FFA career, Dougherty has accumulated 13 of the blue, trademark FFA corduroy jackets.

“I traveled so much,” Dougherty says, “I just kept getting more. I have one chapter jacket, two district jackets, three state and seven national jackets.”

But now that she’s back at Purdue with her own closet space, at least she has the room to store them.

“I was the first to participate in the Peace Corps shadow program (following a volunteer in the field for 10 days) so I’m used to being a guinea pig,” she says.

“Dave Sammons, Tim Gibb and Chris Oseto are all on my master’s committee and I know they really want to get this program going at Purdue.”

“The Purdue name itself has put some pressure on Taylor, too.

“If I don’t really do something exciting, I’m going to feel bad about it.”

Taylor admits. “After all, this is Purdue University, not some podunk college.”

Purdue sophomore Abby Dougherty is happy to be back on campus after logging more than 130,000 miles traveling for the FFA in 1999.

Purdue’s sister school of Zamorano in Honduras, where she helped farmers build silos, terrace farmland and make adobe stoves.

“All through high school and even in college, I always thought I would get a job and move back down to Central America to work,” Taylor says. “I speak the language and I know how to get around down there. I just didn’t know how it was all going to work.”

The study abroad program provided the answer.

“It was perfect for me,” she says. “It allowed me to go back to Central America and see if it was where I wanted to be. If it didn’t work out, I knew I could return to the states. It was a tour of duty, just like being in the military again.”

Being the first student to participate in the master’s program has placed some added pressure on her shoulders. But Taylor says that has only made her more eager to get started.

“Peace Corps”, continued from front cover

Dave Sammons, director of Purdue’s International Programs in Agriculture, slogs through a Filipino rice paddy behind a water buffalo as a Peace Corps volunteer in this 1969 photo.

Taylor poses with a Guatamalan family during a recent visit to Central America.

photo provided

photo provided
Gordon assumes leadership of 4-H Youth programs

by Beth Forbes

Janet Gordon, Extension central district director, has been named interim 4-H program leader, replacing Linda Chezem who stepped down Feb. 1. Gordon will provide leadership for 4-H by overseeing the day-to-day operations of the department and the statewide 4-H program.

David Petritz, director of Purdue Extension, will hold the title of 4-H Youth Development department head until a permanent department head is named. He will provide faculty and administrative leadership for the department.

“Gordon is a great addition to the 4-H team. Her county Extension experience will really benefit the entire department,” says Dean of Agriculture Vic Lechtenberg.

Chezem headed the state’s 4-H program for two years. A professor and former Indiana Court of Appeals judge, Chezem will continue to work on a part-time basis on youth development issues for Purdue Agriculture.

“I’m especially pleased that she can continue to assist us in our youth development efforts and provide counsel on new programs and funding opportunities,” Purdue Dean of Agriculture Vic Lechtenberg says. Indiana has more than 70,000 4-H members across the state. The program also provides school enrichment activities for more than 170,000 Hoosier children.

Gordon began her Purdue career in 1973 as an Extension educator in Hendricks County. Many of her efforts have been geared toward helping youth, including participation on the child protection team for 14 years in Boone County. Gordon also helped develop the parenting curriculum “It’s My Child, Too,” which is used across the state.

Among her leadership roles, Gordon was county Extension director in Boone County and interim program leader in Consumer and Family Sciences Extension on campus.

“We are fortunate that Janet—with all of her experience and ability—will be able to move into the position of overseeing 4-H,” Petritz says. “She will be stepping in just as we begin sign up and the early preparations for this year’s fairs and exhibits.”

Rick Chase, Johnson County Extension educator, has been appointed central district supervisor on an interim basis.
Purdue honors record 15 during Ag Fish Fry

by Tom Campbell

A record 15 recipients of the Agricultural Alumni Association’s Certificate of Distinction were honored at the annual Ag Fish Fry at Purdue University. The award is the association’s highest honor and recognizes individuals for their service to agriculture beyond the call of duty.


Marion F. Baumgardner, professor emeritus of Agronomy, is one of the pioneer soil scientists involved in research on the applications of remote sensing. Baumgardner retired in 1997.

Robert L. Benson is retired from the Monsanto Corp. and is a former county Extension agent. In addition, Benson has served as president, vice president and treasurer of the Indiana Sheep Breeders Association.

R. Leroy Bramer is a progressive hog farmer who has been farm manager of Fisher Properties of Indiana for 35 years and has served on the Indiana Pork Producers Board for eight years.

Larry Curless has farmed since 1956. In 1979, he established Curless Bookkeeping and Tax Service, specializing in tax planning, bookkeeping and financial analysis for more than 100 corporate and 650 individual clients.

As president and owner of Diener Seeds, Thomas E. Diener has been selling seed to farmers for 45 years. His four sons also are part of the company. Diener serves on the board of directors of the Indiana Seed Trade Association.

Robert F. Fields recently retired after a 37-year career as the John Deere dealer serving Tippecanoe and surrounding counties.

Gary J. Geswein farms with his brothers in Floyd and Harrison counties and has taught high school agriculture classes for 17 years. He is currently teaching at North Harrison High School.

Norman D. Long’s career in Extension spanned 32 years. Prior to his retirement in 1996, programs implemented by Long touched the lives of more than 225,000 young people and 9,200 adult volunteers in Indiana.

Morgan L. Miers is an innovative fourth-generation farmer. Twice named Sagamore of the Wabash, Miers was one of the first farmers to use insecticides and herbicides to achieve higher yields. Miers was one of the first Hoosiers to keep farm records with computers in the early 1960s.

A 1993 recipient of Purdue’s Distinguished Agricultural Alumni Award, Harry L. Pearson has served as president of the Indiana Farm Bureau Inc. since 1987. Pearson is involved in a farming partnership with his brother, Joe.

Hugh B. Pence has been a farm manager for Halderman Farm Management since 1958. His father, M.O. Pence, received the Certificate of Distinction in 1958. Pence also owns and operates a 180-acre walnut tree farm.

A 1993 recipient of Purdue’s Distinguished Agricultural Alumni Award, Larry L. Pearson has served as president of the Indiana Farm Bureau Inc. since 1983. His father, M.O. Pence, received the Certificate of Distinction in 1958. Pearson also owns and operates a 180-acre walnut tree farm.

Lee R. Rulon is marketing director of Beck’s Superior Hybrids and is part owner of Rulon Enterprises, a family farming operation. Rulon is active with the Indiana Seed Trade Association and the Indiana Crop Improvement Association.

William E. Swern worked with the USDA Soil Conservation Service for 30 years until his retirement in 1980. At that time, he returned to work the family farm near Rockville, Ind.

Howard M. Unger and his family farm 2,900 acres in Sullivan County. Unger is a leader of several agricultural organizations, including the Indiana and American Simmental Association, American Angus Association, Indiana Farm Bureau, Sullivan County Sheep Association, Indiana Rural Appraisers and Farm Managers, as well as county, state and national beef cattle associations.

Shirley Woody is the wife of a retired farmer, but she carved her own niche in agriculture by providing leadership in many local, state and national organizations. Woody served as president of the Indiana Extension Homemakers Association and was an officer in the National Extension Homemakers Council.

According to Donya Lester, executive secretary of the Ag Alumni Association, the large number of honorees—typically four are selected each year—reflects the growing number of quality nominations being submitted. “For the last two years we have received a tremendous number of exceptional nominations for the Certificate of Distinction award,” she says. “At the rate of honoring only four per year, it was clear that many extremely deserving people would not be honored in a timely fashion.”
Researchers prove transgenic fish could threaten native species

by Chris Sigurdson

Purdue University researchers have found that releasing a transgenic fish into the wild could threaten native populations, even to the point of extinction.

A transgenic organism is one that contains genes from another species. The research is part of an effort by Purdue and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to assess the risks and benefits of biotechnology and its products, such as genetically modified fish. The study was published in November in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science.

Purdue animal scientist Bill Muir and biologist Rick Howard used minute Japanese fish called medaka to examine what would happen if male medakas genetically modified with growth hormone from Atlantic salmon were introduced to a population of unmodified fish. The research was conducted in rows of aquariums in a laboratory setting.

The results warn that transgenic fish could present a significant threat to native wildlife. “Transgenic fish are typically larger than the native stock, and that can confer an advantage in attracting mates,” Muir says. “If, as in our experiments, the genetic change also reduces the offspring’s ability to survive, a transgenic animal could bring a wild population to extinction in 40 generations.”

Extinction results from a phenomenon that Muir and Howard call the “Trojan gene hypothesis.” By basing their mate selection on size rather than fitness, medaka females choose the larger, genetically modified but genetically inferior medaka, thus inviting the hidden risk of extinction.

The transgenic medaka was produced by inserting a gene consisting of the human growth hormone driven by the salmon growth promoter into medaka. The viability of groups of modified and conventional fish were measured at three days of age, and 30 percent fewer transgenic fish survived to that age. The researchers calculated that large males had a fourfold mating advantage, based on observations of wild-type medaka. Computer models then were used to predict the consequences of the transgenic mating advantage combined with the reduced viability of the young.

The study represents scientists policing science, Muir says. “I hope people understand that scientists are investigating the risks of biotechnology as well as the benefits, so decisions can be made with as much information as possible. It’s important to understand the risks so they can be addressed.”

Muir also cautions that the results of his laboratory study should be interpreted conservatively.

“The study does confirm there are significant risks to natural animal populations associated with the release of transgenic animals,” he says. “We assumed a consistent environment with only one variable—sexual preference for size coupled with low life expectancy for the transgenic. The natural world is not nearly as orderly, and genetic background changes could negate the Trojan gene.”

The dominance of sexual preference over Charles Darwin’s classic theory of survival of the fittest is not unknown to wildlife specialists and geneticists. Muir likes to use the example of the male bird of paradise with its long swells of gloriously colored plumage as an example.

“The male bird of paradise with the longest, thickest tail attracts the most females,” he says. “Subsequent offspring also exhibit the long tail and also compete well for females. Unfortunately, the birds with the biggest tails also have the biggest problem escaping predators who appreciate large birds pinned in place by their plumage. Obviously the bird with the most sex appeal is the worst choice as a fit mate. Not unlike high school, some might say.”

The researchers’ next goal is to replicate the study with larger fish of economic importance in a bigger environment. They’re looking for an indoor swimming pool where they can raise tilapia and check the results of the medaka study.

Farm Progress Show slated for Purdue’s backyard

by Beth Forbes

The Farm Progress Show won’t return to the Hoosier State for 17 months, but when it does, you can bet Purdue Agriculture will be ready.

The largest agricultural trade show in the Midwest, the Farm Progress Show will be held Sept. 25-27, 2001 at a 2,350-acre site just south of Lafayette.

“Given the close proximity to the university, we hope to enhance our presence by offering a variety of tours for Farm Progress Show visitors,” says Dana Neary, Purdue Extension special events coordinator.

“The planning committee is discussing corn mazes, ornamental grass and tree plots and special activities for area students at the show,” she says. The schools of Consumer and Family Sciences and Veterinary Medicine will also participate in the show.

The Farm Progress Show rotates annually among Iowa, Illinois and Indiana. The 2000 show will be in Illinois.

Historically, Purdue Agriculture has maintained a large presence at the show. “This has been a great way for us to showcase research and education for Indiana farmers and agribusiness,” says Purdue Extension director David Peritz.

Tom Jordan, Purdue Extension’s program leader for agriculture and natural resources, says having the Farm Progress Show at Purdue’s back door also provides opportunities for university activities that complement the show. Jordan says there may be tours for prospective students, agribusiness companies and livestock producers, as well as educational seminars.

“For example, Purdue’s Department of Agricultural Economics and the Center for Agricultural Business hosted 80 foreign agricultural journalists the last time the show was in Indiana as part of an educational seminar sponsored by Ford New Holland,” he says.

The Farm Progress Show attracts an estimated 100,000 visitors each day of its three-day run and features approximately 600 vendors.

“At the 1998 show in Windfall, Ind., several hundred faculty and staff hosted the Purdue exhibit that featured displays on food safety, biotechnology, 4-H and youth activities and much more,” says Neary. “Next year, we hope to even expand on that.”
Agricultural and Biological Engineering

Michael Ladisch, MS’74, PhD’77, has been appointed director of the Laboratory of Renewable Resources Engineering (LORRE) at Purdue University. Ladisch succeeds the founding director, George Tsao. The laboratory supports multidisciplinary research to help transform basic discoveries of biology to products and services.

Agricultural Communication

Steve Leer has joined the department as a communication specialist. Leer was state editor of the Gastonia (N.C.) Gazette and media relations assistant for the Charlotte Eagles professional soccer team. Leer will write stories for the School of Agriculture, specializing in Purdue Extension and the Agricultural Economics and Agronomy Departments.

Agricultural Economics

Philip Paarberg, BS’75, MS’83, PhD’87, and Kenneth Foster, BS’81, presented testimony to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry in Washington on Feb. 1. The committee is looking into consolidations in the agricultural sector among meat packing houses, grain dealers and seed suppliers to see how they affect price settings for farm goods.

Janet Ayres, BA’73, PhD’83, received the Distinguished Service Award for the North Central Region from Epsilon Pi Sigma, the national Extension honorary. The award was presented at the national conference in Indianapolis on Dec. 4.

Marshall Martin, MS’72, PhD’76, has been appointed to a two-year term on the United States Department of Agriculture advisory committee on biotechnology. The appointment was made by Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman.

Agricultural Education

Mark A. Balschweid, assistant professor of agricultural education, along with Sonya Lord, director of STAR Academy (an agricultural science and business magnet school in the Indianapolis Public School system), recently received a USDA Secondary Agricultural Education Challenge Grant to provide in-service training for Indiana secondary teacher teams to attend a pilot AgriScience Collaboration Institute.

Archie Sauerhaber, senior in agricultural education, was recognized on Feb. 15 as one of only eight Indiana post-secondary students receiving an Indiana Vocational Award of Excellence.

Agronomy

William McFee has received the Crop and Soils Merit Award from the Indiana Crop Improvement Association. The award, presented at the association’s annual conference in Indianapolis in February, cited McFee’s contributions to Indiana agriculture, the seed industry and to agricultural education.

Animal Sciences

Barry Delks, BS’82, is coordinator of career services and alumni relations. Delks will assist students with resumes, internships and posting job opportunities.

Mike Spurlock has joined the faculty to focus on animal growth and nutrition interactions. Spurlock earned his bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Missouri.

The department is seeking alumni professionals to become part of the Animal Sciences Alumni Ambassador program. Professionals can mentor and interact with students in a variety of ways, including speaking to classes on campus, answering questions from undergraduates, hosting a job shadow student for a day, or by participating in the department’s career web page. For more information, contact the department at (800)-213-2672.

Biochemistry

Clint Chapple is one of three School of Agriculture faculty members designated as a University Scholar in 1999. Bernie Engel, PhD’88 (Agricultural and Biological Engineering) and Bruce Watkins (Food Science) were also honored.

Honorees are selected for achieving national and international recognition in research, teaching and service. Each will receive $10,000 per year for five years to further his research.

Botany and Plant Pathology

Robert H. Hanau passed away March 15th. In 1984, Hanau was hired as assistant professor and had been an associate professor since 1990.

Hanau’s research focused on the genetic and molecular genetic bases of asexual reproduction, pathotype specificity and genome variability.

Hanau had mentored five graduate students, all of whom completed their PhD’s.

Entomology

Barry Pittendrigh is an assistant professor of entomology. He joined the department in February from the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology in Jena, Germany, where he was doing post-doctoral work. Pittendrigh’s work will focus on teaching and research in molecular biology.

Alan C. York was awarded the Global Initiative Faculty Grant to pursue his proposal on “Curriculum Development in Spider Biology and Organic Crop Production.”

John M. Ferris died Jan. 19 at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Lafayette after a short illness. He had been a professor in the department since 1958.

Ferris was elected fellow in the Indiana Academy of Sciences and a founding fellow of the Hennig Society. In 1995, Ferris was named a fellow of the Society of Nematologists.

The nematology laboratory work will continue under the guidance of his wife, Virginia, and Jamal Faghihi.

Food Science

Bruce Hamaker’s, MS’83, PhD’86, research in the field of cereal chemistry, specifically in the area of protein digestibility and nutritional quality of sorghum, has earned him the 2000 Purdue University Agricultural Research Award.

The award consists of a plaque, a $1,000 honorarium and $5,000 of Agricultural Research Program funds for his research.

Rakesh Singh is a team member of a group selected to receive a $1.1 million 21st Century Fund grant. The group includes scientists from Notre Dame and Indiana universities. Singh will be involved in setting up a biofluids laboratory using infrared technology.

Forestry and Natural Resources

Urban forester Rita McKenzie, BS’92, MS’96, received the Meritorous Service Award from the Indiana Arborist Association at their winter conference Jan. 12 in Indianapolis.

The number of certified arborists in Indiana has increased by 50 percent since she was appointed liaison to the International Society of Arboriculture arborist certification program.

Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

Paul Siciliano, BS’86, MS’89, has joined the department as an assistant professor of landscape architecture. He had previously been a landscape construction supervisor with Siciliano Landscape Company and a project director with the Brickman Group. Siciliano worked as an assistant sales manager of the Princeton Nurseries, Princeton, N.J.

International Programs in Agriculture

Project coordinator Richard Gelzleichter, BS’58, received the regional Distinguished International Service Award from Epsilon Sigma Phi, the national honorary Extension fraternity.

Gelzleichter initiated an Extension program in Poland, making 25 trips to help the Extension staff at Krakow Agricultural University understand how the Extension system works in the United States.
Sometimes, the things we least expect can make a world of difference. Fortunately for one Purdue Ag alumnus, a summer experience as a student influenced his career and put this former Boilermaker on the globe-trotting trail.

Food science graduate Matthew Moudy had only been an employee of M&M/Mars, a division of Mars Inc., in Hackettstown, N. J., for a little more than a year when he was tapped on the shoulder and asked if he wanted to go to Russia. The assignment? Help start up two new plants in Moscow.

It seems officials of the corporate candy-maker had been combing through their ranks, looking for individuals with international experience. Moudy, who started at the company soon after leaving Purdue in December 1992, spent the summer prior to graduation as one of the first students to participate in International Programs in Agriculture’s (IPIA) student exchange program in Ukraine.

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Information Agency, the program was coordinated by IPIA director Michael Stitsworth and Purdue Russian language professor Zina Breschinsky. Moudy spent that summer learning about agriculture and the people in that region of the world.

“I did it so that I might be able to differentiate myself from other job candidates,” Moudy says. “I didn’t realize until later how valuable that experience would be.”

Moudy joined a team of 150 M&M/Mars employees who made the trek to Moscow in May 1994. “I was one of the junior team members,” he says. “My job was to scout the countryside and find suppliers for the goods we would need to make our products.”

In addition to churning out well-known snack foods, the company also started up a plant for its pet food division. Pedigree® dog and Whiskas® cat foods are two of its corporate products.

Moudy’s mission was to track down goods such as sugar, corn syrup and milk powder. He says it wasn’t easy to get people to work with them, as the company’s quality standards were higher than those of most producers in that part of the world.

While youthful exuberance and energy are often advantageous, Moudy also found he wasn’t quite the businessman people there expected.

“I was 6 feet 3 inches tall back then, and I weighed 165 pounds,” he says. “When I would meet with Russian businessmen, they would drink Vodka at dinner, which I decided would not be the best thing for me to do.”

Although polite, some of those initial meetings were unproductive.

“After a while I figured out that I did not fit in and it was better that I stayed in Moscow and allowed our Russian associates to handle the visits,” Moudy recalls. Despite the challenges, Moudy found his 18 months in Russia a rewarding experience.

“I’d love to go back again,” he says. “I made some very good friends.”

Those are strange words coming from a man who describes some of his experiences there in not-so-glowing terms.

“You were dead tired at night,” Moudy says. “And, you’d wake up in the morning feeling like you’d been punched in the face 10 times. Eventually you’d wake up and it felt like you’d only been punched nine times. That was a good day.”

Not speaking the language was also a challenge. Moudy was required to take Russian 101 before going to Ukraine as an undergraduate, but didn’t make the most of that experience.

“I remember when I took the course, I said ‘Why do I need to learn Russian? I will never use it again,’” he says. “Moral of the story? Never say never!”

Moudy jokes that most of the other Americans had an advantage over him because they had passed their Russian classes. Moudy and the other Americans living in Moscow worked through their difficulties as if they were involved in a game they wished to master. He says their competitive spirit kept them constantly in search of ways to get their hands on treasured American goods. Cheap food was the daily reward for diligently searching for affordable vendors.

When the Russian assignment was complete, it wasn’t too long before Moudy again found himself packing his bags for another corporate venture. This time in Indonesia.

“As the case in his previous assignment, the cultural differences in Indonesia made for many adjustments,” Moudy says.

“Indonesia is a large Muslim country,” Moudy says. “The culture in Indonesia is definitely different than central Indiana.”

His stint in Indonesia lasted for only a month, but his travels were far from over. Upon returning to the states, Moudy became a cocoa buyer, traveling the world to find the best suppliers of this fundamental ingredient of chocolate. His passport gained stamps from places like Papua New Guinea, Ecuador and West Africa.

Currently, Moudy finds himself purchasing nuts for the candy manufacturer. While still on the road, his destinations are less exotic.

“I’m traveling a lot to Georgia these days,” he says.

Squeezed into his schedule are those occasional trips back home to see family members in Indiana. A native of Covington, located about an hour southwest of Purdue, Moudy combines those trips with quick visits back to the Purdue campus.

“Last fall I took my girlfriend to the Purdue Homecoming to visit my old friends in the Farmhouse fraternity,” Moudy says. “She graduated from a much smaller school and had not experienced a major college football event.”

A man who describes himself as “one who goes with the flow,” Moudy hasn’t charted his future course. For the time being, navigating the “superhighway” is his project, as Moudy is investigating the Internet and his interests in e-commerce.

Linking suppliers online is his goal.

And for others whose passions also include the Web, chocolate and Purdue, Moudy says they might fulfill their wishes simultaneously by visiting the company’s Internet site: m-ms.com.

“You can order black and gold M&M® chocolate candies at the site, but the minimum order is about 20 pounds,” he says.

That equals a lot of Purdue pride, and a lot of M&Ms to share with friends.

As a buyer for one of the world’s largest candy manufacturers, Matt Moudy has traveled the world, visiting places like this Ecuadorian cocoa plantation.

As was the case in his previous assignment, the American’s overseas experience was highly influential on his personal development.

“Indonesia is definitely a different country,” Moudy says. “I came away with a wiser perspective and a better understanding of other cultures.”

Using this newly acquired knowledge, Moudy has also been able to put in perspective the cultural differences in his home state.

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Sherman O. Kessler, BS’36, MS’38, New Ross, Ind., participated in the Millenium Mosaic, a recent feature of the Lafayette Journal and Courier. The paper selected one person to represent each age from 1 to 100. Those selected wrote an essay that recounted their life’s memories and the significant milestones they had observed. Two essays were published each week during 1999.

Charles Hofmann, BS’39, Sun City Center, Fla., retired in 1980. He was owner of Hofmann Florist in Chicago Heights, Ill. Charles revised the fifth edition (1994) of The Retail Florist Business, published by Interstate Publishers Inc., Danville, Ill. In researching the book, he enjoyed contacting leading wholesale, retail and trade association members who supplied him with facts, figures and photographs. Charles would like to hear from members of the class of 1939.

After 31 years of active service in the U.S. Army, including duty in Europe in World War II and in Korea, Joseph Williamson, BS’39, Medaryville, Ind., participated in the Millennium Mosaic. He was inducted into the Purdue Army ROTC Hall of Fame in 1996. His family consists of four children, 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren with two more on the way.

Earl Duggleby, BS’40, MS’44, Medaryville, Ind., retired in June 1978 after teaching school for 38 years.

Robert Matthes, PhD’67, Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif., after having spent his career in industry, recently accepted a pre-retirement position as dean of Academic Affairs at Marymount College in Virginia Beach, Va.

Gary VanHoozer, BS’70, Tarkio, Mo., is a contributing writer and sales representative for “Farm Collector” magazine, specializing in farm and agribusiness antiques and collectibles.

W. David Shoup, BS’73, MS’74, PhD’80, is the dean of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s College of Agriculture. Prior to his appointment in September 1999, Shoup was professor of agricultural and biosystems management company for Sonoco, a global engineering and manufacturing company.

Lawrence Rench, BS’68, MS’72, Hartsville, S.C., was promoted to vice president, Intellectual Assets, to lead a new intellectual capital management company for Sonoco, a global supplier of paper and plastic packaging. Sonoco Development Inc. handles all patents, trademarks, copyrights and licenses for Sonoco’s global business.

Christina M. Rinderle, BS’94, Franklin, Ind., passed away on Dec. 25, 1999. She was a long-time volunteer for the International Dairy Foods Association, the American Dairy Science Association, and the National Dairy Council.

Helen (Evrard) Piotter, BS’47, Macy, Ind., is now a member of the committee for sanitary procedures for the International Association of Milk, Food and Environmental Sanitarians. She was also elected to the council for the Public Health - National Sanitation Foundation.

Philip A. Maxwell, BS’86, Valparaiso, Ind., passed away on Dec. 25, 1999.

Edmond (Ed) Baumgartle, BS’87, Westport, Ind., is manager at Kova Fertilizer in Westport.

Toni Wisser, BS’96, Shrewsbury, Ill., began a new job on Jan. 3, as product performance manager, Advanced Farming Systems, with Case Corp. after nearly four years as a test engineer in the vehicle development lab. Tony and his wife welcomed their first child, Scott Charles Wisser, on July 30, 1999.

Ann (Scherrer) Freier, BS’86, Allen, Neb., is scalehouse coordinator at Iowa Beef Processors, Inc. Ann has two children, Jesse, 11, and Caitlin, 7.

W. Scott Johnston, BS’94, Franklin, Ind., has a new office in downtown historic Franklin, working with Southern Land Co.

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Aldo Alves, BSc’60, North Berwick, U.K., is a self-employed farmer. He is trying to move resources into other areas and would welcome suggestions.

Aldo Alves, BS’65, Curupinaus-SP, Brazil, celebrated the Golden Jubilee in Agronomy from E.S.-A.L.Q. Sao Paulo University, Piracicaba, Sao Paulo, on Oct. 12, 1999. Aldo and his wife, Valda, have five grandchildren.

Tom Asher, BS’65, Kingman, Ind., retired on July 30 after nearly 30 years with Indiana Farm Bureau as director of Information/Public Relations. A former 12-year school board member and Lions Club president, Tom and his wife, Shirley, moved to Parke County in 1998. He plans to continue his hobby, raising saddle mules and mammoth jack stock.

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Insulin developer shares success with future biochemists

by June Lang

Ron Chance, BS’56, MS’59, PhD’62, feels strongly that without his Purdue education and the important connections introduced to him by Professor Edwin T. Mertz, his successful career would not have culminated with the synthesis of the drug Humulin (human insulin).

To express their gratitude to Mertz and the university, Chance and his wife, Carolyn, have provided a gift to begin a campaign to establish the Edwin T. Mertz Memorial endowment.

The award will provide undergraduate scholarships and a lecture series in Purdue’s Biochemistry Department. Chance hopes the fund will help students gain the education they need to excel in the world of discovery.

In addition, funding will provide students, faculty and staff the opportunity to interact firsthand with leading researchers by bringing distinguished authorities to campus for presentations.

Chance, who earned his degrees in biochemistry, has had a truly stellar career as a research scientist at Eli Lilly and Company. He has developed an outstanding record of scientific output, and his contributions to the understanding of insulin biochemistry and therapeutics has had worldwide impact.

“It’s important for us (Carolyn earned her bachelor’s degree in Consumer and Family Sciences in 1959) to give back to Purdue, because nothing I accomplished in my career would have been possible without my Purdue education,” Chance says.

“Every scientist or research group that Dr. Mertz introduced me to became a credit to my career.”

Chance was awarded an honorary doctorate by Purdue in May 1999 for outstanding contributions to the health of mankind.

Chance and his research team developed and patented the technology for obtaining bovine (cow), ovine (sheep) and porcine (hog) insulin from pancreases. Humulin has revolutionized diabetic treatment. Chance was a member of the Lilly research team that developed the methods for synthesizing human insulin in bacteria by recombinant DNA methods leading to the drug Humulin.

The School of Agriculture is proud of Chance’s accomplishments and important contributions to society. But he gives much of the credit to his mentor, Professor Mertz.

Mertz was professor of biochemistry at Purdue from 1946-1976. He passed away on Feb. 1, 1999, in Dallas, Texas. He was 89. At Purdue, Mertz conducted extensive research related to plasminogen and plasmin, the system in mammalian blood that dissolves clots.

Mertz was recognized globally for his discovery, along with Oliver E. Nelson in 1963, of high-lysine corn. Mertz devoted most of his attention thereafter to the development of cereals having better nutritional quality than the common strains.

After he retired from Purdue, Mertz remained active in the research activities of the corn and sorghum groups in both the Agronomy and Biochemistry departments.

Mertz stayed in contact with many of his past students and maintained an active interest in their research pursuits.

Staying connected with Mertz is what Chance feels gave his career a boost.

“Mertz lived a long, happy and productive life in space, former astronaut and U.S. Senator John Glenn.

Those experiments, which tested whether DNA transfer could be conducted in microgravity, proved not only that it could be done, but also that it was more successful and efficient than DNA transfers in a control group on earth.

This experiment was done in collaboration with the Wisconsin Center for Space Automation and Robotics, a NASA Commercial Center.

Of the soybean seedlings from the first space experiment, 9 percent exhibited the trait introduced.

On earth, less than 1 percent of the control group showed the trait. “The rate of transient expression in a space environment was more than tenfold over the success rate of a comparable terrestrial experiment.”

Those experiments seem to indicate that space may be a better environment for conducting gene transfers.”

“Genes were transferred more efficiently to targeted cells in space than on earth. The results were so significant, we improved our experiments and tried them again,” he says.

Vierling, an adjunct associate professor of agronomy, is also director of the Indiana Crop Improvement genetics program.

He is working on this project in conjunction with Stephen Goldman, a professor of biology at the University of Toledo.

Vierling says despite modern advances in biotechnology, genetic engineering is still a very inexact science. “Some plant species are easier to work with than others,” he says. “Soybeans in particular are very inefficient to work with, and we’re hoping to learn through these experiments ways that we can improve our odds of success even here on earth.”

The first space mission involved about 1,000 soybeans in what Vierling describes as a “crude experiment.” “We didn’t even know if you could do gene transfer in space.”

Vierling says some of the initial misgivings centered around the fact that the bacteria used to transfer the DNA must be mobile.

“They have to ‘swim’ in a solution. Liquids are hard to control in zero gravity. You must keep the liquid in contact with the cells to be successful,” Vierling says.

The “floating” effect of space may be a benefit in this case, a hypothesis they hope to explore in the next round of experiments. Vierling already has applied for a patent based on the initial experiment results.
School honors eight as Distinguished Ag Alumni

The Purdue University School of Agriculture’s list of distinguished alumni will expand by eight when it introduces its latest class of honorees during a ceremony April 28.

The Distinguished Agricultural Alumni award has been presented each year since 1992 to 10 or fewer School of Agriculture alumni who have made significant contributions to their professions. Selection is made by a committee of school administrators.

This year’s honor roll includes: D. William Biddle, Remington, Ind., Mark W. Bitz, Baldwinsville, N.Y., Ronald P. Cantrell, Makati City, Philippines, Barbara Chattin, Arlington, Va., J.B. Penn, McLean, Va., Sue A. Shadley, Indianapolis, Ind., Kenneth L. Schwab, Shreveport, La., and Marion P. Williams, Sudbury, Mass.

“These are outstanding individuals who have truly distinguished themselves in the field of agriculture and will continue to do so,” says Purdue Dean of Agriculture Vic Lechtenberg.

“We could not ask for better examples of personal and professional achievement than these eight distinguished ag alumni.”

Biddle, BS’64, is the fourth generation Biddle to farm in Indiana’s Benton County. Biddle operates a 2,200-acre seed farm with his two sons and is president of both Biddle Seeds Inc. and Biddle Insurance Service, which he founded in 1986.

Bitz, BS’80, is president and general manager of Plainville Farms. Bitz operates a 1,000-acre corn, soybean and rye grain farm. In addition, Bitz and his 200 employees raise, process and distribute 500,000 turkeys annually in the northeastern United States.

Cantrell, MS’69, PhD’70, has been director general of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines, since 1998. Cantrell was associate professor of agronomy at Purdue from 1975-1981 and professor of agronomy from 1981-1982.

Chattin, PhD’82, was recently appointed deputy assistant United States trade representative. Her office is responsible for developing and coordinating U.S. international trade, commodity and direct investment policy and leading or directing negotiations with other countries on such matters.

Penn, PhD’73 is senior vice president and head of the Washington D.C. office of Sparks Companies Inc., an agricultural information and economic consulting company. Penn is a former staff economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Schwab, BS’69, has been president of Centenary College, Shreveport, La. since 1991. Founded in 1825, Centenary is the oldest liberal arts college west of the Mississippi River.

Shadley, BS’74, is a founding partner in the law firm of Plews Shadley Racher & Dunn, an Indianapolis firm with 22 attorneys specializing in environmental law.

Williams, BS’68, PhD’73, has been the senior vice president for technology of Welch Foods, Inc., in Concord, Mass., since 1992. Welch’s is the world’s leading marketer of Concord and Niagara grape-based products.

Dean Vic Lechtenberg will present the awards at a 9:30 a.m. ceremony in Fowler Hall, Stewart Center, on the Purdue campus. An 11 a.m. reception and noon luncheon follows.

For event information or to purchase lunch tickets, contact the Dean’s Office at (765) 494-8392, e-mail: lswift@agad.purdue.edu.

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Purdue Agricultural Alumni Association
1140 AGAD, Room 1, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1140.

Stay In Touch

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.

Name (First) _____________ (Last)_____________________
(Maiden) ________________________________________
Degree/Date ____________ Department ________________
Home Address _____________________________________
City _____________ State______ Zip_________ Country ___
Home Phone (____)_______________________________
Employment ______________________ Title_________________

Work Address __________________________ City______________
State _______ Zip__________ Business Phone (____),________
E-mail ________________________________
News ____________________________________________________________________________
City _____________ State______ Zip_________ Country ___
Home Phone (____)_______________________________
Employment ______________________ Title_________________
What's New

Graduate first to master Peace Corps program

In 1968, Dave Sammons was a Peace Corps volunteer assigned to a remote village in the Philippine Islands. Fresh out of Tufts University in Boston, Sammons was the first white face many of the young Filipino students had ever seen. Sammons' mere appearance at the tiny school sent many of the second-graders running out of the classroom screaming. But it was nothing personal. The children had been warned a dental missionary had been sent to the village to pull their decayed teeth. To them, Sammons was a likely suspect.

Megan Taylor hopes her first experience as a Peace Corps volunteer won't involve screaming children. Sometime in September, Taylor will go to Guatemala as the first graduate of Purdue's new Peace Corps Masters Program. Taylor has been working on her master's degree since earning her bachelor's degree in wildlife sciences in 1998. But it seems she has been preparing for the "go anywhere, do anything" lifestyle of the Peace Corps all her life.

Born to a military family in Kentucky, Taylor attended 10 different schools in 12 years, including stints in Germany and Panama. "I just love Central America," Taylor says. "The music, the culture, its people, everything about it appeals to me. I would love to be able to go back down there and work."

As an undergraduate, Taylor minored in international programs in agriculture. Twice (1996 and 1997) she spent 10 weeks at "Peace Corps" continued on page 3

What's inside?

• Peace Corps returns grad to Central America Page 1
• Matt Moudy is nuts about M&M/Mars Page 8
• Eight to receive Distinguished Ag Award Page 11