



Green Fire
A HISTORY OF HUXLEY COLLEGE

ENVIRONMENTAL TIMELINE

Huxley College admitted its first students in September of 1970.

A brief environmental chronology of the following four decades runs along the top of our story.

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HUXLEY COLLEGE FACULTY

Of the approximately 4,000 Huxley College alumni, forty were chosen to profile in this book. Those who were selected illustrate the incredible range of expertise and leadership that graduates of the college have achieved. To the right is a list of college faculty who spanned the four decades of its history. On each profile page, the professors who were teaching during the student’s attendance are highlighted with bold text.

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INTRODUCTION

Our story is the environmental movement's story.

Like Earth Day, Huxley College of the Environment was forty years old in 2010. It was, and is, the progeny of a century and a half of American thought about industrialization, its consequences, and humankind's proper and happiest relationship to the planet.

It embodies the dictum of British scientist and namesake Thomas Henry Huxley, who said, "Learn what is true to do what is right."

And, like Earth Day, Huxley's history tracks the history of the modern environmental movement. The idea of establishing an interdisciplinary environmental college at Western Washington University predates most of the legislation that governs environmental politics today. Huxley was never just an academic experiment; it was a cultural creation, a physical embodiment of new values. In the forty years since, those values have shifted in step with broader society. The radical experimentation of Huxley's earliest days inevitably gave way to a more structured, conservative, and politically calibrated college as it matured.

The result is a school that has managed to harness youthful idealism and earn business respect, to spawn ideas and successfully implement them. For better and worse, Huxley has become an established institution — dare we say an establishment? — with the longevity, influence, and practical compromises that name implies.

Huxley's history is important because it reflects the history of man's struggle to develop a sustainable stewardship of the earth. Accordingly, Huxley Dean Bradley Smith and Development Director Manca Valum

conceived the idea of summarizing its story in a fortieth-anniversary book. It is hoped that internally, Green Fire will aid institutional memory and prove useful in inspiring those who will guide and grow its experiment in the future. The book is also intended to give potential students, faculty, staff, and donors an idea of how the college came to be and the ideas that have guided it.

Huxley's accomplishments can be measured in at least three ways.

One is faculty research. The college has frequently led Western in grants funding and contributed to fundamental scientific knowledge, from the analysis of Lake Whatcom to a study of carbon cycling in Siberia.

A second accomplishment is social activism. Huxley students have done everything from pioneering Whatcom County's first recycling center in 1971 to work on making SeaTac Airport one of the greenest airports on the planet in 2009. They have marched on sidewalks, gathered data for urban planners, and published an award-winning environmental magazine.

A third is the contribution of its students in green careers. Here the college has an outstanding legacy. To demonstrate it, we selected forty of our approximately 4,000 alumni to profile, ranging from those working on the cleanup of Puget Sound to organic farmers. These forty are not meant to represent the "best" of Huxley graduates — such a judgment is beyond our capabilities — but rather to represent an inspiring cross section. Their individual stories give a clearer picture of what Huxley is all about.

Huxley College is not so much a place (in fact, its physical presence is scrambled in two main campus buildings, a marine center with which it is affiliated in Anacortes, and branch programs at three Pacific Northwest colleges) so much as it is a forty-year fellowship of people: of teachers, students, donors, partners, and advisers. Its presence on campus is (regrettably) understated, with no flashy sign or even a single building to call its own. It has no billionaire benefactors, attention-winning sports teams, ivy-covered brick (more on its quirky quarters later) or People Magazine celebrity alumni. What it does have is a consistent mission, to produce environmental problem solvers, and a quiet, persistent, unquenchable fire in its belly to make the world a better, more sustainable place.

And for forty years, that has been quite enough.



Photo by Michael Bakke



CHAPTER ONE

THE EXPERIMENT 1961-1970

In the beginning, before there was an Environmental Protection Agency, Washington Department of Ecology, or the federal Clean Air and Clean Water acts, there was Huxley College of the Environment.

It was founded in the fires of one of the most tumultuous periods in U.S. social history, the late 1960s. The college was a daring experiment in education, in cross-discipline communication, in interdisciplinary research, in architecture, and in balancing environmental values with scientific objectivity.

That experiment is still going on today in what promises to be the most challenging era of environmental crisis and debate in world history. In the next forty years, according to United Nations demographic projections, human population is expected to peak, fossil fuels to decline, and atmospheric carbon levels to spike. Climate change, species extinction, competition for resources, risk management, and the quest for renewable energy have made Huxley's mission more important than ever.

Huxley was one of the first – by some measures, the first – environmental college of its type in the nation, and perhaps in the world. Today it is one of two surviving “cluster colleges” at Western Washington University, and a template for programs across the United States that have come after it.

Huxley's success, however, can never be measured by its budget, its endowment, its faculty, or even its research. After forty pioneering years, what sets Huxley apart is the achievements of its 4,000 graduating students. They hatched from their educational experience with green fire and flew into positions of responsibility with an unusually broad understanding of our planet's problems.

The Zimmerman and Mitchell houses were the original Huxley headquarters. In this 1971 view, the Environmental Studies building rises in the background.
Photo courtesy of Stuart Gustafson



Huxley students participate in an active group discussion. ca. 1970 *Huxley College archives*

Huxley's birth occurred in the tumultuous 1960s, and its educational philosophy was defined by the politics, economy and culture of that decade. Its adolescence was the 1970s, when it was rowdy, controversial, energetic, self-questioning, and beleaguered. The college "went straight" in the Reagan era of the 1980s, forming new partnerships with the business community in a controversial swing that coincided with declining enrollment. Student enthusiasm bounced back in the 1990s, but the college resolved a debate on its direction by splitting into two centers and eventually two departments. Its fourth decade, the first of the twenty-first century, has been one of maturity and increasing sophistication, with growth in enrollment, grants, new institutes, and geographic reach. The "granolas" have grown up.

And the next forty years? Can Huxley sustain both academic respect and its passionate relevance? Can it not only research problems but solve them? Can it offer students an experience they can't get anywhere else? Has Western

"It proved itself by proving useful."

taken proper advantage of this intriguing invention by promoting the college, and thus itself? Could Western make more aggressive use of Huxley's uniqueness in the future? This book, by design, has a cliffhanger ending.

But how and why did such an experiment arise in a pulp-mill town in the damp Northwest corner of the United States? Why Bellingham, and why then?

The truth is that the college was born by one tie-breaking administrative vote in a period of academic tumult. Huxley started with idealism, benefitted from serendipity, struggled with identity, survived campus turf battles, and won over a suspicious surrounding community. It proved itself by proving useful.

Within a couple years of its founding, Huxley students were contributing fundamental research to the future planning of Whatcom and San Juan counties. The college pioneered a recycling center. It created a community clearinghouse for environmental information. Students and faculty studied the impact of new industrial fluoride emissions on Whatcom County dairy cows. They called attention to an unraveling old-growth ecosystem, troubled salmon runs, and polluted water. They both angered and enlisted local businessmen and provoked and intrigued local government officials. Huxley started as a dream, but it was made real by the work of students, faculty, and administrators.



At the beginning of 1970, Western Washington State College (WWSC) President Charles "Jerry" Flora gave his annual address to the assembled faculty. The just-passed 1969 had been, he recounted, one of the most tumultuous years in Western's history. To understand Huxley's early boldness, one must understand the era in which it was born.

The baby boomer crest had reached college age and Western's enrollment nearly tripled in a decade, from 3,205 in the fall of 1960 to 9,944 in the fall of 1970. The college Flora had come to in 1957 was so small that it simply had a "Department of Science"; there weren't enough students and faculty to break into the traditional disciplines. The New Whatcom Middle School, christened by law in 1893, had in turn become the State Normal School at Whatcom in 1901, Washington State Normal School at Bellingham in 1904, Western Washington College of Education in 1937, Western

CONTINUED ON PG. 16

Molly Adolfson Class of '75

After graduating from Huxley in 1975, Molly Adolfson applied for a consulting job for which she had no previous experience - and she got it. The employers told her she earned at least an interview since she was the only female who applied and because, of the more than eighty applicants, she was the only person who hadn't made a spelling error.

What goes around comes around. Adolfson is now a senior vice president and principal environmental analyst for ESA Adolfson, a Seattle-based environmental consulting firm, and her company has hired at least a dozen former Huxley students.

"We hire a lot of Huxley graduates because they can think, they can write, and they have good science," Adolfson said.

Adolfson said her interdisciplinary education from Huxley in both English and science has proven invaluable throughout her career.

"Huxley made me more aware of all aspects of the environment," Adolfson said. "It's not just the environment that we need to look at but also the community and economy. The 'environment' is a multifaceted arena of considerations. It's this understanding that has broadened my views throughout life."

Adolfson founded Adolfson Associates in 1987, raising the firm to regional recognition. In 2006, Adolfson Associates merged with ESA, a nationally respected environmental consulting firm, thereby expanding her company's resources and geographic influence. In her more than 30 years of consulting, she has managed and/or authored



"The environment is a multifaceted arena of considerations."



more than thirty environmental impact statements and dozens of environmental analyses.

"By bringing the environmental perspective to projects, it results in a better project all the way around," Adolfson said.

But incorporating environmental concerns requires balancing, she said. While trying to minimize a project's environmental impacts, she also addresses the concerns of the public and private sectors, effectively communicating sometimes controversial issues to regulators and the public. Also, keeping a project within a budget can be like adding flames to the juggling act.

Adolfson said one of her most challenging and rewarding projects was drafting the environmental impact statement for the new Brightwater regional wastewater treatment system for King and south Snohomish counties. The project was controversial, and Adolfson had to address the potential seismic

rupture of the main sewage pipe, water-quality impacts, and community concerns about having a wastewater treatment plant in the neighborhood. The review process took five years, but the system is now scheduled for completion by 2012.

While not in the office, Adolfson is a seasoned triathlete and soccer enthusiast. Her next project is to explore nonprofit work - specifically, supporting international efforts to empower women and promote sustainable agriculture. Through education and establishing financial independence, Adolfson said, women can become key players in the movement for environmental and humanitarian justice.

Devon Frederickson

Above: Winter view from Alki Beach in Seattle. Photo by Avela Grenier

Left: Photo courtesy of Molly Adolfson

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Denise Attwood Class of '83

Just months after graduating from Huxley in 1983, Denise Attwood and her future husband, Ric Conner, stumbled on the opportunity to help create and expand the Fair Trade movement by going into business for themselves.

The ambitious couple, who met at a Huxley potluck, were on a 23-day trek through Nepal when they purchased handmade wool sweaters from Tibetan refugees to keep themselves warm. The refugees, wishing to put their children through school and gain access to U.S and global markets, persuaded Denise and Ric to try to sell their sweaters in the United States.

The couple shipped the sweaters home and continued on their 8 month journey. Along the way Denise was accepted to law school at the University of Washington. When the couple returned to Spokane, Denise's parents rented out a local theatre where the trekkers shared both their travel experience and the lives of the sweater makers.

Every one of the sweaters for sale on a table in the theater sold that night.

"People really loved them," Denise said. "They loved the connection and being directly involved through our stories."

Impressed by the response and eager for the opportunity to share sweaters with more people and to improve the lives of the sweater makers, Ric returned to Nepal to purchase more merchandise. Denise began law school. Not sure where to sell, Ric began what he calls "guerrilla vending" the sweaters back in the States. Denise would accompany him to schools and festivals to sell,



February 22

EPA begins multiyear effort to eliminate leaded gasoline; by 1979 half of U.S. gasoline will be unleaded.

Oregon passes the nation's first bottle-recycling bill.



and they would take the opportunity to talk with people about the importance of fair trade, which is the idea of fairly compensating indigenous craftspeople for homegrown industries that are in balance with the environment.

When they started their business, there was no established fair trade movement. Denise and Ric, along with some of their mentors, were planting the seeds.

By Denise's third year of law school, Ronald Reagan was president, and the legal aid and environmental law jobs she was interested in were vanishing. She realized fair trade incorporated her ideals better than being an attorney. She began speaking, as she was selling, on economic and environmental justice. Denise and her husband had a myriad of paths ahead of them but, as Ric put it "we decided to go through door number three and really establish a fair trade import business, and we ran with it."

Both alumni attribute their confidence and ideals to the foundation they built at Huxley. "It was important to show that businesses could be ethical as well as profitable and environmentally responsible," Denise said.

Their business, Ganesh Himal Trading Company, named after one of their favorite mountains in the Himalayas, now sells about \$500,000 annually to 250 fair-trade oriented stores across the United States. Ric focuses on the logistics and financing, and Denise works on the day-to-day operations and with producers and product. For example, one group of Nepali artisans decided to try using rubber tire waste to make purses. Denise and Ric helped them to design a line of recycled-tire bags and began marketing them through the business. This

has taken what was once a waste product to be burned and create toxic fumes and changed it into a commodity that is now sought after and sold.

On the couple's first trek in Nepal they met an eleven-year-old girl, Sita Gurung, in a remote village with no healthcare. After a time they lost contact. Years later, Denise was sitting in the Bangkok airport and struck up a conversation with a young Nepali woman, only to discover she was the girl from years ago. Denise learned she was living in Seattle, and the friendship reignited. When Sita lost her mother to disease, Denise and Sita began fundraising to build the Baseri Health Clinic in Sita's home village. With the enthusiastic support and help of the villagers of Baseri, the clinic opened in February of 2010. Treating an average of ten people a day for primary-care health issues, it has helped over 1,600 people in the first six months of operation.

Today, Denise and Ric run the Ganesh Himal Trading Company from the Spokane home they built themselves. Denise has served on the board of the Center for Justice in Spokane, and on the national board of the Fair Trade Resource Network. They make sure their thirteen-year-old son, Cameron, continues to spend at least every third birthday in a different country. It's Huxley interdisciplinary education at work.

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Above: Denise and Ric in Nepal.
Photos courtesy of Denise Attwood

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Washington State College in 1961, and would become Western Washington University in 1977. It evolved from a regional teacher-training center in a small mill town to a multidisciplinary instruction and research center in an urbanizing county in just two decades, as higher education became a middleclass norm. The school was so crowded at the height of the post-war baby boom that, in September 1969, students had filled the Old Main lawn with tents in a protest camp-in to highlight the lack of adequate housing. In jammed Haggard Hall, the departments of geology and biology were desperate for new space.

Western was changing both physically and psychologically. Miller Hall had expanded in 1968, the Fairhaven College campus were just opening (much of Fairhaven was still a sea of mud) and the “culture wars” that would continue to simmer for the next four decades were at a boil. The campus had angrily split on the appropriateness of a visit by LSD experimenter and drug enthusiast Timothy Leary in 1966, a controversy so contentious that it contributed to the resignation of WWSC President Harvey Bunke after just two years on the job. Flora, named acting president in July of 1967, would for the next eight and a half years govern the stormiest, most innovative period in Western’s history.

The growth had caused an explosive increase in faculty. Western had hired 81 new professors in 1967, and 92 more in 1969. Many were not a lot older than the students they taught, and were just as radicalized by the Vietnam War.

Western was a fermenting brew of new ideas. National luminaries such as population prophet Paul Ehrlich, author Kurt Vonnegut, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, and antiwar-activist Dr. Benjamin Spock had electrified the campus with visits. Robert Heinlein’s counterculture science fiction classic, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, had been the campus book selection in 1968.

Drugs were increasingly commonplace. Vietnam protest had resulted in ever-larger marches to downtown Bellingham throughout October and November of 1969. The tumult would peak after the invasion of Cambodia and the killing of four students at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, when 2,000 students would rally in Western’s Red Square. An estimated 300 of them blocked Interstate 5 in protest.



Western’s historic Memory Walk contains time capsules from Western graduating classes dating back to 1912.
Photo by Avela Grenier

Rock music had become a unifying theme, and the civil rights, feminist and environmental movements were pumping out challenging new ideas at what seemed a weekly pace. The anti-establishment mood was symbolized in the fall of 1969 by the election of a 450-pound pig named Grenelda as WWSC’s Homecoming queen, over three female and two male contestants. The mockery essentially ended the venerable homecoming tradition.

The Klipsun yearbook was also dying, evolving instead into a quarterly magazine that would initially be so inflammatory that an off-campus reader underlined its obscenities and mailed it to state legislators. In 1971, Flora would ignite more controversy by banning the printing of Jeopardy literary magazine on campus because of its racy content (he argued the college was prohibited from reproducing such material on taxpayer-paid-for presses), forcing editors to print it in Seattle.

Viet Cong flags had waved in Red Square and the brand-new Isamu Noguchi Skyviewing Sculpture had divided Western on the merits of modern art. The educational process itself was under debate: Students and faculty were pressing for experiments that would culminate in 1971 with a report suggesting the end of letter grading, elimination of finals week, and abolition of traditional departments. The proposal didn’t pass, but it was indicative of the radical mood at the time.

Students at Western’s first cluster college, Fairhaven, had voted 114 to 5 to allow 24-hour coed visitation, and WWSC’s Board of Trustees followed suit in May of 1969 by approving the creation of coed dorms on the main campus.

Even as this political and social tumult occurred, Bellingham’s environment seemed under the same kind of pressure that had caused national alarm. Nationally, 1969 was the year a major oil spill stained California beaches on the Santa Barbara Channel and Ohio’s polluted Cuyahoga River caught fire. Lake Erie was pronounced “dead.” The technological confidence of the postwar period, symbolized by Seattle’s Century 21 World’s Fair in 1962, had given way to doubts about the path of industrial capitalism. Steadily rising incomes gave the baby boomer generation the economic security to question the system that had produced that same standard of living. The counterculture of the 1960s was in part a challenge to 1950s materialism that had followed global depression and world war.



WWSC President Charles "Jerry" Flora.
Huxley College archives

In Whatcom County, Bellingham stank from acrid pulp-mill emissions at Georgia-Pacific's complex on the city's waterfront. The county's first refinery, built in 1954, was being followed by a second that would be completed in 1971. An aluminum smelter had opened near Ferndale in 1966. Growth was finally coming to the nation's fourth corner. The Alaska Pipeline would be built between 1974 and 1977 after the Arab Oil Embargo, bringing more tanker traffic to Puget Sound. Nuclear power plants would be proposed for two sites in Skagit County. Whatcom County's population would double in the next forty years. So would the planet's population.

Traditional academic approaches seemed ill designed to grapple with issues of unprecedented scope and complexity. A new, more holistic approach was needed.



It was in Flora's speech summing up this era that he mentioned another, more science-based change at Western — the initiation of a second cluster college. This new institution, following the founding of Fairhaven, was the college that was particularly dear to the president's heart, given that he was a biologist and ecologist. Western had approved and gotten funding for the pioneering Huxley College of Environmental Studies.

What was arguably the nation's first dedicated environmental college was the product of astonishing foresight. The idea was approved in concept by WWSC's Long Range Planning Committee of the Academic Council in 1966, just four years after the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and four years before Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson and a Camas-Washougal kid named Denis Hayes, then a student at Harvard, organized the first Earth Day. There was no other program quite like it.

When Flora spoke, Huxley already had its first dean, a biochemist and biology chairman from Utah State University named Gene Miller. The new dean was a highly respected scientist, with over 100 publications in refereed journals when he came, and National Institutes of Health funding of \$100,000 a year.

The state had appropriated \$3.8 million for a new Northwest Environmental Studies Center to be built between Fairhaven College and the main campus. The innovative, cost-efficient concrete structure would

“Only by abatement of environmental destruction will our future as a human species be possible”

house the geology department, part of biology, and Huxley.

Students were more than ready. In February 1969, Western Front contributor Al Doan ran a lengthy story on Bellingham pollution, topped by a picture of the Georgia-Pacific mill that the campus looked down on completely shrouded in a pall of smoke and steam. After writing other extensive articles on the environment, Doan was elected student body president for the 1969-70 school year.

Like Vietnam, women's rights, and civil rights, the environmental issue had exploded in public consciousness. “Only by abatement of environmental destruction will our future as a human species be possible,” one Huxley planning document read. The 63 students who enrolled at Huxley in the fall of 1970 would increase to 250 just five years later.

The idea for the cluster college, however, had actually been evolving for several years and can be attributed to at least three men: WWSC President Harvey Bunke, Flora himself, and biology professor Jerry Kraft, who helped establish the Institute for Freshwater Studies. This school would eventually be incorporated into Huxley and is known today as the Institute for Watershed Studies.

Flora had come to Western in 1957 as a young biology professor, just as the modern environmental movement was dawning. World War II had been followed by an explosive development of American industry and suburban sprawl, and the chemical revolution that was transforming American material life was having deleterious side effects in the environment.

In July of 1961, Flora and Kraft conducted a Whatcom County fieldtrip that dramatized Western's geographic potential as a place of environmental learning and research. The professors and students began at saltwater tide pools near Bellingham Bay and concluded the day collecting ice organisms at Mount Baker. The cornucopia of ecosystems the fieldtrip crossed made both men realize that Western's location represented an extraordinary opportunity for environmental research.

Western's destiny, Flora would later write, was to be found in its location.

In 1962 – the same year that Carson published *Silent Spring* – Flora and Kraft learned that no soundings had ever been made of Lake Whatcom, Bellingham's source of drinking water. They founded the Institute for

Freshwater Studies to begin examining the lake. Thaddeus Spratlen, Western's first African-American professor, was recruited to build the model of its bathymetry that can still be seen on the main floor at Huxley today, a white hollow squeezed between the horizontal blue and green ventilation pipes.

"Every Tuesday we would make these transects of the lake," Flora said. "I probably crossed Lake Whatcom more times than anyone in history. And we'd say, 'Look at where we are, mountains, rivers, beaches – look at this marvelous environmental setting.'"

Flora had actually met Carson. As a graduate student, he'd conducted the famous scientist and author on a beach walk in Florida and was inspired by her ability to see beyond a specialty and grasp the environment as a whole.

Flora and Kraft put to the WWSC administration their idea of a new kind of school to teach this infant discipline. In a brief history of the college written in 1978, faculty member David Clarke, a political scientist, said other professors such as Carter Broad, Leona Sundquist, Ruth Platt, Marie Pabst, and Jim Martin also urged environmental studies. Traditional biology was marrying chemistry in excitement over the molecular workings of cells, while traditional disciplines such as zoology and botany seemed to be losing glamour. A new, unifying department or college could help rescue traditional natural science disciplines while focusing attention on a new planetary problem.

It's hard to remember how novel this notion was at the time. In the mid-1960s, few Americans had even heard the word "ecology," and environmental protection was a new and controversial idea. Humans had long been victims of nature, not master, and their ability to threaten the entire planet was a novel idea. No laws or agencies existed to enforce environmental stewardship. Few environmental organizations existed. Words like "carcinogen" or "pollutant" had yet to be entrenched in the media lexicon.

Herb Taylor, WWSC's director of research, said that any idea needed a name to thread through the campus gauntlet of committees and review. He suggested "Huxley" for T.H. Huxley, "Darwin's Bulldog," or the man who had most vigorously promoted Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.



Above: Chuckanut Bay in layered tones as seen from Larabee State Park. Photo by Avela Grenier

Left: Jerry Flora's *Raw Data Lake Whatcom* notebook from 1962.

Huxley had won public acceptance for evolution by his lucid defense of the idea, most notably in a June 30, 1860, debate with Bishop Samuel Wilberforce at Oxford University.

Taylor later said the idea occurred to him after reading a passage in George Stewart's novel *Doctor's Oral*, in which administrators fearful of naming a new college after Darwin were persuaded that "Huxley" was even more provocative but safe. "The President accepted this substitute," the novel related, "safely realizing that men fight over words, not ideas, and being sure that the legislators would not know who Huxley was."

Yet Taylor's suggestion to name a college for a champion of evolution was a bold one even in the 1960s, suggesting an institution that would adhere to science wherever it led. Huxley as a college was intended to be intellectually fearless.

It was also designed to yank science from its ivory academic tower and apply it to global crisis, to harness theory to purpose. "Education is the instruction of the intellect in the laws of nature," Huxley wrote, "under which I include not merely things and their forces, but men and their ways."

There is no indication that Huxley's Western founders were aware that "Huxley College" was also the name of the college that Groucho Marx came to run in the 1932 Marx Brothers comedy *Horse Feathers*, a spoof of collegiate pomposity and athletics that still wears well today. The climax in the film is a football game with Darwin U., in which the brothers take the ball into the end zone in a horse-drawn garbage wagon. The movie's signature song, *Everyone Says I Love You*, became the title of a 1996 Woody Allen movie.

Although agricultural and forestry schools long predated Huxley, a persuasive case can be made that it was the first dedicated environmental college in the nation, and perhaps in the world. It was, of course, part of a national movement, and so claims of "first" depend on one's definition. The University of California, Berkeley, College of Environmental Design – an architectural and planning school – began in 1959. Vermont's Middlebury College was a pioneer by establishing the nation's first undergraduate environmental studies major in 1965, and Williams College in Massachusetts established its Center for Environmental Studies in 1967.

CONTINUED ON PG.26

Dave Bennink Class of '94

A massive mural adorns the outside wall of the former Cascade Drycleaners in Bellingham. While paintings of a salmon surrounded by Americans Indians, river otters and trees growing in test tubes seem to scream “waste not, want not,” the inside of the building is a different story entirely. Wasted remains of the out-of-business cleaning company still litter the space, remnants that could be split between a junkyard and an antique store.

Dave Bennink sees this relic differently. Ever since Bennink began his reuse career as the first employee at Bellingham’s RE Store, he has been salvaging parts of old buildings.

Bennink grew up in Whatcom County between Bellingham and Mount Baker. As a youth, he remembers watching his parents and other community member’s stand up to a company that was illegally dumping waste into Anderson Creek, which ran through the community. When a Huxley professor came to speak to his class at Mount Baker High School about how they could turn projects like saving Anderson Creek into a career, Bennink jumped at the chance.

Dave attended Huxley from 1991 to 1994, majoring in environmental science with a minor in environmental policy and assessment. For his internship, he was hired on as the RE Store’s first employee. He worked with his manager to create the framework for business.

“I learned how to work at Mount Baker High School,” Bennink said. “But I learned about the environment and so on at Huxley. So I put the two together so I could be a hardworking environmentalist.”



Re-Use Consulting, Bennink’s current company, is based on the values he adopted at the RE Store. He teaches deconstruction companies how to efficiently deconstruct a house or building instead of demolishing it. Bennink said he saves around 75 percent of the buildings’ remnants from the landfill. Even while competing with demolition, which is cheaper and less time intensive, the deconstruction industry is growing. Bennink hopes eventually it will overtake demolition, meaning over 50 percent of U.S. buildings would be deconstructed instead of demolished.

Bennink’s idea has taken off. In 2009 he was awarded the National Building Deconstructor of the Year Award. He has worked with the Olympic Committee in Chicago to deconstruct some buildings to build what the city hoped would be the next Olympic Village. Bennink is also bidding on a project that would train ex-offenders to deconstruct houses, recycling both materials and lives.

Story and Photo by Kaylin Bettinger

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 JEAN MELIOUS
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 HERB WONG
 MING-HO YU
 NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS

Gail Bingham Class of '75

Some young people struggle with direction. Thanks to Huxley College, Gail Bingham found hers, and she has been mediating conflict ever since.

Gail is an environmental peacemaker.

When Bingham entered Stanford University as a freshman in 1968, the campus shut down her second week for antiwar protests. “It was a very dramatic time for young people,” she recalled, “and it forced me to ask, ‘What did I want to use my education for?’ Given the tumult of the time, “I decided I wanted to participate in our country’s ability to resolve differences when we disagree.”

Her instinct for negotiation dated as early as high school, she recalled. “I thought, ‘Why are people attacking each other when they have differences, and why is this upsetting me?’”

Fast-forward five years. Political differences with her conservative father meant his support for Stanford tuition ended. Gail left school to work in theater, including a year in San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury district. Then she heard of Huxley, entering at age twenty-three just as the program was moving into the new Environmental Studies Center.

Having grown up in Seattle, “It was a little bit like coming home.”

Professor Ernst Gayden helped persuade Bingham that a planning degree could move her toward the mediation skills she wanted. Other professors such as Lynn Robbins inspired her. “There was this really, really smart, intellectually curious faculty” that ignited her own passions, she said.

The self-described “hippie girl” lived in a cluster of Huxley-filled houses on 21st Street and so excelled



“It was a little bit like coming home.”

that she won the Thomas H. Huxley award for outstanding student when graduating in 1975. After a brief stint as a planner in Bellingham, she earned a master’s in landscape architecture from the University of California, Berkeley, spent a year on a fellowship in India, and then joined Resolve, a nonprofit, dispute-resolution organization located in Washington, D.C.

Bingham has been a practicing mediator for thirty years, rising to president of Resolve and then moving on to found Civil Dialog Group LLC. She has mediated breakthroughs in the most contentious environmental issues America faces, including wetlands policy, drinking-water protection, and children’s environmental health. Her current work, seeking consensus on the environmental restoration of the Missouri River, involves working with the largest federal advisory committee ever created, with seventy-seven stakeholders including twenty-eight American Indian tribes.

Gail is one of the most prominent mediators in the nation, is the author of numerous publications, and in 2006 won the Mary Parker Follett Award from the Association for Conflict Resolution.

Having experienced both Stanford and Huxley, she appreciates the mentoring she got at the environmental college. “Status is not what in the end makes the undergraduate experience,” she said. “It’s the intellectual curiosity of the faculty and staff and the relationship between them.” And that, she said, is where Huxley excels.

Oliver Lazenby

Photos courtesy of Gail Bingham

Gail Bingham in 1973.

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“I think it was the first environmental college in the world”

However, Western’s plan to establish a separate, science-based “cluster college” dedicated to the environment appears to have been unique. The cluster colleges were designed to be more autonomous than academic departments, with their own deans, faculty, budgets, endowment, and control over curriculum. Huxley’s preliminary planning in 1966, approval in 1968, administrative beginning in the fall of 1969, and first class in 1970 all predate several other schools that began in 1972.

“I think it was the first environmental college in the world,” Flora said.

The idea of a separate college, instead of an institute or department, came from Bunke. He was concerned that Western’s rapid growth was robbing students of the intimacy the small college had long enjoyed, an asset that set it apart from the state’s two biggest universities. Envisioned was the idea of as many as seven to ten cluster colleges. The first three were to be Fairhaven with a liberal arts curriculum, Huxley with environmental studies, and Ethnic Studies.

This organizational plan of smaller colleges within a larger institution can be traced back to Britains’ system at Oxford and Cambridge. In the United States, the idea was being tried at Florida State University, Claremont Colleges, the University of the Pacific at Stockton, and the University of California at Santa Cruz. College education had had a cloistered formality since medieval times, a subculture of lecture and language aimed at an elite. Now higher education was expanding to the masses, and the flood of incoming students was demanding “relevance.” Education would be more intimate and focused. Students would form a community, knowing each other and the teachers with whom they worked.

Fairhaven began with a “living-learning” concept in which even upperclassmen were expected to remain living on campus, possibly with as many as three faculty members in residence among them.

Huxley, in contrast, was planned from the beginning not to have its own dorms, a strategic decision made by a Huxley planning committee that was ratified on Oct. 15, 1967.

The college was also driven by the political quest for an environmental studies building that could survive legislative scrutiny. Western’s science departments were anxious for more space, and Huxley was an excuse to get it.



Huxley Student on Earth Day.
Western Washington University
Libraries Special Collections

The idea for Huxley emerged at Western in 1966 because of interest in the environment and the potential of grant money to fund it. With the student population exploding, the creation of a separate entity was seen as a way to intrigue state legislators in funding new campus construction. Campus planner Barney Goltz dubbed the proposed building, “The Northwest Resources Study and Development Center” and projected a need for 100,000 square feet. This evolved into a \$3.8 million Northwest Environmental Studies Center, just one floor of which was to be initially reserved for a vaguely defined Huxley College.

If the new building was desperately needed, the cluster college that was justifying it was hugely controversial on campus, and Huxley’s birth was a narrow victory worthy of a Machiavelli.

Flora turned out to be the pivotal decision-maker for Bunke’s idea. He was one of several faculty members sent to Florida State to observe the cluster college experiment there, and he took the idea of a “satellite” college to WWSC’s Long Range Planning Committee, on which he served. As initially proposed, it would combine marine biology, freshwater studies, ecology, and environmental pollution with aspects of anthropology, sociology and psychology. In other words, it would try to marry the scientific with the social and political in hopes of solving environmental problems.

Faculty members recognized the difficulty of combining science and politics from the outset. A subcommittee consisting of professors Bob Meade (chair), Don Call, Sea Bong Chang, Michael Mischaikow (a later Huxley interim dean), and David Mason (who would teach at Fairhaven) submitted a report back to the Long Range Planning Committee on April 18, 1967. They recognized the relevance of social studies, but gave a “hard science” definition to the proposed college and foresaw that a major challenge would be the interdisciplinary nature of its proposed research. In 1978, Mason told Clarke that in 1967 he thought there would ideally be two environmental colleges, one of environmental science and one of environmental studies, an organizational split that would be made by Huxley in 1993 by the splitting into two environmental centers. The subcommittee defined environmental science as “that branch of empirical science which treats problems of the physical and biological matrix with which mankind interacts.”



Student Margaret Fleek.
Huxley College archives

The Long Range Planning Committee approved the idea on May 10, 1967, but when the plan reached Western's Academic Council, professors and administrators were evenly split on the idea. While some were enthusiastic, others saw a new cluster college as another layer of bureaucracy that would compete for dollars, students, and faculty with the existing departments of biology, geology, chemistry, and geography. "Environmental science," as a science, really didn't exist yet, some professors complained.

When a vote was taken on May 23, 1967, the Academic Council split in a tie vote. Flora, however, had been appointed acting academic dean, which made him chairman of the Council. "I was the chair, so I cast the tie-breaking vote (in favor)," he recalled.

The Academic Council then appointed a new subcommittee to consider and address concerns before Huxley was forwarded to the Board of Trustees. They met over the summer of 1967 and came up with a proposal different from the Meade committee's plan. Carter Broad of biology was chairman of this new group, which included Call, Chang, and Mischaikow of the first group, and Gediminas Namikas, Frank Raney, and Chuck Ross of geology. This new subcommittee thus had faculty from the departments of biology and geology that would share Huxley's quarters.

The subcommittee proposed that Huxley not offer graduate study, but also would not be a "hard science" institution since "environmental science is not itself a discipline." The professors also declined to accept their mission to outline a curriculum, leaving this to the new Huxley dean and his faculty as reinforcement of Huxley's administrative autonomy. They suggested a 100-credit program, 40 credits to be general education. "The balance of 40 to 60 credits should be a unique Huxley program — seminars, research, and a senior thesis requirement."

They also decided that Huxley would limit admission to juniors and seniors and not have residences. "It will follow the example of Fairhaven, however," Flora wrote, "in that it will have its own faculty and dean and will establish its own curriculum."

Thus, even before its creation, Huxley was handed two very different blueprints by two different academic subcommittees: a "hard science" approach by one, and a vaguer interdisciplinary mission by another that

was no threat to existing science departments, but which had its goals and curriculum still undefined.

Nor was Huxley's political peril over. On Jan. 23, 1968, the Huxley proposal was forwarded to the trustees, but the Faculty Council, a body empowered to review and veto any Academic Council action, was believed to be opposed to Huxley College. The college was threatened again.

But by the time the Faculty Council was ready to take the matter up, the proposal was already on the trustee agenda, "by which time," Clarke wrote, "as President Flora vigorously pointed out, it was statutorily too late for [the Faculty Council] to raise objections."

Flora had become acting president when Bunke abruptly quit in the summer of 1967. At his new presidential desk, Flora now found the Huxley proposal he had just championed. As president of WWSC, he approved it again, and the Board of Trustees followed suit.

Flora finally had the cluster college he personally wanted and was in a position to get it built and staffed.

On July 24, 1968, the Board of Trustees announced plans to go ahead with Huxley. A memo written in June of that year promised that Huxley would "take special advantage of our location, the resources of this area, the academic programs now existing at the college, and the talent of our faculty to contribute to the study and development of the area's resources."

Then it was time to seek funding in Olympia. Flora got carried away in his enthusiasm in presenting the idea to Governor Dan Evans, eating up fifteen minutes, until Evans finally interrupted. "I've heard enough, let's move on to something else." There was no need for debate. Environmentalism was, briefly, a bipartisan goal with broad support from the American public, and the need for more college space was pressing. Huxley was in the budget and on its way to hosting its first classes in 1970. Ground would be broken on the new building in May of 1971, and what would ultimately be called the Environmental Studies Center would be dedicated in February of 1974.



The cluster colleges were born small. Fairhaven College began with 13 students in a house south of the Music Building in 1967. In 1968 it

moved to Edens Hall and then, as construction was completed, made the transition to its own campus during the 1969-70 academic year.

Huxley would start with 63 students in 1970. But its actual birth came in 1969 when Gene Miller was given an office in a corner of Old Main and a directive to begin planning. Miller and key faculty held a retreat at Rosario Resort on Orcas Island to map out a curriculum. The participants were Kraft of biology, Maury Schwartz of geology, Chang of chemistry, Mischaikow of economics, Ivan Palmblad, (an ecologist from Utah State), Manfred Vernon of political science, and Ming Ho Yu of food science and toxicology. Vernon and Yu would ultimately teach at Huxley.

It was an interdisciplinary group. For the first time, the disciplines of biology, geology, chemistry, and physics would be combined in a holistic way to tackle a holistic problem, the environment. Geography, sociology, and political science would be stirred into the mix. The brew was so intoxicating that the new college had 400 applications for faculty positions.

“Huxley was established as an upper-division college,” Miller said. “Recommended preparation was one year of chemistry, physics, and biology. An understanding of elementary calculus was also suggested.”

The planners laid out a three-step academic program. Students would all take a set of core courses, which in 1971 were Man, Resources, and Pollution; Ecological Awareness; Man, Evolution, and Ecology; Man, Environment, and Social Values; and Environmental Law and Political Action. Clearly the initial emphasis was on addressing environmental problems with social and political change, not new science research.

Students would spend all day Thursdays on a “problem series” addressing specific environmental issues, such as a survey of Chuckanut Bay, erosion on Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, and “the origin and development of environmental organizations.”

There were seminars on a host of topics, such as “Mathematics for Biologists.”

Finally, students would pick concentrations (or majors) such as Ecosystems Analysis, Environmental Planning, and Environmental Education.

Fairhaven had done away with letter grading entirely, faculty giving written evaluations. Western’s main campus retained the traditional A-F grading system. Huxley adopted a system in between. It graded A-C, and “no



Huxley's first dean, Gene Miller, speaks at the dedication of the Environmental Studies Center in 1974. *Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections*

entry” for students failing to achieve C-level work. In other words, you couldn’t flunk, and Huxley initially gained an unenviable — and arguably undeserved — reputation as a place of easy grading with standards more lax than the traditional science departments.

Both the curriculum and grading would eventually prove controversial, but the immediate mood was of excitement and possibility. Huxley wasn’t just a new college, it was a new way of looking at science and society, of going from problem study to problem solution, of students learning by doing instead of just learning by listening. It would be engaged.

Professors occupied two residences the university had acquired when expanding its property southward, the Zimmerman and Mitchell houses on 21st Street. Classes for that first group of sixty-three students were held wherever campus space was available. Bert Webber, who would become one of Huxley’s best-known professors, was assistant dean.

A third cluster college, Ethnic Studies, was approved in October of 1969. Elsewhere in Washington, The Evergreen State College, modeled in part on Fairhaven, would open in 1971. It was a period of bold (some would say trendy) experimentation in Washington higher education that tried to meet student demands for schooling that was “relevant” and innovative.

The 1970 timing of Huxley’s first classes seemed appropriate. On Jan. 1 of that year, President Nixon signed into law the National Environmental Policy Act, creating the need for environmental review before federal projects could proceed. On April 22, a nationwide observance of Earth Day began, an idea first announced at a Seattle conference the year before by Wisconsin Sen. Nelson. This first observance was a bipartisan, activist-industry observance. Congress adjourned for the day, and more than 500 of its members attended environmental “teach-ins.” New York City banned traffic from a section of Fifth Avenue for two hours. The United Auto Workers led a parade through St. Louis featuring a smog-free car. PBS devoted the entire day to environmental programming. Reynolds Aluminum sent trucks to colleges in 14 states to pick up aluminum cans collected at “trash-ins.”

On Dec. 2, 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency was created, and at the end of that year the Clean Air Act was passed.

Huxley’s timing was perfect. Now it needed a permanent home.

Brian Blix Class of '81

While hiking through Alaska in 1978, Brian Blix fell in love twice: with Wendy Williams, and with the idea of returning with her to Huxley College. Although his romance with Williams ended, Blix's interest in the environment grew at Huxley, manifesting itself in the foundation of the college's Planet magazine.

Blix flunked his last semester at Wheaton College in 1970, but eight years later wanted to return to college to earn a degree to aid his fight for environmental improvements in Alaska.

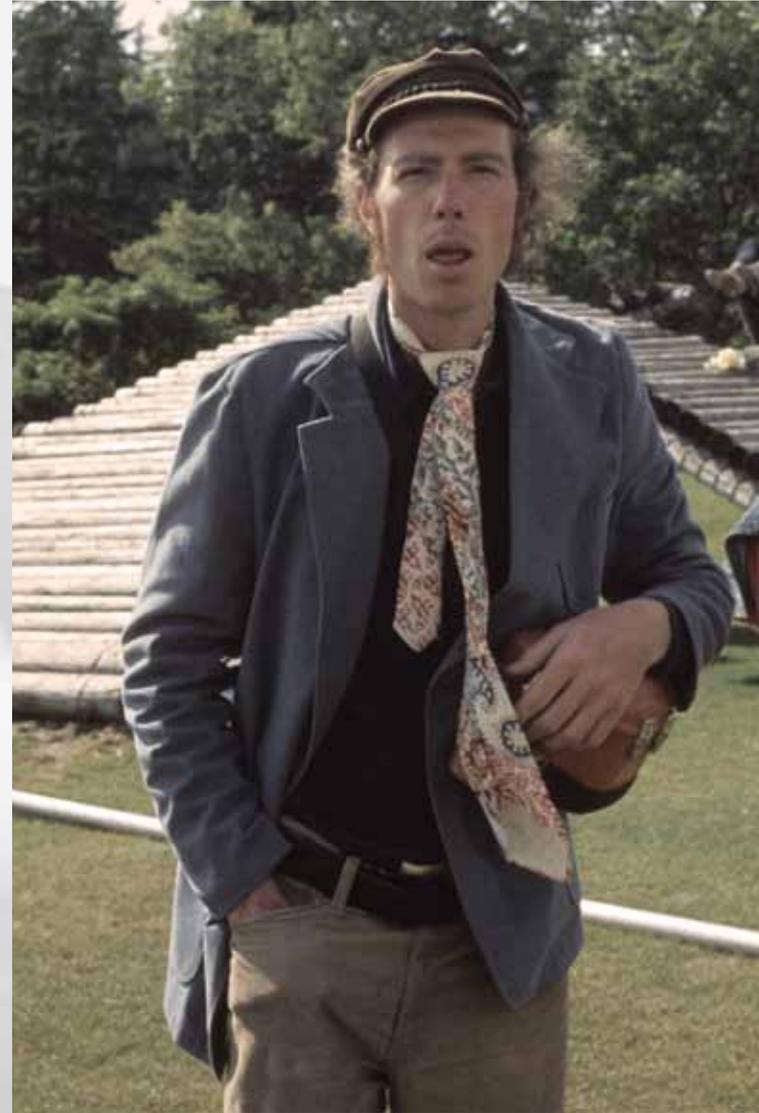
After leaving Wheaton, Blix had moved to Haines, Alaska, and become president of the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council. He'd written some incendiary letters to the editor of the Lynn Canal News and articles in the SEACC newsletter.

"I had this idea of converting rednecks into environmentalists," Blix said. "I was extremely successful at stirring up hornet nests."

At Huxley, Blix again lacked enthusiasm for his studies, spending his free time planning and executing pranks with his accomplice, future Huxley faculty member Gene Myers.

It wasn't until the end of his first year at Huxley that he found an outlet for his passion, writing. He wrote a critique of the Huxley Humus, Huxley's environmental newsletter, calling "Humus" a lowly name and advocating upgrading the quality of its contents. After reading his critique, professor John Miles asked Blix to edit the Humus the following year. Blix accepted the challenge.

He changed the name to The Monthly Planet (now just The Planet). Lacking skills in layout and



"Whether it's the environment or politics, if I really want to have an impact, the best way is to have positive energy, be creative and be patient."

publishing, he used a lot of Scotch tape and Wite-Out that year. He said editing The Monthly Planet was both his most inspiring and expiring experience at Huxley, recalling his post-deadline exhaustion.

Blix never married nor had children, so he thinks of the magazine as his only child. He says he is impressed by how far it has come and considers The Monthly Planet a "mere acorn compared to the sturdy oak tree The Planet is now."

After graduating from Huxley in 1981, Blix returned to Alaska but could not find work due to his radical reputation. Blix traveled to Mexico. There he contracted hepatitis. During his recovery, Blix hiked through the Golden Gate area and discovered the Green Gulch Farm Zen Center. Since then, Blix has followed a spiritual path, learning how to live in harmony with people.

"I've realized I can influence a lot more people when I'm not frustrated with my own life and what I'm doing," Blix said. "Whether it's the environment or politics, if I really want to have an impact, the best way is to have positive energy, be creative and be patient."

Blix is now a member of Berkeley Zen Center and visits Tassajara Zen regularly. He is currently developing his skills in photography and rediscovering his talent for writing, planning to use both media to convey the world's natural beauty.

Story and photo by Devon Fredericksen

Left: Photo courtesy of Jenny Hahn

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Chris Brewer Class of '78

When Chris Brewer enrolled at Western in 1971, she had every intention of leaving with a degree in music. In seventh grade, a math teacher convinced her that girls were much better suited for things like English and art than science or math, so she pursued music. There was just one hitch in the plan: She was too curious for her own good. Science called to her.

“My teacher didn’t have any right to tell me that, but I really didn’t have any right to believe it,” she said. “So there was a point at which I said, ‘You know what? I’m not going to believe it anymore.’ I said, ‘OK, I’ll do science—because I can.’”

After a year-and-a-half break from college, during which she visited her geologist father in Hawaii and became fascinated with the natural world, she chose Huxley when returning to WWU. In 1978, seven years after starting college as a music education major, Brewer graduated with a degree in environmental studies, a minor in biology, and an interdisciplinary understanding.

Then she blended her passions. Brewer worked in natural resources for the Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service. In 1982, she combined her backgrounds in science and music to start her own business, LifeSounds. She trains teachers and mentors to integrate music into education and to use it for personal wellness health. She has authored eight books, mostly on the role of music and the arts in education.

Brewer earned a master’s degree in music therapeutics from Columbia Pacific University in



1991, and after teaching at schools around the country, she finally returned “home” to Bellingham in 2004. Now she’s an instructor and adviser at Fairhaven College, where she lectures on topics related to music and the mind. She recognizes the unique trajectory of her post-Huxley career path, but she wouldn’t have it any other way.

“I can’t tell you how many times I’ve acknowledged that even though I didn’t stay in resource management, it’s all about resource management - whether it’s humans or brains or ecology or children, [whom I believe are] our greatest resource,” she said. “While I live ecologically and support ecological movements, I felt it was important to work with the human element, so that’s where I ended up.”

Brewer thanks Huxley for helping her find her niche and ways to combine art and science. With a firm understanding of ecological systems, she could apply the same principles to any other field. That’s when opportunities opened, and she hopes today’s college students make the same discovery in their own ways.

“I’ve told so many people about the way I blend the sciences and art, and so many people say they can’t do it,” she said. “It’s just a shame to think that. That’s the big thing - to be able to say to yourself, ‘I can do anything that I decide to do, but it has to be of value to me, and I have to want to do it.’”

James Andrews

Photo courtesy of Chris Brewer

TROY ABEL
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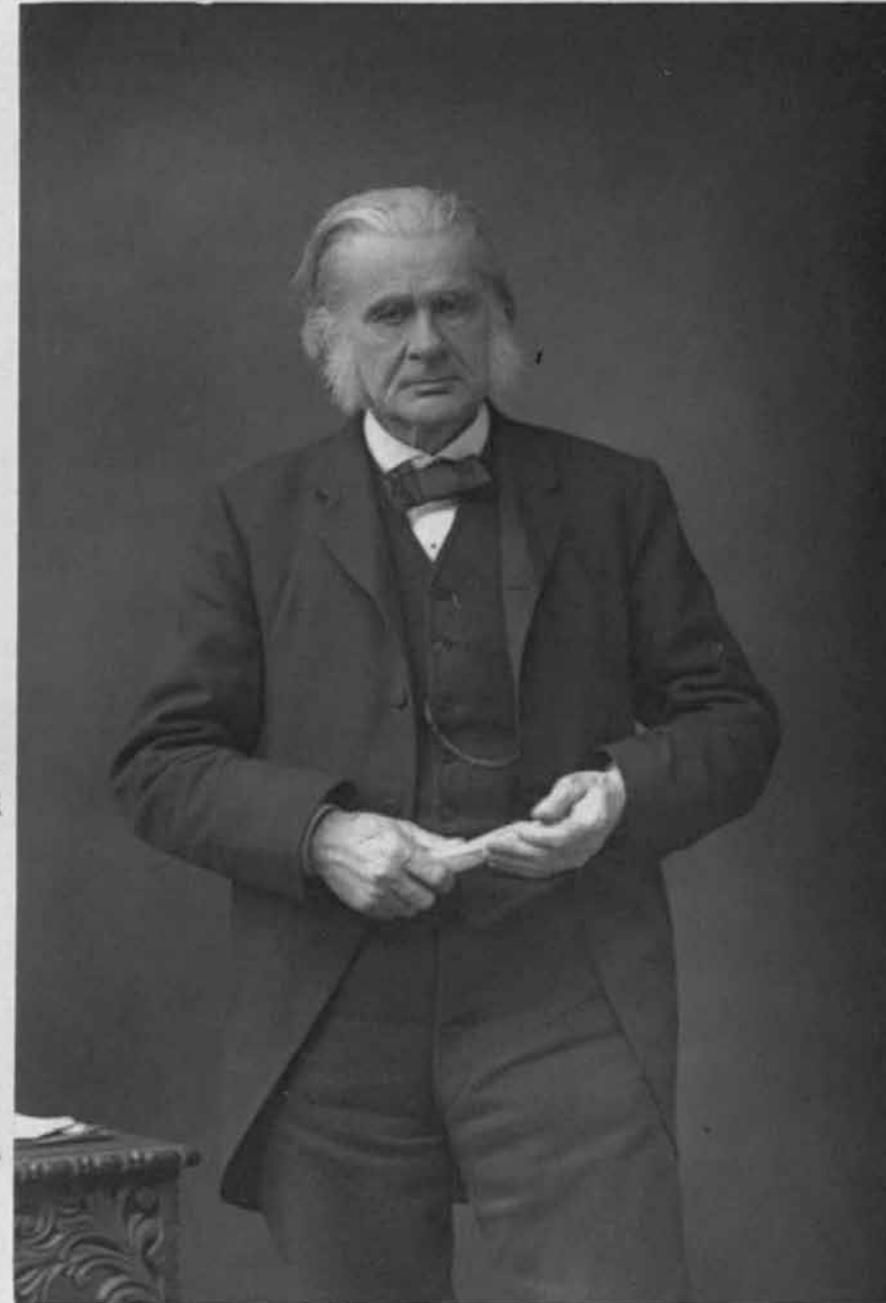
1980 May 18

Mount St. Helens erupts. Natural recovery would advance thinking about ecosystem management.

1981

Vice President George Bush's Task Force on Regulatory Relief proposes to relax or eliminate the leaded-gas phaseout.

Congress passes the Coastal Barriers Resources Act and Nuclear Waste Policy Act.



Thomas Henry Huxley
ca. 1883

CHAPTER TWO

WHO WAS THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY?

The nineteenth-century British scientist whom Huxley College is named for is just one member of a notable family that included famous grandchildren Julian Huxley, a twentieth-century ecologist, and novelist Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World*. But Thomas Henry Huxley's fierce defense of Darwin's theory of evolution, his brilliance as a researcher, and his insistence on rationalism over blind belief make him a particularly appropriate guiding light for the college.

"There have been far greater scientists, even in England," journalist H.L. Mencken judged in 1925, "but there has never been a scientist who was a greater man."

Huxley was called "Darwin's bulldog," and indeed at the peak of his career he had the strong jaw, mutton-chop whiskers, Walter Matthau frown, and skeptical eyes that fit the caricature. But he did far more than ride shotgun for the more famous Darwin. He became a brilliant comparative analyst of fossil bones, studying the relationship of apes to humans, and birds to dinosaurs. His conclusion that birds likely descended from carnivorous dinosaurs was more than a century ahead of its popular acceptance through such movies as *Jurassic Park*. His classification of invertebrates clarified relationships that until then were poorly understood. Largely self-taught, he was a vigorous proponent of scientific education, and not just of England's elite but her masses. He also spoke out strongly for interdisciplinary education and knowledge. "Science and literature are not two things, but two sides of one thing," Huxley wrote.

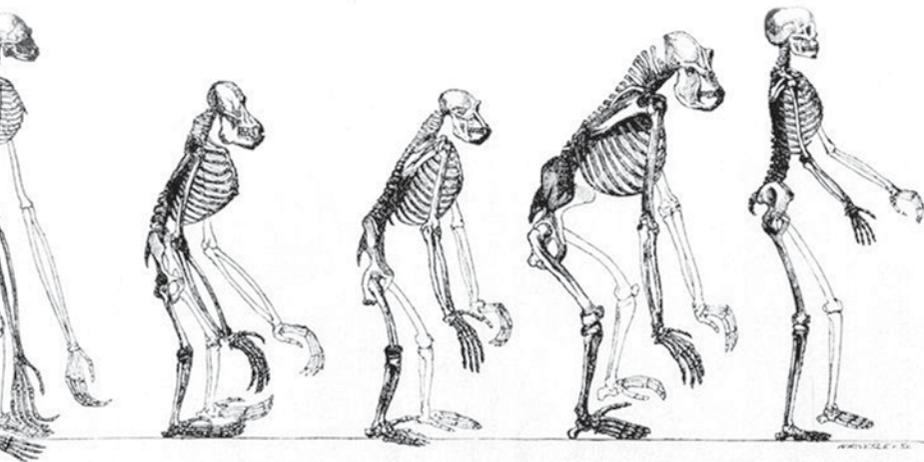
Born May 4, 1825, as the second youngest of eight children, Huxley was the son of a literate, middleclass family that fell on hard times when the

father lost a job as a mathematics teacher. Thomas left school at age ten after only two years of formal schooling, but he was a genius determined to learn. He read comprehensively and taught himself German, Latin, and Greek. His curiosity ranged from science to literature to history. He was interdisciplinary long before the phrase was coined.

Today's scientific career path of degrees and university appointments was not invented yet, and men interested in science tended to become medical doctors. Huxley's potential was recognized and he apprenticed for short periods to medical practitioners, eventually winning a small scholarship to Charing Cross Hospital. By age twenty he had published his first scientific paper. But, considered too young yet to apply for a surgical license, he was made an assistant surgeon's mate on *HMS Rattlesnake* on a four-year surveying voyage to Australia and New Guinea.

Huxley's scientific work on that voyage won acclaim, and by age twenty-five he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. Beginning in 1854 he was a professor of natural history at the Royal School of Mines and held numerous other appointments at prestigious institutions before retiring in 1885 after a bout with depression. Contemporary biographers suspect Huxley was at least mildly bipolar; his family has a history of mental illness as well as genius.

Huxley was an early skeptic of evolution, but Darwin set out to quietly persuade him before the latter's work was actually published, sharing his writings as they developed. As a result, Huxley favorably reviewed *The Origin of Species* in 1859 and then, to defend Darwin, famously debated Bishop Wilberforce at Oxford University Museum in 1860. "I am Darwin's bulldog," Huxley declared. When Wilberforce sarcastically asked during the debate if Huxley was descended from an ape on his mother's or his father's side, T.H. famously replied, in ornate Victorian prose: "If the question is would I rather have a miserable ape for a grandfather or a man highly endowed by nature and possessed of great means of influence, and yet who employs these faculties and influence for the mere purpose of introducing ridicule into a grave scientific discussion, I unhesitatingly affirm my preference for the ape." The quip was repeated across England as a spirited defense of critical and open thinking. Huxley's willingness to speak in public and take a political approach to promoting science was



arguably the intellectual genesis behind the idea of an interdisciplinary, problem-tackling Huxley College. Huxley the college was Huxley the man's philosophy poured into concrete and populated with intellectually enthused faculty and students.

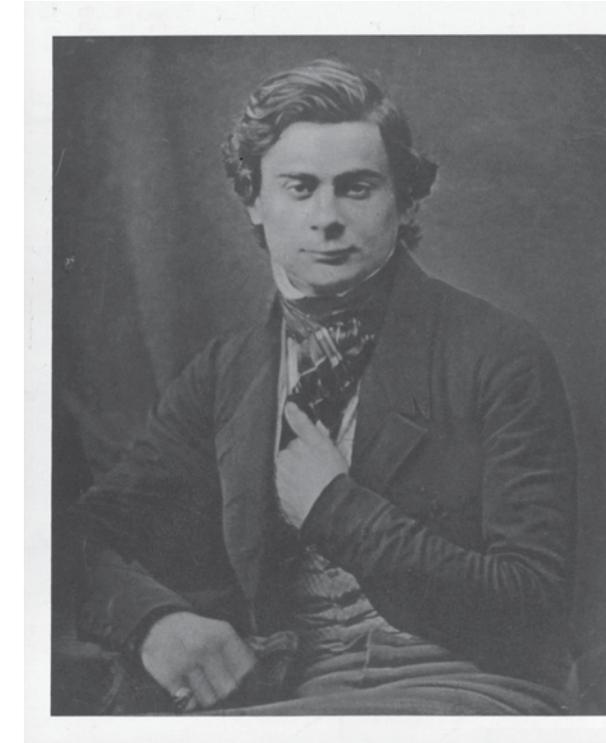
Huxley was also the first science popularizer. He was the Carl Sagan of his day.

Huxley was actually more cautious than Darwin; he was an empiricist who wanted to observe evolution occurring in nature before fully committing to the sweeping theory of natural selection. He helped found the journal *Nature*, and his method of teaching was not grand theory but rather minute examination of preserved specimens. His aim was to drive home the scientific method, not scientific speculation. If the reader ever dissected a frog in school, this concept of biological instruction came directly from Huxley, and has held sway for more than a century.

When helping direct British schools, he called science "organized common sense." He was a lifelong religious agnostic and opponent of organized religion, especially Catholicism, who nonetheless supported the reading of the Bible in public schools for its moral lessons. He did, however, propose an edited Bible trimmed of "statements to which men of science absolutely and entirely demur." This idea was rejected by the London School Board.

Huxley was a science communicator. He wrote regularly for popular magazines, created lectures for workingmen, and distributed some of his scientific talks as pamphlets. He insisted social class was no obstacle to learning, and refused to talk down to his audience. In 1868 he shocked readers by proposing that life was nothing more than "the result of the molecular forces on the protoplasm that displays it," an idea that would still upset many people today. He was a fearless thinker who dismissed religion as the source of moral authority but said humans differed from animals in having to make ethical choices. He called Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea that men are naturally free and equal, "utterly baseless fiction." He went where intellect took him, conventional thinking be damned.

Huxley, in other words, would make a fine Huxley professor.



Above: The Young Henry Huxley. ca. 1852

Left: Cover lithuanisation on Huxley's book, *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*, published in 1863.



CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCRETE COCOON

A home for Huxley College represented both a problem and an opportunity. The problem was designing a structure for a cluster college that was little more than an idea when architectural planning began in 1968: It was a school with no staff, no students, and no curriculum. The opportunity, however, was to produce something as innovative as Huxley itself and to begin implementing a south campus master plan for a college that had tripled in size in a decade and showed no signs of slowing down.

While Western Washington University boasts one of the most scenic campus locations in the United States, the geology of its site has made architectural planning a challenge. The Viking Union is built in part on old seams of coal, and Red Square on a peat bog. “Almost all of Western’s buildings stand on exotic foundation systems,” campus architect Barney Goltz explained in a 1972 press release. “Wood pilings, not unlike the foundations under buildings in Venice, support the Carver Gym and the Humanities Building. Hollow steel pipes filled with concrete support the part of Miller Hall fronting on the Square, and parts of Wilson Library. The Square is underlain with a thick layer of peat. The brick paving system was designed to make it easier to correct settlement of this unstable soil as it occurs.”

Yet the elongated site between two ridges also has offered remarkable architectural opportunity. In the 1960s, Western brought together a visionary combination of like-minded Seattle architects — Ibsen Nelsen for the Huxley projects, Paul Kirk for Fairhaven, and Fred Bassetti for the Viking Union and Ridgeway dorms — who combined tried to infuse Western with a renaissance theme. As enrollment tripled and construction exploded, the initial idea was unification by brick. Nelsen and Kirk,

CONTINUED ON PG. 46

Carlos Buhler Class of '78

When Carlos Buhler attended Huxley College, he already knew he wanted to go to the top.

Of the mountain, that is.

Buhler became hooked on climbing at age fifteen while attending the National Outdoor Leadership School in Wyoming, where he began to transform from the “pudgy and unathletic” boy he describes as his youth. He climbed Pyramid Peak.

In the decades since, he's been at the peak of his peculiar profession, summiting Mount Everest on new, difficult routes and becoming the first American to climb Kanchenjunga in the Himalayas, the third-highest peak in the world.

Carlos, of German and Spanish Basque descent, is a 1978 graduate of Huxley and a winner of a Distinguished Alumni Award. He's made more than three dozen major ascents on five continents and was rated one of the eleven best American climbers by Climbing Magazine. He specializes in daunting climbs with small teams and no oxygen.

Buhler supports himself financially as a motivational speaker to corporations, explaining how climbing skills such as preparation, organization, teamwork, and goal-setting can be applied to business challenges.

Climbing Magazine wrote that he carried in his wallet an inspirational quote that continued to drive him after summiting Everest. “The people who succeed and do not push on to a greater failure are the spiritual middle-classers. Their stopping at success is the proof of their compromising insignificance. How petty their dreams must have been.”

Mount Everest
Photo by Anders Martinussen



Buhler became fluent in Spanish while spending two years in Spain, first as a high school student and then at the University of Barcelona in 1972. There he began climbing in the Pyrenees and the Alps. He then attended Huxley, where he managed to weave his passion into his course work.

He devised an independent study project based on climbing and wrote a thirty-page paper called “Interpersonal and Group Relationships as a Function of Mountaineering Stress.”

It worked: Buhler is known for his management of climbing groups.

Upon graduation, he focused on peaks in the Andes and then the Himalayas. While he brushed death several times, what fascinated him was not so much the physical challenge as the psychological one. “Climbing in the Himalaya is really a study in interpersonal relations - not climbing,” he told the magazine. “The amount of time you actually spend climbing compared to the amount of time planning is the most inefficient expenditure of time you can imagine.”

Buhler's mother actually trailed him to Mount Everest in 1983, staying at base camp to keep an eye on him and remind him not to get killed.

Now he lives with his wife in Bozeman, Montana, where he works as a climbing consultant and speaker, combining the philosophical with the physical.

Even after being forced to turn around 100 meters short of the summit of the Himalayan peak Makalu, fifth-highest in the world, he felt good about the prudent decision and the experience of having tried.

“Last night I went out and bayed like a coyote at Makalu,” he wrote back at base camp. “I like it here. I feel changed. Even after nearly two and a half months out here, I feel no hurry to return anywhere. I like the food, I like the sun . . . I've given up on the mountain.”

William Dietrich
Photos courtesy of Carlos Buhler

TROY ABEL
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OLIVER WILGRESS
ROBERT WISSMAR
HERB WONG
MING-HO YU
NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS

Kurt Creager Class of '79

When Kurt Creager enrolled in college, he didn't just want to sit in a classroom, theorizing. He wanted to see the tangible results of environmental planning.

Through a Huxley College internship, Creager helped conduct a biophysical assessment of Portage Island in Bellingham Bay. The study eventually led to the legal purchase of the island by the Lummi Tribal Council. This project helped earn Creager immediate recognition for his work in environmental planning and secured him a job offer before he graduated from Huxley in 1979.

Creager's interdisciplinary education helped him establish a strong repertoire of skills, fusing environmental ethics with sound economic and developmental planning.

"If you have an environmental ethic, you see the interconnectivity and richness of things," Creager said. "You look at the rich areas between ecosystems, the interconnections between economics and planning, or design and development, or policy and implementation. To engender the most creativity and productivity, you look for the linkages."

While at Huxley, Creager worked full-time to support his wife and daughter, and in his spare time, he studied. Creager lived in design studios much of the school year. His 6-year-old daughter, Jessica, attended school with him frequently, camping out in the back of the studio after her classes and absorbing lessons on 3-Point Perspective Rendering. With that exposure, perhaps it was no surprise when she earned fine arts degrees at the University of Washington in painting and photography.

"If you have an environmental ethic, you see the interconnectivity and richness of things,"



"Like many working students, my degree was earned by the whole family, especially my wife, Barbara," Creager said.

After graduating from Huxley with a self-tailored degree in environmental planning and architectural graphics, Creager began his career in the private sector in Seattle. He then became the chief of housing and economic development for Metropolitan King County. During that time, he created the Housing Opportunity Fund, which has since invested in over 9,000 affordable housing units.

Creager spent the next fifteen years as the CEO of the Vancouver Housing Authority in Vancouver,

Washington, helping to shape the agency into a sustainable local housing provider. He is the past president of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials in Washington, D.C., and is currently the director of the Arizona State University Stardust Center for Affordable Homes and the Family. Creager is a graduate of the University of Washington's Cascade Management Institute and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where he was a Fannie Mae Fellow. He has taught at the undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels, including at Change Management, a seminar at the Global Institute of Sustainability.

Creager has also founded Urbanist Solutions LLC, a sustainable housing and development consultancy, where he continues to merge community master plans with workforce housing and transit-oriented planning.

Creager's affordable-housing projects have earned him national and international recognition. He attributes his success to an ability to adapt.

"Opportunities presented themselves and I was consistently willing to push myself outside of my comfort zone," Creager said. "Every time I made a move, I made a stretch. But every time I made a stretch, it was highly rewarding."

Devon Fredericksen

Photo Courtesy of Kurt Creager

TROY ABEL
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however, decided to push the envelope and try to trim long-range costs by building with poured concrete.

Construction of Fairhaven College came first, in a wooded valley at the foot of Sehome Hill. Additional cluster colleges, if invented, were initially intended for placement south of Fairhaven, where Outback Farm, the Buchanan Towers dormitories, and the athletic fields are today. (Western's main campus totaled 173 acres in 2010.) Between Fairhaven and the main campus was ten acres of undeveloped land that would be filled in with campus expansion of science buildings under a master plan headed by consulting architect G.R. Bartholick Jr. Huxley was to be a tenant in the first of these new buildings, the 100,000-square-foot, \$3.5 million Northwest Environmental Studies Center. (Western's campus academic space totaled about 1.8 million square feet, in thirty-three buildings, in 2010.)

Next-door would go a social sciences building that would eventually be named Arntzen Hall. According to an oral history interview with Richard Lee Francis, a Western professor emeritus of English with a strong interest in campus architecture, Nelsen explained that his original vision for the Huxley area never came to fruition. "Well, you know, it's only half a building," Nelsen told Francis in explanation of Arntzen Hall. Facing Arntzen was to be a second building mirroring its shape: vertical on the plaza side and sloping toward the Ridgeway rise. This manmade hump-in-a-valley between Sehome and Ridgeway hills would be peaked by the glass atrium that would serve as an open-air galleria for graduation and other ceremonies. The galleria would step down the hill to the south and link to another building to complement the Environmental Studies Center.

"It would have complimented Sehome Hill on one side and the hill on which Bassetti's Ridgeway Complex sits on the other," Francis recounted. "There was this curious half-built building, and that's what remains."

Nelsen was equally disappointed with what budget problems had done to the Environmental Studies Center. "He'd say, 'What have they done to the interior?' because he became concerned," Francis said. "That was the building that we finished on the outside but did not have enough money to finish inside, so the top floors of the building were never done at the time the exterior was done. That led to other problems later on."



Above: Aerial view of the expanding Western campus and Environmental Studies Center construction, 1971. *Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections*

Left: Between Environmental Studies and Arntzen. *Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections*

Nelsen (who died in 2001) was commissioned to oversee the entire south campus plan. The architect had toured the renaissance towns of Italy and persuaded Western's administrators to model Red Square after the campo in towns like Sienna. The brick of surrounding buildings carries down to the plaza itself, and colonnades on the modern structures echo those of the Mediterranean. Nelsen's dream was to mesh the best of traditional and modern design.

It was this architect who was selected to design the new Environmental Studies Center, and he decided to extend his theme in a radical way. The building's south colonnade, openings, balcony and rectangular form would echo Italy, he wrote. "Windows and other openings vary and will not be monotonously repetitious," Nelsen wrote. "The building in this sense thus has much in common with Renaissance buildings."

But the structure would be cast in the fad building material of the late 1960s: concrete. Nelsen wrote that exposed concrete "can endure wear and abuse indefinitely and will age with dignity." It was supposed to "produce the harmony of design that is, in fact, what the manmade environment must be if our civilization is to survive as civil rather than decline further into the crude and uncouth."

"It has, as well," he wrote, "a carefully thought-out construction system that will relate it to buildings subsequently to be built in the area."

The structure would be shared with geology, marine biology, and the Institute for Freshwater Studies. And with the success and survival of Huxley far from assured, it would be designed with maximum flexibility in case the new college disappeared or, conversely, grew to its maximum planned size of 700 students and forty faculty. Pipes would be exposed. Interior lab walls did not bear structural weight and could, theoretically, be moved.

Environmental Studies would be as quick-changing as the hectic society that had spawned it.

Huxley College offices were allocated just 3,000 square feet in the initial design, or about 3 percent of the gross square footage of the gigantic structure. "Because the program for the Huxley College was being formed at the same time the building was being planned, maximum flexibility of laboratory space was required," Nelsen's firm wrote in planning documents.

Western's second cluster college thus had a very different physical presence than the first. Fairhaven was designed as a self-contained residential campus deliberately separate from the main university. Huxley, emphasizing its interdisciplinary mission, would share a building with other departments and have no housing, and its students would be within a ten-minute walking distance of other Western classes. It represented a new science but nonetheless was one of the sciences, and its headquarters would be the first anchor of an intended science complex that would spread beyond Carver Gym. While Fairhaven College was arguably lord of its physical domain — at least until its initial “living-learning” philosophy was abandoned and its dorms were populated largely by non-Fairhaven students — Huxley was a tenant in a larger building in which no single college administrative unit had complete control.

Two psychological constants spun out of this planning.

First, Huxley as a separate institution was, and is, relatively invisible. It occupies a floor, not its own castle. There is not even a prominent sign outside announcing its existence.

Second, the college never had sufficient space in the new building to unite its faculty in offices and its students in adjacent classrooms. The physical fragmentation arguably contributed to the curricular debates and ultimate administrative division into two departments that have been a long, dreary fact of its history. Complaints that Huxley failed to sustain an atmosphere of fully inclusive “community” are as old as the college itself and stem partly from fundamental architectural and budgetary decisions.

Designer's visions frequently collided with political realities. Carver Gym was initially supposed to have a brick facade to blend better with the rest of Western's campus, but this was jettisoned to save money. The Environmental Studies Center was also a compromise in that it was to be an example of cost-effective modern architecture. By building in concrete instead of brick, leaving some laboratory space uncompleted for later use, and dispensing with interior finishes on the concrete walls, it was built for \$28 a square foot, Nelsen calculated, compared to an average of \$50 per square foot for science buildings nationally.

The building's construction served important political purposes, however. If Huxley was an excuse for the Legislature to fund an expansion of



Above: The greenhouses atop the Environmental Studies Center, 1978. *Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections*

Left: Four of the thirty-six ancient life symbols that adorn the building. *By artist Eric Ibsen*

Western's physical plant, the building was also an excuse for Huxley: a way to cast an organizational idea in concrete. The Environmental Sciences Center was also used as an excuse to secure Flora's dream of establishing a marine sciences center for Western at Shannon Point in Anacortes. The Legislature was unlikely to approve two separate projects, so campus architect Barney Goltz — later a state senator — suggested to Flora that they combine the request for Shannon Point with the appropriation request for Environmental Sciences, getting both complexes approved as “one” project. It worked.

Nelsen's vision included civilizing touches. Pottery Northwest produced thirty-six ceramic tiles embedded in the concrete. “The idea was to use ancient life symbols, which we thought were very appropriate to an environmental studies center,” Nelsen said. “The tiles depict ancient Egyptian scarabs, or beetle designs, and derivations of centuries-old Japanese art.” However, they were so late in being manufactured that installation was not completed until 1975, two years after the college began using parts of the building, and are so small and innocuous that their aesthetic impact is slight.

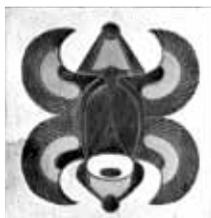
A continuous greenhouse was built on the south side of the fifth floor. However, it was underutilized for experiments and after two decades was converted into (frequently hot, leaky, and drafty) offices for the Environmental Sciences Department.

Glass skylights flooded the concrete interior with light. The ground floor, with its colorful piping, was expected to be a socializing center for students. So was the fifth-floor balcony facing south. “It is not hard to imagine it,” Nelsen wrote, “with its sunny rooftop exposure providing pleasant noontime seminar and bag lunch space not only for Huxley students but for other Western students.”

In practice, this palazzo in the sky proved hot in the sun, wet in the rain, and windy. No one used it, and in fact all the balconies in Huxley's pair of buildings are almost entirely unused four decades later. Students do use the chairs and couches at the base of the soaring atrium, however.

Arntzen Hall next-door, begun in 1972 and completed in the summer of 1974, was also supposed to echo the forms of Renaissance Italy while paying homage to its Northwest terrain. The east side of the building was

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Sam Cushman Class of '97

Huxley graduate student Sam Cushman's plan: Look for tiger habitat. In Siberia. While not knowing a word of Russian.

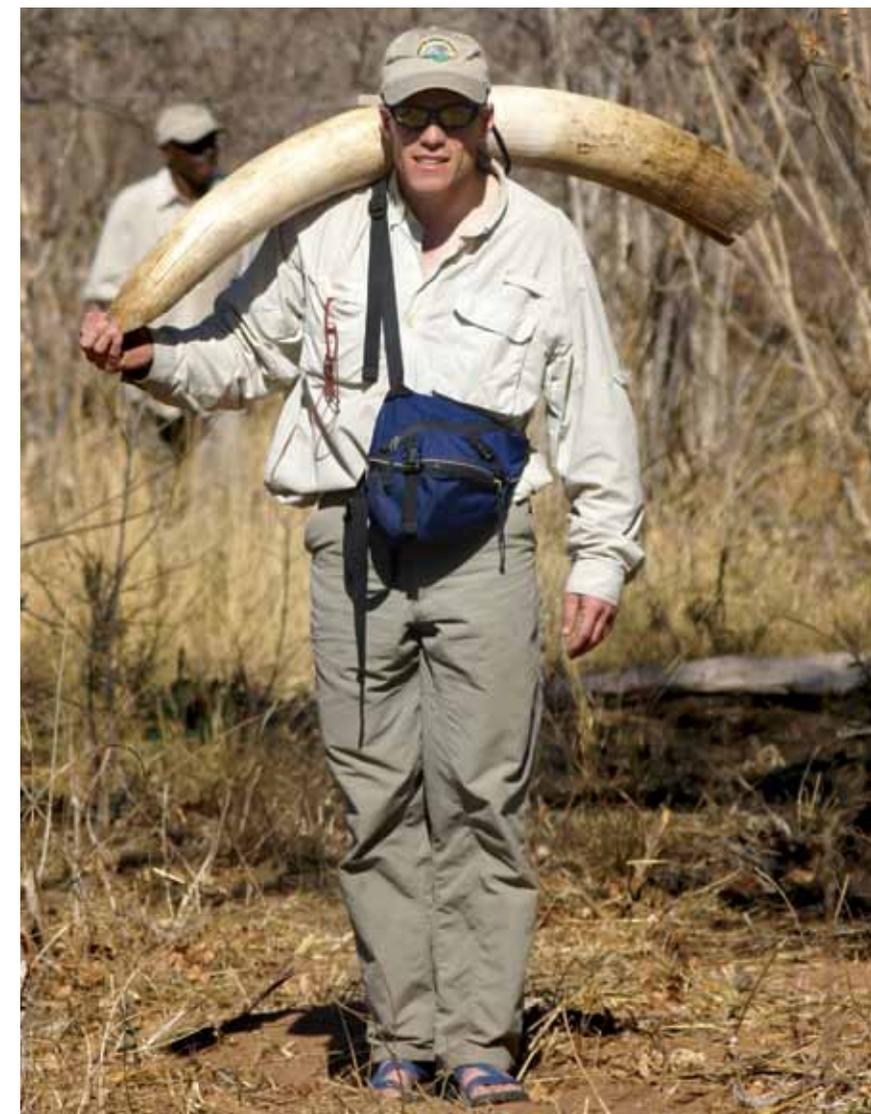
Hey, it's Huxley. It worked.

"I didn't have any idea what I was getting into," said Cushman, who earned his masters from Huxley in 1997 and now works as a research landscape ecologist with the Rocky Mountain Research Station, based in Missoula. "But I was very well prepared."

Sam earned his undergraduate degree at The Evergreen State College in Olympia and came to Huxley to work with forest ecology professor David Wallin. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Huxley Dean Brad Smith had established a relationship with Russia's Far Eastern University in Vladivostok, and Cushman decided to plot habitat conditions for the Siberian tiger using remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems.

He flew to Siberia, linked up with Russian scientist Eugene Shvetsov who would serve as translator, and plunged into the wilderness with a backpack and modern instruments. The two didn't see any of the rare and elusive tigers, but they made valuable contributions to an understanding of tiger habitat, all while dealing with weather, bugs, and cultural gaps.

"Huxley is what you make it," Cushman said. Wallin encouraged his student's sense of adventure. "Dave was both demanding and helpful as an adviser."



Sam did additional doctoral work at the University of Massachusetts, and went on to study carnivores in Nepal, elephants in Botswana, birds in Oregon, and salamanders in Massachusetts. His work presently takes him across the West, from his native Olympia to Arizona.

He studies the interaction of ecosystems, human landscape management, and natural disturbances such as fires, insects, or drought. Cushman uses the latest satellite and mapping techniques to make sense out of what is going on.

He's produced a host of scientific papers and book contributions since leaving Huxley. In 2006 he received the Forest Service's Honor Award for Early Career Science, recognition of the fact by his early thirties he had co-authored two landscape ecology books. He has a third in preparation.

He's also won the Presidential Early Career Award in Science and Engineering, the Elsevier Best Paper 2005-2008 Award, a "most cited author" award from the journal Biological Conservation, and a Forest Service award for cutting-edge use of technology in climate change planning.

Equally at home in front of a computer or on the trail, Sam spends much of his time in the field studying forests that are quickly changing as warming temperatures pose new challenges.

Cushman is the kind of young scientist who would excel anywhere, but he appreciates his choice of a master's program. "Huxley was fabulous for me," he said. "I really benefitted from the quality of the instructors and the rigor of the course work."

William Dietrich

Right: Sam Cushman salvages ivory while campaigning against elephant poachers in Africa.

Courtesy of Sam Cushman

TROY ABEL
 JAMES ALBERS
 ANDREW BACH
 GIGI BERARDI
 RICHARD BERG
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 MING-HO YU
 NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS

Larry DeHaan Class of '71

The 400-acre DeHaan dairy farm runs for half a mile along the Canadian-American border north of Lynden, Washington. Since 9/11, a security camera has been installed near the DeHaan home just 800 feet from the border.

“When a cow gets out, it’s an international affair,” said Huxley grad Larry DeHaan, who has owned and operated the farm with his wife Cheryl and four children for the past thirty-six years.

The DeHaans started with 40 cows, and now they and their two employees milk 450 cows twice daily, which takes about seven hours for each milking. DeHaan said he believes that in order to be a successful dairy farmer, you can’t do things the way every other farmer does them.

For this reason, DeHaan sends most of his cows to pasture every day, which is a rare act among large dairy farmers. He has also built bigger stalls for the cows to lay in, put in rubber matting for them to stand on while they eat, and installed a touch-activated rotating brush, which the cows use to help stay clean.

“I think we all love our cows to a point, but I sometimes get carried away,” DeHaan said.

For his innovative farming techniques, DeHaan was given the Karl and Lexie Kupers Leading Edge Leadership Award in 1991.

The DeHaans were also named the Whatcom County Dairy Family of the Year in '91, which involved giving first-grade classes tours of the farm every day in the month of May.

“There’s always somebody downstream. You’ve got to remember that. Nobody is and island, everything works together...”



More recently, Larry was appointed by President Obama to serve on the state’s Farm Services Agency, which implements Agriculture Department policies on a state and local level.

In addition to winning awards and catering to their cows, the DeHaan family once turned their vegetable garden into a tree nursery for two years. They have also worked with Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association to plant trees along Bertrand Creek to improve conditions for the salmon that frequent the creek.

DeHaan also keeps all waterways fenced off from his cattle because he said he believes it is risky to allow cattle to enter streams.

“There’s always somebody downstream,” DeHaan said. “You’ve got to remember that. Nobody is an island, everything works together... Geography taught me that right away.”

DeHaan graduated from Western Washington University with a bachelor’s degree in geography in 1971. He went on to complete a master’s in geography at the University of Wyoming.

Although he was accepted into two Ph.D. programs, he decided to move back to his hometown of Lynden, get married and become a dairy farmer instead.

DeHaan’s oldest son, who attended Washington State University, teases him about having attended the ‘hippie school on the hill in Bellingham,’ but DeHaan said he is proud to be associated with Huxley College because it has a credible reputation.

“Western stands high on a lot of lists,” DeHaan said. “And Huxley stands that high or higher, so I’m proud to say I was involved. They taught me a lot.”

He loves the way of life that goes with farming.

“I’m becoming a bit of an anachronism in the dairy industry,” DeHaan said. “I still pasture my cows because I do it for the lifestyle. We have a hill behind the barn that we still have trees on, and there’s nothing more beautiful to me than watching those cows walk across the hillside in the morning.”

Anne Maertens

Photos courtesy of Larry DeHaan

TROY ABEL
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Keynote speaker Dr. James Cruchfield congratulates Huxley at the dedication of the Environmental Sciences Center in 1974. *Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections*

sloped to mimic the answering slope of Sehome Hill. Automobile traffic would be confined to the valley between, reserving the western side for pedestrians and the planned galleria. Arntzen's theater was to be covered with a stepped concrete roof planted with evergreen shrubs to help the building blend into the natural environment. The slope allowed banked sunroofs to bring daylight into interiors. The concrete was supposed to be colored to "warm buff tones."

But the leaking theater was eventually covered in aluminum, the concrete stayed gray, and instead of embracing the environment the two buildings seemed stark, rearing, iceberg-like. What was to be organic came out cold and disconnected from the rest of the campus.

Contractor Newland Construction Company of Everett submitted the winning bid, but inflation had pushed it \$300,000 over campus estimates. The company also quickly ran into the typical campus foundation problems. While there was rock underneath the building site, it was fractured. Foundations had to be excavated two to three feet deeper than intended, sometimes under groundwater, to get a firm foundation. Construction fell a year behind schedule.

Begun in May of 1971, the Environmental Studies Center was far enough along to partly occupy in the spring of 1973, and largely completed by the end of that year. It was dedicated in February of 1974. The keynote speaker was Dr. James Cruchfield, a professor of economics at the University of Washington. The moderator was KVOS-TV commentator Al Swift, a future congressman. Invited was Huxley descendant Andrew Huxley, who declined to attend but wrote, "I am very pleased indeed to learn both that you have formed a College of Environmental Studies, and that you have named it after T.H. Huxley. I have been repeatedly surprised in recent years by the increased interest in the scientists of a hundred years ago ... I send my best wishes for the success of Huxley College."

Huxley would eventually be graced by the presence of a great-grandson of T.H., Michael Huxley, at its 40th anniversary celebration.

Even while under construction, Arntzen was named a Grand Award Winner by the Washington Aggregates and Concrete Association, for obvious reasons. Seattle's Argus newspaper meanwhile named the Environmental Studies Center the "Best New College Building" in its Jan. 4, 1974 edition.



The concrete was still white and gleaming in 1973. *Huxley College archives*

"It was really a wonderful feeling when it was built," Huxley's first dean, Gene Miller, said of the Environmental Studies Center in an interview for this book. "The architecture was really remarkable." It throbbed with bright colors: Miller's office was purple.

Others, however, were scratching their heads. What had looked elegant on paper looked hulking and dam-like when cast and approached from ground level. The brief Northwest enthusiasm for making buildings out of exposed concrete quickly dimmed as the initially bright material darkened and became brooding, echoing the region's gray skies. The exposed piping was puzzling to some; the Seattle Post-Intelligencer headlined a March 3, 1974, story, "Students Study Among Sewer Pipes In Unusual Building."

Students never warmed to the concrete. "The walk up the southwest stairwell of the ESC building is a strong contender for the most aesthetically displeasing journey award," a student correspondent wrote in the Huxley Humus in 1975. "The barrenness and lifelessness of that concrete tunnel are a disservice to our human spirits."

A decision to locate offices a half-story away from each classroom-laboratory level led to a curious circulation pattern of unconnected stairways. To preserve a sleek architectural face to contrast with indentations and overhangs, some windows were installed flush with the exterior concrete, meaning there was nothing to protect them from the rainwater and leachate that ran down the walls. In short order they were filthy, leaky, and difficult to clean. Western's environmental college was looking out at the environment through a mayonnaise-like haze.

The crayon-bright exposed pipes in the atrium proved dust-catchers. The soaring space struck some as wasted, and the lounge at the bottom well-like and imprisoned. Ground floor offices felt like Hobbit-holes, while balconies and cutaways designed for exterior access went unused or were turned into storage. There was a disconnect between Nelsen's vision of how staff would live in the buildings and its actual day-to-day use.

In an interview, former Dean Ruth Weiner called the exposed piping "a monument to budget failure." Low-cost flexibility turned out to mean inadequate laboratories, she said. There was no stockroom, so faculty had to keep chemicals in their desks. The emergency showers didn't work. It took a three-year campaign to obtain fifteen coat hooks.



Above: A student perches to read at the Environmental Studies Center, 1978. *Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections*

Right: After 40 years Huxley looked considerably more weathered. *Photo by Avela Grenier*

“The building is functional and for the most part meets our needs, but in terms of aesthetics I don’t think it’s a very attractive building,” Dean Richard Mayer told *The Western Front* in an article published on Nov. 2, 1979. “It doesn’t begin to compare with the buildings in Red Square. It was designed to give maximum space for minimum dollars. Neo-classic cement, you might call it.”

Present Dean Smith dubbed it, “Frank Lloyd Concrete,” and professor Lynn Robbins called it “The Motorola” for its likeness to an early radio or TV.

In a later interview for university oral history archives, geography professor Robert Monahan called Arntzen Hall “the last disaster that Ibsen Nelsen and firm put on our campus. I had to live in that building for twenty-some years and it was not fun. It was a very poorly designed ... the building leaked, and leaked, and leaked, and leaked. It also had posts in the middle of classrooms around which you were hard-pressed to see. Space utilization is poor. It has a lot of waste space. It’s a grim thing because they didn’t paint the inside of it.”

His cartography lab in the basement was so brightly lit by its bank of exposed skylights that it was difficult to show slides, he recounted. The classroom was cold in winter; when he tested with a thermometer a room heated to 70 degrees near the podium was only 60 degrees under the glass on winter days. Students wore coats.

The buildings were also a disappointment environmentally. Huxley’s position as a cutting-edge environmental institution meant its home was built with the assumptions and environmental ignorance of the 1960s instead of energy-conscious design of later decades. Asbestos was used, as was common, on piping and in the thousands of mold-form holes used to cast the concrete. Initial ceiling tiles gave off formaldehyde fumes that made people sick. They had to be replaced. Piping in Arntzen would later be blamed for dangerous levels of lead in some drinking fountains. And there was little energy conservation; the Arab oil embargo did not occur until Environmental Sciences and Arntzen were largely completed.

The windows were fixed, single-pane glass, so leaky in places that faculty used tape on the edges to keep out wind and rain. Goltz recalled that not having openable windows was a cost-saving strategy; interiors were expected to be air-conditioned by energy that was cheap and expected to get



cheaper as new Northwest nuclear plants came on line. But energy soared in cost, nuclear plants were never built, and the windows proved alternately drafty and hot.

One of the nation’s first environmental colleges was, in the end, housed in two structures that were a problematic environment. Complicating matters, a state budget crisis that began in 1971 squeezed off funds to rectify any shortcomings.

Meanwhile, Nelsen himself was dismayed by a decision to modify Arntzen’s western facade in 1982 to house the Atrium coffee shop. Richard Lee Francis, Western’s director of pilot programs and core curriculum at the time, waged a battle to prevent the remodeling but lost. Francis wrote that Arntzen Hall “was far in advance of architecture in this region when it was designed nearly ten years ago. It is a building with an unlucky past but an important historical future.”

“Nelsen thought so highly of (the Environmental Studies building),” Francis recalled, “that he kept a very large colored photograph of it in the outer office of his office in Seattle. I went in to see him once, and there hung (this huge photograph) — gorgeous, fresh and new, concrete — dazzling white — it must have been three by four feet, there in the main entrance of his office complex in Seattle.”

Whether history is ultimately kind to the two buildings remains to be seen: Tastes change and fads repeat. Meanwhile, however, the work to make Huxley’s buildings effectively function goes on. In 2009, new greenhouses were built behind Arntzen Hall by the Biology Department. Environmental Studies got its first double-paned windows after Huxley’s fortieth birthday, in the summer of 2010. But there was money enough to do only half the retrofit.

Huxley’s home was bold, innovative, cost-effective, and award-winning. It has also become, to some at least, an example of what not to do when designing a “green” building. This irony has made it a point of instruction in itself; Huxley students can begin by analyzing their own experimental environment.

Eric Dinerstein Class of '75

Eric Dinerstein is so elusive that even his PR people can't find him. But between flying in from Borneo and flying off to Ontario to monitor birds, Dinerstein stopped at Huxley, his alma mater, to make a speech about his job as lead scientist and vice president of the Conservation Science Program at the World Wildlife Fund.

Eric saves the tiger and is a rock star of wildlife protection.

Dinerstein's mission is to bring back a struggling global population of only 3,200 tigers by protecting their habitat. By 2020, the next Chinese year of the tiger, he hopes to see a doubled tiger population.

And that's just one campaign. In 2009, he and his team mapped the earth's ecosystems to identify and conserve the 200 areas with the richest plant and animal life on the planet.

One of these ecosystems surrounds the Upper Missouri River. It's the largest area of untracked grassland in America and was once home to more than 60 million bison; a lost Serengeti that Dinerstein hopes to revive.

In an attempt to create the American Prairie Reserve, WWF is buying land equal to twice the size of Yellowstone National Park and partnering with surrounding conservation organizations and American Indian reservations. The land is being set aside for bison, wolves, grizzlies, grassland birds and other species.

Simultaneously, Dinerstein is undertaking what he said is the most exciting project of his career, the precise mapping of carbon-dense trees in the world's rainforests. Lasers attached to planes allow Dinerstein

“So how do we think about conservation on very large scales?”



and his team to document how much carbon is stored. Eric hopes this technology will create a new economy to help combat climate change.

“Money would flow from the developed countries that produce a lot of the greenhouse gas emissions to the tropical-forest-rich nations to pay them to keep those forests standing,” he explained.

The huge tasks may seem daunting to some, but Dinerstein says it's the best way to rescue ecosystems.

“Simply focusing on a single national park, like the North Cascades in isolation, wouldn't really do very much,” Dinerstein said. “So how do we think about conservation on very large scales? A lot of my work has been focused on creating whole networks of protected areas.”

While his global outlook is inspirational, he was a late bloomer as a naturalist. He studied film at Northwestern University in Chicago before being inspired by nature and moving to Bellingham to attend Huxley. After graduation, he joined the Peace Corps and was sent to Nepal, where he became the first tiger biologist in a new reserve.

“I knew what I was going to do [with my life] when that happened,” Dinerstein said.

After returning from Nepal, Dinerstein got an advanced degree at the University of Washington and went to work for WWF, where he has labored for the last twenty-two years.

“I have the best job in the world,” he said.

Kaylin Bettinger

Photo Courtesy of Eric Dinerstein

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Harry Edward Grant Class of '79

When the Olympic Peninsula's two Elwha dams are removed in 2011-2012 and the river returns to its natural state, it will be in part due to the legal and political expertise of Harry Grant.

Grant worked with congressional staff drafting the Elwha River Ecosystem and Fisheries Restoration Act, which was signed into law by President Bush Sr. in 1992. Funding for removal of the dams was advanced through a series of appropriations shepherded by Rep. Norm Dicks.

The Elwha, which originates in Olympic National Park, once boasted salmon that reached 100 pounds. Letting the salmon spawn upstream again will be the result of the largest dam removal project in history.

"The main reason the government entered into this arrangement was to test a hypothesis: if hydroelectric dams in this river were removed, would salmon repopulate?" Grant recalled. The course of this inquiry has opened opportunities for a lot of good scientific observation.

Grant graduated magna cum laude from Huxley at Western Washington University in 1979. Like other Huxley grads, the Seattle attorney has become an environmental peacemaker.

"I'm proud of the work we did on the Elwha," says Grant. "One of the things that made this an extraordinary piece of public policy was that the government respected the property rights of the dam owners and compensated them justly, while making a grand environmental experiment a reality."



Elwha Dam removal began in 2011.



The area has since become a critical research site, drawing scientists and students (including many from Huxley) to study salmon habitat and riparian-zone ecology.

Grant was named a "super lawyer" by Washington Law & Politics Magazine for eight years running, declared one of Seattle's top lawyers by Seattle Magazine, and one of Seattle's top business lawyers in environmental law by Seattle Business Monthly.

As a former advisee to the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, he has tackled

environmental issues throughout the western United States and Latin America.

A self-described "episodic student" in his early years, Grant left home for the Army at age 17. After a year in Vietnam, he returned and bought a piece of rural property in eastern Washington. He spent his early twenties there, raising cattle and building his own home using timber harvested from his land.

"It was a tremendous experience, a huge learning opportunity," he says. "Working the land really instilled the importance of conservation" and triggered his interest in attending Huxley.

He earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Policy & Management at the college. "It was at Huxley that I began to think very seriously about environmental law," he says. "It was the late '70s and major environmental laws were just beginning to impact the way business and policy were conducted. I realized that was my opening to make real change happen. By the time I graduated, from Huxley, I knew I wanted to go to law school."

He enrolled at the University of Oregon Law School, where he served as associate editor for the Oregon Law Review.

"I learned things at Huxley I use every day in my law practice," he says. "I love my work, and I hope to continue practicing for years to come."

Jenny Rose Lara
Photo by Jeffrey Luke

"I learned things at Huxley I use every day in my law practice."

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CHAPTER FOUR

INNOVATIVE AND STORMY 1970-1974

Almost inevitably, Huxley’s first decade was its most innovative, its most controversial, and its most colorful. More than two decades after the college opened, in 1993, acting Dean Thomas Storch wrote in a report to incoming President Karen Morse, “A significant portion of Huxley’s reputation today is based on activities and people who were associated with the college during its first decade on campus. These include environmental activism and the tendency for Huxley students to be people who get involved ... Huxley also developed a reputation as an undergraduate program with exceptional opportunities for experiential learning, including required student internships and senior theses for graduation.”

Huxley started as an innovative idea for interdisciplinary solution to a newly recognized problem, the environment. But exactly how it was supposed to accomplish that was still to be defined. Western administrators had made a deliberate decision not to dictate the new college’s mission and curriculum, leaving that to the dean, faculty, and students. Huxley’s eventual size, its share of the Environmental Studies Center, and even its continued existence were all contingent. Accordingly, the new college experimented, evolved, challenged orthodoxy, and drew criticism.

Several national and state trends complicated the situation. Huxley was born at the same time as major U.S. environmental legislation, guaranteeing there would be a reaction against resulting regulation. By 1980, Ronald Reagan would be proclaiming government was not the solution (its role since Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s election at the height of the Great Depression) but the problem. To the degree that what Huxley taught could be identified with rules and bureaucracy, the new school would be controversial.



Similarly, Huxley inherited the culture wars coming out of the 1960s. Its faculty was young, its students longhaired, and its assumptions idealistic. Some students were Vietnam veterans: older, more opinionated, and more independent than a typical recent high school graduate. Professor Robbins estimated that the average age of the first classes of students was twenty-four. About 40 percent were from out of state, giving Huxley a diversity and sophistication in its enrollment the larger campus did not match. Many were outdoors enthusiasts, giving them the confidence and independence acquired through backpacking, climbing, and skiing. The new college represented a challenge to the educational status quo, and to some professors at Western it seemed a rebuff to the way science and humanities had traditionally been taught. The cluster colleges of Fairhaven and Ethnic Studies were equally controversial.

Huxley also opened just when the bottom fell out of the Washington state economy. The Vietnam War had finally dragged U.S. economic expansion to a halt, and in Washington the situation was greatly exaggerated by the Boeing bust of 1971, when plans for a supersonic transport were canceled (partly on environmental grounds!) and the state's premier employer shed



Above: Huxley students campaign for support of Proposition 61, a bottle bill. Photo courtesy of Jenny Hahn

Left: Students atop Windy Peak on a Spring Block trip, 1982. Huxley College archives

60,000 workers, 7,000 of them in a single day. A billboard was erected reading, "Will the last person leaving Seattle please turn out the lights?" At the same time, the wind-down of the war and end of the draft removed an incentive for males to attend college. A rise in the 1950s and 1960s of real income for Americans halted and began to decline. Western's enrollment flattened. The new cluster colleges, seen as a solution to unbridled growth, were suddenly competing for resources on a campus facing severe state budget cutbacks. Jealousy and resentment followed.

"It was at times very competitive and lonely," Dean Miller wrote in an email. "Geology [chair Don Easterbrook] and Biology [Carter Broad] were understandably envious of funds going into Huxley because of funding restrictions in their own fields. Once in a conversation with Jerry Flora [so supportive and fair] he remarked that I and some department heads were like bulls in a ring. The strongest would prevail."

Huxley was also trying to mature in the energy crisis and stagflation of the Ford-Carter years that followed the Yom Kippur War and Watergate. The cheap energy assumptions that had gone into the design of its buildings were almost instantly obsolete. Some perceived environmentalism not as savior but a threat to a newly constricting economy.

"[Huxley] is struggling to stay alive," Bellingham Herald reporter Dick Beardsley wrote as late as July 12, 1980, in a satirical column poking fun at both the college and industry. He jibed about "the Huxley College Gang, which delayed a marina at Squalicum Harbor for a decade, and raised clouds of protest about Georgia-Pacific's chlorine plant, oil tankers on Puget Sound, and nuclear plants on Baucus Hill."

"Some people in the community thought Huxley students were just potheads and activists," Robbins recalled.

"Oh boy," Georgia-Pacific engineer Norval Magnusson said of the industry-Huxley clash of the 1970s, when doing an oral history interview for the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies. "Huxley College was invented at that time and had to have something to do ... And we [G-P] were here, ready and waiting ... Western got off in this environmental thing and it just got totally out of control. It was terrible. But it wasn't just us. We were just the biggest and the easiest to fight."

CONTINUED ON PG.70

Morley Horder Class of '81

“Huxley College gave me a way to think about the world, the belief that you can change it, and the different ways to do it,” says Morley Horder. “You just have to pick your tools.”

The Washington native picked a century-old, 130-foot schooner called *Adventuress* as his tool of choice, using it to introduce young people to the outdoors and ecology.

After graduating from Huxley College in 1981 with a Bachelor of Science in human ecology, Horder joined fellow Huxley graduate Barbara Wyatt to found Sound Experience, a nonprofit youth education organization aimed at encouraging environmental stewardship in the waters of Puget Sound.

It was a pioneering idea. “At Huxley, we all wanted to change the world, and we were considered fringe, environmental lunatics,” he said. “A lot of these are more mainstream ideas now, but at the time it was all new.”

The program he wanted didn't yet exist, so he set off in search of an organization to serve as a model. “I wanted to find the very best programs in existence, and then return to Puget Sound.”

Horder's search took him to New York, where the nonprofit environmental organization *Clearwater* was running a successful youth program combining science, sailing, and environmental education on the Hudson River. An experienced sailor, Horder was hired as captain of the *Clearwater*, a 100-foot sailing vessel and the organization's namesake. He also studied the programs of Sea Education Association by working aboard its schooner *Westward*, out of Woods Hole, Massachusetts.



“I decided my goal was to combine the soul of the *Clearwater* program with the professionalism and safety standards of Sea Education Association and create something here at home.”

With grant funding, Sound Experience ran first excursion in the spring of 1989 on board the historic tall ship *Adventuress*.

“You'll protect what you love: that was my operating procedure and I just tried to instill it in these kids,” he said. Since then, Sound Experience has brought more than 50,000 people, mostly youth, on board the *Adventuress* to be a part of the education program.

After the birth of his first daughter, Horder left Sound Experience so he could have more time with his new family. By 1997 he was the father of three daughters and began a new adventure: owner of Eagle Harbor Book Company, an independent bookstore a five-minute bike ride from his home on Bainbridge Island. To Horder, the progression was natural.

“I think the word “environmentalist” is too narrow. It's a worldview that feels bigger than that. To me, owning an independent bookstore and starting an environmental nonprofit are all part of the same thing: helping to shape the world and trying to make it a better place. Freedom of speech, the freedom to read and write what you want, is right there with the freedom to have a clean environment.”

Jenny Rose Lara

Photo courtesy of Jenny Hahn

TROY ABEL
 JAMES ALBERS
 ANDREW BACH
 GIGI BERARDI
 RICHARD BERG
 BRIAN BINGHAM
 LEO BODENSTEINER
 ANDREW BODMAN
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 DEVON CANCELLA
 SEA BONG CHANG
 DAVID CLARKE
 SUSAN COOK
 WILLIAM DIETRICH
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 ROBIN MATTHEWS
 RICHARD MAYER
 TIMOTHY McDANIELS
 JOHN McLAUGHLIN
 MICHAEL MEDLER
 JEAN MELIOUS
 JOHN MILES
 SCOTT MILES
 GENE MILLER
 DEBNATH MOOKHERJEE
 EUGENE MYERS
 JAMES NEWMAN
 GILBERT PETERSON
 LYNN ROBBINS
 DAVID ROSSITER
 JOHN RYBCZK
 JENNIFER SELTZ
 DAVID SHULL
 DONALD SINGH-CUNDY
 BRADLEY SMITH
 GARY SMITH
 RUTH SOFIELD
 PAUL STANGL
 MARTIN STAPANIAN
 WILLIAM STAPP
 WILLIAM STOCKLIN
 THOMAS STORCH
 STEPHEN SULKIN
 WILLIAM SUMMERS
 MICHAEL SWEENEY
 HOWARD TEASLEY
 THOMAS TERICH
 MANFRED VERNON
 DAVID WALLIN
 GRACE WANG
 HERBERT WEBBER
 RUTH WEINER
 OLIVER WILGRESS
 ROBERT WISSMAR
 HERB WONG
 MING-HO YU
 NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS

Jane Howard Class of '76

By the time Jane Howard graduated from high school, she had visited every National Park in America. "It was a real privilege to do something like that," she said. "I have to applaud my parents because the trips instilled a lifelong appreciation of nature."

And after all those evening campfire programs and conversations with park rangers, she too wanted to connect people with nature.

Her passion led her to Huxley's environmental education program. "I think the holistic approach Huxley College takes really enabled me to look at the interconnectedness of systems and the importance of the details, as well as the complexity of all the working parts within the systems," Howard said.

From 1989 to 2002, she founded and managed Island Institute in the San Juan Islands. Families got hands-on experience learning about marine life, native cultures and conservation. "I loved the impact it had on people."

Today, Howard works as an outreach and education facilitator for Puget Sound Energy, helping middle school students understand the connections between their personal choices and the health of Puget Sound. Under her guidance, kids rethink their natural resource consumption.

Jane grew up in New York and attended college in Ohio, but the Pacific Northwest lured her. She graduated from Western Washington University and Huxley in 1976 with a double major in art and environmental education.

"I've continually been involved with environmental theater, the arts, and the out-of-doors, and I am committed to combining those interests," she said.



"Teaching seemed like a good match."

Howard returned to Western to receive her teaching certificate in 1987 and acquired a master's degree in science education in 1989.

A background in art and education led her to pursue work as an outdoor educator and guide in Georgia and Alaska. She delivered energy-conservation messages through theater performances in Montana schools, taught science education around the Puget Sound and the Caribbean, and designed and led eco-tourism trips in South America and Jamaica.

Howard has relied on the creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit fostered by Huxley to carve out her career. "I wouldn't trade my experiences for anything," she said. "I've really created a patchwork quilt, but it all fits together beautifully."

Jane continues to gather inspiration from the places she's traveled, the people she's inspired, and the power and wonder of the wild. "I want to do more," she said. "I want to have greater purpose: inspire more, learn more, and continue to make a difference."

Codi Hamblin
Photos courtesy of Jane Howard

- TROY ABEL
- JAMES ALBERS
- ANDREW BACH
- GIGI BERARDI
- RICHARD BERG
- BRIAN BINGHAM
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- NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS

That was the reputation. Did it fit reality?

The new cluster college was given significant autonomy, particularly in deciding what it would teach and why. When the Long Range Planning Committee recommended Huxley be created, they stated, "In our thinking a college is that unit of organization that determines the total course of study leading to the awarding of a degree. Curricular planning is, thus, the *raison d'être* of a college."

Flora also gave Huxley latitude. "It will follow the example of Fairhaven," he wrote, "in that it will have its own faculty and dean and will establish its own curriculum ... We feel that a strong interdisciplinary approach to environmental problems is imperative."

Huxley was to be an upper-division, two-year program that would admit up to 150 students its first two years and grow to as many as 700 students and forty faculty as its peak.

On Sept. 1, 1969, Miller, professor of botany and director of the Center for Pollution Research at Utah State University, was named Huxley's first dean. Webber recalled Miller as pleasant, hard-working, and attentive to detail, but Miller was not a political animal particularly adept at tightrope walking in a stormy, contentious, and budget-tight era.

"I always had a great interest in the environment," he recalled much later in an interview for this book, in explaining why he took the job. An institutional theme was set when, in early planning meetings, Webber found a quote from T.H. Huxley's grandson Julian that early planning documents call "a philosophical cornerstone for the cluster college."

"Sooner rather than later," Julian Huxley wrote in *The Humanist Frame*, "we will be forced to get away from a system based on artificially increasing the number of human wants, and set about constructing one aimed at the qualitative satisfaction of real human needs, spiritual and mental, as well as material and physiological."

Put another way, an undated planning document from the college's early years reads, "The purpose of Huxley College is to discover, assemble, integrate and disseminate knowledge toward the resolution of environmental problems for the enhancement of human life."



Above: Huxley Professor Manfred Vernon brings newspapers to the Huxley recycling center on 21st Street in 1972. *Huxley College archives*
Left: "Nansen Bottle" from the vintage oceanography equipment collection of Huxley College professor David Shull.

Two aquatic studies facilities (the Leona Sundquist Marine Laboratory at Shannon Point in Anacortes and the Institute for Freshwater Studies at Western) would initially be administered through the college. Shannon Point would eventually become administratively separate, reporting directly to the provost, but it retained close links to Huxley and the Biology Department.

A College Constitution set up a Huxley committee structure, including extensive faculty involvement in administrative decisions and student participation in all standing committees.

Webber said the curriculum was modeled from an environmental program devised by the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay. Representative of the diversity of early faculty were Yu, a chemist and fluoride pollution expert who represented the hard sciences, and Robbins, an anthropologist who had done his dissertation with the Blackfoot Indians and was working with the Navajo.

"They wanted someone who could bring a multicultural review to environmental studies," Robbins recalled. "I brought something useful to Huxley right away."

Philosophy and curriculum were immediately complemented by specific environmental action. "The students had a very strong environmental consciousness," Miller recalled. In 1971 they formed the Huxley Environmental Reference Bureau, or HERB, a volunteer organization to gather and disseminate eco-information. HERB had a telephone answering service, a speakers' bureau, and a newsletter called *The Huxley Humus*. HERB would eventually evolve into Western's Environmental Center.

In October of 1971, approximately one year after Huxley began classes, the students launched a recycling center at Mitchell House, at 301 21st Street. The center moved down the street to another college-owned house, at 635 21st, in 1972. Grants from the Intalco aluminum plant in Ferndale helped initiate the effort, even though Huxley faculty led early studies criticizing the plant's fluoride emissions. By June of 1972, the Huxley Pilot Recycling Center reported having recycled 15,520 pounds of glass, 4,000 pounds of metal, and 12,000 pounds of cardboard and newsprint. While modest compared to the total amount of garbage generated by Western (The Western Front later estimated the recycling center only collected tonnage

"we will be forced to get away from a system based on artificially increasing the number of human wants"



in a year equal to the weight of throwaway garbage Western generated in a day), it was Whatcom County's first true recycling center.

On Sunday, Oct. 13, 1974, a fire destroyed the recycling center. It reopened on April 1, 1975, at 519 21st Street and that fall it expanded operations by putting paper recycling barrels around Western's campus for weekly pickup. Eventually the effort was subsumed by citywide recycling, but it was Huxley that demonstrated the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of recycling to Whatcom County.

The hands-on activism was an example of Huxley's problem-tackling approach. In Huxley's second year of operation, classes were canceled for the week of Nov. 1, 1971, so that every Huxley student could study and discuss solid waste management and recycling. Regular classes were made up in finals week.

Also that year, a Huxley laboratory class discovered raw sewage on a south Bellingham beach, leading to discovery of a broken main.

Later, the Washington Ecological Committee asked Huxley to draw up a master plan of action for the analysis of oil spills.

It was a heady dawn. One campus plan estimated that the demand for environmental scientists would grow fivefold within fifteen years.

It was also a heady dawn for the global environmental movement. In June of 1972, dean Miller led a faculty-student group of thirty to the first United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm, Sweden. The historic gathering drew 1,200 delegates from 112 countries, and the Huxley group met with anthropologist Margaret Mead, environmentalist Barry Commoner, and Washington Sen. Warren Magnuson.

Huxley students also plunged into land use planning studies in Whatcom, Skagit and San Juan counties, inventoried marine ecosystems, studied industrial emissions at Intalco and Georgia-Pacific, and testified at public hearings. In February 1972, the college organized a planning seminar called "Whatcom County 1990," playing host to fifty regional agencies.

The college, in sum, had given northwest Washington state an institutional environmental consciousness it had not previously had.

The result was almost instant notoriety and debate about Huxley's role.



Huxley students demonstrate for energy conservation in downtown Bellingham in 1979.
Huxley College archives

"After only three months of operation, Huxley College is fast becoming a controversial ecological enterprise," The Western Front reported on Jan. 22, 1971. Huxley's plans to study fluoride emissions at Intalco and housing growth in Lake Whatcom's Sudden Valley were already causing community consternation, the paper reported.

"Right now Huxley is new," wrote Mary Kay Becker, a future state legislator and judge, in the Northwest Passage community newspaper in 1971. "Two old buildings house, tentatively, the offices and lounge. Classes are held in miscellaneous locations like Fairhaven and Bond Hall. So there is a sense of ambiguity about Huxley's location, and in talking to faculty and students I found a similar sense of ambiguity about its goals." The college, one professor told her, has "an atmosphere derived from the mixture of approaches." Some wanted the school to focus on scientific study of the environment, and others on applying science to political action, Becker wrote.

If some thought the new college was butting into community affairs, others felt it wasn't intrusive enough in that protest era. In a Dec. 7, 1971 Western Front feature on the college, student journalist Pam Hicks began, "How can man save himself from destroying the environment he depends on to survive? Huxley College is seeking a solution to this problem on a social as well as a physical and natural level."

She went on to note the college was relatively quiet for the times. "Because Huxley remains in the background with little fanfare or publicity, many have cited it as being 'too passive,'" she wrote.

Webber was quoted responding, "What we are involved in is action, not reaction," meaning that instead of protesting problems Huxley was trying to solve them.

Added student Linda Paris, "Another reason we remain so unexcited and do not demonstrate is that environmental problems are a continual day-to-day process." Huxley was in for the long haul, a strategy proven effective by the wide range of achievements by its alumni.

Some students were impatient with this pace. In the spring of 1972, Robbins recalled, there was a student "revolt" in which the most politically oriented complained too much time was being spent teaching and

"What we are involved in
is action, not reaction"

researching instead of “doing,” or protesting. The students met in a raucous meeting with the faculty in the Fairhaven College auditorium. “One young woman was crying,” Robbins recalled. “But Gene Miller didn’t panic. He was a very calm person.” The students vented, the quarter ended, and the revolution was over.

Miller reported later that year that 80 percent of the first Huxley graduates had found jobs despite a depressed local economy. The college seemed to be filling a niche.

But because Huxley’s mission, philosophy, and curriculum had been left to the college itself to design, few institutions have been scrutinized so often, so early.

There was a 1972 Brooks Report, a 1973 Swan Report following a faculty retreat, a 1974 Drake Committee Report, a 1976 Reis-Kanegis student analysis, a 1977 critique by student Brian Liming, a 1978 Berg Report, a 1981 Huxley retreat report, a 1982 Instructional Review Committee report, annual reports under Dean John Miles beginning in 1986, and consistent efforts in the last two decades to refine the college’s mission statement and curriculum. The gist of all of them was that Huxley needed to continue defining itself and become more rigorous in grading and curriculum, which it proceeded to do.

“Huxley cannot be all things to all environmentalists,” Dr. Robin Brooks, a professor of history at San Jose State College, wrote after being invited to visit and review in May of 1972, after two years of Huxley operation.

Issues he identified included dissatisfaction with communication and community at Huxley, a lack of consensus about goals, student unhappiness with some courses, unease about student involvement in policy making, and lack of cooperation with the other cluster colleges and Western. Brooks identified three possible directions for Huxley: to train environmental scientists, to be a center of environmental activism, or to be “a center for the transition from a social order based on wasteful growth to one that is ecologically and socially balanced and healthy.” Brooks favored the third.

The visiting professor said Huxley students had annoyed more than helped Bellingham’s planning agency and that, “for a long time, the HERB recycling project seemed to be another dump.”



Old Main is one of the oldest buildings on Western’s Campus, built in 1886 and home to the university administration. Photo by Avela Grenier

“Students I spoke to noted that some of their colleagues came to Huxley because its standards are so slack that it is possible to get an easy degree,” he wrote. And, “Perhaps because he is a quiet man, Dean Miller does not make himself clear enough.”

Despite such criticisms, the Brooks report, like all of those that came after, endorsed the need for Huxley. On Sept. 28, 1972, Huxley faculty members Miles and Bob Andersen issued a report listing 32 specific steps Huxley was taking to respond to the Brooks critique.

Huxley remained controversial on Western’s own campus. While some science faculty welcomed the idea, others criticized environmental science as a vague hodgepodge that would compete for resources with traditional departments. Miller and his champion, Flora, found themselves caught in running feuds with rival departments who saw Huxley’s interdisciplinary approach as a mongrel that diluted science with hippie idealism.

On Oct. 31, 1972, Huxley environmental journalist Bob Speed reported that, “Since its inception four years ago, Huxley College has been embroiled in controversy ... All this pent-up ill will seemed to center around the \$3.5 million building under construction just south of the main campus. The basic problems have been conflicts of interest caused by expanding departments trying to fit themselves into a building that has been literally shrinking.”

A tightening state budget meant that the building would remain half-finished inside. Disputes occurred over allocation of money for laboratory equipment. College administrators were unclear about how much space would go to Geology, Biology, and Huxley, resulting in turf wars.

While Miller took issue with details of Speed’s Western Front story, it was accurate that the rapid growth at Western, followed by sudden state budget tightening, had produced strains. All three experimental cluster colleges felt besieged.

In a June 3, 1973, memo, Academic Dean W.A. Bultman wrote to Flora that, “Fairhaven College in particular, but all the cluster colleges to some degree, feel themselves handicapped by a more or less pervasive mindset of negativism, indifference, and lack of understanding and sympathy by many of the administrative officers of the [main] college ... Huxley College

CONTINUED ON PG.80

Ken Johnsen Class of '75

Play ball!

Ken Johnsen always paired his fascination with nature to urban planning. From 1996 to 1999, the Huxley graduate enjoyed the ultimate symbiosis by overseeing the design and construction of Safeco Field, the outdoors Mariners baseball stadium.

Ken is a principle in the Seattle-Portland development management firm Shiels/Obletz/Johnson (SOJ). He has overseen other key Seattle projects such as the new City Hall, Justice Center, and streetcar line.

Johnsen said growing up in proximity to the Puget Sound port industry and Sea-Tac Airport led him to Huxley's urban and regional planning program, from which he graduated in 1975. But his interest in transportation and urban development was always coupled with an inherited concern for the natural beauty of his stomping grounds.

"Raised in the Northwest, I think it's hard not to have affection for the environment," Johnsen said.

"My dad was, and still is, a nature appreciator. Whether he took us out in the woods, skiing, or vacationing down the Oregon Coast, those activities developed my relationship with the environment."

After leaving Huxley, Johnsen worked for the Port of Portland, in Oregon, for six years, first as the manager of planning and research and then as director of planning and development. For the last twenty-four years, he has been at SOJ.

He has led over 100 projects, but the baseball stadium was among the most memorable. "Baseball is somewhere between sport and religion," Johnsen said. "During the project I

"...what you learn at Huxley is important, but part of the responsibility of learning is carrying it into action."



was exposed to baseball fans and saw how much they cared about baseball in an emotional sense. Baseball has been a part of the rhythm of my life since Safeco."

Currently, Johnsen is the project director for the renovation of Seattle's historic Pike Place Market and King Street Station. Ken said it's challenging to get historic sites LEED certified, using green building techniques, but people need to understand the sustainable value of preservation.

Johnsen said increasing public access to alternative forms of transportation is one of the most sustainable moves cities can make. He is proud to direct the reintroduction of streetcars into cities like Portland and Seattle, which have become transportation role models for other urban areas across the nation.

Although he said he's one of the lucky people who enjoys going to work every day, his biggest passion is his family. He hopes his respect for the Northwest that he inherited from his father will pass on to his four children.

Johnsen said he's fortunate to have been exposed to the interdisciplinary approach of Huxley, and hopes the college will keep the bar set high for environmental education.

"For students to go out and make the world a better place, Huxley needs to develop state-of-the-art thinking in environmental subjects," Johnsen said. "Also, what you learn at Huxley is important, but part of the responsibility of learning is carrying it into action."

Devon Frederickson

Photo courtesy of Ken Johnsen

TROY ABEL
 JAMES ALBERS
 ANDREW BACH
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 BRIAN BINGHAM
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 HERBERT WEBBER
 RUTH WEINER
 OLIVER WILGRESS
 ROBERT WISSMAR
 HERB WONG
 MING-HO YU
 NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS

Alyssa Johnson Class of '97

As an international businesswoman, Alyssa Johnson's core values reflect what she learned at Huxley College.

"I want to make sure when I measure profit that at the same time I'm helping people and the planet," Johnson said.

Alyssa graduated in 1997 with a degree in environmental science from Huxley college, and minored in Spanish. She said her college education gave her the foundation to be successful in her diverse career.

She describes herself as a "social entrepreneur" with many irons in the fire. "Some work and some do not," Johnson said. "The ones that work you take off with, like Trips4Fundraising."

Her biggest success is Oro Azul LLC, a Seattle-based promotion, marketing and business development firm she founded in 2001. With her values of people, planet, and profit at the core of Oro Azul, Johnson considers the company a "triple bottom-line business."

Johnson provides business marketing and development services, eco-tourism consulting, and project management services for international businesses and organizations. Much of her work involves the Caribbean, where she lived for over 6 years.

Her firm operates Trips4Fundraising. It offers international trip packages for nonprofit fundraising nationwide; a celebrity promotions program in which businesses and services are promoted



Alyssa Johnson with actress Jane Seymour, left, and actor Terrence Howard, top.

Photos courtesy of Alyssa Johnson



to celebrities; and Splash of the Caribbean, a Caribbean art and gift line. Authentic art and crafts from Caribbean artists are purchased, imported and sold online and in Puget Sound businesses.

Johnson also offers digital photography, translation, and graphic and web design services through the company and gives back to numerous schools in impoverished neighborhoods in the Caribbean, Middle East, South Pacific and Africa.

She uses her Huxley education to make business decisions that have the least environmental impact, such as helping clients implement recycling, sustainable wastewater management, and sustainable construction.

"Where possible I have the environment in mind," Johnson said.

Her triple bottom-line mantra is effective, said Aaron Rose of ROI3, a friend who often seeks business advice from Johnson. "Her business is conservation, and it has a holistic approach," Rose said. "She understands the complete circle of conservation, especially when it comes to eco-tourism."

After graduation, Johnson worked for six years as a product development officer for a sustainable tourism subsidiary of the Caribbean Hotel Association. Later she started her own business, Oro Azul LLC. "Huxley was a launching pad to dive into the Caribbean and apply my environmental education to tourism and conservation," she said.

Codi Hamblin

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regards its facilities as inadequate even with completion of the Northwest Environmental Studies Center to its present stage. Space is needed to cluster all Huxley College faculty members in the same general area, thus permitting a freer communication and the development of an esprit. Special use spaces for discussion, planning, and laboratory studies are wanting.”

Western’s competition for resources during the “Boeing bust” had long-term consequences that went beyond squabbles for square footage and budget. In May of 1972, sixty minority students occupied Old Main to protest that Huxley and Fairhaven were each allocated two additional professors while Ethnic Studies got none.

After reviewing the data, Flora agreed the allocation was unfair and that Ethnic Studies had a reasonable gripe. Some criticized him for caving under pressure. That cluster college had become so controversial that by the end of the year, Ethnic Studies Dean Sergio Elizondo and eight of ten faculty members resigned. While a new dean was hired and replacement faculty member added for a total of eleven, Ethnic Studies ultimately would not survive.

The tide was turning against the idea of cluster colleges. When Fairhaven Dean and visionary Charles Harwood died of carbon monoxide poisoning aboard his pleasure boat in 1970, Fairhaven lost its strongest proponent of creating a residential student community within the clusters. As a result, the requirement for upperclassmen to reside on Fairhaven’s campus was dropped. In 2010, Fairhaven Dean Roger Gilman, a student at Fairhaven in 1970, suggested that two conflicting desires that emerged in the 1960s - a desire for community in a big, impersonal world, and a desire for individualism in a big, impersonal world - collided at the cluster colleges.

“When Dean Harwood died, Fairhaven changed,” campus architect Barney Goltz would later recall. The result was to make the cluster colleges less distinctive as separate entities and more like departments within the larger university. They became less a social model and more an academic unit. As a result, there was more confusion than ever over their necessity.

In June of 1972, the Faculty Council gave Flora a no-confidence vote over the Ethnic Studies battle, his decision to block Jeopardy’s printing, and overall budget and pay controversies. That fall the Board of Trustees chose to retain him, but Flora had already decided to step down by September of 1975.

“I am very optimistic about the future”

His departure would mean the end of the Bunke-Flora cluster college era. Huxley and Fairhaven would remain the exception at Western rather than the rule. The new president, Paul Olscamp, would shut down the College of Ethnic Studies.

By the beginning of 1974, Huxley’s first dean had decided to return to Utah. Miller said in an interview for this book that he wasn’t discouraged by the campus infighting over resources or criticism of Huxley, but simply felt he’d contributed what he could.

“I came to Huxley with the intent of staying only five years,” he told The Western Front. “I personally feel that an administrator should not stay in a position such as this much longer than that.” He wanted to return to research and graduate training.

“We are now out of our infancy,” Miller said. “We have real direction and have achieved stature. We are recognized throughout the nation as a model school for environmental study ... I am very optimistic about the future of Huxley.”

In a January 1974 parting interview with The Bellingham Herald, Miller said Huxley’s development had been “much slower than projected” because of budget woes. He acknowledged the new college had drawn criticism for emphasizing environmental studies instead of environmental science, but he defended the approach. “Problems facing the environment are not going to be corrected by science alone,” the botanist said. “There must be a change in value, ethics, if we’re going to correct the environmental problems that surround us.”

Meanwhile, Huxley was still defining itself. Typical of the conflicting currents was a complaint by student Chris Abel in the Huxley Humus newsletter on Feb. 20, 1974, that “the ol’ enthusiasm is waning” since the move from the Zimmerman and Mitchell houses to the Environmental Studies Center. “What’s happening around here?” he asked. “Where is the excitement and challenge?”

Three days later the new building was formally dedicated, and later that year WWSC Vice President Jerry M. Anderson gave Huxley a vote of confidence by declaring, “The cluster college is no longer an experiment. It is a college that conducts experiments.”



Soil sieves used for measuring soil textures.

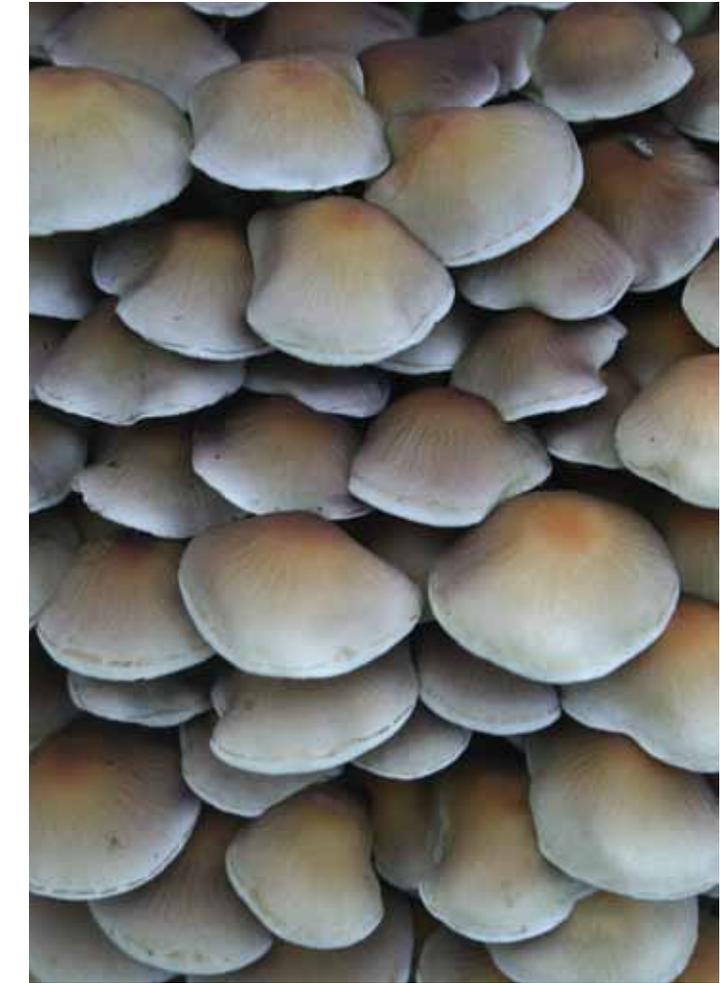
Then came the next Huxley evaluation. In an October 1974 review chaired by George Drake, chairman of Western's Sociology Department, the committee noted that in its 1973 retreat, Huxley had asked its faculty to "get themselves together" to better serve as a model for students.

Said the review: "The focus of Huxley College, its program, its faculty, and its students has been blurred by two fundamental objectives: the production of knowledge and the production of values. The first academic plan places far greater emphasis upon values by its concerns and its language. There is an urgency to its tone and a suggestion that, in its very own words, 'graduates of Huxley, irrespective of their areas of concentration, will have a relevant education and understand the threat to our environment and be equipped to do something about it.' The academic plan for 1973-74 speaks to a far lesser degree about values and mentions the development of professional skills and self-confidence."

The sixties, and the mood that era engendered, were over. Western's pell-mell growth had dramatically slowed. Withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, a hangover from the failed drug culture, Watergate, the Arab oil embargo of 1974, and the fall of Saigon in 1975 had a sobering effect on all campuses. Student focus was changing from saving the world to finding a job.

Meanwhile environmentalism itself was becoming a more contentious topic. With regulation costs rising, those who called for additional cleanup were proving more polarizing. Saving the world turned out to be expensive and rule-bound. By its very mission and association, Huxley had become a heated topic, and the next dean would find herself in the hot seat.

"Saving the world turned out to be expensive and rule-bound."



Mushroom colony on Coyote Creek trail in Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park.
Photo by Courtney Leake

Curt Johnson Class of '77

The first Earth Day, April 22, 1970, inspired many. But when Connecticut high school student Curt Johnson sought to follow idealism with education, at first he couldn't find a college.

"I went to my guidance councilor and asked her if there were any [university-level] environmental studies programs," Johnson said. "She looked at me cross-eyed and said no."

Johnson eventually learned she was wrong, and he transferred from a small college in Ohio to Huxley, 3,000 miles from his hometown near New Haven.

"I was impressed with the fact that [Huxley] was an environmental college in the midst of a much larger university setting, because most programs at the time didn't have anything like that," Johnson said.

Curt earned a degree in environmental education with a minor in marine resources and field ecology in 1977.

After graduation, he made his way back home to become New Haven's first urban park ranger. He developed a park environmental education program which still exists today.

After four years as a park ranger, he began working as a general contractor by day while attending law school at the University of Connecticut by night. During his last year of law school, he participated in an exchange-student program with Vermont Law School, where he focused on environmental law. In the end he earned a law degree from the University of Connecticut School Law and received a master's in the study of law from Vermont.



Long Island Sound, NY.
Photo by Richard Sack.



His subsequent practice of environmental law led to pro-bono work for the Connecticut Fund for the Environment. Eventually the Connecticut Fund offered him a full time position as senior attorney.

"I took about a forty percent pay cut and never looked back."

One of his proudest achievements with the Connecticut Fund has been stopping Bridgeport, Conn., from dumping raw sewage in Long Island Sound during stormwater overflows. This campaign helped both the environment and community, since Bridgeport had a lot of low-income residents who could not afford the burden of implementing a new multimillion-dollar sewage treatment plant. Rather than force residents and the city to foot the bill, Curt and the Connecticut Fund worked to obtain a \$500 million grant and a low-interest loan from the state to cover two-thirds of the cost.

Other programs included permanent protection of 15,000 acres of trees, a trash cleanup on forty-five miles of beaches, work to limit highway construction and auto pollution, and construction of another dozen sewage treatment plants in the state.

"Environmental efforts need to be coupled with the funding to protect those who will be affected the most," Johnson said. "If we expect people to improve, we need to be much more creative to work on these problems from a social-justice and an environmental perspective."

Anne Maertens

Above: Curt Johnson Family.
Photo courtesy of Curt Johnson

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Robert Johnston Class of '81

Robert Johnston is a Navy guy, but he doesn't pilot a warship. As a civilian scientist who works for the Navy's Marine Environmental Support Office, he also serves on the Puget Sound Partnership Science Panel, which is part of the Puget Sound Partnership coalition that is cleaning up local waters.

Johnston helps examine the impact of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton on Sinclair and Dyes Inlets.

There has been encouraging progress. In 2003, the Washington State Department of Health opened about 1,500 acres for shell fishing as a direct result of cooperative work between the Navy, local tribes, and other organizations.

But while the Navy Yard has cleaned up much of its industrial pollution, the growing population on the Kitsap Peninsula puts increasing pressure on Puget Sound. "It used to be, there would be an industrial area, but the rest of the watershed was pristine," Johnston said. "Now we have the industrial areas under control, but the rest of the area is being developed."

He's using his computer, mathematics, and marine science skills to develop computer models of local waters to guide cleanup efforts.

After graduating from Bellingham's Sehome High School in 1973, Johnston and some friends joined the Navy, figuring it was a way to get out of town and gain some life experience. "Vietnam had just ended so I was stationed in a helicopter squadron in San Diego and spent a year overseas working as an aircraft mechanic on a supply ship," he said.



Three years later he returned to the United States and took advantage of the GI Bill, first at Whatcom Community College and then at Western Washington University.

"I started taking all the math and computer science courses, but I also took Huxley classes," Johnston said. "After about two years I got bored with math. I wanted to combine what I was doing with math and what I was learning at Huxley."

He chose a Huxley systems-engineering major, and after graduation in 1981, the Navy recruited him to work at its science lab in San Diego. "I became the computer geek for a bunch of marine scientists and oceanographers," Johnston said. "After I was working there for a while I said, 'Well, if I'm gonna be a marine scientist, I guess I better learn something about marine science.'"

He earned a master's in marine ecology at San Diego State University in 1989 and then a doctorate in biological oceanography at the University of Rhode Island in 1999. He had applied Huxley's interdisciplinary approach, combining math, computer, and science skills.

"When I moved to Rhode Island from San Diego I was single and could put everything I owned in the back of my jeep," Johnston said. "When I moved back I had a wife, three kids and a Ph.D."

Now he's working to save the inland sea he grew up near.

"The best part of my job is the chance to really make a difference for something we care about: the quality of life here in Puget Sound," he said.

Oliver Lazenby
Photo courtesy of Robert Johnston

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Huxley students smile at Shi Shi Beach on the Olympic Coast, 1979. *Huxley College archives*

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HUXLEY STUDENT EXPERIENCE

When small-town Wisconsin girl Jennifer Hahn entered the environmental studies program at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 1978, she found an enormous, impersonal university with a brand-new green curriculum that seemed “amorphous and unclear.” Hahn had started her undergraduate studies at a small environmental studies branch of the university called Stevens Point and recalled seeing there (through a haze of professorial pipe smoke, still the fashion at the time) a poster about distant and experimental Huxley College. When she confessed to a Madison adviser that her choice of a huge school might have been a mistake, she was told the Huxley fall term hadn’t started yet. She could still enroll. Hahn had vivid memories of camping with her father as a four-year-old in Olympic National Forest, and the Pacific Northwest seemed alluring and mystical. With Dad’s permission, Hahn headed west.

Huxley students at that time began their studies with a two-day outdoor orientation at Silver Fir Campground on the Mount Baker Highway. Faculty camped with the newcomers, led them on hikes above the Mount Baker Ski Area, let them “dance til you drop” on Saturday night in the town of Glacier, and cooked a pancake breakfast Sunday morning. A lot of energy went into forging community.

“I felt like I’d fallen into ten feet of moss,” Hahn recalled. “It was so nurturing.”

It was also a bit of culture shock. “The guys were all bearded, with plaid wool shirts, hiking boots, and dark navy blue pants with a lot of buttons that made it hard to pee. The women had shiny red cheeks, were vegetarian, and didn’t shave their armpits or legs. Everyone hugged. I thought, ‘This is nothing like Wisconsin.’ I also thought, ‘I want to be like that someday.’”



Above: Easter Potluck.

Right: Jenny Hahn writes in her journal after hiking the Cascade Crest trail.
Photos courtesy of Jenny Hahn

Huxley students, drawn from all over the nation, seemed to Hahn to be able to name every plant they hiked by. Professors heated a big iron pot of water into which students threw potluck items for a communal stew that, she recalled, was pretty awful in taste but psychologically nutritious. “We created a safety net with each other.”

The faculty seemed oversized personalities: an older David Clarke, the political scientist, urging a cooperative approach to problems; chemist Ruth Weiner “scary” but inspirational in her insistence on mastering science; Ernst Gayden the soft-spoken geographer; and John Miles and Lynn Robbins the “big kids” insisting they be called by their first names.

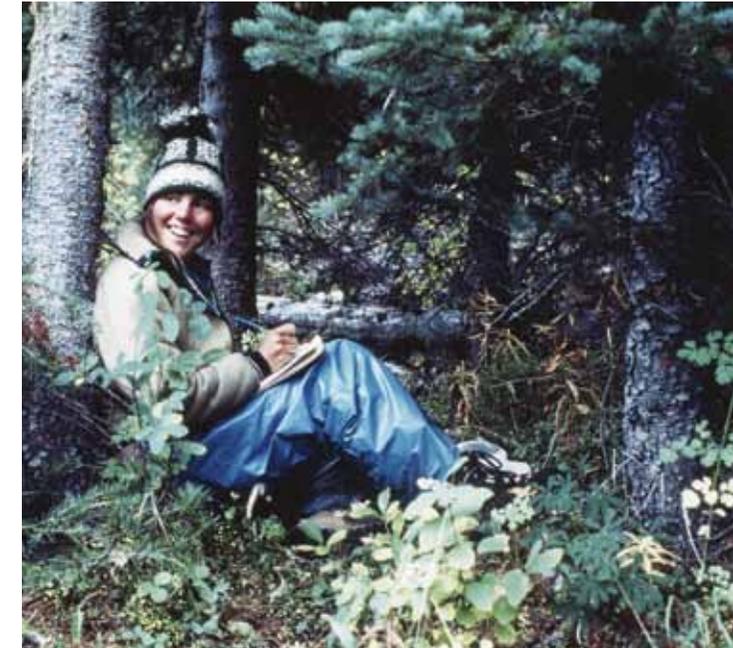
Huxley’s attempt at teaching integration of science and humanities was unique in the nation, Hahn had judged. “You would look at all these options across the nation and Huxley shined. There weren’t other programs like this. They were teaching that what you needed was a balance of these things.”

But students also recognized the philosophic strains of trying to meld disciplines that historically had been separated. “It seemed like Huxley was breaking in half,” Hahn said. “It was a castle with two turrets.”

Students tried keeping the castle together in many ways. Early years saw institution of Tuesday Night Leftovers, a student potluck; an occasional opening of a “Huxley coffeehouse” in the new buildings; and Friday night volleyball. The college used guest speakers, special conferences, hands-on research projects, and internships to engage its students.

“Going through Huxley was, ‘You guys are the future problem solvers,’” Hahn recalled. Faculty member Bert Webber helped demystify science, leading students on comprehensive beach surveys at low tide and coining the name “Salish Sea” for the waters west of Bellingham. Fairhaven College’s Rand Jack admitted students to his environmental law classes.

“Huxley students gravitated together,” said Mike Town, who arrived in 1979. “We lived in these cooperative houses and formed a food web to buy food together. Everybody got to know each other. We had potlucks and listened to the same music. They called us ‘The Granolas,’ and we did dress a little differently. But the passion for, and knowledge of, science was really strong.”



The college made full use of its epic environment. Miles wrote a lyrical essay about “The Students of Albert Camp,” a camping spot in the Pasayten Wilderness used as a spring capstone for environmental education students. He was there with twenty of them when Mount St. Helens erupted far to the south on May 18, 1980.

From that base the Huxley students would leave in smaller groups to explore and set up solo camps to observe and meditate. In 1984 the camp enjoyed twelve clear days and nights and, midway, a full moon. A student named Mark, or “Rolling Thunder,” was a Chicago suburb kid who later wrote for Miles what it was like to camp by himself.

“While I was out there in the sun and moonlight, phrases from the great wilderness writers kept drifting through my head. I sat for hours gazing out over the forest or watching rabbits and deer. The high point came one evening after a brief but intense snow shower put a dusting of powdery stuff over everything. It was brighter than ever — maybe the moon was full that night. I couldn’t sleep. Prowling around, I came across cougar tracks. I wasn’t scared a bit. Instead, I set off tracking it ... I lost the tracks after a while but roamed around all night, feeling an exultation that is still with me. My spiritual consciousness was at the most acute level I had ever experienced ... all doubt about my direction didn’t disappear, but that night I found a powerful blaze telling me where the path lay.”

He subsequently went to work for Washington State Parks and became an eloquent advocate for preserving their natural habitat.

Another student, Melanie, wrote to Miles of the camaraderie. “[It was] a very emotional campfire, readings and emotions and groping hugs, private tears and a feeling with oneness so intense that my heart rips in departure.”

A student named Michael went on to become a wilderness instructor, and reflected on what he’d learned in the Pasayten about being a teacher. “The single most important quality is love — love for self, love for students, and love for wilderness ... the instructor is a tool, a helper, perhaps a model. The true teacher is the wilderness itself and what the student does in it and with it.”

Hahn spoke of learning to work with other students. “Being in the wilderness strips away our character and personality defenses a little bit ...

“The true teacher is wilderness itself”

CONTINUED ON PG.96

Daniel Kirkpatrick Class of '81

When Huxley graduate Daniel Kirkpatrick was challenged to come up with two words to describe what he does, he whittled his life's work down to this: "Inspire youth."

After earning an environmental education degree from Huxley in 1981, the Chicago-area native fulfilled his lifelong dream when he co-founded Bellingham's Explorations Academy in 1995. Explorations Academy is an alternative high school that strives to give kids experiential, interdisciplinary learning and a sense of community.

The school is private but awards scholarships. It has never turned anyone away for financial reasons, Kirkpatrick said.

At Explorations Academy, an international program takes students on excursions to places as diverse as India, Kenya, and Guatemala. He just returned from traveling for a month in Cuba with students. In Guatemala, students backpacked into a ruin that had never before been visited by a high school class.

"I get to tell students, 'You have skills, you have abilities, you have tools, and you have talent. Your talents are needed by this messed up world.' I believe education has the greatest leverage. It's the way you can make the most difference."

Kirkpatrick developed his social consciousness while growing up in a multiracial housing cooperative called the York Center Community Cooperative, which his parents helped create. The housing cooperative was located outside of Chicago, where it was unheard of for white and black families to live together. It had a strong community, and "little Danny" could walk a few blocks in any direction, knock on a neighbor's door and be greeted with a cookie.

Photo by Courtney Leake



"It was a suburban utopian vision," he said. "There was this real effort to create community."

The idea of community became a lifelong theme for him.

Kirkpatrick became an environmentalist after seeing his rural hometown swallowed by the expanding Chicago suburbs. The pond where he caught frogs as a boy was filled to build a strip mall. The creek where he built dams with his friends was turned into a culvert to drain a parking lot.

"I had this compelling set of childhood experiences of watching nature be destroyed," Kirkpatrick said. "That made me an environmentalist. It wasn't a rational decision, it's in my heart and soul."

After finishing high school and leaving the housing cooperative, Kirkpatrick spent a few years hitchhiking around the country until he ended up at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. One day in geology class, "I was looking at a map of the Northwest, and I saw the Columbia running radioactive from Hanford downstream, and I just felt like I needed to be there," he said. "I needed to be in a place where I felt like I could make a difference."

Kirkpatrick enrolled at Huxley in 1979 and found community among the students and professors. "I still keep in touch with my friends from Huxley," Kirkpatrick said. "I was roommates for four years with a character who was like me - shaggy, playful, intellectual, and now he's teaching at Huxley: Gene Myers."

Kirkpatrick helps teach Huxley students, but in a different way. Environmental education students write lesson plans and team up with Explorations Academy to learn and explore the Northwest.

Oliver Lazenby

Photos courtesy of Gene Myers and Daniel Kirkpatrick

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Casey & Katie Kulla Class of '03

Casey and Katie Kulla grew up in what they call “professional families” and assumed they’d have jobs like their parents.

Instead, Huxley graduate Casey, 30, and Katie his wife, 29, run Oakhill Organics Farm in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. They were recently named Yamhill County Young Farmers of the Year and listed on the “Top 40 Farmers Under 40” website by Mother Nature Network.

Casey and Katie met as Western freshmen and married a year and a half later. After graduating in 2003 - Casey with a degree in biochemistry and Katie with a degree in English - they spent a year working in remote Holden Village at the head of Lake Chelan.

Katie’s job in the Holden kitchen gave her access to local farmers in Twisp, Chelan and Leavenworth, many of them first-generation farmers. The couple caught the farming bug.

“When we were at Holden, we realized we really love being near each other during the day,” Katie said. “For us, farming is a great way to work together.”

They moved back to Bellingham to pursue graduate degrees. Casey attended Huxley to study ecology, where he realized being an ecologist involved a lot of statistics and not a lot of on-the-ground time. They also learned that grad school is much like farm life - no one was going to hold their hand.

“Wait, aren’t you just going to tell me what to do in order to graduate?” Casey laughed, remembering his time at Huxley. “I hadn’t realized you have to figure out what you want to do and then propel yourself forward. It was really good training for being a farmer.”



After graduation, Casey and Katie worked at Cedarville Farm near Bellingham. The farm was organic and operated similar to how Oakhill Organics is run now. In 2006, they moved to McMinnville, Oregon, and started their own farm.

They named their cat Mokum, after a type of carrot, and recently became proud parents of a son they named Russell Sprout.

Eighty-five percent of the vegetables produced at Oakhill Organics go to the couple’s Community Supported Agriculture program, or CSA. Community members can sign up for this service and pick up a basket of produce - whatever is in season - every week from the farmers market. It’s like a subscription for vegetables.

Now the farm is expanding into fruit production. “The food is great, we get to be outside all the time, we get to live in a beautiful place, and work where we live. The way we sell our vegetables through the CSA is a great way to tap into the community,” Katie said. Casey and Katie agree this is where they will be for the foreseeable future.

“I don’t know what we would do differently,” Katie said. “There’s a lot of rough moments in farming, and I think, ‘Uhh, why are we doing this?’ Then I try to think through what we would do differently, where we would go what we would do for jobs and I just can’t really picture anything else. We’re pretty locked in - in a good way.”

Story and Photo by Kaylin Bettinger

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Faculty member Crystal Driver and students take water samples in 1986. *Huxley College archives*

Four of us felt claustrophobic at times. It was wild to be with these people who, as a group, weren't really close friends but were learning partners ... We had to deal with each other's personal habits and idiosyncrasies ... it's amazing how two short weeks stand out in my mind."

The young tree huggers were amusing and puzzling to outside observers. One visiting professor from Czechoslovakia commented to Miller, "The men have long hair, beards, and dress in the sloppiest clothes. The women have no makeup, long dresses, and seem to want to make themselves unattractive. But I have never seen students so enthusiastic, anxious to learn, and focused."

Getting students into the environment seemed to be the highlight for both faculty and students, often with dramatic results. In recent years, Professor Andy Bach took students to Grand Coulee Dam and the dramatic Ice



Age geology in the vicinity, and he recalled having to play referee when a Huxley student challenged a Chief Joseph Dam tour guide about the lack of salmon passage there. "The student relentlessly accosted the tour operator, who could only respond with a few canned answers," Bach recalled. "He was outmatched against a Huxley student fresh from fisheries, natural resources, and environmental economics classes. The situation was quite humorous, but I did step in rather quickly since we were part of a large tour group with about thirty tourists who were starting to spontaneously form into their own pro-dam and con-dam groups and discussion was elevating toward heated debate."

Professor John McLaughlin is an example of how instructors used nature to teach its own lessons. He has engaged students with everything from a contest of gluing maple seeds into aerodynamic shapes to get maximum dispersal distance, to doing owl surveys all quarter at Whatcom County's Nessel Farm. He then took students rafting past the farm down the south fork of the Nooksack River in 1999.

In 2010, McLaughlin and his students were banding chickadees when a hummingbird flew into their net. "I quickly freed him from the net, then placed him in the open palm of a student who asked to be the one to release him. The bird sat on her hand for some ten seconds, calmly looking around. Then he flew off along the edge of the forest. For that student, nothing else we did in class that day could compare ..."

Many Huxley students enjoyed memorable trips in the United States and abroad. Ernst Gayden led classes in Mexico, Lynn Robbins in the American Southwest, Nick Zaferatos in Greece, Troy Abel in Costa Rica, Gigi Berardi in Italy, and Andy Bunn in Siberia, to name just some.

"After a daylong fifteen-kilometer hike through a rainforest, Day 1 at the biological site began at 4 a.m.," Abel recalled. "The twenty-four Huxley students didn't dream of such an early wake up, but the forest had different plans. The howls began slowly and seemingly in the distance. They grew to a crescendo right above our buildings, and most of us were shaken out of a tropical slumber. A troop of howler monkeys filled the trees over our bunk houses and let us know that this was their jungle."

Zaferatos returned to his ancestral island of Kefalonia, in Greece, and involved more than 100 students and several faculty members in a study



Top: Huxley students work on trail maintenance. *Huxley College archives*

Below: The commemorative 25th anniversary poster/cover of Planet Magazine during a student letterpress printing session.

examining how the earthquake-destroyed village of Farsa could be rebuilt on sustainable guidelines. The work won the 2009 Green Good Design Award from the European Center for Art, Design, and Urban Studies.

Students in professor Ruth Sofield's environmental toxicology class were thrown together in just the same way. "It's really intense," recalled student Stephanie Eckard. "We sleep and eat and dream together." Her group worked hand-in-hand with Washington's Department of Ecology to monitor the \$21 million cleanup of the old forty-one-acre Scott paper mill site in Anacortes. "We were working with real people, real consulting firms, on a real problem."

Emily Duncanson came to Sofield's program on the advice of Redmond High School teacher Town, the Huxley alum, who explained it was one of the few environmental toxicology programs in the country that allowed hands-on lab and experiment work by undergraduates.

"[Sofield] provided us with such amazing experiences," Duncanson said, "most notably the research through the Port of Anacortes cleanup. We've been able to learn how the contaminated-site cleanup process works in Washington state, including the regulations and how the different responsible parties cooperate."

Her praise extends to other classes. "One of the things I love most about Huxley is the feeling of community felt between students as well as the staff. Every professor made class feel personal, and it was obvious that there was a real desire for teaching and wanting the students to succeed."

Professor Gene Myers took his students to the New Holly housing project in south Seattle to work with urban minority youth groups, exploring the relationship of environmentalism with the achievement of social justice. The cultures taught each other. "Within just a few square blocks, there were seventeen languages spoken ... One of my students prepared a talk about insects and about how some are edible. She'd presented it to her classmates, who found it intriguing and somewhat disgusting. She started her presentation with the New Holly students, and before she was four sentences into it, one of the boys popped up his hand and said, 'My family eats that kind,' and then two others said they did too. It became a case of the youth telling my students about the ways they, and especially their

Future Huxley professor Gene Myers came to a party costumed as a typewriter (note keys on his chest) in hopes of getting the attention of future author and fellow student Jennifer Hahn. Photo courtesy of Jenny Hahn



Huxley graduate, idealist, and Associated Students President Greg Sobel in 1981. Huxley College archives

grandparents, know to use not only insects but wild plants, medicinal substances, etc. It summed up why, when we got together — urban youth and environmental educators — the educators were in the role of learner."

Bunn's study of carbon cycling housed students on a Siberian barge near an old Soviet work camp, where they endured clouds of mosquitoes and primitive living to help forecast the future of climate change. As the climate warms, it melts the permafrost and releases trapped carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, creating what Bunn calls "a carbon bomb." To understand this feedback loop, students waded into freezing water, hacked at clay banks, and slogged through bogs, learning not just about climate but Russian culture in the remote northeastern corner of a gigantic country.

Huxley students came not just to understand the world but to improve it. Greg Sobel opened a soup kitchen at age sixteen, running it for eighteen months during high school in Baltimore before coming to Huxley and studying with Hahn and Myers. He plunged into campus activism and was elected student body president. "He had a tremendous ability to fill a room with hope," college friend David Goldsmith later told a Sudbury, Mass., newspaper. "He gave us reason to believe we could change the world."

As Associated Students president, in 1981 Sobel challenged President Olscamp on a \$23,000 remodel of the president's house kitchen from a Housing and Dining Service fund that came in part from student fees. Sobel's complaint that students weren't consulted resulted in improved communication between students and administrators, with the help of a state legislator who served as mediator.

An avid outdoorsman, Sobel returned east to become director of the environmental mediation program for the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution. He then founded a private firm, Environmental Mediation Services. He helped resolve many high-profile disputes, including the cleanup of the Massachusetts Military Reservation on Cape Cod and the Housatonic Rover in western Massachusetts. He died in 2005, committing suicide after never recovering from the severe pain of a 1996 automobile accident.

The last entry in the journal he kept most of his life read, "Be good to one another, love one another, and try to make changes in the world."

"Be good to one another, love one another, and try to make changes in the world."

Mitch Lesoing Class of '77

When Mitch Lesoing thought he was ready to graduate from Huxley with a degree in marine science, Western Washington University staff said, "I'm sorry Mr. Lesoing, but we only graduate well-rounded students."

With 80 extra science credits, Lesoing was frustrated that he had to pay for more classes to achieve an interdisciplinary degree.

"In retrospect, those Ethnic Studies humanities classes that I took were probably some of the most instrumental and influential in the way I think now," the Quileute tribal biologist said.

In working for the tribe on the remote Olympic coast, Lesoing has done groundbreaking research on harmful algal blooms. He's also served as a community recycling center manager, outdoor therapist's assistant, oyster farmer, passive-solar-house builder, amateur cob-house builder, stay-at-home dad, and a teacher.

Well-rounded, indeed.

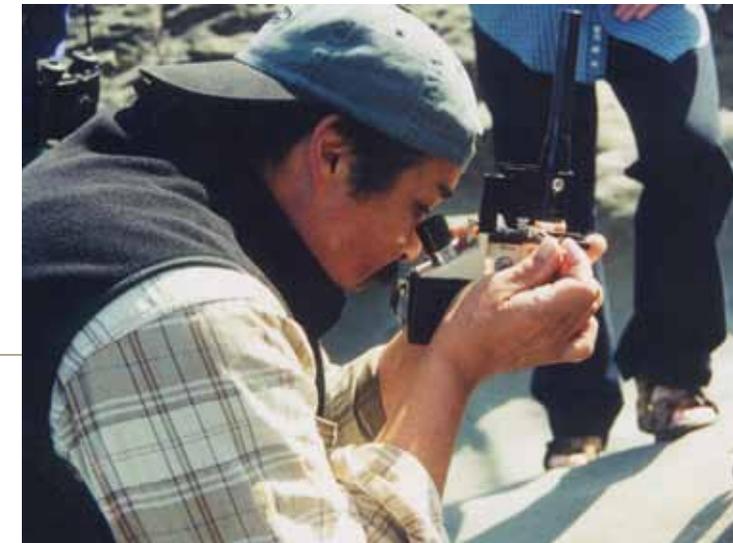
"You wear many hats working for a tribe," said Lesoing, who also helped organize a marine science education program for Quileute students.

In 1994, when the Quileute and other coastal tribes began noticing the increasing toxicity in their traditional subsistence shellfish harvest, Lesoing began researching the effects of algal blooms on human health.

He and other researchers learned that the blooms were making shellfish toxic. Now, coastal tribes have labs and technologies that test for the poison.

"Some of the most elegant solutions for environmental issues are very simple."

Photo by Courtney Leake



Lesoing left tribal employment after a decade and now lives on San Juan Island with his wife and two children. He home-schools his teenage sons, finding ways to incorporate his love for science into their education by taking them whale watching and plankton sampling. Lesoing said he always tries to help his children think critically about the environment. He teaches that recycling is good but that being a conscientious consumer who doesn't require recycling is even better. When able to, he tries to set a good example.

"Metaphorically, environmentalism is sort of like Christianity," Lesoing said. "Accepting Christ into your life is one thing, but living in Christ's image is a whole other thing. Environmentally, practicing what you preach is often challenging."

Lesoing said his family owns one car, but he is currently trying to set up a car-share system within the community, using an imported car powered by compressed air pressure. After constructing his first passive-solar cob house, made of adobe, Lesoing said he intends to pursue more cob-building projects. In addition to closely monitoring their water use, he and his family buy from local farmers, compost, and are active members of the community.

"The most valuable thing I learned from Huxley was not to get trapped within conformity," Lesoing said. "Learn to think outside the box. Some of the most elegant solutions for environmental issues are very simple."

Devon Fredericksen

Mitch Lesoing works with Quileute tribal students on the Olympic Coast.
Photos courtesy of Mitch Lesoing

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Anne Martin Class of '91

When Anne Martin and a small group of friends and Huxley classmates drove toward Vancouver Island's Carmanah Valley in 1990, she was devastated by the stumps and logging slash.

Then the group hiked the valley itself, a beautiful and lush old-growth forest. She saw for herself what was at stake, Martin recalled.

"We drove through miles of clear-cuts," she said. "I had never seen such forest destruction before. That was my start speaking out against destructive timber sales."

Martin soon after graduated from Huxley with a bachelor's degree in environmental policy and a minor in political science. The next two decades would be spent fighting to protect forests and other wild places.

While she began with an internship at the Washington State Department of Ecology, she soon realized that working for a government agency wasn't the right fit. She was spending her lunch hours working to protect British Columbia forests.

"I realized that I was most passionate about organizing public attention to increase awareness about what was happening to forests in B.C. and the United States," Martin said.

She began working for LightHawk. It's an organization that flies media groups, decision makers, community members, and researchers over clear-cuts, logging-induced landslides, and threatened lands.

Martin moved on to work for the Kettle Range Conservation Group in northeast Washington,



which works to protect wilderness on the Colville National Forest. In 1999, she was hired by the American Lands Alliance. Within a year she was promoted to national field director and remained in the position until American Lands closed its doors in 2009 for financial reasons.

Martin was part of several big environmental victories and even more small ones. An achievement she is most proud of was stopping legislation that would have allowed destructive salvage logging in areas burned by forest fires.

"We involved scientists, firefighters and people from all over the country," Martin said. "That bill never passed and that was a huge success for the conservation community."

She loves seeing the positive impact of bringing together organizations and community leaders, including unlikely allies, to collaborate and find common ground.

"I feel very passionate about advocating for protecting forests and other public lands; it is part of who I am," Martin said. "Our communities need intact forests and watersheds, healthy fish and wildlife populations, and wild places to find solitude."

Anne Maertens

Photos courtesy of Anne Martin

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CHAPTER SIX

HUXLEY AGAINST THE WORLD 1974-1979

Huxley could not have been bolder in its next choice of dean. Ruth Weiner, a native of Austria and the daughter of refugees from Nazi persecution, had a doctorate in physical chemistry and was a pioneering female who, at the height of the women's movement, took a contentious job at a college still defining itself. Smart, combative, outspoken, inspirational, and challenging, she was named dean on Aug. 15, 1974. Webber, who supported her tenure, described her as flamboyant, emotional, and charismatic, a figure some students loved, others feared, and faculty divided on.

"Ruth Weiner was scary because she was so demanding," recalled student Hahn. "She was loud and opinionated in all the right ways. I appreciated her really hard, hard science." But many found her intimidating or irritating. "I'd go by faculty meetings and you could hear Ruth talking through the glass," Hahn said.

"She was adored or hated by students," recalled Robbins. "She was adored for the right reasons: she was brilliant, principled, and had high standards. She was tough, but she'd hold tutorials to help students stay [in class]."

As both a chemist in a male-dominated branch of science and dean of a faculty of a dozen men, the 37-year-old Weiner was a pioneer when hired. "I was their great leap forward in affirmative action," she recalled. "For the first couple of months, every week someone made a sexist joke. There was a certain amount of bias." She was not inclined to be diffident. Her readiness to respond aggressively to criticism of Huxley or herself may have reinforced gender tensions in a period when women and minorities were battling for recognition and power.

Weiner is the only female Huxley dean in its first forty years of existence.

When she was hired, Huxley was still unique in the United States in offering environmental studies as a separate college, rather than as a program within existing university departments, Weiner recalled. “The positive side was the commitment of faculty to their college,” she said. “The negative side was the problem of getting the appropriate mix of disciplines and giving the faculty you hire a means of publication in an area where there were almost no venues.” Today, she noted, there are enough environmental journals to have alleviated that problem, but in the early 1970s it was a science without an infrastructure and thus snubbed by some in more traditional disciplines.

“The central campus saw Huxley as an upstart, a sort of pseudo-Fairhaven, and I had to keep telling people yes we give grades, yes we have regular courses and laboratories, yes we have a curriculum that the faculty approves - in essence, we are not Fairhaven but a regular academic unit that happens to be forged out of a number of disciplines. There was also an apparent desire to use Huxley as a dumping ground for faculty who couldn’t get tenure in Arts and Sciences, which we had to resist.”

“The year after I came,” she recalled, “the College of Arts and Sciences split out Education, Business and I believe Technology as separate colleges, and Huxley was seen as less of an anomaly. Since we had new deans, the Deans Council was also more open. As Huxley began to be taken more seriously and accepted, and as environmental doings became more popular, the animosity against the college lessened. Huxley was clearly there to stay.”

The burst of growth authorized in the late 1960s was still playing out. The month after Weiner’s appointment, in September, classes began at the new \$355,000 marine laboratory at Shannon Point in Anacortes. The remoteness of the facility plagued it with underuse, however, and Weiner dismissed its first director, Huxley faculty member Bill Summers. It would not be until 1985, when marine biologist Steve Sulkin was hired as a fulltime administrator, that Shannon Point began to come into its own as a year-round program of offerings that ranged from high school visits to doctoral research.



Above: Former dean and faculty member Ruth Weiner in 1979. Huxley College archives

By 2010, Flora’s dream of a marine laboratory for Western would boast onsite housing, twenty-two courses, an award-winning minority studies program, three boats, and \$6.4 million in federal grants.

That was far in the future. For the moment, Huxley and Shannon Point were still staking their ground. Huxley’s most controversial year might have been tumultuous 1975, the year Microsoft was founded and construction on the Alaska Pipeline began. It was the year the first Greenpeace boat set out from Vancouver, B.C., to challenge the whaling industry, and Edward Abbey published his environmental sabotage novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*.

“Right now Huxley is not strongest in the hard-science component,” Weiner told *The Western Front* in 1975, reflecting on the criticism she had heard since becoming dean the year before. “Instead, its strength lies in the social sciences and humanities components. We do, however, need to strengthen the hard science component somewhat, and we need to work more closely with the College of Arts and Sciences.” In comments to *Resume*, Western’s alumni newsletter, she said she wanted to retain Huxley’s “problem-solving approach” and estimated there were only twenty such programs across the United States. The college’s ideal size, she suggested, would be 300 students.

Huxley students and faculty were continuing to plunge into local issues. Students pushed for expansion of Bellingham bikeways, combated proposals for nuclear power plants in neighboring Skagit County, and opposed industrial land expansion near Custer. They protested the trade of Whatcom Falls Park land to the Bellingham School District, and criticized expansion of Squalicum Boat Harbor because of a potential loss of wetlands, an issue first identified by biology professor Leona Sundquist a decade before.

When the famed Firesign Theater gave a performance at Western on May 18, 1975, a group of Huxley students who called themselves Captain Compost and the Eco-Freaks presented a skit called “Dr. Nucleus A. Boom and the Atomic Elixir and Sideshow — A Pungent Production,” poking fun at nuclear power.

CONTINUED ON PG. 112

Mike McDowell Class of '78

When Huxley graduate Mike McDowell started Pacific Environmental Technology to develop technologies to study salmon behavior in response to an oil spill, he didn't know the Exxon Valdez would run aground in Alaska just ten days later, spilling 11 million gallons of oil.

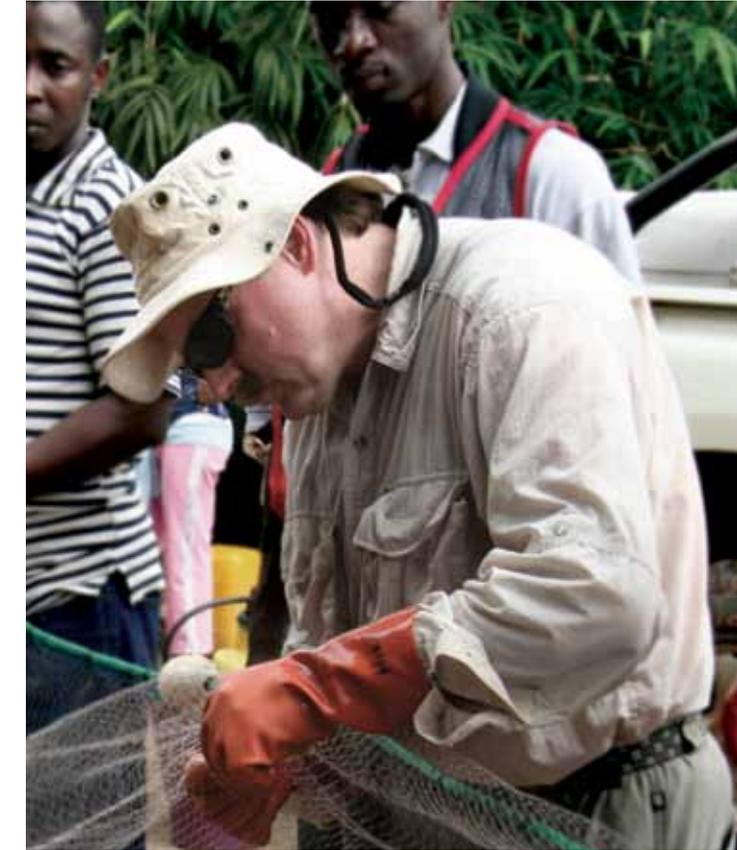
Exxon found the brand-new company and hired it to bring its expertise to Prince William Sound in 1989. For the next 18 months, McDowell's firm did field work, data analysis, and report preparation on the spill's impact on the nearshore environment and salmon populations. His firm pioneered the use of acoustic tags and hydrophones to track fish.

"It was a heck of a way to start a company and not one that I would recommend to anyone," McDowell said. "Our purpose was hijacked by events way beyond our control. We did eventually develop a prototype system that was successfully used to track steelhead returning to the locks in Seattle for (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). But that was after our original vision had been overtaken by events."

McDowell graduated in 1978 with a B.S. in environmental studies and an emphasis on ecosystems analysis and environmental policy. He said the diversity of his education provided a strong foundation on which to build a career, making him not just a scientist but a problem solver.

McDowell appreciated Huxley's connection with the larger university and took a few classes in biology and classes at Shannon Point Marine Lab.

But although Huxley's culture was easy and relaxed, he didn't entirely fit in. "I didn't always feel that I



belonged with the activist wing of the student body which felt like the dominant group at the time," McDowell said. "I was more pragmatic than most and was looking for ways to apply the science and policy that I was learning. We all wanted to improve the world; some were more ardent than I was."

McDowell later attended the University of Washington for graduate studies in fisheries and then in management.

Mike is now the Principal Aquatic Scientist and owner of Confluence Environmental Company. He has traveled to Ghana as the lead aquatic scientist for environmental studies of two large gold mines and has worked in Palau and throughout the Pacific Northwest. In Washington State, he has worked on timber and asphalt-facility projects.

"I generally love doing new things, especially when I get to do them in exotic locations where everything is hard to do," McDowell said. "I like challenges. I dislike the mundane routine regulatory compliance that is a part of most jobs I do."

McDowell serves on the Huxley Advisory Board, which Mike described as a reality check to ensure what Huxley emphasizes is what the marketplace is looking for.

"Huxley is about laying the foundations in future generations of people like me who will go out into the world and make a difference for the environment every day they go to work," he said. "I really feel like that is what I have done for thirty years. Huxley gave me many of the tools I needed to do that work."

Olivia Scalett
Photos courtesy of Mike McDowell

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- STEPHEN SULKIN
- WILLIAM SUMMERS
- MICHAEL SWEENEY
- HOWARD TEASLEY
- THOMAS TERICH
- MANFRED VERNON
- DAVID WALLIN
- GRACE WANG
- HERBERT WEBBER
- RUTH WEINER
- OLIVER WILGRESS
- ROBERT WISSMAR
- HERB WONG
- MING-HO YU
- NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS

Heather Merchant Class of '77

Although Heather Flaherty Merchant is a self-professed plant lover, she didn't fall in love with her Huxley plant ecology class solely because of her interest in flora. The truth is, she lost a car and gained a husband.

She and her classmate, Mike, were conducting a plant inventory of a clear-cut area on the west side of Lake Whatcom. On their second visit to the site, Heather let Mike drive her old car. When they returned to where the car should have been parked, it had disappeared.

Since Mike had forgotten to activate the parking break, the car had taken a tumble down the hillside and was broken beyond repair. Merchant not only forgave Mike, she married him a day after his Huxley graduation, and is still with him after 31 years.

She also uses her Huxley education in her work as environmental education and community outreach manager for the Sustainability & Environmental Services Department in Plano, Texas.

"Huxley gave me a vision for what you can do to interest other people in the environment, and how you can use different activities, programs and events to draw them in," Merchant said. "I'm fascinated with ecology, with how all the systems work together. I want to help people appreciate all the beauty and intricacies of nature so they help protect it."

In her fifteen years working for the city of Plano, Merchant has organized a Master Composter Program training program, managing over 400 volunteers. She has planned the development of the City's Environmental Discovery Center and Gardens. She also has coordinated the Texas SmartScape Showcase, Kids in the Garden Fallfest, and the



"I want to help people appreciate all the beauty and intricacies of nature so they help protect it."

debut of the Live Green in Plano Expo in 2007, which now attracts over 18,000 participants. One of Merchant's most recent achievements was initiating construction of a LEED certified environmental education building.

For her many accomplishments, Merchant has received the 2007 City of Plano Employee of the Year award, the 2005 Outstanding Grassroots Efforts to Promote Composting award from the U.S. Composting Council, and the 2004 and 2000 City of Plano Volunteer Supervisor of the Year award.

"I just feel so blessed, so fortunate, because I'm in my dream job," Merchant said. "I work with individual people and the community, and I get to see really concrete things happen within our community, through a department that's known nationally for its programs."

Mike, meanwhile, is the urban insect specialist at the Texas A&M University extension center in Dallas, teaching integrated pest management and developing "green" pest control strategies for schools and LEED buildings.

Merchant said she continues to incorporate her love of children's literature into her work, using its lessons as teaching tools. She balances her time between her three children, her work, and community involvement.

"One thing I feel strongly about is equipping Huxley students to see the roles they have in their communities, equipping them to be avenues of change," Merchant said. "Most people live in some kind of sizeable community, so they need to develop programs that will have an impact where they live. I know that going to Huxley opened my eyes to see my role as part of a bigger picture, a bigger movement."

Devon Frederickson
Photo courtesy of Heather Merchant

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Students gather to study at Huxley in 1973. *Huxley College archives*

Much of Huxley's activist contribution was positive. For example, professor Gil Peterson had students prepare sixty-one maps of soil conditions in Whatcom County. "The maps are an example of good, practical information that can be made available through the use of the expertise that exists at the college," Whatcom County Planner Harry Fulton told the Lynden Tribune in August of 1975.

Professor Skip Everitt launched a "Goals for Bellingham" community study. A student design for a bikeway on the old Interurban right-of-way from Fairhaven to Larrabee State Park was called "outstanding" by Whatcom Parks director Ken Hertz, and it became a basis for the path's eventual construction.

But the Whatcom County Development Council, a conservative business group, charged that Huxley students "totally monopolized the meeting" that the county held on a proposal to designate more light industrial land around the town of Custer — a characterization Weiner retorted was a "deliberate distortion." Even as Intalco was contributing to the fledgling recycling program, some business interests began to see Huxley as a threat, not a resource.

Bellingham Herald columnist and city editor Bill Daniel complained in April of 1975 that, "Most of the debate over the [Squalicum] Harbor project centered around a man-made swamp the Huxley students have elevated to the status of a salt marsh ... Resentment of Huxley involved in community affairs recently was obvious at the hearing. Several suggested a good conservation measure for the city would be to level Huxley College and start a reforestation project around Sehome Hill."

In a Huxley Humus article, student Mick Hull wrote, "Many at Huxley already know, and those of you who don't probably will find out, that Huxley's popularity at times falls below the dogcatcher's."

The resources feud with Biology and Geology continued to simmer, with some Western science faculty perceiving Huxley teachers as peripatetic dogooders who were science lightweights.

"Members of the Huxley faculty staff have received considerable written criticism from the Biology Department, much of it derogatory, and some that was quite excessively personal," Weiner wrote in a memo to acting Biology chair Ron Taylor.



An early meeting of Planet Magazine, which evolved from the Huxley Humus in 1979. *Photo courtesy of Jenny Hahn*

He dismissed her complaint, replying, "To quote Shakespeare, 'Me thinks thou dost protest too much.'"

By June of 1975 a group of Huxley faculty approached Flora with concerns about Weiner, but other professors supported her and Flora backed her up.

His successor, Olscamp, did not. "Olscamp didn't like me at all," Weiner recalled. The Huxley faculty had split on the proper role of academics and how political the college should be, and the business community was so unhappy with the institution that they expressed concerns to state Rep. Art Moreau, who worked at Georgia-Pacific.

"Many of the businessmen would like to contribute to the college but get turned off by the one-sided presentations on environmental issues," Moreau said in 1975. Huxley was perceived as unnecessarily critical of development proposals, politically liberal, and a nest of culturally long-haired granola munchers. For businessmen mindful of "your tax dollars at work," the college seemed a thorn instead of an asset.



Huxley's view of itself was quite different. In a May 4, 1976, report reviewing Huxley's curriculum, students Mark Reis and Bob Kanegis began on an optimistic note. "After six years of efforts, Huxley College remains at the forefront of post-secondary environmental studies education," they began. "No theoretical or practical approaches have been formulated or implemented in the field of environmental studies in recent years to indicate that Huxley is moving in the wrong direction. To the contrary, Huxley College is still looked upon as one of the leaders in the field by other environmental studies programs and by 'professional environmentalists.'"

What was needed, they wrote, was clarification and fine-tuning. There had been a loss of Huxley community feeling, overwhelming teaching loads that discouraged research, and a failure to adequately partner with the rest of Western and the outside community. They recommended reducing the number of concentrations, improving the "problem series" of classes, adding regular community presentations to encourage communication, and strengthening admission requirements, course prerequisites, and coursework.

They suggested the student-run HERB could be subsumed into a "center for applied environmental research" that would try to make Huxley as useful as possible to the outside world. One of the outsiders interviewed, John Spencer of the Department of Ecology, even proposed creation of an "environmental extension service" similar to the agricultural extension services operated by Washington State University.

However, "It has become increasingly obvious that Huxley College is attempting to do too many things for too many people with negative consequences," the pair wrote. "Huxley College must concentrate its efforts on those areas in which it is unique — or nearly so."

Olscamp asked Weiner to resign in the summer of 1976. "It's a little hard to say why," she said, but she noted she'd drawn opposition from some faculty and businessmen. In oral interviews with campus historians, Olscamp gave virtually no mention of Huxley or Fairhaven and regarded the shutdown of Ethnic Studies as an achievement. With mutual agreement, Weiner stayed in the post through the 1976-77 academic year and then remained on the Huxley staff as a professor.

In November of 1976 the faculty held a retreat on Whidbey Island. The dean and staff listed twenty-seven concerns. Almost every aspect of Huxley, from curriculum, to grading, to student representation, was up for discussion.

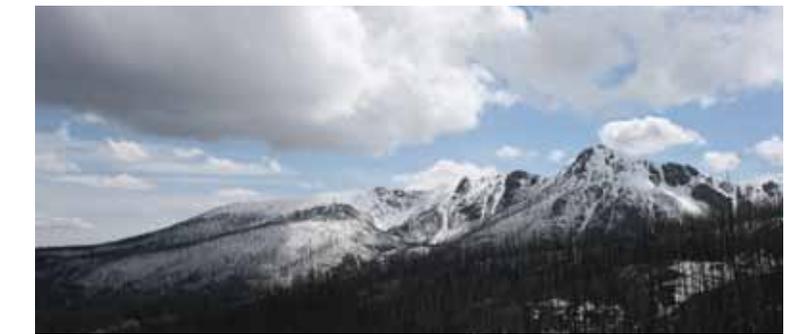
The meeting was apparently productive. "It brought us together in a way we needed to be," Professor Robbins said at the time.

A permanent replacement for Weiner had not been found, so Michael Mischaikow, the economics professor who had served on the first Huxley planning committees in the 1960s, became acting dean.

"Huxley is my baby," he told *The Western Front*. "And you don't bury your children — you try to help them all your life." He used his ties to the business community to calm the college's contentious relationship. In an Oct. 5, 1977, interview, he pointed to an M.C. Escher print of endlessly winding bridges. "This is what I would like to build — to be — for Huxley," he told the newspaper.

Huxley was turning a corner in addressing questions that had plagued it from the beginning. And sometimes unnoticed in the turmoil was that the young college was working. By February of 1976, 166 students had already graduated, and 114 of those responding to a survey held positions related to their degrees.

The upstart institution was doing what it had promised: producing environmental problem solvers. But was it still in step with the times?



Above: View of Windy Peak through forest affected by 2006 Tripod fire. Pasayten Wilderness. Photo by Courtney Leake
Left: Bird bands used in wildlife research classes.

Jasmine Minbashian Class of '92

When environmental activist and photographer Jasmine Minbashian enrolled at Huxley as a college sophomore, she dreamed of working in international environmental policy, traveling the world, and advocating protection of endangered species. After working in Antarctica, the North Pole and Europe, she returned to the Pacific Northwest and found her life's calling in her own backyard.

"I realized there are endangered-species issues right here at home. I could work here and save the place around me."

Since then, Minbashian has led successful campaigns to protect and restore the Cedar River watershed – the source of Seattle's drinking water and now the largest ecological preserve in the central Cascades – and convinced the U.S. Forest Service to permanently stop logging old-growth in southwestern Washington's Gifford Pinchot National Forest. As director of special projects for the Bellingham-based environmental organization Conservation Northwest, she is now helping lead a major effort for the recovery of endangered species in the Pacific Northwest, including once-eradicated populations of wolverine and gray wolf.

"We are the restoration generation," Minbashian says. "Environmentalism in the past few decades has focused a lot on conservation. Now we need to work on restoring what we've saved."

A first generation Iranian-American, she moved with her mother, a photographer, and her father, a mathematician, from Berkeley, California to Tehran for several years when she was a toddler. Her memories of Iran include fording her first river at

"Environmentalism in the past few decades has focused on conservationism. Now we need to work on restoring what we we've saved."



age 4, climbing her first mountain, and watching turtle eggs hatch near her grandmother's house on the Caspian Sea. "These experiences left a big impression on me. In a way they really led me to where I am today."

Minbashian graduated from Huxley in 1992 with a Bachelor of Science in environmental policy.

"At the time, there weren't very many places with programs like this. But it didn't feel 'fringe', it felt cutting-edge," she says. "My skills as a Huxley graduate were really desirable. There was a real need for environmental problem-solving in the policy world."

After Huxley, she moved to France to work with the environmental organization Robin des Bois, then spent a year studying riparian ecology at the University of Washington before signing on for an expedition to the North Pole. "I found myself on a nuclear-powered Russian icebreaker, working

in the supplies kiosk," she recalls. Her first trip was the thirteenth surface voyage to the North Pole in history. She spent the next two winters on expeditions in Antarctica, where she began photographing arctic wildlife.

With the encouragement of pioneering polar biologist Bernard Stonehouse, Minbashian enrolled at England's Cambridge University, earning a science-track (Master of Philosophy) in polar studies from the Scott Polar Research Institute.

"After Cambridge, I was at a crossroads: Do I become a polar biologist and return to Antarctica, or do I go home to the Northwest? I missed the old-growth trees and I realized I wanted to go back and work on the landscape around me," Minbashian says. "It was the forest that really brought me back home."

Jenny Rose Lara

Photos courtesy of Jasmine Minbashian

TROY ABEL
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Gene Myers Class of '82

Gene Myers' office is crammed with environmental books shelved along the walls, intermixed with his own works. Photos of trees shot by his photographer father adorn the walls, and houseplants fill every corner. A giant sugar pine cone is propped next to a map of Sucia Island, where he's taken students. His nest screams Huxley College – and maybe it's because he's spent the better part of his fifty-three years there.

Myers, once a student and now a professor at Huxley, says the college educates not just thinkers but doers. And he represents both.

When former student Mark Manuel, whom Myers taught in 1998, began working for a youth development program for low-income kids in south Seattle, Myers seized an opportunity. He brought Huxley students to Seattle to teach kids environmental education and brought the kids to Western to visit Huxley students. For the first time in their lives, these children began to see college as a viable option.

"He didn't need to do those things," Manuel said. "He saw this neat opportunity. It requires a lot more effort and energy to have those real-life experiential opportunities."

Gene has always been an active intellectual and activist. He began his college career at the University of Washington but moved to Bellingham, a friendlier-sized city where he could really get involved.

Myers began studying at Huxley in 1978 and immediately became active. He helped organized co-op houses where housemates baked bread,

"There's not a part of the natural world I don't find fascinating"



shared finances, created a food web between twenty houses to buy food in bulk, and even built a climbing route through their kitchen.

After college, Myers started an after-school program to teach kids what was behind their everyday routines, such as how water faucets work and where food comes from.

During a kayak trip in Alaska, Gene stopped at a native village and stayed with a family there. The family needed a tutor for their kids, so Myers lingered in the village for three months, teaching and exploring his interest in psychology and human development.

Myers attained his master's degree and doctorate in human development and psychology at the University of Chicago. Though he was one of the few students in his class who didn't have an ivy-league background, Myers' intellectual drive and on-the-ground implementation led him to success.

For the last fifteen years, Myers has excelled at his job as a professor at Huxley. He says there's nowhere else he would want to be and no other subjects he would want to teach.

"There's not a part of the natural world I don't find fascinating," he said.

When Myers looks back on his days as a Huxley student, he remembers students he was surrounded with and the lessons he learned from them. He is amazed by what they've done with their lives.

"I'm so proud of my Huxley classmates," Myers said. "They've gone on to have amazing careers."

His classmates and students are just as proud of him.

Kaylin Bettinger

Photos courtesy of Jenny Hahn and Courtney Leake

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THE HUNT FOR BALANCE 1978-1994

If Huxley's birth was a reflection of the idealism, protest, and radicalism of the 1960s and early 1970s, the stability it achieved by its 20th birthday was a reflection of a cooling of passions, reassessment of methods, and adaptation to the growing conservatism of the Reagan years. Mischaikow and his successors, interim Dean Richard Berg and Dean J. Richard Mayer, built relations with the business community and followed through on recommendations to simplify Huxley's curriculum. But their era also resulted in a drop of Huxley enrollment, which only reversed when Huxley re-emphasized an interdisciplinary curriculum under Dean Miles and the national mood swung back toward environmentalism.

From Huxley's birth, the college had been urged by its foremost patron, Flora, to emphasize science more and activism less; more fact and less opinion. Although Deans Miller and Weiner were both scientists, the early faculty and students were passionate about a politically oriented, problem-solving agenda, and they initiated the college at the tail end of the most liberal period in modern American history. Huxley had been successful in applying academic expertise and student energy to regional planning and problems in Northwest Washington, but it was often ahead of and at odds with mainstream public opinion. Both Mischaikow and Mayer were more conservative than many Huxley faculty and students, and they set out to modify its reputation, sanding off the strident edges.

As interim dean for less than a single year, there was a limit to what economics professor Mischaikow could achieve, but he started a Huxley dialogue on modifying the college's approach and image. His goal was to point the cart in a different direction, toward science and study, the



Faculty member Richard Berg served as Dean for several months in 1978. *Huxley College archives*

traditional roles of academia. Webber described him as “Machiavellian” in his political skill and approach, an economist instead of an ecologist, and a politician instead of an idealist.

None of the perennial Huxley issues had been resolved. Judging from comments in surviving archives, each tier of students tended to look backward to the “good old days.” Wrote student Lorraine Cool in the *Humus*, “Huxley College is not the same college I came to in the fall of 1976. The cohesiveness among different factions seems to be rapidly failing ... I hope apathy and internal struggles do not cause Huxley College to become a Department of Environmental Studies.”

Of course it eventually would become two more traditional academic departments, but long before then Mischaikow helped push through at least two important changes.

In January of 1978, Huxley replaced its A, B, C, and No Credit grading system with the traditional A-B-C-D-F. While 78 percent of polled students opposed the change, the faculty voted 9-3 in favor. The argument was that conventional grading would discourage the perception that Huxley classes were easy, and that it would help students get jobs or enter graduate school.

College self-examination also went on. A document titled “WWU Academic Planning Process, 1977-78,” noted drily, “As witnessed by the present study of issues, Huxley College evaluates itself almost continually.”

Michaikow initiated a Huxley self-study in October of 1977. “The report listed a number of problems,” *The Western Front* reported, “including a haziness between defined goals and the existing curriculum, a lack of depth in separate areas of study, and too many parallel interests.”

In the midst of diverting Huxley’s course to a more moderate direction, the acting dean was sidelined by a skiing accident that winter. He was temporarily replaced by faculty member Berg, a fierce and divisive proponent of pushing Huxley toward a “hard science” curriculum. Berg only served for months and did not have adequate time to enforce his vision, but by May of 1978 there were new proposals to cut Huxley classes from a staggering seventy-two (for thirteen to fourteen faculty members) to thirty-one, and to make the college a four-year school in which students would enter as freshmen.



A Huxley student studies water samples about 1978. *Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections*
Photo by William Todd

Meanwhile, Huxley’s activism had not stopped. A 1978 Huxley study urged that Bellingham Bay’s Portage Island not be developed further. Webber led a shoreline inventory of the coast from the Canadian border to Whidbey Island, providing provide baseline biological data in case of an oil spill. Students would volunteer each weekend to take samples in the low-tide mud.

May 3 of that year was dubbed “Sun Day” to focus on alternative energy, and May 13 was “Care Fest.” Students helped organize and promote a steady stream of observances, conferences, and speakers.

But the pendulum continued to swing toward a science approach. On June 13, 1978, Mayer, of State University of New York in Fredonia, near Lake Erie, was hired as dean. His wife was from Oregon and wanted to return west, and Mayer had competed initially to replace Weiner in 1976. But the position was offered to Dr. Wendel Mordy, a physicist. Mordy accepted the job but then changed his mind, resulting in the academic year in which Mischaikow and Berg were temporary deans. When the position was advertised again, Mayer flew out at his own expense to examine Huxley and talk with faculty and students. His initiative impressed the university, and he was hired as Huxley’s third permanent dean.

“The problem with Huxley College was that there was no respect,” he recalled in an interview. Tirades against business by students and faculty had soured the town toward the cluster college, he said. “We were an embarrassment to Western.”

Continuing the review that the faculty had already set in motion, Mayer worked with the professors to trim thirteen Huxley concentrations to five in February of 1979 to give the institution more focus, but that was just the beginning of sweeping and controversial changes.

“My goal was to make the college respected in the hard sciences,” he said. He met with faculty in the university’s science departments, soliciting advice. He hired toxicologist Ron Kendall and ecologist David Brakke, encouraged partnerships with biology, and persuaded scientists from other departments to serve as adjunct Huxley faculty. At the same time he fired a professor after watching him give a lecture on “the psychology of cats,” and eventually pushed five other faculty members out the door. The fiery Berg left Huxley’s staff and was made a professor-at-large, since no other

CONTINUED ON PG. 128

Don Neff Class of '77

Don Neff is a leading national construction quality-assurance, development and “green” building consultant who also happens to grow and sell organic oranges, other citrus fruits, and avocados in a rare surviving grove in Orange County, California.

Yep. Huxley grad.

Don grew up in Spokane, where his interest in architecture evolved into environmental planning. In 1974 he chose Huxley College for its integration of human ecology and natural systems, and arrived not knowing a soul.

“That was a good thing, because growing up a shy farm boy I needed to get out of my comfort zone,” Neff said. “It forced me to get to know people from all over the Northwest and then the East Coast.”

Neff’s initial concern was whether environmental planning would be a hard science or “mushy-gushy” environmentalism. He quickly learned many professors had hard-science backgrounds. They were also unusually supportive in a tight academic community very different than Harvard University, where he attended graduate school.

“What’s unique about Western is the relationship between students and faculty,” Don said. “Compared to other schools, students get lost. Classes at Harvard were significantly larger. I’m grateful for the academic experience and relationships. At the time, I was clueless as to how valuable those relationships would become in the future.”

Following receipt of his master’s degree at Harvard, and after working for a few years in a Boston-based real estate investment firm, Neff went to work creating senior subsidized housing, multi-

“...I’m trying to leave the world a better place than I found it...Huxley instilled that.”



family housing and large residential projects in Southern California, applying everything he had learned. This included experiences at Huxley and Western Washington University revolving around environmental planning, city planning, regional and environmental economics. After working for several companies, Neff decided to set up his own business: La Jolla Pacific where his employees are like a family. “Presently, we have about thirty professional staff with projects throughout the western and central U.S., from Hawaii to Texas.”

He provides sustainable development and building science-focused construction consulting advice with Huxley values. “All the wonderful experiences in college, the good times, the fun experiences, and

the not-so-fun experiences” influenced his business, Neff said. “You become exposed to different career opportunities. And then, once you are in your thirties or forties, you want to integrate past positive life experiences into your lifestyle going forward. I thought it would be great to have my own orange grove, having grown up in a farming family on the Snake River spanning five generations.”

Don sells organic Valencia oranges, fresh squeezed Neff Ranch Orange Juice, and Hass and Fuerte avocados at local farmers markets throughout Orange County. Meanwhile, La Jolla Pacific consults on risk management and green construction projects to verify companies are not just “green-washing.” Neff is certified as LEED-AP, ICC Certified Building Inspector, ICC Certified Plans Examiner and Certified Green Building Professional. He has recently constructed a new headquarters for his staff that is one of the greenest buildings in Orange County, built to LEED-CI Gold specifications.

Neff says the environmental movement is resurging because of climate change and environmental impacts. He said what was primarily a philosophical movement in the 1970s now has the science to back it up.

He suggested Huxley extend its influence with global partners, exposing students to a wider perspective while giving Huxley a leadership role.

“Personally, I’m trying to leave the world a better place than I found it,” Neff said. “Huxley instilled that.”

Olivia Scalet

Photos courtesy of Don Neff

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 NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS

Tim Nord Class of '81

Tim Nord orchestrates settlements between polluters and the communities affected by a toxic legacy.

“The currency we have is in our personal relationships, even if we have differing opinions on how to solve environmental problems,” says the Olympia native. “Environmental problems are social problems.”

As manager of Land and Aquatic Lands Cleanup section for the Washington State Department of Ecology, Nord designs environmental recovery plans for some of the state's most daunting pollution sites. With this kind of planning, he says, accounting for opposing views is critical.

“We've got to recognize the complex structure of environmental and social relationships,” he says. “When I look at environmental problems I look at all of these things.”

Nord enrolled at Western Washington University in 1978 as a biology student and was soon drawn to Huxley College. There he discovered a passion for freshwater ecology.

“Huxley had a different way of looking at the world that was more complex than the straight biology I had been doing,” he says. “What Huxley offered was a complicated, holistic view. It was my first real exposure to this kind of thinking, and it contributed to the view of the world I hold today.”

After graduating from Huxley in 1981 with a Bachelor of Science in freshwater ecosystems analysis and a Bachelor of Arts in biology, he returned to Olympia and quickly landed a job with Ecology, then a small and growing state agency.

“We want to foster the growth of our future leaders. We need them.”



It was a new era in American environmental policy: Congress had recently passed the landmark Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and states were writing similar regulations. Superfund (the federal program designed to clean up the nation's worst toxic waste disasters) was new. He says he was lucky to get hired during the early stages of this program.

“I joined a young, passionate organization,” he says. “There was a real sense of making a difference at Ecology, and there's still that sense.”

He has been there ever since. He earned a master's in public administration from The Evergreen State College in 1987.

He's also a competitive softball player and father of two.

In one of his early projects, Nord led Ecology in a successful lawsuit to clean up more than 500 properties heavily contaminated with lead and arsenic from an old copper smelter in the city of Everett.

In the town of Skykomish, where railroad activity left an estimated two million gallons of oil seeping underneath the town and into the Skykomish River, the community is in the final stages of a successful five-year, \$100 million cleanup plan designed by Nord and a technical team.

For the last four years he has also been working in a collaborative effort with state, federal, local, and tribal agencies to clean up Puget Sound.

In a recent Anacortes cleanup, Nord was the architect of a natural resource settlement allocating \$500,000 to the Northwest Straits Foundation and \$200,000 to fund science, math and technical programs in the Anacortes public school system and at Huxley College. Students from Huxley did biological and toxicology monitoring at the site.

Huxley, he said, is more important than ever. “We want to foster the growth of our future leaders. We need them.”

Jenny Rose Lara

Photo courtesy of Tim Nord

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Huxley students raft the Wenatchee River.
Courtesy of Jenny Hahn

department took him in. Mayer and faculty member Robbins started two large lecture classes, Mayer on environmental science and Robbins on a social science approach.

“We needed student credit hours to get new faculty,” Mayer recalled. “That was the currency of the time, and we didn’t have any.” The big lectures earned currency. “Up to that point, Huxley had not successfully argued for any GUR [general university requirement] courses. It was my job, as I saw it, to force the issue, and as a result we succeeded in establishing [the courses].”

Not all this was welcomed. “It was hard to tell Huxley faculty what I intended to do,” he said. “I certainly did not have a great deal of support.”

Mayer also struggled to promote the student sense of community. In January of 1980 he encouraged the launch of Huxley “affinity groups” to promote socializing by like-minded students. The experiment was disappointing; by November the fifteen groups were down to just two to five members each, and most students were not participating.

In April 1980, Huxley gave up a degree program in planning and left that responsibility to the Geography Department.

Also that year, Miles and other Huxley staff launched a “spring block” program in which environmental education students worked as a team, camping and doing field trips along the way. The purpose was to develop and deliver an environmental curriculum to middle school students during spring quarter. The idea was so successful that it has continued over the three decades following.

The attempt to reach out to business continued. In May, 1982, Mayer created an eleven-member Environmental Advisory Council that included Whatcom County’s major industries and government agencies. The “us-versus-them” approach of the early 1970s was being jettisoned in favor of consultation and partnership.

“The time has come to communicate, and it will be two-way,” Mayer told the council when it convened. “Huxley has a reputation in the community that is not good because it hasn’t taken into account that industry is as concerned about the environment as we. We haven’t given credit where it is due, and we haven’t taught our students this. We’ve even had problems with getting a commencement speaker. It’s been that bad.”



Dean Richard Mayer sits with Huxley students at a 1984 graduation party.
Courtesy of Jenny Hahn

Mayer’s outreach cooled some of Bellingham’s animosity toward Huxley and brought in money. In 1985 Huxley won \$340,000 in grants, tops among colleges and departments in grants and contracts received at Western.

Reported The Bellingham Herald on May 9, 1985: “Mayer said that under his leadership in the last seven years, Huxley has changed dramatically in its attitude toward business and industry ... I think there was a lack of cooperative spirit,” he said. “The environmental movement of the 1970s led to confrontation more than any thought of cooperation ... There was no territory where either side felt comfortable with the other. Downtown Bellingham saw Huxley as not interested in problem solving, only interested in problem identification. It was certainly one of my driving ambitions to open that door. I think Huxley enjoys a different reputation today. I frequently get calls from industry and business to help solve problems and do research.”

As examples he cited water quality analysis in Padilla Bay in cooperation with the Shell refinery near Anacortes, treatment of weeds in Wiser Lake for a Whatcom County water association, and a study on garbage incineration for a local company.

Faculty still pursued their own interests. While Mayer did research work as a proponent of coal power, Bakke did a national survey of lakes to study the impact of acid rain from those same coal plants. Kendall studied the intrusion of toxic substances into wildlife ecosystems, Webber helped establish the Padilla bay National Estuarine Sanctuary, and Robbins studied Eskimo society on St. Lawrence Island in Alaska’s Bering Sea.

With Ethnic Studies already gone, Huxley remained in peril. Mayer said the college “was on the chopping block” in 1983 when President Robert Ross faced a state budget crisis. In March of 1983, Provost Paul Ford floated the idea of merging Huxley with five science departments into a new College of Sciences.

“My strategy was to let others do the talking for the college,” Mayer said. The business leaders he’d courted testified in support.

Did the dean “sell out” Huxley to industry, winning acceptance by pulling its fangs?

Huxley needed balance, he argued. “That was my job.” He also added Huxley’s first graduate program that year, a move that significantly improved the college’s credibility among academics. The Legislature’s approval “was a defining moment in the college’s history,” he said, “signaling to the campus at large and to prospective graduate students that Huxley College was moving to the forefront of scholarly studies and research in environmental science.”

“I think the graduate program that Dick Mayer got in saved our ass,” Robbins assessed more bluntly.

But enrollment began a dangerous plunge after state lawmakers sharply increased out-of-state tuition during the recession of the early 1980s. Huxley had been unusual in drawing up to half its student body from other states, but the tuition hike, curriculum and grade changes, more centrist philosophy, dilution of mission, and graduation of an unusually large class dropped Huxley enrollment from 345 to 250 by 1982. The slide would continue, even as alumna Denise Attwood organized the first Huxley reunion for May of 1983.

“The Huxley program is changing,” Mayer said when asked about the drop. “There is less emphasis on social/political activism and more emphasis on academic rigor. The word had gone out to traditional sources of students and we are no longer attracting as many activist students.” He told the Herald that, “The balance among the faculty has clearly moved toward the scientists. Because it was my decision in coming here that for Huxley to redress itself, it had to do it through the hard sciences.”

His approach was a dramatic departure from the 1970s, reflecting the pro-business conservatism of the 1980s. “I think we owe it to society to create environmental professionals who will look at the smoke [of industry] and say, ‘Is that a problem?’” he told The Bellingham Herald. “And, if so, ask industry, ‘What can we do about it?’”

Even as Huxley shrank, new initiatives were being tried. Former Dean Weiner initiated an experimental Huxley offering at Seattle Community College in the spring of 1983. The idea did not ultimately have the enrollment and support to succeed, but it was a forerunner of later Huxley branch programs at Port Angeles, Bremerton, and Everett.

“I think we owe it to society to create environmental professionals who will look at the smoke [of industry] and say, ‘Is that a problem?’ And, if so, ask industry, ‘What can we do about it?’”



Dean John Miles chairs a Huxley faculty meeting, about 1986. *Huxley College archives*

But the new approach had confused the college’s sense of mission and reputation. By 1985, Huxley enrollment had fallen to 170, half that of 1980. The number of students graduating that year, 45, was half of when Mayer took over in 1978.

Should the college survive? Was it an obsolete 1960s artifact?

Mayer decided in 1985 to step down. “For me, seven years was long enough to serve as dean; I decided to devote full time to teaching and the writing of an environmental science textbook focusing on case studies,” which was published in 2001. He continued to teach until 1998 before retiring.

In a departure from past practice, Western decided to appoint a new dean who was not a scientist. Instead, the university chose one of the original faculty members who was an environmental educator and a passionate proponent of its original interdisciplinary mission. The pendulum had swung again.

“You have Democrats and Republicans,” Mayer said by way of analogy.

John Miles took the Huxley hot seat on July 1, 1985. Miles praised his predecessor Mayer to The Western Front, noting, “He strengthened the scientific aspect of Huxley.” But Miles, who also taught and began his lengthy days at 6:30 a.m., brought the college back toward its original

CONTINUED ON PG. 136

Paul Norman Class of '74

Paul Norman might have been the only high school student in the United States to draw lifelong inspiration from the 1968 congressional debates over the National Environmental Policy Act. He credits the debates as the greatest influence on his path toward attending Huxley College.

For the first time, government was going to systematically consider environmental impacts before making decisions, and Paul wanted to join the party. Eventually, as senior vice president of power services at the Bonneville Power Administration, Norman helped push Northwest utilities toward a billion-dollar switch from focusing solely on energy production to energy conservation.

In 1972, two years after Nixon signed the act into law, Norman, a kid from Maryland, made the cross-country trek to Bellingham to join Huxley.

"Suffice it to say, it was my first experience with the Northwest and I've lived here ever since," he said. "It's the most beautiful part of the country."

Norman graduated in 1974 with a degree in environmental planning and immediately joined AmeriCorps. He said he always expected to get his hands dirty working for a small environmental advocacy organization, but he was soon lured into a planning job with the Army Corps of Engineers. In 1982 he landed a job at Bonneville, the federal hydroelectric marketing agency responsible for about 40 percent of the energy consumed in the Pacific Northwest.

Though he transferred to Bonneville as an economist, Norman soon moved up the ranks

"That integrated approach to decision making was probably the single most helpful take away from Huxley in my career."

to become a manager and eventually, as he put it, "got kicked upstairs" to become the senior vice president of power services. He managed Bonneville's power generation and sales with an annual budget of \$2.5 billion.

Norman's decisions affected the everyday lives of millions. He helped decide how much money would be spent on conservation, essentially raising rates to save power in the long run.

"That was very controversial," he said. "We spent a billion dollars, but we saved enough electricity to power a city the size of Seattle every year, so I feel very good about that. There's no such thing as a big public policy decision that doesn't come with controversy."

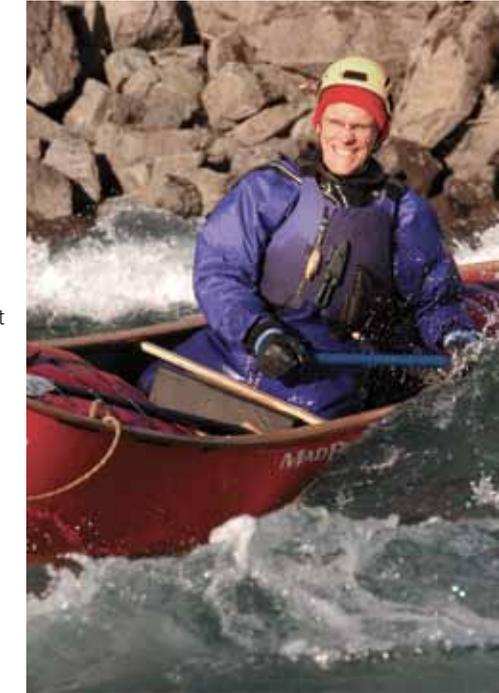
Norman pushed for proper insulation, weather-proofing, efficient appliances, fluorescent bulbs, and streamlined industrial operations.

At Bonneville, Paul was also a big proponent of wind energy, which the agency began supporting heavily in the mid-90s. Today, he said, wind is the most cost-effective new source of renewable energy, and the Northwest has become a national center of wind development.

"In the meantime, we have to stay really serious about conservation and efficiency. We have to meet energy needs at the lowest cost and lowest environmental impact."

Norman retired from Bonneville in 2009 at the age of 58, but he continues contributing to the field of energy efficiency and renewable power.

Norman expresses a deep appreciation toward Huxley, saying it is essential to have a college where students are trained to sustain and steward our world.



"I think the most valuable thing I learned at Huxley was the importance of taking a lot of diverse factors into account in a very rigorous way when making public policy decisions," he said. "It's not enough to look at just the economics, or just the technology, or just the social issues. That's easy to say, but hard to actually do well. That integrated approach to decision making was probably the single most helpful take away from Huxley in my career."

James Andrews

Photo courtesy of Paul Norman

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Dan Pike Class of '94

Dan Pike caught the political bug early. At age five he was on an elevated platform above Broadway in New York City, being taken to the bathroom, when John F. Kennedy waved up to him from a black limousine during a parade.

Dan later managed a mock campaign for Robert F. Kennedy in school, attended a 1982 state Democratic convention as a community-college student, and persuaded the Bellingham School District to revamp its busing schedule when his own child entered kindergarten. He pointed out that the schools were providing a massive subsidy of free parking for high school students, while pleading poverty for bus service for the kids starting school.

“One of my pet peeves was people who complain but don't do anything,” the Huxley planning grad said. Pike does something.

So it was unsurprising when Dan went from lobbying government to running it, beating the odds by being elected Bellingham's mayor in 2007 after a door-to-door campaign.

He has since pushed through a small tax increase to fund transit, is forging a new partnership with the Port of Bellingham to redevelop the city's Georgia-Pacific waterfront site, and thinks sustainability could become a Bellingham selling point to new businesses.

“Huxley matched my core values,” the mayor said. He'd been studying the environment since attending an environmental field camp with his fourth-grade class in New Jersey, and a Huxley political science course was one of the classes that stoked his passion.

Photo by Tore Oftness
www.toreoftness.com

February

Five million acres on Canada's west coast are saved from logging.



Since his election, Pike has displayed a consistent interest in Huxley's future.

The mayor is also working to restore the Lake Whatcom watershed by trying to cut phosphorus levels in the water by 90 percent.

Dan moved to Oregon after high school because of the Northwest's beauty and climbing opportunities, earning an associate's degree at Wenatchee Valley College. Study at Western Washington University followed from 1982 to 1984. He returned in 1992, choosing Huxley as the place to pursue a degree in urban and regional planning.

Like many Huxley graduates, he worked initially – first for the city of Everson, and then as an intern with the Washington Department of Transportation – before deciding to expand his potential by pursuing a graduate degree.

He entered Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and earned a master's in public administration. Dan returned to state government to manage the Freight Action Strategy Corridor Project, a \$500 million series of improvements to speed commercial traffic between Everett and Tacoma. He worked with twenty-two regional partners.

He also worked for a decade as a fisherman and dock manager, giving him rapport with people who work with their hands.

“I kind of view my work as the water against the rock,” Pike said. “A lot of times people think I'm fighting something I can't win, but water wins in the end. You push softly but you push persistently.” His transit initiative required four 4-3, hard-won victorious votes from the city council. “You get where you need to go.”

Story and photo by Kaylin Bettinger

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Above: Brian Blix and friend at the founding of Planet magazine, 1979.
Photo by Jenny Hahn
Right: Planet Magazine logo.

mission of leavening science with the liberal arts. He restored morale and oversaw a resurgence of Huxley enrollment as public interest in the environment accelerated again. Between 1989 and 1991, the college's enrollment doubled.

Robin Matthews, director of Huxley's Institute of Watershed Studies, recalled Miles was tireless in his visits to high schools and community colleges to spread the Huxley message. "He did all kinds of outreach."

The new dean was fair, intelligent, and dedicated to the original Huxley ideal, Robbins assessed. "He worked tirelessly to improve programs, to keep us interdisciplinary, and to make sure we talked to each other." Miles worked his contacts off campus, raising the college's visibility in a positive way.

One of the new dean's early improvements was to create a Huxley College Alumni Association, begun in the 1985-86 school year.

As a writer, he also strengthened the college's fledgling environmental journalism program. Student Brian Blix had started *The Monthly Planet* (its name a play off the newspaper of the Superman comics) in 1979, and the mimeographed sheet slowly grew in sophistication. Miles started a seminar for *The Monthly Planet* in 1982, and in 1987, he hired journalist and environmental advocate Michael Frome to spearhead the program. Frome initially had difficulty even recruiting an editor; Heather Koon eventually volunteered and Bellingham designer Rod Burton coached a more sophisticated layout. "Appearance improved, and with it the writing," Frome recalled. Because the magazine did not yet have university funding, it sold advertising to pay for itself.

Frome brought fire to the program. A proponent of advocacy journalism, he taught students that writing could help save the world, and organized a conference of environmental journalism professionals at Huxley. When he was invited by a group of students to join them for a beer, one said, "This is the first time I've had a beer with a professor." After that, Frome made a habit of inviting students to his home for potluck meals.

By 1991, Frome's program would earn mention in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and Huxley joined with the Journalism Department to offer a joint environmental journalism degree. The program matured further under the leadership of Huxley grad-turned-faculty-member Scott

Brennan, who served as *Planet* adviser from 1999 to 2004. As a student, Brennan recalled that *Planet* staffers had to use their own computers "or sneak into other computer labs in the middle of the night to put the magazine together." Working with Miles and journalism professor Floyd McKay, Brennan secured a dedicated office in the new Communications Facility and the publication's first computers, printers and scanners.

The magazine received considerable attention for its coverage of the Bellingham gas pipeline explosion of 1999, focusing on the young people killed and their families. "Helping my students produce the pipeline explosion issue is and will always be one of the most challenging, emotionally charged and professionally rewarding experiences of my life," Brennan said. "I consider that issue of the magazine both a simple act of grace and one of the greatest works of journalism — student or otherwise — that I've ever encountered. Several of the students who worked on that issue remain close friends of mine to this day."

The magazine began to win a steady stream of regional and national awards, a tradition continued under advisers Tim Schultz (another Huxley grad) and then Bill Dietrich, a Fairhaven graduate who worked many years as a professional journalist at the *Seattle Times* and other publications.

Having built bridges to business in the early 1980s, Huxley was regaining its green luster later in the decade. The college enlisted students in an Adopt-A-Stream program in 1987 and cooperated with Fairhaven College in development of Outback Farm. Veteran environmental champion David Brower of the Earth Island Institute spoke on campus for Earth Day, 1988. Frome proposed a "U.S. Wilderness Service" in 1988 and warned the Bellingham Rotary Club in 1989 that, "Bellingham and Western Washington are fast losing the beauty that have been cherished forever."

And in 1989 the Huxley College Ski-to-Sea team, in the annual race from Mount Baker to Bellingham Bay, called itself, "Those Damn Environmentalists." They placed ninety-fifth.

Huxley was not turning its back on hard science. In 1986, Kathy Fletcher, chair of the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority, had praised Huxley's Institute of Wildlife Toxicology. In 1989, the college recruited Wayne Landis and reorganized the lab as the Institute of Environmental

Toxicology, and, with a remodeled Institute of Watershed Studies, the college earned a growing reputation for its scientific research.

As enrollment rebounded, standards tightened. In 1991 Huxley faculty decided the college was no longer “open to all,” but instead that students must complete English 101, micro-economics, and a course in philosophy before admission.

By 1992, the year Bill Clinton was elected over George Bush, environmental enthusiasm was blooming at Western again. Student organizations included Students for an Ecologically Responsible Campus, Rainforest Action Group, The Western Greens, the Animal Rights Club, British Columbia Forest Action, and the Ecological Horticulture Club. Environmentalism had recharged politics: The Exxon Valdez oil spill occurred in 1989, the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro occurred in 1992, and the clash over old growth logging and the spotted owl culminated in a Clinton Timber Summit in 1993.

Huxley was more relevant than ever.

The stage was set for a quiet yet momentous change in Huxley organization, a split some argued betrayed the original mission of the college and others contended finally focused Huxley on real environmental problem solving.

The first step was the 1992 absorption of the shrinking Geography Department into Huxley College, a move Miles supported. The transfer added faculty and students and once more fortified Huxley’s institutional standing. With higher enrollment and more faculty, it was no longer in danger of elimination.

But to Huxley’s scientist faculty, the addition of geography again blurred the college’s mission between science and humanities, research and political action. Half of Huxley was investigating the natural world and supplying data, and half was involved in the policy implementation of that data through education, planning, administration, journalism, and other pursuits.

Did the interdisciplinary mission of the 1960s make sense in the 1990s?

Huxley science faculty argued that the historic success of science as an objective, reductionist, experiment-oriented truth was its deliberate



Dean John Miles on the phone in his office. *Huxley College archives*

segregation from politics, religion, and the social crisis of the moment. To harness science to ideology — to apply it to social goals as Julian Huxley proposed — was, to their mind, to corrupt scientific integrity and reputation. Scientists won their reputation and advanced their careers with peer-reviewed objective research, published in the proper journals. This required a strong graduate program to provide investigators and the money and time to gather data and conduct experiments. An interdisciplinary focus on undergraduate teaching — which some of the scientists felt burdened with — was not how research reputations were won.

The college’s social scientists countered that science in isolation could become absurdly narrow, myopic and useless, an ivory-tower luxury in a planet hurtling toward ecosystem collapse. Society’s problem, they argued, was that everyone was too specialized and no one could see the big picture. Huxley’s very invention, they contended, was an answer to environmental crisis, and its purpose was to engage in contemporary issues and become problem solvers, not problem studiers. Western already had traditional science departments: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and the like. What was the point of going back to the old-school style of narrow research seen only by other specialists?

It was a cultural gulf. Mayer, who continued to teach at Huxley, said there was a practical issue as well: The college was becoming too big to fit everyone at the table. Faculty meetings were crowded and contentious. The geographers, too, were accustomed to a narrow disciplinary focus. Huxley was becoming unwieldy. Minutes from the debate that occurred in 1993 recorded Mayer arguing that the growth in faculty and degree programs meant the small, decentralized program of Huxley’s beginning should give way to “two centers similar to departments.”

Miles, Huxley’s fiercest defender of its original interdisciplinary mission, had decided to step down as dean and take a year’s leave in 1992-1993 after the successful absorption of geography. Replacing him as acting dean was Thomas Storch, Huxley’s director of the Institute of Watershed Studies. Storch had been a protege of Mayer in New York and had followed Mayer as director of the Environmental Resources Center in Fredonia before recruitment to Western.

CONTINUED ON PG.144

Kevin Raymond Class of '80

The values of Huxley College have a way of creeping up on you. Then they change your life, as they did for lawyer, minister, environmentalist, and former Western Washington University Trustee Kevin Raymond.

“One of the special things about Western and Huxley is it turns people’s lives around,” Raymond said. “It did for me.”

Raymond heard about Huxley as a teenager and arrived in 1976 directly from high school. “The environmental movement was brand new,” he recalled. “The first photograph of earth from space was only eight years old. Huxley was one of the first environmental colleges in the United States; it was cutting-edge.”

He graduated in 1980 with a Bachelor of Science in environmental policy and a minor in journalism. As a senior, he interned for environmental attorney Roger Leed. “I realized then that law could be used as a tool to protect the environment, and I decided that summer to become a lawyer, to my surprise.”

He spent a year in Washington, D.C., working for Congressman Al Swift, before returning to the West Coast to earn a law degree from the University of Washington. Then he became a senior level attorney in Seattle’s public sector for nearly two decades, serving as King County Executive Gary Locke’s chief of staff before Locke’s election as governor. He negotiated for the county with the Seattle Seahawks and Seattle Mariners and later represented the Seattle Monorail Project.

Raymond transitioned to a partnership in a private firm but eventually began questioning if he was compromising his environmental ethics for his

“...we can’t just tell people we have to take care of the planet – we need to tell them how to survive in this economy while doing it.”

Field of canola crop.



career. “If there’s anything I’ve learned in this life, it’s that you don’t know where your work will take you,” he said. “I’m always looking for a place where I might be able to help.”

The births of his two daughters were also catalysts for change. “I had a science background, and I saw the universe as logical and rational. And yet I couldn’t explain the miracle of these kids. I realized then that what I’d studied at Huxley was deeply spiritual: ecosystems, the realization things are connected.”

He enrolled in a theology class at Seattle University, and eight years later graduated with a master’s in divinity.

“When I enrolled, there were two things I knew for sure: I was never going to practice law again, and I couldn’t imagine ever being ordained. Now it’s ten years later, and I’m doing both.”

His law practice is devoted to in-house counsel for clean energy and renewable fuels. He co-founded Washington Biodiesel, which is now Pacific Coast Canola.

Raymond served ten years on Western Washington University’s Board of Trustees and gave a 2010 commencement address. One of his latest projects is collaborating with Huxley and Western’s College of Business and Economics to create a multidisciplinary seminar series, “The Emerging Green Economy,” which Raymond will co-teach. The series will explore social and environmental factors in a modern business economy.

“It’s imperative to build our economy on sustainable practices. But we can’t just tell people we have to take care of the planet—we need to tell them how to survive in this economy while doing it.”

Jenny Rose Lara

Photo courtesy of Kevin Raymond

TROY ABEL
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Mark Reis Class of '75

When running something as complex as SeaTac International Airport, the nation's seventeenth busiest with 31 million passengers a year, it helps to be able to synthesize information and make connections. For Mark Reis, the ability to do that began at Huxley College.

Reis said one of the most valuable lessons he learned while studying at Huxley was systems theory. It's "really all about seeing connections," he said. "Management and leadership requires seeing how seemingly unconnected things fit together."

Mark graduated from Huxley in 1975 and moved to Washington, D.C., to work for Friends of the Earth, an environmental lobby group. Then he joined the staff of Rep. Jim Weaver of Oregon and worked on the Pacific Northwest Electric Power and Conservation Act, which passed in 1980. It has been critical in shifting Northwest utilities from emphasizing energy production to energy conservation.

The Bonneville Power Administration has since met nearly all of its growth and demand with conservation, Reis said.

"What we were doing back then was absolutely revolutionary," Reis said. "To have Congress define life-cycle cost effectiveness as the criterion for energy investment was unheard of."

Following this legislative success, Reis moved back to the Pacific Northwest to start two nonprofit organizations, the Northwest Conservation Act Coalition and the Northwest Renewable Resources Center.

"You will learn how the world works and how to make things happen"



In 1987, Reis attended Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and received a master's degree in public administration.

Next came a job at the Port of Seattle that was expected to last six months, but became permanent. He was made deputy director of SeaTac Airport in 2000 and director in 2004, where he launched programs to "green" the airport and enlisted Huxley students in the effort. The airport recycles 1,300 tons of material a year, purchases green energy, and leads the industry in bird and wildlife protection and stormwater management.

"We've really been able to push the envelope in terms of environmental initiatives at airports," Reis said. "We're looked upon in the United States as one of the most progressive airports in the country, and actually the world, from an environmental point of view."

Besides having one of the most aggressive recycling programs, SeaTac has increased its energy efficiency by 25 percent since 2000, he said.

In addition to his position at Sea-Tac, Reis serves on Woodland Park Zoo's board of directors and the Seattle Convention and Visitors Bureau. He is also a member of the Huxley College Associates Board.

Mark oversaw completion of a contentious third runway in 2008 over fierce neighborhood opposition and has handled the increased security concerns of a post-9/11 world. He suggested that anyone with an environmental studies degree looking to work in public administration should get into politics as soon as possible.

"You will learn how the world works and how to make things happen," Reis said. "And whatever it is you want to accomplish, articulating the merit of the project is the first step."

Anne Maertens

Photo courtesy of Mark Reis

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The science faculty, in contrast, applauded the move. “People wanted a discipline in their comfort zone,” assessed Leo Bodensteiner, a professor of water ecology who was not present for the initial division but came to Huxley in time for the final split into departments in 2002. In 2008 he became chair of Environmental Science. The schism, he said, took the fuel out of some faculty feuds and introduced a stability that, over time, has led to a different sense of community.

“Huxley had to get bigger or it would go extinct,” said Landis, in an interview for this book. The price, he said, was that, “The two cultures grew farther apart.”

The reward was stability. “Huxley is much less acrimonious that it was when I first arrived in 1984,” said Matthews.

Some students were distressed. In the Oct. 4, 1993 edition of *The Huxley Hotline*, the internal college newsletter, the lead headline read, “Huxley: A College Divided.” Michele LaFontaine, the student editor, wrote, “Huxley College — whose reputation is built on an interdisciplinary approach to education — is now a divided institution. Can a college divided within itself stand? ... I guess my concern is mainly for the students. How is this two-center college going to affect us? There was already a schism between the so-called “hard” science people and the social science people, and anyone who denies that simply has her/his head in the sand. Is the schism going to become a gulf? Are we going to be hearing even more of those remarks like ‘Oh, you’re an environmental education major? I’m working toward an environmental science degree myself.’ We don’t have time to put up with that crap; both disciplines are equally important ... If Huxley College wants to maintain its reputation for interdisciplinary education, then they damn well better make sure this new structure takes that into account.”

It did and didn’t. The split brought some philosophic peace to Huxley, and students still could take classes from both halves, but the ideal of being holistic and revolutionary had faded.

What would follow, under new Dean Bradley Smith, was Huxley’s longest period of stability and most consistent period of program innovation.

“Huxley had to get bigger or it would go extinct,”



Photo by Avela Grenier

Roberta Riley Class of '82

At thirty-two, Roberta Riley was a rising star in a Seattle law firm and newly married to her husband, Peter, when she was diagnosed with leukemia. Doctors gave her a small chance of survival and zero chance of ever giving birth. Then, on one of the darkest days of life, her health insurance company canceled its coverage.

If she survived, she vowed to advocate for health care as a fundamental human right.

Now, eighteen years later, she and Peter smile from the sidelines of high school volleyball matches as their 15-year-old daughter, Claire, smashes the ball across the net.

Since her cancer struggle, Riley has earned national recognition for her advocacy on behalf of women and their health.

"You don't survive something like that and just forget about it," says Riley.

When cancer relented, she left private practice to lead a new project at Planned Parenthood. There, she argued and won *Erickson v. Bartell Drug Company*, a landmark federal court decision that prompted American companies to cover prescription contraception in worker health plans. In recognition of her achievements, *Ms. Magazine* named her one of its 2001 Women of the Year.

"I was honored to contribute," Riley maintains, "but it was humbling, since others also worked hard."

Riley's Huxley training taught her to see the connections between human health and the environment, inspiring her career decisions but also fueling her sense of humor. "I did, after all,

marry a man whose favorite book is *Worms Eat My Garbage*," she notes.

Today, Riley works here and abroad to advance health as a human right, regardless of whether one is born male or female, rich or poor. She serves on the Washington State Health Reform Realization Panel, and she is the Project Director for Americans for UNFPA's (United Nations Fund for Population Action) World at 7 billion project. Her Huxley training serves her well as she harnesses the wisdom gained from decades of population efforts to build strong, joint collaborations between environmental and reproductive health activists. Such work is vital, since world population has reached 7 billion, and human numbers have yet to stabilize.

"Raising the status of women is central to our ability to create a just and sustainable future," says Riley, who asserts that when females are educated and afforded economic opportunity and basic health care, they voluntarily decide to have fewer children. "And when that happens," she says, "all boats rise."

Devon Fredericksen

Photos courtesy of Roberta Riley



Roberta with a group of women in Uganda.

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Brian Rolf Class of '95

Few Americans experience the bite of an African army ant as a child, and even fewer wind up as deeply involved with arthropods ("bugs") as Brian Rolf.

At the age of three, he moved with his family to a U.S. Air Force base in Libya. While his parents unpacked belongings, Rolf found ants to play with in their new yard. His father soon heard a mortifying yelp and rushed outside to find an aggressive ant's mandibles sunk a quarter-inch into his son's thumb. It took 30 minutes to pry them out with pliers.

Instead of deterring the future Huxley student, it entranced him. In 2006, Rolf opened the Seattle Bug Safari, a downtown zoo specializing in insects, arachnids and almost anything else that wears an exoskeleton.

His earliest childhood memories revolve around arthropods: chasing them, catching them, and receiving countless bites, stings, and pinches along the way. Today, he shares his fascination and knowledge with busloads of schoolchildren who brave his fifty-species exhibit on the stairway between the Seattle Aquarium and Pike Place Market.

Before Rolf started classes at Huxley College in 1991, he had little notion of operating a bug zoo. He began in accounting at a vocational school, but after three years crunching numbers as an accountant, he decided to enroll at Pierce College to explore other fields. At his first biology class he found direction. Shortly after, he visited Huxley, sat in on a few classes, and accompanied a professor to survey Sehome Hill's mouse population. He bit.

"I made the decision to go to Huxley because I wanted to make a difference,"



"I made the decision to go to Huxley because I wanted to make a difference," Brian said. "I think of that every day I come to work, where I'm exposing kids to this realm of science that they're not going to get anywhere else."

Rolf graduated from Huxley in 1995 with a degree in environmental science and a minor in geology. He immediately went to work for a number of environmental testing laboratories and later moved to hazardous waste management. He also began brainstorming Bug Safari.

Rolf had been collecting bugs since his college days. The new business was part of a natural progression.

"I think it helped that I have an extremely supportive wife," he said. "When I finally said, 'Hey, I think I want to open up an insect zoo in downtown Seattle,' she jumped out of her chair and said, 'Great! If anyone could make it work, it would be you.'"

Rolf has appeared on several television stations with his emperor scorpions, Hong Kong centipede, and goliath bird-eating tarantula. You might have seen his praying mantis fly at a nervous anchorwoman during a live news broadcast. He takes the zoo to school lectures, and he's working with the Lake Washington School District to design an insect-collection program for elementary school students.

"The best reactions I get aren't really 'reactions' at all," he said. "It's more of a person's change in perspective because someone's actually explained this thing to them. I try to show the public that even though these creatures are tiny and seem so insignificant, they play an important role in our environment, to the point where human society couldn't exist without them."

James Andrews
Photo courtesy of Brian Rolf

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CHAPTER EIGHT

ALL GROWN UP 1994-Present

Smith's appointment as Huxley dean marked a historic turning point. A professor of political science and biology turned Environmental Protection Agency administrator, he brought to the college a perspective outside mainstream academia. At this writing he has served in the post 16 years, more than twice as long as any of his predecessors.

He took over after the "great schism" of Huxley — from a deliberately interdisciplinary-organized institution to two centers — was a fait accompli; the long debate over the college's early idealistic goal of somehow blending the scientific and social methodologies was effectively over. Smith decided to concentrate not on inward academic debate but on increasing the college's identity outside its walls.

Some faculty complained that the early tumultuous but exciting green fire had been damped into a chugging political engine; others believed Smith had helped Huxley finally move on from navel-gazing and focus on new research, initiatives, and educational expansion. Enrollment and faculty enjoyed stability and the science and studies sides evolved, for better and worse, to being "friends" instead of "married."

"He's been a calming influence," said Matthews.

Smith received his doctorate in Natural Resources and the Environment from the University of Michigan, in the state where he grew up. After teaching until 1990, he moved to the federal government, where he served as the first director of the EPA's Office of Environmental Education. He also served as special assistant to the administrator of the EPA, and acting associate administrator. As such, he came to Huxley with more political



Above: Huxley Dean Bradley Smith
Photo courtesy of Daria Smith

Right: Water samples from the
Institute of Watershed Studies.

experience than any previous dean, and he set as one of his goals effectively representing the college to Western, business, government, and the media. He serves on a number of international and national commissions and (as an avid hunter) on the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission.

He had already accepted a job at the University of Southern Maine when a recruiter notified him of the Huxley position. "I wanted to come to a place that looked at issues from a holistic point of view," he recalled for this book. He had already visited Western's campus once after a conference, and with the opportunity he switched from East Coast to West.

He inherited the college's perennial political challenge. "Huxley was still viewed as an outlier," he said: an experiment viewed with some skepticism on campus and some suspicion off. "I remember going to a lot of community meetings [in northwest Washington] and being dismissed because, 'It was Huxley.' I said that was bullshit. What I saw is that we were going to have to start building a lot of bridges."

Perception did not match reality, Smith said. Faculty and staff had a number of hunters and fishers, but the college had established no affinity with the hook and bullet crowd. It was stuffed with at least half a dozen former Eagle Scouts and yet was still perceived as anti-establishment. It was doing groundbreaking scientific research and yet was still being snubbed by Western's traditional science departments.

Like deans before him, he saw the solution as reaching out and making partnerships. He helped garner \$100,000 in research and scholarship support from Georgia-Pacific. He courted both the business and environmental communities. "Let other people sing your song," he advised.

The college's increasing attention on science and research funding was ratified in 2002 when Huxley changed its name from Huxley College of Environmental Studies to Huxley College of the Environment. The two centers became the Department of Environmental Sciences and the Department of Environmental Studies, the first headquartered in the Environmental Sciences building and the second in Arntzen Hall. Curricular planning became more separate, but student majors still required courses from both wings of Huxley.

At this book's writing, Huxley has approximately thirty faculty and 450 students, a size sufficient to spawn a large number of programs that came into their own in the first decade of the twenty-first Century. Huxley's contemporary history is in part the history of these programs:

The Institute for Watershed Studies is the granddaddy of Western's environmental science programs, predating Huxley itself. Established in 1962 by Flora and Kraft as the Institute for Freshwater Studies, its initial primary goal was to study Lake Whatcom, the source of Bellingham's drinking water. The institute became affiliated with Huxley when the college was founded. In the 1970s it merged with the Shannon Point Marine Center to form the Aquatic Studies Program under Flora, who had left Western's presidency. In 1982 the two programs were separated again into salt-and-freshwater focuses, and Freshwater Studies became Watershed Studies, reflecting the new emphasis on entire watershed ecosystems. Brakke became its first director from 1982 to 1989, and Mayer served as interim director. Storch was hired in 1990 and served until 1994, a period in which the institute achieved laboratory certification from Washington's Department of Ecology, which aided funding. Storch was replaced by Matthews and, since 1994, more than 160 students have worked on Institute-affiliated research programs, supported by an average of nearly \$300,000 a year in grants and contracts.

Activities include long-term monitoring of Lake Whatcom, investigation of algal blooms in Lake Samish, a baseline-monitoring program of fifty small lakes in Northwest Washington, and work with local governments on specific freshwater programs.

The Institute of Environmental Toxicology, founded in 1989, is the successor to Huxley's earlier Institute of Wildlife Toxicology. Directed by Landis, the institute has done pioneering work in risk assessment for chemicals and invasive species at a landscape level. The Institute is Huxley's Scotland Yard, its whodunnit student detectives trying to solve mysteries such as a decline in herring near Whatcom County's Cherry Point refineries. Institute research has ranged as far afield as the Androscoggin River in Maine.

CONTINUED ON PG. 162



Wendy Scherrer Class of '76

The streams of the Nooksack Basin run through Wendy Scherrer's life.

"We all live downstream," is one of her mantras.

"Restoration is habitat forming," is another.

And, in tribute to the interplay between forests and water, "Fish grow on trees."

Wendy is a 1976 Huxley graduate who helped grow the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and became its executive director in 1999.

As such, she became the protector of Whatcom County streams and watersheds and a tireless organizer who has won nine environmental awards, all while surviving a difficult battle with cancer.

"Huxley inspired me by making me aware of environmental problems in an interdisciplinary way," she said. "The college gave me a hopeful and realistic look at problems, and taught us to ask the right questions."

She's dedicated her life to working on wild salmon recovery and applied her passion close to home with the Nooksack organization.

"It was my best job ever," she said. "I liked the small nature of the environmental nonprofit, and working to provide people a carrot, not a stick, to change their behavior."

After earning her environmental planning degree in 1976, Wendy received a masters in science education at Western in 1988. She joined fellow educators in 1990 to found the Environmental Education Association of Washington. She also helped start the North Cascades Institute's school and teacher training programs, including Mountain

"It is inexcusable to not teach our children about our own backyard ecosystems,"

School. She helped plan NCI's Environmental Learning Center on Diablo Lake and wrote curriculum guides for fourth through eighth grades, including Celebrating Wildflowers, Teaching for Wilderness, and Sharing the Skagit.

"It's inexcusable to not teach our children about our own backyard ecosystems," Scherrer said. "Huxley helped me to not have a fear of science, and taught me how to apply theory to real-world problem solving."

The single mother of three had to put her work on hold in 2005 when she was diagnosed with Stage 4 non-Hodgkins lymphoma and was told she had one year to live.

Dozens of neighbors and friends joined her children in rallying to help. "My philosophy was to use all of my skills that I had developed solving environmental problems to maximize my potential to live," Scherrer said. "I gained knowledge from the best experts, assembled a team around me to support my health, my kids, and my home, and became leader of the team."

It worked. After 10 months of treatment and a stem cell transplant, Scherrer was able to return to work.

She retired from Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association in 2007 but remains on four boards, has founded a consulting company called BlueGreen Northwest, works with the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian to highlight the Lummi Nation's work on salmon recovery, and has written a "Green Infrastructure Plan" for her Bellingham neighborhood.

Wendy is also writing a children's book called Noisy Waters, about the environmental history of

Whatcom Creek. As a Huxley student, Scherrer created a movie in 1974 called *Whatcom Creek is Going Downhill* that examined the stream, hatchery, and sewage treatment plant.

Scherrer's awards include Western's Lifetime Distinguished Alumni Award and induction into the Pacific Northwest Salmon Center's Wild Salmon Hall of Fame.

"Huxley's emphasis is on thinking outside the box and not posing things as black and white, but in a lot of shades of gray," she said. "That really helped me work with people who had different views about the environment. You need to get everyone on the table, first to trust each other, then to gain solid, scientifically-based knowledge, and then move forward cooperatively to implement solutions on behalf of the environment."

Olivia Scalet

Photos courtesy of Wendy Scherrer



TROY ABEL
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 ANDREW BACH
 GIGI BERARDI
 RICHARD BERG
 BRIAN BINGHAM
 LEO BODENSTEINER
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Dean Takko Class of '74

Dean Takko was a Huxley pioneer, a member of the college's opening 1970 class who came to Huxley after growing up fishing, hunting and hiking in southwest Washington. He didn't consider himself an environmentalist, but he had an interest in environmental protection and an interest in jobs that might take him outdoors.

And sure enough, Huxley led him outdoors. "I spent way too much time hiking in the North Cascades, and I'm sure my grades reflected that," he joked.

Takko earned a degree in environmental planning that helped him prepare for a career as county assessor and, since 2005, as a Democrat state legislator from Longview.

The political bug bit early: He served on the Cathlamet City Council just two years after graduating from Huxley.

Dean said learning about environmental studies and science topics at Huxley College, combined with numerous cultural activities on and off campus, made for a great life learning experience. "It really opened my eyes" after coming from a small town like Cathlamet, Takko said.

"I remember one of the professors telling me it's not so important you know the answer, but that you know where to go to get the answer," he said. "That really stuck with me."

The advice resonated while working as an assessor in Cowlitz County for thirty years, and has been even more important in his work as a state representative.

Takko said Huxley taught him the importance of understanding that there are always two sides to an



Capital building in Olympia, WA.
Photo by Courtney Leake



issue. Progress is made when people understand both sides of a conflict, he said. It's the extremes that keep problems from being solved.

"I've always tried to look at both sides of things and land in the middle somewhere," Takko said. He has brought that into balancing preservation and resource use in southwest Washington.

Although Dean has never worked as an environmental planner, he said he values the experiences and knowledge he acquired while pursuing the degree.

"I like to think the degree has some relation to my values," he said.

Codi Hamblin

Below: Takko in Iceland. Courtesy of Dean Takko

Left: Dean Takko and Professor Ernst Gayden.
Huxley College archives



"it's not so important you know the answer, but that you know where to go to get the answer,"

- TROY ABEL
- JAMES ALBERS
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Mike Town Class of '84

Mike Town got direction in life from Huxley College. He, in turn, has given direction to hundreds of his high school students, while successfully lobbying for new wilderness and pioneering alternative energy.

He's a great example of "pay it forward."

Town, 51, has gained national recognition for his environmental education program at Redmond High School east of Seattle. In 2010-2011, he's an Einstein Fellow at the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Early in 2010, Town was awarded a \$25,000 Green Prize in Environmental Education by the National Education Association Foundation. He used the money to double the solar photovoltaic panel array at his home and now generates as much energy as he consumes.

He received the first Cox Conserves Hero award from KIRO-TV and the Trust for Public Land for his work establishing the new Wild Sky Wilderness near Skykomish. He promptly donated the \$5,000 prize to the Washington Wilderness Coalition he worked with. In 2004 he received the Amgen Award for Science Technology Excellence from the world's largest biotechnology company. And five of Town's students received the Presidential Youth Award in 2008 for their work reducing Redmond High School's carbon footprint.

"I want to do in public high schools what Huxley did in American universities," he said. "Huxley was the first, or one of the first, environmental colleges in the nation that brought an interdisciplinary, problem-solving approach to environmental



education. I want environmental science as an interdisciplinary curriculum to become a common core class in high schools."

His Cool School Challenge to enlist students, teachers and school districts to reduce pollution and energy consumption has saved Redmond High at least \$40,000 and been copied by more than 150 high schools across the nation.

His teaching success is equally phenomenal. He encourages average students to try his Advanced Placement science course, and of 143 who took it last year, 91 percent passed the test for certification and college credit.

Town is disarmingly modest. "I'm flattered, but also embarrassed." He credits much of his recognition to being "one of the environmental science teachers doing it longer than anyone else." He says his wife of twenty-two years, Meg, a Western Washington University graduate who teaches middle school science, is a better teacher than he is.

Mike started as a machinist in California, but surfing introduced him to environmentalists trying to save California beaches. On a hitchhiking trip across America, he lighted on the idea of attending Huxley.

He arrived "on one of those spectacular, 75-degree blue sky-days," and providentially, his 1952 panel truck lost its driveshaft in the Fairhaven College parking lot. Town was on campus to stay.

Huxley professors such as John Miles and Ruth Weiner inspired him with Huxley's interdisciplinary, problem-solving approach. He helped research whether pulp-mill waste from Bellingham's Georgia-Pacific plant could make fertilizer. He also studied pine beetle infestations in eastern Washington.

The result was purpose and passion. Mike lobbied and campaigned for nine years to help create the new 106,000-acre Wild Sky Wilderness in the Cascades.

His students have lobbied local government, convinced a Starbucks to change its waste stream, and pushed Puget Sound Energy to promote conservation.

Best of all, Town has persuaded many students to try Huxley.

"Huxley was the right place at the right time for me," he said. "I found something bigger than myself – the environment – and my passion got nurtured there."

William Dietrich



Above: Photo by Dan Scherrer

Left: Photo courtesy of Mike Town

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In 2010, students from Sofield's classes received funding from the natural resources damages settlement to participate in the cleanup of a former Scott paper mill site in Anacortes. With the funding, the students conducted monitoring research that contributed the scientific understanding of clean up techniques. "This is the real world they will be stepping into when they graduate," Sofield said. "There's no better way to prepare them for it than through an applied learning experience such as this. I believe this is how higher education should work: Professors supply fundamental knowledge and then facilitate student opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge to real situations."

Landis came to Huxley from work on environmental toxicology with Army chemical weapon labs at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. He said the transition to academia was "a huge culture shock." Huxley offered more intellectual freedom but also multiple jobs at less pay in constrained labs. "Huxley was a bit more tree-huggy when I first got here," he said. "It was an advocate. Now our culture [in Environmental Science, which he chaired] is research and publication." He views the evolution as necessary and inevitable. "In my field, if you start to have a political event, you lose all credibility."

Huxley, however, has come into its own in offering a societal purpose traditional science departments don't match. Landis went on. "We do applied work. We're helping people make decisions about managing the environment." Initial toxicology concerns about human health, he said, have broadened to human welfare and the impact of environmental decision-making on groups such as the poor.

Now Huxley is in danger of having its thunder stolen, Landis warned. "Other universities have seen [Huxley] as a way of putting applied colleges together. What we started, I'm concerned everyone else will finish ... I think Huxley should become a real college. We need outside support to be successful."

The Institute for Spatial Information and Analysis was created in 1999 to combine new techniques in Geographic Information Systems and GPS technology using Huxley's Spatial Analysis Lab. It gave early help to Whatcom County by lending the new technology for county planning. The Huxley Map Library includes 255,000 paper maps, 35,000 aerial photos, 1,000 atlases, and extensive digital data. It puts twenty-first century geographic technology into the hands of researchers who need it. Budget



Sampling Lake Whatcom, 1987.
Huxley College archives

cuts forced the library administration to move from Arntzen Hall to the main campus library in 2010.

The Resilience Institute, which is part of the Department of Environmental Studies, examines ways to minimize human risk from such threats as forest fire, earthquake, avalanches, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. Created in 2007 from federal funding that followed Hurricane Katrina, the institute was initially known as the Institute for Global and Community Resilience. Classes focus on such topics as emergency planning, risk reduction, and communicating risk, and have examined local issues such as river flooding or the potential for a disruption of food supplies after a catastrophic earthquake.

After Katrina revealed the danger of poor engineering and the possibility of a permanent loss of population after a disaster, the state of Washington was determined to become better prepared than Louisiana, explained institute member Rebekah Green. "One way to avoid that would be to train local students" in risk reduction and post—disaster resilience, she said. "We want to become a powerhouse of innovation for community resilience."

The young program has obtained more than \$500,000 in grants. Professor Scott Miles and Green have advised on landslide avoidance in Guatemala and worked on a social impacts assessment in Haiti. Professor Gigi Berardi has led student research on food resilience, and early graduates of the program have been in high demand by emergency agencies.

Huxley College on the Peninsulas expanded Huxley programs to a wider area of Western Washington in affiliation with Peninsula College in Port Angeles, Olympic College in Bremerton, and Everett Community College. The program began in 1993 on the Olympic and Kitsap peninsulas and expanded in 2010 to Everett Community College's University Center of North Puget Sound, which has created partnerships with six colleges and universities. The program partners with Battelle Laboratories in Sequim and is working on a partnership with the U.S. Navy.

At this writing, Huxley is also exploring the possibility of making its programs available in the United Arab Emirates on the Arabian Peninsula, in an international variant of the Huxley College on the Peninsula programs.

Kelli Warren, a single mother of three girls, not only obtained an environmental policy and planning degree through this program, she



Above: Matt Taylor with salmon on the Nooksack River. *Huxley College archives*
 Right: Moonrise over Bellingham Waterfront. *Huxley College archives*

found a job and a fiancé. She met future husband Aaron Lambert in her courses at Peninsula College. Parametrix, the firm that had encouraged her to return to school, moved her into a planner position.

The Huxley-Peninsula courses included several field trips, a week for a wetlands class at the Bellingham campus, and an all-nighter — with team leader Dr. Dwight Barry standing by until 4 a.m. — to meet a report deadline.

“I do feel Huxley helped prepare me for the job,” she reflected in an essay for this book. “Although the nuts and bolts of permitting or writing NEPA documents could have been learned on the job, I would not be the same person without the background, the reading, and the familiarization with the major issues we struggle with.”

Amy Borde had already earned a bachelor’s degree in biology at the University of Mexico when she decided to start at Huxley through the Peninsula College program. Applying her plant biology skills to environmental policy and assessment, she went to work for the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Sequim, from which she studies habitat restoration opportunities in the Columbia River estuary. She said the program’s hands-on approach in the lab and field prepared her well for the job of trying to restore Northwest salmon runs.

The tweaking of Huxley is a constant process, with faculty enduring long meetings to hammer out a logical sequence of majors and requirements. As of 2010, Huxley offers bachelor’s degrees in environmental science in five areas, environmental studies in five areas, and combined degrees with economics, journalism, and education.

Huxley’s public presence continues to develop. Planet magazine has become an award-winning quarterly magazine funded with student fees. Huxley has a development director and growing endowment. An Associates Board boasts an impressive list of alumni and affiliates. Even Huxley sweatshirts are for sale.

What also consistently sets the college apart is the quality of its support staff, or what Smith calls its “professional associates.” Most have advanced degrees and make Huxley function by the quality of their student advising, organization, and fundraising.

The college faces, in 2011, renewed budget pressures from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Tentative plans to build a

new Huxley campus on Bellingham’s reclaimed Georgia-Pacific waterfront site are, at this writing, on hold because of economic and political obstacles. The dream is very much alive, but Huxley’s next steps will be decided by new generations of faculty and students.

Huxley, the 1970 pioneer, now has lots of company. Environmentalism has become a basic tenet of civilization and has been institutionalized in agencies, non-governmental organizations, and schools around the world. With the global environment and human technology changing so rapidly, challenges are greater than ever. Climate change, overpopulation, species extinction, vulnerability to natural disasters, long-term health effects from the chemicals society uses, car-centric cities, and global unrest ensure the college will be relevant for many years to come.



Linda Versage Class of '84

The path that led environmental educator Linda Versage to Huxley was a logging road she helped create.

After earning her two-year associate's degree in forest recreation from Paul Smith's College in 1978, Versage took a temporary job with a Bellingham land-surveying company, laying down centerlines for future logging roads in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. However, her excitement at finding a job in forestry soon gave way to uncomfortable realization.

She was enabling the harvest of "the most spectacular old growth forest," Versage recalled. "I was just beside myself with emotion for these trees. One day, I was sitting under them and thought, 'What am I doing?'"

Linda promptly quit her job and marched up all five flights of stairs to the Huxley dean's office to apply for admission.

Versage received her environmental education degree from Huxley in 1984. Her experience with the college's Spring Block program confirmed her passion for educating kids about the environment. After spending a number of years as a seasonal naturalist in New England, serving as a science educator, and getting a teaching certificate, Versage returned to Huxley to earn her master's in environmental education.

In 2002, she became schools coordinator for Homewaters Project in Seattle, a nonprofit organization connecting students to their home environment. Versage consults with district curriculum



specialists and teachers to extend environmental education from classrooms to the outdoors.

In 2008, Versage received the Outstanding Non-Formal Environmental Educator Award from the Environmental Education Association of Washington. In addition to her work for Homewaters Project, Versage coordinated environmental education programs at Seattle's Discovery Park for seven years, designed native ecology programs for youth with the former Starflower Foundation, and was one of the founders of Environmental Education Association of Washington. She is also the owner of Geo Vision, an environmental education consulting business.

Versage plans to relocate with her husband to a more rural setting to sate their passion for farming and gardening. She knows, however, that she'll miss working with the diverse populations found in an urban environment.

"We need to cultivate young leaders who are going to have the necessary problem-solving skills to figure out issues that face us in our world," Versage said. "Huxley provided that for me, and I hope I'm doing that for my students."

The college also teaches balance, she said. "I've learned that it's just as important to have a strong interpersonal connection with the people around me as it is to do this important work." She met her husband, Walter Brodie, another Huxley graduate, on a blind date in Seattle years after leaving the college. Now she's the proud stepmother of his two children, who are both enrolled at Western Washington University.

"My family now is top priority. Having that balance in one's life is part of living a sustainable life."

Devon Fredericksen

Photos courtesy of Linda Versage

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Woody Wheeler Class of '76

Environmental educator Woody Wheeler preaches to more than just believers.

He encourages people who might not consider themselves environmentalists to become involved in conservation because he fears environmentalism is sometimes an exclusive club. "That's a recipe for failure," he said. "The environmental movement needs to be broader and more diverse in order to attain critical mass and become one of the top five issues for people."

Wheeler said he first truly connected with nature as a child after closely watching a flock of birds become tipsy while feeding on rancid crabapples. He later used a book to identify the species as cedar waxwings.

That experience not only taught him to view nature differently but also launched his birding career, he said.

Wheeler began studying wildlife biology at the University of Montana but transferred to Huxley, where he graduated in 1976 with degrees in environmental education and geography.

Huxley College's conservation ethic and creative approach to environmental education appealed to Wheeler. He said professors like John Miles, Lynn Robbins and Claire Dyckman encouraged respect for different cultures and viewpoints and a holistic approach to addressing environmental issues.

He also used the college to build a network of lifelong friends and resources.

For the past twenty years he has held jobs revolving around conservation, project management, and



nonprofit fundraising, including positions at The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society and Seattle Parks Foundation.

He recently launched his own business, Conservation Catalyst, a Seattle-based firm that offers birding, natural history, and educational tours and classes. This allows him to reach a larger, multigenerational audience and gets him outside.

"I'm convinced he is finally in the place career-wise where he has been destined to be from the beginning," said Hilary Hilscher, a friend who worked with Wheeler at The Nature Conservancy and Audubon Society.

Wheeler's enthusiasm for the environment, especially birds, is like a "little kid's infectious excitement," she said. He will get down on his knees next to a child or sit next to an adult to get at their level to point something out.

"He goes that extra mile to help people see through his eyes," Hilscher said.

Wheeler said his teaching style goes back to the creative, active and engaging influences he learned at Huxley College.

"That was the Huxley way, and I think it still works," he said.

Cody Hamblin

Photo courtesy of Woody Wheeler

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Ken Wilcox Class of '90

When Washington's wilderness becomes threatened, Ken Wilcox knows the power of putting pen to paper. His environmental journalism, hiking books, and histories have made the 1990 Huxley graduate an eloquent voice in North Cascades preservation.

"Somebody's got to do it," said the Bellingham-based outdoor author and wilderness conservationist. Environmentalists can rant to each other or put their energy into a letter to their Congressman, he said. "I think the latter will get you further down the road."

Wilcox attended Huxley in 1980, landed a job as a Whatcom County land use and shoreline planner, and then returned to Huxley in 1988 to earn his environmental policy degree. "Huxley provided me the assurance that being concerned about the environment is an honorable thing," Wilcox said. "And it was good to be surrounded by like-minded people."

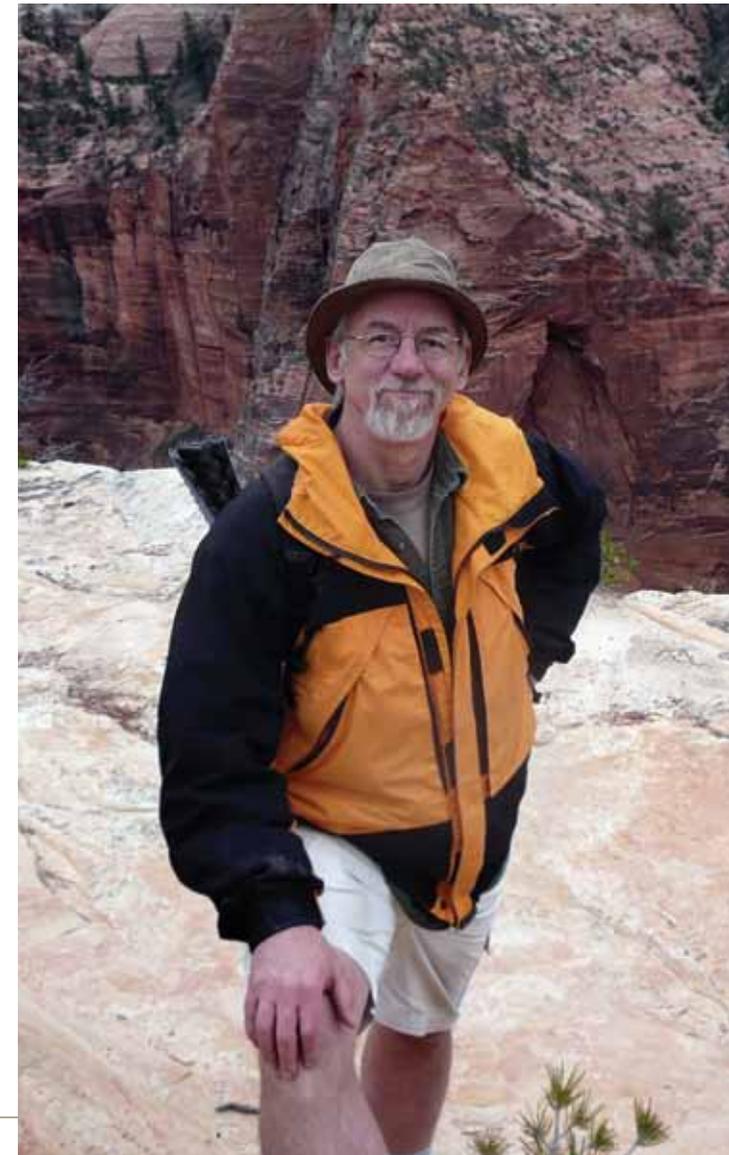
Trips in the Cascade backcountry have shown him the importance of wilderness conservation. "It's a pretty good planet we landed on and we need to do what we can to save it."

Huxley was a natural fit for Ken. "I already had the interest in place when I got there," he said. "It reinforced what was already there." Since graduation he has primarily pursued his business in trail planning and design.

Wilcox also supports various conservation campaigns through research and writing. Wilcox has served on the board of directors for the North Cascades Conservation Council, Mount Baker Wilderness Association, and the Chuckanut

"Go see these places and help us preserve them."

Photo by Courtney Leake



Conservancy, among others. He also chairs the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission, established by treaty with Canada following the 1983 settlement over High Ross Dam.

Colleagues praise his dedication.

Wilcox can collect the details and clearly present them without being forceful, said Frank Eventoff, who has worked extensively with Wilcox to protect the Chuckanut Mountain Range. "He's very eloquent with his writing. That brings people in; it's very captivating."

Marc Bardsley, North Cascades Conservation Council board president, said Wilcox's articles, photographs and maps are a great asset. Wilcox contributes articles to the council's journal, The Wild Cascades, and Whatcom Watch, a locally-based environmental newspaper.

"We have a lot of other talented people who communicate with the public and legislators, but he takes the bull by the horns on a lot of issues and follows through," Bardsley said.

In 2007, Wilcox helped edit and publish a book by the late northwest conservationist and author, Harvey Manning. *Wilderness Alps* tells the story of grassroots wilderness conservation and national-park politics in the North Cascades.

Wilcox has also published several of his own books, including his bestseller *Hiking Whatcom County*. He wrote two other Western Washington hiking guides and a book concerning forest conservation in the Chilean rainforest, where he traveled in the 1990s.

"There's a subliminal message in my hiking books," Wilcox said. "Go see these places and help us preserve them."

Codi Hamblin
Photo courtesy of Ken Wilcox

- TROY ABEL
- JAMES ALBERS
- ANDREW BACH
- GIGI BERARDI
- RICHARD BERG
- BRIAN BINGHAM
- LEO BODENSTEINER
- ANDREW BODMAN
- DAVID BRAKKE
- SCOTT BRENNAN
- PATRICK BUCKLEY
- ANDREW BURN
- REBECCA BUNN
- RABEL BURDGE
- DEVON CANCELLA
- SEA BONG CHANG
- DAVID CLARKE
- SUSAN COOK
- WILLIAM DIETRICH
- BARBARA DONOVAN
- ARLENE DOYLE
- CRYSTAL DRIVER
- CLAIRE DYCKMAN
- JACK EVERITT
- MICHAEL FROME
- RICHARD FRYE
- ERNST GAYDEN
- JOHN HARDY
- RUTH HARPER-ARABIE
- JAMES HELFIELD
- PETER HOMMAN
- RONALD KENDALL
- THOMAS JR. LACHER
- WAYNE LANDIS
- JASON LEVY
- BROOKE LOVE
- ROBIN MATTHEWS
- RICHARD MAYER
- TIMOTHY McDANIELS
- JOHN McLAUGHLIN
- MICHAEL MEDLER
- JEAN MELIIOUS
- JOHN MILES
- SCOTT MILES
- GENE MILLER
- DEBNATH MOOKHERJEE
- EUGENE MYERS
- JAMES NEWMAN
- GILBERT PETERSON
- LYNN ROBBINS
- DAVID ROSSITER
- JOHN RYBCZK
- JENNIFER SELTZ
- DAVID SHULL
- DONALD SINGH-CUNDY
- BRADLEY SMITH
- GARY SMITH
- RUTH SOFIELD
- PAUL STANGL
- MARTIN STAPANIAN
- WILLIAM STAPP
- WILLIAM STOCKLIN
- THOMAS STORCH
- STEPHEN SULKIN
- WILLIAM SUMMERS
- MICHAEL SWEENEY
- HOWARD TEASLEY
- THOMAS TERICH
- MANFRED VERNON
- DAVID WALLIN
- GRACE WANG
- HERBERT WEBBER
- RUTH WEINER
- OLIVER WILGRESS
- ROBERT WISSMAR
- HERB WONG
- MING-HO YU
- NICHOLAS ZAFERATOS



THE NEXT FORTY YEARS

In considering the history of Huxley College, it's clear the school has both influenced and been influenced by the twists and turns of the environmental movement. It is a pioneer in environmental education, and its assumptions have in turn been influenced by events and thinking in the wider world.

"It has grown and changed as the times have changed," reflected Smith. This trend will likely continue. Huxley will evolve with our understanding of the environment.

Like any institution, Huxley should be able to answer three questions. Has it succeeded? Should it still exist? And what should it do in the future?

By most measures, Huxley is an outstanding success. Its 4,000 graduates have a remarkable record of accomplishment, the college has frequently led its university in its share of grants, it has contributed significant research, and it has consistently achieved a high level of student satisfaction in surveys. It has an intellectually diverse faculty and a broad geographic reach for a regional college. Students and faculty contribute regularly to solving real-world environmental problems. Its student publications win awards, and its employees speak, write and contribute to the community on a consistent basis. The institutional dream of Flora and Kraft as they puttered across Lake Whatcom, plotting a college to take advantage of a rich environment, has been realized.

The deeper question of whether Huxley is special, revolutionary, or innovative, is a far more contentious one. Has Huxley won conventional success by being more conventional?

Bunke hoped that a system of cluster colleges within a larger college would preserve the small-college atmosphere Western lost when it tripled in size in the 1960s. As Huxley has grown, its attempts at college-wide community have eroded. It has gone from orientation camp-outs led by a youthful faculty to more traditional departments in which students bond not with the whole but with a particular teacher or program. Perhaps this too is naturally evolutionary, as the wider culture has changed since 1970.

After a tumultuous early history of trying to combine social activism with academic research, Huxley has reverted to the classic academic model of teaching and study, leaving it to business and politics in the outside world to make use of the result. Flora urged an emphasis on science to win respect for Huxley, and that emphasis has worked: Huxley had arguably more credibility with the wider society by 2010 than at any time in its history. Scientists would argue this is as it should be; it was the removal of science from the religious passions and politics of past centuries that made science so persuasive, powerful, and global.

The counter argument is that Huxley has strayed from its idealistic mission, that the divorce of science from policy and ethics helped create the modern environmental crisis by giving society information without wisdom and progress without direction. The alleged moral blindness of science has been a theme from Frankenstein, to the atomic bomb, to Avatar. “The V2s go up/ who cares where they come down/ that’s not my department/ says Werner Von Braun,” goes an old ditty. The Thomas Henry Huxley dream of 1970 was to bridge the divorce between science and man, technology and ethics, data and art; to train not just problem studiers but problem solvers, to be different from the traditional departments. Else, why exist?

Some faculty members argue that in this goal Huxley ultimately fell short; it could not bridge the cultural gap between science and the humanities even within its own walls and won academic acceptance only by being more traditional.

Others contend Huxley has achieved the best of both worlds: exemplary research on both the environmental science and environmental studies sides, and just enough communication and cooperation to amplify both. Students move between departments easily, finding a multiplicity of academic possibilities that fit them individually. Faculty collaborate and share.



Above: From Left: Isabelle DeLise, Graham Goodman, Lily Bliss and Isabel Machuca enjoy the warmth of a final fire at 14-mile trailhead, marking the closing of the Spring Block 2010 expedition in the Pasayten Wilderness/Okanogan National Forest. Photo by Courtney Leake

Left: Student field notes from natural history courses.

There’s a further twist to this age-old argument. Huxley’s evolution, from a historical perspective, echoed the evolution of the environmental movement as a whole. Environmentalism has matured from challenging the status quo in 1970 to being an integral part of it in 2010, a respected player at the political table where it influences decision-making in much the same way as business, the military, faith, education, and social justice. It doesn’t protest as much because it helps rule. Huxley didn’t betray its original mission, it adapted it in the best tradition of Darwin’s natural selection. Huxley became The Man.

And a further twist again: Huxley has lost its green fire, its sense of passion and urgency on a planet hurtling toward a cliff. In this view, the issue is not whether the college will survive until 2050 but whether our species will. Prestigious publication by itself is meaningless.

So should Huxley still exist? The problems it was created to address have grown larger, not smaller. New administrators, new faculty, and new students will debate Huxley’s mission far into the future, and will certainly take the college in directions not dreamed of today.

“We’ve got to go international,” said Smith. “Students have to understand the world from an international perspective.” He forecast a future in which there are more study-abroad programs for American students, offshore branch campuses, and interchange with foreign students. “You have to take the product out of the home office,” Smith said.

This writer, with the bias of a Fairhaven alumnus and a Huxley professor, believes the cluster colleges, as contentious as they’ve been, were the most interesting idea Western ever had. Huxley and Fairhaven were experimental and unique and attracted questing students who otherwise would not have been drawn to the university. They taught in different ways, called attention to different issues, and experimented with different communities.

If there has been a mistake over the past forty years, it is arguably that Western wasted far too much time apologizing for or ignoring its own originality in founding the schools, and it missed opportunities to promote them and, through them, itself. Huxley remains an idea and ideal that could gain the larger university national and international attention as someplace truly special if it can muster adequate institutional attention and societal support. Youthful passion becomes adult wisdom and



contribution, as the accompanying profiles demonstrate. Huxley was never embarrassing, it was electric with concern. The wonder is not that Huxley has survived and will persist, but that it is not touted more aggressively as something that makes Western unique. The university has allowed Johnny-come-lately copycat rivals to steal some of its environmental thunder.

Huxley's first dean, Miller, speculated on the college's future. "Huxley will return to its roots as a cluster college emphasizing an interdisciplinary focus in environmental studies," he wrote in reply. "It should resist efforts to separate faculty into their own disciplines and foster their working together to focus on environmental concepts. Understanding man's ecological relations demands study in many disciplines. Huxley College consequently should offer multidisciplinary study, encompassing all of the physical, biological and social dimensions of environmental problems ... There are enough traditional environmental programs in the country. Another Jerry Flora is required to allow innovative approaches. Faculty such as Bert Webber, John Miles and Ernst Gayden are necessary to instill in students environmental concepts of interdisciplinary studies. Huxley should reach out to the campus and strive to have a core of environmental courses required of all students."

The present dean, Smith, believes Huxley's destiny is strengthening its undergraduate offerings and expanding its graduate school. Ultimately, Western and Huxley should be permitted by the Legislature to offer doctorates, he said.

"Gone are the days when students came to a university, sat at the feet of faculty, absorbed, and then go out to change the world," he added. While he cautioned that Huxley must "make sure passion is not just passion for passion's sake," he believes the future of the college is its engagement with the outside world. "We have to establish partnerships in every sector," he said, from tree huggers to industrialists. And while cognizant of its past, Huxley should be flexible in its future.

"We should be changing all the time," Smith said. "The issues of today are not the issues of tomorrow."

"We should be changing all the time, the issues of today are not the issues of tomorrow."



Huxley graduates in 2009.
Huxley College archives