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UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF MICROBIOLOGY AND MOLECULAR GENETICS

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Summer 2003

MMG Annual Retreat

By Markus Thali

The MMG Annual Retreat will take place at the Ascutney Resort on October 11-12, 2003. The Retreat Committee would like to remind you that



Michelle Shields and Ken Hampel discuss research.

this annual event is approaching fast! Like in the years past, the primary purposes of our annual gathering away from our home are 1) to get people to talk science across lab



Members of the Wallace Lab enjoying the 2002 Retreat - Left to Right: Matt Hogg, Jeff Blaisdell, Scott Kathe, Vishy Bandaru.

boundaries, and 2) to watch Doug Johnson do whatever he decides to do on the dance floor.

Quite likely

this is going to be our last retreat in the current format and at the current location (Ascutney). As much as we all like the event as it evolved over the last few years, the committee feels that we should try something new, if only to prevent the Retreat from becoming routine. So this could well be our farewell tour to southern Vermont, one more

reason to present your best poster/talk ever! See you all down there soon!

Graduation

Graduation was a beautiful, warm, sunny day in May. Congratulations MMG graduates! 2003 Undergraduates include: Sarah Cabral, Michael Florucci, Cris Folley, Jr., Jill Husson, Jamie Lemus, John List, John McKinney, Kathryn Papp, Joanne Pardun, Gulner Pothiawala, Lynsey Provost, Eleanor Rees, Paul Renfrew and Carolyn Thompson. Ph.D. students were Wenge Zhu and Michael Wichroski. Congratulations on a job well done!



Susan Wallace and Warren Schaeffer

MMG Undergraduate Award Winners

Our 2003 Warren R. Stinebring Award to an Outstanding Senior in Microbiology went to **Eleanor Rees** this year. Eleanor has applied to graduate programs in Genetic Counseling. **Jill Husson** and **Gulnar Pothiawala** were the

recipients of our 2003 Lucille P. Markey Outstanding Senior in Molecular Genetics. Jill will be working in a clinical research laboratory in Boston before she applies to medical school. Gulnar, an aspiring physician, has matriculated right here at the UVM in the College of Medicine.

Welcome New Graduate Students

Welcome to the new first year graduate students. You will be seeing their smiling faces in the halls of Stafford, so introduce yourself to:

Jamie Carter
 Karen Cole
 Molly Coseno
 Jenifer Jensen
 Michelle McGroarty
 Amalthiya Prasad
 Snigdha Roy

Musical Labs

This summer has seen a lot of changes in the location of labs in Stafford Hall. Although moving can be tedious, it is nice to get a new, clean lab, with everything freshly organized and in its place. To find the players, here's your scorecard:

<u>Lab</u>	<u>Old Room</u>	<u>New Room</u>
Burke	306 & 308	222 & 220
Gilmartin	316	308
Lewis	222	214
Ward	214	316
Thali	320	318
<u>PI</u>	<u>Old Room</u>	<u>New Room</u>
Uma Wesley	316D	320B
Keith Mintz	112	110B
Chris Huston - Infectious Disease		320B
Beth Kirkpatrick - Medicine		112B

On the whole, moving went quite smoothly. Thanks to all who worked hard to keep the labs running, to facilitate the various moves, and for everyone's cooperation through the confusion. Double thanks to the construction crew who cheerfully cut through the chaos and kept everyone happy.

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Mace



The College's new mace is fabricated in maple, the official tree of the College. The head of the mace contains three sides, each of which bears a medallion with symbols of meaning to the College:

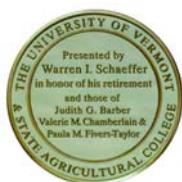
Side one, bears the name of the College. On its face, is a map of the United States and symbols representing basic science, animal science and fruit, ornamental and field crops, each an area intrinsic to the College's research programs.



Side two, bears the inscription: "In Service to Vermont & the Nation" at the top and "Past Present & Future" below, continuing the theme of the map on side one.



Additionally, this medallion brings together, and highlights, the integration of agriculture and life sciences with the humanities, both sides of the College's research. It does so via the visages symbolizing the people served, the horn-of-plenty and the science symbols.



Side three, is the dedicatory medallion. At the top is written, "The University of Vermont" and at the bottom, "& State Agricultural College". On the face, it

indicates that the mace was donated by retiring Professor, **Warren I. Schaeffer**, Ph.D., Professor of Microbiology & Molecular Genetics in recognition of his retirement in May, 2003. Additionally, the face also recognizes three other retirees because of their many accomplishments, dedication and service to the College and its mission: Ms. Judith Barber and Drs. Valerie Chamberlain and Paula Fives-Taylor.

Though commissioned by Dr. Schaeffer, the mace's overall execution was by master craftsman, Mr. Jack Lazarowski, owner of Prism Design, Inc. on North Street here in Burlington.

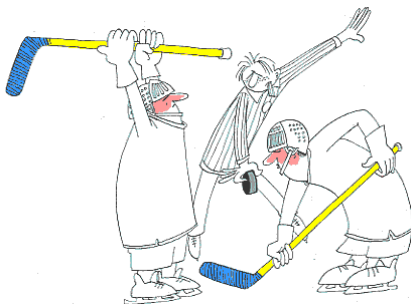
Geezers Complete Undefeated Season!

By Ken Hampel

This year's edition of the Geezers hockey team was composed of MMG regulars, **Gary "The Enforcer" Ward, Pete Brescia, Mike Wichroski** and **Ken Hampel**, plus several of our good friends from the Medical College, including former Stafford Hall resident, **Nick Heintz**.

Defensive play and the superb goaltending of Paul Hale has always been the strong suit of the past Geezer teams, and this year was no

exception for all but 5 minutes of each game. In hockey, however, 5 minutes is an eternity. While the Geezers led the way in every game, lead after precious lead was given back in the dying seconds. As the ties mounted, frustration grew.



"We're Geezers!! These ten minute periods, three of them, they're killing us," remarked team Manager Ken Hampel.

After three regular season ties, the playoffs arrived and bitter disappointment soon followed. The Geezer's semi-final game was played/fought against a crop of hooligans calling themselves the Sure Shots. Five minutes into the second period, a flagrant checking violation by Sure Shots' star forward, Fuzzy Kowalski, erupted into a full fledged brawl resulting in the ejection of two Geezers and an undetermined number of Sure Shots players. At that point the game was called and both teams were slapped with banishment from the remainder of the playoffs. It was a bitter end to an undefeated season.

Retiree News



Paula Fives-Taylor

On May 22 the Department held a retirement party for **Paula Fives-Taylor** and **Warren Schaeffer** in the HSRF Gallery. Combined Paula and Warren have over 65

years of dedication and service to UVM. Speakers included **Nick Heintz**, Jack McCormack, Ken Mann, **Diane Meyer** and **Eunice Froeliger**. Paula will be staying on in her capacity as a research scientist as she has several active grants. Warren will be working with Brenda Tessmann getting part of the MMG 65 laboratory course on line. Presently Warren is a volunteer at the new ECHO at the Leahy Center on the Waterfront and a member of the AARP Vermont

Executive Council. In the spring he is planning to move to New Jersey.

Assorted Lab News

News from the Raper Lab

Cardy Raper was honored by the fungal genetics community in March at the Fungal Genetics Conference at Asilomar Conference Center in Monterey, CA. At the conference banquet, **Tom Fowler** gave a tribute to Cardy's lifelong fascination with the scientific process, but in particular, her work on fungal mating. Although Tom had gathered old pictures and information for several months leading up to the conference, Cardy never caught on that something was brewing, and was taken completely by surprise by the honor. She received a long standing ovation from her colleagues after the tribute. She is in the process of writing a book on her personal experiences in science with an emphasis on the Raper family history in fungal research. One of the big projects in the Raper lab has been to put together the *Schizophyllum commune* strain collection (housed at UVM for decades) so that it could be deposited in the National Fungal Genetics Stock Center for safekeeping. Cardy garnered some funds from NSF to allow **John McKinnon**, Tom, and Cardy to get the collection in shape and it has now been deposited.

This spring saw the graduation of two of the Raper lab's undergrad assistants, Eleanor Rees and John McKinnon. Eleanor received the Stinebring Award for outstanding senior in Microbiology. They will both be missed. But there are always new faces from the undergraduate ranks. **Chris Baker** joined the lab this summer as a Helix Summer Intern and will continue in the lab for his upcoming senior year. Tom was awarded a 3-year NSF grant in June to continue the work on the pheromones and receptors that control

mating in the mushroom fungus *Schizophyllum commune*. There will be a paper from the lab coming out soon in *Fungal Genetics and Biology*.

Also, as unofficial social coordinator, Tom would like to ask, beg and plead for anyone who has new ideas about the monthly Friday afternoon parties to contact him.

News from the Thali Lab

It has been a pleasure for us to have Linda Loonen, an undergraduate student from the Netherlands, working on a cloning project in the lab. She has been here since February.



Left to Right: Sandhya Khurana, Sascha Nydegger-Fasnacht, Linda Loonen, Melissa Batonick, Lynn Rudner, Markus Thali

News from the Johnson Lab

It has been a summer of transitions in the Johnson lab, both personal and professional. We welcomed several new lab members including post-doc **Emily Alexander**, 2nd year graduate student **Suzanne Munsee**, rotating first year graduate student **Karen Cole**, and undergraduate **Candy Tietsworth**. **Kurt** and **Alysia** were only mildly affected by the blackout of '03 while in Cold Spring Harbor, NY. Aside from an outdoor poster session by daylight and having to drink beers on the lawn in the dark, the meeting proved to be a successful exchange of scientific enthusiasm and information. Check out the posters

describing our *Candida albicans* research in the hall if you get the chance! Recent lab alumnus **Tammy Richman** is enjoying her new life and job in Worchester, MA at the UMass Medical School.

News from the Pederson Lab

Wenge Zhu left the Pederson lab in May of this year to begin Post-doctoral studies with Dr. Anindya Dutta at the University of Virginia. Wenge and his wife Jiangyan also are looking forward to the arrival of their first child.

News from the Mintz Lab

Christopher Lenox, former MMG undergraduate, has joined the Mintz lab. He was working at the University of Minnesota before returning to Vermont.

News from the Uma Wesley Lab

Uma received a Micro array pilot project award from VCC for academic year August 2003 to July 2004. Her research topic is titled "To identify the gene expression profiles associated with tumor suppressor activity of cell surface protease in prostate cancer progression."

Technician **Michelle McGroarty** is joining the MMG department to pursue her graduate studies.

News from the Wallace Lab

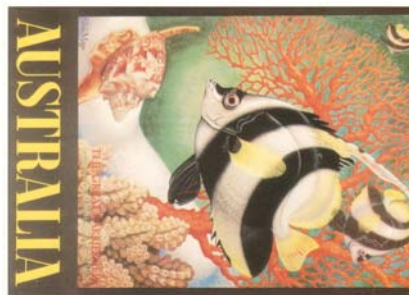
Cheryl Collins, (who was a technician in the Johnson Lab) and **Scott Kathe** got engaged on June 6th.

Scott also won the grand prize in the Adirondack Life's 8th Annual Photography contest this year with a photo entitled

Autumn Alpine Flora. Check Scott's website www.uvm.edu/~skathe for more pics!



Susan Wallace is just back from visiting Australia. She was an invited speaker at the



ICRR 12th International Congress of Radiation Research which was held in Brisbane,

Australia. Combining business with pleasure, Susan decided to tour the country, visiting rainforests, natural parks, seeing native wildlife and fish, and generally relaxing.

Bob Melamede and **Aimee Stephenson**



(formerly an MMG graduate student) have a little boy, Luke, who is four months old. Bob is Chair of the Biology Department at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs. He is teaching a

course in endocannabinoids and medical marijuana and doing research on the topic.

News from the Pederson Lab

Wenge Zhu left the Pederson lab in May of this year to begin Post-doctoral studies with Dr. Anindya Dutta at the University of Virginia. Wenge and his wife Jiangyan also are looking forward to the arrival of their first child.

News from the Doublie Lab

The Doublie lab welcomes a new technician, **Justin Meyette**. Previous Technicians **Jamie Carter** and **Molly Coseno** have joined the Department as new graduate students.

News from the Ward Lab

Mike Wichroski successfully defended his thesis this past spring, and is currently doing a postdoc in Tariq Rana's lab at UVM-South (UMass-Medical in Worcester). Along with **John Cherry** and **Tammy Richman**, he is keeping the Biohazard softball tradition alive, a good thing after Jeff "dropped the ball" this summer!

Jeff has signed his life away...not only has he recently gotten engaged, but he and his fiancé bought a house in Winooski. They also adopted a beautiful baby girl - a black lab named Stella. Guess he's planning on being here for a while!

Aoife Heaslip, a CMB graduate student, has recently joined the lab. She continually amuses her labmates with her Irish sayings - who knew you could say an experiment was cooked instead of it being finished?? This spring we will also be welcoming a new post-doc, **Jeralyn Henderson**, who is currently finishing her thesis at Tufts. With both **Kim Carey** and **Stacey Gilk** planning to defend this spring (fingers crossed), the Ward lab will

soon have a whole new look to go along with the new space up in 316.

News from the Burke Lab

Ken Hampel and his wife, Steff Mueller, had a baby boy on May 23. Their new little guy, Owen, weighed in at 7 lbs, 1 oz. Mom and baby are doing very well. About Ken, we're not so sure.



In June, **Micci Essam-Agbesi** and her husband, Mike, welcomed their newborn baby into the world on June 10, 2003.

Michael Eyrum

Agbesi weighed 7 lbs 3 oz and the family is doing great.

In June **John Burke's** station wagon burned



to a crisp in the parking lot of the Shelburne Road Hannafords. Firefighters had the blaze under control in a matter of minutes after arriving on the scene, but not soon enough to save much of the car. "All I had time to do is save the hairpin grant," gasped John. Technicians at the repair shop are reportedly at a loss to explain this event. "He brought the thing in for an oil change, and well,

errr....looks like we screwed-up," declared an unnamed techie.

The Burke lab recently completed its 7th Annual Lab Move with wonderful results. "This space is so much more....hmmm, spacious, yes spacious. We love it," quipped **Ken Hampel**. "And that view, how can you beat that view, just look at all those great cars," he added.

News from the Lewis Lab

LEWIS LAB MUTANT PICKING PARTY.

Our biggest endeavor this summer was screening a library of 7000 bacterial colonies. This enormous project took seven people, 140 large agar plates and one blazing fire. Yet in the end, after all was said and done we isolated a total of 10 mutants!

During the summer months we had the help of an undergraduate researcher, **Grant Henderson**. He graduated with a B.S. in May from the University of Connecticut and has returned to UCONN this fall for graduate studies in Biochemical Engineering. Grant was a great addition to our lab and will be sorely missed (especially by Sergio, who needs another male to help compete against all the estrogen in this lab)! Recently, we gained an undergraduate work study student, **Stephanie Onyekaba**. She began working with us mid-summer and, due to her newfound interest in microbiology, will continue throughout the fall semester. Please be sure to introduce yourself and welcome her to the Department if you see her around.

News from the Fives-Taylor Lab

Travis Bellville is a new addition to the Fives-Taylor lab working on the *A. actinomycetemcomitans* project. Before coming to Vermont, he was working at the CDC in Fort Collins, Co.

Peter Newell is a new addition to the Fives-Taylor lab working with *Streptococcus parasanguis*. Peter is a graduate of Middlebury College.