

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF NEW JERSEY'S STATE UNIVERSITY

WINTER 1996

RUTGERS

MAGAZINE

\$3.00

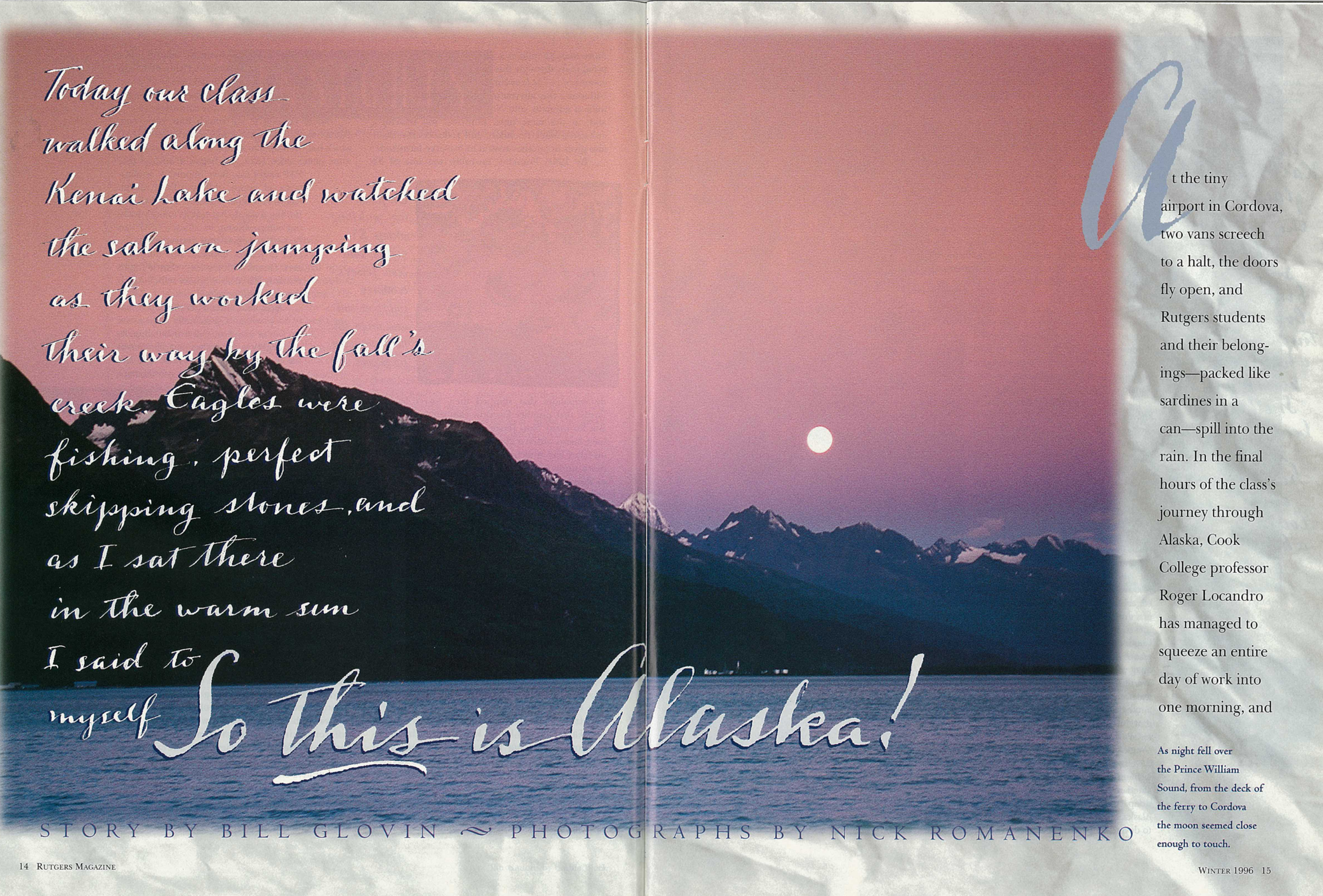
Alaska
has
changed me.
I will
not leave this
place
the same."



Maura Moulton (CC'97)



GAME GEAR ♦ TRUE LIES ♦ BOSNIAN RELIEF



Today our class
walked along the
Kenai Lake and watched
the salmon jumping
as they worked
their way by the fall's
creek. Eagles were
fishing, perfect
skipping stones, and
as I sat there
in the warm sun
I said to

myself *So This is Alaska!*

STORY BY BILL GLOVIN ~ PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICK ROMANENKO

*A*t the tiny
airport in Cordova,
two vans screech
to a halt, the doors
fly open, and
Rutgers students
and their belong-
ings—packed like
sardines in a
can—spill into the
rain. In the final
hours of the class's
journey through
Alaska, Cook
College professor
Roger Locandro
has managed to
squeeze an entire
day of work into
one morning, and

As night fell over
the Prince William
Sound, from the deck of
the ferry to Cordova
the moon seemed close
enough to touch.

*Views of
Kachemak Bay,
glaciers from
the Harding
ice field,
signs of
black bear.
Cow parsnips,
Touch-me-not,
white and red
honeyberry.
Shells on the
beach, loons in
the bay,
bald eagles
overhead.
Couldn't be
a better spot
to camp.*

~SCOTT STEVENSON



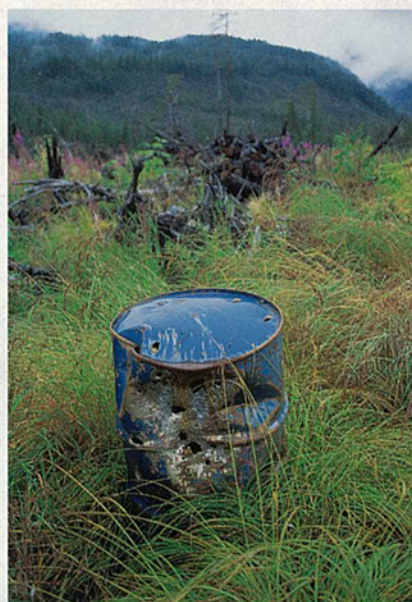
now there's no time to spare. The flight home is scheduled to take off in minutes, but in a spontaneous burst of emotion, the line at the baggage counter dissolves as the students fall out to hug their professor, whom they affectionately call "Doc," and thank him for an unforgettable experience.

Some students wipe tears from their eyes, and I—who signed up as a reporter but became a full-fledged participant—fight a lump in my throat as I remember other moving events in recent days: Scott Stevenson falling to his knees in wonder as ice chunks the size of buildings break off Child's Glacier; Mark Pekosz confronting a grizzly bear and her cubs in a face-to-face showdown on a steep mountain ridge; Russell Pitzner going misty-eyed as a member of the Eyak tribe described the corporate deforestation of their lands; Melissa McCale recounting the spiritual vision of ice falls that seemed to climb like a stairway into the clouds.

For three weeks, Alaska has been a rugged and awe-inspiring classroom for 13 Cook College students enrolled in the five-credit course, Natural Resources of Alaska. In addition to field study, the students met for several months in Monday night classes to discuss Alaska's human ecology and environmental issues, to plan their class projects, and to get to know one another before they embarked on a journey that afforded them very little personal space. Not for the faint of heart, the course is so demanding that Locandro (CC'60,GSNB'68,'73) requires interested students to apply with a written proposal. Once accepted, they must get to Alaska on their own, share in food and transportation expenses, and camp in the backcountry.

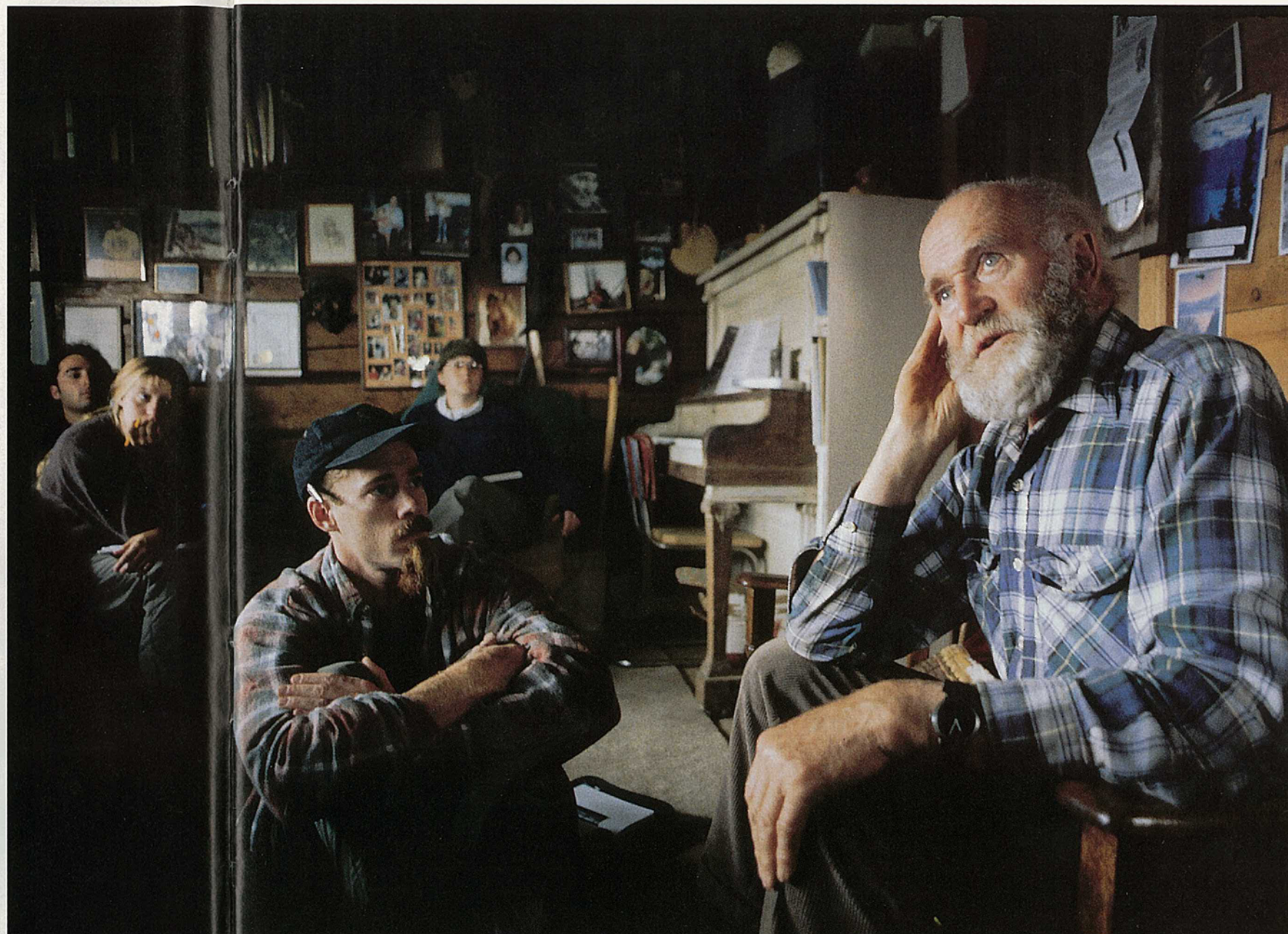
Any sacrifice the students made to come to Alaska, however, was well worth the rewards. They've discussed natural resources with some of the most knowledgeable and influential scientists, business leaders, and public officials in Alaska. They've been invited into the homes of conservationists, homesteaders, and artists. They've been personally escorted to inspiring natural sites that words or images could never fully capture, many of which are off limits to the general public. And they've learned to work with, lean on, and support one another while traveling and learning—often from dawn to dusk—at a frenetic pace.

Patterned after a successful 10-year-old course in Newfoundland, Canada, that Locandro developed, the five-year-old Alaskan field curriculum is refined each year. As word of the dedicated naturalist's enthusiasm, good humor, and deep regard for the land spreads throughout Alaska, so has the network of professionals willing to devote time to the course and its students. "With



all the logistics and personalities involved, I don't know of an individual other than Roger who could pull off a trip of this magnitude," says Bob Behrends, director of the U.S. Forest Service in the

Field journals
(bottom), a great
source of pride, were
never far from the
students' sides. As they
learned about the
struggle between man
and the environment
(below), they used
their journals to com-
pile personal reflec-
tions, nature sketches,
and field notes.



Cordova ranger district. "You not only have to command respect, you have to be dynamic, flexible, and above all, likable. The first year I got involved, I wondered what I had got myself into. Then I saw the conviction and dedication Roger brings to the course. That's why I continue to go out of my way for these kids."

Wherever he traveled in Alaska, Locandro—despite the razzing of his students—wore a Rutgers cap like a badge of honor. At the slightest prompt, the 35-year teaching veteran will proudly reel off a litany of former students who are now making substantial contributions in natural-resources management on the highest levels of state and federal government. This past summer alone, three seniors from the 1995 Alaska class—Cook honor students Sharon DeFalco, Jessica Sears, and Christine Blinn—returned to Alaska to work for wildlife-

management agencies and to conduct research for their honors projects. So dedicated is Locandro to teaching that, despite being on sabbatical this year to serve as chair of the New Jersey State Fish and Game Council, he still conducted both the Alaska and Newfoundland classes.

At the airport, Locandro coaxes the students back into line and extends an invitation to his historic 54-acre Frog Hollow Hog Farm in Stockton, New Jersey. Locandro, a master of cooking with fish, game, and wild plants, promises that the October reunion, co-hosted by his wife, Marylyn (DC'59), will offer an intriguing array of culinary novelties, the swapping of hundreds of photographs, and the opportunity to reflect on an adventure in learning that, in the words of student Russell Pitzner, "makes you feel like you can do anything, go anywhere, and be who you always wanted to be."

Scott Stevenson, who found the best seat in Yule Kilcher's house, wrote: "His style of living close to the land and harvesting only what his family could eat—a well-educated man with family values and a respect for nature. That's a role model."



"Each day I begin to understand glaciers a little more. The terrain we found above the tundra area—recently visited by ice—looked like another planet," wrote Noelle Polakos about Exit Glacier (above) and the ascent to the Harding ice field.

When a grimy van with the phrase, "The Nucleus of Systematic Processes," scrawled in the dirty film of the rear window finally pulls up at a rendezvous point outside an Anchorage hotel, photographer Nick Romanenko and I know that we've connected with the Alaska field class—such abstruse graffiti can only be the work of playful college students.

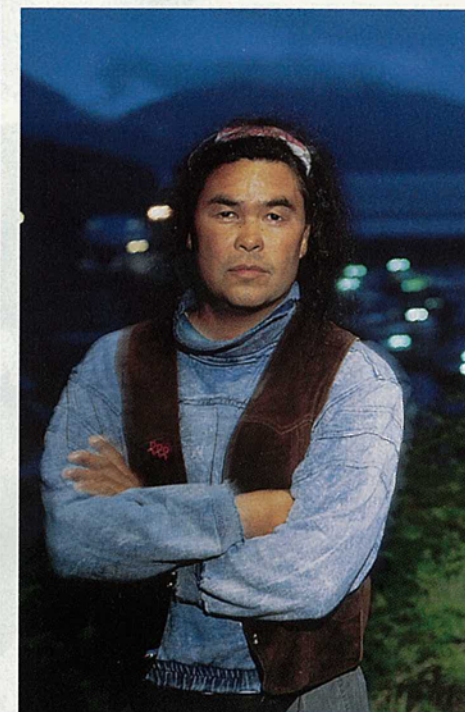
By the time we join up, the class has already completed half the trip. They've camped in the wild backcountry and reviewed ecosystem models with staffers of the National Biological Service at Wrangell-Saint Elias and Denali national parks. Highlights of their latest sojourn, in Anchorage, have included meetings with Alaska's governor, Tony Knowles; Nancy Deschu (RC'76), a senior scientist with the National Park Service; and officials

of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service. Nights were spent camped under the stars on the outskirts of the city. Next on the agenda is Kenai Peninsula, a spit of land south of Anchorage bordered on each side by Cook Inlet and the Prince William Sound.

We make a quick stop at the Anchorage airport to pick up attorney Marty McHugh (RC'82), the 35-year-old chief of the Office of Natural Resource Damages in the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). McHugh and Carlos Martín (CC'93), a 27-year-old professional trapper from Union City, New Jersey, are serving as instructors on the trip. McHugh's input will be especially valuable, expects Locandro, when the class visits the site of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill on the Prince William Sound.

"Man is unprotected here; this is nature's world," writes John Stromeier in *Extreme Conditions*,

Dunar Lankard (below), an Eyak native, argues that the only way to protect the natural resources of Cordova—reachable by ferry (bottom)—is for native corporations to stop selling their lands for short-term profits.



whales mysteriously strand themselves on mudflats that contain dangerous silt. "Be careful," Locandro warns. "The mudflats can suck you in and harden like cement." Last year, he continues, a woman sank to her chest, the silt hardened around her, and, as the tide began to come in, rescuers worked frantically to free her. In a last, desperate effort, a helicopter tried to pull her from the muck. By the time Locandro completes the story of the woman's horrific death, it's certain that no one within earshot will ever take a casual walk in these mudflats.

A few minutes later we cross into the Kenai Peninsula. The three-hour drive to the U.S. Forest Service's Seward district compound at Moose Pass takes us through Chugach National Forest, a temperate rainforest the size of the entire state of New Hampshire. About halfway to our destination, Locandro pulls the van over. Needing no instruction, the students grab their binoculars and leap out. For the next 25 minutes, Locandro delivers an impromptu lecture covering recessional moraines, the spruce bark beetle epidemic, and permafrost's effects on plant life. Whenever possible, Locandro links Alaska to New Jersey through mutual environmental concerns like wildlife and wetlands management and timber regeneration. The students posit a few questions and jot down notes before scrambling back into the van, which hurtles onward to Moose Pass. These spontaneous roadside lessons form a central—and frequent—element of the course's syllabus.

The cabins at Moose Pass may lack heat and electricity, but the bunk beds and toilets, the students agree, are a definite improvement over tents. These simple luxuries, they hope, will lessen the strain that has developed from living together in such close quarters. With the exception of first-year student Allison Katz, all of the students are upperclassmen or 1996 graduates finishing up their last bit of coursework—Alaska. Interaction for a few hours on Monday nights during the on-campus classes was one thing; the level of intimacy required for the fieldwork is quite another. Besides the inevitable personal conflicts that arise when near-strangers travel together, there's also been some grumbling about a lack of time to work on the journals that are the most important measure of student performance. (See page 48.)

Locandro has heard it before, and he's not overly concerned. "An adjustment period

AUGUST 18,
BACKCOUNTRY,
DENALI NATIONAL PARK

We are completely apart from all civilization—immersed in wilderness. Jean, Allison and I are sharing Maura's tent. They say that the only way to overcome your fear is to confront it. I Will!

~ANNE-MARIE MOESCH



his 1993 book about modern Alaska. Twenty minutes out of Anchorage his words already ring true. Locandro points out the window to a park where, a year ago, a bear killed a woman and her grandson. On our right is Turnagain Arm, where beluga



AUGUST 22,
RUSSIAN RIVER,
KENAI PENINSULA

*The salmon
in Russian River!
Large,
bright red,
so plentiful—
they make
such a carpet
of red
in the water
that there
seems to
be little river
left—
just salmon.*

~NOELLE POLAKOS



is common as cliques and romances develop and classmates get on each others' nerves," he says. To complicate matters, this is by far the largest group he's ever traveled with: 18 people—13 students, two instructors, one professor, one reporter, and one photographer—in two vans. The social aspect will work itself out, Locandro says confidently; learning to adjust, to fit in, and to find one's comfort level are integral parts of the experience.

Most days will either begin or end with reflective, free-form class sessions. Tonight, discussion centers on the students' adventures in Denali and Wrangell-St. Elias. Anne-Marie Moesch and Jean Koch talk about overcoming their fear of the wilderness. Martin, having noticed that some of the students struggle on hikes, stresses that physical fitness is crucial for a career in natural-resources management. Being in top shape, adds Martin, allowed him to climb to within feet of a mountain goat at Denali. Noelle Polakos and Maura Moulton marvel at the serenity and vastness of the national parks, which seem like infinite wildernesses. Anna Knipps and Bridget Munger offer a report on wolves and their place in the Alaskan ecosystem.

But the highlight of the session is the story of Mark Pekosz's encounter with bears in Denali: "I was off by myself on a ridge, looking for mushrooms, when I heard rustling and breathing in the bushes. Before I realized it, a beautiful, blond grizzly was standing on her hind legs, peering down at me from about 20 feet away. She was so close that I could see twigs in her blond fur. Suddenly, two cubs appeared from under her feet and ran toward me. She barked, and they retreated."

Caught on a ridge with no escape route, Pekosz remembered the briefing on bear encounters that had been presented by Denali's park rangers. Following their advice, he talked calmly to the mother grizzly and retreated slowly. The bears followed him along the ridge for at least five minutes. The make-or-break moment came when, after removing himself from the bears' path by sliding down a 20-foot slope, the cubs attempted to follow him. With his back foot pinned against a boulder, continued Pekosz, "I could feel my heart pounding. Everything was in the mother's ball-park." She barked, her cubs scurried back up the slope, and they walked on. After standing, stunned, for 10 minutes, he was so shaken that he walked off in the wrong direction. (The next morning, a banner story in the *Anchorage Daily News* reports the death of a Washington, D.C.,

attorney mauled by a grizzly protecting her cubs.)

Within days, these nightly class sessions help dissipate the tension; sharing experiences and expressing thoughts and emotions prove to be good for class dynamics as well as the soul. Morale begins to improve noticeably as we settle in and the students begin to make progress on their journals



Clem Tillian
(top), who led the
movement to regulate
fishing in Alaska,
hosted a trip to
Halibut Cove. On the
boat ride out, the
students (above)
viewed thousands of
seabirds perched on
Gull Island.

and projects. Each student must conduct and write up an independent research project for the U.S. Forest Service to turn into informational brochures and pamphlets that can be offered at visitor sites.

Over the next few days, rangers from the Seward district of the Forest Service explore Chugach National Forest with the students. They address the kinds of issues they face every day in their jobs: fish- and wildlife-habitat management; fire and flood prevention; the licensing of tour guides; and road, trail, and campground maintenance. Locandro proudly points out that the Forest Service reports to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, where James Lyons (CC'77) is assistant secretary and Ralph Otto (CC'68,GSNB'79) is deputy administrator of natural resources—both men are his former students.

Deputy Ranger Bill Shuster devotes two days to the class, offering both indoor instruction and outdoor exploration. A 30-second videotape of a moose stomping a man to death underscores his

warning that a 1,200-pound moose is often more dangerous and unpredictable than a bear, and a slide show teaches the students to identify the species and age of bears using paw prints and ear shapes. Out in the forest, Shuster points out a platform he built to entice ospreys to nest and prompts us to try to spot mountain goats on a ridge. He talks about the pros and cons of last year's mild winter on fish and game: While moose happily graze in verdant mountains, he says, salmon are unable to spawn because streams are depleted. Shuster indicates an area where trees have been partially cut; this management technique reduces the threat of fire and provides easy-to-reach foliage for moose, which discourages them from crossing a nearby road to find food. Scott Stevenson chimes in with a fact he read in the local paper: in the past year the number of moose road kills fell by 100.

After a long day of traveling, Locandro believes, nothing furthers group camaraderie like

By the trip's end, everyone had had their fill—literally and figuratively—of Alaskan salmon (below), which was a focal point for discussions on fisheries regulation and management, and a ubiquitous dish at nearly every meal—including a traditional potlatch.



AUGUST 13,
KENNICOTT GLACIER,
KENNICOTT

*I hiked
So high up
my ears popped
On the way down
I filled my
pockets with
azurite, malacite
quartz—
The malacite
is nice,
polished down
by glaciers.
I broke a
piece open
and found
pure copper.
Pretty Cool!*

—DANIEL SALSBERG



cooking, eating, and cleaning together. While some students head for the supermarket in Seward, others join their professor at nearby Resurrection Bay, where silver salmon leap sporadically from the water. Within minutes, Locandro catches and bleeds a 15-pounder. Back at the compound, Locandro's years of teaching Cook College courses on meats, fish, and edible plants come in handy. With the skill of a sushi chef, he demonstrates proper fish-cleaning technique. At the end of the lesson, he pulls out soy sauce and wasabi and we're treated to the freshest sashimi anyone's ever tasted.

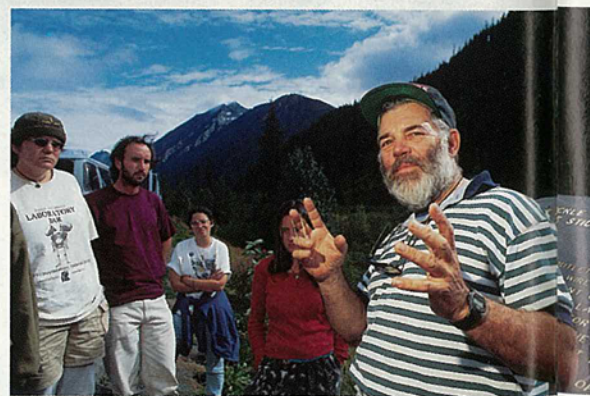
Each day, the trained eye of an expert points out something new to the students: a sea otter feasting on an octopus, bald eagles' nests hugging a line of trees, a row of seedlings taking root in a revegetation project. One such person is Wisconsin native Rick Gease, who greets us at Kenai-Fjord National Park, where we have come to visit Exit Glacier, known as the most accessible glacier in Alaska. Gease, wearing the wide-brimmed hat and uniform of the National Park Service, is just a few years older than the students and relates well with them.

Competing with a brash magpie that has landed at his feet, Gease raises his voice to deliver a quick lesson on glaciers. They come in all shapes and sizes, he tells us, from small, unnamed chunks of fractured ice clinging to high ridges to gracefully curving, 10-mile-long strips of solid ice. Glaciers form when the annual snowfall is consistently greater than the annual ice melt. As the years go by and this "leftover" snow piles higher and higher, melting and refreezing, it slowly changes into ice. When its pressure combines with the force of gravity, the glacier flows downhill like a slow, giant river, patiently plowing through mountain valleys and moving tons of rock out of its way.

"Does anyone think we're still in an ice age?" Gease asks. Indeed we are, he answers. On the half-mile walk to Exit Glacier, he describes the characteristics of an ice age, interrupting himself to point out plants and flowers recognizable in the paintings of Van Gogh and Picasso. The forest in which we walk, he adds, has evolved only since the glacier receded over the last 70 years.

Gease, taking us to a side of Exit Glacier that is off limits to the public, asks the students to insert their hands in a runoff stream for 10 seconds—no one is able to withstand the icy water for that long. To prove that the massive blue ice block is practi-

Roger Locandro (bottom) combines the sensibilities of Ernest Hemingway with the following of Jerry Garcia. He led the class on roadside explorations, including one where Mark Pekosz (below) hunted for mushrooms.



cally impenetrable, he has us throw rocks against it; they bounce off without leaving a scratch. Crowning the park and feeding its glaciers is the 300-square-mile Harding ice field. All but its highest peaks are buried by a vast, unbroken plain of snow and ice. Gease recommends that we return to the park and make the four-mile climb to the ice field's



base. He guarantees that we'll see black bear—or at least signs of them—on the trail.

Two days later, nine of us take him up on his suggestion. The trail's steepest section comes in the first mile. Romanenko, whom the students have nicknamed "Czar Nikolai," struggles through the initial ascent: He is bogged down with heavy camera equipment and awkward clothing designed to hold extra film and lenses. Martin and Pekosz, who climb like mountain goats, come to the rescue, grabbing his tripod and gear. "Don't worry, Czar," Moulton teases him when we see bear scat, just as Gease had promised, "if you're mauled, we'll pick up your film and camera."

The further we climb, the more boulders and craters we see, and the more the terrain resembles the moon. Layers of clothing come off and on in the rapidly changing climate. Along the trail, students spot marmots and Dall sheep that will later be sketched in their journals. They refresh themselves

by dipping their hands and heads in icy streams. Finally, after climbing 3,500 feet, we reach the base of Harding ice field, a breathtaking ocean of white that disappears into the gray horizon. Awestruck by the spectacular sight, we feel as if we're alone on top of the world—until two young hikers approach. The world becomes even smaller when they introduce themselves as David Shapiro and Phil Markowitz, graduates of Rutgers College, class of 1993.

The van's sound system may not be up to an audiophile's standards, but two of Locandro favorites, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, nonetheless fit perfectly with the dramatic landscape we pass on the four-hour drive to Homer, the quaint fishing village and artists' community that calls itself "The Halibut Capital of the World." Locandro has scheduled a whirlwind 24 hours—on the agenda: a meet-

From interior Alaska, a short rail trip through the Chugach Mountains (above) offers the only land access to the town of Whittier. From there, the 17-hour ferry trip through the Prince William Sound to Cordova passes the reef made famous by the *Exxon Valdez*.



While students camped in the wilds of Denali National Park, Locandro (bottom) cared for Natania Ford (below), who had the flu. At Resurrection Bay in Seward, the professor caught a 15-pound silver salmon that became a plate of gravlox.



Narrated by Kilcher, the video shows how he raised and educated six children in a naturalist lifestyle. As scenes of family gatherings, axe grinding, and mushroom picking flicker on the screen, Kilcher periodically interjects humorous quips or expounds on his naturalist philosophies. Locandro is thrilled to find that his charges are mesmerized by this glimpse into the life of an Alaskan pioneer. The constant drizzle doesn't dampen the high spirits fostered by Kilcher as we head for Homer Spit and a much-anticipated part of the trip: Halibut Cove, an island of homes and art galleries

established by Clem Tillian in the late 1940s. The visit is another first for the Alaska curriculum, and Tillian himself has generously offered to boat the class to the island. At the dock, Tillian, a large man with thick red hair and glasses, carries himself with the confidence one would expect from a powerful former state senator known as Alaska's "fish czar."

Since leaving the state legislature in 1981 after a 16-year term, Tillian has stayed active in matters pertaining to national and international fishing. A self-professed "rarest of birds, a conservative Republican conservationist," Tillian is known throughout Alaska as the man who led the movement to regulate fishing in the state. His groundbreaking limited-entry bill, passed in 1973, established fishing zones, dates, and times and restricted the number of commercial boats that could enter Alaskan waters. The controversy stirred by the bill led to threats on his life and the harassment of his children.

About 30 minutes out to sea, Tillian takes us past Gull Island, made up of huge boulders and a sea arch where assorted species of seabirds numbering in the thousands nest in crevices, producing a high-pitched, eerie cacophony of sound. Entering the cove, Tillian points out a spot on the edge of a cliff where he plans to be buried. Around the next bend is a community of structures built into rock and connected by wooden planks, stairways, and boardwalks on pilings. In the pouring rain, this peaceful enclave looks remarkably like something out of *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

Tillian's home is filled with historic artifacts, old books, and paintings and sculpture by many of Alaska's most noted artists. He pulls aside a wall of books to reveal a life-sized mural of himself in front of a hidden stairway that leads us into a wine cellar. Tillian confides that since the fire that killed his granddaughter years before, his possessions don't mean very much to him.

We head for an art gallery, where Tillian's wife, Diana, an artist known internationally for her work in octopus ink, demonstrates her craft. The students then settle in for a fisheries seminar with Tillian and Greg McIntosh, president of McIntosh Marine, Inc. McIntosh describes innovative efforts to market salmon to the federal school-lunch program and chain restaurants. Tillian ascribes the abundance of salmon that makes these endeavors possible to hard-fought conservation decisions, for example, shutting down fishing in Cook Inlet, the

(continued on page 44)

AUGUST 26,
HARDING ICE FIELD,
KENAI-FJORD
NATIONAL PARK

The hike was 3.5 miles and a 3,000 foot incline. On the way up I asked Noelle, "How do we know when we get where we're supposed to be?" The more I think about it—How do I know when I'm where I'm supposed to be?

~MAURA MOULTON



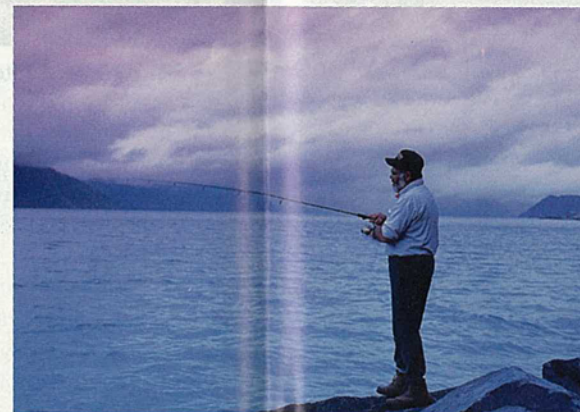
As the ferry passed the Prince William Sound's 150-odd icebergs—including Columbia Glacier (above), which covers an area larger than Los Angeles—the class soaked in the sun, looked for marine life, and ate fresh sashimi prepared by professor Roger Locandro and instructor Carlos Martin.

ing with Albert Baktuit, a tribal elder of the native Kenaitze, who demonstrates hunting and fishing artifacts and discusses his people's culture; a stop at the Alaskan Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Center, where wildlife biologist Steve Brochmann escorts us to Kachemak Bay to observe cormorants, puffins, and murre; an overnight camping stay with legendary Alaskan naturalist and homesteader Yule Kilcher; and a trip to the island enclave of Halibut Cove under the escort of founder and former state senator Clem Tillian.

After the sessions with Baktuit and Brochmann, the vans crawl three miles down a treacherous and winding dirt road toward the remote property of Kilcher. His small, ramshackle cabin and outhouse sit perched on the top of a lush green hillside, overlooking the bay and the ice-covered Kenai Mountains. The students go through the well-rehearsed routine of unloading their gear from the vans, and, with a parting wave from Locandro, he drives the rest of the party off to a local motel. Although he's

never met Kilcher, he has complete confidence in the judgement of his former student, Willie Dunn, an interpreter at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Homer, who arranged the visit.

When we arrive to pick up the students the next morning, there's not a soul to be found at camp, but 13 pairs of shoes are lined up at the door of the cabin. Inside, Kilcher, still spry and feisty in his 80s, sits among the students, who are engrossed in *A Pioneer Family in Alaska*, a documentary on the Kilcher family produced by the Smithsonian Institution. It tells the story of Kilcher, who left Switzerland in 1936 to avoid service in the German army and found his way on foot to Homer, where he claimed and cleared a homestead.



So this is Alaska!

Continued from page 25

Yukon River, and other key tributaries. Fisheries mismanagement has led to starvation in countries like Russia and China, says Tillian, but "our industry does so well because we harvest only 40 percent of what we produce. I never forgot the advice of former governor James Hammond: 'If it's a close call, err on the side of conservation, because that's a mistake that can be corrected.'"

His preservationist stance is one the students admire enthusiastically, but his colorful and conservative opinions unsettle their ideas of conservationist politics. While freely quoting Jefferson and Lincoln, Tillian also endorses the bloody reign of Genghis Khan and the clubbing of baby seals to save fish stocks. "I would never hire anyone who's been on welfare," he pronounces, and, "Richard Nixon was a genius compared with Jimmy Carter."

In the next day's reflective session, the class debates the merits of Kilcher the naturalist versus Tillian the capitalist. Locandro takes advantage of the intellectual fire lit by the two men, using it as a lesson in the scholar's obligation to not allow personal feelings to get in the way of objectively weighing evidence and analyzing opinions.

After a rail trip through the Chugach Mountains and a 17-hour ferry voyage across 300-mile-long Prince William Sound, we arrive at 4:00 a.m. in Cordova, grab our stuff, and sleepwalk into the care of Bob Behrends. On the ferry, we'd finally caught a break from the rain as we relaxed on lounge chairs; sampled smoked oysters and sashimi; marveled at the reflection of countless mountains, waterfalls, and icebergs in the crystal-blue water; and gaped at the beauty of the 40-mile-wide Columbia Glacier.

Along the way to Cordova, we had stopped at Valdez—the city that bestowed its name on the 1989 oil spill that changed environmental history. Our NJDEP expert, Marty McHugh, had pointed out the reef where an Exxon supertanker ran aground and spilled the 10.8 million gallons of North Slope black crude that marred 1,244 miles of Alaskan coastline. Seven years later, the absence of whales and other marine mammals caused by

depleted herring stocks is only one of the disaster's repercussions. "The Exxon Valdez forced environmental agencies to focus on the impact oil spills have on fisheries and wildlife and created a niche for offices like mine, which try to restore natural resources after the fact," McHugh had explained. "The spill crystallized the view that natural resources are held in the public trust and are closely entwined with economic and quality-of-life issues."

Cordova, our destination, may be the community most affected by the spill. In the early 1900s, it was a boom town; valuable copper shipped by railroad from the Kennicott copper mines passed through

It's difficult
to believe our Alaska
trip is over.
I'm very tired, and I can't
wait to sleep again
in my own bed.
More importantly, I can't
wait to plan
my next trip to this
wonderful place.

—BRIDGET MUNGER
AUGUST 31, HOMEWARD-BOUND,
SOMEWHERE OVER ALASKA

its docks. The town prospered until 1938, when labor strikes and the declining price of copper permanently closed the mines. Cordova struggled back, becoming the sound's most prolific fishing village, until the spill set back its progress. Locandro considers Cordova, not reachable by road, a perfect microcosm of Alaska and "a utopia for ecologists." The town of about

2,500 residents is the gateway to the 700,000-acre Copper River Delta, considered among the world's finest wetlands.

During a day of lectures, we meet Kelly Weaverling, former mayor and a member of a regional oversight group created by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. Weaverling, lanky and articulate, worked for years as a kayak guide and charted hundreds of tiny islands and inlets in the sound. "After the spill, I had documentation on every beach, so I was put in charge of coastline conservation," he says. "I turned from a political recluse to an environmental Frankenstein."

Weaverling reflects on the battle to save the sound's birds and marine life, to clean its beaches, and to discourage opportunists from capitalizing on a disaster that "no amount of money could make go away. When I was younger, I wondered why my grandparents couldn't get over the Great Depression, why my father-in-law couldn't get over World War II, and why my peers couldn't get over Vietnam. With the spill, I found out that there are certain things you never get over," he says softly. "I've never gone back to those beaches. To me, it would be like returning to Vietnam to have a picnic in the field where your squad was wiped out." Visibly moved, a few students join Weaverling at his bookstore to further investigate his experiences during the Exxon Valdez disaster.

That evening we are guests of the community at a potlatch supper in a local hall. On behalf of the class, Locandro contributes gravlox, a complicated salmon dish that takes eight days to cure; the professor has cared for it like a baby for a week. The Olsen family, who host the potlatch each year, welcome us as old friends. "The first time we sponsored the potlatch, there was some confusion over whether it was a group of Rutgers students or Russian students," laughs Darrel Olsen. "It wasn't long after that Russians *did* come—to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Vitus Bering's first sighting of Alaska in Cordova. Five hundred Russians showed up, but we had only prepared for 250. They had never seen clam chowder or Jell-O. Cordova was filled with KGB agents in trench coats carrying walkie-talkies."

The Olsens take turns telling stories about the harsh winters, January's Russian Orthodox Christmas, and subsistence living. Leaving the potlatch, stuffed with a feast of traditionally prepared salmon, the students comment that in Cordova, *Northern Exposure*, the offbeat television program about life in a small Alaskan community, rings true.

On our last full day in Alaska, Bob Behrends and Ken Hodges of the Forest Service take us down the 50-mile Copper River Highway, which abruptly ends in the middle of the Copper River Delta. Throughout the day, as we move from site to site, Behrends regales us with the power of nature, Alaska-style. The surrounding mountains, he says, create a funnel effect on the flatlands' severe winds: "In March one year, a young woman got out of a car after quarreling with her boyfriend. The wind picked her up and dashed her to her death on the ice." He takes us to Million Dollar Bridge, which has stood useless since 1964, when the Good Friday earthquake dropped the fourth span from its mooring. The earthquake, which marks time for many Alaskans, lowered some land masses by 16 feet and created 50-foot-high tsunamis that swept away entire villages. From the bridge, we hear what sounds like a thunderclap; at Behrend's instruction, we rush to nearby Child's Glacier in time to see another large chunk of ice calve off into the water with a great roar. As we gape in wonder, Behrends tells us that in June 1993, the magnitude of a calving was so great that two women were washed off the banks and into the forest by a 15-foot-high wave.

The morning's stories have just about convinced the class of the supremacy of nature over man—until Behrends takes us to the site of a clear-cut. Once a dense forest, the area is now a barren stretch of stumps and brush. A quick history lesson gives the site its proper context: In 1971, the state recompensed the native peoples of Alaska by dividing 44 million acres of land and \$962 million between 13 corporations representing native interests. These corporations clear-cut the land and sell the timber, a practice that causes bitter dissension among native peoples, some of whom see it as a profitable enterprise and others as a rape of their birthright. In the last two days, the students heard these

opposing viewpoints directly from two members of the Eyak tribe: native corporation president Lucas Borer and antidevelopment lobbyist Dunar Lankard. Seeing a clear-cut and applying to it the impassioned words of Lankard is yet another proof to the students that their chosen field, natural-resources management, carries with it sociopolitical—as well as ecological—repercussions.

In our last morning, Locandro doesn't ease up on the syllabus: There's still four hours of learning to pack in before our scheduled flight. We begin with a tour of a fish-processing plant, where millions of pounds of salmon move rapidly from boats through an assembly line of workers, and end with a final class session, where Locandro launches an overview of the last three weeks. At first, he steers the conversation but soon allows the collective wisdom of the group to take over.

Sharon DeFalco, a member of last year's Alaska class, discusses her summer in Cordova and the wolf research she's doing for her honors project and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Dan Salsberg sums up the feeling in the room as well as anyone when he says: "This class was the capstone of my education. We've seen for ourselves what human ecology is all about—the power struggle between nature and people." Russell Pitzner says he came to the course to learn more about Alaska and leaves having learned more about himself. Adds McHugh, "I think you know how lucky you are to have had a class like this."

No one wants the session or the Alaskan experience to end, but we're already 10 minutes past the deadline Locandro set to leave for the airport. The students pledge one last time that they'll never forget this journey or each other. They're certain that *Aleyska*—the Aleut word for "this great land"—will be forever in their thoughts.

Locandro, fittingly, offers his parting thoughts: "Learn, study, and observe; strive to find a mental, physical, and spiritual connection to your work. My wish is that you'll someday pass what you've learned in this class to others." The professor takes a last survey of the rapt faces turned to catch his every word and gives a satisfied nod. "Class dismissed." □

Bill Glovin is the senior editor of Rutgers Magazine.

MARKETPLACE

VACATION RENTALS

Anguilla. Rent this exclusive, private, ocean-front estate villa with two identical master-bedroom, air-conditioned suites; maid service; in-ground pool; and all amenities. Facing spectacular day and night views. High season, \$400 per night; low season, \$250 per night. Phone: 215-702-9377 or 609-490-6872. Fax: 609-275-8332. Internet: <http://www.nni.com/~villabh>

St. John. Two bedrooms, pool, quiet, spectacular view. Phone: 508-668-2078

Sanibel Island, Florida. One-, two-, and three-bedroom condos. Beachfront, bicycles, pool, tennis, golf, water sports. Call 1-800-545-2690

PERSONAL SERVICES

Academic Companions is a low-cost dating network for bright, inventive single people. About 1,000 current personal ads; mainly New Jersey, Philly, and New York City. Both voice mail and letter-writing options. Visit <http://www.cybervilage.com/ac>. Or, for an information packet, call 1-800-400-4464

VACATION/RETIREMENT PROPERTY FOR SALE

Maine. Acadia Park. Lovely ranch overlooks Bass Harbor. \$110,000. 518-283-5258

GIFTS

Rowing Catalog: Apparel, gifts, etc. Box 1037, Kennebunk, ME 04043

To Appear in Marketplace

Rates: \$12 per line, 32 characters per line, two-line minimum. No abbreviations. Add \$25 for a Rutgers Magazine box number; responses mailed weekly for eight weeks. Display ads are \$85 per column inch. Ads for the next issue must be received by February 15, 1997. Send your advertisement to: Marketplace, Rutgers Magazine, Alexander Johnston Hall, College Avenue & Somerset Street, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903. Ads must be accompanied by check or money order payable to Rutgers Magazine.