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Fight On! A Thirty Year History of the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club

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FIGHT ON!

**A THIRTY-YEAR HISTORY
OF THE SAWMILL SLOUGH
CONSERVATION CLUB**



**BY MICHAEL W. WOODWARD
AND ERIN B. WIGGINS**

VERY IMPORTANT EXPLANATORY NOTE

This book was written by two different authors at two different times. (How that came to happen will become clear to you by the time you finish reading the book.) Michael Woodward wrote Parts I and II (Chapters 1 through 16) in 1992 and 1993. That text was published in 1993 as "*Fight On! The Twenty-Year History of the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club.*" Erin Wiggins wrote Part III (Chapters 17 through 29) in 2003. So don't be surprised to find two dedications, two author's prefaces, etc.



Sawmill Slough Advisor, Dr. Robert "Doc" Loftin, hikes the trails in western North Carolina, May 1987.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION

BY MICHAEL W. WOODWARD

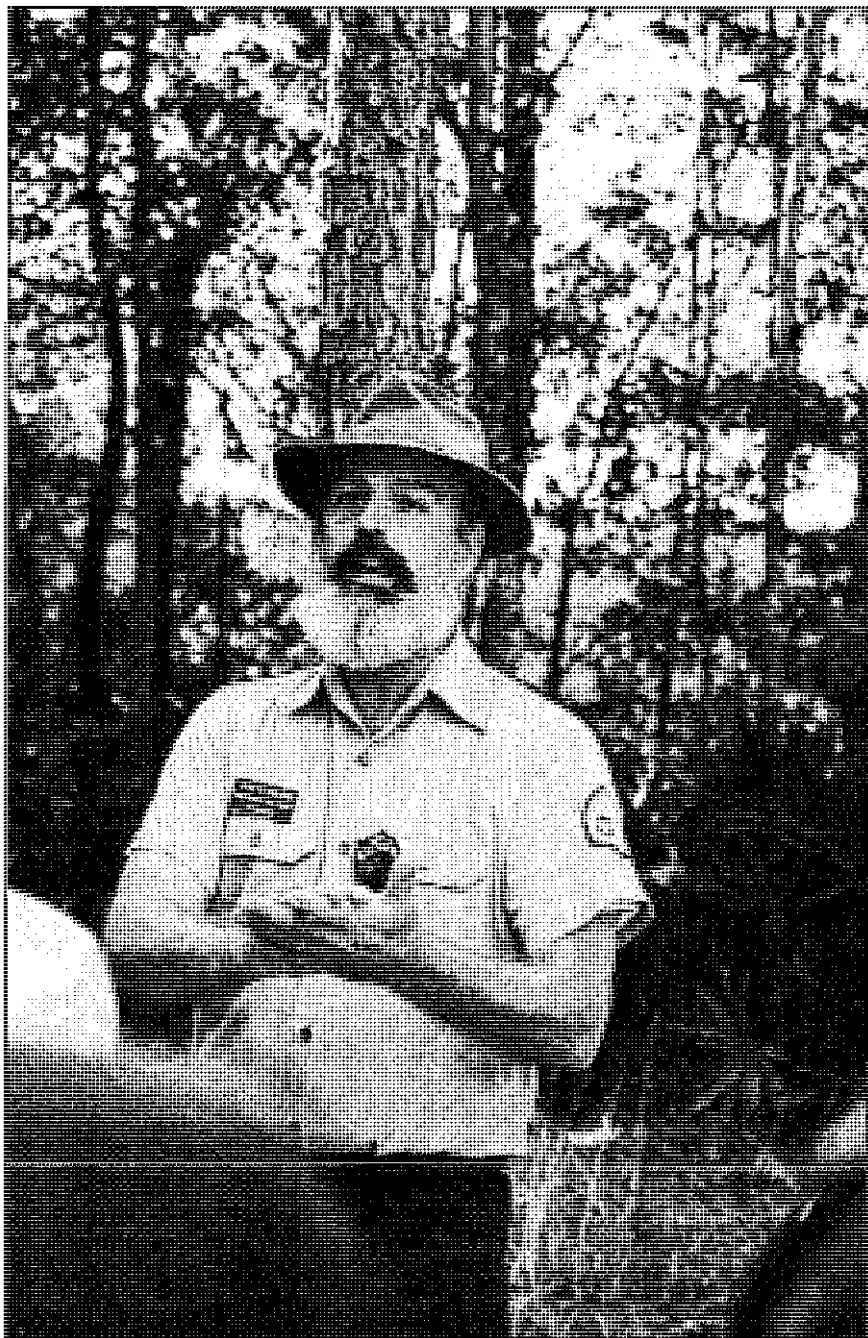
The author wishes to thank many current and former members of the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club, the University of North Florida faculty, and the UNF Student Government Association who contributed their recollections and observations for this account.

Also, this volume owes much to the efforts of SSCC officer James Vickery, whose efforts in locating and conducting interviews with former Club officers and advisors was of great value, as was his assistance in organizing and selecting source materials.

Special thanks likewise goes to Morissa (Rissi) Cherie, whose editorial and publishing expertise and countless hours of volunteer labor added significantly to the finished quality of the book you hold in your hand.

The author is also indebted to UNF Professor of History Daniel L. Schafer, both for permission to quote from Professor Schafer's own work and for his thoughtful criticism of this one.

Most off all, however, the author wishes to recognize and honor two decades of consistent, persistent, and insistent efforts by Professor Robert W. Loftin, whose carefully preserved archives made this book possible, whose strong and self-reliant spirit made the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club a reality, and whose unsullied vision of humanity's responsibility for the nature that includes us inspired two generations of his fellow Sloughies. It is to Robert "Doc" Loftin and to the ever expanding circle of his spirit that this book is lovingly, respectfully dedicated. Fight on, Doc, fight on!



UNF Lead Ranger John M. Golden gives an educational tour of the trails. Photo courtesy of Ranger Ryan Myer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION (2003)

BY ERIN B. WIGGINS

This volume is dedicated thankfully to all the members and advisors of Sawmill Slough the past ten years who have been so helpful in supplying stories, anecdotes and personal memories. It is also dedicated to David Fenner, Michael Woodward and Rissi Cherie, and Christopher Shaver who were instrumental in their enthusiasm, support, and assistance for such a daunting project.

But most of all, this edition of *Fight On!* is dedicated to John M. Golden, former SSCC president, UNF Ranger and devoted keeper of the trail system for over 20 years. Although I never got to know John in a deep or personal way, his years of hard work and passion towards UNF's natural environment was akin to the true spirit I felt within the Sawmill Slough. John was a man of practice and hard work, and not one of empty talk or rhetoric. This was something many of us in the Slough, myself included, have learned from John: To get things done environmentally, one must take action! Even if one has to go at it virtually alone. And most importantly, get the job done right and do it to the best of your ability. Nothing half-baked is worth anyone's time.

John's down-to-Earth approach to things, whether speaking to kindergarten students on a trail tour or to the university administration about a serious decision, is also something we have much to learn from. No job was too small and no person was too unimportant to be denied his undivided attention.

When John Golden passed away on March 15, 2003, he left behind a legacy that is up to the UNF community to uphold. To borrow the words of Dr. David Fenner, from John's Memorial at the UNF Trails:

We must pick up the mantle of John's obligation. We must sustain John's pledge. As we honor John, we must honor his devotion to keep this place green. This was so much of his life. We keep him alive by keeping it alive.¹

AUTHOR'S PREFACE (1993)

BY MICHAEL W. WOODWARD

Fight On! is a peculiar sort of history. It is the history, distilled but I hope not excessively distorted, of the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club. But it is also a history written from the inside looking out rather than the outside looking in. That kind of perspective is not generally available to people on the outside of an organization like Sawmill Slough, and I hope that the reader will find that my efforts to make such a unique, if necessarily limited, viewpoint accessible are not without value.

This work is, therefore, a history not so much of events as of a perspective. Sawmill Slough *is*, essentially, a perspective; unlike most entities whose histories are recorded, the Club owns no territory, owns few assets, has no tangible existence apart from its philosophy. People choose to join and participate in a group like the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club precisely because it represents a particular way of looking at reality that they choose, temporarily or permanently, to embrace.

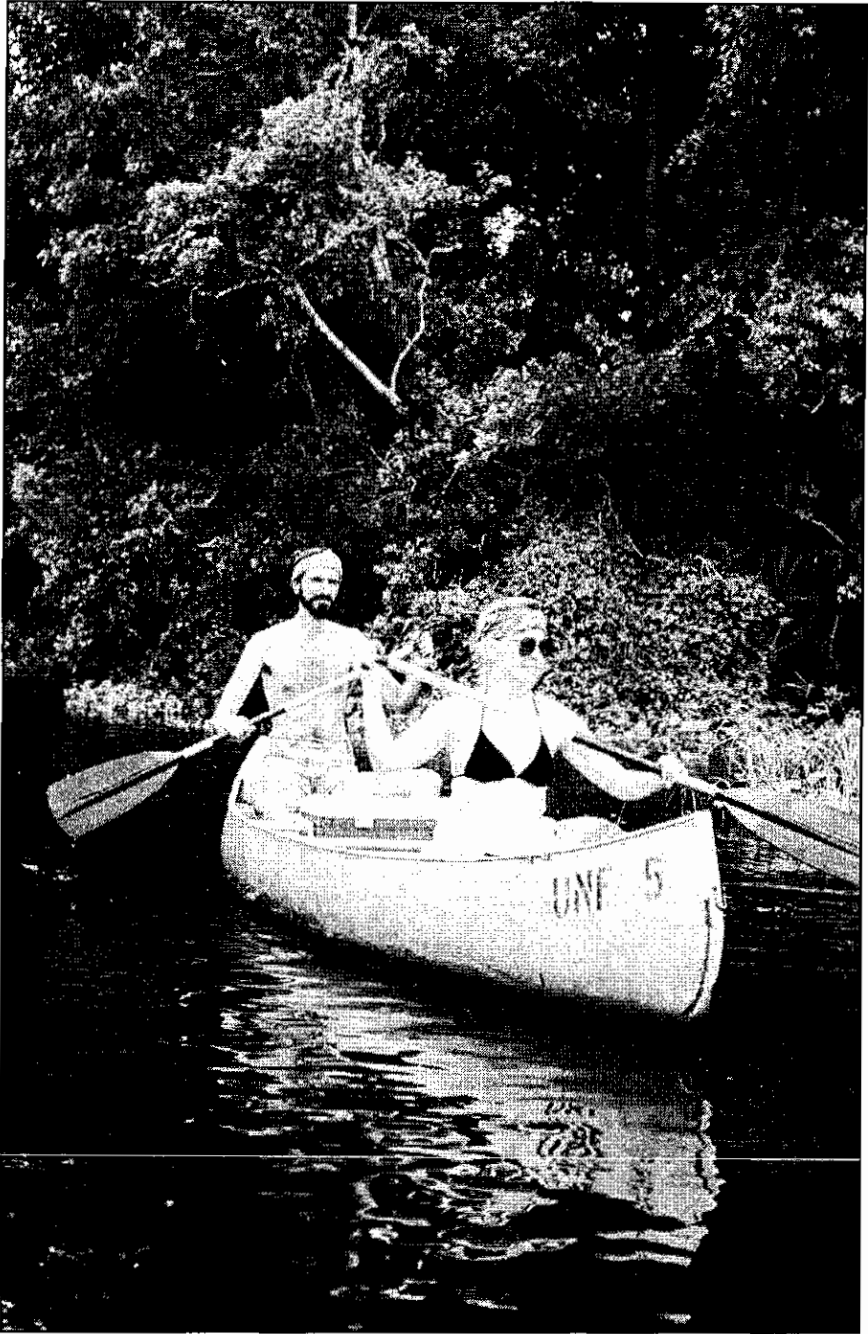
My task, as I saw it, was to set forth as clearly and faithfully as possible that perspective, the particular way of viewing reality that is and has been the essence of Sawmill Slough, and to show how that perspective has developed over the years. I did not think it within the scope of either my purpose or of my ability to present an objective account of the external events in which the Sawmill Slough became involved. I chose instead to limit my task as to explaining how and why the members of Sawmill Slough saw things as they did, and how and why the Club therefore acted and reacted as it did.

Fight On! attempts to present the way certain situations were viewed by Sawmill Slough, not the way those situations might differently or more objectively be seen from one or more other perspectives. The former serves to explain why the Club took a particular course of action; the latter would not do so and therefore would not contribute to the reader's understanding of Sawmill Slough, which is the limit of this book's purpose.

So if the tone of this text at some points begins to seem a bit messianic or paranoid or self-righteous, perhaps it is simply because the perspective of the Club at the time was also somewhat like that. But consider this. It may be that small groups do not stand up to overwhelming odds because their members are fanatics, but rather that they develop a seemingly fanatical perspective simply as a matter of responsive necessity, as a way sustain themselves psychologically by finding some superordinate ideological purpose that will give them the strength to keep going in the face of pressures they otherwise could not endure. If you find in this text a one-sided picture of events, one that condemns other perspective's while glorifying Sawmill Slough's, perhaps that's what the club felt it necessary to do at the time.

However, there is no reason automatically to conclude that Sawmill Slough's point of view is somehow any less rational. Quite the contrary. Whatever the underlying ideology of the Club (or of this book, for that matter), Sawmill Slough's specific opinions and positions have seldom arisen from mere whim or uniformed emotional reaction but have most often been based on extensive documentation and research by Club members. This book references a small sampling of such material. So as you read this account of the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club, do not be too quick to dismiss as invalid the perspective that does, indeed, seem one-sided at times. Read the footnotes. While an exhaustive listing of the documentation the Club has relied on in forming its opinions would probably be longer than this book, the notes do include quotes and references that may suffice to suggest the basis underlying the Club's subjective views.

Of course, the toughest and most awkward part of this project was writing about myself and the events in which I was most intimately involved during my own tenure as Sawmill Slough's president. I tried my best to write about myself as accurately as possible in a tone no more or no less flattering than that which I employed in writing about other high-profile Club officers. What would I say about me if I were not me? That's a question I asked myself as I wrote but one whose true answer I can never know.



Michael Woodward and Rissi Cherie paddle through juniper Springs on a June 1991 Sawmill Slough outing. Photo by Robert Loftin.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE (2003)

BY ERIN B. WIGGINS

When I first picked up Michael Woodward's *Fight On!* in the spring of 2000, I was a freshman in college. I had been a member of the Sawmill Slough four short months, but the faces, the facts, and the legacy were all very new and unfamiliar to me. After all, it was only due to a few (extremely persuasive) personalities that I somehow fell into the club in the first place. So of course, I wanted to find out why this club was something people were so proud and protective of. The book was the first place I looked.

The read was truly profound, and honestly my college life and understanding of the campus I lived would not have been the same without it. My only disappointment was the final few pages, when I got to that all important denouement, and realized that I was only in 1992. What had happened since? Here we were in election year 2000 and I was still stuck back in the first Bush administration.

My ideas came and went in the two years that followed, but it wasn't until the spring of 2003, my senior year at UNF, that I opted for a course of action. After a particularly inspiring late-night campfire conversation on a Slough trip, I decided to take on the daunting project of researching and writing the next ten years of the Sawmill Slough. The natural campus and the impassioned students who fought for it in the past ten years could not be merely forgotten.

This, in a sense, is our story. But it was written for two distinct audiences. One is the Slough of the past, to glorify and remember all the experiences we had and battles we waged. But the second, and almost more important audience is the future Sawmill Slough and UNF student and faculty population. Right now, the campus of the University of North Florida is in a delicate balance between protection and destruction. It was voted Most Beautiful Campus of all state universities for many years in the 1980s and 1990s. This past year a *Folio Weekly* article jokingly dubbed UNF as Campus Most Easily Mistakable as an Office Park.²

My question is this: Do we blindly allow UNF to head into this

direction? Or will we “fight on” to keep it green? Only time will tell. Just know while you read this that you are not alone. Many have fought hard before you, on the very ground you stand on, for what they truly believed in, regardless of the number of bodies on their side or the odds against them. It is this passion that keeps the fire of the Slough alive, no matter how large or small the flame may flicker.

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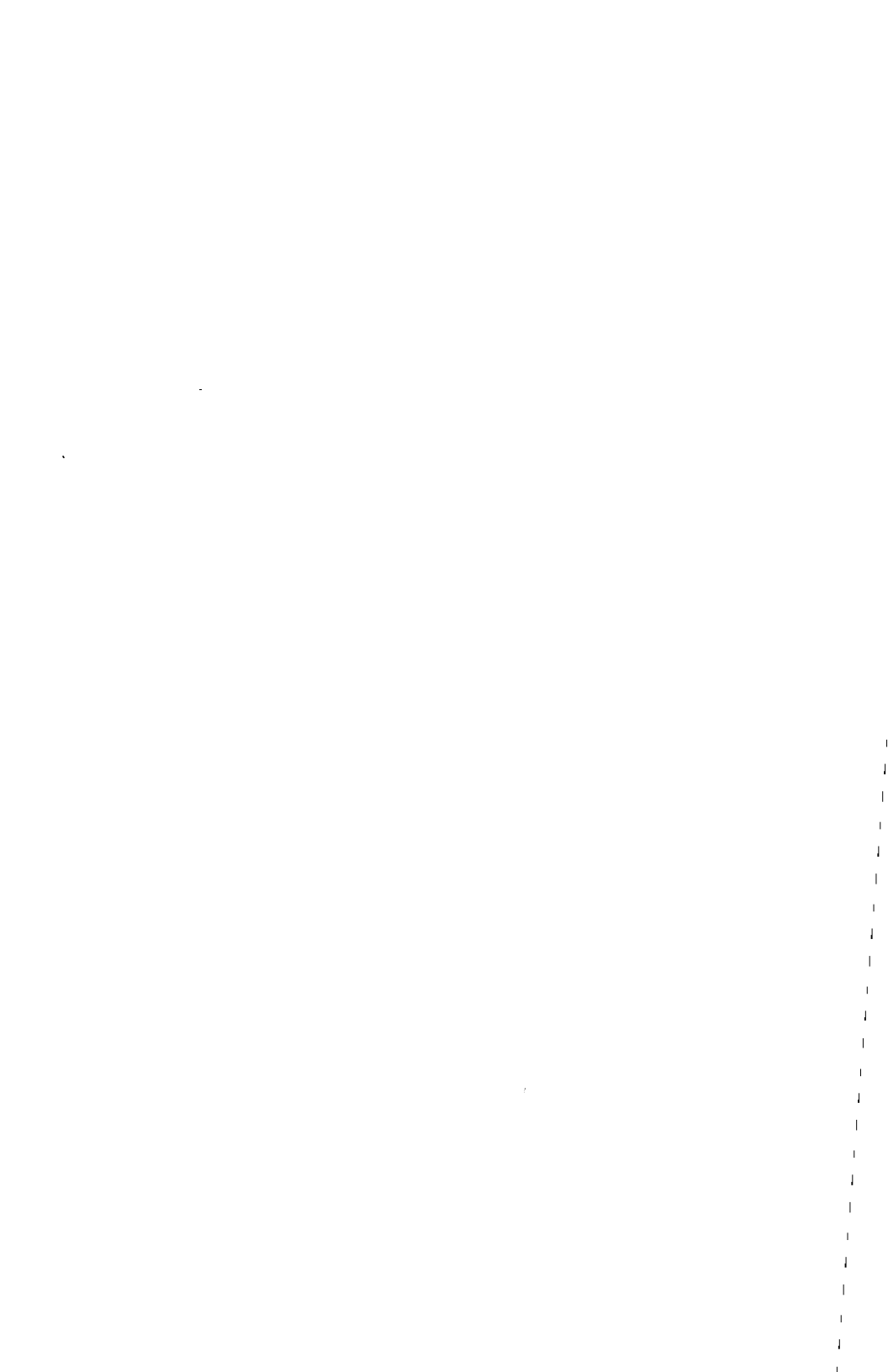
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Part I

1973 - 1981



1. The Outing

“Well, the first camping trip we ever took, we went to O’Leno State Park, and it was in January [1973],” recalls University of North Florida Distinguished Professor Robert W. (“Doc”) Loftin, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club founder and long-time faculty advisor.

Sawmill Slough (rhymes with “true”), named after a swamp that runs through the UNF campus, had been organized just that month, and the enthusiastic charter members were eager to go on their first outing. As luck would have it, that particular Florida January and February would feature record-breaking temperatures in the low teens, and the day of the Slough’s departure “turned out to be the coldest, rainiest, miserablest weather known to man. But nobody would back out, because this was their first trip and everybody wanted to show how tough they were.”¹

The members of Sawmill Slough Conservation Club loaded up their tents and canoes and headed out.

After traveling from Jacksonville to O’Leno, located about twenty miles northwest of Gainesville, the Slough members found themselves faced with the most severe winter weather in Florida history. Of course, no one suggested going home. However, they did somewhat reluctantly decide to rent a cabin rather than pitch their tents.

This was no doubt a good choice for Lenny Burns, after whom the UNF Student Activities Center was later posthumously named and who at the time of the Slough’s founding was already seriously ill with

cancer. However, the cabin arrangement did create a small personal problem for Chris Page, wife of ex-Marine Sloughie Stephen Thomas “Jungle Tom” Page. Chris was, as Loftin puts it, a rather “prudish” type who was “embarrassed as hell that we were all staying together in this one cabin.” So tough-guy Tom Page soon found himself hanging makeshift curtains around his wife’s corner of the one-room communal cabin.

“The next day was so cold, it was frigid—man, I mean it was *frigid*,” Loftin emphasizes. Loftin and several others vividly recall that it actually snowed-in Florida! Undaunted, all but two of the Sloughies decided to set out on a hike. While the other two, Mike Milkey and Richard Caniff, prepared to launch a canoe, “the rest of us went on hiking down the river [bank],” Loftin relates.

They didn’t get far.

“Well, in about two minutes, here came that swamped canoe, floating down the river-without them [Milkey and Caniff] in it.” There was no sign of the two canoeists. The hikers, including Milkey’s girlfriend, Club treasurer Linda “Puddin” Carter, were distraught, to say the least. Loftin, too, had special reason to be terrified: “I said to myself, ‘Oh my Lord, here I’ve brought these students out here on this trip and one of them’s drowned and I’m going to be sued and the whole Club is going to be wrecked.’”

Fortunately, one SSCC member had come prepared. Warren Peck, brother of SSCC charter member and later president Brenda Oliver, had been taking a good bit of teasing both for his hat, similar to one worn by a Native American movie character named “Billy Jack,” and for the coil of rope he insisted on carrying along on the hike. But Peck, whom the other Sloughies had laughingly nicknamed “Cochise,” had the last laugh when his coil of rope became the means of snagging and securing the capsized canoe.

Unfortunately, the canoe was empty.

As Mike Milkey explains it, the water into which the two eager (but less than expert) canoeists had promptly plunged was so cold that he and Coniff had simply “dumped the canoe and headed for the hot showers” located near the O’Leno campsite.²

In short, the Slough’s first trip was a complete success. As the second issue of the Club newsletter (which later acquired its permanent

name, the *Swamp Stomper*) put it, “we had a real nice outing ... with no reported cases of pneumonia. I hope many more will follow.”²³

They would.

Despite the worst of conditions, the members of the new club had done what they set out to do and had a most exciting time doing it. And maybe proved how tough they were, too. Call it a precedent.

2. The Canoes

At the time the Club was founded, the University of North Florida was in many ways a very different kind of place from what it is today. The small enrollment of the new “commuter” University was limited only to upper-division (junior and senior level) community college transferees and a few graduate students. Only a cluster of four buildings occupied the 1,000-acre campus. No dorms. No gymnasium. No food service. No fraternities. No organized student activities.

“No nothing,” as Loftin puts it. “But they had those canoes. And those six aluminum canoes that the recreation department bought for the UNF students were really the key to the Club. If it hadn’t been for those canoes, I don’t believe there would have been any Club.”¹ In those canoes many a novice has learned—most often from “Doc” Loftin himself—how for the first time to hold and use a paddle.

Canoes don’t organize clubs, however. Although Loftin credits education professor Jimmy Bassett—and an ecology poster mounted outside Bassett’s office—with sparking the idea for a campus conservation club, Mike Milkey makes it plain that whatever other factors or purposes may have played their roles in the group’s formation, Sawmill Slough originated primarily with Professor Loftin and his “desire to preserve the campus environment.”²

Milkey recalls signing up for one of Loftin’s ornithology classes, thinking it would be a “crib course.” Think again. Loftin, likely the only

philosophy professor in the country also to be recognized as an authority on birds, had his ornithology students “up at the crack of dawn”³ for field work in the UNF campus nature preserve.

And what a campus! Although parts of it had been the site of past logging and turpentine (tapping of pine trees), the thousand-acre campus was a relatively untouched tract consisting of an astounding variety of intertwining wetland and upland habitats supporting a similarly impressive variety of plants, animals, and birds. Mike Gibbons, a UNF groundskeeper and Youth Conservation Corps project leader who helped with construction of the UNF handicap-access nature trail around 1975, recalls that “the campus was a real nature preserve back then: lots of [wild] hogs, deer, ospreys—saw a wildcat deep in the back forty,”⁴ and Loftin remembers reports of black bear being sighted on campus.⁵ Obviously, this was no ordinary college campus; no other university in the nation had anything to match UNF’s natural resources, and so it was only right that UNF should become a unique university.

UNF Professor of History Daniel Schafer, in his 1982 published account of the University’s first decade, notes that

Loftin seized on the natural beauty of the campus as a positive force around which to build an identity [for UNF]. He took his Field Ornithology classes on daily bird-watching hikes, agitated in support of Nature Trails development, and taught his philosophy classes outside the classroom. He recruited faculty to lead Sawmill Slough in outdoor recreation activities and found in Dr. Ray Bowman of the Department of Natural Sciences a valuable ally, as well as a successor as faculty advisor to the club.⁶

For Loftin, the UNF campus was the ideal place to teach his students about philosophy as well as nature. But Loftin’s students learned something perhaps even more important: a philosophy *of* nature, an interactive relationship with nature that included both enjoyment and responsibility. Schafer records that on one occasion when Professor Loftin and his ornithology students were monitoring the development of

some purple martin nestlings, Loftin

handed one young bird, barely able to fly, to a student. The bird escaped, however, and made its maiden flight out over the water, where quite suddenly, its wings stopped and the bird crashed into the water, struggled briefly, and began to sink. Loftin recalls the event: "Here was this bird drowning out there and I didn't know what to do. I thought it would be a bad example to the class to just allow the bird to drown, because it would teach them to be callous to the natural world."

Loftin stripped down to his undershorts and went into the water to rescue the bird.⁷

And so students like Mike Milkey were hooked. Maybe it was simply coming into contact with the natural beauty of the virtually unspoiled UNF campus that led so many of Loftin's students to want more of such contact than one mere college class could give them. And then again, maybe there really was something compelling about Loftin's vision of the relationship of people to their natural environment that led UNF students to join Sawmill Slough. That is certainly how Roger Sallas (SSCC officer about 1975) sees it. He asserts that Doc Loftin—who had previously been involved in an ecology club at Stetson University—was without doubt "the driving force" behind Sawmill Slough Conservation Club. Sallas says Loftin was like "a magnet to students,"⁸ drawing them not so much to himself as to nature--and to Sawmill Slough.

Many others have expressed similar feelings regarding Loftin's influence on them over the years. Leslie Thompson Chamblin, 1980 SSCC president, recognizes Loftin's role as a "mentor" who "had a major impact on me."⁹ But perhaps Mike Milkey, writing to Loftin, put it best:

For me Sawmill Slough and Robert Loftin are synonymous. Furthermore, you have had a profound effect on my life since the day I met you. I hope that you will continue to have this same effect over all of your students.¹⁰

He would.

Of course, this is not to say that the majority of UNF students who would come to Sawmill Slough would always come through Loftin or his ornithology classes. Through the years, many would join the Slough as a result of the Club's recruiting tables or educational displays at campus events. Others would actually seek out the Club, calling UNF Student Affairs or leaving messages in Sawmill Slough's campus mailbox as a result of seeing the Slough's activities reported by the UNF *Spinnaker*, the Jacksonville *Times-Union*, or local television stations.

And contrary to what many people might think, only occasionally would the Slough's membership be dominated by students majoring in biological or environmental sciences. An understanding of the technical aspects of nature does not always translate into an appreciation of nature's significance or an inclination to take responsibility for its defense. Therefore, SSCC's membership-and leadership-would include persons with a broad range of academic backgrounds: political science, English, psychology, history, art, education, and yes, even business and finance.

But however the members of Sawmill Slough Conservation Club came to the group, it seems they all ended up in canoes. Weekends soon found "The Doc" and his fellow Sloughies paddling those UNF canoes through the creeks, swamps, and rivers of Florida and the Southeast. Schafer writes that

Sawmill Slough soon became a canoeing club, making weekend trips to the Suwannee, Ichitucknee and Santa Fe Rivers, paddling all the way across the Okefenokee Swamp, shooting white water rapids on rivers in North Carolina and Georgia. Club trips ranged from the mountains of North Carolina to the Everglades in South Florida.¹¹

If Doc Loftin provided Sawmill Slough Conservation Club with its spiritual center, and a campus wetland (the topographical "Sawmill Slough") lent the Club its name, then perhaps it was those six aluminum canoes that more than anything else gave the Slough a visible, tangible identity.

3. Wildlife and Wild Life

Maybe it was, indeed, the love of nature, inspired by the unique and beautiful resources of the UNF campus, that led people to join Sawmill Slough Conservation Club. And maybe it really was the unique personality and enthusiasm of Doc Loftin that drew them to the Club.

Or maybe, as Loftin himself modestly suggests, it had more to do with the fact that there simply wasn't much else to do around UNF. Because "there weren't a lot of other clubs in those days," he explains, "there was very little competition" for UNF students interested in opportunities for the kind of social, as well as environmental, interaction that Sawmill Slough offered. "We were just about the only game in town."¹

However, it was no accident that Sawmill Slough Conservation Club would become in many ways the social center of the University in its early years. Loftin and the other founders of the Club had something very much like that in mind. Professor Schafer, noting the significant role the Club played in the life of UNF, writes that Sawmill Slough constituted, in addition to its more obvious environmental agenda, a deliberate

attempt to build a sense of community at the University. Organized by Philosophy professor

Dr. Robert Loftin and College of Education faculty member Dr. Jimmy Bassett, Sawmill Slough soon had 150 members from across the University. Dr. Loftin was motivated partly by a desire to recognize an environmental group and partly by distress that UNF lacked a student-faculty culture. With commuting students centering their lives in their jobs, homes, families, churches—anywhere it seemed, but at UNF—Loftin feared that UNF was in danger of developing a permanent identity as “North Florida Drive-In University, where you drive in and order a course and some french fries” and then drive home again.²

Originally, therefore, Sawmill Slough was not really a “student club” as such—indeed, Loftin himself, a professor rather than a student, was SSCC’s first president (although by year’s end, student Brenda Oliver had taken over that position, with Loftin becoming faculty advisor). While the majority of its members may have been students, Sawmill Slough was actually “a club for everybody,” Loftin explains,³ a student/faculty/staff group allowing all members of the UNF community to enjoy social interaction as equals.

That ideal was consistent with the egalitarian social atmosphere and democratic political structure enjoyed by the entire University in its early days. For example, at the time Sawmill Slough was formed UNF didn’t have a separate student government at all.⁴ Instead, the entire University was governed by a single General Assembly made up of faculty, staff, and students, “grounds crew, nurses, everybody,”⁵ as Loftin puts it. Although the structure of University governance soon changed and became divided and stratified, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club held to those early democratic ideals and remained open to staff, faculty, and alumni, as well as students.

But while Sawmill Slough Conservation Club was in many ways the social center of the University, the democratic social interaction between Sawmill Slough and other members of the campus community

was often somewhat rough and rowdy. Mike Gibbons particularly remembers the kind of fun that Sawmill Slough and the UNF groundskeepers had together on campus.

I recall that during May Day in '75, probably because we knew each other and held similar liberal views on the environment and all, Sawmill Slough and the UNF grounds crew held one hell of a long and tough "tug-o-war." Eventually, we hauled the Sawmill team through the pond near the [UNF] Boathouse.⁶

The Slough got even, though. Doc Loftin recalls that the Club brought in a "ringer" (someone the grounds crew did not realize was not a real Sawmill Slough member) named Larry Rinehart, a martial arts champion who proceeded to trounce the unsuspecting groundskeepers at "log wrestling."⁷

All in good fun. Gibbons says he "can't recall any bad feelings" whatever from the "wild times" he and the grounds crew had with Sawmill Slough. He attributes this largely to the fact that "the Slough and grounds crew attracted the same type of people: liberal-minded activists, environmentalists, drunkards, and pot-heads. But not always in that order."⁸

The Slough's wild times were not confined to campus, however. The Club's camping and canoeing outings certainly included plenty of quiet enjoyment of the natural environment but often featured some interesting supplementary activities as well. For example, Mike Milkey remembers the evening of one outing when the Slough members, perhaps well fortified with natural substances (although "*Mary Jane* is not invited to this outing" reads an early edition of the *Swamp Stomper*⁹) and no doubt further inspired by the warm glow of a campfire, peeled down to their natural selves and "streaked" through a nearby occupied campsite.¹⁰ While the prudish Chris Page probably was not along for this trip, at least one Slough member is known to have taken along a camera, and SSCC historians remain hopeful that a very candid photograph of Professor Loftin, still rumored to exist, may one day surface.



Doc Loftin smiles through a beardful of meringue while displaying an empty pie plate and the Slough's newest blue ribbon. UNF's "May Day" (Later called "Clubfest") 1978.

4. The Trails

However, the influence exerted by Sawmill Slough Conservation Club during the formative years of UNF went far beyond the merely social. “Sawmill Slough has been a major force in the development of UNF,”¹ says UNF Department of Natural Sciences Chair Professor Ray Bowman, SSCC’s advisor from 1976 through 1979, and the UNF Nature Trails are without doubt the most tangible evidence of the lasting imprint Sawmill Slough has had on the University and its campus.

Simply put, Sawmill Slough invented the Nature Trails. The Club was largely responsible for designing, securing funding for, and actually marking and constructing most of the twelve miles of trails that have been enjoyed by many thousands of UNF students and other members of the UNF and Jacksonville communities. As Loftin remembers it, he conceived and developed the original idea for the Nature Trails in conjunction with Professor David Porter (later an SSCC faculty advisor), along with Sawmill Slough members such as Brenda Oliver, and campus planner Hilton Meadows, who had previously induced UNF President Thomas Carpenter to declare the entire campus a wildlife preserve.²

A detailed twenty-page proposal, including maps and funding estimates, was prepared and submitted to the UNF administration by Sawmill Slough Conservation Club in the latter part of 1973 (after Brenda Oliver had become the club’s second president). That SSCC proposal

became the blueprint for the nature trails. Its preamble reads as follows:

The Sawmill Slough Conservation Club of the University of North Florida stands ready to assist the administration in any way we can, to the limit of our physical and financial resources, in helping in the development of the Nature Trail System on the UNF Campus..... To be more specific, we offer our labor to mark the trails, construct facilities, maintain trails, etc.; our knowledge, to advise on trail construction, identify important features, teach ecology, guide parties on the trails, write trail guides and brochures, etc.; and our assistance in raising funds.³

The administration of UNF President Carpenter gladly accepted the Slough's offer, and so for at least the first decade of its existence, SSCC focused a major portion of its energies on promoting and developing the Nature Trails.

Professor Loftin explains how the physical layout of much of the campus trail system originated:

There were all these old logging roads around, so we came up with the idea of making nature trails out of these logging roads..... Rather than cutting new trails, you see, the idea was to take advantage of the trails that were already there.⁴

Thus Loftin, Porter, and other members of Sawmill Slough carefully laid out nature trails without imposing further damage on nature. Patterning the trail markings after those of the famous Appalachian Trail, they "blazed" the UNF trails by placing various colors of paint markings on trees along the respective logging tracks, and prepared maps and guides to enable visitors to enjoy the various trails without becoming lost. For a number of years afterward, until paid trail guides were funded, Sawmill Slough members also regularly served as volunteer guides for individuals and groups visiting the trails.

Much of the credit for the successes Sawmill Slough achieved in

regard to the nature trails and for the considerable influence the group wielded on campus in UNF's early years belongs to the energy and determination of SSCC's second president, Brenda Oliver, who was undoubtedly one of the most formidable activist leaders in Club history. Schafer records that Oliver's activist leadership was by no means confined to on-campus issues, however.

Sawmill Slough also became active in environmental causes. With student Brenda Oliver as president, the club testified in 1974 in opposition to opening the Osceola National Forest to phosphate mining, and at hearings in Jacksonville on the proposed construction of the Dames Point Bridge. The club worked in favor of bicycle paths along J. Turner Butler Boulevard, against the Cross Florida Barge Canal, and took a stand on nearly every local environmental issue.⁵

Although actively and personally representing the Club in many off-campus issues—meeting, for example, with Governor Reuben Askew to lobby for an Environmentally Endangered Lands Program⁶—Oliver's greatest legacy to SSCC and UNF is undoubtedly her part in leading the Club's efforts in establishing the campus trails.

Brenda Oliver was a hardworking, intelligent, and tough history education major whom Loftin goes so far as to describe as “aggressive and confrontational”⁷ and who even refers to herself as the most “loudmouth female out there at that time.”⁸ Perhaps Tom Page best sums her up: “She talked hard and fast, but she put her heart into stuff.”⁹ In any case, Brenda Oliver was exactly what the Club—and the University—needed to organize and direct the Club and to push through the system of nature trails that would actually help put UNF on the map.

It was a glorious day both for the University of North Florida and for Sawmill Slough Conservation Club when Jacksonville Mayor Hans Tanzler joined UNF President Carpenter in inaugurating the first official public walk-through of the University of North Florida Nature Trails. And, some time later, it was a glorious day for Sawmill Slough Conservation Club when on 26 November 1974 Brenda Oliver accepted

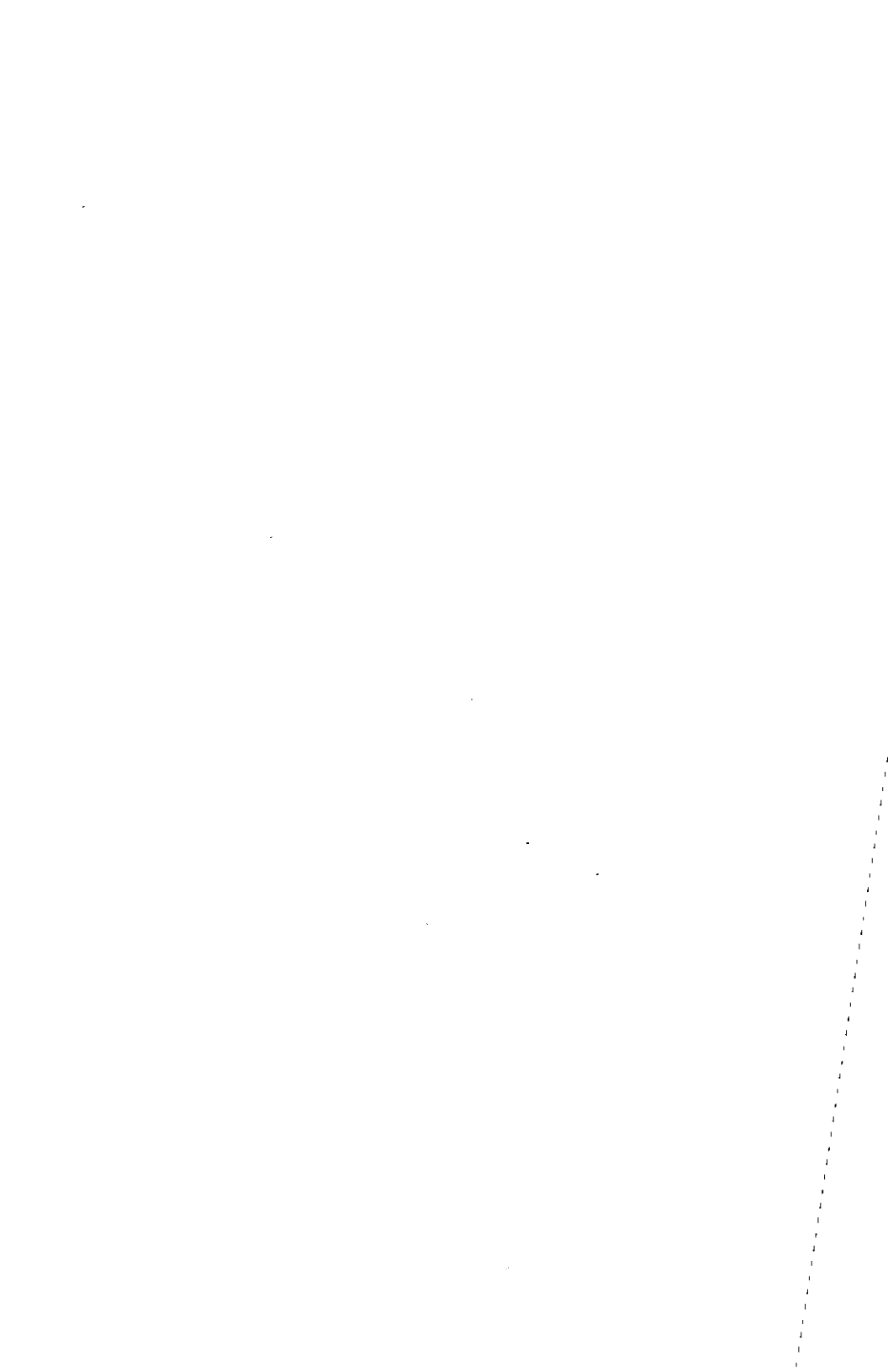
on behalf of Sawmill Slough Conservation Club the annual Mimi and Lee Adams Award, presented by Mayor Tanzler to Jacksonville's top environmental organization.

Although the Slough soon found it necessary to oppose (successfully) such environmentally ill-conceived notions as a plan to build a campus golf course and a pistol range (!) adjacent to the Nature Trails, the relationship between Sawmill Slough and the UNF administration was fairly cordial and cooperative throughout much of the early part of the University's—and Sawmill Slough's—history. Certainly the system of Nature Trails, for whose existence SSCC was largely responsible, represented a major asset to the image and status of the University as a whole, a status that was even further enhanced when, in 1978, the United States Department of the Interior designated the completed twelve-mile UNF nature trail system as National Recreational Trails.

Commenting on the significance the Nature Trails held for the University, Professor David Porter (1980-1984 SSCC advisor) notes that the Nature Trails were “a big part of this campus's and this administration's and this University's statement about who they were.”¹⁰ In a similar vein, Ray Bowman (1976-1979 SSCC advisor) quotes UNF's former vice president of University Relations, George Corricks, as proudly stating that “ ‘UNF doesn't have a football team; we have the Nature Trails.’ ... That was his way of saying that that is one of our most outstanding characteristics at UNF.”¹¹

Yet even as far back as October of 1973, issues of power and authority over the trails—and the campus—began to be raised. It seems that one day Sawmill Slough members Jim English and Steve Sutton decided to go out to the site of one of the trails in order to make some minor improvements, and UNF Director of Physical Facilities Tom Bostwick happened to find them out there shoveling some dirt. Soon Sawmill Slough Conservation Club received a memo from C. Ward Hancock, then UNF's Administrative Director, who informed Loftin, Oliver, and the rest of the Slough that all Nature Trail work by members of the Club should be cleared through Bostwick's office, “as he is responsible for the overall condition of the physical facilities on campus and this includes the nature trail.”¹²

Whose trails are they, anyway? Imbued with a sense of personal responsibility not only for *the* environment but also for *their* environment, and feeling something that might be described as the organizational equivalent of maternal instinct, Sawmill Slough had already come to see itself as the proper guardian of the natural areas of the campus and in particular of the Nature Trails for whose existence the Club was largely responsible. But while the UNF administration was glad to accept the benefits of the Slough's labor, the University fathers wanted it known that they and only they possessed legitimate authority and ultimate power on the campus.¹³ Although soon smoothed over for the time being, this issue would resurface in the years to come.



5. Sawmill Slough Versus the Shah of Iran

Seeing themselves as defenders of not only the campus environment but also that of the Jacksonville community, the members of Sawmill Slough Conservation Club have seldom hesitated to take on opponents having far greater power and resources. In fact, one of the first major environmental issues in which the Club became involved found Sawmill Slough opposing a massive oil refinery scheme involving a joint venture supported by Raymond Mason of The Charter Corporation, Ed Ball of the DuPont corporation—two of the most powerful businessmen in Jacksonville—and the then-ruling Shah of Iran.

The scheme called for building a huge Jacksonville refinery, euphemistically named the “Clean Fuels Facility,” to which supertankers would bring millions of barrels of the Shah’s Iranian oil. The oil was to be converted not into gasoline but into natural gas that would then be piped to the U.S. Midwest. Aside from the fact that the United States had—and still has—an abundance of domestic natural gas reserves, Sawmill Slough was appalled by the contents of the planned project’s environmental impact report, particularly the threat of massive oil spills

(picture an Exxon Valdez disaster in Jacksonville¹) that might occur as a result of huge tankers attempting to negotiate the St. Johns River. So Sawmill Slough Conservation Club entered the fight.

However, the story of just how SSCC first learned the details of the plan and its possible consequences is itself of interest. Al Cherry, a former Slough member who had since become an aide to a local state legislator who was backing the refinery scheme, hoped to use his relationship with Sawmill Slough to secure the Club's stamp of approval for the project.

"Well, we didn't approve it, and we didn't like it," recalls Brenda Oliver.²

It seems that Cherry, confident of a favorable response, gave his old friend and Slough officer Mike Milkey a copy of the refinery plans, including (perhaps inadvertently) what proved to be a shocking environmental impact statement. According to UNF Professor of Political Science Thomas Mongar, Milkey was at that time a student intern in the political science department, and so Milkey, unsure how to handle such a political and environmental bombshell, asked Professor Mongar for advice. "I told him to tell the truth," Mongar recalls.³ Milkey did—first of all to his fellow SSCC members.

And then the Slough went public.

Allied with other environmental groups and concerned citizens, Sawmill Slough members—led by Loftin and SSCC officers Brenda Oliver, Mike Milkey, and Steve Sutton (who reportedly made at least one trip to Washington to meet with officials)⁴—did extensive research, made presentations, participated in debates, and appeared in television news interviews in order to oppose the so-called "Clean Fuels Facility."

Soon after Milkey and the Slough began to voice opposition to the project, Professor Mongar heard from UNF President Carpenter, who commended Mongar on the fine job Mongar's political science interns were doing. Within two weeks the political science internship program was terminated.⁵

It could have been worse. Because they were opposing the most powerful business and political interests in Jacksonville—not to mention a foreign dictator rumored to have secret police agents operating in the United States—Sawmill Slough members could not help feeling that they

might have reason to be concerned even for their personal safety. As Loftin frankly admits, “We were terrified.”

In fact, it was not until eighteen years later, when being interviewed for this history, that Loftin finally felt safe—though not yet entirely comfortable—in revealing one bizarre detail of the story:

Somebody slipped me a secret report that had been commissioned by [one of the companies backing the project]. I still don’t know who gave it to me; it came anonymously. But they [the project’s backers] had hired consultants, secretly, to look at where to locate this thing, and they looked at all these different sites around Florida. Tampa was one of them, but they said ‘No, we couldn’t locate it in Tampa because there are people there with money who will fight it, and we couldn’t have it in Miami because it would be such an environmental horror [that] they would never have it down there. Jacksonville is the place, because Jacksonville is soft on the environment, and you can get this thing in Jacksonville.’ This was a secret report these consultants had prepared!⁶

What did Loftin do with this damning evidence that Jacksonville had been chosen specifically for its well-known lack of environmental integrity? “I never did anything with it,” he confesses, “because I was afraid to use it.” Loftin, who was not tenured and therefore subject to dismissal, had “three little babies” at home to worry about. He could not afford to jeopardize their livelihood—or perhaps even their lives. And so, while Loftin continued to participate in Sawmill Slough’s opposition to the refinery scheme, that sensitive report was locked away and its very existence kept secret until 1992.

And then there were the death threats.

As soon as the legislator who was backing the scheme learned that Sawmill Slough was determined to oppose it, he called SSCC president Brenda Oliver. “You either support my oil refinery or I’ll see to it you’re declared unfit to ever teach anywhere in the United States,”

he told Oliver, an education major. When that failed to stop the Slough or its president from speaking out, the threats became even more frank and more serious: “I’ll kill your ass,” the state legislator said in a second telephone call to Oliver.⁷

Brenda Oliver was frightened, but she did not back down, sit down, or shut up, and neither did Sawmill Slough Conservation Club.

In the end, the oil refinery scheme was defeated, partly as a result of the opposition mounted by groups like Sawmill Slough, and partly as a result of the scheme’s own increasingly evident lack of feasibility. The Shah of Iran, of course, soon had other problems to worry about. His subsequent overthrow—for which Sawmill Slough Conservation Club claims no credit whatsoever—resulted in the cutting off of all Iranian oil shipments to the U.S., while the price of other foreign oil supplies skyrocketed. Had the refinery scheme opposed by Sawmill Slough gone forward, Jacksonville would have been saddled with an environmentally and economically disastrous “white elephant” that would have dwarfed even the infamous Offshore Power Systems floating nuclear plant fiasco that would later enthrall the city.

Brenda Oliver, Doc Loftin, and Sawmill Slough were alive and well; it was the “Clean Fuels Facility” that was dead.

6. Earth Day¹

“Over and over again,” Loftin recalls, “we have planted a seed that has grown to become a tradition at UNF.”²

Another of the Slough’s lasting legacies to the University of North Florida is the annual Spring event first known as UNF Earth Day, although in later years the name underwent several changes: Earth Week, Earth Celebration, Spring MusicFest, Earth MusicFest, etc. Inspired by the then relatively recent memory of the immensely successful—even in Jacksonville—first national Earth Day (21 April 1970), the members of Sawmill Slough decided that UNF and its beautiful campus would be the ideal location for an annual Jacksonville celebration of the Earth. And at least one charter member of the Slough had experience: Bruce Doueck had helped organize the 1970 Earth Day activities in Jacksonville.

In fact, by the time UNF opened its doors Earth Day had already established itself as a popular annual event in Jacksonville, and in 1973 Sawmill Slough Conservation Club participated by organizing the first “Eco-Encounter” on the new UNF Nature Trails. Held on April 28 and led by Mayor Tanzler, this event was also the occasion for the official inauguration of the trail system (although improvement and expansion of the trail system would continue for several more years).

The following year (1974), Sawmill Slough Conservation Club offered to host the entire Jacksonville Earth Day celebration at UNF, and planning began. However, the University administration, after initially

indicating approval—in writing—suddenly expressed paranoiac fears that this would be some kind of Woodstock-from-hell event that would make UNF the scene of thousands of “crazed students smoking dope, tearing up the campus, raping and pillaging.... This was a new university, and they didn’t want to get a reputation for being in any way, you know, rock and roll.”³ So the Slough was abruptly denied permission to host Jacksonville’s Earth Day, although the Club did proceed with another Eco-Encounter, as it likewise did during Earth Week of the following two years (1975 and 1976).

By now, however, Professor Ray Bowman had taken over as SSCC faculty advisor. Unlike Professor Loftin, who was ever the exceptionally passionate teacher of logic and unbending advocate of environmental—and, as he clearly saw it, moral—truth, the more diplomatic Bowman was able to help Sawmill Slough establish and maintain a cordial working relationship with the UNF administration. Thus Sawmill Slough was able to host on the UNF campus virtually all the major events of Jacksonville’s 1977, 1978, and 1979 Earth Week celebrations. (No raping, no pillaging.) These very successful but peaceful and environmentally oriented events, which drew many people to the campus, brought UNF a tremendous amount of favorable publicity. Once again, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club, under the leadership of Bowman and SSCC presidents Sue Leger and Ray Lewis, was putting UNF on the map.

The UNF administration rewarded Bowman, whom Loftin describes as “the best advisor the Club ever had,” by denying him promotion. After all, he had been wasting his spare time associating with students instead of doing research or writing articles for publication. Bowman, who could take a hint, promptly quit as SSCC advisor. Loftin refers to Bowman’s resignation as “the darkest day in the history of the Club.”⁴

Now that the UNF administration had seen how successful Earth Day/Week could be on campus, it wanted more, and it wanted to be in charge. With Ray Bowman out of the picture, the administration itself—particularly Director of Campus Development Lowell Wood—took responsibility for promoting UNF’s Earth Celebration 1980.

The UNF administration not only promoted the 1980 event but changed it from a primarily environmental celebration to something more akin to a pop music festival, arranging for the appearance of the well-known singer Melanie. Melanie, who had in fact been one of the featured

performers at the famous Woodstock festival of the late sixties—and who promised to appear in her original Woodstock dress, or what was left of it—was in 1980 still a major star capable of drawing sizable crowds. And that is exactly what happened. A crowd of ten thousand turned out. Every motorcycle gang, surf bum, acidhead, and hippie hasbeen or wannabe within a hundred-mile radius showed up at UNF, along with plenty of just plain folks. The concert ended with a near-riot, campus facilities were trashed, and, as Dr. Loftin puts it,

the area between the Boathouse and Building 10 looked like the Russian Army had marched through it. In short, what the administration had feared in 1974, when they cancelled *our* show, had finally happened—when *they* were in charge.⁵

But now yet another player had emerged in the struggle for power on campus: student government. While the University administration had, almost from the beginning, taken the position that it alone held total authority over the campus, the Student Government Association (SGA) now began attempting to assert its own authority over campus events and all student activities and groups, including Earth Day and Sawmill Slough Conservation Club. Neither the administration nor the SGA wanted to be reminded that Sawmill Slough Conservation Club was not a creature of either entity and that UNF's Earth Day (EarthFest, Earth Musicfest, Spring Musicfest, etc.) had—like the Nature Trails—been established at the University by Sawmill Slough.

A nasty power struggle ensued. Former SSCC president and long-time Earth Day organizer Ray Lewis refused to surrender Earth Celebration to the SGA's Steve Danneman, who saw the event not as an environmental festival but as a more generic spring concert that would afford him an opportunity to develop his skills as a music promoter, his intended career. There was no cooperation, and consequently the 1981 event—or rather the two separate events, SSCC's environmental exhibition and SGA's concert, that took place at the same time—was basically a flop, which few people attended.

Earth Music Fest, as it came to be called in 1982, was canceled altogether that year. By then, of course, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club had ceased to exist. But that is another story.



Leslie Thompson (with binoculars) leading nature walk on UNF campus in 1979. Bob whalen is at right.

7. The Environmental University

Sawmill Slough Conservation Club's efforts to contribute to—and exert influence on—the development of UNF were also felt in another way. In addition its environmental activism, both on and off campus, and the facilitation of its own members' recreational interaction with nature, Sawmill Slough has always considered the promotion of environmental education to be an important part of the Club's purpose.

As soon as the work of bringing the system of campus Nature Trails into being was well along, Sawmill Slough began focusing more and more of its attention on the beneficial use of those trails and the campus nature preserve the trails made accessible. Now that you have Nature Trails, what do you do with them? The Slough's answer: Teach.

During a period of several years, therefore, the Nature Trails became the site of a number of Eco-Encounters. These widely publicized and well-organized events, the first of which occurred in conjunction with Mayor Tanzler's 1973 inauguration of the Trails, were among SSCC's most ambitious and successful environmental education programs. This is basically how an Eco-Encounter worked: Members of Sawmill Slough

would station themselves at specified locations along the Nature Trails, where participants walking along the Trails would encounter them. At that time, the SSCC volunteer assigned to that station would point out a particular plant or other ecological feature of that location and deliver a mini-lecture concerning it. The tour group would then walk on to the next station and hear a different short lecture from another well-prepared Slough volunteer.

But Sawmill Slough Conservation Club had bigger plans for environmental education at the University of North Florida. Sawmill Slough wanted to preserve the natural environment of the campus not just to preserve it but to use it for the benefit of the University and its students. SSCC believed that the unique biological and botanical assets of the vast natural areas of the UNF campus gave the University a unique opportunity to develop world-class programs of environmental studies. They saw the variety of intact, functioning, interacting ecosystems as constituting not merely an environmental resource but also an educational resource, a living laboratory of rare dimension and value. And so they saw UNF earning a reputation as a great university not by attempting to make itself a slavish imitator of other, larger, urban universities but rather by achieving something that few other universities could hope to achieve, becoming something that UNF's campus had virtually destined it to become: an environmental university.

A tree-huggers' pipedream? Not really. Sawmill Slough Conservation Club did not invent this idea of a university centered around environmental studies. In fact, SSCC's concept for UNF's future development was almost identical to that envisioned in the original plans for the University. As early as 1970, two years before UNF would open its doors to students, UNF President Thomas Carpenter asked the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission to assist him in officially designating the UNF campus as a permanent wildlife sanctuary. Carpenter wrote that he and the UNF planners saw the need to preserve "the ecological habitats which currently favor a native flora and fauna important to our proposed biologically oriented academic programs."¹

Even the engineers and other professionals involved in laying out the initial and future development of the campus saw the obvious value and opportunities afforded by UNF's natural setting. In the cover letter

attached to the original UNF Master Plan, the planning firm's senior project manager made it clear that development of the University should in large measure be governed by the nature of its campus:

This 1,000 acre site, definitely rural in character, abounds with wild animal and plant life.... While this is an atypical college site by most standards, we believe it offers some unique opportunities. The natural forces of this site direct the academic campus development to a single ridge which will in essence create a 145 acre urban enclave in a native surrounding. This native surrounding will both isolate and insulate the campus from the inevitable urban sprawl which will overtake the site all too soon. A very early personal impression of this site holds steadfast, that being, what a marvelous opportunity this affords to bring the urbanite out into this unspoiled natural environment.

We are heartened by the fact that immediately upon taking possession of this site the University of North Florida had it declared a wildlife sanctuary. It is this kind of spirit that we hope to perpetuate through the development of the campus.²

The University of North Florida campus was telling UNF what kind of University it could and should become. The question was, who was going to listen?

No doubt pressured by the current market demands of the business community and perhaps even the majority of UNF students, who understandably tended to be primarily concerned with preparing themselves for existing local career opportunities, UNF concentrated on programs that would meet those immediate demands. Despite its early ideas and ideals, the actual development of the University soon became market-driven rather than values-driven or campus-driven, responding to

external forces rather than any internal ethos or identity of its own. While no one repudiated the concept of environmental education at UNF, such a future-oriented idea was largely supplanted by the perceived needs of the here and now.

Nevertheless, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club sought to help the University set out on the path—or trail—of environmental education, sought in a sense also to remind the University of its own unique identity. If UNF's administration and academic departments were too busy to initiate a formal program of environmental education, then Sawmill Slough would simply do it for them. And did.

It was called The UNF Nature Center.

But meanwhile, changes had taken place in Sawmill Slough Conservation Club. Organizations, like individuals, sometimes get tired and need to recover their strength. The relentless, no-holds-barred activism that had characterized the Club under the presidency of Brenda Oliver had left the group in need of rest and healing.

Belva Vaughn, who in 1975 succeeded Oliver as SSCC president, was just the healer the Club needed. Tall and strikingly, yet serenely, beautiful, Belva was a gentle leader who emphasized the Club's social and recreational aspects. Somehow everyone just seemed to like Belva and feel good around her—although Brenda Oliver recalls that on one occasion Vaughn did manage to anger some Slough members by allowing her insurance salesman boyfriend (later husband) Bruce Ogier to use the SSCC mailing list to solicit business.³

Vaughn delegated to Loftin and to Slough vice president Steve Sutton (who had also been vice president under Oliver) the responsibility of keeping alive the Club's activist tradition; Sutton was "the real go-getter," she recalls. Otherwise, Vaughn says that while the Slough continued its work on the Nature Trails during her year as president, the Club's agenda was "basically social," with the group enjoying some "great camping trips and whitewater canoeing."⁴

While Sawmill Slough has always maintained a threefold agenda—recreational, educational, and activist—major shifts in the relative emphasis placed on each of those aspects have often taken place throughout the Club's history. Usually (though not always) those shifts took place smoothly as Club leadership shifted or as external events

affected the need for active response from the Slough.

Tensions within the group that might arise as a result of differing opinions regarding the importance of various categories or items of Slough agenda were almost always productively resolved by simply putting the persons who cared most about something in charge of it. If, for example, the Club president happened to be an activist who was relatively uninterested in outings (like Brenda Oliver, who once nearly ruined an outing by insisting on turning back when she became uncomfortable⁵), that did not mean that those who enjoyed the outdoors would be neglected; the organizing of camping and canoeing trips would simply be delegated to another officer or member with more interest or talent in that area. Do you like backpacking? Okay, you are now backpacking chairperson.

Even those members who might not be personally enthusiastic about one or another aspect of the Club's activities would pitch in and support the others. Non-activists would at least sit at an information table or quietly accompany the Slough's activists to hearings. Non-outdoorsy people would tag along on canoe trips even if they had to pass up some of the longer hikes. Those who have made good leaders in one area have generally shown themselves willing to be good, appreciative followers in other areas. That doesn't mean arguments never occurred. But despite, or perhaps because of, the kind of lively and wide-open philosophical debates that have often punctuated Sawmill Slough meetings, the three "wings" of the Club—recreational, educational, and activist—have almost always stuck together, no matter which one happened to be dominant at any given time.

Occasionally, however, individuals would find themselves unhappy with the Club's current emphasis or even its basic stance. One example is Ed Smith, a business administration major who joined the Club, and even served briefly as treasurer in 1981, but didn't stick around long. Smith relates that he joined Sawmill Slough because he was "interested in nature," and in fact he did participate in an outing to the St. Mary's River. But even though the only activist issue he can recall was an attempt to have bicycle paths built alongside Butler Boulevard, he still felt that the Club was "too far to the left for me—automatically against moving any dirt anywhere."⁶ So after four or five meetings he simply

dropped out.

In 1976, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club again changed leadership and, to some extent, direction. Sue Leger (later Leger-Krall), a nursing student who went on to become a member of the UNF nursing faculty, took over as SSCC president, while Ray Lewis (who would succeed Leger as president in 1978) became the Club's vice president. It was also at this time that Professor of Natural Sciences Professor Ray Bowman assumed the role of official faculty advisor, but of course Doc Loftin still remained an active and involved member of the Club.

Although as president she testified on behalf of Sawmill Slough at a hearing regarding the adverse impact that one version of a Route 9-A road plan would have on the UNF campus and Nature Trails,⁷ Sue Leger was not known as an activist. However, she was, according to Loftin, "an excellent organizer" who, along with "rugged outdoorsman"⁸ and avid canoeist Ray Lewis, led the Club in an active outings program, including some memorable whitewater adventures. The canoes hardly had time to dry off.

SSCC vice president Ray Lewis, a Sierra Club member, was also the Slough's chief political activist at the time. However, according to Charles Faubion, who served as vice president when Lewis became SSCC president, the Slough's overall agenda was then only about "twenty percent" political or activist. That ratio no doubt suited Faubion, who during the more activist Lewis's presidency would take charge of the Slough's social planning, membership recruiting, and campus relations.⁹

Not surprisingly, however, with a future educator as president and the more conciliatory Professor Bowman replacing Loftin as advisor, the Club began to shift its emphasis to promoting environmental education at UNF, an emphasis that would continue and even increase over the next several years.

The Slough's single largest project during the Leger/Lewis/Bowman years (1976-1979) was the development of the Self-Guiding Nature Trails; this was the next logical step beyond the periodic Eco-Encounters of previous years and the personal trail guide service provided by Slough volunteers.

To the original "low-tech" Nature Trails, which simply made use of pre-existing logging trails, were now added specially created trails

with formal markers, as well as a wheelchair-accessible boardwalk trail. Additionally, the Slough prepared maps and educational guides that allowed visitors not only to find their way around the trails but also to understand and appreciate what they saw along the way.

One of the greatest moments of those years was, of course, when in 1978 the United States Department of the Interior certified the twelve-miles of UNF Nature Trails as part of the National Recreational Trail System.

Sawmill Slough Conservation Club, though proud of this accomplishment, saw it as nothing more than a good beginning. A pleased and grateful University administration was, it seemed, totally supportive of the Slough's efforts to bring environmental education to its rightful prominence at UNF. The Slough was ready for the next step: The UNF Nature Center.

However, the Club's confidence was suddenly shaken by the unexpected refusal of the administration to recognize the value of Bowman's contributions, as SSCC faculty advisor, to the overall academic advancement of the University. When Bowman was denied promotion and for the sake of his career subsequently resigned as SSCC advisor, Sawmill Slough realized that it could no longer count too heavily on the good will—or good faith—of the University administration.

Dark as that day was, Loftin relates, "there was still hope for the Club. Even though we were badly wounded, we weren't quite dead."¹⁰ At about this point, in the fall of 1979, the Club gained a new president, Leslie Thompson, and a new advisor, Fine Arts Professor David Porter. It also found a new ally: the Student Government Association. And Sawmill Slough went on with its plan.

Leslie Thompson (later Chamblin) was to environmental education what Brenda Oliver had been to environmental activism. A science major who admits her major strength was in "nomenclature" rather than "people skills,"¹¹ Thompson had little interest in the recreational side of the Club—although she was an avid bicyclist who rode her bike to and from her Beaches home to UNF every day and who led the Club's ongoing efforts to obtain bicycle paths both on campus and alongside Butler Boulevard.

However, SSCC's social/fun aspects "were foreign to me," she

explains frankly. “But I went along anyway.” She recalls as many as 50-70 people at Slough meetings; they would all bring food and sing songs. While “the people were pretty serious, they enjoyed having fun together, too.”¹²

What SSCC—particularly Thompson—was serious about was environmental education. For someone with no “people skills,” Thompson did all right, garnering the support of the Student Government Association (SGA) for the Nature Center she and Sawmill Slough proposed.

The UNF Nature Center was a program, not a building. The “Center” of the program was to be Nature itself—the unspoiled UNF campus, in particular those areas of the campus nature preserve accessed by the Nature Trails. The “program” part, however, would have to come from Thompson and the Slough.

Recognizing the importance of providing UNF students and others with the opportunity to benefit academically from the unique environmental assets of the campus, SGA provided an office and actually put Slough president Thompson on salary for a year to better enable her and Sawmill Slough to develop the Nature Center concept and to secure permanent sources of funding for its planned environmental education programs. Although SSCC maintained its recreational outings agenda—with past president Ray Lewis conducting “canoe clinics” for novices as well as heading up the Club’s preparations for the annual Earth Day event—throughout 1980 Leslie Thompson and the Slough put their main efforts into the Nature Center project. With the Slough’s help, Thompson developed an entire fourth-through-sixth-grade environmental curriculum that included field work in the UNF Nature Sanctuary, got that curriculum approved by the Duval County School Board, and gave workshops to train teachers in its use. Thompson also put together dozens of grant proposals and pursued numerous sources of funding.¹³

By the end of 1980, however, no permanent funding had been secured, so in January 1981 Leslie Thompson stepped down as SSCC president in order to concentrate even more fully on the Nature Center. Terri Ellerbee, another science major, somewhat reluctantly agreed to assume responsibility for leading the Club, but she delegated the outings program entirely to Ben Raye.¹⁴

Several months later the Student Government Association, whose feelings toward Sawmill Slough had no doubt changed for the worse as a result of the acrimonious struggle between SSCC's Ray Lewis and SGA's Steve Danneman for control of the 1981 Earth Day event, withdrew its support of the Nature Center and refused to fund the project for another year.¹⁵

Exhausted and demoralized from its herculean efforts on behalf of both the Nature Center and Earth Day, feeling betrayed by both SGA and the UNF administration—which in addition to slighting former SSCC advisor Ray Bowman had likewise declined to continue any support of the Nature Center initiative—Sawmill Slough Conservation Club saw no point in continuing its struggle to help UNF become the environmental University it was originally meant to be. In fact, Sawmill Slough saw little point in continuing at all. Schafer records that

when the University administration declined to refinance the Nature Center, Sawmill Slough members voted to disband. Interest and membership had been declining, accelerated by the faculty advisors' perceptions that the University had shifted its priorities to favor research at the expense of service commitments like Sawmill Slough.¹⁶

Doc Loftin's personal recollections certainly show the disappointment he felt then—and the bitterness he has never fully overcome:

We were out there breaking our backs for them, to make the University look good, and they weren't doing anything for us.¹⁷

They [the UNF administration] had denied Dr. Bowman promotion; Student Government had refused to support the Nature Center; nobody really cared.... As for me, I saw the Nature Center as the culmination of all those years of work by Sawmill Slough. When the University decided to

kill it, my motivation more or less disappeared.
So the Slough, acting on my advice, voted to
disband on May 9, 1981.¹⁸

The canoes were empty. Sawmill Slough Conservation Club was dead.

Part II

1983 - 1992

8. The Universal Environment

But some dreams refuse to die. They lurk and linger, waiting for a soul to inspire, a life to change, a mind to challenge.

If you had spent much time on the University of North Florida campus early in 1983, you probably would have noticed a particularly attractive young woman whose waist-length blonde hair¹ followed her energetic movements across the campus. You might even have dismissed her as a rather cute but not especially substantial specimen of the undergraduate UNF student.

And you certainly would never have given any thought to the now defunct Sawmill Slough Conservation Club, which could not possibly have any influence on your life as a UNF student or on the future of the University itself.

You would have been wrong on both counts.

Loftin writes that “the Slough rose like a phoenix from the ashes when a petite science student named Lee Hunter reorganized the Club.”² With Mark Davis as vice president, and Professor David Porter again serving as faculty advisor, Hunter soon had Sawmill Slough up and running. The Club resumed publication of the *Swamp Stomper* in March of 1983, and Hunter wrote that

after two meetings, it looks like we’re really

going. We have a group of enthusiastic, hard-working members. I hope that the group will continue to grow.³

It seems that Lee Hunter [later Fegan] had learned of Sawmill Slough and its mission from natural science professor—and former Sawmill Slough Conservation Club advisor—Ray Bowman. For even though Sawmill Slough Conservation Club had been out of existence for nearly two years, long enough for any former student members to have left the University, the Club had not been forgotten by the UNF faculty members who had been involved with it.

However, it was really the idea of the Nature Center, which Bowman still dreamed of seeing become reality, that initially sparked Hunter's interest and led her to revive the Slough. She recalls that

Ray Bowman and I were working on a proposal for a UNF Nature Center which would utilize the campus [nature] sanctuary and trails while, ultimately, preserving them. Ray encouraged me to get the Slough going again. We agreed that an official body which supported our nature center proposal would add more substance to what we were asking for.⁴

Thus the Nature Center idea to which Sawmill Slough had given birth several years before was now bringing about the rebirth of the Slough.

In the universe of ideas it is what we create that creates us.

Loftin, too, recalls that Lee Hunter reconstituted the Club not primarily for its own sake but more as a means of accomplishing her objectives in regard to the Nature Center:

Her dream was to have a Nature Center on campus, and so she and Ray Bowman applied for some grants and some support from the state to have a center of environmental education. I think Lee, in a sense, was trying to create a job for herself. She saw herself as ... being the director of [the center].

It was her idea to get [Sawmill Slough] going again-as an adjunct to a funded Nature Center.... . Her idea was that the Club would be the soldiers, the front-line troops for an on-campus Nature Center. They would do research, do the legwork, be the action arm of the campus Nature Center.⁵

Whatever the reasons why the Club came to be revived, the important thing was that Sawmill Slough was back in business. It was true that the Club, now dominated by science students rather than political science majors, did not take forceful positions on any controversial issues on or off campus; Hunter describes SSCC's relationship with other campus entities as "neither cozy nor adversarial."⁶ But some of the Club's other traditional activities resumed. In addition to their efforts in support of the Nature Center and the Trails, Slough members participated in outside service projects, such as assisting Little Talbot Island park rangers with their sea turtle patrol program. Soon the Club's outings program also was back on track, and by July of 1983 the Club had some forty members.⁷ The canoes were back in the water, and Sawmill Slough was back in the canoes.

For Doc Loftin it was like welcoming back an old friend. "I had missed the Club when it was out of existence," he recalls. "I didn't really realize how much I had missed it."⁸ Certainly too much ever to let it die again.

Once again the Nature Center failed to come into being. After a year of hard work by Lee Hunter, Ray Bowman, and the Slough, the University withdrew its support of the project, effectively ending it. Hunter believes that the basic problem was—and still is—that the University and those who control it simply lack the scope of vision needed to allow UNF to develop its own identity and fulfill its potential in a way that would set it apart from other universities:

UNF as an ecological study center is not part of the vision of the powers that be. It's too bad. UNF could be unique, different, on the cutting edge. Instead, they seem to want to be just like everyone else.⁹

But this time when the Nature Center died, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club didn't. Loftin and the other members realized that even if they couldn't change the University, they didn't have to let the University change Sawmill Slough. Nature Center or no Nature Center, the Slough had enabled its members to add both meaning and enjoyment to their lives, to grow and learn and have some good fun in the process. And all of that was worth keeping.

Moreover, the Club had its own identity, its own reasons for being that went beyond any one project, even one as important as the Nature Center. Sawmill Slough had a vision of its own, a self-created and self-creating vision that would always include yet always reach infinitely beyond the thousand acres of the University of North Florida campus.

9. No Nukes and No Balls

So Sawmill Slough continued. In 1984 Mark Davis, an art major, took over as SSCC president; Bill Bowen, who later succeeded Davis as SSCC president, came on board as vice president. Terry West, a part-time student whose interest in birds had led her to Doc Loftin and Sawmill Slough, where she became one of the most valuable and loyal members in Slough history, served as SSCC secretary, a post she would hold continuously until 1988.

During this time the Club renewed its involvement in environmental issues, in particular the question of nuclear power. This became a hotly debated issue in Jacksonville, where the Navy base could potentially accommodate nuclear-powered ships and where the much-ballyhooed Offshore Power Systems (OPS) project promised to make Jacksonville a nuclear boomtown. No pun intended.

Doc Loftin and Mark Davis led the Club's unofficial anti-nuclear campaign. Loftin recalls sponsoring on-campus forums—at which the Club made sure that both sides were given equal opportunity to present their views—and even going on the local lecture circuit, where Loftin personally debated nuclear engineers and other advocates of nuclear power. Loftin also describes SSCC president Mark Davis as being “a very committed anti-nuclear activist,” a real “Greenpeace type” (and actual Greenpeace member) even prior to his arrival at UNF from Gainesville.¹

As for the OPS project, which called for the commercial production of floating—*floating!*—nuclear power plants that could be towed away and anchored in the ocean near coastal cities or other large power consumers, it eventually went the way of that other half-baked scheme, the oil-to-natural-gas refinery that Sawmill Slough had fought back in 1974. That is, after many millions of dollars had been spent to alter the topography of Blount Island and build the world's largest crane, the backers of the project realized that no one was actually going to be crazy enough to buy a floating nuclear plant. So another darling of the big business boosters went bust, and the rusting crane was eventually sold to the People's Republic of China at scrap prices.

However, when Bill Bowen took over as SSCC president in September of 1984, he soon found himself leading a fight against a more immediate threat to the campus: yet another incarnation—the first attempt having occurred about 1974—of the corporate community's recurrent desire to turn a sizable chunk of the campus nature preserve into the typical chamber of commerce ideal of what the great outdoors was meant to be. Yes, a golf course.

This time the Slough was not alone in opposing something that would destroy a major part of the campus nature sanctuary. The November 1984 *Swamp Stomper* reports on the reaction of the UNF community, particularly the Student Senate, of which Bowen was a respected member.

One of the worst ideas to surface on our campus in many a day is to give away a significant part of it to the Professional Golfer's Association for a golf course. The portion selected, in the northwest corner of the campus, has been identified as one of the most varied and valuable on the entire campus. This absurd idea was quickly greeted by howls of protest from every sector of the campus. Slough President Bill Bowen, who also happens to be one of the most influential voices in the Student Senate, was a particularly effective voice in opposing this hare-brained give-away of precious wildlife habitat. Your newsletter editor was present at the meeting of the Senate where the "plan" was presented by Vice-President of Student Affairs Sandy Hansford.

At the close of Hansford's presentation, Bill Bowen was on his feet, pointing out with great force the many glaring flaws in this scheme. Bill noted that the campus has long prided itself on being a nature preserve, and that this shrinking resource is sure to become more valuable in the future as all the area around us is developed.... At the close of his presentation, there were no voices raised in support of this boondoggle....,

It seems that [UNF] students are proud of the wilderness aspect of our campus and determined to see that it is not frittered away.²

The University administration, faced with solid campus-wide opposition, soon dropped the golf course (or driving range) plan from consideration, and though the University athletic complex now boasts facilities for tennis, baseball, and basketball, no golf balls fly in the UNF campus nature sanctuary.

Bill Bowen went on to become Student Government Association president.

In retrospect, however, the defeat of the golf course plan seems almost too easy to Doc Loftin, who suspects that UNF president Curtis McCray, an accomplished diplomatist, never really favored the idea in the first place. Loftin theorizes that McCray did not want to risk personally displeasing the powerful business interests that wanted to use—no doubt for free—UNF land for their golf scheme, so he made the plan public and waited for the opposition he knew would ensue. McCray then could point to the outcry raised by Sawmill Slough and others as an excuse for not giving the golf course backers what they wanted. Gee, I'd really like to let you build your golf course here, but you know how those rabble-rousing tree-huggers are.³

In any case, the campus remained golf-ball-free, thanks to the strong alliance Bill Bowen created between Student Government and Sawmill Slough Conservation Club—and perhaps an unwitting alliance between Sawmill Slough and the UNF administration.



Sawmill Slough at Powerhouse Rapid on the Ocoee River in Tennessee, May 29, 1988. Photo: Susan Loftin.



At Cumberland Island Sea Camp on Dec. 3, 1988, Sawmill Slough members smile in the winter sunshine: from left, front--Nancy Messer, Jeannie Ellis, Sarah Webb-Wood, Shirley Webb; middle--Elaine Fygetakis, Donna Bear, Gigi Steven, Michelle Axelberg, Jennifer Bullinger; back--Dr. Bob Loftin, John Kelbert, Stuart Landers, Karl Berg, Jonathan Loftin, Joe Bullinger. Photo: Joe Bullinger

10. The Feminist Connection

Over the years Sawmill Slough developed a variety of alliances and connections, some of which endured and some of which faded out of existence as the membership and interests of SSCC and its allies changed. During Bill Bowen's presidency, for example, Sawmill Slough formed a close relationship with the local Sierra Club, and later, in 1990, the Slough voted to become an autonomous affiliate of the Florida Wildlife Federation.

On campus, especially from 1985 through 1988, Sawmill Slough generally tended to work closely not so much with the upper UNF administration as with the recreation and physical facilities staff, who appreciated the way the Slough gladly contributed volunteer labor to help with such tasks as Nature Trails maintenance and campus recycling projects. John Golden, who modestly recalls his role as a "do-nothing" 1986 Slough president,¹ was actually a tireless Nature Trail worker and nature education advocate who later became the UNF recreation department's chief trail ranger. And Maurice Coman, an army reservist, Sierra Club member, and avid kayaker, was already a UNF employee when he served as SSCC president during 1988; always careful to avoid any involvement in activist or controversial issues, Coman later found it necessary to distance himself from the Sawmill Slough but has stayed on at UNF as a physical facilities supervisor.

Another kind of connection emerged around 1987. It was during this time that Sawmill Slough Conservation Club became a kind of incubator for what came to be known as the UNF Women's Center.

In October 1986, Shirley Webb became president of Sawmill Slough. Webb, a well-liked "people person," was also a staunch thirty-something feminist and notorious highway speedster.² She had recently served as Student Government Association vice president during Bill Bowen's term as SGA president.

Actually, Webb was elected not president but co-president of the Slough; Gillian Baker was chosen as the other co-president, while Helene Kamps and Rifka Jerard served as co-vice-presidents, with Terry West still holding the office of secretary. Maybe it was just a coincidence that aside from Doc Loftin, who by 1985 had again become the official SSCC faculty advisor and also served as treasurer, all the Club's officers were women. On the other hand, even if the term "eco-feminist" was not well known at the time, it was nonetheless true that environmentalists almost by definition assume a nurturing rather than exploitative attitude toward the earth, an attitude that many women find easy to identify with.

One noteworthy change Webb brought to the Club, perhaps a more significant one than might immediately seem to be the case, was the organizational change to the more cooperative, co-equal leadership structure that was indicated in the decision to have co-presidents and co-vice-presidents. As Loftin puts it,

Shirley's idea was cooperation. She said she would take the presidency *if* we would also agree to this co-presidency operation and co-officers and so forth. It was her idea that people working together like that would be more effective than one person working alone.³

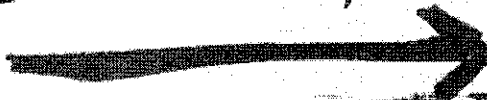
This is compatible with the leadership style that is sometimes identified as being more generally typical of women than of men, a style that supposedly emphasizes relationship-building rather than hierarchical control, conciliation rather than confrontation, consensus rather than debate. And it worked—at least for a while.

In any event, Professor Loftin recalls that during the Webb-Baker presidency the Club followed an agenda that was almost entirely social and recreational. While the Club's all-female leadership was "much more interested in the Club's social aspects than in environmental matters as such," Loftin gives due credit to Webb's superb organizational skills, noting that the Club "had better organized trips under her than we have ever had."⁴ Those were happy times for the Slough.

But Shirley Webb and the group that formed the leadership of Sawmill Slough during 1987 were gradually developing another, more specific agenda, a plan that could not fully be realized within the context of a conservation club. While not neglecting their Sawmill Slough responsibilities, Webb and those associated most closely with her in the Slough were thinking more and more about establishing another entity on campus, a program that would assist female students in dealing with the particular kinds of inequities and obstacles they might encounter even in a modern University culture. By the end of 1987 their plans were already becoming reality, and the cohesive leadership core of Sawmill Slough soon transferred itself, almost as a body, to form the nucleus of the new UNF Women's Center.

Stop The Loop !

Petition



11. Rumbblings

Even with Webb gone, her cooperative leadership idea, which now extended even to “co-secretaries,” continued to govern Sawmill Slough Conservation Club’s organizational structure. And during the respective co-presidencies of Maurice Coman and Doug Murphy in 1987-88, and Stuart Landers and Tere Burkitt (who soon found it necessary to resign and was later replaced by Karl Berg and then Jerry Gray) in 1988-89, the Slough continued to enjoy pleasant times, participating in campus events, performing various community service projects, and going on numerous canoeing and camping outings. The recreational and social agenda continued to be predominant.

Loftin particularly remembers Stuart Landers, both for what Landers did for Sawmill Slough and for what Loftin believes he and Sawmill Slough may have done for Landers:

When he came to UNF as a freshman, he had a mohawk haircut, wouldn’t get up in the morning, wouldn’t go to class—he was just wasting his life. He had a brilliant mind, but he was just wasting his life.

(So naturally he ended up in Sawmill Slough.) Loftin continues:

He took the birdwatching course..... The class met at nine o’clock in the morning, but he wouldn’t get

up and come to class, and he missed the first test. He just wouldn't show up. He just wasn't interested in academic things...

The second part of the course was held out at the beach, where we worked on the saltwater birds. I knew he didn't have a car ... so I walked down to the dorms and I found what room he lived in. (Osprey Hall didn't exist at that time; it was just the apartments.) ... I left a note on his door saying that if transportation was a problem that I would be at be at such-and-such a place and would give him a ride....

I didn't expect him to show up, because he hadn't been to class all semester, but much to my surprise he was there, ready to go. And maybe I'm fooling myself, but I just believe that that was a turning point in his academic career, because then he came to class from then on. And he did excellent [work] in the class; once he *came* and took the tests and so forth, he was one of the best students I ever had. So he began to get himself on an academic track.¹

As had so often been the case with other students who had casually signed up for an ornithology “crib course” and who ended up being thoroughly introduced to nature—as well as to Loftin's own sometimes irascible but deeply caring nature—Landers soon joined the Slough, where his abilities were recognized and appreciated.

I like to think that Sawmill Slough provided a vehicle for Stuart Landers to find some direction and put his life on the right track. He became a leader of Sawmill Slough..... He was willing to work, but he [also] delegated well and got other people to do things; his leadership was decentralized.²

But this style of relaxed cooperative leadership that the Slough, functioning as a primarily social organization, had enjoyed for several years was about to be tested. More serious matters would soon intrude upon the Club's carefree recreational pleasures, issues that would shake Sawmill Slough down to its foundations and force it once more to redefine itself.

As far back as 1974, Loftin and the Slough had expressed misgivings about the University Master Plan's inclusion of a road segment that would one day complete a loop around the central campus core and in so doing extend that core into the nature sanctuary area of the campus. Although no one got very excited about what was then only a line on a map, the loop road concept continued to come under review by the Club over the years, as indicated by this excerpt from the minutes of SSCC's 2 February 1988 meeting:

There is a proposed access road on campus to eliminate traffic congestion. The road will go around the campus, connecting the [existing] dead end road to the residence area. Unfortunately, no one could understand how a road that circles the campus can rid [us of] the traffic problem.³

By early 1989 it became clear that the University's current administration, led by UNF's new president Adam Herbert, was actually serious about going forward with that plan and building the road. Also, the September 1987 *Swamp Stomper* indicates the Club's first awareness of another proposal, the origin of which was not clear to the Slough at that time, a proposal to establish some sort of "research park" on or near the campus. As more and more information came to light—and even more unanswered questions arose—concerning the "loop" and "R & D [research & development] park" plans, Sawmill Slough found itself becoming more deeply involved with those matters.

For a while the Slough managed to stay unified. The social and recreational wing of the Club, led by co-president Stuart Landers and co-secretary Donna Bear (daughter of UNF Physical Facilities Director Charlie Bear), worked hard in support of the efforts of the activist wing, led by co-presidents Karl Berg (who soon graduated and left UNF) and

Jerry Gray, to voice the Club's opposition to the planned "loop road." And the activists, though their time was increasingly absorbed by the loop road issue, also maintained their interest in the Club's outings program and social agenda.

More and more, however, Sawmill Slough was engaged in lobbying against the road that they believed would compromise the integrity of their beloved Nature Trails and of the Nature Sanctuary itself. Cheered on by born-again activist Doc Loftin, whose oft-repeated exhortation to "*Fight on!*" became the Slough's jaunty battle cry, the Club secured resolutions opposing the loop road from virtually every campus organization, from the Faculty Union to the Student Government, from Phi Theta Kappa to the Young Republicans. The Slough also conducted a campus petition drive that yielded approximately two thousand signatures condemning the road plan. "No Loop" buttons and "Stop the Loop" tee-shirts soon appeared everywhere.

Make no mistake—Sawmill Slough had long recognized the need for another access road that would provide a second entrance to the campus. But the loop road, SSCC pointed out, would not accomplish that at all; it would only make a closed circle inside the campus, still leaving people just one way to get in and out. The Slough instead supported a northern access route that would provide a second campus entry point near the athletic complex, a route that the 1985 update of the campus Master Plan actually indicated was supposed to be the next road built at UNF.⁴

Faced with such widespread opposition to the loop road plan, University of North Florida president Adam Herbert, who had recently (February 1989) arrived from Miami to assume the University presidency, announced that on April 19 he would hold a public hearing in the UNF theatre so that he could hear from all segments of the UNF community.

Coached by Doc Loftin, a philosophy professor who believed in the supremacy of logic, the Slough members met to prepare their case. One new member, Michael Woodward, who introduced himself as "a rhetorician rather than a logician," promised to attend the hearing and speak, a promise he kept.

The hearing was held, hundreds attended, dozens spoke, and

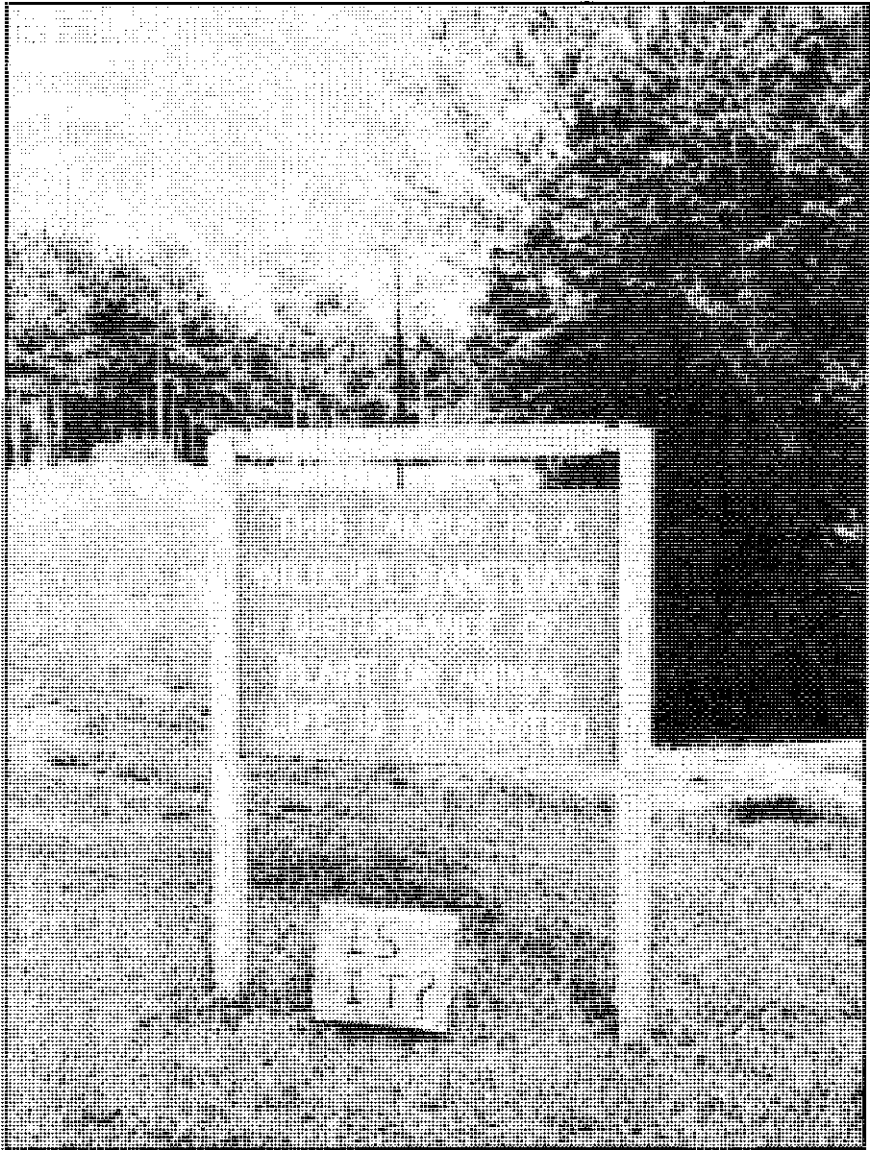
(excepting a presentation by the administration's planning staff) every last one of them opposed the loop plan and urged Herbert not to build it but to build the "northern connector" instead.

Meanwhile, the tension within Sawmill Slough was building; unless the pressure was somehow released—preferably by a quick victory on the loop road issue—a split now seemed almost inevitable. Michael Woodward particularly remembers attending one Slough meeting about this time, a meeting at which Stuart Landers and Jerry Gray, by now very much at odds over the priorities and leadership of the Club, got into such a heated argument that Woodward actually jumped up on a table between the two co-presidents to prevent their verbal argument from becoming a physical one. That memorable meeting was enough to convince Woodward that co-presidency might not be such a good idea.

Two months after the public hearing, Herbert announced his approval of the loop road, which he had now "modified" by altering its route a hundred feet, increasing its width to three lanes, *and adding an entire new road, called the "eastern connector," to the construction plan*—a road no one outside the administration had known was being considered and that had not been mentioned in the presentation the administration's planners had made at the public hearing.

At this point most of the Club, including Doc Loftin, whose spirit seemed broken by the news, were ready to throw in the towel. They had tried their hardest, spoken their loudest, and no one had listened. Okay, we tried—so what's the point in trying, in caring, in believing in anything? Many of the Slough's members who had worked so hard to be heard on this issue just hung their heads in despair and walked away.

The rest got angry.



A homemade sign challenges the truthfulness of the official sign at the University entrance.

12. Road Warriors

With the departure of Stuart Landers (who said he “had done all he could,” as he “didn’t believe in civil disobedience”¹⁾ and with him Donna Bear and the other Slough members who had had enough of fighting the road issue, Jerry Gray became sole president of a leaner but meaner Sawmill Slough Conservation Club. Gray’s presidency was later validated by the election that took place on 21 September 1989, at which time Michael Woodward was chosen as vice president, and Richard Eckler, who was already serving as *Swamp Stomper* editor, was elected secretary. Denise Hok agreed to represent the Slough on the Club Coordinating Committee (CCC—an entity of Student Government), while Loftin stayed on—although his attendance was sporadic for a time—as both treasurer and faculty advisor.

The Slough’s new president, Jerry Gray, an energetic and popular UNF student in his late twenties, was not someone to be messed with. He combined the no-nonsense organizational skills of a business major (which he was), the discipline of a black belt martial arts practitioner (which he was), and the hot-tempered passion of a committed environmentalist (which he was). Perhaps the best example of the latter quality is the story, as related by Doc Loftin, of how Gray initially came to be involved in Sawmill Slough:

Jerry Gray first came to me because he was furious about the [UNF Physical Facilities

Department's] dumping of trash on campus.... He encountered them [Physical Facilities staff] dumping dirt that had plastic pipe and stuff like that in it in a hole in the woods [adjacent to one of the Nature Trails]. They've always done that; that's their idea of what the UNF woods are for—to dump bricks in, and old pipes and stuff, because they don't want to take it to the landfill.

But Jerry Gray got really angry about that, so he collected some of this debris and marched into the Director of Physical Facilities [Charlie Bear's] office and slammed it down on his desk and protested in no uncertain terms about them dumping this garbage out there on the campus.

Charlie Bear was very upset about this, and so he claimed that dirt from the debris Jerry Gray had slammed down on his desk had contaminated his computer keyboard. So he reported Jerry to the central administration for contaminating his computer and ruining this five million dollar machine, [but] he was really angry at Gray because Gray had confronted him in no uncertain terms about the dumping. As a result, Jerry Gray was put on “conduct probation.”

Jerry came to me about it, and I calmed him down and blunted his anger. So he got interested in things and got active with the Slough... and later became the leader in the fight against the loop road.²

Obviously, Jerry Gray was not the type to be bothered by the prospect of a little civil disobedience.

Meanwhile, Gray and the others in the Slough soon found they

had something bigger than a trash pile to be angry about. University of North Florida president Herbert's June 14 approval of the road plan, including not only a slightly modified version of the loop road but also an additional route through the campus nature preserve area, may have demoralized some SSCC members, but it galvanized others. Shortly following the announcement of what Herbert made clear was his final decision on the road construction plan, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club met in emergency session to consider its options.

Really, there were only two options—quit or fight—although there was much to consider in making that choice. If we fight, how will we fight? If we quit, what will the Club then stand for?

One young Slough member gave a very moving and impassioned speech in favor of continuing the fight to the death. (She never showed up again, by the way.) On the other hand, the exhausted Doc Loftin, the only person present who remembered the pressures that had been brought to bear on Club members during the battles of earlier years, warned of the difficulties but still tried to present the options as fairly and objectively as he could.

What it came down to was that the members of Sawmill Slough had to vote to either (1) take the position that the Club had done its best to persuade Adam Herbert but having failed to do so must simply accept his decision—after all, as the University's president it was Herbert's job to make those decisions—and get back to being a camping-and-canoeing recreational student club again; or (2) risk splitting the entire campus community and possibly even destroying the Club, itself already splitting apart, by committing Sawmill Slough to an all-out, probably unwinnable war against the University's president and administration and quite possibly some of Jacksonville's most powerful business interests.

Naturally, they chose the second option. Loftin was outvoted.

Sawmill Slough was now a much different club than it had been two or three years earlier. The balance might have tipped either way, however; SSCC could easily have gone on being a quiet outdoor social club instead of becoming a small army of angry and determined activists. Actually, UNF President Adam Herbert deserves much of the credit (or blame) for tipping the balance. For if much of the Club's resolve to fight the road project was motivated by anger, much of that anger was now

directed toward Herbert and was attributable not so much to the road plans themselves as to the way Herbert had handled the issue.

Michael Woodward remembers that decisive meeting and the Slough members' strong feelings that Herbert had deliberately misled and manipulated them and the entire UNF community. The Slough believed that, far from respecting the concerns of UNF students and faculty by giving them meaningful input into the planning and decision-making process, Herbert had sought merely to placate and marginalize them. Woodward and others were now convinced that the public hearing Herbert held had been a sham intended to give those opposed to the loop road a way to blow off steam harmlessly—in other words, an occasion to make them feel like they were doing something meaningful while in fact dissipating their energies ineffectually before Herbert moved on with his own agenda. The Slough members recall that one hundred percent of those who had attended and spoke at the hearing were opposed to the loop road, yet Herbert had not only approved the loop, he had quietly added another road no one had heard of before.

And then expected people to like it. The *Spinnaker* had reported that

President Herbert said he is satisfied with his decision. "I very much appreciate the concerns and helpful suggestions which members of the university community articulated throughout this decision-making process," he said. "Their input was carefully considered.... I am convinced the modified loop concept will provide much greater environmental protection while addressing our long-term campus safety and traffic circulation needs."³

And in the same article, UNF vice president for administration and planning Curtis Bullock, like Herbert continuing to use the "loop" label for the plan while avoiding mention of the new "eastern connector" road, echoed Herbert in saying he was "confident the modified loop will alleviate the concerns that arose from the original plan."⁴

Slough officer Richard Eckler's paraphrase of the underlying

message of Herbert's words: "We appreciate your input; fuck you very much."⁵

In any case, Herbert's plan most certainly did not alleviate Sawmill Slough's concerns nor those of the Student Government Association, which immediately passed a new resolution condemning the "modified" plan, noting that the changes had been made unilaterally rather than in consultation with SGA or other concerned parties. And as far as Sawmill Slough—what was left of it—was concerned, Adam Herbert had shown utter contempt for the entire UNF community. Perhaps if Herbert had simply said in the first place that he was the University president and was going to do what he thought best even if most people didn't like it, he would have garnered more respect than anger even from those who disagreed with him. But by holding the public hearing and claiming to address people's concerns, then acting in direct contradiction to their clearly stated wishes, Herbert seemed to be dismissing UNF students and faculty as too stupid to notice the difference.

If that was what Herbert thought, then he would have a surprise or two coming from Sawmill Slough.

While Herbert no doubt wished to portray the entire road issue as a closed matter that he had resolved to everyone's satisfaction, Sawmill Slough quickly set about letting the world know that the issue was neither closed nor satisfactory. News articles regarding the Slough's continued opposition appeared in the *Spinnaker*, and letters to the editor (often written or ghostwritten by Slough "rhetorician" Woodward) appeared in the Jacksonville *Times-Union*. Small bands of protestors dogged Herbert's appearances at University graduations and even his own official two-day inauguration gala, held September 28-29. Television stations began to air some of these protest actions, and when the 21 November 1989 issue of *Folio Weekly* did a feature on Herbert it included a sidebar article featuring Jerry Gray and the Slough view of Herbert and his policies.

In later years, however, as Herbert established himself more firmly in the Jacksonville power structure, he would seem to gain more control over the media exposure he received. Just how and why Herbert would become so well established in the local power structure may have been suggested by a small article that by coincidence appeared on the

same day as the *Folio* article but was instead inconspicuously located in the UNF *Spinnaker*:

President Adam W. Herbert will lead economic development efforts next year for the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce when he chairs the Chamber's Committee of 100. The incoming chamber chairman, Charles Sawyer, asked Dr. Herbert to chair the committee because his [Herbert's] goals for UNF dovetail with the chamber's economic development mission.⁶

It occurred to some people in Sawmill Slough that Herbert's campus planning decisions—including his road plans—just might be part of an overall agenda that would subordinate the interests of the University to those of the Chamber of Commerce. Despite Herbert's oft-repeated claims that the loop and eastern connector were needed in order to assure the safety and convenience of students, SSCC began to suspect that the location of the planned roads might somehow have more to do with the convenience and profit of some influential business interests. And the Slough also found it interestingly coincidental when the chairmanship of the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce later passed to Tom Petway, who also happened to be Jacksonville's member of the Board of Regents—which governs the State University System and hires the University presidents.

Meanwhile, Jerry Gray had begun to investigate the little-known “research park” that, as he soon discovered, appeared to be the real reason for the “eastern connector” that Herbert had added to the original loop road plan. Gray discovered an even more mysterious “Duval Research and Development Authority,” a quasi-governmental board that almost no one had ever heard of and whose headquarters was a tiny office in the UNF administration building, and he managed to obtain the minutes of some of the Authority's meetings.

On campus, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club soon realized that it now stood alone in actively opposing the road plan. Although the Student Government Association had passed a resolution indicating its disapproval of Herbert's decision, SGA made it clear that it was not

interested in pursuing the matter further. In fact, the Slough got the definite impression that SGA didn't even want to hear about the issue any more, so the Slough obliged and ceased attempting to work with SGA. And while many of the faculty continued privately to applaud the Slough's die-hard stance, they were unwilling to risk further involvement now that the University president had announced his position. A few, like Professor Jay Huebner, who had publicly supported Sawmill Slough prior to Herbert's announcement, now publicly switched sides and endorsed Herbert's plan.

What was more puzzling to Slough members was the way that some people in the campus community who had previously opposed the road plan seemed actually to resent—with disquieting hostility, at times—the fact that, unlike them, Sawmill Slough did not give up or lose interest in the issue. Perhaps the mere fact that the Slough continued to fight for its principles caused those others some psychic discomfort.

So, finding itself virtually alone on campus, Sawmill Slough began renewing its off-campus contacts, such as its old friends at the local Sierra Club chapter, hoping to get some practical assistance or at least some advice. Although the Sierra Club, like most conservation organizations, was already overextended with its own environmental defense agenda and could offer the Slough no legal or financial aid, it assigned experienced Sierra officer and occasional UNF student David Ferrari to render what assistance he could.

Gray's investigation was now beginning to suggest the existence of a very complex scheme involving a number of players. Somehow the eastern connector, which when combined with the new loop segment appeared to create a diagonal access route not *to* the campus but *through* it, seemed to be tied into a much larger plan, a plan that might take a small and inexperienced group like Sawmill Slough some time to uncover and understand. What Sawmill Slough needed was time, time to figure out just what and whom they were really up against.

Page one of the 10 October 1989 *Spinnaker* proudly proclaimed "Dr. Herbert is officially president!" But Herbert's inauguration shared the front page with another headline: "Tortoises slow construction—Loop road foes gain delay." (And alongside Herbert's inaugural pictures were pictures of SSCC protesters—the "truth squad," as Richard Eckler called

them.⁷⁾ Thanks to Ferrari, the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission had learned of UNF's plans to remove gopher tortoises from the path of the planned road and had ordered them to stop; the tortoises, a protected species, could not legally be disturbed between October 1 and April 1. "They can't turn one shovel of dirt on that site until after April Fools' Day," said Ferrari in the front-page article. The Slough had gained some time.

And Sawmill Slough would need all the time it could get, for it soon had to deal with another organizational crisis. In December 1989 Jerry Gray graduated with his business administration degree and immediately left for Sweden with the Swedish woman he had fallen in love with while she was a student at UNF.

Sawmill Slough Conservation Club now had a new leader, as SSSC vice president Michael Woodward succeeded to the office of president. Woodward, who had grown up in the wide-open country between upstate New York's Adirondack Mountains and the Canadian border, was a tall, lean graduate student whose dark beard and long hair could make him appear to be a combination of Jesus Christ, William Shakespeare, and Charles Manson. And unfortunately for anyone who may have thought—or hoped—that with Jerry Gray's departure Sawmill Slough would now be led by some starry-eyed hippie or empty-headed bunny-hugger, Woodward also happened to have an I.Q. higher than his weight and a consistent 4.0 grade average as he neared completion of his second UNF masters degree.

And he was a stubborn sort. "The most amazing thing about Michael Woodward," according to Doc Loftin, was not his intelligence so much as the fact that "he has no idea what it means to give up.... The concept of throwing in the towel is not something that crosses his mind."⁸

Prior to his involvement in Sawmill Slough, Woodward had never thought of himself as an environmentalist, although one of the reasons he had chosen to attend UNF over other universities was that he felt at home in UNF's largely unspoiled and natural campus. What brought him to Sawmill Slough Conservation Club was really the road issue itself. He had observed some very sincere and caring people trying hard to stand up for what they believed in and just thought he'd lend them a hand. But the degree of this rather casual commitment to

environmentalism changed significantly when he saw the human impact of Herbert's rejection of the UNF community's pleadings regarding the road issue.

I saw people with their ideals utterly shattered. I saw the faces of young people still in their teens and could tell that they would never again try to make a difference in their society, never again participate in attempts to make the world better, never again make the effort to be heard. And I saw a dream that Professor Loftin had nurtured for years being torn from him.

I was really angry about what Herbert had done to these people. I decided I would do everything I could to show them that they could fight back, that they didn't have to accept that kind of bullying. I honestly had my doubts as to whether this fight was going to be a winnable one, but I knew it was one worth fighting anyway. A mother bear whose cubs are threatened doesn't ask herself whether she thinks she can win; she just fights, even against impossible odds. So I guess you could say I decided to see if I could at least even up the odds a little.⁹

Woodward, who saw himself as more of a strategist than a leader, knew the fight would be long and tough, and he really would have preferred to go on being Jerry Gray's vice president rather than take the lead himself. But he didn't have that option. And the situation did represent a kind of challenge that was not without its attractions for him. Despite the passions and ideals involved—certainly including his own—this would also be a game of strategy, a battle of wits in which Woodward and the Slough would engage Herbert and the UNF administration. The fact that the latter party enjoyed overwhelming advantages in power, influence, experience, and money might even have made the challenge more interesting.

One of Woodward's first moves was to secure a copy of Herbert's doctoral dissertation. He would need to understand his opponent's mind. The dissertation revealed, among other things, evidence suggesting that Herbert harbored a long-standing resentment of conservation and environmental groups¹⁰ and that he was familiar with specific techniques that could be employed by public officials and by "legitimate" groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to disrupt the efforts of citizens' groups who also might wish to participate in community decisions.¹¹

Another of Woodward's first priorities was to obtain a supply of high-quality stationery (designed by SSCC member Rissi Cherie) for the Club. While seemingly trivial, this was an essential step in a deliberate strategy to help the Club develop a credible public image, something that Woodward knew would be needed if the Slough was to be taken seriously in its efforts to go head-to-head with the UNF administration. Soon public officials and others started receiving some very credible communications from Sawmill Slough Conservation Club. The plan was to keep making a big noise and maintaining a high profile. No reason for anyone outside the Club to know that by now, with the graduation and departure of Gray and several others, Sawmill Slough was down to only about three or four regularly active members.

Obviously, the SSCC organization itself needed some attention. One thing that had bothered Woodward was the way that the Club would have to come to a virtual halt and totally regroup every time it lost a president or other key officer, something which tends to happen fairly often in a college setting where people come and go far more often than is the case in a community-based group. So Sawmill Slough soon ratified a new constitution that addressed the problem of leadership continuity. The new arrangement called for an elected executive committee consisting of a president and three vice presidents, with a clear and automatic order of succession in the event officers departed between annual elections. When the Slough's 1990 elections were held, Woodward was elected president, with Richard Eckler as executive (first) vice president, Denise Hok as second vice president, and Jason Revisky as third vice president.

Woodward, Eckler, and Hok, who had worked together under Jerry Gray, proved to be a particularly effective team. Richard Eckler, a

history major, was a respected, even feared, member of the SGA Senate. Totally fearless himself, his oratory was up to virtually any public situation. Even if his presentation of detail sometimes lacked precision, there was no denying the forceful effectiveness with which he hammered home his main points, an effectiveness enhanced by his keen understanding of socio-political and group dynamics. And if Jerry Gray had been capable of civil disobedience in defense of the environment, Richard Eckler would just as soon leave out the civil part. "Very anti-authoritarian in his convictions," as Loftin¹² describes him, Eckler was also one of the few people in the Slough who openly criticized Woodward (usually for being too conservative in his strategies) and was therefore one of the people Woodward most respected and relied on.

Denise Hok, a graduate student majoring in mental health counseling, had been a close friend of Woodward's since 1986, when she had been a freshman and he had just transferred to UNF as a junior; Woodward had immediately recognized her superior intelligence and plucky spirit. The fact that other people did not always do so only added to her effectiveness. Denise, a tiny (4'9") woman who walked with a pronounced limp, had a disarmingly sweet and deceptively innocent smile that had long charmed everyone at the University—and by now Denise knew everyone.

Hok was also, as Woodward and Eckler well appreciated, a keen observer of human nature whose insights would prove extremely valuable to the Slough's efforts. For example, during negotiating sessions that the Slough subsequently held with Herbert and his administration (and their lawyers), Denise's role was to say little but instead to watch closely the expressions and reactions of the other parties, thus helping the Slough officers gauge the sincerity of the other side's statements and offers. (Unfortunately, these attempts to negotiate a compromise settlement with the Herbert administration would ultimately prove fruitless, as the administration, seeing itself as the more powerful party, saw no need to offer meaningful concessions but instead saw the sessions as opportunities to persuade Sawmill Slough to accept the administration's position.)

But while three or four good people may be enough to keep a Club alive, they are not enough to make it powerful. Although the Slough

was successfully managing to project the image of a large organization, the truth was that it desperately needed more bodies.

They came.

Having by now publicly defined itself as an activist organization, Sawmill Slough began to attract activists. This was helped along by the special recruiting efforts that the Slough, in addition to its traditional Clubfest and Earth MusicFest booths, now launched in conjunction with its road plan opposition. The SSCC Truth Squad's information tables soon appeared on campus, where they not only informed UNF students of the road issue but also gave them the opportunity to sign up as Slough members, and a number of them did. The Slough also manned (and womanned) recruiting tables outside the administration building, especially at registration time, thus giving new students the opportunity to join Sawmill Slough Conservation Club. And as a result of the publicity Sawmill Slough's activism was generating, other new members came to the Slough on their own, leaving their names and telephone numbers in the Club's mailbox or with the Student Life office.

Michael Woodward recalls returning one such telephone message. Seventeen-year-old Tammy Whited, who was not yet a UNF student, had been deeply disturbed by a report of some local fishermen who had caught a pregnant shark that they then gleefully sliced open in order to display its unborn young. Whited had first called Greenpeace but was not altogether satisfied with the response she told Michael she had received: "Send us twenty-five dollars and we'll call you when we're having a protest." Tammy responded to Michael's invitation to meet the Sloughies at a newsletter folding session held at SSCC 3rd vice president Jason Revisky's apartment, although it would be some time before she would become a regular participant in Sawmill Slough activities.

Professor Loftin, too, began returning to fold, especially after the still shaken Doc was reassured that the Club did not expect-or want-him to act in a leadership capacity. Loftin recalls that

other people came forward and assumed the burden which I wasn't willing [or able, as Woodward saw it] to assume, and made it clear to me that I didn't *have* to assume that burden, that were other people that would do these things and

lead the Club and I didn't have to do everything, but that they would carry the ball. And so they did-chief among them Michael Woodward....

One thing I've always worried about with Sawmill Slough is that it's always been too closely tied to me personally, and that's never been good for the Club. So I felt that when the student leaders departed from my perception and my agenda and my concerns, it was the best thing that ever happened to the Club, because this was something *they* were doing; it wasn't something I was putting them up to.... If anything, I was an impediment, a drag on the Club.¹³

Woodward understood that Loftin would need some time to heal, but he also found it necessary to make clear to Loftin that Loftin's morose and defeatist attitude was bad for Club morale and that Loftin should keep quiet and stay out of the way of those who were now leading Sawmill Slough in the fight it had democratically chosen to undertake. But even if Loftin's leadership was not wanted in Sawmill Slough, his spirit was. So, too, was his knowledge of the natural environment. After all, the Club was now composed primarily of activists rather than naturalists, people who had an appreciation for nature but relatively little technical knowledge. However, they were willing to learn, willing also to follow the Doc as he led them not into battle but into the beauty of the rivers and creeks and forests. Although perhaps less ambitious than in some previous years, the Slough's outings program resumed. The canoes were not forgotten.

The next step in the road war was to delay the process further by filing legal objections to the permits that UNF would need because of the wetlands that would be destroyed or otherwise impacted by the roads. So after the Slough appeared before the St. Johns River Water Management District Board, which ignored their concerns, SSCC filed for an administrative hearing—a quasi-judicial legal process—on the first of the permits related to the road project. Michael, who had no previous

experience in this field, did the legal writing.

As soon as Adam Herbert and the UNF administration realized that Sawmill Slough was serious about this matter, they secured the services of one of the city's largest and—in the view of many people—most profitably anti-environmentalist law firms: Rogers, Towers, Bailey, Jones & Gay. The Herbert administration brought in this high-powered law firm despite the fact that, as was later reported by the *Times-Union*, state law (Florida Statute 287.059) requires state agencies, including state universities, to either use state lawyers or obtain special permission from the Attorney General to hire private lawyers—and the Herbert administration had done neither. As the *Times-Union's* headline put it, “UNF broke [the] law to hire lawyers.”¹⁴ And it occurred to Sawmill Slough that the Herbert administration might have been avoiding contact with the Attorney General because it might not want the Attorney General to know too much about what was going on at UNF. In any event, the Slough soon was inundated by a barrage of legal motions and other papers to which the Club had to respond.

Realizing that Sawmill Slough was now going to need its own lawyer, Michael got on the phone to the network of Jacksonville environmental activists he had recently come to know, asking them to suggest attorneys, several of whom Michael then called. Most of them told him that the situation—a small underfunded, inexperienced group taking on the University as well as a Water Management District that seemed only too happy to approve all the needed permits—was hopeless anyway. The rest told him to contact Tim Keyser, who practiced law in the tiny Putnam County town of Interlachen, some sixty miles southeast of Jacksonville. Tim Keyser just happened to be a former president of the Florida Wildlife Federation.

He took the case.

13. Let the Records Show

Having strengthened the Club's organization, rebuilt its membership, and secured an attorney to represent the Club in challenging the road permits, the Slough's executive committee was now ready to resume Jerry Gray's investigative work. In June 1990 SSCC executive vice president Richard Eckler went to UNF Building One (the administration building, later named J. J. Daniel Hall) and asked to see some specific documents related to the road project and the mysterious "research park." Despite the fact that such documents came under the provisions of the Public Records Act (Florida Statute 119), all Eckler got was a runaround from Herbert's staff, who evidently were either reluctant to comply with the request or confused about how to do so.

So on July 2, SSCC president Woodward submitted the Slough's formal and detailed request to examine a number of categories of documents—including plans, ledgers, contracts, and correspondence—that he and Eckler believed the Club might eventually need to see during the course of its investigation. Woodward followed up the Slough's written request with a personal visit (accompanied by another SSCC member, in keeping with the Slough's never-go-in-alone policy), at which time he explained to administration official William DeSue that while the Slough's investigative committee wished to begin reviewing some records immediately, they

wanted to work out a reasonable schedule that would enable them to inspect the bulk of the various categories of documents over a period of time without unduly inconveniencing UNF staff. But Woodward made it clear that while the Slough did not wish to examine all the records at one time—which would have been impractical anyway—Sawmill Slough was not going to back down on its right to see the documents.

A few days later the Slough began receiving letters from Rogers Towers attorney Marcia Parker. The letters and accompanying invoices demanded payment of a \$1296 “processing” fee for the trouble that the administration had gone to as a result of Sawmill Slough’s public records access request—even though no one had requested any sort of “processing” nor had anyone from the Club yet been allowed to see any of the requested documents. In fact, the attorney’s letters indicated that no records would be made available for inspection unless the entire sum was paid.¹

When the Slough refused to pay and instead insisted on the legal right of Club members—or any citizen—to inspect the public records, the Herbert administration’s Rogers Towers attorney sent another letter, this one addressed to SSCC’s attorney Tim Keyser but enclosing an invoice specifically naming SSCC president Michael Woodward. The letter and invoice informed Woodward that he was now being held personally liable for the \$1296 fee.² He later learned that this amount had been charged against his personal UNF student account, automatically placing him on “financial hold” and thus preventing him from registering for classes, graduating, or obtaining transcripts until he paid the \$1296 in full. (Although Herbert would later claim that in imposing the \$1296 fee against Woodward the administration had sought only to look out for University’s financial interests, Sawmill Slough eventually obtained copies of Rogers Towers invoices indicating that the administration had spent approximately \$4000 in attorney fees in responding to, as opposed to complying with, Sawmill Slough’s public records request—including time these lawyers spent in researching Woodward’s personal liability.)

The fight was getting dirty. And personal.

Folio Weekly, which approximately a year following this development chose Woodward for its annual “local hero” cover-story feature, reported the following views of the matter, the first from a University official who was no longer at UNF when the events occurred:

“The University put a tremendous amount of pressure on him,” says former UNF public relations director, Bud Newman. “I think they totally overreacted to the request for public information. Another person would have walked away from the controversy; they would have let it go.”

Loftin commented on how the University’s action actually revealed the Herbert administration’s fear of losing control of the situation:

“As president of a student club, Michael has forced the administration to deal with Sawmill Slough as an equal,” says Robert Loftin, professor of philosophy and faculty advisor to Sawmill Slough. “The administration would prefer to deal with the club as an organization under their jurisdiction.”

And Woodward’s own analysis:

“Apparently the Herbert administration felt I wouldn’t want my academic career threatened,” he says. “They made a misjudgment. I don’t respond to bullying; it only made me more determined.”³

At the time, Woodward wasn’t quite as disturbed by this turn of events as many people seemed to expect him to be, although he did feel more than a bit insulted that Herbert and Rogers Towers seemed to think he could be so easily intimidated. In Woodward’s opinion, Herbert’s inappropriate retaliatory response to Sawmill Slough’s public records request was welcome evidence that Herbert just might be beatable, after all; it seems Adam Herbert hadn’t bothered to learn how Michael Woodward’s mind worked.

“You’ve given your client some very bad advice regarding public records,” Woodward told the administration’s Rogers Towers lawyer at the close of a previously scheduled negotiating session. “You may be able to keep him [Herbert] out of jail, but you’re not going to keep him out of the newspaper or off the television news.”

On Tuesday 13 November 1990, WJXT-TV (Channel 4) aired the

public records story, featuring Woodward and Eckler, on the six o'clock news. Two days later (15 November 1990), the story appeared on the front page of the Jacksonville *Times-Union*. On the following day the UNF administration backed down, announcing that the financial hold against Woodward's student account was being lifted immediately, although the University still threatened to take legal action against him to collect the \$1296 fee.⁴

They never got a dime. Woodward had also contacted the Attorney General in Tallahassee. After Patricia Gleason of the Attorney General's office finished mediating the matter several months later, Woodward and Sawmill Slough Conservation Club ended up seeing all the documents they wanted to see—without charge.

Herbert was not off the hook yet, however. Woodward also filed a complaint with the state Ethics Commission, which launched an investigation of Herbert's handling of the Slough's public records request as well as the manner in which expenses related to Herbert's inaugural celebration apparently had been paid out of a scholarship fund. However, in June 1992 the Ethics Commission would rule that there was insufficient evidence that Herbert had violated the specific provisions of the Ethics law; even if his handling of the records request was not proper, there was no proof of direct monetary benefit to Herbert as a result of his actions. It probably didn't hurt that Herbert's attorney in this matter was the former chairman of the Ethics Commission.

The good news was that the rights of students and other citizens to inspect UNF records had been vindicated, and Sawmill Slough's investigation could proceed.

The bad news was that it had taken Sawmill Slough eight months to gain access to the records they wanted to see. By the time the Slough finally was able, in February 1991, to begin inspecting and analyzing the documents and to get a clear picture of the overall scheme behind the loop road, the eastern connector, and the R & D park, it was too late to undo all the done deals—deals involving, among others, UNF, the Duval Research & Development Authority, Regency Group (development corporation), and some major nearby landowners.

As far as the members of Sawmill Slough were concerned, the documents they saw were sufficient to verify that, just as the Slough had

come to suspect as a result of information contained in an August 1990 *Times-Union* article,⁵ the primary function of the proposed “UNF research and development (R & D) park” was to serve as a justification for the allocation of millions of dollars of state and local public funds to provide roads, interchanges, and other infrastructure that would open up a vast area of private land for commercial development. The fact that the infrastructure would be provided by the taxpayers instead of the developers could result in huge profits for the latter. And the planned eastern connector shortcut through the University of North Florida campus was playing the essential role of tying the proposed R & D park to UNF—a public university—so as to make it appear that all those public funds were being spent for public rather than private benefit.

What the Sawmill Slough investigators did not find, however, were any feasibility studies or other evidence that the UNF “R & D park” would actually live up to the expectations being implied by that term and explicitly promoted by the UNF administration. Woodward had already obtained the most recent and comprehensive study of research park viability, a study conducted by nationally recognized urban planning experts whose data clearly showed that, while some well-established older research parks would probably continue to do well, the great majority of newly launched university-affiliated R & D parks were proving increasingly to be failures—especially if those new parks were attached only to small universities (like UNF) lacking national reputations for cutting-edge technological research.⁶ But now the Slough believed they understood why lack of viability did not seem to bother the UNF R & D park backers: this particular R & D park would never have to succeed in order to accomplish its major objective, which was to convince naive elected officials to open the public purse.

And it had already worked. In the eight months between July 1990 and February 1991, the tax dollars had been allocated, the contracts signed.

As for Michael Woodward, he graduated with his M.A. (English) in May 1991, right on schedule. He remembers the conversation that took place as UNF president Adam Herbert handed him his diploma cover.

Herbert: Congratulations, Michael.

Woodward: Thank you, Adam. I'll see you in court.



Richard Ekler, Tammy Whited, and Denise Hok, August 1991.
Photo by Rissi Cherie.

14. Whose University is This, Anyway?

Meanwhile, Sawmill Slough and Slough attorney Tim Keyser were still holding off the bulldozers by means of permit appeals. As part of that process, in June 1991 Slough members Eckler, Hok, Woodward, Loftin—back in fighting form again—and new SSCC member Madeline Fernald, a graduate student with a botany degree, all testified at a grueling two-day administrative hearing. Adam Herbert testified, too, after Keyser threatened to subpoena him. To no one's surprise, the hearing officer ruled in favor of the UNF administration and the Water Management District and affirmed the permits—which Sawmill Slough again appealed.

The hearing officer's ruling came as no surprise to the Slough because the hearing dealt only with a narrow range of hydrological and other technical criteria related to the permits, not with the overall merits and purposes of the road plan itself. In other words, the hearing officer was only allowed to consider whether the roads were going to be built right, not whether they were the right roads to build. Only the owners of the property could decide that. The Slough's challenge was to get the

owners to change the plans before the appeals process—and time—ran out.

The legal owners of the University of North Florida campus are the Governor and Cabinet of the State of Florida.¹

Unfortunately, the average citizen cannot just pick up the phone and dial up the Governor for a chat; it doesn't work that way. Even letters sent to the Governor or Cabinet members are usually read only by aides and staff. Only if the staff person who screens the mail and answers the telephone thinks something is very important—and very credible—will it be brought to the attention of the busy state official.

Michael Woodward took the summer of 1991 off and spent eight hours a day calling and writing every government department and bureau in Tallahassee and, with assistance from Slough member and recent UNF finance graduate Michelle Sandarg, a few in Washington, too. It was a crash course in do-it-yourself lobbying. Michael figured if he turned over enough rocks in the bureaucracy, if he called enough people and got enough referrals to other people, then sooner or later he just might get through to someone who would be interested enough and important enough to get the UNF road plan placed on hold until it could be brought before the Governor and Cabinet for reconsideration. It was a discouraging process, as Michael learned that bureaucrats and officials generally tend to listen only to people they're already used to listening to.

One day near the end of summer, when Woodward was running out of time and running out of people to call, he happened to be talking to a Dan Crabb in the Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Land Management (BLM), again asking if there was some way to get the loop and eastern connector plan reconsidered. Crabb pulled the UNF file. He said the BLM had a map showing the loop road but that he had never even heard of this UNF eastern connector. Well, neither had any of the people in all the other agencies Woodward had contacted. The difference this time was that the BLM is in charge of reviewing land use plans for all state-owned lands, including the UNF campus. And the UNF plan on file, the only plan that had been approved by the Governor and Cabinet, *had no eastern connector*.

The University of North Florida and the Board of Regents soon received a letter from the Department of Natural Resources:

This office has been requested to research this

[road] issue due to concerns raised by Mr. Michael W. Woodward, Sawmill Slough Conservation Club...The approved management plan and master plan on file do not appear to address either by text or drawing the eastern connector road questioned by Mr. Woodward....Until this construction activity is approved no construction activities should commence on the property.²

It looked like Michael and the Slough had finally turned over the right rock.

But Sawmill Slough was undergoing some turnover of its own. Richard Eckler had graduated and was now busy establishing his career. Denise Hok had not only graduated during the summer but had moved out of state (following a wild Slough send-off bash). Even Jason Revisky had dropped out. With no experienced vice presidents left to take over, Michael decided to stay on long enough to see the road battle through to its conclusion and to train new officers. So in September 1991, Michael was re-elected as SSCC president. Toni Wheeler, a sharp feminist activist who Woodward hoped to see succeed him as president, was elected as executive (first) vice president. Jeff White, a member of the National Guard sharpshooting team, became second vice president and took charge of the Slough's outings program; while Tammy Whited, now a UNF student and active Sloughie who had recently begun serving as the Club's secretary (now an appointed rather than elected position), rounded out the newly elected SSCC executive committee as third vice president, with special responsibility for on-campus activities.

Realizing the importance of forming alliances, Sawmill Slough had previously voted to affiliate with the Florida Wildlife Federation, while also remaining in contact with the Sierra Club and other environmental groups. The Slough also realized the need to involve other concerned parties in the road issue—and particularly the importance of presenting a broad united front when that issue would be decided in Tallahassee. Soon Sawmill Slough and any allies the Slough could find would be taking their case to the BLM—or actually the Land Management Advisory Council (LMAC), a committee of Cabinet aides whose

recommendations regarding the use of state-owned lands were almost always ratified by the Governor and Cabinet.

On campus, the Club had already begun attempting to renew its ties with SGA, by now composed of an entirely new group of people to whom Sawmill Slough Conservation Club and the road issue were strangers and strange. The Slough, from its own point of view, found it odd that SGA expected the Slough to re-establish and justify its position on an issue—the loop and eastern connector roads—that the SGA itself was already on record as opposing. The problem was that SGA seemed to have no memory; unlike Sawmill Slough, it had little sense of its own historical continuity. So Woodward, as the only remaining SSCC officer whose term in office encompassed the entire road plan controversy, soon found himself playing the role of educator as well as lobbyist, briefing the new SGA senators on the recent history of UNF, Sawmill Slough, and, to some extent, even the SGA itself. As a result, the Slough soon picked up some formidable allies in the SGA Senate, most notably Student Advocate Committee (SAC) chair Gary Greenberg and SAC vice chair Sean Nelson.

However, the process of forging an alliance with SGA involved overcoming the negative image the Slough and its president had in the minds of many senators. Gary Greenberg recalls that at first, “few people understood Michael’s true reasons for attempting to stop the loop road and R & D Park [eastern connector] projects.” Basing their judgments on Woodward’s appearance and his disquietingly intense and unequivocal rhetorical style, “most observers conceived of him as some ‘long-haired, tree-hugging environmental fanatic.’” Greenberg, on the other hand, was able to see almost immediately just what Woodward was about and, at the same time, understand why Woodward’s motives might have been somewhat difficult for some people to relate to or even comprehend: “He stands to gain nothing personally in the final outcome of his actions. Rather, his actions are designed to level the playing field on which power and hierarchy operate to the disadvantage of the rest of society.” Some Senate members initially found it hard to understand that Woodward and Sawmill Slough were motivated neither by personal gain nor by a narrow agenda of environmental fanaticism but were instead concerned with something far broader in scope, “the necessity to represent the

unrepresented,” as Greenberg puts it. And in this case the “unrepresented” were the students and senators themselves. Sawmill Slough was not asking the Senate to assist in resolving an environmental issue so much as it was reminding the senators of their own interest in—and responsibility for defending—the principle that decisions which use public resources to construct public facilities ought, by right, to include all individuals who may be affected by or help subsidize those projects.”³

Stacy Potts, a prominent and outspoken senator, was among those who appeared skeptical, even hostile, for a time, but she, too, began to see that the Slough’s version of reality was more credible than that of Herbert administration representatives—who, as a direct result of Sawmill Slough’s activities, found it necessary to appear before the SGA Senate to explain their policies. Potts, an activist who had become concerned over the pervasive apathy she had seen among so many of her fellow students, recalls that

when Michael Woodward first addressed the Senate on behalf of SSCC, I was left with several overwhelming impressions: SSCC is informed, intelligent, and well prepared; the administration does not have the best interests of the students first on [its] list of priorities (to put it mildly). This meeting was the baptism of fire for many new senators who would become staunch advocates and served as the impetus for a Senate resolution against the Research and Development farce.

Overall, Potts’ impression of the Slough was that it is caring, diligent, and deliciously thorough.... They do their own research, fight their own battles, and even do their own fundraising, at a time when many other clubs are insulted at the mere suggestion of self-sufficiency. I hope for the benefit of all [UNF] students that Sawmill Slough will continue strong into the future.⁴

Following the Slough's briefing and SGA's own investigation, SGA decided it would be appropriate to bring the entire road issue before the student body again, as most of the then current students (Fall 1991) had not been present when the issue was last thoroughly debated in 1989.

So SGA arranged a forum—almost, but not quite, a debate—that was held in the UNF theatre in October 1991. Adam Herbert was at first unwilling to participate, but SGA president Tina Jennings made it clear to him that if he did do so, she would see to it that his reluctance to face UNF students—or Sawmill Slough—would be made as public as possible.⁵ So Herbert showed up, bringing with him UNF officials Curtis Bullock and Tom Healy along with one or two technical people. Sawmill Slough was represented by Michael Woodward, Richard Eckler (who at Michael's request had come out of "retirement" for the occasion), Madeline Fernald, Doc Loftin (who did not say a word but who sat on stage with the SSCC team), and Tammy Whited—whose ringing delivery of the Slough's opening address, written by Woodward with input from Eckler and Whited, thoroughly impressed her listeners and placed Herbert on the defensive even before he spoke. And for every statement Herbert and his staff made, Woodward and Eckler responded with withering rebuttals backed by the boxload of documentation that they had brought along.

Afterward Doc Loftin met Michael and Richard in the parking lot. "I really love you guys," Woodward remembers him saying. "And I'm glad we fought," he said. "No matter what, I'm glad we fought." Those were comforting words for Michael and Richard, who, like the rest of the Slough, had just been devastated by Doc's quiet announcement that he had been diagnosed with cancer. Loftin entered the hospital the following day.

But there was no time to stop and worry.

Woodward and Toni Wheeler (the Slough's new executive vice president) soon were on their way to Tallahassee to state their case before the Land Management Advisory Council, where their position was supported by Florida Wildlife Federation president Manley Fuller. Here they were again opposed not only by the Herbert administration's Rogers Towers lawyer (now acting as a lobbyist in this non-judicial forum) but also by representatives of the Board of Regents, who by now had already

managed to convince the BLM staff that something resembling the eastern connector—which they had never heard of and had been unable to find before—actually did appear somewhere on a previously approved map.

On a follow-up trip to Tallahassee, preceded by intensive preparation of the presentation they would make to LMAC, Michael and Toni were accompanied by SSCC members Jeff White, James Vickery, Karen Finan, and Madeline Fernald. Also accompanying the Slough were SSCC's old friends David Ferrari of the Sierra Club and UNF Professor Tom Mongar, who presented a faculty petition in support of a northern access route as an alternative to the eastern connector opposed by the Slough, which at this point had abandoned the attempt to stop the loop road completion and was concentrating solely on the more vulnerable and even more environmentally unacceptable eastern connector. Although no one from SGA accompanied the Slough in person, Student Advocate Committee chair Gary Greenberg had seen to it that the alternate route—an “academic corridor” straight north to Florida Community College's South Campus—had been tentatively okayed by the landowner (Eastpark) involved, and SGA president Tina Jennings sent along a letter of support. And once again Florida Wildlife Federation president Manley Fuller turned out to buttress the Slough's case.

One of the Slough's best moments came when Woodward reminded the LMAC panel of Rogers Towers lawyer Marcia Parker's previous statement that the eastern connector was needed to open up the southeast area of the campus for expansion. He then played a videotape, shot by Toni Wheeler at a recent SGA Senate meeting, in which UNF officials Curtis Bullock and Tom Healy repeatedly assured the student senators that no expansion was planned for that or any other area outside the existing campus core.

All to no avail. In the end, Sawmill Slough found that it had simply been out-lobbied by an adversary with access to virtually unlimited resources—tax money—and powerful allies, notably the Board of Regents. The November LMAC vote was five to two—at least two Cabinet aides were convinced the Slough was right⁶—to approve the eastern connector. And the Slough's permit appeals soon ran out.

Having kept his commitment to see the fight through to the end,

and feeling that two years was long enough for any one person to lead the Club, Michael Woodward resigned as SSCC president in December of 1991, although he agreed to stay on as Environmental Defense Chair until Fall 1992. He did not feel that either he or the Slough had been defeated, however. They hadn't backed down, hadn't "thrown in the towel," hadn't broken under the pressure. They had actually won a victory far more important even than the public records or road issues. Michael enclosed the following message with the December 1991 *Swamp Stomper*:

In the Spring of 1989, I watched a lot of people beg for their dream—their nature sanctuary—not to be violated, not to be taken from them. I watched their spirits bend and even break as they learned that they and their dream counted for nothing with those who held power over their lives and their land. And I could not stand by and let that be. I'm glad I did what I did for the next two and a half years, whatever it cost me.

Was it all worth it? Well, my honor is whole and my conscience clear. One year, five years, twenty years from now I will be able to look back at what I did to fight for the UNF nature sanctuary and be proud to remember that I did all I could do and gave it my best. I may not have changed the world for the better, but I refused to let it change me for the worse.

And in so doing I have met and come to love and respect some brave and beautiful people I would not otherwise have known. I recall an ancient fable that says the only reason the world is not destroyed is that seventy good people live in it. I am fortunate to have met some of them in Sawmill Slough Conservation Club and the Florida Wildlife Federation.

No dream can be violated that is not first abandoned, and no spirit can be broken that fights for a dream. The sanctuary that is the spirit of Sawmill Slough Conservation Club is beyond the reach of any road, any dictator, any evil. I hope—as I have hoped all along —that everyone who has worked beside me in this fight or even just watched will always remember that.

Fight on. For the earth, for your dreams.
Fight on.



15. The Aftermath

Reorganization of the Club proved more difficult than expected. Instead of taking over as president at the beginning of 1992, executive vice president Toni Wheeler also resigned, as she wished to give her full attention to feminist and social issues. Second vice president Jeff White then automatically became SSCC president, but his increasing academic and military commitments soon caused him to drop out, too.

The situation did not look good for Sawmill Slough's continued existence. It appeared that the Club's carefully crafted constitutional arrangement to ensure leadership continuity might fail just when it was most needed to keep the Slough alive. But the Club had survived similar crises in the past. As Loftin tells it,

When I look back over it, every time when I thought, well, there's nobody on the horizon to lead the Club, the Club's going down, and the people that were the leaders have faded away or graduated and gone off—every time, somebody has come forward, somebody from an unexpected quarter, somebody that I didn't see as emerging as a leader would come from nowhere and assume the burdens of leadership and lead [Sawmill Slough] on. That's happened every time.¹

And so Tammy Whited, still in her teens and with only a few months' experience as third vice president, suddenly found herself president of Sawmill Slough Conservation Club, responsible for leading the Club through the critical process of rebuilding, reorganizing, and redefining itself. Understandably, she felt somewhat overwhelmed, especially when newly elected vice presidents Darrold Goodwin and Sheila Dean also found it necessary to drop out. Whited, not exactly a rugged outdoorswoman, responded by appointing James Vickery, an experienced camper and canoeist, as interim executive vice president and put him in charge of the Slough's outings program.

Doc Loftin had to undergo surgery and endure repeated rounds of debilitating chemotherapy treatments, but he continued both to teach and to serve as SSCC faculty advisor, even going on some Club outings. However, at the request of Sawmill Slough, Professor Tom Mongar agreed to serve as SSCC's co-advisor, thus relieving Loftin of some of the workload involved while at the same time increasing the Club's ties with UNF faculty—something Loftin himself sees as important to the future of the Slough, which he believes

needs more involvement from other faculty members.

The Club has always been too closely tied to me...

and I think it's been my fault that I haven't worked to
cultivate more involvement by other people.²

However, the Florida Wildlife Federation evidently thought Loftin had been doing a good job for the Club. The Federation selected Loftin as the recipient of its 1992 Conservation Educator of the Year award.

The Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce evidently thought Adam Herbert had been doing a good job for them. The Chamber chose Herbert to succeed Tom Petway as the Chamber's chairman.

The bulldozers rolled and the loop and eastern connector roads were built. The loop road was opened to traffic in August 1992, although the eastern connector didn't actually connect to anything.

Michael Woodward made another trip to Tallahassee when he learned that the UNF administration was attempting to secure the Land Management Advisory Council's approval of additional roads in an undeveloped area of the campus. By now Woodward was becoming one of the people LMAC was used to listening to. The proposed roads were rejected—unanimously.³

16. The Canoes

Battered, dented, cracked and patched, the UNF canoes can still be seen in their rack near the campus fitness center. Only four of those twenty-year-old aluminum canoes are left. Only two are still usable.

One Saturday in July, those two canoes accompanied the members of Sawmill Slough Conservation Club on yet another outing, this one to Tanglewylde, a small Florida Wildlife Federation nature sanctuary located on the St. Johns River about fifty miles south of Jacksonville. Michael Woodward is Tanglewylde's caretaker.

Michael gave Tammy Whited her first canoe lesson. They both figured it was about time she learned. She did well.

Good thing, too. The Student Government Association has allocated the money to purchase four new canoes.



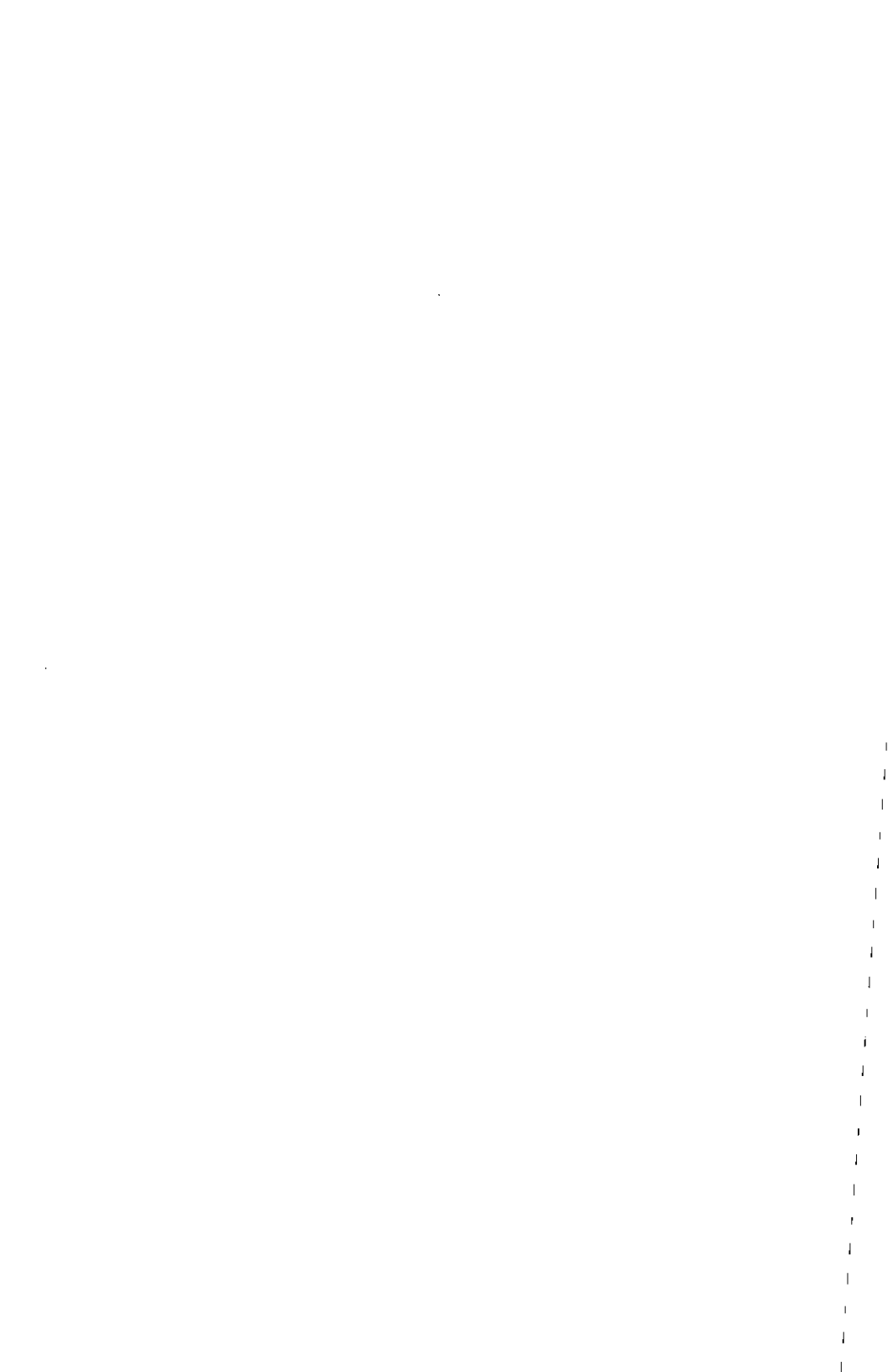
Sawmill Slough with artram's Ixia, Clay County, Florida, May 1991. Front row - L. to R. - Denise Hok, Sandy Boyd, Rissi Cherie, Jason Revisky, Bob Loftin. Backrow - L. to R. - Jeff White, Oona Hoover, Michael Woodward, Nancy & Donna Monroe. Photo by Bob Loftin.



The Slough at Tanglewylde, July 1992.

Part III

1993-2003



17. A Legend Passes

The Sawmill Slough Conservation Club was going through many changes and it would take a lot more than new canoes to see it through. During the 1992-93 school year, Robert Loftin became very sick and was forced to take leave from his position at UNF. Political science professor Thomas Mongar became the official advisor, somewhat just for UNF paperwork. James Vickery assumed the role as president after Tammy Whited also departed from the position. The club was obviously headed into a new and unknown direction.

Then the Sawmill Slough endured the most painful change in all of its twenty-year history. This was the passing of its founding father and greatest ally; quintessentially the backbone of its identity. Longtime leader, Robert W. Loftin's two-year battle with cancer came to an end on August 13, 1993 in his Jacksonville home. After school began, an emotional memorial was held in the Robinson Theater. As Vickery recalls, "there wasn't a dry eye in the house."¹

The memorial service was in conjunction with a prior-planned dedication of The Nature Trail System in Loftin's name. Charles Winton, President of the Faculty Association, and Lee Hunter, former Slough president, presented the plaque, which now permanently sits at the head of the trails:

The University of North Florida acknowledges with grateful appreciation the dedication and leadership of Professor Emeritus Robert W. Loftin, distinguished professor, outstanding teacher and friend, whose inspirational vision and indomitable spirit contributed to the establishment of the UNF Nature Trail System. Dedicated, August 1993.²

While the day was one of sadness for many at UNF, there were a few notes of optimism. Loftin had been able to see the plaque a few days before his death and was aware of the intense appreciation felt for him by the UNF community. His awareness gave the feeling that he was, in fact, there with the group that day, presiding over his memorial. One professor even recalls a moved John Golden, UNF Ranger and former SSCC president, giving a poignant promise to Loftin's spirit, crying out: "We'll keep it green, Doc!"³

But doing so perhaps wasn't so easy. The Sawmill Slough Conservation Club and the University of North Florida had known no existence without devoted environmentalist Robert W. Loftin. What would happen to the Slough? And perhaps more importantly, to the university itself?

18. A New Generation of Slough

The Sawmill Slough Conservation club at the time of Loftin's death was still under the direction of James Vickery and political science Professor Thomas Mongar, with Mongar's daughter Sonja, taking over the presidency. "It truly was the end of an era" recalls Vickery, adding that everything really changed after Loftin passed away. Many people had graduated and moved on around 1993, so Vickery, while already a graduate student, felt he had to stay involved "just long enough to pass the torch and the legacy on."¹

The advisor Mongar had a similar mentality, as he just attended campus meetings and was the advisor only to keep the club active while they looked for someone more permanent.

That permanent person turned out to be philosophy Professor David Fenner, who came on board at UNF in 1992. Fenner, hired as a visiting professor when philosophy professor Andy Buchwalter went on sabbatical, stayed on at UNF after Loftin got sick. Fenner concludes that in a sense, he "took over where Bob left off, in terms of teaching philosophy."²

Of course, filling the shoes of the 1988 Distinguished Faculty award winner was not an easy task. And Fenner knew that did not want to merely replace Loftin's spot as a faculty member. Fenner felt he had no choice but to continue teaching environmental ethics and environmental philosophy, as Loftin had done for so many years. A natural progression from there, of course, was to take over the Slough, so in 1994 he became the next advisor after "placeholder" Mongar. Fenner recalls:

When Bob left, Sawmill Slough was just in limbo. [I thought] it was important to have Sawmill Slough not just go away, and it was [also] important to have environmental ethics not just go away.³

The first president in Fenner's new Slough was Kim Weatherford, a quiet pre-med student, whose shy demeanor Fenner insisted was "deceptive." While she wasn't the "loud Sierra Club, Greenpeace type" Fenner recalled that she "was very good about detail."⁴

While very organized, this new Sawmill Slough Conservation Club wasn't extremely large. Fenner recalls Kim's introverted nature and determined that she "was not in the position to create a huge club with a lot going on."⁵ Vickery, who stayed on as VP, likewise recalls the Club being small, so they "concentrated on the social and spent a lot of time trying to recruit new members."⁶

At least it was a decent start finding an identity in the post-Loftin years. The Club easily shifted back to its roots as an educational and recreational group with little campus activism. Some of the more memorable nature excursions included several canoeing trips to the Santa Fe River and an extensive beach clean-up at Little Talbot Island. Despite the good times that were had on these trips, the Club unfortunately never generated the large numbers that they wanted to.

In the fall of 1995, Fenner took some time away in Scotland and the Slough had a new advisor and a new president, mathematics Professor Rexanne Bruno and Amy Kosakicwicz (later Shaw), respectively.

Amy Kosakicwicz, an education major and self-proclaimed "nature lover," remembers how happy she was to discover the club:

I was very excited about the Slough when I came across them. Being the oldest club on campus and hearing all the exciting things they had done. I was so excited to join...⁷

In 1995, she became president. The Club was still small, so she remembers the Slough doing everything they could to boost enrollment:

I made a new cloth banner to use as display on the green, we did a fundraiser, and we made new t-shirts and sold them at Earth Music Fest...⁸

Of course, Earth Music Fest of that year was a grand success, as it had been for several years in the early and mid-1990s. However, it was slowly evolving into more of a reggae Jamaica-style event than a real Earth Day celebration. While over 3,000 students attended the all-day concert and the Slough was one of nineteen organizational booths⁹, the turnout and notoriety still did little to help expand the Club. Frustrated, Kosacicwicz announced that she would no longer be president. At the time, she remembers the Club being down to four members. The oft-occurring problem of no one wanting to take on the presidency eventually forced the Slough to disband. When Kosacicwicz graduated, she thought the Sawmill Slough was nonexistent.

And it was for nearly a year and a half. The loss of university recognition as a club came in the fall of 1996 and the entire contents of the Club locker were tossed in the garbage by Club Alliance without any warning to the advisors. The results of many hours creating stationary, banners, tee-shirts, and videos were lost forever.¹⁰

The Slough was not only dead again, but this time its long surviving history may have been dying too.



19. Petitions and Golf Clubs: Part I

The nonexistence of the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club left a far greater impact that one might have imagined in the 1996-97 school year. With it being the only campus environmental group and on an indefinite hiatus, it probably seemed to the UNF administration an easy time to pass another damaging environmental plan.

Their agenda was to build the Golf Management Learning Center (GMLC), a 38-acre, three-hole golf course right on the UNF campus. The course was to be located very near the Nature Trail System, in an area that contained wetlands and uplands and abundant wildlife.

Of course, talk about a golf course had peaked and subsided at least twice in UNF's history¹, but Loftin and the Slough had always been there to oppose it. As early as 1973, there was prospect of a golf course. They conducted surveys to see what the student interest was on the idea, but the students at the time, (many Slough affiliated) preferred an ecology center and hiking trails over a golf course.² Off and on after that, talk of the course emerged and then subsided. In faculty minutes from 1984, Robert Loftin and the Faculty Association went on record against the

course. Then-President Curtis McCray (whom Loftin had surmised did not want the course anyway) emphasized to the faculty that their voice would always be heard in the future:

If there be further discussion about this, and that if the university land or access be affected, it is my intention to come back to this organization and seek appropriate authority.³

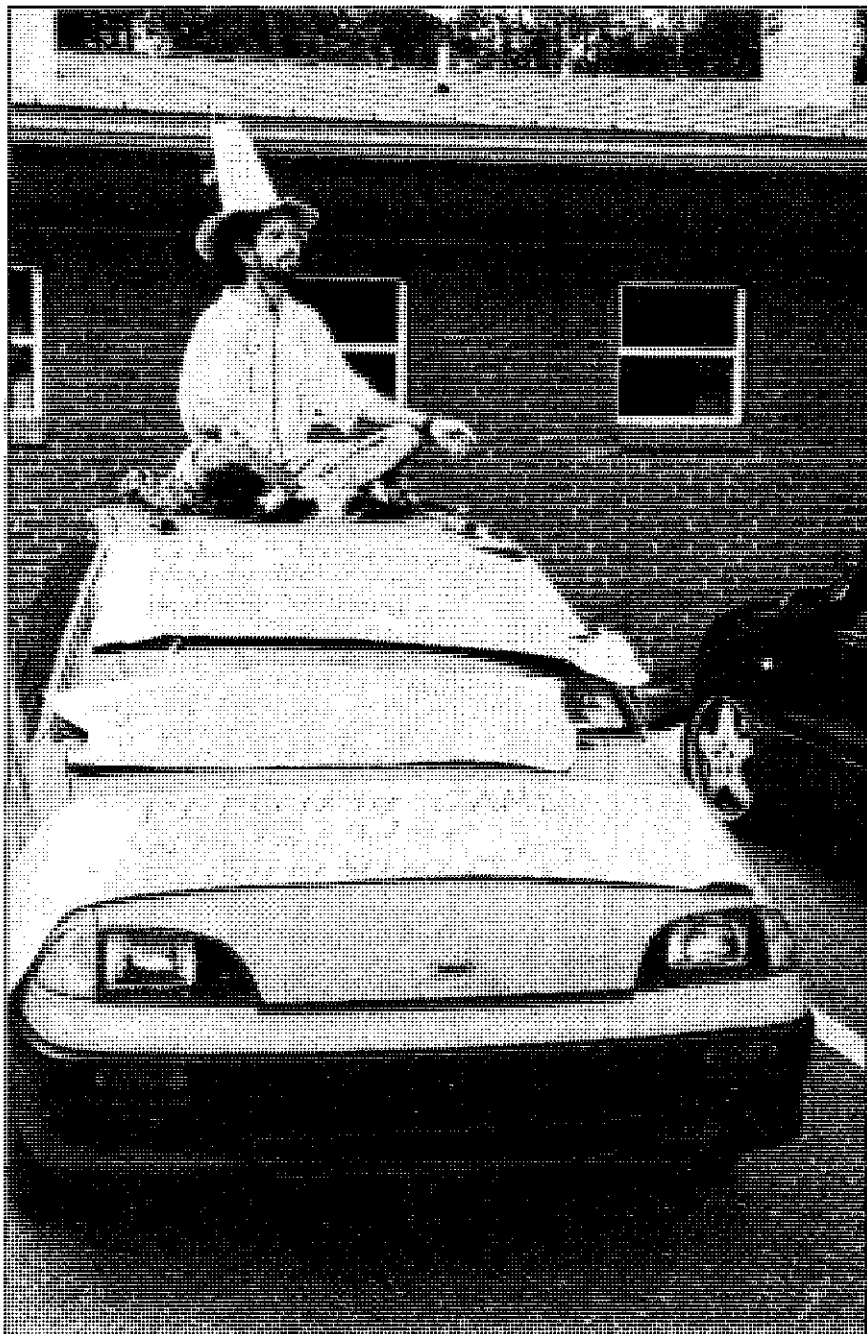
However, things changed in the thirteen years that followed. First of all, Loftin was gone and the Slough was dormant. And possibly even more important, UNF's reigning president, Adam Herbert, seemed to have no intention to follow past precedents.

There was no indication of a golf course in the 1995 Master Plan, a plan that was supposed to detail *all* development for the next five years. Herbert went against that two years later, with a deal that UNF Vice President Bob Fagin later described as done "in the dark of the night."⁴ Herbert accepted a \$750,000 donation from John and Gerri Hayt to build nothing other than a golf course on campus. And he did this without the input of the faculty, students or staff and without allowing them to know what the money was for.

As former Slough advisor and chemistry Professor Ray Bowman recalls, only a few insiders knew the money had already been accepted for a golf course and a golf course only. Vice President Fagin was one of them, and he later admitted to advising Herbert against the move, but it was supposedly a "done deal."⁵

No one else at UNF during 1997-98 school year seemed to know this. And according to Bowman, "some of the most vigorous demonstrations that UNF has ever seen"⁶ occurred during that year, fighting against a project they were powerless to stop.





Jacob Zammito protests the golf center. Photo courtesy Ranger Ryan Meyer.

20. Petitions and Golf Clubs: Part II

If the administration thought that the golf course plan would go fairly unnoticed, they were dead wrong.

When rumor trickled down, there was immediate reaction on the campus of the University of North Florida. It started in the natural sciences department. In a letter to the administration, biologist Johnny Randall and sixteen other professors emphasized the needlessness of such a course on campus. Randall declared that the three-hole course was rather pointless for even the golf team, given that such a small course had little variety for training. After all, there were nineteen public and eight private courses in the area, including world-renowned TPC at Sawgrass to which the team already had access.¹ It seems Randall even rallied on with Bob Loftin's determined spirit: As Fenner recalls:

Johnny took a golf club, broke it in half, and wired it to the front of his pick-up truck. That's how serious his opposition was...²

But this was not a fight to be led by a few environmentally-minded science professors.

The student body, typically fairly passive at commuter schools like UNF, answered the call of history to come alive and protest the golf course. This was thanks to environmental studies major Andy Fairbanks and pre-med major Tiffany Brainerd, who brought the issue to large-scale student attention. Fairbanks doesn't recall how he got wind of the project, only that he knew something had to be done to oppose it.

Unlike some of the sentiments in the infamous Loop battle in the early 1990's, the general student body consensus and SGA was behind the environmental opposition until the bitter end. The students fighting the course decided to re-establish the Sawmill Slough as a platform from which to fight. The concept of an environmental club easily garnered interest again, now having an opponent. While Brainerd and Fairbanks worked on petitions, the SGA sponsored an open forum for students to voice their concerns about the Golf Management Learning Center (GMLC). The petitions contained the names and signatures of over 2,000 students and faculty and the forum drew nearly 200 people.³ Andy Fairbanks recalls:

What really amazed and motivated me was how many 'closet environmentalists' dwelled at UNF. I was also perplexed by how ultra careful those who were staff had to be about how they supported our protests. I was brought up to believe that universities were supposed to be places for free thinking and free speech. I guess we all have our roles, so it worked out that staff helped however they felt they safely could, but left the loud stuff to students. We were happy to oblige.⁴

Indeed they did. One of the most outrageous stunts pulled by students involved an irate school mascot protesting at the spring Earth Music Fest. This is when an Osprey Village resident assistant (recalled as "Dave") legitimately procured the "Ozzie the Osprey" costume for one of his official programs but extended Ozzie's presence well into the weekend. Recalls Andy Fairbanks:

Ozzie spent the entire day protesting the golf-course at the Earth Music Festival. Oh, how I wish I could have seen Adam Herbert's face as Ozzie hugged little children and waved at their parents while wearing a shirt that said: "\$750,000 for Education, not Eradication of Choice, Reason, and Nature" on the back and "I hate the UNF Golf Course" on the front! Seriously pissed as we were, we still managed to have some fun.⁵

While it was the students who were able to make the mischievous rumble on campus, the faculty continued to try diplomacy within the bounds of their positions. Ray Bowman at some point realized that the building of a course was inevitable, so he drafted a new resolution focusing instead on where the course should be placed. He suggested it be constructed on the already disturbed northeast campus quadrant rather than the pristine southeast corner (adjacent to or even on the so-called nature reserve!) that the administration proposed:

I believe history will find the current plan to be lacking in judgment ...if we must have a golf course, it should be used as an opportunity to rehabilitate land rather than destroy part of UNF's most outstanding asset ⁶

The faculty approved Bowman's resolution to put the golf course on this partially developed land near the other athletic facilities. There was only one dissenting vote, and as Fenner recalls, "everyone was resoundingly, virtually unanimously in support."⁷

Everyone, that is, but the administration. Despite Bowman's sensible proposal, Interim President E.K. Fretwell (who took over when Herbert departed for a new position) decided the golf course would be built on the original, undisturbed southeast quadrant, a site that Randall had estimated to contain 40,000 trees. It was also a site where many animals had been identified, including bobcats, white-tailed deer, red foxes, and abundant birds and insects. ⁸

A good quarter of the student population had petitioned against it. The Student Government Association opposed it. The Faculty Association opposed it. This wasn't just a battle for Sawmill Slough to fight. This was a battle that many, many people, not just self-proclaimed environmentalists, fought for and truly believed in.

Shortly after the decision was rendered, Randall left UNF for good. In an open letter to The *Spinnaker*, he announced his resignation from the faculty, giving abundant reasons for his “disenchantment with the quality of environmental stewardship exhibited by the UNF administration.”⁹ Fenner recalls too that Randall “noticed the environmental potential of this campus and [was fed up] that the administration was paying zero attention to it.”¹⁰

As for the golf course, one can now easily spot it from J. Turner Butler Boulevard. It was completed in the summer of 2002.

But alas, positive repercussions did linger. For one, the administration decided to link with Audubon International (not to be confused with the bird-watching Audubon Society) to create an “ecologically sustainable golf course.” It was a small comfort, and most likely just to mollify the uproar and look good on paper. But as Fenner resided, “anything is better than nothing, [and] you take what you can get.”¹¹

And secondly, of course, for the Sawmill Slough and Andy Fairbanks, the GMLC brought new life as well as many new friends together:

I met a whole lot of other folks that eagerly took the time to confront what we all believed was disgraceful. It certainly was a downer when they decided to build the golf course anyway, but I believe the pressure applied by the many activists was what prompted the university to build the GMLC according to fairly strict environmental standards (if you can get past the fact that it is a golf course that was once a wildlife sanctuary). John Golden had a lot to do with that.¹²

While it's uncertain these days how well those standards are being applied, the GMLC fiasco regardless will go down in history as another admirable and hard-fought battle by the Sawmill Slough and the UNF students. Future Slough vice-president and biology major Dawn Beaulac, recalls:

We may not have won the battle, but at least the students knew what was going on. The school thought they could just slide in the golf course unnoticed. After that battle, Sawmill Slough was back and a very respected group.¹³

As with any tough battle lost, a few new Sloughers found themselves jaded and ready to pack it in. But for those few, there were many, many more that were just starting to get inspired. On the opening day of the Golf Center, one Slough member was still out to show the administration that he hadn't forgotten. This was Jacob Zammito, a usually quiet and unassuming biology major, who was photographed meditating for several hours on top of his car with a sign that read "Playing Games with the Environment?" to the inaugural golfers.¹⁴



21. A New Wave of Slough

The Sawmill Slough Conservation Club was really back on its feet after the Golf Center protest. New Slougher Audrey Smallwood recalls first hearing of the Club at one of the courtyard protest tables, and cites the golf course as “what really, truly brought us all together.”¹

And together they were. David Fenner came back on as advisor and Brendie Lucas came on board as the next Slough president. Lucas, an aspiring environmental lawyer, seemed like just the enthusiastic personality the Club needed after such a downer. Fenner endearingly described her as “a person who finds her true home as a cheerleader. Not in a negative stereotype, but she just had that kind of energy.”²

Slougher Jacob Zammito agrees, insisting that while she “wasn’t the rough and tough outdoors type” she was enthusiastic and open-minded in trying. He recalls Lucas:

I saw her learn canoeing for the first time [on a Slough trip]. She and her roommate tried to paddle a canoe both facing each other. She was nice, personable, cheerful and enthusiastic. I once even saw her offer gas money to Sloughers to ensure they could participate in a trip.³

With Lucas at the helm and Peter Bystrowski and Jacob Morton as the new vice-presidents (returning to the ways of the late 80s when two VPs was a club standard) the Club became very active once again. The *Swamp Stomper* was re-instated in the summer of 1998, and the Club did many recreational outings, one notably out into the UNF Nature Trails with Ranger John Golden. This outing, which was later described by Brendie Lucas as a “death march,” was highlighted in the first issue of the ‘98 *Stomper* :

Several members of the Slough got a glimpse into why the former incarnations of the newsletter was called the *Swamp Stomper*. Much stomping, stumbling and grumbling was to be had by Sloughies on May 16. John Golden, UNF’s park ranger, led a small army through the bush of the nature preserve that day. Highlights include a grand 500-year old cypress tree, an elder of the UNF woods, a Pygmy rattlesnake, edible blueberries, Pitcher plants, and super tiny frogs.⁴

With the Club being so outdoorsy, Fenner asked biology professor Sister Aileen Miller (who came to UNF in 1996) to help out with the recreational end of the Club. Fenner, a self-proclaimed theoretician, simply put, “did not camp.”⁵ Miller herself was much more into being outdoors and was happy to oblige, and also remembers getting involved through one of her students, SSCC vice president Jacob Morton.

Later that summer, a second issue of the *Stomper* detailed their first camping and canoeing trip at Princess Place reserve. After a day of canoeing,

Slougheads flocked to Sister Aileen’s homemade vegetable soup. This little taste of heaven as a delicious flavor of fine gourmet food, ecclesiastical style. Thank you Sister Eileen. Another master gourmet, John Hammond (co-founder of the Earth Kinship Conference) indulged those Sloughies camping out to a premium supper of kielbasa, a bean stew. After

supper under the stars, John again awed the senses of the crowd with his poetry. About half the crowd joined in with their own stories to tell... Those that were unable to attend our first outing: you missed a hell of a good time!⁶

The Slough of 1998, after the bitter defeat of the golf course, was totally back to camping and canoeing (and having a really great time doing so!). However, Miller is quick to point out that there was still a focus on discussing environmental issues on these trips, as well as fostering the long-time Slough ideal of a multigenerational connection:

We really had a purpose [on the camping trips]. We were trying to get together and talk and let people share what was going on and what was important [environmentally]. There was a big focus on storytelling and sharing things so that the young people were aware.⁷

The summer of 1998 also brought some on-campus horticultural labor for the Club, as two Sloughers began cultivating an organic garden on the northeast quadrant of campus. Since it was a year of historically extreme drought in Northeast Florida, these two students, Ann Marie Muench and SSCC vice president Jacob Morton, were forced to work extra hard to keep the garden alive.



Sloughers with John Golden on the UNF Trails, May 1998.



Earth Kinship 1999 on the UNF Green.
Photo Courtesy UNF Archives.

22. UNF's Own Environmental Conference

While the golf course fiasco was one incident that helped re-build the Slough in the late 1990s, there was also another (much less bittersweet!) event that did some of the same. This was the Earth Kinship Conference, an environmental conference that called UNF its home between 1996-2001.

The six-year alliance began in 1995, when Sea Grant Coordinator Joe Halusky came to UNF to forge ties with the only state university in the area. Slough advisor David Fenner joined the steering committee for the conference Halusky had co-founded with poet John Hammond in 1989. Although he recalls attending “about one meeting,” Fenner seemed to successfully volunteer UNF as the official site.¹

Thus, from 1996-1999, the Earth Kinship Conference was held on the UNF green and in the downstairs rooms of Building 14. Typically speakers held workshops off and on in the various classrooms and a ceremonial fire was kept up at all times outdoors. The conference generally drew an older crowd and was often less student-oriented than the Earth Music Fest. After all, the price for the three-day event

sometimes reached \$75. However, the students could participate free or at a discount, thanks to their help decorating and keeping the fire up, tirelessly at times, at all hours of the night.

The conference, being so readily accessible on the UNF green, also turned out to be a successful breeding ground to attract new Sloughers to the Club. It was how Keith Marks, future Slough member, came across the Club in the first place:

I just kind of fell into the Slough... [no pun intended!] I was walking back from class to my dorm room one Friday and they were all out there on the green... I stopped to say hi for five minutes, then five minutes turned into two hours, two hours turned into all afternoon... I ended up watching the fire and staying out there all weekend. I don't even think I went to my room to put my stuff away...²

At the conclusion of the weekend, Marks won a door prize that turned out to be a Sawmill Slough Conservation Club tee-shirt. At that point, he really felt like he was a part of the Club. After all, if he wanted to wear the shirt around, he might have to be!

Other future members of the Club came across the conference when their environmentally-minded professors brought them out there. Dan Miller, another future Slougher, recalls psychology professor John Eisler bringing his class to the conference. When Dan is asked about his environmentalism and later success as Slough president, he insists that he “owe[s] it all to Dr. Eisler.”³

After several years on a college campus, the conference began to take on a more intellectual, educational slant. It began to involve many UNF faculty members in lectures and include yearly themes like: “Educating for a future: Learning to be Human in a more than human world” and “Coming Home: Discovering our sense of place.”

23. Still No Research University

While the Earth Kinship Conference was thriving, much of the campus around it was changing dramatically from year-to-year. It seemed some part of UNF was always under construction. By 1999, the school was near 13,000 students, and around that time, two new dorms, a new Fine Arts Center, and a University Center were all going up. These were all arguably necessities to the UNF campus. However, the golf course groundbreaking, going on about the same time, was not the only questionable construction in the area. The edifices that really left people scratching their heads were just off campus on Kernan Boulevard. These buildings comprised the good ole' R & D Park, re-named First Coast Technology Park.

The collective memory of the UNF students had long since forgotten that there was even supposed to be an R & D Park. After all, the Kernan interchange was completed in 1994, but all in total, the park had sat undeveloped for eleven years. Just as former Slough president and author Michael Woodward had surmised in the early 1990s, high end technological and health research companies did not have an interest in the

park adjacent to UNF, which had never been considered a research university.¹

And his other prediction, that the university knew this all along, appeared to come true as well. In 1998, UNF officials asked for state permission to sell a portion of the land for commercial offices instead of research and development. Just as Woodward had concluded, the “technology” catchphrase was all a guise to get the Kernan Boulevard interchange developed for the landowning Skinner family. He guessed all along that they eventually just wanted all the land sold to businesses.

By 1999, park director Bob Fagin (former UNF vice-president) described the park as “hot” in a *Florida Times-Union* article.² The article claimed that the switch to selling commercial was only to “spark interest.” Soon after the switch, the seemingly endless of sight of Florida pines disappeared and were replaced by Aucter Co., America Online and ADT Security all constructing offices.

Most students beginning UNF at the time knew no history of the park and did not understand why it was there. Others tried to read between the lines. A *Spinnaker* article in 2000 revealed the official mission of the First Coast Technology Park as being:

...the center for research and development enterprises which complement, support and strengthen the research, service and teaching mission of UNF.³

But many wondered: how exactly was the so-called “tech park” strengthening teachers and students when it was being sold to commercial businesses as office space? After all, AOL was a tech giant at the time, but the building they were constructing near UNF was a mere call center. Hardly an exciting job opportunity or teaching tool for those in technology fields!

And of course, from an environmental perspective, the tech park had been bad from the beginning. While it did not develop the 50 acres of wetlands on the site, it did develop over 230 acres of upland that went right up to the wetland edge. Not to mention, 98 gopher tortoise burrows were found on the site, 69 of which were actively being used as turtle homes.⁴

Many Sawmill Sloughers and like-minded members of the UNF

community could not help but wonder: If this land really had to be developed, shouldn't it be for something the university really needed? Like maybe more dorms, a real student union, or at least something learning-affiliated? Unfortunately there was nothing the Slough could do, as the decision to construct the park, for whatever purpose, had long been on the books.

It seemed more and more obvious to some that UNF would never be a top research school in the then still-exploding technology field. To them, it was obvious that UNF's real asset was still the natural land itself. As far as research would go, it was the naturally endowed outdoor lab that would set UNF apart from other universities.

At almost the exact time the tech park was selling out, three professors (Drs. Fenner, Eisler and Bowman) were going the opposite direction, trying for a yet again to develop the elusive UNF Nature Center for environmental research.

This time it was based on an environmentally friendly prototype "Florida House" in Sarasota. The organization that had constructed his house, which was made from recycled products, wanted to create one in Northeast Florida and thought UNF was the perfect site.⁵

Fenner and Eisler went through what felt like "millions of meetings"⁶ with the UNF administration on every aspect of the house and what it entailed. In the process, they came across the opinions that the house would need a program to look after it first. After all, UNF did not need another white elephant like the soccer stadium (which at this writing has sat unused for five years).

The project was rejected until they found a program. So the professors got together and planned and worked out the particulars for an environmental studies minor. However, the administration vetoed again and said it needed to be "hard sciences" only. Frustrated, Fenner and Eisler, social science professors, had to give up again on their role in the perpetually elusive nature center.

Fortunately, an environmental science minor was eventually instated in the UNF course books. But on the downside, UNF still remains secondary when it comes to research. There is still no sign of a UNF Nature Center in the near future; likewise, the First Coast Technology Park still has no plans to house any research tenants.



UNF President Ann Hopkins reads "FightOn!" with (from left) Keith Marks, David Fenner, Joe Halusky, Dawn Beulac and Andy Fairbanks.



Sloughers gather at Earth Kinship 2000 in freezing temperatures. Photo courtesy UNF Archives.

24. An Even Stronger Second Wave

Despite some of the negative environmental actions on the UNF campus, the Sawmill Slough was managing to stay grounded and possibly doing better than ever. However, the Club was about to undergo some inevitable graduation changes. Two-year president, Brendie Lucas graduated and several others were close on their way. The Club still had a great group of core members, but again, no one wanted to take on the responsibility of president. Fenner, back on as advisor, knew he had to find someone this time:

The Slough had to have a president. And Keith Marks, bless his heart, was in my Philosophy of Film class. I said to him, I need a president. He had wanted to start a film club, but he was really looking for any club.¹

After a bit of hesitation, the socially-inclined Keith Marks turned out to be just the right person. While he was familiar with the Club from his weekend at Earth Kinship '99, he claims he was manipulated into

taking the presidency by Dan Miller and Dawn Beulac, who also came on board through Eisler's eco-psychology class. It seems that each party has their own side of the story. Marks says that Miller approached him, basically inflicting the guilt-ridden line: "If you won't be president, Keith, there is no club."²

Miller's version is slightly different, recalling that Fenner approached him too, asking him and Beulac to "do something with the Sawmill Slough." While he seems not to recall the ultimatum Marks described, he does recall promising him that he and Beulac, a couple at the time, "would do all the work."³

Regardless of what went down that summer of 1999, the outcome proved effective. Marks, who was heavy into Osprey Productions (UNF's music and entertainment organization), made the perfect president, and the often barefoot and tie-dyed Miller and Beulac excelled as VP's. The 1999-2000 group of Slough was one of the most dynamic ever at the University of North Florida. According to Dr. Fenner,

The Dan Miller years were probably when the Slough was really getting back to having the soul of the Loftin years. Sawmill Slough took off to become a real club. As I recall, these were really big years.⁴

During this school year, weekly meetings were held at Jason's Deli. Miller recalls that there were regularly "a lot of people at the meetings... 20-25 active, somewhat active people at least."⁵ After each meeting, he sent out extensive Slough email updates which radiated with personalized charm. Not merely meeting minutes or a bland update, the emails took on some of the qualities of the *Swamp Stomper*, employing personal anecdotes and humor. The emails often began with intro's like "Hello happy people..." or "Hellooooo Sawmill Slough," and often made some reference to the caliber of that night's broccoli cheese soup.

During this time, Sloughers participated in innumerable activities, some more recreational, others swaying back towards activism, and many more fostering a spiritual connection. The Club succeeded in catering to a variety of student interests and therefore they found great success in generating numbers. On the recreational end, there was

camping and canoeing at Princess Place Reserve, Ultimate Frisbee on the UNF green, indoor rock climbing, and one very memorable Sawmill Slough party hosted by Keith Marks. Marks admits that while he was not the most environmentally activist, he was very good at bringing people together. He recalls:

We really did get a diverse crew out that year. Everyone really had their own thing and the social activities really opened us up and raised our awareness consciously... we were really a creative group... much more than just a club...⁶

Becky Rippon, later SSCC vice president, agreed that the Slough of the time was much more like a family. She explained:

We were friends outside the Club and we made friends within it. We were involved with the Slough because we wanted to be there, not because it would look good on our resumes... that passion gave real energy and sincerity to our projects and activities, and it was also a means for us to bond with each other.⁷

The close-knit group also participated in many activist and volunteering activities, such as the Earth Kinship Conference, numerous campus cleanups, and one very eventful day protesting in the Ocala Forest organized by Lori Zanine. The Slough's activist side was also becoming more well-known in the area. According to a club email in February 2000,

A handful of us went to protest a military bomb testing site in the Ocala National Forest. It was all kinds of fun (even when Chris [Spencer] ran out of gas and Keith [Marks] and Jake [Zammito] had to walk a few miles to find some help). We got connected with some other environmental and peace organizations from University of Florida and some other parts of the state. Our reach is extending further and further and the Slough is becoming recognized throughout the state. Pretty cool!!⁸

The spring of 2000 also brought a series of very eco-spiritual and intellectual events to the Sawmill Slough. This started in January with visits from Thomas Berry, author of *The End of the Petroleum Age*, Steve Torma, director of an eco-village in North Carolina, and, of course, famed conservationist Jane Goodall. All three did special, intimate dialogues with the Sawmill Slough and interested faculty.

Carrying along with the eco-spiritual vibe of that spring was the Earth Kinship Conference, which enjoyed its largest and possibly most successful year ever in the spring of 2000. The conference moved to the newly unveiled University Center right off of Kernan Boulevard. Although it wasn't as easily accessible as the green, it was a necessary move due to the construction of the Fine Arts Building that was underway adjacent to the green.

Of course, in addition to the slight distance, the University Center also evoked a sterile, rectangular box kind of feel that didn't quite embody the eco-spiritual vibe of the Earth Kinship Conference. The Sawmill Slough got hard at work to redecorate using any natural objects it could find, as well as creating birds, fish, deer, turtles and many other animals out of recycled materials. The outcome was truly successful, and as Fenner recalls, it was also the biggest draw ever, attracting some 200-odd people.⁹ Despite the sub-freezing temperatures that weekend, several brave Sloughers also managed to camp out near the center and maintain the feel of earlier years.





Slough excursion on the Appalachian Trail,
Spring Break 2000. Photos courtesy of UNF Achives.

25. A Life- Changing Spring Break

But the true culmination of the Sawmill Slough's spiritual experiences came during the spring break holiday of that year. This was when eight Sloughers took a seven day hike and camping trip along the Appalachian Trail that profoundly changed their lives.

The trip was the idea of SSCC president Keith Marks but it was "hardcore outdoor enthusiast"¹ Justin Barger who really got the ball rolling. Six more people joined forces; Jacob Zammito, Chris Spencer, Dan Miller, Dawn Beulac, Sara Calliham and Zach Mullin. The trip was planned. The people were ready. The Sawmill Slough was off to conquer the Appalachian wilderness. Seven days in the woods had varying effects on the individuals present. As Chris Spencer recalls, everyone had his or her own thing:

Keith spent a lot of time reading, especially a pocket version of the *Thao de Ching*. Zach Mullin (dubbed by his peers as "honorary VP of Turtles") was all about finding critters; skinks, lizards, salamanders, things that the rest of us didn't even

see. Dan and I were really getting into playing music, we were always jamming together in the woods...²

Miller and Spencer both recall the seventh night of their trip and a memorable guitar and drum rendition of Bob Dylan's "Hey Mr. Tambourine Man" as the sun set on "Blood Mountain," the highest peak in Georgia. The music, particularly drumming, would become more and more commonplace on Slough trips, a direct result of Miller and Spencer's Appalachian experience.

Of course, that trip would be absolutely profound, not only for the Slough, but for their individual lives. As Miller recalls:

Seven days in the mountains inspired a lot of people! Chris [Spencer] did the whole Appalachian Trail after that. Then I started thinking, I want to do something outdoors with my life...³

He went on to travel in Australia and later become an Outward Bound instructor in Florida. Spencer took 6 months off work to hike the entire trail the following year:

I knew the first day of our trip, right when we were at the trailhead about the start that I was feeling something. It felt like home. I knew I was going to come back and I never doubted it.⁴

However, their serious and spiritual tones shift when the two are asked of their most memorable experiences on the 2000 trip. All Spencer could talk about was a moment that could have gone down as the all-time worst Slough camping disaster:

We almost set the Appalachian woods on fire. We were trying to light the campfire and it just wasn't catching and so Justin [Barger] poured some more fuel on there... Unfortunately, there were some old embers, so as soon as he tried to ignite it, the flame just soared up. And of course, [freaking out!], he threw it!⁵

At this point Barger and some of the woods are igniting. Miller even more dramatically recalls:

The fire crawled up a stream of white gas fuel up Justin Barger's head, and he throws the fuel bottle 50 yards away and a giant trail of fire fell from the sky! We were scared to death; just picture it, eight hippies in the woods freaking out, grabbing shoes and palm fronds and pine trees trying to put the fire out...⁶

Thankfully they did manage to get it out, but not without some embarrassment. Later in the week, the Slough came across some others on the trail ranting about how an unknown group almost started a huge fire. The Sawmill Slough, having successfully survived the skirmish, had no interest in perpetuating gossip.

26. A Solid Victory, For Now

When it came time to revisit the campus master plan in 2000, (a plan done every five years at UNF) the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club took another stand for the campus environment.

This time it may have been their best ever.

The 2000 process was described by many as far superior to prior master plan revisions. This was thanks primarily to Ann Hopkins, the new University president in 1999. In Ray Bowman's opinion, the process returned back to the early days of UNF where the voices of faculty and students were resoundingly heard. The 1995 plan, as with the Golf Course decision in 1997, did not allow for this kind of democracy.¹

Hopkins devised a Master Plan Steering Committee which came up with four distinct plans: an A, B, C, and D. Each plan was available to garner the public opinion during the decision process. Plan A was a continuation of the 1995 plan, which sent a road straight through the wetland of the Sawmill Slough and spliced gopher tortoise habitats. While being detrimental to the environment, the plan was pretty convenient, as the necessary permits to build the road had already been granted.²

However, this would not happen without a fight, and the now very close-knit members of the Slough very easily unified into activism. Slough vice-president Dawn Beaulac, who had been doing environmental

research where the road was to be put, was very passionate in persuading other Sloughers to join in:

After I spent many hours and days studying the endangered pitcher plants and insects in that area, I felt very connected to it. The battle to save that area became personal, and the more I learned about it, the more upset I became.³

Beaulac was one of many Sloughers who manned (and womanned) tables in the courtyard informing the general student body about the entire process, specifically the effects of each subsequent plan.

The Slough at first pushed towards plan D, which encouraged the administration to build the road elsewhere, particularly the eastern and northern ridges, some of which were areas that had already been environmentally damaged. It left the western ridge, the site of most of the campus wetlands, virtually intact. Shortly thereafter, Bowman also created a plan E, which embodied the same aspects of plan D but also *reserved* some of the western ridge for environmental research. Bowman is quick to point out that this is separate from the term '*wildlife preserve*' which had been misleadingly printed on UNF documents for many years. 'Preserve' is to keep something 'in perpetuity,' which the university had never intended to do. He pointed out, in fact, that UNF is merely a wildlife sanctuary. According to Bowman:

It basically means that you can't take UNF wildlife with a firearm. You can strangle it, kick it, shoot it with a bow and arrow, you can run over it, anything...you just can't shoot it with a gun.⁴

This was something many students, including dedicated Slough members, had no concept of. UNF, despite many documents that said otherwise, had never decided to set aside any land to *reserve* or *preserve*. As Bowman recalls, it only became a wildlife sanctuary to keep backwoods Jacksonvillean subcultures from firing guns on a college campus.⁵

Being the new millennium, many thought it was the right time to take a new direction with campus conservation. Would UNF finally see

its assets and decide to reserve some of it, even if only for science and research? The Sawmill Slough hoped so, and quickly endorsed plan E as well.

An open forum was set up to review all five plans on Friday October 13, 2000 in the business building auditorium. The Slough publicized it heavily, with fliers and tables around campus, mobilizing the student population. About 300 students showed up that inspiring October day and many spoke out on why the road absolutely should not be built through the wetlands. Everyone who was there that day described the forum as an absolute, resounding success for the students and faculty. Biology Professor Tony Rossi recalled:

My proudest moment at UNF in the five years I've been here was when those students went up to the podium one after another and said why they didn't want that road completed. And you know what, it didn't matter how much Ray [Bowman] said, it didn't matter how much Aileen [Miller] said, didn't matter what I said, it was those students spending 2 hours and going up there, they were very informed, that's the one thing that stopped that road.⁶

Rossi also recalled Slough President Dan Miller's standout comment to the administration: "I really think you ought to listen to us, 'cause we're the ones who pay your salary."⁷

Apparently they took heed. For the first time since early UNF history, the students' voices were heard loud and clear. And for the first time since Michael Woodward's days at UNF, the Sawmill Slough was able to break the cycle of poorly conducted campus and environmental decisions. Slough member Becky Rippon recalled:

I honestly thought we were waging a losing battle. I didn't think the administrators would really take anything we had to say seriously. I remember us all having a really good feeling after the meeting was over, but of course we didn't know how well it would turn out until a few days later. I was

surprised [they bothered to listen to us], but I felt it was the absolute right thing.⁸

Bowman concluded that the passion and educated broad base of students' comments that day played an "instrumental role" in the administrative decision.⁹ It didn't hurt that *The Florida Times-Union* and *Folio Weekly* followed-up with articles publicizing the student opposition, including comments from Dan Miller in both publications.

In the end, the administration halted the construction of the detrimental wetland road and decided to develop eastward, using a model close to plan D. (The decision is now unfortunately being revisited.)¹⁰ In the afterglow of such a huge success, the Sawmill Slough Conservation was voted Club of the Year by all their UNF peers in the spring of 2001.¹¹ For the first time in a while, the Club had securely lodged itself back into the center of UNF student life.

27. The Ebb and Flow

But time passes, and after a while nearly everyone involved in the Slough's '98-00 heyday had graduated or moved on to other things.

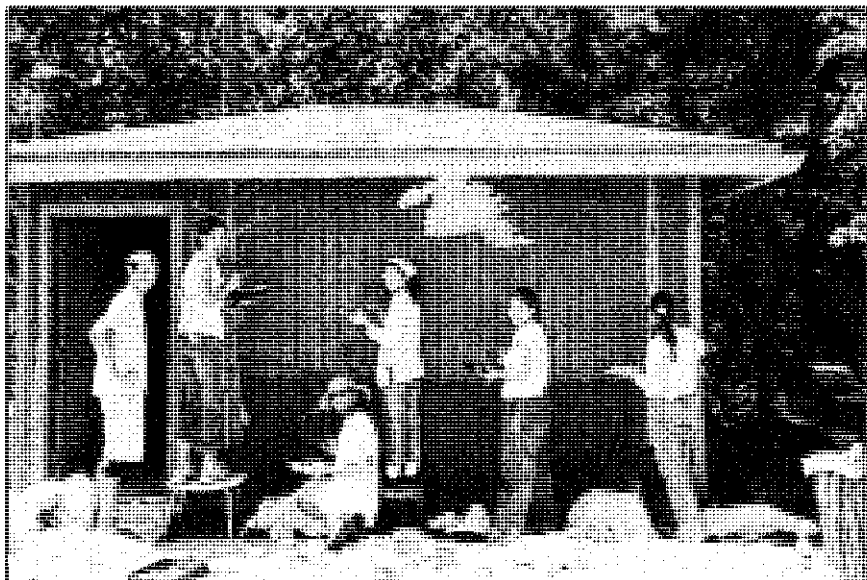
The '01-'02 school year brought changes to the Club and a seeming waning interest in camping and conservation in part possibly due to world events and club officers who lacked a lot of free time.¹ David Fenner officially passed the Club guidance on to John Eisler and Aileen Miller. New Slough president Sarah Calliham, who had been extremely active with the previous two years, was increasingly tied down to commitments in the Nursing School. Everyone was busy and suddenly club meetings became less and less frequent.

After a while, it seemed-almost unbelievably-that the Slough was dying again.

Likewise, the happy symbiotic relationship between UNF and the Earth Kinship Conference also did not last forever. In 2001, there was another large turnout, but also the beginning of organizational problems.² Fenner, who had been newly volunteered as master of ceremonies, felt it was because he could not devote the same time that Joe Halusky could to the preparation. Of course, this was because he was a full-time faculty member at UNF, and the conference logically did not come before his teaching. Regardless, Fenner eventually became aware of hard feelings

from the other organizers and resigned from his position in the conference after only a year. When Fenner departed, so did UNF's six-year alliance. While the Earth Kinship Conference has continued in the years since, the turnout and unique university involvement have never been the same.





Sloughers paint the shed at the Nature Trail Head
in memory of John Golden, April, 2003.
Photo courtesy of Ryan Meyer.

28. A Bongo Drum In Memory

But if history should be the judge, the Slough rarely dies for long. Someone has always eventually emerged from the crowd and unexpectedly taken the torch of the Slough. In the spring of 2002, this person was Jacob Zammito, a quiet yet always inquisitive and passionate Slough member for several years. Despite the fact that he was no longer a student—and at a later point, did not even live in Jacksonville!—Zammito continued coming to campus to organize meetings and activities.

Of course, by 2002, many of the students who remembered the Slough's heyday were also gone, and a new identity had to be formed. Zammito humorously recalled one banner-making expedition where he realized no one really knew about the Slough name:

This year we tried the occasional inclusion of the word 'environmental' in the name and actually modified one of the banners to say 'Sawmill Slough Environmental Conservation Club.' The word environmental at least gives people some idea what the Slough is into. It also cuts down on people thinking it is just a club for political conservatives...¹

In the fall of 2002, biology major Melissa Murray became president for a short term, with Zammito still very much at work behind the scenes. The Slough got political in the fall and endorsed and campaigned for Andy Wojcicki, a Sierra Club activist running for State Senate. A special presentation from Wojcicki's campaign managers was held at UNF as well as several sign-holdings surrounding Election Day.

The fall of 2002 also saw the Slough lose its quarter-mile of the Loop road, a clean-up activity Club Alliance had started two years earlier. While it may have looked ironic or down right pathetic that the environmental club (of all clubs!) could not clean up their portion, it was really because of a lack of paperwork that the privilege was revoked. Furthermore, the Slough had historically opposed the road, and Zammito mused that not having to pick up trash on it "could turn the Slough's focus back to the remaining natural areas rather than the already developed ones."²

Spring 2003 brought on new leadership in the now very student-run club, with Cara Gwalthney, art major, and Erin Wiggins, lit major, presiding as co-presidents. Gwalthney was new blood, while Wiggins had percolated in the background of the Slough for several years, her proudest moment coming up with the new 2000 tee-shirt design. Membership was still not as high as it had been in previous years, but the self described combination of Gwalthney, a "slavish follower of rules"³ and Wiggins, a "subtle rule bender"⁴ proved to be a successful balance.

The Slough took several camping trips that spring that brought new Slough together with recent alumni, including one very memorable one in late January to the Suwannee River Park. Drum facilitator Cheri Shanti spent a weekend with club members and friends teaching the fundamentals of rhythm and the bongo drum.

Despite these really fun recreational—and newfound musical!—activities, there was also an event of great sadness for the Slough and the UNF community. John Golden, UNF Ranger for nearly 20 years, lost his battle with cancer on March 15, 2003. A memorial was held on the island of Lake Onieda at the UNF Trails, a remembrance only six months shy of the 10 year anniversary of Robert Loftin's passing. It was a fittingly beautiful Wednesday morning, and after the ceremony, many lended a hand to planting native Florida plants, just as Golden had

always tried to hard to do. The plants can now be seen on Lake Onieda, in front of the lovingly engraved bench that was also dedicated to Golden that day.

In his honor, the Sawmill Slough also showed its gratitude and went artistic, painting a Florida nature mural on the shed at the nature trails. This was at the wish of graduated Sloughie and now assistant Ranger Ryan Meyer, who knew Golden had always wanted it done. Meyer was also given the task of taking over Golden's duties as Lead Ranger and educational program leader. For several years, Golden had been leading area elementary and middle school students through the trails on a highly successful nature program. Meyer, initially just a biology student looking to volunteer, began to take over these programs when Golden started to ail from cancer.

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29. The Canoes, Part III

In May 2003 the Slough got reunited with the legendary Michael Woodward and his wife, Rissi Cherie, at their new home near Interlachen. One canoe somehow managed to make the trip as a cumbersome load atop Jacob Zammito's hatchback car. The weekend was truly peaceful and optimistic, despite the tumultuous world events of the spring and uncertainty of UNF's environmental future. The lone canoe made several trips out onto the small lake behind Michael and Rissi's house, one lasting into a very late night swim. And one new Slougher, poet Sarah Stewart, even felt compelled to write about the special weekend:

'Tis not a Shower in Sight

Let alone, sometimes an electric Light

We all remain happy, despite....

But Saw Mill Slough will have it no other Way

Drum-lines in the Dark of night

Canoeing and Hiking by Day

Through Communion and Balance

our love spreads into each other

Though we all have no blood relation, our friendship
is what makes us sister and brother.

That just makes it all the more Beautiful/Tranquil
I know its what the holes in my heart, needed in order to
be
filled

I learned so much with all of you
Widened my view of Philosophy a little, too.
For that, I took a piece of each of you,
I hope you all do not mind
In the end, ...we really are just “one” of a kind.¹

One week later, the University of North Florida announced former Jacksonville mayor John Delaney as the fifth official president. While not the most experienced in the academic world, Delaney does bring in a decent environmental track record and good connections to raise money for the university. With all the budget setbacks, it's about time. After all, the campus of the University of North Florida could use a whole lot more than just some new canoes.

NOTES PARTS I and II

CHAPTER 1. The Outing

¹Professor Robert Loftin. Taped interview by Michael Woodward at Loftin's home, 14 February 1992. Except as otherwise noted, the entire contents of this chapter derive from the Loftin interview, one of several interviews and conversations held with Loftin. Much of the background information contained in the first nine or ten chapters is based on Loftin's recollections as summarized by the author. Unattributed material in the remaining chapters is drawn largely from the author's own recollections.

²Michael Milkey. Telephone interview by Michael Woodward, 21 March 1992.

³*Swamp Stomper*, 14 February 1973.

CHAPTER 2. The Canoes

¹Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

²Milkey interview.

³Milkey interview.

⁴Michael Gibbons. Letter to Michael Woodward, 4 March 1992. Gibbons was one of several individuals who responded to requests for personal recollections.

⁵Loftin interview, 14 February 1992. Loftin does not claim personally to have seen these bears, although he is prepared to recite an astounding catalog of species he has observed at UNF.

⁶Professor Daniel L. Schafer. *From Scratch Pads and Dreams: A Ten Year History of the University of North Florida*, 1982, p.111.

⁷Schafer, p.152.

⁸Roger Sallas. Telephone interview by Michael Woodward, 21 March 1992.

⁹Leslie Thompson (Chamblin). Taped interview by James Vickery, 24 March 1992.

¹⁰Michael Milkey. Personal letter to Professor Robert Loftin, 2 December 1974. Currently filed in SSCC archives under Adams Award.

¹¹Schafer, p.111.

CHAPTER 3. Wildlife and Wild Life

¹Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

²Schafer, p.111.

³Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

⁴Note that Sawmill Slough Conservation Club, as UNF's oldest active campus organization, antedates even the Student Government Association (SGA). Brenda Oliver (now Padgett), in a 15 July 1992 interview taped by Michael Woodward, tells of voting in the first SGA election and being appalled to observe that the poll-takers were recording voters' student identification numbers directly onto the students' not-so-secret ballots. Brenda protested this practice all the way to UNF President Carpenter and nearly got the entire election thrown out. Her action brought about permanent procedural changes that protected ballot secrecy in all subsequent SGA elections.

⁵Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

⁶Gibbons letter.

⁷Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

⁸Gibbons letter.

⁹*Swamp Stomper*, January 1973.

¹⁰Milkey interview.

CHAPTER 4. The Trails

¹Professor Ray Bowman. Taped interview by James Vickery at the UNF Boathouse (campus beer bar), 25 February 1992. Bowman and Professor David Porter were interviewed together.

²Loftin interview, 14 February 1992. Also see Schafer, p.55.

³Brenda Oliver, Steve Sutton, Stephen T. Page III, Linda C. Carter, and Robert W. Loftin. "U.N.F. Nature Trails: Recommendations of the Sawmill Slough Conservation Club," p.2. Undated. Unpublished proposal currently filed in SSCC archives under Nature Trails.

⁴Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

⁵Schafer, p.111.

⁶*Swamp Stomper*, April 1974, p.1.

⁷Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

⁸Brenda Oliver (Padgett). Taped interview by Michael Woodward at her home, 15 July 1992.

⁹Stephen Thomas Page. Telephone interview by Michael Woodward, 5 July 1992.

¹⁰Professor David Porter. Taped interview by James Vickery at the UNF Boathouse, 25 February 1992. Porter and Professor Bowman were interviewed together.

¹¹Bowman interview.

¹²C. Ward Hancock. Memorandum to Bob Loftin and Brenda Oliver, 22 October 1973. Currently filed in SSCC archives under Nature Trails.

¹³Readers may be moved to extend their consideration of the ways in which environmentalism is essentially maternal (hence, “Mother Earth” and “Mother Nature”) in its desire to nurture, preserve, and protect the natural environment and how this must almost inevitably lead to conflict with the more paternalistic and patriarchal authority structure whose desire is to dominate and exploit both nature and other humans. What often seems to come as such a surprise to the latter camp (who as a rule tend to dismiss environmentalists as inscrutably irrational because they seem to derive no tangible personal gain from their efforts) is the fact that environmentalists often employ extremely well-reasoned strategies--and that environmentalists, male and female, can sometimes be downright “macho” in their tactics.

CHAPTER 5. Sawmill Slough versus the Shah of Iran

¹What was possibly America’s worst environmental disaster to date occurred on 24 March 1989, when the oil tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground in Alaska’s Prince William Sound and spilled over ten million gallons of oil, devastating hundreds of miles of coastline and killing untold numbers of wildlife.

²Oliver (Padgett) interview.

³Professor Thomas Mongar. Personal conversation with Michael Woodward at UNF, 1 July 1992.

⁴Belva Vaughn (Ogier). Telephone interview by Michael Woodward, 229 March 1992.

⁵Mongar conversation.

⁶Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

⁷Oliver (Padgett) interview.

CHAPTER 6. Earth Day

¹Background information for much of this chapter was gleaned from Professor Loftin's own undated and unpublished manuscript, "A History of Spring MusicFest," which ends with the 1988 event and appears to have been written later that same year. Currently filed in the SSCC archives under History of the Club.

²Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

³Loftin interview.

⁴Professor Robert W. Loftin.

⁵Loftin. "A History of Spring MusicFest," p.10.

CHAPTER 7. The Environmental University

¹UNF President Thomas G. Carpenter. Letter to Major Robert M. Brantly, Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission,

22 October 1970. At that time Brantly was Northeast Region Manager. As of this writing, Colonel Brantly heads the Commission, a regulatory and enforcement agency that in the view of many Florida environmental groups has, in comparison with other state and federal agencies, earned a superior reputation for unbiased integrity.

²John T. Brickert (Reynolds, Smith & Hills, Inc.). Letter to UNF President Thomas G. Carpenter, October 1972. This letter is bound into and constitutes the opening text of the 1972 “University of North Florida Master Site Development Plan” prepared by Brickert’s firm for the Florida Department of General Services.

³Oliver (Padgett) interview.

⁴Vaughn (Ogier) interview.

⁵Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

⁶Edgar L. Smith, Jr. Telephone interview by Michael Woodward, 21 March 1992.

⁷Susan Leger. “Testimony given at the public hearing on the Southeastern extension of State Road 9-A, Jacksonville, Florida, November 17, 1976.” Unpublished speech transcript. Currently filed in SSCC archives under Dame Point Bridge.

⁸Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

⁹Charles Faubion. Telephone interview by Michael Woodward, 21 March 1991.

¹⁰Loftin. “A History of Spring MusicFest,” p.9.

¹¹Leslie Thompson (Chamblin). Taped interview by James Vickery, 24 March 1992.

¹²Thompson (Chamblin) interview.

¹³Thompson (Chamblin) interview. Also see SSCC archives Nature Center files.

¹⁴*Swamp Stomper*, February 1981, p.1; also April-May 1981, pp.1,2.

¹⁵*Swamp Stomper*, March 1981, p.2.

¹⁶Schafer, p.112.

¹⁷Professor Robert Loftin. Taped interview by Michael Woodward at Loftin's home, 13 March 1992.

¹⁸Loftin. "A History of Spring MusicFest," p.13.

CHAPTER 8. The Universal Environment

¹SSCC archives contain photographs as well as written materials.

²Loftin. "A History of Spring MusicFest," pp.13,14.

³*Swamp Stomper*, March 1983.

⁴Lee Hunter (Fegan). Letter to Michael Woodward, 5 March 1992.

⁵Loftin interview, 13 March 1992.

⁶Hunter (Fegan) letter.

⁷"Ecology club 'sprouts' on UNF campus." *Spinnaker* (UNF student newspaper), 11 July 1983, p.8.

⁸Loftin interview, 13 March 1992.

⁹Hunter (Fegan) letter.

CHAPTER 9. No Nukes and No Balls

¹Loftin interview, 13 March 1992.

²*Swamp Stomper*, November 1984, p.1.

³Loftin interview, 14 February 1992.

CHAPTER 10. The Feminist Connection

¹John Golden. Telephone conversation with Michael Woodward, circa February 1992.

²During the 13 March 1992 interview, Loftin had remarked that on Slough outings no one could understand how Webb always managed to get to and from the destinations half an hour before anyone else, even though everyone departed at the same time. The author met with Webb on 29 July 1992 at which time Webb reviewed this chapter and, without addressing that point, confirmed the chapter's general accuracy.

³Loftin interview, 13 March 1992.

⁴Loftin. Telephone conversation with Michael Woodward, 28 July 1992.

CHAPTER 11. Rumbblings

¹Loftin interview, 13 March 1992.

²Loftin interview.

³Minutes of Club meetings are on file in the SSCC archives.

⁴"University of North Florida Master Plan Update - Phase 2." RS&H (Reynolds, Smith & Hills, Inc.), May 1985, pp.23,24. These pages describe and prioritize proposed campus access roads. Page 23 states that

implementation should be as follows: Phase 1 Create an access from St. Johns Bluff Road using the campus R.O.W. [Campus Right of Way here referred to is also known as Alumni Way and is located at the northern border of the campus behind the athletic complex] to enable access to the main [already existing] loop road from the north. This will immediately resolve the problems created because of a single ingress and egress to the campus.

The map on page 24 likewise assigns the number one priority to this northern route.

CHAPTER 12. Road Warriors

¹Loftin. Telephone conversation with Michael Woodward, 29 July 1992.

²Loftin interview, 13 March 1992.

³Adam Herbert quoted in Diane Dickson's article, "President OKs modified loop road." *Spinnaker*, 27 June 1989, p.2.

⁴Curtis Bullock, as quoted in the same article, *Spinnaker*, p.1.

⁵The author clearly remembers the angry Eckler making this statement. As usual, Eckler had a way of putting things that was both succinct and memorable, and his paraphrase of Herbert accurately summarizes both the cognitive and the affective aspects of the impression Herbert left with a number of people in Sawmill Slough, at least.

⁶"Herbert to lead C. of C. group." *Spinnaker*, 21 November 1989, p.7.

⁷The pictures of protesters, along with a small article, “Road protests at inauguration,” appear on page 3 of the 10 October 1989 *Spinnaker*.

⁸Loftin interview, 13 March 1992.

⁹Michael Woodward, 3 July 1992. In this passage the author, who has now become the subject of his own writing, finds it necessary to drop for a brief moment the mask of third-person authorial objectivity and instead speak directly--as primary source rather than historian--about the very subjective feelings and motivations he recalls having at the time of the events now being narrated. Readers are free to ponder the implications of Woodward choosing to become his own source.

¹⁰Adam William Herbert, Jr. *Municipal Charter Reform: The Los Angeles Experience from a Minority Group Perspective*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1971, pp.297-299, 363-365.

¹¹Herbert, pp.263,269.

¹²Loftin interview, 13 March 1992.

¹³Loftin interview.

¹⁴“UNF broke law to hire lawyers.” (Jacksonville) Florida Times-Union, 15 August 1991, Metro section pp.B-1,B-5.

CHAPTER 13. Let the Records Show

¹Marcia P. Parker. Letters to Michael Woodward, 10 July 1990; 16 July 1990.

²Marcia P. Parker. Letter to Timothy Keyser, 18 July 1990.

³Quotes taken from Anne Moore’s article, “Michael Woodward: He’s stuck to his convictions--No loop road extension at UNF.” *Folio Weekly*, 3 September 1991, p.18, 20.

“UNF still wants \$1.296 but won’t withhold degree.” (Jacksonville)
Florida Times-Union, 16 November 1990, Metro section, p.B-1.

“Interchange may create new hot spot.” (Jacksonville)
Florida Times-Union, 9 August 1990, Metro section, pp.B-1,B-6.

Professors Michael I. Luger and Harvey A. Goldstein. *Technology in the Garden: Research Parks and Regional Economic Development*. Department of City and Regional Planning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, October 1990. This study clearly indicates that university-affiliated research parks passed their prime as viable endeavors decades ago. The study finds that more modest and less capital-intensive business incubator programs, similar to UNF’s Small Business Development Center, are in any event far more cost-effective in addressing legitimate economic development objectives.

CHAPTER 14. Whose University is This, Anyway?

¹While theoretically state-owned lands may belong to all the citizens of Florida, technically title to such lands is held by a legal entity known as the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, the trustees of which are the Governor and the six members of Florida’s elected Cabinet.

²Daniel Crabb, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Land Management, Florida Department of Natural Resources. Letter to Murdock Shaw, Board of Regents, 10 September 1991. Copy to Curtis Bullock, University of North Florida.

³Stacy Potts. Written response to author’s request for summary of Potts’ recollections of Sawmill Slough’s interaction with the UNF Student Government Association during her tenure as an SGA Senator.

⁴SGA president Jennings related this to the author at or shortly following the time these events took place.

CHAPTER 21. A New Wave of Slough

¹Audrey Smallwood. Conversation with Erin Wiggins, 25 February 2003.

²Fenner interview, 11 February 2003.

³ Jacob Zammito. Written response to Erin Wiggins, 18 May 2003.

⁴ *Swamp Stomper*. Issue 1, Summer 1998.

⁵ Fenner Interview, 11 February 2003.

⁶ *Swamp Stomper*. Issue 2, Summer 1998.

⁷ Professor Aileen Miller. Taped interview by Erin Wiggins, 28 April 2003.

CHAPTER 22. UNF's Own Environmental Conference

¹Fenner interview, 18 February 2003.

² Keith Marks. Taped interview by Erin Wiggins, 9 March 2003.

³ Dan Miller. Taped conversation with Erin Wiggins, 25 February 2003.

CHAPTER 23. Still No Research University

¹ Michael Woodward. Taped interview by Erin Wiggins, 23 February 2003. This opinion was also very clearly defined in the first edition of *Fight On!*

² Nicole Ostrow. "Finally Taking Off: After struggling for years to Find Tenants, UNF Tech Park is 'hot.' Why the turnaround?" *Florida Times-Union*, 29 November 1999.

³ Aliana Reichert and Aaron Simmons. "Tech Park Infringes on Tortoises." *Spinnaker*, 21 November 2000.

⁴ Development Impact Assessment Report for the First Coast Technology Park. By the Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council. October 1993.

⁵ Fenner interview, 18 February 2003.

⁶ Fenner interview.

CHAPTER 24. An Even Stronger Second Wave

¹ Fenner interview, 11 February 2003.

² Marks interview, 9 March 2003.

³ Miller conversation, 25 February 2003.

⁴ Fenner interview, 11 February 2003.

⁵ Miller conversation, 25 February 2003.

⁶ Marks interview, 9 March 2003.

⁷ Becky Rippon. Email to Erin Wiggins, 28 June 2003.

⁸ Dan Miller. Email to the Sawmill Slough, March 2000.

⁹ Fenner interview, 18 February 2003.

CHAPTER 25. A Life Changing Spring Break

- ¹ Marks interview, 9 March 2003.
- ² Chris Spencer. Conversation with Erin Wiggins, 18 May 2003.
- ³ Miller conversation, 25 February 2003.
- ⁴ Spencer conversation, 18 May 2003.
- ⁵ Chris Spencer. Taped conversation with Erin Wiggins, 25 February 2003.
- ⁶ Miller conversation.

CHAPTER 26. A Solid Victory, For Now

- ¹ Bowman interview, 8 March 2003.
- ² Denise-Marie Williams. "UNF Pays \$50,000 to Disregard Gopher Tortoises." *Spinnaker*. 31 October 1995. UNF paid the state \$51,846 through Gopher Tortoise Incident Take DUV-21 to "move or destroy" gopher tortoises, their eggs and their burrows in order to build the road.
- ³ Dawn Beaulac. Email to Erin Wiggins, 30 June 2003.
- ⁴ Bowman interview.
- ⁵ Bowman interview.
- ⁶ Professor Toni Rossi. Lecture to Honors students, 4 April 2003.
- ⁷ Rossi lecture.
- ⁸ Rippon Email.

⁹ Bowman interview.

¹⁰ This information is known by the author through conversations with Professors Bowman, Fenner and Aileen Miller.

¹¹ This information was known by the author but confirmed in an email from Chris DeVos, Club Alliance Director, 1 July 2003.

CHAPTER 27. The Ebb and Flow

¹ Jacob Zammito. Sawmill Slough's report to Club Alliance, 27 September 2002.

² Fenner Interview.

CHAPTER 28. A Bongo Drum in Memory

¹ Jacob Zammito. Sawmill Slough report to Club Alliance.

² Zammito report.

³ Rachael Dandridge. Conversation with Erin Wiggins, 18 May 2003. Rachael knew Cara for many years and insisted Cara had once described herself as such.

⁴ Erin Wiggins.

CHAPTER 29. The Canoes Part II

¹ Sarah Stewart. "A 'Free' Communion." Reprinted with permission, 1 June 2003.



SAWMILL SLOUGH CONSERVATION CLUB OFFICERS

1973

President: Professor Robert W. Loftin
Vice President: Mike Milkey
Secretary: Gerry Ray
Treasurer: Linda "Puddin" Carter
Faculty Advisor: Professor Jimmy Bassett

1973-1974

President: Brenda Oliver (nee Peck, later Padgett)
Vice President: Steve Sutton
Secretary: Stephen T. "Jungle Tom" Page
Treasurer: Linda "Puddin" Carter
Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1974-1975

President: Belva Vaughn (Ogier)
Vice President: Steve Sutton
Secretary: Roger Sallas
Treasurer: Alex Loach
Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1975-1976

President: Sue Leger (Krall)
Vice President: Ray Lewis
Secretary: Pat Burbridge
Treasurer: Sharon Anderson
Faculty Advisor: Professor Ray Bowman

1976-1977

President: Sue Leger (Krall)

Vice President: Ray Lewis

Secretary: Phyllis Phillips

Treasurer: Sharon Anderson

Faculty Advisor: Professor Ray Bowman

1977-1978

President: Ray Lewis

Vice President: Robert Fisher

Secretary: Julie Mercer

Treasurer: Phyllis Phillips

Faculty Advisor: Professor Ray Bowman

1978-1979

President: Ray Lewis

Vice President: Charles Faubion

Secretary: Trish Purdy

Treasurer: David Reid

Faculty Advisor: Professor Ray Bowman

1979-1980

President: Leslie Thompson (Chamblin)

Vice President: Bob McMichael

Secretary: Cheryl Griffeth

Treasurer: Russ Willis

Faculty Advisor: Professor David Porter

1980-1981

President: Terri Ellerbee

Vice President: David Paisley

Secretary: Donna Paulk

Treasurer: Ed Smith

Faculty Advisor: Professor David Porter

1981-1982

None

1982-1983

President: Lee Hunter (Fegan)

Vice President: Mark Davis

Secretary: Cynthia Small

Treasurer: Geoff Raiser

Faculty Advisor: Professor David Porter

1983-1984

President: Mark Davis

Vice President: Bill Bowen

Secretary: Terry West

Faculty Advisor: Professor David Porter

1984-1985

President: Bill Bowen, then John Golden

Vice President: John Golden, then Ed Beaudry

Secretary: Terry West

Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1985-1986

President: John Golden

Vice President: Richard Coale

Secretary: Terry West

Treasurer: Professor Robert W. Loftin

Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1986-1987

Co-Presidents: Shirley Webb, Gillian Baker

Co-Vice-Presidents: Helene Kamps, Rifka Jerard

Secretary: Terry West

Treasurer: Professor Robert W. Loftin

Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1987-1988

Co-Presidents: Maurice Coman, Doug Murphy
Co-Vice-Presidents: George Brownett, Robert Hamlin, Tony Rosimini
Co-Secretaries: Helene Kamps, Kimberly Frank
Treasurer: Professor Robert W. Loftin
Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1988-1989

Co-Presidents: Stuart Landers, Tere Burkitt,
then Karl Berg, Jerry Gray
Co-Vice-Presidents: Tony Rosimini, John Kelbert
Co-Secretaries: Donna Bear, Nancy Messer
Treasurer: Professor Robert W. Loftin
Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1989-1990

President: Jerry Gray, then Michael Woodward
Vice President: Michael Woodward
Secretary: Richard Eckler
Treasurer: Professor Robert W. Loftin
Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1990-1991

President: Michael Woodward
Executive Vice President: Richard Eckler
Second Vice President: Denise Hok
Third Vice President: Jason Revisky
Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1991-1992

President: Michael Woodward, then Tammy Whited
Executive Vice President: Toni Wheeler, then James Vickery
Second Vice President: Jeff White
Third Vice President: Tammy Whited
Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert W. Loftin

1992-93

President: James Vickery
Vice President: Cindy Burns
Treasurer: Brittany Gravely
Faculty Advisor: Thomas Mongar

1993-94

President: Sonja Mongar, then Kim Weatherford
President: James Vickery, then Brittany Gravely
Treasurer: Professor Thomas Mongar
Advisor: Professor Thomas Mongar

1994-95

President: Kim Weatherford
Vice President: James Vickery
Treasurer: Professor David Fenner
Faculty Advisor: Professor David Fenner

1995-96

President: Amy Kosakicwicz
Vice President: Timothy Welsh
Treasurer: Isadelle Mercedes
Faculty Advisor: Professor Rexanne Bruno

1996-97

None

1997-98

President: Brendie Lucas
Vice Presidents: Jacob Morton, Peter Bystrowski
Treasurers: Gretchen Ferrell, Jennifer Ducharme
Faculty Advisor: Professor David Fenner

1998-99

President: Brendie Lucas
Co-Vice Presidents: Peter Bytrowski, Jessica Brown, Jacob Morton
Treasurer: Jennifer Ducharme
Faculty Advisor: Professor David Fenner

1999-2000

President: Keith Marks
Co-Vice Presidents: Dan Miller, Dawn Beaulac
Treasurer: Jennifer Ducharme
Faculty Advisor: Professor David Fenner

2000-2001

President: Dan Miller
Vice President: Dawn Beaulac
Treasurer: Jennifer Ducharme
Faculty Advisor: Professor David Fenner, then John Eisler

2001-2002

President: Sara Calliham, then Jacob Zammito
Vice President: Melissa Murray
Treasurer: John Heatherington
Faculty Advisor: Professor John Eisler

2002-2003

President: Melissa Murray, then Cara Gwalthney
and Erin Wiggins
Vice President: Becky Rippon
Treasurer: Sara Veillet
Faculty Advisor: Professors Aileen Miller and Scott Frey

Whatever Happened To...? (1993)

Jungle Tom and Chris Page live in Auburndale, Florida, where Tom is a sheriff's department negotiator. Tom, who takes their teenage son on week-long kayaking trips, says the formerly prudish Chris "has loosened up considerably."

Mike Milkey and Linda "Puddin" Carter dated all through college but never married—not each other, anyway. They still keep in touch.

Mike Gibbons is a juvenile delinquency caseworker and counselor for the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services in Sarasota.

Brenda Oliver Padgett teaches history and political science for the Duval County public school system and hopes soon to complete her doctoral dissertation.

Steve Sutton became a corporate vice president. When last heard from, he was living on a mountainside in Washington state.

Leslie Thompson Chamblin teaches science for the Duval County public school system.

Lee Hunter Fegan teaches science for the Duval County public school system.

Shirley Webb is Director of the UNF Women's Center.

Stuart Landers is working on his doctorate in history.

Jerry Gray is in the import/export business in Sweden.

Michael Woodward is in law school.

Whatever Happened To...? (2003)

Denise Hok lives in Vermont, where she rides a wheelchair and is known as the state's toughest advocate for the rights of the disabled.

Tammy Whited worked as an environmental lobbyist in Washington. She recently graduated from law school.

James Vickery is working at a local hospital. He still recalls his time in Sawmill Slough as being "some of the best memories of my life." While he has gotten more into health issues than environmental conservation, Vickery insists he can still often be found "out in the woods somewhere."

Andy Fairbanks is working for Duval County Recycling and is involved in the area chapter of the Green Party. He's afraid he's become "a little jaded," but he's still an environmentalist at heart.

Keith Marks is working as a massage therapist in Jacksonville. He is also still very involved in the local music scene.

Dan Miller is an Outward Bound instructor, doing trips all over the country and other areas of the country with adjudicated youths. He still feels destined, as he often says, to one day "become a rock star."

Chris Spencer is still inspired from his Appalachian experience and is now exploring the trails out west "somewhere."

Dawn Beulac attended graduate school in Missouri and is now in Arizona, no doubt living out her life-long dream to "save the earth."

Becky Rippon is moving to California after graduation to pursue her degree in the Fine Arts.

Jacob Zammito has moved to Largo, Fl. after teaching school and is now giving "Jail Tours" in St. Augustine.

Cara Gwalthney got married the day after graduation and lives in Gainesville.

Erin Wiggins is going out west and eventually considering grad school.

Ryan Meyer is UNF's new Lead Ranger and aspires to one day have an office away from the UNF golf course.

Michael Woodward is currently practicing law with the firm Keyser and Woodward in Putnam County. Now with his own law degree, he works to help out the underdog client that he once was. In either a coincidence or just an act of good karma, Michael ended up having the pleasure of facing off against Marcia Parker in a courtroom. This time, she didn't have a chance.

