NJMA NEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY MYCOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Volume 36–6 November – December 2006

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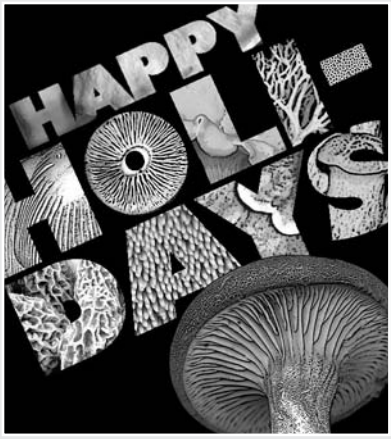
NJMA EVENTS HOTLINE

908-362-7109 for information on NJMA events or cancellations due to bad weather.



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, November 5 — **NJMA Photo Contest Deadline** *(see last issue)*

Sunday, November 5
2:00 pm

MEETING & LECTURE
at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum

*Our speaker will be **Dr. Roy E. Halling**, Curator of Mycology at the New York Botanical Garden. He will speak on **"An overview of Costa Rican Mushrooms."***

Saturday, November 11
(Setup at 6:00 pm, dinner at 7:00 pm)

Culinary Group Dinner – Andean Cooking
at the Long Hill Rescue Squad in Gillette, NJ.
*For information or to sign up, contact Bob Saunders at **(201) 568-3919** or at **robertsaunders2005@earthlink.net***

Sunday, December 3
2:00 pm

NJMA HOLIDAY PARTY, Photo Contest, Meeting, and Election of Officers at the Unitarian Society, Tices Lane, East Brunswick, NJ.
Registration required – see page 17 for details and directions

Sunday, January 7
2:00 pm

MEETING & LECTURE
at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum

*Our speaker will be our good friend, mycologist and author **Gary Lincoff.** Always informative (and entertaining), he is the author of the **National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms**, one of our favorite field guides.*

His topic for this meeting will be:

"From the Central Park BioBlitz 2006 to a MycoBlitz for Me and You"

COMING IN EARLY FEBRUARY
NJMA's ANNUAL MYCOPHAGY MEETING
Date and location will be announced in our next issue!

Directions to the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morristown

Traveling from the South: I-287 Northbound to Exit 36A (Morris Ave.). Proceed East approx. 1/2 mile in the center lane, past Washington Headquarters (on left). Take left fork onto Whippany Road. Turn left at 2nd traffic light onto East Hanover Avenue. Proceed for about 1/4 mile. Entrance is on left, opposite the Morris County Library.

Traveling from the North: I-287 Southbound to Exit 36, following signs for Ridgedale Avenue (bear right in exit ramp). Proceed to traffic light, then turn right onto Ridgedale Avenue. At 2nd traffic light, turn right onto East Hanover Avenue. Proceed for about 1/4 mile. The Arboretum entrance is on the right just past the traffic light at the Morris County Library.

Traveling on New Route 24: New 24 West to Exit 1A, (also labeled as Rt. 511 South, Morristown) onto Whippany Road. Stay in right lane. Turn right at 1st traffic light onto East Hanover Avenue. Proceed for about 1/4 mile. Entrance is on left, opposite the Morris County Library.

Directions to the Unitarian Society, Tices Lane, East Brunswick

From New Brunswick via Route 18: Take U.S. Highway 1 south, exit at Ryders Lane to East Brunswick, continue to the second light, and turn left onto Tices Lane. The Unitarian Society is the 2nd drive on the right before you go under the NJ Turnpike.

From the south via the Garden State Parkway: Take Route 18 north toward New Brunswick to Tices Lane exit (take jughandle from right lane of 18 across to Tices Lane). Follow Tices Lane until you pass under the Turnpike. The entrance is in the woods on the left just after you leave the underpass.

From the NJ Turnpike: take Exit 9 to Route 18. Take Rt 18 South to East Brunswick. On 18, turn right onto Tices Lane at the third traffic light. Follow Tices Lane until you pass under the Turnpike. The entrance is in the woods on the left just after you leave the underpass.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I've just returned from our last foray of the 2006 season at Brendan Byrne State Forest, and despite the cold and windy conditions, it was a wonderful foray. I mention this to remind everyone that our forays *always* take place, regardless of the weather. (The one exception this past season was the scheduled foray at Herrontown Woods. As it turned out, there was no leader for that foray because it coincided with the NEMF foray in Québec, and yours truly was tied up with previously-mentioned family matters.) If ever you're in doubt about a foray or meeting taking place, pick up the phone and call our newly-established Events Hotline, **908-362-7109**. You will hear a recorded message of upcoming events and/or any problems which might prevent those events from happening. We've started this to help prevent a repeat of what happened for last February's mycophagy meeting when several people showed up for the meeting in two feet of snow. I encourage you to use the number and hope that you'll find it worthwhile.

I want to also remind you that NJMA doesn't rest when the mushrooms stop coming out! Be sure to come out for our regular monthly meetings to learn and talk with some of the world's most knowledgeable scientists and experts in the field of Mycology. On November 5, Dr. Roy Halling, Curator of Mycology at the NY Botanical Garden and one "heck" of an expert, will fill us in on his forays through Costa Rica. On January 7, our good friend Gary Lincoff will take us through the 2006 BioBlitz in New York's Central Park (yes, there are mushrooms in the Big Apple!) and tell us how we can conduct our own "mini myco-blitzes" right in our back yards or favorite foray spots. Gary's talks are always interesting and fun, so be sure to join us. Meetings start at 2:00 PM. And, don't forget our annual Holiday Dinner on December 3, and be sure to register for it! This is the only NJMA event which requires registration, so do it today! (Use the form on page 17.) We always have lots of good food and fun at the party, and every member is invited.

Speaking of food, we are currently making arrangements for our February 2007 Mycophagy meeting. We are hoping to announce some news which will make it easier for you to actually SEE what the chefs are doing and make this meeting a better learning experience for all. Hopefully, well have more on this by the next issue.

I'd also like to ask for the attention of all the artists, photographers, and writers in the club. Jim Richards and I are both anxious to get as much information, photography, and art from our own members into the newsletter as we can. There's a lot of knowledge and talent in this club, and we can't encourage you enough to take advantage of the winter months to gather your thoughts and photos and send them on to Jim for inclusion in *NJMA News*. Remember, this newsletter is *your* newsletter, and both of us hate to think that every photo or every article is coming from just a handful of people in the club. Remember that many other clubs pick up articles from us. The article you write or the photo/artwork that you submit could very well help to enlighten other mycoholics across the nation and around the world. Your knowledge does no one any good when you keep it bottled inside. Don't worry if you're not a "pro" writer; if it's not perfect, Jim will work with you to make it fit for publication.

One final thought: I want to thank Jim Richards for the uncounted hours which he puts into procuring, editing, and assembling content for *NJMA News*. He (and I) will appreciate it if you direct your comments about the newsletter (positive or negative) to Jim himself, rather than to me. Remember, I just put it all together and make it look good; Jim does the "legwork" to make this one of the best newsletters in the country. Your comments (and submissions) will only make it better!

– Jim Barg

NJMA CULINARY GROUP: ANDEAN DINNER, NOVEMBER 11

A partial menu for the dinner includes the following:

Pisco Sours, *Chica* (the everyday drink of the Andeans), two versions of *Ceviche* (marinated fish in lime juice, usually spicy), *Papas a la Huancahina* (potatoes in a cheese sauce), *Aji de Gallina* (chicken in somewhat spicy sauce; very tasty), Quinoa (steamed South American grain), *Lomo Saltado* (sort of like pepper steak, with beef and green peppers, not spicy, and always served with French-fried potatoes), *Rocoto Rellano* (stuffed peppers), *Mazamorra Morado* (a dessert of purple corn and fruit), *Arroz con Leche* (rice pudding), and *Pastel de Manzanas* (apple tart).

There are just a couple of spaces left, so please contact Bob Saunders at **robertsaunders2005@earthlink.net** to reserve a space and for any additional information.

CAN'T FIND WAXED PAPER BAGS?

My son Chris and I joined up at the Fungi Fest last Sunday. We were talking to a fellow about locating those waxed paper sandwich bags and how hard they were to find. Of course, that afternoon, we found Cut Rite waxed paper sandwich bags right at our Whole Foods Market, so now we pass it on.

– Anne Franges

FUNGUS FEST VISITORS SAY WHY THEY CAME, WHAT THEY LIKED

by Marc Grobman

Remember the jokes about the writer or artist who got a fantastic idea while mind-traveling via Psilocybin or its non-mycological soulmates, LSD or peyote? And how the writer/artist knew that the idea was so fabulous it was unforgettable, so he or she didn't write it down?

Your NJMA News reporter's excuse for not being able to provide a more thorough report on Fungus Fest 2006 is equally flimsy: He was having too much fun to take extensive notes. But he did record observations from various "civilians", i.e., non-NJMAers. Here's a look at Fungus Fest 2006, through their eyes.

Why they came: Because I "love to eat them [mushrooms]." I'm "very curious about mushrooms. Our backyard has a lot of mushrooms. I wanted to know more." "Seeing what they [mushrooms] feel like when you touch them."

What were the most fun/interesting/impressive/new things they learned: The "names of mushrooms and knowing their names." "Seeing all those different kinds of mushrooms." That there were "so many uses for them." That "you could make paper [out of mushrooms]." The "nutritional elements" [of mushrooms] and that they "have protein." "The health benefits. I always ate for taste and texture but didn't know about the health benefits." "The different types that were edible… how to grow [mushrooms]… the expert knowledge… Microscopes… handling them." "[The walk leader was] very good." "The walk outside was great. The leader was very knowledgeable. I liked giant puffballs the most." The "knowledge… all that I learned." "[This is a] good location…. I come every year. I always learn something more… Morristown is bigger and you can look at trees and flowers. I enjoy this location better."

What appealed to younger folks: The "smell of the stinkhorn… the dyes… the colors. That you can make paper out of mushrooms… mushroom cooking… the article on truffles that are worth $3,600… The huge puffball outside." "Paper, how they made it… cooking [mushrooms]."

What didn't they like/wanted improved: "Two years ago, there was a longer hike in woods. There were more mushrooms." "Why not sell mushroom-making kits?" "An introductory course for kids." "Kids would like to try growing mushrooms."

How they felt about Fungus Fest 2006: "You realize how totally inadequate your knowledge is. Overwhelming." "Interesting." "Amazed." "Learned a lot." "Enjoyed." "Very interesting." "A lot of fun." "Very interesting." "Amazing." "Amazing." "I was astonished." "Overall, great." "Above my expectations."

STOKES FORAY FINDS

submitted by Dorothy Smullen

There was a multitude of mushrooms at Stokes this year for the Grete Turchick picnic. The tables set aside for identified specimens quickly filled up, but the sorting table never seemed to empty.

Lactarius chyrsorheus and *L. lignyotus* were abundant, along with many Russulas. *Tricholoma aurantium* seems to show up at every picnic. Other trichs were *T. odorum* and *T. sejunctum*. Susan Hopkins' eagle eye spotted *Cordyceps ophioglos/9*, and she carefully dug them up attached to their false truffle Elaphomyces. Glenn Freeman identified a Pouzarella. *Polyporus brumalis* was found, as well as *Albatrellus caeruleoporus* and *A. cristatus*. The latter was found by Judy Mudrak right nearby the picnic area.

The total list of specimens from this foray and others can be viewed when all the forays end and the year's data appear in a future issue of this newsletter.

You don't need to be an expert to help!

A bit of a lesson...I received these three calls this past month:

1. Two women ate mushrooms from their yard. Both had thrown up a lot, and promptly. From the photos, the mushrooms seemed to be Jack O' Lanterns *(Omphalotus illudens)*.

2. A toddler had sampled mushrooms in the yard, no symptoms, and except for lack of nearby oak, I declded the fungus was *Armillaria tabescens*, the ringless honey mushroom.

3. A dog had eaten fungus that was either *Mutinus elegans* or, ironically, *M. caninus*. No symptoms yet, except for a reminder that dogs like carrion.

– Alex Adams

THE WONDERMENTS IN THE GENUS RUSSULA

*by Sam Ristich (from **Mainely Mushrooms**, Maine Mycological Association, October 12, 2006)*

Although Dr. Robert Shaffer has been the United States' authority on the genus Russula, Dave Patterson and Ray Fatto have revealed the wonderments in the genus to the common man. When I was at the New York Botanical Garden in the 1970s, Dave Patterson helped me with handout sheets (which I still have) for my class. But in the past 25 years, Ray Fatto, with Geoff Kibby's help, has provided us with printed material which includes descriptions and keys.

At the MMA foray on July 8, many species were collected at Bliss Woods or were brought from other places. Most of the field guides have wonderful photos with good descriptions of species. I also have Ray Fatto's useful key to many species. I am hoping several people will be collecting, naming, and photographing about 50 species this summer and fall.

This spectacular Fatto-Kibby key contains 18 characteristics, including spore color. The key is titled: *Keys to the Species of Russula in Northeastern North America* (Kibby-Fatto Enterprises, 1990. NJMA sells reprints.)

My daughter Ruthie has pointed out that for those of you with Internet access, there is an interactive online key to North American Russulae called *Online Synoptic Key to the Species of Russula in North America*.

This is the web address:
http://www.mtsn.tn.it/russulales-news/id_kibby_fatto.asp

This online tool represents an updated version of the synoptic keys published by Kibby and Fatto some years ago, and allows you to quickly check the characteristics of your collections to see which species match the chosen criteria.

*(P. Murosako, from **Spore Prints** - Puget Sound Mycological Society, October 2006)*

In Memorium

MARY BRANDWEIN *1912 - 2006*

A very good friend of NJMA, Mary Brandwein, passed away on Monday, September 4, 2006. She was 94 years old. Mary established the Brandwein Institute to honor the legacy of her late husband, Paul, and served as chairwoman of the Institute's Board of Directors for seven years. She carried on her husband's mission stressing the importance of science education and field-based research.

It was Mary's wish that her land be used for biodiversity studies. Many teachers have benefited from becoming Brandwein fellows. Through the request of Jack Padalino (formerly of PEEC), NJMA became involved in a fungal study on Mary's land at Rutgers Creek in Unionville, NY. Ray Fatto and others began the study in July, 2000. The fungal herbarium there is named in Ray's honor.

The collecting and identifying crew has changed over the seven years, but for the last few years the active members have been Richard Balsley, Aaron Norarevian, Sang Park, Rhoda Roper, Dorothy Smullen, Gene Varney, and Gene Yetter, who serves as data manager. One of the highlights of each collecting trip was our visit with Mary. She generously served us cold drinks, fruit salad, and cookies – a perfect refreshment after two hours of collecting on the rocky slopes of Rutgers Creek. We will sadly miss talking with Mary, a lovely and generous friend who had a remarkable vision for her husband's memory and her land.

Gifts to the Mary Brandwein Endowment Fund may be made in her memory, and will help insure that programs continue that connect learners of all ages with nature. Mail to the Brandwein Institute, P.O. Box 13, Unionville, New York 10988. Phone 845-856-8230.

- submitted by Dorothy Smullen

NEMF 2006 - FORAYS, CLASSES, AND PARTIES IN BOREAL QUEBEC

Article and photos by Terri Layton

The 2006 Samuel Ristich Foray of the North East Mycological Federation (NEMF) was held in Lac-Bouchette, Quebec hosted by the Cercle des Mycologues de Montréal and the Société de Mycologie d'Alma. It was also a joint annual meeting and foray of the Association de Mycologie du Québec, which includes seven mycological associations from Québec.

It was a pleasant drive to Lac-Bouchette once we passed the Montreal area and left all the hustle and bustle of city life behind. We were fortunate to spot a bald eagle gliding along one of the many rivers on our long journey. New members Elena Greene and Igor Safonov reported seeing a juvenile black bear leisurely crossing a road on their journey.

We arrived well before noon on Friday and, finding it too early to eat lunch or to register, we went for a stroll around the campus (a Catholic retreat) and, to our delight, found many fungi unfamiliar to us. After registration and a quick bite to eat, we armed ourselves with baskets, knives, lots of enthusiasm, and, praying for a short ride, reluctantly piled back into our car for our first foray.

The foray area was a boreal forest which is largely intact and free of roads and industries. Globally speaking, the boreal forests ring the regions immediately south of the Arctic Circle (most of Canada, Russia and Scandinavia) and is larger than the Amazon rainforest. As you can imagine, the boreal forests play a critical role as "carbon reservoirs" which are important to all living things.

What surprised me (and was a horror to some of our carpool comrades) was how close the vegetation and soil composition was to our own New Jersey Pine Barrens. There were plenty of porous sandy soils, blueberries, moss, lichens, and black spruces. If it wasn't for the hilly terrain and the lack of ticks, we would have thought we were back home. Despite reported recent rains by the locals, we were disappointed with both the numbers and variety of fungi.

Looks a little like our own Pine Barrens, you think?

We decided to ditch the Pine Barrens-like conditions and once again piled back into our car and came back to campus, leaving our seasoned veterans Rhoda Roper, Dorothy Smullen, Gene Yetter, Rod Tullous, the Parks, and the Burghardts (who doggedly stayed there) to search on. Back at campus, our mood improved considerably as the collected fungi proved to be more productive despite similar conditions at other forays in the area. We were truly delighted to find beautiful *Amanita wellsii*, luscious *Hypomyces lactiflorum*, Helvella, many Boletes, Coprinus, lichens and mosses.

Friday evening activities included an opening meeting in a chapel and social gathering with a live band and dancing under a big white tent. Next day, I opted to stay for lectures instead of the foray and wasn't disappointed with the choices available, in English or French. Speakers were Walt Sturgeon (who was a recent guest speaker at NJMA – remember "Just for the Smell of It") and Bill Roody (co-author of *North America Boletes,* and who just happens to be Susan Mitchell's brother-in-law), who spoke on Boletes and Mushrooms on the Lawn, respectively.

Certains de nos membres de NJMA posant pour une image à NEMF

One thing we couldn't ignore was that most, if not all Canadians in the Québec region speak only French. This was most inconvenient at meal time if you wanted something other than standard meals. For an example, I witnessed one of our members (let's call her lady chemistry professor - LCP) trying to order scrambled eggs by imitating a whipping action; the mime Marcel Marceau would have been proud. Later, I witnessed LCP failing to get a glass of water even though she pronounced the word "water" very succinctly, and I might add, with increasing velocity. Finally, LCP stopped yelling "water" and brightly exclaimed "H_2O". Needless to say, LCP got

her scrambled eggs but no water.

I know for sure that none of the servers were deaf because when my turn came, I asked softly for *"oeuf"* and held up two fingers (peace sign) and gestured flipping them over gently. I got exactly what I wanted (two eggs over easy), just the way I like them.

Yes, our inability to communicate with Canadians was frustrating at times, but we managed to laugh a little and picked up a few words and had fun greeting each other in French.

Actually, this brings up an important point about using universal languages like Latin and Greek to describe fungi. It's not a frivolous pastime to learn Latin and Greek when we study fungi. Both languages are essential components of the study of mycology. My insight was further reinforced when I visited the fungi collection area and had no trouble identifying fungi names familiar to me although the fungi looked unfamiliar. Can you imagine the magnitude of confusion if everyone used their own language to describe certain fungi given that the same fungus can look very different from region to region? Take, for instance, the common names associated with *Hericium americanum*: icicle, pompom, lion's mane, etc. Imagine how different things would be in many different languages!

This "beefy" edible looks a lot like our own ***Tricholoma caligatum****.*

I can better illustrate my point as follows: One day I was surveying the collection room and noticed a fellow French mushroomer gawking at a certain meaty-looking mushroom I had not seen before. I moved closer to him and softly whispered *"Bon Soir"*. Our searching eyes met and our gaze locked instantly. Well you know what happened next: I held up this fungus and mimicked chewing. Instantly he exclaimed *"OUI!"* It took less than two seconds to find out if YOU CAN EAT IT! How easy was that? *Nes pa? Tres bien! Bon appetit!* By the way, the mushroom in question was *Catathelasma ventricosum* (or *Biannularia ventricosa*). And, in fact, it is considered a good edible.

Coprinus atramentarius*, one of two Coprinus species found at NEMF.*

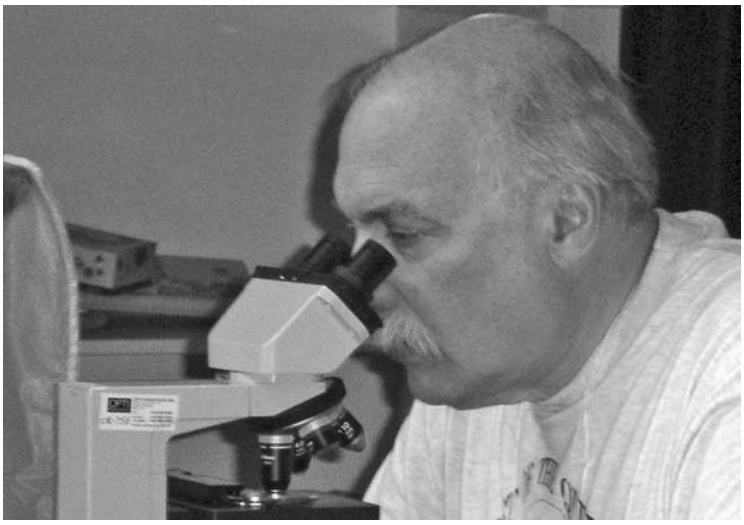
Two noteworthy items: Dorothy Smullen won a contest for naming blue fungi (blueberry country, right?), and Rod Tulloss made some interesting comments on a fairly rare Amanita species found by Nina Burghart. (What was interesting was not what Rod said but, rather, how he said it. It was in French. *Oui!* I would say with sort of American accent…I am not kidding!) I have no idea what was said because my high school French was inadequate for the task.

By day, we forayed, and by night, we partied. We had cocktails, live band music, dancing and singalong[s] by a bonfire. We didn't have mycophogy, but who wants to eat when you can drink, sing and dance and have a ball? A good time was had by all.

At closing, we all sang *Frère Jacques* in six languages in a Catholic chapel.

Mark your calendar for next year's NEMF in Maine. It's a good way to get to know your fellow mushroomers.

(By the way, "Water," in French, is "*Eau*". Check with Rod for proper pronunciation!)



Rod Tulloss at the 'scope.

MEMBER PROFILE:

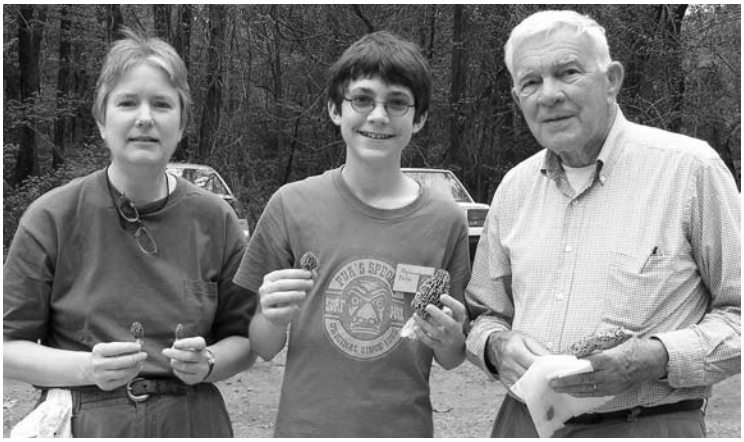
"THE QUIET MAN" – DR. EUGENE VARNEY

A profile from the perspective of Terri Layton

Most know Dr. Eugene Varney as a quiet, sincere, patient and gentle man who grows wonderful mushrooms. For years, Gene exhibited cultivated mushrooms for NJMA's annual Fungus Fest for the public's education. This year was no exception with his beautiful oyster mushrooms in a strawberry jar.

Beware though, under that quiet exterior, he is a quite a forceful man who had some training on how to get what he wants. As a young man, he served our county as an interrogator for the US Army Air Corp S2 Intelligence Division during the WWII. His main duty in England was to sniff out potential bombing sites utilizing various methods, including interrogation of captured Axis pilots.

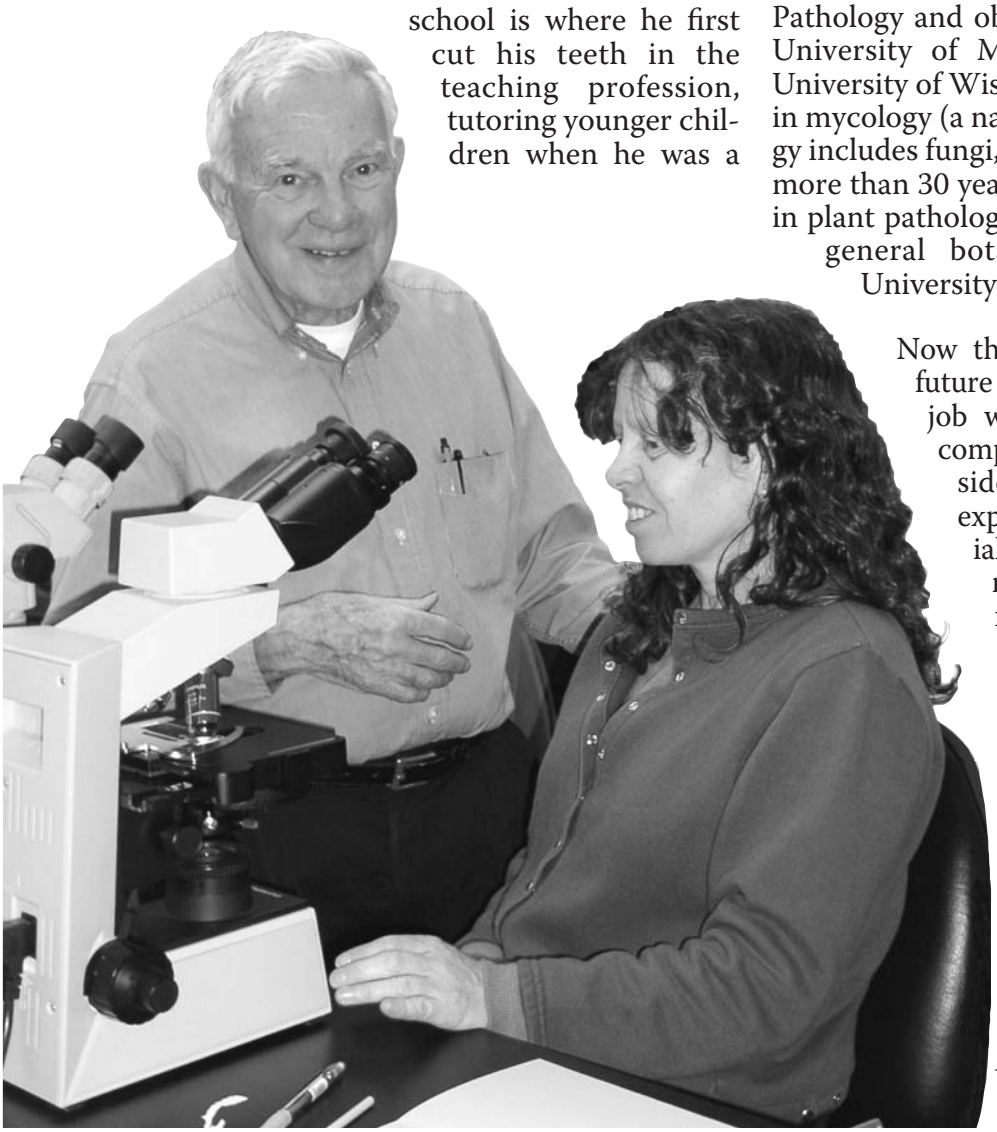
Gene grew up in a small town in Massachusetts and attended a one room school from first to eighth grade. Can't you almost picture a white schoolhouse like the one on the *Little House on the Prairie* television series? In this little one room school is where he first cut his teeth in the teaching profession, tutoring younger children when he was a just a lad himself. Later, as an undergraduate student at Rutgers, he also found much satisfaction in tutoring his classmate athletes. He eventually made a career in teaching, which he continues to date as a one of the principal NJMA instructors. His NJMA teaching repertoire includes microscopic study, cultivation, and medicinal uses of fungi.



Susan Hopkins and Raymond Fatto with Gene Varney

His love of nature, nurtured by his family and his innate social sense to help nature, propelled him to study Plant Pathology and obtain his Bachelor of Science from the University of Massachusetts and a Ph.D from the University of Wisconsin in plant pathology with a minor in mycology (a natural combination since plant pathology includes fungi, virus, bacteria and micro plasma). For more than 30 years, Dr. Varney taught graduate courses in plant pathology and undergraduate mycology (under general botany) at Cook College of Rutgers University until his early retirement in 1988.

Now this all sounds like Dr. Varney had his future neatly mapped out, but not so. His first job was a secretarial position at a utilities company. This caused my head to tilt to one side questioningly and he charmingly explained that back in olden days, secretarial positions were available to men because most companies lacked proper facilities for women. (He actually said this to me with a straight face and anyone who knows him would not doubt his sincerity.) He further explained that he was compelled to wash windows (I bet! No women around to wash windows!) for this company because his boss smoked like a chimney causing windows to fog up and obstruct the view to the outside. Unable to endure being cut off from trees outside, Gene left the utility company to pursue a greener pasture.



← *Dr. Varney willingly shares his knowledge of mycological microscopy with Hadas Parag.*

After graduating from high school, Gene also contemplated becoming a landscape designer. He does, however, get to showcase his talent as an amateur landscaper (with his wife Ruth) in his back yard. Together, they have a beautiful back yard where they grow lots of yummy vegetables, beautiful flowers and, of course, lots of healthy trees. They also love to feed birds and tolerate squirrels, pigeons, and groundhogs without too much grudge.

He first learned about NJMA when Bob Peabody, also a longtime member, invited him to a meeting as a guest speaker many years ago. He eventually became active with NJMA when he retired from Rutgers. Gene served as vice-president and president of NJMA during late 80's and early 90's. Gene also dedicated many hours writing for the NJMA newsletter and served as a chairman of the photo contest.

Besides teaching about fungi, Gene is passionate about conducting research and surveying the fungi kingdom. He contributed to the biodiversity study of a rare, virgin forest in New Jersey-Hutcheson Woods, which is jointly owned by the Nature Conservancy and Rutgers University. Gene, accompanied by Ray Fatto, forayed the forest every month for over 12 years to collect and identify the fungi. It's no wonder Gene still misses his longtime friend and foray buddy Ray, who was equally passionate about fungi.

Dr. Varney continues to participate in yet another biodiversity study in Greenville, NY (the "Rutgers Creek" project, as NJMAers like to call it) for the Paul Brandwein Institute, where collected specimens are identified, dried, and placed in the Raymond Fatto Herbarium, which was dedicated in 2003.

Gene Varney, Gene Yetter, and Aaron Norarevian at Rutgers Creek

Dr. Varney also made it possible for NJMA to permanently house over 2,530 specimens in a herbarium in one of the science buildings at Rutgers University. Also, through Dr. Varney's association with Rutgers, our microscopy and medicinal mushroom classes are conducted in a state-of-the-art campus laboratory at Rutgers.

Gene and Ruth frequent NAMA and NEMF forays. At these events, you will find Dr. Varney working quietly identifying slime molds and ascomycetes that others do not consider glamorous.

This past spring, several of us attended his mushroom cultivation class, which was held in his home garage. His dedication to teaching was obvious: He had spent many days of preparation for a hands-on class plus planning the lectures and making the handouts (not to mention cleaning up after the class). We had lots of fun mixing straw with oyster mushroom spawn and drilling oak logs for shiitake spawn, which we took home. Dr. Varney also showed us few exotic edible mushrooms he was cultivating for his own personal enjoyment, which made me curious about his favorite consumption variety. To my surprise, he stated that he's perfectly happy with those plain white button mushrooms, *Agaricus bisporus*. He just likes to grow things.

Dr. Varney's nurturing extends beyond plants and fungi. He volunteers his time at a nearby correctional institution as a final evaluator for the intensive-supervision program. Without a doubt, he uses interrogation skills he learned while serving in the US Army (I think Uncle Sam got his money back ten times over) to determine if inmates are ready to be released back into society.

Now in their eighties (hard to believe!), Gene and Ruth like to keep busy and are looking forward to more traveling before getting too old. For fun, they like to travel to the Everglades to study wildflowers and birds. Gene and Ruth just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and have three children: daughters Ellen and Caroline, and son Stephen. To their delight, all three children (and four grandchildren, including twins) all live within driving distance.

Although Dr. Varney's personal interest in fungi is mostly scientific in nature, he comments that there is plenty of room in NJMA to support a diversity of interest. He is truly a remarkable teacher who is a living model for tolerance, patience, and generosity. We are fortunate to have Dr. Varney as a dedicated member of NJMA.

Thank you, Dr. Varney and Mrs. Varney, for sharing your knowledge, your generosity, and your time.

AN EMAIL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

(Editor's Note: I am reporting this correspondence between Richard Butsch, myself, and Gene Varney to further illustrate Gene's willingness to share his knowledge with others. Thanks, Gene!)

October 12, 2006

Jim:

I read with interest the September NJMAnews article Fungal Friends, about mycorrhiza. My landscaper recommended a mycorrhizae soil injection to improve the health of a tree, for $83!! I have three questions:

1. Do you or any other members know if this is safe in the long run, not only for this tree, but for surrounding plants?

2. Can I locate some mycorrhiza mushrooms to fertilize the tree area with their spores, for $0.00?

3. What kind of mushrooms should I be looking for? There are quite a few popping up now under trees that are phallic-like, appear to be sac fungus, have a bright red tip, and wilt fairly quickly (within hours with warmth).

Feel free to forward this inquiry to others. Thanks for any help anyone can offer.

Richard Butsch

October 12, 2006

Jim:

Minutes after my previous email, I found this website: **www.mycorrhizae.com**

But I'd still appreciate any advice.

Richard Butsch

October 12, 2006

Richard:

Thanks for passing on the website information - I will make sure it gets into the next newsletter. To try to answer some of your questions:

To the best of my knowledge, mycorrhizal connections have no detrimental aspects - they form a symbiotic relationship between the organisms.

The type of mushrooms that you should be looking for depends entirely on what type of tree you wish to "inoculate".

The mushrooms that you have growing would seem to be one of the "stinkhorns" - you should be able to readily confirm that by smelling some of the fruiting bodies that have a colored material on the end of the fungus.

I will forward your email to a couple of members who should be able to give you more information.

Jim

October 13, 2006

Jim:

Thanks. The trees I have are zelkova and maples - with Japanese green maple, river birch, and yew bushes within about twenty feet.

Richard

October 17, 2006

Dear Mr. Butsch,

You probably already have more information than you ever wanted to know about mycorrhizal fungi. Young trees being planted in harsh environments such as on a land fill or waste lands around coal mines may need the right mycorrhizal fungi added to survive. Nurseries growing trees for reforestation may also inoculate new seedlings. Legumes may grow better if inoculated with nitrogen-fixing bacteria. But, I doubt that you need an injection of mycorrhizae around a healthy mature tree in an average area. Your tree roots are undoubtedly already colonized by many species of mycorrhizal mushrooms. Your tree long ago replaced its natural root hairs for absorbing water and nutrients with assorted mycorrhizal fungi. I do not know if one mycorrhizal mushroom will replace another mushroom carrying out the same function. The root system of any single tree will be colonized by many mycorrhizae. For example, you can find many species of Russula, Boletus, and Amanita under one tree growing by itself on a lawn. These are all mycorrhizal fungi.

The injection is unlikely to do any harm but may be useless. If you like to experiment, inject half the area under the tree and see if there is a difference in a year or two on that side of the tree. If you have twin trees, do one and not the other.

Your inquiry about the phallus-like mushroom suggests that you already have a soil rich in organic matter, a soil that is teeming with all kinds of fungi and other soil organisms. The mushroom you described is most likely a stinkhorn, *Mutinus elegans*, even though you did not mention a fetid odor. It looks like a dog's penis; you can find a picture in most field guides.

Much research is going on with mycorrhizal organisms and it is difficult to keep up with the latest findings. It is also an area that invites quackery.

Gene Varney

Mixed Wild Mushroom and Smoked Pork Gumbo

by Jim Barg (as served at the 2006 Grete Turchick Foray and Picnic)

1 cup flour

1 cup vegetable or canola oil

1½ cups chopped Vidalia onion

1½ cups chopped mixed color bell peppers

1 cup chopped celery

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (more if you like it hot!)

¾ teaspoon salt (more or less to taste)

2 cups lean smoked pork butt, diced into ½-inch cubes

5 cups fresh or frozen mixed wild mushrooms, sliced/diced

(In the past, I've used just about any "meaty" wild mushroom or combination of mushrooms, including Lepista nuda, Grifola frondosa, Laetiporus sulphureus, Agaricus campestris, Rozites caperata, Hydnum repandum, any chanterelles, edible Lactarii, edible boletes, even Coprinus comatus. Puffballs, however, do not work well.)

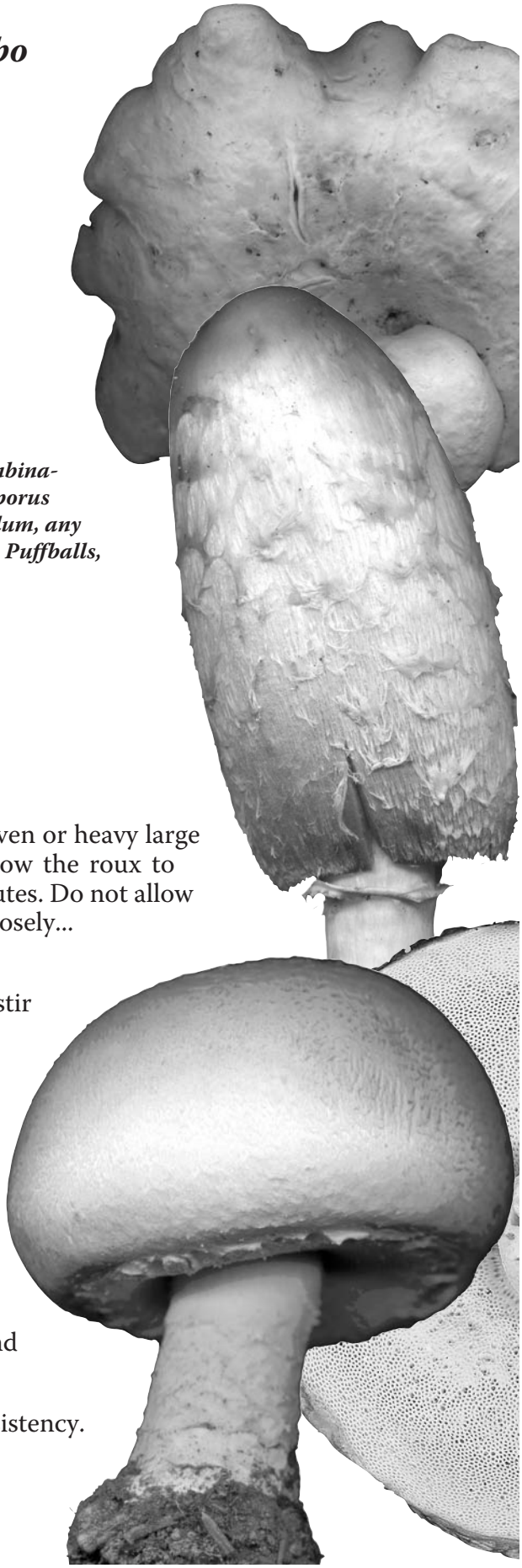
3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

3 cups water

1 tbsp. flat-leaf parsley, chopped

4 green onions, sliced thinly

filé powder (powdered dried sassafras), as desired



1. Prepare a roux by combining the flour and oil in a large dutch oven or heavy large saucepan over medium heat. Whisking slowly and constantly, allow the roux to reach a chocolate brown color, which should take about 20-25 minutes. Do not allow the roux to burn (once the roux begins to brown, watch it VERY closely... if it turns black, discard it and start over!).

2. Add the onion, bell peppers, and celery to the browned roux and stir constantly for another five minutes.

3. Add the pork, cayenne pepper, and salt and stir for another three minutes. Add the broth and water, stir until smooth, and bring to a boil.

4. Reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for one hour, stirring occasionally (and scraping the bits off the bottom of the pot as you stir).

5. After one hour, add the mushrooms. Allow to simmer for another hour, stirring occasionally. Add the parsley and green onion and cook for five more minutes. Adjust the seasoning, if needed.

6. Serve over white rice, adding filé powder to bring to desired consistency.

Yield: 8 servings

Mushroom Pinwheels

by Jim Richards (as served at the 2006 Grete Turchick Foray and Picnic)

1½ pounds of Grifola frondosa, cleaned and cut into ¼-inch dice ***(Other mushrooms can be substituted)***
1 bunch of scallions, cut into ¼-inch dice
3 cloves of garlic, minced
3 chili peppers, minced
(Use more or less according to your preference. I used two Thai hot peppers and two Lemon Drop peppers)
¼ cup dry sherry
3 tbsp. peanut oil
3 tbsp. fish sauce (or soy sauce)
½ cup chicken stock
2 tbsp. cornstarch mixed with ¼ cup chicken stock
2 roasted duck legs (drumstick plus thigh)
½ cup cream cheese
4 wrappers (I used two spinach and two wheat)

1. Remove the skin from the duck legs and cut the meat into ¼-inch pieces.

2. Heat the peanut oil in a wok until quite hot. Add the scallions, garlic, and chilis. Cook for 2 or 3 minutes.

3. Add the mushrooms, sherry, chicken stock, and fish sauce. Cook over high heat until most of the liquid has cooked off. Add the shredded meat from the duck legs. Add the cornstarch mixture and stir briefly. Put the mixture aside to cool. (At this stage, the mixture could be used as a filling for wonton wrappers and steamed or fried as dim sum. Or, it could be used to fill phyllo pastry, puff pastry, or whatever your imagination can conceive)

4. When the filling is cool, mix in the cream cheese and check the seasoning. Add salt and pepper to your taste.

5. Spread the mixture on the wrappers. Roll up tightly. Chill until needed.

6. To serve, cut the rolls at a slight diagonal into 3/4-inch slices.

Yields about 40 slices.

THE NOSE KNOWS: SIMPLE IDENTIFICATION OF AGARICUS AND MATSUTAKE MUSHROOMS

*by Bill Windsor (from **Spores Afield**, the newsletter of the Colorado Mycological Society, October 2006 issue)*

It has been some 26 years now that I have been scanning the ground for edible mushrooms, and it has come to the point that it is no longer a conscious effort. It does not matter that I might be engaged in a business meeting inspecting a property, or perhaps on a sporting motorcycle ride; I see mushrooms everywhere. Recently, I have noticed that Agaricus mushrooms are fruiting all over the area at lower elevations.

I am a big fan of edible Agaricus mushrooms, I really enjoy their 'meaty' flavor. It is an easy mushroom to identify to genus, but it can be very daunting to identify to species. Since there are a number of toxic Agaricus mushroom species, and because I tend to be VERY cautious about eating any mushroom that I cannot identify without question, for many years I avoided collecting Agaricus mushrooms for my dinner plate. It was CMS member Ellen Jacobson who introduced me to a remarkably simple tool to identify edible Agaricus mushrooms. Even then, it took me a couple of years to learn to trust that tool. But I am at the point that when it comes to separating an edible Agaricus from a toxic Agaricus, I use my nose.

Everybody learns things in a personal manner and often that trait is linked to one of the senses. For me, my sense of sight is dominant to my learning. I learn best by seeing something. Because of that, it was initially difficult for me to 'switch gears' and classify Agaricus mushrooms by smell.

First, it is vitally important that you learn to identify an Agaricus mushroom to genus, and for that I use my vision. This is in harmony with the most basic identification concept of mycology which separates genus by differentiating macroscopic fruiting body characteristics. Once I establish that a given fruiting body is an Agaricus mushroom in prime age and condition, I then tum over identification to my nose.

Remember, my goal here is to identify an edible Agaricus from a toxic Agaricus, and not to identify the mushroom to species. I also must express a warning that it is best to be able to identify a mushroom to genus and species if you are going to eat it. Using smell to separate an edible Agaricus from an toxic Agaricus may not work for many people. I spent a couple of years verifying that my sense of smell matched known edible and toxic Agaricus mushrooms before I became comfortable in using my nose as a reliable tool in Agaricus identification.

As part of the identification process, I separate Agaricus mushrooms into three smell groups: (A) Almond smell; and (B) Mushroom smell; and (C) Phenol, or chemical smell. Any hint of an Almond smell in an Agaricus mushroom is an automatic 'keeper' for eating. For me, all Agaricus mushrooms that have an almond smell are prime for eating. Those that smell 'mushroomy' are also 'safe' to eat and some (such as *A. bitorquis*) are prime edibles. I discard all Agaricus mushrooms that have any trace of a Phenol, or chemical smell, and as a back-up, I also discard all Agaricus mushrooms that quickly turn bright yellow at the very base of the stem when they are cut open.

Likewise, the unique smell of the Matsutake mushroom allows the nose to be the ultimate tool for field verification of the mushroom's identity. While there are several 'lookalike' species within the genus Tricholoma, once learned, the smell of the Matsutake mushroom is truly unmistakable. Your eyesight and knowledge of environment will lead you to Matsutake, but it is your nose that will verify that you have found the correct mushroom.

One of the joys of mushroom identification is that all of your senses can (and should) be used as part of the identification process. It is fascinating to me that with a little bit of training, a difficult to identify genus of mushrooms, such as Agaricus, can easily be separated into edible and non-edible species by the use of smell. Many other mushrooms also have specific smells that can aid in identification. Whether you are new to mycology or a seasoned 'shroomer, the nose is a valuable tool in navigating the complex task of mushroom identification.

Good forays to you all.

MUSHROOMS AND HEARTS

submitted by Gene Yetter

The Czech Center in New York City will host an exhibit entitled "Mushrooms and Hearts" showing fungally-themed paintings by Monika Abbott.

These are not the diagnostic or artfully-composed pictures typical of mushroom field guides. They are large paintings of mushrooms in various stages of decay or decrepitude, nevertheless artfully composed.

The artist's work is shown at **http://www.monikaabbott.com** (no hyphen). Some of the paintings were featured in *Mushroom, the Journal*, Spring 2004.

The exhibit opens on Tuesday, October 24th from 6:30pm to 8:30pm, and it runs through November 24.

The Czech Center is located at 1109 Madison Avenue (at 83rd St). Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10:00am - 5:00pm; Thursday 10:00am - 7:00pm.

TIBETAN HERDERS JOIN RUSH FOR PRIZE FUNGUS

by Chris Buckley, from Reuters via the Los Angeles Mycological Society, June 13, 2006

Yajiang, China *(Reuters)* - Amid towering mountains stretching from western China into Tibet, a tiny fungus is luring herders into a feverish treasure hunt that promises wealth to people who have often been bystanders at China's economic party.

At a mountain pass more than 4,000 meters (13,000 feet) above sea level outside Yajiang County in Sichuan province, a herder, Tangba, and a dozen other men have joined tens of thousands of Tibetans hunkered on treeless slopes across the region, squinting for signs of what Chinese call "worm grass" -- a prized medicine.

"You can become rich if you're lucky, make a bit of money if you're not, but it's not easy," Tangba said, clutching a jar half filled with shriveled, yellowish stalks. "That why Tibetans are best at it. We know our home."

"Worm grass" is not really a plant. Known by Tibetans as "summer-grass winter-worm," it forms when a parasitic fungus hijacks and devours the bodies of ghost moth larvae that have burrowed into the alpine soil for up to five years. It then steers their bodies to the surface so it can spread its spores.

The mummified moths, two inches or more long, are a traditional Tibetan cure-all that promoters say helps fight AIDS, cancer, and aging. As Tibetan medical ingredients have won adherents in China and abroad, worm grass and other alpine fungi and plants have become lucrative commodities, luring almost entire villages on harvests from May to July.

"Now many families are going out to find it, just leaving the old people at home. I thought it was a bit crazy too, but I also want to make money," said Celang. He planned to quit his job in a Kangding town restaurant in western Sichuan to hunt fungi.

With luck, Celang said, he could make 2,000 yuan ($250) in a month or two, compared to 400 yuan a month in the restaurant.

Fungus Frenzy

At the mountain pass, Tangba and the other pickers set out every morning, scanning tuft-covered ground for tell-tale fungi shoots and, with a trowel or small hoe, cut carefully and deeply into the earth to avoid damaging the larvae corpse.

Sometimes they return to camp with dozens of the dirt-covered caterpillar fungi, at other times only a handful.

The hunt is enacted across large parts of Tibet itself, as well as neighboring Sichuan and Qinghai provinces, providing a vital economic pump in many areas, Daniel Winkler, an environmental consultant and expert on the fungus based in Kirkland, Washington, told Reuters.

Children get special school holidays to go picking, officials go AWOL, and in some areas influxes of thousands of temporary pickers take much of the crop, sparking violence with locals and even killings, according to Chinese news reports.

Caterpillar fungus, which provide many Tibetan yak herders with about half their annual income, is a case of bottom-up business in a region dominated by grand development blueprints that have often failed to deliver at the grass roots, Winkler said.

"Without the income from caterpillar fungus, the whole place would collapse right now," he said of the local economy.

Pickers with larger hauls or higher hopes converge on markets like one in Litang, a far-western Sichuan town that recalled a Gold Rush outpost overrun by fungus hunters. On a recent Sunday, the main street was a crush of pickers and traders, with onlookers following deals as intensely as Wall Street brokers.

Tibetan and some Hui Muslim buyers flashed wads of 100-yuan notes, gestured bids, and peered at bags and baskets of fungi. Police had to break up a brawl, apparently between quarrelling traders.

Booming Demand

Nomadic Tibetans have traded caterpillar fungus with neighboring Chinese regions for centuries. But locals said booming domestic and international demand has made the annual hunt more intense, and enriched a class of Tibetan brokers.

China's exports of worm grass leapt to 4,795 kg (10,570 lb) in 2004, up 1,422 percent on 2003, said China's pharmaceutical administration. China produces about 20,000 tons of caterpillar fungus a year, according to one official estimate. Litang traders said domestic demand is growing by 10 percent or more a year.

"You can make good money in Tibetan medical herbs, but you need to know the market and the plants, and we're better at that than Han people," Tibetan trader Dimtsenema said in a Kangding nightclub, where he was celebrating a good week, dressed in a dark suit, red shirt and trimmed goatee.

But much of the annual crop eventually flows through mostly Han Chinese wholesalers in regional hubs, such as the Hehuachi traditional medicine market in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan.

(continued on next page)

A kilo today sells for 20,000 to 50,000 yuan, depending on quality and origin; five years ago, it sold for about half that; a decade ago, for 3,000 yuan, said Hehuachi stall holder Deng Yazhi. "The whole world wants it, so worm grass is like gold."

Commercial appetite for caterpillar fungus may, however, carry long-term costs, some environmental activists have warned. Swathes of Tibetan highland are being scoured of medical plants, leaving pockmarked mountain slopes vulnerable to erosion and possibly disrupting complex ecological rhythms, they have said.

Winkler, the environmental consultant, said the long-term consequences remain little understood but production seems not to have suffered so far and some warnings may be overblown.

Tibetan pickers said they worried most that growing numbers of people would continue crowding the grass lands for fungus.

"It's getting harder and harder to find worm grass," said Tsangpa, a herder who had traveled to Litang with a small bagful. "There's not so much to go around."

CORDYCEPS, RARE MEDICINAL FUNGUS, CULTURED

from chinapost.com, July 7, 2006, via the Los Angeles Mycological Society

Singapore - The technology has been developed to culture microorganisms for large-scale production of a rare Chinese medicinal fungus, a Singapore company said in a published report Thursday. The development has resulted in the cultivation of the *Cordyceps sinensis* fungus in 9.5 days, compared with 12 months in nature, according the company, Auric Pacific Nutritech (APN).

"Wild *Cordyceps sinensis* is only to be found in places like China, Tibet, Nepal, and Qinghai, at altitudes above 3,500 meters," The Business Times quoted APN general manager Mark Xu as saying. This product is rare with "demand greater than supply."

Studies have found *Cordyceps sinensis* to contain bioactive compounds that support healthy lung and kidney functions, and anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

TRUFFLEMANIA

compiled by Jim Richards

It's that time of year again, when the articles begin appearing in the press about the ever-rising prices of white truffles. These elusive fungi make their annual appearance from October to around Christmas. And, each year the prices get even higher. In an article in the October 4 issue of the *New York Sun*, Dan Dorfman writes that the newest wrinkle this year is the debut of the $200 Baked Potato with White Truffles served at New York's Four Seasons Restaurant. The price is up about 33 percent from last year's $150 Potato.

Why? Restaurants are paying $2500 a pound for white truffles from Alba (considered the finest in the world), up from a price of $2000 a pound. At other restaurants around the country, the prices are up as well: At Sistina, a portion of risotto or pasta with truffles is $120, a salad with a sprinkle of this fabulous fungus is $60. Nicola Civetta, the owner of Primavera, the city's premium power Italian restaurant, estimates that diners will spend between $20 million and $25 million on a variety of truffled dishes in upscale eateries in the Big Apple. He figures that his restaurant will serve about 2,000 dishes with truffles this season. This season is expected to be a good one, with ample rainfall in Italy. "All the rain has moisturized the soil, leading to the creation of very pungent and firm truffles," said Mr. Civetta. Luigi Rosso, of Il Postino, says that "every year is a record truffle year because of rapidly swelling interest".

In a related article in the October 30 issue of *New York Magazine,* it is reported that Morimoto (of Iron Chef fame and the owner of eponymous restaurants in New York and Philadelphia) just purchased a two-pound white truffle for $10,500.

MAHLON-DICKERSON FORAY REPORT

by Jim Barg

The morning of Saturday, October 21 was breezy and chilly, but that didn't stop a small group of NJMA diehards plus two new members from wandering the woods of Mahlon-Dickerson Reservation in Jefferson Township. Finds were sparse, but the group still managed to collect well over 30 species, including one gorgeous newly-emerging *Grifola frondosa*.

In addition to the expected late-season fungi such as *Hypholoma sublateritium*, *Lepista nuda*, and *Amanita citrinum*, red Russulas were still in evidence, hanging on by their last legs, despite frosts that week. Other finds included *Gymnopilus penetrans*, many late-season species of Lactarius (many which defied precise identification), *Tricholoma myomyces*, *Calostoma ravenelii*, *Laccaria ochropurpurea*, *L. bicolor*, *Hydnum umbilicatum*, and *Lycoperdon perlatum* (among many others). No boletes were found on this downright *cold* foray!

Holiday Dinner 2006

The NJMA requests the pleasure of your company at our annual Holiday Dinner, Photo Contest, and Election of Officers to be held at the Unitarian Society in East Brunswick on December 3, 2006 at 2:00 p.m.

Please bring a favorite dish (sufficient to serve 8 to 10 people) for the buffet table. If you plan to bring a dish containing wild mushrooms you must get clearance for the dish from Bob Hosh, who is coordinating the buffet menu. You may contact him by phone at **(732) 873-1406** or via e-mail at **rhosh@patmedia.net**. Dishes should be labeled to show ingredients and should arrive ready for the buffet table with serving utensils. All questions concerning the buffet menu should be directed to Bob. The club provides beverages.

Please note that a donation of $10.00 per person is required to help offset some of the buffet costs. In order that we may cater the party properly, please respond by November 27, 2006!

Directions to the Unitarian Society:

The Unitarian Society is near the corner of Tices Lane and Ryders Lane in East Brunswick.

From New Brunswick via Route 18: Take U.S. Highway 1 south, exit at Ryders Lane to East Brunswick, continue to the second light, and turn left onto Tices Lane. The Unitarian Society is the 2nd drive on the right before you go under the NJ Turnpike.

From the south via the Garden State Parkway: Take Route 18 north toward New Brunswick to Tices Lane exit (take jughandle from right lane of 18 across to Tices Lane). Follow Tices Lane until you pass under the Turnpike. The entrance is in the woods on the left just after you leave the underpass.

From the NJ Turnpike: take Exit 9 to Route 18. Take Rt 18 South to East Brunswick. On 18, turn right onto Tices Lane at the third traffic light. Follow Tices Lane until you pass under the Turnpike. The entrance is in the woods on the left just after you leave the underpass.

NJMA Holiday Dinner Registration Form

Fill out this form, make your check payable to **NJMA**, and mail both, *before November 27*, to:

Bob Hosh, 209 South Middlebush Road, Somerset, NJ 08873

Questions? Phone: **732-873-1406** E-mail: **rhosh@patmedia.net**

NAME(S): _____

TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ATTENDING _____

x $10.00 each = $ _____ *(Don't forget to enclose your check for this amount)*

I will bring sufficient to serve 8 to 10 people *(please specify below):*

_____ Hors d'Oeurves _____ Meat casserole

_____ Vegetable casserole _____ Green salad

_____ Potato or pasta salad _____ Dessert

I will help with: _____ **Setup** _____ **Serving** _____ **Cleanup**

(Detach and mail)

NJMA NEWS
c/o Susan Hopkins
P.O. Box 291
Oldwick, New Jersey 08858

FIRST CLASS MAIL

In this issue:

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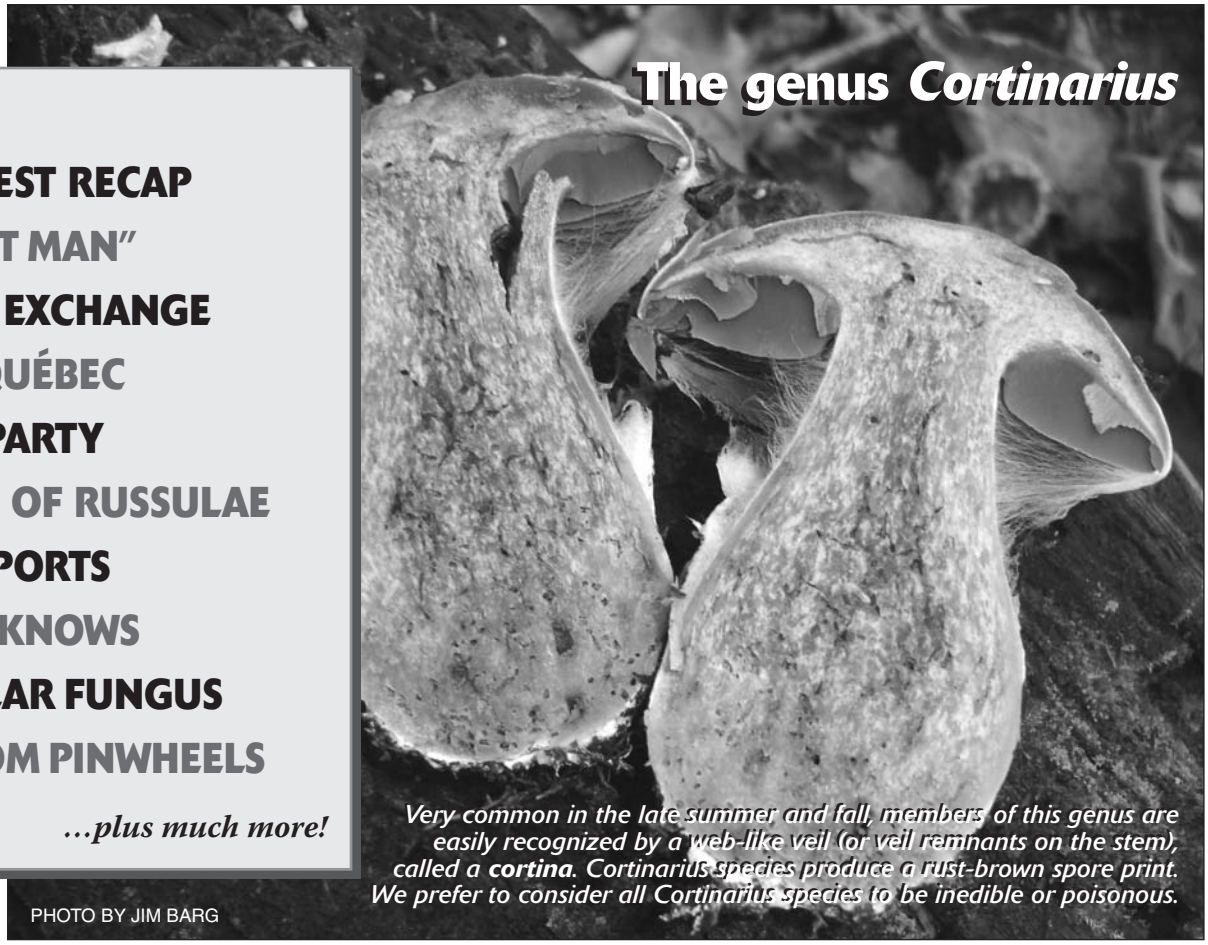
- **FORAY REPORTS**
- **THE NOSE KNOWS**
- **CATERPILLAR FUNGUS**
- **MUSHROOM PINWHEELS**

…plus much more!



*Very common in the late summer and fall, members of this genus are easily recognized by a web-like veil (or veil remnants on the stem), called a **cortina**. Cortinarius species produce a rust-brown spore print. We prefer to consider all Cortinarius species to be inedible or poisonous.*

PHOTO BY JIM BARG