

## WINDS OF CHANGE AT THE DESERT LABORATORY

In February, a new faculty member from Geosciences, Jay Quade, arrived on the Hill fresh from his postdoctoral year at the Australian National University in Canberra. Jay is no stranger to the southwest, having won degrees from the University of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. His publications on soil carbonate (caliche) geochemistry and its relationship to desert vegetation opens a new vista for desert geobotanists. Jay is getting up a high vacuum line in the main laboratory for sample pretreatment. Let's all welcome him up on the Hill.

Another new face in the "Shreve Laboratory" (my proposed name for Building 801) is Karl Flessa of the Geosciences Department. Karl is spending his spring semester sabbatical with us and holding up his side of the table at the Lab lunches, especially when extinctions are being discussed. Karl finds many opportunities to practice taphonomy, his brand of marine paleontology, by studying distribution of marine shells in the beaches around Rocky Point and Gulfito, and, as he admits under pressure, in the collecting box. Sounds like a science for beach combers! We hope to see more of sabbatical visitors in the future, as space allows.

Spring of 1992 continues to be one of the best for wildflowers on the Hill, borages, phacelias, white bachellins buttons, serocio and unels clover. The cacti and shrubs are on show as well with heavy bloom underway or promised in the abundance of buds. Exotic introduced grasses had a great spring and may create a severe fire hazard given the vulnerability desert shrubs have to the extra fuel load brought by animals after a wet warm spring.

Spring of 1992 will also be memorable for the long-planned reorganization of the Desert Laboratory Committee appointed by Ed McCullough, Dean of the Faculty of Science, and chaired by Robert Robichaux, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Members include Vic Baker, Clem Chase and Paul Martin, Department of Geosciences; Steve Russell, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; Ken Foster, Office of Arid Lands Studies; Katie Hirschboeck and Malcolm Hughes, Tree-Ring Laboratory. High on their agenda will be a five-year plan for the Hill and its mission.

Last, Chairman Robichaux is organizing a new book on the Desert Laboratory to commemorate its 90th year of operation, the largest ecological research program devoted to deserts in the world.