



along the south fork

A TREE'S TIME

By Mike Woolsey

When a tree falls on campus, does anybody hear? Manny Kenney sure does. Sometimes he gets an earful.

A monumental 80-year-old maple (see photo above) towered four stories outside the southeast entrance of North Hall until this past July when a tree service was hired to remove it.

"There's absolutely no good reason that tree should have been removed; it looked healthy to me," complained an angry student. But Kenney, grounds maintenance supervisor, had to factor in significant safety issues. The tree, which had suffered considerable damage during storms over the past several years, was evaluated by a faculty member from the plant and earth science department, an outside tree contractor, and Kenney himself. It was agreed that there was an unacceptable safety risk to pedestrians traveling beneath its prolific limbs.

"People are dismayed when a majestic tree must be removed," says Kenney. "It proves the axiom that when you are planting trees you are

planting for the next generations." The most prominent maple of its size on campus, perhaps planted during the Harding administration, had to come down. "It's a fact of all living things," reminds Kenney. "There is always an end."

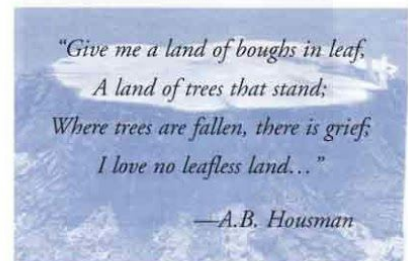
According to Kenney, campus trees are removed for two reasons—new construction and public safety. New trees are often budgeted into construction projects. Some trees, even mid-sized, may be moved with a large tree spade to accommodate construction. As was the case with the aged maple, many trees are removed for safety reasons. Disease can leave trees weak, creating the potential for falling limbs across walkways. Storm damage may be severe enough that corrective pruning can't make it safe. However, some campus trees with cracked trunks have been saved with bolts and cables.

"We must strike a balance between setting an acceptable level of safety for the campus community and providing an attractive and environmentally friendly landscape," states Kenney. Kenney takes into consideration several factors when planting new

or replacement trees. The tree must be hardy to our area. It must be appropriate to the campus location. And input from the campus community, especially horticulture faculty, also occurs.

"Nearly as important as what tree to plant is where it is planted," says Kenney. "We must consider the size of the tree as it matures." How a tree may some day block a campus street or how sidewalk lighting is affected must be considered. Wisconsin's winters also play a role. How will a tree be affected by snow and ice removal? Will the tree be affected by salt and sand applications on thoroughfares?

Today the south lawn of North Hall appears open and unshaded. A tree plan was developed to repopulate the west lawn of North Hall years ago. A similar plan will likely be implemented for the south lawn featuring a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees. The plan will depend on future funding, always tenuous in tight budget times. However, Kenney says donations to the UW-River Falls Foundation tree fund triggers progress in getting such projects underway sooner than later. This fund has been



tapped to plant trees that faculty have requested to support teaching opportunities, has paid for the cost of relocating existing trees, and has been used for general replacement of trees around campus. Kenney says folks have made donations to have trees planted as memorials to loved ones.

A new tree planted today could still be enjoyed by students several generations from now—as proven by the mighty maple that once graced the lawn of North Hall. ■