

**URBAN ENTOMOLOGY EXTENSION & RESEARCH**  
**Palmetto Pestalk February/March 2007 Newsletter**

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I struggle with words today because they travel from me to this page through a cloud of emotional pain. It is hard to wrap any words around the horrible events at Virginia Tech (VT) on morning of April 16. When I first heard of the shootings on the VT campus, I was concerned. When I heard many of the victims were in Norris Hall, I was consumed with worry. My brother, Richard (Dick) Benson is the Dean of the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech and his office is in Norris Hall. My sister-in-law Leslie also works on campus in a nearby building. As the terrible news unfolded, I called both Dick and Leslie's private cell numbers with no response. Around noon, I got word from Leslie that she was okay and that Dick was away from campus attending a conference. Thank God!

While we are fortunate that no one in our family was physically hurt, the impact of this tragedy on all those at or associated with VT, including Dick and Leslie, has been profound. To help provide some perspective, I am going to use insightful words, paraphrased from two messages sent on April 17 by my brother:

*"Monday was a day of shattering, unspeakable grief. So many of you have written to me in the last two days. I want to say at the outset that the outpouring of kindness and support is having an enormously beneficial effect at Virginia Tech. We have all shed tears of grief these last two days, but we have also shed tears of emotion at the many, many kind acts that have been shown to us."*

*"My heart aches for the lives of the students lost. These bright young men and women were in the prime of life, planning for rich, fulfilling futures. They came to Virginia Tech to acquire an education; an education that would forever change their lives."*

At the Virginia Tech Memorial Convocation on April 17, President Bush described the classroom as a sanctuary, and it is. Any caring professor knows they are privileged to enter a classroom full of bright, beautiful faces. No one takes an engineering class at VT or an entomology class at Clemson because they have to. They do it because they want to. They want to learn, to acquire an education to change their lives for the better.

And it is a privilege to work with wonderful faculty and staff. So often we hear of kooky or extremist college professors in the media, but most college faculty and staff members are wonderful, dedicated people who deeply care about their work and students. My brother wrote:

*"We lost five faculty members, three of them engineers. G.V. Loganathan, while teaching a graduate class in hydrology, was gunned down along with most of his students. Kevin Granata, a biomechanics expert and father of three young children was lost. Liviu Librescu, a Holocaust survivor and a giant of a scholar in structural mechanics, was shot through the door of his classroom. He was barring the door so his students could jump out of windows to safety. Heroes! Never forget their names!"*

*"There were many other acts of extreme courage including the faculty members that raced through the halls of Norris Hall while shots were being fired to warn people to lock their doors. They saved many lives. There were many other acts of decency including the faculty members that traveled to local hospitals to console the grieving."*

As the weeks have passed and the funerals have taken place, the families, faculty, staff and friends of those lost at VT continue the grieving process. My brother carries the burden of finding a path for the College of Engineering at VT. Dick is confronted with providing continued support for students and employees traumatized by the shootings and the mayhem and horror of fleeing Norris Hall on April 16. He has to help determine the future of the historic and massive Norris Hall. He continues to struggle to find

office and classroom space for all of those displaced from Norris Hall. He has to find new funding and redirect large amounts of money from other projects to meet the pressing needs due to the fallout of the April 16 tragedy. He has to find ways to keep the future of engineering at VT bright and not defined by the darkness of a madman. And Dick and Leslie have to continue to be strong for others while their own hearts still ache. And while I still pain for my brother, I take some consolation in his words:

*“While our loss is huge and our grief is unbearable, the nobility of this great community of scholars is undiminished. Those of us that survive, and those that will come after will continue to dedicate themselves to teaching and learning. And we will never forget the friends that we lost. As long as there is a Virginia Tech they will be remembered. They are more than friends. They are family.”*

*“I continue to get e-mail messages from around the country about the VT tributes that are occurring on other campuses, including the wearing of VT colors, playing of the VT alma mater on the campus carillon, holding candlelight vigils, etc. I’ll finish as I began; this has an enormously beneficial effect on us all.”*

Whether you help others by spending your day in the office, classroom, laboratory or even in a crawl space, we are all cut from same cloth. In the end, we have what we feel, what we know and what we believe. What I feel is deep sadness, but I am bolstered by the goodness of others. What I know is that goodness will push back the darkness, and Virginia

Tech will prevail. What I believe is that God has an army of wingless angels. They are called friends.

### **Looking Forward To The Next MPCT Program**

Last year, we cancelled the Master Pest Control Technician (MPCT) Course due to low enrollment numbers. I am pleased to report that we will be able to hold the course this year. We currently have 10 participants enrolled for the June 10 – 15 course at Clemson. Participants stay on the Clemson campus and have over 40 hours of training through classroom, lab and field activities. The cost, including all instructional materials, room and meals is \$750. We have room for only five more students, so if you are interested, register soon! You can sign up by contacting Jackie Ellis by phone at 864/656-5048 or via email at [jells@clemson.edu](mailto:jells@clemson.edu).

### **Time To Register For The 2007 ATT, WIR & MTT Programs**

It is time to register for the Apprentice Termite Technician (ATT) Schools, the Wood Infestation Report Training Workshop (WIR) and the Master Termite Technician (MTT) Schools. The ATT programs will be offered August 6–7 and August 9–10. The WIR program will be offered August 8. The MTT programs will be October 16–17 and October 18–19. All of the programs will be held at the Clemson University Sandhills Research and Education Center in Columbia, SC. See additional registration information in this issue of Pestalk. Remember that every year our enrollment exceeds the number of spaces we have

available for each class, so if you are interested, please enroll early. If you have any questions, please contact Jackie Ellis.

### **The Taming Of Shrews**

Over the last few years at the SCPCA Winter Meeting, we’ve had an open workshop to identify pest specimens or damage that attendees have brought to the conference. With a good microscope, a couple of good reference books and a lot of experienced pest professionals at the meeting, we usually can identify most samples. This past February, we were all stumped by droppings that Paul Troublefield brought in from a wall void area from one of his accounts. We were pretty sure the droppings were from a vertebrate pest, but their odd appearance made them difficult to make a positive identification. I asked Paul if he ever caught the offending creature, to please let me know what it was. Paul caught it and it was a shrew.

There are many species of shrews and we were not able to make a species identification. The house shrew does produce odd, corkscrew shaped droppings and that may be the species that was infesting the account. Shrews are similar in size and general appearance to mice, but mice have four toes and shrews have five. Mice are rodents and shrews are insectivores. With a high metabolic rate, shrews are voracious predators and most species eat a wide variety of insects. To avoid being a meal for larger animals, shrews have a vile odor that keeps most predators away, though owls will readily consume shrews. Their foul odor,

sharp pointy teeth and aggressive, pugnacious nature, makes shrews less than cuddly.

Shrews usually fall into the category of nuisance wildlife and do not establish large infestations in structures. Common procedures used to exclude rodents from structures are also effective against shrews. Keeping thick vegetation away from structures can help reduce habitat areas for shrews. With no baits or toxicants labeled for shrews, trapping is the most viable control method for shrews in structures. For detailed information on shrews and a variety of trapping methods, consider reading the [Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage](#) at

the University of Nebraska website:

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/icwdmhandbook/55/>.

I've seen a lot in my life, but I know I haven't seen everything. At least I can add shrew droppings to my repertoire. If I'm ever presented with shrew droppings again, perhaps I'll be more able to help with the taming of the shrew.

### **I Need Your Help With Bed Bugs**

I'm in the process of developing information on current and potential control strategies for bed bugs. Over the next six months, I would like to work with technicians in SC doing bed bug

control. This would involve working with the technicians, photographing infestations and documenting control strategies and procedures. If your company is doing treatments for bed bugs, I would like to visit and work with your technicians. I realize that I may be contacted on short notice and I would do my best to work with your schedule. I also understand that I must be discreet with the information and undistruptive to the control process. I will not highlight specific problems or accounts, but rather highlight broad challenges and procedures for controlling bed bugs. If you have "opportunities" for me, or questions, please let me know. Thanks!