

Ethelynda Harding

WHEN HER OFFICE becomes the topic of conversation, Ethelynda Harding smiles and says, "When I'm not teaching or working on a research project, I'm trying to find my desk, which seems to be lost."

Indeed, her office is a comfortable home away from home. It's "wallpapered" from floor to ceiling with what seems like hundreds of books. They aren't as neatly cataloged as the collections you find in the library; rather, in these tight quarters, they inform all visitors that this office belongs to a busy microbiologist.

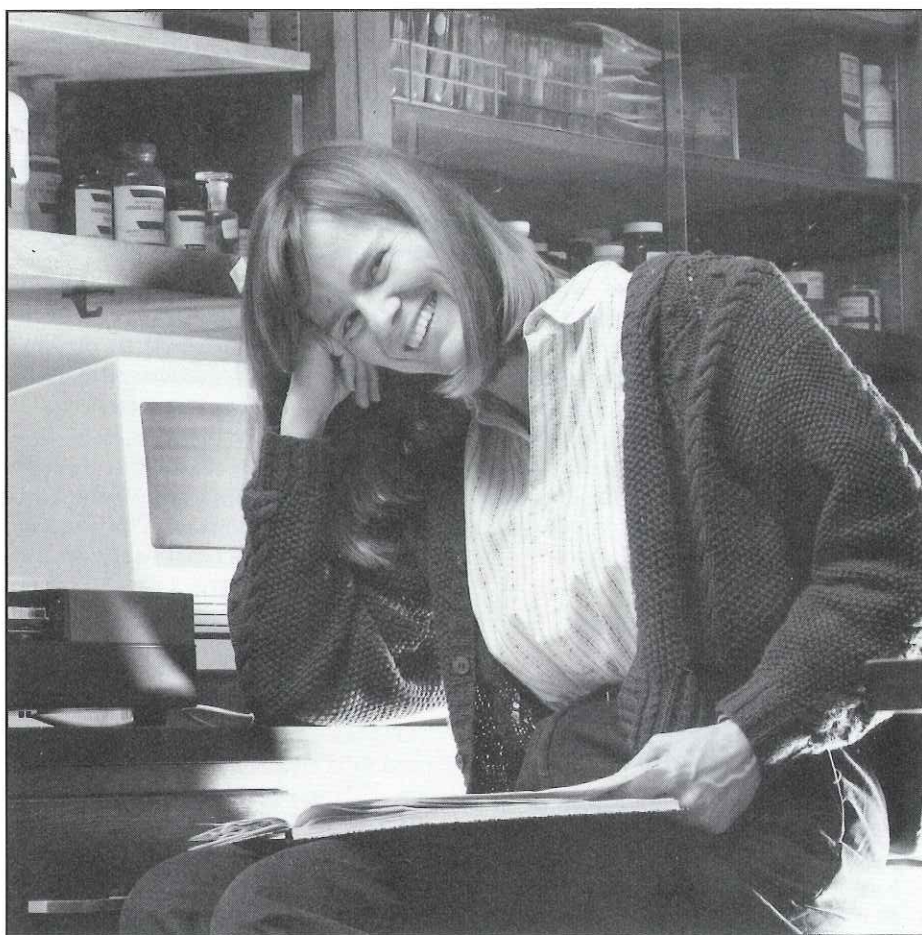
Adjacent to her office is the classroom laboratory, which, not surprisingly, is one of her favorite spots on campus. For it is here that this professor confronts the many challenges of her career.

"Getting the students to think instead of just regurgitating the information I've given them, that's quite a challenge," she says. "Watching the light bulb go on when someone figures something out, that's one of the rewards of teaching."

Harding teaches upper-division courses in microbial ecology and microbial physiology, a graduate course in bacterial diversity and, on occasion, graduate seminars. However, the main focus of her teaching is an introductory microbiology class she teaches every semester.

The professor is quick to point out that her classes are difficult. They are 4- and 5-unit courses in which a lot of material is covered; students can expect to spend at least 10 to 15 hours a week studying.

"That's a big challenge — motivating students who don't want to study," Harding says. "Every



"If it's big enough to see with the naked eye, it isn't worth looking at."

Professor, Microbiology

teacher faces this same problem. Some students want to study; some don't, maybe because they have other things on their minds that particular semester. They may take the course over again later and do fine because they're concentrating more. I do what I can by talking to them and telling them that I'm here to help if they need it ... and every once in a while, I call them in and yell at them."

In return, some of Ethelynda Harding's students — past and present — call her. "There's one group of students I hear from constantly. They were here about six years ago. They were, and still are, a very enthusiastic, hard-working bunch. One of them is doing her residency on her M.D. Another one is in Sacramento working for the California equivalent of the Environmental Protection Agency. One is a physical therapist; one is an enologist. Another one works for Stauffer Chemical Company, and the sixth student is in graduate school in Arizona.

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LAST GOAL ACCOMPLISHED: Getting my lecture exams graded and returned.

NEXT GOAL: To present two papers at the annual meeting of the American Society for Microbiology.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS: American Society for Microbiology, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Institute of Biological Sciences, Soil Science Society of America, American Society of Agronomy, International Society of Soil Science.