

## Official follows passions in work at PSU

By Colleen Boyle  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

If Paul Ruskin totaled the distance he has ridden his bicycle to work since he began at Penn State's Office of Physical Plant (OPP), he would be close to making one loop around the world.

As great of a feat that may be, saving gas — and the environment — is just a way of life for Ruskin. For him, caring for the planet is not only a duty but a passion, and no act is too small in his quest to save Mother Earth.

As he said, "a little thing done a billion times over makes a difference."

Today, Ruskin spends his days on the edge of Penn State's campus at the OPP office, working as the communications and public affairs coordinator, responsible for alerting the Penn State community about OPP operations.

But he's also doing what he loves, assisting Penn State with many of its environmental projects.

"OPP has led the 'greening' of Penn State, and I'm proud to be a part of that," Ruskin said. "Penn State offers the beauty of being immersed in nature [and] allows me to pursue interests that relate to the planet and to the earth."

Ruskin's concern for energy conservation began decades ago as a student at Penn State. Troubled by the amount of energy wasted by classroom lights left on during the weekend, Ruskin began switching them off as he passed by on Friday evenings.



Michael Felletter/Collegian

Paul Ruskin shows off the Segway he rides around the office, campus and seminars he is invited to attend. Purchasing Segways for OPP employees to ride was Ruskin's idea.

As time passed, this passion for conserving energy caught on. Today, the Friday Night Lights Out program continues Ruskin's tradition.

Ruskin began at Penn State, but his journey back took him across the Atlantic Ocean, forced him to cleave to an M-16 rifle night after night and led him to a part on the silver screen. After graduating college in 1970, Ruskin left State College to join the American Forces

Radio and Television Service and take his message across the Atlantic. There, he worked on a late night radio show out of Madrid, Spain.

"Most of my radio show was environmental issues," Ruskin said.

After relaying his passion for the earth to his listeners for four years, Ruskin returned to the United States, having experienced the world about which he cared so much firsthand.

He had traveled the earth and seen her wonders, but for Ruskin, the next step was to return to where his love for the earth began: Happy Valley.

"He has experienced so many cultures," said Ruskin's friend and colleague Al Matyasobsky. "He is an environmentalist at heart."

Ruskin took a job at his alma mater and became the video producer for extension service in College of Agricultural Sciences, where he led many environmental initiatives.

Since his days in Europe, Ruskin had witnessed many ways to protect the earth. Now, he relays these changes to the university.

"He is willing to give anything a try," said Matyasobsky, OPP Central Support Services supervisor of labor and equipment. "But he is not hazardous — it is always planned and well thought out."

Possibly Ruskin's favorite of these advancements is the Segway. Thanks to his encouragement, Penn State now owns more than four, nicknamed John, George, Paul and Ringo after the Beatles members. Ruskin enjoys using the Segway that shares his name to cruise around his office and Penn State's campus.

"I come up with lots of ideas — not all of them good," Ruskin said. "Penn State listens to my ideas, and they laugh for a couple of years. And then sometimes they do it."

Another product of Ruskin's ideas is the time

For an interview with OPP spokesman Paul Ruskin on his job:

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capsule located in the lobby of the Agricultural Administration Building. Placed in the building in 1987, the capsule is set to be opened in 2087. It contains multiple items collected by Ruskin, including several Pennsylvania wines, stream water samples from across the state and the seeds of endangered plant species.

Ruskin said he hopes when the capsule is opened, future scientists can benefit from these samples, which would be impossible to gather in 2087. Also included are two \$100 checks and a job application completed by Ruskin. By the time the capsule is opened, the checks will have matured to \$200,000. The application is for the "Penn State Orbiting Campus," which Ruskin predicts will be in full swing by the time the capsule is opened.

"Why not have a campus floating above Harrisburg?" he said.

In the coming years, Ruskin said he plans to continue his work with OPP. But even in the small town of State College, Ruskin has not lost sight of the big picture and the planet that he loves.

"Someday I want to volunteer for scientific exploration. Off the coast of Turkey, there are diving expeditions," Ruskin said.

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### RUSKIN'S TALE

"When I was stationed in Spain, our intelligence people found out that the Basque separatists didn't like the fact that the Americans had a radio/TV station, so we got word that during a certain week, they were going to attack our station.

It was going to be at night, and I had the station to myself at night because I had the night shift. So I went in every night at midnight not sure what was going to happen that night. The military put up two machine gun nests at either end of the hallway, and my orders were that if the terrorists attacked and got past, I had an M-16 rifle attached under my desk. So I was to move away from the microphone, grab the gun, swing around and shoot holes in the transmitter.

And then after that, it was up to me, whatever I wanted to do - defend the station or surrender. But the important thing was that I was to shoot the transmitter so that the terrorists would not have access to put their message out.

They found out that we found out, so they never came. But it was a stressful week."

## CAPTAIN PLANET



In the conference room of Penn State's Office of Physical Plant, Paul Ruskin is seen in a video that was shot while on one of his shipwreck adventures. Great Lakes. Ruskin's passion for the environment is not only a duty but a passion.

### If you know

Do you know someone you think should be on the We Are page? Call us at (814) 865-1828 or e-mail [collegian@psucollegian.com](mailto:collegian@psucollegian.com) to suggest somebody.

### Paul's Picks

**Music:** Advanced electronic music

"But it's gotta be from the future."

**Restaurant:** Out-of-the-way mom and pop places

"I like pleasant surprises in the out-back ... and that's not the Outback Steak House."

**Book:** "2001: A Space Odyssey"

**Penn State Spot:** Natatorium

**Ruskin Film Reel:**

"The Wind and the Lion" (1975)

"It actually is a good movie even though I'm in it."



Michael Felletter/Collegian

Paul Ruskin sits at his desk at the Office of Physical Plant Building. For Ruskin caring for the environment is not only a duty but a passion.