

W is for Weather and Ithaca:

Cornell meteorologist Paine
Said the weather would be like his name.
But the weather in Feb
Ithacated instead,
And we had crazy warmth and some rain.

This limerick of mine took second place in a contest on limericks about Ithaca in the Ithaca Journal in the early 1980s. The weather is indeed a factor here, and one can never tell what it will do. It may rain with perfectly blue sky overhead, or change from a furious blizzard to bright, calm sunshine and back within minutes, or precipitate a weird mixture of rain and sleet and snow that cannot be properly identified. When the weather is acting so strangely, it is called *ithacating*, a term I used in my 1981 text *The Science of Programming*.

Well, we need something to complain about, for Ithaca is a great place to live. Ithaca is the most enlightened town in the US (*Utne Reader*, 1997), the best emerging city to live in (*Cities Ranked and Rated*, 2004), the fourth best city to relocate to (website Relocate America, 2006), one of the 12 hippest hometowns for vegetarians (*VegNews*, 2006), and one of the 12 great places you've never heard of (*Mother Earth News*, 2006). Ithaca has its own currency—the Ithaca Hour, Ithaca's \$10.00 bill, is accepted by many establishments and is used for barter. And Ithaca's Namgyal Monastery is the North American Seat of the Dalai Lama—probably because the town of Varna is about 5 miles away, so Ithaca is Nearvarna.

Come live in Ithaca—but not too many of you. We like to keep the city population about twice the zip code (14850) and the metropolitan area around 100,000.



X is for Xcellence, for which we strive mightily.
Xceptional, xemplary, ximious we want to be.
So xperts we hire—that is obligat'ry.
But it always takes more, and we can't win so easily!
It needs working together, with mutual trust(ily)
Producing a synergy, and even a symphony.

Well, just about everyone strives for xcellence. It's xhilerating to xperience the unfolding of a new research idea, to xplore it and xcogitate on it to uncover all its nuances, and then to xpress and xplain it in an xaration that others find xemplary and xcelse—and all this comes from striving for xcellence. It's xciting to xpose students to new ideas and concepts and to have them react xuberantly, xceeding our xpectations in their grasp of the material. Not that this always happens, but it happens more often when one has xcellence.

Xcellence will happen in an academic environment if the environment supports it, strives for it, and even xpects it. An academic environment must hold all faculty in high xistimation, provide time for them to do their own thing, and encourage collaboration and communication. No one is xcluded or xcommunicated, and faculty will xult xcessively in the xploits of their colleagues. Jealousy and bitterness do not appear.

That is the kind of environment for which we strive at Cornell. We don't always achieve it, because of human nature and because various xigencies block the way from time to time. But we are aware of the need for this kind of environment and work at achieving it. It makes for a more pleasant atmosphere.

Note: Xpatiating on the topic of xcellence was xhilerating but xhausting!

