Campus Finds Comfort in Tree-Lighting, Yule Log

With temperatures hovering in the sixties, it felt like this year’s fourth annual tree-lighting ceremony was celebrating the arrival of spring rather than the winter holiday season. But the festive scene created by a packed College Walk—filled with students, administrators, faculty and alumni—was a much needed break from the harsh reality of the past three months.

“There was an eagerness to return to something normal, something familiar,” said Eric Thomas, CC’03, vice-president of programming for the Columbia College Student Council, who added that a “spirit of community was engendered by the event.” The Dec. 6 ceremony was attended by more than 500 people.

As it has since 1998, the tree-lighting ceremony featured free apple cider and chestnuts for all, plus a capella performances and a lighting countdown hosted this year by President George Rupp.

Later in the evening, Columbia’s 92nd annual Yule Log was held in the John Jay Lounge. Guests were ushered in by holiday songs performed by the Columbia Glee Club.

Dating to pre-Revolutionary War times, the lighting of the yule log at Columbia (then Kings College) provided students unable to return home for the holidays with a campus celebration of the season. The ceremony lapsed until 1910, when President Nicholas Murray Butler revived the lighting, which has continued since. (See Page 12 for photos from the ceremonies.)

—Jason Hollander

Columbia College Senior is 2002 Marshall Scholar

Daniel Immerwahr, CC’02, has been selected by the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission to receive one of the 40 Marshall Scholarships for 2002. Immerwahr, a history and philosophy major, will study modern history in Belfast.

“I plan to come back to the United States after Britain and try to get a Ph.D. in U.S. history,” said Immerwahr’s father, John, a philosophy professor and associate vice president for academic affairs at Villanova University. His mother, Paula Sepinuck, writes and directs plays.

“Most of my research was done in Levittown since the 1940s and I also located some other history of residents who have remained in Levittown public library, where they have a complete collection of local newspapers,” said Immerwahr. “I interviewed a number of residents who have remained in Levittown since the 1940s and 1950s, and also located some other archives in churches and one synagogue.”

Immerwahr’s father, John, is a philosophy professor and associate vice president for academic affairs at Villanova University. His mother, Paula Sepinuck, writes and directs plays. Daniel’s brother, Adam, is a freshman at Brown University.

Immerwahr, a member of the Undergraduate History Council and a co-founder of the Undergraduate Philosophy Forum, was one of 13 Ivy League students selected for the 2002 Marshall Scholarships.