

scheppconnections

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Global Connections: Recent Schepp Scholars Go Abroad to Take on World Problems

As you'll see, this issue of Schepp Connections is largely devoted to the stories of recent Schepp Scholars who have committed themselves to serving abroad in the interest of world peace, improved health-care in developing countries, education and breaking down cultural and historical barriers simply by "being there."

The Scholars include a former Peace Corps volunteer in Namibian Southwest Africa who is now studying public health at Yale in preparation for returning to Africa, a young expert in nuclear nonproliferation who is

now studying Arabic in Syria, and an environmentalist doing research in Siberia. Their stories are fascinating and compelling, their idealism is admirable, and their grounded sense of "let's-get-the-job-done" realism is reassuring.

Our next issue of the newsletter will focus on Schepp Scholars from abroad who have come to this country and are making significant contributions to our society in such areas as immigrant law, medical education and foreign relations.

It is good to know that in a world as torn by fear and suspicion as ours is now, there are young people everywhere willing to and capable of making an important difference. Kudos—and our gratitude—to you all. [n](#)



Schepp Scholar Katey Walter prepares for a trip down a frozen river in Siberia



Schepp Scholar Lara Knudsen with Dr. Sam Kabwigu in Uganda

**Let's Celebrate
the Holiday Season**

WHEN:

Wednesday,
December 18
4 to 7 pm

WHERE:

Leopold Schepp Foundation
551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3000
New York, NY

RSVP:

The Foundation
212-692-0191

Report From Darby Parliament

GRADUATE OF THE MONTEREY INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, 2002
CURRENTLY ON A FELLOWSHIP IN THE MIDDLE EAST

I will begin with a brief background on how I decided to focus on conflict resolution and nonproliferation issues at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

For two years, I led groups of recent high school graduates on semester long experiential education trips. I led two trips to Asia which included the Philippines, Thailand, India and Nepal; one trip to East Africa and the Middle East (Kenya, Egypt, Israel, the West Bank); and one trip to Central America (Guatemala, Belize, Costa Rica, Honduras).

Each of these trips was designed to provide the students with an intense cultural experience in the countries we visited. Through a combination of home stays, community service work, cultural events, physical activities and some common sightseeing, the students were actively learning about the world first hand. Some of the highlights included (and there are many highlights) painting schools and teaching English with a locally run community development group on a rural island in the Philippines; sitting in silence at a 10-day Buddhist meditation retreat in Thailand; volunteering with Mother Teresa's clinics in Calcutta and Delhi, India; trekking in the Annapurna region in the Nepali Himalayas; helping to build rain water collection tanks for a local women's cooperative in rural Kenya; helping administer vaccines to Kenyan babies as part of the global campaign to eradicate polio at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro; sailing down the

Nile in an old Nubian style sailboat; learning about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, first by staying at an Israeli kibbutz, and then staying with Palestinian families in the West Bank.

After 2 amazing years of leading these trips—and living out of a backpack, where sleeping in the same place 4 nights in a row was rare—I was ready to unpack my bag for a little while.

I am still constantly amazed at how fortunate I am to have had all of these experiences, and I really aim to work in a position where I can build on what I have learned through my travels, and play a positive role in improving the quality of life. I thus decided to return to school to get my MA. I chose the Monterey Institute, which has only 700–800 students, but something like 70 different nationalities! I recognized a convergence of my values with those of the Monterey Institute, and have been very happy with my time here.

One of the recurring themes throughout many of the countries I've visited is the relationship between conflict and development. This brings up a wide variety of related issues, including refugees, human rights, HIV/AIDS, weapons proliferation, exploitation, corruption, poverty . . . all of which continued to be recurring themes through most of my classes in Monterey.

I became involved with nonproliferation primarily because the Monterey Institute is host to the Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), one of the most recognized and respected organizations in the world that focus on global nonproliferation issues. I was able to work on the Middle East project, and I have focused specifically on Iran's missile and nuclear programs. I am currently working on a detailed paper (which will hopefully get published)

looking at Iran's nuclear ambitions. In the paper I attempt to distinguish fact from rumor, and look objectively at whether or not Iran has a clandestine nuclear weapons program. Most Western governments take an Iranian nuclear weapons program as fact, but there is no irrefutable "smoking gun" that definitely proves this. Furthermore, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors have repeatedly found that Iran is not in violation of its nonproliferation obligations.

In 2001, I worked as an intern at the IAEA in Vienna. This internship was a result of the solid relationship that has been established between CNS and the IAEA over the past 10 years. My role there focused mostly on supporting the IAEA's efforts to encourage states to agree to strengthened nuclear safeguards agreements—which essentially provides the IAEA with more access to verify that countries are not violating their nonproliferation obligations.

Overall, I had a great experience. Just being in the UN setting, and getting a feel for the workings of an international organization was extremely valuable. I also really valued the opportunities I had to sit in on bilateral consultations between the IAEA and representatives of different countries, regarding various aspects of their nuclear activities.

I recently won a fellowship to Syria through the National Security Education Program, which is designed to allow American students the opportunity to learn languages that are not typically learned in our schools. The other key aspect of the program is that fellows conduct a research project that relates to U.S. national security interest.

I will be spending 3–4 months in Syria, focusing on learning Arabic. I spend the next 3–4 months either in

Robert McLendon, husband of our president, Barbara, died on October 12th. He was a mainstay of *Schep Connections*—proofreader and advisor—and we are deeply saddened by this loss.

Jordan or Lebanon doing my research. (My original proposal was to work with the Landmines Resource Centre in Lebanon, doing research on the effectiveness of international aid for landmine awareness education and de-mining activities. However, due to the esca-

lating tensions in southern Lebanon, where most of the landmines are now, I am considering shifting my research project to Jordan.) I am currently looking into doing research with an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Amman, focus-

ing on the relationship between conflict, weapons proliferation, and development in the region.

That's all for now. I am really grateful for the support from the Schepp Foundation, and look forward to seeing the newsletter! n

Report From Katey Walter

PHD CANDIDATE IN BIOGEOCHEMISTRY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA–DAVIS

Northeast Science Station Sakha Republic, Russia

How familiar are the smells and tastes of Russia!

After an absence of 10 years, I am once again a guest at a Russian table. Streams of steam sweep from the bowl of boiled dumplings (pelmeni) at the noontime meal. They are sprinkled with fresh dill and best eaten with smitana, a milky sour cream. Salt and oil lavish a bowl of finely chopped tomatoes, cucumbers and onion. We soften pieces of black bread in the salty juices of the meal, savoring each piece of dill. Then we pour the chai—first the concentrated leachate of black tea leaves (zavarka), followed by dilution with boiled water and milk. There is nowhere I would rather be than at this table. I am glad to see that ten years following perestroika, the Russian table has not changed. Except for the age and shape of her face, or the number of gold teeth in her mouth, neither has the Russian housewife changed. These tastes and smells were as much the same 10 years ago when I was an exchange student in Krasnodar, southern Russia, as they are today in Moscow and Siberia in the homes of Olga or of Lena, of Aunty Masha or the kitchen of Babushka Luba. We sit on stools behind tables whose garments are rich and humble. My feet shift in their slippers, lightly tapping the air bubbles trapped under plastic linoleum floors.

I have returned to Russia, more specifically to Yakutia in the Sakha

Republic of Northeastern Siberia, to research my dissertation. Yakutian people are of Central Asian decent and speak a language rooted in Turkish. En route to our field station on the Kolyma River, my advisor and I visited a Yakutian family in Yakutsk. The Russian government granted this family land on the fringe of town, on which they transformed a littered pine forest into a wooden cathedral: a spectacle of mammoth fountains, stone fireplaces, a wooden sauna, marble pools, and an underground ice sculpture museum. They fed us boiled milk in the intestine of a cow, horse meat, and buttered kasha. We toasted these delicacies with fermented mare's milk (humos), champagne, vodka, and honey wine. Our hostess, dressed in blue silk and ornamented with a silver headdress and earrings, sang several folk songs to us about the tundra and the beauty of a woman's eyes. She blessed our spirits and prayed into the fire, making offerings of bread and horses' hair. In the afternoon, the family led us out of town, past 19th century wooden homes whose foundations had long ago sunk into the ground. With regional climate warming and the melting of permafrost in Yakutsk, the foundations of these homes have subsided such that window panes have drowned in moats of melt water.

The far northeast of Siberia is a land underlain by permafrost hundreds of meters thick. During the cold, drier climate of the Pleistocene (12,000 to 2 million years ago), vast regions of

Siberia were covered by grassland, upon which mammoth and bison roamed. Annual ground temperatures well below freezing facilitated the accumulation of ice in grassland soils. Today we travel by river through this landscape, viewing tall walls of ice and frozen soil, whose exposed surfaces are melting, revealing a wealth of Pleistocene mammoth, bison and woolly rhino bones. A warmer climate during the past ten thousand years has enhanced the melting of this ice-rich landscape. The melting of ground ice in closed basins forms ponds and lakes, which now cover as much as 30% of the land surface in NE Siberia. These lakes, which do not freeze to the bottom in winter, continue year-round to melt the ice-rich soils surrounding them. Forests and



Katey Walter in Siberia



A thermokarst lake in Siberia

tundra are literally falling into the lake bottoms as the ice beneath them melts and the ground subsides. This process is known as thermokarst erosion. The goal of my Ph.D. research is to understand the significance of thermokarst erosion and other lake processes as they relate to regional methane emissions. Erosion of terrestrial soils into lake bottoms introduces fresh organic matter to anaerobic decomposition in the lakes sediments, a process that produces large amounts of methane. Methane, a natural gas whose greenhouse effect is 30 times that of carbon dioxide, has increased in atmospheric concentration by 1% annually during recent decades. Rice paddies, landfills, ruminants and natural wetlands are major sources of methane emissions to the atmosphere. Efforts to constrain the global methane budget require a better understanding of the processes controlling methane production and emission. The seasonal amplitude of atmospheric methane concentrations, which is greatest at northern latitudes, is not well understood. It is likely that the rich distribution of thermokarst lakes and the active erosion of their margins due to melting of ground ice contribute significant amounts of methane to the atmosphere each year.

This summer field season is drawing to a close. Here in the arctic, it is the change of season. After months of light, the sun has begun to set behind the horizon in the evenings. The dwarf birch trees are turning red and it is the time to gather blueberries, low-bush cranberries, and red currants. The moon hangs backwards in our northern sky. For four days the old man has shown his face, a bright reflection on the floodplain rivers, which these late summer days are turning black. His nighttime cloak reminds us of our humanity. Darkness brings rest. Short-lived summers in the north demand fieldwork days of no end. Our one long workday lasts for two months; taking advantage of the sun, we too “photosynthesize” like high arctic plants.

Last night was a beautiful night for a limnologist. Nikita, my 17-year old Russian field assistant, and I tied our little red row boat to a rope in the middle of a large lake to sample the temperature and the pH and oxygen contents of the water column all the way to the lake’s dark bottom. Our northern lakes, laying in bowls of ice, can have bottom water temperatures as low as 2 degrees C. The amount of methane that microscopic organisms can produce under

these dark, near freezing conditions in the lake bottom sediments amazes me. Nikita and I worked late into the evening, glad for the chilling wind that carried swarms of summer mosquitoes and black flies far away. The evening light in the north is magical. Yellow streaks of warm sunlight broke through the cloud cover, dancing on the lake surface; the backdrop was a pallet of dark and light blues, the hues of sky, mountains and brush. Autumn’s first snow fell on us as we worked, and we savored the thermos of hot tea that brought sense back into our numb fingertips.

Life is slow, simple, and sweet in Siberia. The days consist of studying lakes, thousands of them in all sizes and shapes; the nights, of methane analysis on our old gas chromatograph which runs on a tank of hydrogen that was found abandoned in the tundra, leftover from the Stalin days of atmospheric testing. In between I eat soup and black bread, and jog in the taiga. Only in the quiet, passing moments does this 26-year old woman remember that she is alone here in the arctic. She wonders briefly whether or not she longs for a companion, and wonders about her chances of finding one among the tussocks and cranberries. Concerned, the Russians remind her that she should spend some of her time looking for a husband rather than working herself ragged. After all, “she is nearing the time in her life for bearing children.” The woman uses laughter to shake such remarks from her skin, like water off of wax. But in quiet moments those remarks lurk at her side. Like every young woman, she wonders what the future holds.

In acknowledgement, I would like to thank the Leopold Schepp Foundation for their generous support of my graduate research at UC Davis (2000). With assistance from the Schepp Foundation, I completed my Master’s Degree studying Lake Tahoe, CA-NV before moving to Fairbanks, Alaska, where I am currently based for my PhD research in NE Siberia. n

Report from Bernadette Thomas

CURRENT SCHEPP SCHOLAR AT YALE UNIVERSITY

COMBINED MASTERS OF ARTS IN PUBLIC HEALTH AND SCHOOL OF NURSING DEGREE

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER, NAMIBIA, 1997–1999

I think that the Peace Corps is an amazing experience, and I tell every person who asks about it that it is one of the best opportunities provided us by our government.

Although initially rooted in Cold War policies, the Peace Corps has undergone tremendous change over the years. Personally, I believe that the Peace Corps is most important as a cultural exchange program, that enables Americans to be known to others, and others to be known to Americans—thus promoting peace, and dispelling prejudices and stereotypes about ourselves and others.

My Peace Corps assignment was riddled with difficulties. Though Peace Corps Namibia has an “easy” reputation (South Africa left amazing infrastructure intact after independence), most volunteers (including myself) were placed in the bush, with no electricity or running water.

I was stationed in Onayena Village in the far north of Namibia, approximately 80km from Angola, where I taught English and Business Management to 8th and 10th grade students. The village where I stayed was close to the town of Ondongwa, so urbanization was ever encroaching on the village. I worked hard to establish credibility in the village, especially after being threatened by a local youth. Being the first volunteer at my school, I also had to find accommodation in the village. After some months I befriended an excellent family that happily anointed me the eldest daughter.

My Peace Corps experience was also marked by the death of my stepfather. During training my stepfather was diagnosed with cancer. A year later I went on emergency home leave to help

my mother care for him, and my second year was marked with visions of his painful death.

Frustrations? Of course. I’m sure that every Peace Corps volunteer has an “idea” about what village life *should* be like, about what their Peace Corps “experience” *should* be like. I don’t think that those “ideas” fly in modern Africa. While I lived in rural areas, urbanization was 30km away; AIDS was (and is) ravaging the North, where one in four pregnant women test positive for HIV; the children I taught longed for the “life” of the West: Nike, Fila, Adidas, and everything “gangsta.” Some of the students I taught were not children at all. They were 26, 27, 28 years old. Apartheid had effectively stunted their education and they had fallen through the cracks of Namibia’s English emersion education system. My learners sat in classrooms with dilapidated floors and broken windows. We worked without textbooks, or with textbooks in poor condition—with missing pages or answers written in them.

In addition to their responsibilities at school, my students were herders,

housekeepers, babysitters, and food producers. Young girls were at high risk of having to leave school early, due to a pregnancy (an all too common headline in Namibia announces that yet another young girl has thrown her newborn child into a pit latrine in order to hide its existence). Boys and girls alike face a future of unemployment, AIDS, and debilitating rates of alcoholism.

The rewards of my Peace Corps tour are difficult to quantify, or to define, for that matter. Tangibly, I taught over 200 children, approximately 90% of my 10th grade students passed their English exam (necessary to proceed to grade 11), my colleagues and I built the village’s first library. . . . But, will any of this mean anything? I am still left with the feeling that I could have or should have done more. I’ll probably never know the long-term impact of my presence in the village. I am tempted to do it again—to get it right the second time around. . . .

I do know that the Peace Corps altered the course of my life. Not only did the Peace Corps allow me the opportunity to experience how most of the world’s people (the very poor) live,



Schepp Scholar Bernadette Thomas’s 10th grade “homeroom” in Namibia

I was also able to visit other countries in Southern Africa, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Swaziland. I fell in love with Southern Africa and her people.

Before entering the Peace Corps, I was manager of the contract & copyright department at one of New York's finest and oldest publishers. When I returned to the States, I floundered while I tried to grasp my revised understanding of the world—I knew that my future was no longer in publishing. I was offered a job at Literacy Partners, where I had volun-

teered before entering the Peace Corps, and while this work was important and fulfilling, I knew that my heart was elsewhere. After some soul searching with a good friend, I realized that my life's work would be in Africa, working with the poor in a meaningful way. Currently I am pursuing a Master's in Public Health at Yale University, and I have just applied to Yale's Nursing School, in hopes of undertaking a Nurse Practitioner degree. I hope to return to Southern Africa as a public health practitioner and rural healthcare worker. [n](#)



Interview with Jenifer Joyce

CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF THE U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE

I'd rather be in Paris

EXCERPTS FROM AN ARTICLE THAT APPEARED IN THE *NEW YORK TIMES* ON JULY 21, 2002:

Despite a record number of people applying to join the Foreign Service since Sept. 11, the State Department is having a difficult time filling hardship posts overseas as American diplomats shun jobs over security and lifestyle concerns.

The problem is especially acute in countries like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

But the problem is far broader. Sixty percent of American embassies and consulates are designated hardship posts for reasons including security threats, poor hospitals and schools and oppressive weather. From Nigeria to Kazakhstan to China, all considered hardship assignments, American missions report a vacancy rate 50 percent higher than in more developed nations.

In an encouraging sign, more than three times the normal number of applicants have taken the Foreign Service exam since the terror attacks of Sept. 11, propelled, officials say, by a surge of patriotism.

But interviews with new Foreign Service officers underscore a conundrum. While the newly minted diplomats are more eager than ever to serve their country and even express interest in hardship assignments, they are quick to say they would avoid places that might pose a risk to their families.

A notable exception to the "I'd rather be in Paris" trend is former Schepp Scholar, Jenifer Joyce, who has recently completed an assignment at our Embassy in war-ridden Colombia and is now on her way to potentially war-ridden India. She had actually agreed to a posting to Pakistan but her job was eliminated due to security risks, so she was reassigned to New Delhi.

I interviewed Jenifer at the Foundation office when she was in New York visiting her mother before beginning a five-week training program for India at the State Department. —Banning Repplier

BR: What inspired your interest in the Foreign Service?

JJ: I have always been interested in international affairs and foreign languages. A career in the Foreign Service seemed like the ideal way to explore these interests and see the world at the same time.

BR: Did your education prepare you for this career?

JJ: Not specifically. I have a degree in journalism from Boston University and later got a law degree from New York Law School. I worked for a number of years as legal council to the Committee on Transportation for the City of New York. I also had several legal articles published during that time. But as I said, I have always had an interest in foreign affairs and subscribed to foreign affairs journals, so I kept up on what was happening around the world.

BR: The US Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, was your first Foreign Service assignment. How did you find your two years there?

JJ: It was a fascinating experience. Bogotá is the second largest US embassy in the world. Of course, there were secu-

rity issues in Colombia, where fifty years of civil war plus the on-going war with the drug cartels, have created an atmosphere of fear and instability. But, for the most part, I felt safe in Bogotá. I took certain precautions—like never using public buses or taxis and avoiding certain parts of the city. Also, travel outside of Bogotá was somewhat restricted. Whenever we left the city, we had to have our itinerary approved by the Embassy. I did make a number of Colombian friends, especially in the small Jewish community of Bogotá. The synagogue was near my apartment. I also took a trip to Ecuador and spent two weeks in Havana, Cuba, on an exchange program with the US mission there.

BR: What did you think of Cuba?

JJ: The people are very poor. The housing is very rundown and I saw a lot of malnutrition. It also isn't very egalitarian. People connected to the Party definitely live better than the average.

BR: What was your assignment in Bogotá?

JJ: I worked in the “American Citizens Services” of the Consular Section. One of my responsibilities was to visit US citizens imprisoned in Colombian jails around the country, usually on drug charges. Many of them were very young and had been persuaded by hardened traffickers to try to smuggle drugs into the US. They really didn't know what they were getting into. We made sure they weren't being mistreated. Colombian prisons don't provide personal articles like soap, shampoo and towels. Those things are usually provided by the prisoners' families. But the US prisoners didn't have local families so we generally provided these articles for them. We also took care of any medical needs that might have arisen. I also worked in the visa department and sometimes dealt with US businessmen working in Colombia. We kept them apprised of the political and economic situation.

BR: How is your Spanish?

JJ: Not bad. I had studied Spanish for seven years at school. I had also traveled in Latin America before. I did take a refresher course provided by the State Department.

BR: Do you think the political situation in Colombia will ever improve?

JJ: I think so, but slowly. The US is spending a lot of money on “Plan Colombia” to promote alternate crop development and discourage the cultivation of drugs. The Plan also trains Colombian military personnel and is working to help the judicial system better deal with drug offenders. The new president, who takes office in August, may make a difference. People are very hopeful that he will get the situation under control but it really is an enormous task. The guerilla groups are very entrenched as are the drug lords. Needless to say, the people are tired of war.

BR: And now you're on your way to a new assignment in India. How did that come about?

JJ: When one assignment is coming to an end, you do a “bid list” of the places and the specific jobs in those places that would be your top choices. You list about eleven possibilities. Though India had been my first choice, I was given an assignment in Pakistan. But the job was considered “nonessential” and, what with the situation in Pakistan, all nonessential jobs were eliminated. So I was reassigned to the Political Section at the Embassy in New Delhi.

BR: Are you looking forward to the new posting?

JJ: Very much. I think India will be fascinating and that I'll learn a lot. I leave in a few days for a five-week training course at the State Department in Washington.

BR: Will you have much opportunity to travel in the region?

JJ: We get two weeks vacation a year and six weeks home leave between assignments. We have to take the home leave in the US in order to become reacquainted with American culture and not suffer reverse culture shock, which can happen if you stay away too long.

BR: Will you ultimately specialize in one region of the world, like South Asia or Latin America?

JJ: I might eventually do that. But for the next few years, I want to experience lots of different places and jobs.

BR: What do you feel about the prospects for peace in the Middle East and between India and Pakistan?

JJ: I feel it's very important to always be optimistic—and I am optimistic. Communication and compromise are essential to conflict resolution. The problem is that leaders don't want to appear to be giving in. Another problem is lack of consistency in past behavior. Promises have been made and broken so often it's hard to establish any kind of real trust—and trust is crucial if there is to be a lasting peace. Americans are optimistic by nature. We're able to rise to the challenge of overcoming obstacles, however difficult. We believe we can bring about positive change. But many people in the world feel hopeless and unempowered. They feel nothing they can do will make a difference.

BR: Where do you see yourself in the future?

JJ: I'm not sure. Wherever life takes me. I'm curious and have a sense of adventure. I have always been interested in international human rights and want to work in that area, either with the Foreign Service or with another organization. I also want to write, perhaps a book about foreign affairs. ⁿ

Trustee Sue Dawson Makes Connections in Remote Corners of the World

Komodo dragons, gibbons, orangutans and proboscis monkeys are all endangered species which my husband and I saw in July in Indonesia. I have always enjoyed viewing animals in the wild—but I also enjoy meeting the local people and learning about the world as they see it. Our guide in Northern Sumatra surprised us with the breadth of his knowledge about U.S. affairs. He was more up to date than we were, perhaps because of the proliferation of TV satellite disks.

Last summer in Mongolia, we drank fermented mare's milk and ate hard sheep's cheese while talking with the nomadic herders in their gers. We told them stories and showed pictures of our 87-year old friend, "Banana George," who water-skis barefoot and dresses entirely in yellow. They responded with stories about some of their famous wrestlers and throat singers. We later sent

snapshots back for our guide to deliver to the herders the following summer.

In Botsawana on a trip several years ago, a guide known as "Leopard"



Burmese guide, May, applying Tanaka to Mrs. Dawson in Myanmar

quizzed me extensively about the U.S. political system while we took a fishing trip in the Okavanga Delta. He asked

many astute questions and expected serious responses.

The internet has made it possible for me to remain in contact with many of the people we have met on our travels. I currently have correspondents in Mongolia, Thailand, and Sumatra.

At the end of our recent trip we were white-water rafting on a remote river in Northern Sumatra (three hours from town in a car, then a 1/2 hour bumpy ride in a truck, followed by a 1/2 hour slippery hike to reach the river). Once there, we were spotted by a group of school children who were crossing a suspension bridge above us (made with wooden planks and ropes). Our guides said the villagers would be talking about us for weeks!

I am grateful that I have been fortunate to visit all these wonderful places and look forward to many new adventures and new friends. ▢

An International Advocate

LESLIE KRETZU—CURRENT SCHEPP SCHOLAR WORKING ON A MASTER'S IN THEOLOGY AT UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Leslie Kretzu has dedicated her life to services and championing the rights of the oppressed throughout the world.

After high school, Leslie received a BS in Biology from St. Joseph's University in '96. From 1996 to '97, she worked with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in California. She later worked for the California Medical Association in San Francisco doing health care legal research, and in Anaheim for Hope House in conjunction with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

She also lived for one month in a factory workers' village in Indonesia on

the \$1.25 a day wage paid to Nike workers. She was part of an international human rights project that she co-founded, called Educating For Justice, documenting the living and working conditions of factory workers. She is an advocate for labor rights and women's rights, mainly in Indonesia at the moment, but hopes to expand to other countries in the future. She has criss-crossed the U.S. to speak about her work at roughly 80 universities to over 12,000 people, briefed Congress on Nike labor practices and is helping produce a documentary that will be avail-

able to schools and universities about the Nike story.

From 3/00 to 5/00, Leslie worked with mentally handicapped adults at the Home for the Dying in Calcutta, India and with children at several orphanages in Calcutta and Khatmandu, Nepal. She was chosen to be a Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Torchbearer and ran her leg of the relay barefoot in 35 degree weather in order to emphasize that some of the corporations that sponsor the Olympics ignore the demands for human rights in the countries that manufacture their goods. ▢

Foreign Correspondence

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS SENT HOME TO THE FOUNDATION
BY OUR OWN STAFF OF FOREIGN OBSERVERS

Hello, how are you? I am writing to update you and the Trustees on what I'm doing here in Uganda. For spring semester, I got a job working as a research assistant with the Makerere University Institute of Social Research (MISR). I am working on a study commissioned by the World Health Organization to look at the migration of skilled health personnel in Africa. The study is being conducted in six African countries, of which Uganda is one, so I am interviewing doctors, nurses and midwives about their jobs and intention to migrate (either to the private sector or to another country). The "brain drain" exodus of skilled workers out of Africa has been a recognized problem for years. We are trying to figure out what the Government can do to slow it down. Currently, I am in Rakai District in Southwest Uganda, but I am traveling around many rural areas in the next couple of weeks to finish the interviews. Then I will return to Kampala to assist with data entry and analysis.

I am also working on another research project with an American political scientist. She is looking at Uganda's population policies and use of family planning. I will be assisting her in policy review and interviews.

I will keep you updated on how things go as the semester progresses. Please extend my gratitude and best wishes to the Trustees, and enjoy the approaching spring!

—LARA KNUDSEN

As I informed you all earlier, I was in Norway this past summer at the Peace Research Institute in Oslo. This was an internship. I had the chance to write a paper (which will hopefully be published this year) with an academic who is well known in the field of Peace Research: Nils Petter Gleditsch.

More exciting, though, were my fall travels. I received two grants to conduct

research for my master's thesis, which will explore Southern Sudanese civil society and the proto-state that has developed under the force of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)—the rebel movement. I traveled to Kenya, southern Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania. I conducted over 30 interviews and had the most fantastic experiences. I was escorted through unstable territory by rebel commanders, and I interviewed soldiers, community leaders and many of the humanitarian organizations working in the area. The information I have gathered will make my thesis so much richer!

Right now I am trying to decide whether to proceed with my Ph.D. I have applied to 5 programs, one of them being Columbia in New York. Who knows, perhaps I will be there next year!

Take care and stay warm.

—CLAIRE METELITS

After the tragic events of September 11th, the atmosphere at Wellesley College was somber. Although each student was affected by the tragedy differently, we were all confronted with similar themes—dealing with personal loss, reorienting ourselves in a world that is not as secure as we may have originally imagined, and reevaluating and perhaps reorganizing what is important in our lives. Fortunately, the winter break has been more positive and my experiences have left me feeling rejuvenated and excited to begin the spring semester.

During winter session, I was fortunate enough to receive a grant from Wellesley to participate in a volunteer program. From December 27th to January 7th, I worked at the La Selva biological station in Costa Rica as an Earthwatch volunteer. The ongoing project involves researching interactions between caterpillars, plants and parasitoids. Studying the ecological interactions

between the species enables scientists to better understand rainforest dynamics and predict environmental changes that may occur over time as a result of climactic or demographic variation. I chose to participate in this project because of my interest in tropical ecology.

I returned to Wellesley a couple of days ago and although it has been wonderful to reunite with family and friends, I'm also mourning my departure from Costa Rica. In addition to the incredible experiences I had trekking through the lush rainforest, learning from the researchers and bonding with like-minded people in the group, I was also impacted by the dynamics of the research station. Interacting with knowledgeable, enthusiastic and adventurous people at La Selva was inspiring and enlightening. The natural and cultural environment at La Selva facilitates research by providing an atmosphere conducive to developing and exchanging ideas. I was also struck by the camaraderie that exists amongst the scientists. Needless to say, I want to return this summer (through the Wellesley-in-Costa Rica program), not only to work in this exciting research environment, but also in hopes of becoming part of a greater scientific community.

The experiences in Costa Rica have offered me greater academic and professional clarity and, as a result, I look forward to beginning the spring semester with more direction and enthusiasm. In the future, I envision my knowledge of other cultures and background in environmental science culminating in a graduate degree and career in ethnobotany.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to you and the Leopold Schepp Foundation. The generosity of the foundation has provided me with the opportunity to accomplish many of my academic goals and realize my future career objectives.

—JENNIFER REDFEARN

(Foreign correspondence cont.)

A sincere thank you to the Foundation for its continued support and contributions to my academic pursuits. These funds are extremely helpful; there are no words to describe how much I appreciate assistance from the Foundation.

I've been working hard on my master's thesis proposal. The final product will include research in a broad scope of areas including adventure education, biodiversity conservation and environmental education. As you may remember, my intention at New York University has been to create and implement a program in marine academic expeditions.

To assist in developing the knowledge and skills needed to achieve this career goal, I pursued an internship last summer in Tasmania, Australia working for Ocean Frontiers, an Antarctic expedition company. While interning, an opportunity presented itself to pitch my program proposal.

Since then, I have kept in close contact with Ocean Frontiers. Just this last month, I was invited to implement my proposed project aboard Ocean Frontier's "Sir Hubert Wilkins," a 37-meter-ice-ship. This invitation coincides with their "Reef Rescue Expedition" which will be conducted in cooperation with the Australian World Wildlife Fund in June. The expedition, a four-month long voyage along the Great Barrier Reef, will be spent cleaning up pollution and conducting biological assessment activities.

This is the opportunity I've been waiting for, to coordinate a marine academic

expedition in the field. This is an essential step in the process of program planning and critical to the future execution of the program involving a small group of students. Moreover, this is an amazing opportunity to develop my program in the company of WWF professional and internationally recognized expedition professionals.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

—ALLISON ARRAK

It always happens—when I get to the last stretch of my journey, things start to get really good.

Two days ago I returned to Venice after one of the most amazing vacations of my life. It started in Napoli where I got off the train and met with one of my best friends named Rocco, who graduated from Boston University last year and returned to his home in the South of Italy. We drove back to his small village in the mountains called San Nicola Baronia and rushed to take a shower and get dressed to go to a wedding. Although my Italian is still not good (and everyone was speaking in a thick Southern dialect) people were unbelievably friendly, singing, telling jokes and continually filling my glass of wine. The atmosphere was so comfortable that they even got me who, most of the time is painfully shy, to get up and sing a song, which I dedicated to the bride and groom while they danced. The ceremony lasted for 6 hours. We were served an 8 course meal, wine, meat, and pastries that had all been produced right there in the town.

The next day I met almost everyone in the village. Being as small as it is, many people already knew who I was, where I was from and who I was staying with. Most people don't go by their real name but instead a nickname which the whole town uses. Later I found out the reason for all of the nicknames: their real names are all the same, either Vito, Rocco, or Luigi.

No matter where I went, people would offer to buy me a drink and want to talk. Everyone, from the young kids to the very old men, seems to do the same things all day: tell jokes, drink, stand outside the one café in town and play cards.

As if the town alone wasn't beautiful enough with its old brick buildings erected around the caves of ancient people, enveloped by grape and olive covered mountains, it was also Easter weekend. I saw the village's traditional procession of the Passions of Christ which lasted for 4 hours. Everyone, from grandparents to mothers with children, followed the procession through the narrow streets of the town. Afterwards I had the most amazing meal with Rocco's family. Somehow it was even better than the wedding feast which I mistakenly thought was the best meal of my life. The last day in San Nicola I went to an 11 hour barbecue where we went hunting for wild asparagus in the mountains and cooked them with the pasta and meats.

On the Tuesday after Easter I drove to Rome with Rocco's sister Luciana. I stayed for 6 days and am still at a loss for words when trying to describe the city.

While in Rome with Luciana's help I was able to find a cheap place to live for the summer and a possible job. So it happily looks like I might be able to extend the last stretch of my journey.

Mrs. Bobrow and the whole Leopold Schepp Foundation, I am greatly appreciative for everything you've given me. Truthfully, without your help this most amazing experience could have never happened.

I hope everything is well.

Again, thank you sooo much!

—LAKSMAN FRANK

[Laksman is an art student at Boston University specializing in graphic design]

Leopold Schepp Foundation Awards summary

1925-2002

Student Category	# of Awards	\$ Awarded
Endeavors (1925-1932) High School Youth	3,922	\$ 784,400
College/university	17,170	19,125,576
Research/post doctoral	151	1,636,815
May 15, 2002	21,243	\$ 21,546,791



Edythe Bobrow: Making and Keeping Connections

BY ROB WILLIAMS

Recently, I had the privilege of interviewing Edythe Bobrow, the Foundation's Executive Director. The meeting was quite a turnaround for me, as I remember a little less than four years ago, my own interview (as a potential Schepp Scholar) at the Foundation's cozy headquarters on Fifth Avenue. This time, I felt the same jittery enthusiasm that I had felt when I myself had been under the microscope, only now it was because of my wanting to present a worthy and accurate portrait of an already great woman.

I began with the question that has no doubt been on many of our minds: How did she get involved with the Leopold Schepp Foundation? (An 'involvement' that has spanned 26 years and counting) Well, as many of us do know, Edythe is not one for simple, one or two word answers. She thought about it for a minute, and then she proceeded to tell me a wonderful story about how, over 26 years ago, she was contentedly working as the Director of Financial Aid at Sarah Lawrence College (where she also had attended classes). It seems someone at the Foundation (a "head-hunter," as she called him) called her office at Sarah Lawrence asking if she could put them in contact with someone who would be interested in a job opening with a background in financial aid. The persistent head-hunter then asked Edythe why she didn't apply for the job herself and even went so far as to request a resume (which, she tells me, she didn't have).

"I really had no intention to go for an interview," she said to me, "but this guy was enthusiastic and energetic and one thing led to another . . ."

Soon she found herself meeting with the then Schepp president, Barbara Tweed Estill, and several

trustees and it became very clear that this is where she belonged.

"Barbara and all of the trustees soon became my close friends. I have nothing but mutual respect, to say nothing of affection for the people of the Leopold Schepp Foundation—as a group and as individuals. My husband became seriously ill soon after I started, but Barbara and everyone were extremely understanding and supportive. I'll never forget their generosity."

Indeed, it seems that generosity is a common trait among the people of the Leopold Schepp Foundation, and I don't mean in just the handing out of checks, but the inner workings and relationships of the Foundation as well.

But again, we already know this. What I really wanted to know was just how Edythe has developed this impeccable instinct for picking scholarship winners.

"It's been a growth process," she shared with me, sitting back slowly in the comfortable powder-blue chair in the Foundation's meeting room. "It's not a job. I don't know what to call it—a remarkable experience. There is always something to get out of meeting young people. There's never been a day where I didn't learn from or enjoy meeting with the young people I interview, whether they become scholarship winners or not."

"And of course," she continued, "sometimes I connect with some more than others. Though counseling is not my job, talking a student through issues really helps. And this is where honesty and good conversational skills really come in to play, on both of our parts. Sometimes an interview has turned into a discussion of a student's fears or expectations of college or their misconceptions about college and the

financial realities. Students really need to talk it out."

Clearly, the interview is an integral part of the procedure. But even more important is the visit to the Foundation (and for some of us, including myself, this may be our first time in the Big City), and the finding out just what the Leopold Schepp Foundation is all about. And, as Edythe said to me, "who wouldn't want to come to New York City?"

"One interviewee," Edythe beamed, "was a charming young man from the Midwest who had never been up to the 30th floor of a building in his life and couldn't wait to get down again."

For Edythe, it is important not only to make these connections, but to keep them. She is constantly receiving letters and postcards from past and present Schepp Scholars from all over the world, updating the Foundation on individual progress, grades, travel, and publications, among many other things. With the help of several trustees, Edythe has also taken to reading old minute books (from past Schepp Foundation meetings and interviews) to find names and addresses of former Schepp Scholars and is currently updating the records—an often rough and rigorous task, as many of the addresses are no longer accurate. Nonetheless, it is a task she finds extremely worthwhile.

"It's important because there are not many good organizations like us around—ones that have such a positive influence and impact on recipients as well as trustees. This is an organization that has touched many lives. We are just carrying on with the legacy of Leopold Schepp—giving young people a start in life—the trustees keep that in mind."

Of course the Foundation has changed with the times, she reminds

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me. An organization that originally helped 'worthy' young boys has grown to help both men and women pursue their goals of higher education on the undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels. But one thing will never change, and that is the enthusiasm of this organization. Much like the 'head-hunter' who lured Edythe away from her job at Sarah Lawrence, Edythe, too, is a head-hunter for the earnest, hard-working, deserving students and potential Schepp Scholars. And believe me, if they are out there, Edythe Bobrow will find them. That's just how she is. [n](#)

The Philosophic Life

May 15, 2001

In 1928 I received a gift of \$1,000 from the Leopold Schepp Foundation. Still a pupil, I was enabled by the gift to become a college student and a scholar.

My mentor was my Scoutmaster, who periodically sent to the Foundation his observations on my attitudes and behavior: helpfulness, family relationships, reverence, loyalty, and reliability. This emphasis on the eternal verities reinforced our family ideals, and we have continued to hold to these ideals for ourselves and our eight children, including two adopted Latvian orphans.

The Foundation gift, together with summer earnings and student work, enabled me to go to college. After graduate school (PhD, University of Minnesota), I taught philosophy at St. Olaf College until retirement. Those forty years were punctuated by five years of work with prisoners of war and refugees and intermittent periods in Denmark for work on writings of Søren Kierkegaard. This editing and translating was published as Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, I-VII (Indiana University Press) and Kierkegaard's Writings, I-XXVI (with Edna H. Hong and co-workers, Princeton University Press). Out of this work also came the Kierkegaard Library (St. Olaf College) and the Kierkegaard House for scholars who come from throughout the world to use the resources of the Library.

We are nearing the end of planting and nurturing twenty acres of black walnut trees in southern Minnesota and six hundred acres of pine, spruce, and cedar in northern Minnesota—a healing of cut-over woodland.

Now, still living in our handmade stone house on Heath Creek and cabin in the North Woods on the Brule River, we rock and read a little more, enjoy our grand- and great-grand-children, and contemplate and seek to represent the crucial eternal verities, which are needed all the more in a disintegrating culture (see Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence*, 2001).

Best wishes to the Leopold Schepp Foundation in fulfilling its vision and mission.

Sincerely yours,
Howard V. Hong

New Dean at NYU Law School

RICHARD REVESZ: SCHEPP SCHOLAR, YALE LAW SCHOOL, 1982-83

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES, MARCH 6, 2002: New York University Law School named Richard Revesz, a 43-year-old Argentinian-born law professor, as its next dean, effective June 1. He succeeds John Sexton, who will become NYU's president. Professor Revesz studied civil engineering at Princeton and MIT before earning his law degree from Yale, where he was editor of The Yale Law Journal. In 1985, after clerking for Judge Wilfred Feinberg of the United States Court of Appeals and Justice Thurgood Marshall of the Supreme Court, he joined the law school, where he teaches environmental and administrative law. Professor Revesz's wife Vicki Been, is also an NYU law professor. They met when they were Supreme Court clerks. The law school is one of the largest in the country, with 1,800 students, 80 tenure-track faculty members and 25,000 alumni. [n](#)