

## Building America: Schepp Scholars from Abroad Who Are Making a Difference in the U.S.

**A**s you may recall, the last issue of Schepp Connections focused on recent Schepp Scholars who are serving abroad, devoting their lives to securing world peace, improving healthcare in developing countries, promoting better education, and fostering deeper cross-cultural understanding.

This issue of Schepp Connections turns the tide, putting the spotlight on Schepp Scholars from abroad who are now making important contributions to this, their adopted country.

These Scholars are continuing an important American tradition—that of welcoming immigrants from the world over and giving them the opportunity to improve their own lives and, at the same time, make this country a better place. A classic example of the immigrant who “gave back” is the German-born Leopold Schepp himself, who started out penniless on the Lower East Side, made a fortune in shipping, then earmarked most of it for the Foundation, to help others receive the formal education he himself had never had.

At a time when too many of us look with suspicion on the foreign born, it is important to recognize the untold millions of immigrants who have helped make this country prosperous, strong and—we hope—tolerant and compassionate. ■



Former Schepp Scholar Carmen Bambach curated the 2003 *Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman* exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was America’s most successful show of works on paper and drew more than 400,000 visitors in 57 days, many of whom waited two and a half hours in lines that curled around several city blocks.

## Bringing da Vinci to America

YEARS AFTER CARMEN BAMBACH CAME TO AMERICA, SHE ARRANGED FOR DA VINCI TO COME AS WELL *by Banning Repplier*

On January 22, 2003, *Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman*, opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to both critical and public acclaim. By the time the exhibit closed 57 days later, more than 400,000 visitors (6,700 a day) had seen the da Vinci drawings, often after waiting for two and a half hours in lines that spilled out of the building and snaked down the sidewalk for two or even three blocks.

This is good news. Even better news is the fact that the curator of America's most successful show of works on paper was Carmen Bambach, a former

Schepp Scholar at I Tatti, the renowned art institute in Florence, Italy.

I recently spoke with Carmen at the Foundation's offices, forty blocks south of the Met on Fifth Avenue. As I listened with rapt attention, Carmen spoke of the work involved in organizing the exhibition.

"We started back in 1998," Carmen told me, "contacting European and American museums which had important da Vinci drawings in their collections. All in all, there were 29 lending institutions, including Queen Elizabeth's private collection at Windsor Castle, the Louvre, the Kunsthalle in Hamburg, the

British Museum, and several museums in Italy."

Negotiations were proceeding well, with most of the institutions pledging their support. But then September 11 happened and everything changed.

"After the initial shock," Carmen said, "most of the people I was dealing with were very supportive and sympathetic. For example, the director of the Kunsthalle agreed to send their entire collection to us, 'to put a smile on your face after September 11,' he explained. A curator in Venice said, 'This is for the people of New York.' But understandably, there were also some reservations and that really complicated the final negotiations."

Many of the lending institutions were concerned for the safety of their priceless, irreplaceable works. What if there were terrorist activities directed at the drawings? The planes carrying them to New York could be hijacked, for example, or the museum itself targeted.

"I had to calm their fears," Carmen went on. "It involved many trips to the lending institutions, countless phone calls, a lot of flexibility and patience, and, most of all, unwavering determination."

Then, just when Carmen felt things were moving forward again, the war with Iraq began to loom threateningly on the horizon.

"That was a real set back, giving rise to more fears, more concerns, and more uncertainty—all perfectly justifiable. I can't stress enough how helpful Philippe de Montebello [the Met's president] was throughout the process. Without him, I would never have been able to persuade the lenders to overcome their hesitations. He really backed me up. He's a wonderful boss, who gives his curators a lot of creative freedom and support."



Carmen Bambach

One of the arguments that helped Carmen and Philippe persuade the lenders to collaborate with the Met, despite the risks, was the fact that this was not going to be a ‘vanity show,’ meant to bring prestige to the museum. It was really going to make a scholarly contribution by demonstrating how Leonardo’s mind worked and providing a glimpse into his creative processes. At the same time, the exhibition was going to educate the public about the works of a great master. Viewing 130 drawings gathered together in one space would help people appreciate how Leonardo was at once part of an important tradition and a remarkable innovator.

“Because of the worsening political situation around the world, I had a lot

of doubts that the show would ever really come off,” Carmen confesses. “So you can imagine how happy and relieved I felt on the opening night. I had prepared a talk but, in the end, I just spoke from my heart. It was very emotional. After all the works had been hung, but before the public arrived, I had gone through the galleries alone. It was magical, like visiting a sacred temple. I will never forget the experience.”

Carmen was born in Chile and came to the US with her family after their September 11, the day the democratically-elected president, Salvador Allende, was overthrown by military coup, which marked the beginning of a long period of brutal repression in the country. The family settled in Connecticut where Carmen completed high

school and attended Yale straight through from her BA to her PhD in art history. She studied da Vinci’s drawings while at I Tatti on a Schepp fellowship and has written numerous scholarly articles. She is currently working on a book about the drawings which will be published by the Yale Press.

During the frenetic period when she was organizing the exhibit, Carmen found time to marry Ronald Street, a sculptor. They live in Manhattan and have a house in upstate New York, where Ron has a studio.

As for the future, while continuing to work on her book, Carmen will be thinking about the next exhibition she will curate at the Met.

Bravo Carmen! The Foundation is very proud of you. [n](#)



## Amma Hewitt

**Born:** Brooklyn, NY (grew up in Trinidad)

**Came to U.S.:** 1998

**T**hough I was born in Brooklyn, NY, my family returned to Trinidad when I was 4; I returned to New York to complete my senior year of high school. What was my impression of the United States, this country to which I was returning after so long an absence? Well, I was coming from an extremely sheltered background on an island that was stable economically and had a strong educational system and firm values. It was also, however, an island that was rife with crime and suppurating racial tension. Leaving my parents behind and coming to the United States was therefore an eye-opening experience. I had thought that the Caribbean was multi-cultural and multiracial. Multiracial, yes. Multi-cultural, no. New York, I quickly realized, was the quintessential cosmopolitan area. Additionally, having gone to single sex schools all my life, I now experienced co-education. It was in New York, too, that I first ate Cuban food and first experienced life in a fast-paced, some-

what materialistic environment, which contrasted with my experiences in Trinidad. That senior year of high school, I was enthusiastic but homesick, ambitious but holding tenaciously to my past. I had come to the United States to attend college. And this is what I did. In the fall of 1999, I began my undergraduate education at Yale University.

The four years that I spent at Yale were extremely memorable—and made all the better by the Leopold Schepp scholarship that I received from my sophomore through senior years. At Yale, I considered a plethora of career goals, from fashion design, to Wall Street, to not-for-profit. After considering and eliminating all of these options, I decided that I would be most happy with and most able to fulfill my humanitarian goals through medicine. I plan to become involved in the fight for adequate health care services for the poor. Ultimately, I would like to return to Trinidad to become involved in politics.

For the moment, though, I shall be teaching in Mexico City. I spent most of my undergraduate years at Yale engaged in volunteer tutoring and mentoring—an activity that I found invaluable to both my students and me. Having been accepted to medical school, I deferred for one year in order to devote 2003–2004 to teaching—and to further understanding another culture—before I embark on my life’s mission.

Overall, my family has been instrumental to my success. My parents, who currently reside in Trinidad with my two youngest brothers, have been a steady source of strength. My two remaining brothers who now attend college in the United States have reminded me that I am blazing a path for others to follow and have therefore kept me humbly striving to achieve. My aunts and uncles who reside in New York have been a reservoir of support that can never be repaid.

From those to whom much is given, much is expected. [n](#)

## Talking to the Dolphins

FORMER SCHEPP SCHOLAR DOYEN NGUYEN  
HAS LEARNED YET ANOTHER LANGUAGE *by Rob Williams*

Catching up with former Schepp Scholar Doyen Nguyen is not very difficult, what with the numerous letters, postcards and photos she has sent in the 25 years since her first association with the foundation. Keeping up with her is another story! She has limitless energy, enthusiasm, and determination (to say nothing of talent); one wonders when she finds the time to sleep. The burst of light that is the Paris-born, Vietnamese descended, Doyen Nguyen became affiliated with the Leopold Schepp Foundation in 1978, when she was graduating from West Chester State College (now University) in Pennsylvania and she needed help for her enrollment in Temple University Medical School. The Schepp Foundation enabled her to get through her second year of medical school and beyond, and since graduating in 1981, Doyen has zigzagged across America and Europe. For starters, she had a fellowship in hematopathology at the USC Medical Center, then worked as a private practice pathologist in Arizona, and eventually participated in an eight-year research project with the Coulter Corporation in Paris. The project also took her to Germany and England and the work she did subsequently became the basis for “Diagnostic Hematology: A Pattern Approach,” a book she wrote with her husband, Lawrence Diamond.

Doyen and Lawrence later did research work in New York City which led to their second medical book, “Flow Cytometry in Hematopathology.” But then Doyen’s life changed radically—she switched her focus from hematopathology to dolphins!

Doyen first became aware of her affection for dolphins in 1993, on a visit to Sea World Orlando. Near closing time, she and Lawrence stopped by the dolphin pool to watch their synchronized swimming. One dolphin,

however, was not swimming with the others. It was on its own and when Doyen approached the edge of the pool, it came up to her. Well, what does anyone do when approached by a dolphin? Doyen, of course, hugged it! And in the dolphin’s eyes she saw a connection. It was, she says, “as if the dolphin



Doyen Nguyen

was telling me, ‘I am your long lost relative.’” After the dolphin swam away, Lawrence said, “you look completely different.” And she was. Something inside her was telling her that this was where she belonged.

Unfortunately, she had to go back to work, and it wasn’t until a 1998 return trip to Sea World Orlando that she realized her affection was really more of an affinity. She understood that her interaction with the dolphins was based on friendship, trust, and patience, and decided to make dolphins part of her work—and part of her life.

In July of 2000, Doyen was accepted for an internship at the University of

Hawaii to work with dolphins in a laboratory setting. This was the chance she had been waiting for—and this is where you can find Doyen today—on the Honolulu side of Oahu.

Though she was taken on as a ‘dolphin trainer,’ Doyen is actually responsible for providing medical care, “a sort of backup vet,” as she puts it. Despite the fact that in terms of evolution, humans and dolphins are very far apart, Doyen says that there are similarities in blood and chemical values. The three Atlantic Bottlenose dolphins she works with, Ake-Akemai (which means lover of wisdom), Phoenix, and Hiapo (meaning first born) are all undergoing various treatments for cancer. “Because I am a pathologist, working with a dolphin that has a tumor is quite interesting to me,” she says. “I’m a trainer, but I don’t use a whistle or a bucket of fish . . . I just use my voice to mimic their sounds.” Sounds, Doyen explains, reflect emotional content, just like a baby who can’t speak will cry or coo or moan. It is Doyen’s job to keep the dolphins well, but she has done more than that, she has established a relationship with them that is based on trust, something the other lab technicians had not been able to do.

Recently, Doyen visited the Schepp Foundation offices and played a tape of her dolphins ‘speaking to her.’ We heard a series of high pitched squeals and beeps and whistles and gurgles, and amazingly, Doyen was able to pick out which dolphin’s voice was which (“That one is Ake!”, “And that long drawn out squeal is Hiapo!”). It was a thrilling experience, as no doubt every day must be for Doyen in Hawaii.

So what’s next for Doyen Nguyen? She’d like to work with her three dolphins for as long as possible, though sadly she gives Ake only about two more years to live. She would also like to spend the next couple of years writ-

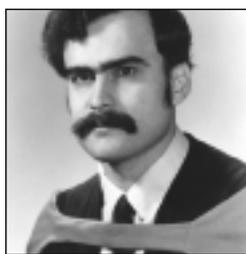
ing another book, but not a textbook. This time she would like to write a book about Dolphins, or more specifically, a work of fiction, told from the perspective of a dolphin, rather than the perspective of a human. As far as she knows this has never been done before. “I would like to immerse myself in their lives and world and get into the mind and under the skin of a dolphin. It may be a novel or a series of connected stories. All of this is very new to me,

because I’m used to scientific writing. But this book will have a conservation message as well. I want it to say ‘stop exploiting us.’”

I have no doubt that Doyen will write that book. Imagine what her page at Amazon.com will look like—the first listing will be two textbooks on hematology, followed by a novel about a brilliant, headstrong dolphin. My only question is: what next? But I guess for that we’ll just have to wait and see.

After I had finished interviewing Doyen, I remembered part of a quote by Plutarch. I think it was on a poster of a dolphin, pinned to the wall of a friend of mine when I was growing up:

*To the dolphin alone, nature has given that which the best philosophers seek: Friendship for no advantage. Though it has no need of help from any man, it is a genial friend to all and has helped mankind. n*



## Tomas Antonio Salerno, M.D.

**Born:** Cassia, Brazil

**Came to U.S.:** 1964

Seldom have I had the time to pause and reflect on my life, especially regarding those who contributed most to whatever success I have achieved. The Leopold Schepp Foundation provided me the opportunity to obtain an education in North America, despite the fact I was not American. I am eternally grateful to all that the Foundation has done for me, and it gives great pleasure to write about the life I lived during my years in Brazil and then in North America.

I was born in a small village in Brazil called Cassia, located in the South of the State of Minas Gerais on January 17, 1944. My family was of Italian descent (father) and Brazilian (mother). My sister was a teacher in a local school. At the age of 13, having completed my basic schooling in the village, there was no further opportunity for education. My father, who always emphasized to me that education was everything, even though he himself had little more than basic education, sent me to Sao Paulo city to live with my aunt’s family. I soon entered the Colegio Roosevelt working towards a degree in Science, going to school at night and studying during the day. Unfortunately the death of my grand-

father led to problems in the family and I found myself on the street, looking for a place to live and a place to work while going to school in the evenings. From childhood, I had learned English as my second language on my own efforts, and was able to obtain work at Kaiser Corporation, an engineering company from the USA which was looking for workers who spoke English. I then started working as an office boy and found a room in a small boarding house while attending classes from 7PM to 11:30PM daily. Unfortunately the office in Sao Paulo was reorganized and I was assigned to work in Cubatao, in an industrial project called Cosipa, being constructed by Kaiser. That completely changed my

life, as I was forced to wake up at 4AM every day, go to the Central Station by cab, and then take a train that went down the hill via cables to Cubatao, where I worked from 7:30AM to 4:30PM, catching the last train to Sao Paulo, arriving at 6:45PM and walking to school. Those were very difficult years, as the salary was low, meals were scarce and, for a while, I lived on the soup that the school provided the students at low cost. During one of these trips on a rainy day I recall vividly crossing Viaduto do Xa, an overpass in the center of Sao Paulo and having a great desire to jump the bridge and end the misery I was living in. Unfortunately I caught a very bad cold, which led to pneumonia, the rector of

### Our thanks—and an apology

We would like to thank all of the many foreign-born Schepp Scholars who replied to our email asking them to share their life stories. Unfortunately, we do not have room to print all of their fascinating responses—such as those of Peter Baofu, who came from Vietnam to the U.S., earned a doctorate, and is now a noted academic and writer, and violinist Kunie F. DeVorkin, who came from Japan, earned a Masters of Music degree at Yale University and later an MBA. We hope to be able to print their stories in a later issue.

*Salerno (cont.)*

my school noticing my absence came to my boarding room and saved me from what could have been a terminal case of pneumonia. He took me to his house and spoon fed me back to life as his physician treated me with antibiotics. I continued the three year program, graduating successfully with a degree of Cientifico. As I was fluent in English, I soon was asked to teach in a preparatory school for students trying to enter medical school, and taught English classes for two years. During this time I also taught English at the Colegio Rio Branco, even though some one else had to sign for me, since I had no teaching degree. I used to ride a motorcycle from place to place trying to make a living, with hopes of further education quickly disappearing, as I had no time to study.

One day in the newspaper, I came across an ad from the School for Experimental Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, looking for Brazilians to teach Portuguese to American Peace Corps Volunteers who would be trained at their site and then move to Brazil for field work. I went for an interview and was accepted as a teacher. I had to get permission from my father to travel since I was 17 years of age. That day, I abandoned the security of my jobs in Sao Paulo to venture to the United States with the idea of going to medical school one day, a dream that would never have materialized had I stayed in Brazil. I remember my first time on an airplane, the arrival at the Hudson Hotel in New York, and bus ride to Brattleboro, where I taught for the six month period that I was hired for. I made a lot of friends there, some of them still my friends today. I continued to think about pursuing a career in medicine, a dream that I had from age 12, when I read Time magazine in Cassia to learn English and came across the work of Vineberg and others who were placing patients on ice to operate on their hearts.

I remember to this day when I went to downtown Brattleboro and

bought a pocket book on scholarships for foreigners. I then spent most of my free time typing letters, literally begging for a scholarship to study in North America. My colleagues from Brazil had decided that my dream would never materialize and that the chance of getting a scholarship was nil. However, I did write hundreds of letters and, to my disappointment, most answers were negative. The only letter that suggested that I come for an interview was from Dana Kelly, then trustee of the Schepp Foundation. Although polite, his discussions with me via letter implied that I would not be suitable, but he was willing to have me come for an interview. I recall going to New York and meeting him, and I suppose I impressed him with my desire to get an education. I basically told him that I did not want to go back to the life I had in Brazil and that the Schepp Foundation was the only hope I had. He told me that this was premature, since he doubted that I could be accepted to any university in North America and to come back to him when I had completed an application and had a reply. This was a rather long and painful process as school after school quickly disposed of my application. The Peace Corps Volunteers had to get field training in medicine at McGill University Children's Hospital under Dr. Richard Goldbloom. We went by bus to Montreal where I was interviewed at McGill's medical school by Dr. Banfill who told me that I would be required to take an undergraduate degree at McGill. I saw Dr. Sterns, Dean of Arts and Science, who told me that I would go into the third year honours program in biochemistry. Having been accepted at school in Canada and one in California, I opted to study at McGill, which was an internationally renowned university at the time. I then went back to Schepp Foundation with the news and was given US\$700.00 per year to help cover tuition and board.

Undergraduate school at McGill was very difficult, specially the lectures

and laboratory in biochemistry, as I lacked knowledge and the scientific language. Furthermore, I did not have enough money and had to find a job as a night watchman. I supplemented my income by writing a book on Oral Brazilian Portuguese, a project for the School for Experimental Training in Brattleboro. I failed my first exam in biochemistry, which was devastating as the marks were placed on a bulletin board for everyone to see. I realized that I needed to sacrifice most of the little luxuries of life, such as dental work, soap, etc. so that I would not have to work at night. The extra time to study made a difference and I got an A+ on my final exam in biochemistry. I then applied to McGill medical school and was accepted.

After I finished medical school in 1971, I did an internship in surgery and was then accepted to a general surgical program at the Royal Victoria Hospital, McGill University. After completion, I took one year towards my master's degree and then two years of cardiothoracic surgery. How ironic that I would work with Dr. Vineberg and Dr. Dobell, the individuals who had inspired me to pursue a medical career.

I married and had two children, Mark and Kim. Later, I divorced and married Helen Salerno. Mark is currently married and works in computers. Kim is single and finishing college. My parents are still alive and healthy. I visit Brazil frequently, lecturing and visiting family. The mayor of the town has built a sanatorium for the poor and named it Sanatorium Tomas A. Salerno, M.D. I support a music school for the poor children of the village, which has over 100 students and continue to work with the poor whenever possible.

My life, while not always easy, had been very rewarding and motivating. I will never forget those who helped me through when I was in need. Without the Schepp Foundation I would have never achieved my dreams and would probably have returned to my village in Brazil. n



## Olesya Tkacheva

**Born: Baku, Azerbaijan**  
**Came to U.S.: 1996**

I was born and grew up in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, one of the former Soviet republics. Founded in the 9th century AD, located on the shores of the Caspian Sea, rich in natural gas and oil, the city used to attract tourists, artists, historians, architects, engineers, and students from all the parts of the Soviet Union and its satellites. Baku was a melting pot for thousands of Azeris, Russians, Jews, Armenians and many other nationalities and was famous for its hospitality, diversity and cultural heritage. However, in the late 1980s a conflict broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. It made the lives of non-Muslim minorities insecure and forced my family to immigrate to the United States in 1996.

I was almost 19 when we came to NYC. For the first two weeks we stayed at the Belleclaire hotel on Broadway and 77th Street. There was no TV in the room, and I spent every evening sitting at the window watching people and cars going up and down Broadway. Numerous cabs turned Broadway into a yellow river. Looking down at it, I was wondering when that flow would take me. Fortunately, it brought me across Central Park to Hunter College. I started school in the fall of 1996.

When I started school, I was very undecided about my future career. As a freshman, I took American Government taught by Professor Andrew J. Polsky. He sparked my interest in

American political development and became my mentor. I am thankful to him for the time he generously spent advising me. Under his guidance, as a McNair fellow, I started a research project on business-government relations in the 1920s or “associationalism.” Associationalism was based on a voluntary cooperation between the Department of Commerce and business associations to promote economic growth and reduce industrial waste. In 1999, I won a Hoover Scholar award. As it turned out, that year I was the only undergraduate student among twenty graduate and post-doc researchers. In the summer 1999, I traveled to the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and there, for the first time, I experienced the excitement of touching the yellowish pages of history. Every folder with Hoover’s correspondence transported me from West Branch, Iowa, to the Washington, DC of 1921-1922. I felt as if I were meeting with Herbert Hoover and his contemporaries to discuss the antitrust law revision, the reorganization of the Commerce Department and many other issues. The excitement of working with primary sources and unearthing the important facts neglected by other scholars prompted my decision to seek a career in academia.

In addition to political science, I became interested in economics while working as a research assistant to Professor Howard Chernick, of Hunter College. I helped him develop an inter-

governmental grant formula for South Africa. The South African Financial and Fiscal Commission sought to implement a cost based approach to health, education and welfare financing in order to eliminate the inequities inherited from Apartheid. For me, that project was an eye opener: I watched how a microeconomic theory, which at first appeared to me very dull and limited, was applied to improve lives of children, women and the elderly.

I graduated from Hunter College in 2001 with a triple major: special honors, political science and economics. I wanted to combine political science and economics in my future research so I entered a joint Ph.D. program in Public Policy and Political Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I have completed my first year and have enjoyed tremendously the interdisciplinary environment of the school and the diversity of its school body. This summer, I came back to NYC to work with Professor Chernick on a research project related to 9/11. We are analyzing how the World Trade Center attack affected New York’s budget.

I have been in the United States for seven years. Though I was not born here, I feel as if it were my motherland. From my first steps here I have always been surrounded by people willing to help and encourage me. I am very thankful to all of them, and in particular, to the Leopold Schepp Foundation. Mrs. Bobrow is one of the kindest people that I have ever met. She has room for every Schepp Scholar in her heart. It is always a great pleasure to talk to her. Kathy Smith makes even the shyest students feel at home at the office.

My family is small: just my mom, dad and myself. We are very close to each other, and I would not have been able to accomplish what I have without their encouragement. n

### Leopold Schepp Foundation Awards summary

1925-2003

Student Category	# of Awards	\$ Awarded
Endeavors (1925-1932) High School Youth	3,922	\$ 784,400
College/university	17,363	19,960,070
Research/post doctoral	151	1,636,815
May 21, 2003	<b>21,436</b>	<b>\$ 22,381,285</b>



## Lulezim Traga

**Born: Albania**

**Came to the U.S.: 1991**

I come from a very small country in Southeastern Europe called Albania. At the time of my escape from Albania, great world events were taking place. The collapse of communism signaled simultaneously an unpredictable state of events and great hopes for the future. The situation in Albania in early 1990 was very chaotic. Uncertainty reigned among both the populace and the political elites. The Albanian government, confronted by the events that were taking place throughout Eastern Europe, initiated some political and social reforms such as the abolishment of internment camps and class discrimination and the right to private ownership on a small scale (i.e.: a few sheep and a few acres of land for farmers). It became clear, however, that the country needed fundamental transformation. The political and social reforms were simply measures taken by the regime to maintain its grip on power by trying to ease the tensions among the populace. Albania was not only socially demoralized by the Stalinist regime, it was also economically devastated. It became clear that a regime change was inevitable.

I come from an extended working class family. My immediate family consists of my mother and my four brothers. My father died 3 years ago at the age of 63. My grandfather, who fought in World War II, was a strong anti-Communist and, when the Stalinists seized power in 1945, we were sent to an internment camp where we lived for 35 years. My father, who had only completed junior high school, worked in construction and my mother, who also had only a junior high school education, worked on a farm near the camp and raised five sons. In fact, my brothers and I were all born in the camp.

During the political turmoil in Eastern Europe violent protests were taking place in Albania in an effort to

change the Stalinist regime. Some of the people saw no other alternative but to find refuge in foreign embassies in the capital (Tirana). One of my brothers and I tried to seek asylum in the embassies together but were caught by the undercover police. For my part, I was very fortunate to finally enter the Turkish embassy on June 7 at 10 o'clock in the evening. My reason for fleeing Albania was to escape the suffering that I and my family had endured for years. America—for us as a family, and myself particularly meant escaping the discrimination that we encountered in every aspect of life, social, economic and political. That discrimination has left a mark that still remains.

I remember I arrived in New York on December 2nd, 1991 about 7:30pm. After a year and a half in a Turkish refugee camp, New York seemed like one of the Hollywood movies I had seen. The entire city and surrounding vicinities were bright dazzled with light as I looked out of the window of the plane. Even though I had an understanding of the grandeur of New York, actually seeing it with my own eyes was a remarkable experience. As our plane landed at JFK and the passengers made their way through the hallways and past the immigration officers, I could not help but feel insignificant, helpless and lost, not having a clue where I would go next. What would I do here? During my years in Albania I did not have a job. Being the youngest child I was over-protected by my family. Here I was 16-and-a-half years old, with junior high school education and with no profession whatsoever. My most vital possession was my determination not to go back. I was all alone with no family, no relatives, no friends. Luckily, a couple I had met at the refugee camp in Turkey had arrived in America about a year before me. They took me into

their apartment, where I stayed for three months. Two weeks later I found a job through an agency that provided services to newly arrived immigrants. I began working in a Japanese restaurant as a dish washer and kitchen helper, making \$149.99 per week with one day off.

During my first year I felt like an outsider. I spoke very little English and I could not attend school because I had to support myself. I thought long and hard as to how I was going to learn English and came up with a great idea: watching movies to learn English. Not speaking English was an obstacle to integration into the American mainstream. It made it also very difficult to create and maintain relationships and friendships. For foreigners having no language skills and no professional skills makes it very difficult to adjust to the new way of life here. I also felt a sense of nostalgia about my birth place. I had some hostility towards it but eventually accepted the fact that it was not my country which had punished me and my family, but the regime.

My impression of America was and continues to be that it is an amazing place. I was astonished by the fact that New York City had a population of several million, composed of people from all walks of life who lived in harmony with one another. It was this diversity that brought me to America. To me, diversity means freedom of expression, tolerance, and moderation from any form of extremism.

My life experience plus my interest in social science influenced my decision to pursue politics as a profession. I am very happy with my choice. Politics has been an inseparable part of my life for a long time and I cannot imagine doing anything else. I am attending the University of Michigan and planning to go to graduate school in political

science. I am the first in my family to get a higher education; I hope I will not be the last. I also hope they will be able to come here for my graduation.

After a 7 year absence from my country, I decided to go back and visit. I could not have chosen a more inappropriate time to go for it was 1997, during a period of civil unrest. The government had collapsed, institutions were disintegrating, and the economy was in critical shape. There was no law enforcement to provide order and safety. Uncertainty had taken over

people's lives as it had in the 1990's before I left. Everyone was looking for a way to escape the despair that had befallen them once again. There I was in the midst of it all, re-living that excruciating experience I had in 1990.

The last time I visited my family in Albania was 3 years ago when my father died. After a life-long struggle with the police, informers, town officials, threats, persecution and cancer, my father finally was laid to rest. He never had the chance to see me where I am now. He also never got to meet

my wonderful wife. She is a Jewish immigrant from Uzbekistan. Like me, she has been here for almost 12 years, but with her entire family. We met 8 years and 1 month ago and have been together ever since. She just finished graduate school at the University of Michigan with a degree in Clinical Social Work.

In America I have found peace, liberty, humility and most important of all, love: love for life, for equality, and for justice. And even more importantly, love has found me. ▯



## Speaking Out for Those With No Voice

CHAUMTOLI HUQ DEFENDS THE DEFENSELESS *by Rob Williams*

Chaumtoli Huq was a Leopold Schepp Scholar during her undergraduate years at Columbia University, from which she graduated in 1993. Born in Bangladesh, Chaumtoli, or Chaum as she is known at the Foundation, grew up in the Bronx. The Schepp Scholarship, she explains, helped cover part of Columbia's expenses and afforded her the time to work with several volunteer groups on campus, including the Bank Street tutoring program (a program that this writer has also worked with!). At Columbia, Chaum studied comparative politics. She was especially interested in international human rights and immigration issues. Her senior thesis discussed the plight of women in the garment industry who are forced into prostitution and drug trafficking.

After Columbia, Chaum worked for a year and a half with the Domestic Violence Organization for Immigrant Women from Southeast Asia (especially India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan). While she was working there, one of her co-workers suggested that she should become a lawyer. The idea appealed to her and soon, with the help of the Foundation, she was hitting the books at Northeastern Law School in Boston.

Graduating from Northwestern and passing the Bar was a thrilling event,

not just for Chaumtoli, but for her entire family and even her community. The fact that Chaum may be the first Bangladesh born, U.S. raised lawyer was much written about and celebrated.

After law school, Chaum took a job for two years in Philadelphia at the 3rd Circuit Court, working with prisoners who were appealing their convictions. But she really wanted to work on the big civil rights cases. In 1999, she won a fellowship from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (a sister association to the NAACP) which allowed her to design her own project. Before long, she was at the forefront of a highly publicized case in which a Bangladeshi worker charged her employer, a Bahraini diplomat, with keeping her in indentured servitude. The challenge was to over-ride the diplomatic immunity that protected the diplomat. But Chaum won the case, which was settled out of court for undisclosed damages.

After September 11, Chaum received an Open Society Institute Grant to work full time with the Taxi Workers Alliance. Due to the World Trade Center tragedy, the taxi industry, made up primarily of immigrant workers, was facing severe economic hardships. Chaum was able to persuade the New York City Taxi and

Limousine Commission to change its guidelines, allowing drivers to apply for financial assistance.

In April of 2003, Chaum went to work for MFY Legal Services, a group that provides free legal help to the poor, with a focus on employment, housing and mental health issues. It seems she has found the perfect job, specifically geared toward her specialty and expertise: employment law. At MFY, she works with a diverse client base—African-American, Russian, Latino, Asian, and Southeast Asian, among others. The diversity, she says, “makes me feel more connected.”

In the future, Chaum thinks she would like to live abroad. Where, she's not entirely sure, but “everyone should live in a country they are not familiar with. It builds character.”

Chaum and her husband (yes, she actually found the time to get married!) are expecting a baby at the end of February so she will certainly have her hands full for while. But after that? “I have thought about maybe becoming a judge . . . There are no Muslim judges and few Asian women judges . . . so that's a possibility.”

A definite possibility I'd say. Mr. Schepp would be proud—in fact, we all are. ▯



## Francis F. Chen

**Born:** Canton, China

**Came to the U.S.:** 1936

I was born on the campus of Lingnan University, an American-Chinese collaboration, across the Pearl River from Canton (now Guangzhou), China. My father was the high-school principal, and my mother an English teacher. Even in 1930, this was a more westernized setting than was typical of south China. My mother got a one-year scholarship from a lady in Pasadena to study for a Master's degree

at Columbia University's Teachers College. At the same time, my father was sent on a fund-raising mission to South America. In 1936, my mother took me and my brother (6 and 2) on the President Coolidge to Los Angeles, where we later reunited with my father. In 1937, the Japanese invaded Canton, and we lost everything. We were stranded in the U.S., which turned out to be fortunate, since we

escaped the Red Guard and the communist takeover.

Being only six at the time, I had no preconceived notions and took life as it came. We lived in a small house in L.A. at the edge of town, which is now downtown. We were desperately poor and were helped by relatives here. I can remember only one toy that my brother and I could buy that year; for the most part we invented our own

## An early Schepp "Endeavorer" (1928–1931) reconnects with the Foundation

Greetings,

I was born in a rural section of Anderson County, Upper South Carolina. My family attended the Bethesda United Methodist Church where I was in a Sunday school class with four other boys. We had a very devout teacher who read about the Schepp Foundation in some church literature. We discussed the conditions which we would have to meet to receive the \$200 awards and, when we all agreed to accept them, our teacher applied to the Foundation for us.

Each of us had a good sponsor who we reported to as per the agreement. It was a very rewarding and character-building experience for each of us.

In the appropriate time we all received our checks for \$200 and our parents were very proud of us.

Our parents made their living in agriculture. Times were tough and the \$200 was like receiving \$2,000 in today's world. All of us contributed our money toward the family's survival and thanked our teacher (who saw to it that we continued to keep practicing what we learned throughout our lives).

Our teacher, our parents, and the entire church were thankful for what the Foundation had made possible for us.

We all grew up, served in World War II, married, and raised families. Two continued to farm, one joined the Navy, one worked in textiles, and I found a career in construction.

I doubt if anyone ever paid the Foundation back, so attached is a check for \$1,000 for all of us.

I would like to thank the foundation for all the good it has done in the past and for all it is going to do in the future.

Sincerely,  
Charles H. Cely

*NOTE: The Foundation's early emphasis was on providing help to boys between the ages of thirteen and fifteen—called Schepp Endeavorers—so that, unlike Leopold Schepp himself, they could complete high school. Later, the Foundation shifted its priority to granting awards to young men and women to help them attend college and graduate school.*

playthings. I had whooping cough and missed one year of school. In 1937, we moved to New York (near Columbia), but neither parent could find a decent job, being academics speaking English as a second language. Through her Teachers College connections (and my IQ), my mother got me admitted to Horace Mann School with full scholarship. I entered the third grade a year late but skipped a grade later. Though I didn't know English, I assimilated it in a year. School was more informal and less rigorous than in China, with fun projects like making a model sun and solar system, something that they would not have thought of in China. But the math, for instance, was a year behind. I remember little instances like my teacher's using the word "besides" which gave no clue as to its meaning, and I had to ask my mother. Later, when I was 12, I was fascinated by English grammar and was reading grammar books as well as comic books. For instance, I knew that words like "hospitable" and "preferable" had to be accented on the pre-antepenult. I "majored" in Latin and Greek in high school and have studied more than a dozen languages since. As a scholar and athlete, I was well respected at school and had many friends, but I could not integrate well socially because when it came to girls and dates I felt like an outsider. I realize now that I was the first minority student the school ever had.

When funds ran out, we moved to the slums of East 14th Street, near the El. My parents eked out a living teaching English to Chinese immigrants. In junior high school, I commuted by myself from E. 14th St. to W. 246th St., where Horace Mann was, using the infamous 42nd St. shuttle. My parents did not integrate well into American society, but their children did. My mother was both a rebel and a Jewish mother. She rebelled against both the Chang Kai-shek and the Communist regimes and decided that we would be Americans, period. We kept many

Chinese traditions and spoke a lot of Cantonese at home, but cut all connections with mainland China.

World War II was a blessing in disguise because my parents found work in the CIA. But that meant that my brother and I had to survive by ourselves in New York with the help of our gym teacher. Because of our economic difficulties, family life was seldom happy.

In high school I was fascinated by astronomy, a subject not as popular as now and not offered in the curriculum. I studied classics only because the strongest teaching was there. I went to the Hayden Planetarium often, and took a course on celestial navigation. Entering Harvard with the help of the Schepp Foundation, I majored in astronomy. It was fulfilling, but I soon found something more interesting and challenging—quantum mechanics. I switched to physics. I stayed at Harvard through the Ph.D., doing my thesis at Brookhaven National Laboratory. In 1954 during the Korean War, I went to work on a classified project at Princeton. The project was called Controlled Thermonuclear Fusion. It was a practical decision; I would have preferred High Energy Physics.

I became one of the pioneers of plasma physics and later, at UCLA, wrote a popular textbook in this field. My original goal was to give back to the world—to science—what had been invested in my education. I think I have done that, though I am not through. Plasma physics turned out to be a good career choice, since it is a field of physics in which the same person can do both theory and experimentation. It is also a discipline that will save civilization once fossil fuels are depleted. A second objective was to pursue my intellectual interests without regard to economic gain, so as to avoid the obsession with money that most people had. This goal was also achieved. I have been sufficiently well paid to live comfortably and send three children through Yale, Stanford, and Harvard.

My greatest contribution is perhaps in education. My textbook *Introduction to Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion* is used worldwide in beginning plasma courses. My Ph.D. graduate students are trained to do both theory and experimentation and not to be satisfied until these agree with each other. My current work, however, is in another area, that of plasma generators used in making semiconductor circuits. Computer chips cannot be etched without the use of plasmas; yet the industry had little knowledge of how to design plasma sources except by trial and error. About 12 years ago, I decided to develop the field of Low Temperature Plasma Physics to serve the industrial community better. I am glad to report that the semiconductor manufacturers are now aware of the need for plasma expertise.

Since leaving in 1936, I have visited China only once, in 1985. I was impressed with the population density. The country was still quite backward then; I believe it is much more modern now. China was not a total shock, since I had been to Japan and India.

I have been blessed with my family. My wife Ande (that's Edna spelled backwards) is an artist and art teacher who is in tune with nature. She has had 25 solo shows. My daughter Sheryl is a Cistercian nun, now in Norway helping to found a new abbey near Trondheim. She has written profound articles on Catholic topics, sometimes in Norwegian. My bilingual daughter Patricia, former modern dancer and pianist, is now teaching English at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Bordeaux, France. She has a daughter Lani, who loves horses. My son Robert is an Associate Professor at the University of Massachusetts. He is a chemical oceanographer and teaches ecology. He married into an Italian family, has three beautiful (and active) daughters, and coaches soccer. You see that our family has taken advantage of the world's best cuisines: Chinese, French, and Italian. And nobody is fat. ■

## Board of Trustees 2003-2004

Barbara McLendon, President  
William L. D. Barrett, Vice President  
Kathryn Batchelder Cashman,  
Vice President  
Sue Ann Dawson, Vice President  
James G. Turino, Treasurer  
Linda B. McKean,  
Assistant Treasurer-Secretary  
Louise M. Bozorth  
Susan Brenner  
Andrew W. Butterfield, PhD  
Carvel H. Cartmell  
Anne Coffin  
Emily Crawford  
Betty David  
William G. Gridley, Jr.  
Diana P. Herrmann  
Michele A. Paige  
Elizabeth Stone Potter  
Bruno A. Quinson  
Robert F. Reeder, MD  
Banning Repplier  
George R. Walker  
  
Edythe Bobrow, Executive Director

## Honorary Trustees

Rob Caples  
C. Edwin Hodges  
Priscilla C. Perkins  
Benjamin Phillips, PhD  
Samuel Thorne  
  
Paul Marks, MD, Science Advisor

## Editorial Staff

Banning Repplier, Editor and  
Contributing Writer  
Kris Tobiassen, Graphic Designer  
(Schepp Scholar)  
Robert R. Williams, Contributing  
Writer (Schepp Scholar)  
Edythe Bobrow, Coordinator  
Barbara McLendon, Advisor  
Bruno A. Quinson, Advisor  
Kathleen C. Smith, Secretary  
Annelise Skovmand, Assistant  
(Schepp Scholar)

Designed and produced by  
Kris Tobiassen. Portfolio online at:  
[www.kristobiassen.com](http://www.kristobiassen.com)

Printed by Binding Together,  
A non-profit organization

Leopold Schepp Foundation  
551 5th Avenue, Suite 3000  
New York, NY 10176-2597  
(212) 692-0191

# Memories

SALLY WHITAKER FREUD

**W**hen I was growing up in Westport, Connecticut, my parents, Eleanor and Robert (Bob) Whitaker were actively involved with the Leopold Schepp Foundation.

During the 1950s, I spent many evenings in the living room with them as they read applicants' files. Occasionally they would give several files to me and ask for my opinion of the candidates. I do not know if they ever took my advice, but it was a wonderful opportunity for me to learn about the Foundation and also to get to know the scholars through their applications. What a remarkable group they were. These young men and women were ambitious, intelligent, and had a great sense of purpose. Though not much older than I at the time, they knew where they were going and how they intended to get there. There was much variety in both the applicants and the applications. Some of the files were neat and clear, others more artistically put together. But all were from people who needed financial help to reach their goals. At the time it was hard for me to imagine how difficult it might be for them to further their education.

Many years have passed since that time and I wonder how "my" students fared. Did they receive financial help from the Foundation? Did they reach their goals? Did their goals change as they studied and worked? Where are they now and how do they compare to the current Scholars? I know my parents followed their progress through the Foundation office, but I was on to other things and lost track of their lives. Miss Schepp also played a part in those evenings, as she was often quoted or talked about. Both my parents admired her and became close to her over the years. I heard of visits to her apartment in New York City and what a beautiful, elegant place it was. I was fortunate to meet Miss Schepp several times. The last occasion was in October of 1963 when she came to our wedding. We have a wonderful picture of her greeting us as we left the Church. She, of course, was wearing hat and gloves, as all ladies did in those days, and she looked like a favorite grandmother. n



Ms. Florence Schepp greeting the Friends on their wedding day in 1963.