



SJSU INTERNATIONAL HOUSE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1, FALL 2010



REUNIONS: ALUMNI CONNECT IN FRANCE



Photo courtesy of Bob Aron

Antonieta (Toña) de la Chaise, Bob Aron, Yvette Young, Cliff van Amen, Christine Gunnarsson, Paul Belasky, Kristen Bjaaland, and Leann Cherkasky Makhni (left to right) stand outside of Cathédrale Saint-Maurice d'Angers in Angers, France.

BY BOB ARON

Unbelievably, it's been 7 years since the SJSU I-House held its 25th Anniversary celebration here in San Jose and ever since that time, I've thought it would be great to organize an alumni event abroad. With 30 years worth of alumni, practically any place on the globe might be convenient enough for at least a modest reunion.

Yvette and I chose to plan a reunion in France with the help of Sue Crust, who lives in Angers, 90 miles southwest of Paris. With little advance

notice, a dinner was scheduled in Paris two days before the Angers, France weekend. Amazingly, 20 of us met in Paris, and while most of the group spent their time at the I-House in the 21st century, the conversations that night reaffirmed for me the impact that living at the I-House has on so many residents and how little has changed since I moved into the House in 1981.

Thanks to Facebook, it's been easier to reconnect and stay in contact with our fellow I-House alumni.

SEE REUNIONS PAGE 8



It was so exciting to hear about Leann's trip to Paris and Angers and how she was able to meet so many former residents of the SJSU International Center (I-House) who had lived there in the '80s, '90s, and recent decades. Leann introduced me to all of the glowing remarks on Facebook, and I was pleased to learn that so many of you have kept in touch over the years and have such fond memories. I am particularly happy to hear about your enthusiasm for planning and attending additional reunions at other locations around the world, such as Bali.




These stories about your experiences and the good times you had have brought back many fond memories for me, as well — particularly about how the I-House came about and the challenges of preparing it for the first group of incoming students. It is hard to believe that it was 32 years ago that Alan and I were watching a football game on television when, during halftime, we saw a building that looked much like the ex-sorority house that needed new ownership here at SJSU. As it turned out the facility we were viewing was an International House located in Arkansas that housed 20 students on Rotary

scholarships. We became so excited about similar prospects for the SJSU ex-sorority house that we decided to fly to Arkansas to see what we could learn.

We came back so impressed with the idea of an international residence that we immediately began developing a plan. As it worked out we made an offer on the ex-sorority house for \$250,000, and the owners accepted it in June of 1978. That meant we had to clean and paint a 25,000 square foot building, hire a director, arrange for food service, and recruit students — all by the end of August. We started with 20 residents that year with the idea of an American citizen rooming with someone from another country. There was too much to do initially and too little time to get the Rotary club involved with scholarships, but the organization has been so wonderful and supportive over the years. They have given us the computer room equipment, the furniture and flags, and they have provided tickets for all kinds of cultural events downtown. I personally cannot thank them enough for what they have done for the I-House.

I also recall that in the early years, there was a group of ladies who put on luncheons for outside groups in order to raise money and awareness for the I-House. Quite often, several residents would stop by the kitchen to see what smelled so good and hope to get a sample. We enjoyed these impromptu visits, along with the realization that there is very little difference among nations when it comes to student curiosity or appetite.

Another memory I have is seeing the students dressed in clothing representative of their country. We have a very large, well-cared-for collection of international clothing, which was given to us by Doris Menendez. When students dress in their homeland attire, it not only provides an interesting, colorful glimpse into an aspect of their culture, but it also helps to facilitate conversations and make the new students become more comfortable in their SJSU home-away-from-home.

For me, these are just a few of the memorable and fun events that I recall from my involvement with the International House over the past 32 years. I can imagine that the time you spent at the I-House holds an equally important and permanent place in your memory. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for keeping the spirit of the International Center alive. I hope and pray that we can keep the I-House going forever. 

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360 SJSU INTERNATIONAL HOUSE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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Why 360?
*It's the I-House's address.
*It's the number of degrees of a circle.
*There's an expression, "come full circle," meaning to return to a starting point. We hope this newsletter helps you come full circle with 360 South 11th Street in San Jose, California!


“You’ve been at I-House how long?!” people regularly ask me with astonishment. “19 ½ years,” I reply (with the exception of a cumulative year and a half maternity leave in ’96 and ’00 / ’01). To young new applicants, I can honestly say that I’ve likely been at I-House most, if not all, of their lives. In fact, one of our current residents was born in Azerbaijan the week I started work at International Center in 1991.

“Don’t you get bored doing the same job for almost 20 years?” is another frequent question. “Well,” I respond, “the cycle of activities year-round can be repetitive, but it’s the people who make the difference and since I’m constantly interacting with new and different students who cover a wide span of ages and who come from all over the world (around 95 countries since I’ve been at I-House), there’s always something new to learn.” In addition, of course, I regularly interact with International House alumni (the recent reunions in France were amazing), family members of residents, Phyllis Simpkins, Rotarians from the San Jose Rotary Club International House committee, the I-House Advisory Board, my colleagues working in the field of international education, and faculty and staff from the university.



In 2003 at the time of the 25-year reunion, I told some alumni that I was thinking it is time to make a change to Pancake Breakfast (PCB) — after all, we’d been doing it twice a year for 22 years already. “What?! No way can you change PCB!” was the response. That was the moment when I realized that PCB has become an institution at I-House. I realized that all alumni who have lived at International House since 1983 hold fond memories of an event that is a link among generations.

It’s fun when alumni visit I-House and they say, “Wow, it looks and smells the same as when I lived here.” And at that same time they are saying, “Hey, why hadn’t you re-done the restrooms when I lived here? Why did you wait until I moved out to renovate the kitchen?! When did you put carpet and overhead fan / lamps in every bedroom? Wow, look at the size of that television! The furniture is similar but looks new in the Dining Room and Living Room”, etc.

As you’ll be seeing throughout this newsletter, living at International House has been the most significant, memorable experience in the lives of so many of our alumni. As a new semester begins, I have the joy of knowing that our newest residents are about to embark on the experience of a lifetime and that as they depart from I-House, they will maintain the bonds of friendship developed at I-House throughout their lifetime. It has been very rewarding for me to see this, as well as for our former directors Sue Crust and Jo Stuart, and for our founder, Phyllis Simpkins. At age 86, Phyllis continues to be actively involved in International House as she has been since 1978. She has made so many of our experiences and our building remodels possible. We hope that you will help us continue her legacy. 



INTERVIEW BY MEGAN BROWN



NINA SCHJELDERUP

Norway
1985-1988

First Secretary of
Development
Cooperation,
Ministry of Foreign
Affairs, Norwegian
Embassy

As a student what made you decide to live in the I-House (I-Center)?

I first decided not to live at the I-Center, and therefore moved into Royce Hall the first semester at SJSU. Then I got many friends at the I-Center and decided to move in the following semester (Spring 1985)

Upon graduation what steps did you take that lead you to your current position?

I believe all my experiences led to my current job, also the experiences and jobs I had while a student at SJSU and the I-Center. When I returned to Norway in 1994 I first had a temporary job at City Hall, then I worked with integration of refugees, before getting a job for the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in 1996. I've worked at our Embassy in South Africa and Tanzania, at our representative office in the West Bank, and three years at the Norwegian Embassy in Kabul.

What has been your most profound and/or your most challenging moments in your current position?

Well, I've been working in Juba, Sudan only since February this year, so I have not collected that many moments there as of yet, but if I look back since my start at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996 I would probably say my three years in Afghanistan were the most interesting and challenging so far. Afghanistan is a very different

country with proud people and a violent history. I was part of a time of optimism (in 2003-2006) when we thought development cooperation could give hope to the Afghan people. We worked closely with the Afghan Minister of Finance to decide on how development initiatives should be executed in order to facilitate long-term development and stability in Afghanistan. It was a great moment talking to President Karzai. It was challenging being evacuated at the time of riots from the Muhammed drawings.

How do you like living in a different country?

My line of work is development so the countries I work in are developing countries. This means the infrastructure and many of the other facilities many of us take for granted are not available. When you live in war affected areas like the West Bank, Afghanistan, and now Sudan, the lack of peace and stability is, of course, a challenge. Still, my experience is that people are friendly and want peace for themselves and their children everywhere. I've met hospitality where people have little to share. It has also been a lesson that nobody can come from the outside to develop a country; people who live there are the best experts on their own needs. Living so much abroad also makes one realize how extremely spoiled one is at home!

Did living in the I-House influence your professional decisions?

Very much so. I was always interested in the cultural diversity, and this interest was enhanced during my I-Center experience, getting close friends from all over the world.

What are some of your fondest memories of the house?

Secret Santa, Secret Valentines, being in love with (-: Bonfires at the beach in Santa Cruz.

Have you visited the House since you have left? If so what has changed and what has not?

I have visited many times. The I-Center is becom-

SEE NINA PAGE 11



FALL 2010 RESIDENTS

AMERICAN SAMOA

JINYI "JANE"

AZERBAIJAN

IDRAK

BRAZIL

HELDER

CHINA

CHEN "LEON"
SANG "SHANIA"

CZECH REPUBLIC

SARKA

FINLAND

JOSEF

FRANCE

GUILHEM
YANN

GERMANY

CHRISTINA
DANIEL
FERDINAND
PAUL

HONG KONG

KA KI "CATHY"
MAN KIT "ALVIN"
PUI YAN "LA LA"

INDIA

AKMAL
CECIL
DARREN
VILOK

INDONESIA

DIONPIUS

IRAN

MARYAM

IRELAND

LAUREN
PAUL
SARAH

ISRAEL

JONATHAN

ITALY

CARLOTTA
VALENTINA

JAPAN

AKANE
HIROMITSU
KAORI

JORDAN

NIZAR

NIGERIA

OBINNA

PAKISTAN

SCHEHRBANO

SAUDI ARABIA

MAHMOUD

SENEGAL

OUSMANE

SINGAPORE

SHI BIN "GERALD"

SOUTH KOREA

CHAN JAE
CHONGJU
JAEYOUNG
SOYEON

SPAIN

FLORENCIO

SWITZERLAND

DAVID
NADINE

TAIWAN

YING-CHIH "CHLOE"
YI TSEN "EVE"

TUNISIA

WALID

URUGUAY

NICOLE

UK

CATRIONA (ENGLAND)
JAMIE (NORTHERN IRELAND)
JAMIE (SCOTLAND)
JENNIFER (WALES)

USA

ACE
AMANDA
BRITTANY
COLIN
DANIEL
DAVE
ELLA RAE
JAMES
JOSHUA
JACQUELINE
JESSICA
KINSEY
KIYOMI
LINZY
MADELINE
NNAMDI
REINA
SARAH
THOMAS
VANESSA

VIETNAM

TUAN

INTERNATIONAL QUIZ
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1, 12:30 - 4 P.M.
 DURING SJSU HOMECOMING WEEK
PANCAKE BREAKFAST
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 9:30 A.M. - 1 P.M.
 I-HOUSE ALUMNI DONORS WILL RECEIVE A COMPLIMENTARY PIN



BY DREW WEEKS

The International House is thirty-two, married, having its first kids, and showing maturity by saving for its future.

Interacting a great deal with International House alumni, I regularly hear and discuss how the House hasn't changed in 32 years. I understand what alumni mean. Yes, there have been much-needed bathroom upgrades and the student kitchen got a makeover just two years ago, but overall the House has the same layout and charm that it has had for the last few decades. The House is still home to 73 students. This semester those students will be representing 31 countries.

Amazingly, the House has now had more than 2,500 alumni from more than 95 countries. As alumni have left the House, many have gone on to get married and have kids. Those who lived in the House during its first decade are starting to have children who are at the age to attend college. In this newsletter, you'll find an interview with Diego, the first second generation child to live at I-House. In over 25 cases, alumni who met while living together at I-House have married each other.

Leann Cherkasky Makhni is a familiar face as the Director of the House. Twenty years ago, Leann's first year was also my first year in the House. During that time, Leann has done an exceptional job preserving the spirit and unique experience that we have all shared. Of course the House would not exist without Alan and Phyllis Simpkins who privately owned the House until they donated it to the SJSU Foundation in 1997. Phyllis still attends Board meetings and she still has a spry smile and an active interest in the House. In fact, she is still the main benefactor of the House.

After so many years of operation, students passing through, marriages, and now children of alumni staying in the House, Phyllis, Leann, and alumni are looking to preserve the House and its experience for future generations by creating an endowment. The ultimate goal is to raise \$5 million in 5 years. At 4% per hundred thousand,

that would give us \$200,000 annually while the annual budget is \$600,000. A \$5 million endowment will support major expenses, but not provide us full income to live off of in perpetuity.

The House is owned by San Jose State University Research Foundation and is expected to function entirely under its own budget. The House currently lives "paycheck to paycheck" or more specifically, it relies on filling the House every semester in order to pay its expenses. If for any reason the House saw a downturn in occupancy due to price competition from dorms, reduction in foreign admittance to SJSU, a significant earthquake ... then the House would be compelled to dip into its reserves. Currently the House has \$160,000 in reserves while the annual operational budget is \$600,000.

We as Alumni need to show that we support the ideals of the House and want the spirit and experiences of International House to live on.

Let's Do Some Easy Math

If the House were to serve 10 fewer students than its maximum capacity of 73 residents that would cost the House 10 X \$5,000/semester (room and board fees for one semester; remember what they were when you lived at I-House?) = \$50,000.00 from its only safety net.

In addition to that, this reserve is intended to cover any repairs or upgrades to the House. For those who aren't familiar with home repair costs, the House recently renovated bathrooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors (\$350,000), the

basement student kitchen (\$175,000), and the 1st floor restrooms (\$30,000), which were all generously funded by Phyllis Simpkins. Professional architectural services were also donated for two of these projects by architect and former San Jose Rotarian Larry Lagier. Those two upgrades alone would have drained the reserve three times over.

Keep in mind the House is getting older and still requires ongoing repair. Some of the repairs that are expected in the next decade include the following:

- Renovation of the 1st floor kitchen serving area (\$20,000)
- Replace windows throughout the House with new energy efficient ones (\$75,000)
- Replacement of the stairs from basement to 4th floor on both sides of the House (\$65,000)
- Carpet in Living Room, Dining Room, and bed-



LOOK, THE HOUSE IS ALL GROWN UP

- rooms (\$50,000)
- Furniture replacement in all of the bedrooms and main rooms of the House (\$75,000)
- Repainting the House inside and outside (\$50,000)
- Roof replacement in the next 10 years (\$40,000)
- Replacement of earthquake emergency supplies every 5 years (\$5,000)

Again these expenses would more than entirely consume the current \$160,000 reserve that the House has. But the endowment is not intended to just cover future expenses for the House; the endowment will allow the House to be competitive on all levels with the new student dormitories in terms of comfort, amenities, security, and utility. The endowment would allow the House to offer scholarships and additional grant-in-aid that could attract high caliber applicants from a wide variety of countries, majors, and economic backgrounds.

Although the House is still the same after 30 years,

the International House is in a new environment. The State of California has been slashing its budgets to record levels during the last few years and universities in the state are following suit. Competition with the new dormitories is fierce.

The House for many years has been dependent on Phyllis Simpkins to be its white knight, but we as alumni need to show that we support the ideals of the House and want the spirit and experiences of the International House to live on.

When I make my contribution this year, my intention is to preserve the House for many years to come and allow students to share the same unique experience I had while staying in the House. I hope you will join me in supporting the I-House. 🌍

Drew Weeks, 1991-1993, is a portfolio analyst for Cisco and an I-House alumni representative.



Photo by Patrick Brown

Campus Village, the newest on-campus residence hall, opened in Fall 2005. It is made up of three high-rise buildings, including a 15-story tower with studios and apartments.



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

This fall, the SJSU International House is home to 72 residents from 31 countries. Over the summer, two bathrooms on the first floor were renovated.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In the end, our small group meeting in Angers represented 8 countries if we count Russia for Paul who immigrated to the U.S. as a teenager; Panama (Yvette), Bolivia (Toña), Sweden (Christine), Norway (Kristin), Netherlands (Cliff), France (Christopher), Russia (Paul), & the U.S. (Leann, Sue, Sharon, and myself). Our 3 days together consisted mostly of eating and drinking, checking on the World Cup matches, and strolling around Angers. Sue Crust, I-House director from '80-86 who now works in Angers, was kind enough to organize a tour at the Cointreau factory and the "official" reunion event was a luncheon followed by a visit to the Angers Chateau.

I must confess that while enthusiastic about the opportunity to visit some old friends, I was so surprised at how easily we picked up right where we left off long ago. The 3 days spent in Angers reminded me of any weekend outing that might have occurred while living in the House. Walking along the streets of Angers could just as easily have been a Saturday in San Francisco, or Monterey, or

a weekend in Yosemite. As one might expect, we reminisced about our time at the I-Center (name changed to I-House in 1997) and we compared notes about how life has changed with new interests and the responsibilities of work and family. As a freshman in 1981, I had no idea what a profound impact living at the I-House would have on the rest of my life.

In the end, we all went our separate ways, but unanimously agreed that another reunion was in order, possibly in Bali or a cruise to St. Petersburg where Paul has volunteered to be tour guide. I believe that if the current residents from any year of the I-House's existence were asked, "Can you imagine getting together with a group of residents 25 years from now?" the answer would probably be "no, not really". After having experienced such a gathering, I can't imagine not doing it again and look forward to sharing more time with some great people in some new place on the globe. 🌍

Bob Aron, 1981-1985, is a software engineer manager at Apple Computers and an I-House alumni representative.



Photo courtesy of Leann Cherkasky Makhni

Paris reunion participants: (first row, left to right) Agathe Bignon, Pierre Barrier, Rémi Astier, Adrien Wiesebron, Reesa Bruketta, Maud Lecomte Du Nouy, Phillipine Frilieux, Melodie Braka, Elizabeth Yau, (second row, left to right) Jérôme de Vasconcelos-Mota, Leann Cherkasky Makhni, Christine Senoville, Yvette Young, Issa Mao, Marine Dumas, Kim Macrez, (third row, left to right) Bob Aron, Cliff van Amen, and Nicolas Herault.



Photo courtesy of Bob Aron

Angers reunion participants: (first row, left to right) Sharon Colliver Dreyfuss, Kristin Bjaaland, Yvette Young, Antonieta (Toña) de la Chaise, Leann Cherkasky Makhni, Christine Gunnarson, (second row, left to right) Christophe Roche, Sue Crust, Paul Belasky, (third row, left to right) Cliff van Amen, and Bob Aron.



ENDOWMENT In order to create a sustainable long future for the International House, we have created an Endowment Fund to be managed by the San Jose State University Tower Foundation. An Endowment Fund is designed to provide a long-term and predictable income source for the I-House by establishing a permanent fund from which income is available. While the principal is retained to grow over the years through additional contributions and investment growth, interest provides annual income available for maintenance and improvement of our wonderful home, expanded programming, and financial support of residents. We strive to keep International House competitive at every level by making it affordable, attractive, and interactive.

GIVING We hope that you will join I-House alumni and friends who are giving generously to build our new Endowment Fund. To donate, please go to the following web page:
<http://www.sjsu.edu/giving/ihouse>

CHALLENGE Help us take advantage of the unique opportunity allowing us to fully benefit from a generous Matching Challenge by Phyllis Simpkins: Every dollar that you send to the endowment will be matched, dollar for dollar in full, thereby doubling the effect of your gift to the I-House. With your help, we can create a long-lasting flourishing future for the International House.

**Please use the attached envelope for further assistance on donating your gift today
or donate online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/giving/ihouse>**

GROWTH OF I-HOUSE FAMILY TREE: DIEGO



BY MEGAN BROWN



Photos by Megan Brown

Top: Diego Roy de Lachaise stands in front of room 7, which was the room of his mother Toña Tejada when she lived at I-House.

Bottom: Roy de Lachaise points to his mother's picture on the spring 1983 poster.

The International House is honored to have our first second-generation resident, Diego Roy de Lachaise. Diego is the son of Antonieta de Lachaise; perhaps you know her as Toña Tejada when she lived in the I-House from '82-86. Diego has come to San Jose to complete a two week English language immersion course through the Studies in American Language (SAL) program.

Diego is 18, the same age as his mother when she first moved into the House. As he explored the I-House, Diego was amazed and delighted to find photos of his mother when she was the same age as he is now.

Born in France, he moved to Peru and later Colombia before he was ten. Although Spanish is his first language, he considers himself French and studies in Paris. His family currently lives in Romania.

Did your mother influence your decision to come to San Jose?

Yes, I believe she wanted me to get a glimpse into her four years here in the House.

Are you enjoying San Jose so far?

It is everything I imagined. It is very relaxed, sunny and warm. It always seems perfect and very clean.

You are currently living with roommates from Saudi Arabia and South Korea. Have you ever lived with other international students?

No. I am enjoying it though. Communication sometimes is difficult, but it has been great to meet people from other countries.

Since arriving, you have visited some of your mother's I-Center friends: Bob Aron, Yvette Young, Kelli Wong, and Brian Drugge. How have your visits been and what have you done?

It has been great getting to know my mother's friends. I have not had the opportunity to meet any of them before. They are all great and very kind. I can imagine my mother had many great

SEE **DIEGO** ON NEXT PAGE



DIEGO

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

adventures with them.

Your Mom went to the reunion in Angers, France. What did she say about it?

She came back with a huge smile on her face. She came back telling me stories about her time in the House with all the people that were at the reunion, which got me more excited to come.

Would you recommend other children of alumni to come stay at the House?

Of course. I would say to come longer than just two weeks though. You need time to adapt to your new surroundings and meet people. Also it would have been nice to be older than 21. 🌍



NINA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ing more and more beautiful, the atmosphere is the same - a certain excitement in the air.

In your opinion, what is the importance of giving back to the I-House?

Depends what is meant by that. Give and take can be very relative terms and what is given by some is not necessarily felt as receiving by someone else. In some cultures maybe money donations from ex-residents would be expected, but that would be a very strange concept for others. To promote the I-Center living experience to students around the world in order to fill up the I-Center and to spread the concept of international living could be a way to give. 🌍



SAN FRANCISCO TRIP



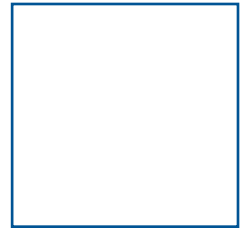
Photo by Megan Brown

Some of the Fall 2010 I-House residents visited the Golden Gate Bridge as part of a San Francisco tour. Residents had their own red double-decker bus with a tour guide and driver.



SAN JOSÉ STATE
UNIVERSITY

SJSU
Phyllis Forward Simpkins
International House
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San Jose, CA 95112



SPRING 2010



PANCAKE BREAKFAST



INTERNATIONAL QUIZ

**WE WANT TO
HEAR FROM
ALL ALUMNI!**

***WHAT DO YOU THINK
OF THIS NEWSLETTER?**

***DO YOU HAVE ANY
STORY IDEAS FOR US?**

***WANT TO SHARE WHAT
YOU'VE BEEN UP TO
WITH OTHER I-HOUSE
ALUMNI?**

***WANT TO PUBLICIZE
AN UPCOMING
I-HOUSE REUNION?**

**E-MAIL US AT
IHOUSE@SJSU.EDU,
AND LET US KNOW IF
YOU'D LIKE TO BE
PUBLISHED IN 360!**

**NOTE: NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS
MAY BE EDITED FOR CONTENT,
CLARITY, LENGTH, GRAMMAR,
SPELLING, AND PUNCTUATION.**