Activist With a Camera

Freelance photographer Teru Kuwayama, B.A.’93, whose award-winning pictures document history in the making in Afghanistan, Iraq and other international hot spots, sees himself as “more of an activist” than a journalist.
The Big Picture

Collaboration among the nation’s political leaders and support for the economic stimulus were among the topics former President William Jefferson Clinton fielded in a March 2 talk at the University at Albany. Speaking before an audience of 4,500 at SEFCU Arena, Clinton also noted that poverty affects much of the world’s population, triggering inequities in access to such basic necessities as food, clean water and health care, and fueling political instability. In addition, the two-term chief executive offered students some advice: to maximize the opportunities available to them at UAlbany and to “make the future you want.”

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Karen R. Hitchcock Portrait Unveiling
Photo: Mark Schmidt

The University at Albany’s 16th president, Karen R. Hitchcock, returned to campus Sept. 17 for the unveiling of her presidential portrait. Known for her ability to organize coalitions and work with diverse groups, Hitchcock served as president from 1996 to 2004; under her leadership, UAlbany facilities and programs experienced significant growth. In 2004, Hitchcock was named principal of Queen’s University in Ontario, Canada. She returned to the Capital Region in 2008.

Scholarship Reception/Alumni Awareness Luncheon
Photo: Mark Schmidt

Homecoming Weekend 2010 included an Oct. 8 reception that celebrated philanthropy and student success.

Above, young men and women whose studies and career plans are being positively impacted by the generous support of University donors pose for a group photo.

Above right, pediatric cardiologist Evan Zahn, M.D., creator of the Evan Michael Zahn ’82 Scholarship, is pictured with Julia Prusik, recipient of the award that carries his name. Prusik, a junior majoring in biology and art, intends to pursue a career in general surgery.

School of Business Alumni Reception in New York City
Photo: Raymond Robinson

More than 140 UAlbany alumni living and/or working in Metro New York gathered at the Hard Rock Café in Manhattan on Oct. 14 to network. They also heard remarks from President George Philip and School of Business Dean Donald Siegel.

Far left, Philip poses with Lisa Ganz ’89 and Debra Ganz ’89, creators of Twins Talent, the only referral service/talent agency exclusively for twins and multiples.

Pictured here, left to right, are guests Jessica Cavallero ’08, Michelle Mund ’08, Michelle Landers ’08 and Natalya Ruseva ’05.
Citizen Laureate Dinner

Photo: Gary Gold '70

With more than 430 guests attending, the 31st annual Citizen Laureate Awards Dinner was a great success! The event, held Oct. 20 at the Hall of Springs in Saratoga Springs, helped to gross an unprecedented $180,000 to support University at Albany Foundation initiatives, including the Campaign for Students.

Those enjoying the evening’s festivities included, from left, University President George M. Philip; Citizen Laureate Dinner Co-chair I. Norman Massry; Community Laureate John J. Nigro; Academic Laureate Sally Temple, Ph.D.; and UAlbany Foundation President George R. Hearst III.

Rockefeller College Alumni Awards

Photo: Mark Schmidt

During its 27th annual Alumni Reception and Awards Ceremony on Dec. 2, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy honored five individuals for outstanding public service.

Pictured, left to right, are Mohammad O. Abbadi, M.P.A. '08 (Rockefeller College Young Alumnus Award); Peter D. Miraglia, B.A. ’72, M.S.W. ’77 (Distinguished Continuing Professional Education Leadership Award of Excellence); Ruth S. Walters (Rockefeller College Distinguished Service Award); The Honorable Lawrence K. Marks, B.A. ’79 (Distinguished Alumnus Award in Political Science); and Peter C. Finn, M.P.A. ’77 (Distinguished Alumnus Award in Public Administration & Policy).

World Within Reach Speaker Series

Photo: Mark Schmidt

Renowned broadcast journalist Barbara Walters visited campus Oct. 9 as part of the Student Association’s World Within Reach Speaker Series. Walters’ ground-breaking exclusive interviews with world figures and her enterprising reporting have made her one of the most highly acclaimed journalists on television. She is pictured here with performers from The Earth Tones, UAlbany’s premier all-male a cappella group. When Walters met them during the photo opportunity, she asked them to sing to her. Members claim it was one of their proudest moments!

Winter Commencement

Photo: Island Photography

UAlbany's alumni are a source of tremendous pride and inspiration. On Dec. 8, at the Winter Commencement Ceremony held in the SEFCU Arena, almost 1,000 graduates joined our alumni family. Of that number:

- 561 students earned undergraduate degrees in 42 different majors and represented 17 countries, including China, Korea, Japan and Ghana. Ages ranged from 20 to 61. Fifty percent were men; the class also included 10 military veterans.

- 434 students earned graduate degrees; they came from nine states and 25 countries, including Pakistan, Turkey, China, India, Korea, Iran and Japan. Ages ranged from 22 to 63. Sixty percent of the graduate students were women.

Kelsey O'Brien, a bachelor’s candidate who received her degree in psychology, spoke on behalf of her fellow graduates about recognizing those who have supported them along the way and giving back to others. She is pictured here with one of her treasured Fountain Day rubber ducks!

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Maheshwari Colloquium Honors Graduate’s Parents

More than 25 years after earning his degree, Raj Maheshwari, B.S.’83, returned to UAlbany for a special event last fall: a College of Arts and Sciences luncheon recognizing him for endowing a Department of Mathematics and Statistics lecture series in his parents’ names. The Man Mohan and Asha Devi Maheshwari Colloquium in Mathematics will provide support for honoraria, travel, lodging, meals, audiovisual needs and other direct costs associated with the series.

Well known in their native India for their support of education, the elder Maheshwaris set an example for their son, encouraging him to collaborate with other UAlbany alumni to increase donations to the University. They and other family members, including Raj’s wife, Sarita Singh, and children, were guests of honor at the Oct. 10 luncheon.

RNA Institute Receives First Corporate Gift

With its gift of $45,000, Krackeler Scientific, Inc., has become the first corporate entity to support the University’s new RNA Institute.

The firm’s president and CEO, Anthony R. Krackeler, said the contribution was inspired by the institute’s “unique potential for advancing cutting-edge RNA research and applications, as well as its clear and substantial enhancement of the growing life-science research profile of New York’s Capital Region.” The RNA Institute was established last June.
NYLARNet: Producing Knowledge and Results

By Amy Halloran, B.A.’90

With Latinos comprising 16 percent of New York’s 19.1 million citizens, policies regarding immigration, health, education and political participation have come to the fore in recent years. Thanks to the UAlbany-based New York Latino Research and Resources Network (NYLARNet), the state has a resource that informs both public discourse and the policy-making process relating to those issues.

Established in 2004, NYLARNet sponsors and conducts research focusing on Latinos in the Empire State. The nonprofit operates on a consortium model, with affiliates at UAlbany’s Center for Latino, Latin American, and Caribbean Studies (CELAC) and at Columbia University’s Teachers College, Hunter College, City College and Cornell.

At NYLARNet, explained José Cruz, network director and associate professor of political science, “we conduct surveys, interviews, and analysis of primary and secondary sources, then use research papers or reports to suggest new policies or modifications to existing policies. Some of our work produces knowledge that, although not applied in a strict policy sense, is useful as a contribution to the understanding of broad historical questions and issues that impact our political culture.”

NYLARNet research also produces results. An assessment of Latino representation within the City University of New York faculty, Cruz noted, “led to the establishment of an office within CUNY to identify and recruit more Latino faculty within the system.” And doctoral candidate Jennifer Woodward, M.A.’08, who studied bilingual education in New York City schools, wrote a report that helped bring together state and local educators and politicians on a task force aimed at increasing academic services for Bronx students, especially English-language learners.

Jackie Hayes, M.A.’09, is working with Cruz and Joel Bloom, director of Assessment & Survey Research and research assistant professor in the Department of Political Science, on a survey she hopes will determine “if there are certain things that can be tailored in order to attract more Latino students into state jobs. On the state level, there are major disparities in Latino representation in government jobs,” said the Ph.D. candidate, who has also studied Latinas in the garment industry at home and abroad. Hayes enjoys the research process and may consider a career in nonprofit research.

Visit NYLARNet online at www.albany.edu/wwwres/nylarnet.
“I love working hands-on with objects and materials and textures,” says Judy Brust, pictured in the studio at her Nantucket home. On the wall behind her is a print inspired by the wildlife she saw while vacationing in Tanzania a few years ago.
When Judy Brust was studying art at the University at Albany, a classmate dubbed her “Nature Girl.” The nickname still fits: Her creations are often inspired by the wildlife she’s seen in her travels.

Brust has seen a great deal of the world since her days at Pennsylvania State University, where she first studied to become a hospital dietician, then an interior designer, before turning to art education in her junior year. She and her husband, Robert, met and married in college and settled into a busy life together as Bob’s executive career with General Electric – and later, with Unisys, Sprint and Kodak – took the couple and their three children to Philadelphia; Rochester, N.Y.; and Pittsfield, Mass. Judy, who raised their family while substitute teaching and giving lessons at home, sometimes thought about attending graduate school, “but there was never time.” Her mother’s passing and Brust’s consequent reflections on death, however, “gave me the impulse to continue my education.”

While the family was living in Pittsfield, Brust made her first move toward earning a graduate degree. She visited UAlbany and met Professor of Art Edward Mayer, audited his beginning classes, then applied for admission to the M.A. program.

Like Mayer, Professor Roberta Bernstein was “a wonderful help” to Brust, who would tape the art historian’s lectures to replay during the commute home. Brust also enjoyed the Visiting Artists Program, which brought “six or eight lecturers to campus every year. It was extraordinary to meet the people you study and then go to see their work in museums.”

At UAlbany, where Brust later earned her M.F.A., the painter and printmaker expanded her repertoire to include sculpture. She also learned “what I really wanted to say in my art. I love working hands-on with objects and materials and textures.”

Away from the studio at her home in Nantucket, Brust enjoys observing the wild creatures that inspire much of her work. During a vacation in Tanzania a few years ago, she watched wildebeests at play and saw “a lake pink with flamingoes” – visual elements she later incorporated into prints.

Her artistic mastery is evident in several pieces displayed at the Mandarin Oriental Boston. Brust’s mixed-media Life Line #3 is at center stage behind the reception desk; six other works hold places of honor throughout the luxury hotel. “It’s a beautiful building, and to see them in that space is just so nice,” she said.

Grateful for her experience at UAlbany, Brust has set up an endowment to fund a yearly scholarship for an art student. “It’s amazing to me how much that period of time affected my life,” she observed. “Everyone should have that experience.”
Where Are They Now?
By Carol Olechowski

We wondered what was new with Rebecca Whiteley, B.S.’07, (Spring 2009, “A Lifelong Dream Realized”), a Peace Corps volunteer in Moldova two years ago. So we contacted her – and promptly received a response. Whiteley returned to New Jersey with her then-fiancé, Moldova native Costel Sarivan, in December 2009, and the couple married the following month. “Costel is currently in his second semester at Raritan Valley Community College and works at the ARC of Warren County,” e-mailed the Phillipsburg, N.J., native, who now goes by her married surname. “I am working as the development coordinator at Cancer Support Community Greater Lehigh Valley and am applying to graduate programs in fundraising management,” added Sarivan, who majored in political science at UAlbany.

Professor of Political Science Joseph F. Zimmerman must be one of the most prolific writers around! The State University of New York Press, which published his Regulating the Business of Insurance in a Federal System in December, will release Zimmerman’s Horizontal Federalism: Interstate Relations this spring. His manuscript State-Local Governmental Interactions has also been approved for publication. Zimmerman’s many other books include Congress: Facilitator of State Action; The Silence of Congress: State Taxation of Interstate Commerce; and The Government and Politics of New York State: Second Edition – all published by SUNY Press.

Alan D. Abbey, B.A.’75, who wrote the initial installment of “The Last Word” for UAlbany (Spring 2007, “Back to the Future”), e-mailed recently to let us know that he’s now Internet director of Shalom Hartman Institute, “an educational think tank and policy center focusing on pluralistic and modern Jewish thought.” The institute runs programs in both Israel and North America, noted Abbey. He and his wife, Sheryl, marketing director for a publishing company, live in Jerusalem with their children, Alex, 15; Ezra, 11; and Maayan, 8.

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School of Social Welfare Professor Emeritus Edmund Sherman, Ph.D., let us know about his recent book, *Contemplative Aging: A Way of Being in Later Life*. Published last July by Gordian Knot Books and distributed by University Press of New England, *Contemplative Aging* emphasizes “the crucial importance of mind and spirit in the later years of life,” noted Sherman, who lives in Latham, N.Y. “While staying physically and socially active for as long as possible, we would do well to cultivate a more reflective or contemplative approach to living [that will] prepare [us] for the losses of relationships and physical activities.” Sherman, who taught at UAlbany for 22 years before retiring in 1995, follows his own advice: An avid reader, he also continues “a small counseling practice with older (60+) individuals.” In addition, Sherman enjoys “theater, film, chamber concerts and long walks” with his wife.

Owing to the cholera outbreak, Phara Pignard, B.A.’02, M.S.W.’08 (Fall 2010, “Helping Haiti”), and her family delayed their planned December return to the Caribbean country to continue distributing clothing, medicines and other aid to victims of the January 2010 earthquake. Since the publication of her story in UAlbany, “I have collected funds for the shipping of five barrels [of supplies],” wrote Pignard, who earned her undergraduate degree in sociology and criminal justice. “I’ll keep you posted as things progress,” she promised.
With only a camera and a photographer’s keen perception, Teru Kuwayama records history in the making.

As a freelancer for Time, Newsweek and other publications, he has journeyed to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq 15 to 20 times, “probably half the time embedded with U.S. and NATO forces; the other half, solo or with an aid organization.” Wherever he goes, Kuwayama, who has also traveled extensively in India and Kashmir, captures images of humanity – and inhumanity – many of us would otherwise never see.

“In years past,” observed the New York City native, “I was more of a traveler with a camera.” His work, however, has “made the journalism aspect of my career more central. I’m not interested in producing compositions of tragedies; I want to unravel them and work toward solutions. But, on some level, I’ve probably crossed a line from being a journalist to more of an activist.”

Activist or journalist, Kuwayama arrived at Albany with no career goals “at all.”
His father, a painter, had “done some photography when I was a kid,” in the “pre-digital, black-and-white, analog era,” so Kuwayama did have a rudimentary knowledge of “the mechanics of cameras and darkrooms.” Despite a professed lack of interest in photography, he joined the Student Photo Service. “I went by the office one day to meet a friend, and they happened to be holding an interest meeting. While I was waiting, I filled out the form, just to be polite. I didn’t have any intention of joining, but as it turned out, I was the only one in the room who knew the difference between a shutter speed and an aperture, so I was recruited. A year later, I ran the place.”

His first assignment – photographing a ticket for an ASP story about parking policies – went well. But during the second, which called for Kuwayama to “batch develop a week’s worth of film for everyone else’s assignments, I ruined everyone’s film. It wasn’t a very auspicious start.” Things improved, however, as he began photographing “sports, fashion, portraits, news, music, architecture, landscapes, parties, and anything and everything else. But the most basic thematic thread that interested me was life around me, and the people I encountered.”

Kuwayama was also an intern for Gary Gold, B.S.’70. The professional photographer “was really important to me and to many others who passed through Albany. He was sort of a mentor, patron saint and bail bondsman, all rolled into one,” noted Kuwayama.

After receiving his bachelor’s degree in art, Kuwayama remained in Albany and freelanced for the weekly MetroLand, supplementing his income by washing dishes at a Mexican restaurant. When he moved back to New York, he did construction, worked in a type shop, filed slides at a photojournalism agency, and “did darkroom I’m not interested in producing compositions of tragedies; I want to unravel them and work toward solutions.”
For his work, Teru Kuwayama, pictured on opposite page, has received numerous accolades, including:

- a 2010 John S. Knight Fellowship from Stanford University
- a 2010 TED (Technology Entertainment and Design) Global Fellowship
- a 2010 Dart Center Ochberg Fellowship from the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism
- the 2009 Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize (shared with Christian Parenti) for the documentary *Unnatural Borders, Open Wounds: The Human Landscape of Pakistan*
work for people who actually had careers as ‘working photographers.’ I’ve never had a staff job anywhere. Freelancing wasn’t a decision; it was just what was available to me.”

For his Fall 2010 project, Basetrack (www.basetrack.org or www.facebook.com/basetrack), Kuwayama employed “photography and social media, tactically and strategically,” in an attempt “to inject Afghanistan deeper into the public consciousness. The intention is to use photographs to draw viewers into contact with unfamiliar ideas and sources of information. I’m not trying to convey a specific message so much as I’m trying to disrupt a disconnect between the American people and the longest war in U.S. history. If we’re going to spend $100 billion a year on a decade-long war and deploy 100,000 troops to the other side of the planet, we should do it with a lot more thought and consideration than we have so far.”

For the time being, at least, Kuwayama will continue to cover the “conflicted regions and crisis situations” he documents so well. “I have no idea what’s around the corner, or what I’ll be doing a year from now. I’m ready to move on, but I’m also deeply invested in what’s become a very personal story.”

To find clues that will help scientists provide more advance warning of hurricanes, several UAlbany faculty and students literally flew into the eye of the storm last semester.

Graduate students Diana Thomas of Lillington, N.C., and Leon Nguyen of Fresno, Calif., boarded a NASA DC-8 with Research Professor of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences John Molinari as part of a field study to determine what transforms some weather events, but not others, into tropical storms and hurricanes.

Based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Molinari and his atmospheric science students were part of the NASA-supported experiment Genesis and Rapid Intensification Processes (GRIP), which focused on how hurricanes form and why they often intensify rapidly. Professor and Chair Christopher Thorncroft was involved with GRIP, as well; his doctoral student, Matt Janiga of Chicago, Ill., joined Thomas and Nguyen in Fort Lauderdale. All were part of a three-pronged research effort that also dispatched research scientists to St. Croix and California.

Thomas, a second-year master’s student, has enjoyed the unpredictability of weather ever since she was a girl observing approaching thunderstorms with her dad, Neill.

“Each day is different,” said Thomas. “No two storms are exactly alike, and the excitement of watching a storm develop has stayed with me.”

Another group, led by Distinguished Professor Lance Bosart, was based in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, from Aug. 15 to Sept. 30 as part of Pre-Depression Investigation of Cloud-systems in the Tropics (PREDICT). Since storms often form in the vicinity of St. Croix, flights extending thousands of miles from there were conducted. Doctoral candidates Heather Archambault and Jason Cordeira; Thomas Galarneau, Ph.D.’10; and Kyle Griffin, who arrived on campus as a new doctoral student last fall, helped forecast for PREDICT aircraft operations and analyze data collected during the experiment.

“The real scientific challenge was to understand why so few potential disturbance seedlings develop into tropical cyclones,” Bosart said. PREDICT’s goal was to fly research aircraft into disturbance seedlings (cloud clusters) to obtain measurements that would help scientists find answers to this puzzle.

Assistant Professor Ryan Torn, who remained in Albany, incorporated data supplied by the aircraft into the computer model to help scientists understand what physical processes limit their ability to predict hurricane formation.

National Science Foundation and NASA funding for this experiment – in Albany alone – totaled more than $800,000 among Bosart, Torn, Thorncroft and Molinari.

“Ultimately,” said Molinari, “this work will help us to understand and predict hurricane formation, which remains an unsolved scientific problem. Many
times, all the ingredients – warm water; persistent, intense rainfall; and a pre-existing low-pressure area – are there, yet development does not occur, or is delayed for 24 to 48 hours. We want to understand what processes delay or even prevent tropical cyclone formation, as well as what brings it about.”

Molinari added: “Although we all have access to a huge volume of data collected in hurricanes, there is no substitute for actually being present when the data is collected. We got to see the eyewall and eye of the storms multiple times during our flights – a tremendous benefit when one is analyzing data. In GRIP, we flew into numerous storms, but my favorite was Hurricane Earl.”

The flights afforded the researchers an opportunity to observe the formation of Earl’s eyewall and the development of an eye, and to capture the latter with multiple instruments. “It will take additional months to assemble, process and interpret the data. Our goal will be to understand what factors in the storm and in its environment are responsible for the formation of the eye and the eyewall in tropical cyclones,” explained Molinari.

“Rapid intensification,” a separate phase of hurricane development, transforms a tropical depression or a weak tropical storm into a hurricane. Because this phenomenon frequently occurs near coastal regions, often quickly and with little warning, it is especially important to understand. Unlocking the mystery of rapidly intensifying tropical cyclone formation may one day enable scientists to give more advance warning to hurricane-vulnerable communities. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), running the Intensity Forecast Experiment (IFEX) and based at the Hurricane Research Division in Miami, Fla., was the third group involved in the research.

Seven aircraft – including NOAA aircraft flown out of Tampa, Fla., and NASA’s Global Hawk, a California-based unmanned aircraft that can remain aloft for 36 hours – supported the research projects.

For the students, Molinari said, the project presented “a great opportunity not only in the air, but also on the ground. They observed how a field experiment is designed and carried out, and the challenges that are always present.”
At 50, UAlbany’s Atmospheric Sciences Research Center (ASRC) has built an enviable reputation for investigating the impacts atmospheric phenomena have on us and on our environment.

Based on a SUNY Board of Trustees-approved plan submitted by Distinguished Lecturer Vincent Schaefer and Oscar Lanford, dean of what was then the State University College of Education at Albany, ASRC was founded Feb. 3, 1961. At a December 1959 conference, representatives of the National Science Foundation’s Atmospheric Science Division; RPI and its Radio-Astronomy Laboratory; General Electric’s General Engineering Laboratories in Schenectady; and the New York State Conservation Department had recommended establishing ASRC at the college and a research station at Whiteface Mountain. The initial budget of $45,000 included $30,000 for equipment and $15,000 for personnel. Lanford became the center’s first director; Schaefer chaired its advisory committee. The new center’s mission called for studying the atmosphere and developing new instrumentation to improve the study of weather.

Soon, ASRC evolved into the headquarters of a major research center. The September 1957 launch of Sputnik, the demonstration of the unmanned satellite’s broadcast capabilities, and the Soviet Union’s subsequent launch of a man into space all pointed to a need for the U.S. government to direct funding toward science in general, and more particularly toward space science and “the Space Race.”

Prior to serving as dean of the college, Lanford had been a professor and then chairman of the chemistry department. Impressed by the National Science Institute that Schaefer conducted at the Loomis School in Connecticut, Lanford invited him to join the college staff. As a research scientist at GE’s Research Laboratory in Schenectady, Schaefer had discovered the first successful method of cloud seeding in 1947. Later, he was director of Research for the MUNITALP Foundation, which funded atmospheric scientists all over the world. With Schaefer’s addition to the faculty, the college – which would become one of the SUNY System’s four
University Centers by 1960 – was able to broaden both its research capabilities and its graduate programs.

At ASRC, Schaefer duplicated the GE-style research center, where good scientists were hired and allowed to pursue their own research interests. Having flourished in that environment, he quickly set about assembling a team that included many of his co-workers on “Project Cirrus,” the U.S. government-run project that aimed to understand and attempt to control the weather. The first new hire was Schaefer’s former colleague Raymond Falconer, a weather-forecasting specialist. Falconer, charged with developing the Whiteface Mountain research facility, would go on to create a widely syndicated weather report and provide weather coverage for the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics. Other ASRC hires included former GE researchers Bernard Vonnegut, who discovered cloud seeding using silver iodide, and Duncan Blanchard, an expert on water droplets.

Early on, Schaefer also demonstrated his ability to attract federal funding and his interest in studying the atmosphere in other venues. Supported by the National Science Foundation, he mounted the first of 10 winter expeditions to Yellowstone Park, where the -40 degrees Celsius conditions were ideal for performing cold-cloud experiments on the ground. One finding borne out by the Yellowstone Field Research Expeditions was the presence of heavy concentrations of lead in the atmosphere in late 1966, a time when all gasoline contained lead. Schaefer warned of the additive’s impact on “cloud modification,” and by 1973, the federal government was taking steps to eliminate lead from gasoline.

Supported by grants from such important sources as the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Energy and NASA, ASRC staff have conducted research from the Northeast to the Amazon rain forest, from the Alaskan tundra to Quebec’s boreal forests, and at the South Pole. Through the efforts of researchers like Roger Cheng; Ron Stewart; Richard Perez; Jon Scott; U Czapski; David Fitzjarrald; Ernesto Barreto; Julius Chang; Kenneth Demerjian; Scott Miller; Volker Mohnen; Wei-Chyung Wang; and their predecessors, we have a better understanding of solar energy’s potential; microclimates; the impacts of rain, air pollution, radiation and climate on the environment; the health effects of ultrafine particles in the air; and the causes of acid rain.

I am extremely grateful to David Fitzjarrald for talking with me at length about the history of ASRC, and to Jon Scott and Duncan Blanchard for their helpful comments.

This article draws mainly from Fitzjarrald’s work. To read his very detailed history of ASRC’s work, link to http://www.asrc.albany.edu/about/history.html.

To submit a question for “Ask Geoff,” e-mail gwillsams@uamail.albany.edu.
Real-Life Goddess

Jane Marx, B.A.’65 • By Carol Olechowski
Jane Marx has been a teacher, an editor, a “terrible” waitress, a secretary who typed “90 words per minute – most of them unreadable” – and even an actress. But her most enduring job to date has been goddess: As the self-proclaimed New York Tour Goddess, Marx offers city dwellers and tourists the opportunity not just to see her beloved hometown, but to “swallow it, savor it, soak it up!”

Marx was born to the tour-goddess calling. The daughter of “a loving and talkative family” from Queens had just turned 17 when she enrolled at the University at Albany and “discovered another world. Albany was smaller than my high school, and it was a perfect environment for me. I just loved being with these people who were not all from New York City,” recalls the former history major. She made friends from all over the state and particularly enjoyed her anthropology and economics classes. Two professors, Catherine Newbold and Helen Horowitz, set a good example for Marx, who “wanted to be a social studies teacher since fifth grade.”

She did go on to teach 10th-grade social studies for three years in a Long Island school district. “I loved the kids, and I liked being in front of an ‘audience’; it was like theater. But I didn’t want to go to committee meetings.” Marx left when her roommate, Janice, who drove them both to work every day, quit her job. “I’m a terrible driver. It’s boring to look only at the road. I had seven car accidents in three years,” Marx admits.

At that point, she made a career change, taking a position as an editor with Random House. She remembers: “I worked with Toni Morrison; she edited English books, and I did social studies. She was working on her novel *The Bluest Eye* at night.”

Four years later – after visiting the Virgin Islands, where she worked at a jewelry store and learned public relations – Marx switched jobs again and became a secretary at a publishing firm. While interviewing for that position, she recalls, the personnel director observed: “You’re so theatrical; you’re an actress. Why don’t you go to acting school?” So the highly suggestible Marx attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. She landed some acting jobs, “but I would memorize my lines at the last minute and forget them on opening night.”

Still, all the job experience added up. As an independent tour guide, Marx has used the skills she acquired in teaching, editing, writing and public speaking, as well as her love of history. The job “also allows for zaniness, since I’m my own boss.”

Marx learned early on that poise and common sense are useful attributes for the tour goddess, too. Her first day on the job, she and a driver new to Manhattan took their coach down a street that was too narrow and hit a car. “My fault; I forgot the route,” says Marx, who proceeded to handle the situation with characteristic aplomb. After ascertaining that no one was hurt, she told the passengers: “Look, accidents happen every day. Today was our turn.”

Jane Marx blogs as New York City Storyteller at http://x.nytourgoddess.com/blog. Visit her online also at www.nytourgoddess.com and on YouTube at newyorktourgoddess.
Elizabeth Gray has an interesting take on life: “Making plans is futile, and the best way to find opportunities is to be open to them when they present themselves.”

That philosophy has landed Gray jobs at an art studio and a farmers market and motivated her to begin her own after-school enrichment programs for children. Now, it has inspired her to take on a new project: helping a small indigenous community in Ecuador to establish its own school.

Born in The Bronx and raised in Ithaca, N.Y., Gray arrived at UAlbany “with no clear career plans.” However, the University’s “wide-ranging course offerings” afforded her “incredible opportunities” to explore new interests. The Honors College student majored in philosophy, a “compelling and challenging” discipline that “offers a rigorous intellectual, moral and metaphysical foundation from which all things follow. My training in philosophy has prepared me, not just academically but as a whole person, to engage meaningfully with any path that I end up following.”

Inspired by the leadership of then-President Kermit Hall, who passed away in 2006, Gray was determined to “strive for excellence and reach higher in the belief that we can be the best in all that we do. Every aspect of my education was all that I could have hoped for.” She cites the mentorship of Professor of Philosophy Jon Mandle, her adviser, and Distinguished Teaching Professor of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences John Delano, as well as a study-abroad experience in Chile, as highlights of her undergraduate years.

Gray took odd jobs after graduation, earning enough money to buy a plane ticket to Ecuador. She traveled in Quito and the Galapagos Islands, teaching English at a hostel in exchange for free housing. Gray later connected with the volunteer program Nueva Era and taught on San Cristobal, Galapagos, for six weeks. “It was paradise,” recalls Gray, who explored the island and lived with local families during her stay.

Soon, a new opportunity presented itself, and Gray found herself teaching the children of the Wishi Community, part of “an
indigenous group called Shuar. The families – about 10 adults and 20 children – live in simple huts made of wood or bamboo and survive as hunter-gatherers.”

In the community’s primitive schoolhouse, “the kids sat on logs under a scrap of aluminum roofing,” remembers Gray. “There were no supplies, so we used what was available: We wrote with charcoal on the piece of wood that served as our chalkboard, painted numbers on rocks with paint made from achiote seed, and made 10 workbooks from a single notebook. The kids shared three pens while practicing writing for hours. Despite the limitations of our classroom, the children were so excited to be learning.”

Gray left the community a few weeks later, determined to return with the money, materials and manpower needed to build a school. Back in the Capital Region, she began the Wishi Project to raise the $20,000 needed for construction and supplies. By early December 2010, donors had contributed more than $13,000 toward that goal. Alumni Morgan Edwards, B.S.’07, and Danny Buckley, B.A.’07; juniors Sammy Frumkin and Joel Tirado; and other friends Gray made at UAlbany “have been truly invaluable in supporting and guiding” the project.

Gray anticipates that the school’s impact will prove “immeasurable” as families who left to educate their children elsewhere return to their community. A teacher fluent in both Shuar and Spanish has already been engaged; Gray will work with her to develop a curriculum, then “leave the running of the school” to the Wishi. “My greatest hope is to make myself obsolete,” she says.

“I don’t know what I will do when I finish this project,” adds Gray, “but I hope that it will have given me the tools I need to move forward toward a rewarding and successful path – or at least to my next step. I have learned that committing myself passionately to the opportunities that present themselves will lead me to the next big thing.”

For more information about the Wishi Project, visit Elizabeth Gray’s Web site at www.wishi.org.
Spend just a few minutes with Roberto Vives, University at Albany director of men’s and women’s track & field/cross country, and you’re sure to hear his favorite motivational saying: "Do the incredible."

Corny, perhaps, but it’s genuine. Most importantly, it resonates with his athletes.

“‘Do the incredible,’” UAlbany women’s track captain Sandy Antenor said. “I can’t tell you how many times he’s said that. He makes you want to go beyond your limits.”

“Everyone knows that saying is Roberto’s,” said Winsome Foderingham, B.A. ’89, M.P.A. ’92, an All-American who ran for Vives in the 1980s and made it to UAlbany’s Athletic Hall of Fame. “He’ll make you better than you ever thought you could be,” added Foderingham, now the University’s associate director of Corporate and Foundation Relations.

Vives hasn’t simply asked his athletes to do the incredible. Since taking over the University’s track program in 1985, he’s demanded the same of himself.

He’s led UAlbany to 43 conference championships. He’s coached 27 All-Americans. He’s led the program through a seamless transition from Division III up to Division I, leading his men’s team to a ranking as high as 36th in the nation at the top division. His list of achievements is endless.

“There’s a sense that you don’t want to be the team that lets him down,” men’s track captain Tyler Fogarty said. "His teams have had success for so long.”

The success is expected to continue. The America East coaches recently picked the men’s indoor team to win its sixth straight indoor track conference title. The women were also chosen to defend their crown. And with Vives at the helm for the foreseeable future, more great results are likely.

“I really love what I do,” he said. “It doesn’t happen a lot in sports that each year keeps getting better, but that’s what we’ve had, and we want to keep it going.”
Vives, 55, grew up in The Bronx. If not for an unusual rule, he possibly would never have gotten involved in track. At just 4’-11”, 90 pounds when he was a freshman, he benefited from a rare rule that allowed him to compete against other athletes his size. It isn’t the norm for track & field competitions to have weight standards, but the league that his high school competed in had such a setup.

Vives was immediately hooked on the sport. He loved the camaraderie of track. Not only did he enjoy competing; at age 14, he started coaching younger kids on the street, organizing races and giving pointers. “I’m not sure if I knew a lot about technique back then,” Vives said. “But I think everyone saw how much I cared, and that’s what matters. I’ve had a knack of connecting with people.”

He went on to become a track star in college, first at Lehman, then at Seton Hall, where he set the school record in the decathlon. More exploits – including the winning of three Masters Events at the Empire State Games, an Olympic-style competition for New York athletes – followed.

Vives was successful in high school and club track, but wanted to coach in college. “I would see kids coming back home, failing out, and I knew I could make a difference. You have to show the students that you care, that you’re committed to them. It’s not win-at-all-costs here. I want good people who are committed to academics and to doing the right thing,” he said.

For their part, Vives and his family are also committed to the University and its hometown. He and his wife, Valrene, live in Albany, and their children both were members of his team in recent years. Andres Vives, B.S.’06, graduated cum laude, earning a degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing/finance. Ashley Vives, B.A.’10, was an art major who minored in business.

“The University has been a great place for me and our family,” Roberto Vives said. “There have been a lot of memorable moments.”

And many more to come.