THE PHILADELPHIA STORY:
September 25–27, 2008

Graeme Goodsr
With contributions from Rhonda Soricelli and Philip Minter

This 18th Annual Conference of the Sydney University Graduates Union of North America (SUGUNA) was a great experience for all who attended – with stimulating seminar talks on the Friday and Saturday mornings, with diverse outside activities in afternoons thereafter, and very enjoyable social events on three evenings, including a splendid welcome party on Thursday night at the home of Drs. Rhonda and Richard Soricelli. A delicious buffet was served which included Australian lamb cutlets, lamingtons and wines. The evening ended with the traditional sing-along of Australian songs aided by Dick Soricelli’s spirited harmonica accompaniment. After this great start, the Conference flowed seamlessly.

A total of 68 graduates, spouses and guests attended over the 2 days and 3 nights, including a delegation from the University of Sydney. The University Chancellor, Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, had earlier sent a note apologising for her inability to attend. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Andrew Coats (Community), Deputy Vice-Chancellor John Hearn (Academic and International), with his wife Margaret, and Ms. Tracey Beck, Director of Alumni Relations, spoke during the Conference about varying aspects of University life and progress, with Professor Coats being both host and speaker at the Friday night reception, and Professor Hearn giving a stimulating address on Friday morning about the future of Biotechnology. Tracey Beck spoke at various times about developing alumni interests.

The program and calibre of seminar speakers was outstanding focusing on medical science research, natural resources, climate change, and legal and political issues. One variation was a talk by Dr. Rob Williams, Agriculture Counsellor at the Australian Embassy in Washington DC, who led off the Friday morning sessions by discussing Australia’s animal health-quarantine
system including reference to the big-ramification outbreak last year of equine flu. He was followed during that morning by:

**Edward McWhinney**, a top-level international lawyer and past Canadian parliament member – talking on the changing world order of international law and politics

**Richard Pestell**, with incredible achievements in cancer research, oncology & administration, who spoke on “Death to the Cultural Cringe – Australians on the Global Stage”

**Joan McConnell**, a longstanding SUGUNA supporter, talked about “Water Power ? Coming Conflicts in a World of Diminishing Resources”

**Vanda Lennon** (from the Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minnesota) discussed how “Entrenched Mythology Retards Progress 110 years : Lessons from Multiple Sclerosis”.

**John Hearn** (Deputy Vice Chancellor at Sydney) on Biotechnology Future: Beauty or Beast

**Tracey Beck** on Alumni Relations and the launching of Australia’s first New Alumni Centre at the University of Sydney.

The Friday morning seminar was held at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia (the oldest honorary medical institution (1787) in the US), followed by a guided tour of big, mesmerising Mutter (medical) Museum. The rest of Friday afternoon was free to see around this historic city, ahead of a spirited evening reception held at the College, and kindly hosted by the University of Sydney – with an address about the University’s progress and challenges by Professor Andrew Coats. Two additional guests “popped in to say hello” – young Americans who recently graduated from the University and just returned to their respective homes in Philadelphia and New York City – with great memories. SUGUNA President, Dr. Philip Minter, acknowledged Professor Charles McKenzie, a graduate in Veterinary Science and first recipient of the University of Sydney Alumni Award for International Achievement. Charles had been nominated for the award by the directors of SUGUNA. Philip read the citation given at the University on September 5, 2008.

The Saturday morning seminar was at a different location – the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania (across the Schuylkill River). Many members enjoyed a brisk walk from the Club Quarters residence, arriving for an early breakfast in the Museum’s interesting Mosaic Gallery. The morning seminar featured:-

**Penelope Pether** (Professor of Law at nearby Villanova University) speaking candidly about “How America Got the Bad Common Law” (with undue influence).

**John Mutter** (Deputy Director and Associate Provost at the Earth Institute of Columbia University in New York City) asking “Does Climate Change Really Matter?” and reviewing how many poor nations in the equator belt have insuperable challenges.

**Peter Magee** (Associate Professor at nearby Bryn Mawr College) – about his years of archaeology over-sight in the United Arab Emirates along the eastern
regions of the Arabian Peninsula – “Shifting Sands and Paradigms: Fifteen years archaeological research in the United Arab Emirates”

Matthew Hall (a postgraduate researcher at the National Cancer Institute, National Institute of Health and currently secretary/treasurer of the University of Sydney USA Foundation) speaking in detail about cancer research in the context of “Serendipity of Drug Design”.

Margaret Somerville, back from McGill University in Montreal by popular demand, talking this time about Free Speech (Bird on an Ethic’s Wire) – in another controversial wrap-up finale.

The morning session also included time for a SUGUNA business meeting plus an election of new officers, with Dr. Gerry Bassell (from Wichita, Kansas) becoming the new SUGUNA President, succeeding Dr. Philip Minter, who concluded 3 years in office with distinction. Veterinarian Dr. Wanda Haschek-Hock, from Champaign, Illinois, accepted the office of Vice President and President-Elect to succeed Gerry Bassell, who continues to be a live-wire SUGUNA supporter.

Afternoon activities (apart from looking through the mind-boggling University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) included a group tour conducted by President Philip Minter to the famous Barnes Foundation Art Museum, and another group tour, conducted by meeting committee member Bette Seamonds, to Chanticleer Gardens which garden buff John Semmler called “unbelievable”.

The University of Sydney USA Foundation sponsored the final event of the Conference, the annual Awards Banquet, which was held on the fore-deck of the 4-mast sailing ship MOSHULU. From this vantage point on this magnificent vessel, which carried wheat from Australia to the UK in the early part of the 20th Century, we were afforded splendid views of Philadelphia at night. Dr. Bruce Stillman AO, FRS, President and Director of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, offered a brilliant keynote address on research with the human genome. James Wolfensohn, who had donated the Tiffany Plate, first awarded in 1994, joined in the festivities as Phillip Smith, last year’s recipient, presented the 2008 Jim Wolfensohn Award to John Semmler, co-founder and long-time secretary-treasurer of the USA Foundation. A memorable evening was had by all.
**OUR GENETIC HERITAGE: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

Dr. Bruce Stillman, AO, BSc (Hons) Sydney, PhD, ANU, FRS

A summary of the keynote address to the University of Sydney Graduates in America: September 27, 2008 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

We all inherit approximately 3 billion bits of genetic information from each of our parents that when combined contributes to our development, our appearance and even to our behavior and longevity. Every time a cell divides, our genome has to be accurately duplicated and segregated to each of the two daughter cells. The process of duplicating the human genome is highly accurate, but can lead to errors that have profound effects on our health and the health of our children. Events over the last ten years have revolutionised our view how our genomes vary and can be damaged. Such information has provided insight into the causes of human disease such as cancer, psychiatric disorders and human behaviour.

It is fitting that this address is delivered in Philadelphia, for it was here that the founding fathers of America gathered to proclaim that the fledging nation was independent and most importantly that all men are created equal. In the immortal words of Thomas Jefferson, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” As we know, the signers of the Declaration of Independence did not necessarily practice what they preached, for the lack of true equality led to a great Civil War some nine decades later. Nevertheless the sentiment of equality was engrained in the American psyche, leading to a society that welcomes diversity and opportunity for all.

In 1776, the most immediate and appropriate meaning was that men should not be subject to the Divine Right of Kings. The broader meaning then, as now, was that the concept of equality is the foundation of how we interact with each other and how we establish relationships, be they business, personal, legal or political. Equality is based on the mutual understanding between individuals or groups of people that each person commands respect and has all the opportunities to contribute to the common good. Given the realities of human behavior such a notion of equality is impractically idealistic, but it is a notion to which we aspire and it guides our judicial and political interactions.

The dramatic statements in 1776 were remarkably obvious and plain. One wonders whether the founding fathers could have been so concise in their thinking if they had known about modern genetics. For, from a genomic point of view, we are not all created equal. In contrast, we are all created as absolutely unique, with no two genomes the same, save for identical twins who derive from a single fertilised egg and are thus clones of each other.

So how does the reality of genetic inequality interplay with the notion of equality in the societal sense?

The 3 billion bits of genetic information that we inherit from each parent goes a long way to determining who we are and how we behave. Although not known precisely, the human body contains on the order of 100 trillion cells, all deriving from a single cell created by the fertilisation of an egg cell with a single sperm. The cells are not static, but they are constantly being duplicated, differentiating into different cell types, living a life within us and then dying. Each day in our blood system, about 100 billion cells are born, they survive for a short time and then die, being consumed by surrounding cells and the waste discarded.

Each time a cell divides to produce two daughter cells, the DNA in chromosomes that contains our genetic blueprint has to be precisely copied. I have worked for my entire career on discovering how this remarkable process occurs and what goes wrong with it to produce disease such as cancer. An amazing machinery exists to ensure that our
DNA is copied completely and with precision.

Each cell in our body contains DNA that when stretched out is about 1.8 meters long, but only 2 billionth of a meter wide, comprising the famous DNA double helix whose structure was deduced by my predecessor at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, James Watson and his colleague Francis Crick. So the machinery that duplicates our genome has to copy 1.8 meters of DNA each time to yield 100 trillion copies all our cells, or 100 billion cells each day in our blood. Thus there are many occasions for making mistakes. If these mistakes occur in making eggs or sperm, they are passed onto our children. We now understand that autism is caused by such errors of inheritance.

Each of us inherits one copy of a genome from our mother and our father, thereby diluting our ancestors’ contribution to each individual by 50% with each generation. Within the DNA are the genes that when expressed determine the types of cells we harbour and when combined, influence our life. Although our environment nurtures the expression of individual genes, nature still contributes much of who we are, including our behaviour.

We now know the complete sequence or blueprint of the DNA within the 24 different human chromosomes and the mitochondrial genome that is exclusively inherited from our mothers. Very recent advances in molecular biology has enabled the sequencing of the genome of individuals, such that within a few years we could all have our genetic blueprint determined for under $10,000, perhaps even for $1,000. Even partial genome sequence information is now being used to track our ancestral heritage, sometimes finding that there were secrets in our ancestry that we might not have guessed. For example, DNA analysis has confirmed what was scandalously publicised while Thomas Jefferson was President of the United States that he was the father of children together with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings.

That is not to say that genetic testing is not beneficial. In health care, it can save lives. When born, all infants are tested for a variety of genetic defects, such as phenylketonuria. If the test is positive then the infant’s diet is modified, thereby preventing severe mental retardation or death. Likewise, women with Brca1 gene mutations that predispose to breast cancer can modify their behaviour by increasing breast cancer screening or having prophylactic surgery to lessen the chance of breast or ovarian cancer. Thus, genetic knowledge can, in the right circumstances be powerful knowledge.

DNA analysis must be accompanied by an understanding of the implications of genetics before venturing into the unknown, especially when genetic analysis does not predict with certainty an outcome. For example, it has been reported that Sergey Brin, founder of Google, has learned from DNA analysis that he carries a gene mutation that predisposes to Parkinson’s disease, the same genetic marker inherited from his mother who has already been diagnosed with the disease. But it is not certain that the disease will affect him, for he could easily have inherited modifier genes that will counter-act the genetic defect. But such examples raise the issue: do we really want to know such information when it is not yet possible to do anything about it? My guess is no.

The reality of genetics is that we are not born equal. We all have a roll of the genetic dice that makes us different from everyone else, for better or worse. In some cases our genetics results in beneficial characteristics, such as physical characters or mental activity, but it can also lead to defects that are not welcome, leading to diseases such as autism, schizophrenia, cardio-vascular disease or cancer. We are diverse and indeed diversity should be celebrated and understood. Genetic knowledge can be used for our benefit, but we must understand how it can be best used and not abused. Genetic information can improve an individual’s life and when so obtained, such information must be kept private. It is therefore important that genetic education be universal, endowing individuals and society with the ability to make the rational decisions and understand the realities of genetic diversity.

It is perhaps more important now, compared to 1776, that we understand the real notion of equality. Although we are not equal genetically, equality of individuals must remain a key right in society. Unless we understand this important notion, we may succumb to the failures of the past when naive notions of genetics resulted in eugenic abuses. We know much more now, but often I fear that our education system does not adequately prepare us for making rational decisions, especially when science is involved. At a minimum, we crave for leaders like Thomas Jefferson who, despite his human frailties, set us on the right path.
SUMMARY FROM THE SUGUNA ANNUAL MEETINGS IN PHILADELPHIA

The following presents a summary of items from the Annual General Meeting of SUGUNA Members and the SUGUNA Annual Conference held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

- Congratulations to John Semmler for receiving the Jim Wolfensohn Award for 2008.

- Congratulations to Gerry Bassell for assuming the Presidency of SUGUNA, to Wanda Haschek-Hock for accepting the position of Vice President and President Elect, to Ron Ettinger for continuing on the Board as a Director and to Penelope Pether being elected as a Director.

- Gratitude was expressed to Philip Minter for his resolute leadership for the past three years as President, and for his time and effort in managing SUGUNA’s operations. Philip continues on the Board of Directors as Immediate Past President.

- The 2009 SUGUNA Annual Conference will be held in Los Angeles, CA from 20 to 23 August 2009, on the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus.

- Gerry Bassell requests to be contacted for suggestions on a possible location for the 2010 SUGUNA Annual Conference.

- In coordination with Sydney University and as an outreach program, SUGUNA will conduct a survey of graduates in North America, to explore their interests, including conference preferences, and possible local representatives.

- The Board of Directors will be reviewing SUGUNA’s current by-laws, with possible revisions to follow.

Readers are encouraged to offer comments and suggestions and to ask any questions concerning the above or SUGUNA in general. Please contact SUGUNA President Gerry Bassell (usydgrad@mac.com or phone 316 648 7200) or Secretary Michael Challis (mdchallis@aol.com or phone 734 971 6186), or any Director.

SUGUNA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please return the enclosed SUGUNA Annual Membership Form to the Secretary, Michael Challis. Note: in order to be eligible to vote on business decisions of SUGUNA at Annual Membership Meetings, in person or by proxy, one needs to be a member and also to renew one’s membership each year.

2009 SUGUNA Annual Conference

The 2009 SUGUNA Annual Conference is to be held in Los Angeles on the beautiful University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus, over the period August 20 to 23, 2009.

An exciting program of speakers and activities is being planned. See overleaf for details and make sure you save the date in your diary!
What do you think of when you think of Southern California?

… The blue Pacific and white-tipped waves at Malibu?
… Tall palm trees swaying in a soft Beverly Hills breeze?
… Cultural treasures – the Huntington Gardens, the Getty Museum, the Getty Villa, the Norton Simon Museum?
… Shopping with the stars on Rodeo Drive?
… The La Brea Tarpits and its 25,000 year old secrets?
… Sunset, Hollywood and Santa Monica Boulevards and their hopping night life?
… A vital and cutting-edge art scene?

We are all this and more.

For the first time ever, SUGUNA is coming to Los Angeles.

Our 2009 Annual Conference will be held at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), August 20 – 23, 2009, and the committee is working hard to bring you an exciting line-up of presentations. We challenge each and every Sydney University graduate living in North America to come and join us. These conferences are fun. Find out what your fellow Sydney University graduates here in the U.S. are up to. Network with colleagues and with SU graduates working here in completely different fields. Learn fascinating things to which you were oblivious before you came. (You can even, if you’re quick off the mark, volunteer to make a presentation yourself – see below). At the SUGUNA conference you will make useful and interesting contacts. You might even (as has happened more than once) meet someone who can help push your career in a new or more productive direction. And there will be plenty of activities to suit all tastes.

Among the extracurricular activities planned are visits to both Getty museums – the Brentwood location and the Malibu Villa; tennis, golf and kayaking; a hike in the Santa Monica Mountains; a tour of LA’s Freeway Operations Center, the central operations room for traffic control etc. on the LA freeway system; a trip to the La Brea Tarpits and LA County Museum of Art; and, possibly, a trip to Pasadena to the Huntington Gardens and galleries. Social events will include an opening night reception, a barbeque on Friday evening and the banquet on Saturday, when the annual Jim Wolfensohn Award will be presented to the 2009 awardee.

The conference will be held on the beautiful campus of UCLA, in the heart of Westwood on Los Angeles’ west side. We will be close to the legendary and oft-filmed neighborhoods of Bel Air, Beverly Hills, Brentwood and Santa Monica.

Recently, SUGUNA member Ed McWhinney wrote to the organisers of the 2008 conference to say: “The Medical and Scientific papers were excellent and the presenters, uniformly, were articulate and effective in communicating advanced technical specialisation in terms that a general, often “lay” audience could really comprehend. It was a fine showcase for the University…”

In other words, the presentations are of an extremely high standard and are equally absorbing and informative. (If you think you can attend and may be able to give a 20-minute presentation on your work or a particular passion, please contact our 2009 Presentation Chairperson, Bernard Balleine, at balleine@psych.ucla.edu)
THE JIM WOLFENSOHN AWARD FOR 2008

Presented by last year’s recipient, Phillip Hartley Smith.

The Jim Wolfensohn awardee for 2008 was born and raised on a farm just South of Lake Ontario in Upstate New York. He was the first in his family’s history to graduate from an institution of higher education and his choice of college was a good one, Cornell University.

After graduating from Cornell, the awardee decided that Ithaca was a good place to live and work and accepted an administrative position at Cornell and remained there until 1992 at which time he was Assistant Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine. During his career he held appointments in Cornell’s Division of Biological Sciences and the University grants office. While at Cornell, he distinguished himself while serving on a number of University committees, including the Accreditation Committee, Human Resources Advisory Committee, and President’s Committee on affirmative action. We all recall the late 60’s and early 70’s Vietnam War era as turbulent times of campus disturbances and Cornell was very much involved in the implementation of affirmative action reform. His leadership in these key areas was of major importance to Cornell’s smooth crossing of those rough seas.

After several decades of guiding Cornell and its various faculties to obtain government and private support, in 1991 he and his wife embarked on an overseas adventure. At the urging of visitors from the University of Sydney, he applied for, and was appointed to, the newly created position of Director of Development and Alumni Relations at the University. Although a key driver in a successful $1.25 billion campaign for Cornell, he decided to accept the challenge of initiating a centralised fundraising program at the University of Sydney, and yes, in a country without a strong history of philanthropy such as enjoyed by Cornell and other American universities.

He worked hard at the University to make fundraising and “giving back” to one’s Alma Mater an acceptable idea; in fact a privilege. He gained the confidence of the Faculties, their Deans, the central administration, the Senate, and the University’s donors who had not previously seen themselves as donors to the University but instead as donors to their old Department or some special project. He implemented programs that gave alumni and friends an opportunity to contribute and he saw to it that donors were recognised for their efforts.

We had met while he was at the University and he contacted me regarding the establishment of an organisation here in the US, which could provide tax deductibility for US taxpayers who wished to support the University. Hence, with his and Chancellor Dame Leonie Kramer’s support at Sydney, in 1993 we established the University of Sydney USA Foundation. Some years later, when he left his position at the University, the Sydney Morning Herald noted, “A strong voice of philanthropy is leaving the country”.

Until last year he served as Secretary and Treasurer of the University of Sydney USA Foundation. It was a privilege for me to have him in that position while I chaired the Foundation. He provided the Foundation with extraordinary diligence in record keeping, advanced the visibility of the University and cultivated donors in the most respectable and conscientious way, always low key and with gentlemanly tact.

Since returning to Ithaca in 1995, he has also been active as a volunteer in helping a myriad of local and regional non-profits. He has been an officer and Board member of the Finger Lakes Land Trust, a local low-income housing agency, a local historic association, to mention just a few. In addition he served as an incorporating Board member of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County, and the Ithaca Children’s Garden.

He has also been active in helping other Australian institutions raise funds from the generous US philanthropic community. He helped establish and manage both the University of Melbourne and University of Tasmania USA Foundations. Recently he has set up a Foundation for Independent Schools in Australia so that Old Boys and Old Girls living in the US can support their school of preference with U.S. tax deductibility. In concert with these foundations he has educated and informed the recipient schools, colleges, and universities about the demands of the U.S. tax code to see the foundations based in the U.S. not as “pass throughs” but as foundations, which distribute funds, based on grant requests.

While he admits to undermining the US balance of payments, he has been directly responsible for the granting of millions of US dollars to the University of Sydney and other educational institutions in Australia. Most certainly these funds would not have found their way to Australia were it not for the Foundations he helped establish and the work he has spearheaded to attract donations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, University graduates and friends, recognising his meritorious and exemplary efforts on behalf of the University of Sydney, we present to you the Jim Wolfensohn Awardee for 2008, our friend, John C. Semmler.
Edward McWhinney, Q.C., S.J.D., LL.D.

In the current reassessment of the unintended political and legal consequences of the US-UK “unilateral” invasion of Iraq [outside the United Nations and International Law] a general conclusion emerging is that any viable post-Iraq World Order must inevitably seek to include the active involvement and participation of key political players – China, India, Russia, in particular – that may often have been effectively by-passed on some crucial War and Peace issues of our times.

There are cogent lessons to be drawn today from the operational methodology devised and successfully applied to achieve a peaceful ending to the Cold War between the two great rival political-military blocs, Soviet-led and US-led, that had dominated international relations in the difficult and dangerous decades of bipolar nuclear confrontation after World War II.

The operational code of principles and process for Soviet-Western accommodation without recourse to armed force, entering into General International Law under the rubric of Peaceful Coexistence and ripening ultimately into normative legal principles of East-West Détente, may be summarised as follows:

FIRST: keep the lines of communication open and seek to establish and maintain a continuing inter-systemic dialogue at all times. If official, United Nations or other inter-governmental arenas should become blocked, seek out alternative, private, professional or scientific fora that are open to representatives of the competing systems. [The first, creative openings to East-West agreement, during the Cold War, on De-nuclearisation of Antarctica and Outer Space, and on banning Nuclear Tests so as to eliminate their poisonous fallout, originated by this route].

SECOND: try to de-Ideologise the inter-systemic exchanges by excluding any prolonged preliminary debate over abstract questions of political theory and by avoiding also pejorative name-calling or exaggerated rhetorical formulations irrelevant to the issues under discussion.

THIRD: concentrate wherever possible on concrete and immediate tension-issues between the competing systems and on identifying high priority problems concerning each of them equally and lending themselves in consequence to common, agreed or consensus solutions on a basis of mutuality and reciprocity of interest as between the competing systems.

This particular operational methodology – identified at the time as the pragmatic, empirical, problem-oriented, step-by-step approach – produced in quick succession the Eisenhower-Khrushchev Antarctic Treaty, and the Kennedy-Khrushchev Partial Test Ban Treaty, and led on, logically and inevitably, to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the ABM Treaty and Salt I Agreement, and an impressive group of follow-up detailed Soviet-Western accords on nuclear and general disarmament and tension-reduction as a whole [including in this latter category the first demonstrably viable inter-systemic treaties on control of International Terrorism – here, the Aerial Hijacking accords].

The lessons of patient, empirically-based dialogue, across ideological frontiers, on common problems as a powerful contribution to ending the Cold War without resort to nuclear weapons, have an evident immediate relevance in any post-Iraq return to Multilateralism, within the United Nations and under International Law, in the present period of clashing civilisations where the challenges seem to exist equally for the erstwhile Cold War protagonists.

For follow-up study, please refer to Dr. McWhinney’s recently filmed lectures at the United Nations, now available as part of the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law, on the UN Website: http://www.un.org/law/avl.
Margaret Somerville, AuA (Pharm), Adelaide, LLB (Hons), Sydney, AM, DCL, McGill. F.R.S.C., McGill University, Montreal, Quebec

We are in a time of major change with regard to whom we bond with in terms of shared values and the way in which we find and affirm values, the process that has always generated and will continue to generate the glue that bonds us as a society and enables us to function as a collective.

The challenge is to find shared values that allow us to be both a “me” and a “we” in that world. To achieve that duality, we will need to balance the needs and rights of individuals and protection of the community – we need a new integration of the “me” and the “we”.

In the recent past, depending on our own values orientation, many of us chose between strong individualism and strong communitarianism, with the former clearly prevailing in Western democracies over the last forty years. That is no longer feasible in light of the increasing complexity of the diverse “values packages” we espouse.

We form, share and pass on values through buying into a “shared story”. To ensure our story does not disintegrate and continues to be enriched, we must engage in mutually respectful conversation. Among many requirements for doing that, the public needs academics to speak freely – and respectfully, openly, honestly, and without threat of repercussions – about contentious but important societal problems.

That requires respect for freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and academic freedom – the latter of which is meant primarily for the benefit of the public by allowing academics to feel they can speak the truth, as they see it, to power. Those freedoms are currently under serious threat as a result of the acceptance of political correctness in our universities.

Our universities should be models for the larger society of crossing the divides that separate us, not of widening them as presently seems to be happening. In the much larger context than the university, of our contemporary multicultural, pluralistic democracies, we must engage in mutually respectful conversation across those divides. That’s the message of the “bird on the wire”, who asks the bird facing in the opposite direction, “Can’t we talk about it?”

And that leads to a proposal that has been the focus of my work over the last two to three years: that we need to search on an ongoing basis for a shared ethics. We can no longer assume, as we could in the past when we were small, isolated, homogenous societies, that we all share our most fundamental values.

Matthew D. Hall, BSc (Hons), PhD, Sydney, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health

Cancer is a disease tackled with a wide range of compounds that, by virtue (or vice) of their task, are necessarily cytotoxic. Commonly, these are used in combination to provide several concurrent ‘punches’ to ensure that cancer cells can be killed. While improved therapeutics are constantly arrived at, and remission rates improved, the nature of cancer (dysfunctional as it is) is to adapt and develop resistance towards these agents. This resistance constantly requires new drugs and new strategies.

In spite of the huge effort to ‘rationally’ design drugs, it is remarkable how many cancer drugs have been discovered through varying degrees of serendipity. The classic example of serendipitous drug discovery is that of Fleming’s observation that a mould contamination prevented the growth of bacterial culture which ultimately led to penicillin. Yet many steps and a great deal of intellect and effort were required to take this observation to the point where penicillin was preventing deaths for what are now considered minor infections.

In cancer, serendipity has also been at play. One of the most used cancer drugs in therapy is cisplatin – perhaps
now best known for resolving the metastatic testicular cancer of cyclist Lance Armstrong. Cisplatin is not an obvious drug candidate – it causes a range of undesirable side effects during treatment, is made from the toxic heavy metal platinum. A modern drug screening program would not (and does not) even include compounds like this in their library of potential drugs. Cisplatin was found accidentally by a Michigan researcher examining bacterial cells dividing with an incorrect experimental setup. When the bacteria didn’t divide, it was found to be due to platinum contamination. The subsequent reasoning that the platinum drug might stop cancer cells from splitting also was naïve, but proved correct, and the National Cancer Institute spent ten years moving the compound forward to clinical trials where it proved successful.

In this age, hundreds of thousands of compounds can be tested in the search for a drug that behaves in a certain way. The cancer drug paclitaxel (taxol) was identified by such a screening program as holding promise and was developed. The luck here is that the compound was included in the screen at all. Paclitaxel is a naturally occurring compound found in very small quantities in the bark of the slow growing Pacific Yew tree and had been extracted and submitted by a researcher there. Thankfully (after many trees were felled) an industrial process to produce the drug has been developed.

“Dans les champs de l’observation le hasard ne favorise que les esprits préparés” (In the fields of observation chance favors only the prepared mind) – so said Louis Pasteur in 1854 and it is still true today for science and discovery. It is this intellectual alertness that allows drugs to come not just through modern automation, but from chance observations. The next new drug is just around the corner, even if we don’t always have a map.

WATER POWER – coming conflicts in a world of diminishing resources

Joan McConnell, BA (Hons) Political Science – Concordia University

As the population of the world increases, the supply of water is diminishing – this is not a propitious situation. Of the world’s total water supply, 97.5% is salty. Of the remaining, but mainly frozen freshwater, only 1% is available for human use. Of this 1%, about 80% is used for agriculture and industry.

The sources of renewable water are glaciers, snowfall, rainwater and surface water – all of which are threatened by global warming. Fossil groundwater, the source upon which perhaps 50% of the world’s population depends, is being depleted at an alarming rate and is a non-renewable resource.

There are 263 international shared river basins in the world and the distribution of water between the riparian nations has been, and continues to be, a cause of contention. With the pressure from population growth, these tensions are likely to escalate into open conflict. Indeed, water problems have often been the hidden factor in violent conflict both between and within nations over the past few years, involving the Nile, Jordan, Euphrates, Tigris and Indus rivers.

Within nations there are continuing contentions between rival users of shrinking water supplies. For example, Alberta has seen rising tension between developers of the oil sands and the farming community. Both require an enormous amount of water and the oil industry is a major polluter. The Murray-Darling basin is in serious decline after seven years of drought, affecting NSW, Victoria and South Australia. With the shortage, questions arise regarding the suitability of irrigating land to grow water-costly crops like cotton and rice.

All over the world pollution is a major problem; in the developed world, from agricultural and industrial run-off, in the developing world from lack of sanitation. Added to this is the saline intrusion in groundwater in intensive irrigated areas. In Africa, Asia and Central America, the rivers which should sustain life are so often the bearers of waterborne diseases.

Another issue which has caused conflict is the privatisation of water versus its delivery by a public utility. The corporations define water as a human need. The advocates for a United Nations covenant proclaim access to clean water as a human right which should always be delivered by a public utility. Interestingly, Paris, which has had a privately delivered water system for 100 years, is now converting to public delivery.

There are desperate searches for new sources for water:

(1) Desalination

Desalination of seawater is very expensive, a high energy user, harmful to denizens of the sea and creates a large salt residue.

(2) Wastewater Treatment
ANIMAL HEALTH TRENDS AND AUSTRALIA’S ADVANTAGES IN WORLD TRADE

Rob Williams, BSc (Veterinary), BVSc, Masters in Veterinary Public Health Management Sydney, Agriculture-Veterinary Counsellor Australian Embassy, Washington D.C.

Agriculture is important to Australia’s economy, with around two-thirds of agricultural products being exported to a variety of countries. Major agricultural export commodities are beef, wheat, wool, wine and dairy, with key markets being Japan, the USA, South East Asia, China and the EU. Australia has a progressive policy on trade liberalisation and works hard particularly through multilateral fora to achieve the break down of tariff barriers and to establish science-based trading standards. Underpinning the importance of this trade is a highly favourable animal health status, which Australia aggressively protects via a robust, comprehensive approach to quarantine. The Australian quarantine system is designed around pre-border, border and post-border activities. One challenge recently to Australia’s animal health system was the August 2007 outbreak of equine influenza. The outbreak led to over 10,000 infected properties over two states and cost $343 M in direct costs alone. However, the disease was eradicated in a relatively short space of time and Australia officially declared freedom from equine influenza in June 2008. Finally, some key trends affecting animal industries and trade include: animal welfare, traceability, sanitary barriers to trade and the environmental impact of agriculture.

HOW AMERICA GOT THE BAD COMMON LAW

Penelope Pether, BA, LLB, PhD, Sydney, MLitt, University of New England

Professor of Law, Villanova University School of Law

This presentation documents the emergence, operation and effects of the system of “institutionalised unpublication” of judicial decisions that has come to dominate U.S. adjudication, particularly appellate adjudication, since the late 1950s. Its origins lie in a conservative judicial backlash against Brown v. Board of Education and the Warren Court’s criminal procedural revolution. It operates via the silent, semi-secret delegation of the vast majority of appellate adjudication of cases by underqualified and frequently inadequately supervised court staff. Its results are systematic discrimination against the poor, the powerless, and those on the margins of the nation’s life, who maintain a paradoxical faith in the federal courts as a place where they should seek justice, especially against excesses of government power. Perhaps most troublingly, the vast majority of the U.S. judiciary understand that those who actually do most of the nation’s judging are not up to doing the job adequately, but vigorously resist change.

Outgoing SUGUNA President Philip Minter hands the gavel to incoming President Gerry Bassell

Treatment of wastewater to drinking water standard.

(3) Water Conservation

Water conservation domestically and storage in tanks and cisterns.

If we are to avoid violence over water scarcity, we must work both internationally and intranationally to set up co-operative systems for the equitable distribution of shared water. Perhaps the United Nations could institute an authority to administer conflict resolution when the riparian states failed to reach agreement. There are some success stories. The St. Lawrence Seaway - Great Lakes system is a notable example, its proud motto being “Managing a shared resource for the benefit of all”.

We are already embroiled in conflict over oil resources; however such wars are disguised as something other. But there are alternative sources for energy – humans have lived without oil for many centuries and will do so again.

There is no alternative to water and we are already in a world crisis – conflict or conflict resolution?

The University of Sydney
Alumni
On Sunday, September 28, 2008, University of Sydney graduate John Winston Howard AC was honoured by the American Freedom Alliance with the award of the Winston S. Churchill Medal of Freedom. His award was part of a larger commemoration on the 70th Anniversary of the Munich Agreement, a treaty between the Allied democracies and the Fascist governments.

The Winston S. Churchill Medal of Freedom is awarded annually to a current or past leader of a Western democracy who has demonstrated resolve in confronting threats to democracy, freedom and the survival of the West. It is named after the British statesman and author Sir Winston Churchill, who, in the 1930’s, stood almost alone in Britain in recognising the threat of a resurgent Germany under Adolf Hitler and who forcefully opposed his own government’s policy of appeasement.

John Howard served as the 25th Prime Minister of Australia from March 1996 until November 2007. While in office, Mr. Howard forcefully articulated his government’s position that appeasement of both rogue regimes and ideologies that threatened democratic life would not be tolerated. For these stands he won wide admiration throughout the Western world.

After the ceremony he and his wife, Janette, were feted at a reception where they were greeted warmly by many of the Australians residing in Los Angeles, including the Acting Consul General, Phil Minos and his wife Kris.

**THE HON. JOHN W. HOWARD AC RECEIVES AWARD IN LOS ANGELES**

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**NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR 2009 JIM WOLFENSOHN AWARD**

Presented by last year’s recipient, Phillip Hartley Smith.

Nominations are invited for the 2009 SUGUNA Jim Wolfensohn Award. Any member of SUGUNA may make a nomination for this award, which is based on the following criteria:

(a) The winner must be a graduate of the University of Sydney
(b) He or she must be a member of SUGUNA.
(c) He or she must be a person who has made significant contributions for the betterment of society and his, or her, profession, business or academia.
(d) The nominee shall have participated in SUGUNA Conferences.

Nominations must include a complete curriculum vitae, with details of professional appointments, awards, honours, other accomplishments (research where appropriate), affiliations, compilations of publications, service to communities and organisations, and other achievements. The nomination must also include a supporting letter from the nominating member outlining the merits and qualifications of the person nominated. Nominees of the winning candidate are asked to ensure that both they and the award winner are present at the award presentation. The selection committee for each year is comprised of the five previous winners.

The nominations deadline for the 2009 award is April 30, 2009.

Please email your nomination to ian.campbell@sopera.com or send to:

Ian D. Campbell
Chairman Wolfensohn Award Committee
910 Windflower Way
San Diego, CA 92106-2974

The Chairman will circulate all nominations to the selection committee.
**Steve Mandel's Conundrum**

Steve Mandel, a University of Sydney graduate and former professor of mathematics, presents us with Autumn’s conundrum.

Answers may be sent to the editors at portiamail@aol.com or directly to Steve at MaryJaneMandel@aol.com.

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**This issue’s Conundrum:**

Every weekday afternoon Barbara leaves her suburban house and drives to the train station. Barbara always drives at a constant speed and she always arrives at the train station at five o’clock precisely. There her husband Andrew who has arrived on the commuter train gets in the car and Barbara drives him home. One day Andrew leaves work early, catches an earlier train than usual, and arrives at the station at four o’clock instead of the usual five o’clock. He has left his cell phone in his office and can’t call Barbara so he starts walking towards home along the route habitually taken by Barbara. In due course he meets Barbara who is on her way to the station to fetch him. Barbara stops the car, Andrew gets in, Barbara turns the car around and drives them both home, arriving there ten minutes earlier than usual.

How long did Andrew walk before Barbara picked him up?

Comment: You will be thinking that you do not have enough information to solve this conundrum. You will be wanting to know what was Andrew’s speed of walking, what was Barbara’s speed of driving, how far is it from house to station and so on. You do not need any of that stuff. You do not need any algebra either! Just plain common sense and a bit of lateral thinking, also known as thinking “outside the box”, are sufficient to solve this conundrum.

**Last Issue’s Conundrum:**

A. Some ice cubes are floating in a glass of water. They will gradually melt. As they do so, will the level of the water in the glass rise or fall or remain at the same level?

B. Some ice cubes are totally submerged in a glass of water, held down at the bottom of the glass by covering them with some small rocks. They will gradually melt. As they do so, will the level of the water in the glass rise or fall or remain at the same level?

**SOLUTION**

In part A, in which the ice cubes are FLOATING in the water, there will be no change in the level of the surface of the water in the side of the glass as the ice blocks are melting. The reason for this is that, by Archimedes Principle, the floating ice cubes displace their own weight of water. As the ice cubes melt into water their weight does not change and, accordingly, fill exactly the space that they were displacing when they were being ice cubes. Therefore that space is filled exactly and, as a result, there will be no change of any kind whatsoever in the level of the water in the glass.

In part B, on the other hand, in which the ice blocks are completely immersed in the water, the level of the surface of the water in the side of the glass will FALL as the ice blocks are melting.
NEW MEMBERS ... SUGUNA welcomes new members and returned friends (October 2008)

Mubeen Aslam, Ottawa, ON MComm (2004)
Bernard Balleine, Venice, CA BA (Hons) (1987)
Mavis Champion Vero Beach, FL
Michael Dunmore Essex, ON, MCrim (2007)
William Evans, El Segundo, CA BA (1972), LLB (1975)
Vivienne Felberman Ivry Palm Beach, FL, B Pharm (1976)
Frank Fielder, Alpine, NY BVSc (1938), DVM (1950), MS (1951)
Anne T Martin, Vero Beach, FL BEc (Soc Sci) (1992)

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