

Global Semester's 40th Anniversary Challenge Gift

BY SUZY FRISCH

It's been 28 years since they traveled the world as part of St. Olaf College's Global Semester, but the memories are still crystal clear. Whether it was swimming across the Suez Canal, climbing the pyramids in Egypt to watch the sun rise, listening to bells ring in the New Year in Kyoto, or fasting for three days in India, the alumni of Global Semester 1981 shared transformational experiences.

Kristine Dale Kawamura '82, who owns KDK Consulting, which works with companies on international strategy and leadership, entered the field of economics and international business because of what she saw and learned while on Global.



"Going on Global was life-changing for me. I left the United States as one person and came back another," she says. "It's affected every way I think and how I see the world. Once you see that other people don't have the same opportunities we have, it gave me a commitment to give something back."

Having been indelibly changed by their travels, these Global veterans want to make sure a new generation of Oles can have their own eye-opening experiences on the program. An anonymous alumnus recently pledged \$500,000 to create the Larry Carlson Global Semester Scholarship in time for the program's



Bill and Char Carlson (above: middle row, far left), their son Larry (front row, third from the left) and the 1981-82 Global Semester program participants met with a Buddhist monk at a local kaikan while studying at Kyoto University in Japan. "Going around the world and seeing how all these millions of people live ... it's a humbling experience," says Dan Wimsatt '81. "You realize just how small a part of the world we are. We think we're at the center of the universe, and really we're not." Larry (left) also enjoyed Egypt and all its wonders.

"He was the kid in all of us," says Dan Wimsatt '81, founder of

hedge fund aAd Capital Management in San Diego. "He was an integral part of our trip."

The Carlsons are enormously touched that the Global scholarship fund is named in honor of their son. Larry died in 2006 at the age of 35 from complications related to injuries he suffered during 15 years serving in the U.S. Army, Marines and Special Forces. Char Carlson says the scholarship is especially appropriate because Larry, whom the Carlsons adopted, was biracial and liked to think of himself as a child of the world. "He always found a way to relate to a whole range of people," she says. "That was his whole life."

Every gift pledged by Dec. 31 to the Larry Carlson Global Semester Scholarship will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$500,000.

40th anniversary. Challenging others to join the campaign, the donor gave the gift in the form of a challenge: Every dollar given or pledged to the scholarship by Dec. 31, 2008 will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$500,000.

The donor named the scholarship in memory of Larry Carlson, the late son of Char and Bill Carlson, a long-time economics professor who retired in 2004. As the faculty leaders on the 1980-81 program, the Carlsons brought along their three children, including nine-year-old Larry. The St. Olaf students treated Larry like a younger brother.

The Carlsons twice led Global Semester and led Term in the Middle East once. They are delighted that the Larry Carlson Global Semester Scholarship will ensure that more St. Olaf students, regardless of their financial situation, will have an opportunity for international study.

"Any time you can give a student the opportunity to travel in this way, in a program that is as rigorous as the St. Olaf program, that's a real gift to those students," says Bill Carlson. "Finances should not hold back a student from having these experiences."

For many of the Oles who went on Global in 1980-81, the impact of the program continues to shape their lives. Dr. David Midthun '80, a lung specialist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., attributes his willingness to volunteer on five international medical missions to his formative time on Global Semester. "When you experience the world and see the 'haves' versus the 'have-nots,' it's hard to shake the feeling that you need to respond somehow," he says. "I may not have been inclined to do that before Global."

Pat Van Wylen '80, coordinator of St. Olaf College's visiting scholars, says Global gave her a new outlook on hospitality. During their travels, many people went out of their way to make the students feel welcome and Van Wylen has tried to do the same back home. When a Sudanese teenage refugee needed a place to live so that he could finish high school in Northfield, the Van Wylens welcomed him into their home for a year and a half.

This fall Pat and Dave Van Wylen '80, a professor of biology at St. Olaf, are leading Term in the Middle East, and they led Term in Asia 10 years ago. As they did in 1998, the Van Wylens will take along their three children — two sons who are current St. Olaf students and their 15-year-old daughter. "We're hooked," says Pat.

These days, members of the Global class of 1981 are giving back through the Larry Carlson Global Semester Scholarship, and they hope others do, too, so that every St. Olaf student can share similar life-shaping experiences. 🐉

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