



# the sidney-pacific newsletter

Volume 3, Issue II

Orientation 2004

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Write for the Sidney-Pacific Newsletter

Send articles, cartoons, photos, puzzles, jokes, or ideas to [sp-newsletter-chair \[at\] mit \[dot\] edu](mailto:sp-newsletter-chair@mit.edu).

## back to school

**W**elcome, welcome, and step right up to the newsletter of greatest graduate community on Earth!

Just ahead in this issue, you'll find information on that fun and crazy circus known as S-P Orientation, featuring new friends, free food, and lots of clowning around. You'll hear from one of S-P's former ringleaders—Sham Sokka, the first president of Sidney-Pacific. Sokka wrote an astounding history of Sidney-Pacific. The S-P Fellows will also take center stage. This issue features short biographies about the S-P Fellows, a group of professors affiliated with our building. Then, be prepared to be entertained by a commentary on traveling by one of the Fellows, Professor Samuel Jay Keyser of Linguistics and Philosophy. Next, the talented chairs of two Sidney-Pacific committees—Coffee Hour and Brunch—explain some of the tricks of their trade.

Each month, the S-P newsletter will be your ticket to ins, outs, and goings-on of the Sidney-Pacific Graduate Community. We are always looking for writers, reporters, and new ways to stir up controversy or press the boundaries of censorship. So review your favorite restaurants, local bands, express your opinion about a film or politician; write about a sporting event or athlete; or start a comic strip or cartoon. And, as always, let us know if you have any ideas or suggestions for the next newsletter.

Welcome to Sidney-Pacific!!! 

## disorienting the oriented

by *Adrian KC Lee, Orientation Chair*

**T**welve months ago, I left my home 10,000 miles away, ready to embark on a vigorous academic journey, in search for scientific truth and knowledge in the field of Hearing Science. As the plane approached Logan, I was trying to flip through last year's S-P Orientation guide that I printed from the web, mentally going through my "to-do" list for the third time. I was convinced that if I knew what I needed to do once I got to S-P, the quicker I could settle into my new dormitory, and the more time I would have to make a head start in my academic work.

My plane is now due to arrive at Logan again. A lot has changed in a year.

Has my perception of life at MIT changed in the last year? Yes. Would I want it to be anything different? Definitely not.

Before I arrived at S-P, I anticipated it to be nothing more than a

dormitory, and that MIT would be a place for me to build professional contacts. I figured that everyone would be so busy that no one would have time to socialize. At first I was reluctant to join any of the orientation activities, thinking they would distract me from my work. But then I went on the S-P house tour, and met a person who eventually turned out to be one of my best friends in America. I kept meeting people at other orientation events—the hall dinners, Prudential Skywalk tour, and S-P brunches. As the semester got underway and the number of organized events started to diminish, I was happy to realize that my newly-formed friendships remained. I also realized how important these friendships were to making my first year more rewarding.

As a new grad student, I was originally focused just on my studies. Only when I was "reoriented" by some of the orientation activities did I fully appreciate life in S-P and MIT. To me, S-P is more than just a place where I eat, sleep, and finish my problem sets. Rather, it is a community of people with whom I can share my tears and laughter. I have now found a sense of belonging in America. I am grateful that the friends I found in the orientation period now provide me with much-needed balance to my studies and research.

This year, I am excited to be working with Alberto as the Orientation co-chair for Sidney-Pacific and help others become part of the S-P community. All summer, we were working hard to ensure that the S-P Orientation events will be running smoothly for the new incoming students. The long nights were worth it, though, because of the close friendships I formed with the other people on the Orientation Committee. So you see, Orientation period is a magical time. It barely lasts for a month, yet the friendships formed last possibly a lifetime.

So "give it a go," as Aussies would say. Dare to be disorientated from your work temporarily and join in the fun during Orientation. I hope you enjoy this year's activities as much as we had fun preparing for these events. S-P Orientation officially starts on Aug 25, see the calendar on the next page for a list of the events! 

### Newsletter Chair:

Karen Schrier (sp-newsletter-chair [at] mit [dot] edu)

### Contributors:

Adrian KC Lee (akclee [at] mit [dot] edu)  
Professor Joel Schindall (joels [at] mit [dot] edu)  
Nancy Kelly (ndk [at] mit [dot] edu)  
Professor Jay Keyser (keyser [at] mit [dot] edu)  
Daryush Mehta (dmehta [at] mit [dot] edu)  
Sham Sokka (sham [at] mit [dot] edu)  
J.P. Kurpiewski (jpk212 [at] mit [dot] edu)

### Photos:

Johnna Powell (sp-photofile-chair [at] mit [dot] edu)  
Leonide Saad (leonide [at] mit [dot] edu)

## september 06– september 11, 2004

time	date
	<b>monday, september 6 (labor day)</b>
12 pm - 4 pm <b>5:30 - 8 pm</b> 8 pm onward	Fall Barbeque and Sports (Kresge BBQ Pits, Astroturf and Briggs Field) <b>Activities Fair (BBQ + Local Vendors Displays)</b> Night Out on Town (Departs from Ashdown)
	<b>tuesday, september 7 (reg day)</b>
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm <b>8 pm - 9pm</b>	Ice Cream Social (50-220 Lobby) <b>House Meeting (Multipurpose Room)</b>
	<b>wednesday, september 8 (classes begin)</b>
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm 8 pm - 10 pm <b>8 pm - 9 pm</b>	September GCM & Dinner (Walker) Weekly Wednesday (Muddy Charles) <b>S-P Summer Coffee Hour</b>
	<b>thursday, september 9</b>
7pm - 9pm <b>9 pm - 10pm</b>	International Student Mentorship Dinner (TBA) <b>Hall Meetings</b>
	<b>saturday, september 11</b>
11 am - 12:30 pm <b>2:15 pm - 3:00 pm</b> <b>9 pm onward</b>	Edgerton Yardsale & Brunch (Edgerton) <b>S-P Tours</b> <b>S-P Dance Party</b>
	<b>sunday, september 19</b>
12 pm - 2 pm	S-P Brunch

Check online at [http://s-p.mit.edu/about\\_sp/oguide2004/calendar.php](http://s-p.mit.edu/about_sp/oguide2004/calendar.php) for more events and activities.

# features

## meet the s-p fellows

*bios courtesy of S-P Fellows*

*Introduction by Howard Shen, S-P Fellows Liaison*

The S-P Fellows are five or six professors affiliated with Sidney-Pacific who do the following:

1. De-mystify the holy image of the “Professor” for incoming students (especially international students).
2. Organize events with residents that non-MIT Professors would not necessarily have access to (see examples below). The student life offices gives them a budget to do this.
3. Interact with students and form informal relationships as mentors/advisors perhaps not in the students’ major.
4. Attend SP events for fun and interaction.

The following are examples of events in the pipeline this year:

Prof. Arnie Barnett is thinking about taking students on a commuter boat ride that is quite scenic. Arnie has the “inside scoop” on the boat, something that most MIT students do not know about, and would like to share that with the new students.

Prof. Paola Rizzoli is an oceanographer and often takes trips out to sea for weeks at a time on large vessels that carry very sophisticated scientific instrumentation. She is planning a trip that would allow students to tour a vessel while it is at rest in the harbor.

The following are bios of three of the S-P fellows. The next issue of the newsletter will include bios for the other three fellows.

### **joel schindall**

Professor Schindall received his BS, MS and PhD degrees from MIT in the ‘60s. As a graduate student, he did extensive undergraduate teaching, wrote a set of course notes, and was chief (and only) engineer for WBCN which was, at that time, a classical music station (BCN stands for Boston Concert Network). Although he briefly joined the MIT faculty, he decided to relocate to California and start a career in industry. He worked in the fields of aerospace electronics, telecommunications, and satellites. During this time, he was president of a division of Loral, and chief engineer of Globalstar—a joint venture between Loral Spacecom and Qualcomm that successfully developed and deployed a 48-satellite-based CDMA mobile phone system.

Professor Schindall returned to MIT in September of 2002 as the Bernard Gordon Professor of the Practice. His charter is to share his experience in the business and entrepreneurial aspects of product development, and to augment the EECS department’s offerings to include courses in product design and



**Joel Schindall. (Photo courtesy of Joel Schindall).**

project management. He is associated with LEES and LIDS, and is getting started in some research activities, primarily involving automotive electronics.

He and his family have recently moved from San Diego to Arlington, and his two daughters are undergraduates at Wellesley and Tufts. He enjoys running, bicycling, and sailing, and talking about the virtues of his hybrid gas-electric car, the Toyota Prius.

### **nancy kelly**

Nancy Kelly is Administrative Officer in the Office of the President at MIT, where she has worked for over three decades. In addition to her responsibilities for financial and personnel matters in the departments that report to the Office of the President, she works on membership issues with the chairs and staff of Institute faculty and presidential committees, and is the Policy Administrator for MIT’s Policies and Procedures Manual.

Her passions include travel and photography, so when she isn’t working, she is usually documenting a trip in an exotic locale or planning her next adventure. Her most recent explorations have been in Tanzania, Japan, Bali, Egypt, Italy, and Botswana. This year she will add Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, New Zealand, and Tasmania to the list. She drags her reluctant-traveler husband Jay Keyser on her adventures. While she is photographing their experiences, Jay is writing about them in journal form, and they often combine the images and journal writing into a presentation made to various MIT groups, including the residents of Sidney-Pacific.

## meet the s-p fellows, continued

### samuel jay keyser

Samuel Jay Keyser is professor emeritus in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy at MIT and currently holds the position of Special Assistant to the Chancellor and President of MIT.

Aside from his career as a theoretical linguist—he is editor-in-chief of the journal *Linguistic Inquiry*—he is also a jazz trombonist with the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, the New Liberty Jazz Band, and the Dave Whitney Swing Orchestra.

Keyser has published extensively in the field of theoretical linguistics. He has also published two books of poems, *Raising the Dead* and *The Pond God and Other Stories* (<http://www.frontstreetbooks.com>), which has been given a Lee Bennett Hopkins Honor Award for children's poetry for 2003. Excerpts from Keyser's "A Safari Journal: Faint of Heart in the Heart of Darkness" appeared in the May 2000 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* (<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2000/05/keyser.htm>). Keyser is an occasional commentator on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*. His most recent commentary on NPR can be heard at <http://www.npr.org/features/feature.php?wfid=3D1902773>.

**The following is a reprint of the commentary Samuel Jay Keyser gave on NPR's *All Things Considered*.**

I have been a serious traveler for the past ten years "a harmful side effect" of a relationship with the woman to whom I am married. She is an inveterate traveler. To have married her and not travel would be like wearing sun glasses in an art gallery. You only see part of what is there.

There is a cost attached. Each time our plane lifts off for some exotic destination, I am on pins and needles. Why? Not to put too fine a point on it, I'm afraid for my life. The assassin? Nature. It's as simple as that. Unfortunately, it isn't cities like Rome or Paris that attract my wife. She takes me to places where snakes dangle from trees, for example, the Engaruka Plain in Tanzanian Africa where we look for pythons balled up like worn out tires in the upper reaches of acacias.

Once in Zambia we were walking in a bend of the South Luanga River. Suddenly four lionesses hidden in the tall reeds of a meadow rose up in front of us like Cerberos, the multi-headed hound of Hades. They roared, as if to say, à la Danny Devito in *Romancing the Stone*, "Your ass is grass and I'm a lawn mower." We escaped by backing up slowly, assurance that we were not a threat. They bought it. Retelling the incident still knots my stomach.

My dilemma as a traveler is that I can be wherever my wife takes me in body only. Only it isn't the body that counts. It's the spirit. I am a home body, the kind who always finds that one

last thing to do before leaving the house—turn off the computer; wash one last glass; fold the newspaper. Anything to stave off the trip out over the threshold.

Most toilers in the safari trade anticipate a touch of this in their clientele. On the six African safaris my wife has foisted on me, our guides bent over backwards to provide astonishingly good meals, including homemade ice cream for dessert. That's only the half of it. In the middle of some godforsaken wilderness, say, the Kalihara Desert, they go to incredible lengths to set up hot showers at the end of a blistering day. By the time we return to the campsite the crew has readied scads of boiling water. They bucket steaming bags of it to canvas shower stalls erected next to our sleeping tents. They hoist them up on pulleys and tip them into reservoirs just so we can stand under a shower head, pull on a drawstring and have gallons of hot water wash over us. Above our heads more stars than you can ever imagine watch from a respectful distance. The guides understand me better than I do. They know the shower is as much a symbol as it is an amenity. It assures me I am not really there after all. So I needn't be anxious.

I will continue to travel as long as my wife is alive. If she dies before me, then I will make one last trip, the one I promised her I would make, scattering a bit of her ashes on every continent on the face of the earth. She has by far the easier task. If I go first, the backyard will do. **SP**

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# features

## the long and winding road

by Sham Sokka

*The following article was originally printed in the Graduate Student Newsletter.*

Graduate student housing has a rich and unifying history at M.I.T. The first graduate residence at M.I.T., the second in the United States, was established in 1938 by then institute President Karl Taylor Compton.

As motivation to fund this project, he stated in an address to the alumni: "Graduate students now lack almost completely the social contacts which the undergraduates enjoy throughout their manifold organized activities. Their cultural development, and hence their social effectiveness, depend on such contacts. The most natural cultural training comes from free social intercourse between men of differing interests but of equivalent intellectual outlook."

Although times have changed, President Compton's statement rings true today with the new Sidney-Pacific Graduate Residence, and his reasoning was once again a primary driving force behind its establishment. The growth of the graduate student body, the rise in rents in the surrounding neighborhoods, the institute's previously stated commitment to house half the graduate students on campus, and the desire to house all interested first year students on campus also contributed to the construction of a residence hall on the corner of Sidney and Pacific Streets.

Despite these reasons, the rise of a graduate residence at that site was not easy and has taken years of advocacy and planning. The vision to build a graduate residence at this site goes back to the late '80s.

Even after the construction of Edgerton Hall, the housing needs of the graduate students remained unmet. The Graduate Student Council and the Dean for Graduate Students, Ike Colbert, became the bearers of the torch for this cause. In the early '90s, the GSC spent almost all of its advocacy time on graduate housing.

In 1997, there was a breakthrough. In March of that year, the M.I.T. planning office hired an architectural firm to help prepare plans for a new graduate residence. A group of graduate students, administrators, faculty and staff headed by Professor Vernon Ingram, then housemaster of Ashdown House, developed



photo courtesy of the sp-photofile chairs

a detailed vision of a new graduate residence that would combine high quality accommodations similar to Edgerton Hall with the abundant community space of Ashdown House.

Soon after this client team report came out, institute priorities changed, and funds that might have been used for a graduate residence were diverted elsewhere. There was a perceived crisis in undergraduate residential life, new academic initiatives were beginning, and graduate housing fell lower on the institute funding priority list.

So once again the GSC raised the torch, this time engaging leaders in the graduate residence halls. After two years of hard work by graduate student leaders such as Luis Ortiz, Brian Schnider, and Tom Lee, M.I.T. renovated an old warehouse used as a storage facility (NW30, now the Warehouse graduate dormitory) and began to commit funds to building a 750 student residence hall in University Park, a once desolate graveyard of warehouses.

This decision was ultimately that of senior administration, which committed the institute to a debt of over \$90 million. We must

*continued on page 7*

# features

## the long and winding road to a new residence, con't

*continued from page 6*

remember that this was no small task, and it should serve as the strong reminder of the institute's commitment to graduate students.

Struggles remained for this residence even after the administration's commitment to build. There were difficult negotiations with the city of Cambridge to get a building permit, no formal structure to incorporate student input into the design, and an attempt to use a majority of the S-P community space exclusively for day care. However, in late 2000, the GSC began to work with the project manager for this building, Senior Real Estate Officer Michael K. Owu, and many of the struggles gave way to new-found excitement.

Owu listened to student input and incorporated many of the comments from the original client team report. The resultant building will include as much community space per person as Ashdown House, units as spacious as Edgerton Hall, amenities such as air conditioning, wireless internet, convocation space, a state-of-the-art gym, a seminar room, an equipped game room, and a series of other technological innovations.

### S-P Facts

- Sidney-Pacific opened in Fall 2002
- It houses 749 graduate students, four housemasters, and one RLA
- It is the largest residence at MIT
- Has four wings: orange, purple, green, and blue

In addition, the Dean for Student Life's office has committed resources (both time and money) to develop programs for community building. With its space and programs, Sidney-Pacific will become a premiere graduate student center, engaging not only residents but off-campus graduate students, undergraduates, faculty, and the greater Cambridge community.

What began as simple statement in 1938 by President Compton will now lead to the addition of an eighth graduate residence hall. His vision of "free social intercourse between men [and women] of differing interests but of equivalent intellectual outlook" has already been realized in the establishment of this community.

The Sidney-Pacific Residence Hall is the culmination of graduate students, faculty, and administrators past and present working together with a shared vision. It is now up to future residents to carry on this rich and hallowed tradition. **SP**

*Sham Sokka was the first president of the Sidney-Pacific Graduate Community, in 2002.*

photo courtesy of the sp-photofie chairs



# features

## S-P coffee hour Q&A with the coffee hour chair

by Daryush Mehta, Coffee Chair

**Q: So what is Coffee Hour?**

A: It is a weekly tradition here at Sidney-Pacific. Wednesday nights, we bring S-P residents together in a relaxing atmosphere of music and food. Friends come to hang out and relax after a long day of research or classes to sip a cup.

**Q: Is there coffee?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Is there more than just coffee?**

A: Yes! We have what you normally expect from a coffee house—coffee, tea, milk—and more. Popular items include cookies, pie, cheesecake, ice cream, fruit, and assorted snacks. What more can you ask for?

**Q: You must be kidding. How much do I have to pay?**

A: NOTHING. Just come on over. Have some refreshments on us

and mingle with fellow residents. Drag your roommate along.

**Q: Can I help out?**

A: Definitely. Email Chris and Daryush at [sp-coffeehour-chair@mit.edu](mailto:sp-coffeehour-chair@mit.edu). Setup and tear-down times are minimal. Come by an hour before if you'd like to chop up fruit and lay out the food. The more, the merrier (and you get first dibs).

**Q: What time and where does this happen?**

A: Wednesday nights, 9-10 pm, S-P Multipurpose room, right across from the computer room. During the summer, it's from 8-9 pm, with volleyball outside starting at 7 pm.

**Q: One more question. What if my friends don't live in S-P? Can they still come?**

A: Get some new friends. Just kidding, of course they can come. Anyone is welcome—your parents, first-borns, visiting friends, and professors. **SP**

## a message from the brunch committee

by J. P. Kurplewski, Brunch Chair

Every month, the Sidney-Pacific graduate residence holds a brunch for the entire graduate community. The brunch is held in the S&P multipurpose room at noon on a Sunday. The production is a huge effort and involves over 15 volunteers, headed by the two brunch chairs Jenn Cheung and J.P. Kurplewski. During the week, Jenn takes a trip to Costco or BJ's to purchase enough pastries, eggs, and other food items to fill a van. On Saturday, J.P. goes to Haymarket to purchase boxes of fruit and potatoes. The kitchen is prepared on Saturday afternoon for the event the next day. On Sunday, the brunch committee starts working at 8 am, cutting fruit, manning the stoves, and setting up the multipurpose room. Typical brunches include eggs, hash browns, bacon, pastries, muffins, bagels, toast, croissants, yogurt, fruit, and beverages. The fruit display varies slightly with season, but typically includes pineapple, strawberries, blueberries, bananas, oranges, apples, mango, grapes, watermelon, and grapefruit. Hungry yet? There is also an assortment of beverages, and desserts such as chocolate-

covered strawberries with whipped cream.

The next brunch is on September 19th. Be sure to read your SP-ANNO emails, glance at the SPTV, and check the elevator bulletin boards for more details about the brunches. The success of each brunch is dependent on volunteer turnout. If you'd like to volunteer to cut fruit, cook, serve, or clean up, the help would be greatly appreciated—even if you can only dedicate an hour. The brunch chairs are in the kitchen from 8 am until 2:30 pm, so stop by anytime. When you volunteer, you get to eat before everyone else, have the chance to meet new people in the dorm, get involved with the graduate community and SP government, and receive special gifts from the brunch chairs. More importantly, IT'S FUN! There is music playing, lots of singing, and seeing the smiles on people's faces is worth it! If you have any questions or wish to be placed on the email list, please contact [sp-brunch-chair@mit.edu](mailto:sp-brunch-chair@mit.edu). Hope you enjoy the meals! **SP**