



SJSU International House
NEWSLETTER
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From my little I-House to yours

By - Reesa Bruketta, Manager (USA)

While I never lived in the I-House, I am an IHOP alum. At my small liberal arts school in Los Angeles, IHOP stood for the International House Of People. So when I came here, I began to wonder why the IHOP never attempted a Pancake Breakfast like the one here at the I-House. And while those who pass by 360 S. 11th Street may wonder if this is an embassy, at least there's no confusion about why cultural events are taking place at a pancake restaurant!



(Reesa Bruketta)

Our International House of People was really a house. A small house in the suburbs of LA filled with just seven people. Collectively we only represented six countries: Canada, Mexico, the Philippines, England, Sri Lanka, and the United States. We had no janitorial services, no RAs, and no direct supervision. In most ways we were nothing resembling the I-House I work for now. And yet, there is something at the core of both houses that could not be more similar.

Diversity is in the heart of each international house. Everyone is removed from their familiar environment (yes, even the Americans!) and are given an awareness that they are different. It is precisely this awareness and these differences that can make international houses *homes* and their residents *family*.

We see we are different. We see our skin, our hair, our faces. We observe our languages, taste our foods, perhaps display our native dress, and hear our stories of home. However, we do not just observe others. We experience our own culture in the light of these differences as much as we experience the new cultures around us. Have you ever been questioned about how you eat your dinner before you began living with people who ate using different utensils (or perhaps ate using none at all)? When was the last time you asked someone from your own country if it is common to do this or that? Being aware of our differences helps us learn about ourselves.

It doesn't take 1,000 international students to learn we are different from each other. Think of your own family. You may have been raised with siblings from the same parents in the same country and in the same religion. You are from the same blood and yet you are different. Tradition and similarities may make it easy to understand each other but I believe it is a shared formational experience that really binds people. As you came to know yourself from a child to an adult, you shared the experience with your family or close friends. Now, having lived at an International House, you have also grown, maybe not in inches or centimeters, but in awareness and understanding of yourself and of the world. The more you continue to grow and the more you share this common experience with those around you, the closer friends you will become.

So whether we are living in community with 7 or 70 – we are still living amidst diversity and opportunity to observe and to learn. Living in the IHOP transformed me and I hope the I-House has also impacted you in some meaningful way. You may have come here seeking community in San José, and in doing so, have found community across borders, cultures, and nationalities. The size of the house doesn't really matter if, in the end, it makes the world a smaller place.

Experiencing cultural diversity

By - Marta Baixauli Grau (Spain)

As we all might have heard, culture is formed by the beliefs, norms and values shared by a society or group of people. This conglomerate shapes the behaviour and structure of the different cultures that coexist in the world. Therefore talking about diversity and cultural differences will always be a bit tricky as we are all influenced by our own culture. Nevertheless, I will give it a go. And as I cannot possibly be impartial I will just give my own personal point of view.

So, what are cultural shocks, cultural differences, cross cultural sensitivity and all these cultural concepts? Sometimes I get really confused about the meaning of all these complicated sets of social rules and values. No matter where I am. Yes, no matter where I am. It is not that I am living in a foreign country. My cultural shock started in my own country. It was first in my own village, and then in my city, and so on. I finally understood that social norms are made to make life easier, but they can sometimes impede creativity in life. I have to say that after many years trying to find my position I have made a few values of my own and I have learnt to adapt to all the rest depending on the circumstances in order not to disturb people. Of course, there are always times that I don't even realise that I should adapt! I am a bit absent minded. This is so much fun sometimes...Ah! And I am always open to change my values and norms if I find a good reason to do so, why not?

My question: If you experience a cultural shock, should you adapt or not adapt? So, yes, to adapt, but just to a certain extent. It is good to keep adaptation in balance with freedom. Um, society and freedom... an interesting combination, but I will leave this topic for some other moment.

Maybe you could ask why do I want to talk here about diversity if I feel such an individualist? (Product of my culture anyway, you could say, because Western cultures encourage individuality.) We are all sometimes difficult to understand. Much has been said about cultural differences. We have been educated in diverse societies, and all of them encourage their members to behave in an appropriate way. Unfortunately, what is adequate in one culture might be wrong in another. The question arises: How to behave in the global community where frontiers are not as difficult to cross as they were before and there are so many international gatherings? Barriers between cultures are diluting, but just if you have the money to cross the barrier, I have to say. Sorry, it is not the nice side of all this international issue but it has to be said that in this world, it sometimes seems more important to protect good manners and political correctness than to protect life, and it shouldn't be like that. Oh! Maybe you think it is an exaggeration, but we all know about poverty, climate change and all these issues that have been a companion for our entire life.

My point is that if some day, we have the opportunity to change anything, we should try (small or big it does not matter, it all counts), and we have to remember all the nice, great people from other countries, from other circumstances than we met in the past and remember that we are all the same inside. You don't have to change the world, just as much as you can. There will be that day that you will be able to fix an injustice, a misunderstanding, and that will be a great way to return the favour that life did you, giving you such a great international experience.

Talking again about people and societies I have to say that I believe in persons, but I don't believe in societies. Maybe you think that this is a contradiction, as societies are formed by individuals. And yes, I think it is a contradiction. Am I trying to confuse you? No, I am confused myself and to be honest, for me it is a normal mental situation.

I prefer to say that in spite of the mistakes, there are good initiatives all around the world trying to achieve global well-being. And that is inspiring. In my case, I believe that this can work out. I love this world. I love the mystery of us, human beings, somewhere in the middle of this analytical brain and this pulsating soul. Maybe you don't believe in souls, maybe you do. Well, that could be just another cultural difference. But if some day you take the time to stop and just feel, you will hear something beating. Yes, it is your heart, but don't stop there, be still and pay attention to everything around, isn't it just magic?

Many things have more than one answer; you can choose the one your heart tells you is right, or your parents, or a friend, or a book, or whatever you feel more comfortable. Anyway, I recommend using the heart instead of the mind. Of course, I'm not talking about maths! With societies it is a bit the same. Social rules are there to simplify organization and communication. They can be useful, but they are not an eternal concept. They change all the time. In the beginning, it is really hard to change a social norm or value, like it was hard to change the perception that people had about the role of women (and it is still hard sometimes). Changes are getting faster everyday, and I hope it will all change to harmony and understanding in the world. It's our choice.

This international experience is important for all of us. There is so much to learn, so much to enjoy. No matter how different we are, never give up, don't look at the rules, don't look at the norms, look at that person in front of you and smile because as human beings we all have this gift. Love in our hearts. Am I being too optimistic now? Do you think? Are you thinking of people shouting at you or not being nice? Well, ok, but that could be just fear or tiredness or shyness. We are not perfect! Would I be writing this if I were? No! I would be in heaven...or maybe in nirvana, or in paradise, or... Oh! Let's don't start again!



(Marta with her roommate)

I am an African

Poem Written by - Wayne Visser (South Africa)
Submitted by - Kerilyn Grant (South Africa)

I am an African
Not because I was born there
But because my heart beats with Africa's
I am an African
Not because my skin is black/white
But because my mind is engaged by Africa
I am an African
Not because I live on its soil
But because my soul is at home in Africa

When Africa weeps for her children
My cheeks are stained with tears
When Africa honours her elders
My head is bowed in respect
When Africa mourns for her victims
My hands are joined in prayer
When Africa celebrates her triumphs
My feet are alive with dancing

I am an African
For her blue skies take my breath away
And my hope for the future is bright
I am an African
For her people greet me as family
And teach me the meaning of community
I am an African
For her wildness quenches my spirit
And brings me closer to the source of life

When the music of Africa beats in the wind
My blood pulses to its rhythm
And I become the essence of music
When the colours of Africa dazzle in the sun
My senses drink in its rainbow
And I become the palette of nature
When the stories of Africa echo round the fire
My feet walk in its pathways
And I become the footprints of history

I am an African
Because she is the cradle of our birth
And nurtures an ancient wisdom
I am an African
Because she lives in the world's shadow
And bursts with a radiant luminosity
I am an African
Because she is the land of tomorrow
And I recognise her gifts as sacred.



(Kerilyn Grant)

IceCube Project

Interview with former resident, Tomas Gustaffson (Sweden)

Interview by - Yoke Mangudi (Indonesia)

Many I-House alumni do great things after they leave the I-House. One of them is Tomas Gustaffson from Sweden. Leann, I-House Director, told me that Tomas stayed in Antarctica (South Pole) for a few months. At that time I thought, "Wow, that's great and very unusual", which is why I was interested to interview him to know more about what he did in Antarctica and share his experience with other I-House residents and alumni. This interview was conducted through correspondence by e-mail:

Yoke: What did you do in Antarctica?

Tomas: At the Amundsen-Scott Station on the South Pole about 250 people live and work from mid-November to mid-February. The station used to be some mix between a military station (without military equipment) and a scientific station. After the end of the Cold War, the station was reformed to be a scientific station only. There are a number of projects going on at the station but the largest by far is the IceCube project.

Yoke: Could you summarize what is the IceCube project?

Tomas: It may not look like one at first look but the IceCube project is a telescope. The IceCube equipment looks for sources of neutrinos on the northern hemisphere. There may be other physics found by the IceCube project that are hoped for or maybe not even thought of for the moment. However, the main goal is to be able to observe sources of neutrinos, such as black holes. There are 120 people working full or half time for IceCube. It is a \$300+ million dollar project (\$270 million from National Science Foundation in the USA).

Yoke: Please tell me about your role in Antarctica.

Tomas: My position is being a hot water driller with about 24 people. We work two shifts, meaning that I work 12 hours per day, 7 days a week if needed. What the hot water drillers do is that we set up the equipment, drill a number of holes by using hot water and then we take the set-up down again. We make 8000 foot deep hot water columns in the ice. These columns are about 2 feet in diameter and are created by heating up the snow to almost boiling temperatures and then through a long hose, pumping it down a deeper and deeper hole. When we have this column done, we take all our equipment up from the hole and then we deploy a string of photo multipliers down the hole. We then start making the next hole.

Yoke: How long does it take to drill one column?

Tomas: The actual drilling of a hole is about 48 hours. To this, we can add about 12 hours to set up and make the firm hole (that is the hole that is about 50 meters deep and will make us reach the solid ice). Then we should add another 15 hours to move the equipment. Also, it is between holes we take vacation. If all goes well we expect to be able to make a hole every 4 or 5 days. What takes a lot of time is to set up the equipment and there are still (this was the second season) a lot of changes and additions to the existing equipment. That should be less for each year and after next year there should be much fewer modifications meaning that we will be able to start drilling faster.

Yoke: How did you get involved in this project ?

Tomas: I applied to a project named AMANDA. The AMANDA project is a small scale

IceCube with 19 holes. It is a project on its own, but AMANDA is also a prestudy project for IceCube. The reason why I applied for AMANDA was that I read about it at Uppsala University where I studied and I got one of the two positions. This was in 1997.

Yoke: Since your part (drilling the column) was done, are you still involved in this project?

Tomas: No. I was hired for about 3 months by Swedish Polar research. If I wanted I probably would have a good chance to continue this work but I do not expect my current job for a software company to let me leave again like this. I am going back to my ordinary job for a software company, Telelogic - www.telelogic.com.

Yoke: I'm wondering what did you do during your break or when you were not working?

Tomas: We work 12 hours a day most days of the week, so after that I would typically eat, talk to people, mail and maybe watch a movie or read. Some days, I would play some table tennis, have some beers or go for a ski trip. I also walked around and took quite a lot of photos, some of them you see on my web-page today.

Yoke: Do you have a sort of "weekend" there?

Tomas: My work is not of the character that we can take breaks based on weekends, but most people would not work on Sundays, on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year. I would have more random days off, based on the job situation. On these days, I sometimes borrowed skis and went for a trip. We did have to work for 2 hours even on days off, so we were seldom completely off.

At the station, we have activity rooms, musical instruments, library, smoking lounge, TV room, and a few other places to hang out, apart from the dining room where most people tend to be when they are not sleeping or eating.

Yoke: Since there is no movie theatre or mall, what kind of entertainment do you have there?

Tomas: We have one large movie room and some smaller. There are hundreds of DVD's to borrow, plus all the movies that people bring down. Next year, there will be one large gym to play basketball and such. Right now, there are two small gyms for weights and running. We have quite a lot of musical instruments, and there will often be a few bands playing on events such as Thanksgiving and New Year. We have skis to borrow and there is a hut that you can ski to. There is a computer room where you can look at your pictures, mail



(Antarctica)

friends or work. There are also activities like yoga, dance and similar every week, plus bingo and quizzes. We have a film festival that is very popular where people make their own short movies. Then, every week there is a scientific presentation about research going on, about the station, constructing large projects and a few others. There are also a few skiers coming to the South Pole each year who also often make a shorter presentation. Then, there may be some U.S. Senators that visit and who may say something (this year, McCain among other visited us). We have a kind of bring your own bar and once a week there is usually some party where there can be dance, BBQ, skiing down small man-made slopes or similar.

What we may miss is water. We have only 2 showers, each 2 minutes a week. It is not a problem since there are (because of the low amount of water in the air) almost no smells. I can add that there are almost no colors, everything is white; there are no sounds of children, no wind in your hair, almost dry fingers, no perspectives in nature (everything is flat) and so on. Coming back to beautiful New Zealand is very powerful after a few months of a life like this. It is actually amazing!!!

Yoke: People would think that in South Pole people live in igloos :) So please can you describe the place you live in and what kind of facilities are there?

Tomas: It is a very open place. Most people cannot (and many of those who can, don't) lock their door. I had only a curtain in front of my room. The walls are, at most places, very thin - often only a curtain. To live in such an open environment means that (you may expect the opposite) you are longing for privacy when you get back to New Zealand. It also means that people trust each other since we all leave computers, iPods, money and more in rooms that you simply can walk into without any problems. The office facilities we have are quite good; especially in the new station that is being built. It is almost as you could see that you worked and lived in a modern office.

Yoke: Have you have any fun experiences with your co-workers during your work there?

Tomas: I have great colleagues. The saying that "it is not the place but the people" who make the South Pole unique is not that untrue. People work hard, take responsibility, and care for their coworkers with almost no exception.

Yoke: You mentioned about food. Yeah...what kind of food did you eat there? Was it just regular frozen foods?

Tomas: Most food will be good frozen food. Due to the high costs for transportation, we get good ingredients since buying expensive doesn't make food much more expensive. Almost no one throws food away. We get fresh vegetables flown in once in a while and there is a small greenhouse on the station that produces salads and other vegetables, plus herbs. We do also have an ice cream machine with chocolate and vanilla soft cream.

Yoke: Thank you so much for your time and patience answering all my questions. I really appreciate it.

To get more information about the IceCube project, you can go this website <http://icecube.wisc.edu/>

Addendum: Prior to publication of the Spring/Summer newsletter, Tomas let us know that he accepted a wonderful opportunity to continue his work on this project.

For the next 5 years, he will spend a month or two in Wisconsin (USA), and 4-5 months living in Antarctica. The other six months of the year, he will be on vacation spending the time with his girlfriend Eugenie and his parents. Congratulations and Good Luck to Tomas on this wonderful opportunity.



(Tomas Gustaffson)

Why you so like dat?

By - Pearly Chan (Singapore)

When you ask anyone about Singapore, either they tell you it's somewhere in China (not true!) or that you will get fined for every little thing possible (partially true!). But there's one aspect that most people miss out on and that is Singlish. Nothing makes Singapore more unique than Singlish.

For many Singaporeans, English is the main language. Many families speak English at home and it is one of the first languages learnt by about half of the current pre-school children. Nearly everyone in Singapore speaks more than one language, with many people speaking three or four. Most children grow up bilingual from infancy and learn more languages as they grow up. Naturally the presence of other languages (especially various varieties of Malay and of Chinese) has influenced the English of Singapore.

Singlish shares many similarities with dialects of English, and can easily give off the impression of "broken English" or "bad English" to some English speakers. In addition, the abundance of Singlish features, especially loanwords from Asian languages can easily make Singlish downright incomprehensible to a Briton or American.

Below are some everyday examples of Singlish and its English translation.

Tomorrow doh need bring camera. — *You don't need to bring a camera tomorrow.*

Not good one lah. — *This isn't good.*

How come never show up? — *Why didn't you/he/it show up?*

Your computer got virus arnot? --- *Does your computer have viruses?*

Aiyah, cannot wait any more, must go oreddy. --- *Oh dear, I cannot wait any longer. I must leave immediately.*

This book you want or not? — *Do you want this book?*

We two friend-friend one ---- *We are close friends.*

Wah lau! So stupid one! --- *Oh my gosh! He's so stupid!*

It's okay lah. --- *It's all right.*

But he very good at sports what. --- *Shouldn't you know this already, having known him for years?*

Okay lorh, you do what you want. — *Fine, go ahead and do what you want.*



(Pearly Chan)

Gimme leh. ---Give it to me.

Really meh? ---Is that really so?

This bus got air-con or not? --- *Is there air-conditioning on this bus?*

alamak! --- an expression of surprise/shock

chin chye lah! --- I have no preference; it's up to you, don't bother me!

shiok --- *Great!* An expression of satisfaction

English words with different meanings in Singlish

arrow - *pinpoint/pick on; To assign someone to an unwanted duty; "Why he arrow me to do this?"*

on ah - 'It's settled then?'

tok kok - (*talk cock*) - *Probably from the English "cock and bull story". Talking senselessly/rubbish; "Don't tok kok lah!"*

Expressions

no fish prawn oso can - *accepting a lesser alternative*

Got problem is it? - 'an aggressive, instigatory challenge.'

You think, I thought, who confirm? - army expression used during organisational foul ups.

Why you so liddat, ar? - (English - Why are you so "like that"?) 'an appeal made to someone who is being unreasonable.'

My England not powderful! - 'A sarcastic response made when a Singlish speaker is being corrected for his grammar, or lack thereof.'



Love

By - Shveta Shahi (India)

Is love a tradition, or is it a mission?
Is it Romeo and his Juliet, or Britney and her 'Idiot'?
Is it a bird of joy, or merely passion and coy?
Is it a song on her lips, or the perpetual pain her heart seeks?

Is it the sweetest sin, which we crave within?
Is it the heat of passion, with deception,
Or the three single words said with an ease?
Is it all about hand holdings, forehead kisses that a girl misses?

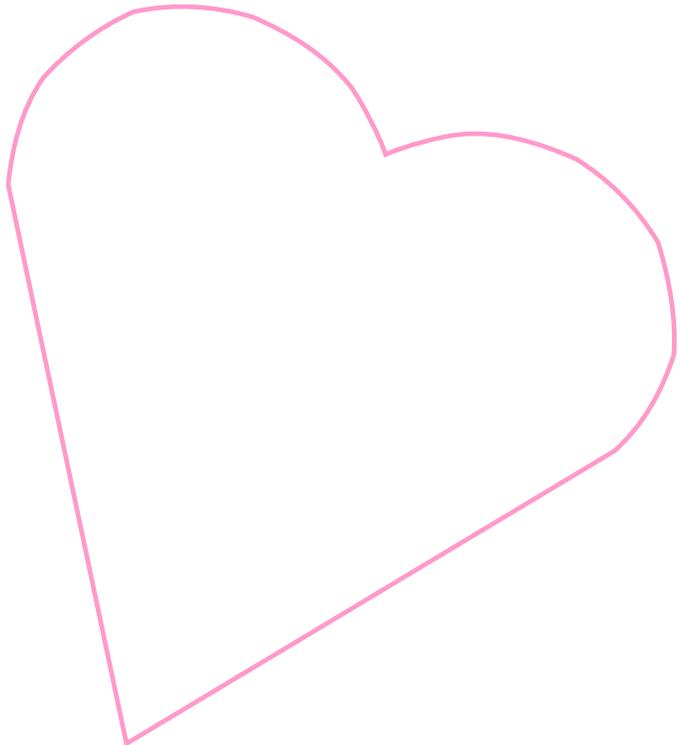
Racing heart, trembling kisses, nervousness, pain, laughter, tear...
This is Love which is pure and crystal clear.
Love is a maker, not a heart breaker,
It's a great sensation, on a quick vacation.

Love is neither intentional nor a mistake,
It's like a trip, you never know when, in its grip.
Like the sky, sometimes dark, sometimes bright,
It's like a beam of light in a dreary night.

In the bindings of love, I feel a shove,
Into the sturdy arms of 'My Mar', I witness repose.
With the chains of love, I am bound,
But the song of love is a sweet sound.



(Shveta Shahi)



Time

By - Leann Cherkasky Makhni, Director (USA)

The beginning of February this year marked my 15th anniversary at International House. A couple of residents make it a point daily to remind me of my "advanced" age. I do my best to take it in stride to be teased about my age, remembering that when I started at I-House so many residents were older than I was and that brought its own challenges. Still, time passes.



(Leann Cherkasky Makhni)

I have learned quite a bit about individuals, cultures, motivations, sensitivities, and resources. There's always more to learn; some individuals are quite open to learning while others feel quite sure of their own perspective and ways of looking at the world.

I particularly love to hear from alumni. Former residents most appreciate their I-House experience. Time gives alumni perspective on the challenges and wonders of living among such a diverse group of people. Over time, residents and staff often say that I-House was one of the very best and most memorable experiences of their life, and wish they could re-capture that time.

As residents rush to get through their studies and into the professional world, alumni often express a wish to return to the fun aspects of their student days.

Time has been on my mind this semester. When my father passed away quite unexpectedly in January, I found a wonderful poem he had written as a senior in high school; I would like to share it with you:

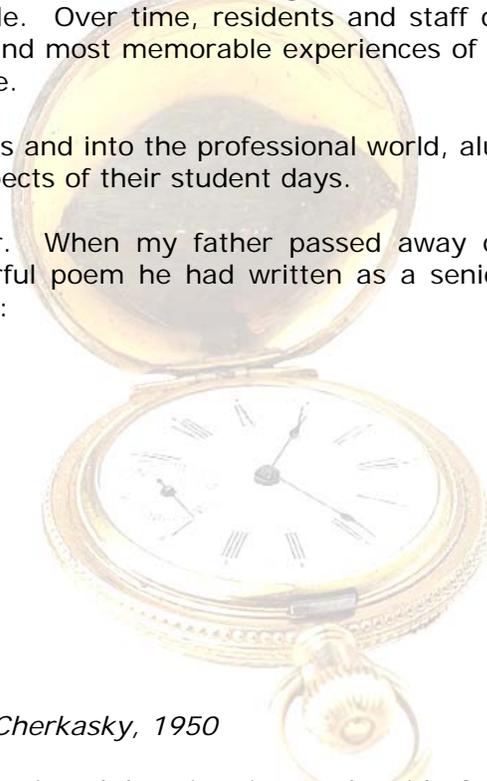
*Time, the majestic sense of all things.
Continuous and discontinuous,
Of finite and infinite quantity
An important and unimportant thing.
All these things is time... all you say it is.*

*And yet one knows not what it is at all.
Time can be forever or a second;
Time may end now or be an eternity;
Time can decide being or not being;
Time carries only your definition.*

- Milton Cherkasky, 1950

Over the past 15 years, I have greatly enjoyed keeping in touch with former residents of the I-House. I hope you will get in contact with us and let us know where and how you are.

We have an amazing group of alumni who are meeting regularly now in San Jose. If you'd like to be part of this group, e-mail us and let us know: ihouse@sjsu.edu. Check out our new I-House website: www.sjsu.edu/ihouse, especially the alumni page.





(Formal Dinner Picture – Spring 2006)



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