

# The Phillips Scholar

*The Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund*

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*A beautiful view of the South African coast through the camera lens of Hana Rhee.*

## *“The Best Year of my Life”*

It seems that this superlative crops up over and over every spring as we read the Renewal Application essays from our scholarship recipients. From Stockholm to Australia, Nepal to South Africa, Israel to China, or cruising through several seas aboard a ship, Phillips Scholars are literally crisscrossing the globe in search of broader horizons and an understanding of our shrinking world. No longer solely the province of language majors, study abroad programs can be found for (apparently) just about every major; remarkably, we have yet to read an essay in which the writer regrets the time away from the home campus. In this issue of *The Phillips Scholar*, four students tell their stories of cultural immersion through their travels to South Africa, Australia, Belize, and Ireland. Implicit in their stories is an invitation to the rest of us to find a way to experience the richness of other cultures in order to understand how we, too, might become better world citizens.

## *Hana Rhee: South Africa*

Sitting in the high tech library of Wellesley College typing this article, it is difficult to believe only months ago I was living and studying in the most southern tip of Africa. From my colleagues in a Conflict Resolution class, who hailed from all across Africa, I was learning the insider view of the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, about the making of public media programs in Burundi, differing opinions about the land reform issues in Zimbabwe, and the history of the conflict in East Timor. I was documenting Cape Town, South Africa, and her people through my camera lens, which accompanied me wherever I went. I was conversing fiercely about the current issues in South Africa, ranging from the recent break-in at my house (I lost a laptop, two cameras, my passport, plane ticket, sneakers, and even a pair of eye glasses.) to the increasing crime rates; the HIV/AIDS issues; the recent rape of a nine-month-old baby by a gang of men (who believed having sex with a virgin would cure them of AIDS), and on to the exponentially growing number of AIDS orphans and street kids. Despite such staggering problems and figures – for example 25% HIV/AIDS infection rate and 40% unemployment rate – it was quite astounding to see how much they have changed their country and their lives in the time span of eight years since the new Government.

Studying abroad in South Africa showed me the face of a country — one of many countries — in which life may have completely different sets of assumptions and foundations than I’ve ever known— different than those of the United States, where I have been studying for the last seven years; different than those of France, where I studied the fall before South Africa; of China where I lived for a month and a half for a language exchange program; and different than those of my very own, formed in Korea, where I lived the first sixteen years of my life. The world is becoming ever smaller each day. Yet the gaps between the developing countries and the developed countries are widening at an appalling rate. Millions of people die of AIDS without the simplest treatment in sub-Saharan Africa, while the affluent countries, where not even one tenth of the percentage of the population is infected, easily avail themselves of appropriate medicine. While computers are the norm in U.S. elementary school classrooms, there is

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## *Gil Freitas: Belize*



I had an opportunity to go to Belize through the School for International Training (SIT). This task was a prime goal of mine upon entering college, allowing me to study abroad without having to extend my graduation date. The program was entitled “Belize: Natural History and Cultural Ecology,” and through its intense field-based learning activities I gained a firsthand understanding of terrestrial ecology, marine ecology, and cultural ecology. I learned about the ecology and conservation of Belize’s forests and coral reefs. The program allowed for the students to get an understanding of ancient Mayan civilization and modern indigenous people, and we examined such issues as sustainability, development and natural-resource management. Coming from a human biology background I had only dealt with quantitative research skills. This program allowed me to implement qualitative research skills as well. The title of my independent study project was “Assessment of the

Caribbean Spiny Lobster within the Caye Caulker Marine Reserve.” We were required to camp out, hike, kayak, and discuss environmental issues that were once unnoticed.

During our program, Hurricane Jerry ripped through the southern portion of Belize. We took action by setting up a hurricane relief effort. We assisted in rebuilding houses and working with the village council. Many of these Mayan villages had no electricity and the people lived off the land. The hurricane disrupted their way of life and left the land barren. I found great joy in working with these people. I helped tear down a school that was dismantled, and we salvaged the zinc roofs for future use. To see the faith and hope in the faces of these people was an unparalleled experience for me. Their homes had just been torn to pieces, yet they still had smiles on their faces, and were excited by the fact that they were alive. This taught me that we must never take life for granted, but to cherish it despite the loss of material goods. In that little village in southern Belize I found the real meaning of life for me.

*A first-generation Cape Verdean from Rhode Island, Gil Freitas attends Morehouse College, where he majors in Biology and plans to attend medical school. He encourages everyone to learn more about themselves by moving outside those circles of influence in which they are comfortable. Growth comes from disrupting the comfortable!*



## *Lauren Shore: Australia*

As I walked off the plane in Sydney, I expected to see kangaroos and to have to wrestle crocs. To my surprise, the land of Oz isn’t filled with characters like Steve Erwin and Crocodile Dundee. Rather Sydney is a cosmopolitan city with 6 million people from more than 200 nations. My experience in Australia was a series of firsts: my first half-marathon, first legal drink (my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday), first apartment, first skydive. For the first time in my life, I flew halfway around the world to a strange place where I didn’t know anyone and didn’t even have a place to live. Realizing I should have taken my mother’s advice and not removed my sweaters and winter coats to make room for bathing suits and shorts, I was a little overwhelmed and nervous about the next 5 months. However, aside from my poorly packed bags, the only thing I brought with me was my sense of adventure and willingness to try something new.

My companion on the 14-hour flight to Sydney was a Canadian who had ventured to Australia several years back, fallen in love with the country and decided to move there permanently. A hockey player, like me, he gave me a contact number in Sydney if I wanted to play. Shocked that Australians had even heard of ice hockey, never mind had a women’s team, I was very excited to play. Our team managers, two of the nicest people I have ever met, gathered extra equipment including their daughter’s old skates so I could join the Sydney Bombers. Despite the fact that the rink owners only clean the ice a few times a day, leaving hills and holes in the ice, my experience was incredible. I truly got to experience the laid back, friendly Australian culture and make some wonderful friends.

In addition to sports and social activities, I also had a great academic experience. I enrolled in a neuroscience class at the University of Sydney that was the best class I have ever taken. This intensive medical science class consisted of labs, lectures, anatomy tutorials, and paper writing sessions. Consisting of many different styles of teaching, it really broadened my horizons. As a direct result of my experiences, I realized that I want to continue my education and go to medical school. The people I met and classes I took inspired me to become a doctor. So, if you can extract one thing from my experience abroad it is that everyone should spend time in another country. Aside from learning about another culture,



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## Jaclyn Thompson: Ireland

In less than 24 hours I was to step on a plane that was headed to Ireland. I tried desperately to get as excited about my year studying abroad as I had been during the summer, but to no avail. I closely examined my one-way ticket as if somehow it held the answers, but I was unable to ignore the events of the past week. Tomorrow was September 19th, only days after the tragic events that had changed the world forever, and I had to decide if I really wanted to go to Ireland.

I had been waiting for this day for a year now, since I had first applied to the Ireland program at Saint Mary's College. I would be in another country for the school year, living with another culture, and leaving behind all that was familiar to me. It sounded like the typical studying abroad

experience, a chance to learn more about myself and grow interculturally, which was, in the beginning, what had made the program so attractive, but my last day in Clinton, Massachusetts, was not how I had imagined it. The excitement and nervous energy that had been building up over the last few months were now the elements that contributed to the sick feeling I had in the pit of my stomach just thinking about Ireland. The threat of war now stirred the world, and being in unknown territory, and away from my family during these times of trouble were not my idea of 'the experience of a lifetime.'

Choosing to go ahead with my year abroad in Ireland in light of September 11th was the hardest decision I have ever made. While my family and friends were torn by my decision, I stepped on the plane on September 19th, and knew that this was something I had to do for myself.

The small town of Maynooth in County Kildare, thirty minutes west of Dublin, became my home away from home. Living in an apartment with four other girls, three Irish students, and another Saint Mary's College student, while attending the National University of Ireland proved to be quite the experience. In the beginning, it was difficult adjusting to the different lifestyle while coping with the troubles that were happening across the ocean. Without getting caught in being homesick, I was determined to make the most of my time in Ireland. During the first semester, I tried it all. I took up rugby, joined the Math Society, and traveled from coast to coast. During Christmas break I had the wonderful experience of backpacking around Europe for three weeks.

When I came back to Maynooth, I settled in comfortably, and was committed to finding my passion again. I began taking dance classes at the Dance Theatre of Ireland in Dublin. Although this was almost a two-hour commute because of the train schedules, I ventured into the city two nights a week to do what I truly love. I continued with the classes for the rest of the year, and joined the dancers at the University who were interested in bringing our passion to the college. We established the Dance Club at the University in Maynooth, which is now flourishing today.

I hold a special place in my heart for Maynooth. The opportunities I had in Ireland were endless. The sights that I saw will be forever vivid in my mind's eye, and the friendships that I made continue to develop across an ocean. My study abroad experience turned out to be more than I had ever expected. The year I spent in Ireland was, without a doubt, the best year of my life.

*Jaclyn Thompson comes from Clinton, Massachusetts, and is a graduate of Nashoba Regional High School. She currently attends Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, and studied abroad through their Ireland program. Majoring in Mathematics and minoring in Dance, Jaclyn plans to integrate these two fields at the graduate level.*



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I learned a lot about my own country and myself. This semester was truly one of the best 6 months of my life.

*Lauren Shore is a senior at Georgetown University majoring in psychology with a concentration in pre-medical studies. She is from Swampscott, MA, and spent 6 months of her junior year in Sydney, Australia.*

## Phillips Facts

- ◆ For the 2002-2003 academic year, 188 new scholars received awards, totalling \$950,000.
- ◆ 566 students' awards were renewed for another \$2,391,000.
- ◆ Scholars attend 177 different colleges.
- ◆ The grand total, then, for the Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund this year is \$3,341,000.00, awarded to 754 students.

Congratulations to you all!



## Anna Pingree Wheatland Phillips: World Traveler

March 4, 1895

*Mr. Gilbert woke me to go and see the Temple of Luxor by moonlight. It was most beautiful there in the moonlight and very impressive. It was light enough for me to read many of the inscriptions, and I was delighted to recognize Ramses the Great's cartouche.*

The mother of Stephen Phillips, Anna Pingree Wheatland was born in 1870 and married Stephen W. Phillips in 1899. As was typical of young ladies of wealth, she travelled extensively, carefully chronicling her travels, sights seen, and people met along the way.

Along with the bound travelogues, the archives include



a small book with entries arranged alphabetically of places she had visited. It is interesting to note the countries included over time: Algeria, Egypt, Italy, Spain, and England, and to see that trips to California made the book as well.

The urge to see the rest of the world to understand other cultures is certainly not a new phenomenon. The post-September 11th world begs for Americans especially to reach out and experience the vast differences that exist culture to culture. At the Stephen

Phillips Memorial Scholarship, we are pleased to assist students who seek this broadening educational experience.

### Volunteers in Salem



Answering our call for volunteers to help receive and open applications last spring, parents of scholars and current and past scholars came to Salem to offer their services. Also helping out was Brian O'Reilly, a 1999 graduate of Johns Hopkins University, who applied his computer expertise to some technology issues in the office. It was great to have the extra hands and to spend some time with these delightful people. Pictured here, clockwise from the top, are Justine Evans (Tufts University '04), Chris Howe (Northeastern University '01), Bonnie Pihl (School of Visual Arts, '04), Eileen Donato (College of the Holy Cross '04) and Brian O'Reilly.

### Renewal Reminders

With your fall semester just about over, now is the time to order your transcript and think about the Renewal Process! Visit our website [www.phillips-scholarship.org](http://www.phillips-scholarship.org) to download your renewal application. You may fill it out on the computer, print it out, and mail it in with your supporting documents. Your parents should begin the FAFSA as soon after the first of the year as possible, so that you will receive your Student Aid Report in a timely fashion. Remember: **April 1st is the mailing deadline** for your application, a copy of your most recent financial aid award letter from your school, and a sealed transcript with fall semester grades included. Your Student Aid Report, if not included with your application, must be received by May 15. If you have trouble downloading the application, please email ([renewal@spscholars.org](mailto:renewal@spscholars.org)) or call us (978-744-2111), and we will send one to you. We will not, however, be mailing renewal applications to all current recipients, because it is available on the web.

We look forward to reading your essays to learn about your experiences this year. As always, early applications are greatly appreciated!

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a severe shortage of computers even in the best university in all of Africa – an extraordinary Digital Divide. And these are only a few of a long list of extreme and worsening divergences seen in the world.

It is an exciting world we live in. There is so much to see and so much to do. For the time period of a short-and-long year in two continents that I was foreign to, my encounter with their people and cultures revealed infinite possibilities for different kinds of lives. A picture can show better than a thousand words of explanation; I would never have known the richness of the diversity I experienced last year without seeing it and living it myself. And now, with that world, in which there is so much to see and so much to do, I can't help but wonder what my place will be and what my generation is to get done in our lifetime.

Born in Korea, **Hana Rhee** moved to the States at the age of sixteen to study. After a year in LA, she attended Milton Academy in Massachusetts before entering Wellesley College, where she is a senior majoring in Economics. At the moment, she aspires to find her place in the world in the areas of international trade or international law. But, as Hana predicts, "Plans are made to be changed... by the most delightful delight in life – serendipity."

