GREETINGS OF THE SEASON!

December 2002

Recently, most of the current Ojima Group and a few recent alumni gathered at the Ojima home for their traditional Thanksgiving Eve celebration. It was a lovely evening and a reminder to us all that, even in these perilous times, there is much for which we can be thankful.

Those of you for whom we have a valid email address will already have seen the announcement of Professor Ojima’s NYSTAR grant, to help him establish the exciting new Institute for Chemical Biology and Drug Discovery. There will be lots more news about this ambitious project over the next few months, so keep looking at the web page for updates.

Earlier in the year Professor Ojima was honored by SUNY and the Research Foundation with the Chancellor’s "Premier Inventor" Award, for both the number and significance of his inventions and patents. Typically, he was unable to attend the Award Ceremony because he was on a lecture/symposium trip to Japan and China, so Yoko charmingly represented him at the banquet in Albany and accepted the award on his behalf.

Professor Ojima’s hectic travel schedule also had him visiting numerous universities and research facilities in this country and abroad, including trips to Italy, England, Germany, and several to Japan. Interestingly, one of the latter was made to provide expert testimony on behalf of an American company in a Japanese patent case. Naturally, his contribution was instrumental in winning a favorable decision!

Of course, Professor Ojima was not responsible for all the "comings and goings" in the Ojima Group during 2002. In January Andrew Moralee returned to England after one year as a postdoc in the Ojima Group. In April Larisa Kuznetsova chose to come to Professor Ojima’s laboratory instead of staying in Professor Sieburth’s lab at Temple University. Then Dansu Li went on "leave of absence" after the arrival of her son, Alexander on May 16th. After three years of undergraduate research in the Ojima laboratory Matthew Sturm received his BS and left to enroll at the Medical Scientist Training Program at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Nevertheless, we were bursting at the seams (figuratively) over the summer, since Professor Ojima accepted two new grad students, Jin Chen and Qing (Sunny) Huang, as well as welcoming into the laboratory two visiting undergraduates, Michael Zacharias, (John Carroll University) and Audra Criscione (Providence College). Mike was a participant in the NSF-REU program, and Audra was a Fellow in the Interdisciplinary Biomedical Research Program. In addition, we had three enthusiastic high school researchers, Mandeep Virdi (returning from summer 2001), Kerry Lanigan (Kings Park), and Vikas Gupta (Comsewogue). David Gallagher returned to the Ojima lab during his "summer vacation" from Downstate Medical Center to try to finish up his MS degree. Finally, Dr. Rama Devi Appari joined us briefly to hone her skills for a return to the job market. Happily, she has moved to a position at Professor F. Johnson’s ChemMaster laboratory.
By September the labs seemed almost empty in contrast, since we also had to say good-by to Chae-koo (Dan) Chong, who received his MS degree and accepted a position at Wyeth in Princeton, NJ and to new Ph. D. Xudong (Deric) Geng, who was accepted into Dr. Samuel Danishefsky’s lab at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. However, we were soon joined by two new postdocs, Drs. Yigong (George) Bu and Hojae Choi.

Unfortunately, a serious family problem forced George to leave prematurely, and with deep regret. Professor Ojima also accepted another undergraduate student, Warren Hans, into the lab to do his Senior Research Project under Victor Vassar’s tutelage. We are currently looking forward to welcoming a new French postdoc, Dr. Bibia Bennacer, on January 6th, and two visiting Italian postdoctoral fellows will be arriving some time between January and April 2003.

In addition to all his other responsibilities, Professor Ojima managed to make time to serve on the search committee for Director of the newest building on campus, the Wang Center for Asian Studies, which had its "grand opening" in November. Group members were proud that, among the many dignitaries and celebrities participating in the event, our own Yoko Ojima opened the program with a powerful, moving, and enthusiastically received rendition of "God Bless America".

Over the course of the past year we have received word of numerous job changes, engagements or marriages, the arrival of children, etc. We thank you all for remembering to keep us informed, and hope that you will continue to do so. For those of you who have not gotten into the habit, we hope you will begin. Unfortunately space does not permit listing all the news in this format, and we would not want to omit any news unintentionally, so I hope you will use the enclosed mailing list to follow changes in information for fellow alumni and, when the spirit moves you, to get in touch with them and "catch up" on personal news. If you notice any errors in your own information, or can correct or supply missing information for another alumnus, we would greatly appreciate your letting us know. In that case, email is usually the best option, but use whatever method is most convenient for you.

I hope that this letter finds all of you in good health, and that you will continue to prosper in the New Year!

Don’t forget to take an occasional look at Professor Ojima’s and the Ojima Group’s web pages at the following URLs:

http://www.chem.sunysb.edu/faculty/ojima/ojima.html

http://ojima10.chem.sunysb.edu/~ojimaweb/homepage/homepage.html

A wish for the holidays and throughout the coming year,
Joy!
Love!
Prosperity!
Peace!

Patricia Marinaccio

Project Staff Assistant