Greetings of the Season!

This has been a strange and, in many ways, a stressful year. With the US economy in its worst condition for over 25 years, massive home foreclosures and falling property values, job insecurity (for those of us who have jobs), and consumer prices rising sharply despite currency deflation, there has been a general sense of unease and even gloom clouding many holiday celebrations this year. A number of Ojima Alumni have been impacted by mergers, downsizing, and uncertainty about the futures of their companies. Others of us have seen our stock portfolios and retirement income prospects shrink in size to an unbelievable degree. Even for those who have escaped relatively unscathed, there are worries about the prospects for parents, children, siblings, and other significant people in our lives. And that does not even touch on the many war zones, genocide, and starvation around the world, nor the increasingly critical impact of the numerous assaults on our environment and eco-systems. The sense of excitement and historic events surrounding the US Presidential Inauguration has brightened the atmosphere recently, but even the prospect of a new direction for the federal government is dampened by the sense that the problems are too enormous and world-wide to be solved in the short term. Thus, there is the expectation of more pain and suffering in the interim.

Despite all this depressing news, however, there is still much for which to be thankful, both individually and as a group. With almost Herculean efforts (7 grant proposals submitted in the past year), Professor Ojima has managed to secure enough funding to continue his active research program and support his students for the next several years. The ICB&DD continues to grow and flourish. There are numerous reports of new jobs and promotions. Some of our alumni are defying the risky economic climate by returning to school to prepare for major career changes. We receive wedding announcements from around the world, and our numbers are increasing with the arrival of an adorable new “crop” of babies. (The Ojima Group Homepage has been recently updated, but we can’t include your news if you don’t send it.) Please be sure to share all of your “life events” (including photos) with us, so that we, in turn, can share them via the Ojima Group websites, and remember to stay informed about current and past members’ activities throughout the year by visiting the sites often. For those of you who are receiving these greetings via email, the links below should be “clickable”, but you can also type them into your browser bar and then surf from one to the next.

http://www.acsmedchem.org/ojima.html
http://ojima10.chem.sunysb.edu/~ojimaweb/homepage/homepage.html
http://ojima10.chem.sunysb.edu/~ojimaweb/alumni/alumnews.html
http://www.stonybrook.edu/icbdd/news.shtml

I am also making my usual appeal to all of you to check the Members List (which will be sent in a separate email because of its size or mailed via regular mail, if you prefer) to verify your own contact information and let me know if you notice any errors or omissions. The same is true if you recognize any missing or incorrect information for other alumni with whom you are in touch.

Those of you who received Professor Ojima’s and Yoko’s card and holiday message have already seen photo highlights and important news from the past year, so forgive any repetition, but this will also go via regular mail to alumni for whom we have no current email addresses.

In addition to teaching and supervising his research students, writing grant proposals, serving on review boards, writing a large number of articles and book chapters and editing another book, Professor Ojima has kept up his usual busy schedule of travel and guest lectures. Among his trips were the First International Conference on Drug Design and Discovery in Dubai; the spring ACS Meeting in New Orleans, where he presented at the Ernest Guenther Award Symposium; the Swiss Chemical Society, Medicinal Chemistry Division Mini Symposium on Drug Targeting in Basel; the 6th
University of Glasgow-Organon Symposium on Synthetic Chemistry; and the Sosnovsky Distinguished Lectureship, Advances in Anticancer Drugs at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. There were numerous other invited lectures, from as close by as Hunter College, CUNY, in Manhattan, to as far away as Sundia Pharmaceuticals, in Shanghai. On many of his trips, there were fond reunions with alumni in New Orleans, Paris, Geneva, Shanghai, and Philadelphia. Naturally, he made his yearly lecture/consulting tour in Japan in the end of October and early November. Finally, he and Yoko finished the year with their annual “retreat” to Honolulu.

As de facto social secretary of the Ojima Group, I try to keep a file of important events, but sometimes my “real job” is too demanding, and I lose track. (Not to mention that the number of members keeps growing!) Further, many of my recent files and even some emails were lost in a computer failure in November, so please forgive me if you sent me some of your news and it does not appear here. Just send me an email and I will try to get the information up on the Ojima Group website quickly.

The year began with several new additions to the Ojima Group and one returning member. Allison Selby, Raymond Camilleri, and Shakil Ahmed joined our group of talented undergrads, and Sunny Huang was welcomed enthusiastically back for a brief (about 3 months) stay as a postdoctoral fellow, while awaiting acceptances from the MBA programs to which she had applied. Her primary task was helping to write, edit, and proofread articles and book chapters. We also learned that, on the heels of the Siemens national grand prize win by Amanda Marinoff and Janelle Schlossberger, another of Professor Ojima’s summer high school researchers, Robert Hackett, was named an Intel semifinalist. Thus, all four of the students achieved recognition, since Alicia Chionchio had earlier been named a Siemens semifinalist. In February, Professor Ojima was contacted by a Marine Sciences major who had completed her MS degree requirements and wanted to experience research in a chemistry laboratory. Su-Hui Chang turned out to be a very welcome addition to the lab, and according to her mentor, Ilaria Zanardi, an extremely capable researcher. We were all very sorry that she could stay only until the end of the semester.

Sadly, for the rest of the spring we were saying goodbye, first to Ray Zhao, who was very pleased to get an excellent job offer as an MS chemist at Genentech, although he will continue writing and defending his thesis and expects to receive his Ph.D. in May 2009. Next, Sunny left for a visit to her family in China before beginning business school at Boston College. Shuyi actually left before graduation to accept a Ph.D. chemist position at a company in New Jersey, but came back for the Hooding Ceremony, along with Liang Sun (who is now doing a postdoc in Prof. Lawrence’s lab at UNC) and Ce Shi (who left in September for a postdoc at Univ. of Minnesota). Several of Professor Ojima’s undergraduate research students also received their BS degrees, including Kimlong Chan, Erica Ravin (cum laude), and Rohit Repala (summa cum laude). Rohit is now at Upstate Medical School and Erica is in the Dentistry program at Stony Brook.

All the labs were soon filled again though, with the arrival of three first year graduate students: William Berger, Guan-Ting Chen, and Chih-Wei Chien. They were followed soon after by another new undergraduate, Ping Ping Lin, and Adrian Schulte, a visiting undergraduate student from Prof. Haufe’s laboratory at the University of Muenster. Rounding out the group were four high school students, Re-I Chen (from Maryland!), Samantha McKenna, Shalini Pammal, and Preya Shah. All were welcomed graciously and enthusiastically, as usual, with a delightful BBQ at the Ojima’s lovely home. A good (and filling) time was had by all! It must be a pattern, because the annual Beach Picnic we seemed to spend more time eating Gary’s excellent barbecue than we did swimming or playing beach volleyball, but no one complained!

They say good things must end, and so beginning in early July, we said farewell and good luck to Liang. He was followed a month later by Adrian, and then the high school students in mid-August. Last, but certainly not least, Dr. Ce Shi, headed for his new job in Minneapolis. However, as Ce departed, we were fortunate to welcome Dr. Hengguang (Henry) Li, as the new Directory of the
ICB&DD Discovery Chemistry Laboratory. Professor Ojima also accepted three new undergraduate students into the lab for the fall semester. Dilruba Khanam, Lucy Li, and Christina Susanto, joined Allison, Keita, Ping Ping, Ray, Rob, Samsad, Shakil, and Tolga, bringing our total to an unprecedented eleven (11) undergraduates. And what a great group they are!

October brought Chemistry Research Day and the Gala 50th Anniversary Chemistry Celebration and Banquet. Although Professor Ojima was in Milwaukee at the time, the Ojima lab was well represented at both events, with a total eleven posters, including two from three of our high school students, and Yoko, Pat, Henry, and a number of the graduate students in attendance at the banquet. Thanks in part to the slide show of past and present people and events and Professor Hsiao’s excellent selection of wines, it was a truly memorable event.

November, of course, has come to be defined by the Ojima’s wonderful Thanksgiving Eve Party, and this year was no exception. In addition to current members we were joined by Dr. Larisa Kuznetsova with Leon and their adorable daughter, Kristina (born 4/10/08), one of a “bumper crop” of new Ojima Group babies born in 2008. Among the others were: Kendall Elizabeth (Jackie Kamp’s granddaughter) born 2/20/08; Noam (son of Dr. Bennacer and Thomas) born 4/3/08; Andrew Stephen Miller (Dr. Michael & Jennifer), 5/13/08; Emily K. Ng (daughter of Dr. Edward Ng); Cecily Nha Vu (Dr. An T. Vu and Tram Hoang), May 2008; William Pollina Cormier (Elizabeth and Jay), 8/24/08; Nolan Wynter Borella (Dr. Chris and Cheanie), 10/15/08; Nicholas Duquette (Dr. Grace Chuang and Jason) 12/27/08.

We also had word of two marriages, though I suspect that there were others we missed. Anthony Nigro, MS married his lovely Alicia in December 2007, but we didn’t learn of it until this year. Then, on June 28th, 2008 Dr. Claude Commandeur and his beautiful Ghosia were wed, in France. Sincere congratulations to the happy couples and to all the lucky parents and grandparents!

Please, don’t forget to send us your updated contact information and other news. It is sad to lose touch with old friends and acquaintances. And don’t forget to visit the web pages occasionally to see what other alumni and current members are doing, as well.

Those of you who have received my email messages may have noticed my quote from Gandhi:

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow;
Learn as if you would live forever."

Best wishes to each of you for a year of good health, success, and happiness, but if you do suffer problems, I wish you the courage to overcome them and to be made stronger by them.

Warmest regards,
Pat

May there be Peace on Earth

Alaafia      He Ping      Paix      Paz      Shalom