
THANKS TO SCANDINAVIA

By Anne Barajas

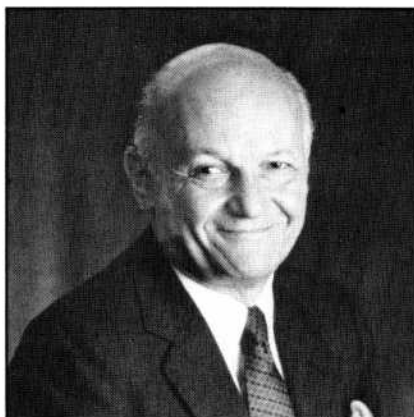
Out of the horrors of the Holocaust came tales of amazing heroics. Out of gratitude for these acts of heroism came a unique program to bring young Scandinavians to the classrooms of the University of Oklahoma.

On the flood of sin, hatred and blood let loose by Hitler upon the world, there swam a small ark. The demonism of Hitler had sought to overturn and overwhelm it in the floods of hate. It was saved by the heroism of a handful of saints.

—Sholem Asch
in *Their Brothers' Keepers*

These were stories that rivaled the daring of "Robin Hood," the peril of "Treasure Island." These were not the typical stories read by youths; they were all too terrible and real. But for Alan Greenberg, these were the stories that would help shape his life.

In the days after World War II, the world gradually learned of the unspeakable horrors that had been com-



Alan Greenberg

mitted against the Jewish people by the Nazis. Although in many countries the details of Hitler's "final solution" would not be known for years, ignorance was little comfort when the full truth was revealed. At the outset of Hitler's extermination campaign, approximately 8 million Jews lived in Europe. By the time the Allies reached Dachau, Auschwitz and Treblinka, more than 6 million of them had succumbed to starvation or perished in the gas chamber.

However, another type of story came out of the Holocaust as well—tales of courage, humanity and faith that, although not as well known, would touch and inspire people worldwide. The heroes of these stories were the people of Scandinavia, everyday people who defied the Third Reich and risked their own lives to save thousands of Jews from certain death. *Continued*

The rescue of Jews in Scandinavia took many forms. In occupied Finland, government leaders used diplomacy to outwit the Germans and delay the deportation of that country's 2,000 Jews until the Nazi hierarchy had crumbled.

The Norwegian people jeopardized their own safety to hide more than 1,000 Jews in remote areas until they could cross into Sweden, where they would be welcomed with shelter, food and transportation.

Perhaps the most famous liberation of Jews happened in 1943 on Rosh Hashana, the Jewish new year. In a miracle that came to be known as the Danish Rescue, Rabbi Marcus Melchior informed a Copenhagen congregation of Nazi plans to raid every Jewish home the following day and transport Denmark's 7,000 Jews to the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Overnight, most of the Jews were hidden by their neighbors and, despite blocked seaports, the refugees were smuggled into the safety of Sweden.

These acts of humanity also continued after the war. Jews who managed to survive concentration camps — including many who were labeled by other nations as "difficult" because of physical and emotional problems — were welcomed into Scandinavian communities with open arms.

For a young Alan Greenberg growing up halfway across the world in Oklahoma City, these were stories of inspiration.

"In the back of my mind I said that if I ever had the means, I would do something for the Scandinavian people," says Greenberg, who, at 62, serves as chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the Wall Street firm Bear Stearns Cos. Inc.

Greenberg has kept that promise. Through a University of Oklahoma scholarship program named for his late father, Street's clothing store founder Ted H. Greenberg, he has provided more than \$250,000 for the education of the children and grandchildren of the heroes of his youth.

The OU program is endowed through Thanks to Scandinavia Inc., a scholar-

ship fund founded in 1963 by entertainer Victor Borge and New York attorney Richard Netter. Their purpose was to express gratitude to the people and governments of Scandinavian countries for their selfless acts during the Holocaust.

Borge, whose Jewish ancestry and comedy routines about Hitler made him unpopular in Germany, fled his native Denmark to the United States in the early years of World War II. Netter's interest in the Scandinavian rescues began during a 1957 visit to Germany when he read *Their Brothers' Keepers* by Philip Friedman.

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The book, which chronicles the efforts of Europeans to save Jews during the Holocaust, had a profound effect on Netter.

"The Nazis were perpetrators of a great evil, and many people took no action to help people who were doomed," Netter says. "What the Scandinavian people had done was very, very special during a dreadful period. Good deeds should be remembered."

Through Thanks to Scandinavia, students from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden can receive scholarships to attend the University of Oklahoma, New York University, Columbia University at New York, the University of Pennsylvania or Cornell University. OU's Thanks to Scandinavia program is the largest, with nearly two dozen Scandinavian students attending OU on Greenberg scholarships since the program's inception in 1980.

During 1989-90, the scholarship fund brought six Scandinavian students to Norman—Soren Gerdes and Wilhelm Engle of Denmark; Line Arctander and Anita Pettersen of Norway; and Madde Ljung and Gunglog Für of Sweden.

Norman is a different world from Borgen, Line Arctander's Lofoten Islands home above the Arctic Circle off the northwest coast of Norway. Once a thriving fishing community, Borgen today is losing its youth to the Norwegian mainland because it has no higher education opportunities.

In 1987, Arctander, whose grandfather was a whaler, followed her brother Andre to OU, where he was studying petroleum engineering. A senior majoring in business administration, Arctander credits her OU experiences with giving her an edge over students in Norway.

"I think my perspective is much broader than it was before I came to OU," Arctander explains. "I've had an opportunity to learn to speak English, which gives me an advantage, and I've learned about other cultures."

One opportunity she has enjoyed is that of meeting students from other countries. In fact, before coming to Oklahoma, Arctander had never seen a black person.

"I've discovered that there are no differences between people," she says. "We are all the same."

But on the cultural spectrum, Arctander has discovered a host of new things, including Halloween, peanut butter, Thanksgiving and macaroni and cheese.

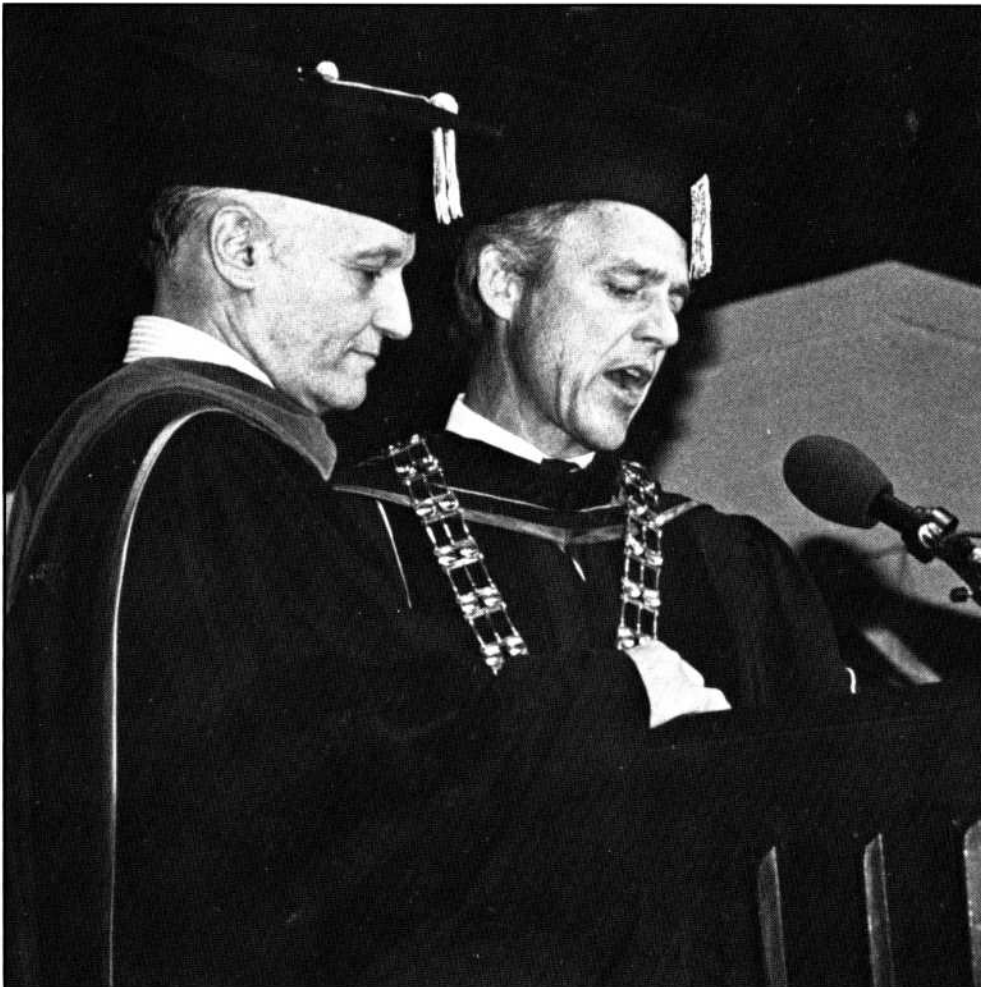
Following graduation, Arctander hopes to pursue a master's degree in the United States. In time, however, she plans to return home, taking many memories with her, notably the friendliness of Oklahomans.

"Everyone talks to you," she says. "People here seem to be more open and caring."

In addition to what the students have learned about other nations and cultures, they also have learned something about themselves and their own histories.



Alan Greenberg and his wife Kathryn, center, were honored at a campus reception in 1989 for his many benefactions to the University of Oklahoma.

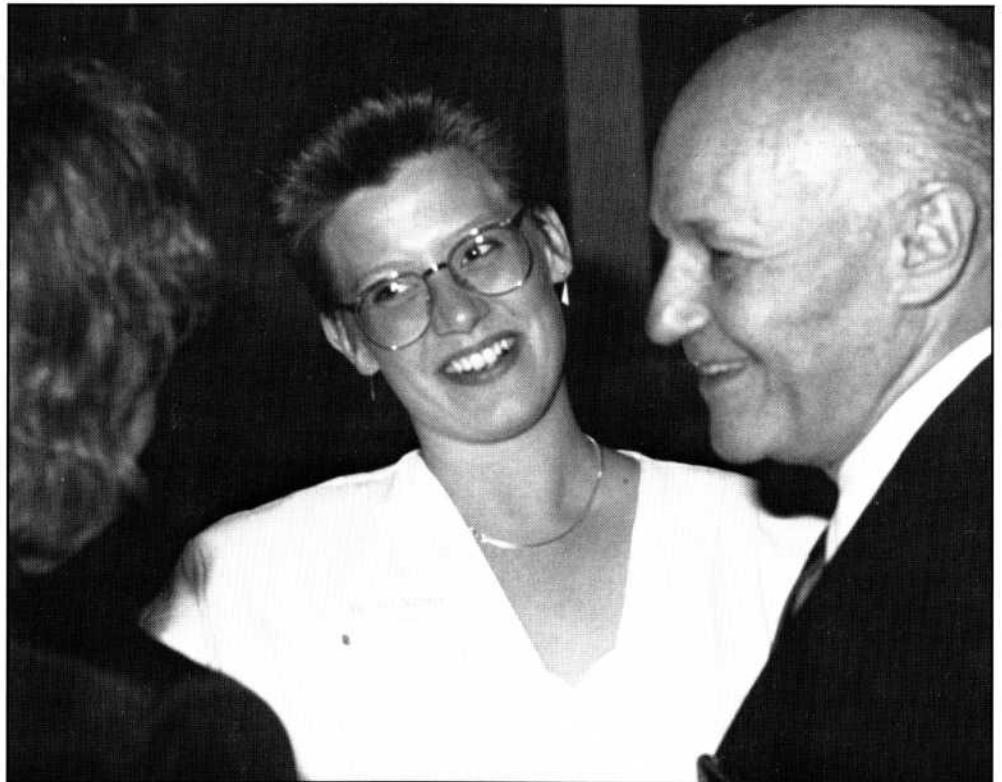


The University's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Citation, is bestowed on Alan Greenberg, left, by President William S. Banowsky during Commencement 1984.

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The University's 1990 Greenberg scholars meet on the student union terrace. From left, Gunlog Marie Für and Madde Ljung, Sweden; Anita Petersen and Line Arctander, Norway; and Soren Gerdes, Denmark.



1989 Greenberg scholars Maria Rudell, back to camera, and Dorthe Vester, center, join in honoring their benefactor for his contributions to OU.

Although stories of the Scandinavian rescues were familiar to the Greenberg scholars before they came to the United States, all agree that they had not thought of their parents and grandparents as heroes.

"I don't think I'd thought of that period of history as something to be proud of," says Gunglog Für, who has used her Greenberg scholarship to earn a master's degree and pursue a doctoral degree in history at OU. "I think people just thought that helping others was a given, something that you had to do."

Since coming to OU, the former junior high school teacher has come to feel strongly about the significance of the Greenberg scholarships.

"I feel it is a great honor to be here on this scholarship because it commemorates the fact that the Scandinavian people did show compassion and courage during the Holocaust," she insists.

"It's more than just a sum of money to me," Für adds. "It's something that your grandparents did for other people, and now it's being given back to you. It's an incentive. It makes you realize that the kind of obligation to other people that was shown during the Holocaust should continue in my generation as well."

A sense of obligation to others is one of the traits that has made Greenberg "one of the most respected people on Wall Street and in the world community," Netter says of his friend, who was named "the biggest giver on Wall Street" in a *New York Magazine* article on philanthropy. "His greatest pleasure in life is doing things for other people," Netter adds. "I know of no one who has as much concern for other people, individually and collectively."

In 1984, Greenberg was knighted by Queen Margrethe of Denmark with the Order of Denmark for his work as honorary chairman of the Thanks to Scandinavia exhibit of Jewish history. That same year, he was honored with OU's Distinguished Service Citation.

"He gives generously," Netter says, "not to be famous, not to be noted, but

to serve people who are in need. He is a totally true friend of humanity."

In addition to his professional and civic achievements, Greenberg is an accomplished magician. "What he does, he does to perfection," Netter explains.

That touch of perfection is reflected in Greenberg's personal history. His father, Ted Greenberg, who died in 1980 of Parkinson's disease, moved to Oklahoma City at the height of the Great Depression to open a branch of Street's, his Wichita clothing store. Operated by Alan's brother, Maynard, the chain today includes stores in Midwest City, Norman, Bartlesville and Oklahoma City, where Mrs. Ted Greenberg resides.

noticed the young Oklahoman.

Today, Greenberg and his wife, the former Kathryn Olson, are "involved in causes all over the world," Netter says.

Named the 1974 Man of the Year by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Greenberg also served as chairman of the Wallenberg Committee, a group dedicated to honoring the memory of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved the lives of thousands of Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust. Greenberg remains a champion of the organization.

Greenberg's example has influenced friends and Bear Stearns staff members to become leaders in charitable works. Through his influence, a dozen

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A graduate of Classen High School in Oklahoma City, Alan Greenberg received a football scholarship from OU. Following a back injury, he transferred to the University of Missouri at Columbia, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration.

After graduation, Greenberg landed a job as a clerk in the oil department of Bear Stearns. By the end of his first week, he had caught the eye of John Slade, a Bear Stearns partner who today is the most senior partner in the firm.

Greenberg and Netter's friendship began during a party at Slade's home. After introducing Netter to Greenberg, Slade took Netter aside and said, "Remember his name. Someday he will be the head of Bear Stearns."


Greenberg's remarkable success began shortly thereafter when he borrowed \$10,000 from his father to speculate on the stock market. Soon, Slade wasn't the only partner who had

people each have contributed more than \$100,000 to Thanks to Scandinavia.

Closer to home, he has established the Ted H. Greenberg Memorial Fund at the OU Health Sciences Center. The fund provides scholarships to students who are in financial need because of a chronic neurological illness in the family and provides resources for a lectureship on neurological sciences and research in neurological diseases.

A man of few words, Greenberg says simply that he created the fund and named OU's Thanks to Scandinavia program after his father to honor "a great father and an all-around good fellow."

By remembering his father and the Scandinavians who gave so unselfishly during the Holocaust, Greenberg hopes the world will not forget.

"I think it's important to do anything we can to remind people that there are heroes in the world." 

The Honors Program

Let Knowledge Grow

By Paula Baker

If success in education were measured in numerical growth, the University of Oklahoma Honors Program could be counted a success. Enrollment of the freshman honors students was up 37 percent from 230 last year to 316 in 1989-90, with pre-enrollment for fall 1990 well over that number by mid-summer.

If success were counted in monetary recognition, the Honors Program could point to a two-year, \$100,380 federal grant for its Intellectual Centering program for freshmen. OU's request was one of the three percent of grant proposals selected for funding by the U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE). Established in 1985, FIPSE provides yearly project grants for the assistance of innovative programs that improve the access to and the quality of post-secondary education.

In reality, however, educational success is measured in the growth of individuals who learn to develop their intellectual abilities to the fullest and use them to enhance the quality of their lives and those of others. The University recognized this premise in

1987 when the Honors Program, in existence since 1960, was revitalized and expanded. The need for continued enhancement is stressed in OU's long-range plan, Strategy for Excellence.

After exhaustive study by a University-wide task force, Associate Professor of Psychology Nancy Mergler was chosen to oversee the renaissance. Program Director Mergler received her bachelor's degree in psychology from William Smith College and her master's and doctoral degrees in developmental psychology from Syracuse University. At OU, she has been awarded a Junior Faculty Summer Research Fellowship, served on the Graduate College Research Council and has been a member of the executive committees of both the colleges of Arts and Sciences and Liberal Studies.

The Honors Program, which takes its motto from Alfred, Lord Tennyson: "Let knowledge grow from more to more," is an enrichment opportunity, not a short cut through college. The first class of gifted students who will have received the nurturing of the program for a full four years will not graduate until 1991. Their Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes and Supreme Court ap-

pointments are half a lifetime away. Even the M.D.s, J.D.s and Ph.D.s to which most aspire are years in the future.

Nevertheless, the excitement in the Honors House lounge during a parents' brunch on the day of Commencement demonstrates the students' pride in completing their challenging honors requirements, which include special courses, individual research and grade points of at least 3.25 on a 4.0 scale.

During Commencement exercises, honors students wear special red-lined hoods. Their diplomas are inscribed with OU's loftiest accolades, "with Honors," "with High Honors" and "with Highest Honors," depending on their cumulative grade points ranging from 3.25 through 3.75. These designations are the OU equivalent of cum laude, magna cum laude and summa cum laude, and carry more prestige than the degrees "with Distinction," defined by individual colleges based primarily on grade point alone.

"People in the Honors Program are over-achievers and dedicated students," says Diana Morales, a letters major from Durant. "It has been