



UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA

International Connection

Dixon Johnson, A Life in International Education

By Judy Hartwich, Senior Associate Director

Dixon Johnson has been at the helm of the Office of International Services, formerly, the Office for International Students and Scholars at USC since 1983. After 24 years of exceptional service to USC's international students, scholars and faculty, Dixon is retiring from the University this June.

Prior to assuming his position at USC, Dixon was Director of the Center for International Education Services at the University of Tennessee for 14 years. He received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Oklahoma State, and both a Master's in political science and a Ph.D. in college student personnel (higher education) from the University of Oregon. He is a former President of NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

I recently sat down with Dixon to interview him about his distinguished and varied career.

Judy Hartwich: What it was like

coming from Knoxville, Tennessee to Los Angeles in 1983?

Dixon Johnson: Well, Knoxville had a distinctive regional culture. If you're not from around there you definitely feel it. I believe the out-of-state enrollment was about 15% of the total student body. Los Angeles, by contrast is a rich tapestry of different cultures, nationalities and religions.

In L.A. we have the whole world represented in one city. The intermingling of the different cultures really defines the city, and the University itself is like a microcosm of the whole city.

JH: So what were your first impressions of USC?

DJ: I guess at first I had an image of the USC student body, which was pretty much the stereotype of the time. I thought the typical student was blonde-haired and blue eyed, driving a BMW with a surfboard in the back. That image was burst immediately. What I noticed most was the feeling of being on a real campus, the feeling of community, the compactness, every bit of space being so inten-

See DIXON, p. 8.



Dixon Johnson

I love working with Dixon. He is incredibly dedicated to bringing the peoples of the world together to learn from one another and gain a greater appreciation for the things that bind us together not separate us.

— Michael L. Jackson, Vice-President for Student Affairs

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Get Ready...It's Tax Season, Again

By Becky Peterson, International Student Advisor

Tax season is here! You have **until April 17th** of this year to file your federal and state forms and most of you should have received all your various tax reporting forms in the mail from USC, employers, banks, etc. by now.

The tax reporting documents you receive may include, but are not limited to:

Form W-2 – Issued by a U.S. employer/s to report wages earned in the year 2006 that are not covered by a tax treaty (see #1 below re: tax treaties). If you worked for more than one employer, you would receive more than one and need to include information from all your W-2's on your tax forms.

Form 1099 – Issued by a U.S. bank to report the interest accrued on a checking or savings account in the year 2006.

Form 1042S – Itemizes wages earned that are exempt under a claimed tax treaty benefit or scholar-

ships/fellowships that are considered subject to taxes.

Tax workshops are being offered by OIS, however, please note that we cannot offer you any tax advice. If you need specific help, please attend one of the remaining two tax workshops of the year listed below (no RSVP is needed).

Federal forms are filed with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of the U.S. government and state tax forms are filed with either California or the applicable state in which you earned income. Please read on for more information:

All non-residents are subject to paying federal and state taxes on any income earned during the year 2006. Most non-resident students (F-1 and J-1) are exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes for their first 5 years in the U.S. J-1 scholar and researchers are typically exempt from Social Security for their first 2 years. Social Security is the government retirement supplement fund for U.S. citizens and residents.

See TAXES, p.9.

Upcoming Tax Workshops for International Students and Scholars

Friday, March 23	3-5:00pm	THH101
Friday, April 5	3-5:00pm	THH101

*(These dates and times are subject to change.
Please contact OIS for up-to-date information.)*

Become An Orientation Group Leader (OGL)!

By Ji-Hyun Lee, International Program Assistant

USC is home to the largest international student body in the World. Every year, we welcome over 1500 international students from all over the globe and now you have the opportunity to be one of the first people to welcome them to USC and the United States! By becoming an Orientation Group Leader (often referred to as OGL-pronounced Ogel), you will be given the opportunity to introduce new international students to USC's campus community and present them with a warm welcome to the Trojan Family!

Being an international student myself, I understand just how difficult it is to find a job on campus. However, the Orientation Group Leader position does not require Work-Study and is open to international and domestic students, both undergraduates and graduates. The process of application is fairly simple. Just pick up an application form from the Office of International Services (STU 300) and fill it out. The requirements are a minimum GPA of 2.5 (undergraduate) or 3.0 (graduate), at least 1 year enrollment at USC, a love for USC and an interest in helping fellow students! Make sure to turn in your application by **March 28, 2007 at 4:00 p.m.**

Once the applications have been turned in, you will need to schedule for a group interview. As the interview is conducted with approximately 3 to 4 other people in your group, it relieves a lot of the pressure and stress off the individual. In addition, it encourages participants not to compete against each other,

but to collaborate and work with each other.

As an OGL, your main responsibilities include guiding new international students through a fun and organized orientation program, sponsored by the Office of International Services. You will be trained for two weeks prior to the actual orientation with all the information that you will need to know, which ranges from visa/immigration issues to class registration. An extremely valuable part of the OGL experience is that you learn just as much about the wide range of services that USC provides to its students as the new incoming students whilst preparing for the Orientation program.

After orientation in August, the OGLs are presented with an opportunity to work for the Office of

International Services as an International Program Assistant (IPA).

There are six IPA positions and it is a paid part-time job that runs throughout the academic year. IPAs are responsible for organizing programs for International Students such as LA Today, Diners Club as well as the International Graduation Reception.

For me, the best part of this experience was the fact that many of the students from the orientation remember the OGLs and are always so appreciative for the help they received. So take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime experience to expose yourself to an excellent leadership opportunity that will teach you everything there is to know about life at USC and help you form friendships with people from all over the world!

BECOME AN ORIENTATION GROUP LEADER for International Students

Meet People from All Over the World!

**Paid positions available for Orientation Group Leaders
and International Program Assistants.**

**All majors, Graduate and Undergraduate, Domestic
and International Students are welcome to apply.**



**To pick up an application and job
description, please visit:
Office of International Services
Student Union 300
(213) 740-2666**

**or visit our Web site:
<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS>**

Application Deadline is March 28, 2007

Explore LA and Beyond with the LA Today Program

By Becky Peterson, International Student Advisor

The Office of International Services LA Today program enables students to visit many hot spots throughout the Los Angeles region and beyond. However, this program also offers students a chance to retreat from the busy Los Angeles city life to embrace nature at its finest!

At the beginning of the Spring 2007 semester, the Office of International Services' LA Today program took 55 international students skiing to Big Bear Mountain. Participants were provided a two hour ski lesson that included rentals. The

weather was perfect to enable first time skiers to experience the snow and learn to ski, while more experienced skiers had an opportunity to jet down the black diamond advanced ski slopes.

It was an exciting and adventurous day, as one student said on our way back to USC, "I had a blast!! Absolutely loved it!"

And you still have a chance to participate with this exciting group by joining in the fun of the last LA Today event planned for the semester. March 31, 2007, is a horseback riding adventure in the Hollywood Hills. During the

day participants will be able to ride right by the famous Hollywood sign and enjoy the scenic surrounding communities. We are looking forward to another memorable day with international students and desire to offer opportunities that students may not be able to experience otherwise.

If you are interested in any of our events or have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please feel free to email us at latoday2006@gmail.com or visit our website at <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/Activity/Programs/latoday.html>.

International Diners' Club Goes Irish for March!

By Judy Chen, International Program Assistant

The International Diners' Club program, organized by the Office of International Services, introduces all students to the customs, history and culture of a diverse set of countries through food. During the course of the semester, we will take you to various ethnic restaurants, all right here in Los Angeles. Not only do we focus on the different flavors of such international cuisine, but also on what we can learn from each dish.

Each event is lead by a cuisine guide from the country of interest. He/she will introduce the traditional dishes of that country and use them as a vehicle for further discussion and understanding of that country.

In March, Diners; Club celebrates St. Patrick's Day by going Irish! And you are invited to join us to enjoy a wee bit of celebration at **Finn McCool's**, an authentic Irish restaurant/pub located in Santa Monica.

What: Enjoy a traditional Irish Sunday roast with live Irish music.

When : March 25th, Sunday
4:00 – 7 :00 p.m.

Where: Meet in front of Leavy Library SC at 3:00 pm. Then we'll venture together to the famous Irish Pub in Santa Monica, right near the beach!

Cost : \$20 per person due on sign-up which includes food and transportation..

So, sign up today by visiting the OIS office at STU300.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact International Program Assistants, Ji-Hyun or ChenChen, at oisdinersclub@gmail.com.



Finn McCool's in Santa Monica

International Student Graduation Reception

By Becky Peterson, International Student Advisor

Every year the Office of International Services holds a graduation reception for international students, their families and friends, and faculty and staff of USC. This year, the 25th annual International Graduation Reception and Awards Presentation will take place on **Friday, April 20, 2007 from 3-5:00 p.m.** at the Radisson Hotel on Figueroa Street in the upstairs ballroom.

With a vibrant international student community here at USC, the reception serves to honor and commemorate the accomplishments of graduate and undergraduate international students who will be graduating in Spring or Summer of 2007 or have already graduated in December 2006. Two separate awards will be presented to students:

Academic Achievement Award

Undergraduate international students graduating with a cumulative G.P.A. of 3.50 or higher and graduate international students with a cumulative G.P.A. of 3.80 or higher will be recognized. Only students graduating May or August 2007 or those who have graduated



International Student Graduation Reception

in December 2006 are eligible (based on G.P.A. at the end of Fall 2006).

Leadership Award

The Leadership Award is given to international students who have shown extraordinary dedication, involvement and motivation as a leader on the USC campus. This includes contribution to USC clubs, organizations and the international student community for the year 2006-2007. Recipients of this award do not have to be graduating students to qualify.

At this year's International Graduation Reception, also, one faculty and one staff member will

be recognized for their outstanding contributions to the international student community. These are individuals who have provided dedication, assistance and support to international students, above and beyond their job responsibilities.

So, if you know of a student, faculty or staff member who deserves to be recognized, please come to the Office of International Services and fill out a nomination form, or you can download the form from the OIS Web site: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/>.

The International Graduation Reception is open to all USC faculty and staff and is a wonderful opportunity to see the strength of the international student community at USC. No RSVP is required to attend the reception and a light buffet will be served.

Should you have any questions about the awards or the ceremony, please call our International Program Assistants Judy or Michael at (213) 740-2666, or stop by our office in the Student Union, Room 300.

25th Annual International Student Graduation Reception

When: Friday, April 20, 2007, 3-5:00p.m.

**Where: Radisson Hotel (upstairs ballroom),
Figueroa Street**

OIS Welcomes Iran Carranza and Joan Cerera

Cheryl Gilman, Director, Faculty/Staff Visa Specialists

Iran Carranza left the foggy San Francisco bay area for sunny Southern California in order to join the Faculty Staff Visa Services (FSVS) team. A native of Los Angeles, she first moved to Berkeley, California in 1998 to work towards her bachelor's degree in both History of Art and French from the University of California Berkeley.

Her work at UC Berkley's Center for African Studies first opened her eyes to the importance of international educational exchange. She further honed her skills as the Immigration Case Coordinator for Permanent Residence at Berkeley's International Student and Scholar Office before coming to the University of

Southern California.

Iran's personal "To Do" list includes attempting to learn Portuguese and trying out Thai kickboxing. She is also trying to find new ways to convince her family and friends that she cannot get them special USC football tickets.

Prior to working at USC, Joan Cerera worked as a Senior Immigration Paralegal for a law firm, and as an Immigration Paralegal/Case Writer for a PLC. Previously, she worked as a College Guidance Counselor in the Philippines. She is an active member of the Los Angeles Paralegal Association and an associate member of the National Association of Legal Assistants.

Joan earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Centro Escolar University in the



Joan Cerera

Philippines.

"Having been an immigrant myself, I admire how USC recognizes the rich talents and expertise a foreign national can contribute to programs in different fields. USC provides an equal opportunity to acquire a world class education and opens doors for qualified and highly skilled foreign nationals, allowing them to share the skills and knowledge they have acquired from their native land.

"I love knowing that in my own little way, I am instrumental to the University achieving its globalization goals. I am happy to be able to make a difference in the lives of foreign nationals as I assist them navigate the maze of acquiring work visas and permanent residency."



Iran Carranza

Lands of Beauty and Wonder: U.S. National Parks

By Winnie Lai, J-1 Program Assistant

My first time visiting a National Park was three years ago on a road trip from New York to Los Angeles. Never before had I imagined myself in a park larger and more beautiful than New York's Central Park. I suppose this is the result of being born and raised in a big city.

My family and I had planned this road trip to consist of only one national park, Grand Canyon National Park. If you've ever been to the Grand Canyon you probably understand how captivating the sight of such a vast, beautiful canyon is. I was amazed at how utterly large it is. At the North Rim of the canyon there was a choice between hiking and horseback riding. Not knowing at the time that horseback riding was available, we decided to set out on a two-to-four mile hike. This was the first real hike I'd ever done. It was rather tiring but definitely worth it. Along the way, we met a few hikers who had been in the canyon for days. They'd come from the South Rim and were making their way across the entire canyon. Being a city-girl I could not understand how someone could spend all those days out in the "wild" but I respected them for their bravery and dedication.

The Grand Canyon was breathtaking, but it was not until we discovered Zion National Park that I really got "hooked" on parks. The discovery of Zion was the best mistake we've ever made. After leaving the Grand Canyon my family and I began driving towards Las Vegas, our next stop. On the way, we made a wrong turn and ended up



Winnie Lai at Bryce Canyon

in Utah for much longer than planned. Our headlights provided visibility for a couple feet in front of us but other than that, there was very little light coming from any other source (it must have been a new moon). Almost suddenly the road turned from black to red and began to twist and turn very dramatically. At one point we made a complete 180 degree turn, as if making a U-turn at an intersection, around some dimly visible mountain. This mountain and these roads turned out to be the most beautiful park I'd seen so far, given I'd only seen one other park at this point I did not have many other experiences to base this decision on. That night we came across Springdale, the nearby town. Instead of driving to Vegas and spending the night there, we decided to spend the night in this little town and explore the marvels of what we would discover in the morning. Zion National Park was the most beautiful thing I have

ever seen (this was before I stepped foot in Bryce, Canyonlands, or Kings Canyon). And that morning, I gave my heart to Utah.

Zion's beauty is so magnificent it can never fully be expressed by any words or photos. It is a beauty that can only be understood through experience. For those with some familiarity with Judeo-Christian scriptures Zion was the hill on which the Jewish people once built their temple, the place where God was said to have lived. It is no misnomer that this particular park was named Zion. It was so magnificent, the founders (most likely Christian or Mormon) probably thought, "this is a place so beautiful God would come here for vacation." After we did some hiking in Zion, we headed off to our next stop, Las Vegas. Las Vegas is the epitome of the exact opposite of a national park. In comparison with Zion, Vegas was simply dull and dirty.

See PARKS, p. 11.

Dixon Johnson: Celebrating 24 Years at USC

Continued from p. 1.

sively utilized and every little park or plaza having a name. This was very different from Tennessee where there were large stretches of unutilized land. That openness and spread-outness was just taken for granted, but it also meant that students, faculty and staff were more spread out from each other on campus. By contrast, since most everyone connected with the University at Knoxville lived in close proximity to one another, it was easier to become close friends with colleagues. In Los Angeles, I quickly learned the term “geographically undesirable,” this of course relating to the reality that if someone you really connected with on a personal level lived more than 10 to 15 miles away from where you lived, that distance would make it a

big challenge to spend large amounts of casual time together. I have some long-term good friends in Los Angeles, who I see maybe 3 to 4 times a year because they live so many miles away. I learned that this was quite normal in Los Angeles. I

think my wife, Carrie Jo, and I have never quite adjusted to that. I’m not so sure that anyone really adjusts to that happily.

But the weather – that was certainly an easy adjustment. To be able to be outdoors 12 months out of

the year to play golf, or ride bikes along the beach or go hiking – year round – now that’s the life!

JH: When did you first decide you wanted to pursue a career in international education?

DJ: After finishing coursework for a Ph.D. at the University of Oregon, I won a grant to do research on international education at the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii. There, I conducted a field study interviewing University of Oregon alumni who were now residing in Asia. My wife, Carrie Jo, and I traveled to Taiwan, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Hong-Kong, Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia to interview these alums.

It was this experience that made me realize that I had a real passion for things international, for learning about the similarities and differences between peoples and the importance of international education in bringing people together.

JH: Having spent 24 years at USC, you’ve seen our international students through quite a few national crises, can you talk about these?

DJ: Well, the first big event, which was not really a crisis, was the

Dixon was one of the first people to welcome me to USC. We have continued to collaborate and discuss international student health issues for more than 20 years. He is always personable, professional and caring of his colleagues and students.

– Brad King, Director, USC Student Counseling Services

hosting of the 1984 Olympics. I had been in Los Angeles only a short time, but had certainly learned the hazards of being in the wrong place at the wrong time on the LA freeway system. I remember there being a lot of nervousness about traffic congestion, and the possibility of the city coming to a halt – but I also remember the intensive planning and public relations education that took place in the many months preceding the Olympics. Not surprisingly Los Angeles actually had a very “quiet” summer that year in terms of traffic, because people actually listened and prepared. Many left the city and many took public transportation instead of using their cars, and the freeways were actually more free than they have been at any point I can remember either before or after the Olympics.

The time of the Los Angeles riots which occurred in 1991 after the “not guilty” verdicts were announced in the case of Rodney King vs. the LAPD, and the Northridge Earth-

Dixon’s concern for students and his worry about whatever changes might impact them let you know that with him this is personal, and not just a job. He has a wonderful attitude towards life and even sang the role of Elvis (wig and all) during the International Students’ Assembly International Night.

– Hudhail Al-Amir, Director, USC Testing Bureau

See DIXON, p. 10.

Don't Wait...Attend an OIS Tax Workshop!

Continued from p. 2.

Please note, that ALL non-residents and their dependents who were here during tax year 2006 must file Form 8843 which is used to claim non-resident status with the U.S. government.

If you arrived in the United States AFTER January 1st of this year (2007) or earned no income during the 2006 year, you would not have any earned any taxable income. However, your USC scholarships/fellowships may have been considered taxable. If they were, you will receive a **Form 1042S** from USC.

Also, non-residents are not eligible to file their taxes electronically (E-file) but must print and sign hard copies to mail-in.

The following are a few guidelines that will help you to get organized:

1. Determine if your country has a tax treaty with the United States

The United States government has signed tax treaties with many countries which would provide tax exemptions for foreign nationals who are in the United States. These treaties can apply to both wages earned and/or scholarships and fellowships. For example, a Chinese citizen's wages earned up to \$5,000 during 2006 would be exempt due to the current tax treaty with the U.S. and a South Korean's wages would be up to \$2000. Please note that no tax treaty exists between India and the U.S., so all wages earned in 2006 are taxable.

In order to claim any exemptions, you must file Form 8233 with

the U.S. government otherwise you are not eligible. **Form 8233** and the list of country treaties and amounts are available at OIS, STU 300. For additional country information, please go to: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/international/article/0,,id=96739,00.html>.

In regards to scholarships and fellowships, if you DID NOT receive a **Form 1042S** from USC, your scholarships/fellowships were not considered taxable. If you were taxed, please consult the list of scholarship amount exemptions under tax treaties to see if you can claim any or all as exempt from federal taxes.

Please note, these exemptions only apply to FEDERAL taxes. All non-residents are subject to paying STATE taxes. Federal tax treaties do not apply at the state level.

2. Obtain the correct tax forms

The federal (IRS) form is the **1040NR-EZ** (short form) or **1040NR** (long form). The long form is used if you have itemized deductions, dependents to claim or received a **Form 1099** from your bank which shows interest earned. The state form for California is **Form 540NR**. If you earned income in another state during tax year 2006, you must also file a return for that state. These forms would be posted at the "State Government" websites.

As stated earlier, international students, scholars, faculty, staff and their dependents must file **Form 8843** regardless of whether or not you have worked during the year 2006. **Form 8843** must be com-

pleted and filed individually by the principle visa holder and each dependent. Its purpose is to report non-resident status for tax reporting purposes.

3. Gather all of your tax documents and prepare them

Gather all of the tax documents you may need to file your taxes and use the instructions booklets or attend the OIS tax workshops. Make sure you have received all your anticipated tax reporting forms (W-2, 1099, etc.) before you begin since you may need to combine information from several. After filling them out, make copies of ALL the forms and documents for your records, in case you need to resubmit them or refer back to them in the future.

4. Software

For those of you who would like to do your own taxes, you can purchase software such as TurboTax or H&R Block Tax. Again, non-residents cannot E-file (electronically file) tax forms but will need to print them, fill them out and mail them as hard copies to the federal and state governments.

Software packages tend to cost approximately \$30-50 at stores such as Best Buy.

Again, the staff of the Office of International Services is not trained or licensed to answer questions concerning your tax situation or offer any tax related advice. USC students and scholars should consult tax professionals for specific tax advice or attend the scheduled workshops.

Dixon Johnson: Through Times of National Crisis

Continued from p.8.

quake of 1994 were all events where the University and the Office of International Services needed to be particularly concerned for and take some extraordinary measures to ensure the safety and security of all our students. The Gulf War under the first Bush Administration caused us to be particularly concerned for our international students, especially those students from the Middle East.

There were very few troubling incidents in which Middle Eastern students were harassed on and about campus, but these were addressed swiftly in a series of Town Hall Meetings and educational seminars across campus and in the residence halls. OIS sponsored a State of the World Seminar in which students from Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon discussed the conflict and educated the campus community about their different perspectives. Their highly informed, reasoned, and peaceful conversation helped to break a lot of stereotypes. Over 200 people attended, and the Los Angeles media needed to be kept out of the venue at the students' request.

After September 11, the University community faced some of the same challenges in terms of ensuring that international students felt

safe and secure in the U.S. and here in L.A. But, I really think we had learned a lot from the ways that we'd dealt with the fall out from the first Gulf War. Rabbi Laemmle, coordinated a remembrance and grieving ceremony the Friday after the

September 11 attacks in which students from all the different religious groups on campus came together on the stage of Bovard to bring us all together in our shared mourning and our shock. Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs and Hindus— we

all grieved together and shared our sense of horror and loss. OIS also sponsored a series of seminars in which students from a number of countries in the Middle East, as well as students from Europe and the US, spoke openly in panel discussions about the tragic event and about what it might mean for the future.

JH: Whew, that's a lot of important history. What has it been like to be a part of Student Affairs at USC, not only during these critical points, but in the past 24 years

you've been here?

DJ: I've been blessed to work with and for very good people in my years here, Jim Dennis and Michael Jackson, both of whom recognize the unique role of the Office of International Services within the Division of Student Affairs. There's been the recognition that while we take care of students' needs in terms of their legal status, we are also a staff that has expertise and commitment to educational and cultural programming that contributes to the whole campus community. People who get involved in education, at any level, do so because it is a true calling—a way to live out one's ideals. I've been very fortunate to work with the staff I've worked with in my career in international education—people who are not only committed, but are called. They believe in the benefits of international education, and the potential for all students to become citizen diplomats around the globe, people who can give us all hope for a

future where conflict can be dealt with in new and creative ways, and world peace is a true possibility. I have no doubt that the quality of service we have achieved here will only improve in the future and that USC will continue to be nationally and internationally

recognized as a leader in international education.

When I think of Dixon Johnson, I think of a very humble "servant." I am very aware of him helping many international students even with issues as seemingly small as getting linens and bedding after the issue of finding housing had been solved.

— Don Ludwig, Director, USC Recreational Sports

I think Dixon has given more than could have ever been expected to our international students — helping them with everything from temporary cash flow problems to finding a place to live.

— Diane Kenney, Director, United Ministry at USC

Across Utah, Land of Wonders

Continued from p. 7.

For years I dreamt of revisiting those canyons and discovering new ones. I took a couple of trips up to Yosemite but it wasn't the same. Yosemite is beautiful, but for me the canyons are where my heart is. Last summer my family and I set out to do another trip, this time cross-Utah instead of cross-country. We went from San Francisco to Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia, Zion, Bryce Canyon, Capitol Reef, Arches, Canyonlands, and Great Basin National Park. This was one of the most amazing trips I've ever been on. Although we spent a good five days on the road, I have yet to see anywhere close to all the wonders of these parks or the surrounding areas. I can visit a national park multiple times and each time would be a different experience. In each visit, I have discovered something new, walked another path.

This semester my friends and I drove to Death Valley, about three hours east of Los Angeles. We were only there for one day, but just being in a national park is so refreshing. I suppose it doesn't necessarily have to be in the park itself but there's something about being out in nature where things are indeterminable and beauty is all you can see. It calms my soul. When surrounded by beauty, I can only think about how wonderful everything is. People and things don't bother me. Material possessions don't entice me. When I am in such a beautiful place, the only thing that can hold my attention is beauty itself. Whether it is a mountain, trees, sand dunes or canyons, this beauty is all encompassing, and all fulfilling. This, I



Death Valley, just 200 miles north east of Los Angeles

suppose, is the reason why I love national parks so much. It gives me a reason, better than any reason I have ever found anywhere else, to believe this world is a beautiful place. It reminds me why things like money and possessions aren't worth trading my dreams for.

California, Utah, and Arizona all have wonderful parks within driving distance from Los Angeles. I

share this with you in hopes that you too will visit the vast wonders America has to offer. Not only are we a land of business and commerce, of big cities and beautiful suburbs, but we are also a land of beauty and nature, a land full of wonders and new places to discover each day.

Winnie Lai is a junior majoring in Psychology at USC.

International Connection

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The University of Southern California International Connection is published four times a year by the Office of International Services.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome. Please contact us at ois@usc.edu.

Spring 2007 Calendar

March 9	OPT Workshop	9-10:00am	TBA
March 13	OPT Workshop	3-4:00pm	TBA
March 16	OPT Workshop	9-10:00am	TBA
March 20	OPT Workshop	3-4:00pm	TBA
March 23	OPT Workshop	9-10:00am	TBA
March 23	Tax Workshop	3-5:00pm	THH101
March 25	International Diners' Club: Ireland	4-7:00pm	Leavey
March 28	SOW: Emerging China - Friend or Foe	5:00pm	Doheny Intellectual Commons
March 28	OGL Application Deadline	4:00pm	STU300
March 31	LA Today: Horseback riding	TBA	TBA
April 5	Tax Workshop	3-5:00pm	THH101
April 20	International Graduation Reception	3-5:00pm	Radisson Hotel
May 11	124th Annual Commencement	8:30am	Alumni Park

For more information on additional OPT workshops or other workshops and events, please visit our Web site at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/>

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