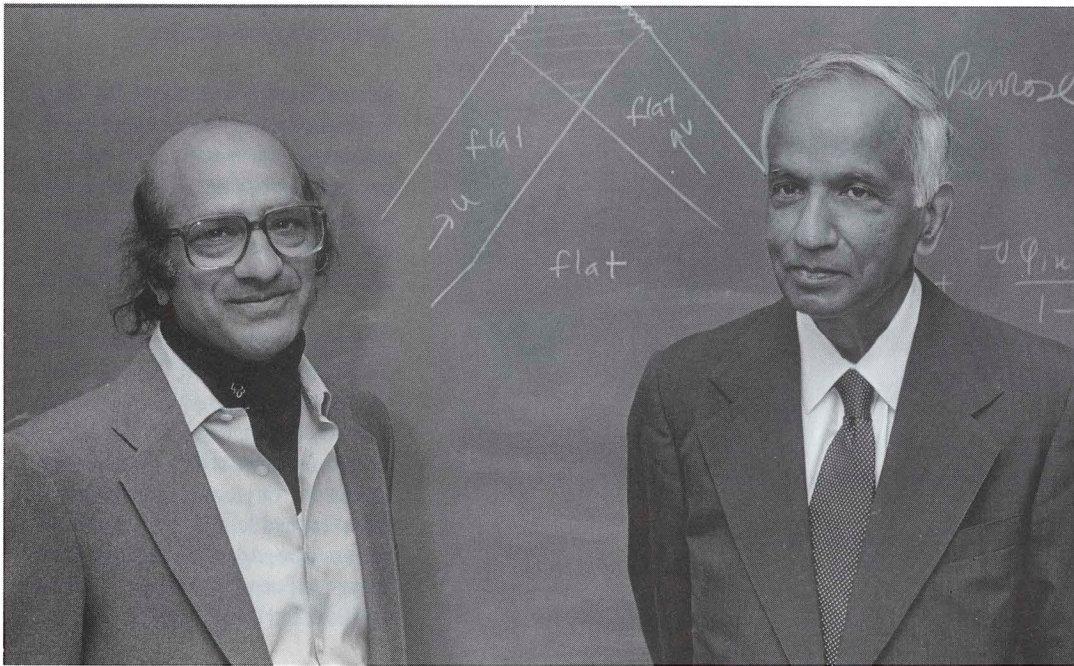




Role Model

Kameshwar Wali took the time to acknowledge a hero.



In 1984, Kameshwar Wali (left) brought Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar to campus for the University Lecture Series. Wali has since sponsored "Chandra," a Nobel laureate in theoretical astrophysics and mathematics, for an honorary degree at Syracuse, which he received in 1987.

America, where opportunities were less hindered by racial prejudice. "I don't think there was any Indian who was given a permanent job, in those years, in any of the British universities such as Cambridge or Oxford," says Wali.

Chandra had joined the faculty of the University of Chicago. Over time, calculations he had done in England on the collapsed states of massive stars—work that led to the discovery of black holes—entered the fundamental body of astrophysical knowledge. (Later, that work would earn him the Nobel Prize.)

For Wali, the most

important thing about Chandra was not his success, but his departure. To remain in India in 1930—or in 1955, when Wali faced a similar choice—doomed one to scientific mediocrity, Wali says. The lack of a supportive scientific culture and the rivalries, in-fighting, and stifling bureaucracy of India assured it.

"Chandrasekhar was one of the few Indians I came to know of then who had sustained activity in science," Wali remembers. "That was a great influence on me. I felt it was very good that he stayed abroad." Wali also left India, never to reside there again.

Wali can describe in great detail his first few encounters with Chandra, and the extreme self-consciousness he brought to them. He can tell you how, when living in the same neighborhood as Chandra, he would cross a street rather than meeting Chandra, for fear of saying the wrong thing.

Over time, as Wali's own stature grew,

Late in July 1930, a young Indian scientist arrived in Bombay to board the ship that would take him to England, where, on a government scholarship, he planned to study at Cambridge. His name was Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, and he had every reason not to go.

For nearly two years, his mother had been seriously ill, and her condition continued to worsen. "You must go," she told him. "You must pursue your ideals to the utmost." But he knew if he boarded that ship he would never see her again.

Worse, if his studies were successful, he would join a circle of eminent theoretical physicists whose sphere did not and could not include India. In all likelihood, he would never return to live in his homeland. Among Hindus, this abandonment was tantamount to treason. Chandrasekhar knew his father, among others, might never forgive him.

Since his early teens, though, Chandrasekhar believed the most important goal he could ever pursue was science. So he got on the ship and sailed to England—a decision that still matters very much to Kameshwar Wali.

Today, Wali is a member of SU's faculty and an elementary-particle physicist of note. As a member of a later generation of Indian scientists, he has never forgotten the beacon that Chandrasekhar represented to him. Last year, his biography of Chandrasekhar was published by the University of Chicago Press—a testimonial to that respect.

By the time Wali was a graduate student at Banaras Hindu University in the early fifties, he'd begun to hear the legend.

"Chandra" had excelled at Cambridge. In 1933 he had become only the second Indian to receive a Trinity College fellowship. Then, in 1935, he had moved to

his meetings with Chandra were less intimidating, and an association grew. In the mid-seventies, he became fascinated with an infamous and mysterious attack on Chandra's work by one of Chandra's own mentors, the world-renowned physicist Sir Arthur Eddington. "This was a singular case," Wali says of the 1935 incident, "in the sense that Eddington just demolished [Chandra's work] without any reason." Chandra weathered the public embarrassment of Eddington's attack. Rather than further engaging Eddington, whose influence was enormous, Chandra shifted the emphasis of his research and carried on to other discoveries.

Wali interviewed Chandra in 1977 for an article about the Eddington incident, but it didn't end there. Wali became intrigued by the many personal sacrifices Chandra had made in pursuit of science, and he requested more interviews. He traveled to Chicago to pore over piles of Chandra's letters. He spoke with family members and former students of Chandra, now 81. The result was the biography titled, *Chandra*.

Chandra, as Wali himself describes it, is an attempt to humanize a paragon. "You know, most people think about great scientists, such as Chandra or Einstein, never thinking of their humanness. We always glorify them to such an extent that we don't think that they have normal desires." Dissolving that barrier was a goal of Wali's book.

Owing to the thoroughness of his research and the long letters Chandra wrote throughout his travails, Wali was able to reconstruct portions of Chandra's life in almost daily detail. While recounting Chandra's scientific challenges and accomplishments, Wali also relates his great homesickness at Cambridge, his bouts with racial discrimination, mixed emotions about the nationalist movement in India, and Chandra's futile attempts to find palatable vegetarian cuisine in London.

Wali says it was worthwhile to steal time from his own research to write a straightforward biography of a colleague. For scientists, it is a glimpse behind a legend. For others, it is a reminder that scientists are human.

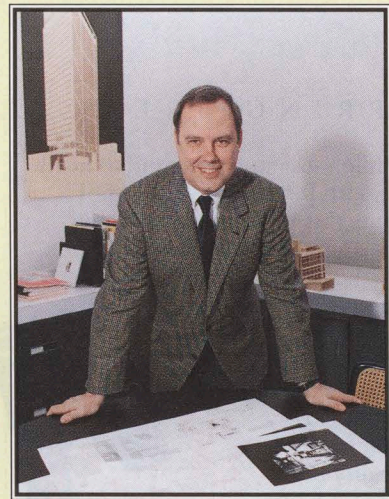
And, for those who know Kameshwar Wali, it is also confirmation that scientists sometimes have heroes.

—DANA L. COOKE

ACCORDING TO PLAN

To hear Bruce Abbey tell it, success comes easily to SU's School of Architecture, of which he has been dean for two years. Despite the ebb and flow of the construction markets, there are always aspiring architects. The mix of interests and aptitudes that produces an architect is so unusual that fate is irreversible. Provide a sound and serious education, Abbey says, and the students will enroll.

Well, maybe. But we knew that the school must be doing something right. Architecture has emerged as one of those beacon programs on which SU is staking its reputation. So we sought Abbey out. He struck us as being very much like his school: committed, quiet, thoughtful, and, above all, purposeful.



Dean of Architecture Bruce Abbey

We assume that architecture, as a profession, is going through hard times.

There are already signs that we are coming out of the recession. It may never again reach the boom time of the eighties, when everybody was building office space everywhere, but serious practices will survive and grow and develop.

This is a good time to be in school, as a matter of fact, because by the time people are out of the five-year cycle and graduate, things are presumably going to be much healthier.

How has the school been able to stay strong during what are generally hard times?

Probably there are three major issues that contribute to the school maintaining its competitive edge. One of them is the fact that we offer an education based in a very specific place, Slocum Hall. Every student has a desk. Every student has a home. This is a place and a program with which you can identify. You have a sense of certainty about what you're studying and why you're studying it.

Second, the faculty teaches very hard. Faculty members have contact hours in class upwards of 20 hours a week, including studio time. Students know that they're getting very personalized attention, or as much as we can give them.

And, thirdly, we recruit very hard. We send faculty out. . . . And we require a portfolio interview of every applicant. So it's very personalized and we try to get to the biggest market we can.

It doesn't hurt that we have the Florence program through DIPA, where most of the fourth-year students, if they can, will either do a semester or a year. And the reputation of the school keeps grow-

ing because of past efforts, it keeps building on itself as a place of excellence.

You don't foresee any large changes in the school over the next five years or so?

We've made technical changes in the curriculum. Fine-tuning has taken place. We are going to spend the next year discussing content and how courses relate to each other. That's the end of my first three-year phase of getting us talking and thinking and acting, enlarging the sense of purpose for the school. As part of the restructuring process, we are expanding the graduate program and we will be expanding the faculty modestly to accommodate that growth. So we will be slightly bigger and slightly more oriented toward graduate education than we have been in the past.

What are the alumni saying about the school?

I have spent a reasonable amount of time in my first two years meeting with alumni all over the country, and they're very interested in what this school is doing and how it is developing—what I might do to alter the percepts of their education. . . .

The younger ones certainly don't want to see anything done that would harm the value of their education, or the reputation of their degree. And I've had alumni from 15 to 20 years ago tell me how wonderful it is that the school has improved so greatly in the past decade, such that they're very proud of their Syracuse degree. These are both very good news and cautionary tales, I suppose. I certainly have no interest in doing anything that runs counter to their expectations. —D.L.C.