Success by Degrees

All of the 5,100 who received degrees at SU's 131st Commencement in May had reason to celebrate, but every graduating class contains a few special graduates, for whom the victory is extra sweet. The Class of 1985 was no exception.

Ingeborg Klink Klemperer fulfilled a 50-year-old dream when she received her doctorate in medieval German poetry. It was a goal that the 74-year-old mother of four and grandmother of 13 "had planned for when I was in my 20s."

Klemperer had begun her academic career as a medical student in Germany during the rise of the Nazis but came to the United States with her husband in 1934 as a political refugee. She taught German department as a teaching assistant and began working on her doctorate. She completed her dissertation last August and took part in Commencement as the Graduate School marshal.

Marlene Bortoff and her son, Scott, made graduation a family affair. Marlene completed a degree program in management that she had begun 25 years ago at the University of Illinois, and Scott earned his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.

That coincidence prompted a friendly family rivalry about grades. Entering final exams, Mom was carrying an outstanding 3.91 cumulative average (of a possible 4.0), but still trailed Scott's staggering 3.99.

Marlene is also an example of the working person who pursues education during spare hours. She is employed as senior administrator to SU’s vice chancellor for academic affairs, and earned her degree while shuttling back and forth from home to work, work to class, and class to work, enrolling each semester in two University College courses. "It really ties up your weekend," she adds. "I try to go to Syracuse Stage, basketball games, and to jog. There's no extra time beyond that."

Both Bortoffs plan to further their education. Scott plans to continue as a University graduate fellow in engineering, and Marlene wants to continue her academic career just for the sheer fun of it.

Patrick Magari also completed a lifetime of academic work in 1985, but unlike Ingeborg Klemperer or Marlene Bortoff, he did it all in four years. Magari earned simultaneous bachelor's degrees in electrical, mechanical, and aerospace engineering, graduating with a 3.96 average. According to faculty members, no one at SU has completed that sort of triple degree in engineering in at least 15 years, if ever.

Magari's academic career has been decorated with a variety of honors, including the departmental awards for outstanding achievement by a freshman and by a sophomore and the Best All-Around Senior award. He was one of 12 undergraduates honored as University Scholars at Commencement.

Even so, SU hasn't occupied all of Magari's time. He is the designer of a super-modified race car that was among the top six at nearby Oswego Speedway last year. "It's a matter of adjusting a lot of nuts and bolts in the right combination," is how Magari describes his role at the track.

Magari will continue his studies at SU next year as a graduate research assistant, part of a NASA-funded project to study heat-transfer programs in gas turbines.

Talking Sex

Sol Gordon, professor of child and family studies, has packed more than 400 students into his human sexuality class each semester for more than a decade. Beginning this summer, though, he'll be seeking even larger audiences: He has retired from the faculty in order to convert his part-time role as public educator into a full-time mission.

Any devotee of TV news magazines and talk shows knows that Gordon has long been a popular advocate for sex education. In dozens of appearances, he has offered a set of simple, although invariably controversial, messages: knowledge is not harmful, sex is never a test of love, and good parents should educate their children about sexuality.

Now Gordon is launching what he has calls a full-time political mission—a battle against conservative views on family issues. Certainly, more controversy lies ahead.

Most recently, Gordon made headlines when the Jenison, Mich., superintendent of public schools banned a scheduled talk by Gordon to high school students. In response, several hundred students marched, demanding that Gordon have the right to speak. After receiving a petition signed by 600 students and supported by dozens of parents, the board of education reversed the decision, and Gordon spoke.

"I felt very encouraged," Gordon says of the Jenison incident. "Democracy is alive; a little sickly, but latent and alive in places as conservative as Jenison."

Free Press

Alumnus Arun Shourie was back on campus this spring, considerably better known than when he left in 1966 with a doctorate in economics. He has since earned an international reputation for investigative journalism—one that made worldwide headlines early in this decade.

Shourie earned his renown while executive editor of the Indian Express, for which he wrote a series of exposes on corruption in Indira Gandhi's ruling party. The series resulted in the ousting of one of the late prime minister's most power-
ful allies, and led to Shourie's designation as 1982 International Editor of the Year by World Press Review. The exposes also resulted in Shourie's firing and blacklisting.

But that hasn't stopped him. "India is a free country," he said during a Maxwell School lecture on campus in April. "I have my freedom of speech."

Living in New Delhi, Shourie continues to write about politics, but on a freelance basis. He no longer works full time, because, he says, he hasn't been able to find a perch that will give him the freedom he wants.

Shourie also discussed current politics in India—his favorite topic—describing conditions under Rajiv Gandhi as "on the mend despite the government."

Sport Court

In an eighth-grade classroom in Syracuse, the Denver Broncos and Cincinnati Bengals replayed a game that had first taken place in 1973 in Mile High Stadium. Actually, former SU defensive end Blaise Winter was the only pro player on either roster; the rest were the 13- and 14-year-olds of Chestnut Hill Middle School.

Winter, back on campus this spring to complete his bachelor's degree, was participating in Project Legal, an ongoing, federally-funded SU program designed to better integrate legal history and theory into public school social studies classes.

He and the students reenacted an actual malicious hit that had followed an interception during the 1973 game (the classroom hits were imaginary, of course, and no one came away with so much as a bruise). Then the students were divided into three groups, one representing the plaintiff's attorney, one the defense, and one the judge. Winter and project director James Carroll advised the students on relevant legal details, asking them to decide whether an injury among professional athletes could be brought to legal action.

Carroll wanted an athlete to help him "reach students who might not be motivated by social studies and teach them the law through a setting that'll attract them." He contacted Winter, a starting lineman with the Indianapolis Colts, who was happy to help.

"It's important to get the concept across," says Winter, who will begin just his second NFL season this fall. "Everything in life has different sides. If you're in sports, it's more than just the game. You've got to know about things like contracts and insurance."

The students, although thrilled by Winter's presence, ruled against him. Seven out of 10 "minicourts" created by the students found that the angered intended receiver, played by Winter, was in fact liable for the injuries inflicted on their classmate, little Bill Davis, who had dared to intercept.

Picture Perfect

Joe McNally, '74, '76 was chosen to photograph a 22-page color spread in a Feb. 18 issue of Sports Illustrated for two reasons: He is an excellent photographer and he was "just like those kids" in the story.

The subject of the photo essay—which was of rare length even for SI—was Indiana basketball.

"Where there are boys in Indiana," the story reads, "there will always be basketballs, and goals, either real or imagined."

The same was apparently true of McNally. As a junior varsity guard at Iona Prep in New Rochelle, N.Y., he recalls, "I spent an awful lot of time on the bench, but basketball was what I really lived for." At SU, McNally was an intramural all-star and played semi-pro ball during a semester of study in England. He still hits the hoops near his home in New York City when he gets the chance.

McNally approached the SI assignment believing that the greatest common denominator among all the magazine's readers is their experience in high school sports. "I just tried to approach it from an angle that everyone would have a relationship with sports on a high school level and remember what they were about and would feel the same things looking at those pictures that I remember," he says.

In the midst of the hysteria over hoops in the Hoosier State, one coincidence arose. Bobby Knight, the basketball coach at Indiana University and a predominant figure in Indiana basketball today, had been a coach at a summer camp that McNally attended two decades ago, long before Knight had achieved national prominence.

"Even then he was tough," McNally remembers.

Indianapolis Colt Blaise Winter was back in Syracuse this spring.
Bear Watch

Cathryn Newton, assistant professor of geology, is probably the only SU researcher whose fieldwork tools include a bear rifle.

Newton's research takes place in the most remote sections of Alaska, where she is attempting to answer age-old questions about the history of life on Earth. Alaska is the base of her study of fossils and her search for information about mass extinctions, such as the one that wiped out the dinosaurs millions of years ago.

"Alaska is made up of a series of geological terrains that have subsided rapidly during the last 240 million years. A record of the fossils' lives has been preserved more completely than in many parts of the world," she explains.

The stories of her work's dangers are not contrived. Bears pose so great a threat that the three or four assistants who accompany Newton on her yearly expedition are required to have some degree of expertise in the use of a shotgun, and one member of the team is always on "bear watch."

Nor is the research without a lot of hard work. In the summer, the project, which she began as a doctoral candidate at the University of California in Santa Cruz, involves hours of hauling five-pound sledge hammers, geology hammers, and chisels to the cold, rainy, and windy Wrangell Mountains in the southern part of the state. She and her assistants dig there for samples of limestone.

The hard work appears to have paid off, however. Her findings have led her to conclusions that shatter existing theories about marine invertebrate extinction in the Triassic period. She will publish her theory, which has been already enthusiastically received by the scientific community, and she has been invited to join the prestigious International Geological Correlation Programme. In addition, her research has garnered funding from several gas and oil companies for a $25,000 research project.

Scholar of The Unusual

If anyone can bring credibility to parapsychology, a field plagued by fraud and considered truly scientific by very few, it is Robert Morris, research associate in SU's School of Computer and Information Science. Or at least that's the reasoning at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, where Morris will become the Arthur Koestler Professor of Parapsychology this fall.

Morris will be the very first occupant of the Koestler chair, one of the few academic posts in the world—and certainly the most prominent—dedicated exclusively to the study of apparitions, poltergeists, psychics, and other paranormal phenomena. It is a research focus that few other scientists will touch, such are the doubts about it. (It is reported that both Oxford and Cambridge universities rejected the Koestler endowment, in fact, for fear that the post would damage their scientific reputations.)

Morris, the chairman of the International Parapsychological Association, has transcended the stigma by conducting his research at SU in a "low-key" fashion and, he says, by making only claims that he can back up. He has earned a reputation as a cautious and rigorous researcher, and maintains a radically objective attitude toward his area of expertise.

Morris sees his appointment as an opportunity both to continue his research and to help debunk the negative image of his field. He describes himself as "neutral but friendly" to the paranormal.

"It is likely that there's something out there," he says, "but it also could be the case that there isn't."

Keys to Success

Anyone who wins the annual Crouse School of Music Concerto Competition is obviously an up-and-coming musician—unless, of course, he is already at the top.

The 1985 winner, Shi-guang Cui, was, until last year, at the top of the musical establishment in China. He had served as principal pianist and composer for the People's Republic of China Central Philharmonic Orchestra since 1978, but left that position last August to enroll in SU's School of Music.

The reason for his move is obviously not career advancement. "It doesn't make any difference professionally whether I come here or not," Cui says of his unusual decision. "It only makes a difference for myself—for me as a person to experience and to learn more."

Cui, who has recorded performances and traveled extensively throughout Europe and Asia, chose Syracuse on the recommendation of an SU grad who is a fellow musician in Beijing, China. His goal here, he said, is to study American composers, "to feel the spirit of American contemporary music," and to write an American concerto, which he would like to present to a Syracuse audience before taking it home to Beijing, where his wife and daughter live.

Thus far, his favorite American composers include Aaron Copland and Sam Berger. He has also developed an interest in Christian spirituals. "Though they are simple musically," he says, "they express so much emotion."

Capital Way To Learn

Behind every good public representative is an office full of energetic and devoted aides, whose efforts on behalf of pending legislation are as important as the sponsor's signature. SU student Taryn Chapman had a chance to serve on such a team this spring, via the New York Assembly Intern Program.

Based in Albany for a semester, Chapman, a political science major, watched first-hand as veteran lawmakers promoted and defended the interests of their constituents. She participated in the daily operations of Assemblywoman Cynthia Jenkins' office, attended commit-
Madeline Reamy Patchen is director of Atlanta's Uncle Remus museum.

Songs of the South

At first glance there's little about Madeline Reamy Patchen '78 that leads naturally to her current assignment. This "young woman, born, raised, and educated in New York State and given to a lot of newfangled ideas" (as one local paper put it), is the new director of the Joel Chandler Harris house in Atlanta, an institution as decidedly Southern as the works of fiction it commemorates. Harris was the author of the Uncle Remus tales.

Patchen was attracted to the Wren's Nest, the name of Harris' home, "because of the potential I saw in it as a major historical resource for the city of Atlanta. I saw the house as a fascinating late 19th-century structure representing a certain facet of Atlanta history." Her instinct is proving sound. Since she took over the Wren's Nest, membership in the Joel Chandler Harris Association has quintupled.

Certainly one reason Patchen won her job is her SU education in the relatively new and growing field of museology—museum studies and management. But despite her Northern upbringing, Patchen does have some connections to the Old South. For one thing, her parents lived in Georgia before moving north during the Depression. She has relatives throughout Georgia and "spent a lot of time visiting in old homes in the South as a child," she says.

And, back in New York, a good family friend was one Remus Harris, an advertising copywriter and music publisher who was also the author's grandson. "Isn't it a coincidence that Remus Harris was a good friend of my father in New York?" she says.

Local Lyrics

Hayden Carruth, poet and SU professor of English, departs from the faculty this year to return to his writing, taking on a part-time teaching position at Bucknell University. He leaves behind, though, a special position of his six years in Syracuse in the form of Asphalt Georgics, a new collection of poems, all set in regions near the Salt City.

When Hayden accepted his SU appointment in 1979, he abandoned an idyllic Vermont setting, where he was both writer and woodsman, and moved into a large apartment complex in suburban Liverpool. "I deliberately chose a place to live that was radically different from anything I had known before," he says. "I felt that my writing needed this sort of change."

Not surprisingly, those "radically different" locales figure prominently in many of his poems, which capture the central New York landscape, shopping malls, fast-food chains, and grocery stores in the dialect of the area. In order to depict that upstate dialect, Carruth has invented a new verse form—the "georgic"—composed of quatrains in strict syllables and rhyme:

we drove, past Hiawatha Plaza, Wegmans, Bayberry Mall, with all the other pieces of the strip strung in between. Friendly and Ponderosa looked o.k., but Carvel was dilapidated and Mister Donut had a hell of a big jagged hole through both sides of its glass sign... .

Carruth may be the first SU creative writing professor to use the region in his poems, and although the University is not mentioned, many familiar landmarks appear. The characters in one of the book's long poems move into the city and buy a small house "back of the Abe's Doughnut shack."