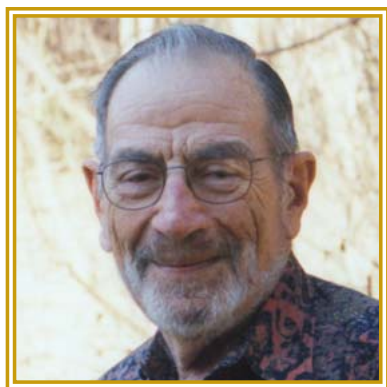


NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

at the UNC School of Public Health

Making a Difference: Okun provides scholarship gift to support promising engineering students in their studies



DR. DANIEL A. OKUN

Growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., Dr. Daniel A. Okun began his career at the early age of 12.

Okun, now Kenan professor emeritus of environmental engineering at the UNC School of Public Health, watched his father supervise the engineering of a massive tunnel to transport water from the Delaware River to New York City and its residents. Located about 600 feet below the city, the tunnel held a strong attraction for young Okun — an attraction that endured. He went on to become one of the world's premiere civil and sanitary engineers, collaborating on hundreds of water supply and sanitary engineering projects in some 90 countries worldwide.

Later in life, Okun said he took his young son to see a water tunnel in Connecticut. It must not have had the same effect, he said, laughing: "He's now a lawyer."

Okun's contributions to UNC

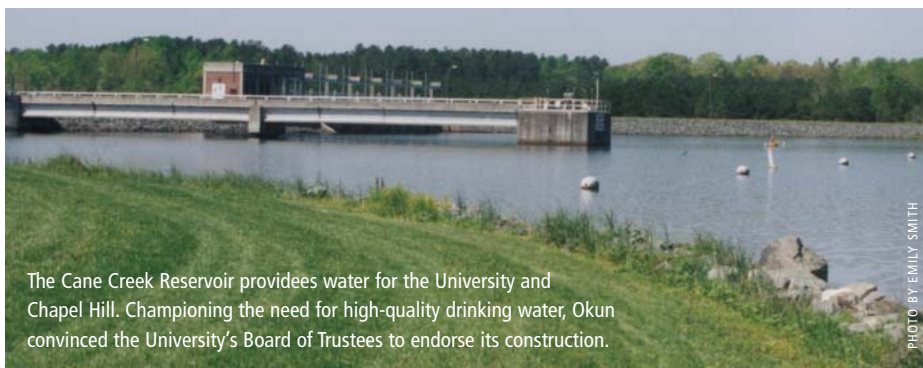
through the years have been substantial on multiple levels. He joined the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering faculty in 1952, serving as department chair from 1955 through 1973. Under his guidance, the department was transformed from a traditional sanitary engineering program into a prestigious environmental engineering program. He helped implement a departmental doctoral program and recruit faculty to the department, increasing the number of professors from three to 25.

Today, he remains active in departmental and professional activities — conducting research and lecturing under the banner of UNC, despite having "retired" in 1982. A world map in his home study is filled with 149 pins, each marking a location in which he has worked.

"Professor Okun has served and continues to serve as one of the leading global luminaries on environmental sciences and engineering issues related to

water and sanitation in developing countries, drinking water source selection, and water reuse," said Dr. Casey Miller, professor of environmental sciences and engineering at the UNC School of Public Health. "Additionally, he was the leading figure in the interdisciplinary development of our department, now regarded as one of the best programs worldwide in this area of scholarly endeavor."

Okun's departmental contributions and leadership extend beyond his chairmanship. Through the years, he also has provided generous financial support for the department. He and his wife Beth recently contributed \$200,000 to enhance the Dan Okun Scholarship Fund, established by alumni and friends upon his retirement. The scholarship is to recruit and support promising master's level environmental engineering students. Okun's recent contribution helps offset increases in tuition and living expenses that have occurred since the fund was established. Scholarship recipi-



The Cane Creek Reservoir provides water for the University and Chapel Hill. Championing the need for high-quality drinking water, Okun convinced the University's Board of Trustees to endorse its construction.

PHOTO BY EMILY SMITH

ents will now receive approximately \$20,000 a year.

“In order to recruit the best graduate students, we have to entice them just like they do in the basketball program,” Okun said. “We have to compete with the best schools to recruit the best candidates.”

Others also have given to the department in Okun’s name. In 1994, faculty colleagues and former students launched a campaign to establish an endowed professorship in his honor. Dr. Philip C. Singer now holds the position of Daniel A. Okun distinguished professor of environmental engineering, officially established in 1999.

When asked, Okun said he is most proud of his role in helping assure that UNC and the surrounding community of Chapel Hill would have a source of high-quality drinking water, adequate to supply the community’s burgeoning population.

In 1952, University Lake, was the only water supply for the town, and, by extension, the university, which owned the water system. However, the university was growing so fast, Okun realized a new water source would soon be needed.

“Dan’s gift helps continue an 80-plus-year tradition of engineering education at Carolina.”

At the time, the University’s Board of Trustees was making plans to obtain additional water from the Jordan Lake reservoir, under construction nearby. But water for this reservoir would receive wastewaters from large urban and industrial communities upstream, making it a poor drinking water source.

“I didn’t want to use the Jordan reservoir water,” Okun said. “It’s best to start with clean water.” Okun convinced the Board of Trustees to abandon Jordan Lake and endorse the construction of a new reservoir with a well-controlled watershed to prohibit development and maintain water purity. The Cane Creek Reservoir, as it came to be known, now holds four times the water of the city’s original source.

“It took time to build the dam, but now we are assured of having water of high quality for the foreseeable future,” Okun said, smiling.

With Okun’s recent gift to the department, the School can continue to recruit the most promising students to the engineering field.

“We are extremely grateful to Professor Okun for his continuing generosity,” said Miller, who served as chair of the department from 1999 through 2005. “His gift helps continue an 80-plus-year tradition of engineering education at Carolina.”

To contribute to the Okun Scholarship Fund, make check payable to “The School of Public Health” and designate “Okun Scholarship.” Mail gifts to the: UNC School of Public Health, Office of External Affairs, CB #7407, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7407. For additional information on the Dan Okun Scholarship, contact Charlotte Parks at (919) 966-7612 or charlotte_parks@unc.edu. ■

Maternal and Child Health Scholarship established in memory of School Alumna Dr. Katherine Ann Wildman



DR. KATHERINE ANN WILDMAN

Focused. Bright. Beautiful. Generous spirit. Fearless world traveler. Playful heart. Dr. Wildthing.

Those are a few of the words and phrases that friends and family use to describe Dr. Katherine Ann Wildman, a maternal and child health alumna of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s School of Public Health who died unexpectedly on Nov. 23, 2003, in her home in Paris. She was 35.

At the time, Katherine was working in an epidemiological research unit of the Institut national de la sante et de la recherche medicale (INSERM) on national indicators

to monitor European perinatal health. INSERM is a French governmental institution dedicated to biomedical and public health research. She leaves behind two young daughters, Savannah and Mireille; her husband, Geb Berry; her parents, Jack and Peggy; and a web of friendships that span the globe.

“Katherine was a shining example of what was best about our class. She brought to our program a wealth of experience, a commitment to women’s health, a love of learning and an openness to new ideas,” said Dr. Melissa McPheeters, a close friend of Katherine’s and a 1996 alumna of ▶▶

▶ the School's Department of Maternal and Child Health. "We really lost an important member of our community. She was phenomenal."

Katherine's example inspired family and friends to establish a scholarship in her memory. The Katherine Ann Wildman Memorial Scholarship in Maternal and Child Health goes to outstanding graduate students with a demonstrated commitment to the study of maternal and child health.

Gynaecology and the European Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology.

Katherine's interest in other cultures and the field of public health began early. High school friends remember her telling them that she wanted to live and work in Africa. And indeed, she did — moving to Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1990 following graduation from the University of Virginia where she earned a bachelor's degree in international relations. There, she lived and worked for 18

to her friendships," said Dr. David Becker, an alumnus of the School and a friend of Katherine's. "She had a very easy-going demeanor about her that engendered trust, and she was thoughtful and intuitive without being imposing."

McPheeters echoed these sentiments: "Part of what Kath did so beautifully was to meet every individual on their own path. She didn't ask the people she loved to be like her — she enjoyed them for who they were...She created safe space around each and every relationship she had."

Those wishing to make a contribution to Katherine's scholarship fund should make their checks out to "The School of Public Health." In the memo section, write "Katherine Wildman Scholarship." Mail gifts to the: UNC School of Public Health, Office of External Affairs, CB #7407, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7407. For additional information on the Katherine Ann Wildman Memorial Scholarship, contact Charlotte Parks at (919) 966-7612 or charlotte_parks@unc.edu. ■

"Part of what Kath did so beautifully was to meet every individual on their own path. She didn't ask the people she loved to be like her - she enjoyed them for who they were."

Emily Bobrow, the first recipient and a doctoral candidate in the Department of Maternal and Child Health, was awarded the \$1,000 scholarship for the 2005-2006 academic year at a departmental reception at the School's Fred T. Foard, Jr. Memorial Lecture last April. She plans to use it to support her dissertation fieldwork in Malawi where she is researching factors influencing whether pregnant HIV-infected women choose to participate in mother-to-child transmission research (and thereby disclose their HIV status — an act which often leads to violence or abandonment).

"This is a living memorial to Katherine and provides an opportunity to carry on the work that she was committed to," McPheeters said of the scholarship.

Katherine's focused belief in herself buoyed her through the rigor and exhilaration of academia. She earned her master's degree in maternal and child health from the School in 1996 and completed her doctorate in maternal and child health from UNC in 2001 soon after the birth of her first daughter. She went on to publish articles in scientific journals including the *British Journal of Obstetrics and*

months as a volunteer with Visions in Action, and afterwards, with friend Lucy Carlson, traveled throughout Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya.

After this trip, Katherine accepted a position at John Snow, Inc., where her reproductive health work regularly took her to Bangladesh and other developing countries.

"Katherine was unique in her focus and in her belief in what she was doing," said her brother, John. "She just always knew what she wanted to do."

Katherine's quiet determination was apparent to others even when she was a child, her father said.

"One Christmas when she was about seven or eight she received a pogo stick as a gift," he said. "She fell off it several times when first trying it out and after that, made the decision that she was going to practice it for 30 minutes every day and in less than two weeks time, there wasn't a thing she couldn't do with that pogo stick."

But it wasn't just Katherine's focused attention or her playful heart that endeared her to others. It was the way she appreciated and cherished her friends.

"Katherine was very committed and loyal

Create a scholarship and the opportunity of a life-time

Scholarships are critical for many students who want to come to Carolina. And they are essential for recruiting the brightest and most passionate students. An in-state graduate student pays \$5,875 a year for tuition, and one from out of state pays \$19,116 annually. When living expenses are added, the cost can be prohibitive or offers from other schools can look too good to refuse. The scholarships mentioned in this issue will help make it possible for generations of students to come to Carolina. You can create one, beginning at \$20,000 and give students the opportunity of a life-time. Contact Lyne Gamble at (919) 966-8368 or lyne_gamble@unc.edu.

Epidemiology alumna honored: Scholarship established in memory of 2004 Graduate Dr. Rebecca James Baker



DR. REBECCA JAMES BAKER

Dr. Rebecca Baker, beloved friend, colleague, wife and family member — and 2004 alumna of the UNC School of Public Health's Department of Epidemiology — died suddenly on Aug. 8, 2004, of a pregnancy-related heart condition. She was 33.

Rebecca's graduation from the School in May 2004 was the capstone of a distinguished academic career. After earning a bachelor's degree in biology from Brown University, she lived in Russia while teaching English. She returned to the United States to earn a master's degree in public health from Harvard University and then a doctorate from Carolina's School of Public Health. As part of her graduate work, she moved with her husband to the Czech Republic. When she died, she was working as a principal epidemiologist at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) in Research Triangle Park, N.C.

"Becca faced her life challenges with great confidence," her husband, Jeffrey Baker, said. "She had an amazing ability to weigh all points before making any decision, so there were no unforeseen circumstances to fear. She was always there for others, too — supporting friends with their decisions, and helping them conquer their fears."

Lynne Sampson, a UNC classmate of Rebecca's said, "Rebecca enlightened others with what she learned from the places she visited."

Rebecca's ability to enlighten and help others was demonstrated when she taught a

difficult methods class in the Department of Epidemiology as a doctoral student. She was known as a teaching assistant who would find a way to reach every student, no matter how much help was needed. Rachel Williams, a classmate and close friend, said, "Rebecca had a passion for learning and was a terrific teacher. She had the wonderful ability to reach her peers through her description and interpretation of the subject."

Rebecca's special interest was in environmental health, particularly how children are affected by pollution in Eastern Europe. "Rebecca cared about the 'big picture' of public health, and environmental and reproductive health exposures have this sort of broad impact," Hall said. Her work at GSK was in respiratory health. Many friends believe she would have gone on to become a professor one day.

energy and it made every conversation with her have more meaning."

In Rebecca's memory, friends, family and colleagues have created the Rebecca James Baker Scholarship in Epidemiology to benefit a student from her home department. The award will be given to "worthy doctoral students who have demonstrated commitment to the study of epidemiology" at the UNC School of Public Health.

"This scholarship is a tribute to her enthusiasm for epidemiology and the value she placed on education," Williams said. Sampson added, "It is a perfect way to remember her because her academic achievements were very important to her, but they had barely begun. A scholarship in her name will serve to help other students on that same journey, and she would have liked that."

In addition to her husband, she is survived

"She had the wonderful ability to reach her peers through her description and interpretation of the subject."

Beyond being an outstanding scholar and dedicated public health professional, Rebecca was known as a warm, devoted friend, cherished by those who knew her. Her funeral in Chapel Hill, N.C. was attended by members of her family, friends from early childhood, classmates from years at Brown, Harvard and UNC, associates from her international experiences, and new colleagues from GSK — who came to show their love and appreciation for her friendship. She was remembered as one whose incredible resourcefulness was strengthened by "dignity and kindness." As her husband's eulogy said so eloquently, "She was truly loved by all and she deserved every bit of that love. It wasn't just that she listened to people — she heard them; she gave them

by her mother, Mary Ellen James; her father, Jonathan James; her grandmother, Rose Quinto; and two brothers, Christopher and Nathan James. She also leaves several extended family members, and friends from all areas of her life.

Those wishing to make a contribution to Rebecca's scholarship fund should make their checks out to "The School of Public Health." In the memo section, write "Rebecca Baker Scholarship." Mail gifts to the: UNC School of Public Health, Office of External Affairs, CB #7407, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7407. For additional information on the Rebecca James Baker Memorial Scholarship, contact Charlotte Parks at (919) 966-7612 or charlotte_parks@unc.edu. ■