

# Center for Southeast Asian Studies End of the Year Program



**Wednesday, April 16, 2008**  
*4:00pm - 6:00pm*  
*1636 International Institute/SSWB*



## **Undergraduate Language Awards**

*Filipino - Claire Vergara*

*Indonesian - Takamichi Kono*

*Thai - Timothy Long*

*Vietnamese - Trang Ly Nguyen*

## **Moscotti Prize**

*Joel Selway*

## **Tribute to Judith Becker**

*On the occasion of her retirement*

## **Reception**

*International Institute Gallery*



*On the occasion of Judith Becker's professional retirement:*

First, hearty felicitations to Judith and best wishes to her for some hard-earned time off. It's impossible, though, to imagine Judith "retiring" in the sense of retreating from the world of ideas or intellectual debate, or of creativity, art and music. I know she will remain engaged in myriad ways, and wouldn't want it otherwise. That she won't have to deal with the administrative minutiae of professorship or dean-ship or SE Asia Center director-ship will only mean more time for the things that matter to her, I'm sure: family, ideas, contemplating the beauties of the world around her, but also engaging with pressing social issues here and around the world. For she is above all a person who *cares*.

Second, a few nostalgic, if generalized, notes that may help add to a composite picture that her students, former and current, and colleagues will attempt together. I remember Judith the teacher and scholar, of course. She was always a terrific teacher—clear, organized, curious, responsive; it was truly a journey of learning *together*, and it was always exciting when she was trying to work out ideas, theories, ways of understanding through her teaching. That's always the best kind. And her books and articles are well-known and still important, I'm sure, though probably I've been away from the field too long to make any pronouncements there. (Actually, I've kept close enough eye on academic publishing in ethnomusicology and on the anthropology of Southeast Asia to know that there aren't that many people writing nowadays who match her multifarious interests or boldness in combining music theoretical, historical, aesthetic and anthropological approaches, so actually her kind of scholarship is increasingly valuable by being rare.)

And she has always been a great mentor: probing, demanding, exacting when necessary; understanding, sympathetic, humane always.

And this leads me to the final point, which is to salute Judith as friend. I doubt that there are many professors/mentors who can so easily claim to have made lifelong friends of so many of their students. Though we haven't met in person in several years (last time in Burma, I think, a place she loved and whose people she tried so hard to help in small but useful ways) and I've been a terrible correspondent, too, I know that when we meet or write to each other, it will be like picking up the thread of a conversation with a dear friend where it left off. She is a loving, warm, kind and compassionate person who thinks first of all of other people. That empathy and warmth are the great gifts of knowing her and her beloved husband, Pete, who has always been a worthy inspiration to her and to all the many of us who count them both as *guru*, too. So, to my dear friend and teacher, again, congratulations!

~Alan Feinstein

## *A Tribute to Judith Becker*

My first contact with Judith Becker was in the fall of 1967, as a brash undergraduate psychology major at the University of Michigan seeking to find help in learning sitar. She kindly provided a referral; nonetheless, within a matter of weeks I found myself turning from Hindustani ragas to join the new UM Javanese gamelan ensemble. How could I not? Buoyed by her enthusiasm, encouraged by her welcoming and supportive approach to students, and challenged by her scintillating intelligence, I could not resist the opportunity to engage with Judith. By the time I graduated, I had taken all of the ethnomusicology courses I could stuff into my schedule, and had cajoled her into leading an independent study on Alan Lomax and Leonard Meyer. More than forty years later, I'm still studying, playing, and performing Javanese and Balinese gamelan.

I note these early years of contact because I am confident my experience was not unique. Judith had that *something* that made students want to work with her, to extend themselves to really learn. Her intellectual curiosity, her cross-disciplinary perspective, and her ability to guide, support, challenge, and encourage have motivated huge numbers of people like me over the years. The footprint of her graduate students, especially, is wide, deep, and remarkable. A part of me has always wished I had been one of those graduate students. But, well, I was first and foremost a psychologist.

Later, I returned to Michigan in 1973 as a Junior Fellow, a cognitive psycholinguist with a dissertation in music perception and four years of intensive gamelan at UCLA in my "backpack." Judith had recently returned from her own dissertation fieldwork in Java. To my delight, I found that the two of us fell immediately into a new and collegial relationship, and I dove easily into seeking to mesh her interest in music and linguistic models with my own. Neither Judith nor Peter Becker ever turned aside my efforts to engage with their exhilarating circle of colleagues and students, and tolerated my narrow insistence on empiricism with good humor. Kyai Telaga Madhu welcomed me back, as well!

Most importantly for me, I learned from reading Judith's publications how to address a readership. Judith has always written with clarity and an uncanny attention to an audience. I heard her "tone" in my writer's ear throughout the long weeks of writing of my own scholarly monograph. Her insistence on careful examination without sacrificing the big picture is merely another facet of her scholarly power.

Judith Becker's retirement calls for both celebration and application of her legacy.

~Dane L. Harwood

It would be impossible to overstate the impact Judith has had on my life. The lessons I learned from her are many and profound—lessons she imparted by quietly setting an example rather than by preaching to her students. Among them are that any music is worth studying, that one ought to be fearless about borrowing from other disciplines, and that, in the words of Mellonee Burnim, one must demonstrate “humility before [a culture’s] genius.” Her ethnomusicology pro-seminar is—or ought to be—legendary. We came into that class feeling like graduate students and we left feeling like intellectuals. I remember, each week, never quite having enough time in the three hours we met for us to say everything we wanted to say in discussing that week’s reading—we were making so many connections and, in the process, discovering a whole new way of making music relevant to every aspect of our lives. The repercussions of that class continue today, as it is what led me to want to teach a whole series of “music and . . .” courses.

Recently Judith came down to Earlham College, where I teach, to give a talk for our bi-weekly, campus-wide convocation series. Once again, during the question-and-answer period, I was reminded of how inspiring Judith can be. She is part *éclairceuse*—someone who scouts ahead, but also someone who illuminates—and part electrician—someone who sees what loose ends need to be connected to make everything come alive. Many of the audience members told me afterwards that we could have continued endlessly asking questions and sharing our thoughts. And it was that kind of excitement and shared intellectual curiosity that made Judith the kind of professor you *wanted* to write a paper for.

As a gamelan leader, Judith was equally inspiring. I remember the way rehearsals would run smoothly and how everyone would come on time and work hard, but without ever any coercion or anger on her part. She exuded a kind of inner calm, and at the same time *wibawa* (a kind of commanding presence that leads others to behave harmoniously).

Part of her personal presence is also a kind of profound wisdom. Somehow she always seems to have her values in the right place, and many times she has helped me find the right course of action when I have found myself in a quandary. This might include, for instance, my giving up something that seems terribly important at the time, but which, in the grand scheme of things turns out not to be.

Last but not least on my list of Judith’s attributes is her easy and infectious laugh. And lest this encomium sound too much like a eulogy, I rejoice in the prospect of sharing that laugh for many years to come.

With affection and admiration,  
Marc Benamou

*To Judith on her retirement:*

From the day in 1972 when I opened up the copy of your dissertation I had ordered and eagerly awaited as it made its way (non-electronically) from University Microfilms to the University of Hawai'i, I knew you would have a major influence in my life. I wasn't yet sure I would be able to pursue my PhD at Michigan, but I could see then that the discourse on Javanese music had fundamentally changed. Your work opened up many new vistas, not only for those of us working on gamelan in Java, but for a younger generation of students interested in the meanings of music, musical change, and musical aesthetics. Four years later, when I enrolled as a doctoral student at Michigan, I was immediately engaged reading the new work you and Pete were doing on musical grammars--an interest I continue to nurture, however surreptitiously now that it has fallen out of vogue in the field of ethnomusicology. It inspired my own first conference paper (ICTM, actually still IFMC back then) in 1977 and my first publication (*Ethnomusicology*) which followed shortly thereafter. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, as I completed my PhD, your work kept developing in intriguing new directions, from translations of Javanese theorists to convincingly positing Java's tantric connections, to the beginnings of your seminal work on music and trance. From the mapping of gamelan cycles onto circles—a device I consistently use in my classes to teach students about gamelan's structures—to your and Pete's brilliant theorizing on coincidence/*kebetulan*, I've been so enriched by your penetrating and original thinking. It was not *kebetulan* that as a young student of gamelan I eagerly read your dissertation, but it surely was *kebetulan* that I was in Ann Arbor during those exciting years 1976-1981, with you as a wise and patient advisor. Your retirement is well-earned and richly deserved after many years of exemplary teaching, research, and administrative service. I'm sure your other former advisees would join me in wishing you the very best as you retire and in hoping we will continue to *ngangsu kawruh* ("draw knowledge from the well") from talks and articles you've got percolating for us in the future.

~Andy Sutton

Dear Judith,

You were one of the first Southeast Asianists I met when I came to Ann Arbor in the summer of 1975 (I happened to run into you and Pete near Bird Hills Park) and I'll always remember your warmth as well as your deep affection for Southeast Asia, its culture, and people. Those qualities as well as your unique insights into and personal stories about Burma and Java have made you into one of my favorite people.

Your contributions to the field are made so much more meaningful by your personal qualities. I feel so lucky to have so many good memories of being connected to you – learning about your crash course on playing every gamelan instrument, running past your house so many times, visiting your Bell Tower office and imagining you as Repunzel, and listening to your stories about life in Burma in the 50's (my favorite is when the western, Jesus-like guy with the beard showed up in your town).

Your optimism is wonderful as is your gutsiness. I'm sure that retirement will only bring out new areas of creativity and fulfillment for you. I hope we can have a few more laid back conversations on your front porch when I come to Ann Arbor.

Love,  
Bonnie

Judith Becker was on my dissertation committee, and I profoundly appreciated her advice and example as I went through my masters and doctoral programs at U of M. For me, Judith embodied all the lessons one needed on combining scholarship, art, family life and an international career with tremendous skill. She was intellectually committed, attentive to her students, and completely down to earth. Call it bedrock midwestern values, Buddhist pragmatism or a gift for balanced and harmonious living--whatever it was, Judith had it.

As a member of the U of M gamelan ensemble, I was fortunate to learn about Javanese musical culture from Judith and her many wonderful visiting colleagues---Hardjo Susilo, Pak Tjokro, Sumarsam, and others. I'll never forget carrying the instruments from the bell tower over to Rackham Auditorium for a January concert in 5 degree weather, and hearing Judith's embracing laughter when we finally had the instruments assembled again after that icy transit.

With profound gratitude for her life wisdom, intellectual mentoring and dedication to music and Southeast Asian Studies---all of this made such a difference to this grateful student...

~Mary Zurbuchen

Dear Judith,

I wish I could be there today in the audience to mark this moment with you and all your students! I'll never say "former" students when it comes to you because none of your students regard themselves in that way. Once a Judith Becker student, always so--that's centrally part of the phenomenon that you are. Oh, you didn't know that you're a phenomenon? You are, and we all have our stories about you--something that you said in a seminar 20 years ago, still vividly remembered, or a seemingly simple piece of advice you gave one of us while dissertating that allowed us to see the forest through the trees. Being your student is like being a member of a club.

I will never forget my first contact with you. I was still an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania and one night was wandering around the stacks of its amazing anthropology library. I saw a book spine---*Traditional Music in Modern Java*---and stopped in my tracks. First, I hadn't known that there were any books about music in the anthro library, and second, I'd never seen the words 'traditional' and 'modern' side by side in that way. I opened it and eventually sat down on the floor right there in the stacks and read and read. I was literally mesmerized. I hadn't known that anyone could look at music in this way, that it was possible to work with music and think about the big issues and the deep values that drive any society. To quote Renée Zellweger in *Jerry Maguire*, you had me at 'hello', Judith! Deciding to study with you was thus part of my earliest understanding of what ethnomusicology could be.

Your ability to see the big picture and to articulate the big questions is centrally part of your contribution to ethnomusicology. I got to know you just at the point after you had been exploring structuralist methods for some time, and I had read that work (on coherence, on srepegan) and been gripped by it. To my own surprise, you were turning away from that thinking just at the point when I started taking graduate seminars with you. Part of what I learned from you was how theory is a tool that offers certain answers, and how different theories offer different answers. Watching you turn away and move on from some of your own conclusions was astonishing, and it was one of the most deeply pedagogical things I have ever witnessed. I learned about meta-thinking from you in more ways than one.

Your wisdom, compassion, and serenity has touched all your students, Judith. We each hope that it has marked us at least a little. Congratulations on your retirement. We are all in the room with you tonight, saying thank you for what you taught us and what you have modeled for so many years.

*~Deborah Wong*

## *Judith Becker's Legacy*

When Judith Becker took us under her mentorship we understood it to be her tacit commitment to ethnomusicology in the Philippines. She wasn't just teaching us but a future generation of Filipino ethnomusicologists. It was with almost a sense of mission that she extended every possible support for us to complete our graduate programs and maximize our training in the field of ethnomusicology and the musics of Southeast Asia. All she hoped for was that we do likewise for Filipinos who would come our way.

In our present academic milieu, we like to think that our efforts to empower the under-represented through alternative music programs and our advocacy of new approaches to Philippine music instruction are extensions of Judith's own legacy of empowerment and her trusting openness that encourages learning and self-discovery. It may be a different time and place yet today we continue to be guided by a spirit of nurturing mentorship that is the ultimate legacy of Judith Becker.

*Fe Prudente  
Kristina Benitez*

*Manila, Philippine  
April 2008*

To Judith —

An extraordinary Southeast Asianist with keen sensibilities about the *Nusantara* world. As my dissertation chair so many years ago, my mentor, colleague, friend and first *gamelan* teacher, I extend to you a few words of deep gratitude for all of the above that can be summed up in an old Malay *pantun* about bananas and debts that says,

*Pisang emas dibawa belayar,  
Masak sebiji diatas peti,  
Hutang emas boleh dibayar,  
Hutang budi dibawa mati.*

I hear you are retiring, but I don't think you really are.

With all best wishes in all that you do in the years ahead,  
Patricia Matusky

Dear Judith,

You are a fantastic scholar, an extraordinary professor in your field. Many know this, and it will be said many times, rightly so, at the occasion of your well deserved retirement. But for me, what mattered even more is your human stature: your patience, compassion with our struggles, your joyfulness, your child-like enthusiasm, your insatiable curiosity. You are not only respected, but loved. You didn't only pass on your knowledge, you wanted us to find our own. You helped us find our better selves through our work, and through the standards you set, by your own example. You helped me find myself. You delighted in each discovery that would guide me toward my own destination, even outside of academe and scholarship. For that, and for that wonderful, unquenchable and inspiring laugh, I appreciate you infinitely, and I congratulate you on your ongoing life's work, in which your retirement is but a small stop on the journey, because you and your spirit are bigger than even that magnificent and well-done job.

Sincerely,  
Gernot Blume

When I was younger, and devoted to classical piano, I remember being inordinately proud that I shared the initials of my name with the composer Johann Sebastian Bach. Now that I am older and dedicated to Southeast Asian music, I am happier that I share them with Judith Becker. The progression from one model to the other is a movement directed down to earth, and this is the quality that I like best about Judith. Her work on music and the people who make it has always been done on the ground, but I also appreciate this quality about her mentoring: realistic, grounded, encouraging us to deal with success and setbacks as part of the same cycle, understanding that the best work we do comes from our most human selves. Thank you, Judith, guru agung.

~Julia Byl

*To Judith With Love*

In the middle of a crowd of about thirty people ranging from their thirties to their sixties stood a woman, stretching and doing light and easy jumping jacks. Hardly a third of the group could (and only a few did) match the agility of this woman. Her exercise took place during a break in an all-day sequence of papers, delivered in the highly emotional atmosphere of a large-family reunion, a celebration of her seventieth birthday – hard to believe for our youthful mentor and model. The gymnastics at the gathering held in her honor reflect Judith Becker’s physical abilities as well as her philosophical perception of life, music, and culture. She began my first class on ethnomusicology by defying the tradition of still, motionless, non-participatory listening associated with Western classical music, the somber atmosphere of concert halls and opera houses. In the cultures she researched and introduced to us, music performance was 1) a bodily experience for both performers and listeners and 2) the embodiment of ongoing ever-familiar, ever-changing communication. In this first lecture with Judith as in many that followed, I (trained as a classical pianist within a particularly strong and rigid Soviet tradition) felt confused. Judith, however, does not frequently hesitate to challenge one’s security zone, to question and explore one’s sense of comfort, the domain of the familiar, even of her own. From her I learned that the Geertzian model of the world constructed of a pile of turtles is applicable to knowledge, with one turtle layer concealing or revealing another turtle/truth. And it is from her I learned to stop in the middle of the class, admitting boldly, “I am not sure,” “I don’t know.” She is one among the field shapers, supporting my non-traditional ethnographic research on eighteenth-century Russian court culture – “if you are to fail, make it with the topic you love to research.”

Soft-spoken, the most attentive listener, Judith is anything but easy, soothing, and soft. Her small, tender, unassuming manner is deceptive. She is a fighter and (invisibly to us) a large powerful woman, fearless, stubborn, probing, changing others and herself. Keeping me for hours in her office, she let me “defend” my dissertation topic a couple days before I left for my fieldwork. Unimpressed with the topic of my choice, she did not argue, did not insist or demand. She simply held me hostage in her cozy office, where I kept talking, myself arriving at a theme she approved.

She and Peter have been the greatest inspiration for my family and me. My falling for a linguist and a literature professor, our marriage is yet another aspect of embodied experiences in the ethnographic field of Judith Becker.

With love,  
Inna

Dear Judith,

I went to the University of Michigan to do my Ph.D. in ethnomusicology with you because your publications deeply inspired me. The fact that you focused on a research area very different from mine did not matter much to me. I was attracted by the kinds of research questions you asked and the interdisciplinary approaches that animated your publications. Your concern with the work of translation and the cultural politics of aesthetics was then, and continues to be, most influential in my studies.

I feel very privileged to have had you as my mentor. Your wonderful ability to tune in with the students' contrasting needs was providential to me. Your ethics of care made it possible for me not only to feel support but also to enjoy a great deal of intellectual freedom. The nurturing environment you have provided made my experience of graduate studies highly productive and profoundly human.

My heartfelt thanks for all.  
Jocelyne Guilbault

I was a student of Judith's at the University of Michigan School of Music for several years in the late 1990s. Although I was a composition major, I spent many hours in the gamelan and took several important courses with Judith which helped to shape my outlook as a composer and teacher. Some of my fondest memories of those years in graduate school are the ones that took place in the gamelan ensemble. In a way, Judith was almost single-handedly responsible for one of my most important commissions. In 1999, the UM gamelan and the Ann Arbor Symphony partnered with the American Composers Forum to commission a new work for gamelan and orchestra. I applied and was lucky enough to be chosen. Judith provided essential guidance in the writing of the work, allowed me to take class time to rehearse the gamelan, and played in the performance as well. I believe the resulting composition, *Lokananta*, is one of my strongest works, and I am forever thankful for the opportunity! I love listening to and (when I have the chance) playing gamelan to this day, and I'm sure it will find its way into my writing again. Thank you, Judith, for everything, and good luck in retirement!

Best wishes,  
Gabriel Gould

Dear Judith

When brilliance is outshined only by kindness, the radiance of the life stretches past the borders of the field of expertise. Thoughtful and attuned to the needs of others, honest speaking and clear minded, generous and cheerful in giving, persevering through difficulty, getting to the heart of a matter, and crafting a multi-layered thought with simple eloquence, these strengths of yours have touched everyone in your radius. But the "gesamtes Bild" of your life as a mother, grandmother, Doktormutter, author, etc. is especially poignant because of your passion to focus on what is subtle, and easily missed, and contextualize shades of detail within a broader frame, and from unusual and creative perspectives. Your love for detail has not only watered the garden of your work, which would have been enough in a life so rich with accomplishment. But by taking notice of detail in the lives of the people around you, you have made so many of us feel loved. Intellect with heart --- lovely! The desire to express my feelings resonates in speechless waves of gratitude that I hope, with all your sensitive creativity, you can somehow imagine.

with great affection and respect

Julie Spencer

Judith is always a source of intellectual inspiration. Returning from Shanghai in early 2005, as I was searching for ways to use my Chinese data on emotion (*qing*), Judith's 2001 essay "Anthropological Perspectives on Music and Emotion" pointed me to possible directions. It was an enlightening moment, which happened in the Music Library in a late evening, when her analysis of music, emotion, and the sense of self in the essay unfolded in front of me. Her perspectives on music and human experience, early and recent, will continue to shape my Chinese music research in the future years to come.

Judith has an admirably consistent character, which appears to me as an embodiment of stamina and spirituality. Rain or snow, she always comes to our conference presentation trial runs, giving support and constructive comments. Encountering Judith on campus, whether outside the Burton Memorial Tower or the Moore Building, is always a delightful episode of the day. I am honored to have her on my dissertation committee, and in my defense last Friday (April 11, 2008).

~Joys Cheung

## MY TRIBUTE

Dearest Judith (and Pete),

I am sending my regrets on not being with you on this remarkable and well earned occasion of praise for your career and your contributions to hundreds of students and colleagues. I am currently an Associate Professor (tenure-track) teaching in three departments Music, Anthropology and Black Studies. During my time in the ethnomusicology program at the School of Music (1993 - 1996), you were my rock in your soft, gentle and yoga teacher-like way. You let me fly and explore and talk and think aloud such that I found my voice -- the beginning of a scholar's voice -- often without knowing it. You were rigorous in a loving way. You were straight but never brittle. You encouraged partnership among your students and embraced many who were not. I'll never forget you doing a headstand for us at Lorna McDaniel's home at a party.

I remember thinking back then as a Ph.D. candidate in ethnomusicology about all the students you had mentored before me who were strewn around the country at various universities. Each one I noticed shared a similar adventurousness and integrity of voice. Each one was a great mentor to students. Each one was a great human being and I knew I'd be taken care of well in the future out of the quiet yet rich training you were then giving me. I knew I'd be joining great company in the field of ethnomusicology, too. I even bragged about it. I honestly believe I wouldn't have written about gender, double-dutch and hip-hop if you hadn't allowed me to explore those realms and challenged me to share what I was passionately and curiously thinking. I was nominated for a distinguished dissertation as I graduated but the creme de la creme was recently winning the Alan Merriam Prize for most outstanding book in the field of ethnomusicology in 2007 for my book based on my dissertation. *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop* (NYU Press 2006) could have been dedicated to you. Instead let me dedicate to you my career. I wouldn't be doing what I am doing, being who I am being as a professor, loving what I love as an ethnomusicologist if it weren't for you! Thank you Judith!

All my love, inspiration and honor are sent to you this day from my desk at Baruch College at the City University of New York. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

PS. My mother and stepfather say hi!

Your mentee and protege,

Kyra D. Gaunt

In making these remarks, I'd like to take the notion of diaspora as an analogy. When I came to Ann Arbor in 1985 I was in the PhD program at Wisconsin, studying with Andy Sutton. I started working at the Center, joined the UofM gamelan ensemble, had the good fortune to take Judith's Seminar in Ethnomusicology, and worked on the final publication of *Karawitan*, a 3-volume work of seemingly endless core documents on Javanese music. I also developed some lifelong friendships with a group of scholars who eventually finished their PhDs with Judith — Deborah Wong, René Lysloff, Mohd. Anis Md. Nor, Marc Benamou, and others — who are now dispersed teaching across the globe.

What I've learned from Judith is that every music has a reason, and that ideas can stand up to challenges. Judith once wrote a comment to me on a paper that I eventually presented at an ethnomusicology conference: "this is an intriguing, but abstract idea, either expand it or drop it." She was perfectly clear — I dropped it.

I've been lucky to be part of this intellectual diaspora. And as a result I'd like to challenge a concept that has been applied to peripheral communities. One notion that has been put forward about diaspora is that, while a home community changes, those at the edges may remain static, or may become, in Greta Slobin's words, "incongruous resemblances."

One part of this notion works marvelously! The Center (if you will) certainly changes. Judith's continued research on music, emotion and human response to music has continued to challenge our understanding of how music lives as a cultural presence. However, I can attest that Judith's diaspora also remains dynamic. Among those who have studied with her there is no "static periphery," but rather an increasing interest in ongoing areas of research such as ethnicity, music and technology, musical aesthetics, and new areas of musical practice brought about by globalization and the Internet. This is a testament to her approach to scholarship.

I'd also like to say that Judith has graciously offered her council through the years, most recently in helping me to plan this year's regional ethnomusicology conference — where by the way, she also delivered the keynote — and she has always showed great interest in my family.

Thank you, Judith for your friendship and your beautiful mind.  
Sincerely,  
Randal Baier

For my entire professional life, Judith Becker has been my standard for ethnomusicology--even to this day. Whenever I'm faced with a professional or even personal dilemma, I ask myself: What would Judith do? Judith is the model I have always aspired to attain. I remember when I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan, there were still relatively few women in music departments. In diversifying American academic institutions, part of the argument for more female professors is that they would be models for young female students. I don't think anyone realized that a woman can also be a model for young male students as well. Judith has been a model of personal and professional behavior for ALL of her students, male and female. Thus Judith is living proof that gender diversity is good for the marketplace of ideas, not only because she's a woman but because she's also a great scholar.

I remember as a graduate student, being in one of Judith's classes. I remember how she sometimes so effortlessly tossed out amazing ideas, how casually generous she was in sharing her ideas with her students. Some of my earliest research ideas were, to be honest, taken directly from my work with Judith-- especially, my early interest in ritual and music. I remember how Judith stood up for me when I wrote my dissertation using the first person narrative (still rare at that time). One of my other dissertation committee members did not approve of this style of writing, but Judith always stood for good ideas. And that's what she taught her students. Indeed, Judith taught me to have faith in my intellectual skills. Together with Pete Becker, Judith taught me to take intellectual risks. Instead of trying to shape my scholarship into some sort of standard mold, she encouraged me to develop my own voice, my own approach, and my own interests. When I teach today, when I mentor graduate students here at the University of California, Riverside, so much of what I now do to help my own students has been inspired by my studies with Judith Becker. In a way, my students, are her students. Her passion for Javanese music, her profound interest in expressive culture, and her deeply held ethics and commitment to justice and fair play will be her legacy. Her students and her students' students will all aspire to be the kind of scholar and person she is. She is our model, our standard.

~Rene Lysloff

Judith, thank you for being an encouraging mentor, an inspiring teacher and a path-breaking scholar. A large part of the reason I am an ethnomusicologist is because of your support and encouragement. I deeply appreciated your taking my early academic efforts, seriously, even as an undergraduate. At a time when there were few women academics, you provided a model of how to combine academic work with family life and motherhood.

I have learned so much by watching you teach over the years. You presented fascinating material; I still think about some of the lectures you gave, the way you engaged the students and elegantly articulated your points. You were so open and patient with students, no matter what their level of ignorance or intellectual blind spots. I distinctly remember a student in an introductory ethnomusicology class who defiantly claimed that the sounds produced by the didgeradoo “were not music.” Instead of denigrating his view or dismissing it, you took him on, at some length, arguing in a friendly but persuasive way.

You established one of the first gamelan programs in the US, generously teaching gamelan two nights a week and mounting numerous concerts, often without compensation, for many years. Playing gamelan was the central intellectual and social experience of the undergraduate years of many people in the group, including myself. You inspired so many students to tackle the more difficult instruments. At the same time, you were totally accepting of students who had trouble with the basic instruments, never making them feel bad. I remember one student who couldn’t keep a beat. You graciously looked the other way when she played and within a few months, she was relaxed enough to figure it out for herself.

Thank you for being a fearless thinker, who courageously opened new intellectual territories in your research. Your books and numerous articles have spawned numerous new angles of research and ways of thinking. Your *Traditional Music in Modern Java* was the first comprehensive book-length look at gamelan music, inspiring many others to write their own books. With its focus on the cultural/historical context of gamelan, it suggested a new ways of doing ethnomusicology. Your three volume set *Karawitan: Source Readings in Javanese Gamelan and Vocal Music*, edited with Alan Feinstein, served two purposes: it provided translations of dozens of Javanese writings on gamelan for the newly developing western fascination with gamelan, and it encouraged many people like myself to delve deeper into these works, since you generally invited many graduate students to help with the translating. In your book *Gamelan Stories: Tantrism, Islam and Aesthetics in Central Java*, you ventured into territory that no other Javanese scholars had explored. You imaginatively showed how many aspects of present day gamelan music and dance have their roots in pre-Islamic, Hindu/Buddhist worldview. This work has been particularly important on my own thinking about gamelan. Finally, in your most recent work, you are pioneering an uncharted area of research in musicology: the connection between music, trance, and neuroscience.

Finally, thank you, Judith, for your sense of humor, your good will, and your calm Buddhist perspective.

~Susan Pratt Walton

april 16, 2008

dear judith

fall 1976, my first semester as a music student at UM  
required course: music history 139, prof. judith becker  
i sat in the first row, usually. in the recital hall.

you played examples of music for us on records; and as was common then the record  
player arm was wobbly so you'd ask if anyone had a nickel or coin to set on the arm to  
steady it.

i think i gave you all my nickels that first semester.

then you played gamelan music for us.

everything changed.

i mean, everything.

of course at the moment i didn't realize just how this change would be realized over the  
course of my life, or realize what a lovely connection i'd continue to have with you.  
you don't think that far ahead when you are 18 and your music history teacher plays a  
record.

so that's the beginning of my tribute time line.

then there's all the years in between then and now... the rehearsals, concerts, kreteks,  
selamatans...

but this part's just too long – all the ways you made a difference in my student life, my  
musical life, my personal life, i can't even begin to list them all.

and then there's the now, when i happily find myself in yoga class on a mat next to you.  
even upside down you're an inspiration.

with much love and great admiration

theresa