

New Lecture Series at AU Honors 40-year Friendship

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Alfred, NY -- A friendship that arose between an Alfred University student and a professor led to the creation of the Samuel R. Scholes, Jr., Lecture Series. Dr. Joshua A. Fierer, who graduated from Alfred University in 1959, says some of his best memories of Alfred involve Dr. Samuel R. Scholes, Jr., professor emeritus of chemistry and a member of AU's Class of 1937. To him, Scholes is a friend, as well as a teacher. Fierer, who is now retired after a career as a pathologist and professor of pathology, said it pleased him to be able to create the lectureship in "honor of a man who is very much alive." "When we learned last fall about this new lecture honoring Professor Samuel R. Scholes, we felt there were three criteria that we should use in selecting the inaugural speaker," said Dr. Robert Pipal, professor of chemistry at AU. "First, the person should be a chemist, and second, like Professor Scholes, the person should have devoted much of his or her life to chemical education," explained Pipal. "Finally, we felt it essential that the speaker have interests that would appeal to the broader Alfred University community." (more) New Scholes lecture 2-2-2 They chose Sister Mary Virginia Orna, a professor of chemistry at the College of New Rochelle. She is now on leave from that post to serve as director of Educational Services for the Chemical Heritage Foundation in Philadelphia, where she is also editor of Chemical Heritage magazine. "I am honored to be the first lecturer in the new series," said Orna. "I came to know Sam Scholes this evening, and if he is one example of what comes out of Alfred University, you are all blessed," she told a nearly full house at Nevins Theater. In her presentation, "The Shroud of Turin and Other Mysteries: Uncovering Traces of the Past through Science," Orna described what she called "the chemical interface with art and archeology." During 1994, Orna was a Fulbright Fellow in Israel where she did research on ancient Middle Eastern artifacts, tracing the origins of fabrics from a single thread taken from each sample. She has also been involved in helping to determine the formula for inks used on manuscripts created during the Middle Ages, and in helping to determine if the Shroud of Turin dates back to the first century A.D, or to the 11th century when Crusaders are believed to have brought it from the Holy Land to Europe. In each instance, she explained how techniques and processes of analytical chemistry are used to solve ancient mysteries.