

Al Barsa Memorial Scholarship


By Pete Massiello

Al Barsa, Jr. had a heart of gold and was always there to help, to listen, to advise, and, of course, to swap family stories. No matter who you were, Al would come over and talk with you during a conference and make you feel at ease. He was always working his hardest to make our beloved i the best platform in the world, and we have Al to thank for his constant critiquing of IBM. You could always count on Al to open COMMON's Sound-off with comments on how IBM Rochester had performed over the last year. Al's dedication to the System i was only surpassed by his dedication to his family. His entire face would light up when he spoke about **Albert** and **Christie**; he had a lot to be proud of in their accomplishments.

Al was also involved in the charter days of the COMMON Education Foundation (CEF). He and **Jim Sloan** were the initial benefactors by providing the seed money for the CEF. Because of Al's accomplishments and his willingness to help everyone in the System i community, the COMMON Education Foundation (CEF) has decided to establish a special scholarship in memory of our friend Al Barsa, Jr. This scholarship, the Al Barsa Memorial Scholarship, will honor an individual who exemplifies Al's commitment and dedication to the i community and is an advocate to the i community.

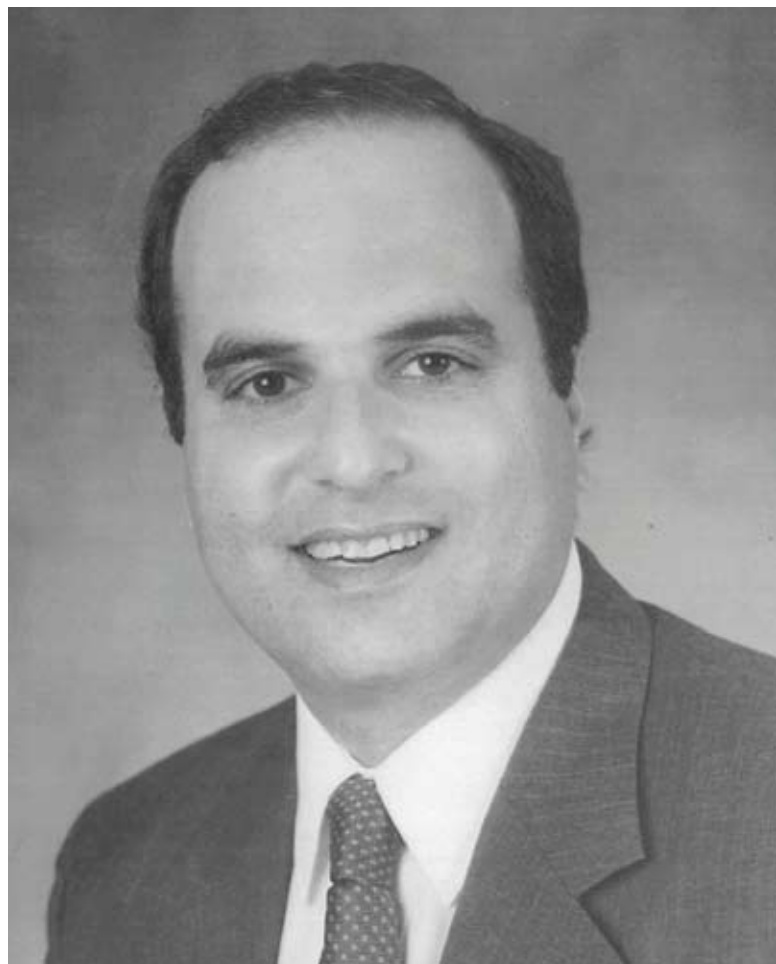
The recipient of this award will receive a conference registration and be presented a plaque at the COMMON Annual Meeting. Anybody within the i community is eligible and an application will be posted on the CEF website in the fall. You can nominate yourself or another deserving member of the community.

The CEF has already raised over \$10,000 in Al's memory. We have received many generous donations from companies (**Jim Sloan, Inc.**, **LANSA**, **Midrange.com**, **Central Park Data Systems**, **Slomin's, Inc.**, **Amerequip Corp.**, and **Durakon Industries, Inc.**), Local User Groups (**LISUG**, **FASUG**, **NEUGC**, **NHMUG**, **OCEAN**, and **TUG**), and individuals who were Al's friends, colleagues, and admirers. Thank you to all! If you have learned from Al, if Al has helped you or your career in any way, if you have heard him speak or had him speak at your User Group, or if you are a friend, we ask that you contribute to this scholarship in Al's memory.

You can find the contribution form on the COMMON Education Foundation website (www.common.org/foundation). Scroll down and click on the link for the Al Barsa Memorial Scholarship – Contribution Form under the “Scholarships Available” section. All donations are tax deductible under IRS guidelines. If you have any questions you can email **Michelle August** at michelle_august@common.org or call her at 815-592-8924. 

About the Author

Pete Massiello is the President of iTech Solutions Group, President of the Fairfield CT AS/400 User Group (FASUG), a past member of the COMMON Board of Directors, and a frequent speaker at user groups. Email him at pmassiello@itechsol.com.



BARSA, ALBERT SIMON JR.

Albert Simon Barsa Jr. of Rye passed away suddenly on Friday, April 4, 2008 at age 55. Al was born in New York City and raised in Rye, New York. He graduated from The Cranwell School and received his B.S. in Management and an MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. For more than 20 years, Al was President of Barsa Consulting Group, LLC and Barsa Systems Distribution, Inc. in Purchase, NY. He was an IBM business partner and expert with regard to every aspect of the software and hardware relevant to IBM System i (AS/400, i Series). He was widely regarded as a pioneer in his field and unique in his computer related knowledge. Al was a frequent speaker at both COMMON USA and COMMON Europe. He was also an Editor of the COMMON Technical Library, and a member of the Speaker Excellence Committee. Al had been voted COMMON's Best Speaker, and received COMMON's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award. He will be fondly remembered as a gregarious and enthusiastic business leader who loved to tell jokes. Every year from 1996 to 2000, he was named on the AS/400 Insider Weekly's 10 Biggest AS/400 Market Influencers list, making him the only person in the world to have received this honor 5 times. He also served as the president of the Long Island Systems User Group (LISUG). He is survived by his beloved wife of 32 years, Susan, his two loving children Albert and Christina, his devoted mother and father Gloria and Albert Barsa and his beloved sister Barbara Jamison.



Al Barsa — Mr. 400

Do you have stories to share about Al Barsa Jr.? A special blog website has been set up as a tribute to Al. Check it out at www.mr400.com/Al.html. You are invited to add your comments too.

Here are just a few samples of the many kind words written by friends about Al on this site:

Dan Hughes

"It was Fall 1996 Conference. I had attended a few of Al's sessions over the past years, but had never personally met him. We were looking at getting a new RISC box and I was relatively new to this platform. After a session, I asked Al if he had a minute to help me understand the new system that we were considering and ideas on the huge CISC to RISC conversion that would be required. Al said that he was in a hurry to get to his next setup, and was on the way to the restroom in between, but if I wanted to walk and talk, he would do his best to help me. In the next few minutes walking, he helped reassure me that the system was a good fit for us and provided me with information and resources that helped me to do the conversion on my own. That's one example of Al's generous nature to even strangers. May God bless you, Al Barsa, and your family."

Sara Blake

"I met Al at a COMMON (or 2) back in the 80's, and shared some information on a new solution I had a problem on the old S38. We exchanged several phone calls and I sent him a piece of code. I truly enjoyed that little piece of working with him, and remember him well after all these years. He was as quick to share as he was to receive. I always loved his passion for the iSeries (or whatever it's name) and still share that passion today. He will be missed."

Kim Kuras

"He was loved by many and respected by all. I'll miss you my friend."

Scott Haglund

"Al was one of the hardest working people in the business. He was admired by many and respected by all. I will miss you my friend."

David Naigles

"Al was a driving force behind making the AS/400 (I don't care what they call it now, it will always be what it was in 1988) what it is today. But he was also an engaging, friendly individual who lent his support to others and will always be remembered for his humanity. I have had the honor of knowing Al and sharing time with him at many events."

Steve Shurge

"I met Al 19 years ago and have had the privilege of participating in many of his sessions. As we can see, Al has had an impact on many of us. Al was a GREAT person and FRIEND that his family are surely very proud of. Al will be greatly missed."

Bob Kane

"I met Al in 1991. IBM introduced us and I didn't know what to expect. I had gone to lunch, and when I returned to my office, I found a pair of winged tip shoes scattered on the floor, along with an Igloo cooler. It was then that I learned about Al's love of Diet Coke and his need for sneakers to stand on the cold, hard, raised floor of the computer room. Al and I became the closest of friends as a result of that engagement and I will miss him very much. Geography separated us over the past 3-4 years, but we still remain the best of friends."

Rares Pateanu

"How do you sum up in a few words 20 years of friendship, of shared jokes and shared passion, of meeting in airports and foreign places, as well as close to home, years of one COMMON conference after another, years of sharing ideas and disagreeing from time to time? I don't know, but what I do know, is that for all of us who have known and loved Al for all these years, it was a privilege to know him, and to be a small part of his life. Dear friend, may you forever rest in peace, and may you forever live in our memories."



Affiliated LUG Conferences and Special Events

Southeast Michigan iSeries Users Group

MITEC – Michigan iSeries Technical Education Conference

www.semiug.org

June 3, 2008

Dearborn, Michigan



OCEAN User Group

OCEAN – 15th annual OCEAN Tech Conference, Vendor Expo, and Executive Breakfast

www.ocean400.org

June 30, 2008 Irvine, CA



Northeast User Groups Conference

www.neugc.org

April 6–8, 2009

Sheraton Framingham Hotel,

1657 Worcester Road

Framingham, MA



Wisconsin Midrange Computer Professional Association (WMCPA)

23 Annual Spring Technical Conference

Spring 2009

Geneva Resort, Lake Geneva, WI



Toronto Users Group for Power Systems TEC 2008

www.tug.ca/tec

Spring 2009

Sheraton Parkway Toronto North

Richmond Hill, ON, Canada

