

Walter Farber

Thinking back through the past year in terms of academia, the most positive event for **Walter Farber** is still the fifty-first Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, organized by Martha T. Roth, Jennie Myers, and himself in July 2005. With quite some pride, he says that the scholarly program (for which he eventually took sole responsibility) was a complete success, and he still occasionally gets fan mail for what has been called by at least one old-timer “the best Rencontre ever.” Even the technology worked without a glitch, thanks to the tireless efforts of John Sand-

ers and a dedicated group of student volunteers — anybody familiar with the idiosyncrasies of Breasted Hall knows how incredible this feat still seems.

Fall, winter, and spring went by quickly with teaching and occasionally some time for research, but were punctuated several times by events and decisions concerning the future of Assyriology in Chicago that were both time-consuming and painful. Among other things, he has yet to adjust to the emptiness in the office next door, where for years Erica Reiner was his neighbor and daily interlocutor.

To end this report on a more positive note, Farber mentions his participation in June 2006 in a conference-like “Summer Institute” at the University of Chicago’s Gleacher Center, *Epidemics Then and Now*. Here, he found a very appreciative audience of young educators and health professionals for his presentation on medical knowledge, and especially on the notion of contagiousness and epidemics, in ancient Mesopotamia.
