Pomona has always been a place where relationships of every description are built, many of them to last a lifetime.
Stephen Glass ’57 and Sandra Dunkin Glass ’57

Steve and Sandy Glass don’t recall how they met. “Pomona was much smaller when we were there—like 700 or 800 students—and everybody knew everybody,” Sandy says. “So it wasn’t a question of meeting.” However, they do remember very clearly their first two dates, during their sophomore year. “I asked him out first, to the Associated Women’s Formal,” Sandy says with a laugh. “That’s right,” Steve agrees. “She asked me out and we had a very nice time. Then I asked her out—took her to the Academy Awards.”

As it happened, Steve’s father, who was in the movie business, didn’t need his Oscar tickets that year. Steve and Sandy double-dated with another Pomona student, Frank Capra Jr. ’55, who was then dating a young starlet named Anna Maria Alberghetti. “Is that classy or what?” Steve asks. “I came from Oregon,” Sandy retorts, “so the Academy Awards didn’t mean that much to me.”

The couple graduated from Pomona at about 4 p.m., June 16, 1957, and they were married in Little Bridges, in a traditional Jewish ceremony, three hours later. “After all, the whole family was already there, so why waste it?” Steve says.

The secret of their 58 years together? “I like what she likes, and she likes what I like,” Steve explains. “We had a good education at Pomona, and we always have a lot to talk about.”

Jaureese Gaines ’16 and Maxine Solange Garcia ’16

As members of the 10-student Posse cohort that came to Pomona from Chicago high schools in 2012, Maxine and Jaureese say they feel more like brother and sister than mere friends.

“Simply put, when I use the word ‘Posse’ to describe my relationship with these nine amazing individuals, I’m actually describing my second family,” says Jaureese. “We’re not just a Posse, we are family. I love my four sisters and five brothers.”

As the group nears graduation, Maxine, a neuroscience major, is preparing for medical school, while Jaureese, a politics major with three summer internships in Washington, D.C., under his belt, is planning to return to Chicago to work on educational access. But they expect to stay close in the years ahead.

“We know we’ll all be invited to whatever engagement party, wedding, award ceremony or baby shower either one of us has,” Maxine says. “I also told Reese he’ll have to help me out during med school because of med school debt. Maybe I’ll move into his garage. But in all seriousness, I know that Reese, and all of Posse, will be there for me 20 years down the line, just like they were there for me these past four years.”

FACE TO FACE:

THAT’S HOW THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTS OF COLLEGE HAPPEN.
LUNCH WITH A PROFESSOR AT THE COOP. A LATE-NIGHT DISCUSSION WITH A NEW FRIEND IN A HALLWAY. ADVICE FROM A MENTOR ON WORK OR LIFE. A FIRST DATE AT DOM’S LOUNGE.
TALKING, LAUGHING, ARGUING, THINKING TOGETHER.
THAT’S HOW RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILT TO LAST A LIFETIME.

PHOTOS BY CARRIEROSEMA
Neuroscience Professor Nicole Weekes and Vivian Carrillo ’16

“I met Nicole Weekes when I took Neuropsychology my sophomore year,” Vivian remembers. “She has this contagious excitement when she lectures that makes you interested in whatever she is talking about.” Their relationship progressed from teacher-student to mentor-mentee when Vivian asked Nicole to be her thesis advisor. “I knew her work and was pulled in by her commitment to students,” Vivian explains. “One of the best things about her, and sort of an inside joke between us, is that when I get too ambitious about my work, she says, ‘Save that for your dissertation.’ And while it seems like a joking way to tell me to slow down, it’s reassuring. Hearing her say that reminds me that I can have a future in this field and that I am capable.” For her part, Nicole says the benefits of mentoring flow both ways. “I love to see my students grow intellectually, personally, socially. It is such an honor for me to get to mentor them in any and all of these arenas. As so many people say about mentoring, I know that I get at least as much back from these relationships as my students do. So, how could I ever say no? It is one of the most important and fulfilling parts of my job. I am honored to watch students like Vivian just continue to rise.”

Viraj Singh ’19 and Jonathan Wilson ’19

Pomona puts a lot of work into pairing first-year roommates, but as we all know, it doesn’t always work out. Sometimes, however, the result is golden. Viraj values Jonathan’s fun-loving spontaneity, and Jonathan appreciates Viraj’s sense of humor. “He’s a go-to funny guy in our hall,” Jonathan says, “and has been known to drop unexpected comments that make everyone in a room laugh out loud.” But it’s not just laughter. “In October, my best friend from high school passed away from neuroblastoma,” Jonathan says. “Viraj never pressured me into talking about it, but I made it about him, but was willing to listen when I wanted to talk. That’s the best I could have asked for in a friend.” “When you are put in a room with someone else,” Viraj says, “you’re rewarding to be able to talk about anything and truly feel comfortable around him.” Before they go to bed at night, he says, they will often debrief, talking through the significant parts of the day. “It serves as a mini-therapy,” he says.

Ed Tessier ’91 and Professor Emeritus of Sociology Bob Herman ’51

Bob likes to say he learned more from students like Ed than they learned from him. Ed’s response: “He changed my life.” An activist since his Pomona days, Ed saw his role as a city planner and developer to make neighborhoods more livable, downtowns livelier, the arts more visible and public places more accessible. “He’s taken the things I was teaching and used them,” Bob says. “He’s a practitioner. He’s doing things. I was just talking in front of a class.” “We had lunch last week to debate this,” Ed says. “I didn’t know it at the time, but a lot of what Bob was preaching was actually very edgy in the field. When I went out as an activist and was quoting Jane Jacobs and siding with the new urbanists, the development community around here marked me as a real rabble-rousing radical. Now they’ve all changed their tune. This is the new orthodox. So Bob gave me a good 25-year head start on the rest of the field.”
Cesar Meza ’16 and Draper Center Director Maria Tucker

Cesar was 14 years old when he first met Maria as a student in the Pomona College Academy for Youth Success (PAYS). “We were in the Wig lobby when I first introduced myself to her,” he recalls. “Before I could even finish saying my name, she told me what city I was from and what high school I went to.”

Years later, when he was accepted as a Pomona College first-year, he already knew he wanted to work at the Draper Center. Since then, the Center—and Maria—have continued to play a huge role in his education. “I would not be the active student I am today without her guidance and support,” he says. “She has helped me navigate through difficult situations and given me the motivation to overcome any obstacles.”

For her part, Maria says the chance to mentor smart, caring students like Cesar is one of the biggest perks of the job. “For me, these relationships keep alive the notion that education transforms lives as well as communities,” she says.

Jamila Espinosa ’16 and Lucia Ruan ’16

Jamila and Lucia met at Women’s Union during their first year, but their friendship didn’t really blossom until the following summer, when they began to exchange thoughts and experiences over Facebook, a habit they continue to this day.

“Lucia is one of the most thoughtful people I know,” Jamila says. “Whether it be finals week, or Christmas, or Valentine’s Day, or your birthday, you can count on some type of recognition from her. She’s the master of planning surprise parties. She also knows where to find the funniest memes on the Internet, and I especially admire her fashion sense. In short, she is fabulous on the inside and out.”

Lucia describes Jamila as “a huge support in my life and someone I share almost everything with. Even this past weekend, I was feeling incredibly down, and she came into my room and kept me company, waiting for the moment I was ready to share what was bothering me and offering suggestions that push me in the right direction towards taking care of myself.”

Richard Bookwalter ’82 and Galen Leung ’82

Richard and Galen recall meeting as first-year students who had been elected as members of the Freshman Dorm Council, representing Walker (Galen) and Oldenburg (Richard). Early in the second semester, the group threw a Survivors’ Party for students who had made it through the first half of the year, and afterwards, Richard says, “we were the only two who showed up on the cleaning committee.”

Over the next couple of years, they mostly went their separate ways—different dorms, different majors, different groups of friends. But after Galen returned from a junior year semester in Washington, D.C., and Richard returned from a semester abroad in Geneva, Switzerland, the two met again at a Gay Student Union meeting, and by the end of their senior year, the two knew they wanted to be together.

Three decades later, they are still together, and on August 30, 2008, they were married.

“I think our relationship has lasted over 34 years because we are able to communicate with each other,” Galen says. “I love Richard because he’s the best—intelligent, feeling and concerned about the world, himself and others. His perspective and empathy help me relax and enjoy the moment and the world around me.”
Shadiah Sigala ’06 and Kaneisha Grayson ’06
Shadiah and Kaneisha now live almost 2,000 miles apart, but at heart, they’re always closer. “Kaneisha is one of my life partners,” Shadiah says. “There are a handful of those people in my life—including my husband, mom and daughter—and Kaneisha makes it on the short list.”

The two met during a freshman seminar class, but it wasn’t until the following semester that they became close. During a trip to Washington, D.C., Kaneisha came up to Shadiah and said, with her usual directness, “You’re going to be my friend.” “I thought, ‘Who is this bold, confident woman?’” Shadiah remembers. They soon discovered that they were much alike, though Shadiah thought of Kaneisha as “a more advanced version of me.” She adds: “Truthfully, she showed me all that I was capable of doing, simply by being herself.”

Now, Kaneisha says, the shoe is on the other foot as she learns from her friend’s experiences in life and work. “I love how Shadiah can tackle very difficult things,” she says, “planning a wedding, being married, working a demanding job, being a mom, even looking for a startup job during a brutal recession, while staying very positive and still engaging in self-care. Having a close friend go through many life events just a bit before you do—and report back the truth of how it’s simultaneously not as bad and way harder than others make it seem—is very encouraging and uplifting.”

Dan Stoebel ’00 and Biology Professor Daniel Martínez
Daniel Martínez joined the Pomona faculty in 1997, and Dan was one of his first student researchers. “His project was very hard,” Daniel recalls. “I can’t believe we did manual gene sequencing using radiation, but at the time, it was the only way.”

“What made Daniel unique was that he treated us like colleagues,” says Dan, who went on to follow in Daniel’s footsteps, earning his Ph.D. at the same institution, SUNY Stony Brook, and becoming a professor of biology at neighboring Harvey Mudd College. “Daniel told us quite honestly that much of the material was not his field of expertise, and this turned out to be valuable. Daniel was not an authority, but rather modeled how those who know how to learn go about doing it. As he struggled with us to understand a poorly explained experiment, or a seemingly contradictory result, we got to watch a professional scientist in the process of intellectual exploration. In putting himself on the line for us, in making himself vulnerable to failure with us, Daniel was a role model for the type of learning that we all have to do after we graduate. I am profoundly grateful for his willingness to do so.”

Michelle Chan ’17 and Sophia Sun ’18
When Sophia was trying to decide between Pomona and two big universities, she introduced herself in a post on the Facebook page for each institution. The warm and welcoming response from Pomona students, including Michelle, convinced her that Pomona was where she belonged. “Even through Facebook,” she says, “I could tell that Michelle was incredibly warm, passionate, and curious—an initial impression that has been wholly confirmed by all my interactions with her.”

“We’re both perpetually awestruck with gratitude in our landing at Pomona,” Michelle says, “and we feed off each other’s energy in our passion for more. Sophia has taught me how to embrace life head-on and not waste a single opportunity to learn and reflect.”
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Thank You!
FOR MAKING CAMPAIGN POMONA: DARING MINDS
THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL
CAMPAIGN IN THE HISTORY OF POMONA COLLEGE.

DRAPER CENTER
POMONA COLLEGE
Dinner with the Deadnies

When I was in my early 20s, I briefly dated a young woman who, as I soon discovered, had already put her entire funeral paid for. She had it all down on paper—from music to flowers to what she would speak when—with corrections and notes in the margins. I suppose that funeral plan might have had something to do with the fact that we only dated briefly. After all, in our society, thinking too much about death is considered morbid and strange.

Forty years have gone by since then. Thinking about death no longer feels strange—more like inevitable. Recently, a friend of my age said about it as well as she can be said:

“The scary thing is that I can no longer die an untimely death.”

So when Peggy Arnold ’65 invited me to Colorado to meet her group of end-of-life-activists—whom she refers to as “the Deadnies”—and to dip my toe into the end of life revolution, I took it not only as a professional opportunity, but also as a personal challenge. The tangible result is the story titled “Before I Die” on page 44 of this issue. The intangible is the story titled “Before I Die” on page 44 of this issue. The intangible is the story titled “Before I Die” on page 44 of this issue. The intangible is the story titled “Before I Die” on page 44 of this issue.

The scary thing is to realize that I can no longer die an untimely death.

A Breathing Institution

I received the email for the survey on improving Pomona College Magazine (PCM). I wanted to commend you on looking to improving your magazine. PCM holds a special place in my heart because my exposure to it was almost accidental. My wife and I were looking for something to read that was less about “suckers for the alumni and faculty profiles) and more about the institution itself. When I saw the survey, I was intrigued. At that point, I was no longer interested in reading the glossy, high-quality magazine that was on the shelf at my local bookstore. Rather, I was looking for a magazine that was more about the institution itself. When I saw the survey, I was intrigued. At that point, I was no longer interested in reading the glossy, high-quality magazine that was on the shelf at my local bookstore. Rather, I was looking for a magazine that was more about the institution itself.

I was interested in the fact that I could make suggestions about how the magazine could be improved. I was interested in the fact that I could make suggestions about how the magazine could be improved. I was interested in the fact that I could make suggestions about how the magazine could be improved. I was interested in the fact that I could make suggestions about how the magazine could be improved. I was interested in the fact that I could make suggestions about how the magazine could be improved. I was interested in the fact that I could make suggestions about how the magazine could be improved.
President Oxtoby Plans to Step Down in 2017

President David Oxtoby has announced plans to step down as president of Pomona College at the end of June 2017, bringing to a close what will then be a 14-year tenure. He informed the Board of Trustees of his plans at their February meeting to give the institution ample time to conduct a search for his successor.

“I am very proud of Pomona College and grateful for the years spent here, and for the culmination of Campaign Pomona: Daring Minds,” he said in an email to the college community. “While I am considering opportunities I might pursue, my highest priority will remain leading this amazing institution in the months ahead. I am confident that the leadership and expertise of our faculty, the experience of our staff, the determination and talent of our students, and the time we have to partner together on shared goals will make this a smooth transition and allow us to remain focused on the critical work at hand. We also have so much to learn and enjoy each day on our campus and in our classrooms. I appreciate the support I received from Board members and I am committed to continuing to advance the College’s key priorities and successful operations of the institution.”

Board Chair Sam Glick ’04 said the College will make plans to celebrate President Oxtoby’s many contributions to the College at an appropriate time. Meanwhile, he said, the Board will begin the task of choosing the 10th president of Pomona College. “Selecting a new leader is the highest duty a governing body has—a duty that is integral in keeping the College running smoothly. We also have so much to learn and enjoy each day on our campus and in our classrooms. I appreciate the support I received from Board members and I am committed to continuing to advance the College’s key priorities and successful operations of the institution.”

Language & Relationships

Mastering a second language is no easy feat, but it gets easier when you have help. At Pomona College, employees wishing to learn or improve their English have been getting assistance from students for more than 10 years now.

Employees gain language skills and students learn teaching skills, but at the core of the program are the relationships developed between students and the employees who often work in the background in housekeeping, dining services and grounds and are integral in keeping the College running smoothly. Math major Luis Antonio Espino ’18, a student coordinator for the program, joined for very personal reasons. “As a first-generation immigrant, I grew up being a translator for my parents,” he says. “I dealt with the troubles of having to go to the doctor and seeing my parents struggle through that. That was one of the reasons I was interested in doing the ESL program.”

Espino says that while in college, students are encouraged to develop strong ties with faculty, but he sees connecting with staff members as equally important. “One of the goals is to bridge that gap and have students recognize everyone’s equal worth,” he says. Ani Alyce Schug ’17, a politics major who studies Arabic, Spanish and Swahili and grew up speaking Armenian, is in her second year as a student coordinator for the program, which is run by the Draper Center for Community Partnerships.

“It’s one of my favorite parts of being at Pomona,” says Schug, adding that while the majority of employees choose to learn English, some are looking for help in areas such as computers and GED prep.

“This is my first time taking ESL classes,” says Rosario Osorio, who emigrated from Mexico 12 years ago and now works in housekeeping. “We, unfortunately, arrive to this country to work and don’t have the financial means to go to school and take classes because we must immediately find work, and we have children to raise. But thanks to students at Pomona, we have this opportunity and we should take advantage of it.”

An Observer in Paris

“Massive, exciting, chaotic and a bit overwhelming.” That’s how Olivia Voorhis ’16 described her time as an official observer of COP21, the United Nations conference on climate change held last December in Paris, where delegates of 195 countries came together to try once again to negotiate a global climate agreement.

In halls she describes as “the size of jet hangars,” she encountered languages and dress from around the globe and attended dozens of lectures and panels and a range of side events.

“There were thousands upon thousands of people, from scientists and researchers to activists, media and government representatives,” she says.

In all, she spent a week in Paris, focusing mainly on ways in which World Wide Views, a global citizen consultation initiative, might become a more effective part of the international policy-making process.

She doubts that the COP21 agreement, which was signed after she left Paris, will achieve everything environmentalists had hoped for, but she believes the conference is a step forward because it focused global attention on the problems. “I think the global community left COP21 with admirably low goals,” she says, “but now comes the extremely difficult and politically contentious work of implementation.”
**Treasured Map**

Two centuries ago, surveyor and geologist William Smith completed the ambitious task of mapping the geology of an entire nation. His detailed, hand-colored geological maps of England and Wales, published in 1815, changed the course of geology and remain among the field’s most treasured artifacts. (One of the remaining maps was recently made available for sale in Great Britain for £150,000.)

So it’s something of a feather in the cap of Pomona’s Geology Department that it is the proud owner of not one, but two of the historic maps. And with the bicentennial of the map’s release last year, one of them was brought out of safekeeping in the Special Collections of Honnold-Mudd Library to be restored.

“Because of the bicentennial, we felt it was the right time to renovate the map,” says Geology Professor and Chair of the Geology Department Jade Star Lackey. “It’s a great piece of history that we think all geology majors should be able to come and see.”

Because of the map’s size (more than two and a half meters wide), the restorers had to set up an aluminum platform over the top of the map to work from. Even so, the conservation process took nearly two months, including dry cleaning front and back, removal of a damaged cloth backing, wet cleaning, lining with Japanese paper and wheat starch paste, and mending tears. The result is impressive to behold, not just for the brilliant and colorful detail in drawing and watercolor, but also for the rich history and monumental shift it caused in the field of geology.

“The map is a turning point of understanding that the pattern of nature has an order, that resources like coal or limestone are not just randomly scattered about the surface of the Earth,” says Geology Professor Robert Gaines. “This map actually makes predictions about what’s going on underground, and it suggests there is a recognizable order.”

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**Buonasera, Glee Club**

This May, St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome and St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice will ring with the voices of the Pomona College Glee Club, as the group brings its annual concert tour for the first time to Italy. Each year after the end of the spring semester, the Glee Club takes a little piece of Pomona on the road, performing in venues across the country and around the world. Last year’s East Coast tour included a performance at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. (above). The last time the troop went transatlantic was in 2012, when they performed at venues across Poland, England and Germany, including the famous Thomaskirche in Leipzig (Bach’s home church for nearly 30 years), St. James’s Piccadilly in London, and the Berliner Dom in Berlin.

For Sagehens abroad or those who plan to be abroad in May, here’s the complete schedule (all are concert performances unless otherwise noted):

- **Basilica San Nicolo**, Lecco (Lake Como region), Italy—May 19, 9 p.m.
- **Chiesa San Salvador**, Venice, Italy—May 21, 7 p.m.
- **St. Mark’s Basilia**, Venice, Italy—May 22, noon (featurd choir at mass)
- **Chiesa di Santa Caterina**, Fire, Italy—May 24, 9 p.m. (concert sponsored by UNESCO)
- **Basilica Santa Trinita**, Florence, Italy—May 25, 9 p.m.
- **Chiesa San Marcello**, Rome, Italy—May 27, 9 p.m.
- **St. Peter’s Basilica**, Vatican City, Rome, Italy—May 28, 5 p.m. (featurd choir at mass)

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**MICHAEL J. FOX ON OPTIMISM:**

“I just feel like if you throw a penny in the air a hundred times, at least 51 times it’s going to come up heads. It’s not that I’m blind to the possibilities. I’m not reckless, and I don’t put my family in jeopardy because—’Don’t worry. It’ll be okay. It’s just a bear. We’ll make friends.’ I can be pragmatic and realistic too, but I do believe that if we let it happen, it’ll happen the right way. And the times it doesn’t make you grateful for the times it does.”

—Actor, author and activist Michael J. Fox in conversation with Neuroscience Professor Nicole Weekes at Bridges Auditorium, Feb. 12, 2016
It sits like an abandoned tank in a basement hallway of Sumner Hall, just outside the entrance to the College Archives—an antique steel safe on rusty wheels, its surface scarred by decades of scratches and random drips of paint. On the front, below the combination lock and an oddly pastoral painted tableau, are the words “From John H.F. Peck Safe Dealer, Los Angeles.”

The only references to the John H.F. Peck company that turn up in a web search are from the 1890s, so it’s a safe bet (so to speak) that the object is as old as it looks. But how did it come to be here? And what’s inside?

The only known mention of a safe in the early histories of Pomona College is from Frank Brackett’s *Granite and Sagebrush*, in which the founding faculty member tells the story of a safe kept in the Office of the Dean in old Holmes Hall. One day in the spring of 1911, as he tells it, while most of the campus community was away at a picnic in San Antonio Canyon, the safe “simply vanished without leaving a trace.” No one had a clue what had happened until, a few weeks later, a professor noticed a squeak in the floor. Kneeling to investigate, he found that the linoleum had been cut. Pulling back the loose piece, along with the floorboards, which had also been cut, and scraping back the dirt, he discovered the lost safe, which, like Poe’s purloined letter, had been there all along, buried beneath the floor.

So is this the purloined safe that was once buried by pranksters beneath the floor of Holmes Hall? It certainly seems old enough, and it seems unlikely that the College, in its early, penny-pinching days, would have had more than one of these. It also makes sense that the Dean’s safe would have been moved to Sumner Hall when Sumner was relocated in the early 1920s and began to house the College’s administrative functions.

But we’ll probably never know for sure. And since the combination is lost in time, the safe’s contents, if any, are likely to remain a mystery as well.

**The Purloined Safe**

**ITEM:** Antique safe  
**DATE:** Late 1800s or early 1900s  
**DESCRIPTION:** Steel combination safe, 41 25/8” H x 27 3/8” W x 28 25/32” D  
**ORIGIN:** John H.F. Peck Safe Dealer, Los Angeles

If you have an item from Pomona’s history that you would like to see preserved in the Pomona College Archives, please call 909-621-8138.

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**Tend Your Garden**

Spring is here, and the Organic Farm is bustling, as Pomona students welcome the season by following Voltaire’s advice to “tend your garden.” According to Farm Manager Scott Fleeman, March harvests have already included kale, collards, broccoli, Swiss chard, radishes, snap peas, fava beans, bunching onions and tangerines, as well as the first artichokes. Here’s a partial harvest schedule for the rest of the spring:

**APRIL**

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**ORGANIC**

**FIRST TOMATOES: LATE JUNE**

**SUMMER SQUASH: WEEKLY FROM EARLY MAY**

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**10-Minute Theatre**

Family Weekend this year featured the world premiere of five new plays—each no more than 10 minutes long. The plays, written by members of the 5-college community around the theme of self-discovery, were all part of the eighth annual 10-Minute Play Festival, sponsored by Pomona’s Department of Theatre and Dance, organized by Carolyn Raftery, visiting assistant professor of theatre and dance, who said the plays ranged “from the silly to the absurd, as well as the moving and the heartfelt.”

At right, Peter Brown ’15 directs a group of Pomona actors in “While Away,” his play about three siblings dealing with the aftermath of their grandmother’s death, simultaneously bonding and fighting over her less-than-perfect legacy. Pictured, from left, are Rachel Tils ’19, Brown, Barbara Peisch ’19 and Ben Hogoboom ’19.

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**Photo by Michelle Chan ’17**
The Freedom to Work

WORK RULES! INSIGHTS FROM INSIDE GOOGLE THAT WILL TRANSFORM HOW YOU LIVE AND LEAD

TWELVE, HACHETTE BOOK GROUP, 2015

416 PAGES | $30

The reviews for Work Rules! studied at Google, as well as past, the jobs my friends and even I have lousy days. But if I great job. I love what I do. And of sucks for too many people.

Bock: Yes, it has been, actually. I’ve been thinking for a long time? It feels good to be able to tell everybody that is: what’s at eye level and convenient. The problem with that is, you can’t anticipate. “Tell me about yourself. You’re absolutely right. Most people can’t hit that for itself. The problem is we pay everybody fairly because everyone is working on all the time. What’s beautiful about that is: you have all this free- the person is going to be good in the job. They’re called “struc- tured behavioral interview questions.” They’re called “struc- tured behavioral interview questions.” Everything else is kind of a waste of time.

Bock: I’ve always felt you could learn something from everyone around you. I remember a phi- losophy class in high school that was just a complete random mix of people from all kinds of dif- ferent backgrounds—kids who were stores, kids who were into punk rock, kids who were never, ever going to go to col- lege and a very few who hadn’t had a background like mine, with two parents with master’s degrees. By the end of it, I absolutely learned something from every single kid in that class. I realized you can learn from the people all around you. Whatever they look like on the outside, what ever baggage they bring, what ever damage they have or trauma they’ve been through, there’s just a core of good- ness in there. There’s something they can reach you if you just take the time to open your ear and listen.

That, I think, has informed not just a lot of things I’ve done in my life, but also the book. It’s premised on the notion that you have to ask yourself, “Are people good or are they evil?” If you believe they’re good, you have to treat them that way and act that way.

Bock: I think the biggest thing is, “Don’t trust your instincts,” or as I write, “Don’t trust your gut.” We have all kinds of biases. Our instincts and intuition feel good. It feels good to be able to tell everybody we pay everyone fairly because everyone makes the same money. The reality is your average people and you’re actually dis- advantaging them if you pay them all the same or within 10 percent or 20 percent. So our instincts on how to manage people are just wrong.

Bock: You’re absolutely right. Most people that are doing interviews don’t know how to interview. I’ve been back to Pomona a few times, to talk about how you write a resume, how to interview, questions you can anticipate. “Tell me about yourself. What’s your greatest strength, greatest weak- ness?” None of those common interview questions tell you anything about whether the person is going to be good in the job. The only questions that do are questions that actually say, “Give me an example of work you did that is exactly like the work you’re going to do.” They’re called “struc- tured behavioral interview questions.” Everything else is kind of a waste of time.

Bock: Yeah. Part of the way we solve for it at Google is: there’s a tremendous belief in transparency. It’s okay to ask anyone what they’re doing, and people post their goals on our internal website, so you can see what everyone is working on all the time. What’s beautiful about that is: you have all this free- dom, but as one of our executives, Jonathan Rosenberg, used to say, “Trust but verify.” I think that was Ronald Reagan’s cold war maxim.

You give people freedom, you just check on them once in a while to see how things are going, and 99 times out of 100, they’re doing great stuff. So there is a little bit of anarchy, and you try to observe what’s going on without jumping in and telling people, You can do this; you can’t do this other thing.”

Bock: The conventional model of leadership is somebody who stands at the bow of the ship and says, “Onward. We’re going in this direction.” The problem is that one...
person isn’t going to have the best judgment in the world in every situation, and they may be sending you in the wrong direction. If you want to retain your best people and keep them motivated, you actually have to let them lead in some different way.

Rather than having a single person saying, “This is the way it’s going to be,” what we focus on is emergent leadership. When there’s a problem, let somebody emerge as a natural leader. Do you actually take charge? And just as importantly, do they relinquish control? Do they then let go and let somebody else step in? Those are the things we look for.

Larry [Page] and Sergey [Bryin], in running Google, have done this multiple times. They could have said, “I’m going to make every decision. Here’s how it’s going to go.” But instead, most recently, they handed off the position of CEO of Google—the crown jewel of the company, the big source of revenue—and they just gave it to Sundar Pichai, who is fantastic. So they’re willing to lead and step back, lead and step back. And that’s essential, because while in conventional leadership theory, there is a leader who is the right leader who is going to lead in all situations, the reality is we all have different strengths and weaknesses, and we will be more effective as leaders in very different kinds of circumstances. There’s no one person who is the right leader all the time.

The way we screen for that, quite frankly, is all of us hate to be managed like that. The way we see for that, quite frankly, is that they actually deliver. They do talk to us; they don’t give us freedom—and they just gave it to Sundar Pichai. They could have said, “I’m going to make every decision. Here’s how it’s going to go.” Instead, they said, “I’m going to watch you very closely and make sure you deliver.” The reality is all of us hate to be managed like that.

“If you just get off our backs and give us some freedom, we’ll do our jobs and we’ll do great work. And that’s true in 99.9 percent of the cases. Anyone can do it.”

PCO: Tell me about the response to the book so far?

Bock: It’s been surprising, and humbling, and flattering, and exciting, and a little embarrassing. The book came out last April. It’s out now, we’re up to 10 to be published this year. Mainland China just came out last week, but World Affairs is, for example, is coming out in a month, next month. So the appetite for it has been surprising. It’s kind of humbling and delightful. The critical reception was a huge relief, because I was terrified people were going to say, “This doesn’t make any sense.” The math is wrong. The science doesn’t hold up. Thanks to the analytics folks here, we dodged that bullet.

But the best thing is the emails and letters I get from people who have read it. I bump into people who say, “Hey, I got my job because I read your chapter on how to hire.” I got an email from a Pomona alumna who’s got a law firm in a large city. She said, “Hey, I read the book and I tried instituting spot bonuses in my company where you can give anyone a bonus of up to $10,000. It’s been really cool.” So the direct feedback from people, saying, “It’s actually changing how I run my business, and people are happier,” has been amazing, and kind of surprising and delightful.

PCO: Do you have another book in mind?

Bock: I don’t know. Maybe. I think there’s just enough rough problem around how to find a job. I’ve been thinking about what would be the next most helpful way to help people with their jobs. This book was sort of from the corporate side—if I’ve got a business or a team, or I’ve got people and how do I manage them? The flip side of that is: If I’m a new grad, or I’m graduating, how do I get a job? How do I play that? If I’m somebody who stepped out of the workforce for 10 years to start a family, how do I get back in? I think that’s a really hard question so I’ve been thinking about that.

What’s Stressing Your Face?

In this “doctor’s guide to proactive aging and cosmetic surgery,” dermatologist and cosmetic surgeon Dr. Olympia Ablon ’88 discusses a variety of stress-related conditions, from rosacea to hair loss, in addition to common conditions, such as shingles, along with treatment-ranging from psychotherapy to electrical stimulation. (Basic Health Publications, 2015, 184 pages, $15.95)

Ira’s Shakespeare Dream

Glenda Armand ’77 joins illustrator Floyd Cooper to tell the true story of Ira Aldridge, an aspiring Black actor who defied convention and prejudice to become one of the most celebrated Shakespearean actors of the 19th century. (Pomegranate, 2015, 40 pages, $18.95)

Leopards at My Door

Hardin Delson ‘65 recalls her adventures in the Peace Corps during the mid-1960s, teaching at the Bagamoyo Hospital Training School in Tanzania (where she had regular visits from leopards and an array of other wild animals). She worked with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, India, and later as a volunteer with Leprosy. (PeaceCorps Writers, 2014, 252 pages, $15.00)

The Panchen Lama’s Debate Between the Reifying Habit and the Refuting Habit

Kenneth Liberman ’70 spent a decade translating the principal work of the renowned first Panchen Lama, Lobzang Chokyi Gyaltsen (1570–1662), styled as a witty play, employing the tension between logic (wisdom) and logic (the refuting habit) in dramatic characters. (Maitral Banarasia, India, 2014, 224 pages, $35.00)

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Teeny Tiny Immortals

Providing the strongest evidence to date that some animals have the potential for immortality, new research released in December confirms the tiny hydra does not age and, if kept in ideal conditions, may just live forever.

In a co-authored paper published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) journal, Pomona College Biology Professor Daniel Martínez caps a decade of research into these centimeter-long freshwater polyps with a knack for longevity.

The paper titled “Constant mortality and fertility over age in Hydra” shows hydra could live in ideal conditions without showing any sign of senescence—the increase in mortality and decline in fertility with age after maturity, which was thought to be inevitable for all multicellular species.

“Hydrides are made of stem cells,” Martínez says. “Most of the hydra’s body is made of stem cells with very few fully differentiated cells. Stem cells have the ability to constantly divide, and so a hydra’s body is continually renewed. The differentiated cells of the tentacles and the foot are constantly being pushed off the body and replaced with new cells migrating from the body column.”

The project was labor-intensive and, at times, tedious. Each hydra had to be individually fed three times a week. “Many, many hours of work went into this experiment,” says Martínez. “I’m hoping this work helps sparks another scientist to take a deeper look at immortality, perhaps in some other organism that helps bring more light to the mysteries of aging.”

—Carla Guerrero

What’s in a Name?

The study landed just in time for the 2014 hurricane season, and it created quite a weather system of its own.

A team of university researchers had found that female-named hurricanes are deadlier, and they pointed that this was due to sexism—people didn’t take hurricanes with female names as seriously. They concluded that changing a severe hurricane’s name from Charley to Eloise “would nearly triple its death toll.”

The findings, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, drew international media attention. They also drew skepticism from some observers and academics who questioned the methodology.

Economics Professor Gary Smith digs more deeply into these doubts in his new paper, “Hurricane Names: A Bunch of Hot Air?”, published in Weather and Climate Extremes. In addition to questioning the methodology, Smith uses new data to provide the most extensive look at the controversial findings so far. Smith finds the hurricane names conclusion is “based in a questionable statistical analysis of a narrowly defined data set” and does not hold up when looking at a more inclusive set of data or at a fresh set of data.

His skepticism was heightened by the study’s conclusion that there is no female-male effect for less severe storms. If the sexism theory is true, he says, it ought to be most apparent for storms of questionable danger.

“It is implausible that an imperiled public’s response to a potential storm of the century—with catastrophic warnings broadcast by news media that feed on sensationalized reporting—depends on whether the name Sandy is perceived to be a feminine or masculine,” notes Smith.

Smith found that the original study’s conclusions depended on the inclusion of pre-1979 data, a period when all tropical storms were given female names. Hurricanes happened to have been stronger during these years and it is likely that infrastructure was weaker and there was less advance warning. It is more scientifically valid to analyze storms since 1979, when weather officials started assigning alternating female and male names before the hurricane season begins.

Smith also found that the statistical analysis was flawed and that the authors estimated at least a dozen models, which he calls a sure sign of tortured data. Smith tried to replicate the original research by 1) looking at a wider set of data and 2) looking at a fresh set of data. The original study, Smith notes, excluded tropical storms that did not meet the wind-speed threshold to be labeled hurricanes, as well as storms that started off the coast and did not make landfall in the U.S. It also excluding deaths that occurred outside the U.S. When a wider set of data is considered, the study’s conclusions don’t hold up, says Smith.

—Carla Guerrero
For a second test, Smith looked at Pacific storms—the original research only considered Atlantic storms—and again found no difference in fatalities from female-named and male-named storms.

The Betchler Jones Professor of Economics at Pomona, Smith teaches finance and statistics and pursues research on topics such as housing prices and stock prices. Author of Flawed Assumptions, Tortured Statistics, and Other Ways to Lie with Statistics, Smith laments that, “Statistical analyses are indispensable for evaluating competing claims and making good decisions. Unfortunately, the credibility of useful analyses is undermined by studies that torture the data.”

—Mark Kendall

GEOLOGY: Professor Eric Grosfils

Supervolcanoes

Almost 10 years ago, Geology Professor Eric Grosfils published a scientific paper on the stability and rupture of small magma reservoirs, challenging the current theory behind what triggers eruptive events. One key finding was that magma buoyancy, which has lower density than the rock around it, begins to create pressure and push against the crust until it breaks, permitting magma to move upward and fuel an eruption. These pressures, however, contribute in only minor ways relative to other factors. “Buoyancy doesn’t appear to be the trigger for such eruptions as others have argued,” says Grosfils, suggesting that previously identified factors, including external fracturing during roof collapse, remain the critical drivers for supervolcano eruptions. “We know that really big magma bodies accumulating at shallow levels in the crust can feed large eruptive eruptions like the past climactic events at Yellowstone or Long Valley,” explains Grosfils. “All of us are interested in discovering what causes it takes for a system like that, just sitting there happily minding its own business, to begin erupting. What happens in the reservoir and surrounding crust that allows the materials to escape and feed a large, catastrophic volcanic eruption?”

Smith also has a penchant for looking more deeply at implausible findings and underestimating competing claims. “There are still many aspects to triggering supervolcanic eruptions that we still do not understand. Our recent investigation helps to rule out one potential eruption triggering mechanism,” Grosfils says. “This leaves us with many additional ways to be worked on to better constrain the mechanisms that trigger supervolcano eruption.”

Given the additional work left to figure out what sets off supervolcanoes, the opportunities for students to explore and learn are plentiful, and Grosfils’ collaborative nature and mentorship has already inspired some students to continue the work.

Recent Pomona graduate Robby Goldman ’15, is one of those students. He will be working with Gregg the following academic year, pursuing a supervolcano dynamics model on a large scale as a graduate student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign’s geodynamics program.

A geology major at Pomona, Goldman worked with Grosfils and another geology student, Jack Albright ’16, on a project modeling magma chambers in three-dimensional space using the finite-element modeling software COMSOL. Multiphysics. The goal of that research was to better understand how the formation of large, calderon-shaped depressions known as calderas, are influenced by pressure changes in the underlying magma chambers. Their research was presented at the annual Lunar and Planetary Science Conference last spring in Houston.

Goldman is now headed to New Zealand on a Fulbright grant to continue his work in an ancient volcanic system, and he says his work with Professor Grosfils directly influenced his decision to apply for the Fulbright grant.

Adds Gregg, “Working with Professor Grosfils is incredibly enriching. His patience and generosity of time, acting as a critical sounding board as we work through the physics and dynamics of our volcanic models, makes doing science together fun and exciting.”

—Carla Guzman

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—Carla Guzman

ADAN AMAYA

Traveling the World with Languages

With the Fulbright grant, Amaya was exploring the world through language, he’s probably well, traveling. He makes the trip back home to El Salvador twice a year; he has even brought Pomona students along with him, including a Chinese student he met during his Oldenborg lunches.

“He showed up to the Spanish table with his little Spanish,” recalls Amaya. “I said, Bob, do you really want to master Spanish? In order to do that, you have to put some passion into it. I’ve been seeing his improvement over two years, and he took the courage to go with my family back to El Salvador. That’s one of my greatest experiences.”

From his trips to Greece to his travels around Central and South America, Amaya is no stranger to exploration. His next destination: Roatan Island, Honduras. For someone who naturally likes to wander, he was surprised to discover he feels right at home with Pomona’s mail services team.

“I never thought that I would stay for very long. But since I’ve stayed at Pomona for so long, and the environment is related to the work, and how you move around with people, I’ve liked it. I’m going to hang out here with Pomona for a long time.”

—Anthony Beal ’17

Man of the World

When he’s not delivering Pomona’s mail, Adan Amaya is traveling the world with languages.

Man of the World

When he’s not delivering Pomona’s mail, Adan Amaya is traveling the world with languages.
A February view of North Campus, with snowclouds lingering over the mountains.

Photo by Jeff Hing
Spirits of Saturn was a fine, white powder that 17th-century women smoothed into their skin. Also known as Venetian ceruse, it hid smallpox scars, spots and blemishes, transforming faces into a fashionable pallor. It also slowly poisoned the wearer—it was made of powdered lead.

HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE AND INTERPRET THE FACES WE SEE?
HOW DO OUR BRAINS TRANSLATE HUMAN FEATURES INTO BEAUTY?

HOW DO WE TELL MALE FROM FEMALE, YOUNG FROM OLD?
NEUROSCIENTIST RICHARD RUSSELL '97 IS BREAKING THE CODE.

STORY BY JULIE SCHARPER
ILLUSTRATION BY MARK WOOD
Nimocks’ grandmother was both creative and resourceful. Store-bought hair products were usually made for creative and resourceful. Mainstream cosmetics were prohibitively expensive. She cites research indicating that hair relaxers seep through the epidermis, making it easier for estrogen-mimicking hormones to enter the bloodstream. In

Over time, the powder caused teeth to rot, hairlines to recede and, in particular, a cruel twist of irony, the skin to shrivel and turn gray. Yet, for hundreds of years, European and Asian women dabbled in and relied on the most unanny preparation that women have used to whiten their skin. Ancient Roman women used crocodile dung; Japanese women preferred nightshade dynamics.

Women have been powdering their cheeks, lining their eyes and ronging their lips for nearly all of recorded history. The story of makeup may begin even earlier—stores of red ochre found in Paleolithic caves suggest humans have been painting their skin for tens of thousands of years. While ideals of beauty change over time and across cultures, some elements are nearly universal: fair, unblemished skin, ruby lips, alluring eyes. Psychologist Richard Russell ’97, who studies the biological underpinnings of beauty, believes he has figured out why.

Through a series of elegantly-designed experiments, Russell has proved that women’s faces have greater contrast than men’s. It’s as if Mother Nature applied an Instagram filter to the female face to make the eyes and mouth pop out from the rest of the features. And this contrast, Russell discovered, appears at puberty and ebbs at menopause, making it a marker of fertility.

In other words, Russell solved a riddle nearly as old as hu-

manity. Why do women wear makeup? To look more feminine and more fertile. “There’s a lot of information we get from a face—age, health, sex, race, trustworthiness,” he says. “There are judgments that we make, even though we’re taught not to make them.”

Russell is not what you might picture when you think of a makeup scholar. The 40-year-old Gettysburg College professor is partial to plaid shirts and wire-rimmed glasses. He spends his free time hiking with his kids, not pursuing the counteracts at Sephora.

Even his wife, Carrie Russell, an attorney and novelist, doesn’t wear much makeup, Russell says. “Part of how I study this is I have an aversion to vision,” she says. “I don’t put that much work into my appearance.”

Russell’s interest in perception began during his undergrad days at Pomona, where he majored in neuroscience. Working on a student mural project sparked an interest in art, and Russell de-
cided he wanted to study how the mind perceives beauty. He received a doctorate in cognitive science from the Masa-

chusetts Institute of Technology, then joined a post-doc program at Harvard. It was there that Russell made his first major contribution to the understanding of facial perception.

Russell was studying prosopagnosics, people who are exceptionally bad at recognizing faces (the term comes from the Greek “face”) and “face”.

Prosupagnosics are unable to identify co-workers, friends, and, in the most extreme cases, their own spouses. The biologist Oliver Sachs wrote extensively about prosopagnosia and addiction with which his self was afflicted. In an essay, he recounted being unable to recognize his own psychoanalyst when passing him in the building. One afternoon, while meeting with a woman he had been waiting to see if he could recognize her without prompting.

While some prosopagnosics, such as Sachs, appear-
tantly suffer from a hereditary condition, others lose the ability to recognize faces after an accident or illness. Scientists believe that a portion of the right side of the visual cortex, known as the fusiform face area, is primarily responsible for facial recognition.

As Russell studied people who had problems recog-
nizing faces, he began to wonder if there were others who were exceptionally good at recognizing them. While researchers had traditionally thought fa-
cial recognition was a skill that people either pos-
sessed or lacked, Russell had a hunch that it was an ability that lay on a spectrum.

In a Craigslist ad, one of Russell’s subjects had told him of a friend who had an extraordinary talent for remembering faces. This young man recognized people he had glimpsed at a concert months earlier, notifying them by phone and text, and could not today, he realized, be expected to do so.

Russell devised a test to spot exceptional facial recognition ability. He administered it to his subject’s friend, and others, and discovered that there were indeed people who had an innate talent for identifying faces. In a 2009 paper, Russell announced the existence of people who had an innate talent for identifying faces. In a 2009 paper, Russell announced the existence of

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The Natural

Joyce Nimocks ’15 has

found memories of her grand-
mother teaching her to make
body butter out of olive oil
and using natural, home-
made concoctions on her
granddaughter’s curly hair.

Nimocks hopes to someday open a
non-profit in middle-to-high-income com-

munities. Nimocks has written a business proposal to
start a nonprofit. She says her summer research and classes like these have given her the confidence required to believe she can bring big ideas to life.

“Your beauty,” she explains. “It’s about relaxation. It’s about self-care and self-love. I can really see my organization being a place where women feel comfort-
able going to and even talking about beauty issues. I can see it being a really integral part of communities and also partnering with other community organizations, like libraries or YMCA’s in Chicago.”

But before she launches into that project, she has more research to do. Funded by a prestigious $30,000 Watson Fellowship, Nimocks is currently on a tour of Ghana, Japan and South Africa to work with artisans, farmers and other groups and learn about the ways they use local ingredients to produce sustainable, handmade cosmetics.

Nimocks recalls conversations with her grandmother while making their beauty products in the kitchen. Years later, recreating relationships around all-natural cosmetics is a tribute to her heri-
tage. “My grandmother would be really happy,” she says. “She

—Sneha Abraham
While many think of beauty as a subjective construct, Etcoff argues in her book, *Survival of the Prettiest*, that we are primed to find certain evolutionarily adaptive traits attractive. Studies show that attractive faces meet certain criteria. They’re symmetrical. They’re youthful. They’re sexually dimorphic—males are assumed to be either-or. You have them, or you don’t. But if there is a spectrum for facial recognition, perhaps one exists for other abilities as well.

Harvard psychologist Nancy Etcoff, who also studies the biological basis of beauty, says Russell’s work challenges the field’s established notions. “He’ll take a known finding and make you think about it in a different way,” she says. Russell is a “creative, thoughtful and rigorous researcher,” whose research has inspired some of her own recent work, she says.

As Russell’s discovery has led him to question what other cognitive abilities exist on a spectrum, Etcoff conducted follow-up experiments that showed that reducing the level of contrast in a woman’s face made her looked older. How does all of this relate to the cosmetics counter? Women use makeup to darken their eyelids and brows, to hide skin imperfections and to add color to their lips and cheeks. In other words, as Russell also demonstrated in a 2009 paper, makeup increases facial contrast. By making their eyes and lips pop, women make themselves look younger and more feminine, and, therefore, more attractive.

Etcoff made headlines a few years ago with a study that showed people perceive women wearing makeup as more attractive, but more competent and trustworthy. What we tend to think of as a “natural look,” is actually a face that has been subtly embellished with makeup.

“Women use makeup similarly across time and cultures,” Russell says. “I’m trying to marry the knowledge of perceptions of human attractiveness with what people have been doing for thousands of years to enhance their faces. We could learn a lot about makeup by applying this psychological research,” Chanel, the century-old French cosmetics company, seems to think so too, since it’s currently funding some of Russell’s research.

In the future, Russell is interested in delving into other aspects of appearance. After all, people have been styling their hair and covering their bodies for at least as long as they have been painting their skin. What do we reveal—and hide—about our evolutionary fitness through clothing and hair?

“So people think a core aspect of what makes us human is altering our appearance,” Russell says.

Would you like to learn more about the psychology of beauty? Contact Richard Russell ’97 at Gettysburg College.
But Larsen has snapped a million other moments and more photos of famous faces than you can count. Name a Hollywood star and he’s probably captured them on his camera. Brad Pitt. Halle Berry. Clint Eastwood. Cate Blanchett. Since 1997, the celebrity portraiture and lifestyle photography of husband and wife team Larsen and Tracy Talbert—they met in high school when he was the yearbook photographer and she was the school newspaper photographer—have appeared worldwide in magazines like People, Esquire, InStyle, Playboy, Entertainment Weekly, and for commercial clients like NBC, Fox, Bravo and Warner Brothers.

Larsen’s childhood dream was to be a filmmaker—he adored “Star Wars”—and he learned the principles of filmmaking through still photography. He was 14 when he got his first camera, an Olympus OM1 35mm, and he went on to work as a photographer for the yearbook throughout high school and The Student Life while at Pomona. He was never without his camera and was always in the darkroom, he says. “It was a constant, daily practice for me.”

After graduation he set out on his pursuit of a film career but realized after a grueling two years that this wasn’t what he wanted to do after all, he says.

“1 looked around at the career paths of the crew and camera people and it looked pretty depressing in terms of...
their personal lives,” he says, thanks to long brutal hours that he saw taxed families.

A photography workshop Larsen attended in upstate New York led to a conversation, which led to an invitation, which led to a pivot. He talked to Douglas Kirkland, one of the first modern celebrity portrait photographers, who told him about the role of photo assistants. Larsen remembers thinking, “Wait a minute, what is that? That’s a job?”

Kirkland invited him to a shoot with Matt Groening, creator of “The Simpsons,” and Larsen, after seeing how professional celebrity shoots happen, was hooked and decided then this was the path for him. “I was just completely taken. It was kind of like filmmaking in that you’re building sets and creating worlds, but you’re doing it in a five-hour period, instead of months and days,” says Larsen.

His first gig was a teddy bears shoot for a toy catalog but over the course of seven years his experience expanded to assisting the biggest names in the field like Annie Leibovitz, Nigel Parry, Kirkland and Firooz Zahedi (Larsen helped him with the now iconic movie poster for “Pulp Fiction”).

Larsen says Leibovitz influenced him greatly with the artistic style she would bring to her shoots: whether putting Demi Moore in body paint, dumping Whoopi Goldberg in a tub of milk, or asking John Lennon to be naked and hug Yoko Ono on the floor. (To this day Larsen wonders about Lennon and Ono’s initial reactions to that request.)

Larsen and Talbert have spent two decades building that kind of creative trust with celebrities and, now more than in bygone eras, also with stars’ publicists, who do the initial vetting and then often give the final yay or nay. From his very first shoot Larsen says he realized that celebrity photography isn’t just about taking a nice picture; it’s about psychology and politics as well.

As soon as a subject arrives on set, the face is the first place his eyes go. Lighting changes are made accordingly and wardrobes are assessed based on body types.  

Clockwise from left: Matthew McConaughey, Jane Lynch and Ben Affleck  
Photos Copyright Larsen&Talbert
“Celebrities are actually very vulnerable at this point,” says Larsen. “A bad photographer or a magazine with an agenda could make them look bad intentionally if they wanted. We made a decision a long time ago that we were in the business for the long run, and so it’s incredibly important that we treat our subjects with respect and not violate the trust they put in us.”

(“Every once in awhile you get a subject who is so stunningly beautiful they look great no matter what. Halle Berry was one of these,” he says.)

If all goes well there is that magic click, when the shutter release button meets “a moment, a pose, the light, where you think to yourself, ‘That’s it!’ Anything you get after that is just gravy,” he explains.

But often, he says, you don’t see the magic until after the fact. “Sometimes during the shoot I think, ‘Wow, this person is really a dud, nothing going on at all,’ and then you start looking through the pictures and realize they were doing something very subtle and intense and they actually gave you a gift,” he says. “That’s the fun of photography: discovering what you really captured later, after all the rigmarole of the shoot has passed and you’re just sitting with the images in front of you. Sometimes that same discovery can come years later when you’re looking back through the shoots.”

And then there are the shoots that go awry. They had 10 minutes with Jodie Foster when Larsen realized he had accidentally shot in multiple exposure and all the photos were on one frame. He threw his back out completely on a shoot with Goldie Hawn and Susan Sarandon and was unable to stand, so Talbert put the camera on a tripod, focused, and Larsen just pushed the button. Both times they still got the money shot.

Then of course, there are the difficult, er, quirky celebrities. The hardest session he recalls was with Christopher Walken. “As we were shooting, if we wanted him to look at the camera, we had to say ‘look.’ I said ‘look.’ He’d look at the camera for one frame, and then look away. He insisted that we say ‘look’ for every frame that we wanted him to look at the camera. Eventually, we got into a rhythm, but it threw me off at first.”

The smoothest shoot? Brad Pitt. “I had worked with him back in the early ‘90s on a movie called Cool World. He hadn’t quite exploded yet and liked to hang out with the crew instead of hiding in his RV like the other big actors. When we did the shoot, he was the same laid-back guy. No fuss. But when he left the studio after our shoot, his car got attacked by paparazzi as it was pulling away. It was hard to watch that. We had a lot of sympathy for him and the price he pays for fame.”

Celebrities are just normal people who happen to have really interesting jobs, says Larsen. And they make his work interesting as well. “We’re very lucky to be able to get to spend some time with these folks and get a glimpse into their world, which is creative and at the leading edge of our culture. I think that’s the most rewarding part: a front row seat to American culture — the transcendent and the infamous, but distinctly American. It’s a privilege,” he says.

“The fact that I get paid to do this makes me feel very grateful and a little guilty.”

Clockwise from bottom left: LeBron James, Hugh Jackman, Cameron Diaz and Halle Berry. Bottom right: Tracy Talbert and Michael Larsen (photo by Luke & Ada Larsen)
HOW ABC’S SHARK TANK PROPELLED JUSTIN FENCHEL ’06 AND HIS BOXED-WINE COMPANY TO THE BIG TIME...

JUMPING THE SHARK

How do you look a man in the eye and ask him for a million dollars on national television?

“You have to just go for it and not think about it,” Justin Fenchel ’06 says. “As soon as anyone in the room senses weakness, you’re doomed.”

It was June of 2014, and Fenchel was talking shop with Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks and one of the judges on the ABC reality show “Shark Tank.” Cuban had just bid $600,000 to buy a third of Fenchel’s company, and eight million TV viewers were waiting for an answer.

Running the numbers in his head, the Pomona economics major was hesitant to say yes. His team had agreed beforehand that they wouldn’t give up more than 20 percent of the business unless they received a particularly hefty bid.

The room was suddenly eerily quiet. The show’s dramatic background music wouldn’t be added for several more months, and the bright studio lights were making Fenchel feel like he was about to black out. (Looking at the transcript afterwards, he says, “I don’t remember half of the comments I appear to have made.”)

One thing he did recall saying, though, was his reply to Cuban: “Would you do a million?”

Cuban paused a beat.

“Sure.”

With those four letters, Fenchel’s life changed in a very big way.
BeatBox Beverages, his line of wine-based cocktails that come in blindingly bright 5-liter boxes, had just been valued at three million dollars, and was about to experience the unique joy that is “the Shark Tank effect.”

After not being stocked in a single store 18 months earlier, BeatBox soon expanded to nearly 900 locations in 13 states, all while grabbing celebrity endorsements and positioning itself to take on the biggest players in the wine world.

Reflecting on BeatBox’s rapid rise, Fenchel shakes his head and grins sheepishly. “To think,” he says. “It all basically started with a game of ‘slap-the-bag.’”

“We knew we were onto something when people were literally throwing 20 dollar bills at us and asking where they could buy it.”

BeatBox— Преобразование вина в игру

“Thanks, Franzia!”), and walk around local events giving out free samples. (“We go to festivals and ask for brutally honest feedback on which flavors tasted best,” Fenchel recalls. “We knew we were onto something when people were literally throwing 20 dollar bills at us and asking where they could buy it.”

BeatBox’s first production run was just in time for the South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival in March of 2013. Shortly but steadily, the company grew—from 20 cases a month, to 50, to 100, with Fenchel and his three colleagues still packaging and pressing every box.

“By 2014 we had increased our distribution 800 percent, but realized that we were still spending all our time cultivating potential distributors and investors, one of the most powerful businessman in the state,” says Fenchel, who connects with Cuban at least once a week via email or text. “People who wouldn’t return our calls before were taking meetings with us now.”

At Fenchel’s zips around the country holmoeading with potential distributors and investors, one of the most common questions he gets is a simple one: why boxed wine?

As any casual oenophile knows, boxed wine has what Fenchel generously describes as a “perception problem.” The practice of putting wine in boxes first emerged in Australia in the mid-60s, and the cheapness of the approach made it attractive to low-end jug-wine sellers in America.

While companies targeting upscale customers may view the box as a barrier, BeatBox treats it as a key differentiator and marketing tool for millennials who are more interested in having fun than seeming sophisticated.

The box also helps the bottom line, since boxed wine is easier to produce, longer-lasting, more convenient and more environmentally-friendly than traditional methods. BeatBox’s sales last year translated to a savings of 530,000 wine bottles that weren’t being produced or trashed.

Moving forward, Fenchel’s five-year plan is simple: “More stores, lower costs.” He’s hoping to get big-chain authorizations from the likes of Publix and Kroger, and hopes to soon stock single-serving sizes so that they can sell it at bars and convenience stores.

He also has built a network of more than 250 “brand ambassadors” who organize promotional events and happy hours around the country. It’s all part of his loftier goal to grow BeatBox into a global company on par with Red Bull, with sponsored concerts and sports competitions.

“Anyone can turn BeatBox into a lifestyle brand, it’s the guy who’s embodying that philosophy,” says Schultz. “The fun-loving, outgoing, celebratory spirit of BeatBox—that’s more or less a direct reflection of Justin and who he is as a person.”

On a bootstrap budget, Fenchel’s team crowd-funded a logo and package design. To focus-group their product, they would plaster BeatBox stickers onto card-board boxes, put test batches into empty wine bags (“Thanks, Franzia!”), and walk around local events giving out free samples. (“We go to festivals and ask for brutally honest feed-back on which flavors tasted best,” Fenchel recalls. “We knew we were onto something when people were liter-ally throwing 20 dollar bills at us and asking where they could buy it.”

“We needed money.”

“We acted like it was the biggest job interview of our life,” Fenchel says. “Which it was.”

The work paid off: in the months after BeatBox’s episode aired in October 2014, sales doubled and the team expanded from 150 stores to nearly 900. In 2015 they hit a million dollars in sales and rung up endorse-ments from the likes of electronic musician Skrillex and rapper Waka Flocka Flame, who enthusiastically describes the Blue Raspberry flavor as his “Turn Up Juice.” “Shark Tank” also impacted BeatBox in more intan-gible ways. “It certainly helps when your email to Wal-mart’s Texas distribution team includes a CC to the most powerful businessman in the state,” says Fenchel, who connects with Cuban at least once a week via email or test. “People who wouldn’t return our calls before were taking meetings with us now.”

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“We needed money.”
Most of the people gathered around the card tables at the Senior Center in Longmont, Colo., this morning seem to be my age or older—in their 60s or 70s. They sit three or four to a table and peek at their cards, as I do at mine. Unlike most card games, GoWish gives each player a full deck—cards bearing no diamonds or spades, no aces or deuces. Just words. Words like: “To be mentally aware.” And “Not to be connected to machines.” And “To be at peace with God.”

The object here isn’t winning—it’s understanding. By organizing our cards into numbered priorities, we’re all seeking to come to grips with the nitty-gritty of our own mortality—that is, to decide how we would prefer to die.

As I shuffle through my cards and grapple with my own priorities (Do I want to be free from pain more than I want the chance to see my close friends one last time? Should I rank having my financial affairs in order above having a doctor I trust?), my host, Peggy Arnold ’65 wanders from table to table, asking probing questions and offering nuggets of information about the world of modern death. Just starting the process of talking about the subject, she says, is therapeutic—taking us back to a day when death was a visible part of life.

“What’s really interesting about that game,” Arnold says, “is what happens when people have a discussion about why they chose what they chose. Really, it’s a values clarification game.”

“Death in our culture has become a medical event, not a personal experience,” she says. “It used to be that children would run in and out of the parlor when the body was lying there. Or people grew up on farms, where life and death were always present.” Modern death, she says, is often hidden away behind hospital curtains, and most people have no clue what awaits them there.

At my table, one person picks as her top priority “To be free from anxiety.” Another chooses “To have an advocate who knows my values and priorities.” I settle on “To have my family with me.” In each case, it soon becomes clear that there are personal experiences behind the choice. The person who wants to be free from anxiety explains that her mother spent weeks before her death in a terrible state of fear. The person who hopes for an advocate worries about having no one she can trust. It only occurs to me afterward that my own choice might have something to do with the fact that both my parents died suddenly, without a chance to say goodbye.

“Ideas for end-of-life crusader Peggy Arnold ’65, thinking about death is just another way of thinking about life. Story and photos by Mark Wood.”

Pomona College Magazine
TAKING BACK DYING

For Arnold, the program coordinator for Longmont United Hospital’s AgeWell program, this game, and the reflections and conversations it prompts, are also part of a larger movement—a grassroots crusade that has been spreading across the country for the past few years. The goal: to reclaim death from the medical establishment and empower people to make choices about how they wish to spend their final days.

“To me, what’s exciting is that people are starting to take back their own death and dying process,” she says. “Look at everything that goes on around birth—all the joy and the care, the respect and the dignity that goes on. But on the other end of the conveyer belt, this hasn’t been happening.”

Today, medical technology can prolong life almost indefinitely, but as Arnold points out, in too many cases that has simply prolonged suffering and turned the end of life into a horror show. “Most people—there are always exceptions, but most people—are not going to want to go out of this life hooked to beeping machines, with tubes everywhere,” she says.

Like the Advanced Directives class she teaches at the Senior Center, this game of GoWish is intended to help participants think clearly about their options while there’s still time. Arnold likes to quote Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ellen Goodman, the founder of The Conversation Project, who said: “It’s always too soon, until it’s too late.”

Since 2010, The Conversation Project has been focusing on encouraging people to have a conversation with their loved ones about their end-of-life wishes. That, however, is only one of the visible kernels or concrete vaults to inhibit the natural recycling process. And at least 30 programs like the one at Longmont United, now spread across the United States, offering people a forum for free-form conversations it prompts, are also part of a larger movement—a grassroots reformation of the healthcare system, is aimed at his fellow doctors, giving them heart-breaking advice on how to relate to people who are dying.

“I went through the last meal (a cheeseburger or maybe fish and chips); what music he would like to hear on his deathbed (a piece by Felix Mendelssohn above his desk); for the personal. An old friend, Mogens Baungaard Thomsen—a Danish exchange student in her high school who had become a vascular surgeon in Sweden—revealed that he was living with a death sentence—kidney cancer that had metastasized to his lungs. “We just started Stepping a lot and had the most fascinating con-

At the time, Thomsen didn’t expect to live long enough to see his new grandchild, but he outlived his own prognosis. “There’s a picture of them together,” Arnold says, pointing to a photo pinned above her desk of Thomsen holding his granddaughter. “And he acoustic death trade” just evolved naturally. “You could call it ‘unbidden,’” she says. “It just appeared, and I was the one who was asked to do it.”

The exchanges between Thomsen and Arnold sound at times more practical and more emotionally raw—what he wants for his epitaph (“I don’t want one”).

For her part, Arnold says death has always seemed an integral part of her life. Her mother’s father died two months before she was born, and she suspects that her mother’s grief may have affected her in the womb. One of her first playgrounds in her hometown of Oberlin, Ohio, was a cemetery where she played among the tombstones of runaway slaves. Then there was her grandfather’s suicide by walking in front of a train there in Claremont. “I could go on and on with all these experiences of death,” she says. “So it’s really no surprise that it’s been a theme for me. Maybe not THE theme, but it’s definitely been part of the story.”

Having worked as a hospice volunteer before taking her current job 10 years ago, she says the part of her work that relates to “the death trade” just evolved naturally. “You could call it ‘unbidden,’” she says. “It just appeared, and I was the one who was asked to do it.”

First she was designated as the hospital representative to a short-lived organization called the Front Range End of Life, which fo-cused on creating resources for the terminally ill. Then the hospital decided to do a video about planning for the end of life, and guess who got the job? Then they needed someone to teach a class on ad-

That’s what the Deathies are all about. “They’re all passionate about returning control over the end of life to the dying and their families.”

alers.”

At the time, Thomsen said to Arnold with all these experiences of death,” she says. “So it’s really no sur-

She knew that was part of who he was. He loved all those adventures. “Sometimes it was scary, but he knew that was part of who he was. He loved all those adventures. And so, he was looking at death as the next adventure.”

In the area around Longmont and Boulder, Arnold is at the center of a small but determined community of end-of-life reformers whom she dubbs, with affection and “*M*A*S*H*-style humor, “the Deathies.” There’s Kim Mooney, an experienced end-of-life counselor and certified thanatologist (death scholar) who recently started her own company, called Practically Dying. There’s Bart Windrum, who, following the disastrous hospital experiences of his two dying parents, was moved to write Nuts from the Waiting Room, a guide book for families of the terminally ill. There’s retired emergency room physician Jean Abbott, who is urging her fellow doctors to get over their squeamishness about removing patients from life-prolong-

Like Dr. Angelo Volandes, author of The Heart of It All, there’s an increasing number of activist physicians who are seeking to change the ethos of end-of-life care by pulling back the curtain on hospital death and dying. “I saw a physician. He was a widower. Now he was facing his own end.”

So they made a video together about his experience of dying. “He talked about all the adventures he’d had in his life, like being with headhunters in New Guinea, and how everything he did was just a new adventure,” she says. “Sometimes it was scary, but he knew that was part of who he was. He loved all those adventures. And so, he was looking at death as the next adventure.”

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like therapy. “Although I’ve seen so many people die, I still don’t know what goes on at the end,” Thomsen reflects at one point.

“As long as I’m aware of what’s going on, I would probably want to cling to my relatives and have them with me, but that’s a very egoistic way of thinking. I don’t think it’s a pleasure for them to see me die.”

“You could ask,” Arnold gently suggests. “It may not be a pleasure, but it may be important.”

“You’re right,” Thomsen says. “I hadn’t even thought of asking. Thank you.”

Four months later, when Thomsen finally reached what he called “expiration date,” both of his sons were at his side.

“As it turned out, he had a medical emergency, went to the hospital, and though he would never have wanted to die there, that’s exactly what happened,” Arnold recalls. “And it was probably the best thing, as it turned out, because a really good friend who was a doctor was able to be there to make sure everything was going to happen the way Mo would want it. And it meant that his two sons could actually be there.

IT’S ABOUT LIFE

In the end, Arnold says, her experience with Thomsen taught her something important—not about death, but about life.

“We learned from him that, first of all, we do need to be looking at death face to face. No one should tell anybody else how to do this, but I think there’s a lot to gain from looking at it—not just at the end, but in relation to the end. What is life all about? What is today about? Tomorrow isn’t here yet, so what do I want my life to be about today? That, to me, is the good of doing this work.”

In the end, as much as we may avoid the subject, we all have our own expiration dates—we just don’t know what they are yet. Arnold sometimes wonders how she would respond to a terminal diagnosis herself. Would her work still have meaning? Would she find joy in little things, as her friend Mo did at the end?

In the meantime, she continues to teach her classes and organize events and counsel seniors who come to her for advice. And she continues to let her involvement with death inform her thinking about life.

“Advanced directives are just documents,” she says. “The medical people need them. But what’s interesting to me is the thought that has to go into them. So that means people have to look at what their values are, what their beliefs are, what their goals in life are, what quality of life means to them, all of these things. If they’re really thinking about it and taking it seriously, they’ve got to look at death and figure out what their relationship to it is. And that means, ‘What’s your relationship to life?’”

IT’S ABOUT LIFE

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The Final Face of Cuba

A middle-aged Cuban sat at an outdoor table in an alley across from a Havana restaurant that our group would later see. Wearing a red and blue baseball shirt, he smiled faintly, and I thought, “Not another panhandler in this impoverished but on-the-make-up-nation.”

As I would soon learn, however, this was no panhandler, but a former athlete, one of a number of Cubans of all ages chosen by tour planners to put a human face on today’s Cuba. Rey Vicente Anglasa dined with us that afternoon, and then, through an interpreter, highlighted his career as a player and manager for the Industriales and the Cuban national baseball team.

We were 24 Americans visiting Cuba for 10 days. Although at this writing, individual visits by American tourists remain illegal, the recent thaw in relations with Cuba has opened the door to people-to-people (“P2P”) programs like ours, one operated by small groups in New York. For my part, I was here to satisfy my own curiosity about the intertwining histories of our two countries, to find out for myself how this Caribbean communist state worked or didn’t, and to meet the island’s people.

The cultural exchanges turned out to be mostly one-sided, but we talked to countless Cubans in all lines of work—artists, teachers, students, cowboys, musicians, actors, guides, fishermen, restaurant owners and one former baseball player dodged about, walking into our small group like the weather.

The first person we met, and in many ways the most interesting, was our 43-year-old national guide, Enedis Tamayo Traba.

Accompanying us throughout the tour, she put her own spin on both Cuba’s achievements and its failures. A married mother of two, she modestly declared at the outset: “Welcome to my humble country. It is not perfect.” Another time, she noted: “Under Batista, we were mostly poor. Fidel gave us food, housing and health care, which is why we love him.” And in what might have been a popular joke during the Soviet-influenced era, she offered this explanation for the fact that few Cubans are overweight: “The elevators don’t work.”

The tour put us up in a series of luxury properties in Havana (the Melia Cohiba) and Grandluciano (Plaza Pesquero) near Holguin and at modest but comfortable hotels in Cienfuegos and Camaguey. However, as we toured, there were frequent reminders of the nation’s poverty. Once, Enedis took us to visit a cheerless government store where a farmer had lined up with his rationing book to claim his meager allowance of rice.

However, we also caught frequent glimpses of burgeoning free enterprise—rooms for rent in private dwellings, roadside fruit stands and elderly vendors hawking tiny roasted peanuts to supplement their incomes. Our factory guide, Augustin, opened the door to people-to-people (“P2P”) programs like ours, one operated by small groups in New York. For my part, I was here to satisfy my own curiosity about the intertwining histories of our two countries, to find out for myself how this Caribbean communist state worked or didn’t, and to meet the island’s people.

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Accompanying us throughout the tour, she put her own spin on both Cuba’s achievements and its failures. A married mother of two, she modestly declared at the outset: “Welcome to my humble country. It is not perfect.” Another time, she noted: “Under Batista, we were mostly poor. Fidel gave us food, housing and health care, which is why we love him.” And in what might have been a popular joke during the Soviet-influenced era, she offered this explanation for the fact that few Cubans are overweight: “The elevators don’t work.”

The tour put us up in a series of luxury properties in Havana (the Melia Cohiba) and Grandluciano (Plaza Pesquero) near Holguin and at modest but comfortable hotels in Cienfuegos and Camaguey. However, as we toured, there were frequent reminders of the nation’s poverty. Once, Enedis took us to visit a cheerless government store where a farmer had lined up with his rationing book to claim his meager allowance of rice.

However, we also caught frequent glimpses of burgeoning free enterprise—rooms for rent in private dwellings, roadside fruit stands and elderly vendors hawking tiny roasted peanuts to supplement their incomes. Our factory guide, Augustin, opened the door to people-to-people (“P2P”) programs like ours, one operated by small groups in New York. For my part, I was here to satisfy my own curiosity about the intertwining histories of our two countries, to find out for myself how this Caribbean communist state worked or didn’t, and to meet the island’s people.

The cultural exchanges turned out to be mostly one-sided, but we talked to countless Cubans in all lines of work—artists, teachers, students, cowboys, musicians, actors, guides, fishermen, restaurant owners and one former baseball player dodged about, walking into our small group like the weather.

The first person we met, and in many ways the most interesting, was our 43-year-old national guide, Enedis Tamayo Traba.
He quickly answered, “Night in Tunisia … Dizzy Gillespie.”

And of course, any account of a visit to Cuba would be incomplete without some mention of those amazing vintage American cars, visible on postcards, placemats and paintings as well as in the streets. Without them, Cuba simply wouldn’t be Cuba. At different times, drivers chauffeured members of our group in a 1940 Chevrolet sedan and a 1958 Edsel convertible, both impeccably maintained in spite of the seemingly insurmountable obstacle of the U.S. embargo. A 1948 Studebaker parked at a roadside gas station could undoubtedly win top prize in a restored vehicle competition in the States. This tour didn’t come cheap, but we met Cubans and toured their country in ways that I couldn’t have done on my own—even if it were legal.

For those interested in taking part in a people-to-people visit to Cuba, it’s important to keep in mind that (in the words of a customer service representative at smarTours) “it’s not like going to the Jersey shore for a weekend.”

The required paperwork is extensive, including a registration form and a copy of your passport page for the tour company, a Treasury Department travel affidavit confirming that you’re participating in a people-to-people visit; a reservation form for Cuba Travel Services, a visa application, and a variety of health forms.

Here are a few other things to keep in mind:

• Credit cards aren’t accepted and ATMs aren’t available, so be sure to bring extra cash for emergencies.

• Cuba charges a 13% fee to exchange American dollars into Cuban convertible pesos (known as CUCs) but no fee to exchange Canadian dollars or Euros into the national currency, so you can save money by converting your travel money into Canadian bills before you leave.

• Photographs are prohibited at Cuban airports and military facilities.

• The Treasury Department mandates that 272 tourists keep a daily travel journal and keep it for five years, in order to prove that the trip was legal.
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