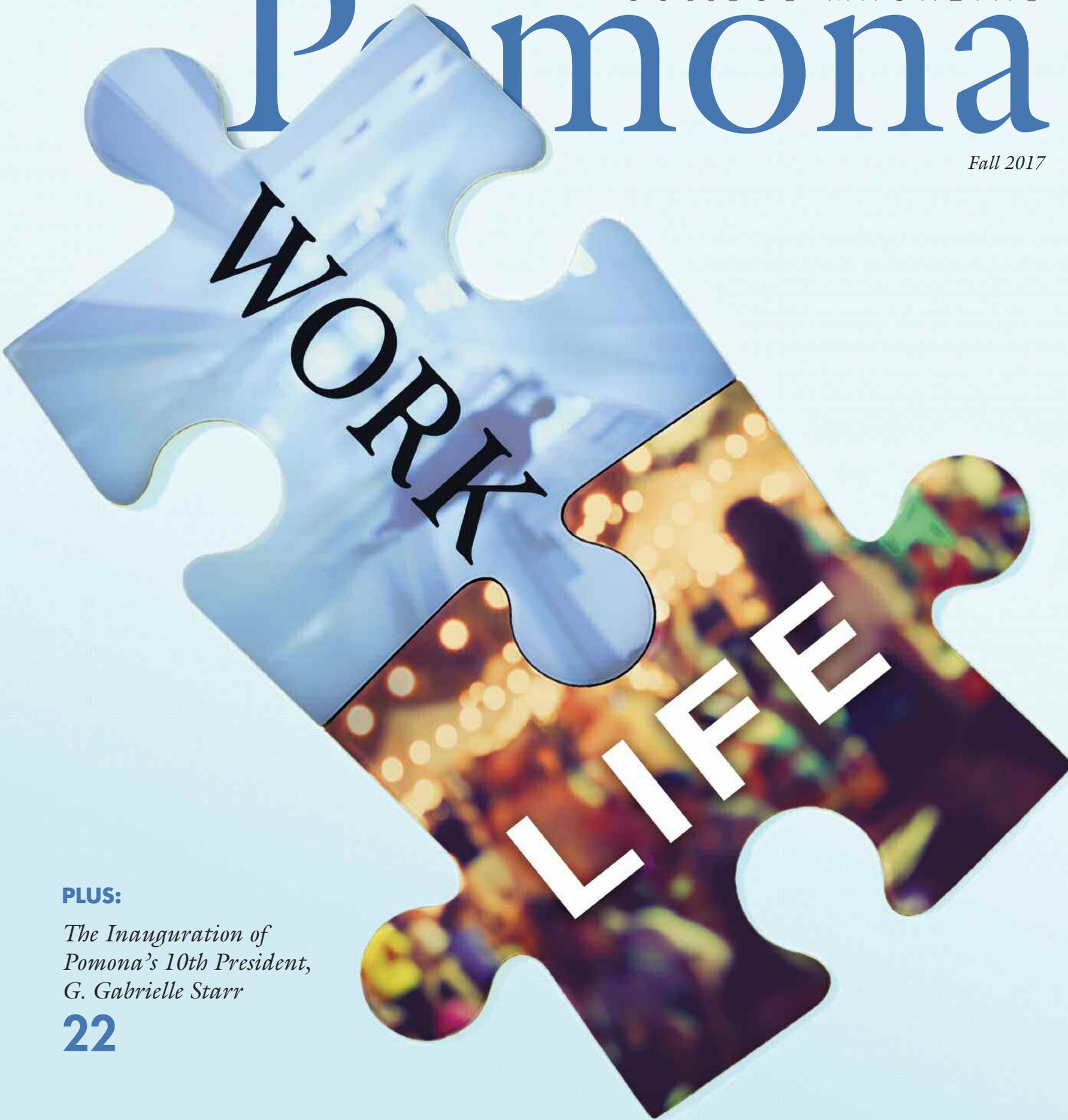


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COLLEGE MAGAZINE

Pomona

Fall 2017



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*The Inauguration of
Pomona's 10th President,
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A REUNION TO ECLIPSE ALL OTHERS

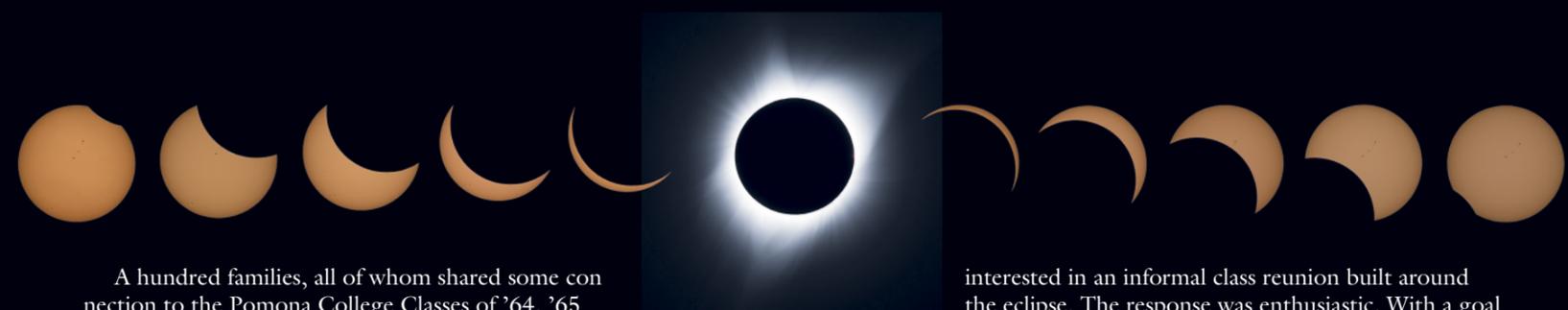
By Lew and Chuck Phelps '65

We

looked to the west across the vast plain that lay at our feet, far below the high summit we had recently ascended by ski lift. An ominous wall of darkness rushed toward us, enveloping everything in its path. Someone muttered, "Sauron, the Lord of Darkness, comes now in all his might!" We all then turned from this foreboding view to the sky above to watch the most astonishing and spectacular event in all of nature. This was the moment for which the two of us had been preparing for seven years. Totality had begun for 200-plus Pomona College alumni, their families and friends, in the

**Pomona College
Solar Eclipse
Reunion of 2017.**





A hundred families, all of whom shared some connection to the Pomona College Classes of '64, '65 and '66, had assembled atop Fred's Mountain in western Wyoming. We had flown or driven to the area in the days before, ridden a mile long ski lift to the top of the peak and watched with growing excitement as the dark disk of the moon gradually ate its way across the surface of the sun.

In just over two minutes, the total portion of the eclipse was over. Light began to return to the sky. Laughter and excited chatter filled the air. Some of us wept from the pure joy and power of the experience.

We, the authors of this article, are identical twins, both graduates of Pomona College in the Class of 1965. Back in 1991, after jointly experiencing an awe some six minutes and 45 seconds of total solar eclipse in Baja Sur, Mexico, we began thinking about a good place to view the eclipse that would pass completely over the United States on Aug. 21, 2017. About seven years ago, we began to deploy what was then a relatively novel tool, Google Earth, to find an ideal spot for viewing the 2017 eclipse. We plotted the path of totality across the U.S. and then began "walking across the landscape" at high magnification, starting on the Pacific coast.

We came first to a fire lookout tower in central Oregon, smack on the path of totality, but a long, difficult hike from the nearest Jeep trail. We kept looking. The Palouse region, east of the Cascade Mountains, looked promising from a standpoint of cloud cover—the nemesis of all eclipse watchers—but the landscape was tedious. Moving farther east, just as our digital exploration crossed the state line from Idaho into Wyoming, we found a ski lodge.

Hello, Grand Targhee Resort.

The more we looked at this location, the more interesting it became. The resort sat at 8,000 feet, at the base of a 10,000 foot peak called Fred's Mountain, with a chair lift to the top. Just east of Fred's Mountain rise the magnificent peaks of the Grand Tetons.

This skier's paradise, we realized, might provide a truly unique eclipse watching opportunity. From atop Fred's Mountain, with very clear air, one might be able to see the shadow of the moon racing across the 100 mile wide valley floor below. We calculated that at 1,662 miles per hour, it would take only a bit more than three and a half minutes to cross that breadth, all in view from our aerie like perch.

After kicking around various ideas for how best to make use of this seemingly unique site, we decided shortly before the 50th reunion of our Pomona Class of '65 (Thor) to see if our classmates would be

The 47 Eclipse

One fun aspect of this venture, the Phelps twins said, was the opportunity to infuse Pomona's mystical number 47 into communications related to the event. In their first written description of the event to classmates, they wrote, "Numerology savants will note that at our location, the eclipse event ends at exactly 1:00:00 p.m. on 8/21/17. The sum of those date and time numbers equals 47! What's more, the exact geographic location of the top of Fred's Mountain is N 43.787° W 110.934°. The digits of that latitude/longitude position also add up to 47!"

Photo on previous pages by Tom and Judith Auchter, digitally enhanced by Lew Phelps '65; photo above by NASA/Aubrey Gemignani; photo at top right by Alex Bentley and Hunter Bell; photo at right by Robert Gaines

interested in an informal class reunion built around the eclipse. The response was enthusiastic. With a goal of completely filling the resort's 95 rooms, we first solicited sign ups from our classmates and then expanded the proposal to our two "adjacent" classes, '64 (Dionysus) and '66 (Pele). And so we brought together the god of thunder, the god of wine and ritual madness, and the goddess of fire, volcanoes and capriciousness—quite a volatile mix. From those three classes, we drew enough participants to fill the entire ski resort, counting spouses, children and grandchildren of classmates.

Then came two years of intense planning, including two inspection trips to the resort, negotiations over fees, menu planning for group dinners, contracts with vendors, identifying speakers (what would a Pomona gathering be without strong intellectual content?) and much more. We even included four nights of "star parties"—opportunities to view gorgeous objects in the night sky through telescopes operated by experienced amateur astronomers organized by Franklin McBride Marsh '17.

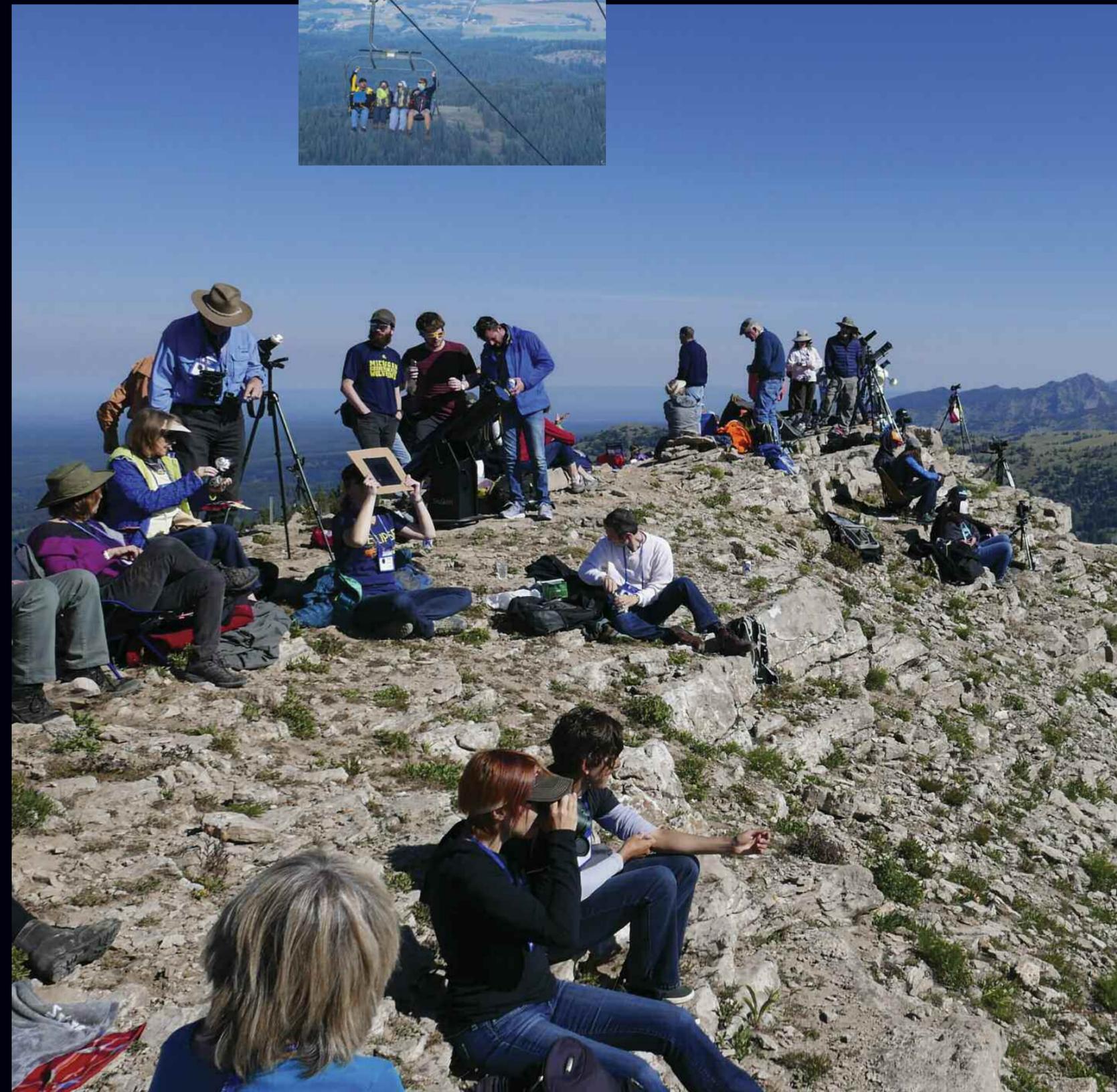
We approached the resort's management well before they had a clear sense of the enormous enthusiasm that would later emerge for the Great Eclipse of 2017. Thus we were able to negotiate a very favorable deal—a four night minimum stay at only modestly higher than normal room rates. In the months just preceding the eclipse, commercial tour operators were asking—and getting—three or four times as much per person in nearby Jackson Hole, Wyoming. On eclipse day, rooms in a Motel 6 in nearby Driggs, Idaho, were going for \$1,000 a night. In the last year before the eclipse, as people began to focus more on the upcoming event, the resort's marketing team received inquiries from numerous other groups, including eclipse chasers affiliated with Brown and Oxford universities. Sadly for them, but happily for us, Pomona College got there first.

For our speaker series, Pomona College sponsored two Pomona faculty members—Professor of Geology Robert Gaines and former Brackett Professor of Astronomy Bryan Penprase. And from the ranks of our alumni, we added Ed Krupp '66, director of the Griffith Observatory in L.A.; Larry Price '65, part of the team that proved the existence of the Higgs boson with CERN's Large Hadron Collider; Barbara Becker, historian of astronomy and spouse of Hank Becker '66; and James A. Turrell '65, the world famous artist who manipulates light and space.

To our considerable relief, the morning of the eclipse dawned with almost completely clear skies. ▷



Left: The ski lift up Fred's Mountain brings more participants to the reunion. Below: Sagehens watch the slow progress of the moon across the sun from their mountain perch.





You can plan for a thousand details, but there is no way to control the weather. We had selected the site in western Wyoming for two reasons—the unique view and the area’s encouraging history of mostly clear skies in late August. The historical record proved predictive, but if the eclipse had occurred four days earlier or three days later, we would have been rained out, so we were also lucky.

On eclipse day, the air to the west was darkened by smoke from vast forest fires in the Pacific Northwest. As it turned out, however, the smoke enhanced our eclipse experience. Thanks to the haze, the lunar shadow presented itself to us as an immense 60 mile wide wall of darkness (some saw it as a wave) that seemed dense, solid and impenetrable. The sight of what appeared to be a huge physical mass moving toward us at twice the speed of sound was awesome—indeed, frightening—and even more dramatic than we had dared to hope. As we stood there at the only vantage point in the world where that unique view was available, we couldn’t help imagining what the experience might have been like for people before science provided an understanding of the event.

The appearance of the sun during totality is as different from a partial eclipse as (literally) night is from day. All the phenomena one hopes to see during totality made an appearance atop Fred’s Mountain. The glorious halo of the solar corona was much more expansive

and detailed than the two of us recall from the 1991 eclipse we saw in Baja Sur. Atop Fred’s Mountain, we observed Bailey’s Beads, the fiery red dots that appear on the rim of the moon at the beginning and end of totality as the sun peeks through valleys in the mountains and craters that rim the moon’s edge. The “diamond ring” apparition as the sun emerged from behind the moon was spectacular. Our bodies’ shadows became extremely sharp edged as the sun became almost a true “point source” of light just before totality. A beautiful magenta aura caused by prominences erupting from the sun’s surface appeared just before totality ended. Alas, the shimmering and beautiful “shadow bands” that can appear just before and after totality were not much in evidence on the summit of Fred’s Mountain, although more so to several dozen of our group who stayed at “base camp” at the resort to watch.

Most of our group had never seen a total eclipse previously, and for days afterward, the listserv that we had established for the group was populated with messages such as “Still quivering!” We received thank you notes filled with phrases like “experience of a lifetime,” “unforgettable,” “amazing adventure” and “spectacular event.” One participant wrote, “The majesty of the eclipse escapes my ability to describe. ... It will live in my memory forever.”

Such is the power of a total solar eclipse. [PGM](#)

Speaker Series

The Phelps twins have made electronic presentations from the reunion’s speaker series available to donors who give \$47 or more to the Phelps Twins Solar Eclipse Fund for Science Internships at Pomona College, created by reunion participants following the event. The presentations, which combine audio recordings with synchronized copies of the accompanying PowerPoints, include “Aliens in the Ooze,” by Pomona Geology Professor Robert Gaines; “Chasing Cosmic Explosions,” by former Pomona Astronomy Professor Bryan Penprase; “Devoured by Darkness,” by Ed Krupp ‘66, director of the Griffith Observatory; “The Scientific Discovery of the Century,” by physicist Larry Price ‘65; “Risky Business: The Search for the Soul of the Sun in the Shadow of the Moon,” by historian of astronomy Barbara Becker; and “The Art of James Turrell,” a conversation between Krupp and noted light-and-space artist James A. Turrell ‘65.



From left: Sagehens watch the moon’s shadow race across the valley floor; Lew and Chuck Phelps, both ‘65, embrace at the end of the event; and the eclipse reaches totality above the Grand Teton Mountains.

Photo on opposite page by Martha Lussenhop; full page photo by Robert Gaines; inset photo by Alex Bentley and Hunter Bell.



Excelling Wisely

POMONA IS EXTRAORDINARY. We remind ourselves of this proudly when we marvel at the brilliance of our students and faculty, the accomplishments of our alumni, the talent of our staff, the amazing marks Sagehens leave on the world. How many high-achieving people, people who never give up, do we see every day?

What a wondrous thing! Yet I wonder something else, too. How much room do we give ourselves and each other to slow down? To choose which amazing thing we are going to do—today? There’s a lot of pressure on everyone to take advantage of all of the gifts and opportunities in front of us. We advise each other to excel.

Maybe we can talk about excelling wisely.

Sometimes people ask me for advice, and this column seems a good place to give some, if you’ll let me. Most of us acknowledge that you have to seek balance in life; equally, we acknowledge that finding such a balance is hard. This truth deserves more than lip service. We need to tell ourselves and each other that we can achieve and excel without taking every drop of energy from our reserves. That we all need to take some time to laugh.

Parents, friends, professors, bosses, coworkers and mentors routinely use language that raises expectations: We challenge, we press and we exhort. Even this magazine—always full of stories about people doing extraordinary things—can sometimes seem to be ratcheting up the pressure to achieve. There’s good reason for all of that. Everyone needs to be reminded that they can do great things. But we also need other reminders. Creativity requires freedom, space and room to grow. And achievement isn’t the only thing that adds meaning to our lives.

This issue of the magazine is, as usual, about some amazing Pomona people, but it’s also about the sometimes blissful, sometimes thorny relationship between the work we do and the lives we live. It’s about achieving lifelong dreams and coping with life-or-death stress. It’s about life-changing choices and what happens when everything falls apart.

Most importantly, the stories in this issue are about dealing with timeless, and timely, questions. I hope you pause and give yourself permission in your work, your studies and your relationships to make the life you desire.

—G. Gabrielle Starr
President of Pomona College

Pomona

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Pomona College

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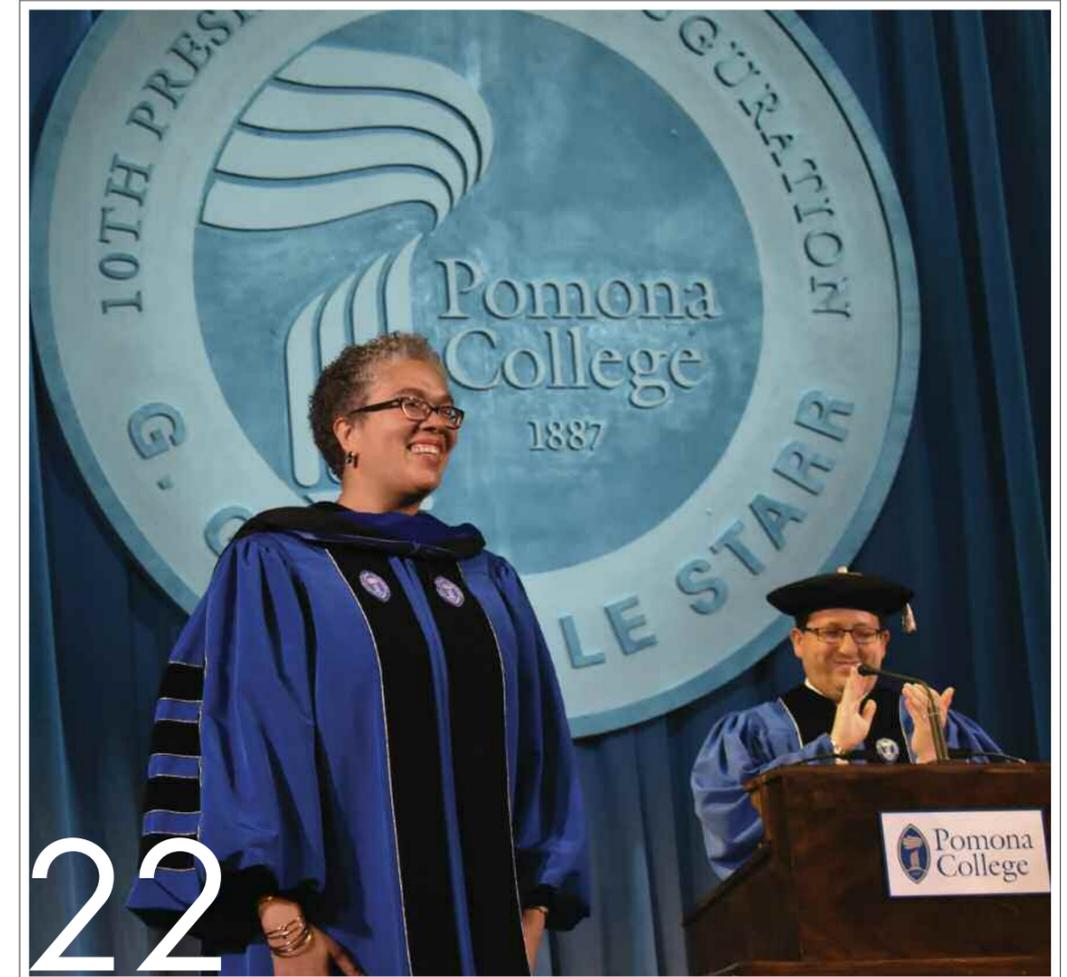
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PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY MARK WOOD



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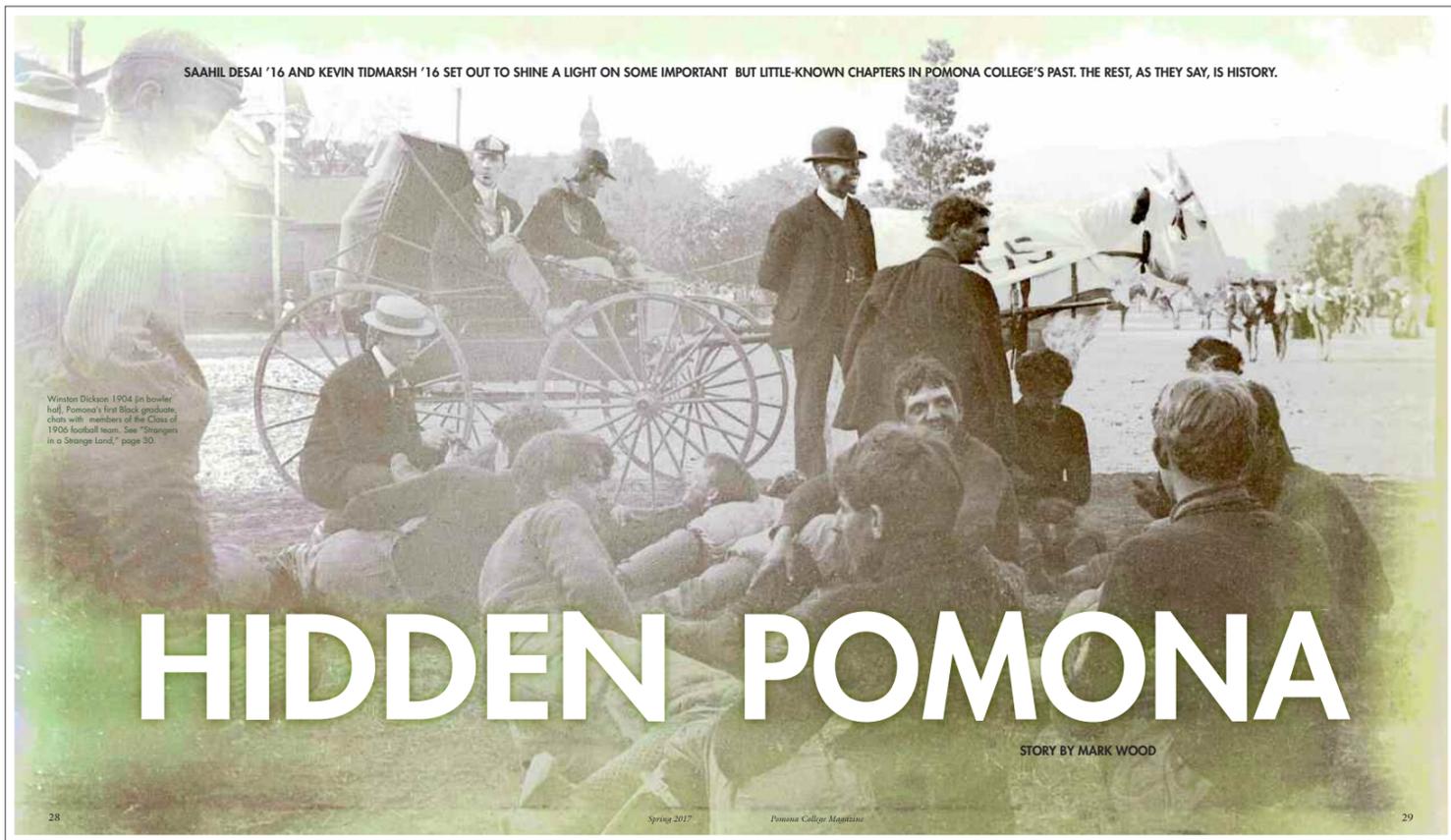
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Six of the 68 Pomona students who received funding for a summer internship report back on how they spent their working vacations.



SAAHIL DESAI '16 AND KEVIN TIDMARSH '16 SET OUT TO SHINE A LIGHT ON SOME IMPORTANT BUT LITTLE-KNOWN CHAPTERS IN POMONA COLLEGE'S PAST. THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HISTORY.

Winston Dickson 1904 (in bowler hat), Pomona's first Black graduate, chats with members of the Class of 1906 football team. See "Strangers in a Strange Land," page 30.

HIDDEN POMONA

STORY BY MARK WOOD

"Hidden Pomona" and the Whartons

I was recently visiting my mother (Mayrene Gorton Ogier '49) in Atascadero, Calif., and noticed the cover photo of the Spring 2017 issue of PCM depicting Pomona's first Black graduate, Winston Dickson 1904. The magazine was doing secondary duty under a flower pot, but the water-stained photo nevertheless looked familiar. And indeed, it depicts Dickson boxing with my great-uncle, William Wharton 1906.

Then, inside on pages 28 and 29, was a wonderful double-page photo spread of Dickson a year and a half after his graduation, socializing with the 1905–06 Pomona College football team—evidently relaxing and recounting plays following a hard-fought game. (In those years, Pomona routinely beat USC, among others.) The gentleman immediately in front of Dickson in profile with his back to the camera wearing a disheveled suit coat is very likely Seaborn Wharton 1901, who stayed on at Pomona as football coach for a number of years before returning to Tulare, Calif., to manage the family farm.

The two gentlemen sitting in the dirt talking with Seaborn and Dickson are almost surely William, who was team captain in 1906 and strikingly handsome, but who tragically died in a mining cave-in soon after graduating, and likely, Charles Greene (Charley) Wharton 1907, my grandfather, who later became a urologist in the Sierras silver-rush town of Bodie, Calif., and then in downtown Los Angeles, after graduating from medical school at Bowdoin. All three of them were distinguishable from their Pomona mates by their six-foot-plus height and wild curly hair—as was their sister, Minnie 1902, who taught school in Pomona and was vice president of the Pomona Alumni Association after World War I.

If I knew how to communicate with those Whartons now, I would ask about Winston Dickson, as per the wishes of the hosts of the "Hidden Pomona" podcasts, who had little information to work with aside from old photographs. The Wharton family surely knew him very well.

By the way, that early 19th-century Wharton family "thing" about Pomona College (the entire family moved to Claremont for a decade so the children could attend) has persisted. If my children had matriculated at Pomona as I hoped

they might (they chose Princeton and Occidental instead), they would have been the 31st and 32nd extended Wharton/Alexander/Ogier/Gannon/Wyse/Wiederanders family members to do so (counting also my father, Walter T. Ogier, who chaired the Physics Department for many years). To further the Pomona cause, my grandfather, Charley Wharton, and my grandmother, Aileen, in addition to being substantial direct donors to Pomona during their lives, also contributed financially and otherwise to the successful passage through Pomona of my siblings, Thomas Ogier '82 and Kathryn Ogier Lum '88. How I managed to miss Pomona's siren call is not clear.

—Walter C. Ogier
Williams College '78
Winchester, Mass.

I Do Belong

I've been meaning to write since reading the touching, inspiring article by Carla Guerrero '06, "I Do Belong Here," in the Summer 2017 PCM. Then, this week, President Starr asked us to write our Pomona stories to her, and I responded. It was only right that I also write to

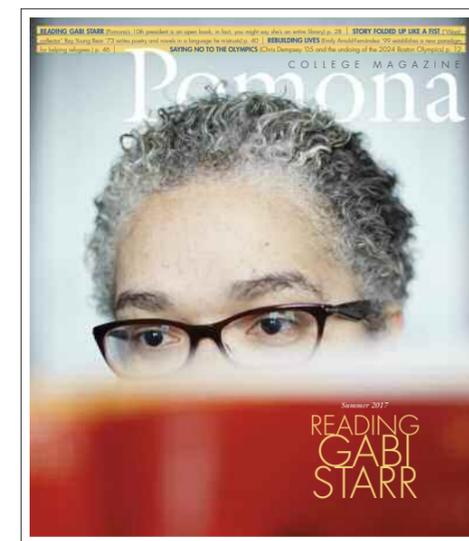
you, for it was Carla's story that inspired me to be in touch with Pomona College again after over 60 years.

In 1952–54 I was a freshman and sophomore at Pomona College. As the only Japanese American in my class (there were two other Asians—no Blacks or Latinos) and coming from an immigrant, working-class family in Los Angeles, I was very aware I did not fit at Pomona in terms of race or social class. I was even invited to join the International Club. I suppose the well-meaning people who invited me did not understand that people of color were not necessarily born outside the U.S.

Your story, the information that more than 50 percent of this year's new class are domestic students of color and President Starr's appointment fill me with joy. Pomona has always been a fine academic institution. I'm glad it is also moving toward being a welcoming home for multicultural students who reflect the current demographics of our country.

Congratulations and thank you to Carla and others who were part of the wise group of people who brought President Starr to Pomona College.

—Amy Iwasaki Mass '56
El Cerrito, Calif.



I was very touched by Carla Guerrero's column in the most recent PCM entitled, "I Do Belong Here." I graduated from Pomona in 1998, and as I read her piece, I was transported back to my days as a student. I could completely relate to her experience as an awkward first-gen Latina daughter of proud immigrant parents trying to find her place at Pomona. Like Carla, I found a

good group of peers, and with the support of wonderful faculty and staff, I thrived. The excitement she described at the hiring of Gabi Starr as Pomona's new president is felt well beyond Claremont. I've talked to many of my Pomona friends, and we all agree—we're so very proud of Pomona and can't wait to see how President Starr will influence and inspire the entire community. Thank you, Carla, for writing a piece that truly captured not only a shared experience of the past but also a shared enthusiasm for the future of the college we love.

—Juliette Cagigas '98
Whittier, Calif.

The Mind of a Psychopath

I enjoyed reading the article titled "How to Understand the Mind of a Psychopath" in the Summer 2017 PCM. I was impressed with 2017 graduate Kaily Lawson's view on cognitive science and what goes on inside the mind of what many consider to be a "serial killer." I found it interesting that many prominent figures in today's society have traits found in psychopaths.

Now, when it comes to famous serial killers whose acts spurred an utter disturbance among Americans, it is hard to determine how the legal system should treat these individuals. An example of this is Ed Kemper, infamous as "the Co-Ed Butcher." Although he was found guilty of his horrible crimes and received seven years to life in prison, he turned himself in to the police and ultimately felt remorse for what he had done. In his most recent parole hearing, he rejected attending it because he deemed himself unfit to return to society. He suddenly recognized that his crimes were morally wrong and confessed his guilt. But what caused this sudden change in intuition? Lawson obviously has a great interest in this branch of psychology, and I completely understand when she says there's a "continuum" for psychopathic traits, where people may be placed on a spectrum of "good" or "bad."

Once again, I enjoyed reading this article, and I hope Ms. Lawson finds success in her future career. I also wish her the best in her efforts to influence public policy in today's legal system.

—Jules Winnfield
Inglewood, Calif.

Extreme Individualism

The summer issue of PCM contains three letters from readers shocked by the simplistic right/wrong mentality of the modern occupants of Pomona College. I studied philosophy with Fred Sontag and W.T. Jones in the '50s and sang in the glee clubs. But for the last 15 years

I have been a student of Sanatana Dharma, the timeless path of the ancient riches in India. Before that I was interested in Chinese thinking for decades.

My background leads me to see what is going on at Pomona as an extreme form of individualism in the still-adolescent culture that is the United States. What we need today is the ability to open our hearts to everyone and use our minds to try to understand what our hearts tell us about others. Pomona is of course a bookish place.

I take issue also with the idea that climate change is the major issue. Doris Lessing's futuristic novels suggest what the world might look like after catastrophe: They are lost but surviving. However, I would say that the major issue is the fallout from unregulated socially irresponsible capitalism and our apparent inability to live together in a crowded landscape without resulting in wars between city blocks scaled up to nations.

There are so many good people in America, although one might think money is the main value for most people. So I also hold the thought that Trump may save us yet by pushing us so close to self-destruction that we may suddenly experience a mass epiphany and find in our midst unknown new leaders who can lead us, hopefully without too much humor about how foolish we were to be taken in by our dogmatic old beliefs.

—Thomas (Megha) delackner, '58
Concord, Calif.

I hope certain letter writers in the Summer 2017 PCM learn someday that what they call "political correctness" is simply treating those different from them with basic dignity and respect. They should try it sometime. They might learn a few things that four years at Pomona evidently failed to teach them.

—Bruce Mirken '78
San Francisco, Calif.

Correction

In your obituaries in the Summer 2017 PCM, you listed Robert Shelton as Robert "Bob" H. Shelton '47. He was always known as "Robin" Shelton at Pomona. I should know because I married him.

—Miriam Cross Shelton
Laguna Beach, Calif.

Alumni, parents and friends are invited to email letters to pcm@pomona.edu or "snail-mail" them to Pomona College Magazine, 550 North College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711. Letters may be edited for length, style and clarity.

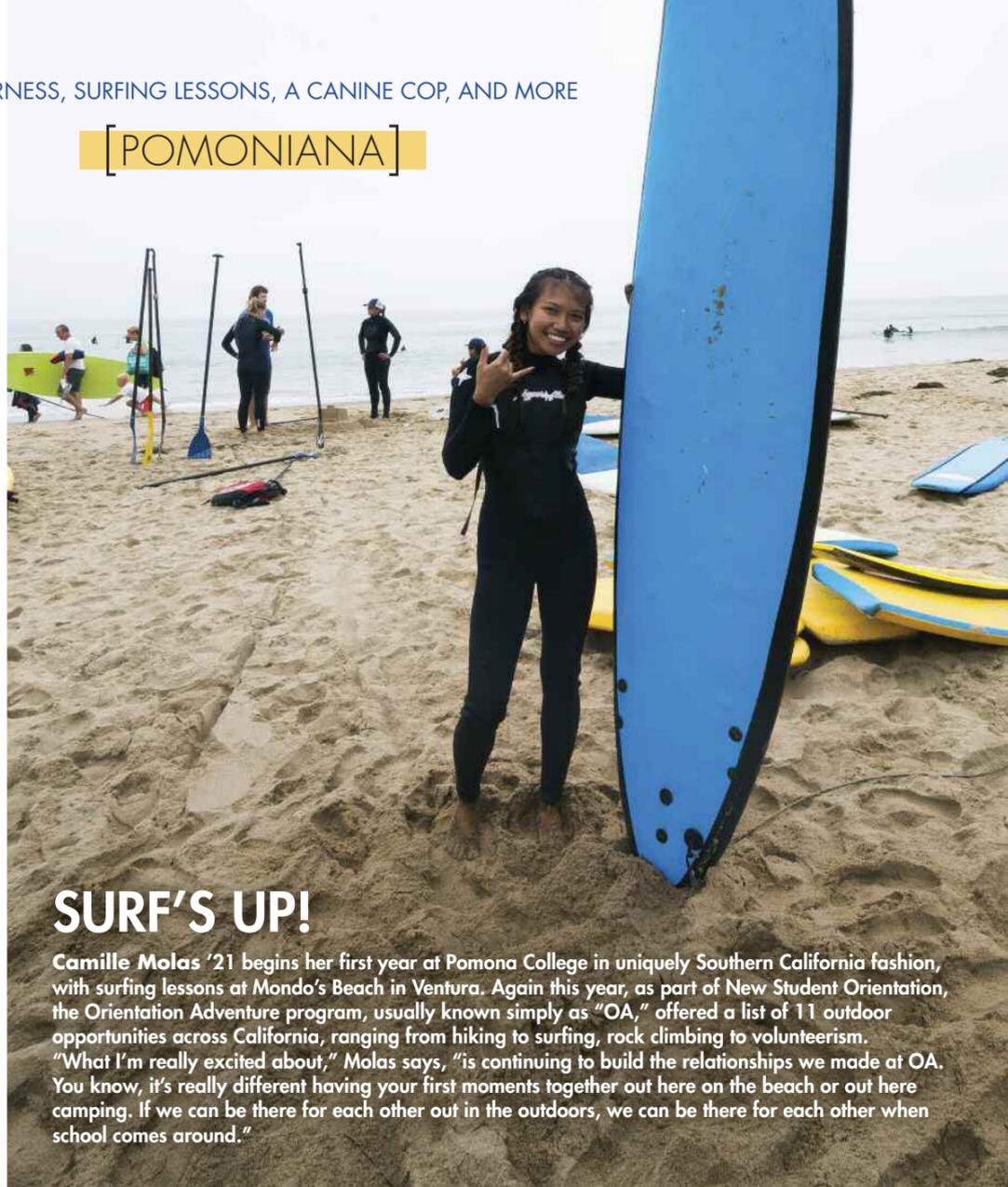
[POMONIANA]

A Gift of Wilderness

Pomona College is expanding the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park with a gift of 463 acres to the city of Claremont. The land, including Evey Canyon and three Padua Hills parcels, is to be preserved in its undeveloped state and remain available to the members of the public for hiking, biking, horseback riding and other passive recreational uses. With the new addition, the size of the park will increase to nearly 2,500 acres.

“The Claremont Wilderness area is a natural jewel and provides an important connection to nature,” says G. Gabrielle Starr, president of Pomona College. She adds that the commitment to sustainability of her predecessor, David Oxtoby, “is reflected in his important work to bring this agreement forward and enhance the College’s and community’s commitment to open spaces for all.”

Evey Canyon is home to the Herman Garner Biological Preserve, used by the College’s Biology Department for research. The lower portion of the canyon consists of a type of riparian woodland that is becoming rare in Southern California. Evey Canyon’s varied topography and vegetation, combined with a permanent stream, result in a rich bird and insect diversity.



SURF’S UP!

Camille Molas '21 begins her first year at Pomona College in uniquely Southern California fashion, with surfing lessons at Mondo’s Beach in Ventura. Again this year, as part of New Student Orientation, the Orientation Adventure program, usually known simply as “OA,” offered a list of 11 outdoor opportunities across California, ranging from hiking to surfing, rock climbing to volunteerism. “What I’m really excited about,” Molas says, “is continuing to build the relationships we made at OA. You know, it’s really different having your first moments together out here on the beach or out here camping. If we can be there for each other out in the outdoors, we can be there for each other when school comes around.”

Jobs for the Homeless

Pomona’s efforts on behalf of the homeless expanded this semester with the launch of the Pomona Employment Partners (PEP) initiative by the Draper Center for Community Partnerships. It’s the newest of three programs that make up the Center’s Hunger and Homelessness Initiative. Unlike its sister programs—the Food Recovery Network and the Homelessness Action Team—which focus on such urgent needs as food and shelter, PEP will focus on long-term solutions by connecting the homeless with actual employment opportunities.

Co-directed by Sophie Roe '19 and Marisol

Diaz '18, the program will combine the work of job researchers with that of on-site volunteers to locate possible job openings and help homeless clients create résumés and apply.

“Most employers don’t like being asked whether they do drug tests on applicants or whether they are felon-friendly,” job researcher Sarah Burch '21 told Pomona’s student newspaper, *The Student Life*. “Coming out of jail definitely brings many barriers to getting a job. We try to find specific jobs that meet the needs of the homeless community, taking into account the obstacles that formerly incarcerated people have.”

WORKING DOG

The newest member of the Campus Safety team wags his tail lazily as he strolls across campus, pausing to have his back stroked or his ears scratched. But don’t be fooled—Officer Red Dogg is hard at work.

He’s built more for comfort than speed at this point, says Campus Safety Director Stan Skipworth, who adopted the 10 year old beagle mix from a rescue organization, but he is actually certified as an emotional support animal, and he’s had some modest training for that.

Skipworth had been considering adding a canine to the staff, and when he happened onto Red, he decided it was worth a try. He’s such a good natured dog, and I thought it would

be a nice way to build on our community oriented policing policy.

The response, he said, has been remarkable—and not just when Red is out patrolling, wearing his official ID collar and his Campus Safety insignia on a red and black bandanna.

We actually get several visitors a week who come here specifically to see Red and pet him, and then they go on to class, Skipworth says.

Red really earns his keep, however, when people come to Campus Safety to make a report. He doesn’t do real police work, Skipworth says, but he’s our official greeter, and when people who’ve had a bad experience come in to do a report, he comes and sits with them, and I think he makes a real difference.



Red Dogg with one of his many escorts, Corporal Arman Abedini

ONLINE BONUS CONTENT:

SAGEHENS AT WORK

Check out the video at pomona.edu/magazine



about the budding careers of six recent Pomona graduates, from across the nation, who are working to make a difference in a variety of fields. The group includes Kara Toles '07, the subject of “Life and Death in the D-Pod” on page 30.

Field Garthwaite '08
Art Major
Los Angeles, Calif.
Entrepreneur,
Founder and CEO
of Iris TV



Marybel Gonzalez '09
International
Relations Major
Denver, Colo.
On-air Reporter,
Rocky Mountain PBS



Ellen Moody '06
Art History Major
New York, N.Y.
Assistant Projects
Conservator, Museum
of Modern Art



Guy Stevens '13
Economics Major
Kansas City, Mo.
Coordinator of
Baseball Analytics,
Kansas City Royals



Scott Tan '16
Physics Major
Boston, Mass.
Ph.D. student in Mechanical Engineering, MIT



Dr. Kara Toles '07
Black Studies Major
Oakland, Calif.
ER Physician,
UC Davis Med Center



AUTHOR DOUG PRESTON '78 HAD TO ENDURE IMPENETRABLE RAIN FORESTS, DEADLY SNAKES AND FLESH-EATING PARASITES TO REALIZE HIS CHILDHOOD DREAM OF FINDING A LOST CITY, BUT HE HAS NO DOUBT THAT IT WAS WORTH IT.

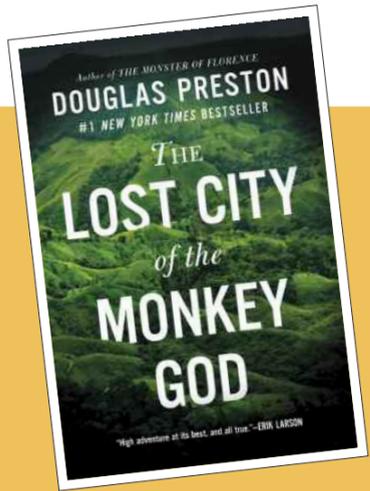
CITY OF DREAMS

Douglas Preston '78 says he keeps bank hours, writing from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. No dead-of-the-night or predawn creative marathons. The buttoned-down approach might be surprising given the risks he will take to get a good story. In 2015, Preston joined an expedition to see firsthand whether a 500-year-old legend was true. Was there a lost city of immense wealth hidden deep in the Honduran jungle? Indigenous tribes had spoken of this sacred city since the days of conquistador Hernán Cortés. In *The Lost City of the Monkey God*, Preston narrates an adventure you couldn't dream up (well, maybe in a nightmare). He and his fellow adventurers found an impenetrable rain forest, deadly snakes, a flesh-eating disease—and the remains of an ancient city rich with artifacts.

Pomona College Magazine's Sneha Abraham talked to Preston about his search for a vanished civilization. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

PCM: What inspired you to go on this adventure?

Preston: I've been following this story for a long time. Honestly, I've never quite grown up. I've always thought that it would be exciting to find a lost city. When I was a kid I was always interested in reading about the discovery of the Maya cities, the tombs in ancient Egypt, the tomb of King Tut. I just loved those stories. But as I became an adult I realized, "Well, all the lost cities have been found, so that one childhood dream is never going to come true." But then it did come true. So, I guess that's why I was so



The Lost City of the Monkey God
by Douglas Preston '78

Grand Central Publishing 2017
366 pages | 35 photos and maps
Hardcover \$28.00
Paperback \$15.99

intrigued by the story of this legendary lost city. It's remarkable to me that in the 21st century, you could still find a lost city somewhere on the surface of the Earth. Amazing.

PCM: What did your family think about your going on this particular adventure, knowing the risks involved?

Preston: Well, I didn't tell my mother because I didn't want her to worry, but she found out anyway. But my wife is just as adventurous as I am, and her problem was that she wasn't going. She wanted to go!

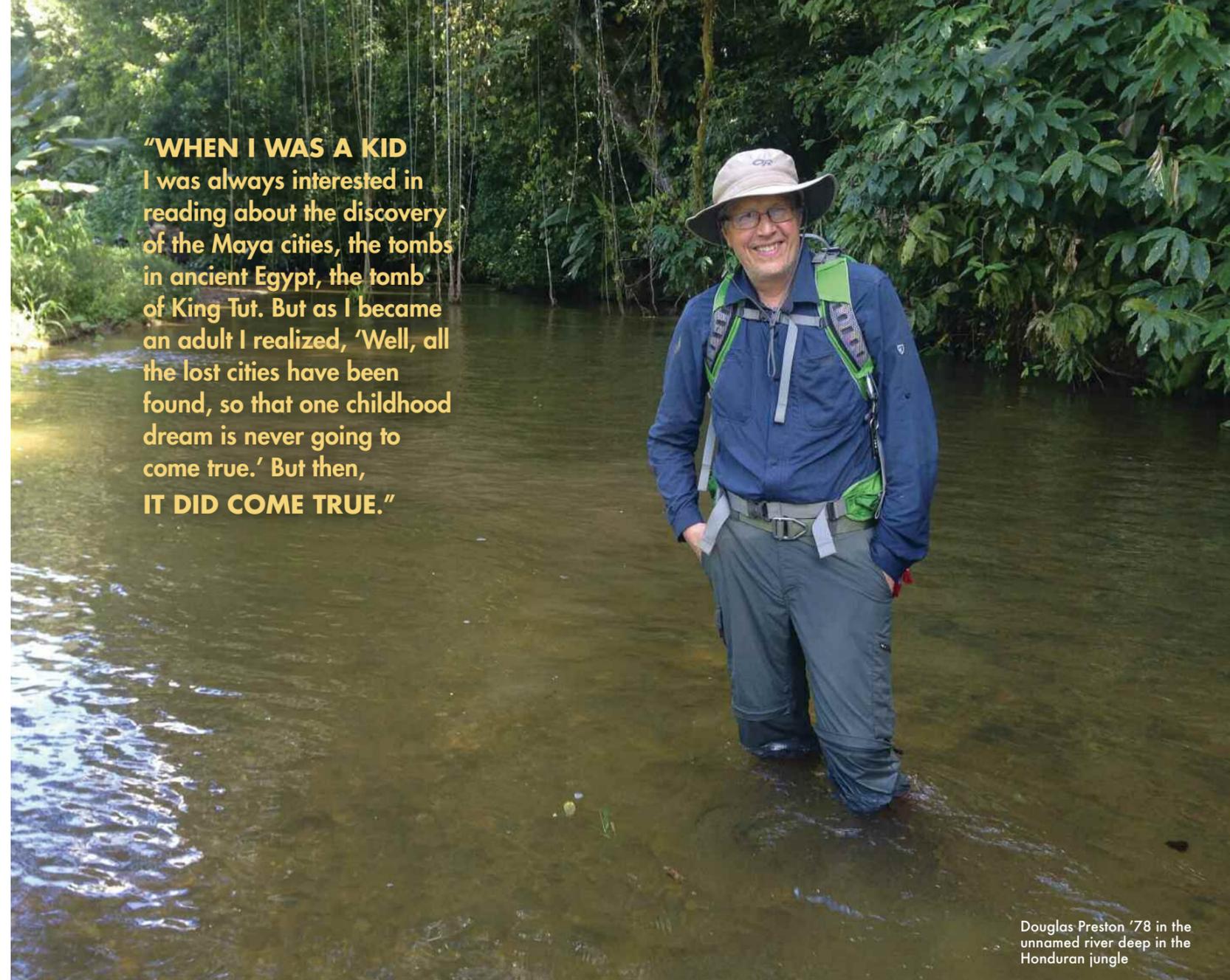
To be honest with you, I didn't realize just how dangerous this environment was until I was actually in it. Now, I'd been warned. People talked about it and I was fully briefed. But I dismissed those warnings, thinking, "It's exaggeration. This is for people who've never been in a wilderness before." I assumed they were giving us the worst-case scenario. I didn't take it all that seriously. Then I entered that jungle environment and realized it was even worse than described.

PCM: Were you afraid when you arrived and you realized just how dangerous it was?

Preston: Oh, I wasn't at all afraid in the beginning because it was gorgeous. It was amazing to be in a place where the animals had never seen people. They weren't frightened of us. But where I had the come-to-God moment was when I saw that gigantic fer-de-lance coiled up that first night, highly aroused and in striking position, tracking me as I walked past.

The head of the expedition, a British SAS [Special Air Service] jungle warfare specialist, tried to move the snake but ended up having to kill it because it was so big. The fight was terrifying. That snake was striking everywhere and there was venom flying through the air. It was really shocking. After that, I felt a little shaky. I thought, "Well, this is sort of a dangerous environment, isn't it?"

PCM: Are there many places in the world that are left unexplored?



Douglas Preston '78 in the unnamed river deep in the Honduran jungle

"WHEN I WAS A KID
I was always interested in reading about the discovery of the Maya cities, the tombs in ancient Egypt, the tomb of King Tut. But as I became an adult I realized, 'Well, all the lost cities have been found, so that one childhood dream is never going to come true.' But then, **IT DID COME TRUE."**

Preston: There really aren't. But even today there are some areas in the mountains of Honduras that remain unexplored. The thickest jungle in the world covers incredibly rugged mountains. When you've actually been in that jungle, you realize the steepness of the landscape and the thickness of the jungle make it almost impossible to move forward anywhere, except by traveling in a river or stream. You can't get over the mountains. You just can't get over them. You can fight with machetes for 10 hours and be lucky to go two or three miles.

And then, of course, there are all the snakes. The number of poisonous snakes in that area is staggering—and you can't see them.

PCM: Are you in grasslands? What is the terrain like?

Preston: Well, it's interesting that you mention that. Most of it is really thick jungle, but where there isn't jungle, there's high grass. It's nine or 10 feet tall and it's very thick-stemmed. It's almost like wood. It's the worst stuff to travel through. You hack

away at it with a machete and you can barely make any forward movement. There are snakes hiding in the grass. They climb up into it so there's always the chance of their falling down on you.

Wherever you are, when you move forward after cutting through with machetes, you're stepping through leaves and debris that are lying on the ground. It's two feet deep. You have no idea where you're putting your feet.

So it's a really frightening thing when you see just how common the snakes are in there. ▷

PCM: Would you talk about places that are unexplored—like the lost city at the site known as T1? What do you think places like these, for lack of a better phrase, do for the human psyche? Specifically, what did T1 do for you as a group? And broadly speaking, what is it about these unexplored places that is important or significant for us as human beings?

There are mountain lions, jaguars, margays, ocelots. Apex predators. And they're everywhere in that valley. They've never been hunted by people. And what they prey on are animals like peccaries and tapirs, which are also heavily hunted by humans. There are so many peccaries and tapirs in this environment that they support a very large number of these apex predators.



The head of a fer de lance, tied to a tree as a reminder of the jungle's hidden dangers

Preston: There are layers of answers to that question. The first is that on a personal level, when you're there, you realize just how unimportant you are. This is an environment that is not only indifferent but is actively hostile to you. It's important, I think, for human beings to be humbled by nature once in a while.

On a much deeper level, these environments that haven't been touched by human presence are extremely rare on the surface of the Earth. It's vital for us to protect them.

Conservation International sent 14 biologists down into this valley, and they set camera traps. They recently brought those camera traps out, and they saw the most amazing animals—animals thought to be extinct, species that were unknown to science, and unbelievably dense numbers of big cats.

This is truly a rain-forest environment that is what it was like before the arrival of human beings and in equilibrium. It's a beautiful thing to see that.

PCM: Did you feel that others in the expedition group were sharing the same sort of response to that experience?

Preston: Yes, I did. We had 10 Ph.D. scientists with us on this expedition. We had ethnobotanists, three archaeologists, an anthropologist, engineers and others. And all of them were deeply affected and impressed by what we saw. They had the scientific background to appreciate it on a deep level. While I was appreciating it on more of a layman's level, they understood it on a scientific level, and it was extremely impressive to them.

PCM: When you open the book, it begins as an adventure story, but it turns into a history lesson and a biology lesson. Obviously, it's still an adventure book, but there are many layers to it. You talk about the historic decimation of the population in the New World versus the lack of decimation in the Old World. Is what you put forth something that's accepted by the mainstream? Obviously, the numbers seem to bear that out, but are other people talking about it in these terms?

Preston: Yes, I would say that the view I presented is the consensus view. However, it is controversial.

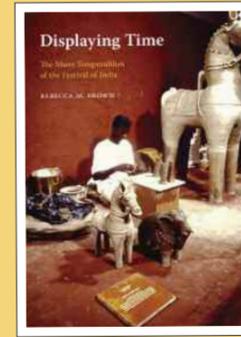
PCM: Would you talk about that?

Preston: Everyone agrees that there is a tremendous die-off among the indigenous people of the New World from Old World pathogens. The controversy is what percentage of people died. There are those who say, "Well, we don't have solid evidence that 90 percent to 95 percent died. All these numbers that the early Spanish give us, they're very unreliable." But the doubters have not come forward with their own numbers. They just say it's all very unreliable.

However, with no event in history are we given reliable numbers, especially that far back. It's really a question of looking at all the evidence, the confluence of evidence, and coming up with the most reasonable interpretation. And the most reasonable interpretation, which is, in fact, the consensus, is that there was a 90 percent mortality rate from European diseases. That's just staggering.

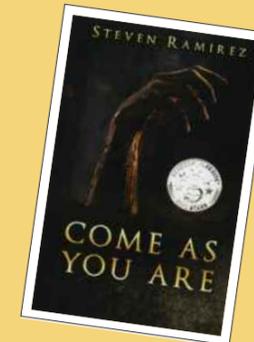
Of course, the big question is, "How many people were in the New World before the Europeans arrived? What was the population? We have very good numbers on what the populations were after, but we don't know how many were there before. And, again, I think the consensus view is that the aboriginal populations in the New World were quite high.

PCM: Your group got quite the negative backlash from the archaeological community. How do you feel about that today? And do you still think those objections are primarily turf battles, jealousy, politics? Would you talk a little bit about that? ▷



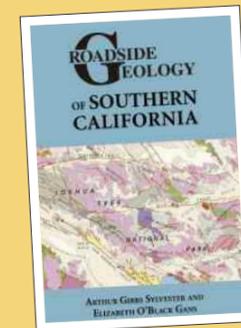
Displaying Time: The Many Temporalities of the Festival of India

Rebecca M. Brown '93 uses archival research and interviews with artists, curators, diplomats and visitors to analyze a selection of museum shows that were part of the Festival of India.



Come As You Are

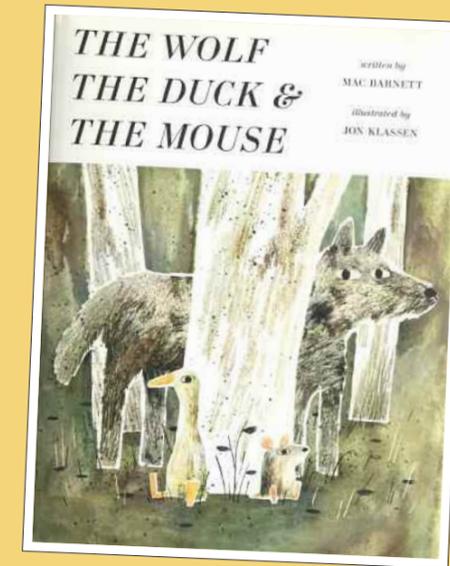
Steven Ramirez '74 writes a young-adult supernatural horror novella about a middle schooler and the terrifying evil forces he unleashes from the pages of an old notebook.



Roadside Geology of Southern California

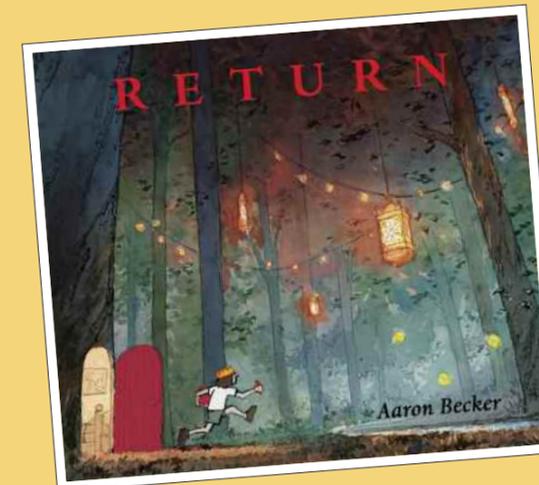
Award-winning Santa Barbara geologist Arthur G. Sylvester '59 offers a tour of the iconic features of the Golden State, combining science and stories about its rocks and landscapes.

BOOKMARKS



The Wolf, the Duck, and the Mouse

The author of the acclaimed children's book *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole*, Mac Barnett '04, again joins illustrator Jon Klassen for a fable with a twist and a wink—in this case, a mouse and a duck who set up housekeeping inside a wolf.

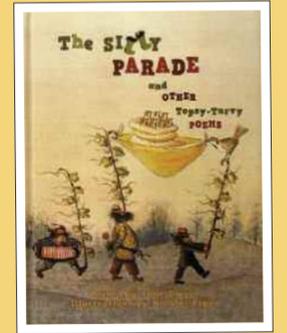


Return

Illustrator and Caldecott honoree Aaron Becker '96 completes his epic children's trilogy with a third wordless journey through a hidden door into a visually stunning realm of enchanted landscapes and strange creatures.

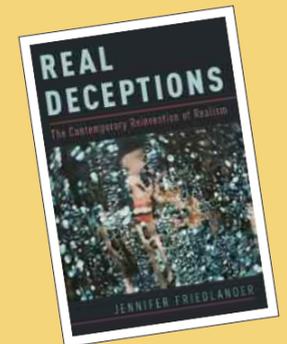
The Pomona College BOOK CLUB

Interested in connecting with fellow Sagehen readers? Join the Pomona College Book Club at pomona.edu/bookclub.



The Silly Parade and Other Topsy-Turvy Poems

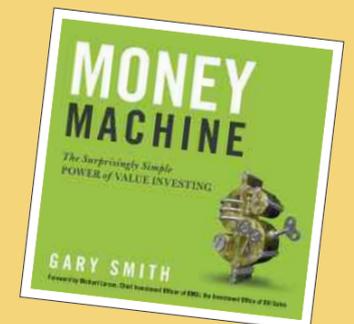
Inspired by the book art of Nikolai Popov, Associate Professor of German and Russian Anne Dwyer translates and retells traditional Russian songs and folk poetry for children.



Real Deceptions:

The Contemporary Reinvention of Realism

In her third book, Pankey Professor of Media Studies Jennifer Friedlander explores a new theory of realism, examining a range of contemporary art, media and cultural practices to argue that our sense of reality lies within the deceptions themselves.



Money Machine: The Surprisingly Simple Power of Value Investing

Fletcher Jones Professor of Economics Gary Smith offers expert guidance on value investing to beginning investors and veterans alike, debunking current strategies and promoting what consistently outperforms the market.

Preston: In my book I try to balance some of the legitimate objections with some of the ones that were not legitimate. To put it in perspective, it was a very small group of archaeologists objecting very vociferously.

The Honduran archaeologists who dismissed our findings were individuals who had been removed from their positions following the military coup in Honduras in 2009. The military removed the leftist president and then turned the government back over to the civilian sector, and they had new elections. A leftist government was replaced by a rightist government. In the process, several Honduran archaeologists lost their jobs and new archaeologists were brought in. Some of the dismissed archaeologists did

about it. There were no scientific publications yet. They heard that a “lost city” had been found, and some reacted with understandable skepticism. But then when the scientific publications started appearing, the criticism ceased. As of now, almost a dozen archaeologists have worked at the site, all from top institutions—Harvard, Caltech—as well as archaeologists from Honduras, Mexico and Costa Rica. When the doubters read those scientific publications and saw the lidar images of the city, they realized, “Oh, wow, this really is a big find.”

The fact is the importance of this discovery isn’t just archaeological. It has stimulated the Honduran government into rolling back the illegal deforestation of this area and en-

value of the logs, but for the grazing of cattle, for beef production. Because of this discovery, the Honduran government has finally taken steps to stop the cutting of trees and the burning of the forests in the area. And also they’ve taken measures to prevent illegal rain-forest beef from entering the supply chains. I was able to show that originally when we went into 2015, some of this rain-forest beef was going to a meat packing company that was selling through a long supply chain to McDonald’s, Wendy’s and Burger King.

Now those three American companies weren’t aware, I don’t think, that they were buying rain-forest beef, because they were buying it several wholesalers removed, through intermediaries. I know that when I brought my evidence to the attention of McDonald’s, they freaked out and immediately sent people down to Honduras and tried to make sure that they weren’t buying rain-forest beef. Obviously, it’s a good business decision not to be accused of being behind the destruction of the rain forest.

PCM: How much of the site has been excavated, and how many of the artifacts have been retrieved?

Preston: The city of T1 itself probably covers 600 to 1,000 acres. That’s a very rough guess. Only 200 square feet have been excavated. In that area, they took out 500 sculptures from a cache at the base of the central pyramid. There is so much more still in the ground. It’s just incredible. But the Hondurans are not going to excavate the city. They understand, everyone understands, that it’s much better to leave it as is. They’re not going to clear the jungle or anything like that. They’re going to leave virtually all the rest of it as is.

PCM: So much of it remains untouched still, but do you feel that the experts are gaining more knowledge about this culture that disappeared?

Preston: Yes, this culture is so little known and uninvestigated that it doesn’t even have a name. They’re just the ancient people of Mosquitia. But they had a relationship with the Maya. It’s a very interesting question as to what the relationship was. The city of Copán is 200 miles west of the site of T1.

After Copán collapsed, a lot of Maya influence flowed into the Mosquitia region. The ancient people of Mosquitia then started building pyramids. They started building ball courts and playing the Mesoamerican ball game. And they started laying out their cities in a kind of vaguely Maya fashion. But they weren’t Maya. They probably did not speak a Mayan language. They probably spoke some variant of Chibchan, which is a language group connected to South America.

There are so many mysteries as to who these people were, where they came from, what their relationship was to the Maya, and what happened to them. Now, the excavation of the cache hinted at what might have happened to these people, what caused the collapse not only of T1 but of all the cities in Mosquitia. But we still don’t know anything about their origin, where they came from, who they were. And we have only a vague idea of how they lived in this seemingly hostile jungle environment, how they thrived in that environment.

PCM: You mentioned global warming in the context of the flesh-eating disease you contracted, leishmaniasis.

Preston: Two thirds of the expedition came down with leishmaniasis. The valley turned out to be a hot zone of disease. When I got leishmaniasis, of course, I became very interested in it because it’s a potentially deadly and incurable disease. You find it’s suddenly a rather intense focus of your interest! Epidemiologists have predicted the spread of leishmaniasis across the United States. There was a paper that looked at best-case and worst-case global warming scenarios for the spread of leishmaniasis into the United States. Even in the most optimistic, best-case scenario, leishmaniasis will spread across the United States and enter Canada by the year 2080.

In the entire 20th century, there were 29 cases recorded in the United States, and those were right on the border with Mexico. Since then, leish has been found across Texas and deep into Oklahoma, almost to the Arkansas border. It’s a disease that we are going to have to deal with in the future. There’s no vaccine. There’s no prophylactic for it, unlike malaria. It’s transmitted by sand flies which feed on any number of mammals, from rats and mice to dogs and cats. Sand-



A sculpture of a “were jaguar” found at the site of the lost city

flies are about the quarter of the size of mosquitos. You can’t hear them. You can’t feel them biting. They come out at night. The disease is very difficult to treat.

PCM: How your current health? You mentioned in your book that the disease is coming back, but you haven’t told your doctor.

Preston: It unfortunately does seem to be coming back. This is not unusual for the strain of leish that we all got. I finally photographed the lesion that is redeveloping. But I haven’t sent it to my doctor yet. I just don’t have the guts to do it.

PCM: So what price are you willing to pay for a story? If you’d known beforehand what would happen, would you have still gone?

Preston: Yes, I would’ve.

PCM: You would’ve?

Preston: Yeah, I would’ve. Honestly, as a journalist, I’ve put myself into some dangerous situations, and if this is the worst that’s going to happen to me, I’m probably ahead of the game. I’m lucky. I would do it again. Look, leishmaniasis is not the worst thing that can happen to you. A lot of people are dealing with a lot worse, like cancer and things like that. So I’m doing just fine.

PCM: Would you go back?

Preston: Well, I would if they discovered something really cool. This culture apparently buried their dead in caves as opposed to in the ground. In this jungle, ground burials are gone. The soil is so acidic that there would be nothing left in terms of bones or remains. But they do find spectacular necropolises in caves in this region. Archaeologists are now exploring the valley for caves, where they hope to find burials full of extraordinary artifacts. That would be an amazing find. I’d go down for that. **PCM**



Preston (right) and Chris Yoder wading in the unnamed river

not look with approval on our cooperating with the current government. On the American side, there were several archaeologists who specialized in Honduras who were upset that the discovery was made not by archaeologists but by engineers using lidar, which is an extremely expensive technology unaffordable to most archaeologists. They also objected that the expedition was financed not by archaeologists but by filmmakers. But since my book was published, along with several peer-reviewed papers on the discovery, the objections have ceased.

When archaeologists first heard about the discovery, they initially didn’t know anything

couraged it to preserve this incredibly pristine and untouched rain forest for the future. That might be even more important than the archaeological discovery. Preserving that rain forest is crucial.

PCM: Talk a little bit about that preservation, because you write in the book about the encroaching destruction of these rain forests and jungles. Do you feel that the protection is going to be effective?

Preston: Well, it’s hard to say. Deforestation is a huge problem. The land is being cleared, most of it, not for timbering, not for the



Sea Chanties

To help his students get on board with one of his chief research interests, Music Professor Gibb Schreffler got them out of the classroom and out to sea.

On a breezy spring afternoon, aboard the two-masted sailing vessel *Exy Johnson* in Los Angeles' San Pedro Bay, Ranzo—Schreffler's chantyman alter ego—led a group of Pomona and Claremont Colleges students in singing “Goodbye, My Riley” and “Tom’s Gone a Hilo,” traditional work songs known as “sea chanties.” Adding the physical labor and rhythm of pulling halyard lines gave the students a sense of how chanty singing once fit into the work of the crew on a traditional sailing vessel. As the hoists grew more difficult toward the end of the lines, the chanty leader shifted to a “short drag” chanty such as “Haul Away, Joe” and “Haul the Bowline” to reflect the cadence of a more demanding physical effort.

The half-day sailing field trip was part of Schreffler’s special topics course, American Maritime Musical Worlds, where his class ex-

plored America’s musical development from the perspective of those who have lived or worked near the water. The goal was to better understand the context and function of the shipboard work songs prevalent in the 19th century.

According to Schreffler, the topic of American maritime music is not well-documented or researched. His scholarship focuses on the musical experiences of African Americans, and his findings place the tradition of sea chanties within the larger umbrella of African American work songs. The epicenter of the chanty genre, he explains, was not Great Britain but America—or, more precisely, the western side of the “Black Atlantic,” rimmed by Southern U.S. ports and the Caribbean.

Schreffler’s research also found that chanty singing by sailors at sea represented just one branch of a larger network of work-singing practices, most of which were performed on terra firma. In fact, far more chanties were sung by stevedores—the workers loading ships—than were ever sung by sailors. Sailors’ labor tended to be associated with white workers, and stevedores’ labor was associated with Black workers—which

partly explains the neglect of the latter’s story in ethnocentric narratives told by English and Anglo-American authors of the last century.

Schreffler’s research has been challenging, in part, because much of what has been presented in the last century has created a strong bias against recognizing African Americans as creators of the sea chanty genre. His published work on the subject includes the article “Twentieth Century Editors and the Re-envisioning of Chanties,” in the maritime studies journal *The Nautilus*.

His research takes him to archives and ports in cities around the country that were centers of maritime commerce, such as Mobile, Alabama, and Galveston, Texas. He also has traveled internationally in a traditional sailing ship from the Azores, in the middle of the Atlantic, to the coast of France, to study applied seamanship in order to better understand the historical texts he studies.

Since the maritime work songs Schreffler studies are not used in today’s sailing, recreating their performance helps him imagine them and find answers, despite the lack of detailed information available. Since 2008 he has been working on posting online his

renditions of every documented chanty song he has encountered. His purpose for the recordings is to simulate psychologically the process of acquiring a repertoire and learning the genre’s method and style.

“Scholars in my field, ethnomusicology, traditionally employ fieldwork to interpret living culture as ‘text,’” he explains. “In order to study culture of the past in this fashion, I try to convert history into a sort of living text in the present.”

Last spring was his first time teaching the course, but Schreffler previously brought chanties to Pomona College and The Claremont Colleges through the Maritime Music Ensemble he founded and directed in 2013. In the ensemble, all songs were taught orally to simulate a realistic way of acquiring the tradition. Students needed no prior formal training and took part in engaging sessions of rehearsals or jam sessions as well as performances.

Experiencing music in order to understand it is at the core of Schreffler’s teaching and research. Also a scholar of the vernacular music of South Asia’s Punjab region, he learned to play the large drum known as the dhol. “Without my doing this, many of my interlocutors would have had no idea how to relate to what I was doing in studying Punjabi music,” he says.

Schreffler has plans to return to his Punjabi research and work on a forthcoming book during his upcoming sabbatical year. In addition, he headed to the Caribbean during the past summer to get reacquainted with the Jamaican music scene in order to prepare his next spring course. Among the topics he will explore in that class, he says, is the connection of Jamaican music to the beginnings of hip hop and electronic music.

“Some of my students are very interested in producing or becoming DJs, so this course could be of special interest to them, given the connection to the origin of hip hop and dance music.

“My goal with this class, as in all of my classes, is to give them information and lively discussion that will challenge them about something that is related to a topic they’re interested in to begin with. I don’t necessarily tell them that it is related, but I drive them to make the connection. Once they see the connection, it transforms their learning about the original topic of the class.”

—Patricia Zurita Vest



The 2017 Wigs

Each spring, juniors and seniors honor a group of outstanding professors, recognizing their excellence in teaching with the Wig Distinguished Professor Award. Here is the list of the recipients for 2017 (left to right in the photo above), each with a quote from a student.

Philip Choi, associate professor of physics and astronomy, teaches such courses as Techniques in Observational Astrophysics, and Stellar Structure and Evolution. This is his first Wig. “Professor Choi is one of the most helpful and contemplative professors I’ve met. He’s not only a gifted instructor and mentor, but he truly cares about his students and their successes.”

Tzu-Yi Chen, professor and chair of computer science, teaches such courses as Intro to Computer Science, Computer Systems, and Algorithms. This is her first Wig.

“Pillar of the CS department. Always open to talk and support students despite doing so much already.”

Vin de Silva, associate professor of mathematics, teaches such courses as Topics in Topology and Geometry, and Combinatorial Mathematics. This is his second Wig.

“Professor de Silva is simply brilliant. His lectures are very insightful. I also got to have him in my ID1, ‘I Disagree,’ and his arguments and lessons were often extraordinary.”

Donna Di Grazia, David J. Baldwin Professor of Music and choral conductor, teaches courses like Engaging Music and conducts the Choir and Glee Club. This is her second Wig.

“Professor Di Grazia consistently goes above and beyond with her students. She offers her full self to her teaching, to her committee work and to her performances.”

Michael K. Kuehlwein, George E. and Nancy O. Moss Professor of Economics, teaches such courses as Principles: Macroeconomics, and Advanced Macroeconomic Analysis. This is Kuehlwein’s sixth Wig.

“Professor Kuehlwein is one of the best professors and mentors I have ever had in both my life and my time at Pomona. ... Overall, it is because of his classes and the times we’ve talked together that I chose to pursue a career in economics.”

Pardis Mahdavi, former associate professor and chair of anthropology; dean of women; director of the Pacific Basin Institute; and coordinator of gender and women’s studies. Mahdavi left Pomona last summer to become the senior associate dean at the University of Denver’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies. This is her second Wig.

“Pardis sparks my desire to learn, to improve myself, and to fight so others can have equal opportunities in this world. She’s unmatched in talent and in her ability to inspire courage in all her students.”

John Alldredge Clithero ’05, assistant professor of economics, teaches courses including Behavioral Economics and Experimental Economics. This is his first Wig.

“Concise lecturer follows up with students a lot after they have finished taking his course. One of the most knowledgeable professors at Pomona College by far!”

David R. Kauchak, assistant professor of computer science, teaches courses that include Natural Language Processing, and Computation and Cognition. This is his first Wig.

“From his matter-of-fact, clear lectures to his fair and balanced tests and assignments, Professor Kauchak is an excellent communicator, whether in a lecture-based class or in a seminar course.”

TEAM WORK



Birir sets the all-time Sagehen career rushing record in the 2017 season opener.



Birir works in the biochemistry lab on a medical research project with Professor Charles Taylor.

Of Record Books and Lab Books

AS AN ATHLETE, Aseal Birir '18 has made his mark as the leading running back in Pomona-Pitzer history. At the same time, as a senior chemistry major working on his last research project, he is also leaving his mark in the laboratory.

On the athletic side, Birir was named Rookie of the Year in the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SCIAC) during his first year of college. Since then, he has validated that award by going on to claim team records both for career rushing and for single-game rushing.

He became the football program's all-time leading rusher during the team's home opener this fall against Lewis & Clark, surpassing the previous record of 3,004 yards set by Luke Sweeney '13 and becoming only the second Sagehen ever to eclipse the 3,000-rushing-yards mark.

"The all-time rushing record was a satisfying record to break," says Birir. "I think it is a great reflection of what our whole team has accomplished over the past four years. Football truly is a team sport, and I have received a lot of help from teammates along the way to get to the record."

Then, for good measure, on Oct. 7, Birir also set the record for most rushing yards in

a single game, with 275 yards against Cal Lutheran. His achievement was recognized by the conference, which named him SCIAC's Athlete of the Week.

"The single-game record is somewhat bittersweet for me," says Birir. "I am very proud of my individual effort, but it stings to know that I broke the record in a game that we lost in the last minute. However, it will probably be the game that I remember the most 10 years from now when I reflect back on my football career at Pomona."

Voted captain by his peers as a junior, Birir also serves as captain during his senior season.

"Aseal's athletic abilities and his leadership on and off the field have been instrumental in the improvement of our entire football program," says Sagehen Head Football Coach John Walsh, who recruited him in 2013.

On the academic side, under the guidance of Chemistry Professor Chuck Taylor, Birir, who hopes to become a doctor in the future, is focusing his research on reducing the risk of bacterial infections in hospitalized patients. The goal is to understand the types of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) released by bacteria that are known infectious

agents for many hospital-acquired infections. Working with Soleil Worthy '18 in an ongoing project led by Professor Taylor, Birir aims to use the VOCs as biomarkers in a breath test, offering a quicker way to test patients for infectious disease.

Birir's scientific journey started early at Pomona after his senior year at Tamalpais High School in Mill Valley, Calif. As an incoming first-year student, he participated in the summer High Achieving Program (HAP) for minority students interested in pursuing a career in the STEM fields.

The HAP experience in Professor EJ Crane's biochemistry lab provided him with an eye-opening introduction to scientific research. It also laid the foundation for the academic support that would be key to balance his rigorous curriculum and a full athletic schedule with the Sagehen football team.

Professor Taylor points to Birir's perseverance in the lab and on the field.

"When experiments don't go as planned, extra work is needed reviewing the data and conditions to determine why the experiment didn't work out as expected," says Taylor who has worked with Birir since he entered Pomona. "Some students would throw up

their hands and say 'I'm done,' but Aseal would come back and we'd work through the problem together."

"You can't teach a person to have this kind of drive, but by getting to know them, you may be able to learn what gets them excited and tap into that," adds Taylor. "Ultimately, the drive comes from within and is a combination of intellectual curiosity and willingness to learn from one's mistakes. This is probably the trait that makes Aseal a great football player and what will make him an excellent physician."

On top of his athletic and academic commitments, the Novato, Calif., native finds time to mentor young men at a local high school. On Fridays, he volunteers for the program Young Men's Circle at Pomona High School through the Pomona College student group BLOC (Building Leaders On Campus). The program involves college volunteers meeting with high school students and encouraging them to pursue their goals through either workshops or conversation.

"We try to use what we have learned about our own paths to college to help these students pursue whatever goals they have—may that be college or something else," says

Birir. "Young Men's Circle works to bridge that opportunity gap by providing the kids access to volunteers who were in similar situations to theirs not too long ago."

Another factor in Birir's success is the ability to forge relationships with his mentors. Two high school coaches greatly influenced him to pursue a college football career and to follow his dream of becoming a doctor. Coach Mark Ridley put him in contact with college coaches, while Mick O'Mera was his coach and his AP chemistry teacher—and one of the reasons why Birir is a chemistry major today.

"Without him [Ridley], I probably would not have even realized that I could play football in college or even how to go about pursuing it," says Birir. "He still keeps in contact with me and is planning on coming to Claremont this year to see me play."

What does Birir want to accomplish in his final year as a Sagehen?

"I guarantee if you ask Aseal what is more important—his personal record or for the team to win games—he will always want team success," says Walsh.

"Win SCIAC and beat CMS [Claremont-Mudd-Scripps]," Birir responded.

—Patricia Zurita Vest

Two for MLB

TWO MEMBERS OF last year's Pomona-Pitzer baseball team are now making their way in the world of professional baseball. Sagehen slugger and second baseman Tanner Nishioka '17 was picked by the Boston Red Sox in the ninth round of the Major League Baseball draft—the highest draft pick in Sagehen history—while pitcher David Gerics '17, though undrafted, signed a contract with the Minnesota Twins.

"It's a huge honor to have two Sagehen baseball players signed by MLB teams in the same year," says Sagehen Head Baseball Coach Frank Pericolosi.

Nishioka is the first Sagehen drafted to the MLB since David Colvin was selected by the Mariners in the 27th round of the 2011 draft. During Nishioka's senior season, the neuroscience major from Honolulu led the nation for Division III with 18 home runs and a .888 slugging percentage, and he racked up a slew of honors, including selection for First Team All-American, Academic All-American, West Region Player of the Year and SCIAC Player of the Year.

"I just wanted to play baseball for as long as I could," Nishioka told the *Los Angeles Times*. "I wouldn't say I thought I would get drafted in the top 10 rounds at all. I still can't believe it."

Nishioka completed his college career in the top six in Sagehen history in hits (254), home runs (36), batting average (.395), runs (189), and RBI (166). Nishioka also ranks seventh in single-season batting average (.441) and is tied for third in home runs in a single season (18).

Gerics ended his senior year with a career-high of 86 strikeouts. He also earned All-West Region honors during his junior season, as he finished the year with a perfect 7-0 record and a 2.31 ERA with only 16 earned runs surrendered in 62.1 innings pitched.

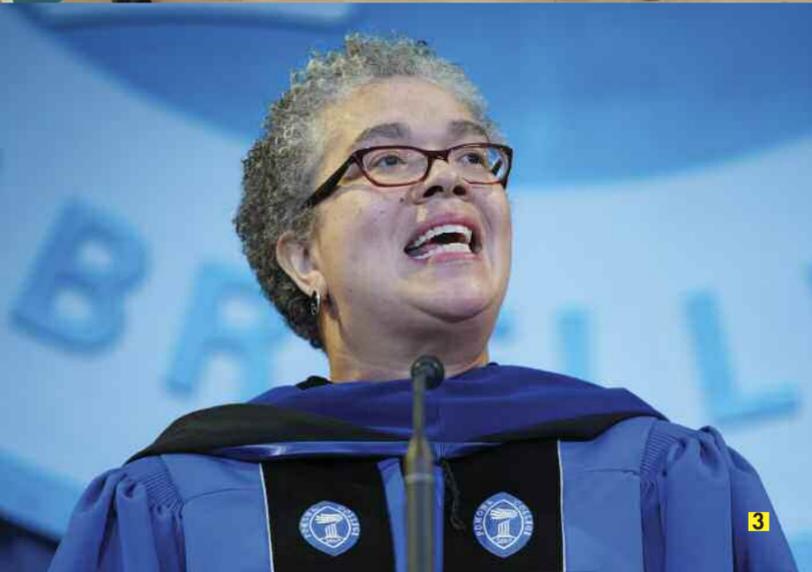
After graduating in May with a B.A. in economics, Gerics tried out with the Mets, the Angels and the Twins. He was on his way to Gary, Ind., with plans to play baseball for the non-MLB affiliate, the Gary Southshore Railcats, when the Twins gave him his long-awaited callback.

"Two hours before I arrived, I got the call that my wildest dreams were becoming a reality," says Gerics. "I couldn't believe it, and I still can't believe it. It was pure elation."

A LOOK BACK AT OCTOBER 14, 2017, THE DAY G. GABRIELLE STARR WAS INAUGURATED AS POMONA'S 10TH PRESIDENT.

Imagine. Create. Engage. Together.

PHOTOS BY CARLOS PUMA
AND WILLIAM VASTA



“We discover. We create.

And every discovery begins with a question, an observation, something that piques the human imagination. As a community we test our knowledge, engaging deeply with our fields, our peers and the world beyond us. We don’t close our eyes to critique, to alternate possibilities, to the reality that we may be wrong. And the ultimate result is something new in the world: a new idea, a new solution, a new molecule, a new policy, a new work of art, a stronger community.”

—PRESIDENT G. GABRIELLE STARR

1) During the morning long Inauguration Symposium, Dominic Mensah '20 discusses a student empowerment program he helped found in Ghana. 2) Starr poses with four current and past chairs of Pomona's Board of Trustees from left: Stewart Smith '68, current Chair Samuel D. Glick '04, Starr, Jeanne M. Buckley '65 and Dr. Robert E. Tranquada '51. 3) Starr delivers her inaugural speech. 4) Starr is hooded during the installation ceremony. 5) Glick applauds after the completion of Starr's official installation as Pomona's 10th president.

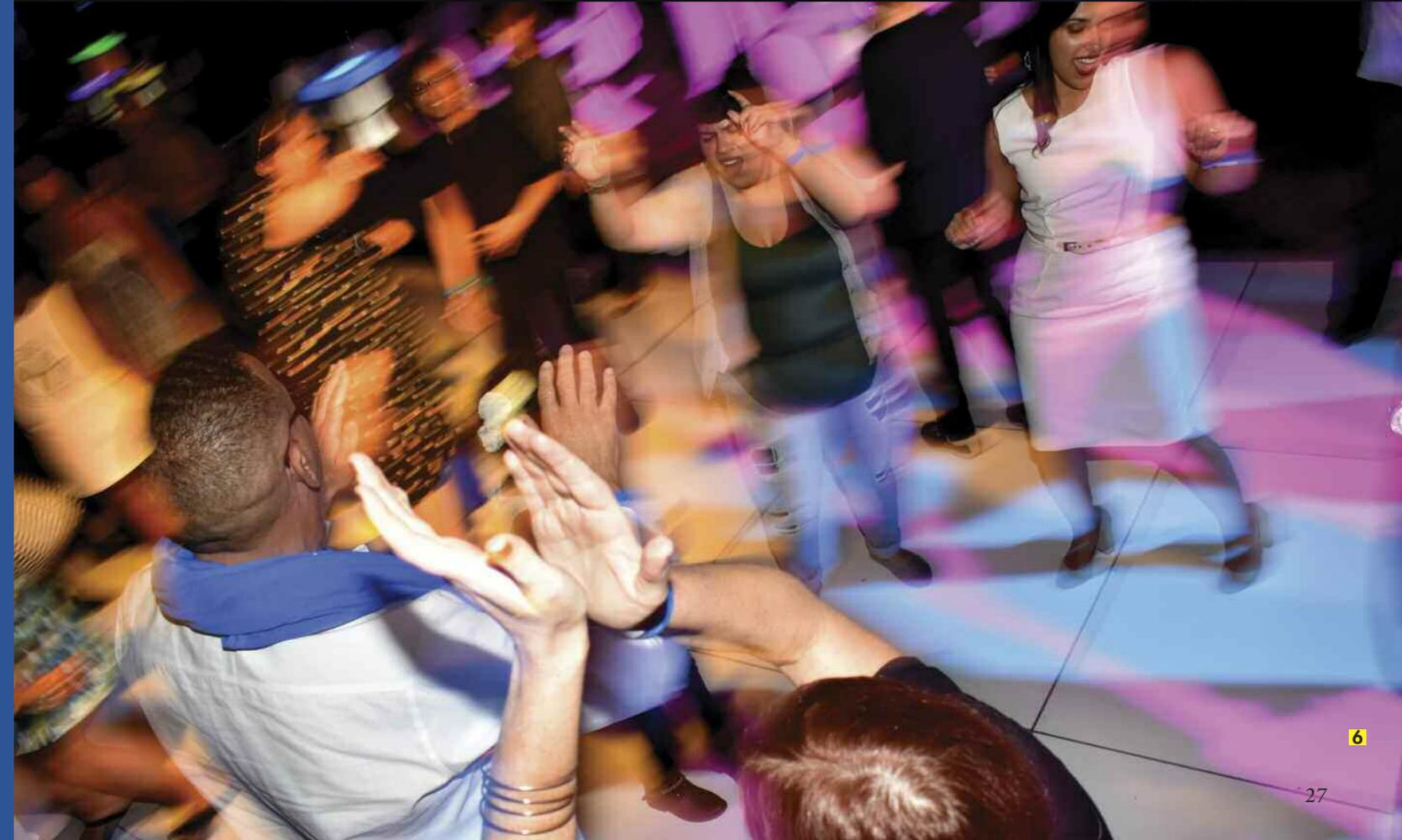


“We have a voice —

indeed, many voices—what will we say, and how will we say it to the world? When this College was launched ‘the world’ meant something different. Our place, now, is different. We must decide together what that place will be. We have stood for access. We must stand for equity and inclusion. We have stood for principle. We must stand for nuance. We are smarter than slogans, smarter than simple binaries, smarter than the world always knows. We can be humble. We can open our voices to the world. We can shape discourse now. Listen to each other. Hear each other. And, please, mark these words: As one Pomona, we realize the future of our own making. Thank you, let’s celebrate each other, let’s party, and then—let’s get to work.”

—PRESIDENT G. GABRIELLE STARR

1) Starr receives congratulations after the installation ceremony. 2) During the following reception, Starr speaks with Assemblymember Cristina Garcia '99. 3) Darkness falls as diners enjoy a community picnic and party on Marston Quadrangle. 4) Partygoers enjoy a game of pingpong on a lit table. 5) Dramatic lighting on the front of Bridges Auditorium reveals banners with the College mark, the inaugural logo and the theme of the inauguration—Imagine. Create. Engage. Together. 6) Dancers take over a lit dance floor under the stars.



INAUGURAL MESSAGES

Leading up to her inauguration, President G. Gabrielle Starr went online to ask alumni and parents to share stories, memories and thoughts about their own Pomona experience. Here are a few excerpts. To read others, go to www.pomona.edu/sharewithpresidentstarr.

"Pomona College offered me unparalleled opportunities as a first-generation, low-income, undocumented student. I was able to attend Pomona College cost-free, study abroad and visit 11 different countries, engage and partner with the surrounding communities to bridge socioeconomic barriers, think critically about what I was learning in the classroom and how to best apply such knowledge to better my home community."

—Sergio Rodriguez Camarena '16

"I hope I can meet you next year at our 60th, for you also exude that openness that meant so much to me then and has allowed me to persevere in my efforts to guide a broken world toward a saner future."

—Carolyn Neeper '58

"When I think about what Pomona means to me, I think about one particular conversation I had with my son, Franklin, early on during his time at Pomona. We were talking just before he was scheduled to go meet with a family friend who was visiting Pomona as a prospective student. I asked him, 'If he asked you what the best thing about Pomona is, what would you say?' Without hesitating, he answered, 'I am surrounded by people who care about me.'"

—Sarah Marsh P'17

"Pomona College wasn't just a great educational experience. It was a new perspective on a bigger, more diverse world of different cultures, national and global politics and society, in general—a total game changer."

—James Blancarte '75

"Pomona and her people quickly became my adopted family. The people I met, experiences I had, and opportunities I realized served me well as a student and have continued to be a source of support and inspiration during my 37 years (ack!) as an alumnus. I look forward to a new chapter in Pomona's storied history under your leadership, and I can't wait to meet you in person. Remind me to show you my Cecil Sagehen tattoo."

—Frank Albinder '80

EMERGENCY ROOMS
ARE AMONG THE MOST
STRESSFUL WORKPLACES
IMAGINABLE, BUT FOR
ATTENDING PHYSICIAN
KARA TOLES '07, STRESS
IS JUST PART OF THE
BALANCING ACT THAT
MAKES LIFE WORTHWHILE.



LIFE AND DEATH IN THE D-POD

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MARK WOOD



From left: Kara Toles '07 observes preparations in a trauma room, makes a teaching point with medical student Samantha Kerns, awaits the arrival of a trauma patient with chief resident Taylor Stayton and gets hands-on with a patient in the D-Pod.

A.M. *At this hour, as at every hour,*

the D-Pod bustles beneath the round-the-clock glow of the hallway strip-lights. Attending physician Kara Toles '07 has just begun her shift in the Emergency Department of the UC Davis Medical Center (UCDMC), and for the moment, both the outgoing and incoming teams are jammed together inside the tiny, walk-through office known as the "Doc Box," a space about the size of a janitor's closet. As they work their way through the customary hand-off, their terse exchanges are studded with terms like "angioedema" and "metabolic encephalopathy." Toles quickly takes charge, quizzing the three young residents and one visiting medical student who will make up her team for the day.

Once the hand-off is complete, Toles loses no time in setting out for her first tour of the surrounding hallways. As she speed-walks, print-out in hand, she pokes her head through each set of curtains to introduce herself, greeting each patient by name. The important thing, she explains, is to get a firsthand sense of which patients can wait and which need immediate care. "The first thing we're trained to do with a patient is say, 'What do I see, hear and smell? In medicine, and especially in emergency medicine, we have to use all of our senses, picking up cues. Just standing outside of a room, you can tell a lot about a person's airway, breathing and circulation—the ABCs—just from looking at them.'"

Today, most of the cases seem to be fairly routine, but one catches her eye—a man suffering from a severely swollen lip and chin. She speaks with him for a few minutes before moving on. "That can go downhill really fast," she remarks as she hurries back to the Doc Box. "We need to take it very seriously."

Welcome to the D-Pod. That's D as in disease, disaster and death. It's what they call the section of the ER that handles the patients Toles describes as "really sick"—that is, dealing with potentially life-threatening conditions. Today, their immediate welfare and, possibly, their ultimate survival will depend on how well Toles and her team do their jobs.

THERE'S A CERTAIN IRONY in Toles's decision to specialize in emergency medicine. Back in 2005, as a junior at Pomona, struggling with the academic workload of a premed student and trying to decide what major to pursue as she followed her childhood dream of becoming a doctor, she was featured in an article in this magazine titled "Stressed," in which she opened up about the difficulty of dealing with the unrelenting demands of college life. Her first year was so stressful, she said at the time, that "I'm sure I would have transferred if it were not for the support that I got through my sponsors and other peers in my sponsor group."

Fast-forward—past graduation, past a year off to regroup, past four years of medical school at UC Davis and various rotations as a resident—to her choice of arguably the most stressful of all medical specialties.

"I know," Toles says with a laugh when reminded of that history. "What does that tell me about myself? I guess I thrive in stressful environments? I feel alive in stressful environments? It's that degree of stress that makes you get up and do, and not feel paralyzed. And I think that I need some degree of that to feel alive. But then, my baseline is to back off and say, 'Hoo, all right. I'm going to chill now.' But every once in a while, I need it to remind myself that I'm alive."

That balancing act seems to be a lifelong pattern. At Pomona, for instance, she solved her early battle with stress, in part, by choosing a less traditional path into medical school, switching her major from neuroscience to Black Studies because it allowed her to break away from the sciences and spend more time exploring her identity as a Black, queer woman and how to incorporate social justice into her practice as a physician.

"I was able to tap into those other sorts of courses—psychology and art history and music and dance, West African dance, and history

of jazz with Bobby Bradford and all these super-cool classes that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to take if I were doing neuroscience. It was really fun to learn about that stuff, and it kind of helped me have a better understanding of who I was as an African American woman, so it was a pretty awesome experience."

Today, the pattern continues with Toles's decision to work part time instead of committing to a full-time position in a hospital ER. "Residency was a lot of people telling me where to go, what to do, and when to do it," she says. "I'm a very headstrong, independent woman, and so I needed that part of my life back after training. I'm taking a little bit of a pay cut because I'm not signing on somewhere and getting, you know, that salary and benefits package. But I only work around eight to 10 shifts a month, so I have a lot of free time to decompress and tap into things that give me life and make me happy and make me feel fulfilled."

9 A.M. *Toles checks in again on the patient with the swollen lip and is delighted to learn that the swelling is going down. After counseling him on his daily medications, she returns to the Doc Box and wolfs down a beef stick, a few walnuts and some trail mix to keep her energy level up. "You never know when something's going to go down, so I just snack and then have a full meal after I get off," she says.*

With her whole team momentarily present, Toles offers to demonstrate a new technique for resolving a dislocated jaw without having to put fingers inside the patient's mouth, but as if on cue, events begin to speed up, postponing the demonstration and sending residents scrambling.

First, there's a new analysis of imaging for a patient suffering ▶



Scan the QR code or go to pomona.edu/magazine for bonus video content related to this article.



From left: Toles makes a point in the Doc Box and gowns up for a trauma case with chief resident Taylor Stayton.

from an uncontrollable tic, identifying a potentially deadly subdural hematoma—blood pooling between the skull and the brain. Then a new patient arrives with a badly broken wrist, the result of a skateboard accident. That’s followed by another patient showing troubling signs of gastrointestinal bleeding, and another suffering from weakness in one arm and leg following a traffic accident, and another suffering from a bizarre condition called subcutaneous emphysema, in which air escapes from the lungs into the surrounding tissues, causing strange, crinkly swellings of the chest, throat and face.

In the midst of all that hectic activity, the loudspeaker announces a 911 emergency arriving in five minutes, and Toles and the chief resident drop everything to head for one of the trauma rooms, where they join a growing crowd of attendings, residents, nurses, technicians and students. Pulling disposable plastic gowns over their scrubs and donning gloves and face shields, they join their colleagues inside the red line on the floor that separates participants from observers—and they wait.

A little before 10 a.m., the patient arrives, strapped to a gurney. She’s a disoriented homeless woman with stab wounds to the neck, reportedly self-inflicted. As someone closes the glass doors to the room, she can be heard shouting threats and obscenities at the doctors as they close in to care for her.

IN ADDITION TO BROADENING her education, Toles’s choice of Black Studies as a major had a significant impact on the kind of doctor she wanted to be. For her major thesis, she studied the relationship between the nation’s medical system and social justice, and the inequities that she saw gave her a new mission in life—caring for people on the margins. That was still on her mind a few years later as she neared the end of her medical training and began to explore specialties.

“At first, I was thinking, ‘How do I marry this idea of social justice and using medicine as a vehicle for social justice?’ And to me, that meant preventive care, and the essence of that is pediatrics, like having conversations with folks about healthy behaviors before they get chronically ill. But then, when I did my peds rotation, I was like, ‘Theoretically, that makes sense, but in practice, I don’t feel engaged, you know? Kids are cute and whatever, but at the end of the day, I’m not excited.’ It just didn’t speak to me. So it was like, ‘Oh bummer. What else am I going to do?’”

The answer came to her, strangely enough, while working up a sweat on a climbing wall.

“I met an emergency medicine doctor in the climbing gym,” she says with a laugh. “And he was a really cool guy, really nice guy, an awesome climber, and I knew that he was associated with UC Davis but I wasn’t sure how. We ended up kind of being in the same friend group at the gym, and he told me he was an ER doctor, and I was like, ‘You? You are really cool. You’re out there doing things that I want to do, and I want to be like you.’ And he’s like, ‘You totally should check out emergency medicine.’ And I did, and I fell in love with it.”

Part of that love, she says, has to do with the people she sees in the ER. Many are precisely the kind of people on the margins to whom Toles pledged to devote her career.

“That’s what we do in emergency medicine,” she says. “Whoever walks in the door—it doesn’t matter your race, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, whether or not you have a home—we treat everyone, and that’s one of the powerful things that drove me to emergency medicine and that keeps me there.”

Then too, it appealed to her because it reminded her of what she loved most about college.

“Of all the specialties, emergency medicine is the one that has kind of a liberal arts flavor to it because of the breadth of knowledge that’s

“THAT’S WHAT WE DO IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE. WHOEVER WALKS IN THE DOOR—IT DOESN’T MATTER YOUR RACE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, AGE, WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE A HOME—WE TREAT EVERYONE.”

required to do this practice,” she says. “I love the fact that I get to see such a breadth of pathology. I think it’s incredibly engaging in one minute to be taking care of a patient who has angioedema, which is the swelling of the lips or the mouth that can be life-threatening, and then I walk out of the room and take care of a critically ill, injured trauma patient. So that switching and the dynamic nature of my job, I just love. It keeps me excited. It’s like stuff that you see on TV.”

12 NOON: *A crackly voice on the public address system announces, “911 in three minutes,” and as the inhabitants of the Doc Box turn to their computer screens for details, the mood abruptly shifts from laid-back to tense. “This sounds real,” the chief resident says.*

As Toles and the chief resident head for the trauma room, all they know for sure is that the patient has suffered a traumatic amputation of his lower left arm in a motor vehicle accident, but they know that an accident of such severity is likely to produce other kinds of trauma as well. As they gown up, they discuss their role in the coming procedure, which will be to establish an airway, if needed.

Despite the three-minute warning, they’re still waiting 20 minutes later, as a crowd of observers gathers around the red line in the room and overflows into the hallway.

Finally, EMTs steer a gurney down the long corridor to the trauma room. On it is a male patient in obvious pain. Word spreads that he was driving with his arm outside the window when a guard rail struck him just below the elbow. A few minutes later, two highway patrol officers arrive carrying a cooler. A member of the team removes the severed arm and begins to clean it in hopes of a possible reattachment—an effort that will prove to be in vain.

Later, back in the Doc Box, Toles turns to the residents and asks, for maybe the fourth or fifth time that day, “Okay, what are the learning points from that case?”

“WE CALL IT DROPPING PEARLS,” Toles says of the teaching aspect of her job. “Dropping little pearls of knowledge along the way.”

After all, UCDCM is a teaching hospital, and the ER is in many respects a big, high-stakes classroom. The residents and fourth-year students are there to care for patients, but they’re also there to learn through observation and firsthand experience.

“And if they ever get stuck,” Toles adds, “then they know that the attending is there to help them push through that part.”

The chance to gain experience in teaching, she says, is one of her own principal reasons for working here. However, this part-time job at UC Davis is not the only iron Toles has in the fire. She’s also taking shifts back in her hometown of Angleton, Texas, in the ER of the small community hospital where she was born, as well as working

in the much tamer environs of an urgent-care center near her home in Oakland.

“‘I have issues with commitment,’ is what I tell the residents,” she says with a laugh. “I don’t like to commit until I know what I’m getting myself into because I like to give 110 percent when I do commit, and I don’t like to give less than that.”

Each setting provides her with a very different taste of life as an emergency physician. “I’m getting a feel for these different settings,” she explains. “So I picked jobs that are in communities that mean a lot to me, that I haven’t been able to engage in the way that I want to because I’ve been in residency. Working here at UC Davis, I get to engage in this community with my friends and learn how to be a teacher at this academic institution. And then, my job down in Texas is in a small community hospital where it’s single coverage, and I’m the only emergency medicine doctor in the Emergency Department, which is a completely different experience.”

Eventually, she expects to make a more permanent career choice, but for now, she’s content with the freedom her unconventional lifestyle provides. “I wanted to get a feel for what it’s like to be a doctor in those many different settings,” she says, “but I’m also tapping into these people in my life that I had to neglect while I was in residency and put energy, love and time back into those relationships, which feels great.”

1:45 P.M. *As her shift winds down, Toles goes out for her final rounds. “I want to visualize everyone one more time,” she explains. Then it’s back to the Doc Box for the hand-off to the next crew. Though her shift ends, theoretically, at 2, she hangs around another hour or more to make sure that the transition goes smoothly and, finally, to give her long-delayed demonstration of the new technique for resolving a dislocated jaw.*

It’s been a good day by her standards—she’s taken care of some “really sick” patients, but the D-Pod wasn’t so swamped that she had no time to teach. Most importantly, no one died on her watch. That’s one experience in the ER that she prefers not to talk about. When asked about it later on, away from the ER, she quickly changes the subject, but a few minutes after, as she is discussing something else, a tear rolls unexpectedly down her cheek in response to some unspoken memory.

“I try not to have that happen at work,” she says as she swipes it away, “but you’re human. Accidents in young people—those are the worst. But you do what you can medically to try to save them, and if you’re not able to, then it’s heartbreaking. But you honor the life that has passed, and you try to figure out what ways you have to deal with that and cope with that.” She dabs away another stray tear. “If I ever get to the point where I’m not crying when a baby dies, then I need to stop doing my job.” **PCM**

STEVEN GUTKIN '86 ALWAYS SAID HE'D WORK FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS AS LONG AS HE LOVED IT, AND NOT A MINUTE LONGER. AND HE MEANT IT.



Imagine

for a moment that this is your life. Interviewing the likes of Fidel Castro, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Lee Kuan Yew, Jimmy Carter and Shimon Peres. Getting shot at, shelled, detained or banned in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Cuba. Bearing witness to global events such as the rise and fall of the Medellín and Cali cocaine cartels, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, upheavals in Venezuela and Indonesia, a coup in Fiji and the defeat of the Taliban.

And now imagine that, as a reward for your efforts, you are “promoted” to a management position, where conference calls, performance reviews and bureaucratic jockeying have taken the place of covering palaces, presidents and the outbreak of war and peace.

What do you do then? Why, you quit your job and move to India with your wife and two sons to start your own weekly newspaper, of course.

At least that’s what you do if you’re former Associated Press (AP) bureau chief Steven Gutkin ’86.

Whether fleeing Colombia because of death threats from the Cali cartel, or ducking and covering during a Taliban shell attack on a battlefield north of Kabul, or witnessing the independence celebrations of the long-suffering people of East Timor, Gutkin has always equated work with adventure and the pursuit of truth. And when he talks about his long career as a foreign correspondent, his war stories unfurl like a tightly wrapped, multicolored Sikh turban.

For instance, early in his career, he and another journalist were left stranded in the Amazon jungle with Yanomami tribespeople by a pilot who took off from a grassy field promising to return in a few hours but came back instead 10 days later. Gutkin and the other reporter were forced to trade their clothes with the tribesmen in exchange for plantains to eat, and he recalls watching dozens of Yanomami click their tongues—their word for “wow”—upon seeing their first magazine.

At the time he was angry about the pilot’s antics, but looking back, he says, “I was afforded a great privilege to spend time deep in the Amazon jungle with an intact hunter-gatherer society completely untouched by Western influence. I don’t think it would be possible to find such people today.”

And then there’s the story he tells about the day Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar was killed. Gutkin had submitted questions to the drug lord’s son, Juan Pablo Escobar, and asked him to get answers from his dad over the phone. While the two lingered on the phone, the police traced their call. Gutkin says, “Father and son spoke about a number of things that day, ▶

but among them was going through the answers to a journalist's questions—that would be me.”

Gutkin soon arrived at the Medellín home where Escobar had been gunned down with a pistol in each hand. He saw blood, shattered glass and Escobar's half-eaten hot dog. He recalls, “I used the same phone that Escobar had used when his call was traced, partly because he was answering my questions, to call in my reports to the AP.”

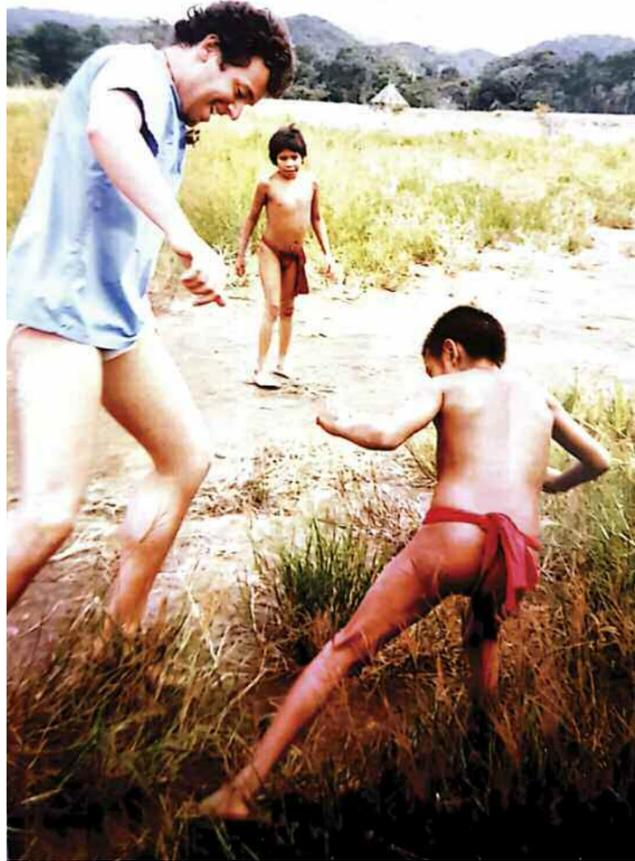


After earning his master's degree from the Columbia University School of Journalism, Gutkin moved to Venezuela in 1987 and got his first byline in *Time* magazine during 1989's violent price riots in Caracas. “You could say this was my first major break in journalism,” he says, “because the *Time* magazine correspondent was out of station when the riots broke out, and the magazine hired me to cover them instead.”

He then began his long relationship with the Associated Press, covering a coup attempt in 1992 by a young Venezuelan army officer named Hugo Chavez and reporting on the drug wars of Colombia. (He hasn't seen the Netflix series *Narcos* but says he did “live it.”) He then became an editor on AP's international desk in New York.

In 1997 at the unusually tender age of 32, Gutkin returned to Caracas as the AP's bureau chief in Venezuela, where he covered Chavez's rise to the presidency and came to know the late leader well, along with the policies that he says led to Venezuela's implosion. “I'm absolutely sick about what is happening in Venezuela today,” he adds. “One of the most delightful countries on the planet has been driven into the ground by stupid ideology-driven policy. People are going hungry, and misery abounds.”

After the AP set up its first bureau in Havana since the Cuban revolution, he covered the story of Elián González, the 6-year-old boy who was the subject of an international custody battle in 2000 after surviving a boat wreck at sea that killed his mother and her boyfriend. Gutkin spent a week in the mother's hometown of Cárdenas and wrote a story revealing how the Cuban authorities had lied about her motivations for leaving the island. The AP brass got wind of the piece and, fearing closure of the newly opened Havana bureau, ordered a rewrite. By then it was too late, however, as the original story had already run on the AP's Spanish wire. In the ensuing fallout, the bureau was allowed to remain in Cuba, but Gutkin was not.



Scenes from the career of Steven Gutkin '86: playing with Yanomami children; interviewing Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez; in Kabul after the fall of the Taliban; and with his wife, Marisha Dutt, on their wedding day in India.

“In some ways, I have always considered being banned from Cuba as something of a badge of honor, but the truth is I love the country and very much would like to return there. I hope enough time has passed now that I will be able to do so.”

In the years that followed, Gutkin always seemed to find himself where the action was.

He was appointed AP's chief of Southeast Asia services in Singapore and then Jakarta. He became the AP's first print journalist to enter Afghanistan after 9/11 and rode into Kabul with a triumphant Northern Alliance. He helped lead AP's coverage of the Iraq War and covered the kidnapping and killing of fellow journalist Daniel Pearl in Pakistan (Gutkin, like Pearl, is Jewish, and they had both been seeking to interview the militants who subsequently killed Pearl after forcing him to say, “I am Jewish”).



As bureau chief in Jerusalem from 2004 to 2010, he led one of the AP's largest international operations and directed coverage of wars in Lebanon and Gaza and the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Then a big story broke on the other side of the world that would change his life forever.

In the spring of 2010, a blowout at the Deepwater Horizon platform sent some 210 million gallons of oil gushing into the Gulf of Mexico over a period of five months, making it the largest spill in the history of the petroleum industry.

At the time, Gutkin had been hoping to take up a new position in Mexico City, but the AP convinced him to move to Atlanta to lead the AP's multitiered coverage of the spill, involving scores of reporters, photographers, videographers, graphic artists and others.

Eventually, however, the story died down, and Gutkin found himself living in Atlanta with no permanent assignment. “The kids were settled in school,” he says, “and we were hoping to buy a home and stay there for a while.”

So, after decades of pursuing big stories and dodging bullets, he accepted a job as deputy regional editor for the U.S. South—“a good gig,” he says, but still “a far cry from the life I had come to love.”

So at the age of 47, with the support of his wife, Marisha Dutt, he decided to leave his AP career behind and start over.



“I had always thought about the possibility of doing something on my own, and in the back of my mind I told myself that I'd stay with the AP as long as I loved it, and would leave as soon as I didn't,” Gutkin explains. “That happened in 2011, when I decided to start a new chapter completely.”

The couple had been traveling to Dutt's native country of India every year since their marriage in 2002, and in 2008, they had purchased a home in the tiny western state of Goa. “If the idea was to start something on our own,” he says, “Goa seemed the place to do it.”

The first edition of their new weekly newspaper, called *Goa Streets*, was published on Nov. 8, 2012.

“We started out with a bang, to say the least,” Gutkin says. “Our *Goa Streets* Flash Mob, days before our launch, attracted about 160,000 views on YouTube, and we arranged hop-on, hop-off party buses around the state, with traditional Goan brass bands aboard, to ferry people to hot spots” around Goa.

For the next four years, Gutkin and his wife, along with a devoted staff, published a weekly newspaper, informing readers about things to see, do and eat in Goa while providing cutting-edge articles on a wide range of topics, including politics, art, literature, the environment and finance.

“Our idea was to bring the idea of an ‘alt-weekly’ to India,” Gutkin says. “We worked very hard and had a wonderful time.”



Looking back, Gutkin says the price for achieving profitability at *Goa Streets* was too high, however. He gives the example of Goan casinos, whose advertising was essential for financial survival but who would not countenance negative coverage despite a scandalous presence in the state.

“I do not want to choose between my principles and my pocket-book,” he says of his eye-opening introduction to media entrepreneurship in India.

About a year ago, the couple decided to quit printing their weekly and publish online only. Currently, they are in the process of turning *Goa Streets* into a probono publication that promotes art, culture and responsible citizenship in the state and beyond—with any hopes for further monetization postponed to a later date.

“We have a great brand,” says Gutkin. “*Goa Streets* will live on.”

At the same time, they have ventured into a brand new arena—constructing sustainable luxury villas in Goa, an enterprise that has opened what Gutkin calls “a completely novel and entirely welcome new path in life.”

Their main project at the moment is a villa in the serene village of Sangolda. It is designed by award-winning architect Alan Abraham, who built one of the most famous homes in India—a seaside penthouse in Mumbai for his brother, Bollywood actor John Abraham, called Villa in the Sky. The new villa is nestled beside a flowing stream on a property filled with coconut palms.



“When Alan came to check out the property and saw the towering coconut trees, the first thing he said was, ‘We're keeping them,’” Gutkin remembers. “So instead of cutting the trees to build the house, we built the house around the trees. We're calling it Villa in the Palms, kind of like the sequel to Villa in the Sky.”

It's a long way from his old globe-trotting life on the cutting edge of the news, but Gutkin says he has no regrets. And he promises he's not done with journalism yet.

“My next big goal in life is to write more for Indian and international publications,” he says. “I've lived in a lot of places, seen a lot of things, and feel I have much to say.”

AFTER THE FALL

MORE THAN A THIRD OF ALL AMERICANS ARE REPORTEDLY JUST A PAYCHECK AWAY FROM HOMELESSNESS. FOR RAMONA BRIDGES, BEING HOMELESS BECAME A NIGHTMARE. HERE'S HOW SHE FOUND HER WAY BACK.

STORY BY AGUSTIN GURZA | PHOTOS BY IRIS SCHNEIDER

FOR RAMONA BRIDGES '77,

the plunge into homelessness was like falling off a cliff. One day, she was a grounded single woman with a solid career, working a stable job. The next, she was an aimless, disoriented street person, pushing her sad belongings in a shopping cart, repeatedly arrested as a trespasser, in and out of jails and mental wards, and even banished from her own church, her only solace in her life's most desperate moment.

Suddenly, Bridges had lost her job, her home, her car. And she had lost her way in life.

Once the bright star of her Catholic high school in South Los Angeles, one of the few African American students attending Pomona College in the mid-'70s, Bridges had met a dead end in mid-life.

How could it have come to this? How did a young woman with so much promise wind up with nothing to her name except a misdemeanor criminal record, multiple restraining orders and a tarnished résumé?

"I guess I haven't thought about it because my faith helped me so much when I was homeless," says Bridges. "If I hadn't had the religious background that I had, something bad probably would have happened to me out on the streets. I felt like it was a spiritual experience. So no, it didn't scare me." ▸



Ramona Bridges '77 revisits a bench beneath which she sometimes slept during the time that she was homeless.



Bridges remembers finding comfort on a bench outside her church, the Agape International Spiritual Center, where she could listen to the wind chimes.



R AMONA ARMENIA BRIDGES

was born in Austin and still has a taste of a Texas drawl. Her father was an accountant, her mother a teacher. She had three siblings, but she always thought of herself as “a mommy’s girl, her favorite child, probably.” She was a tomboy when it came to sports, but she treasured the dresses her mother would sew for her at Easter.

Her parents divorced when Bridges was 13, and the teenager moved with her mother to Los Angeles. She remembers it as “a happy move,” hitching a U-Haul and heading west with her uncle and cousin. The year was 1969, the start of a new life.

The newcomers moved into an apartment in the Fairfax district. They were one of the few African-American families in the neighborhood, she recalls. But Bridges didn’t attend Fairfax High, the public school across the street. Instead, she enrolled in an all-girls Catholic school, the now-defunct Regina Caeli, 25 miles away in the heart of Compton. Her mother made the daily drive to drop her off and pick her up.

The extra effort paid off. The school’s 1973 yearbook documents the graduate’s stellar record: student body president, National Honor Society, glee club, French club, and varsity basketball. Her fellow students also voted her “Most Typical,” an ambiguous title that, as she explains it now, may as well have been “Miss Goody Two-Shoes.”

“I was always doing what I was told to do,” said Bridges, who speaks with a slight lisp that she attributes to sucking her thumb as a child. “A lot of times I got criticized for not doing the popular things, because you know how girls are. They want you to chase the boys and all that. And I just wasn’t going to necessarily do all that. You know, I was going to do the right thing. So I didn’t win any popularity contests. But the nuns *loved* me.”

Back then, Bridges didn’t dwell on what the future might hold.

“You know, you’re young and you don’t really have anything in mind,” she says. “I knew I was going to college. That was a given, because my mother made a house rule that everybody was going to college. No exceptions.”

Pomona College recruiters came on campus and “made a good pitch,” she recalls. They were looking for “somebody from the inner city that had scholarship credentials,” and she fit the bill. Bridges enrolled with vague ambitions to be a doctor, though she quickly decided “that I couldn’t cut the mustard” in premed. So she switched majors to psychology, “which was more my forté.”

Bridges also came out in college as a lesbian, though it wasn’t a crisis for her. “No, it might have been a crisis for my mom,” she says, with a smile. “It blew *her* mind. But it wasn’t for me, no.”

At the time, she thought her psychology degree would lead to “some kind of job” in counseling or social services. But after graduation, the only job she could find was in the insurance business.

For the next 15 years, Bridges toiled anonymously in unglamorous insurance work, first as a claims adjuster with State Farm in Oregon, then back in L.A. with the California Department of Insurance, this time handling consumer complaints.

It was steady work for more than a decade, but not exactly fulfilling. So Bridges started working for nonprofits, sometimes as second jobs. She was a youth advocate, children’s social worker and caregiver. Then in 2001, she was hired by the California State Employment Development Department (EDD), helping people file unemployment claims.

She held that job for almost 12 years, until a crisis within the agency led to a personal crisis for Bridges. Stress at work, she says, triggered the mental illness that had haunted her since her 30s. Suddenly, she found herself on the downward spiral into homelessness. ▾

BRIDGES WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER

in the 1990s. She had gone through a bitter breakup with her long-term partner and the loss of their Lancaster home through foreclosure. At the same time, she discovered that her younger brother, now deceased, was HIV-positive.

“So that all made me snap,” says Bridges, who was prescribed medication to control her mood swings.

Fast-forward a decade. In 2007, Bridges was working two jobs—by day at the EDD and by night as a live-in caretaker for a disabled adult. But by 2011, she felt burned out. She wanted privacy and a place of her own. So she quit the night job and moved into a one-bedroom apartment in Inglewood, where the rent chewed up half her pay. “It wasn’t the smartest thing to do because I couldn’t support myself on one income,” she says.

The breaking point came in 2013. The EDD was under pressure to clear a backlog of old cases, forcing employees to work faster. Bridges resisted the rush and argued that clients needed better service, which takes time. “Well, they started making my life miserable,” she says. “And I got thrown under the bus as a result of speaking out the way I did.”

Once again, stress triggered her bipolar symptoms.

“What happens is—when I start getting manic, I don’t sleep enough, and that’s what brings on the sickness. So I started staying up all hours of the night.”

Bridges says she went out on disability, under doctor’s orders. What she did next—or failed to do—would prove catastrophic.

Bridges missed the deadline to file for disability benefits, a lapse that would delay her checks. Now, with no income, she stopped paying her rent. Then she stopped taking her meds and started acting out. Neighbors called police. An eviction notice was tacked to her front door.

Before she knew it, she was out on the street.

BRIDGES IS VERY GOOD AT GIVING DIRECTIONS.

She navigated for her mother with maps as they drove around an unfamiliar L.A. Today, she knows these streets like a cabbie. In fact, she worked for a time as an Uber driver in 2012, and also as a chauffeur for celebrities, once even attending the Oscars.

Recently, she led a reporter on a tour of her favorite homeless haunts, mainly in West L.A., near the Howard Hughes Center. There was the bench at a bus stop and, when she could afford it, the hotel across the street, until they kicked her out. Nearby, she staked out a special spot outside her church, the Agape International Spiritual Center, sleeping on a bench, wind chimes ringing softly in the cool ocean breeze. She found peace and comfort here. But that wouldn’t last either.

Court records show Bridges faced multiple criminal charges for trespassing. But when asked about her specific behavior, she answered only vaguely. “I’m trying to remember what would I do,” she says. “I would behave in a strange way where people would think something was wrong.”

Indeed, at times she was so disruptive during church services that police were called. Once, she got into a physical altercation with a church security guard who, according to police reports, held her on the ground with a knee in her back. She was taken to a psych ward

and banned from the church.

Looking back, Bridges says police and prison guards treated her “like a second-class citizen.” She doesn’t remember ever being aggressive, but police and church officials tell a different story. They say a barefoot Bridges was often angry and delusional, lashing out at strangers. In one report, officers describe her as “yelling incoherently and (being) verbally aggressive.”

At one point, Bridges sought counseling from a church minister, the Rev. Greta Sesheta. Bridges brought an expensive bottle of wine and asked the minister to give it to Oprah Winfrey, who she said was her friend and an inspiration. The pastor could see that Bridges was in a lot of pain. What she needed was just someone to talk to her, to listen and to offer encouragement.

“I admired her in a way,” says Sesheta, “because she was having such difficulties, yet she always had a higher vision for her life. She always had these great ideas for businesses that she could start. The spirit within her was strong.”

Bridges was soon allowed back in the church, and the minister has been impressed with her recovery.

“Now she seems completely self-sufficient,” Sesheta says. “It’s almost like talking to a completely different person.”

EVENTUALLY, BRIDGES HAD A LIFE-SAVING PAYDAY.

Her disability came through, and so did a settlement for a separate workers’ compensation claim, which she says she had to sue to win. The money helped her get off the streets, and her restored health insurance helped her gain stability, because she was able to start taking her meds regularly again.

Bridges also credits the help of loyal friends like Audrey James, who visited her in jail and bought her clothes. Then there were her best friends—books. They were like medicine without a prescription. The “healing messages” contained in them, she says, helped “me find my way back to myself.”

Still, it wasn’t easy getting an apartment with an eviction on her credit record. So in 2014 Bridges rented a room that she found advertised on a bulletin board at a Starbucks on La Brea in Inglewood. She lived there for the next two years, until a family crisis called her back to Texas.

When Bridges was homeless she had had a falling-out with her mother, who at one point refused to bail her out of jail. “My mother was very disappointed that I had gotten arrested and was homeless,” she says, “so she lost a lot of respect for me.” Now, the elderly woman was ailing. She had moved back to Texas and was calling for her once-favored daughter. “She was lonely and didn’t want to live by herself,” recalls Bridges. So just before Christmas in 2016, she returned to the Lone Star State to be with her mother.

Three months later, her mother was dead at 87.

Today, Bridges is back in Los Angeles, living with her aunt and looking for work again. Finding a job is still a struggle. In December, she had passed on one job offer from a homeless agency because of her move. “Trust me, I was disappointed, because it had taken me forever to get that job,” she says, over her favorite chicken wrap sandwich at that same Starbucks. “I always wanted to be at work. But because I’m 62 and I haven’t worked in three or four years, those are overall barriers to my employment.”

Asked for a copy of her current résumé, Bridges makes a dash to retrieve one from her car, a Toyota Rav 4 purchased when her disability came through. She always keeps her phone close, anxiously anticipating word of any new job offer.

THE TOUGH TIME ON THE STREETS HAD TAKEN ITS TOLL

physically; she has missing teeth, “really bad knees,” chronically aching feet and diabetic nerve damage. Luckily, she was able to get her Kaiser health insurance coverage back as part of her pension benefits. These days, she’s careful to take her meds every night before bedtime, for her cholesterol, blood pressure and bipolar disorder.

Bridges is trying to rebuild her life and her image. She has written a book about her homeless experience, slyly titled *Forgive Me My Trespasses*. And she has a website (ramonabuildsbridges.com) putting herself forward as an educator, mental health advocate and speaker on homelessness and women’s empowerment. She also makes a pitch

for donations to complete a documentary and to join her campaign to end homelessness, Ramona’s Bridge, granting donors such benefits as “VIP seating” at her book signings.

“When I got out, I wanted to start an advocacy group,” she says, “because I didn’t want to see this happen to anybody else.”

And she vows it will never happen to her again.

In late September of this year, Bridges still had irons in the fire. She had gone through a background check to work for FEMA at a Pasadena call center for hurricane relief. But she worried she wouldn’t pass the credit check required for federal employees because her credit was “in the toilet.” She also applied to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority to work on the county agency’s emergency response team.

Yes, the search has been frustrating. But through it all, there’s one thing she hasn’t lost—her faith. And that gives her hope that she’ll finally find work again.

“I pray on it,” she says softly. “I pray on it.” 



Back among family and friends, Bridges is joined by her cousin and fellow church member Jason Mitchel (right) and Thelma Chichester, chief administrative officer at Agape.

HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION

As summer came to a close, many Pomona students returned to campus with new career experiences, thanks to internships across the country and around the globe. Through the Pomona College Internship Program (PCIP), 68 students received funding to participate in work opportunities that would otherwise be unpaid, while others found paid internships that also allowed them to live in new cities and gain new experiences. Here are six of their stories.

Marisol Diaz '18

Major: American Studies

Internship: Legislative intern with California Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia '99

Location: Sacramento, California

"Interacting with staffers in Assemblymember Cristina Garcia's office has been great. She has such a wonderful team of people; specifically, in her office, there are a lot of women and women of color. It's very encouraging to me, and it's very important in shaping my experience to be surrounded by women."



Jacob Feord '18

Double Major: Economics and Japanese Language and Literature

Internship: Intern with the United States Department of State at U.S. Embassy Tokyo-Akasaka

Location: Tokyo, Japan

"A U.S. government institution managed by Americans, located in Tokyo and staffed largely by Japanese local staff makes for a very unique workplace culture. The mixture of languages and business ideologies is a concoction absolutely unique to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. At first it seemed difficult to navigate, but I ended up having a lot of fun getting to know the quirks of the embassy system."



Pablo Ordoñez '18

Major: Public Policy Analysis

Internship: Policy intern with the United States Department of Commerce Census Bureau

Location: Washington, D.C.

"Everyone has this big misconception about the government: It's a very slow, monotonous, perfunctory place. But like any company, it has a CEO and high-level executives, meetings, people very connected to the mission of the bureau—and that's helpful to me for any industry I'll go into. Government could be slow and inefficient, but there are people there who are very committed to the work they are doing who have extremely innovative ideas."



Carly Grimes '18

Double Major: Cognitive Science and Politics

Internship: Intern with the Yale University Canine Cognition Center

Location: New Haven, Conn.

"My favorite part of this internship was interacting with the dog's owners, since I love communicating science research to the general public. The owners were always very interested and would ask great questions that sharpened my ability to make complex scientific theories more easily digestible for people with vastly varying scientific backgrounds."

Secured Solid Partnership



Sylvia Gitonga '20

Major: Economics

Internship: Investment analyst intern with the East African Reinsurance Company

Location: Nairobi, Kenya

"I learned how to establish and maintain relationships not only with clients but also with the company's employees. I also became more vocal and confident in terms of presenting ideas to people. Although I secured this internship by myself, the one-on-one meetings with Wanda Gibson in the Career Development Office, with regard to my career path, really played a huge role in acquiring the internship. The PCIP funding, however, is what really enabled me to carry out this internship. If not for that, my career growth would be stagnant."

PHOTO COURTESY OF SYLVIA GITONGA '20

THE DAILYSHOW WITH TREVOR NOAH

Samuel Kelly '18

Major: Media Studies

Internship: Intern with *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*

Location: New York City

"I'd say one of the biggest things I've learned at this internship is the level of professionalism necessary to make a massive production like The Daily Show operate smoothly and at a high level. It takes a lot of people to get The Daily Show on the air every night, and I'm always impressed at how everyone in the office knows exactly what they need to do to make it successful."



BRYAN KEVAN '14 SOUGHT A POSTGRADUATION ADVENTURE AND FOUND A CYCLING LIFESTYLE.



ROADS LESS TRAVELED

BY BRYAN KEVAN '14

IF A ROAD can be a political statement, then the Carretera Austral—stretching 1,200 kilometers, the majority of the length of Chilean Patagonia—is just that. Started under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in the 1970s, it checked all the boxes for a military dictator seeking to exert political and economic control over the country's most remote and inaccessible territory.

Many of the towns along the road had previously been connected to the outside world only through towns across the border

in Argentina, a dependence that Pinochet sought to eliminate. Snaking around narrow fjords, over high mountain passes and through dense, seemingly impenetrable forests, the road was a symbolic statement that not even nature could stop Chile from policing its borders. The road unofficially carried Pinochet's name for years, an indication of its strategic military importance in the historically poor relationship between Chile and its neighbor to the east.

As Pinochet's reign continued, so did construction of the Carretera Austral. Over decades, the road inched farther and farther

into the Patagonian wilderness. Signs along the road still carry a Ministry of Public Works slogan harkening back to the road's original political significance: "Obras que Unen Chilenos" ("Works That Unite Chileans").

The spirit of the Carretera Austral remains, embedded in a thin ribbon of gravel road connecting Chilean Patagonia to the rest of the country. In 2000, workers finally reached their limit, a dead end at the town of Villa O'Higgins. The terrain was just too rough after that point, and the territory too remote. With no more towns, the Carretera

Austral had reached its terminus. Two small border crossings into Argentina, complete with posts and military barracks, were constructed at the end of the road, neither passable by car.

When I graduated from Pomona in 2014, my mom told me to go out and take a new risk. Confined to the Pomona bubble for four years, and to the bubble of small Eugene, Oregon, for my life before that, I was hungry for something different. Something new, challenging and, most importantly,

was decided.

So I packed up the things I thought I would need for a few weeks on the road, never having camped for more than a handful of nights in a row, and set off to Patagonia. Everyone on the Internet's various bike-touring forums raved about this gravel road in Chile, and I felt like I just had to do it. I didn't expect to make it far. Maybe go out for a week or two, have a fun experience and then come back.

I quickly realized upon my arrival that I



Left: Bryan Kevan '14 at the Mirador Cuesta del Diablo, just off the Portezuelo Ibañez, the highest pass on the Carretera, in 2014. Above: Kevan sitting on a marker identifying the peak of the Tizi n'Isli Pass while riding along the spine of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco in 2017.

something not academic. I didn't, and still deep down don't, consider myself particularly athletic or adventurous. I ran cross-

country in high school, but not particularly well. I enjoyed hiking and camping, but it was clear at least to me that I didn't share the single-minded passion for it that many of my classmates had. I replied to my mom over text with a picture of a motorcycle, and she responded with a picture of a bicycle. It

had timed it all wrong. It was September, very early spring in Patagonia, and most towns, campsites, hostels and even some border crossings into Argentina were still closed. It rained pretty much constantly for the first two weeks of my trip, and the state of the road left my body broken and bruised every night from hour upon hour of riding on rocky, muddy gravel.

My tent was hardly waterproof, my rain jacket even less so. For a road that was supposed to be so popular with touring cyclists, it was surprisingly little-traveled; I finally saw another cyclist after a month. It was a strug-

gle. I learned to live with myself, camped alone for weeks in the middle of nowhere. But it was exciting, it was new, and I loved every second of it.

At Villa O'Higgins, a month into my trip, I reached the dead end, and the two roadless border crossings, only one of which was open during that season. The Chilean post was unassuming, to say the least—just two small buildings and a helipad at the dead end of a rough gravel road. Three policemen manned the post, sitting around a fireplace stamping passports and making snide remarks about the Argentines 15 kilometers away. I stayed the night in the barracks next to a nice, warm fire and stamped out of Chile the next morning. Between passport stamps, it took 14 hours of navigating the roadless swamp of backwoods Patagonia to reach Argentina. I cursed and yelled my way through dense forests, over swinging sheep bridges, through bogs and through glacial streams, all on the very imprecise directions received from a very inebriated gaucho living on the border.

I eventually found a road that led to the Argentine border post. As I stumbled out of the wilderness, a policeman came out to meet me, clearly concerned for my safety. I was quickly stamped into the country and shown where to set up camp.

In a poetic turn, I experienced the same thing at the Argentine border as I had at the Chilean one, but in reverse—just three policemen stamping passports and making snide remarks about Chileans. After the decades of antagonistic relations and political symbolism that surrounded the road's construction, all that remained at road's end was a remote border crossing, a few half-rotted military barracks and a handful of policemen taking half-hearted verbal shots at one another across the border.

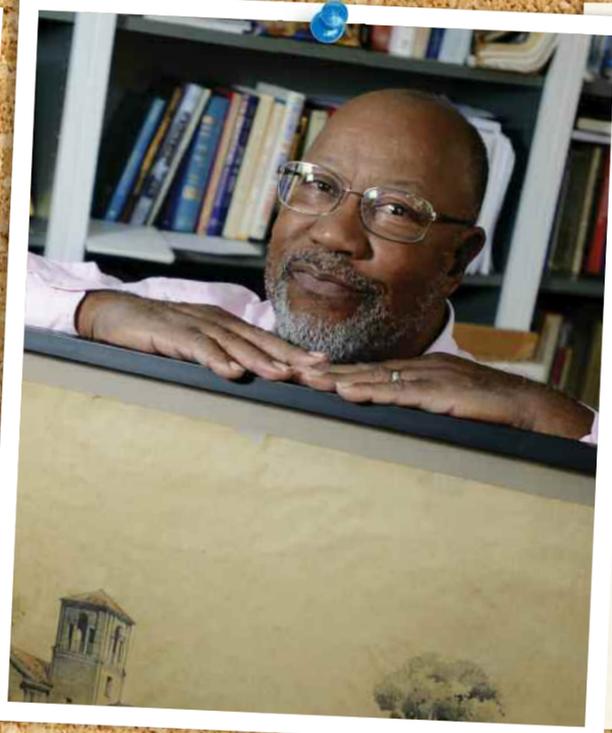
I was sold. These were the genuine travel experiences I wanted in my life. I continued my trip, eventually ending up in Tierra del Fuego, at the tip of South America. More trips soon followed—Southeast Asia, the Pacific Northwest, Iceland, and Morocco, all since graduation.

I am now in the planning stages for a trip spanning the entirety of the Silk Road across Central Asia, starting in 2018. I encourage interested readers to follow along at my blog starting next March at venturesadventures.wordpress.com.



Mentor Current Students with Sagepost 47

Do you remember feeling unsure about your path after Pomona? Are you interested in ways that you can give back to the student community? Sagepost 47 is Pomona's alumni-student mentorship program, founded by a team of students and alumni in 2014. The program connects alumni mentors with students, provides support for career and graduate school exploration and allows students to participate in mock interviews in a variety of fields. Visit sagepost47.com to learn more or sign up to become a mentor.



Sagehens Bid a Fond Farewell to Prof. Lorn Foster

Lorn Foster, Pomona's Charles and Henrietta Johnson Deto Professor of American Government and Professor of Politics, has announced his retirement at the end of this academic year—his 40th at the College. A special fund supporting student internships and Pomona's golf program has been established in his honor. Foster fans who wish to honor his legacy with a gift should visit pomona.edu/give and select the "Lorn S. and Gloria F. Foster Fund" from the gift designation menu. To hear about events celebrating Professor Foster, make sure your information is up to date at pomona.edu/alumniupdate.



Alumni Travel/Study

April 4–11, 2018
Explore Cuba with the Claremont Colleges
 Join CMC and Pitzer alumni on this three-college tour as we cross a cultural divide, exploring the art, history and culture of the Cuban people.

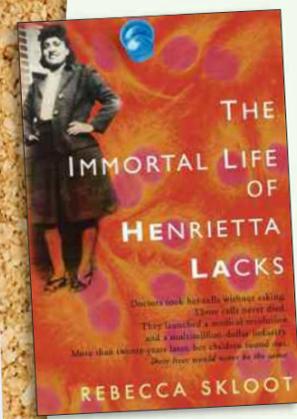
May 25–June 4, 2018
The Camino de Santiago: A Pilgrimage into the Past
 Join John Sutton Miner Professor of History and Professor of Classics **Ken Wolf** on one of the great journeys of the world, the Camino de Santiago, done in the way it was meant to be traveled: on foot.

For complete tour information, please visit pomona.edu/alumni/lifelong-learning/alumni-travel-program or email alumni@pomona.edu.

Welcome, 2017–18 Alumni Board

The Alumni Board welcomed President Starr to its first meeting of the year with a basket of gifts sent by alumni authors, filmmakers, poets, musicians and vintners. President Starr and members discussed priorities for the year and topics important to on- and off-campus Sagehens, including free speech and alumni-student mentorship. During lunch, the board heard from **Elvis Kahoro '20**, who was featured in the recent *New York Times* article "When Affirmative Action Isn't Enough." Working committees met, including Alumni Engagement, chaired by **Don Swan '15**, which focuses on learning and career programs for alumni; Athletic Affinity, chaired by **Mercedes Fitchett '91**, which supports events such as Rivalry Weekend and promotes the Champions of Sagehen Athletics fundraising initiative; Current Matters, chaired by **Rocio Gandara '97**, which responds to time-sensitive issues within the Pomona alumni community as they arise; and 4/7, chaired by president-elect **Diane Ung '85**, which organizes community service events around Pomona's "special day" in April. The Alumni Association president for 2017–18 is **Matt Thompson '96**. A complete list of members and a nomination form can be found at pomona.edu/alumni/alumni-association-board.

Fall/Winter Book Club Selection: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*



Grab a blanket (or, if you're in Claremont, maybe a fan) and cozy up with *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot, the Pomona College Book Club selection for fall. This *New York Times* bestseller was adapted earlier in the year into an Emmy-nominated HBO television film, directed by Tony Award-winning playwright and director **George C. Wolfe '76**. In a September 2017 interview for the website *Shadow and Act* (shadowandact.com), Wolfe spoke about the project: "I think it is a phenomenal story. Henrietta Lacks, a woman who, with limited education and a vibrant and colorful personality, transformed modern medicine. When she died, her cells gave birth to the biotech industry. I found it so fascinating that someone who on paper had limited power, in death had tremendous power and that her family knew nothing about it."

To join the Book Club, learn more about in-person discussions in your area, and access exclusive discussion questions, faculty notes and video content, visit pomona.edu/bookclub.

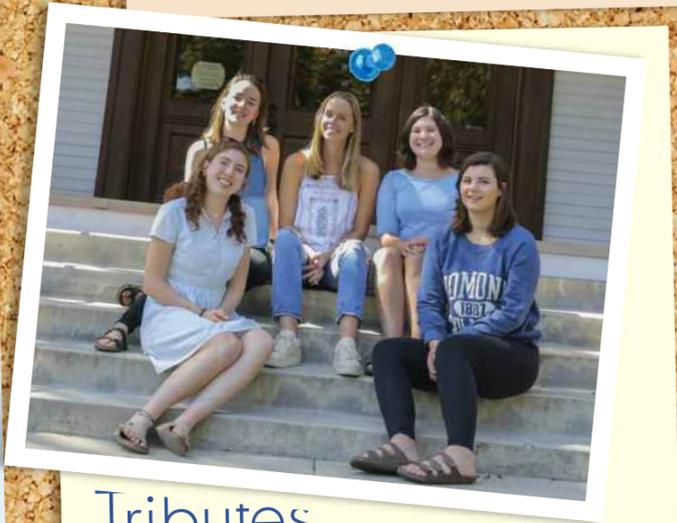


Show Your Sagehen Pride with New Pomona-Pitzer Athletics Gear

Big news for Sagehen fans: Announcing the launch of a new online Nike store for Pomona-Pitzer Athletics! Get in the game with your favorite gear at sagehens.com—just click the "Nike Store" tab on the navigation bar. Your order will be shipped directly to your door. And don't forget to support your favorite team with a gift to Champions of Sagehen Athletics at pomona.edu/champions!

New Pomona-Pitzer Athletics Filter in the Mobile Alumni Directory

Sagehen Connect—a free app featuring an alumni directory and mapping resource to connect you with Sagehens in your area—has been bringing alumni together since 2013. Now, a new filter allows users to search by athletic participation from the Directory search tool. Visit pomona.edu/sagehenconnect to find out how to download the app to your iOS or Android device.



Tributes

First-year students whose parents are alumni were invited to swing by Seaver House to say hello and snap a photo. Thanks to those who took part, and welcome to the Pomona family. Pictured are: (top row, left to right) Frannie Sutton, Maia Pauley, Martha Castro, (bottom row, left to right) Claire Goldman and Lianna Semonsen.

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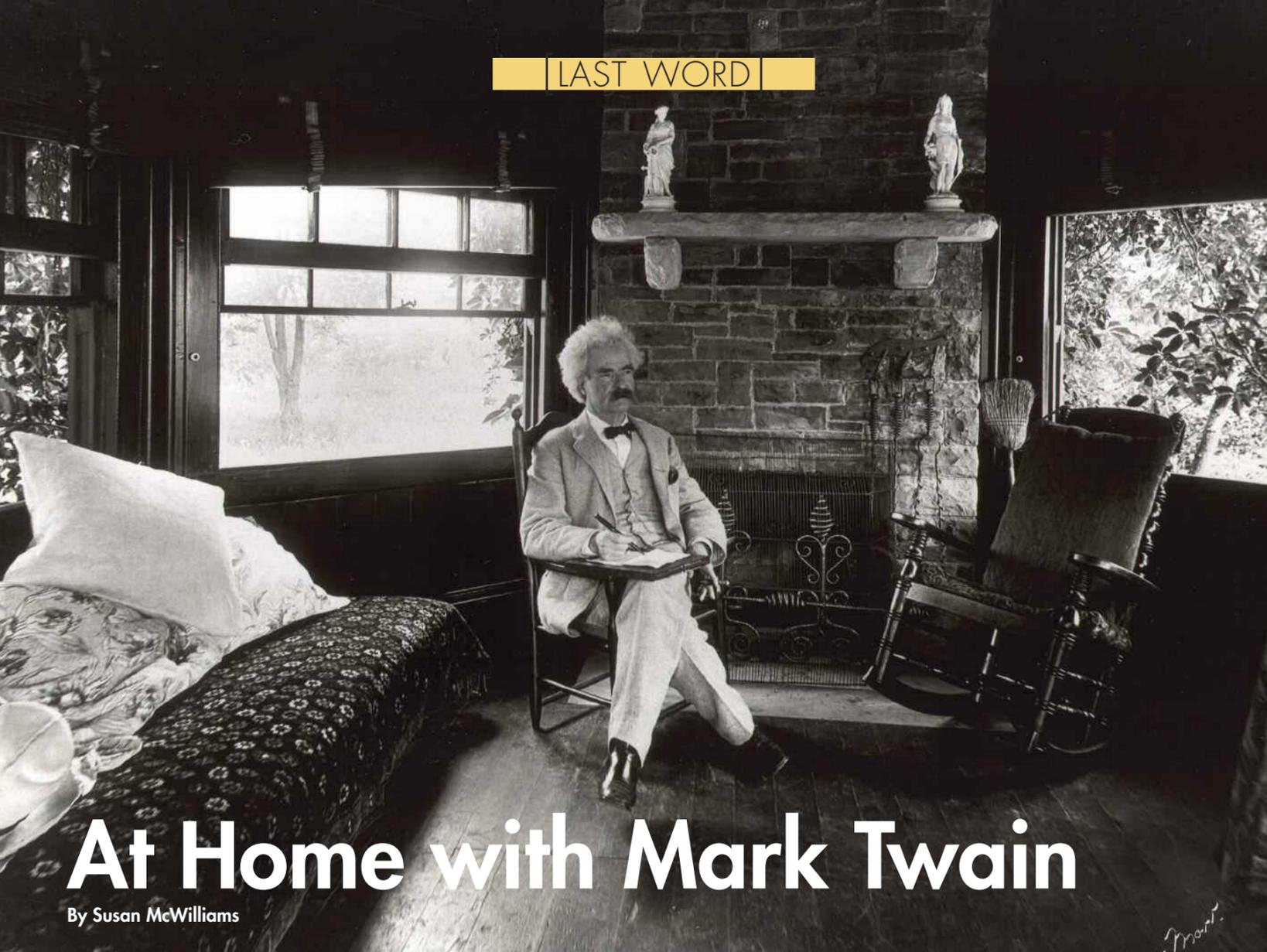
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At Home with Mark Twain

By Susan McWilliams



At left: Twain at Quarry Farm; at right, McWilliams in her office with her father's manuscript and files.

I HAVE A PICTURE of myself as a child, sitting on the very porch where, 30 years later, I am writing these words. Quarry Farm hasn't changed much since my last visit, although most of my life has.

As a kid, I spent a couple of summers at Mark Twain's Quarry Farm—the house in Elmira, New York, where Twain lived and wrote books like *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and *Tom Sawyer*—because my father, Wilson Carey McWilliams, was a great teacher of Twain's work and a scholar-in-residence here. During the days, my sister and I romped around the grounds while Dad held seminars.

At night, just as Twain had done for his own daughters, Dad made up stories for us

based on the pictures on the fireplace tiles in the parlor. And he read us Twain, of course: the stories and the novels and the bull's-eye critique of James Fenimore Cooper that always made me laugh, even though I'd never read anything by James Fenimore Cooper.

My father dropped dead 12 years ago, on a sunny Tuesday morning, leaving behind notes on the manuscript about Mark Twain that he'd been working on for decades. His friends and colleagues mourned the lost book, but of course the manuscript was not the main thing. The more pressing concern was just getting through the day; Dad, a big-hearted, big-hugging, big-thinking man, left an absence that felt even bigger than his presence. Grief had me by the throat.

I got my dream job, teaching at Pomona College, a few months later.

I tell my students, sometimes, that grown-ups are not lying to you when they talk about how fast life goes. You wake up and really do wonder where it all went—which is why one of the great luxuries afforded Pomona students is the freedom to sit down on Marston Quad or in a dorm room and to talk with friends, or to think for yourself, about where you want to be and, more importantly, with whom you want to be there. Your job isn't just to learn a subject. It's to learn to live a good life.

And so it is years later, and I have my own children now, and they are almost the age that I was when we spent that first summer at Quarry Farm. And they love stories that are

the stuff of Twain: kids getting in trouble, kids being sneaky, kids in danger, knights, tricks, grownups who do stupid things, those rare acts of true bravery and courage that make you believe human beings might be worth something, after all.

Perhaps all that storytelling has something to do with why I finally picked up those old manuscript notes—and why this summer, I'm the professor working at Mark Twain's house, as a fellow of the Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies, trying to finish a book that my father was writing before I was born.

One of Twain's great themes was that the American myth of individual autonomy and self-creation is a lie—a lie that enabled the great moral evil of slavery, for one thing, but

that also impoverishes our lives in subtler ways. Huck Finn has a lot of adventures, but other Americans are always trying to get one over on him, and Huck feels “awful lonesome” most of the time.

The truth about us humans, Twain taught, was that we are social and political creatures who are inextricably bound to other people. Love calls us and can ennoble us, and Twain was “confident,” my father wrote, “that the comradeship of honorable love is the clearest human instance of what is divinely right.”

Twain knew that we have to admit our connection and indebtedness to others if we are ever to know ourselves. And we have to be willing to dedicate ourselves to others, and to do so out of love, if we are ever to be

truly free, to smile in the face of our certain deaths.

My father wrote this: “Love, particularly when it is linked to the rearing of children, can nurture and sustain the spirit, even in a gilded age, just as a great storyteller can help us to hear the music in our souls.”

And so it is that here I am, on this front porch looking out at the hills of upstate New York, at home again with my father, and at home again with Mark Twain, with the abiding refrain in my ears.

Susan McWilliams is associate professor of politics and chair of the Politics Program at Pomona College. The author of *Traveling Back: Toward a Global Political Theory*, she has two books in the publishing pipeline ahead of the Twain book.



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