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COLLEGE MAGAZINE

Pomona



Spring 2016

FACE TO FACE

*Pomona has always
been a place where
relationships of every
description are built,
many of them to
last a lifetime.*

FACE TO FACE:

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

PHOTOS BY CARRIE ROSEMA

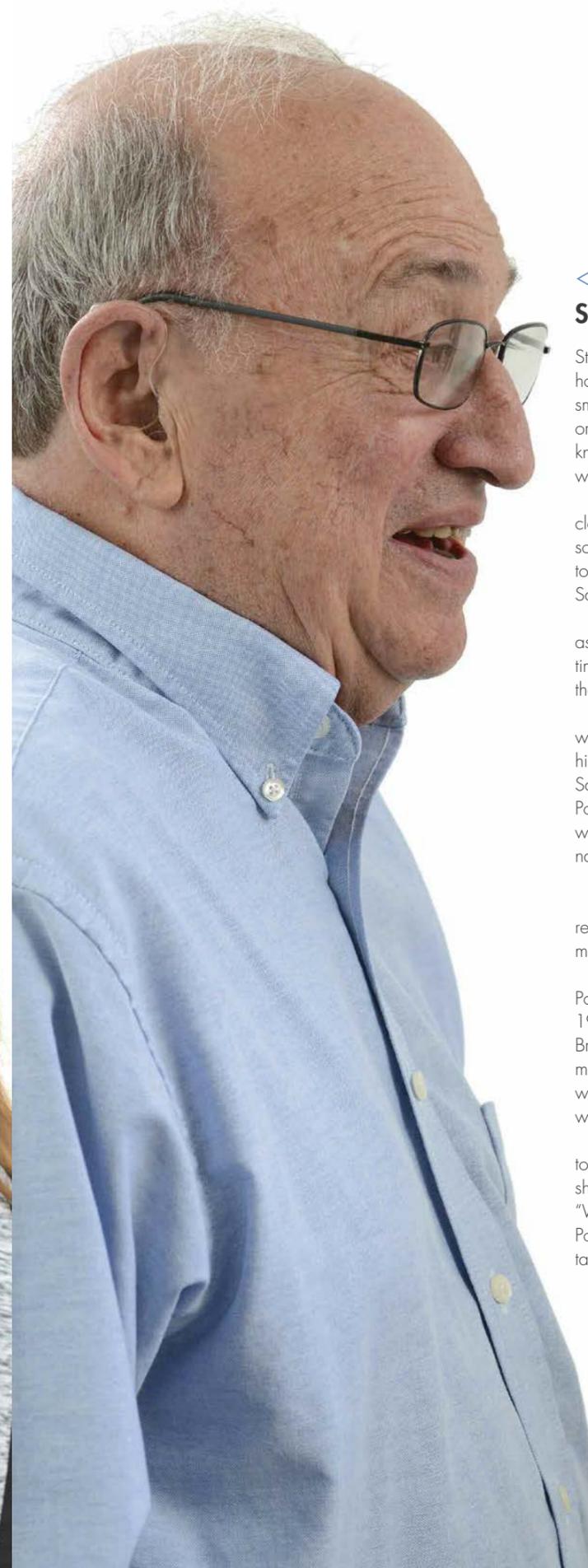
◀ Jaureese Gaines '16 and Maxine Solange Garcia '16 ▶

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

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

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

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



◀ Stephen Glass '57 and Sandra Dunkin Glass '57 ▶

Steve and Sandy Glass don't recall how they met. "Pomona was much smaller when we were there—like 700 or 800 students—and everybody knew everybody," Sandy says. "So it wasn't a question of meeting."

However, they do remember very clearly their first two dates, during their sophomore year. "I asked him out first, to the Associated Women's Formal," Sandy says with a laugh.

"That's right," Steve agrees. "She asked me out and we had a very nice time. Then I asked her out—took her to the Academy Awards."

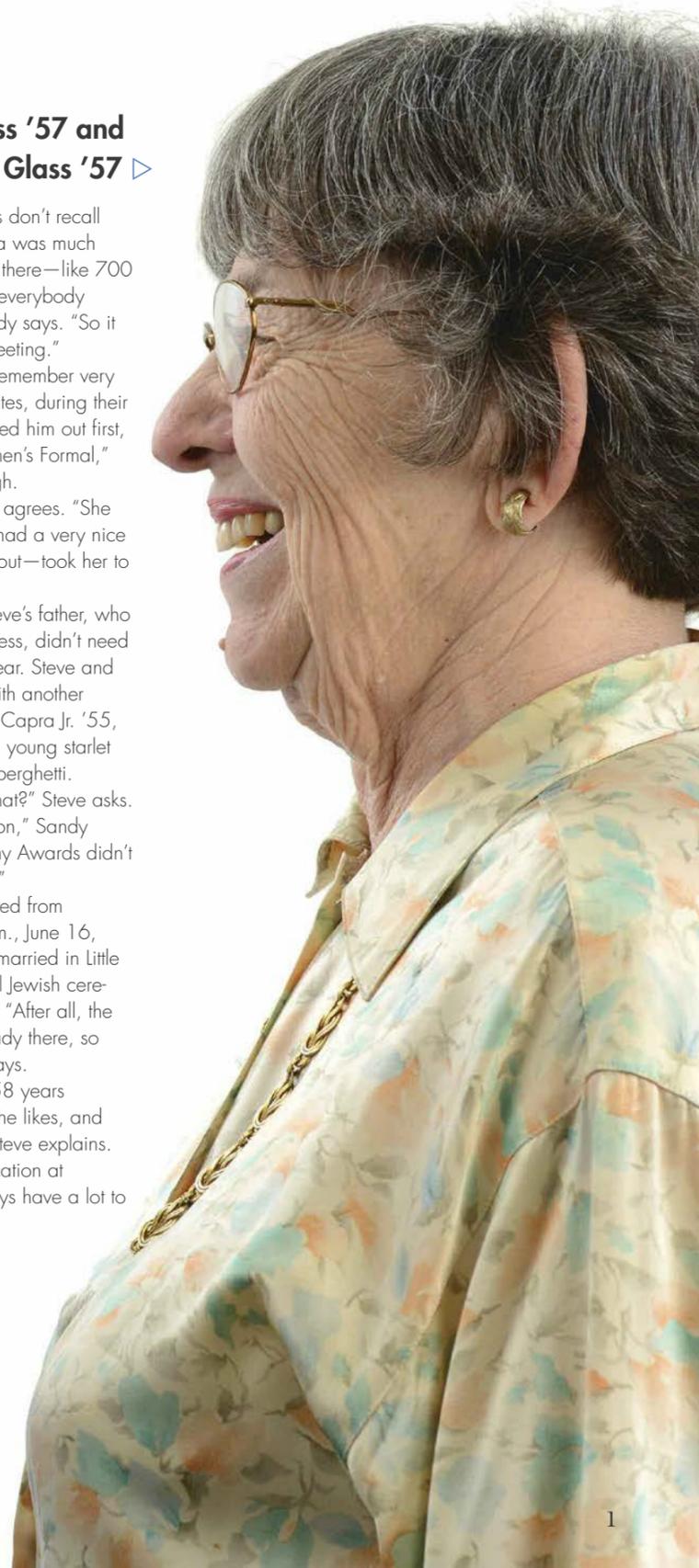
As it happened, Steve's father, who was in the movie business, didn't need his Oscar tickets that year. Steve and Sandy double-dated with another Pomona student, Frank Capra Jr. '55, who was then dating a young starlet named Anna Maria Alberghetti.

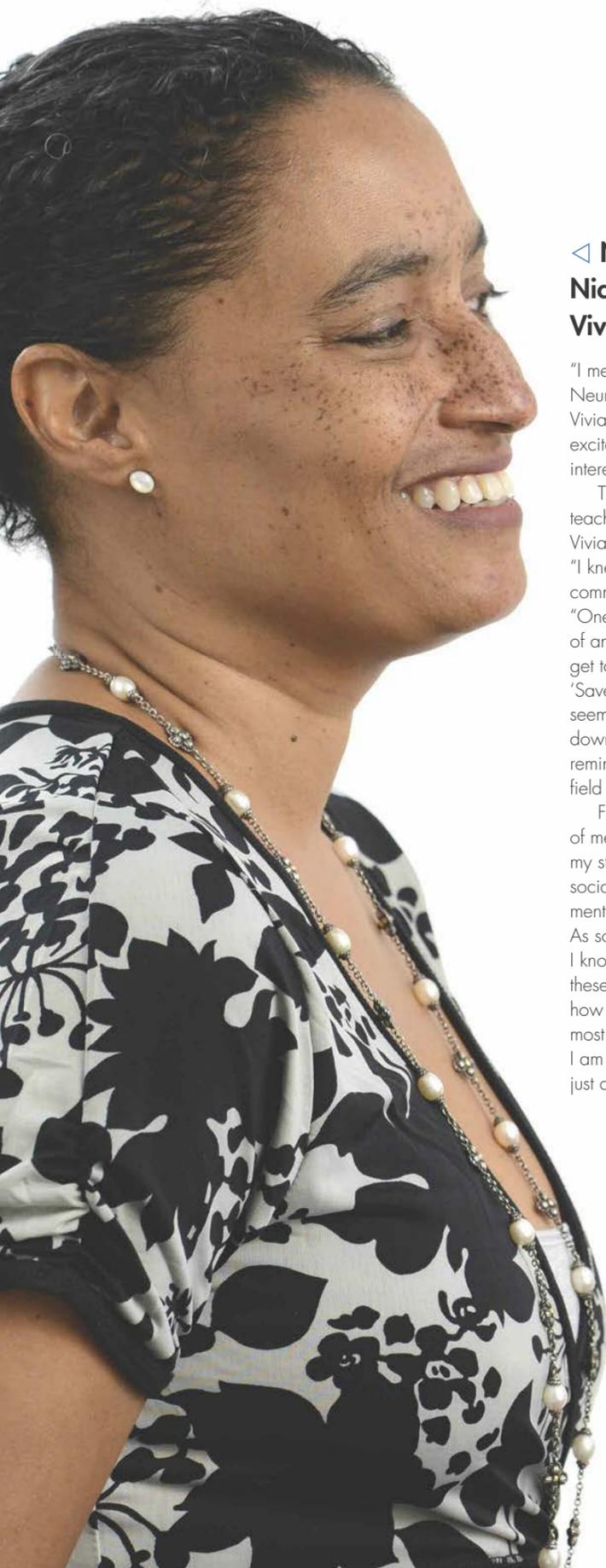
"Is that classy or what?" Steve asks.

"I came from Oregon," Sandy retorts, "so the Academy Awards didn't mean that much to me."

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

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



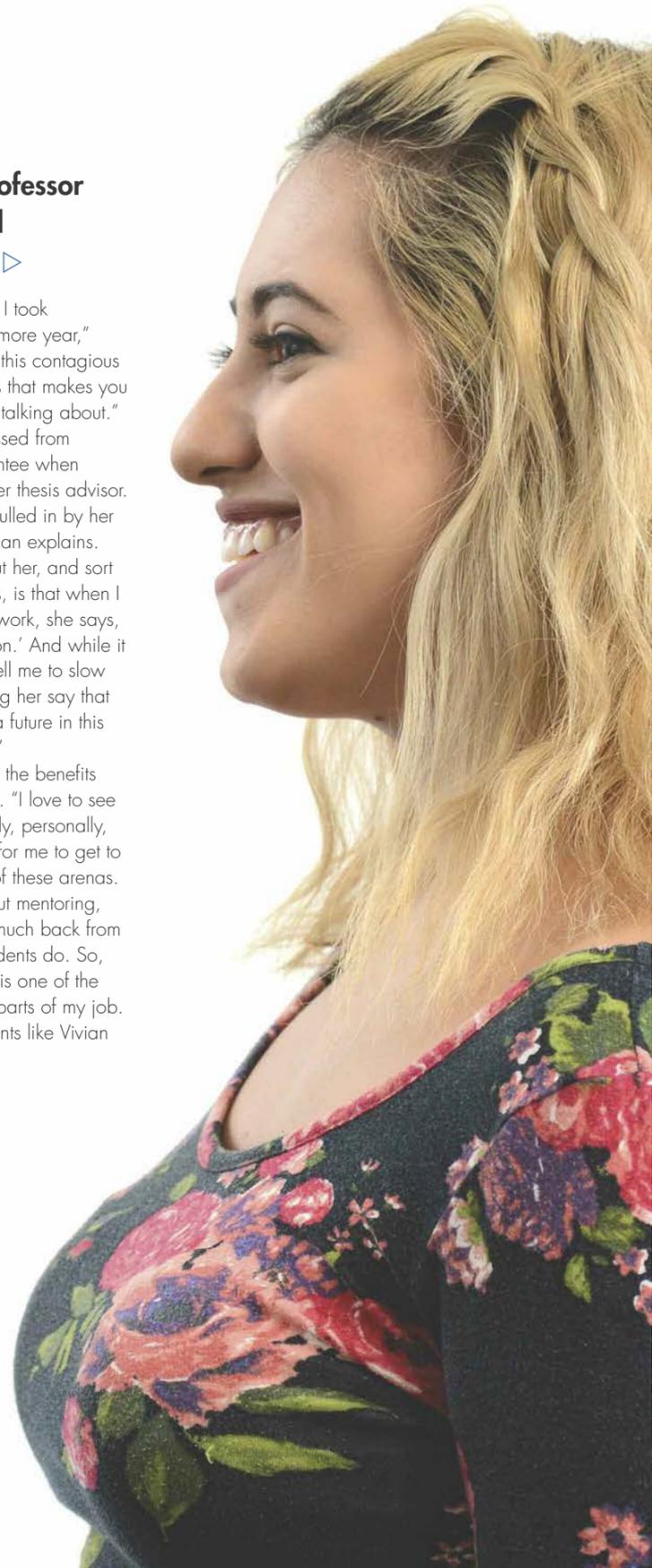


◀ **Neuroscience Professor
Nicole Weekes and
Vivian Carrillo '16** ▶

"I met Nicole Weekes when I took Neuropsychology my sophomore year," Vivian remembers. "She has this contagious excitement when she lectures that makes you interested in whatever she is talking about."

Their relationship progressed from teacher-student to mentor-mentee when Vivian asked Nicole to be her thesis advisor. "I knew her work and was pulled in by her commitment to students," Vivian explains. "One of the best things about her, and sort of an inside joke between us, is that when I get too ambitious about my work, she says, 'Save that for your dissertation.' And while it seems like a joking way to tell me to slow down, it's reassuring. Hearing her say that reminds me that I can have a future in this field and that I am capable."

For her part, Nicole says the benefits of mentoring flow both ways. "I love to see my students grow intellectually, personally, socially. It is such an honor for me to get to mentor them in any and all of these arenas. As so many people say about mentoring, I know that I get at least as much back from these relationships as my students do. So, how could I ever say no? It is one of the most important and fulfilling parts of my job. I am honored to watch students like Vivian just continue to rise."

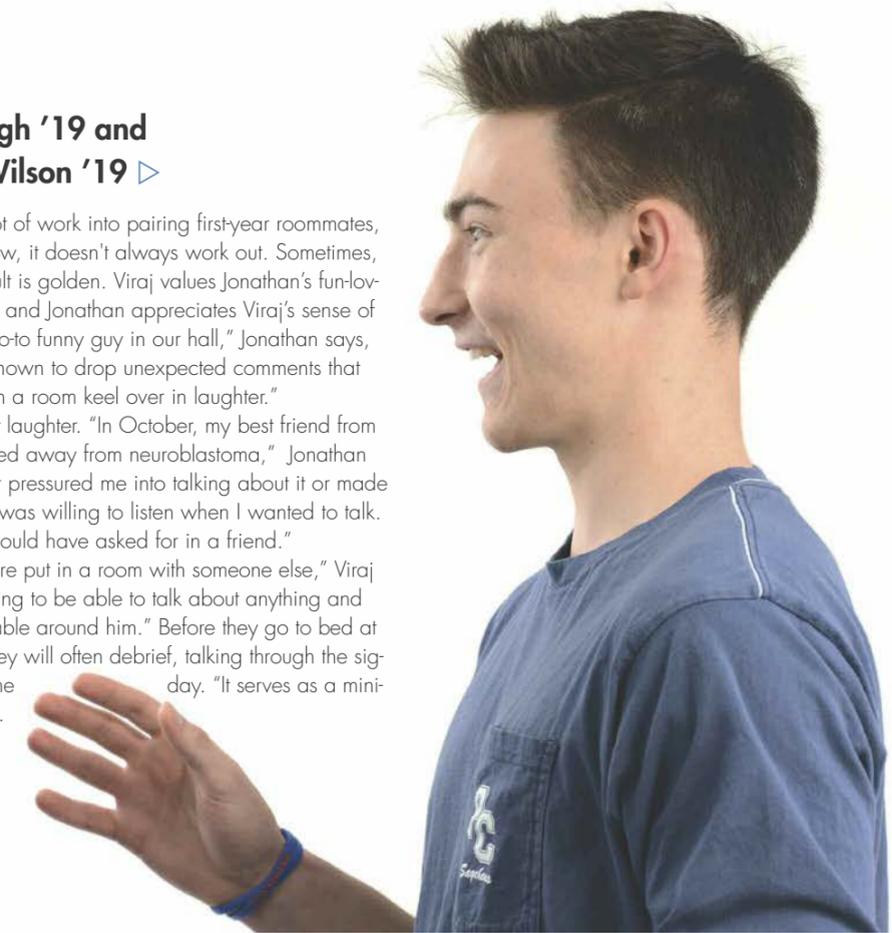


◀ **Viraj Singh '19 and
Jonathan Wilson '19** ▶

Pomona puts a lot of work into pairing first-year roommates, but as we all know, it doesn't always work out. Sometimes, however, the result is golden. Viraj values Jonathan's fun-loving spontaneity, and Jonathan appreciates Viraj's sense of humor. "He's a go-to funny guy in our hall," Jonathan says, "and has been known to drop unexpected comments that make everyone in a room keel over in laughter."

But it's not just laughter. "In October, my best friend from high school passed away from neuroblastoma," Jonathan says. "Viraj never pressured me into talking about it or made it about him, but was willing to listen when I wanted to talk. That's the best I could have asked for in a friend."

"When you are put in a room with someone else," Viraj says, "it's rewarding to be able to talk about anything and truly feel comfortable around him." Before they go to bed at night, he says, they will often debrief, talking through the significant parts of the day. "It serves as a mini-therapy," he says.

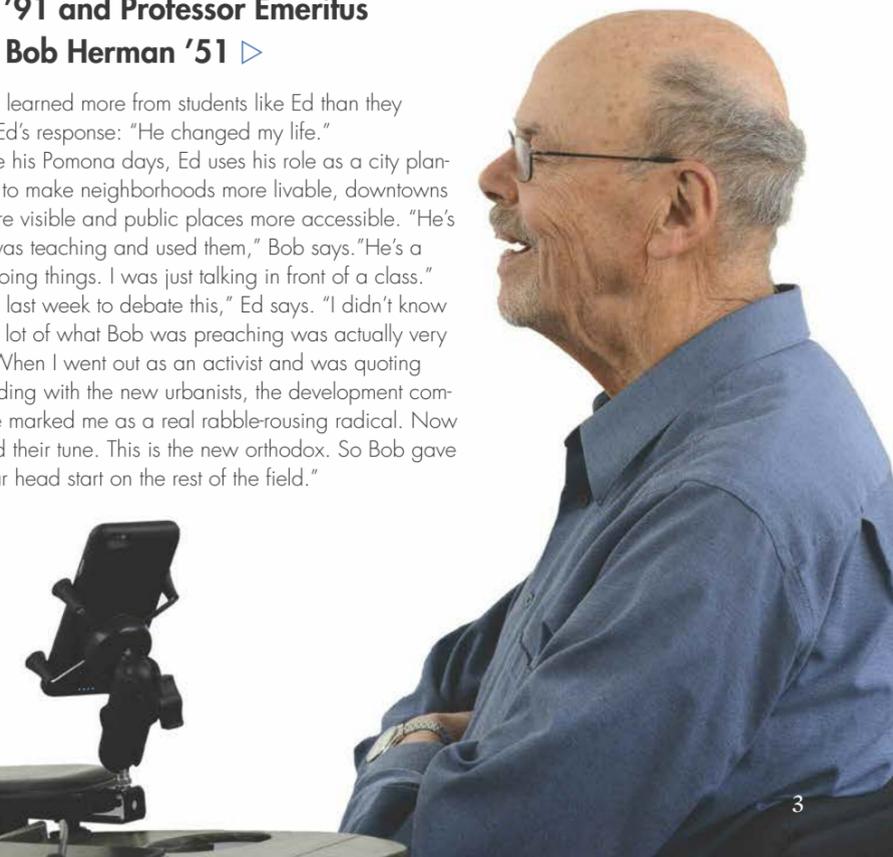


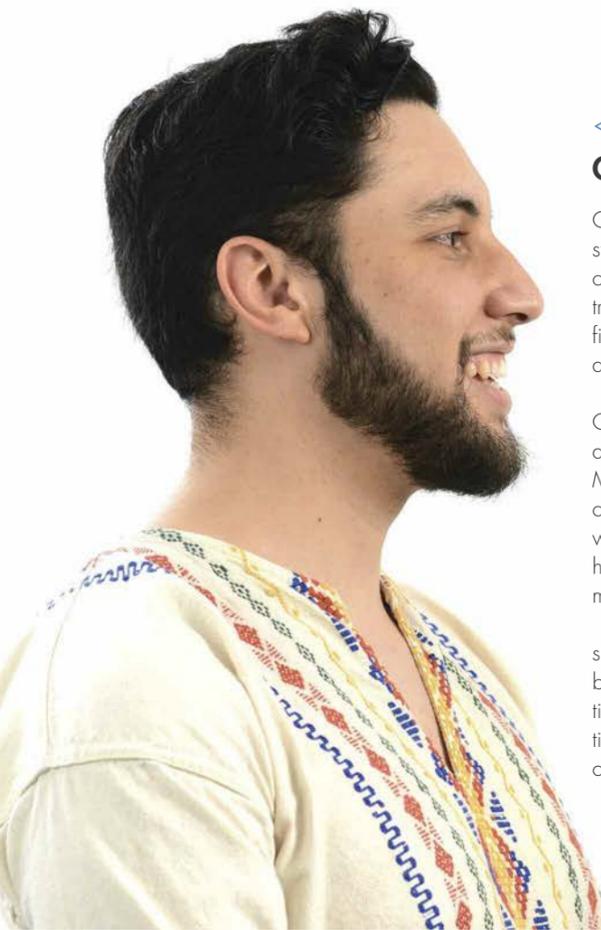
◀ **Ed Tessier '91 and Professor Emeritus
of Sociology Bob Herman '51** ▶

Bob likes to say he learned more from students like Ed than they learned from him. Ed's response: "He changed my life."

An activist since his Pomona days, Ed uses his role as a city planner and developer to make neighborhoods more livable, downtowns livelier, the arts more visible and public places more accessible. "He's taken the things I was teaching and used them," Bob says. "He's a practitioner. He's doing things. I was just talking in front of a class."

"We had lunch last week to debate this," Ed says. "I didn't know it at the time, but a lot of what Bob was preaching was actually very edgy in the field. When I went out as an activist and was quoting Jane Jacobs and siding with the new urbanists, the development community around here marked me as a real rabble-rousing radical. Now they've all changed their tune. This is the new orthodox. So Bob gave me a good 25-year head start on the rest of the field."



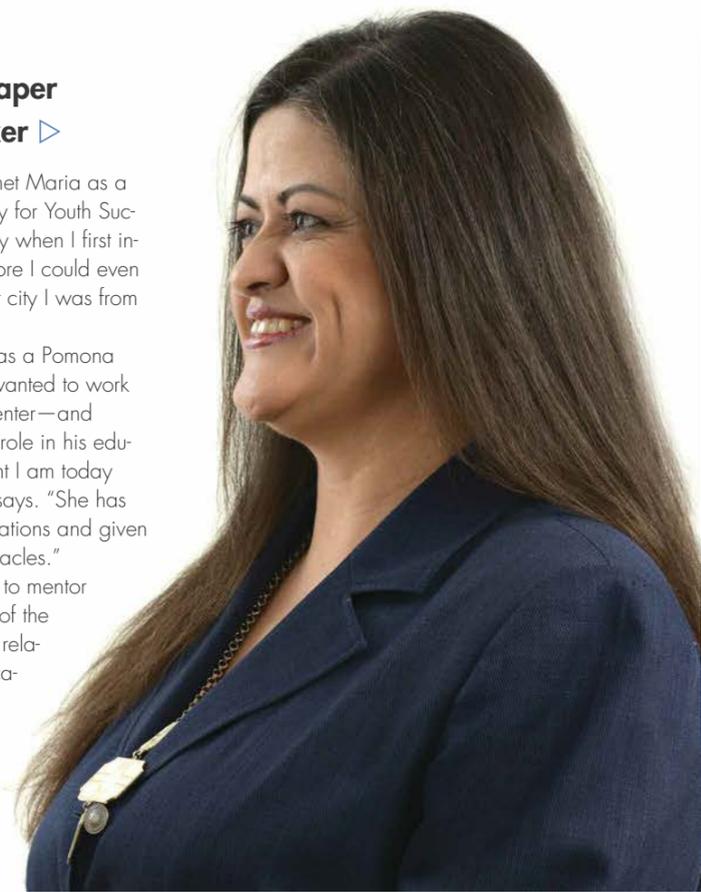


◁ Cesar Meza '16 and Draper Center Director Maria Tucker ▷

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

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

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

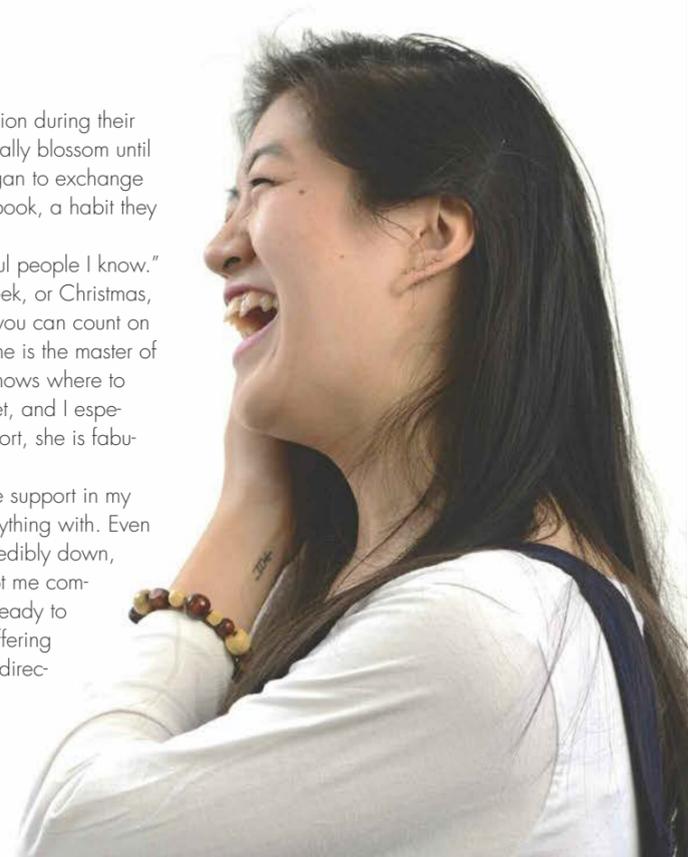


◁ Jamila Espinosa '16 and Lucia Ruan '16 ▷

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

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

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



◁ Richard Bookwalter '82 and Galen Leung '82 ▷

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

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

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

"I think our relationship has lasted over 34 years because we are able to communicate with each other," Galen says. "I love Richard because he's the best—intelligent, feeling and concerned about the world, himself and others. His perspective and empathy help me relax and enjoy the moment and the world around me."





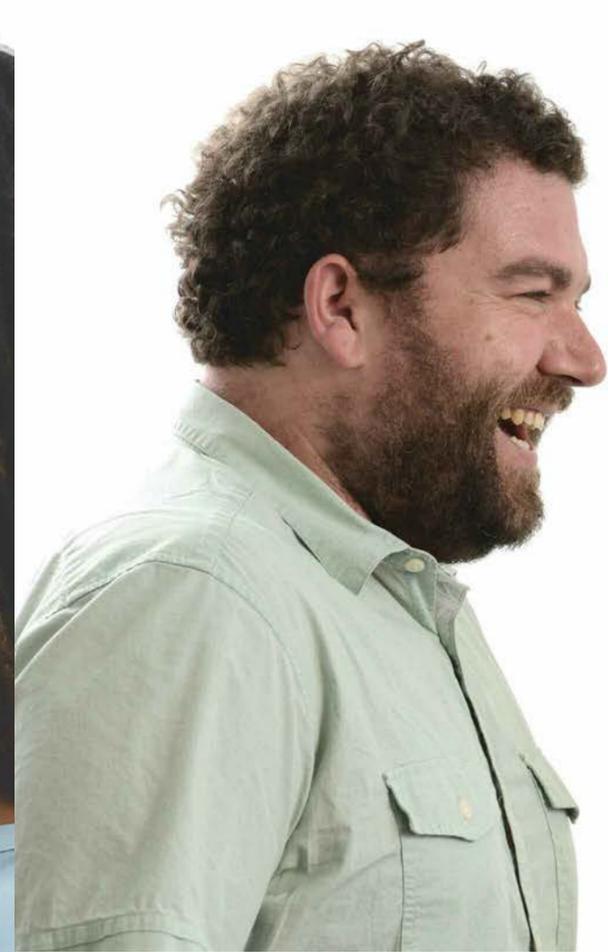
◀ **Shadiah Sigala '06 and Kaneisha Grayson '06** ▶

Shadiah and Kaneisha now live almost 2,000 miles apart, but at heart, they're always closer. "Kaneisha is one of my life partners," Shadiah says. "There are a handful of those people in my life—including my husband, mom and daughter—and Kaneisha makes it on the short list."

The two met during a first-year seminar class, but it wasn't until the following semester that they became close. During a trip to Washington, D.C., Kaneisha came up to Shadiah and said, with her usual directness, "You're going to be my friend."

"I thought, 'Who is this bold, confident woman?'" Shadiah remembers. They soon discovered that they were much alike, though Shadiah thought of Kaneisha as "a more advanced version of me." She adds: "Truthfully, she showed me all that I was capable of doing, simply by being herself."

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



◀ **Dan Stobel '00 and Biology Professor Daniel Martínez** ▶

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

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



◀ **Michelle Chan '17 and Sophia Sun '18** ▶

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

"We're both perpetually awestruck with gratitude in our landing at Pomona," Michelle says. "and we feed off each other's energy in our passion for more. Sophia has taught me how to embrace life head-on and not waste a single opportunity to learn and reflect."



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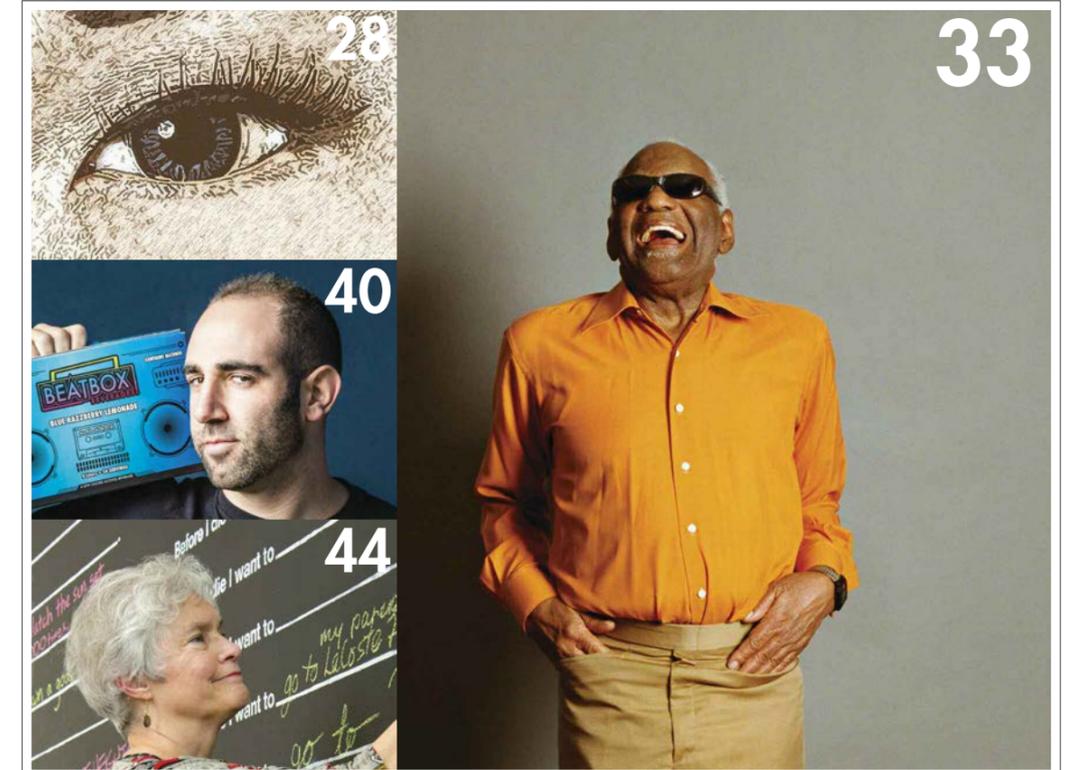
Jaureese Gaines '16 and Maxine Solange Garcia '16 (photo by Carrie Rosema)

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[FACE TO FACE]



FEATURES

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How do we interpret faces? How do we tell young from old, male from female? How do our brains gauge beauty? Neuroscientist Richard Russell '97 is breaking the code. BY JULIE SCHARPER

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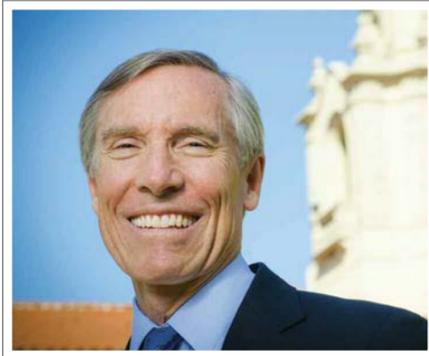
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How do you face down a billionaire for a cool million on nationwide TV? Ask Beatbox Beverages co-founder Justin Fenchel '06. BY ADAM CONNER-SIMONS '08

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For end-of-life crusader Peggy Arnold '65 thinking about death is just another way of thinking about life. BY MARK WOOD



President Oxtoby Plans to Step Down in 2017

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

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

Board Chair Sam Glick '04 said the College will make plans to celebrate President Oxtoby's many contributions to the College at an appropriate time. Meanwhile, he said, the Board will begin the task of choosing the 10th president of Pomona College. "Selecting a new leader is the highest duty a governing body has—a duty that my colleagues on the Board and I intend to carry out with humility and careful deliberation," Glick said.



Student Ani Alyce Schug '17 (center) works with housekeeping staff members Rosario Osorio and Beatriz Tovar on an English lesson.

Photo by Jeff Hing

Language & Relationships

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

Employees gain language skills and students learn teaching skills, but at the core of the program are the relationships developed between students and the employees who often work in the background in housekeeping, dining services and grounds and are integral in keeping the College running smoothly.

Math major Luis Antonio Espino '18, a student coordinator for the program, joined for very personal reasons. "As a first-generation immigrant, I grew up being a translator

for my parents," he says. "I dealt with the troubles of having to go to the doctor and seeing my parents struggle through that. That was one of the reasons I was interested in the doing the ESL program."

Espino says that while in college, students are encouraged to develop strong ties with faculty, but he sees connecting with staff members as equally important. "One of the goals is to bridge that gap and have students recognize everyone's equal worth," he says.

Ani Alyce Schug '17, a politics major who studies Arabic, Spanish and Swahili and grew up speaking Armenian, is in her second year as a student coordinator for the program, which is run by the Draper Center for

Community Partnerships.

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

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

An Observer in Paris

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

In halls she describes as "the size of jet hangers," she encountered languages and dress from around the globe and attended dozens of lectures and panels and a range of side events. "There were thousands upon thousands of people, from scientists and researchers to activists, media and government representatives," she says.

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

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



I Speak Karaoke

Song requests for a recent Karaoke Klub Nite included: Vicente Fernandez's "El Rey" in Spanish, Aamir Khan's "Mitwa" in Hindi, Les Cowboys Fringants' "En Berne" in Canadian French, and a few Demi Lovato and Celine Dion songs thrown in for good measure.

The once-per-semester celebration brings together international and domestic students to belt out songs in Hindi, Spanish, French, English and other languages.

"International students can sing the songs they really love from back home without feeling guilty about it," says ISMP Head Mentor Chihiro Tamefusa '16, who says the discomfort comes from singing in another language that others might not understand. But at karaoke night, she says, everyone can sing whatever song they want. "International students can feel comfortable singing, and for non-international students who are learning a language, they can practice and learn more," she adds.

Hosted by the International Student Mentoring Program (ISMP) and Oldenborg Center for Modern Languages, the event is open to all students from The Claremont Colleges.

"It is an incredibly fun environment with international and American students singing songs they don't know in languages they don't speak," says Lazaros Chalkias '16, an ISMP member.



Treasured Map

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

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

"Because of the bicentennial, we felt it was the right time to renovate the map," says Geology Professor and Chair of the

Geology Department Jade Star Lackey. "It's a great piece of history that we think all geology majors should be able to come and see."

Because of the map's size (more than two and a half meters wide), the restorers had to set up an aluminum platform over the top of the map to work from. Even so, the conservation process took nearly two months, including dry cleaning front and back, removal of a damaged cloth backing, wet cleaning, lining with Japanese paper and wheat starch paste, and mending tears.

The result is impressive to behold, not just for the brilliant and colorful detail in drawing and watercolor, but also for the rich history and monumental shift it caused in the field of geology.

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



Professors Robert Gaines and Jade Star Lackey examine the restored map.



Buonasera, Glee Club

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

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

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

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

— Actor, author and activist Michael J. Fox in conversation with Neuroscience Professor Nicole Weekes at Bridges Auditorium, Feb. 12, 2016



Tend Your Garden

Spring is here, and the Organic Farm is bustling, as Pomona students welcome the season by following Voltaire's advice to "tend your garden." According to Farm Manager Scott Fleeman, March harvests have already included kale, col-

lards, broccoli, Swiss chard, radishes, snap peas, fava beans, bunching onions and tangerines, as well as the first artichokes. Here's a partial harvest schedule for the rest of the spring:

APRIL						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

MAY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

ORGANIC

ARUGULA	COLLARDS
BEANS	GREEN ONIONS
BOK CHOY	KALE
BROCCOLI	RADISHES
CHARD	TURNIPS

ORGANIC

ARUGULA	GREEN ONIONS
BEANS	KALE
BOK CHOY	LOGUATS
BROCCOLI	MULBERRIES
CHARD	RADISHES
COLLARDS	TURNIPS

ORGANIC

SUMMER SQUASH:
WEEKLY FROM EARLY MAY

FIRST TOMATOES: LATE JUNE

10-Minute Theatre

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

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



Photo by Michelle Chan '17

The Purloined Safe

It sits like an abandoned tank in a basement hallway of Sumner Hall, just outside the entrance to the College Archives—an antique steel safe on rusty wheels, its surface scarred by decades of scratches and random drips of paint. On the front, below the combination lock and an oddly pastoral painted tableau, are the words "From John H.F. Peck Safe Dealer, Los Angeles."

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

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

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

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

ITEM: Antique safe

DATE: Late 1800s or early 1900s

DESCRIPTION: Steel combination safe, 41.25" H x 27.75" W x 28.25" D

ORIGIN: John H.F. Peck Safe Dealer, Los Angeles

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



GOOGLE'S **LASZLO BOCK** '93 IS ON A CRUSADE TO TRANSFORM THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE

The Freedom to Work

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

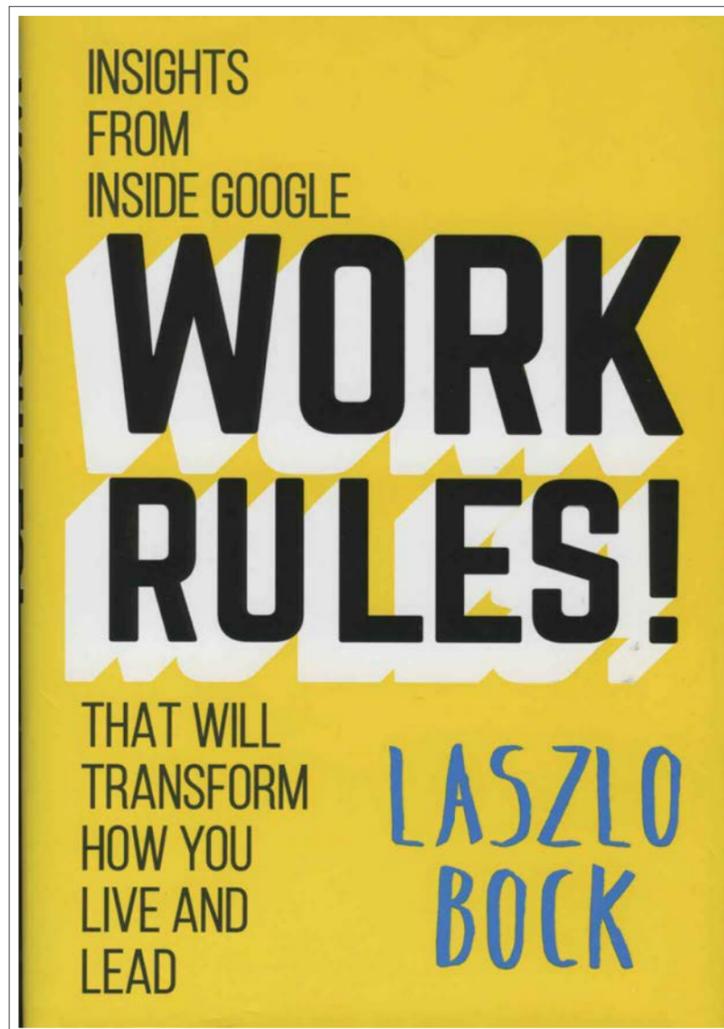
BY LASZLO BOCK '93
TWELVE, HACHETTE BOOK GROUP, 2015
416 PAGES | \$30

The reviews for Work Rules! by Google's Vice President for People Operations Laszlo Bock '93 have been, to say the least, laudatory. Forbes.com called it "a masterpiece." Tom Gardner, founder and CEO of Motley Fool, called it "the finest book on organizational culture that I have ever read." So this spring, PCM Editor Mark Wood sat down with Bock (long distance) to talk about how the book came about.

PCM: Tell me how you came to write *Work Rules!* Is it something you've been thinking about for a long time?

Bock: Yes, it has been, actually. Not about writing a book, but I've been thinking for a long time about how work really kind of sucks for too many people. Work is just not fun. I've got a great job. I love what I do. And even I have lousy days. But if I think about jobs I've had in the past, the jobs my friends and classmates have, work just sucks way more than it should.

And I realized it actually doesn't have to. There's actually a lot of things we've done and studied at Google, as well as



great things other companies have done, about how to make work better, have a better, more meaningful, more fulfilling, more impactful, more productive experience, without spending money. I got it in my head to tell that story about how you can do that.

PCM: I was struck by how optimistic you are about people. Is that something you've always felt?

Bock: I've always felt you could learn something from everyone around you. I remember a philosophy class in high school that was just a complete random mix of people from all kinds of different backgrounds—kids who were stoners, kids who were into punk rock, kids who were never, ever going to go to college and a very few who had a background like mine, with two parents with master's degrees. By the end of it, I absolutely learned something from every single kid in that class. I realized you can learn from the people all around you. Whatever they look like on the outside, whatever baggage they bring, what-

ever damage they have or trauma they've been through, there's just a core of goodness in there. There's something they can teach you if you just take the time to open your ears and listen.

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

PCM: Reviewers have called *Work Rules!* "unconventional," "innovative," "surprising." What would you say is the most revolutionary idea in the book?

Bock: I think the biggest thing is, "Don't trust your instincts," or as I write, "Don't trust your gut." We have all kinds of biases. Our instincts and intuition feel good. The problem is we're wrong most of the time.

For example, it feels good when we interview somebody and find out that they like the same teams or they went to the same school. Turns out, those are terrible reasons to hire somebody.

It feels good when you're hungry to reach in the fridge and grab whatever is at eye level and convenient. The problem with that is: what's at eye level and convenient tends to be sugary snacks and sugary drinks which are actually bad for you.

It feels good to be able to tell everybody we pay everyone fairly because everyone makes the same money. The reality is your best people generate way more value than your average people and you're actually disadvantaging them if you pay them all the same or within 10 percent or 20 percent. So our instincts on how to manage people are just wrong.

PCM: I've always thought the skills you need to excel in a standard interview usually aren't the skills you need to do a good job.

Bock: You're absolutely right. Most people that are doing interviews don't know how to interview. I've been back to Pomona a few times, to talk to students about how to write a resume, how to interview, questions you can anticipate. "Tell me about yourself. What's your greatest strength, greatest weakness?" None of those common interview



Photo by Robert Durell

questions tell you anything about whether the person is going to be good in the job.

The only questions that do are questions that actually say, "Give me an example of work you did that is exactly like the work you're going to do." They're called "structured behavioral interview questions." Everything else is kind of a waste of time.

PCM: At one point in the book, you say, "We want owners not employees." What do you mean by that?

Bock: Ideally, here's what it boils down to. If there's garbage on the floor or a scrap of paper left in a conference room, you want people who are going to pick it up and throw it away. You want people who think this is their company or team or department. The reason is those people are always going to do the right thing rather than just doing what's in their short-term interests. As a result, you end up better serving your customers, your shareholders, and your users.

PCM: There are a lot of little maxims in this book, and one of my favorites is, "If you're

comfortable with the amount of freedom you've given your employees, you haven't gone far enough." Tell me about that.

Bock: The secret to growing and developing is you just keep giving people more freedom. As long as you give them more, they get excited, they feel challenged, they grow and do great work. But our impulse is to titrate that out very slowly when we think they're ready for it rather than saying, "You know, this is an amazing person. I don't know what's going to happen and it may blow up, but I'm going to make a bet on that person." That's uncomfortable and scary, because as a manager, you're on the hook for that person's results. But you have to remember, too, that you're also an employee, and what you want more than anything else is for your own manager to get out of your way and give you a bunch of freedom. So remember that and get uncomfortable.

PCM: How does that high-freedom workplace work in real life? Do you have to be able to tolerate a little bit of anarchy?

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

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

PCM: You say one of the things you're looking for in hiring is "emergent leadership." What do you mean by that and how do you find it?

Bock: The conventional model of leadership is somebody who stands at the bow of the ship and says, "Onward. We're going in this direction." The problem is that one >

person isn't going to have the best judgment in the world in every situation, and they may be sending you in the wrong direction. If you want to retain your best people and keep them motivated, you actually have to let them all lead in some different way.

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

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

The way we screen for that, quite frankly, is pretty boring. We structured these interview questions where we basically said, "Give me an example of a time you led a team," or "give me an example of when your leadership led to solving a problem." And the signifiers that everyone knows about are things like: people who say "we" a lot, people who describe taking power and letting go of it, people who describe a lot of collaboration. Those people tend to do better in the interview process.

PCM: How do you answer critics who say this culture of empowerment is a luxury item that's particular to Google?

Bock: That's probably the most common question I get. The answer is, "It's not at all unique to Google." One of the cool things about writing a book is that you get to look for lots of data that either support or deny your argument. I was pleasantly surprised to

"IF YOU JUST GET OFF OUR BACKS AND GIVE US SOME FREEDOM, WE'LL DO OUR JOBS AND WE'LL DO GREAT WORK. AND THAT'S TRUE IN 99.9 PERCENT OF THE CASES."

see how many companies and organizations in very different circumstances choose to be high-freedom environments, and they don't have to spend a lot of money. I talk about Wegmans, which is a Northeast grocery chain, complete opposite of Google. Family-led firm. Most people have a high school education at best. It's regional. Their margins are 1 percent or 2 percent. But their values in terms of how they treat their people, the freedom they give their people, is a mirror image of what we do at Google.

There was a study done of two different Nike plants in Mexico, making tee shirts. One was very conventionally run. In the other, basically, the workers were told, "You all figure it out." They doubled productivity when the workers were told, "You figure it out."

Going back to your first question, the conventional approach is, "Well, I'm the boss, I know best. I'm going to tell people what to do. And by the way, my butt's on the line, so I'm going to watch you very closely and make sure you deliver." The reality is all of us hate to be managed like that.

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

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

Bock: It's been surprising, and humbling, and flattering, and exciting, and a little embarrassing. The book came out last April. It's out now in 11 languages. There's another 10 to be published this year. Mainland Chinese just came out this last week, but World Arabic, for example, is coming out, I think, next month. So the appetite for it has been surprising. It's kind of humbling and delightful. The critical reception was a huge relief, because I was terrified people were going to say, "This doesn't make any sense. The math is wrong. The science doesn't hold up." Thanks to the analytics folks here, we dodged that bullet.

But the best thing is the emails and letters I get from people who have read it. I bump into people who say, "Hey, I got my job because I read your chapter on how to hire." I got an email from a Pomona alum who's got a law firm in Claremont. He said, "Hey, I read the book and I tried instituting spot bonuses in my company where people can give anyone a bonus. It's been great. It's been really cool." So the direct feedback from people, saying, "I'm actually changing how I run my business, and people are happier," has been amazing, and kind of surprising and delightful.

PCM: Do you have another book in mind?

Bock: I don't know. Maybe. I think there's a really tough problem around how to find a job. I've been thinking about what would be the most helpful way to help people find jobs. This book was sort of from the corporate side—if I've got a business or a team, how do I select people and how do I manage them?

The flip side of that is: if I'm a new grad, or if I'm out of work, or if I'm underemployed, or if I'm somebody who stepped out of the workforce for 10 years to start a family, how do I get back in? I think that's a really hard question so I've been thinking about that. 

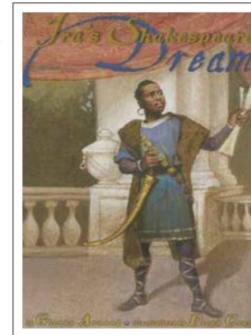
What's Stressing Your Face?

In this "doctor's guide to proactive aging and healing," dermatologist and cosmetic surgeon Dr. **Glynis Ablon '88** discusses a variety of stress-related conditions, from rosacea to hair loss, psoriasis to shingles, along with treatments ranging from psychotherapy to electrical stimulation. (Basic Health Publications, 2015; 184 pages; \$15.95)



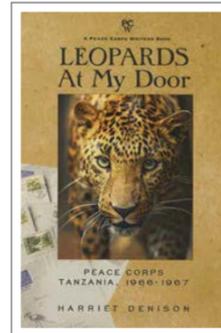
Ira's Shakespeare Dream

Glenda Armand '75 joins with illustrator Floyd Cooper to tell the true story of Ira Aldridge, an aspiring Black actor who defied convention and prejudice to become one of the most celebrated Shakespearean actors of the 19th century. (Lee and Low Books, 2015; 40 pages; \$18.95)



Leopards at My Door

Harriet Denison '65 recalls her adventurous years in the Peace Corps during the mid-1960s, teaching at the Bwiru Girls' Secondary School in Tanzania (where she had regular visits from leopards and an array of other wildlife), and later on, her work with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, India, treating people afflicted with leprosy. (Peace Corps Writers, 2014; 252 pages; \$15.00)



Nelson Mandela

In her second book for young readers, **Beatrice Gormley '64** offers a moving biography of South African civil rights activist, long-time political prisoner, author, Nobel Prize winner and eventually President Nelson Mandela, exploring the man behind the iconic smile—his struggles, his triumphs, and the sacrifices he had to make along the way. (Alladin, 2015; 256 pages; \$17.99)



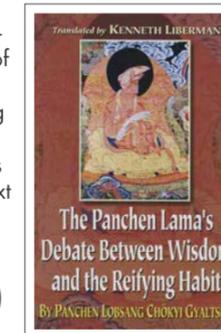
Our Dried Voices

This science fiction novel by **Greg Hickey '08** offers a vision of a far-distant future in which colonists on a planet called Pearl, where there is no longer any need for human labor, conflict or thought, suddenly find themselves struggling with the sabotage of the machines that their utopian lives depend upon. (Scribe Publishing Co, 2015; 234 pages; \$13.99)



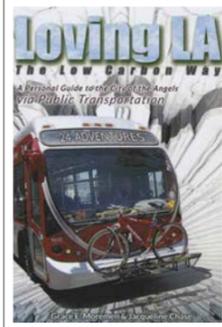
The Panchen Lama's Debate Between Wisdom and the Reifying Habit

Kenneth Liberman '70 spent a decade translating the principal work of the renowned first Panchen Lama, Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen (1570–1662), styled as a witty philosophical text employing the tension between *shes rabs* (wisdom) and *bdag 'dzin* (the reifying habit) as dramatic characters. (Motilal Banarsidass, India, 2014; 224 pages; \$35.00)



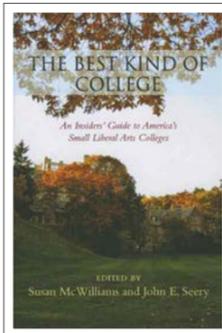
Loving LA the Low Carbon Way

Grace Moremen '52 and Jacqueline Chase offer a guide to the City of Angels by Metrolink, subway, light rail and bus, with 24 adventures that include such destinations as the Griffith Observatory, Watts Towers, the Observation Deck at City Hall, the Tar Pits and many other treasures hidden in plain sight. (Dream Boat Press, 2015; 230 pages; \$15.00)



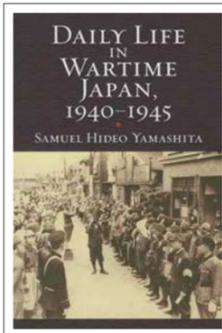
The Best Kind of College

Subtitled "An Insiders' Guide to America's Small Liberal Arts Colleges," this set of essays, edited by Pomona Professors **Susan McWilliams** and **John E. Seery**, makes the case for the continuing importance of small, residential liberal arts colleges as a key part of America's higher education smorgasbord. (SUNY Press, 2015; 314 pages; \$80.00)



Daily Life in Wartime Japan, 1940–1945

Pomona Professor **Samuel Yamashita's** new book puts a human face on wartime Japan, with an intimate picture of what life was like for ordinary Japanese during the war. Drawing upon diaries and letters written by servicemen, kamikaze pilots, evacuated children and many others, he lets us hear the rich mix of voices speaking during the course of the war. (University Press of Kansas, 2016; 256 pages; \$29.95)



BIOLOGY: Professor Daniel Martínez

Teeny Tiny Immortals

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

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

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

Working with James W. Vaupel of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR) in Rostock, Germany, Martínez duplicated earlier findings regarding hydra immortality, but on a much larger scale. That scale, Martínez says, is key to the study’s significance, along with the fact that the hydra showed constant fertility over time, defying expectations for most organisms.

The latest study took 2,256 hydra from two closely related species and conducted experiments in two laboratories (at Pomona College and the MPIDR) over an eight-year period, doubling the amount of time from Martínez’s previous experiments showing hydra living for four years.

“I do believe that an individual hydra can live forever under the right circumstances,” says Martínez. “The chances of that happening are low because hydra

are exposed to the normal dangers of the wild—predation, contamination, diseases. I started my original experiment wanting to prove that hydra could not have escaped aging. My own data has proven me wrong—twice.”

As one of the world’s leading scholars on hydra phylogeny and the evolution of aging, Martínez in 2010 received a \$1.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health for research on the mechanisms underlying lack of senescence in members of the genus Hydra. In 2013, he received a grant from The Immortality Project at UC Riverside to study the implications of hydra’s lifespan on medicine and increasing human longevity.

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

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

—Carla Guerrero



Photo by Jeff Hing



ECONOMICS: Professor Gary Smith

What’s in a Name?

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

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

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

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

His skepticism was heightened by the study’s conclusion that

there is no female-male effect for less severe storms. If the sexism theory is true, he says, it ought to be most apparent for storms of questionable danger.

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

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

Smith also found that the statistical analysis was flawed and that the authors estimated at least a dozen models, which he calls a sure sign of tortured data. Smith tried to replicate the original research by 1) looking at a wider set of data and 2) looking at a fresh set of data.

The original study, Smith notes, excluded tropical storms that did not meet the wind-speed threshold to be labeled hurricanes, as well as storms that stayed off the coast and did not make landfall in the U.S. It also excluded deaths that occurred outside the U.S. When a wider set of data is considered, the study’s conclusions don’t hold up, says Smith. >

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

The Fletcher Jones Professor of Economics at Pomona, Smith teaches finance and statistics and pursues research on topics such as housing prices and stock prices. Author of *Standard Deviations: Flawed Assumptions, Tortured Data, and Other Ways to Lie with Statistics*, Smith also has a penchant for looking more deeply at implausible research findings, such as the report (published in the *British Medical Journal*) claiming that Japanese and Chinese Americans are susceptible to heart attacks on the fourth day of every month because in Japanese, Mandarin and Cantonese, the pronunciation of the words for “four” and “death” are very similar.

Smith laments that, “Statistical analyses are indispensable for evaluating competing claims and making good decisions. Unfortunately, the credibility of useful analyses is undermined by studies that torture data.”

—Mark Kendall

collaboration with Grosfils and Shan da Silva from Oregon State University, shows that the same is true for the much larger systems that feed supereruptions.

The long-held idea is that the buoyancy in magma, which has lower density than the rock around it, begins to create pressure and push against the crust until it breaks, permitting magma to move upward and feed an eruption. These pressures, however, contribute in only minor ways relative to other factors. “Buoyancy doesn’t appear to be the trigger for such eruptions as others have argued,” says Grosfils, suggesting that previously identified factors, including external fracturing during roof collapse, remain the critical drivers for supervolcano eruptions. “We know that really big magma bodies accumulating at shallow levels in the crust can feed large explosive eruptions like the past climactic events at Yellowstone or Long Valley,” explains Grosfils. “All of us are interested in discovering what it takes for a system like that, just sitting there happily minding its own business, to begin erupting. What happens in the reservoir and surrounding crust that allows the materials to escape and feed a large, catastrophic volcanic eruption?”

“There are still many aspects to triggering supereruptions that we still do not understand. Our recent investigation helps to rule out one potential eruption triggering mechanism, buoyancy, but there is still a lot of additional work to be done to better constrain the mechanisms that trigger supervolcano eruption,” says Gregg.

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

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

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

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

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

—Carla Guerrero



GEOLOGY: Professor Eric Grosfils

Supervolcanoes

Almost 10 years ago, Geology Professor Eric Grosfils published a scientific paper on the stability and rupture of small magma reservoirs, challenging the current theory behind what triggers volcanic eruptions. One key finding was that magma buoyancy plays almost no role as a trigger. Grosfils’ research today continues to expand upon that work and influence the field of volcanology.

A new study published in the *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research*, led by Patricia Gregg of the University of Illinois in

WHEN HE’S NOT DELIVERING POMONA’S MAIL, **ADAN AMAYA** IS TRAVELING THE WORLD WITH LANGUAGES

Man of the World

Adan Amaya knows that to travel the world, you don’t necessarily have to go very far. Known for his outgoing personality, Amaya enjoys meeting students, faculty and staff in his daily rounds with Pomona’s mail services team. And when he’s not delivering the mail, he’s at Oldenborg Dining Hall using his passion for language to travel the world himself.

Born in El Salvador, Amaya moved to San Bernardino 35 years ago. His 20-plus years of experience as cook made it easy to find a position with Scripps dining services in 2007, but he was soon ready for a change. He is now in his eighth year at Pomona, where he exercises his love of language every day at Oldenborg.

“Rita Bashaw [Director, Oldenborg Center] approached me one day and invited me. I really was kind of shy because I don’t have experience being around students, but I said ‘I’ll be there.’ I started going, and after that I liked it. I’m always there, every day.”

Amaya speaks four languages—his native Spanish, English, Greek and Italian—with more to come. On Wednesdays, he’s at the beginner Italian table, while on Thursdays, he goes Greek. He spends the rest of his lunches at the Spanish table, helping beginner and intermediate students with their conversation skills.

“I’m committing myself because I love it; it’s my passion to be there with the students because the students really want to learn Spanish, so I can give them a little motivation to practice and have conversations.”

Even before arriving at Pomona, Amaya was exploring his capacity for languages. His first goal upon coming to the United States from El Salvador was to learn English, but then his language learning took a turn. His cooking experience brought him into work with a Greek family as cook, manager, and eventually supervisor in their southern California restaurants. To advance in the business, he says, it became

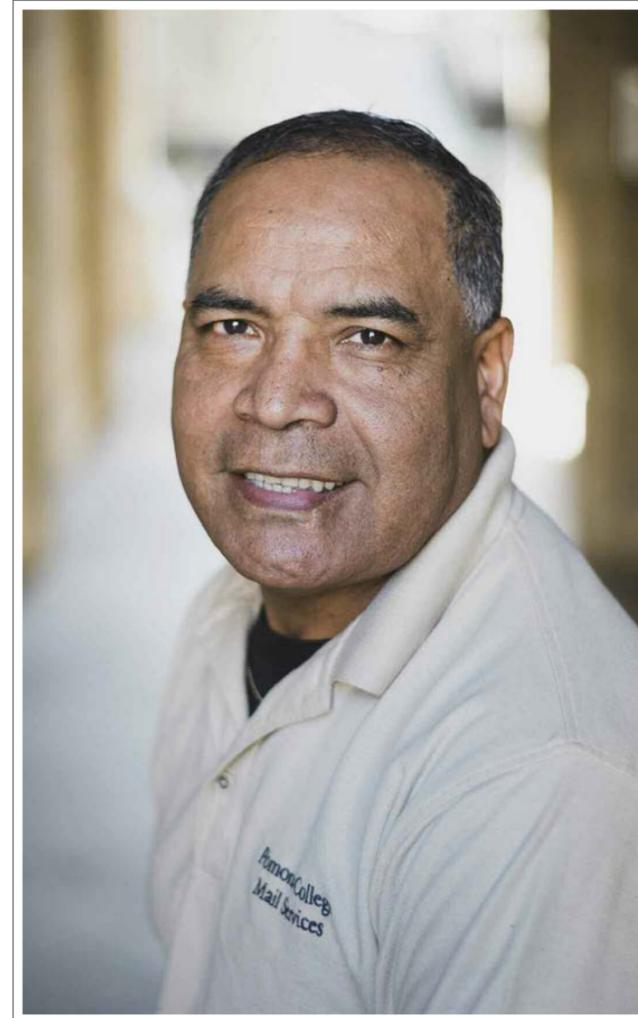


Photo by Michelle Chan '17

necessary to learn Greek. Between two trips to Greece (once in 1998 and again in 2000) and 10 years of studying, Amaya has mastered the language.

When he left the restaurant business, he didn’t stop there. “I do speak Italian too, but Italian is easier than Greek,” he says. “Italian is very easy because once you master Spanish, you can go ahead and do Italian.” What’s next for Amaya? French, he reveals, and a little farther down the road, Portuguese. “I always have a little space for learning something,” he adds.

When Adan isn’t traveling the world through language, he’s probably, well, traveling. He makes the trip back home to El Salvador twice a year; he has even brought Pomona students along with him, including a Chinese student he met during his Oldenborg lunches.

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

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

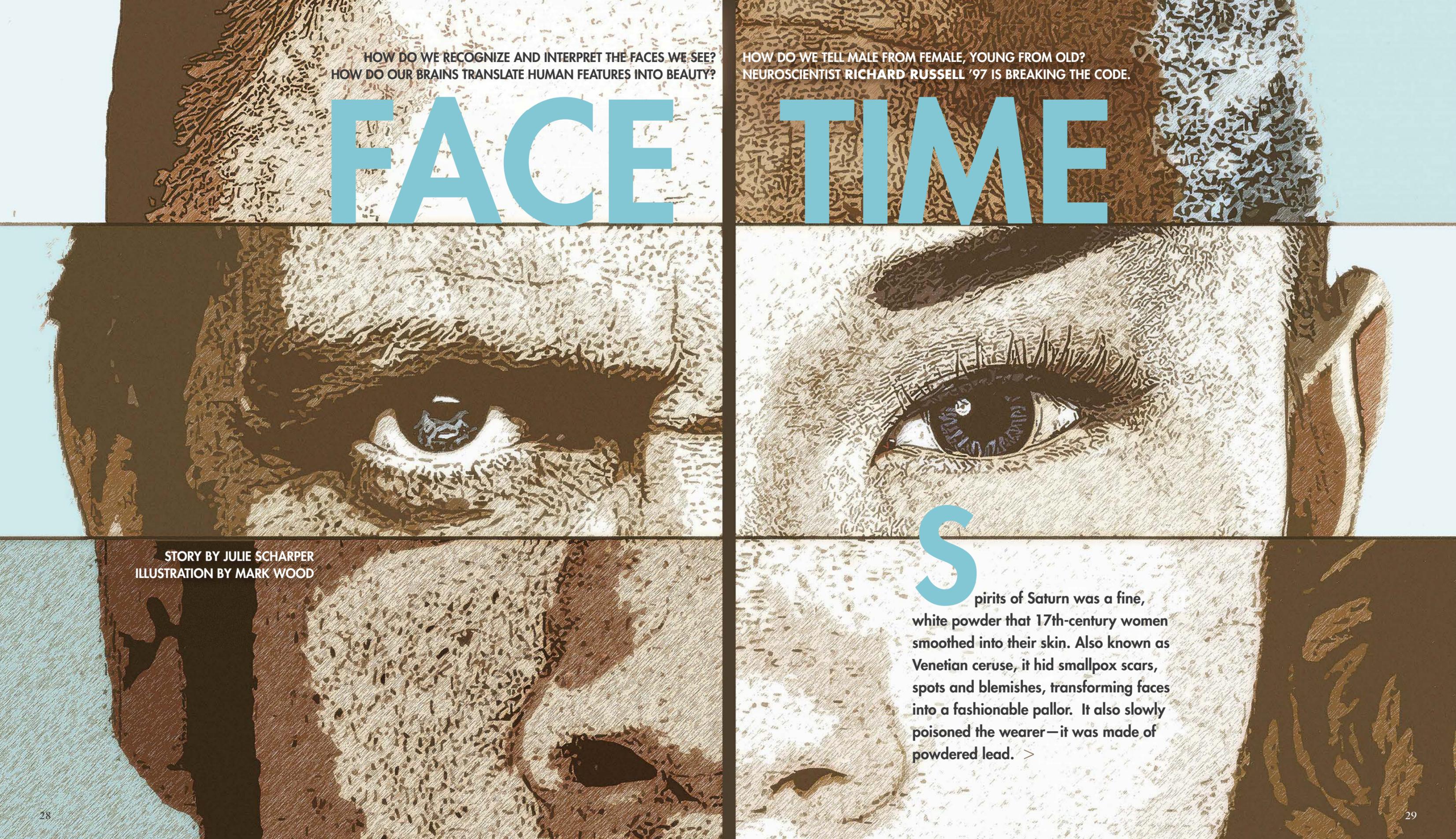
“I never thought that I would stay for very long. But since I’ve stayed at Pomona and seen how the environment is related to the work, and how you move around with people, I’ve liked it. I’m going to hang out here at Pomona for a long time.”

—Anthony Bald '17

[PICTURE THIS]

A February view of North Campus, with snowclouds lingering over the mountains
Photo by Jeff Hing





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

FACE

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

TIME

STORY BY JULIE SCHARPER
ILLUSTRATION BY MARK WOOD

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

Over time, the powder caused teeth to rot, hairlines to recede and, in a particularly cruel twist of irony, the skin to shrivel and turn gray. Yet, for hundreds of years, European and Asian women dabbed lead on their faces. It's not even the most unsavory preparation that women have used to whiten their skin. Ancient Roman women used crocodile dung; Japanese women preferred nightingale droppings.

Women have been powdering their cheeks, lining their eyes and rouging their lips for nearly all of recorded history. The story of makeup may begin even earlier—stores of red ochre found in Paleolithic caves suggest humans have been painting their skin for 100,000 years.

While ideals of beauty change over time and across cultures, some elements are nearly universal: fair, unblemished skin, ruby lips, alluring eyes. Psychologist Richard Russell '97, who studies the biological underpinnings of beauty, believes he has figured out why.

Through a series of elegantly-designed experiments, Russell has proved that women's faces have greater contrast than men's. It's as if Mother Nature applied an Instagram filter to the female face to make the eyes and mouth pop out from the rest of the

features. And this contrast, Russell discovered, appears at puberty and ebbs at menopause, making it a marker of fertility.

In other words, Russell solved a riddle nearly as old as humanity. Why do women wear makeup? To look more feminine and more fertile. "There's a lot of information we get from a face—age, health, sex, race, trustworthiness," he says. "There are judgments that we make, even though we're taught not to make them."

Russell is not what you might picture when you think of a makeup scholar. The 40-year-old Gettysburg College professor is partial to plaid shirts and wire-rimmed glasses. He spends his free time hiking with his kids, not perusing the counters at Sephora. Even his wife, Carrie Russell, an attorney and novelist, doesn't wear much makeup, Russell says. "Part of how I study this is I have an outsider's viewpoint," he says. "I don't put that much work into my appearance."

Russell's interest in perception began during his undergrad days at Pomona, where he majored in neuroscience. Working on a student mural project sparked an interest in art, and Russell decided he wanted to study how the mind perceives beauty.

He received a doctorate in cognitive science from the Massa-

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

Russell was studying prosopagnosics, people who are exceptionally bad at recognizing faces (the term comes from the Greek words for "face" and "ignorance.") Prosopagnosics are unable to identify co-workers, friends, and, in the most extreme cases, their own spouses.

The neurologist Oliver Sacks wrote extensively about prosopagnosia, a condition with which he himself was afflicted. In an essay, he recounted being unable to recognize his own psychoanalyst when passing him in the lobby after a session. On another occasion, a woman he had been sharing a waiting room with informed him that she was his longtime assistant. She had been waiting to see if he could recognize her without prompting.

While some prosopagnosics, such as Sacks, apparently suffer from a hereditary condition, others lose the

"THERE'S A LOT OF INFORMATION WE GET FROM A FACE—AGE, HEALTH, SEX, RACE, TRUSTWORTHINESS. THERE ARE JUDGMENTS THAT WE MAKE, EVEN THOUGH WE'RE TAUGHT NOT TO MAKE THEM."

ability to recognize faces after an accident or illness. Scientists believe that a portion of the right side of the visual cortex, known as the fusiform face area, is primarily responsible for facial recognition.

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

One of Russell's subjects had told him of a friend who had an extraordinary talent for remembering faces. This young man recognized people he had glimpsed at a concert years ago. He had a mental library of extras from TV shows and movies. Russell devised a test to spot exceptional facial recognition ability. He administered it to his subject's friend, and others, and discovered that there were indeed people who had an innate talent for identifying faces. In a 2009 paper, Russell announced the existence of >

The Natural

Joyce Nimocks '15 has fond memories of her grandmother teaching her to make body butter out of olive oil and using natural, homemade concoctions on her granddaughter's curly hair.

Nimocks' grandmother was both creative and resourceful. Store-bought hair products were usually made for women who wore their hair straight. Mainstream cosmetics made Nimocks' skin break out. And money was tight.

After graduating from Pomona last May with a \$12,000 Napier Initiative grant in hand, Nimocks returned to her



Photo by Carie Rosano

hometown of Chicago to conduct free summer workshops for low-income women of color to inform them of the ingredients in commercial cosmetics and teach them how to make their own products with natural, non-toxic ingredients.

An environmental analysis major, Nimocks wrote her thesis on the health implications of hair relaxers. Exploring the issue in depth through the Summer Undergraduate Research Program, as well as her study-abroad in Brazil, she found an extensive study showing an association between African American women who frequently used hair relaxers and the presence of uterine fibroids.

She cites research indicating that hair relaxers seep through the epidermis, making it easier for estrogen-mimicking hormones to enter the bloodstream. In addition to inducing fibroids and uterine cysts, they have been implicated in causing premature puberty in girls as young as six months old.

"What I found is that this isn't just a public health issue; this is also a social justice issue, in my opinion, because these products are only being marketed toward women of color," says Nimocks.

The injustice continues because all-natural products are prohibitively expensive for low-income women, she says.

"You can get a bottle of a non-natural brand of lotion—32 ounces for four dollars at Walmart. You get a small 12-16 ounces of a natural brand, and it costs you seven to eight dollars," says Nimocks.

In her workshops, she focused on teaching women how to make lipsticks on stovetops with beeswax, shea butter and crayons; body butters using a cake mixer, with aloe vera gel, cocoa butter and, of course, olive oil; and natural perfumes with witch hazel and essential oils. One of Nimocks' favorite homemade products is her deodorant, a blend of coconut oil and baking soda, infused with lavender, orange and tea tree oils.

Nimocks herself is a powerhouse blend, according to Professor of Environmental Analysis Char Miller. "She has a compelling ability to weave together her academic interests with her activism, her professional and civic engagement," says Miller.

Nimocks hopes to someday open a center where low-income women can come and make their own cosmetics for free, funded by workshops she'd conduct for a fee in middle-to-high-income communities.

Thanks to a six-week Social Entrepreneurship class taught through the Draper Center for Community Partnerships,

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

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

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

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

—Sneha Abraham

such people and coined a term for them: super-recognizers.

Just as prosopagnosics often describe faking recognition to avoid embarrassment, super-recognizers admit to hiding their talents, Russell says. They learn, over time, that acquaintances can be creeped out when they say they remember passing them on the street years earlier.

Russell's discovery has led him to question what other cognitive abilities exist on a spectrum.

"There's an assumption in experimental psychology that we're all the same," he says. With the exception of personality and intelligence, most characteristics are assumed to be either-or. You have them, or you don't. But if there is a spectrum for facial recognition, perhaps one exists for other abilities as well.

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

ethnic group or skin color, women's faces reflect 3 percent more light than their male counterparts. The contrast is most noticeable during young adulthood, and fades with age.

According to one hypothesis, women have paler skin during their fertile years so that they can more easily synthesize vitamin D3, which helps absorb the calcium a developing fetus needs.

To test his theory on facial contrast, Russell showed a series of male and female composite faces to subjects. He decreased the contrast for some of them. When subjects saw female faces with less contrast, they ranked them as less attractive. But the opposite was true for male faces—subjects thought the men grew more attractive when their eyes and lips stood out less.

For other photos, Russell increased the contrast between the eyes and lips and surrounding skin. Subjects said that this made the female faces more attractive, while the male faces became less so.

Russell then morphed together images of men and women, creating an androgynous face. Again, he tweaked the level of contrast.

When subjects saw the androgynous face with a high level of contrast, they said it appeared to be a woman. But when they saw the same face with a low level of contrast, they said it appeared to be a man. Russell then conducted follow-up experiments that showed that reducing the level of contrast in a woman's face made her look older.

So how does all of this relate to the cosmetics counter? Women use makeup to darken their eyelids and brows, to hide skin imperfections and to add color to their lips and cheeks. In other words, as Russell also demonstrated in a 2009 paper, makeup increases facial contrast. By making their eyes and lips pop, women make themselves look younger and more feminine, and, therefore, more attractive.

Etcoff made headlines a few years ago with a study that showed people perceive women wearing makeup as not only more attractive, but more competent and trustworthy. What we tend to think of as a "natural look," is actually a face that has been subtly embellished with makeup.

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

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

"Some people think a core aspect of what makes us human is altering our appearance," Russell says. [POM](#)



Richard Russell '97 works with a student in his lab at Gettysburg College.

While many think of beauty as a subjective construct, Etcoff argues in her book, *Survival of the Prettiest*, that we are primed to find certain evolutionarily adaptive traits attractive.

Studies show that attractive faces meet certain criteria. They're symmetrical. They're youthful. They're sexually dimorphic—males are manly and females are womanly. And, they're—well—average.

The first three criteria aren't really surprising; all signal fertility. But what does the fourth mean? When scientists blend together images of many faces, people find the composite much more attractive than any of the other faces. These "average" faces mimic our own mental images of the archetypal male and female face.

That female face, it's important to mention, is lighter than the male face—women are, quite literally, the fairer sex. Regardless of

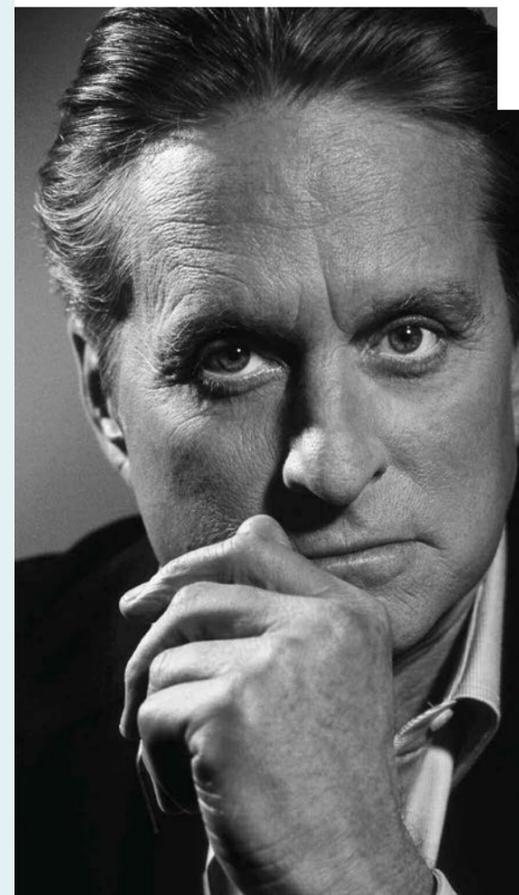


STORY BY SNEHA ABRAHAM

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL LARSEN '89 AND TRACY TALBERT

FAMOUS

If the surreality of being on a plane with Elizabeth Taylor en route to Paris for the Cannes Film Festival and then being whisked away in a limo with her upon landing isn't memorable enough, picture this: Elizabeth Taylor making the limo driver pull over on the tarmac so she could let her little Maltese out to do its business. This is a celebrity photographer's eye view—and one moment you really wish you had on film, according to Michael Larsen '89. >





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

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

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

“I looked around at the career paths of the crew and camera people and it looked pretty depressing in terms of >



Page 33: Clockwise from top: Eddie Murphy (times three), Keira Knightley and Michael Douglas.

Facing: Clockwise from bottom left: Tom Hanks, Tilda Swinton and Ray Charles

Clockwise from left:
Matthew McConaughey,
Jane Lynch and Ben Affleck



their personal lives,” he says, thanks to long brutal hours that he saw taxed families.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Clockwise from bottom left: LeBron James, Hugh Jackman, Cameron Diaz and Halle Berry. Bottom right: Tracy Talbert and Michael Larsen (photo by Luke & Ada Larsen)

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

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

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

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

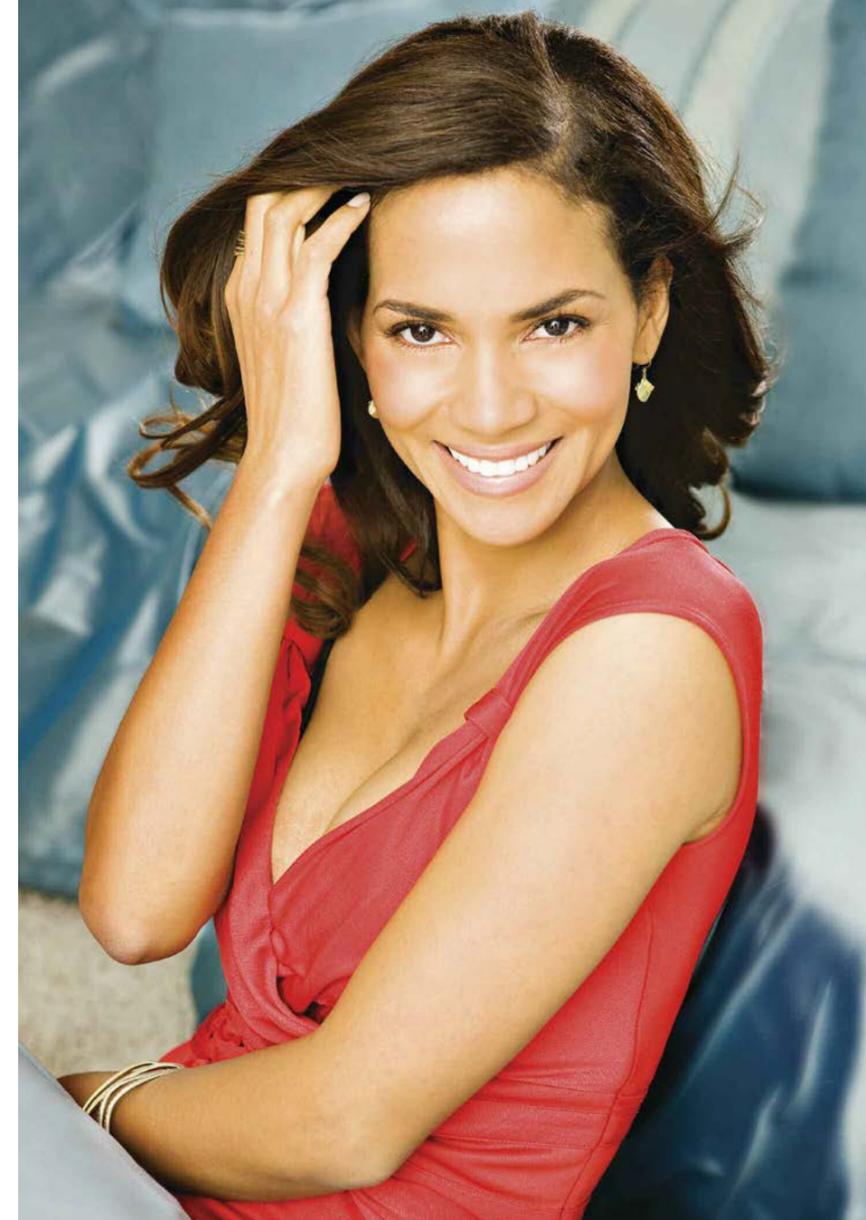
And then there are the shoots that go awry. They had 10 minutes with Jodie Foster when Larsen realized he had accidentally shot in multiple exposure and all the photos were on one frame. He threw his back out completely on a shoot with Goldie Hawn and Susan Sarandon and was unable to stand, so Talbert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

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

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

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

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



HOW ABC'S SHARK TANK PROPELLED JUSTIN FENCHEL '06 AND HIS BOXED-WINE COMPANY TO THE BIG TIME...

JUMPING THE SHARK

Story by Adam Conner-Simons '08

Photo by Michael Larsen '89 and Tracy Talbert

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cuban paused a beat.

"Sure."

With those four letters, Fenchel's life changed in a very big way. >



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

BeatBox Beverages, his line of wine-based cocktails that come in blindingly bright 5-liter boxes, had just been valued at three million dollars, and was about to experience the unique joy that is “the Shark Tank effect.”

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

Reflecting on BeatBox’s rapid rise, Fenchel shakes his head and grins sheepishly.

“To think,” he says. “It all basically started with a game of ‘slap-the-bag.’”

BOXED-WINE BEGINNINGS

Like Facebook and Napster before it, the origin story for BeatBox quite literally begins in a dorm room.

One of Fenchel’s fondest Pomona memories was living in the North Campus trailers and hosting “boxed-wine Tuesdays,” where his roommates would buy a case of Franzia wine and invite friends over to watch movies. His Pomona years coincided nicely with the rise of “slap-the-bag,” a drinking tradition that involves removing a bag of wine from its box, slapping the side of the bag, and taking a swig right from the nozzle.

Fenchel enjoyed the communal nature of “slap-the-bag,” and found Franzia convenient, affordable—and completely boring.

“The only reason I bought it was because there wasn’t a more appealing option,” he says. “It made me wonder if I could take the idea of a boxed wine, and recreate it so people my age would actually be excited to bring it to a party.”

After college he and his childhood friend Brad Schultz collaborated on a few iPhone apps, while still kicking around drink ideas.

In 2011 they dreamt up “Wine-ergy,” a caffeinated beverage coming in flavors like “Call-A-Cab” and “Zin-FUNdel”; they promptly nixed the concept after the caffeine-infused Four Loko courted controversy on college campuses. A few months later they mulled over a vodka-based drink, before learning that regulations on spirits would limit their “party in a box” to a decidedly un-party-like 12 servings.

What finally kick-started BeatBox was, of all things, a glass of OJ. Specifically, Fenchel stumbled across a special wine made of oranges that drinks more like a spirit and pairs deliciously with fruit juice. By 2012 he had built a team of co-founders and developed flavors that were directly inspired by his days making Crystal Light and vodka mixers at Pomona.



Justin Fenchel '06 and his BeatBox partners on ABC's Shark Tank

On a bootstrap budget, Fenchel’s team crowd-sourced a logo and package design. To focus-group their product, they would plaster BeatBox stickers onto cardboard boxes, put test batches into empty wine-bags (“Thanks, Franzia!”), and walk around local events giving out free samples.

“We’d go to festivals and ask for brutally honest feedback on which flavors tasted best,” Fenchel recalls. “We knew we were onto something when people were literally throwing 20 dollar bills at us and asking where they could buy it.”

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

“By 2014 we had increased our distribution 800 percent, but realized that we were still spending all our time in the warehouse and none of it expanding,” he says. “We needed money.”

GETTING IN THE TANK

Customers had been constantly telling Fenchel that his company seemed ripe for “Shark Tank.” When producers announced an open casting call at SXSW 2014, he stood in line for two hours to give his 30-second pitch. Three months later, BeatBox was one of 108 teams to be selected for the show, out of 70,000 annual submissions. (“You’d have a better chance getting into Harvard, or even Pomona,” Fenchel says.)

The team feverishly prepared in the ensuing weeks, painstakingly researching the show’s five judges and enlisting business faculty from the University of Texas to serve as “mock sharks.” They learned about the sharks’ every move—what they invested in, what they looked for in companies, and even what they ate for breakfast each morning.

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

The work paid off: in the months after BeatBox’s

episode aired in October 2014, sales doubled and the team expanded from 150 stores to nearly 900. In 2015 they hit a million dollars in sales and rung up endorsements from the likes of electronic musician Skrillex and rapper Waka Flocka Flame, who enthusiastically describes the Blue Razzberry flavor as his “Turnt Up Juice.”

“Shark Tank” also impacted BeatBox in more intangible ways. “It certainly helps when your email to Walmart’s Texas distribution team includes a CC to the most powerful businessman in the state,” says Fenchel, who connects with Cuban at least once a week via email or text. “People who wouldn’t return our calls before were taking meetings with us now.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Justin Fenchel '06 and his partners meet with investor Mark Cuban.

FOR END-OF-LIFE CRUSADER PEGGY ARNOLD '65, THINKING ABOUT DEATH IS JUST ANOTHER WAY OF THINKING ABOUT LIFE.

BEFORE I DIE



STORY AND PHOTOS BY MARK WOOD

MOST OF THE PEOPLE GATHERED

around the card tables at the Senior Center in Longmont, Colo., this morning seem to be my age or older—in their 60s or 70s. They sit three or four to a table and peek at their cards, as I do at mine.

Unlike most card games, GoWish gives each player a full deck—cards bearing no diamonds or spades, no aces or deuces. Just words. Words like: “To be mentally aware.” And “Not to be connected to machines.” And “To be at peace with God.”

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

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

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

At my table, one person picks as her top priority “To be free from anxiety.” Another chooses “To have an advocate who knows my values and priorities.” I settle on “To have my family with me.”

In each case, it soon becomes clear that there are personal experiences behind the choice. The person who wants to be free from anxiety explains that her mother spent weeks before her death in a terrible state of fear. The person who hopes for an advocate worries about having no one she can trust. It only occurs to me afterward that my own choice might have something to do with the fact that both my parents died suddenly, without a chance to say goodbye.

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

TAKING BACK DYING

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

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

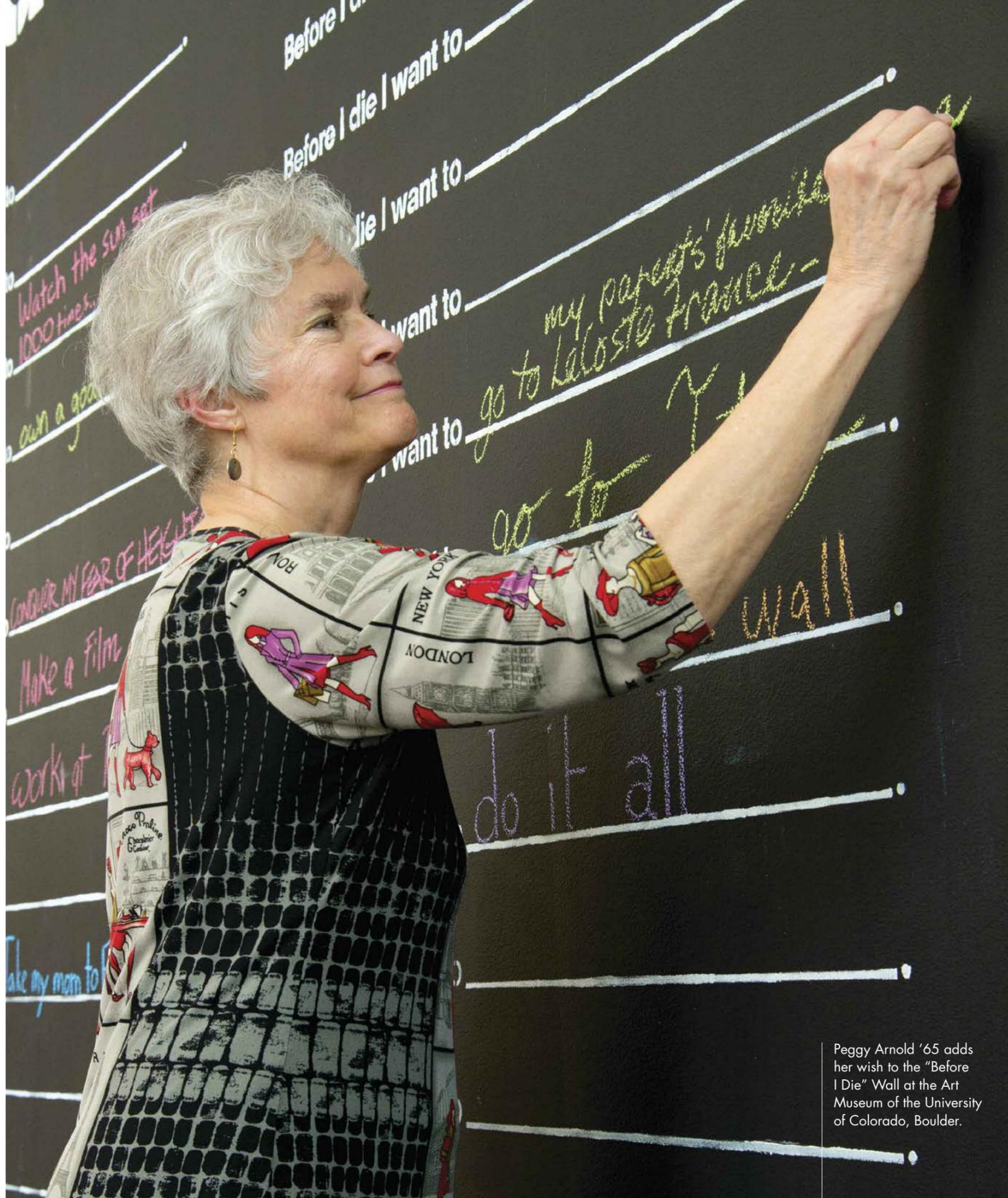
Today, medical technology can prolong life almost indefinitely, but as Arnold points out, in too many cases that has simply prolonged suffering and turned the end of life into a horror show. "Most people—there are always exceptions, but most people—are not going to want to go out of this life hooked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

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

Since 2010, The Conversation Project has been focusing on encouraging people to have a conversation with their loved ones about their end-of-life wishes. That, however, is only one of the visible prongs of this burgeoning movement. Another is the Death Cafés, which sprang up in the United Kingdom, also in 2010, and have now spread across the United States, offering people a forum for free-wheeling discussions of death and dying over cookies or a slice of cake. Then there's the Green Burial movement, which seeks to reclaim the long-lost right of natural burial, without embalming or caskets or concrete vaults to inhibit the natural recycling process. And at the heart of it all, there's an increasing number of activist physicians like Dr. Angelo Volandes, author of *The Conversation*, and Dr. Atul Gawande, author of *Being Mortal*, who are seeking to change the ethos of end-of-life care by pulling back the curtain on hospital death and challenging both their fellow doctors and the public to look at the subject differently.

In the area around Longmont and Boulder, Arnold is at the center of a small but determined community of end-of-life reformers whom she dubs, with affection and "M*A*S*H"-style humor, "the Deathies." There's Kim Mooney, an experienced end-of-life counselor and certified thanatologist (death scholar) who recently started her own company, called Practically Dying. There's Bart Windrum, who, following the disastrous hospital experiences of his two dying parents, was moved to write *Notes from the Waiting Room*, a guide book for families of the terminally ill. There's retired emergency room physician Jean Abbott, who is urging her fellow doctors to get over their squeamishness about removing patients from life-prolonging equipment when the outcome is no longer in doubt.

What the Deathies all have in common is that they're passionate about returning control over the end of life to the dying and their families.



Peggy Arnold '65 adds her wish to the "Before I Die" Wall at the Art Museum of the University of Colorado, Boulder.

ONE DEATH

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

Having worked as a hospice volunteer before taking her current job 15 years ago, she says the part of her work that relates to "the death trade" just evolved naturally. "You could call it 'unbidden,'" she says. "It just appeared, and I was the one who was asked to do it."

First she was designated as the hospital representative to a short-lived organization called the Front Range End of Life, which focused on creating resources for the terminally ill. Then the hospital decided to do a video about planning for the end of life, and guess who got the job? Then they needed someone to teach a class on advanced directives... "It's like the underground of aspen groves," she says. "Their root systems go on for acres and keep shooting up new stems. The time for this had come, and I happened to be in the middle of the grove."

Then, five years ago, her focus on death and dying took a turn for the personal. An old friend, Mogens Baungaard Thomsen—a Danish exchange student in her high school who had become a vascular surgeon in Sweden—revealed that he was living with a death sentence—kidney cancer that had metastasized to his lungs.

"We just started Skyping a lot and had the most fascinating conversations," Arnold says. "At some point, I said, 'Mo, I'd love to record what you're saying. I think it is so wise.' He was a physician. He was a widower. Now he was facing his own end."

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

At the time, Thomsen didn't expect to live long enough to see his new grandchild, but he outlived his own prognosis. "There's a picture of them together," Arnold says, pointing to a photo pinned above her desk of Thomsen holding his granddaughter. "And he actually lived almost two years longer."

During that time, they made two more videos together. The first, prompted by Thomsen's terrible experiences with the Swedish healthcare system, is aimed at his fellow doctors, giving them heart-felt advice on how to relate to people who are dying.

The second, made shortly before his death, is less philosophical, more practical and more emotionally raw—what he wants for his last meal (a cheeseburger or maybe fish and chips); what music he would like to hear on his deathbed (a piece by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy that he listened to with his wife while she was dying); what he wants on his epitaph ("I don't want one").

The exchanges between Thomsen and Arnold sound at times like an interview, at times like old friends chatting, at times >



Peggy Arnold '65 at her desk with a photo of Mogens Thomsen and his granddaughter.

like therapy. “Although I’ve seen so many people die, I still don’t know what goes on at the end,” Thomsen reflects at one point. “As long as I’m aware of what’s going on, I would probably want to cling to my relatives and have them with me, but that’s a very egoistic way of thinking. I don’t think it’s a pleasure for them to see me die.”

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

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

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

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

IT’S ABOUT LIFE

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

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

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

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

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

[ALUMNI VOICES]



The New Face of Cuba

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

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

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

The cultural exchanges turned out to be mostly one-sided, but we talked to countless Cubans in all lines of work—artists, teachers, students, cowboys, musicians, actors, guides, fishermen, restaurant owners and one former baseball player.

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

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

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

However, we also caught frequent glimpses of burgeoning free enterprise—rooms for rent in private dwellings, roadside fruit stands and elderly vendors hawking tiny roasted peanuts to supplement their incomes. In Camaguey, two budding entrepreneurs set up a makeshift display to sell shoes, and puppeteers put on a professional show in a makeshift theatre where seating consisted of about 20 folding chairs.

And then, there are the paladares—homes converted into surprisingly good restaurants. In a country that rations rice,

cooking oil, milk and other staples, tourists dine in these privately owned restaurants on shrimp, lobster, crab and fish. At the retro art-decorated La California in Havana, a family-style dinner included pumpkin soup, rolls, black beans and rice, lobster tails, red snapper with vegetables and ropa vieja, a classic dish of shredded beef and spices.

On our final day in Havana, we entered the Partagas Cigar Factory, divided between experienced workers and trainees in hot, humid rooms. Our factory guide, Augustin, related how tobacco leaves are selected for different cigars. By Cuban standards, rolling cigars is a relatively well-paid job, and one that is eagerly sought. Two Romeo and Juliet cigars packed in metal tubes, a gift for a friend, cost me \$6.95 each, about 20 percent of the average Cuban’s monthly wage.

Wherever we went in Cuba, we found the artistic muse alive and well. We visited five galleries of different creative pursuits, including the manic display of ceramic art of Jose Fuster in Havana and the feminist art at the Martha Jimenez Gallery in Camaguey.

Musicians entertained us endlessly at concerts and restaurants. At dinner one night in Camaguey, a young man played a trumpet as a woman danced to Latin music near our tables. The musician used a mute to soften the sound against a background of recorded music on a CD, and his partner made her hip-moves while waitresses dodged around her to serve the meal. After one tune, I asked him if he had just played a John Coltrane piece, “Straight, No Chaser.” >

He quickly answered, "Night in Tunisia ... Dizzy Gillespie."

And of course, any account of a visit to Cuba would be incomplete without some mention of those amazing vintage American cars, visible on postcards, placemats and paintings as well as in the streets. Without them, Cuba simply wouldn't be Cuba. At different times, drivers chauffeured members of our group in a 1940 Chevrolet sedan and a 1958 Edsel convertible, both impeccably maintained in spite of the seemingly insurmountable obstacle of the U.S. embargo. A 1954 Studebaker parked at a roadside gasoline station could undoubtedly win top prize in a restored vehicle competition in the States.

This tour didn't come cheap, but we met Cubans and toured their country in ways that I couldn't have done on my own—even if it were legal.

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

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

Here are a few other things to keep in mind:

- Credit cards aren't accepted and ATMs aren't available, so be sure to bring extra cash for emergencies.
- Cuba charges a 13% fee to exchange American dollars into Cuban convertible pesos (known as CUCs) but no fee to exchange Canadian dollars or Euros into the national currency, so you can save money by converting your travel money into Canadian bills before you leave.
- Photography is prohibited at Cuban airports and military facilities.
- The Treasury Department mandates that P2P tourists keep a daily travel journal and keep it for five years, in order to prove that the trip was legal.

—Roland Leiser '58

Looking for your chance to come face to face with fellow Sagehens?

This Bulletin Board is a great place to learn about alumni community events on campus, in your area and around the globe. For more frequent updates on opportunities to come together with fellow Sagehens, join the Pomona Alumni Facebook group at [facebook.com/groups/Sagehens](https://www.facebook.com/groups/Sagehens), check listings of upcoming events at pomona.edu/alumniupdate and update your email address at pomona.edu/alumniupdate.

Here are a just a few of the ways alumni are coming face to face, literally and virtually, this academic year.

Pomona in a City Near You...

The fall 2015 edition of a popular new Sagehen tradition, Pomona in the City Southern California, took place on Sunday, November 8 in Dana Point, California. 135 alumni, parents, faculty, staff and friends flocked to the St. Regis Monarch Beach to reconnect with the College community and attend a series of learning sessions, kicked off with a welcome from President David Oxtoby and a keynote address by Professor Char Miller. The afternoon of learning concluded with an outdoor cocktail reception on the Pacific Ballroom Promenade. To date, Pomona in the City—a conference-style program that takes the academic offerings of the College to major cities to share the classroom experience with the Pomona community—has been held in Seattle, San Francisco, New York, Washington, D.C., and Southern California. Pomona in the City speakers have included David Oxtoby, Pierre Englebert, George Gorse, Lesley Irvine, Susan McWilliams, Char Miller, John Seery, Shahriar Shahriari, Nicole Weekes, Ken Wolf and Sam Yamashita.



Pomona in the City Southern California



Pomona in the City San Francisco

The most recent Pomona in the City program was scheduled for Saturday, April 9, 2016, at the Hotel Nikko San Francisco. Watch for details of future editions of this popular program in your mailbox and at pomona.edu/alumniupdate.

Honor a Daring Mind Wrap-Up

What makes a meaningful finale for a years-long, record-breaking campaign? A celebration of the people at its heart, of course! Members of the Pomona community showed up in droves for the Honor a Daring Mind celebration, which kicked off in November and gained momentum through December as Sagehens around the world caught word. More than 1,100 students, alumni, parents and friends answered the call to honor their favorite Pomona person, recognizing 678 inspirational professors, coaches, classmates, mentors and friends. Gifts given in honor of Daring Minds during the celebration, totaling \$447,064, were matched by the Daring Minds Fund, fulfilling a \$1 million matching grant to support Pomona education. Thank you, Pomona community, for recognizing the people at the heart of this effort and closing the Campaign with a ringing "Chirp!" To see the full list of honorees, please visit pomona.edu/hdm before June 30.

I'M HONORED...

To be considered a daring mind by my Pomona community of amazing students and alums. Yours were the daring minds I sought through Shakespeare to nurture and free them!
Thank you for all!

Pomona College Professor Andersen [#DARINGMINDS](http://pomona.edu/hdm)

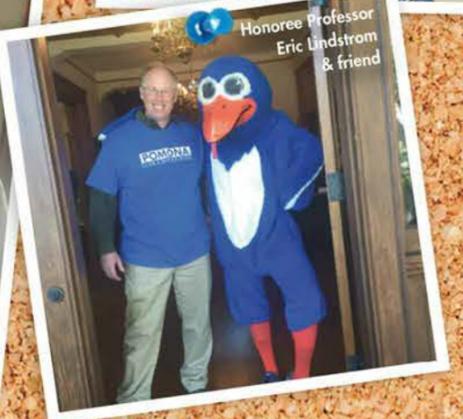
Note from Honoree Professor Emerita Martha Andersen



Honorees Sefa Aina and Maria Tucker



Honoree Professor Jill Grigsby



Honoree Professor Eric Lindstrom & friend

Quest Student/Alumni Engagement Reception at Alumni Weekend 2016

Happy Anniversary, Quest alumni! This year, Pomona celebrates 10 years of partnership with QuestBridge, a program with a mission to match high-achieving, low-income students with top-tier colleges and to support them from high school through college to their first job. Since 2006, Pomona has enrolled 325 students through the program. Students, alumni and friends of the Quest program are invited to a special Quest Student/Alumni Engagement Reception on the Pomona campus on Friday, April 29 to celebrate as part of the Alumni Weekend 2016 festivities. 47 chirps to our Quest alums! To see the growing list of events and receptions planned for Pomona College cohorts, campus organizations, academic departments, visit pomona.edu/alumniweekend. Make your plans soon to come back to Claremont for the biggest Sagehen party of the year!

Winter Break Parties

More than 800 Sagehen alumni, parents, current students (and early decision admittees of the Class of 2020!) gathered in 10 major cities this January for Pomona's annual Winter Break Parties. Held during the first two weeks of January, Winter Break Parties are one of the best ways for Sagehens of all ages to connect with the Pomona community in their own city. For more information on Winter Break Parties and other events in your area, visit pomona.edu/alumniupdate and join us in the Pomona College Alumni Facebook Group.

**Class Notes
only available in
print edition**

[LAST LOOK]

CELEBRATING CAMPAIGN POMONA



"Five years ago, the Pomona College community set out on a daring quest to make an extraordinary liberal arts education even better—more equitable, more experiential, more sustainable and better suited to the needs of the 21st century," President David Oxtoby told the crowd of campaign donors, trustees, faculty, staff and students who gathered on Feb. 27 to celebrate the successful conclusion of Campaign Pomona: Daring Minds. "I am proud to report that together, we have done all of that and more." The campaign closed Dec. 31, 2015, after eclipsing its \$250 million goal with a total of \$316 million raised.

PHOTOS BY JEANINE HILL



(1) Edmunds Ballroom decorated for the campaign celebration dinner; (2) welcoming decorations in the Smith Campus Center hallway; (3) President David Oxtoby offers a toast; (4) Board Chair and master of ceremonies Sam Glick '04 and Emily Glick '04; (5) Campaign Chair Stewart Smith '68, P'00, P'09, addresses the crowd; (6) a special "Daring Mind" cocktail; (7) dessert with Campaign Pomona chocolate decoration; (8) Campaign Co-chair Libby Gates Armintrout '86 makes a point; (9) trustees Allyson Harris '89 and Jack Long P'13, P'15, chat with student Jaureese Gaines '16; (10) student speakers Ashley Land '16 and Nico Kass '16; (11) the crowd watches a special video; and (12) members of the Pomona College Glee Club entertain the assemblage.





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