

COLLEGE MAGAZINE

Pomona

**BEYOND HOOD
ADJACENT**

What comes next
for comedian
James Davis '05?

**SLIGHTLY
OUT OF TUNE**

Remembering
the off-key fame
of Mrs. Miller '39

**YOUR BRAIN
ON HUMOR**

Ori Amir is both
neuroscientist and
comedian—no joke

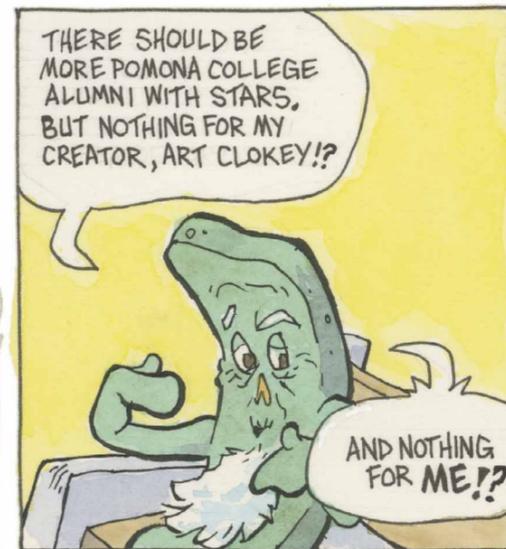
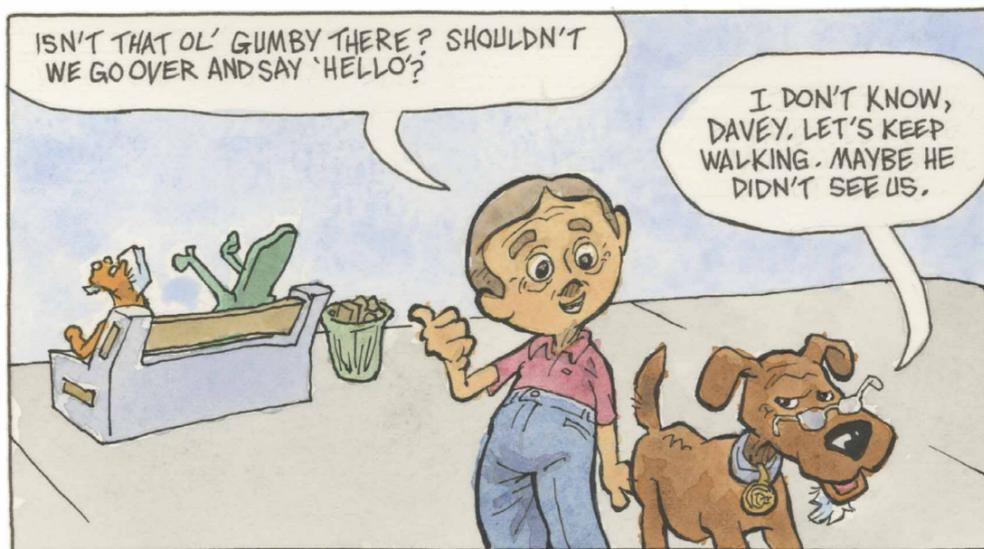
**THE WORLD OF
BOB'S BURGERS**

Writing comedy
with Wendy
Molyneux '97

Fall 2019

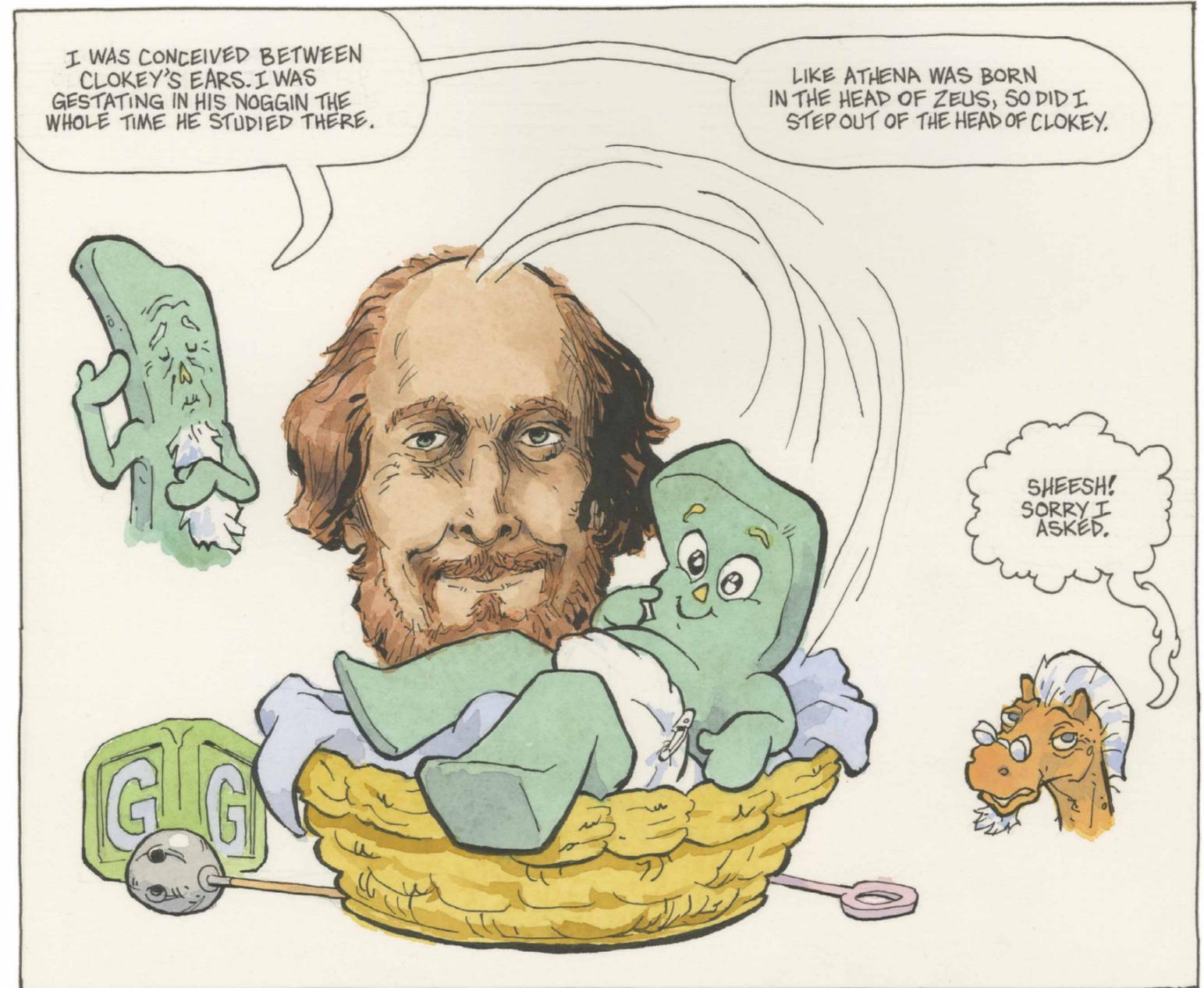
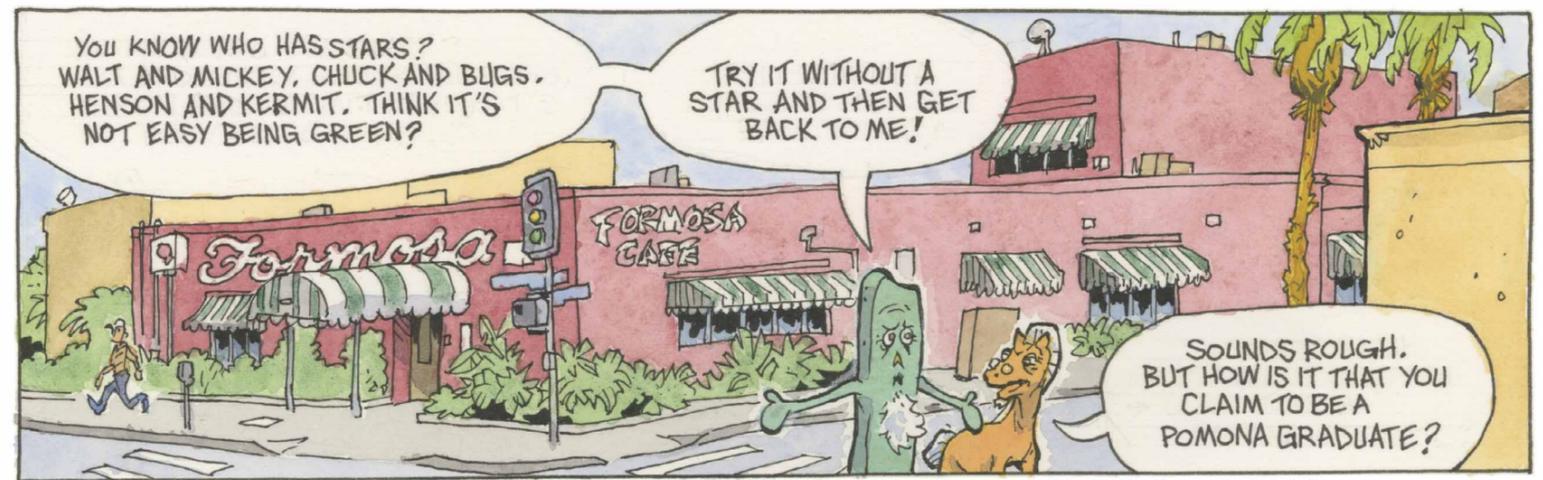
**EMMY
BUSINESS**

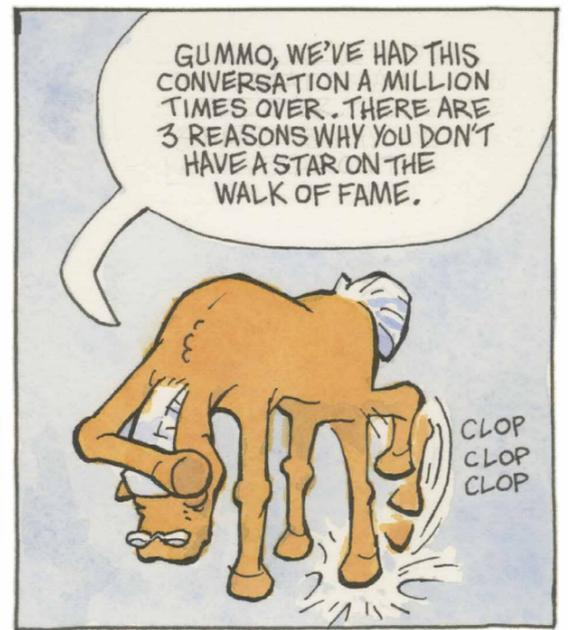
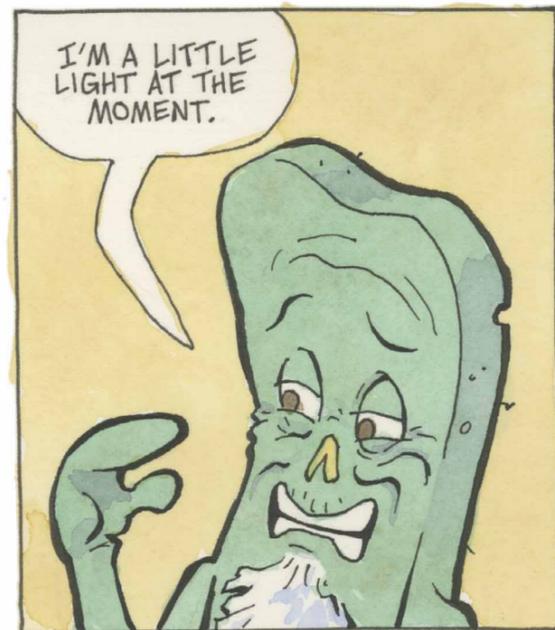
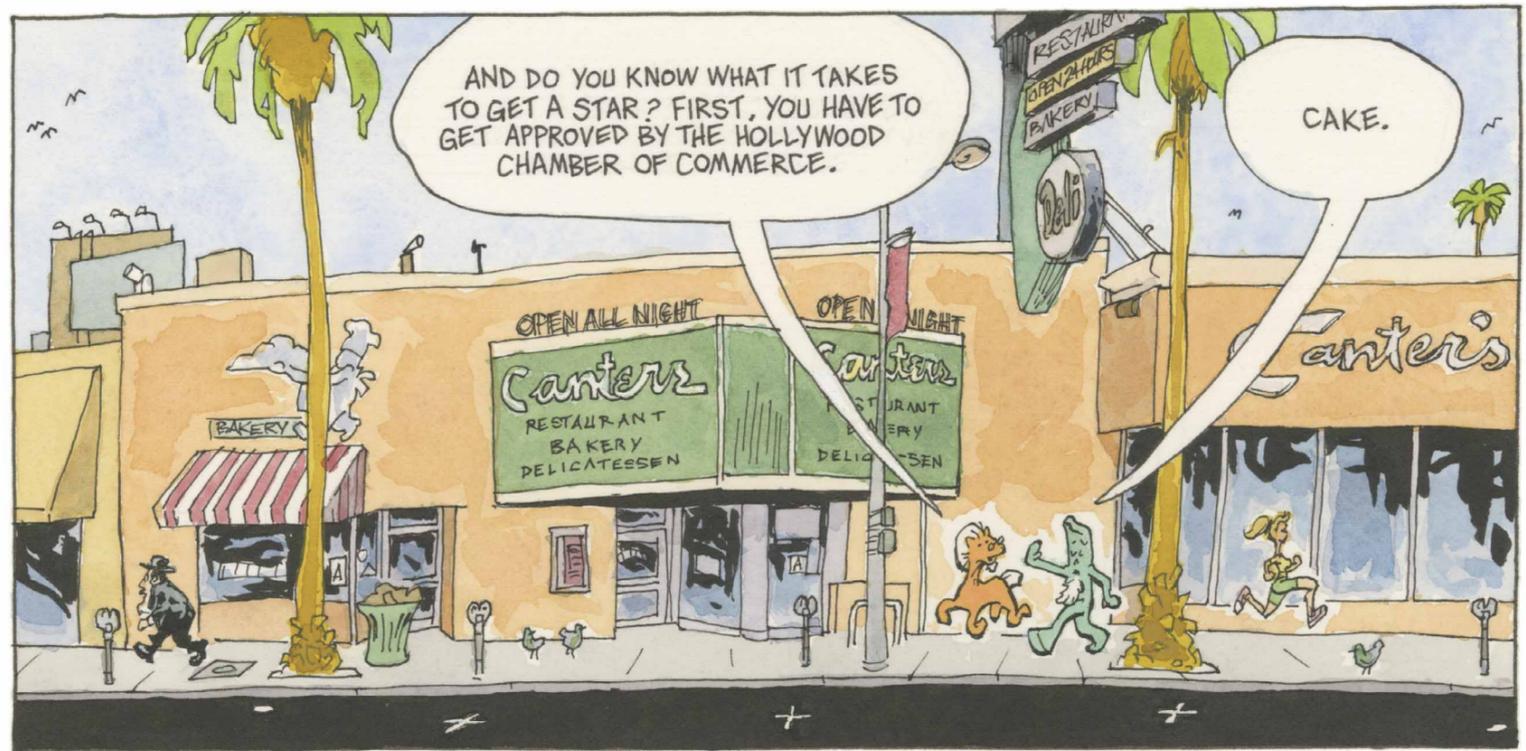
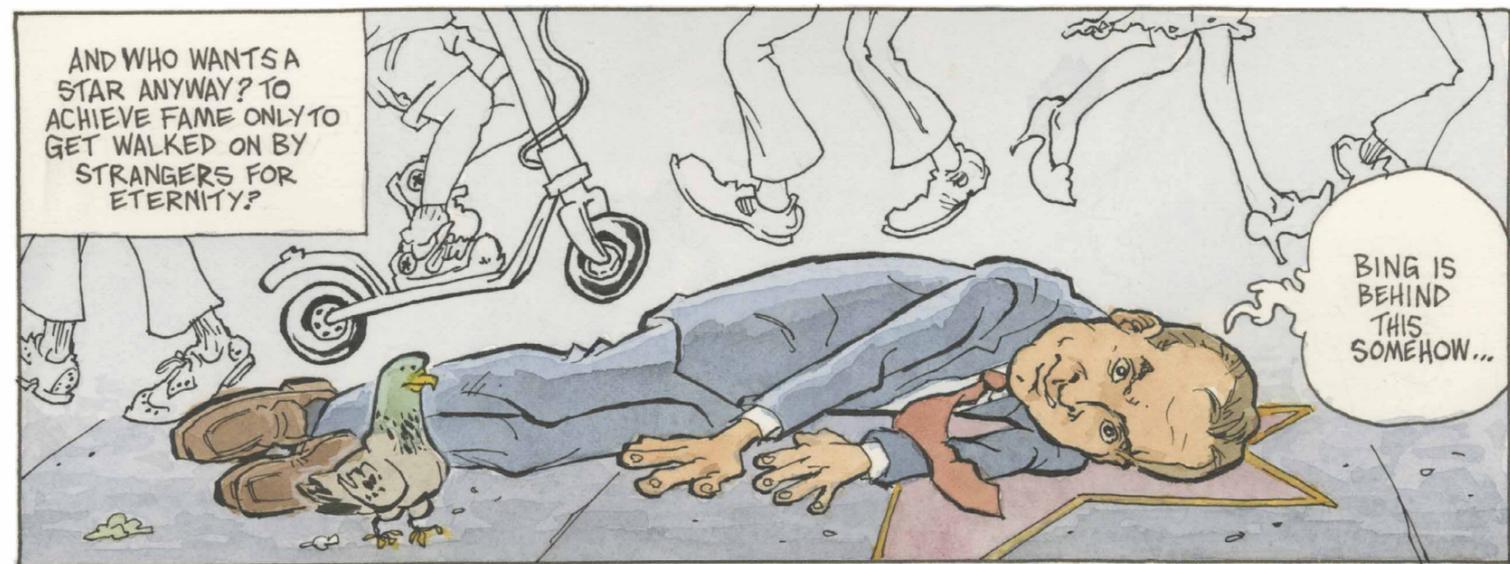
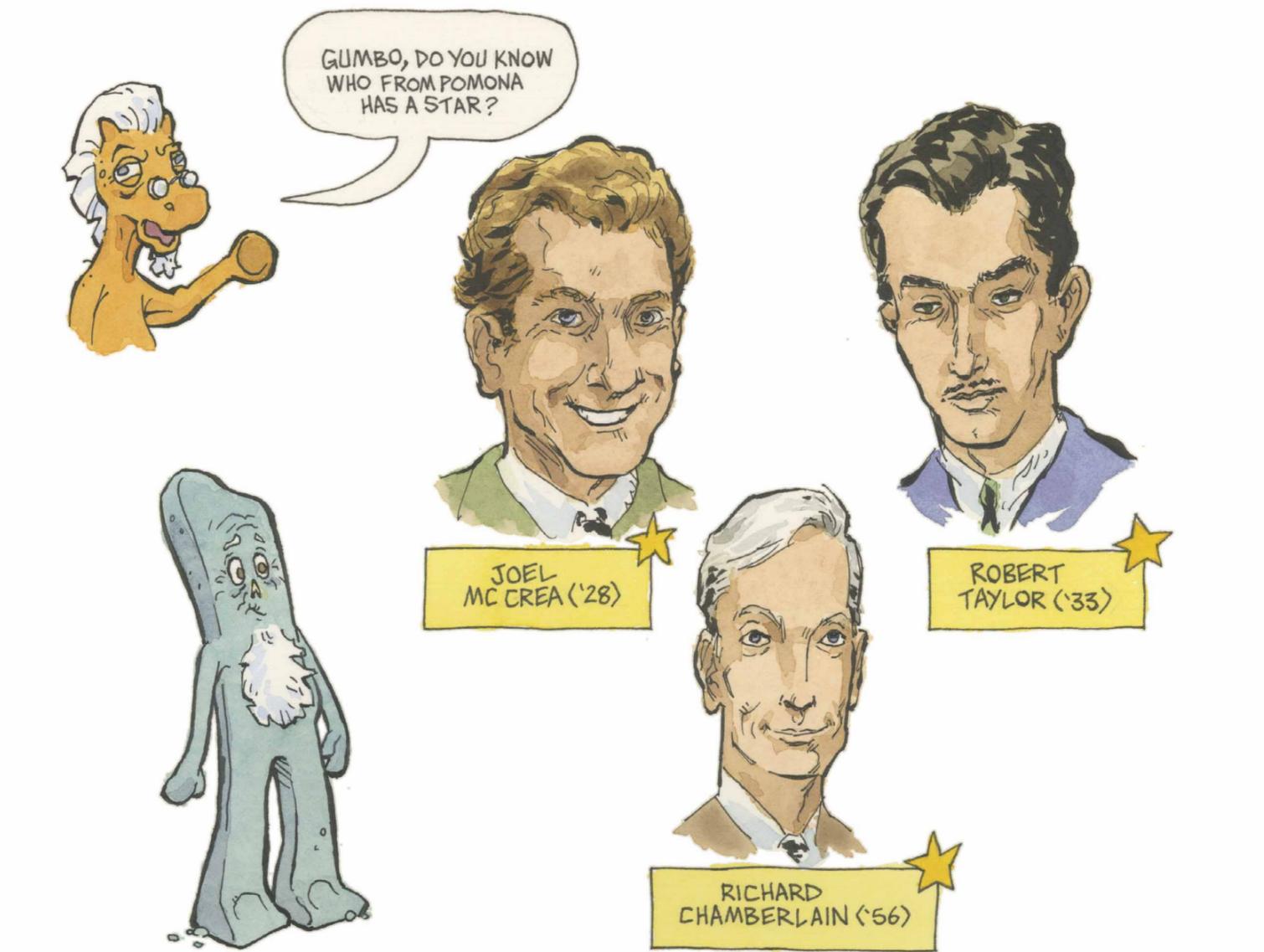




ART & STORY-- ANDREW MITCHELL '89

ajmitchellart.com

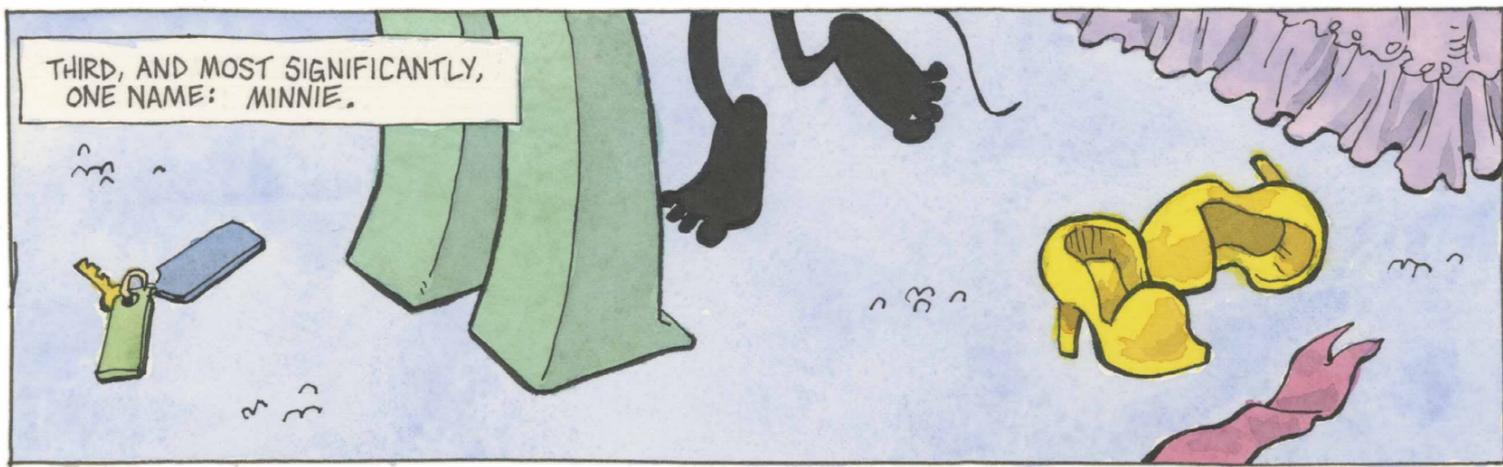
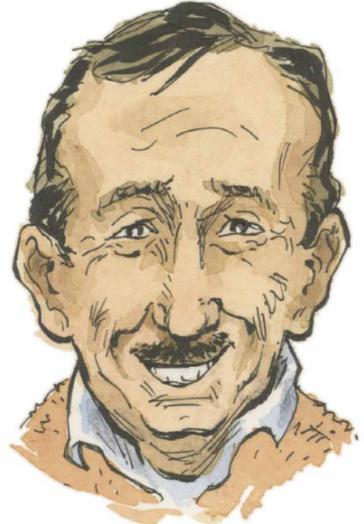






NUMBER ONE: IN THE MAIN, POMONA GRADS ARE EGGHEADS NOT THE PERFORMERS WHO GET ALL THE STARS. POMONA PRODUCES THE CONTENT CREATORS. THEY WRITE. THEY PRODUCE. THEY DIRECT.

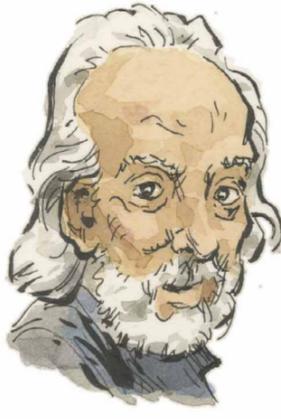
ROY E. DISNEY ('51)



FRANK WELLS ('53)



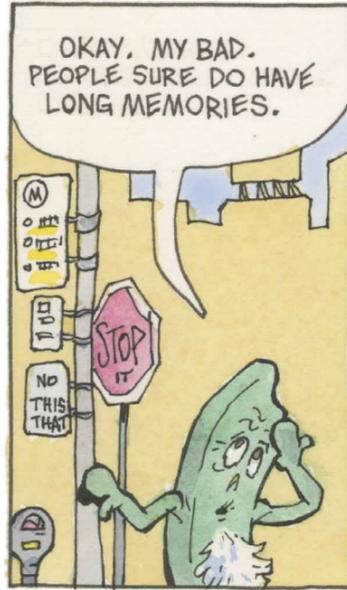
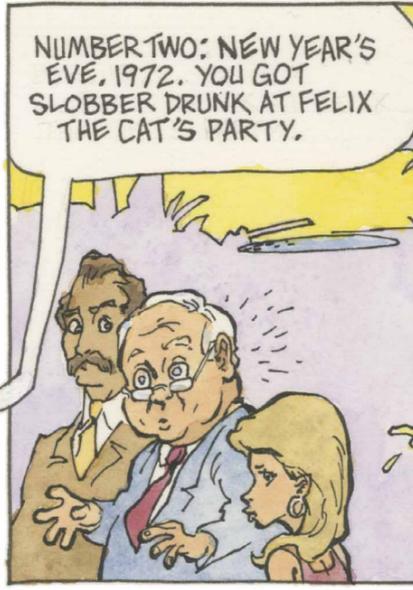
ADITYA SOOD ('97)



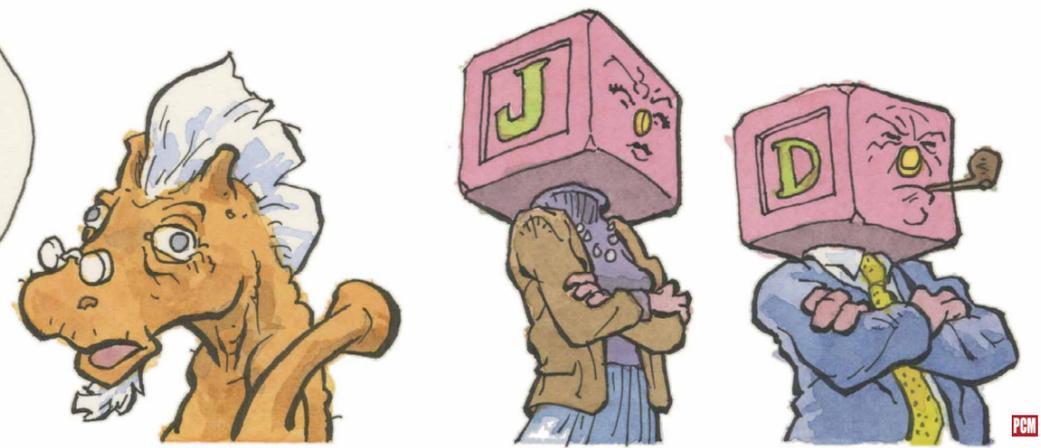
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* JOHNNY GRANT: LONGTIME HONORARY MAYOR OF HOLLYWOOD AND HOST OF WALK OF FAME EVENTS

Last of the Yellow Journalists

There was a time when editorial cartooning was a job a young artist could aspire to. In 1900, there were an estimated 2,000 editorial cartoonists at work in the United States. They still numbered in the hundreds by the late '70s, when—at the start of my career—I briefly became one of them.

It's probably just as well that I moved on to other things. Since then, the American editorial cartoonist has become an endangered species, right up there with the pygmy elephant. The total in the U.S. is reportedly below 25 now, and falling. Just in the last two years, two Pulitzer Prize-winners—Nick Anderson at the *Houston Chronicle* and Steve Benson at the *Arizona Republic*—were dumped. In June, following an uproar about a cartoon full of anti-Semitic tropes, the international edition of *The New York Times* followed the example of its national counterpart and fired its last two cartoonists—neither of whom, by the way, had drawn the offending cartoon.

Here's how bad it's gotten: Iran now boasts more editorial cartoonists than the U.S.

I thought for a while that editorial cartooning would be my life's work. Old-timers like Herblock and Conrad were giving way to subtle, innovative artists like Pat Oliphant and Jeff MacNelly. Strip cartoonists like *Dooniesbury* creator Gary Trudeau were blurring the line between the Sunday comics and the editorial page. These young guns were transforming the medium—putting irony and satire,

artistic style and sly visual humor ahead of blunt-force commentary. It was an exciting time to be an editorial cartoonist.

And I loved the actual process of creating a cartoon—the immersion in the news, the joyous flash of inspiration, the inner howls of laughter as I did my preliminary sketches, the knowledge of famous faces that allowed me to draw Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton without conscious thought and the feeling of working without a net each time I wielded my ink brush to create the final product.

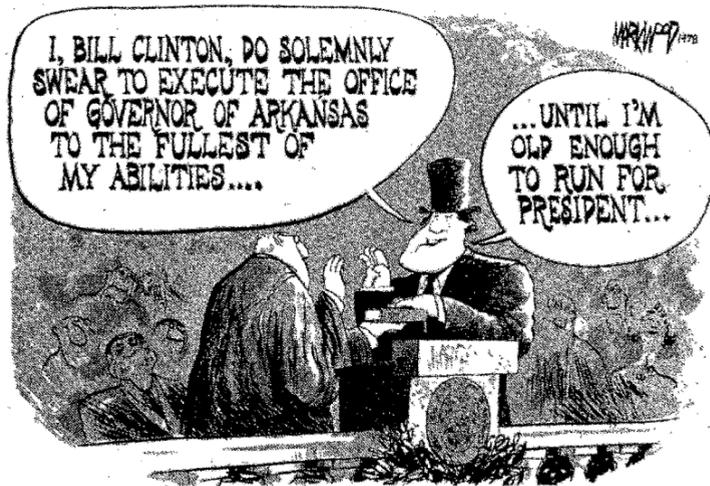
Over the years, I must have done hundreds of drawings of Clinton, then governor of the state where I lived, including one, shown here, that was completed shortly after he was first elected governor at the tender age of 32. It's without a doubt the most prescient thing I've ever produced.

Part of the fun of it was the pure joy of poking fun at powerful people. I used to joke that we editorial cartoonists were the last of the yellow journalists—the only purveyors of the news who still had license to use caricature and exaggeration to distill complicated situations down to a single, simplistic metaphor. Our work was full of open mockery—an artform that intentionally stretched the limits of polite discourse.

And that was probably a big part of its undoing. In a time of heightened sensitivities and social media mobs, caricature has become a dangerous sport. As Australian cartoonist Mark Knight (whose caricatures are uniformly brutal) learned when tennis player Serena Williams's husband accused him of a racist depiction of her, there's a fine line between the kind of harsh visual exaggeration that caricatures depend upon and the perpetuation of cruel stereotypes. Add in the decline of newspapers as a profitable industry, and it's not surprising, I suppose, that cartoonists have become, at best, expendable and, at worst, potential liabilities.

Given all of that, the number of young American artists who now aspire to become the next great editorial cartoonist is probably on a par with the number who plan to repair steam engines. But while the bell is clearly tolling for American editorial cartooning, I have to admit that I was wrong when I said we were the last of the yellow journalists. Yellow journalism, I'm afraid, is viciously alive and well on social media and talk radio—minus, of course, the redeeming humor.

—MW



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The star of *Comedy Central's* *Hood Adjacent* and host of *Awake: The Million Dollar Game* on *Netflix*, James Davis '05 has a serious outlook on comedy.

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Mrs. Miller—a frumpy, middle-aged pop chanteuse—sold half a million records and was a 1960s media sensation thanks to her sheer chutzpah and utter incompetence. But was she in on the joke?

38 This Is Your Brain on Humor

Professor Ori Amir wants to understand how the human brain generates comedy. He also wants to make you laugh out loud.

44 The World According to Bob's Burgers

To break into the world of comedy, Wendy Molyneux '97 and her sister Lizzie wrote plenty of scripts that went nowhere—until one of them happened to cross the desk of the creator of *Bob's Burgers*.

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ON THE COVER

PHOTO OF JAMES DAVIS '05 AT THE COMEDY UNION IN LOS ANGELES BY DAVID ZAITZ



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DEPRESSION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Caroline Chou, a Claremont McKenna College senior completing her major in Pomona's computer science program, knew she wanted to do her senior thesis on a subject that incorporated health and computer science. Based on prior research showing a connection between certain indicators in social media and an episode of depression, Chou wondered if she could use social media to create an app-based support tool for therapists, psychiatrists and other health professionals who are working with people suffering from depressive disorder. With the support of Pomona College Assistant Professor of Computer Science Alexandra Papoutsaki, Chou spent the last semester designing the various interfaces of an app that would, when completed, provide an analysis of public portions of a patient's Twitter usage, giving the clinician a heads-up to possible depressive episodes. Here's a fictitious scenario showing how it might work:



1 Dr. Kay recommends that her patient, Josie, use the app to analyze depression-related patterns in her Twitter usage.

2 Dr. Kay logs in to look at the patient's monthly report for January and sees a spike in depression-related indicators during the second week of the month.

3 During Josie's regular therapy session, Dr. Kay uses the report to jog the patient's memory about significant events of that particular week.

4 Josie tears up as she remembers that week, when her dog was seriously ill, and as a result, her therapy session becomes more productive.

From left: Professor Alexandra Papoutsaki and Caroline Chou (CMC '19)

Social Media: Not the Answer

In your cartoon in the spring/summer 2019 *PCM* titled "Depression and Social Media," fictional "Dr. Kay" (sadly not so fictional) provides some sort of "therapy" (using the word loosely) to fictional "Josie," recommending she use an app to analyze her "depression-related patterns in her Twitter usage."

Now wait a minute! My view from 35 years of actual clinical practice as a clinical psychologist is quite different. I wouldn't say it quite so harshly, but my advice to young Josie:

"Josie, research is getting pretty clear, and the title of the cartoon you are in says it all: 'Depression and Social Media.' The increase in depression in your age group seems to be related, in part, to the proliferation of social media. I recommend you get off of Twitter! Also, fire Dr. Kay as he is incompetent and doesn't know the literature about what helps people.

"It is other people.

"Perhaps Dr. Kay fears this assertion is not 'scientific.' He is wrong, the scientific data is actually very clear in this regard. Dr. Kay seems most thoughtful as he looks at his computer

screen, where he (along with the surveillance capitalists at Twitter) renders your behavioral data. When you are, ironically, lying on the Freudian couch, he's not looking at you, but at the 'report' that the app has rendered, and reminding you that your dog was seriously ill.

"Josie, do you really not remember that your furry friend was seriously ill?"

"Maybe you have been conditioned to believe, as some of my clients have, that such an experience shouldn't upset you, but clearly it does, and that makes a lot of sense. If you really don't remember he was ill, we need to explore your rather severe dissociative disorder, perhaps caused in part by your overuse of social media."

I make what is called a "right livelihood" working directly, face to face, with a broad range of people, including those in Josie's generation. Many, on their own, without my saying anything, have realized they need to decrease their use of social media, and all would seem to prefer and benefit from relating to me, not an app, as we, together, uncover and explore their joys, sorrows, hopes and fears. It is profoundly rewarding work.

—Jon Maaske '72
Albuquerque, NM

In Defense of the Federalist Society

The article "History & the Court" in the winter 2019 *PCM*, about Professor Hollis-Brusky's analysis of a recent Supreme Court decision on guns, references the way federal courts may inadvertently, but sometimes intentionally, intrude on Congress's plenary power to enact substantive law under Article I of the Constitution.

Professor Hollis-Brusky's apparent call to view the courts as a vehicle to "throw out all the rules about what we ought to expect, [which] opens up a lot of possibilities for people who want to reimagine the way we are" is essentially a call to judicial activism. Jurists answering that call would be acting in a way irreconcilable with the Constitution's foundational tenet of separation of powers, which vests in Congress, not the courts, the authority to create the law.

In contrast to Professor Hollis-Brusky's call to judicial activism, the Federalist Society advocates that "the separation of governmental powers is central to our Constitution, and that it is emphatically the province and duty of the judiciary to say what the law is, not what it should be." The Federalist Society's solution for judicial activism is a

judicial approach focusing first on the Constitution's express words, and then, if any ambiguity exists, determining the Framers' actual intent by focusing on what reasonable persons living at the time of its adoption would have understood the ordinary meaning of the text to be. This approach was followed in the Heller decision referenced by Professor Hollis-Brusky. The Heller decision reflects a proper judicial analysis of the Founders' original intent and meaning of the Second Amendment at the time of ratification.

Although Professor Hollis-Brusky asserts that such an analysis had been made many times over the 150 years preceding Heller, resulting in an answer contrary to the Heller majority's approach and conclusion, the judicial record indicates otherwise. As the 8th Circuit held in *U.S. v. Seay*, "Prior to 2009, the Supreme Court had not examined [the Second Amendment right] in depth. This changed with the Court's landmark decision in *Heller*." Similarly, in *People v. Aguilar*, the Illinois Supreme Court (none of whose judges were, at the time of the opinion, members of the Federalist Society) unanimously noted that the U.S. Supreme Court in *Heller* "undertook its first-ever 'in-depth examination' of the Second Amendment's meaning." A consistent application of original intent thereby decreases the danger posed by the temptation for jurists to impose their own policy preferences into decisions and/or exercise judicial activism to change the law independently of the legislature.

—Grant Frazier '16
Phoenix, AZ

Real VR Therapy

I am writing with regard to the article in the spring/summer 2019 *PCM* about the potential research of Cynthia Nyongesa '19 on virtual reality and individuals with ASD.

While we do not use VR as a therapeutic intervention, per se, we at AHRC Middle/High School in Brooklyn, NY (schools.ahrcnyc.org) have been using this technology with our students since 2017.

We have used VR to help our students simulate community experiences such as traveling via subway, making purchases and having social interactions, as well as using it a tool for "virtual field trips" and curriculum extensions. In our experience, VR is an easy-to-use, cost-effective tool for introducing more "real-life" situations to our students with ASD so that they are better prepared to handle these encounters in the real world.

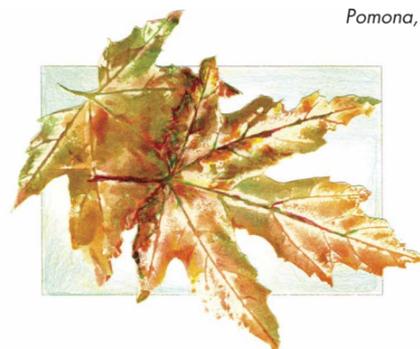
We appreciate that these novel and safe interventions are being investigated at Pomona College these days.

—John Goodson '02
Cambridge, MA

Corrections

I'm at a point in life where one is inclined to be somewhat forgetful. Personally, I am a good example of that some of the time, but thankfully not all of the time. So when I saw my class note in the spring/summer 2019 *PCM* with the Class of 1950, I had to think twice: Am I Class of '50 or Class of '51? The '50ers are a great group, but I really am a loyal '51er and always will be. Thus I felt compelled to bring this little editorial glitch to your attention.

—Pat Newton '51
Pomona, CA



The spring/summer issue is a splendid piece of work in all ways, but unfortunately, it contains an error on page 52, line 7 of the Class of '49 notes. I am a member of the Nature PRINTING Society, not the Nature PAINTING Society. If you will access www.natureprintingsociety.org, you will see that while our society is fairly young, the art of printing from nature is centuries old. I mostly print botanicals [see above] but have also printed fish (does *gyotaku* ring a bell?), feathers, squid, octopi, fossils, shells, snakeskins and really flat roadkill, and I even got to assist at the printing of an orca that washed up down-coast and was assigned to the museum for a necropsy. NPS also appears on Facebook, but since I'm a technological Luddite, I have no idea how to find it.

—Lila Anne Bartha (AKA "Hebe")
Santa Barbara, CA

Concerning an error in "Smoke in the Wine" in the winter 2019 *PCM*, Sonoma and Santa Rosa were not "Spanish settlements" in what is today Sonoma County, Calif., as the article says. They were Mexican.

—Hal Beck '64
Forestville, CA

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

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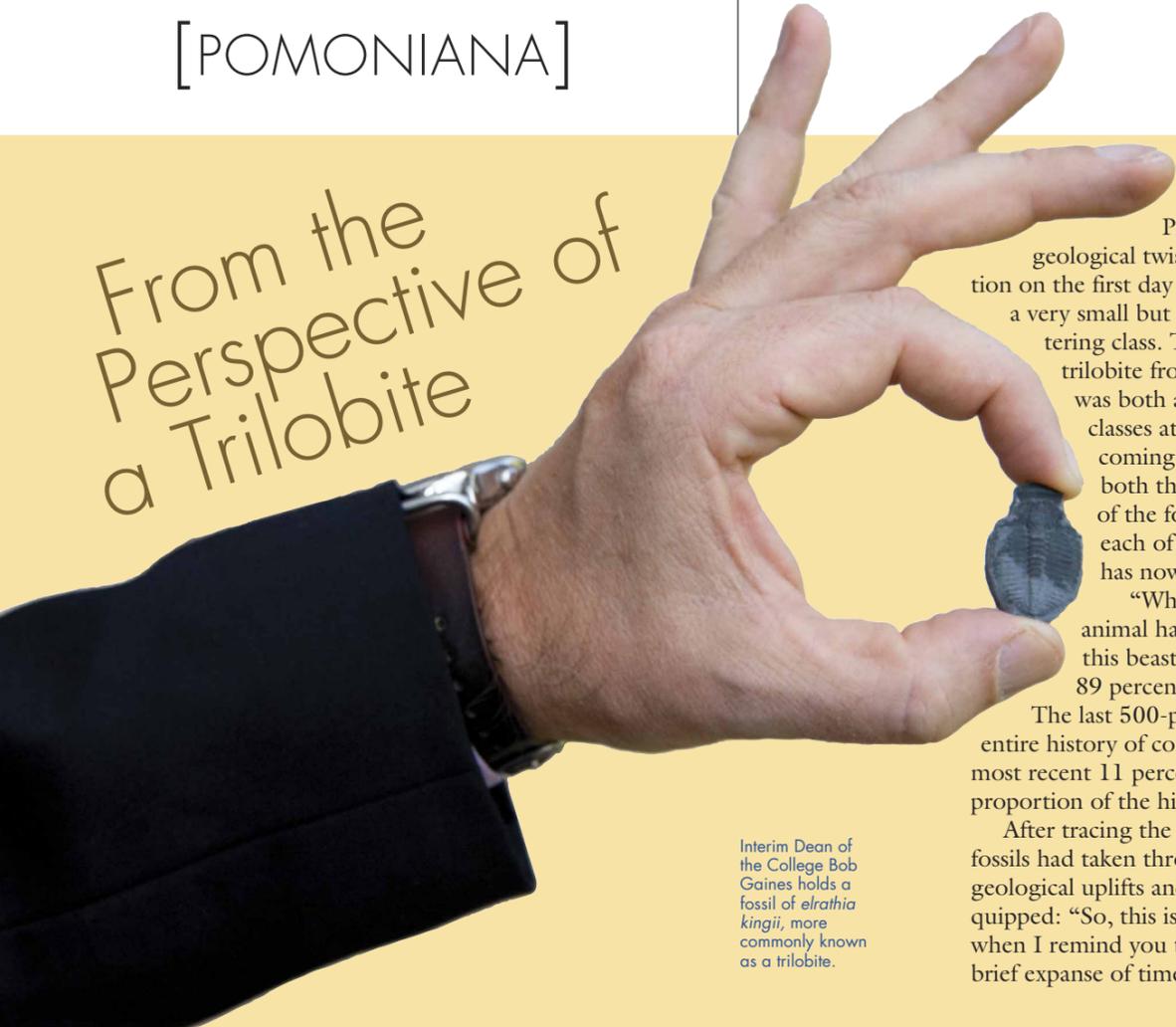
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Pomona College complies with all applicable state and federal civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination in education and the workplace. This policy of nondiscrimination covers admission, access and service in Pomona College programs and activities, as well as hiring, promotion, compensation, benefits and all other terms and conditions of employment at Pomona College.



From the Perspective of a Trilobite



Interim Dean of the College Bob Gaines holds a fossil of *elrathia kingii*, more commonly known as a trilobite.

Interim Dean of the College and Professor of Geology Bob Gaines threw a geological twist into the College's opening convocation on the first day of the fall 2019 semester by presenting a very small but very old gift to each member of the entering class. The gift—a 504-million-year-old fossil trilobite from the Wheeler Shale in western Utah, was both a memento of the students' first day of classes at Pomona and a focal point for his welcoming speech, which focused on time, on both the geological scale and the human scale of the four-year college journey upon which each of the new members of the Class of 2023 has now embarked.

"What you hold," Gaines explained, "is an animal half a billion years old. In Earth terms, this beast is a mere youngster. It appeared after 89 percent of Earth's history had already elapsed. The last 500-plus million years—which constitute the entire history of complex life on Earth, represent only the most recent 11 percent of Earth's history and a far, far lesser proportion of the history of our universe."

After tracing the very long journey each of those tiny fossils had taken through ancient seabeds, rock formations, geological uplifts and ice ages to the present day, he quipped: "So, this is the perspective from which I speak when I remind you that four years is actually a relatively brief expanse of time."

On the Fringe

On the first day of her Devising Theatre class last spring, when Assistant Professor of Theatre and Dance Jessie Mills proposed the idea of developing a student-produced play as part of the Hollywood Fringe Festival, five of her students leapt at the opportunity. The festival—an open-access celebration of theatre in L.A.—brings hundreds of new plays to professional theatres each summer. And so, for one week in June at the Broadwater Black Box theatre, Ally Center '21, Roei Cohen '21, Alex Collado '20, Noah Plasse '21 and Abdullah Shahid '19 brought to life onstage their own serio-comedy, titled *How to Adult*. Recent graduates Rachel Tils '19 and Jonathan Wilson '19 were also involved as directors.

The students not only had to create their own play; they also had to produce it, including negotiating a contract with a venue for dates and times and setting up and breaking down their own sets. "Creating and producing this work is truly at the center of the liberal arts," says Mills. "These students pulled from a myriad of sources, experiences and materials to collaboratively synthesize their ideas into one cohesive vision."

Award-Winning Food



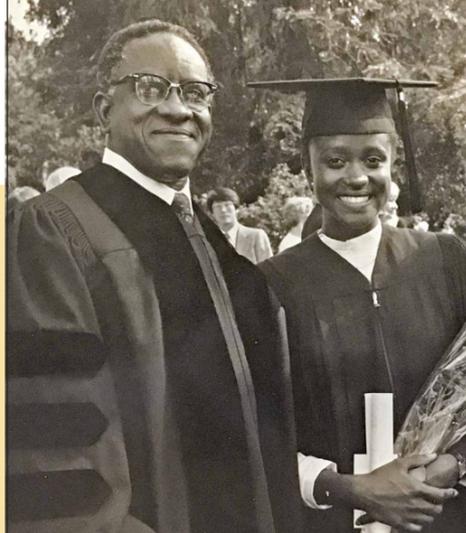
Try not to drool when you read the menu that won Pomona College chefs Amanda Castillo, John Hames, Marvin Love and Angel Villa a silver medal in a recent national cooking competition.

First course: branzino with kohlrabi slaw, ginger-scented maitake fish broth and tempura snap peas.
Second course: pork belly and shrimp with herb-roasted mashed potatoes, tomato purée and roasted corn.

Third course: vegan almond cake with caramelized peaches, bionda ganache, raspberry sauce and cashew and popcorn brittle.

Buffet course: Korean spiced tri-tip with moong bean pancakes, pickled cauliflower and jasmine rice.

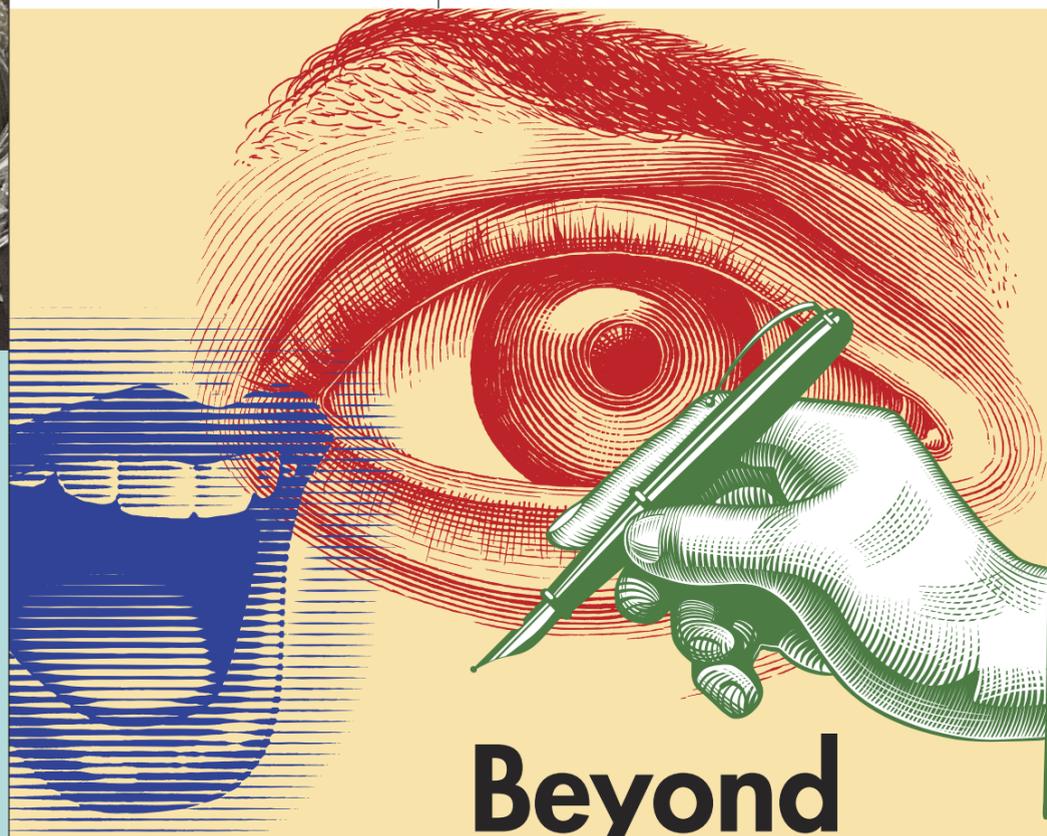
The event was the team competition sponsored by the American Culinary Federation during its 25th Annual Chef Culinary Conference at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, last June.



Generationally Speaking

Last May, when foreign policy expert and former member of the Obama administration Esther Brimmer '83 stepped up to the podium in Marston Quad as the featured speaker for the 2019 commencement exercises, she was following in some big footsteps—her father's. Andrew Brimmer, then governor of the Federal Reserve, was Pomona's featured commencement speaker in 1983, the year his daughter graduated from Pomona. In her address, Esther Brimmer recalled her father's advice to her: "Run with the swift. ... Whatever you do, you should try to learn from the best."

Above: Esther Brimmer with her father, Andrew Brimmer, at the 1983 commencement exercises. Below: Esther receives an honorary degree at Pomona's 2019 Commencement.



Beyond Writing

Fulbright Fellows

Nine Pomona College recipients of Fulbright fellowships boarded airplanes this fall, headed everywhere from Indonesia to Lithuania. Four others declined the award to pursue other plans. Here's the list of new Fulbright fellows, with their majors and destinations:

- Natasha Anis '19, English major, teaching in Indonesia
- Ellena Basada '16, English major, teaching in Germany
- Sarah Binou '19, cognitive science major, teaching in Brazil
- Tiffany Mi '19, anthropology and French major, teaching in Spain
- Andrew Nguy '19, Asian studies major, studying contemporary tea culture in China
- Jessica Phan '19, molecular biology major, studying the chemistry of addiction in Portugal
- Megan Rohn '18, international relations major, teaching in Lithuania
- Ivan Solomon '19, international relations and Middle Eastern studies major, teaching in Morocco
- Laura Zhang '19, cognitive science major, teaching in Taiwan

Pomona College's Writing Center isn't just about writing any more.

Last summer, the center received a \$250,000 grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations to expand its mission to support oral and visual communication as well. The two-year grant will fund programs in which students can hone not only their writing skills but also their speaking ability and their competency in dealing with visual communications in an increasingly image-driven world.

"Through the new center, we propose a transformative reconceptualization of how we understand literacy and how we teach key forms of communication in the 21st century," says Kara Wittman, director of college writing and assistant professor of English. "Flexibility, thoughtfulness and deliberateness in all these areas will ensure that all Pomona graduates leave the College able to write and speak effectively, advocate compellingly and have an impact on the real-world issues they care about."

The new Center for Speaking, Writing and the Image will be a leader among liberal arts colleges in supporting written, oral and visual literacies at a single site.

HAUTE CUISINE, HAWAIIAN STYLE

Odds are high that food is one of your favorite topics. Office conversations about where to go for lunch. Calls home on your commute asking what's for dinner. Recounting a delicious meal in meticulous detail to a friend. Binging on the Food Network. And, of course, your Instagram feed (no pun intended). Food is a near and dear topic for Samuel Yamashita, too. The Pomona College Henry E. Sheffield Professor of History combined two great loves—food and, of course, history—and wrote *Hawai'i Regional Cuisine: The Food Movement That Changed the Way Hawai'i Eats*. In the book, Yamashita chronicles the way Hawaiians have eaten over time, and the way good, local island eats combined with French and Continental mainland fare to create a distinctive style of cuisine.

PCM's Sneha Abraham sat down for a chat with Yamashita on all things food.

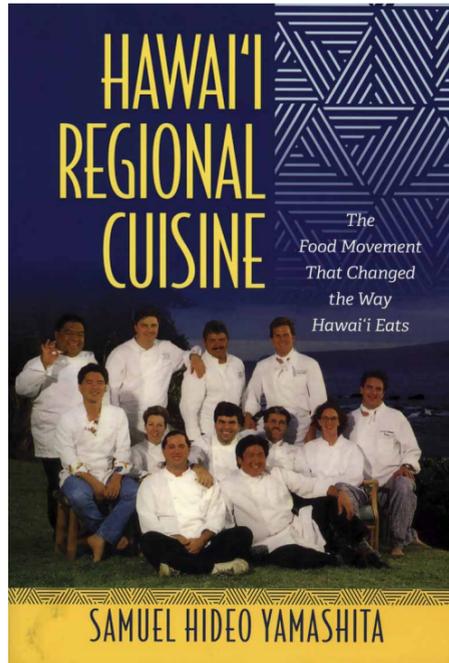
PCM: You grew up on the Hawaiian Islands?

Yamashita: I did. I grew up in a suburb of Honolulu, a place called Kailua, which has one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, top 10. And it's where Obama would rent a house during his presidency, but, of course, he really couldn't go on to the beach because of too many people.

PCM: Security.

Yamashita: Yeah. So, I grew up in a beach town. I didn't really wear shoes until I was 12. And so I had huge feet with really hard, kind of leathery soles. I had a great childhood. I mean, I played, I fished. I didn't study much.

PCM: You've made up for it in the years since.



Yamashita: Well, I had to.

PCM: Were you born there as well?

Yamashita: I was born in Honolulu, in the same hospital where Obama was born.

PCM: What inspired you to do food studies?

Yamashita: In about 2007 or '08, my editor at the University of Hawai'i Press asked me out of the blue if I'd be interested in writing the history of Japanese food. She knew I was interested in food, and she was too. We'd have great lunches, and it was at the end of one of these celebratory lunches (on the occasion of the publication of my book *Leaves from an Autumn of Emergencies*, that she oversaw) that she asked me, "How would you like to write a history of

Japanese food?" I was old enough to know that I really needed to think about this. To think about what sources I would use, how I would organize it, what kinds of narratives I would write. And I said, "Let me think about this."

I thought about it for half a year, and then I said, "Sure, I'd be happy to give it a try." But I said, "You and I know that you'll be long retired by the time I finish." She was exactly my age, and I sensed that she was going to retire in a few years, and I was right. So she retired about four or five years ago, and I'll finish this history of Japanese food in 2025 or so. It'll probably be my last book. That was the beginning of my interest in food studies.

I also had collected and read many dozens of wartime Japanese diaries and had written some pieces on the food situation in Japan during World War II. My first food pieces were actually on the food situation in wartime Japan. And then in around 2009, or '08 maybe, I was having to visit my widowed father in Hawai'i about four times a year, and I thought, "I need to be able to write off these trips."

So I began to interview chefs—the chefs for the Hawai'i Regional Cuisine movement. And I ended up interviewing 36 people, including eight of the 12 founding chefs of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine. And then I wrote a paper called "The Significance of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine in Post-Colonial Hawai'i" and presented it at a conference, and somebody who heard it said, "How would you like to contribute it to a volume?" And so a volume called *Eating Asian America* was assembled and published by NYU in 2013. That was another important piece for me. And then I began to map out a book on Hawai'i Regional Cuisine. And in the meantime, I published in 2015 a book called *Daily*

Life in Wartime Japan, 1940–1945 that used about 100 of the diaries I collected.

Once I finished with that, then I was able to concentrate on what became *Hawai'i Regional Cuisine*. I've also had good support from the College, chiefly in the form of the Frederick Sontag research fellowships, which are for senior faculty. So without those and without a series of spring leaves, I wouldn't have been able to finish.

PCM: Talk about the perceptions of Hawaiian food that you write about.

Yamashita: Well, people who traveled to Hawai'i didn't go for the food, and Alice Waters once said to a friend, "If you go to Hawai'i, be sure to take some good olive oil and vinegar so you can make a dressing and buy some watercress and have a good salad at least"—right? That was the prevailing view—that you went to Hawai'i to spend time at the beach, to do other fun things, but not to eat. And the one food phenomenon that was somewhat popular was the so-called luau, a kind of Hawaiian feast. And I certainly grew up attending luaus because our Hawaiian friends and neighbors would usually have a luau whenever there was something to celebrate. When a new child was born or a child graduated from high school or somebody got married or when there was a new baby, often there'd be a luau. And this is pretty typical of the Pacific and parts of Southeast Asia—you raise a pig especially for the luau, and the pig is ready at a certain point, and it becomes the main item in the luau. And so, our neighbors would dig an underground pit called an *imu*, and they cooked the pig in the pit. They'd also make all sorts of dishes that accompanied it, including poke, which is very popular now in the U.S., but poke was ... I could never eat poke outside Hawai'i. Often they misspell it, P-O-K-I; it's really P-O-K-E.

PCM: People here pronounce it poke-EE, too, right?

Yamashita: Yeah, yeah, it's po-KEH. So, I'd say Alice Waters's characterization of food in Hawai'i and then the construction of the luau as a tourist food event were probably the two prevailing views of food in the islands. And, of course, as I point out in my

"IN ALMOST ALL COLONIAL SITUATIONS, THE FOOD OF THE COLONIAL MASTERS IS VALUED AND ELEVATED AND AFFIRMED. OF COURSE, IT IS SERVED IN THE HOMES AND IN THE CLUBS OF THE COLONIAL ELITE, AND LOCAL FOOD IS DENIGRATED."

book, there was fine dining in the islands, usually at the top hotels that would hire Anglo chefs, usually European or American French-trained chefs. And what's interesting is that they would cook the very same things that their counterparts on the mainland or in Europe cooked. They would make the same French dishes, and they would use imported, generally imported fish, meat, vegetables and things of that sort. They weren't using local, locally sourced ingredients much at all. And, of course, all the chefs, all the top chefs were Anglo, and locals served in subordinate positions as cooks.

So-called "local food" is the food that the local ethnic communities brought to Hawai'i when they immigrated. The food they ate was denigrated by these Anglo chefs. So, there was a pretty stark hierarchy that separated haute cuisine, which was French and continental, from local food.

PCM: Can you talk a little bit about colonialism and then food, that relationship?

Yamashita: In almost all colonial situations, the food of the colonial masters is val-

ued and elevated and affirmed. Of course, it is served in the homes and in the clubs of the colonial elite, and local food is denigrated. I have cookbooks from the 19th century and the recipes are typical of New England. And they added a few Hawaiian things, but about 96 percent, 97 percent of the dishes in those cookbooks were American.

There's a scholar whose work I admire named Zilkia Janer who has written about food in Central America and Latin America. And, of course, there it's the Spanish cuisine that's elevated, and local cuisine of local indigenous people was denigrated. I actually use her piece in my book, as well as a number of other works on colonialism in South Asia, which offer a framework. So I also placed Hawai'i in that broader colonial context.

PCM: Do you think we're seeing kind of an iteration of that today in terms of globalization—the standard American diet is being adopted across the world?

Yamashita: Globalization is spreading American fast food as well as American popular culture. So McDonald's is in many places, even places where you don't expect to find it. Of course, now it's almost everywhere. And that's very typical, but it's a new kind of colonialism; it's a latter-day, post-modern colonialism that's a little different from what existed earlier.

PCM: Talk a little bit more about the historical distinctions between fine-dining food versus local food. What dishes did you find in fine dining? What dishes in local food?

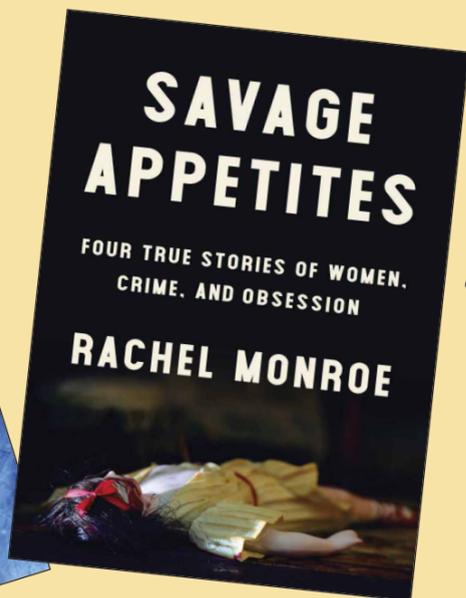
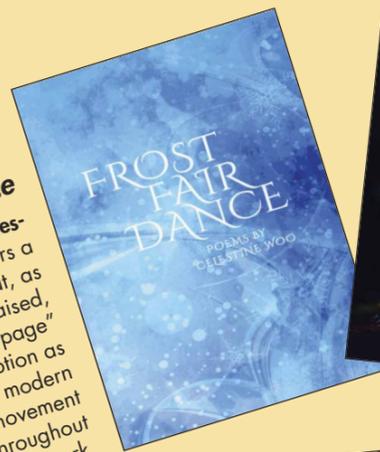
Yamashita: Before Hawai'i Regional Cuisine?

PCM: Yes.

Yamashita: So essentially, fine dining was dominated by continental and/or French cuisine. And so lots of emphasis on heavy sauces, as was the case with the French cuisine served with imported wines. Usually not served with rice, but with potatoes. I analyzed menus from some of the top restaurants in the islands before HRC, and the menus would be recognizable to anyone familiar with fine dining on the mainland ▶

Frost Fair Dance

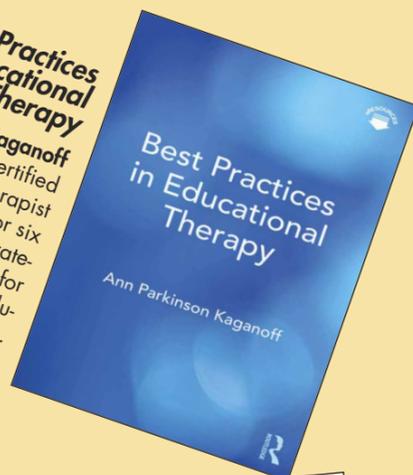
Dancer and poet **Celestine Woo '89** offers a book of poems that, as one editor praised, "glide across the page"—an apt description as Woo uses modern dance and movement as themes throughout her work.



Savage Appetites: Four True Stories of Women, Crime, and Obsessions
Rachel Monroe '06, hailed as one of the "queens of nonfiction," by *New York Magazine*, pens the stories of four women's obsession with true crime and explores our collective morbid fascination.

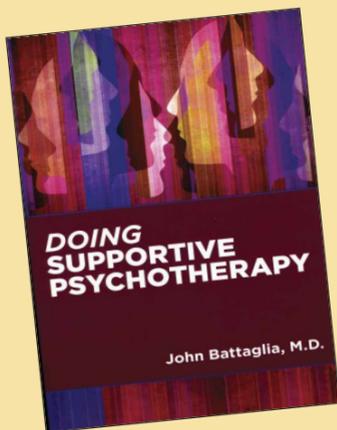
Best Practices in Educational Therapy

Ann Parkinson Kaganoff '58, a board-certified educational therapist and educator for six decades, offers strategies and solutions for novice and veteran educational therapists alike.



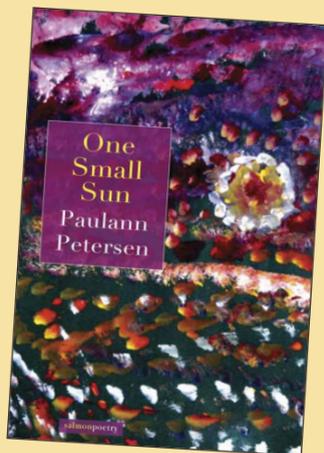
Doing Supportive Psychotherapy

John Battaglia '80, professor of psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin, has written a guide for learners and professionals alike on how to forge meaningful, impactful therapeutic relationships with patients.



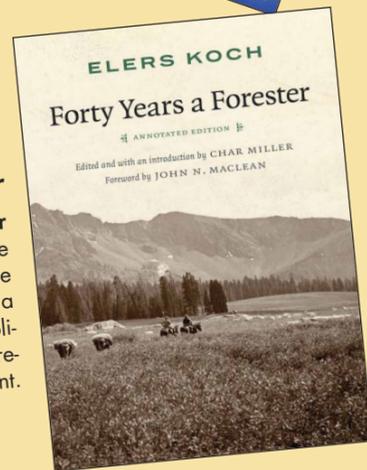
One Small Sun

The poetry of **Paulann Petersen '64** takes readers from Oregon to India, taps into memory and tells the tales of an aging woman's life.



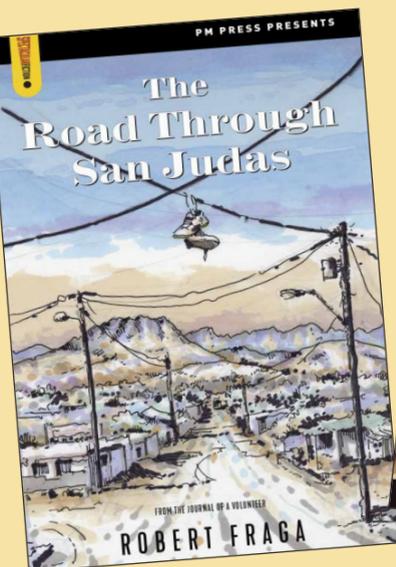
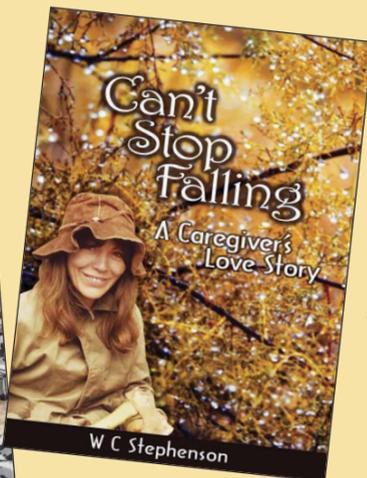
Forty Years a Forester

Professor of Environmental Analysis **Char Miller** edited an annotated edition of the memoir of **Elers Koch**, a key figure in the early days of the U.S. Forest Service with a major role in building relationships and policies that made the bureau the most respected in the federal government.



Can't Stop Falling: A Caregiver's Love Story

In a memoir written to inspire people helping loved ones who are suffering, **W C Stephenson '61** tells the story of his wife's rare neurological disease and his role as her caregiver.



The Road Through San Judas

The inspiration for this novel by **Robert Fraga '61** came from his time as a volunteer in Northern Mexico, where he learned of the conflict between landless Mexican farmers and a wealthy Juárez family who wanted their land.

as well. It's actually what you would find at top fine-dining establishments, especially French restaurants, in New York, in San Francisco and in Chicago. And you wouldn't find local dishes on the menu.

What really suggested to me that something had happened was the following: My wife and I went to this really wonderful, well-regarded restaurant called CanoeHouse on the Big Island. It's a great place for a great romantic dinner, located close enough to the ocean that you would hear the surf breaking. We got there at dusk and were led to a table and sat down, and I noticed on the table what you would find in the homes of locals and especially working-class locals—bottles of soy sauce and chili pepper water. And so when the waitress came back to the table, I said, "What's this? What's going on?" And she said, "Oh, we have a new chef. His name is Alan Wong." That's the two-word answer to the question. The bigger answer, the fuller answer is Hawaiian Regional Cuisine. Suddenly, people like Alan Wong and Roy Yamaguchi made it possible for local food to find its way into fine-dining establishments and, of course, this is what triggered my interest.

PCM: What did the chefs say triggered it for them?

Yamashita: Oh, that's a good question that has several different answers. Let me give you the big answer first. Roy Yamaguchi graduated from the Culinary Institute of America, 1976. He was one of the first students of Asian descent to go there, you know—CIA in Hyde Park, New York. And after he graduated, he came to L.A. and cooked at a number of different places, finding his way in the restaurant world because there weren't many Asian chefs. And he ended up finally at the best French restaurant in Los Angeles.

Then he cooked at two other French restaurants. And food critics writing for the *Los Angeles Times* wrote reviews of those restaurants and they said, "You know, I had the best French dinner I've had all year at this restaurant," and who was the chef? It was Roy Yamaguchi. And then in 1984, he opened his own restaurant called 385 North, which was located at 385 La Cienega in West Hollywood. But what was also happening is that in 1982, Wolfgang Puck opened

Spago, and then in 1983, he opened Chinois on Main, and then a bunch of Japanese chefs sent from Japan opened Franco-Japanese restaurants. And then Roy opened 385 North, and they were all cooking something that Roy called "Euro-Asian cuisine." And he claims to have invented the concept in 1980; he may have invented it, but it quickly spread and was adopted by Puck and these other Japanese chefs.

Nobu Matsuhisa opened Matsuhisa in 1985, just about half a mile south of 385 North. But they were all doing Euro-Asian cuisine. And then in 1988, Roy came back to Hawai'i and opened his own restaurant called Roy's, and he used the Euro-Asian cuisine concept. And what that made possible was the adoption by chefs at fine-dining establishments of all kinds of Asian ingredients, the serving of Asian dishes. Conceptually that was what made HRC possible at a very high level. Because Roy was extremely well-trained and had experience and came to Hawai'i, and that Euro-Asian framework was adopted by the other HRC chefs as well.

But at another level, if you asked Alan Wong that question, he would say something different—Alan Wong and Sam Choy, who were the two of the 12 chefs who are local. Alan Wong would say, "This is plantation food," because the plantation communities were multi-ethnic.

Alan puts it this way: "You know, they would share their lunches, and so the Japanese would bring a Japanese lunch, the Chinese would bring a Chinese lunch, the Filipino would bring a Filipino lunch, and they would share food." And so, Alan's answer then is, "Well, this is what happened historically in Hawai'i, beginning in plantation times." It's a very different kind of answer, but Alan did not go to the CIA. Alan went through a culinary arts program at a community college in Hawai'i for two years, and then he went to a famous resort in Virginia called the Greenbrier, where he had two more years of training. And then he worked in New York at Lutèce, which was one of the best French restaurants in New York City. And after several years there, he then came back to Hawai'i.

So he had the technical skill to make the best possible French cuisine imaginable, but he began to incorporate things from the local diet. That's how he would explain that.

So two very different kinds of answers. I think Alan's answer is somewhat mythicized; it's a kind of romantic view of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine. I think the story of Roy is one that, historically, I'm more comfortable with. You know, I don't like myth.

PCM: Yeah, you deal in history.

Yamashita: Yeah, that's right, exactly right.

PCM: There is a sort of farm-to-table element, right, in Hawai'i Regional Cuisine. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Yamashita: Well, that emerges somewhat late. Hawai'i Regional Cuisine—its founding is formally announced in August 1991. It's really not until the second decade, in the 21st century, that Peter Merriman and others developed the farm-to-table dimension of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine. Of course, farm-to-table also emerges on the mainland, the continental U.S., around the same time—I think in the 21st century. And, you know, it's important, but the impact of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine on farming is actually much larger than that because farm-to-table is a kind of tourist phenomenon, right? It's so that tourists can visit the farms with the chef and meet the farmers and so forth. What Peter Merriman and others began to do in the 1990s was to develop relationships with farmers. What it does is to encourage local farmers, and it makes possible a kind of locavorism that was beginning to be really big on the mainland as well.

PCM: What is the legacy of HRC?

Yamashita: Good, good—that's an important question. In the first place, Hawai'i Regional Cuisine has made haute cuisine in Hawai'i part of what I call "the restaurant world" on the mainland, and this was very important. That is, they were noticed by mainland food writers and won national awards. Secondly, it affirmed locavorism and encouraged local farmers such as Tane Datta. His daughter's name was Amber. I think she was a 2013 Pomona graduate. Third, Hawai'i Regional Cuisine affirmed "local food," in quotation marks—that is, the food that local people, non-Anglo people, ate. Fourth, it led to the formation of farmers' ▸

markets throughout the islands. Fifth, it made culinary arts an acceptable path of study, and even graduates of Punahou [a prestigious private K–12 school in Honolulu] became chefs—Ed Kenney and Michelle Karr-Ueoka, they're both Punahou graduates. In the sixth place, HRC helped de-racialize fine dining in the islands. And that's, to me, a really important point. Roy Yamaguchi says, "In an earlier generation, I would've been a cook, not a chef." So he's aware of that demographic change.

It also helped shatter the domination of French cuisine. And I was able to track this in recipes of HRC chefs. And that connection made it easier for chefs in the islands to cook locally, to cook things inspired by what they grew up with in their respective ethnic communities. One of the post-HRC chefs, the Filipino chef Sheldon Simeon, says, "I'm cooking my community." Which I thought was a wonderful way to put it: "I'm cooking my community." And then finally, the HRC movement and chefs brought important food issues to the attention of the broader public. So, sustainability, obviously, is one important issue.

There's a kind of bottom fish called pink snapper; it and other types of bottom fish were being overfished. And so HRC chef Peter Merriman brought that to the attention of the broader public in some editorials that he wrote.

And this resulted in careful regulation of bottom fish catches. When a certain limit is reached, then they close it down. And some of the chefs even began to use farm-raised tilapia instead of pink snapper.

Tilapia can be farmed. And apparently, the farmed tilapia tastes good. Whereas the tilapia that some of us caught when we were kids, you know, it tasted muddy, it tasted like catfish. So, it's had a huge impact. And, of course, the HRC chefs became celebrities, got TV shows and contracts. And so, they became part of this global celebrity-chef phenomenon. Yeah, big deal.

PCM: Yeah, it is. What was the most fun part about writing this book?

Yamashita: Well, of course, eating the food.

PCM: I knew the answer, but I had to ask. Do you have a favorite Hawaiian dish?

Yamashita: A favorite dish? Well, you know, Alan Wong's loco moco was my all-time favorite dish.

PCM: Can you describe for the readers what loco moco is?



Alan Wong's interpretation of loco moco

Yamashita: Well, it's an interesting story because the loco moco was invented in Hilo, after World War II. And it was a dish created for a bunch of local teenage boys who were about to play a football game. A particular cook said, "I'll make a dish for you guys." It's a plate with a mound of cooked short grain rice, topped with a hamburger patty with brown gravy poured over it and a fried egg on top. So they got starch, they got protein, you know, and lots of carbohydrates, and that carried them through the game. And so if you go to L&L Drive-In, they serve loco moco.

What Alan Wong did was to deconstruct the loco moco. For the rice, he used mochi

rice, which is a highly glutinous rice. He cooked it and then created a kind of patty, rice patty, and deep fried it briefly. And then, instead of the ground beef patty, he used ground wagyu beef and unagi, which is Japanese eel. Mixed that together, created a patty, and cooked that and slathered it with an unagi sauce, which is sauce made with soy sauce and sake, and probably sugar. It's a thick, dark sauce. He poured that over it, and then he topped it with a fried quail egg. There's a picture of it in my book, and it's a

magnificent, brilliant, brilliant take on a humble local dish. I had eaten several different loco mocos of Alan Wong's over the years before I encountered the version I just described. This was, to me, the pinnacle.

PCM: Loco moco 2.0.

Yamashita: Loco moco 4.0.

PCM: Do you cook?

Yamashita: You know, I do, or I used to. My wife's such a good cook that I leave it up to her. No, I like to cook the things that are my favorites.

PCM: What's your signature dish?

Yamashita: I used to have my students over, and what I used to make was a beef carbonnade described in a French cookbook. It's essentially a stew made with beef and onions and

a lot of red wine. It's just a really hearty, rich dish, but a lot of our students are vegetarians, so they didn't always like that, but that was what I used to make.

At that point I started making instead a Chinese dish called white-cooked chicken, where you parboil chicken and serve it at room temperature, and you slice cucumbers into thin strips and put the chicken on top of that and serve it with a peanut sauce.

PCM: That sounds delicious.

Yamashita: That's one of my favorites. So, when I'm a bachelor, I often make that for myself. **PCM**

Bowling for Atoms

Professor of Physics and Astronomy David Tanenbaum keeps this broken pink bowling ball in his office as a reminder of a project that he considers to be one of the most important responsibilities of his career—playing the lead role in providing faculty oversight for the design, planning and construction of the new Millikan Laboratory for Physics, Mathematics and Astronomy. The last step in that long and arduous process was the grand opening of the new facility on Founders' Day 2015. In planning for that special event, the question arose: How should they christen the new building? The answer to that question involved some showmanship, some real physics and, incidentally, the destruction of a bowling ball.

Built in the 1950s, the original Millikan Laboratory had become badly out-of-date, so in 2013 it was torn down to make room for a new, state-of-the-art Millikan, built upon the footprint of the original.

To dedicate this new building for physics, math and astronomy in 2015, the faculty didn't want anything trite, like cutting a ribbon. They wanted nothing less than to smash an atom.

Not a real atom, of course. An atom made of papier-mâché. The Math Department took on the job of creating the atom, using as a model the sculpture above the building's front door.

Created for the original Millikan by artist Albert Stewart, that bronze sculpture, a striking but not-very-accurate representation of a lithium atom, is the only remaining feature from the original structure.

The next question was how to smash this make-believe atom. After some consideration, the faculty settled on two bowling balls, suspended by ropes from the ceiling, swinging down simultaneously from two sides to smash together in the middle.



Knowing that it would take some experimentation to create a safe and reliable way of smashing the atom, Tanenbaum and his colleagues bought several bowling balls and fitted them with hooks.

They then hung two bowling balls from the ceiling and devised a clever mechanism to pull them apart and release them at the same instant by the pull of a cord, so that they would swing down and collide.

Since there was only one papier-mâché atom and it couldn't be destroyed more than once, they concentrated on making the two bowling balls collide at the midpoint where the atom would be hung on the day of the opening.

In one test, the balls collided so violently that the resin covering of one ball shattered. After that, Tanenbaum used a cardboard box as a stand-in for the atom to cushion the blow.

For the event, then-President David Oxtoby was recruited to do the honors. Standing in a lift and wearing a hard-hat, he pulled the cord, and all of that hard work ended in a crash, with a thoroughly smashed atom.

Critical Inquiries



Professor Sandeep Mukherjee in his studio

With any luck, many first-year students will find in their Critical Inquiry seminars what Miguel Delgado-Garcia '20, president of the Associated Students of Pomona College (ASPC), told those gathered for 2019 Opening Convocation he found in his.

It was “the first of many homes for me” at Pomona College, Delgado-Garcia said as he addressed students in Bridges Hall of Music on the first day of classes.

Known as ID1 courses for their interdisciplinary designation in the catalog, Critical Inquiry seminars give first-year students an introduction to the kind of deep reading, writing and discussion that will be a foundation of their educations at Pomona. ID1 is one of three time-honored traditions (along with Orientation Adventure and sponsor groups) that introduce first-years to small groups of students who share close experiences that help them form early friendships on campus—and perhaps find the first of many homes.

Here’s a look at three of the 30 ID1 courses this year.

I Disagree

It’s little surprise one of the most requested ID1 classes this year considers “the problem of living with difference.” Professor of Mathematics Vin de Silva has taught the class a number of times, but says “what I’ve found in the last couple of years is that I feel that it’s almost inadequate for the much bigger task of rebalancing our public climate.”

De Silva has no illusions of resolving political conflict, but through various case studies students learn more effective ways of communicating. One example is the 1957 movie *12 Angry Men*, in which the character played by Henry Fonda slowly changes the minds

of jurors in a murder trial. Another comes from Edward Tufte, a Yale professor emeritus of political science, computer science and statistics. Tufte studied the efforts of Morton Thiokol engineers who advised against the 1986 launch of the ill-fated shuttle Challenger. NASA officials pushed back, and the launch went ahead.

“Of course it wasn’t OK,” de Silva says. “So then, the whole question is: If you have some piece of information and some understanding that makes you think that something shouldn’t be done, and there’s still pressure to do it, how do you try to communicate that? The contractors went to NASA and showed them all sorts of complicated figures and then said, ‘We don’t think you should launch.’ That isn’t always going to be effective. Tufte proposes a simplified chart, and as soon as you spend a couple of minutes looking at it and figuring it out, then you realize it’s totally clear that you shouldn’t launch.”

On Fiction

In an era when truth is under scrutiny, where does that leave fiction? Colleen Rosenfeld, an associate professor of English and a faculty fellow this year in Pomona’s Humanities Studio, designed her course to complement the studio’s 2019–20 theme, Post/Truth.

“The question of post-truth was especially interesting to me for fiction because the debate right now is so much around facts. How do we evaluate facts, and is it about trusting institutional sources?” Rosenfeld says. “Fiction has an interesting status because it’s neither truth nor lies.”

Among the readings in this class is the essay “Defence of Poesy” by 16th-century poet Philip Sidney. “Sidney says against the charge from Plato that poets are liars that, well, a poet cannot lie because ‘he

nothing affirms,’” Rosenfeld says. “If you don’t make an affirmation, then your speech can’t be held to the question of true or false.”

Other texts include Italo Calvino’s short story collection *Cosmicomics* and Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

“There’s a long tradition which says, ‘Yes, fiction does involve truth—it’s just truth operating on a higher order,’” Rosenfeld says.

“These questions are old. We’re thinking about them in this political context, but it’s the same set of ideas that people have been using to think through literature and poetry and fiction, as far back as I can read.”

Color and Its Affects

Inside Sandeep Mukherjee’s studio, a work in progress lines two walls in layers of fleshy reddish-brown paint. Hanging from the ceiling are aluminum moldings of tree trunks, sprayed with black and white paint that runs down the metal like rivulets.

Mukherjee, an associate professor of art and recipient of a 2017 Guggenheim Fellowship, says one of the challenges his ID1 students will face is the elusive endeavor of writing about color and its affects. (He draws on affect theory as proposed by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze.)

“It escapes, because color isn’t a fixed entity,” Mukherjee says.

“It depends on what’s around it, where it’s located, space, time, the person viewing it. So when all these factors come together is when color is produced as an experience, and to try and pin it down in language is almost impossible.

Black and white will be examined too, and Mukherjee notes the inadequacy of those terms in describing race or skin tone.

“You’ve got brown, purple,” says Mukherjee, who often assigns self-portraits to beginning painting students. “I have them make the color that is their flesh, their hair, their eyes, their eyebrows. So they understand how much color each of us has.”

More unsettling is an essay students will read by Aruna D’Souza in *Whitewalling: Art, Race & Protest in 3 Acts* on the painting *Open Casket* by Dana Schutz. The painting depicts the grotesquely mutilated face of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old black boy who was murdered in 1955 after whistling at a white woman. His mother chose a glass-topped casket to show the world what had been done.

“There was a huge controversy at the Whitney Museum about race and who gets to speak on it,” Mukherjee says, noting that Schutz, the artist, is white.

“The most gratifying feedback I get is, ‘The way I look at the world has changed on the most basic level,’” Mukherjee says. “That’s profound.”



The 2019 recipients of the Wig Distinguished Professor Award, the highest honor bestowed on Pomona faculty, were (from left):

- Stephan Garcia, W.M. Keck Distinguished Service Professor and professor of mathematics,
- Guadalupe Bacio, assistant professor of psychology and Chicana/o Latina/o studies,
- Valorie Thomas, professor of English and Africana studies,
- Susan McWilliams Barndt, professor of politics,
- Pey-Yi Chu, associate professor of history, and
- Carolyn Ratteray, assistant professor of theatre and dance.

EMILY GLASS '15 IS WORKING TO MAKE THE MIAMI MARLINS THE FIRST BILINGUAL TEAM IN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL.

Hablas Baseball?



Emily Glass '15 with Miami Marlins pitcher Jose Quijada

Walk through the Miami Marlins clubhouse and there's a chance you'll hear a Spanish phrase common in the Dominican Republic: “¿Qué lo que?”

Thanks to an innovative education program led by Emily Glass '15, that might be an English-speaking player engaging in Spanish banter that roughly translates as “What's up?” And you're just as likely to hear a Latin player greeting his U.S.-born

teammates in English.

With Glass's help, the Marlins are trying to become the first bilingual organization in Major League Baseball (MLB). “We're teaching English to our international players and Spanish to our domestic players, but then also life skills, from financial planning to cooking classes,” says Glass, whose work as the Marlins' first education coordinator has been featured in *The New York Times*

and *The Washington Post*. “The philosophy behind that is that we live in a globalized world, and Miami is at the center of that,” Glass says.

More than a quarter of the players on major league rosters at the beginning of this season were born outside the U.S., with a record 102 from the Dominican Republic, 68 from Venezuela and 19 from Cuba. In Miami and some other cities, the fans are in-

creasingly Spanish-speaking too.

“Our new stadium is in Little Havana, so it's in a neighborhood where everybody speaks Spanish,” Glass says. “So we want to give our players and all of our front-office employees the ability to interact with our fans that come to the ballpark and with the community, in both Spanish and English.”

Working for an MLB team seems glamorous when you see Glass bumping fists with a major leaguer on the field before a game. But the former Pomona-Pitzer softball player also spends at least a month each winter in the Dominican and much of the season on the road visiting Marlins minor-league players on teams like the Batavia Muckdogs, the New Orleans Baby Cakes and the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp.

Though her path to the big leagues has been winding, she has been preparing for this work even before she stepped on the Pomona College campus. She played baseball with her brother on youth teams until she was a teenager and then switched to softball for high school and college. She started every game for the Sagehens her first season, batting .386. But Glass would play only one more season of softball because competing campus interests and a love for hardball led her to recreational baseball with the guys in what she euphemistically calls a “carbonated-beverage league.”

Her first-year Critical Inquiry class at Pomona, or ID1 as it's known, was Baseball in America with Lorn Foster, now an emeritus professor, who became such a close mentor that the two still have a standing phone call each Sunday at 3 p.m.

“She was a very gifted writer—that's first and foremost,” Foster says. “But her interest in baseball was abiding.”

Glass later served as a teaching assistant for the class, and honed her high school and college Spanish while studying abroad in Salamanca, Spain. When it came time to write her senior thesis for a degree in public policy analysis, she again chose baseball as her topic, delving into a renowned program for disadvantaged youth called Reviving Baseball in the Inner City (RBI), founded by former major-league player John Young in Los Angeles in 1989.

She also won a coveted Watson Fellowship, which provides a stipend of more than \$30,000 for a new graduate to engage in a

year of independent research abroad. Glass studied international baseball while traveling to seven countries, including the Dominican, Japan and Australia. In Japan, she coached Little League on a field onto which she believes only one other woman had ever stepped. There she faced language and cultural barriers and “just baffled confusion from some people of ‘Why are you here?’”

On her return, she reached the final round of interviews for a position as an assistant of baseball operations with the New York Yankees but didn't get the job. She then worked as the chief sales officer for a company called Acme Smoked Fish in Brooklyn for a year and a half before realizing, “I want to work in baseball. I don't want to work in smoked fish.”

Mayu Fielding, the education coordinator for the Pittsburgh Pirates, became a mentor and referred her to multiple teams. Glass made it to the final round for a job with the New York Mets and interviewed with the Toronto Blue Jays and the Cincinnati Reds.

“My dad had always said to me that it takes six months to get the job that you want,” she says. “But if you try for six months and you put in the time and you trust the process, it will work out.”

Finally, the Marlins called, and Gary Denbo, the organization's vice president of player development and scouting, gave her the only chance she needed.

The shared language of baseball often starts with pitches. *Recta* for straight fastball, *curva* for curveball, *cambio* for changeup. For catchers and pitchers in particular, it's important nothing gets lost in translation.

“Baseball is a game of inches,” Glass says, “whether something is a ball or a strike or fair or foul, and our players see that by being able to communicate and be on the same page as some of their teammates, everything works better.”

Her mission might be most crucial with the Latin teenagers at the Dominican academy or just starting minor-league careers, many of them trying to break free of poverty and provide for their families. Landing in the hinterlands of the American minor leagues with no English is difficult.

“A lot of our players we sign at 18 or 20 years old; they've never cooked meals for themselves,” says Glass, who hires teachers to work with various Marlins teams in classes

limited to 12 students—a hat tip to her small-class experiences at Pomona. She also shapes the curriculum, part of which is delivered by mobile phone or online.

“All of it truly is encompassed in service in the highest sense of the word—the skills they are going to need when they're in a rookie league making very little money and trying to support themselves,” she says. “So we really tailor things toward interview skills and toward the off-field and money management skills—how to send money to your family abroad and how to communicate professionally at the field and away from the field.”

Jarlin Garcia, a 26-year-old Dominican pitcher now in the majors, remembers how challenging it was when the amount of English he spoke was *nada*.

“It's a little bit hard, because you want to talk with the people, with the fans, and like when you're out to eat,” he says in English, sitting in the visitors' dugout at Dodger Stadium. “That's why we need to learn.”

Beside him was Luis Dorante, a player relations and Spanish media relations liaison who works closely with Glass and travels with the major-league team to translate when necessary.

Like Glass, he is cognizant of the importance of life skills. “Some of these guys come from very humble places,” he says. “They have no idea what is a debit card, what is a credit card. Credit is difficult to explain. I say, ‘Son, be careful, you have to pay that later on.’”

Of course, only one in 200 minor leaguers ever reaches the big leagues. And even for those who do, the money may not last forever. “What we tell them is that many of these players won't make it. Unfortunately, it's a statistical fact,” Dorante says. “They need to enjoy this period in their life where they're learning many skills and also gaining friends that might last for life.”

Jose Quijada, a 23-year-old pitcher from Venezuela, echoes Garcia, once again in English. “I think it's important for me because, like, you play here in America, you need to talk with your friends from America who speak English. When you go to the bank, you need to talk English.”

It's Glass's job to make that happen—even if players' Spanglish is sometimes charmingly imperfect. “Emily's my friend,” Quijada says. “She's a good guy.”

—Robyn Norwood

[HOW TO]

GENEVIEVE LEE
THE EVERETT S. OLIVE PROFESSOR
OF MUSIC AT POMONA COLLEGE,
HAS PERFORMED AS A CONCERT
PIANIST ALL OVER THE WORLD,
FROM BRAZIL TO CHINA. TO LEARN
WHAT IT TAKES TO SUCCEED IN
THAT DEMANDING ART FORM,
WE INVITE YOU TO FOLLOW HER
WINDING PATH THROUGH LIFE.

HOW TO BECOME A CONCERT PIANIST

1 AT AGE 4, although neither of your parents is a musician, decide on your own that you want to play the piano. Study with a neighborhood teacher in Racine, Wisconsin, and discover that you love it so much that your parents never have to make you practice.

2 WHILE ASPIRING to become an architect or a brain surgeon, show so much promise as a young pianist that, when you're 8 years old, your piano teacher tells your parents that you need to move on to a more advanced instructor.

3 AFTER MOVING to York, Pennsylvania, apply to study piano with a well-known teacher in Baltimore, an hour's drive away. Get accepted and work with her for five years, as she gently nudges you to abandon brain surgery for a career in music.

4 AT 12, PERFORM as a soloist in your very first concert with an actual orchestra. Play a Mozart concerto with the York Symphony Orchestra and discover the thrill of performing before an audience that isn't made up of relatives and friends.

5 AS A HIGH SCHOOL senior at the age of 15, decide to apply only to music schools. Choose Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, where you feel both intimidated and inspired by the talented people around you. Decide that this is the right path for you.

6 GRADUATE FROM Peabody in three years and attend a summer program for musicians in Fontainebleau, France, where you win a one-year scholarship to the École Supérieure de Musique in Paris. Take first prize in the school's annual competition.

7 GO ON TO graduate school at Yale University, where you find a mentor, the pianist Boris Berman, who challenges you to think independently and find your own special voice as a musician. Eventually earn your doctor of musical arts degree there.

8 TEACH FOR TWO YEARS as a visiting professor at Bucknell University and fall in love with the liberal arts setting. Apply for a job at Pomona College and get it. Enjoy working with the students so much that you're still at it 25 years later.

9 IN ADDITION TO your solo work, play with various chamber music ensembles, including the Mojave Trio and the Garth Newel Piano Quartet, even though the latter means flying across the country to Virginia for each rehearsal.

10 PERFORM AT VENUES around the globe, including Carnegie Hall in New York and Disney Hall in L.A. Play both classical works and experimental pieces and earn a Grammy nomination for a CD in which you play a toy grand piano.

THE STAR OF COMEDY CENTRAL'S HOOD ADJACENT AND HOST OF AWAKE: THE MILLION DOLLAR GAME ON NETFLIX, JAMES DAVIS '05 HAS A SERIOUS OUTLOOK ON COMEDY.

THE MANY FACES OF JAMES DAVIS

BY ZAN ROMANOFF



JAMES DAVIS HAS BEEN SITTING AT OUR TABLE

at Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles in L.A. for no more than five minutes when his phone lights up with a call. He hasn't even had time to order yet, and already, his attention is being diverted in another direction.

It's a girl. Davis answers and tells her playfully: "I'm mid-interview, but I was, like, 'I have to pick this up.'"

If she's not used to hearing it from him yet, she will be soon: Davis's work as a comedian, actor and writer is more in demand than ever these days. Since leaving Pomona to pursue a career in entertainment, Davis has appeared on shows like Kevin Hart's *Real Husbands of Hollywood*, created and starred in *Hood Adjacent with James Davis*, which aired on Comedy Central for a season in 2017, and, most recently, acted as the host for a game show called *Awake: The Million Dollar Game*, which

really hits you. And when that passion is so strong, everything else really starts to feel like a distraction."

He quickly discovered that passion would only take him so far: "That was way more daunting than I'd assume it was going to be, coming from the Pomona bubble," Davis says now, laughing at his youthful hubris. "Like, *Hollywood. I'll conquer that next!*"

Luckily he'd grown up in L.A., so Davis had a place to crash while he was making a name for himself: His mom took him in while he went to auditions and started pulling together material for a stand-up routine. He doesn't take that for granted, he says: "I didn't have to sleep on any couches. I didn't have that desperation with my comedy where I was like, 'If this joke doesn't land, or I don't book this one gig, I'll have to fly back home.'" Davis looks around the restaurant, which has been a touchstone in his life since he and his friends hung out here on weekend nights in high school, and smiles. "I'm already back home."

Still, the climb from being a nameless nobody to the top-billed star of a Comedy Central show was a grind. Davis started out

Baldwin Hills, a historically black neighborhood, but as a teenager he would travel crosstown to Santa Monica to attend a majority-white private school, Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences.

So The Comedy Union immediately felt like home because "it's predominantly black, but not all black. For someone who's self-proclaimed hood-adjacent, it was important for me to have jokes that appealed to everybody. I didn't just want to do rooms that were all black, and I didn't want to be the comedian that only does all-white rooms either. When my friends come to the show, I want them to laugh, both white and non-white," Davis says.

Davis credits his education with helping him craft the kinds of jokes that caught Mitchell's eye and made him popular with those diverse audiences. "Those classes," he says, talking about the time he spent in college, "are what I think make my jokes different from the majority of my peers'. Those classes are what gave me a certain awareness about the world, to then use comedy as a platform."

When Davis is writing a joke, he says,

he says, is about the murder of one of his uncles by a police officer. There's a joke in there, a standard laugh line: Davis riffing on how he never got to know what kind of uncle stereotype his uncle would have inhabited—the cheap one, the drunk one, etc.

But also, "I'm using this moment to say, 'Hey, me too,'" Davis explains. "This person performing for you—I am one of those people who's had a family member killed by a police officer. So if you think you've never seen somebody who's been affected by this—here's someone who has."

He cites studying with ex-Black Panther Phyllis Jackson while at Pomona as an experience that helped him realize how important it was to share his perspective. "You realize that the rest of the world didn't take this class; the rest of the world doesn't see that particular point of view," Davis says. "People say that I'm a smart comedian, that I'm clever. To me, I'm a product of the education I've been put in."

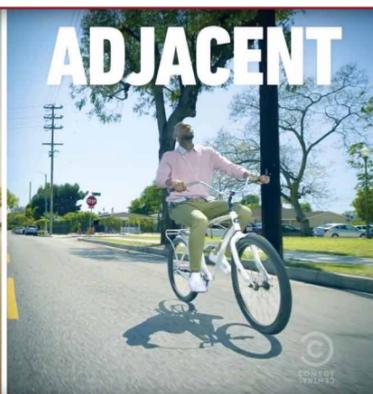
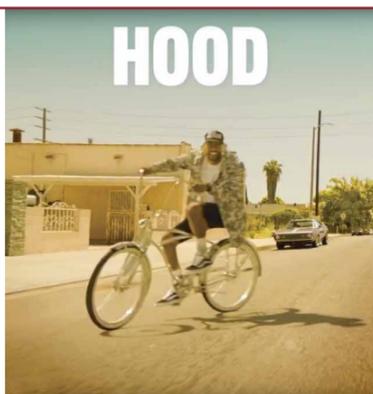
He also recognizes that he's lucky to have an audience to share with. "Not everybody is blessed with the opportunity to walk on a stage and be guaranteed a listening audience even for a split second," he says. "I feel called to, in some way, use that platform for more than just self-gain."

But putting so much into his comedy can be emotionally draining, and some days he's not really in the mood to give his experiences a punch line. "I care about a lot of serious issues, but I'm a comedian," Davis says. "I'm going through a lot of serious things in my per-

sonal life right now, but I'm a comedian. Right now, comedy is a little more challenging." He pauses and considers. He also writes and acts; he could focus on those pursuits instead, and to some extent, he's doing so. But he can't bring himself to give up on comedy, because, he says, when he's doing it well, it feels better than anything else on Earth.

WHEN DAVIS FIRST got into comedy, having his own show was the dream. "I remember watching *Chappelle's Show* and being like, 'This is what I want to do,'" he says. He was so focused on getting there that he ▶

"NOT EVERYBODY IS BLESSED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO WALK ON A STAGE AND BE GUARANTEED A LISTENING AUDIENCE EVEN FOR A SPLIT SECOND. I FEEL CALLED TO, IN SOME WAY, USE THAT PLATFORM FOR MORE THAN JUST SELF-GAIN."



This page: James Davis performing the rap-song intro to *Hood Adjacent*, which aired on Comedy Central in 2017; next page: Davis hosting his new game show *Awake* on Netflix.

premiered on Netflix in June. He's got 50,000 Instagram followers and a newly released stand-up special. He's not all the way on top of the world yet, but he is definitely making a rapid ascent.

Davis is balanced on a precipice: He's already achieved what many people would consider a lifetime's worth of career milestones; on the other hand, he's only 32, and he has "very big" goals he's still aiming to achieve, he says.

On the day we meet, however, he's just back from a weekend trip to Las Vegas for a friend's birthday, where he learned he loves to gamble ("like, too much"). So for the moment, he's less comedy superstar in the making, and more relat-

able hungover 30-something. For today, his goals are a little smaller: He wants to reassure his girl he's still into her, eat some fried chicken, and then take a well-deserved nap.

DESPITE THE FACT that he didn't end up graduating, Davis says that he loved his time at Pomona. He enrolled expecting to become a lawyer, but instead, he got distracted by studying English and taking acting classes. He liked the acting part so much that he started doing some work as an extra in L.A., and that was it for him, he says: "I was like, 'This is what I want to do.'"

"I chose the school; I chose my major," he continues. "But that bug, when it hits you, it

at the very bottom, doing what he describes as "bring a room" shows, which anyone can perform at as long as they have a friend who's willing to accompany them (and buy a couple of drinks). From there, he befriended other comedians and persuaded them to watch his tapes; they, in turn, spoke to Ens Mitchell, who owns a mid-city LA club called The Comedy Union, on his behalf.

The Comedy Union was the perfect place for Davis to hone his craft, he says, in part because it tends to draw racially diverse audiences. Davis grew up toggling between black and white spaces: he was born and raised in

regularly turned down gigs guest-starring in other people's projects, which "would make people look at me weird, like I'm crazy."

But his focus paid off: *Hood Adjacent* premiered on Comedy Central in June 2017. The show is formally similar to Chappelle's: It features Davis doing stand-up bits for a live audience before introducing prerecorded segments where he does things like gather a bunch of minority students from a local college campus to interview them about what it's like to be the token in their friend groups, or takes his bougiest friends to try to earn their "hood passes" from a Compton native.

The show is extremely personal, and extremely specific to Davis: It's his attempt to translate to a larger audience his experiences of blackness, of growing up in Los Angeles, of simultaneously belonging and not belonging in various communities. It was thrilling to get it made, but also "so stressful," Davis says. At the time, it was hard to appreciate the full extent of what he'd accomplished, and even now, "I'll sit back and realize, 'I did it,'" he says, shaking his head, still amazed.

To be fair, he didn't have very long to get used to the idea: *Hood Adjacent* lasted just eight episodes. "It didn't stay on like *Chappelle's Show*," Davis says. So, on to the next one: "Then I was like, 'I gotta create another show.'"

That next show is still gestating; in the meantime, he has to earn a living, which is how he ended up on a Burbank backlot shooting *Awake*, a show that feels like a hard left turn for a comedian whose work is usually fairly personal and political. There's no discussion of the nuances of the black American experience on *Awake*; instead, Davis is responsible for shepherding a group of contestants through a series of goofy challenges made harder by the fact that they haven't slept in 24 hours: They chug Slushies, thread needles, and turn off alarm clocks with bleary, sometimes daffy determination.

Davis recalls a Netflix executive calling to offer him the job and asking, essentially, *Are you all in on this? Is this show the biggest thing in your life right now?*

"I remember saying, 'Listen, when I left college, it was not to be a game show host,'" Davis reports, laughing. "'But I think this is gonna be a great show. I love the premise. I'm gonna take it seriously and do my best.'"

He saw *Awake* as an opportunity, and he's been in Hollywood long enough to know that you should never turn down one of those. "Unless you're a superstar, and you have that skyrocketing trajectory of a career, every appearance moves you a little bit closer, gives you more eyes," he says. "*Hood Adjacent* opened up a lot of people to me. I did a Facebook game show with charities, and that helped me get *Awake*. *Awake* is going to open me up to more hosting opportunities. Which is not what I was trying to do, but if that's what I do in between my passion projects, that's super cool with me."

DAVIS IS AT AN interesting juncture in his career, and his life. He's successful enough that friends are starting to ask him for favors. (He tells them, "Appearances versus payment are very different. I'm not Tom Cruise; I'm not Will Smith. I'm not anything close to that. I can get a couple of bills—like, dinner bills.") And Twitter haters are popping up regularly. ("If they're tweeting at you, they know about you. I remember when I had no haters because no one knew of me. There's just too many people on the Internet to worry about whether it's all positive.") But he also still

feels like he has a lot left that he wants to accomplish—getting another show of his own being just one of them.

"I shot a pilot for TruTV; TruTV went through some internal issues and didn't pick up a bunch of pilots, including mine," he says. "But I feel really good about what we shot, so I feel like it's going to land somewhere. I feel like there's going to be me hosting some other stuff—I've had a couple of meetings and some tests."

"Right now," he continues, "I'm really an open slate; it's about what I choose to do. I know for a fact that I'm going to be doing short films, maybe put some stuff in

some festivals. Just elevating, and continuing to use whatever craft to speak my mind."

He's particularly excited about doing more writing in every format: "Writing is always my favorite, because writing is at the base of everything," Davis says. "My favorite part is receiving a blessing of an idea, and then just capturing it and executing it, no matter what the genre is."

And maybe he'll help some of those friends get ahead too: His rise has given him the opportunity to open doors for old pals, a position he says he both relishes and resents. It comes with a lot of pressure: "I've got friends who, the plan was always, I get on,

and I help them get on," he says. Which means he has to succeed for their sake as well as for his own: "If I can't get on, I can't help them get on."

Davis feels the weight of his community on his shoulders, as well as his own high expectations for himself. But most days, the challenge excites him.

"I embraced that I'm the star of the team," he says. "I'm Kobe. Comes with the territory. Heavy lies the crown, but I still like how the crown fits." He tilts his head back and forth and smiles knowingly. "Even though it's heavy and it hurts, I like how it looks on me." **PCM**

CARTOONS WITH A MESSAGE

An Illustrated Q&A with Liz Fosslien '09

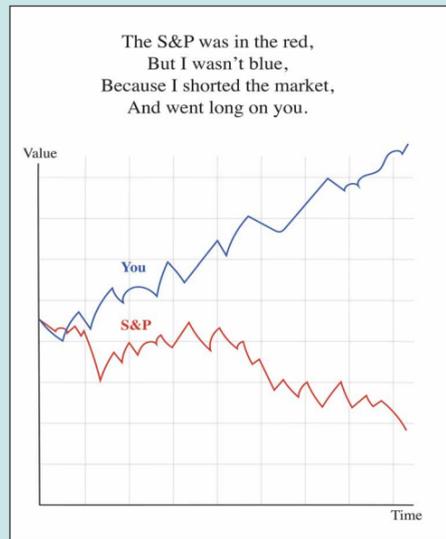
Liz Fosslien '09 is the co-author and illustrator of the *Wall Street Journal* bestseller *No Hard Feelings: The Secret Power of Embracing Emotions at Work*. She is also the head of content at Humu, a company founded by Laszlo Bock '93 that uses behavioral science to make work better. In her spare time, she draws cartoons that have been featured in *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, and *TIME*.

Q: When did you first start drawing?

I've always been an avid doodler. While I was working as an economic consultant in my early 20s, I started putting my feelings into charts and illustrations. One of the earliest projects I put online was "14 Ways an Economist Says I Love You" (at right)—super nerdy, but economists seemed to like it, which gave me the motivation to continue drawing in a more serious way.

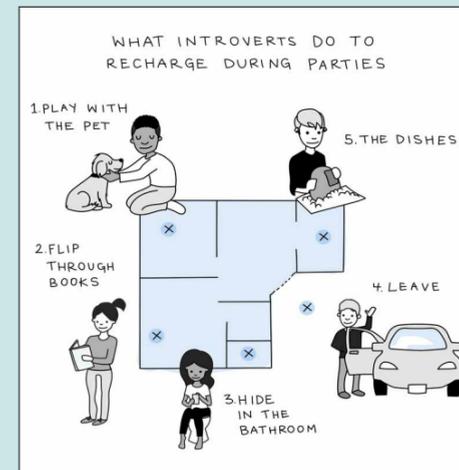
Q: How do you come up with ideas?

A comedian friend of mine once said he only goes to gatherings he knows will be amazing or horrendous, because extremes give him the best material. I feel similarly. When I'm brainstorming ideas, I try to think back on the moments when I felt intense emotion, good or bad.



For example, last summer I went to a wedding that started at noon, which is a very early time to start an event that goes until midnight. I'm an introvert, so around 7 p.m. I could not bear the thought of one more small talk. The only closed-off, quiet area was the coat closet, so I went inside it, sat on the floor and started messing around on my phone. A few minutes later,

another woman came in to do the same thing. We quickly bonded over being in the coat closet and then had a long and lovely discussion about all the things we'd done just to get some peace and quiet at a party. I made a cartoon out of that:



Q: How do you keep track of your ideas?

I send myself text messages. I tried writing ideas in a notebook, but it became too cumbersome to constantly be responsible for a notebook. Here are a bunch of idea texts I recently sent to myself: "weather forecast," "coffee and garbage can," "sharing and oversharing firehose." They're semi-nonsensical, but they usually do the job of joggling my memory. I don't remember what the "coffee and garbage can" text meant, though, so it's not a perfect system.

Q: What do you find funny?

Economics, the comic series *Calvin and Hobbes*, the book *Catch-22*, the human Larry David. And my partner—he is pretty funny.

Q: Many artists seem to have rituals. Do you have any?

So many. I'm most rigid about my morning routine. I've eaten the same thing for several years: seven mini-scoops of Trader Joe's plain nonfat Greek yogurt and one s'mores Luna Bar. While eating breakfast, I read academic abstracts or, if there is a new episode, listen to the podcast *Reply All*.

Trader Joe's has the best plain, non-fat Greek yogurt. My partner doubted there was any real difference between this yogurt and other brands, so we did a blind taste test. He fed me seven random spoonfuls of Trader Joe's, Fage, Chobani, and Wallaby yogurts, and I had to identify which one was the Trader Joe's yogurt. I got a perfect score.

More recently I've been experimenting with a new breakfast by swapping out the Luna Bar and swapping in peanut butter and walnuts. This is for health reasons only. The new breakfast is not as delicious.

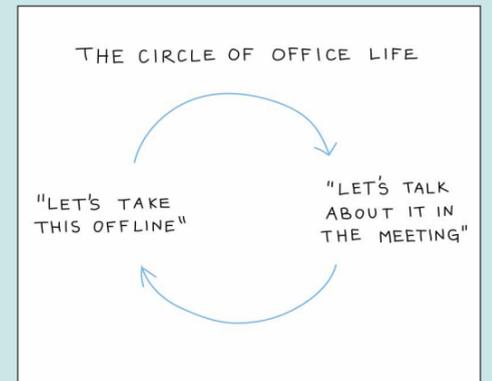
Q: Have you ever had a cartoon bomb?

Sort of. I posted this cartoon [next column] on Reddit, where it made it to the front page and was then promptly ripped to shreds by Internet trolls. The top comment was "Hooray, I get to have a colonoscopy!" and it went downhill from there. My parents thought it was hilarious. My dad, who lives in Chicago, still texts me from time to time. "I get to shovel the driveway again," he'll write. "I get to file my taxes."



Q: You've written a book about work. What's a good joke to tell when you're late to an important meeting?

My advice is to be punctual to important meetings.



Illustrations by Liz Fosslien '09

Mrs. Miller—a frumpy, middle-aged pop chanteuse—sold half a million records and was a 1960s media sensation thanks to her sheer chutzpah and utter incompetence. But was she in on the joke?

SLIGHTLY OUT OF TUNE

BY DAVID SCOTT

Few pop songs are as delicate, lovely and sophisticated as Antônio Carlos Jobim’s bossa nova classic, “The Girl from Ipanema.” Most know

it from the version recorded by Stan Getz and João Gilberto with vocals by Gilberto’s wife, Astrud. She is neither a trained nor technically proficient singer, which lends the song its magic. Her soft, shy sibilance fits the song’s irresistible sway, the perfect marriage of dreamy soundscape and insouciant delivery. “*And when she passes, each one she passes goes, ‘Ah!’*”

This, then, is the setup for one of the greatest jokes in pop music history. Mrs. Miller’s trip to “Ipanema” is a master class in her art. The track opens with 34 seconds of what may be the lushest, most sweeping treatment the song has ever known.

And then at 0:35—to adapt a phrase from today’s electronic dance music scene—Mrs. Miller delivers the drop. “*AbhhOHH, but I watch her so saaaaad-le-EE-ee...*” If Astrud is the voice of the seductive Rio beauty, then Mrs. Miller is a rogue elephant stampeding down the beach, trumpeting away without a care in the world. It’s not that Mrs. Miller can’t sing; it’s *how* she can’t sing. She proclaims each syllable as grand opera—the kind that’s shouted above thunderous tympani—and her vibrato is seismic. Pitch is of no concern; that she often comes close, in fact, renders her delivery even more maddening. And she never met a downbeat she couldn’t miss. ▷

HEAR FOR YOURSELF

If you’ve never heard Mrs. Miller, or even if you haven’t heard her lately, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEPPbONFXyc, and then get back to us ...



Mrs. Miller performs on The Hollywood Palace.

If this sounds vicious, please know that a handful of music nuts—myself included—adore Mrs. Miller, and being objective isn't easy, especially about an artist—an alumna of the College—whose notoriety came seemingly as the butt of an extremely cruel joke.

Because this issue of *PCM* is dedicated to humor, I felt I had to check to see if her music is still potent nearly 50 years on. Is the joke funny? Was it ever? An uninitiated friend was driving us to dinner. "Mind if I play something?" I asked, slipping in a CD. Thirty-four seconds of instrumental intro. My friend smiled and nodded. *This is good!* Then it happened. He started laughing so hard, he had to pull over. "Oh my god!" he said, gasping to contain himself. "What is she ... ? **MAKE IT STOP!**"

MEET MRS. MILLER

She had a first name. It was Elva. The fact that she didn't use it professionally is a clue for understanding the joke and determining if Elva Ruby Connes Miller '39 was in on it or not. More clues in unraveling the mystery: She released three albums—*Mrs. Miller's Greatest Hits*, *Will Success Spoil Mrs. Miller?*, and *The Country Soul of Mrs. Miller*, covering everyone from the Beatles to Buck Owens—in under two years (1966–67) on entertainment industry behemoth Capitol Records. A fourth album, *Mrs. Miller Does Her Thing*, was released in

1968 on a tiny label out of Hollywood. That Mrs. Miller disowned this effort is the strongest evidence we have that she wasn't fully in on but later caught on to what was happening. We'll get to all of that soon enough, but first we have to meet Mrs. Miller.

She was born and raised in mid-American cattle country, where she met and married John Richardson Miller, a man nearly 40 years her senior. They survived the Depression and retired to Claremont (as people do) in 1935. As a housewife with time on her hands, Elva studied

music at Pomona, where, she told a *Life* magazine reporter, the students warmed up to a more mature classmate. "They liked the idea of an older woman there," she said. "And within three weeks they were coming to my house, to copy my notes or listen to my records."

And by records, she meant the ones she'd recorded. Mrs. Miller booked time at local studios (paid for by Mr. Miller) to indulge her love of singing. She told the *Progress Bulletin*, "[Making *Greatest Hits*] certainly wasn't my idea. It was just a series of coincidences that could happen to anyone. Everyone has a hobby. Some people take pictures and file them in albums. Others paint pictures and store them in the



THIRTY-FOUR SECONDS OF INSTRUMENTAL INTRO. MY FRIEND SMILED AND NODDED. THIS IS GOOD! THEN IT HAPPENED. HE STARTED LAUGHING SO HARD, HE HAD TO PULL OVER. "OH MY GOD!" HE SAID, GASPING TO CONTAIN HIMSELF. "WHAT IS SHE ... ? MAKE IT STOP!"

garage. I've made records of sacred or classical songs for my own amusement. A closet at home is filled with them."

Some of them found their way out of that closet: She would give records to churches and day care centers. Along the way she met three men who would steer her toward becoming a reluctant recording star. Gary Owens was a deejay at Los Angeles radio station KMPC who, following Mrs. Miller's success, became a regular on '60s TV comedy sketch show *Laugh-In*. He heard one of her records and sought her out to record comic jingles and station IDs. In his tongue-in-cheek *Greatest Hits* liner notes, Owens claimed to have discovered Mrs. Miller. That honor actually belonged to Fred Bock, a church musician whom Mr. and Mrs. Miller hired to accompany Elva on her hobby recordings. Bock, in turn, introduced the Millers to Lex de Azevedo, a novice record producer who had industry "connections" thanks to being the son of one of the King Sisters.

With that, the stage was set.

A CAPITOL IDEA

So why would a leading record label—home to the Beatles and the Beach Boys, to Frank Sinatra's imperial period and Peggy Lee's renaissance—want to have anything to do with Mrs. Miller? Maybe because Jonathan and Darlene Edwards won a Grammy.

Cocktail club singer Darlene Edwards sang sharp—distressingly so—and her pianist husband Jonathan had the unique ability to play different keys and separate time signatures simultaneously. As illustrated by the cover to their debut album (on Columbia, Capitol's main rival), he was born freakishly with two right hands.

It was a funny joke perpetrated by jazz vocal great Jo Stafford and her big band-leader husband Paul Weston. Stafford was known to have stunningly perfect pitch; so sure was her instrument that she could sustain the Herculean feat of intentionally singing above pitch. And he was so nimble on the 88s that he could accompany in fitting style by throwing in extra beats per measure and flying off into impossibly inept cadenzas. They used these dubious talents to personify two ditzzy, dreadful lounge lizards—Jonathan and Darlene Edwards—to entertain their friends at parties. The gag was so popular among jazzbo hipsters that Stafford and Weston released *The Piano Artistry of Jonathan Edwards* just for kicks.

Imagine their surprise when its follow-up brought home the 1961 Grammy for Best Comedy Album and revved up the market for musical comedy albums in general. With the industry's need to give the people more of the same, record company halls soon resounded with, "Get me the next Jonathan and Darlene Edwards!" At Capitol, Mrs. Miller's do-it-yourself 45s ended up in some talent screener's inbox; by that time Bock had convinced her to record a couple of the day's pop hits. The pitch was made: Rather than find someone talented to

play dumb like Stafford—*someone who would expect to be paid*—why not go with someone actually untalented?

Mrs. Miller was signed. De Azevedo was tapped to produce. Bock helped with the arrangements and recording. Owens came on board to add industry cred. And this juicy bonus: Rumors persisted, once the album was a hit, that Mr. Miller had footed the bill for the whole enterprise, as he had done for all of his wife's hobbies. (Confronted with this by the *Progress Bulletin's* Vonne Robertson, Mrs. Miller reportedly snapped, "He didn't buy me a career!")

There was a significant and telling departure from the Edwards formula—a ready-for-pasture lounge act massacring yesterday's moldy oldies much to the delight of the hipper-than-thou cool school. (Stafford and Weston enjoyed a stupendously long career and would eventually have the Edwards record hits of the day as well, including the Bee Gees' falsetto-driven disco smash "Stayin' Alive" in a parody so wicked and on-the-nose that Barry Gibb allegedly was not amused.)

Capitol's grand plan for Mrs. Miller drew inspiration from the nascent Silent Majority v. Hippie Freak culture wars. The joke was funny because she was someone on the wrong side of cultural history, proving how far behind Mom and Pop had been left by the rock 'n' roll revolution. Not that she would be brought in on the joke; that

might ruin its purity. They told her she would be presenting rock 'n' roll as opera.

What follows is Mrs. Miller's recounting of how *Greatest Hits* was made, assembled from several chronological news sources spanning a two-year period, a period where what had happened to her slowly dawned on Mrs. Miller: "[Recording] it was easy. We didn't even have rehearsals. If there ever was a square, I'm it. I'd never attempted popular songs [before]. The studio men just popped the music in my hands—sorta sneaky like—and I started. I don't sing off-key and I don't sing off-rhythm. They got me to do so by waiting until I was tired and then making the record. Or they would cut the record before I could become familiar with the song. [I suspected something was up] when they

printed [my worst performance of] 'The Shadow of Your Smile.' They told me it was an experiment. I am naïve, and I am somewhat lacking in musicianship, but I really [didn't think it was] a gag. At first I didn't understand what was going on. But later I did, and I resented it.

"I don't like to be used."

THE HITS JUST KEEP ON COMING

Capitol released Mrs. Miller's cover of Petula Clark's "Downtown" as a single along with the album. What happened next was well captured by Joe Cappo writing in the April 21 *Chicago Daily News*. "Wally ▷



Phillips, WGN's zany morning disk jockey, premiered the LP on air last Friday. [He reports] the first batch of people who called said, 'Get that nut off the air.' Then after a few more plays, the listeners said, 'We want more Mrs. Miller. She's better than the rest of the junk you play.' Phillips says he has received hundreds of telephone calls since the first playing and is scheduling at least one Mrs. Miller tune every day. Phillips said, 'I play her records when I want to work off my hostilities against the world.'"

Greatest Hits sold out of its initial run of 50,000 in a matter of days. Another 150,000 were quickly pressed. They sold in a matter of weeks. Reports vary on how many finally were sold, ranging from 250,000 to 600,000.

Mrs. Miller Mania had hit. This was her itinerary for 1966–68: She was whisked to New York to be on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. She would also be a guest of Merv Griffin, Mike Douglas and Art Linkletter. There was *The Joey Bishop Show*. There was an appearance on TV's *Hollywood Palace* where she sat atop a piano to sing "Inka Dinka Doo" with Jimmy Durante. There was an appearance at Carnegie Hall with Red Skelton. Hollywood came calling. She played a version of herself in a low-budget film called *The Cool Ones* with Roddy McDowell.

A nightclub act was quickly pulled together with a backing band and chorus. (An ad in the trades may or may not have read, "Wanted: musi-

cians who can keep a straight face.") Mrs. Miller's first appearance was in Ontario at the Royal Tahitian. (A review had positive things to say ... about the "good chicken stuffed with almonds and apples.") Two more albums were made, each selling significantly fewer copies than the previous. A fourth appeared on a small independent label, Amaret Records. It disappeared without a trace, despite a promotional appearance with Johnny Carson on *The Tonight Show*.

And then it was over. Reports also vary on profits. Capitol is said to

have made millions off of the Mrs. Miller phenomenon. She is reported to have earned less than \$40,000 from *Greatest Hits* and not more than \$100,000 in total earnings from royalties, fees and personal appearances.

The May 13, 1966, issue of *Time* magazine mentioned in what amounted to a parenthetical aside that Mrs. Miller had put her earnings into a medical-care trust fund. Likely over the course of Mrs. Miller Mania and certainly by its end, Mr. Miller had needed round-the-clock nursing care. He died at age 96 in December 1968.

IN HER DAY SHE WAS COMPARED TO THE CHERRY SISTERS, A 19TH-CENTURY VAUDEVILLE ACT POPULAR ALTHOUGH—NO, PROBABLY BECAUSE—IT WAS SAID "THEY COULDN'T SPEAK, SING OR ACT. THEY WERE SIMPLY AWFUL."



I DON'T GET IT

How do you explain Mrs. Miller Mania? She was interviewed by *The Collegian* after her initial success and said, "I just don't know what to think about it, because I have never done anything which has brought any attention of any kind whatsoever, and I just don't know what to say. Now the boys in Vietnam, they want me to come, but I have to go back East first. I will go there because I think the service boys come first." On further reflection, she told reporter Bob Thomas, "I don't understand [my record sales], but teenagers seem to be buying them. As I see it, there are two kinds of teenagers. There are the sophisticated ones, who dress like Sonny and Cher. They don't buy my album. Then there are the teenagers who dress neatly; they are the ones who do buy my records."

This points to the 1960s culture wars, but in her admitted naïveté, Mrs. Miller overlooked something crucial. Like the boys in Vietnam or the hippies in their freaky frippery, her "character" embodies a sign of the times. As she warbles opera in her fusty frock and Sunday hat, she is the priggish society matron, the antithesis of all things with-it and groovy, practically begging for our smug derision. Think Margaret Drysdale on *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Mrs. Stephens on *Bewitched*, or, more benignly, even dear Aunt Bee and neighbor Clara on *The Andy Griffith Show*. Humor in those shows was often generated by letting the air out of such old gas bags. *She's singing rock 'n' roll! But she can't! It's hilarious!*

Recall as well that during Mrs. Miller Mania, America had its love affair with camp. We watched *Batman* on TV and listened to Tiny Tim (a hippie with talent who nevertheless warbled the hoariest of musical chestnuts while coyly strumming a ukulele). Even the Beatles got into the act with the likes of "When I'm 64" and "Yellow Submarine." (Mrs. Miller took a ride on the latter.)

Capitol Records—home to polar opposites like "A Hard Day's Night" and "Dear Heart," both songs scaled by Mrs. Miller—had its fingers on that pulse. Ultimately, Mrs. Miller wised up as well. In a review of her February 1967 appearance at L.A.'s Coconut Grove nightclub, John L. Scott noted that Mrs. Miller was playing the show as pure comedy, noting that she delivered very deliberate one-liners with great comic timing. And she was very aware that she had the audience in stitches. *She knows—'cause when she passes, each one she passes goes, "Ha!"*

But that didn't mean she gave in or pretended to be anything she wasn't. She went by "Mrs. Miller" for a reason, and it wasn't because it had a marketing ring to it. It was polite that wives were properly identified in public as their husband's property. Interviewed by Skip Heller in an article in *Cool and Strange Music Magazine*, Mrs. Fred Bock—to sustain a trope—recalled when, after a gig, she, her hus-

band and Mrs. Miller met actress Natalie Schafer (Mrs. Thurston Howell III, the *Gilligan's Island* version of the blue-blooded old biddy). The actress said to Mrs. Miller, "You can call me Natalie." To which Mrs. Miller replied, "And you can call me Mrs. Miller."

DESAFINADO

Antônio Carlos Jobim, who gave us "The Girl from Ipanema," penned another classic, "Desafinado" (translation: slightly out of tune). Its English lyrics speak of love gone sour; the original Portuguese gets at something deeper, suggesting that only privileged ears can hear things perfectly, that bossa nova can't help but be out of tune. It chides, "What you don't know and cannot feel is that those out of tune also have a heart."

Mrs. Miller wasn't the first pop sensation to have been lauded for singing poorly. In her day she was compared to the Cherry Sisters, a 19th-century vaudeville act popular although—no, probably because—it was said "they couldn't speak, sing or act. They were simply awful." And then there was Florence Foster Jenkins, the grossly untalented opera singer who rented grand opera halls to torture her friends. (In a 2016 film, Jenkins was played by no less than Meryl Streep, who proclaims, "People may say I couldn't sing, but no one can ever say I didn't sing.") Susan Alexander Kane's atrocious public

screaming is a central plot point of *Citizen Kane*. And try as you might, you cannot forget William Hung, can you?

Music is a particularly prickly muse. We are very quick to accept, even champion, foibles and faux pas in other art forms. We celebrate primitive painters. We keep Norman Mailer in the pantheon despite his having opened *Harlot's Ghost* with an egregious dangling participle. And Nicolas Cage keeps getting acting gigs, for crying out loud. But stray one iota off key....

It's often said visionaries are ahead of their time. In 2019 we have a word for the Mrs. Millers of the world—disrupters—and it's the hot thing to be. So isn't it odd that the chaotic disrupter of the music industry's professional norms and expectations—the joyous elephant stampeding down that Ipanema

beach—was none other than the persona of the stuffy establishment matron whose comeuppance we so deeply desired? And if you're having trouble wrapping your head around that double irony, here's the mindblower. When it comes to cooler-than-thou, competence isn't spared, either.

Nearly concurrently, 30 miles to the southwest, another transplant from the East who blossomed in a college music department was about to become a thousand times more famous than Mrs. Miller and come crashing down a hundred times harder. Only she was the ▷

best voice of her generation. Karen Carpenter came out of Downey, Calif., and the music department of California State University, Long Beach, to sell more than 90 million records. Carpenters records dramatically changed popular music—yes, even rock 'n' roll. The duo invented the guitar-driven power ballad, and their recording, performing and marketing techniques set standards throughout the industry. But they could not break the critical determination that they were unhip and square—okay, they *were* unhip and square—and that disservice lingers. Riots likely will break out should they ever be inducted into Cleveland's Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.

Karen now is regarded as a preeminent interpretive pop singer, yet frustrations with the duo's inability to shake their negative image, coupled with her own personal demons, led her to die of anorexia at age 32. Elva couldn't sing a good note. Karen couldn't sing a bad one. And both were out of tune with their times. Which just goes to show you that the arbiters of taste in their indifferent and often unfounded dismissals can be truly heartless monsters.

ONE FOR THE BOYS

Two postscripts. One bitten, twice shy? Hardly. It seems Mrs. Miller could not catch a break. After she was dropped by Capitol, news articles appeared noting that she was going to change her image. In April of 1968, she released *Mrs. Miller Does Her Own Thing*, working with noted L.A. producer Mike Curb. (He would go on to produce the Osmonds, date Karen Carpenter and serve as California's lieutenant governor.) Scattered among the usual pop hits that anyone but her should be singing, were suggestive, trippy titles such as "The Roach," "Mary Jane," "Granny Bopper" and "Renaissance of Smut," that would have been better if the pot and porno references had at least been dressed up with coy double entendre. The cover was psychedelic and garish. Mrs. Miller is winking knowingly and offering a salver of brownies presumably enhanced with what we now call "edibles."

Her new image was a pusher? Yet again, she had been hornswoggled. She didn't get the sex and drug references. The cover art had been manipulated. She didn't even get it when a winking Johnny Carson asked how the weeds were in her garden. (Was there ever a time when male entertainment honchos didn't exploit their power differential with women? *MAKE IT STOP!*)

When she was woke to this new betrayal, Mrs. Miller said "Enough!" She lived quietly in Claremont but remained engaged in her community. She was the grand marshal for the Fourth of July parade, and she judged The Claremont Colleges' Spring Sing. She moved to Hollywood, where she enjoyed classical concerts and theatre. She later moved to an apartment in Northridge that was destroyed in the 1994 quake. She was relocated to an elder-care facility, where she died in 1997. She was 90.

She did keep her promise to the boys in Nam. In 1967 she joined Bob Hope's annual USO tour. *Life* magazine's Jordan Bonfante covered it, noting of her performance, "In Vietnam, clad in jungle boots and a muumuu, she chatted with audiences about the 15 years she spent studying music, lopped five years off at each burst of laughter, and finally offered, 'Would you believe one?' When that was howled down, she confessed she was starting lessons 'tomorrow.'"

She had timing. She had one-liners. And—as captured in photos of her among the adoring troops—she had the time of her life.

"And when she passes, each one she passes goes, 'Ah!'" 

WHEN SHE WAS
WOKE TO THIS
NEW BETRAYAL,
MRS. MILLER SAID
"ENOUGH!"



Mrs. Miller and Jimmy Durante sing a duet on TV's The Hollywood Palace.

PROFESSOR ORI AMIR WANTS TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE HUMAN BRAIN GENERATES COMEDY. HE ALSO WANTS TO MAKE YOU LAUGH OUT LOUD.

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON HUMOR

BY ROBYN NORWOOD



O N A RANDOM WEEKNIGHT

at a comedy club in Burbank, Pomona College Professor Ori Amir bounds onto the stage.

“Hello, party people!”

By day, the bearded redhead with perpetually tousled hair is a visiting professor of psychology who has taught at Pomona since 2017. By night? An amateur stand-up comic.

“As you can tell by my accent, I am a neuroscientist,” the native Israeli says, drawing titters from an audience that doesn’t quite know what to believe. “Sorry, I forgot I’m in Hollywood: I’m a neuroscientist-slash-model,” he says.

“I did get a new haircut. I went to Floyd’s and I told them I work at a college, so could you just give me the haircut of whatever celebrity is most popular among college students these days? So they gave me the Bernie Sanders.”

This time, the laughter is in full.

To Amir, stand-up comedy is like a scientific experiment that provides immediate results. You test the hypothesis that your joke is funny: They either laugh or they don’t. There are variables such as word choice, delivery and audience demographics, but the feedback is instant—sometimes painfully so.

His academic research is a far more sophisticated inquiry. Other researchers have used fMRI analysis, or functional magnetic resonance imaging, to study the brain’s responses to humor. Amir’s work with fMRIs and eye-tracking technology is groundbreaking: He studies the workings of the brain during the actual creation of humor.

Comedy, it turns out, is a nearly perfect subject for exploring the creative process.

“It’s a cognitive process that under the right setting could take 15 seconds, and you can replicate it many times. Anybody can at least try to do it,” Amir says. “It’s hard to ask a novelist to come up with a novel while you’re watching.” ▷

AMIR'S RESEARCH HAS BEEN featured by *Forbes*, and the journal *Nature* reported on his work last fall in an article about how neuroscience is breaking out of the lab, citing his doctoral research at the University of Southern California with Irving Biederman on the neural correlates of humor creativity. *The Guardian*, *Reader's Digest* and the website Live Science also have featured Amir's work.

For his research at USC, Amir recruited professional comedians—including some from the Groundlings, the famed Los Angeles improv troupe that helped spark the careers of Melissa McCarthy and Will Ferrell—along with amateur comedians and a control group of students and faculty. He then showed them examples of the classically quirky cartoons from *The New Yorker* with the original captions removed and asked the subjects to come up with their own captions—some humorous, some mundane and sometimes no caption at all—as he recorded which areas of the brain were activated.

What Amir found was somewhat unexpected: The regions of the brain lit up by the creation of the funniest jokes by the most experienced comedians weren't so much in the medial prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain associated with cognitive control, but in the

Amir has expanded his work at Pomona, where he teaches such courses as Psychology of Humor, Data Mining for Psychologists and fMRI Explorations into Cognition. His current work uses eye-tracking technology to examine the relationship between visual attention and the creation of humor.

That study has given undergraduate students who are headed toward entirely different careers an opportunity to contribute to re-



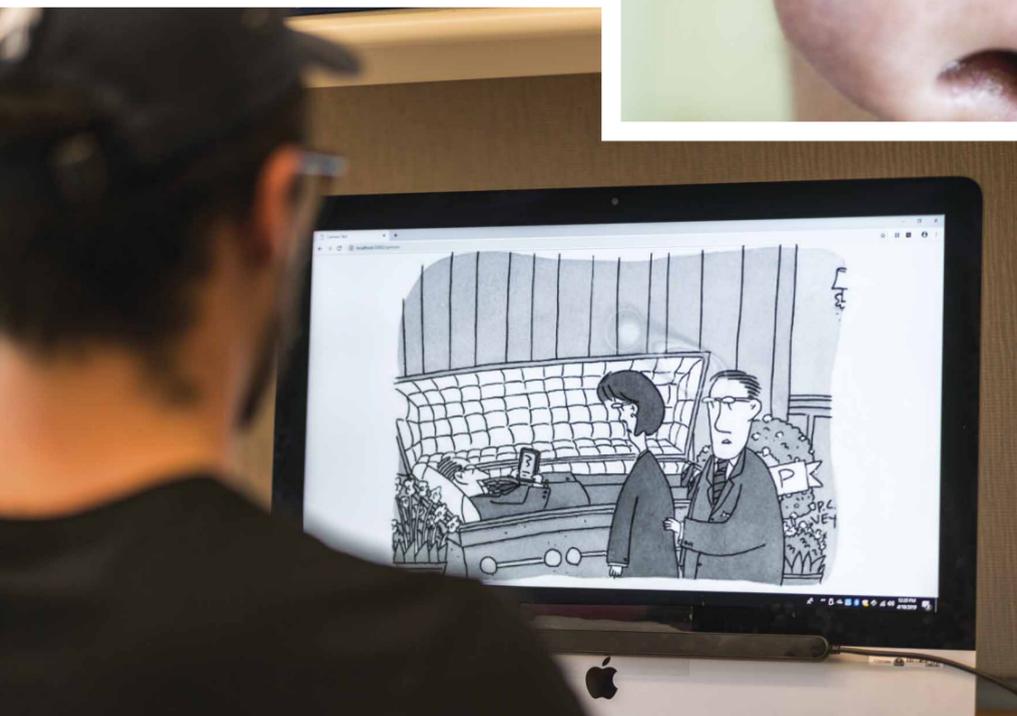
Konrad Utterback '19 (above and at left) models the use of the Tobii eye tracker to track eye movements as subjects try to create a punchline for an uncaptioned *New Yorker* cartoon.

search that Amir expects to publish in a scientific journal next year. Recent cognitive graduates Konrad Utterback '19, who is beginning his career as a financial analyst, and Justin Lee '19, who plans to go to law school, will be among the paper's coauthors. Other collaborators include Alexandra Papoutsaki—a computer science professor at Pomona whose expertise in the emerging uses and potential of eye tracking has been featured in *Fortune* and *Fast Company*—and students Sue Hyun Kwon '18 and Kevin Lee '20, who wrote computer code for the project.

Once again using uncaptioned *New Yorker* cartoons as prompts, Utterback and Justin Lee conducted experiments using a similar assortment of professional comedians that included comics from the Groundlings and Second City,

along with amateur comedians and students.

The eye-tracking device—a low-end model by Tobii that costs about \$170 and looks like a narrow black bar attached to the bottom of a standard computer monitor—allowed the researchers to chart >



temporal lobes, the regions of the brain connected to more-spontaneous association. The findings fit perfectly, he says, with the classic but decidedly unscientific advice by improv comedy coaches to “get out of your head.”



the movement of the subjects' eyes on an X-Y coordinate plane over the 30 seconds they were given to look at each cartoon.

The results were then compared to something called a saliency map of the cartoon image.

"It's this algorithm that basically determines which part of the cartoon is the most visually salient; it defines visual saliency in terms of things like edges and contrast and light—factors which are likely to attract low-level, primitive visual attention," Utterback explains.

Once again, the results were surprising. The expert comedians fo-

cused most closely on the salient or conspicuous features of the cartoon, including faces.

"It's actually a little counterintuitive because you would think, well, you have all this experience doing comedy and then you end up looking at those features that the low-level algorithm has determined to be the most salient ones," Amir says. "Our interpretation was that it has to do with them actually using the image to generate the captions, using the input to generate associations to come up with something funny, as opposed to trying to sort of top-down impose their ideas."

That made sense to Utterback.

"The fact that these were improv comedians in particular is relevant because that's consistent with how comedians do improv comedy," he says. "They're basically trained to listen to what other people are saying first and not ruminate internally too much trying to think of something funny on their own, and sort of just be reactive. It makes perfect sense with these results because they were focusing much more on the actual content of the image to create the joke rather than trying to generate it themselves and forcing it to fit the cartoon, which is what we would expect people with no comedy experience to do."

Justin Lee's part of the study built on those results, adding the captions the subjects produced to the original cartoons and then asking three different people to rate the funniness of the cartoons and their captions. "We were able to use the data to determine that this fixation on the salient parts of the image directly correlates with how funny the caption actually ends up being," Lee says.

The students' findings support Amir's earlier results. "We basically proved the same thing that he did using a different modality (eye tracking versus fMRI)," Utterback says. "In a nutshell, both experiments show that people with more comedy experience display a higher level of bottom-up, automatic control and less top-down, intentional influence on the humor creation process."

GROWING UP IN ISRAEL, Amir watched his father "joke all the time" around the house and even do some comedic appearances on Israeli television.

He tried his own hand at stand-up for the first time about seven years ago while still in graduate school at USC, telling a couple of jokes at a campus comedy event. Later, he started showing up around L.A. for open-mic nights. He has appeared at some famous L.A. comedy clubs and can even be seen on TV's Comedy Central and CMT—"assuming you watch those channels 24-7 on a split screen, without blinking," Amir writes on his comedy website.

His mainstay is performing at smaller clubs, joints still dotted with appearances by famous or once-famous comics, where he can continue to hone his craft. The life of most comedians, he quickly learned, is not what he saw on TV growing up, somebody telling jokes for an hour in a big arena.

"You don't know the path," he says. "The path is—you're going to end up performing for a long time in front of three apathetic strangers at an open mic, and you're going to wait two hours to do that and have to buy something from the place. Especially in Los Angeles, it's an extremely competitive sort of thing. But obviously if it wasn't so rewarding, people would not be working with so much effort."

Amir's influences include George Carlin, the late comedian

You're going to end up performing for a long time in front of three apathetic strangers at an open mic, and you're going to wait two hours to do that and have to buy something from the place.

remembered for his HBO specials and his sharp political and social commentary, as well as British comedians Eddie Izzard and Bill Bailey.

As a foreigner and an academic, Amir has an uncommon perspective for a comic. Audiences don't always believe he is who he says he is. "I had a couple of times when people said, 'You're not really a neuroscientist, and your accent is so fake,'" he says with a laugh. Amir also likes to needle Americans with the insight of an outsider.

"I do like being a foreigner, but sometimes I'm a little concerned that Trump is going to deport me now to Mexico," he says onstage. "I'm trying to seem more like an American by walking around saying American things, like, 'Hey, this is America—speak English. Jesus loves you. Sign here.'"

"I love the American English," he goes on. "I love how rich your vocabulary is. You have words like communist, socialist, Marxist, anti-American—and these are only just the synonyms for poor."

Social and political commentary and the typical off-color comedy club fare can be a little dicey for an academic, particularly one without tenure, Amir knows. He doesn't invite students to his gigs, but his act was squeaky clean the night *PCM* visited.

"I do actually have a reporter from my college here," he told the crowd, "so I can't say any jokes that could be offensive or construed as prejudiced or sexist or dirty in any way, so ... Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen!"

That one, he says later, would have worked better if he had led with it. His comedy is part improv and partly always being refined. He doesn't expect to give up his day job any time soon, nor does he plan to quit performing.

"I do want to see how far I can get with it," he says. "Very few people actually make money doing it—and also, my visa doesn't allow me to do that for money anyway."

Ba-dum-bump.

BACK IN THE LAB, Amir plans to turn his gaze to the potential for artificial intelligence to produce comedy.

His initial instinct is that comedy is an "AI-complete problem"—one of the few things robots are not soon going to be able to do better than humans. There are types of humor, however, that computers should be able to excel at—such as puns, the proverbial lowest form of humor.

"That's the first type of humor computers are able to do," he says.

By the way, Amir—who performs around Los Angeles maybe a couple of times a week—already has had the distinction of being the opening act for a joke-telling robot.

The electronic novice of the stand-up circuit was pretty funny, he admits. However, there was a catch.

"The robot told jokes written by a good comedy writer." **PCM**



TO BREAK INTO THE WORLD OF COMEDY, **WENDY MOLYNEUX '97** AND HER SISTER LIZZIE WROTE PLENTY OF SCRIPTS THAT WENT NOWHERE—UNTIL ONE OF THEM HAPPENED TO CROSS THE DESK OF THE CREATOR OF *BOB'S BURGERS*.



THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BOB'S BURGERS

STORY BY AGUSTIN GURZA | PHOTOS BY IRIS SCHNEIDER



Wendy Molyneux holds a stuffed version of the mysterious Kuchi Kopi character from *Bob's Burgers*.

TV

fans might get their notions of a comedy writer's workplace from the sitcom *30 Rock*, with its gaggle of unkempt guys tossing around food and sexist jokes. But reality is the polar opposite at the gleaming new offices of Fox's long-running animated series *Bob's Burgers*, where Wendy Molyneux '97 works as a writer and an executive producer.

Molyneux's private office is colorful and comfortable, but also tidy and sunny. Artwork by fans, depicting the show's goofy but lovable characters, adorns the walls, attractively framed and carefully aligned. Beyond her door, the common areas provide roomy and serene spaces where colleagues can convene for group writing sessions or have a bite at a working lunch counter, a replica of the one on the show.

The offices reflect a designer's orderly touch, not the unruly, chaotically creative mind of a comedy writer.

Tidiness, Molyneux will admit, is not her strong suit. She once hired a professional organizer to help get her life in order, as she explained to podcast host and fellow Pomona alumna Alison Rosen '97. During that assisted cleanup, Molyneux rummaged through boxes of her old college stuff and got a glimpse of herself more than 20 years ago as an aspiring scribe. She didn't like what she saw.

"I looked at some of the things I had written and thought, 'Oh God, how did I have a single friend?'" Molyneux said on the episode of *Alison Rosen Is Your New Best Friend*. "Some people are better than I was at that age, but I think I was really pretentious."

If so, Molyneux, now 43 and expecting her fourth child in just a few weeks, certainly seems to have grown out of it. Dressed casually with hair uncoiffed, she takes a seat on a cozy couch. At times, she seems self-effacing. Interrupted by the reporter, she apologizes: "Sorry, I ramble." Asked a follow-up question for clarification, she



Wendy Molyneux (left) and her sister Lizzie Molyneux-Logelin chat in a working replica of the diner in *Bob's Burgers*.

takes the blame for the confusion: "This is, like, the least-clean bio of all times." But she says it with a friendly laugh. Not a belly laugh or knee slapper, but a natural, spontaneous laugh that punctuates and ripples through her sentences, as if what she hears herself say just struck her funny.

That lighthearted quality hasn't changed since her college years.

"I remember Wendy vividly and fondly," says Thomas G. Leabhart, resident artist and professor of theatre at Pomona. "The mischievous twinkle in her eye and her love of a good hearty laugh did not prevent her taking her studies seriously. She performed classic roles with as much authority and ease as contemporary ones and seemed perfectly at home on stage."

For Molyneux, the road from college theatre to professional comedy would be long and winding, with more than its share of potholes, detours and dead ends.

Molyneux was born in New York and grew up in Indiana, the second child in a family of four girls and one boy. Asking if her family name is French elicits another laugh. "Our last name sounds a lot more sophisticated than we are," she says. "We're like 80 percent Irish, or more. We're actually potato people."

She attended Franklin Central High School on the outskirts of Indianapolis, an area that was, at the time, primarily white, staunchly conservative and stubbornly bent on maintaining its rural lifestyle. She calls it "very proto-Trump country." Her parents, Richard and Susan Molyneux, were "Democrats in a sea of Republicans."

The kids, however, did not see the world in political reds and blues. For them, it was a fascinating playland of childhood adventures and sibling shenanigans. They were "free-range kids," recalls Molyneux, out of the house in the morning, back at night. There were no fences, and no adult supervision.

It smacks of the idyllic suburban life nostalgically portrayed in Steven Spielberg movies. "We literally had a cornfield at the end of our street," recalls Molyneux. There was also a creek running through their backyard, and endless open space where they could run wild, along with their imaginations.

That carefree lifestyle is still a source of inspiration for story lines on *Bob's Burgers*, focused on the off-kilter but loveable Belcher family: owner Bob, his wife Linda, and their three rascals, Tina, Gene and little Louise with her perennial pink rabbit ears. Molyneux does not rely on her children for ideas; she draws on her own childhood experience to animate the episodes she co-writes with her sister and longtime collaborator, Lizzie Molyneux-Logelin. To them, the cartoon Belchers share much in common with the real-life Molyneux family of a bygone era.

That era came to an end when Wendy was 15. Her father, an engineer, got a new job with Mattel, the corporate toymaker based in El Segundo, and the family moved nearby to the tony suburb of Manhattan Beach. Wendy enrolled at Mira Costa High School, among the best in the country. Lizzie, who is eight and a half years younger, was barely starting grade school.

California real estate prices gave her parents sticker shock. But the political climate on the left coast gave them a new sense of belonging. "It was a revelation," Molyneux recalls, "like, 'Oh my God, not everyone is conservative!'"

Despite their age difference, Wendy and Lizzie were great friends. They went to the movies and joked around together. It would be another 15 years before they would start writing together too.

After graduating from Mira Costa in 1993, Molyneux started weighing her college options, though not too rigorously. All she needed to make her choice was a casual glance through a promotional booklet for Pomona College that belonged to her sister Jenny, older by a year and a half, who had preceded her at Pomona.

Wendy zeroed in on a small boxed feature in the booklet, and there it was—her mission in life. "I literally can remember where it was on the page: bottom right-hand corner, somewhere in the middle of the book. A little box says, 'Pomona College has an improv comedy group called Without a Box,' and I was like, 'Well, I have to go here,'" Molyneux recalls. "Literally, I didn't care about anything else. I didn't understand that most colleges have improv groups. I thought this was incredibly special."

At Pomona, Wendy and her older sister took different tracks. Jenny majored in economics and sang in the Glee Club. After graduating, she worked in Pomona's admissions office.

Meanwhile, Molyneux was performing leading roles in classical theatre (Sophocles, Shakespeare, Molière) as well as contemporary theatre (Sam Shepard, María Irene Fornés). When not on stage, she was immersed in the study of English literature and poetry, informed at times by her passion for feminist issues. Mixing the two did not always please her professors.

In her junior year, Molyneux took a course on modernist poetry, a seminar led by then English Professor Cristanne Miller, a foremost authority on Emily Dickinson with a strong interest in women's studies.

"Only seven students were in the class, and Wendy was among the strongest, although I recall that we had a few conversations about the need to moderate her tone in her papers," recalls Miller, now a SUNY Distinguished Professor and Edward H. Butler Professor of English at the University at Buffalo. "A note in my grade book indicates that I handed Wendy's first paper back ungraded, asking her to rewrite it, since it mostly raved about a single idea rather than >

developing an argument. The idea was in essence feminist and I was sympathetic to it, but expressing anger about T. S. Eliot's portrayal of women is not sufficient for a literary critical paper—even a short one. Her second essay in the class was much better.”

Nowadays, Molyneux is not restrained by academic rigor in expressing her strong opinions on a host of topics, from feminism and gun control to motherhood, women's rights and her none-too-subtle feelings about President Trump. Her Twitter feed (@Wendy-Molyneux) is peppered with F-bombs and other profane put-downs aimed at trolls, bots and other critics.

Some of her tweets are funny. Others are deadly serious.

“It's going to be funny right until I get murdered,” she says, still laughing. “I did attract NRA trolls for a while. They send you pictures of guns and basically be like, ‘I hope you lock your doors at night.’ And then you report it to Twitter, and Twitter does absolutely nothing.”

Molyneux decided she would not be intimidated or back down. They want people to be afraid, she says, as a way to silence the opposition.

Recently, Molyneux spoke out against the diet industry as harmful to women's self-image. She was particularly critical of a weight-loss app for kids called Kurbo from Weight Watchers. She tweeted a link and a deeply personal observation: “The first time I was told my body wasn't okay, I was 4 or 5. Sad, right?!”

Molyneux graduated from college with an English degree and a lack of direction. “I think a lot of people came out of Pomona being like, ‘I'm gonna be a doctor. I'm going to be on Wall Street.’ And I was like, ‘I'm going to move to San Francisco and work at a crepe restaurant. It was not a good plan. But now I work on a show about a restaurant, so I guess in a way, I was being incredibly smart.”

For a few years after college, Molyneux “floundered around” in search of a clear career path in comedy, but with no map.

“I had literally no idea how to make anything happen,” she says. “I didn't have any family in the business, and I didn't know how you were supposed to get started. It's not like jobs are on LinkedIn. It's more like a room that you want to be in, but nobody's ever seen the door, and you don't know where the door is. So you kind of, like, have to feel your way into it.”

Molyneux “flamed out” in San Francisco after a year. She moved back to L.A., waited tables, took temp jobs, worked for an answering service. Through trial and error, she eventually “stumbled sideways” into comedy as a life-sustaining endeavor.

She got a day job selling group tickets for the Hollywood Pantages Theatre, “a little troll that they kept in the basement ... and no one checked on me all day.” In her downtime, she started writing short humor pieces for the website McSweeney's Internet Tendency,



Wendy Molyneux works on a script with some of her colleagues at *Bob's Burgers*.

“which is still a great place for young people to get their humor-writing published.” After hours, Molyneux pursued her passion at the legendary ImprovOlympic West in Hollywood (later the iO West), a training ground and cultural hub for comedians in L.A. until it closed last year.

But there's one thing that Molyneux, a self-described introvert, would never, ever even try—stand-up comedy.

“I was too intimidated to do stand-up,” she says, recoiling at the thought. “Oh, no, no, no. I found it frightening to be on stage by myself.”

Improv, on the other hand, has been very, very good to Wendy Molyneux. It not only put her on a career path, but also on a path to starting her own family. She met her husband, fellow writer Jeff Drake, through the improv world, and their career paths merged along with their personal lives. At one point, Drake had a job writing promotional pitches for shows on NBC, and she joined him on the in-house staff when another job opened up.

They've worked closely together ever since.

In 2006, they were both hired as writers for a new NBC talk show featuring Megan Mullally, of *Will and Grace* fame. Though short-

GET TO STOP TIME WITH THESE CHARACTERS SORT OF PERMANENTLY, WHICH IS MAYBE WHAT ALL OF US WANT TO DO AT CERTAIN POINTS IN OUR LIVES. LIKE, 'OH, THIS IS GOOD RIGHT HERE. LET'S STOP!'

lived (less than five months), the show marked Molyneux's first break into the TV-writing business.

During that time, Molyneux also started working for the first time with her sister Lizzie, who was still in college and doing a summer internship in entertainment. When Lizzie pitched a script idea to a producer, he liked it. With no experience, she turned to her older sister for advice. They worked on the script together, and though it didn't go anywhere, a successful sibling writing team was born.

Theirs was no overnight success. They continued to work on pilots that didn't get picked up and specs (or sample scripts) in hopes someone would like their ideas. They're not sure how, but one of those specs made it to the desk of *Bob's Burgers* creator Loren Bouchard. Suddenly—miraculously, they still think—they were hired for the show's very first season in 2009.

“That's the thing with entertainment,” Molyneux said on the podcast. “You have to keep throwing stuff at the wall until something sticks.”

The Burbank offices of Bento Box, the animation studio behind *Bob's Burgers*, has been home to Wendy and Lizzie Molyneux for the past 10 years. Wendy's husband Jeff (@hatethedrake, for all you *Seinfeld* fans) works on a different show in the same building, with offices just upstairs. Molyneux also thinks of her colleagues as family, all pitching in ideas, punching up jokes, putting final touches on scripts.

Fans are part of the family, too. They not only contribute artwork, but also fanatically keep track of episodes, minor characters, and running gags. One website ranked the show's 149 special burgers by pun (no. 5: the Poblano Picasso Burger). Other fans intently try to catch all the punny names on neighboring storefronts (a pottery shop called “Welcome Back Potter,” or one of Wendy's favorites, “Maxi Pads: Large Apartment Rentals.”)

The Molyneux sisters have become their own brand in the business, racking up writing awards together and getting hired as a team for new projects. Last month, they began work as showrunners and executive producers on a show they created themselves, along with *Regular Show* alumna Minty Lewis, called *The Great North*, about a single father in Alaska and his weird bunch of kids.

Molyneux is at the top of her game. But like many adults, she's astounded how fast time passes. At heart, she admits, she's “super sentimental and nostalgic,” especially when thinking back on those seemingly endless days of her childhood.

“I think that's one of the reasons it's good to work on an animated show,” she said on the podcast. “You get to stop time with these characters sort of permanently, which is maybe what all of us want to do at certain points in our lives. Like, ‘Oh, this is good right here. Let's stop! Like everything's fine right now. Let's just stay here, getting to live in the eternal present.” **PCM**

A Super Set of Sagehen Summer Welcome Parties

It was a busy summer season as we welcomed the class of 2023 and their families at Pomona College's 14 welcome parties across the country and abroad. Each year during the months of July and August, the Office of Parent Engagement and Giving works with the Major Gifts Office and Parents Leadership Council members around the country to coordinate Summer Welcome Parties for incoming first years, transfers, and returning students and parents. In addition to the new students and their families, alumni and current students also attend our parties to help answer questions and offer their personal perspectives on the Pomona College experience.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Miami Summer Welcome Party hosted by the Pomona College Parents Leadership Council; Denver Summer Welcome Party hosted by Doug Gertner and Maggie Miller P'21; and Los Angeles Summer Welcome Party hosted by Beth Abrams and Stuart Senator P'20.



We kicked off the party season the weekend of July 13 - 14 in San Francisco and Palo Alto, CA and Seattle, WA, then made our way on July 20 to Del Mar, CA, Miami, FL and Minneapolis, MN. Portland, OR was our next stop on July 25, and then we headed to Denver, CO, Chicago, IL and Hong Kong on July 27. On July 28, we made a short trip over to the Los Angeles party in Pacific Palisades, and then to our final party destinations in the East Coast to New York City, Washington D.C. and Boston.

All in all, more than 600 people attended these special event parties. It was a whirlwind of activity, but very enjoyable meeting our new students and chatting with their parents. We would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who traveled near and far to attend our parties and to our wonderful hosts who helped us welcome the newest Sagehens into our college family!



Rivalry Weekend

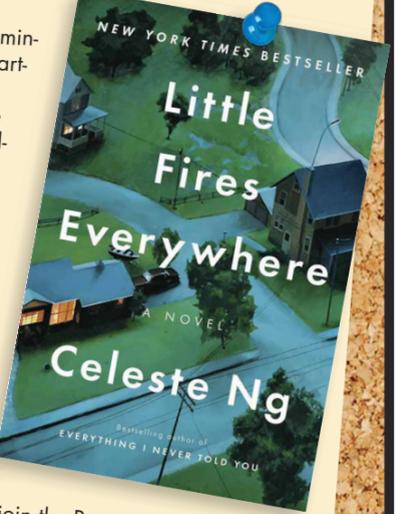
Join the Sagehen football team for Rivalry Weekend 2019! Starting Friday, November 15 and ending Sunday, November 17, the weekend will be highlighted by the big game on Saturday as the 'Hens go for a three-peat against the Claremont-Mudd-Scripps Stags. The game will be at John Zinda Field starting at 1 p.m. Sagehens from far and wide will gather at Merritt Field in advance of the game for light bites and free swag. We'll then march across 6th Street as #OneTeam to beat the Stags. Go 'Hens!

Keep your eye on social media for registration information. Questions? Please contact Michelle Johnston in the Pomona-Pitzer Athletics Department at (909) 621-8016 or by email at michelle.johnston@pomona.edu

The Book Club's Fall Selection

The fall selection of the Pomona College Book Club has been getting rave reviews, like this one: "Witnessing these two families as they commingle and clash is an utterly engrossing, often heart-breaking, deeply empathetic experience... The magic of this novel lies in its power to implicate all of its characters—and likely many of its readers—in that innocent delusion [of a post-racial America]. Who set the little fires everywhere? We keep reading to find out, even as we suspect that it could be us with ash on our hands." — New York Times Book Review

This fall, join us as we read *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng, named a Best Book of the Year by NPR, Amazon, *The Washington Post* and many more. In-person events will be taking place October through December throughout the country. Visit the Pomona College Book Club web page to learn more about events near you or to sign-up to host a book club. If you can't wait for an in-person discussion, join the Pomona College Book Club on Goodreads to chat with alumni, professors, students and staff around a common love of reading. <https://www.pomona.edu/alumni/lifelong-learning/pomona-college-book-club>



Regional Volunteers Unite!

After leaving campus, alumni establish themselves in communities across the globe. Wherever you choose to take up roots, you can find and create opportunities to connect with nearby Sagehens by joining or starting a Regional Chapter. Regional Chapters support events such as Winter Break Parties, 4/7 and Book Clubs and also create unique activities for their local community.

If you are interested in starting your own chapter, or connecting with other volunteers in your area, contact Alanzo Moreno, Assistant Director of Community Development and Annual Giving, at alanzo.moreno@pomona.edu for more information.

LEFT: Orange County Regional Chapter Happy-Hour.



Alumni Association Board: New Year, New Leaders

The Alumni Association Board begins its year in October with a meeting that will include a visit from President Starr, an update on the College's strategic planning process and identifying possible cities for Regional Chapter expansion over the coming year.



ABOVE: Jon Siegel '84, Alumni Association President
Left: Don Swan '15, Alumni Association President-Elect

The board will be led in 2019-20 by Alumni Association President Jon Siegel '84 and Don Swan '15 will serve as president-elect. The group welcomes the following new members: Chris Byington '12, Paula Gonzalez '95, Jade Sasser '97, Robin Melnick (Faculty Representative), Miguel Delgado-Garcia '20 (ASPC President) and Alanzo Moreno (Alumni & Parent Engagement Representative).

A complete list of members and a nomination form can be found at pomona.edu/alumni/alumni-association-board



In this photo of the 1958 freshman football team, the author is number 30 in the center of the back row.

An Unforgettable Halloween BY PAUL F. ECKSTEIN '62, P'92

Some dates and events are indelibly imprinted in our memories. The obvious ones are typically the saddest—such as Pearl Harbor Day, the day President Kennedy was assassinated and the day the World Trade Towers were leveled. We remember where we were, who we were with and what we were doing when we received the news.

Halloween 1958 was not nearly as momentous and was far less significant to our national history. But it is still a date I'll never forget.

Sixty-plus years ago, I was a freshman at Pomona College and (barely) on the freshman football team. In those days, freshmen had their own schedule and could not play on the varsity team. Not that I could ever have made the varsity football team and surely not as a freshman.

I chose Pomona in part because I thought of myself as a football star even though I never played in high school and could never have made the state championship team at my 3,500-student high

school. Division III was for me.

What funny games the mind can play.

When I arrived at Pomona, I went out for football. The coaches needed cannon fodder for practice, so I was allowed to practice and then to suit up for real games. We played a schedule of seven games. I think I played in three of them.

I recall having a really good game against Caltech—participating in maybe 10 plays in which I made a number of unassisted tackles and a few quarterback sacks.

In those days college football players played both offense and defense. Fuzz Merritt was coaching at Pomona and insisted on using the single wing, which was in style when he had played for Pomona in the 1920s. It was decidedly not in style in 1958. Only Princeton, UCLA and Tennessee and perhaps a few other schools were still using the throwback single wing.

There are four backs in a single wing of offense: a tailback who runs and throws the ball after receiving a direct snap from center,

a quarterback who calls signals and sometime takes a direct snap from center, a fullback who blocks up the middle and a wingback who takes reverses and catches passes, among other things. The linemen often pull to block for the backs on power plays over tackle and around the end.

I played right guard on offense and nose guard on defense. I weighed 175 pounds. We all were small.

One of the teams on our schedule was San Diego State, which then was at the nadir of its football prowess. (Pomona would no more think of scheduling San Diego State for a football game today than scheduling UCLA.) We played San Diego State on Oct. 31, 1958, in the old, old Aztec Stadium on the San Diego campus.

We boarded a bus in Claremont in the early morning—all 25 of us—and headed south on Highway 101 to San Diego. We had a picnic lunch at a rest stop along the highway and arrived at Aztec Stadium around noon. There was no locker room for

us. We changed clothes in a big room with bales of hay spread on the floor.

When we took the field, we could see the Aztecs were a lot bigger than we were. The person across the line from me was a giant. I estimate that he weighed 220 pounds, which would make him a running back today. But because we ran the single wing, which no one knew how to defend, and because our linemen typically blocked at an angle while running, we did all right.

We pushed San Diego State up and down the field but could not penetrate their 20-yard line. They couldn't penetrate our 20-yard line either, until late in the game when our center hiked the ball over our tailback's head and some 220-pound Aztec (probably my man) tackled our tailback in the end zone for a safety. That was the only score of the game: San Diego State Freshmen 2, Pomona College Freshmen 0.

We were solemn as we boarded the bus for the trip back to Pomona College. Our line coach, Ben Hines (for whom the baseball field at La Verne University is named), kept shaking his head and saying: "2-0. I can't believe it. That is a baseball score, not a football score." He must have repeated those words a dozen times.

By the time we approached Claremont, it was dark and the trick-or-treaters were out. To lift our spirits, one of our tailbacks, Hal Coons, began gustily singing a popular song of the day, the Big Bopper's "Chantilly Lace." Over and over again. We all joined in. The mood lightened considerably, and we all felt better.

I still hear that song in my mind every Halloween.

Most of us on that freshman football team have lived long and productive lives. We include four physicians, three Ph.D.s in physics (one of whom became a Buddhist monk and administrator of the Zen Center of Los Angeles), a Ph.D. in economics, two dentists, three lawyers, a career Army officer, the founder of the well-regarded American Museum of Ceramic Art, the president and CEO of a Fortune 500 company, a minister and several high school teachers and businessmen.

So why is Halloween 1958 burnished into my hippocampus? Who really knows? Perhaps it is because for the first time in my adult life, I was able to be a part of a team, however minor that part was.

"THE PERSON ACROSS
THE LINE FROM ME WAS
A GIANT. I ESTIMATE
THAT HE WEIGHED 220
POUNDS, WHICH WOULD
MAKE HIM A RUNNING
BACK TODAY."

Paul Eckstein '62 is a trustee emeritus of Pomona College.

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[IN MEMORIAM]

Gwendolyn Lytle

**Professor of Music
(1945–2019)**



Gwendolyn Lytle, who led a distinguished career as a vocal soloist and college professor at the University of California Riverside and Pomona College, passed away on August 22 in Claremont, Calif., after a courageous battle with liver cancer. She was 74. Beloved sister, aunt, colleague, teacher, and friend, her life was dedicated to family and education. Her musical performances included operatic roles, art songs and, her specialty, Negro spirituals.

Born on January 11, 1945 in Jersey City, New Jersey, Professor Lytle was the ninth of 10 children of Margaret and Lacey Lytle who had migrated north from the Jim Crow South to find better lives. In her early years the family lived in Harlem in the basement of the building where their father was onsite janitor, and the children shared the work of stoking the coal furnace and collecting trash. There was always music in the home, especially on Saturday nights, when neighbors gathered at the Lytles' for singing and dancing. On Sundays the family attended Ebenezer Baptist Church in Englewood, N.J., where Mr. Lytle was organist and choir director. As children, Gwendolyn and her four older sisters formed a vocal gospel ensemble that gave concerts in the New York area. They were often accompanied by their father on a Hammond B3 organ and their brother Cecil, the 10th child, on piano.

After graduating from the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan, she received her undergraduate degree from Hunter College, and went on to earn a Master of Music degree from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. She joined the Pomona College music faculty in 1985 after serving 10 years as lecturer at the University of California, Riverside.

At Pomona, Professor Lytle served as head of the voice studio, teaching hundreds of students during her 35-year tenure. She

also taught various classroom courses, including Words and Music: Black Song and Survey of American Music. But, it was in teaching individual voice lessons that she had her most lasting impact. She was able to take anyone into her studio, beginner or advanced, and not only help them sound better, but also teach them how to become expressive musicians. For her, the emotional link between words and melody was the essence of music, and she would insist that her students make that connection. Whether it was preparing a senior music major for a solo recital, or teaching fundamental breathing to a beginning voice or choral student, Professor Lytle was able to tease out of each student more than they themselves believed possible. On hearing of her passing, many alumni mentioned this

remarkable ability to help them realize their potential; almost universally, they single out her passion for music and her genuine warmth and ever-supportive spirit.

Known for her extraordinary soprano voice, Professor Lytle sang professionally all across the United States and in Europe. She was equally at home in a large concert venue singing opera or solos from the great choral-orchestral repertoire or in a small recital hall performing new music with many of her faculty colleagues, each of whom felt a special bond in their collaborative music-making.

She was generous with her time and dedicated herself not only to her students, but also to her colleagues and the College at large. A respected member of many major campus-wide faculty committees, she also served as chair of Pomona's Music Department and of the Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies (IDAS). She was an active member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) and frequently served as an adjudicator for various solo competitions, including the regional Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions.

Professor Lytle was a longtime resident of Claremont, where she was a member of Pilgrim Congregational Church in Pomona. Traveling to international music festivals and concerts was both a professional endeavor and personal pleasure for Lytle.

She is survived by her brother Cecil Lytle and his wife, Betty, of Southern California; her brother Henry Lytle of North Dakota; her sister, Florence Lassiter of New Jersey; and a host of nieces and nephews.

Donations may be made in honor of Gwendolyn Lytle to the Pomona College Music Department, which is establishing the Gwendolyn Lytle Scholarship Fund for need-based aid to talented students who are studying music.

[LAST LOOK]

COMMENCEMENT 2019



Clockwise from top left: A graduating senior celebrating after receiving his diploma; President Gabi Starr greeting members of the Class of 2019 with high fives; an 8-foot globe on display on Marston Quad, painted to show the various home countries of the new graduates; an address by senior class speaker Ivan Solomon; members of the Class of 2019 applauding a speech by Esther Brimmer '83 (see page 11); and two new graduates sharing a congratulatory hug.





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