

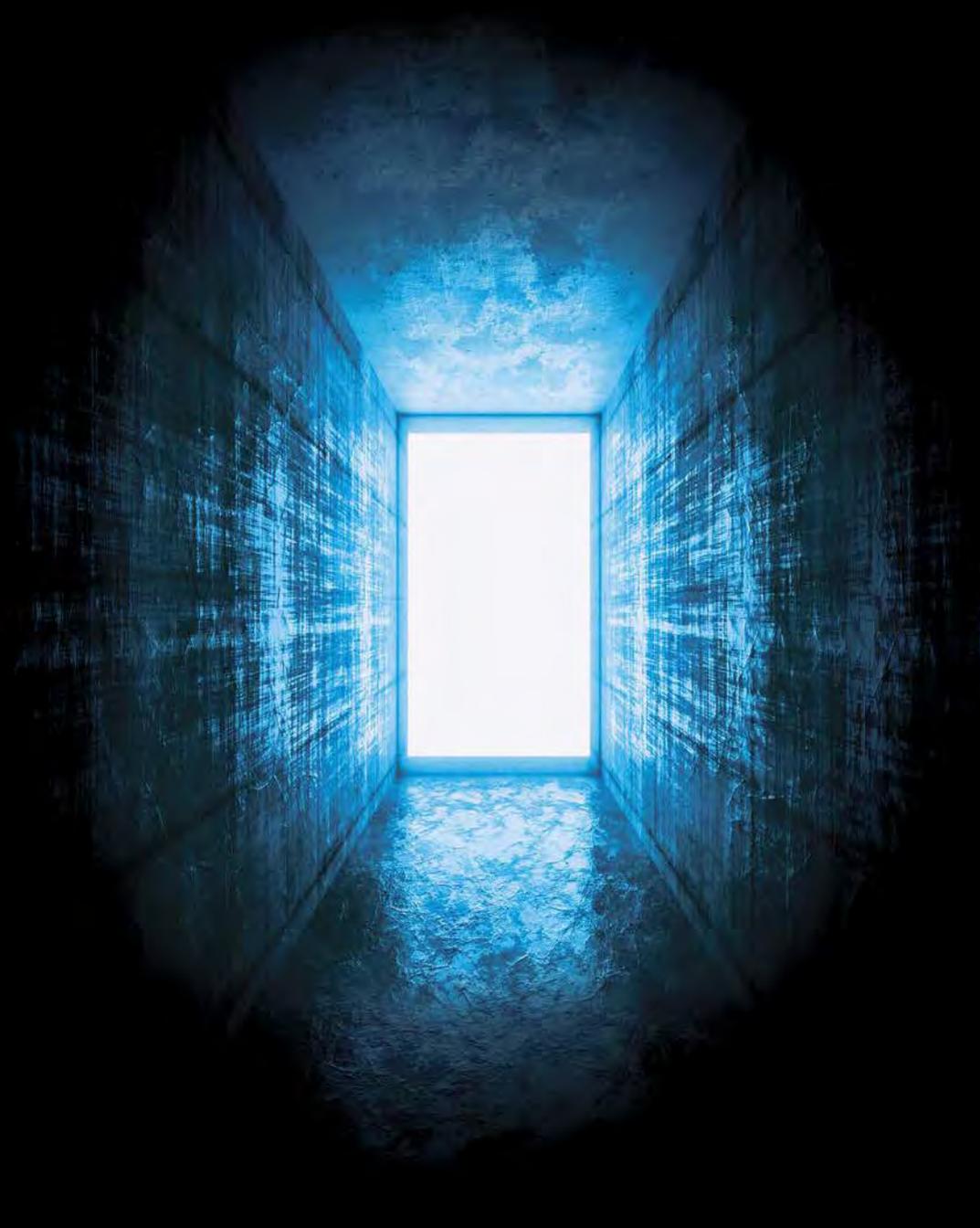
**INSIDE:
REBOUND**

- *The Front Lines*
- *The Class of 2020
Vs. the Pandemic*
- *Gardener of the Sea*
 - *Cycles of Life*
- *The Global Coach*

COLLEGE MAGAZINE

Pomona

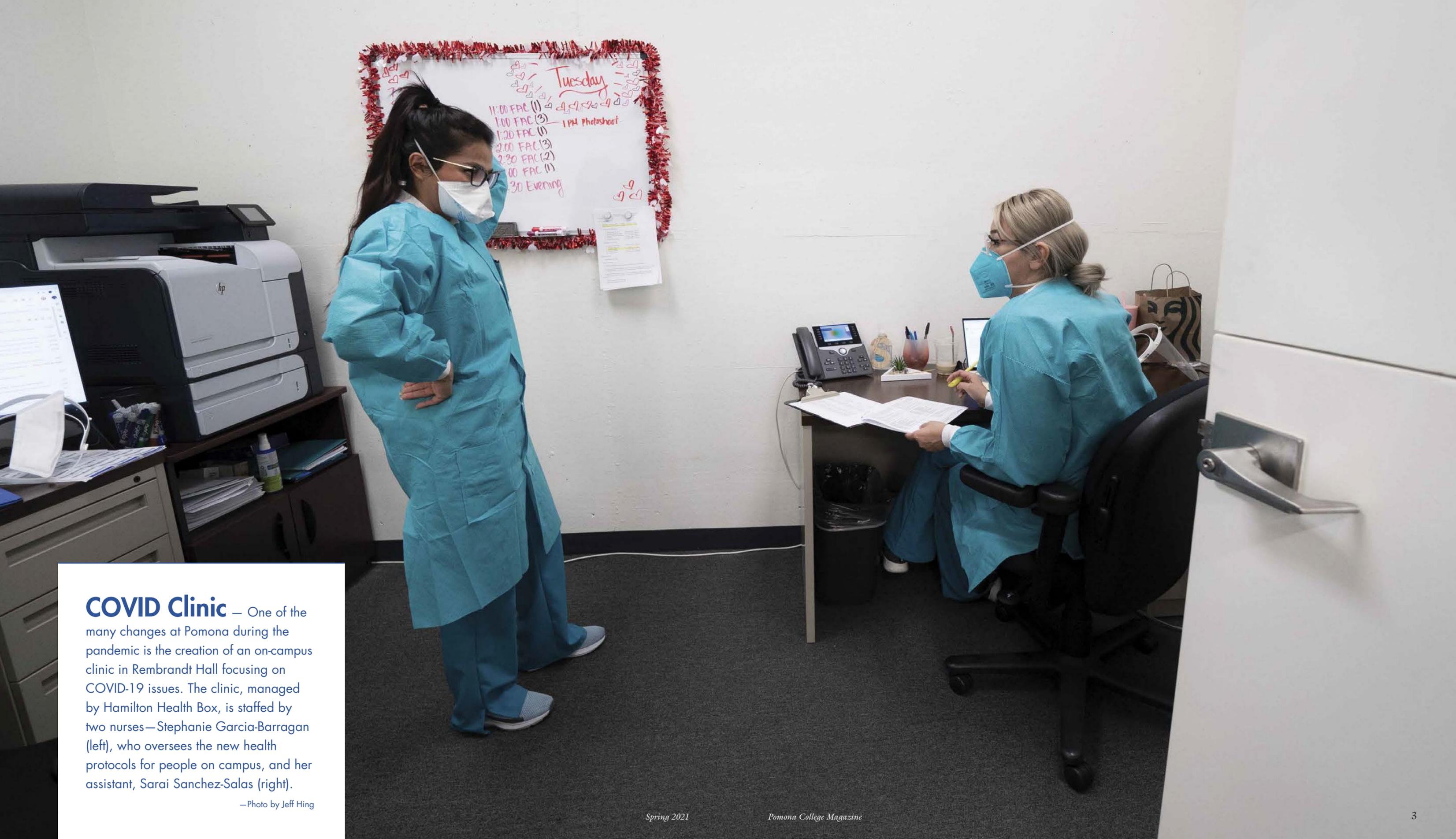
Spring 2021





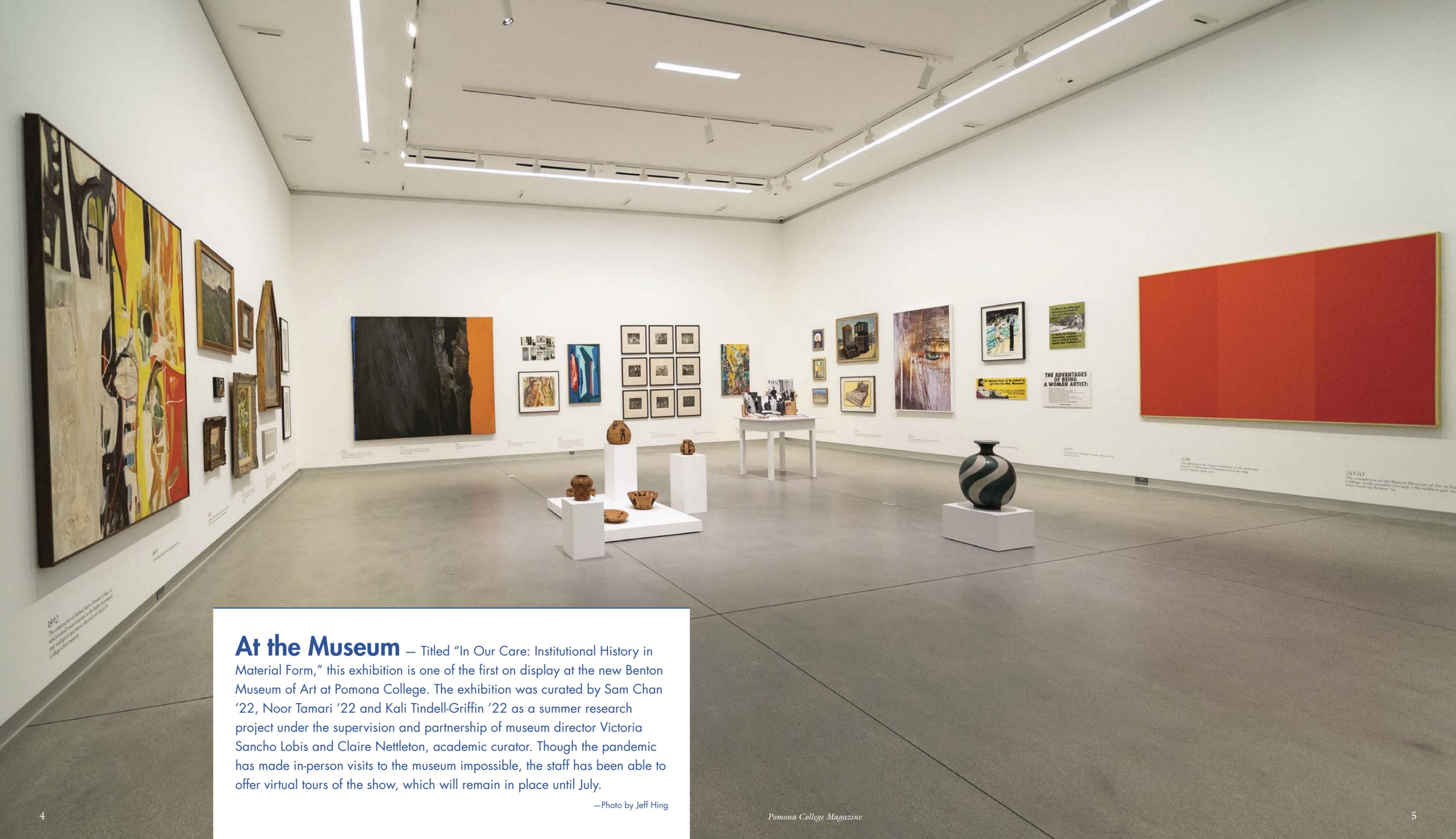
Nobel in Gold — While speaking on the phone with her sister, Sarah Doudna, **Jennifer Doudna '85** holds up the gold medallion stamped with the profile of Alfred Nobel that represents the Nobel Prize. The photo was taken on Dec. 8, 2020, following a presentation ceremony in Berkeley, California, during which Doudna officially received her 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Normally, Nobel recipients receive their awards in Stockholm, from the hand of the king of Sweden, but due to the pandemic, all presentations were made locally.

—AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, Pool



COVID Clinic — One of the many changes at Pomona during the pandemic is the creation of an on-campus clinic in Rembrandt Hall focusing on COVID-19 issues. The clinic, managed by Hamilton Health Box, is staffed by two nurses—Stephanie Garcia-Barragan (left), who oversees the new health protocols for people on campus, and her assistant, Sarai Sanchez-Salas (right).

—Photo by Jeff Hing



At the Museum — Titled “In Our Care: Institutional History in Material Form,” this exhibition is one of the first on display at the new Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College. The exhibition was curated by Sam Chan '22, Noor Tamari '22 and Kali Tindell-Griffin '22 as a summer research project under the supervision and partnership of museum director Victoria Sancho Lobis and Claire Nettleton, academic curator. Though the pandemic has made in-person visits to the museum impossible, the staff has been able to offer virtual tours of the show, which will remain in place until July.

—Photo by Jeff Hing



Nice Kitty — No, that's not someone's pet tabby hiding in the brush near Bridges Auditorium or scampering across the campus green. It's a bobcat, another example of the local wildlife that has found its way onto the Pomona College campus during the College's yearlong closure. The photos were taken by a local resident, 12-year-old David Lonardi, who spotted the bobcat while trying out his new camera near campus.

Passages

Our lives are mostly continuity. Days blur into a seamless river of time, broken only by a handful of true discontinuities that stand like dams against the flow of years, shunting our lives onto new and radically different courses.

Some of these are matters of fate and circumstance. Winning the lottery, getting a dream job, getting fired, losing a loved one. This year we've all been shaken by one of the most disruptive of all—a pandemic.

Other disruptions take the form of cultural milestones—rites of passage in the course of a modern life. Starting school, leaving home, graduating, getting a job, getting married, having a baby. These transitions seem almost sacramental. They transform our lives, but they also make us feel part of something bigger than ourselves. We look forward to them with equal parts anticipation and fear because they promise both possibility and uncertainty. They also remind us that the clock is ticking inexorably on our lives.

I've been thinking about this a lot lately because I now find myself on the brink of another of life's sacramental passages—the one called retirement. By the time you read this, I will be at home, readjusting to a new life. And though I do feel some trepidation and wistfulness, I'm also excited about the prospect of focusing all my time and energy on my own writing and art, not to mention catching up on a lot of reading and, once this pandemic is done, having more freedom to travel.

I've gotten plenty of advice from friends who've walked this path before me, mostly about not repeating their mistakes. There are plenty of mistakes to be made, and I'm sure I'll invent a few of my own. The best advice I've gotten, though, came from Professor Emeritus Richard Fass, who took my elbow one day and said with a wink: "Just remember: It's a process."

Which, I suppose, makes it like every other great milestone in life.

But I have to say that leaving this job is a bigger transition than most. I'm now in my 23rd year at Pomona—the longest I've ever worked or lived anywhere. This issue of *Pomona College Magazine* is the 65th I've had the privilege of designing and overseeing as either managing editor or executive editor. That number, I was surprised to discover, accounts for more than a third of the total since the very first *PCM* rolled off a press back in October 1963.

To that, I can only add: Thank you for putting up with me for so long.

When you retire, there are lots of sentimental "lasts" to get through. This is one of them—the last one of these little essays I'll ever write. Over the years, I've penned lots of them, usually about my take on something relevant to the magazine's theme. In many of them, I've shared personal recollections and reflections from my own life—from childhood memories to the trials of parenthood to, in this case, saying goodbye to a career that I've mostly loved. I've done this, at the risk of oversharing, because I've always believed the universal is in the individual. I hope some of what I've written about my own life has resonated with yours.

Twenty-three years ago, in the very first of these little missives, I promised you a magazine that would respect your intelligence, and I noted that *PCM's* mission should be to "inform, entertain and sometimes disturb. Like an old friend, it should be reliable, but it should frequently surprise you. It should make you think. In the Pomona tradition, it should challenge you."

That charge is one that I now leave, with a high degree of confidence, for *PCM's* next editor.

—MW

Pomona

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POMONA COLLEGE
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PRESIDENT
G. Gabrielle Starr

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Remembering Bill Wirtz

We would like to recognize the legacy of Emeritus Professor William “Bill” Wirtz, who recently passed away in Norco, California, at 83 years old. Bill provided invaluable experience-based learning to generations of Pomona College students that brought the natural world into focus for all and inspired many of us to continue on in biology and ecology careers.

Many of us fondly remember Bill’s ecology course that included overnight trips to the Granite Mountains (to study desert ecosystems) and the Pitt Ranch (oak woodland/grasslands) and day trips to the San Gabriel Mountains (chaparral and coastal sage scrub communities). Bill was in his element with students in the field. He had a seemingly infinite knowledge of the natural history of mammals, birds, reptiles and plants and how they all fit together in an ecological community. Bill’s infectious enthusiasm and passion for biology made us eager to learn more. His vertebrate biology course featured infamous exams that required students to identify the bones of elephants, seals, snakes and birds and discuss their evolution across taxonomic groups.

Some of us were lucky enough to work for Bill as teaching assistants in the laboratory or as research assistants in the field. These experiences did two things simultaneously. First, Bill taught us how to “do” science, which formed our foundation in biological theories and methods. Second, his guidance inspired us to ask our own questions about nature and humanity’s relationship with it. Bill’s kind and patient mentorship motivated many of us to pursue careers as academics and practitioners, passing on his legacy to new generations.

Bill formed deep friendships with many students that lasted a lifetime. He sometimes referred to us as his academic “kids.” When we checked in with stories from our professional lives, we could feel his pride in our accomplishments. We also knew we could turn to Bill anytime for mentorship and advice.

Bill was a treasured friend and an engaged community member, dedicating his time to a number of endeavors, including fire rescue, the Audubon Society and animal welfare through the Humane Society. His endless passion for biology continues to live on in the work of his students. Bill will be sorely missed and fondly remembered.

—Tania Abdul ’95, director of Breathe, United for Racial and Environmental Justice

Joel Brown ’80, distinguished professor emeritus, biological sciences, University of Illinois – Chicago



Professor Bill Wirtz leading an animal-trapping expedition with students at Marine Corp Base Camp Pendleton near San Diego. —Photo by Helen Wirtz

Susan Burr ’91, vice president, AECOS Inc.

Scott Fujimoto ’94, public health medical officer, California Department of Public Health

Julie Hagelin ’92, senior research scientist, Institute of Arctic Biology, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Greta Hardin ’94, forest lands manager

Brian Hudgens ’92, vice president and senior research ecologist, Institute for Wildlife Studies

Glennis Julian ’92, research technician, Butterfly Genetics Lab, University of Cambridge

Roger Lai ’94, senior product manager, 8x8 Inc.

Brad Lamphere ’93, assistant professor of biological sciences, University of Mary Washington

Audrey Mayer ’94, professor of ecology and environmental policy, Michigan Technological University

Jen Perga ’91, teacher (environmental science), Northwestern Regional High School

Terry Sicular ’76, professor

Gillian Thackray ’92, Thermo Fisher Scientific, chief counsel for IP

John Withey ’91, director & faculty, Master of Environmental Studies Program, Evergreen State College

Clint S. Wright ’91, emeritus scientist, U.S. Forest Service

A memory of Ved Mehta

One of my paying jobs during my first year, 1952–53, was serving as Ved Mehta’s reader in biology, a course in which I was also a student. Three nights a week, I sat with him and

read the text and tried to explain the diagrams. The diagrams were difficult for us, as Ved was blind. One Sunday night, the devil was in me, and I suggested that instead of reading biology, we walk into town for a coffee at the only place open on a Sunday night, the Sugar Bowl. We did so, and for that night biology took the hindmost.

Perhaps 20 years later, I was leaving a club on W. 43rd St. in New York after lunch just as Ved was leaving his club next door. To my astonishment, when I spoke to him he recognized my voice as the biology reader. We talked for a few minutes, and then went our ways.

At our 50th reunion in 2006, discovering that we were going to cross campus to another event, Ved suggested we walk together, and I remembered his preference for subtle guidance by a touch to his elbows.

It became clear that he retained a strong mental map of the campus as it was, for he paused, concerned, before a place at which a building in our time now no longer existed (Harwood Hall, a World War II wood dungeon, for example) and had no idea of what lay beyond 6th Street.

During our stroll, I decided to unburden myself of the guilt I had sometimes felt for taking Ved away from his studies on that Sunday night. He said, with great sincerity, “Oh no, Doug, I will always remember it. It was the first time anyone had suggested that they wanted to do something with me.”

For the record, I must have been an excellent teacher, for Ved always scored above me on biology exams.

—Douglas K. Candland ’56
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.



Slowly, Cautiously, the Reopening Begins

More than a year after Pomona—like so many colleges across the country—was forced to evacuate and close its campus in the face of the growing pandemic, there is finally a light at the end of the tunnel.

After a devastating fall and winter surge, COVID-19 case counts dropped dramatically in Los Angeles County through late February and early March, even as the pace of vaccination accelerated, generating a spirit of optimism in the College community.

County officials agreed in the early spring to first steps toward a limited re-opening of some campus facilities. It began, naturally enough, with outdoor spaces. For students living off campus in reach of Claremont, Pomona made plans to open outdoor facilities for recreational sports activities and physical conditioning. Haldeman Pool, the Pauley Tennis Complex and Strehle Track were set to open for current students, faculty and staff under a reservation system, President G. Gabrielle Starr announced in late February.

Colleges in Los Angeles County were not permitted to bring students back to campus during the spring, and so remote learning

continued to be the only show in town. But looking forward, Starr said, Pomona is planning enthusiastically for the full return of students in the fall, with in-person instruction and on-campus living. “The campus is ready,” she said. “We are ready.”

With the county taking a highly restrictive approach to in-person higher education amid much of the pandemic, Pomona has taken the lead in advocating for college students with county officials to work for a responsible return to campus. “The young people who will build our future need to be given greater priority,” said Starr.

By early March, the county was sending positive signals for the return of students to campus for summer programs, and vaccination for higher education workers had begun. Student Health Services received its first small allotment of vaccines in this period, and Pomona faculty and staff were encouraged to seek their shots through the massive county vaccination effort as soon as possible.

As the College reached a turning point in one of the most sweeping crises in its history, Starr noted the need to stop and

mourn for those who lost their lives in the pandemic. “For some of us, the shock of loss is something we are just beginning to feel, and even for those who have been grieving for months now, the pain is still too fresh. In many ways, we are just beginning to absorb what has happened.”

She noted how “so many of our students saw their lives turned upside down. They—and our entire extended Sagehen community—responded with perseverance, ingenuity and grace in the face of the direst world crisis of most of our lifetimes.”

Starr also said she looked forward to the time—not so far away now—when the entire Sagehen family could be back together on campus.

“We are moving full steam ahead for the return of in-person education and on-campus living in the fall,” said Starr, noting that safety protocols would need to be carefully followed. “We will push forward with our mission of providing the most compelling and complete liberal arts education in the world.”

Updates: pomona.edu/coronavirus



Compassion on Wheels

A new **Meals on Wheels** program, operating since November 2020 out of Pomona’s previously idle dining facilities, was designed with more needs than one in mind. In the midst of the pandemic, furloughed dining and catering staff prepare meals for 180 homebound seniors in the area. The result is mutually beneficial. Senior citizens receive breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days a week, and furloughed staff are able to use their skills on a limited basis and be paid their regular wages.

The program is a partnership between Pomona College, the Hospitality Training Academy and UNITE HERE Local 11, a labor union that represents Pomona’s dining workers.

Staff members cook and package food and prepare the meals for delivery by the Hospitality Training Academy. Jose Martinez Jimenez, general manager of dining services, says a total of 22 furloughed staff members are working the county meal program—16 dining staff and six dining managers.

To ensure their safety during the pandemic, returning dining staff work in tightly controlled “bubbles” of two teams, are regularly tested for COVID-19 and follow strict health and safety guidelines and protocols, according to Robert Robinson, assistant vice president for facilities and campus services.

As of mid-January, more than 20,000 meals had been served. And we’re not talking about peanut butter and jelly sandwiches here. The cyclical menu includes plant-based meals such as mushroom ropa vieja, al pastor tofu with grilled pineapple, miso-glazed buckwheat soba noodles and other Sagehen favorites.

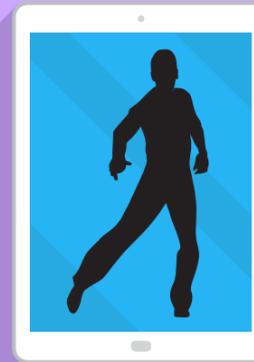
Catering chef Benigno Avina treasures this opportunity to use his talent, and he calls it one of his greatest experiences. “I’m so happy to be working in this program, helping people that really need help in these extraordinary times.”

Women in Math Award

Elena Kim '21 has won a national undergraduate mathematics award after being selected as the recipient of the Alice T. Shafer Mathematics Prize established by the Association for Women in Mathematics. The annual prize is presented to one undergraduate woman for excellence in the field. During her time at Pomona, Kim developed a strong research background and set of skills thanks to two summer research experiences for undergraduates (REU) programs. She did one REU at the University of Michigan-Dearborn the summer after her sophomore year and another, virtually, last summer through Williams College, working for Professor Steven J. Miller, who nominated her for the prize.

Fulbright Honors

Pomona College has been named one of the top producers among bachelor’s institutions for the Fulbright U.S. Student and Scholar programs for 2020–21. Pomona is tied for the No. 2 spot in its category for Fulbright scholars, and the No. 8 spot on the list of top producers of Fulbright students. Two scholars and nine students from Pomona were awarded Fulbright awards for 2020–21. The Fulbright competition is administered at Pomona through the Career Development Office.



Two to Tango

It takes two to tango, even if they’re a thousand miles apart.

Members of the Claremont Colleges Ballroom Dance Company have spent the last several months practicing their moves solo, but while physically apart because of the pandemic, the students have continued to practice and compete via a collaboration app called Discord.

“I knew I wanted the team to keep interacting and having some sort of plan, and after talking to the student officers from all 5Cs, they were the ones who said, ‘Discord is where it is at now,’” says Denise Machin, director of the ballroom dance company and assistant director of the Smith Campus Center. “That’s why we started Discord. They were the ones with the insight into what students need, and what they need is a platform to connect.”

To work around the company members’ being in multiple time zones, Zoom meetings are held on different days at various times so that more people have the opportunity to participate. Other colleges in the ballroom scene are hosting online group classes open to other collegiate dancers, and that’s giving “our students a chance to learn from people outside of our organization and build a community,” Machin says. “It’s really nice that

the different campuses are supporting each other during this time.”

There were even opportunities to dance in virtual competitions, including the Zoom Ball on Halloween, where participants uploaded videos of their routines to be judged live—a way for them to safely receive feedback on their dancing. “It’s a difficult time, and I’m really impressed by the resilience of our students,” Machin says. “They are going through a lot and managing a lot, and I’m inspired by them. They are just good at this—they are so good at connecting online and coming up with creative ideas.”

RAISE

The RAISE Program (Remote Alternative Independent Summer Experience) was created last summer to fill the void left when the Summer Undergraduate Research Program was canceled due to the pandemic. Through stipends of \$2,500 or more, RAISE supports a broad array of research projects, with more than 400 Pomona students participating last year and a similar number expected to take part in 2021. As a sample of the research being done, here are three stories of RAISE students at work:

Makeda Bullock Floyd '22, an environmental analysis major, studied wild plants growing on Windermere Ranch in Santa Barbara, cataloging and reporting on the plant life at the ranch in an accessible guidebook. This collection of case studies contains personal narratives, Western science, Indigenous knowledge and community experience, explains Bullock Floyd. She adds that it highlights a mix of native, invasive, edible and nonedible plants, each with unique strengths and properties explored in detail.

Lerick Gordon '22, a history major, reviewed 60 years of military history to analyze factors leading to a growing number of Latinos in the U.S. Armed Forces. “I conducted my research primarily by searching through online databases, historical archives, oral history interviews and various books and scholarly articles on Latinx U.S. military history/service,” he explains. “I was even able to conduct my own oral history interview, where I interviewed my dad, who is currently an active-duty soldier in the U.S. Army.”

Alexandra Werner '22, a cognitive science major, used prior studies on speech bilinguals to examine the interaction between emotion and bilingualism in decision-making and offered insights on how her research might translate for an overlooked group: bimodal bilinguals or bilinguals who know both a signed and a spoken language. “The inclusion of bimodal bilinguals offers valuable insights into how signed and spoken languages interact across modalities at the lexical and conceptual levels,” she explains.

Winning Inspiration

A bright idea from Christine Cannon '23 may help light up the world in these dark days. It also won her a \$25,000 award for tuition costs from the organizers of the Reimagine Challenge, sponsored by Schmidt Futures. The molecular biology major was one of 20 college and university students from around the world selected for their innovative solutions to the problems of building back from COVID-19 and sparking global movements for change. Cannon’s bright idea took the form of a virtual hub called WeCan, designed to keep users connected to a range of social justice movements. On the app, individuals will be able to receive updates and action items from the movements they care about in one centralized feed and create group message communities with friends and family where, together, they can share and track their action plans.



The Coding Twins

Pandemic or not, Evelyn and Summer Hasama '24 just keep on coding. The first-year twin sisters have already won first place not once but twice this academic year for apps they’ve developed together.

In November they won first place in the virtual 5C Hackathon for their app Event Check, which allows users to go through health and safety checks to gain access to a campus event. Even so, the sisters didn’t expect to win a month later when they presented their new app, called DonateIt, to a panel of judges from Facebook, Reddit, Instagram and Visa for a competition at the conclusion of their CodePath IOS mobile development course. “We honestly thought we had no chance of winning,” says Summer. “We were a team of two, while all the other teams had three or four—we were outnumbered. And we are just freshmen, while some of other students were juniors and seniors.”

DonateIt allows users to donate unwanted items to neighbors who might want them. Explaining their inspiration, the sisters said, “Instead of throwing things in the trash, we wanted to create something that would make use of these things by donating them to individuals within our community.”



A Pandemic-Conscious Campus

The object below is one of nine Gekka infrared thermometers that have been wall-mounted near the entrance of Pomona College residence halls as part of a project to upgrade campus facilities to provide for the safe return of students, faculty and staff. These IR thermometers are only one small part of a wide-ranging story of added equipment, renovated spaces, upgraded facilities and carefully planned health protocols designed to make the campus a safer place while the novel coronavirus continues to require a high degree of institutional vigilance. Here are a few of the other changes that members of the returning College community will find waiting for them:

The creation of an on-site clinic in Rembrandt Hall to oversee health protocols, do COVID-19 testing and carry out contact tracing

Optimized heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems that will infuse more outside air into the interior of campus buildings

The installation of upgraded air filters (from MERV 8 to MERV 11) throughout all campus buildings

The installation of 15 automatic door openers and 275 touchless door-opening devices throughout campus to help the community avoid high-touch objects such as doorknobs

The addition of 325 soap dispensers in residence hall bathrooms to make it easier for students to wash their hands frequently

A daily Pomona Safe email reminding members of the campus community to follow all health protocols, including a required self-check, before coming to campus.

The installation of 175 hand-sanitizing stations throughout common areas in all campus buildings to encourage safe behaviors

The development of new seating plans for Pomona College classrooms to allow for in-class social distancing during instruction

The addition of plexiglass shielding to all front-facing College departments to provide protection for employees whose work requires face-to-face contact with others

Specialized COVID-19 cleaning training and supplies provided to all housekeeping staff



Construction Begins on New Athletic Center

Although the pandemic caused a delay of several months, construction of a new athletics, recreation and wellness center finally got under way in February, with completion expected in time for the fall 2022 semester. The rebuilt and expanded facility is designed to replace the Rains Center for Sport and Recreation with an upgraded, up-to-date athletic facility while boosting health and wellness for all members of the Pomona community.

“The need for a revitalized center has been clear for years,” noted President G. Gabrielle Starr in an email to the campus community. “Last spring, however, as the pandemic forced the evacuation of students from campus, we decided to delay the start of construction in the face of the unfolding crisis. Moving forward this semester allows us to complete the most disruptive aspects of construction—demolition, grading and assembly of structural steel—at a time when few people will be on our campus. This will reduce the impact of noise, vibration, dust and truck traffic and also will reduce the costs of mitigation steps. When we return to normal operation in the fall, we can proceed with the less disruptive aspects of the work.”

By rebidding the project after the delay, the College was also able to negotiate reduced prices. At the same time, Starr said, the College has benefited from generous gifts that allowed the project to proceed without affecting Pomona’s operating budget. “We are incredibly

grateful to Ranney ’60 and Priscilla Draper, Libby Gates MacPhee ’86, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the many other friends of Pomona whose early and generous partnership and support has allowed us to begin construction on this vital facility.”

In addition to supporting more than 450 varsity athletes, the new building will serve more than 900 intramural athletes, 550 club athletes and student physical education classes and accommodate fitness and recreation programming for students, faculty and staff for both colleges.

The new center will include a larger recreational fitness area, with additional space for cardio workouts. Studio space available for fitness classes will be doubled. In addition to a general-use weight room, there will be a dedicated varsity weight room. Locker rooms will be redesigned to provide sufficient space for the groups that use them, with separate facilities for faculty and staff in addition to varsity teams.

The men’s and women’s varsity basketball teams and the women’s varsity volleyball team will continue to play in the facility, with Voelkel Gym remaining largely intact and a new two-court practice and recreational gym added above the fitness area. Plans also include athletic training and equipment storage areas, three new team meeting rooms and individual offices for coaches and administrative staff.

PROFESSOR SUSANA CHÁVEZ SILVERMAN CONTINUES TO TRANSFORM SPANGLISH INTO “AN ASTUTE LITERARY TONGUE CAPABLE OF BAROQUE DEPTHS.”

Language, Love and Location

Some say Romance Languages and Literature Professor Susana Chávez Silverman has outdone no less than J.R.R. Tolkien. One author points out that while Tolkien invented a number of languages, Chávez Silverman “has turned Spanglish into an astute literary tongue capable of baroque depths.” The International Latino Book Awards literally seconded that—her book recently won second place in the memoir category.

Chávez Silverman is known for seamlessly alternating languages. But that is style. Even more than that, what she does in her new book, *Heartthrob* (subtitled *Del Balboa Café al Apartheid and Back*), is storytelling. Using her letters and diary entries as a palimpsest, Chávez Silverman chronicles a love affair that is both deep and delicate, fiery and fragile, set against politics and place—and one that takes her from San Francisco to South Africa.

PCM’s Sneha Abraham chatted with Chávez Silverman via Zoom (or as the professor likes to call it: “Zoomba”) about language, love, location and more. This interview has been condensed and edited for space and clarity.

PCM: Tell me a little bit about your family and how language was used in your household.

Chávez Silverman: Well, that’s a very intriguing question because my current project is actually delving into a bit of my family history, particularly on my mom’s side. And that’s something that I haven’t really written much about—my family.

My dad was a Jewish-American Hispanist born in the Bronx, and my mom was a Chicana. She was born in Visalia in California and

grew up in San Diego. They met in summer of 1949. It was kind of like a study abroad experience. My mother got a fellowship from the Del Amo Foundation, I think. They were both on a study program in Spain. That’s where they met.

And each of them had apparently a fairly serious paramour. But when they met, it was like a *flechazo*, like a love-at-first-sight thing. They got married in 1951, much to the disapproval of my dad’s mother in particular. I have my parents’ love letters, which were sent to me a couple of years ago by my youngest sister. She had inherited them when my mother passed. And there are quite a few.

And my mother’s parents were also not in favor of the union, particularly her father. My mother was the granddaughter of two ministers. Her maternal grandfather was a Presbyterian minister, and her paternal grandfather was a Methodist semi-itinerant preacher. This was in New Mexico. My mother’s parents eventually came around, to the point that my parents’ wedding was on their front lawn, performed by Samuel Van Wagner, my great-grandpa.

We grew up, mainly, English dominant-ish when I was very, very young. However, we were around relatives who spoke different languages. On my dad’s side, it was Yiddish and English. We weren’t too much in connection with my dad’s, but they were all back in New York. But on my mom’s side, we were very, very close to my mom’s parents, to my grandparents, my maternal Chavez grandparents, and they spoke Spanish and English or sometimes code-switched with all my grandmother’s siblings and relatives, etc. We often were there in San Diego with them.

And my dad played with language a lot. My mother did not encourage code-switching, but it has to do with the time that she grew

up in, in the ’40s, and the particular prejudice she experienced. It was: You speak correct English or correct Spanish—no mixing! And it was all about assimilation. And my mother retained her Spanish. Her two sisters really did not.

But because my dad was on sabbatical, my first year of school was in Madrid, when I was 4 and 5. I was thrown into a Madrid kindergarten. That was one of my top traumas. I don’t have a lot of memories of my early childhood, but I remember that. That’s a horror because I was very shy, with minimal Spanish at first, and I was terribly bullied at school.

PCM: How does language work in your head? Are your dreams multilingual?

Chávez Silverman: Oh, yeah, very much so. As a matter of fact, dreams form a very crucial foundational kind of intertext. I always think of the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar, who said that many of the subjects of his stories came from dreams. A little grain or a little seed or even a full scene or images come from my dreams. I have a lot of access to my dreams.

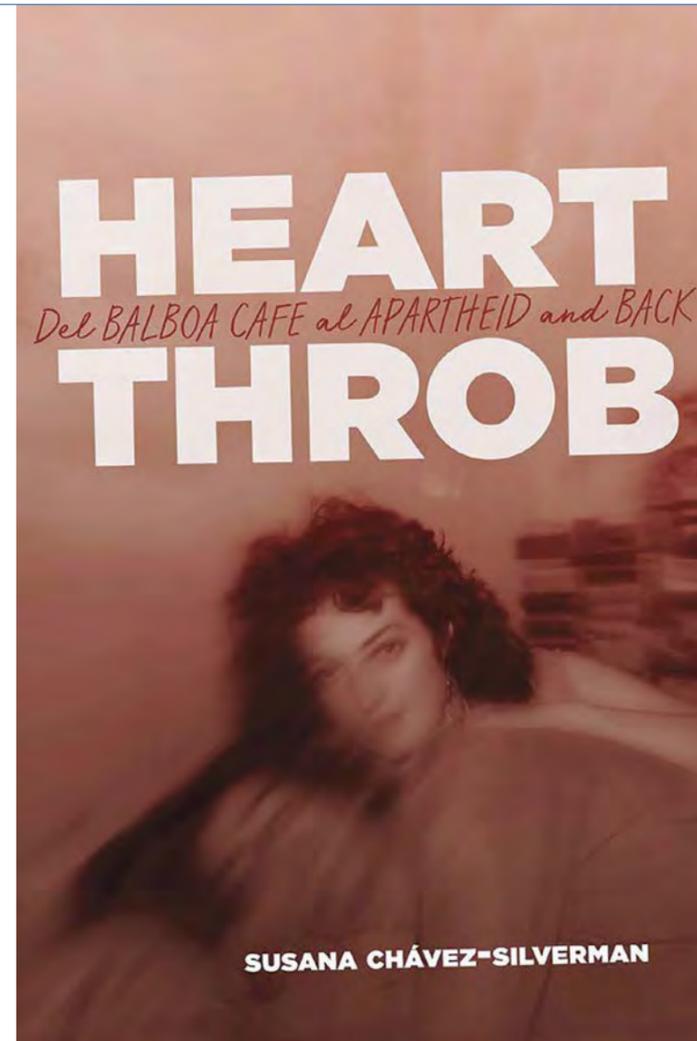
I’m a proselytizer for dreams. I tell my students, “How many of you remember your dreams? If you don’t, here’s how to remember them and keep a dream journal, etc.” Because I think it’s very important.

But I dream in both Spanish and English, sometimes Italian, sometimes Afrikaans. And I also dream in languages that I don’t speak. Like, I wake up, and I know I was speaking German, which I don’t—I have a slight understanding, but not much. I don’t speak it.

PCM: When you write letters or *crónicas*, are you conscious of their potential of being published?

Chávez Silverman: Oh, yeah. Well, let’s see, initially, I wasn’t, as a matter of fact. This whole transformation or process started—I can date it very clearly to 2000, when I had won an NEH Fellowship to Argentina, and I had been living in Buenos Aires for a good part of a year. I would be there a total of 13 months.

And I was writing and emailing. I’ve always been a correspondent. Without my journals, which I recopied as letters, and letters that peo-



Heartthrob
Del Balboa Café al
Apartheid and Back

By Susana Chávez-Silverman

University of Wisconsin Press

336 pages | \$34.95

PCM: *Heartthrob* is very intimate. How is it to write to the bone?

Chávez Silverman: But I don’t, my darling. I mean, I’m really very glad that it gives that impression. But I actually consider myself to be a rather close-to-the-vest person. However, I know that my writing gives people the impression that I’m spilling my guts.

In my author’s note in *Heartthrob*, I’m citing the writer Wyatt Mason about Linn Ullmann, who is a Norwegian writer. And he writes, “She was not looking for reportorial evidence, even if she was writing a scene based in what she could recall. She allowed herself to see with the imagination. She gave herself the freedom to imagine what had been forgotten, not in an attempt to establish fact, but to find the truth.”

I thought that was brilliant. That quote kind of gets at that tension that comes out in my epigraph between truth and reality. So I’m very aware. I’m always negotiating when I’m writing—how much to share and how much to leave out.

Publishing and truth, you spilling out your whole guts, they >

“And yet, as I also write in the book, it was almost as if upon sacrificing that relationship, which was really my true love, I became myself: a writer. And that’s how I see my writing really. I started thinking of myself as a writer in my mid-20s in South Africa.”

don’t always go together. It’s about a process of negotiation. And I’m very aware of that.

PCM: This book takes you across the world. Can you talk a little bit about place and love and how one impacts the other?

Chávez Silverman: I had the sense—it’s hard for me to know what kind of wisdom comes with hindsight, but it’s a lot, you know. But even at the time, in the ’80s, I ended the relationship, but not because I didn’t love him or he didn’t love me. I was finding the place, South Africa, impossible for me. I was very politicized throughout my 20s, especially. It didn’t stop but it morphed—elements of practicality and motherhood and other things came in.

I don’t want to say I had a death wish, but it was pretty ridiculous to throw myself off that cliff and move to South Africa under apartheid, considering my political beliefs and the family that I grew up in and everything. But I hate that. The heart wants what it wants.

I mean, it was love at first—it was a major *flechazo*, similar to my parents, ironically. My parents, by the way, met the Roland Fraser character in San Francisco. And both of them liked him. My mother was very fond of him. I’ve just discovered both he and my mother share a moon in Capricorn. Yes. I’m very into astrology as my friends, readers and students all know.

But it’s as if I felt something fundamentally shift between us. I’ve written that he got swallowed by the underworld, the undertow, not exactly of apartheid per se; he was very progressive for a privileged, white English South African at that time. But it wasn’t that. It was between the familial and sort of the societal structures and expectations of the northern suburbs of Joburg. He was the eldest of six, and the family expectations on him, and also his own double Capricorn personality—we were screwed, kind of, by the place, by the effect of the place on us.

And yet, as I also write in the book, it was almost as if upon sacrificing that relationship,

which was really my true love, I became myself: a writer. And that’s how I see my writing really. I started thinking of myself as a writer in my mid-20s in South Africa.

We revisited our love story and saw that the feeling is the same, or it’s there still. And yet, for me, it’s still impossible. I don’t want to make a life in South Africa. It’s something that has inherent tensions and impossibilities that make it very powerfully seductive and also impossible. I tried to capture that in the book’s final sentence.

PCM: Love is not enough. Right?

Chávez Silverman: Right.

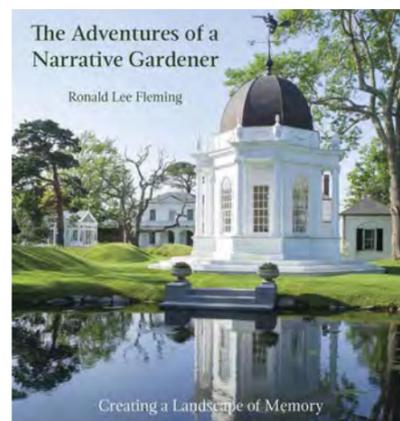
PCM: With love, there’s an intensity and there’s also a breakability. Does that change over time?

Chávez Silverman: I have a tension between the heart and the head. So you can chalk it up to the stars, or chalk it up to the personality or whatever. Probably the signature word that a lot of people would apply to me would be “freedom.” People have said that I’m very iconoclastic in many ways.

And so, there was some part of me that railed against ... I don’t think love, passion and domesticity go together very well, for example. So that wasn’t going to go over well in that South African *mundo*, which was going over to his parents’ for barbecue for lunch every Sunday and so on.

No. But we didn’t have any way of seeing that ourselves, madly in love in San Francisco, in New Orleans. You know, I couldn’t see that until I actually went there. I’m not at all sorry because, paradoxically, going there to South Africa also made me who I am in many ways. But as far as love, I mean, I can’t tell you anything except this: I have a very romantic heart, and I’m also intractably rebellious or freedom-oriented. **PCM**

Correction



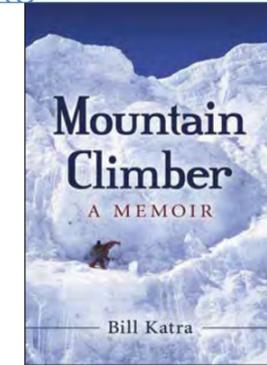
The publishing information that accompanied last issue’s Book Talk with author Ronald Fleming ’63 was incorrect. Here is the correct information:

The Adventures of a Narrative Gardener: Creating a Landscape of Memory
By Robert Lee Fleming
GILES | 168 pages | \$39.95

BOOKMARKS

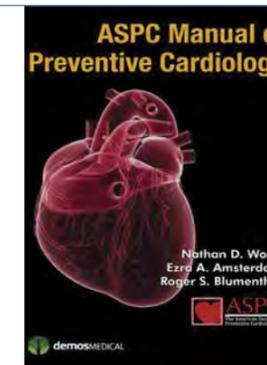
Mountain Climber A Memoir

After nearly six decades of climbing, **Bill Katra** ’68 recounts his mountain adventures, detailing his experiences and reflecting on the wisdom he’s gained from them over time.



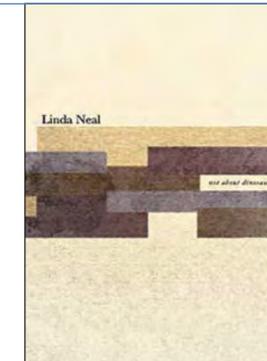
ASPC Manual of Preventive Cardiology

Nathan D. Wong ’83 has co-edited an updated review on the current guidelines and practice standards for the clinical management of cardiovascular risk factors and prevention of cardiovascular diseases.



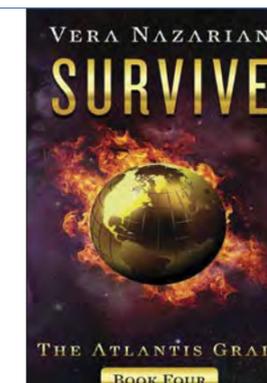
Not About Dinosaurs

This collection of poems by **Linda Neal** ’64 digs deep into matters of living, dying and extinction.



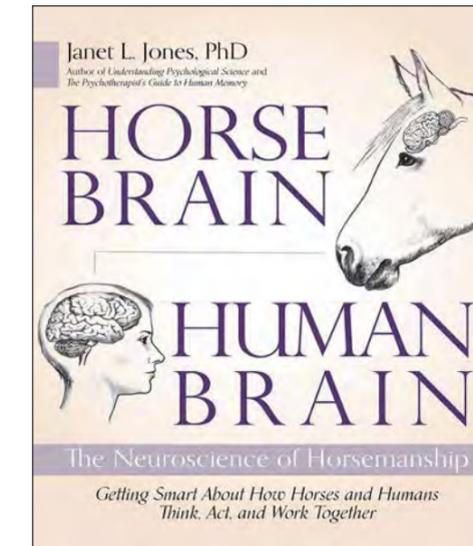
Survive (The Atlantis Grail Book 4)

Vera Nazarian ’88 has released the fourth and final book in The Atlantis Grail series, in which under the threat of annihilation, the fate of the entire human species is at stake.



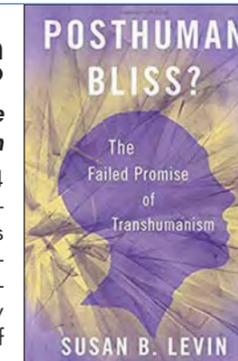
Horse Brain, Human Brain The Neuroscience of Horsemanship

This work on human and equine brains, by brain scientist and horsewoman **Janet L. Jones** ’84, was recently listed as one of Book Authority’s “Ten Best Human Brain Books to Read in 2021.”



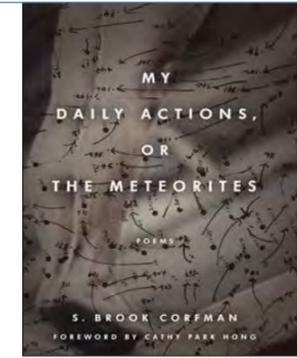
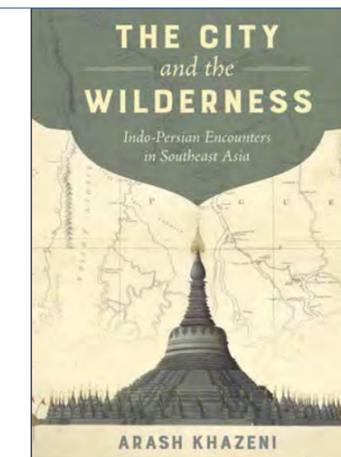
Posthuman Bliss? The Failed Promise of Transhumanism

Susan B. Levin ’84 challenges transhumanists’—advocates of radical enhancement—claim that science and technology support their vision of posthumanity.



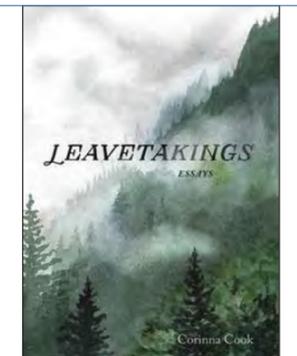
The City and the Wilderness Indo-Persian Encounters in Southeast Asia

Professor of History **Arash Khazeni** recounts the journeys and microhistories of Indo-Persian travelers across the Indian Ocean and their encounters with the Burmese Kingdom and its littoral at the turn of the 19th century.



My Daily Actions, or The Meteorites

Named to a *New York Times* list of the “Best Poetry of 2020,” the daily journaling practice of **S. Brook Corffman** ’13 investigates the ordinary.



Leavetakings

Corinna Cook ’07 presents nine essays, all set in Alaska and posing the question of what coming and going can reveal about place.

HOW TO BECOME A ONE-MAN BAND

Professor of Politics **Pierre Englebert** has never had any illusions about becoming a rock star. He's more than content with his day job as a tenured professor at Pomona College. But his on-again, off-again love affair with writing and performing music has been on again for the past couple of years, and the evidence is mounting at a range of free, on-line music platforms. To understand how a noted scholar of African politics became a veritable one-man rock band, *PCM* invites you to step briefly into his musical shoes.



1 LEARN A FEW BASIC GUITAR CHORDS from a Scout leader as a Cub Scout in Brussels, Belgium. Get your own guitar for your birthday, and take lessons from a high school student. Ask your parents to have the family piano tuned so you can practice chords.

2 START YOUR OWN BAND—named Rhapsody for the famous song by Queen—at age 16. Play for the fun of it, but more importantly, to get the attention of girls. Sing in English despite having only an elementary grasp of the language.

3 WRITE YOUR FIRST SONG in high school. In college, form a better band—named (inexplicably) The Ice Creams. Go to lots of rock concerts by bands like The Police and UB40, and play more than 50 gigs, once as the opener for a Tom Robinson concert.

4 CUT YOUR FIRST AND ONLY RECORD at age 20 on a local label and see your music video appear—once—on Belgian TV. As your interest in African politics takes precedence, dissolve the band and drop music almost entirely for the next dozen years or so.

5 BUY AN ELECTRIC PIANO with your first paycheck from the World Bank in 1988. Use it sparingly until the mid-1990s, when you resume songwriting as a creative outlet while working on your dissertation. Get an 8-track recorder and sound-engineer your own songs, one track at a time.

6 WRITE A FEW NEW SONGS, including one for your wife titled “When You Shave Your Legs.” After getting your Ph.D., lose yourself in work. Store your instruments under the bed, where they will mostly gather dust for more than 20 years.

7 NOTICE A FLYER for guitar lessons while on sabbatical in 2018. Decide to expand your musical chops by taking guitar lessons. Then take it a step farther by auditing music classes with Pomona professors Tom Flaherty and Eric Lindholm.

8 START WRITING SONGS AGAIN, using software called Guitar Pro. Then with another program called Logic, build them out a track at a time. Send the “pre-mix” to a studio in Los Angeles to be professionally mastered.

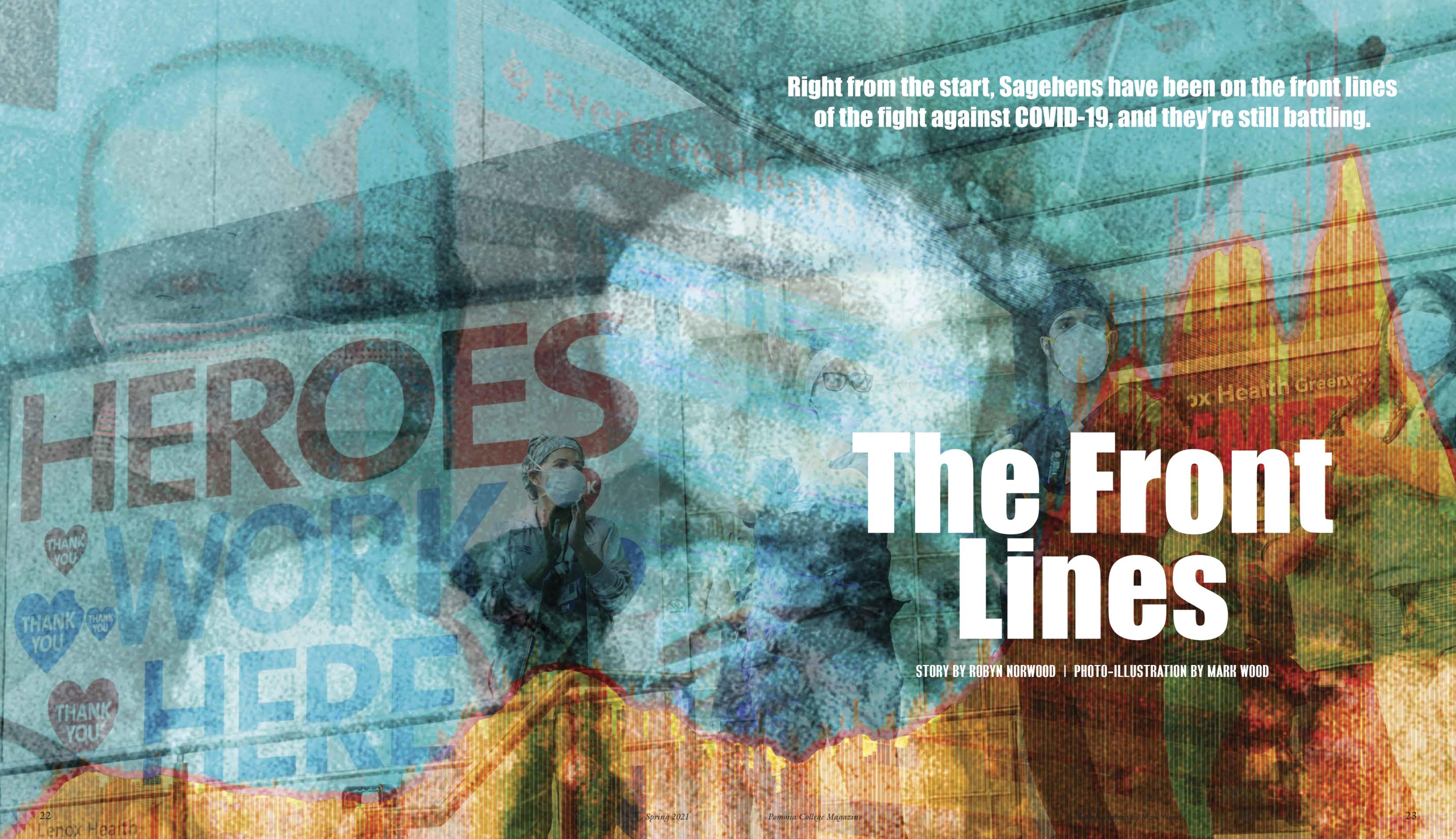
9 UNDER THE MONIKER “Not a Moment Too Soon,” produce your first album, titled “Back to Plan A.” Post it on SoundCloud. Then sign up with a distributor to post your tracks on a range of platforms, from Apple Music to Spotify.

10 POST YOUR SECOND ALBUM—titled “Well,” (including the comma)—with cover art by Pomona student Sei M’pfunya. Plan to keep sharing your songs as long as you find it rewarding and the songs give people joy.



Both of Englebert's albums are available free at his website: www.not-a-moment-too-soon.com, and at such online repositories as SoundCloud, Spotify, Apple Music and YouTube.

Right from the start, Sagehens have been on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19, and they're still battling.



The Front Lines

STORY BY ROBYN NORWOOD | PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY MARK WOOD

It wasn't the end, not by a long shot, but it felt like the beginning of the end.

"I was just at home. It was a weeknight, like 8 p.m.," says Kate Dzurilla '11, a nurse practitioner at NYU Langone hospital in New York who worked nights on a COVID-19 floor during the surge that brought freezer trucks to the city to serve as overflow morgues. "It just popped up on my phone. 'You have an appointment to schedule. You're eligible for the vaccine.'"

Clicking through quickly, Dzurilla scheduled the first available slot on Dec. 15. "And I just kind of started crying," she says. "I wasn't sure exactly what the emotion was, whether it was excitement or relief that it was over or, like, a little bit hopeful."

On the other side of the country in Kirkland, Washington, Dr. David Siew '98 works as an internal medicine hospitalist at EvergreenHealth Medical Center, where the first known U.S. outbreak of COVID-19 was identified in February 2020 as patients from the nearby Life Care Center skilled nursing facility streamed into the hospital with severe lower respiratory illness. The hospital would later lose an intensive care nurse to COVID-19. "A nurse that had been with us for a really long time and was a bedrock of all of our intensive care unit," Siew says. "That was really hard, and obviously it highlighted our own vulnerability."

On Christmas Eve, Siew and other hospital staff received their own first vaccines.

"It was amazing to see the emotion of people," he says. "It was almost like a party atmosphere at our vaccine clinic because of the amount of relief and elation after living a year in a higher-risk environment, just knowing that the threat was always there, that you could fall critically ill or die from this illness. Obviously, the vaccine is not 100% protective, but to finally have some relief was euphoric, and hopefully we'll be able to get that for everyone."

The first known U.S. case of the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 was identified on Jan. 20, 2020, in Washington's Snohomish County in a 35-year-old man who had recently returned from Wuhan, China. "Patient Zero" would recover.

At the headquarters of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Matt Wise '01 monitored the reports. With a Ph.D. in epidemiology from UCLA, he has worked for the CDC for more than a dozen years and has risen to chief of the Outbreak Response and Prevention Branch in the division of Foodborne, Waterborne and Environmental Diseases, typically focusing on illnesses caused by such pathogens as salmonella, E. coli and listeria.

"The reality is that almost every year, there's some major public health disaster either at home or abroad," he says.

Most are contained. This time was different.

The outbreak at the Life Care Center was identified after Dr. Francis Riedo, a former CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service officer and the director for infection control and prevention at the hospital where Siew works, noted an expansion in testing eligibility beyond only those who had travel history or contact with someone who was infected. The hospital selected two seriously ill patients, sent out the tests, and uncovered what would become one of the first significant COVID-19 outbreaks in the United States.

But those illnesses among vulnerable elderly patients weren't what stopped Wise cold: At about the same time, a 17-year-old high school student from nearby Everett, Washington, tested positive with no history of travel. "The moment that came out, you knew that there was extensive unrecognized community transmission going on," Wise says. "I think seeing that confirmed everyone's worst fears



Nurse practitioner Kate Dzurilla '11 takes a selfie as she receives her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

that this was being transmitted widely within the U.S. And I think that was the moment where it was just like, 'OK, we're not getting out of this. This is here, and it's happening.'"

Back in New York, the virus hit early and hard.

"I got it right at the beginning, like March 16th. I tested positive," Dzurilla says. "Thankfully it was mild, but there was so much anxiety, more than anything. Especially at that point, we didn't really know what all the symptoms would be like. I lost my taste and smell on about Day 5 of being sick and no one had even known that was a symptom at that time. When I got it, we'd barely had any COVID patients. When I came back two weeks later after being sick, the hospital had exploded, and it was all COVID."

In Los Angeles, Dr. Edgar Chavez '98 had been monitoring the distant drumbeat of the deadly virus that emerged from Wuhan for months, but Los Angeles County did not record its first death until March 11, a woman who had traveled abroad.

Chavez earned a medical degree at Stanford before turning down a lucrative job offer and returning to the South L.A. neighborhood where he grew up after his family fled war-torn El Salvador. The Universal Community Health Center he opened on E. Washington Boulevard blocks from his childhood home was the first of three clinics he founded to meet the needs of the underserved, largely Spanish-speaking population.

It was a Monday in March, as Chavez recalls, when "I had a

patient that came to see me, and he was having a bad cough, just not feeling really well. He had an appointment to come back a week after so that I could evaluate him again. And by Sunday I get a call from a community hospital that he had passed away from respiratory failure. This was a young 60-year-old guy. He had a little bit of diabetes, but not really to the level that I would say, oh, my God, you know, you are at such huge risk of dying from any type of disease. And so that's when it hit me. You know what? This is going to be really bad."

At the initial U.S. epicenter of the disease, doctors at EvergreenHealth started a website recording their own experiences and responses to the new disease to share with medical colleagues around the U.S., Siew says.

But after the earliest days, when COVID associated with people who had the means to travel—or had interacted with people who traveled—began to fade, it became clear that the battle is against more than the disease itself, says the CDC's Wise.

"The virus has found the soft underbelly of everything in our society, all of our public health system, our health care system, the inequities, racism—the virus sort of sees all of that," says Wise. He has now served three COVID deployments from his home—the first last spring focused on identifying areas where transmission was increasing rapidly, the second in the fall working on community interventions ▸

such as how to protect people at polling places, and the most recent this winter focused on providing constantly updated vaccination data on the CDC COVID Data Tracker. “When you ask that question about whether I have been touched, well, I am one of the people who have the ability to work remotely and insulate ourselves from contact.”

Working from home “is not a luxury that lots of people have. It’s not a luxury that health care providers have, and it’s not a luxury that lots of people that have to go to a physical job every day have,” Wise says.

And they’re repeatedly being exposed to COVID. The young may not have issues; they will get over the COVID. But the problem is that they’re taking this COVID back home, and they have grandpas and parents who have these high-risk conditions and end up getting COVID, and then they end up dying. A lot of our patients are undocumented too. They don’t have the luxury of saying, ‘I am going to rely on the subsidies that the government gives for me to stay home, from unemployment.’ They don’t have access to that money. It’s a hard situation to see with our patients.”

Now, he says, it’s 4,500 a month, in part because of access to testing.

Along with testing, Chavez transitioned many clinic visits to telephone or virtual with a simplified system called Doxy.me that allows people to simply click on a text for a video call rather than going through a portal or requiring a computer and Wi-Fi. That allowed both patients and his health care providers to limit contact.

With the arrival of the vaccine, Chavez pivoted again, quickly ordering vaccines and spending close to \$10,000 on a used ultra-low-temperature freezer to store them.

he says. “We were helping bring in State and National Guard to help our different hospitals. We were basically having to put ICU beds in gift shops and hospital cafeterias and lobbies.”

Since then, he has shifted his work to the immense logistical task of distributing vaccines in a county that covers more than 20,000 square miles and reaches to the Arizona and Nevada borders, making it the largest in the Lower 48 states.

Instead of creating vaccination mega-sites, as L.A. County did, San Bernardino adopted a hub-and-spoke system to reach a more dispersed population. Another challenge is overcoming vaccine hesitancy in the community.

“I just had a feeling that was going to be a problem with this vaccine,” Sequeira says, recalling how about half of his nurses in years past had resisted flu vaccines. “From the start, I was trying to stay ahead because if we only had 50% of the people who are eligible taking the vaccine, we’d never reach herd immunity.”

To counter uncertainty stemming from concerns about the speed of the vaccine’s approval, the mRNA technology, politicization of the pandemic or other issues, San Bernardino embarked on a campaign of education and reassurance using social media, community town halls and spokespeople including Black doctors, Spanish-speaking doctors and tribal doctors.

There are also worries about variants, with the U.K. variant appearing in a small pocket of Big Bear Lake. “We had to jump all over that, and we’ve contained it,” Sequeira says.

By late February, as the U.S. marked the solemn toll of more than 500,000 dead, hints of hope emerged as cases declined rapidly—a suggestion, some said, that the U.S. had begun to achieve partial herd immunity. Many of those closest to the crisis are more cautious, saying it could be only a lull, cautioning against overreaction.

“I think everyone is eager for a return to some kind of normalcy,” says the CDC’s Wise. “I just think we have to be really careful that our eagerness to try and have some of that

normalcy come back—to be able to see our grandparents and our friends and all that—doesn’t lead us to underestimate the virus. There are variants out there.

“I would say I’m optimistic for sure, but I think that we have to temper that optimism with some realism that having a vaccine is an incredibly important tool, maybe the most important tool, but it’s not the only one. And it’s necessary but probably not sufficient to get us over the line. We still have to do all the other stuff too.

“I think it’s really hard to predict what society is going to look like when this all ends. And frankly, I think even the notion of this ending, it’s hard to know what that even means. You know, we will probably have some amount of COVID-19 with us always now.” **PGM**

Workers exit a large tent set up in front of the emergency room at EvergreenHealth Medical Center, where Dr. David Siew ’98 experienced the first known outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States. —AP Photo/Ted S. Warren



Matt Wise ’01 in his office at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. —Photo by Dustin Chambers

The disparities unfolded starkly in the South L.A. communities Chavez’s clinics serve. “A lot of our population historically has gotten poor health care, so they have lots of diabetes, hypertension, heart disease,” he says. “When they get COVID, it’s not a flu, it’s not a cold. It’s actually something that drives them to the hospital. We’re seeing a lot of deaths. In the past year, I’ve probably lost upwards of 15 to 20 patients to COVID—my own patients that I’ve seen over the past 10 years that I’ve been at the clinic.

“The reason that’s happening is because a lot of our community lives in multigenerational households, and so you’ll have the young that have to go out to work. They’re the people that work in restaurants and shops, where they’re the first line to deal with the public.

Frustrated with waiting up to 10 days at one point for results from COVID tests sent out to labs—rendering them clinically useless, he says—Chavez made a decision to go big on testing that provides quick results. “You can tell people, ‘Hey, stay home,’ but if they don’t have a positive result, people are like, ‘Maybe I’m negative.’ They don’t really listen to you.”

With the help of \$650,000 from the federal CARES Act, Chavez purchased a mobile van for testing, hired additional staff and ordered 200,000 of Abbott’s ID Now tests that provide a result in less than 15 minutes. The Universal clinics now provide three types of COVID tests—antibody, antigen and the rapid PCR test. In a typical month before the pandemic, the clinics might have had 2,000 patient visits.

Beyond L.A. County, Dr. Michael Sequeira ’73 faces some of the same demographic challenges and more in his role as San Bernardino County’s new public health officer—a job he started on Nov. 23, shortly before the devastating post-holiday surge.

The county is home to transportation and shipping hubs, farm workers, a large Indigenous population that includes the San Manuel and Morongo tribes and many Pacific Islanders, whose large and close-knit families have been hit hard by the virus.

As hospitals began to fill, Sequeira, a former emergency room doctor, stepped back in to assist in the emergency room for a bit, even though at 69 his age put him in a vulnerable group.

“Most of the hospitals in the region were bursting at the seams,”



ELECTRICAL

THE PANDEMIC DENIED MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 2020 THEIR FINAL HURRAH ON CAMPUS, BUT THAT WAS JUST THE START. WHAT FOLLOWED WAS A TEST OF RESILIENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS.

The Class of 2020 Versus the Pandemic

STORY BY CARLA GUERRO | PHOTO-ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK WOOD

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the College to evacuate its campus a year ago, the Class of 2020 was stunned—perhaps more so than their younger peers. This was their last semester on campus, a busy one but also a fun one—it was supposed to be the semester to end all semesters. But on Wednesday, March 11, an email appeared in all their inboxes, announcing the closure of campus as the COVID-19 outbreak brought Los Angeles County, along with the rest of California, into a state of emergency. Suddenly, all their expectations were turned upside down.

Their final months as Pomona College students were spent off campus, either back home with family or in new living arrangements with friends and roommates. As the pandemic worsened, economic forces began to affect the job market while tightened university budgets constrained graduate programs.

Pomona College students in general fared well, according to a Career Development Office survey released in February that showed 90% of the Class of 2020 graduates participating in career activities—such as a job, internship, service opportunity, graduate school, fellowship or other related activity.

To dive deeper, we spoke to six recent graduates from the Class of 2020, who shared how they have managed in the months since graduating from Pomona. Spanning disciplines and industries, these Sagehens have endured their fair share of experiences that are unique to the year of the pandemic. These are their stories. ▸

Karla Ortiz “I’ll Figure Something Out”

“Growing up, my parents were always telling me: ‘We don’t want you work with your hands—we want you to work with your mind,’” Karla Ortiz recalls. As immigrants, however, her parents knew little about college or scholarships, so Ortiz had to figure out everything on her own. “All I knew was how to get good grades and that I’ll figure something out.”

And she did. As a QuestBridge Scholar, she earned a fully paid scholarship to Pomona, starting out on the pre-health track. After a full year of biology and chemistry, when she decided pre-health wasn’t for her, a methods course in Chicana/o-Latina/o Studies (CLS) soon filled the void. “I felt a very big sense of community that I hadn’t felt in any other classes. ... In CLS, I felt I was being heard and understood, and so I decided to major in that, with a focus on immigration.”

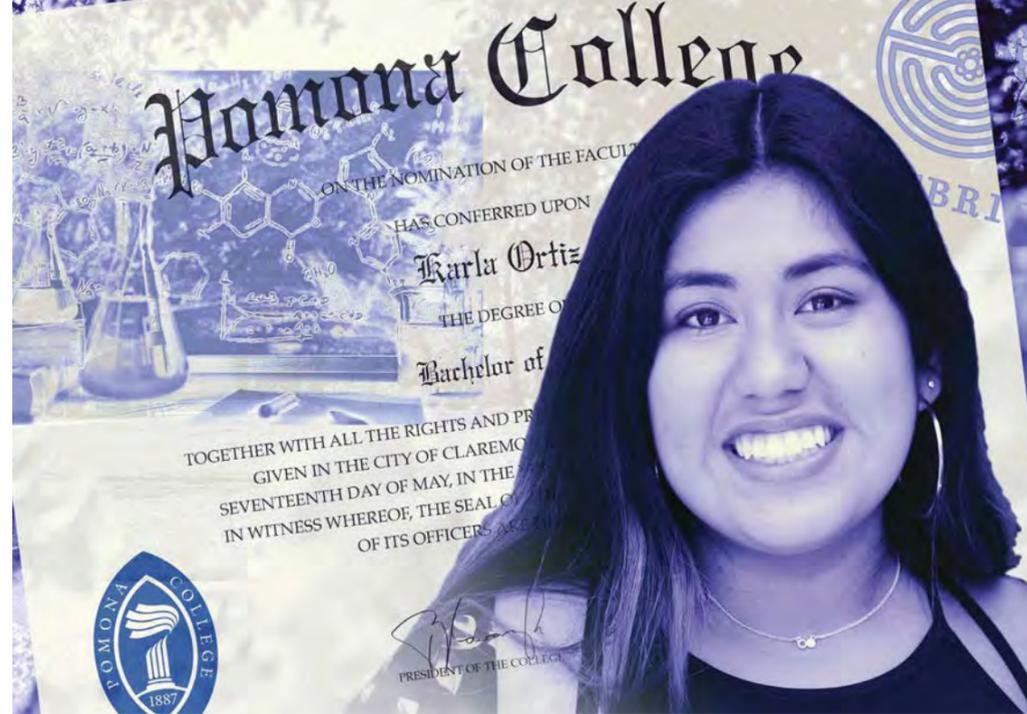
She became a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow and volunteered at a nonprofit, Uncommon Good, where she tutored and mentored youth. She took a leadership role with the First-Generation and Low-Income (FLI) program.

When the pandemic hit, Ortiz—who was set to graduate with a major in CLS and a minor in mathematics—again had to figure things out. She was in the middle of interviews for a paralegal position when entry-level openings began to disappear. Suddenly, the replies to her cover letters read along the lines of “We are no longer hiring for this position” and “We are freezing hiring for the time being.”

With her parents’ words in her ear, Ortiz never stopped giving it her best, even as her options dwindled. Anxious about not having a job lined up, she signed up in May for an online platform for jobs in education at independent and charter schools. A director of a private school in the Bay Area contacted her personally. “He said he saw my résumé and that I’d be a great fit.” As it turned out, he was particularly interested in Ortiz’s chemistry background—her first year of chemistry and her sophomore year when she became a mentor to a chemistry cohort for underrepresented first-years at Pomona.

“And so, we just went through the interview process: three interviews, got a reference from my chemistry professor, and they talked to another professor about my skills. I got the offer in the beginning of August, and the first day of classes was the 24th.”

A two-year teacher training program at the private school paired Ortiz with a mentor in the same subject, and her first few weeks were spent observing pedagogy in action: how the teachers interacted with students, how they taught the material, how to plan lessons. Now she’s teaching her own classes in ninth-grade chemistry—remotely at



ON MARCH 11, 2020: Karla Ortiz, a Chicana/o-Latina/o Studies major and math minor, was in the interview process for a paralegal/legal assistant position and had a few other résumés out for jobs in the legal and nonprofit fields.

first, then as a hybrid mix of virtual and in-person learning.

Trained in CLS, Ortiz has keenly observed the disparities between her own experience as a pupil at an underresourced public high school in Las Vegas, where school lunches often involved semifrozen burritos and other heavily processed foods, and the private high school world in the heart of Silicon

Valley where she now teaches. No frozen burritos here—fresh and healthy ingredients are the norm as cooks prepare wholesome meals for the students and staff.

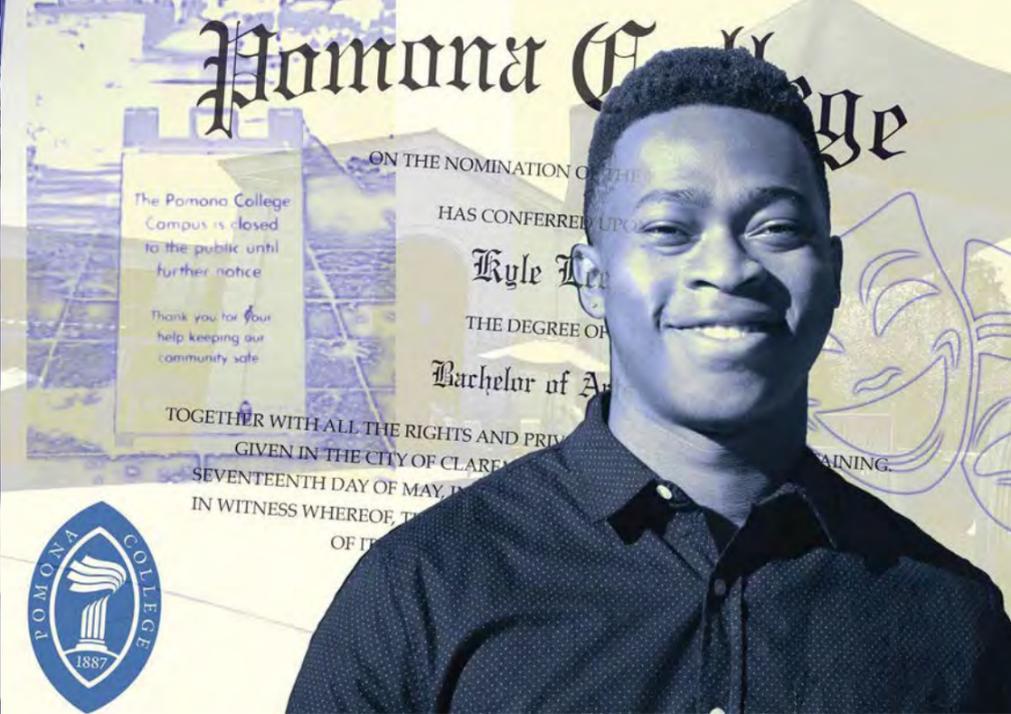
Ortiz is not sure what the future holds. She plans to continue teaching through the end of the training program, arming herself with the knowledge and experience for teaching at the college level one day—perhaps. But she’s also considering business school, a career route she’d never considered before the pandemic. “Money is tight, and business school has crossed my mind.”

Business school. A Ph.D. in sociology. A policy degree. Ortiz continues to mull over her future choices, knowing she will figure something out. But in the meantime, it’s back to ninth-grade chemistry.

Kyle Lee “An Exercise in Being Vulnerable”

Kyle Lee is an extrovert by nature. An actor who took to Seaver’s stage as a theatre major, he also mastered the art of walking backwards while giving campus tours for the Admissions Office.

“I’m a people person,” says Lee, who also designed a second major, clinical neuropsychology, in order to better understand people. While at Pomona, Lee thought he knew himself well. Then the pandemic surprised him with the hustler living inside him, as he puts it—the Kyle who makes things happen.



ON MARCH 11, 2020: Kyle Lee, a theatre and clinical neuropsychology double major, had just returned from a final callback for an MFA program at UC Irvine and was excited to be in the midst of the admission process with a number of notable MFA programs.

In the fall of his senior year, Lee had applied to a number of MFA programs in acting. He had spent hours and hours preparing monologues and getting ready for auditions, and he got final callbacks at a number of good schools. Excited about each and every one of them, Lee was feeling good—very good—about himself in the weeks leading up to that fateful spring semester, when everything changed.

He stopped hearing back from the programs around the same time Pomona began evacuating campus. When the programs emailed him again, it was a series of depressing messages. “Programs were emailing saying they had either closed or were no longer going to happen. These programs already only take about eight students, so now some are only taking four or six. Most programs just didn’t happen.”

The blow was a harsh one. “Honestly, there were a lot of times when I was wondering why I got this degree. I felt my skills were not useful ... but it’s a pandemic and I had to learn to give myself grace.” Ongoing therapy and a close-knit group of friends going through similar struggles helped Lee get through it all.

In the weeks leading up to the announcement that all students must vacate campus, Lee didn’t believe things would be that bad. The shock of the evacuation took him aback. At first there was anger toward the College administration over the decision to evacuate. Then came fear. Lee wasn’t able to return home to New York. “I felt I was being left out in the cold. My mother is housing-insecure, and she was like, ‘I don’t know where you’re going to live.’”

Mixed with the fear was uncertainty. “I was on the precipice of the unknown. I hadn’t heard from my MFA programs, and I didn’t know where I was going to be. I was not sure if our [Pomona] jobs would keep paying us. Honestly, I wasn’t even thinking of graduation or the social aspect of things. I was just trying to figure out how to survive. I packed my stuff, and I just sat in the back of a car not knowing where to go.”

Lee ended up in Los Angeles after calling a friend, Miles Burton ’17, who had an extra room in an apartment he was sharing with an-

other person. The room was spoken for, but Lee was welcome to stay there until the new roommate moved in. Lee was grateful for the respite, but the uncertainty of his life continued to hit him in waves. What followed were many weeks of despair and wondering how he would be able to afford his new rent and bills.

The job search in a pandemic was plainly and simply hard, says Lee. He took on various gigs to pay the rent: delivering food for Postmates, coordinating a training for a startup, becoming a freelance writer for a get-out-the-vote campaign in Georgia.

Even with his gregarious nature, Lee was hesitant to ask for help. But in early fall of 2020, after months of gig jobs and stressful thoughts, Lee reached out to his beloved Office of Admissions at Pomona, where he had worked for many summers and where staff members had taken him under their wing.

“I was like, ‘OK, Kyle, this is an exercise in being vulnerable.’ It was hard to tell people I still didn’t have a job—that I needed help. This felt so personal. I felt so vulnerable that I was scared to do that reaching out, but I reached out to Adam [Sapp, assistant vice president and director of admissions] ... He moved his schedule around immediately and had a whole meeting with me about admissions jobs.”

Sapp encouraged Lee to apply for a temporary position as an outside reader for the Admissions Office. He got the job a month later, which helped Lee sustain himself while he searched for a more permanent job and prepared for another round of MFA applications.

“I realized that I am someone who can roll with the punches and land on my feet. I’ve learned so much about myself and my capacity and my work—things I couldn’t have learned in grad school.”

In January, Lee accepted a full-time offer in business development for BlackLine, a cloud software company. He’s also been busy rebuilding his trust in himself after months of uncertainty. With a new set of tools and newfound knowledge of himself, Lee is once again applying to MFA programs that have reopened. He has a final callback in April for the Tisch School of Arts at New York University. Wish him luck.

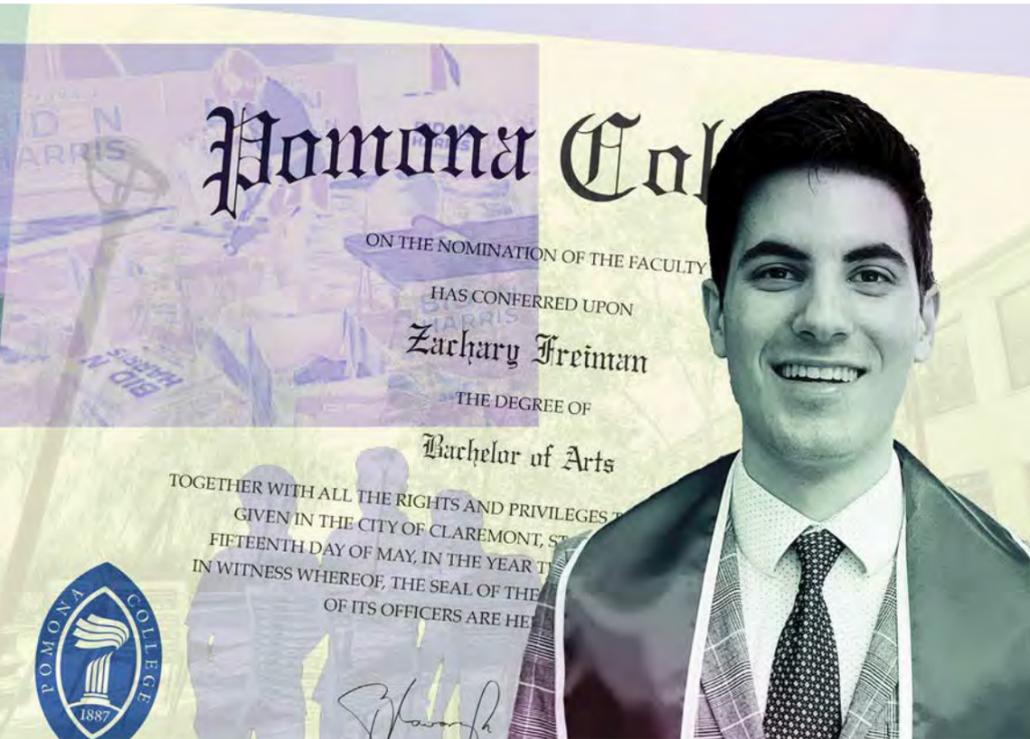
Zachary Freiman “The Campaign Staffer Life”

Suddenly last March, Zachary Freiman’s parents saw their brood of three adult sons return unexpectedly to the nest at the family home in Westchester, New York.

Before the arrival of COVID-19, Freiman—a double major in public policy analysis (PPE) and music—was excited to graduate during an election year. He dreamed about working for a big ▷

Senate race and living “the campaign staffer life”—where you “uproot everything, and you’re living in the supporter housing, in someone’s guest house eating pizza” while running phone-banks and doing door-to-door canvassing.

When the pandemic began, he was worried and anxious but



ON MARCH 11, 2020:

Zachary Freiman, a music and public policy analysis (PPA) double major, had just completed his senior music recital the week before spring break—a capstone event that his father had flown from New York to witness.

The week before spring break, his father flew in from New York for the recital, and Freiman remembers jokingly asking him to bring cardboard boxes and packing tape in case they needed to pack up his dorm. In the end, his father did help him pack up and get home.

During the next few months, COVID-19 hit the Westchester area hard, with shelves empty of toilet paper and trips to the grocery store fraught with worry. “We were scared and at home,” Freiman recalls. “My dad runs a small business, and that got hit really bad, and he was struggling. My mom was working in politics and was out of a job. We were all basically struggling as much as the country was and is. It was a deeply stressful, traumatic experience to be home during the pandemic with my whole family there, not knowing if it’s airborne, if we can go see our grandma, if we can go to the grocery store—we’d wipe down the bags, wipe each item out of the bag, wipe handles ...

continued with his academic work, including preparing for his senior music recital, a major capstone for most music majors. “I spent four years at Pomona pretty much running back and forth between Thatcher and Carnegie,” he recalls.

We were neurotic. We couldn’t find yeast, couldn’t find toilet paper or even cleaning supplies.”

The situation only grew worse as Freiman continued to search for campaign jobs during a unique moment in history. After the initial scramble of campaigns regrouping to move operations to the virtual world of online organizing, Freiman got a notice from a friend that a Democratic campaign of some kind in North Carolina was hiring.

“Who it was for, I wasn’t sure, but I sent in my application,” remembers Freiman with a laugh. “Someone texted me back furiously: ‘We need to hire you.’ So I interviewed with this guy, and I didn’t even understand what this campaign was at first. Turns out, I began working for the Biden campaign in North Carolina.”

The job was virtual, so Freiman was working from home. His duties included helping get campaign volunteers into the virtual space. “We were having to teach the volunteers how to Zoom. We had to spend hours and hours with really lovely, elderly volunteers—volunteers who had been volunteering for years—we had to help them as if we were their grandchildren. I was part of a fleet of young staffers acting as grandchildren—helping them with tech problems. I’ve had to help my grandparents with these things like opening a browser, using Gmail, how to plug in your headphones.”

Freiman was able to travel to North Carolina for the last few weeks leading up to the election to safely canvass neighborhoods and go door-knocking while maintaining social distancing.

Today the campaigns are over, and Freiman has left his family home and moved in with his former Pomona roommate, William Baird-Smith ’20, in Washington, D.C. He wants to be close to the action as he continues his search for meaningful political work.

Freiman’s experience with the campaign staffer life may not quite have been the post-Pomona adventure he had envisioned, but for now, at least, it was close enough.

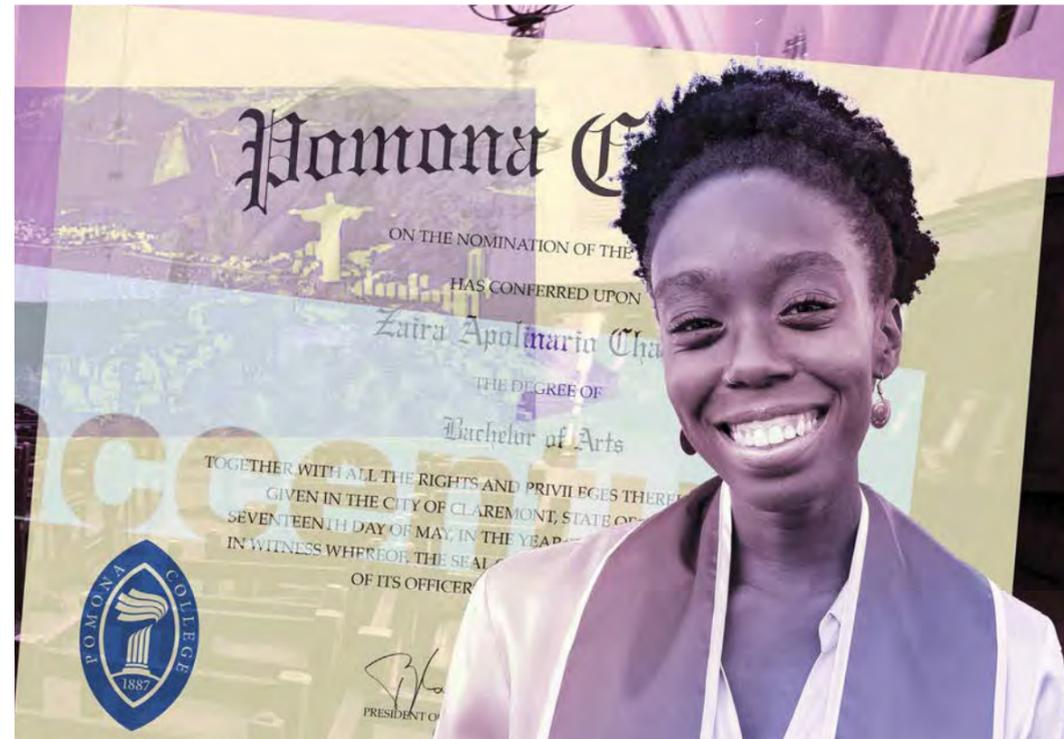
Zaira Apolinario Chaplin “Frazzled, Confused and Lost”

Zaira Apolinario Chaplin recalls returning to her family in New York—the epicenter of the coronavirus at the time—after campus was evacuated last March. She arrived home with a cold. Fearing the worst, she camped out in the living room. Her makeshift bedroom served as a remote classroom, and her suitcases were her closet. “I was super frazzled, confused and lost.”

Her mother, Erminia, worked as a caregiver at the time and had to travel to Florida with the family she worked for, heightening the stress

that Zaira was already feeling in those early months of the pandemic.

Fortunately, professors extended a lot of deadlines. Her thesis readers continued to support her, but living through a pandemic while trying to wrap up your final semester of college was difficult. “I was nowhere near as productive as I was in school. But I thought, ‘I have



ON MARCH 11, 2020:

Zaira Apolinario Chaplin, an international relations major, had a job offer in hand with Accenture and was planning a fun summer, with a research project and a trip back to Brazil, where she studied abroad.

to get it done. I have to graduate. I cannot end on a negative note.”

Not only did she graduate; she was awarded the John Vieg Senior Prize in International Relations for her thesis.

She kicked off her summer

by spending quality time with her family. She started learning to crochet; she baked; and she took up gardening with her mother. She kept this up as she started a part-time research gig working for Professor Guillermo Douglass-Jaimes.

An international relations major, Apolinario Chaplin had secured a job as an analyst with Accenture in San Francisco that was slated to start in early fall. As she was finishing up her research work for Douglass-Jaimes, she received an email from Accenture pushing back her start date to January 2021.

“That gave me time to spend time with my partner in her home city of Rio de Janeiro,” says Apolinario Chaplin who remembers multiple canceled flights until she finally booked a flight and made the trip to Brazil, where she tested negative for COVID-19 and booked an Airbnb. “It was nice to have some breathing room, have a little bit of space and also to have my own apartment, naturally. I just cooked

a lot and tried so many recipes, I made all kinds of soups and just really spent a lot of time with myself,” she says. “I learned how to box braid my hair and experimented with styling kinky black hair textures like my own. I joined a Facebook group called ‘Safe space for Black girls who never learned to braid,’ and it was really emblematic of the special, online quarantine communities that many people sought out in the early months of the pandemic.”

The time in Rio was a contrast to the past few months in New York, where the only places she could get outdoors were in parks. “Versus in Rio, you can go camping, hiking, and that really changed the way I spent my time, to be able to be in fresh air and not be concerned with contaminating other people.”

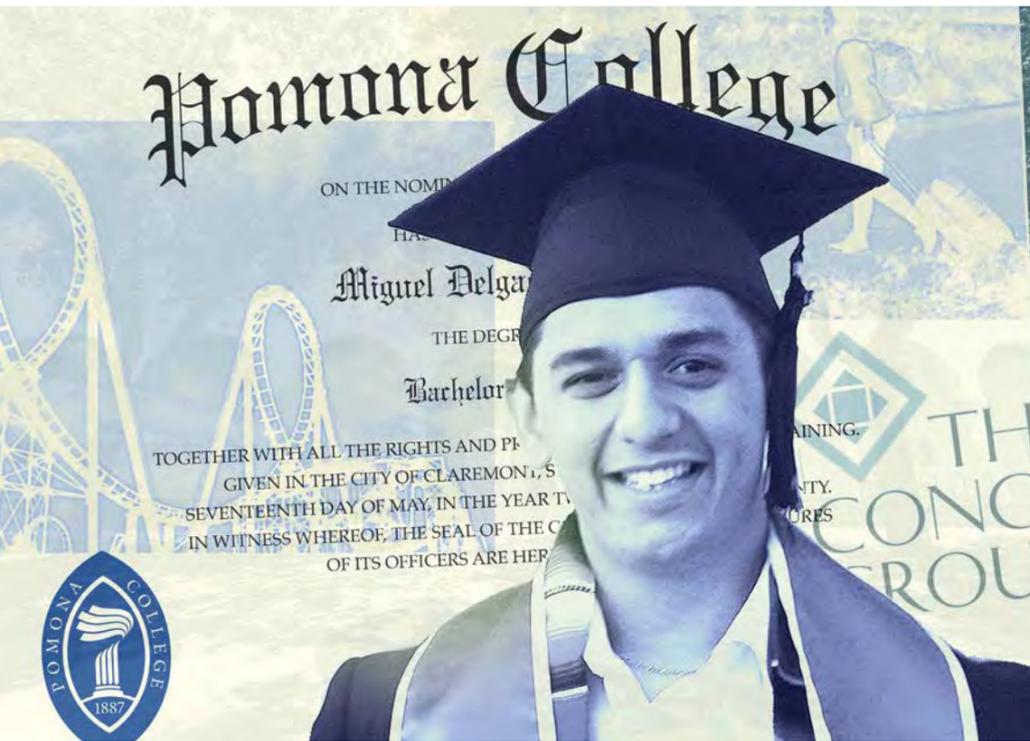
Even with the outdoor opportunities, Apolinario Chaplin experienced a side of the pandemic in Rio that she wasn’t used to. “Generally, people weren’t taking the pandemic very seriously. Every single restaurant was open; clubs were open; bars were open; every other person was wearing a mask. People tended to treat the pandemic and the discussions around social distancing as something banal, a minor inconvenience.”

Apolinario Chaplin came home to New York in January. Her mother had quit her caregiver job and was now cooking Brazilian food and selling it via an app called Shef. “It’s been nice to see her entrepreneurial side, and it’s a big relief for me because she doesn’t have to travel with the family anymore.”

Since her start with Accenture, her life has been more of a whirlwind than the relaxed months she spent in Rio. Training was intensive, but she started with a cohort of other new, nervous beginners like herself. Accenture sent her a work computer and a headset, and she now works from home, with a schedule that has been busy but flexible. But Accenture also has a branch in Rio, and the thought of transferring there someday gives Apolinario Chaplin a special goal to work toward in the future.

Miguel Delgado-Garcia “A Roller Coaster I Was Riding”

During the fall of his senior year, student body president Miguel Delgado-Garcia, was putting in a busy schedule to ensure that he would have a smooth spring semester. A public policy analysis (PPA) major, he had done all the research he needed for his thesis, which he was going to write in the spring. He jumped into the hiring cycle for consulting firms and secured an offer from The Concord Group, a national real estate strategy firm. He was also traveling twice a week into Los Angeles for an internship, all while fulfilling his duties as president of the Associated Students of Pomona College (ASPC). ▷



ON MARCH 11, 2020:

Miguel Delgado-Garcia, an public policy analysis (PPA) major and student body president, had already accepted a position with a L.A.-based consulting firm and did not anticipate any changes in the offer.

As spring began, his busy fall seemed to be paying off. In the weeks leading up to the evacuation of campus, Delgado-Garcia had been going out with friends and enjoying his last semester at Pomona. Then: “I was in theatre class when we got the email, and initially, I just felt shock and awe. I saw Dean Ellie Ash-Bala and we’re just sitting together in disbelief when Dean Josh [Eisenberg] came out and said, ‘OK, what are we going to do?’”

From then on, it was all business for Delgado-Garcia, who helped set up a meeting between the ASPC and Pomona’s executive staff, getting it livestreamed and ensuring they asked all the pertinent questions on behalf of the student body. Amidst senior activities and pre-spring break celebration, the student body chose to unify and advocate for each other. “I think that was the beginning, when we had to pivot and acknowledge that we’re in a new world.”

For Delgado-Garcia, that included working with student activist groups to secure housing and funding for students who had to leave campus but didn’t have a viable place to go to on short notice. “That was difficult because I always felt stuck in the middle. I was elected to advocate for the students, but I also understand the struggles the College was facing. It was a constant, nonstop remainder of the semester. I remember calling Professor Eleanor Brown, my thesis reader, and just breaking down. I didn’t have my thesis draft ready. I shared what was happening in ASPC. She helped me calm down. All

my professors were supportive. It was definitely a difficult semester. It was a huge transition, and then one day, I submitted my thesis and graduated.”

By this point, Delgado-Garcia had moved back home with his father. “Suddenly I was in my childhood room, where I had applied to Pomona. I hadn’t planned on moving back home after graduation. I thought I was going to move directly to San Francisco, and here I am.”

And then, the week before finals were due, Delgado-Garcia got an email from The Concord Group informing him that they wouldn’t be able to hire him. “At least through the remainder of the semester, I knew I had a plan because I had a job ... and then my job was gone. The carpet was pulled out from under me. They informed us that due to the pandemic, and in order to honor their current employees, they wouldn’t be able to bring us on. They had halted all hiring.

“I graduated, and suddenly I was an adult with a college degree, with no job, living at home. It was a span of six weeks after graduation where I slept a lot, read a lot of books, went on a lot of hikes. There wasn’t a lot to do being quarantined in L.A. I applied for a couple

of jobs. It really knocked down my morale in general: I had been on a high, a roller coaster I was riding, and it suddenly dipped.”

Luckily for Delgado-Garcia, The Concord Group sent him a second email a few weeks later, re-offering him the position. At that point, he had activated his Claremont Colleges’ network and through a connection, had secured an offer with another consulting firm. Ultimately, however, he went with the original job offer.

In the end, Delgado-Garcia is grateful to have lived through those experiences to grow as a leader and as an individual: “It steeled me.” Because he’s working remotely, Delgado-Garcia is just now starting to feel confident in his job, nearly eight months later. He’s moved out of his father’s house and in with one of his longtime best friends, Nicole Talisay ’20.

He’s thinking about graduate school for the future, but for now, he wants to soak up as much as he can. Eventually, with a master’s in public policy in hand, he’d like to work in the public sector. “I’d love to go get my master’s in two to three years, but I’m not ready to go back [to school] yet. Especially not in a pandemic.”

Norani Abilo “The Uncertainty of the Pandemic”

Norani Abilo had a clear plan for her next two years. She would take the first year off after graduation and apply to medical school the next year. During that two-year gap, she planned to



work in a clinical research setting to gain clinical laboratory hours and build strong relationships with health care professionals. All in all, a solid plan, she thought.

“I was thinking that I could still apply to jobs outside of California, so I was trying to think about my options,” she recalls. “I hadn’t applied to too many yet when the pandemic hit, and then applications were put on hold, and I was asked to wait longer for decisions. I was starting to stress out and wonder what’s going to happen post-graduation. That’s when I started applying to as many jobs as I could, but no one was really getting back to me.”

In all, she applied for almost 200 different jobs. Some employers did get back to her and even interviewed her before they halted or let her know they were moving on to someone else. It was after some months of this that Abilo applied to a pharmacy technician opening at a local CVS Pharmacy in Encino, California. “It wasn’t part of my original plan,” says Abilo, who is from Los Angeles, but the pandemic has forced many a well-laid plan to go awry.

The position didn’t require certification. CVS trains you on the job, explains Abilo. Working part time since November, Abilo has been able to study for the MCAT and focus on her medical school application materials as she works with Pomona’s Career Development Office through the process.

Back on track for her long-term plan, Abilo is now facing a new hurdle: canceled, postponed and overbooked MCAT testing dates. There are applicants from the last pre-med cycle who weren’t able to take the MCAT because of COVID-19, and they are the ones being prioritized by MCAT testing centers, explains Abilo. “My MCAT keeps getting canceled or pushed back. Right now I have to decide [what to do] because I’ve already submitted to the Pomona Pre-Health Committee, and I have to let them know if I’m applying or not this June. I feel the uncertainty of the pandemic, and not know-

ON MARCH 11, 2020:

Norani Abilo, a molecular biology major, was in the middle of her job search looking into clinical research jobs—part of her plan to gain precious clinical hours in preparation for medical school, for which she planned to apply the following year.

ing what I’m doing in five years is stressing me out more.”

This stress of the unknown is nothing new to Abilo, who spent her last few months as a Pomona student helping her fellow first-generation and low-income community find housing after the campus was evacuated. Abilo was able to stay with a friend in an apartment near campus but then moved back in with her mother.

Abilo and her mother, a caregiver, live in the Pacoima. They share a converted garage that doesn’t afford much space to either of them. Living with her mother, Abilo held off applying to hospital jobs for fear of contracting COVID-19 and not being able to isolate in their cramped quarters. But now that both have gotten the COVID-19 vaccine, Abilo is considering applying to these jobs—although CVS has proved to be a valuable learning experience.

“Even the pharmacy was pretty scary at first,” she admits of the fear of contracting the virus. Abilo has dealt with customers who refuse to wear a mask, even when standing near elderly, more vulnerable people in line. Other customers are coming in while ill, sometimes just getting over COVID-19. Others are just plain rude.

It’s not all negative though. Abilo is gaining precious clinical experience—and she’s learning a lot from the patients and from the pharmacists.

In addition, she’s met some lovely customers.

“There are good customers, older folks who don’t have anyone at home. They’re happy to see us, as we’re the only source of interaction they’ve had in weeks.”

2021: Another Year Without Streamers?

Even as Abilo deals with the anxiety of her MCAT being endlessly postponed and her plans potentially laid waste by the pandemic, she’s also thinking sympathetically about the Class of 2021. “Class of 2020 had it rough, and I know Class of 2021 will too.”

As we enter year two of the COVID-19 pandemic and a second academic year that may end without the festive blue-and-white streamers over Marston Quad marking Commencement, the situation will again test the mettle of young Sagehens. Like the class before them, these new Pomona graduates may be taking their graduation photos in their own driveways and front yards. And like their predecessors, they may have to make their way in an economy still struggling toward recovery.

Like the Class of 2020, members of the Class of 2021 have been indelibly marked by the events of the past year, but they also will be able to say, in their turn, that they struggled, coped and eventually found their way in the midst of a global pandemic unlike any other in at least a century. **PCM**

Gator Halpern '12 and Coral Vita are playing a major role in expanding coral farming and reef restoration efforts in the face of global warming.

GARDENER

By Ramin Skibba

OF THE SEA

For years Gator Halpern '12 studied ecology, biology and environmental management during our era of worsening climate change. His research took him to the Andes, the Amazon and elsewhere as he witnessed deforestation, overfishing and bleaching corals. But his work wasn't yet having quite the impact he wanted.

"I felt like I was almost helping write the obituary of the world without actually getting out there on the front lines and doing something about it," Halpern said. His passion motivated him and his colleague, Sam Teicher, to found Coral Vita, a company dedicated to coral farming and reef restoration. After having seen firsthand the declining health of coral reefs, he decided that "working with these ecosystems that are, really, canaries in the coal mine when it comes to climate change—the first ecosystems to collapse—is a great place to try to make a difference."

The United Nations, government agencies and nonprofit groups like the Coral Reef Alliance and the Reef Ball Foundation have been working for years to raise attention and expand efforts to protect coral reefs. Halpern and Teicher started Coral Vita in 2015 in an attempt to act more quickly than other organizations, if possible, to secure funding, cultivate resilient corals and return them to reefs to help them recover and survive as ocean waters continue to warm and become more acidic. Halpern and his team currently work at Grand Bahama Island, just about 100 miles east of Miami, and his vision is to scale up their efforts to reefs elsewhere, too. ▶

Corals are both tough creatures and the scaffolding for the homes of numerous other animals. Stony corals are like slowly growing skeletons, hosting thousands of microscopic algae in mouthlike openings on every polyp, which photosynthesize during the day and provide energy to the coral. Coral reefs, the animal forests of the seafloor, can stretch for hundreds of miles or more, and they surround most of the Bahama islands where Halpern works. They teem with thousands of fish species, clams, lobsters, sea turtles and myriad other organisms—25% of all marine life—that enjoy the ample shelter and sources of food, whether they call the reefs home or are just passing by. All this makes coral reefs important thriving ecosystems during normal times.



Climate change is the new normal, though, putting these whole, interconnected marine communities at risk. Marine scientists have seen ocean waters gradually warm for decades, while subjecting reefs to particularly warm episodes more often. Like a vulnerable coastal community during hurricane season, coral reefs roll the dice every year.

Sometimes water as much as 2 degrees Celsius above average will wash over a reef—or worse, linger in the area for a while, making the corals overheat. Current climate projections predict that the pace of warming will accelerate, said Stuart Sandin, a marine biologist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California. “What we’re seeing is that these hot water events, often associated with El Niño patterns, are more frequent and less predictable.”

Continually warming waters will threaten coral reefs on a massive scale in the coming decades, and after that, climate change will gradually acidify the oceans as well, eventually making it harder for corals to make their durable skeletons. “We’re already having massive coral reef loss right now, and it’s only projected to get worse,” said Andréa Grottoli, an ocean scientist at Ohio State University in Columbus. If we continue on our climate trajectory, up to 90% of coral reefs could be lost by 2050, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and it’s not clear whether there will be enough coral surviving to maintain all those diverse ecosystems.

When seawater surrounding a reef warms by just 1 degree Celsius for 10 days or longer, the corals’ health takes a hit. They eject their little algae as their carefully balanced symbiosis breaks down, halting their key energy source. Corals then hang on by depending on their fat reserves and snagging microscopic plankton for food. One can see through to their white skeleton at this point, in what’s called coral bleaching, which isn’t by itself a death sentence, Grottoli said. But if the waters don’t cool soon, within months the corals begin dying off and their ecosystems collapse.

If corals survive the bleaching period, it can take years, even

decades, for them to make a full recovery, she said. Unfortunately, Grottoli and other scientists foresee a near future with bleaching events happening annually, with the cumulative effect killing off more and more sections of coral reefs. The reefs won’t grow back to their former splendor, or even survive this century at all, unless something major changes.



That’s where Halpern and Coral Vita come in. They’re farming a variety of healthy and resilient corals and returning them to the sea, helping to revive dying reefs so that as many can survive this warm century as possible.



Gator Halpern shows off one of Coral Vita's outdoor water tanks.

Halpern and Teicher have launched what they call the world’s first commercial land-based coral farm. For their pilot project, they’ve partnered with the Grand Bahama Development Corporation and Grand Bahama Port Authority, and they’re working with scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Mote Marine Lab in Florida and the Hawai’i Institute of Marine Biology, as well as university researchers. Their main coral farm involves 30 outdoor water tanks the size of a dining room table, about four by eight feet. They conveniently built the coral farm next to a canal, so they can pump fresh seawater directly into the tanks. They’ve collected healthy fragments of reef, including brain coral, star coral, pillar coral and other species, and they farm them in the tanks for six to 18 months before returning them to the wild.

Halpern and his team’s coral farming involves taking advantage of

two important techniques. First, they perform what’s called micro-fragmentation, splitting up coral colonies into little pieces that soon fuse back together, dramatically speeding up coral growth rates by up to 50 times, so that they grow rapidly within months, rather than in decades, as they’d grow in nature. A coral colony grows asexually by cloning itself into hundreds or thousands of connected animals. For the entire time Halpern and his colleagues have a coral at their farm, they break it apart, fuse it back together, and repeat, keeping it in that high-growth state. If the corals come from the same original parent colony, they quickly heal from the procedure and grow normally afterward. This permits the Coral Vita team to select the very slow-growing corals that make up the foundation of the reef, more of which are needed for reef restoration. Without micro-fragmentation,



Gator Halpern dives near a Bahamian reef.

the team would be limited—as other groups have been—to only the fastest-growing corals.

Halpern and Teicher’s second technique, “assisted evolution,” is what it sounds like. They gradually crank up the heat and acidity in their tanks to see which kinds of corals can adapt to the rising sea temperatures and acidifying conditions expected to be common in 2050 or further in the future. They take the strongest corals of the batch and use them to seed the next batch, and then repeat the process. “Some corals do work better than others, but all species have the ability to adapt, and they all have a range of tolerance that they’re able to survive in. We can work with any species to increase that range and make them more resilient to climate change,” he said.

For the final step, Halpern and his team just have to transplant the healthy corals to the reef when they’re ready. They scuba dive down

and graft the corals to the existing, degraded reef using nothing but underwater drills and glue. Once the corals are established back on the reef, the reef quickly comes back to life. “Fish immediately sense the coral there and start moving back among the branches. It’s pretty magical,” Halpern said. His hope is that the most resilient corals become a significant part of the reef, which then adapts naturally to climate-influenced conditions.



To realize their goals, Halpern, Teicher and their nine employees, four of whom are Bahamian, have many challenges to overcome. The first comes from events caused by climate change itself, such as Hurricane Dorian in September 2019, which may have intensified because of warm air and water vapor in the atmosphere. Dorian battered the Bahamas with 185-mile-per-hour winds and increased rainfall, though the storm surge’s damage might have been worse had the surrounding coral reefs not provided a natural seawall. As it wreaked havoc throughout the islands, the hurricane destroyed Coral Vita’s farm, and Halpern and his team are still rebuilding today.

Another challenge could arise if assisted evolution turns out to be more complicated than expected. There’s no guarantee that picking resilient corals for the future will work as planned.

“Whatever is surviving and growing well in your nursery might not be the one growing well in the reef. There is no consistent winner” among the corals, said Mikhail Matz, a biologist at the University of Texas at Austin. One type of coral might fare well one year and then poorly the next. That’s partly because future conditions might require not only heat tolerance, but also the ability to live well with new organisms, tolerate disease and recover from storms like Dorian, he said. But Halpern isn’t putting all his eggs in one basket, as Coral Vita

grows at least 20 different kinds of corals.

Coral Vita and other coral farming efforts currently seem small compared to the size of the global problem, but that could change. While coral farms can revitalize a valuable local reef here and protect a fish spawning site there, they need to be scaled up. Halpern plans to eventually have at least 100 tanks at the Grand Bahama farm, and eventually his vision is to expand to other reefs beyond the Bahamas. He also takes a community-based approach, training local divers and staff to manage the farm, an approach the team could apply elsewhere.

Most scientists agree that projects like Coral Vita’s can play a part in our society’s effort to respond to climate change. “There’s certainly a role for coral farming to complement other efforts,” Sandin said. “If we use all the tools we have, we have an opportunity to make a real difference.” **PCN**

Katie Hall '09 loved her seven-year adventure in pro cycling, but she has no qualms about turning the page and moving on.

CYCLES OF LIFE

BY ALISSA GREENBERG

IT WAS NOW SEVERAL YEARS AGO, BUT KATIE HALL REMEMBERS THE ENCHANTMENT OF HER FIRST GIRO D'ITALIA IN VIVID DETAIL AND BRIGHT COLORS.

The “Giro Rosa” as it’s usually known in cycling circles, is essentially the women’s Tour de France. Its competitors endure a brutal but beautiful 600-plus-mile, 10-day stage race through the muted browns and greens of central Italy. But mostly what Hall remembers is the pink.

The race route winds through some of Italy’s most scenic landscapes, landing in bustling plazas festooned in blush-colored garlands. “It’s beautiful,” Hall says. “You ride through these ancient town squares with pink ribbons everywhere and pink umbrellas hanging above.” (“Rosa” means pink in Italian; the race gets its name from the pink-papered newspaper that originally sponsored it.)

Although she was a self-described “pretty active kid” who played a lot of sports growing up, Hall’s childhood in Seattle was not one that necessarily foretold achievements in elite athletics like the Giro Rosa. “I was pretty bookish—one would maybe even say nerdy,” she says. And although she learned to ride a bike fairly early on, she didn’t even own one for most of her teenage years. “It wasn’t on my radar at all,” she says.

Nevertheless, Hall eventually found her way to Italy and the world of professional cycling. The competition there was fierce; women’s cycling races are often more intense than men’s because they’re shorter, she says. “There’s a lot of excitement and drama in it; it’s a really beautiful sport.”

Now, she counts her experiences there among her favorite memories in an unlikely but successful career in pro bicycling. After putting aside previous plans to study physical therapy to become a professional cyclist in 2013, Hall pivoted again in 2020 as the world changed around her. Despite being long-listed for the ill-fated Tokyo Olympics, she ▶

Katie Hall rides down a street in Italy during the Giro d’Italia.

Katie Hall celebrates her win in the 2018 Colorado Classic.

made the difficult choice to walk away from a seven-year adventure in pro sports and pursue a career she sees as more meaningful—one that has redefined her relationship with her body and her community.

Hall majored in chemistry at Pomona and for a while thought she might go into public health research. Her college years were also when bicycles reentered her life, though for the moment in a purely pragmatic role: She rented a house in Seattle with classmates one summer and bicycle-commuted to an internship in Redmond, 25 miles away. But long-distance bicycling didn't come easily at first. "I would come from work and lie on my living room floor, and people would throw snacks at me," she says. "I was destroyed."

After graduation, Hall began a Ph.D. program at the University of California, Berkeley, bike racing on the side in the hope of making friends who shared her interests. After a brief and disastrous stint on a mountain bike—"It was terrifying, and I was basically last in everything I did"—she found her niche in road races. Here, finally, was something she was good at and loved. She competed in the National Championships her first year.

At the same time that she was discovering cycling, Hall was also learning what she didn't love: spending all her time in a laboratory. She found the windowless basement workplaces stifling; the slow pace made her antsy. And there were too many steps between her work and the positive impact she hoped to have on society. Searching for a better option, she started observing in physical therapy clinics, a setting where she could work with people face-to-face and see immediately how her work impacted them.

But then, after a stint on the collegiate all-stars biking team, she was offered a professional contract on a team sponsored by the health insurance company UnitedHealthcare. It was a "now or never" opportunity, she thought, an adventure that would get her out of the windowless basement. Why not try it for a year for two?

She never expected to stay for seven.

One of the best parts of being a professional bicyclist, Hall says, is the free time. A person simply cannot train for 40 hours a week without injury, a limitation that left space for a multitude of hobbies and a leisurely pace. And bicycling brought Hall not just to Italy for the Giro Rosa but all over Europe; her last two years she lived in Spain half time. When she wasn't training, she could explore, cook, relax. When she was on the clock, she could hone her skills at something she loved, along ▶



with an international coterie of people who cared about the thing she cared about and who were really, really good at it.

Plus, it felt great to win, and for someone who found the sport relatively late in life, Hall won a lot. She counts her win at the Tour of California on the Women's World Tour in 2018 as her biggest cycling achievement. She'd already lost narrowly twice in the race, the year before by only a second to the reigning Olympic champion. That made her 2018 victory all the sweeter, a culmination of four years of tough and determined work.

It *was* work, even if it was also fun. The constant training could be depleting, and she couldn't let herself have an off day. Being on the road got lonely at times, especially because her husband's job meant they were separated for long stretches. And the pressure could really get to her. In bicycling, "there are 200 starters and one winner," Hall says. Not winning meant letting her team down, especially once she took on the role of team leader at UHC. "You have five other people putting their whole heart and soul and faith in you," she says. "And if you let them down, it feels bad!"

After five years on the team, the highs and lows started to wear on her. She'd won all the major races in America; she'd had her vindicating moment at the Tour of California. Her mind again drifted toward physical therapy. She even applied to some graduate programs.

But then the phone rang again. This time it was Boels-Dolmans, one of the best teams in Europe. European cycling was a rarified world, one she'd been intimidated by until now. Her teammates would be the Olympic champion, the world champion, and their respective runner-ups. Again she took a chance; again she seized the moment. "This is this adventure I'm having right now, and then I'm going to go back and work a job," she thought to herself. "So, why not ride my bike around the world?"

Like many people, Hall says ruefully, "I had this really nice and tidy plan before pandemic." She'd trained all year with her new teammates. On a high from her recent successes, she found herself on a long-list for the American Olympic team, slated to compete in Tokyo in August 2020. The last race of the year would be the World Championships, on September 26. Her physical therapy graduate school program at the University of Washington started on September 29. She'd use that weekend to move to Seattle and start a new life. Easy!

But, as happened with so many 2020 goals, the universe had other plans. Though races started

getting canceled in early spring, Hall kept training, never knowing which might go forward and which might not. Then, when she flew home to California for three weeks for a planned trip, she simply never flew back.

Suddenly back in the U.S. and unsure when things might get back to normal, she struggled to keep training at home, fitting in interval sessions and "bikepacking" trips with friends around the more standard baking projects and TV binges. That's also how she ended up setting a brief world record "Everesting" a hill in her neighborhood—a niche bicycling sport that involves traversing a hill enough times to equal the height of Mount Everest. In this case, that hill was Bonny Doon in Santa Cruz, California; Hall biked up and down it 28 times in just over 10 hours, as part of a fundraiser for COVID-19 relief. Though her record was quickly beaten by other cyclists, she still thinks of the experience as a highlight of 2020. "It felt like something I could *do*," she says.

As the pandemic stretched on and professional bicycling didn't come back to life, Hall had to make a tough choice: Should she keep pushing at training, preparing for eventual races and maybe the Olympics? Or should she finally do what she had always intended and start a new life as a physical therapist? Her announcement that she would retire surprised many in the bicycling world. She seemed to be at the top of her game. How could she walk away now?

But the year, unexpected as it was, had presented an opportunity for reflection, she says. Living through a global pandemic reminded her of her original goal to help people. She saw that with bicycling shut down, "the world wasn't worse off. I wanted to have a job where, if we stop doing it, it matters."

Walking away from even the possibility of the Olympics was difficult, but Hall downplays what she calls the "slimmest chance" that she might have competed, considering the other cyclists sharing space on the long-list. Instead, what she takes away is the achievement of being included at all. "It was a huge honor to be on that list and really cool to think about how far I've come in cycling," she says.

So it was that Hall packed up her things and became a full-time student at the University of Washington in September 2020, attending in-person classes three days a week. "I'm really grateful for how they're navigating the COVID measures so far," she says. "It's such a physical thing; it's in the name. It would be really hard to learn entirely online."



Katie Hall poses with her bike on the campus of the University of Washington.

Aside from the changes in career and content, her biggest challenge has been "transitioning from body to brain," from several hours a day out in the sunshine to what can feel like cons in front of a computer or buried in books. Now there's homework to be done and anatomy to be learned; this semester she's excited to move from the extremities to the spine and trunk. Sometimes if she's too antsy, she'll ride her exercise bike while she watches lectures. And she calls spending time in the cadaver lab "mind-blowingly cool." (Plus, now she gets to ride her bike purely for the pleasure of it. "It's a refreshing feeling to not be so tired from training and be excited to get out every single time," she says.)

Studying physical therapy is also giving her a profound new perspective on bodies—both hers and others'. For seven years, she worked on getting as good as she could at a specific movement, an endeavor that necessitated concentrating deeply on herself. When she wasn't training, she was thinking about training, or thinking about how to think about training: how to be "1% better at pedaling," how to organize her workouts, how to recover after difficult sessions.

"It's a pretty self-centered career," she says. "To be good, you have to really focus on your recovery, your nutrition, your sleep quality." She appreciates that physical therapy will allow her to work and think more about other people and how to help them achieve their goals. "My goals were pretty elite-level movement," she says, and figuring out how to do that movement without pain. She can apply that to helping even her patients who are just trying to make it through the day.

That's gotten her started thinking about how she'd like to focus in her future career as well. She came in with the idea that she'd want to work with endurance athletes, drawing on her personal experience to help them reach the top of their sports. But the more she learns, the more she wants to learn. Maybe acute care could be a good fit; maybe women's health work would be fulfilling.

She sees this adjustment as just another step in the flexible, elastic path that's led her here. Olympics or no Olympics, she says, physical therapy is not a rebound but rather an organic and long-awaited step in a life that's had its share of unexpected detours. "Cycling was not ever a career I was going to be able to do forever," she says. All cyclists, no matter how talented, need another plan, and this is hers. "I'm really excited about where I am," she says. "I feel like I'm in the right place." **PCM**

Will Voigt '98 has built a career on a love of basketball and a willingness to go wherever it takes him.

The [Basketball] World According to Voigt

By Michelle Hiskey

Click click click.

Videotape is the focus of Will Voigt's first job after his 1998 Pomona graduation—collecting it and editing it for the San Antonio Spurs. He is a peon in the kingdom of professional basketball coaching, his only power the dicing and splicing of game tape. Start, stop, rewind, pause, fast-forward—the VCR controls are squares, triangles and hash marks, some of the same symbols coaches use to communicate basketball plays.

That basic code of basketball is something Voigt knows well from competing for his tiny Vermont high school three hours north of the gym where James Naismith invented the sport with peach baskets as goals. In the NBA org chart, the assistant video coordinator is barely listed, but in Voigt's case, it gives him a seat on the bench where Pomona-grown head coach Gregg Popovich and assistant Mike Budenholzer '92 held court.

The Spurs gig didn't turn into a trailer for his own version of *Hoosiers*. He didn't move up and around the NBA. Instead, Voigt's own education and mastery of basketball coaching would be a peculiar string he kept unspooling, to Norway, back to Vermont, California, China, Angola, and even the 2016 Rio Olympics with the Nigerian national team. He's bounced from continent to continent, most recently landing in Germany at the height of the pandemic to coach the Telekom Baskets Bonn in the Basketball Bundesliga.

If you lose track of where in the world Will Voigt is coaching, you can usually find him on YouTube, sharing the artful ways basketball is

played far from the NBA. Now he's starring in videos instead of taping others, and friends and strangers are watching, backing up, clipping, studying. Trying to get an edge from Will Voigt.

"Will is a little wacky, and his story has played out that way," said Budenholzer, now head coach of the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks. "In San Antonio, he was there anytime for anyone who needed anything, because everyone mattered, from the bottom of the ladder as a video guy to the top. Everyone contributes whatever is needed to the team's growth. Young coaches can be fascinated with the NBA, but there are only so many teams and jobs, so you have to be willing to go anywhere. Will is the greatest example of taking that advice to new places that are almost unheard of in the NBA."

Tipoff

Everyone matters in unincorporated Cabot, Vermont.

When Voigt was 5, voters in the city of Burlington, 60 miles west, elected a new mayor named Bernie Sanders. The most famous export is the cows' milk that's used to make Cabot cheese, which comes from a local co-op. In 2019, the population was 189. "Indomitable people," Calvin Coolidge said of Vermonters, "who almost begged themselves to serve others."

Voigt practiced shooting to a goal in his family's barn, where birds would build nests between the net and backboard when Voigt went into soccer and baseball seasons. Every athlete who could play, did. Voigt, a point guard, led his team through state playoffs against Vermont's smallest schools and graduated valedictorian in a class of 18. He also played piano because his mother, Ellen, who had served as Vermont's state poet, and his German-born dad, Francis, who ▷



had started the New England Culinary Institute, insisted he do something besides sports. When it came to his college, they insisted on strong liberal arts. “They would not budge,” Voigt recalls.

Due east, over the White Mountains and into Maine, is the town that Bill Swartz had left to become head soccer coach at Pomona-Pitzer. When Voigt reached out, Swartz recalled thinking, “I can definitely take a chance on this guy. I’ve always thought that players from those New England states had qualities that were difficult to put on paper. Will had a good sense of who he was and how he fit in.”

With Voigt as a backup forward on the soccer team, the Sagehens won the 1996 Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. With less fanfare but more foreshadowing, Voigt performed in a mock Congress with Claremont McKenna students, playing independent-minded Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords. “Will was a swing vote, in the middle of everything, talking to both sides and paying attention to everything,” noted Professor of Politics David Menefee-Libey. “It makes sense that he’d become a coach.” Voigt didn’t see it then. When he graduated in 1998 in political science, he expected to go to law school and become a sports agent. Basketball was calling.

First half

Earlier in the century, the sunny beaches of Los Angeles had inspired tire retreader William J. Voit to invent an inflatable rubber ball. He vulcanized it to create the modern basketball. The summer after college, Will Voigt bounced into the Long Beach State Pyramid for the NBA free agent league. He hoped to hang with agents, and one asked Voigt to coach a team led by Duke’s Ricky Price. “The players were trying to shine and show teams what they could do, and Will took it so seriously,” Price said. “He even put in a defense—for a summer league? I thought he was auditioning for a coaching spot for real.” This—plus an internship with the Los Angeles Clippers and Pomona ties—helped him get to the San Antonio Spurs’ sideline.

“Good or bad, I have had a confidence in myself that is generally unjustified,” Voigt said. “Like I have never been afraid of the moment. That helped me in San Antonio, being able to keep it real. I could be myself. If I stopped and thought about being a small-time Vermont kid on the NBA court with one of the best coaches in the history of the game, I would be paralyzed.”

Voigt had ventured into college basketball coaching when a voice



from his past opened an unexpected door. His high school coach Steve Pratt, in Chicago to train players for college and the NBA draft, was asked if he knew anyone who could coach a pro team in Norway immediately. Its American coach had decided not to show. “I have the guy,” Pratt said.

Halftime

To say that Voigt, then 27, brought passion to the Ulriken Eagles is incomplete. He also loves arguing. In Oslo, the Eagles were down 26 points to the league’s best team when Voigt got ejected right before halftime. Pratt was visiting, and heard Voigt’s last words to his team: “Screw this! You have nothing to lose. Just go beat their ass!” And they did.

Second half

A vote brought Voigt back to Vermont, when he was elected coach of the Vermont Frost Heaves, a startup in the American Basketball Association. Yes, elected by Vermonters given ballots by team owner and *Sports Illustrated* writer Alexander Wolff. “Wouldn’t it be great to have someone who was deep into hoop and who can see the larger world out there?” Wolff wondered. The Frost Heaves won two straight ABA championships, which had only been done before once, by the Indiana Pacers.

“My first impression of Will? I got a knock on my door at the Ho Hum Motel in Burlington, and God knows who was going to show up,” said John Bryant, a signee who had just flown in from China, now an assistant coach with the Chicago Bulls. “Will didn’t even look like a player much less a coach. He has that baby face. He couldn’t be the right guy, but he was.” Voigt moved on to five years with the Bakersfield Jam in the NBA D-League, where he left a memorable impression on his team’s Nigerian-American players. When the Nigeria Basketball Federation needed a coach, it picked Voigt, who had just wrapped a gig with the Shanxi Dragons of the Chinese Basketball Association. Voigt coached the Nigerians to the African title and one of only a dozen spots in the 2016 Rio Olympics. Despite winning only one game in Rio, Voigt had sealed his reputation, and the next team to sign him was Nigeria’s fierce rival Angola. In Luanda in 2018, Angola was practicing in the Estadio da Cidadela when a large light fixture fell from the ceiling, barely missing Voigt and nearby players. “At that stage, I had been in Africa so long, that didn’t faze me as much as it should have,” Voigt said.



He tweeted the near-miss with video footage. Just like in San Antonio, the cameras were rolling in Luanda, too. But now Voigt was becoming a more seasoned coach in a setting that was less star-driven, more Cabot-like. Even the international basketball court, at 28 by 15 meters, is slightly smaller. “More ball movement, more people movement,” said Budenholzer. “We all try to do similar things as coaches, but the international coaches and teams buy into it more, and when everybody is touching the ball and moving, it is a more inclusive way of playing.”

African players taught Voigt an intuitive defense that fascinated him. Defending players typically must react in seamless actions when the other team drives to the basket: cover their player, help defend against the ballhandler, rotate to help other defenders, and then recover to their assigned player. The Africans simplified this. When the ballhandler beat the primary defender, the next defender rotated into that gap, leaving a gap that the next defender filled.

Voigt calls this defense the peel switch. “Most of the teams I coach have to be different to find a competitive edge, so when I saw this, I knew it was something different that would help us play to our strengths,” Voigt said. “Teams that do this are really good at communicating, and I liked exploring something new like this rather than doing what we always do.”

Last year, when the pandemic created a gap in his chances to

coach, Voigt did a peel switch of his own, turning to teaching this and other basketball strategies online until he got the call from Telekom Baskets Bonn.

Final score

Voigt is now 44, and when he looks back on his vagabond career—the video highlights, if you will—Pomona’s liberal arts training shows in his open-mindedness, critical thinking, engagement in the larger world and appreciation for multiple perspectives. He left campus at the end of one century to embrace a rapidly changing world while hopscotching between rectangular hardwood landing pads. He speaks six languages.

“If you look at all the places I’ve been, it’s hard to imagine any plan that would have taken me on that route,” he said. “I think everyone aspires to be and do what they can at the highest level, and for me that was to be an NBA coach one day. But when you get locked into that, as soon as you go somewhere, you are trying to get somewhere else. You won’t enjoy yourself, and you won’t give everything you have. I’ve embraced jumping on opportunities when they’ve presented themselves and doing it ‘all in’ and seeing what that leads to next.”

The Voigt video is still rolling, so stay tuned for the next episodes, wherever they’ll be filmed. 

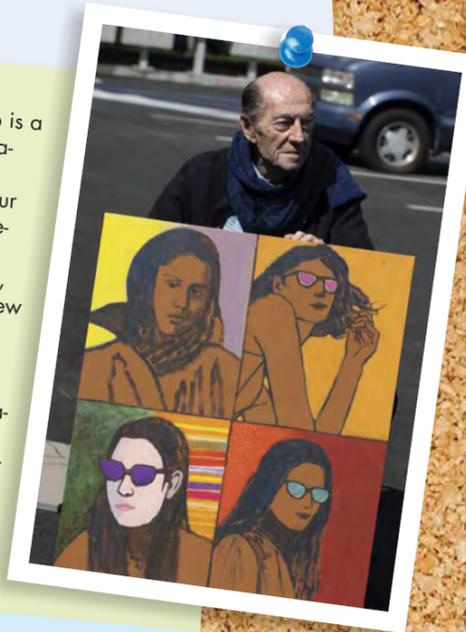
2021 Blaisdell Distinguished Alumni Award Winners

The Blaisdell Award is one of the most prestigious awards given to Pomona alumni, recognizing high achievement in their professions or their community. We are thrilled to congratulate this year's Blaisdell Distinguished Alumni Award Winners: Cathy Corison '75, James Strombotne '56, Martina Vandenberg '90 and Nathan Wang '79.

Cathy Corison '75 was the first woman winemaker-proprietor in the Napa Valley, where she continues to produce handcrafted wines without compromise. Her grapes are sourced from some of the finest vineyards in the Napa Valley, all located on classic benchland between Rutherford and St. Helena. Corison's vineyards are certified Napa Green. She has farmed organically for more than 25 years, with sustainability as a core value. She founded Corison Winery in 1987, guided by her belief that winemaking and wine appreciation are a timeless, creative celebration of life.



James Strombotne '56 is a painter whose work has been featured in more than 100 one-man shows, with 14 retrospectives: four in New York City, 22 in Los Angeles, and others in San Francisco, Washington D.C., Santa Barbara, Newport Beach and Santa Fe, New Mexico, among other venues. His work has also been included in most major group shows in America and can be found in the permanent collections of museums across the United States. He is a professor emeritus at UC Riverside following his retirement in 2005 after 40 years of teaching.



Martina Vandenberg '90 is the founder and president of The Human Trafficking Legal Center, which she established in 2012 with support from the Open Society Foundations Fellowship Program. For more than two decades, she has worked to fight human trafficking, forced labor and violence against women and establish that rape is a war crime. Vandenberg has trained more than 4,000 pro bono attorneys nationwide to handle human trafficking matters. She has testified before multiple House and Senate Committees, gave the keynote address at the first NATO ambassadorial-level conference on human trafficking in Brussels and currently co-chairs the D.C. Human Trafficking Task Force's Forced Labor Subcommittee.



Nathan Wang '79 is one of the most successful composers in Hollywood and Asian cinema. Prolific and versatile, he has written music for Jackie Chan movies, Steven Spielberg documentaries and Disney, DreamWorks, Warner Bros. and Sony Pictures Studios' films. His compositions have been performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Shanghai Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Opera and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He received a Singapore Grammy for Best Arrangement of a Song and an Emmy for the award-winning film *Reefer Madness*. Wang is an associate professor of film scoring at Beijing University.



Learn more about these extraordinary alumni at pomona.edu/news/2021/03/02-2021-blaisdell-distinguished-alumni-award-winners

4-7: An Annual Celebration of #SagehenImpact

Our annual 4-7 Day celebrates and honors Sagehens for their local and global contributions. Although we can't celebrate together in person, all are invited to join us online for a special day of recognizing and discovering the extraordinary impact alumni make, bearing their added riches around the world! Visit pomona.edu/sagehen-impact to register and learn more.

4-7 Day also provides a unique opportunity to showcase the collective impact of the Pomona alumni community by supporting the growth and learning of our current students. Make a gift of \$4.47, \$47.47 or \$447.47 to the Annual Fund today at pomona.edu/give.

Looking for other COVID friendly ideas on how to celebrate 4-7 Day? The Alumni Association Board has a few—or perhaps 47—ideas for you! Check out 47 Things to Do: COVID-19 Edition at pomona.edu/alumni/alumni-association-board/blog.

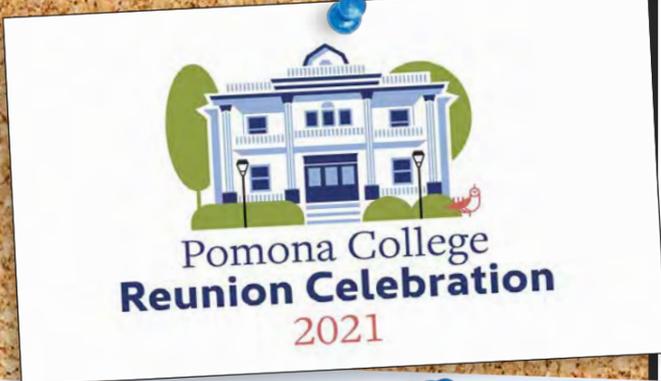
Coming Together as #OnePomona—and a Big Thank You!

There is a brighter future ahead, and the campus is happily ready and waiting for the return of students, faculty and staff to resume Pomona campus life in person. It won't be long now!

We also want to pause and chirp a big THANKS to you, our alumni and families, for your support these past 12 months. The Sagehen community came together like never before to help students, faculty and staff navigate the uncharted course of remote learning and more during the global pandemic.

The incredible, ongoing generosity of alumni and families this past year ensured that students and faculty had the technology needed to successfully connect and engage in distance teaching and learning; helped expand urgently needed financial aid resources for students; supported virtual research and experiential learning opportunities in summer 2020 through the Remote Alternative Independent Summer Experience (RAISE) program; and provided support to our local community through Pomona's PAYS program. And there is more.

This spring, we will be sharing further details about your #SagehenImpact and the many ways your gifts have done so much to promote resilience and provide opportunity and genuine care for students and the campus community. Thank you for your dedication and support! Chirp!



Reunion Celebration 2021 is Right Around the Corner!

The Pomona College Reunion Celebration will take place on Friday, April 30, and Saturday, May 1, on the virtual Pomona College campus. We are looking forward to having this year's online reunion classes join us for two days of activities and prizes, unique presentations, Blaisdell and Distinguished Service Alumni Award winner tributes and more.

Registration is free, so sign up today! For more information or to register, visit: pomona.edu/reunion-weekend

Join your classmates in supporting your Reunion Class Gift at pomona.edu/class-gift. Thank you!

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**Class Notes
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print edition**

William Wirtz

Emeritus Professor of Zoology and Biology
1937–2020

William Wirtz, emeritus professor of zoology and biology, died at home on Dec. 24, 2020, after a long illness. He was 83.

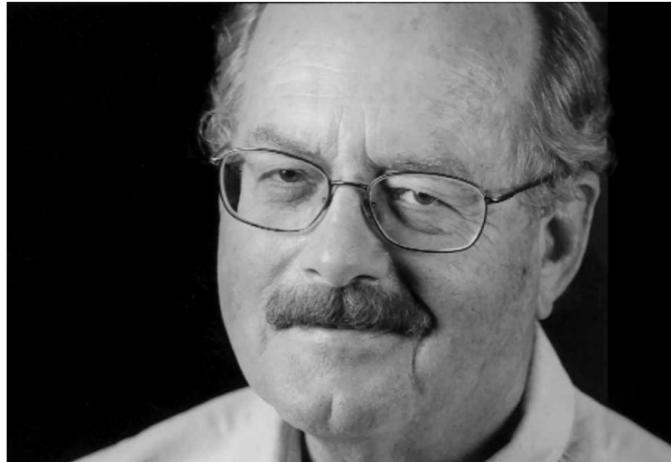
Wirtz was born in New Jersey on Aug. 16, 1937. He attended Rutgers University, where he studied ecology under one of the nation's foremost experts, graduating in 1959. At Cornell University, he did his postdoctoral research on the habits of the Polynesian rat in the leeward Hawaiian Islands. He received his Ph.D. in ecology and evolutionary biology in 1968. He joined Pomona College the same year in September, teaching until his retirement in 2003.

As a child, Wirtz enjoyed wandering the woods and taking a boat to the nearby salt marsh to study the wildlife. "I was the kid who brought home mice and snakes. And I never stopped," he told the *Pomona College Magazine* in 2003 interview.

At Pomona, Wirtz was responsible for establishing, maintaining and upgrading Pomona's animal care facility and program. He was also known for his two 10-foot snakes, a reticulated python and a boa, which on at least two occasions over the years had escaped the classroom. (Both snakes were found shortly after their escapes, and eventually were both rehomed to wildlife centers).

Professor of Biology and Neuroscience Rachel Levin remembers Wirtz as an institution within Pomona's Biology Department. "He was totally at home in the wilderness and he was a skilled and passionate naturalist," she says. "He had a way of engaging students and turning them on to natural world ... He took many generations of Pomona students on unforgettable adventures to Pitt Ranch and the Granite Mountains."

One of those students, Audrey Mayer '94, now a professor of ecology and environmental policy at Michigan Technological University, credits Wirtz for launching her career. "I knew I liked biology, but I had no



idea what to do after in terms of a career. He's the one who encouraged me to get a Ph.D., which was not on my radar at all. I have a book coming out in March on the gnatcatcher—that was a book that started with him."

Julie Hagelin '92, now a senior research scientist for the Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, says Wirtz was the first person who made her realize she could do field biology. She learned the step-by-step process of handling small mammals on her first day working as his student assistant—a skill she took with her to graduate school. "It was like he opened a door to a secret world of biology: in the bushes and brush, with these little animals that are only active at night."

Retired doctor Sharon Booth '78 shares the same feeling. "Wirtz's ecology 101 course awakened my eyes to the natural world and the joy of learning about its complexities." Booth went on to work for Wirtz, spending at least one summer in the chaparral trapping rodents for population surveys.

Joel Brown '80, now an emeritus professor of biological sciences at the University of Illinois Chicago, was also one of Wirtz's early protégés. "I'd always loved ecology, had always loved nature, but had no idea that extending one's love for nature could be a career."

"Bill was a nonstop documentary and encyclopedia who taught us all these techniques, and can you believe it, we were being paid!" Brown became a student worker for Wirtz and learned how to trap small animals, put radio collars on raccoons and coyotes, band red-tailed hawks and noose lizards. "It was completely transformative. I went home and told my folks I finally knew what I wanted to do. I want to be an ecologist. And so, from that day forward, Bill offered me amazing opportunities."

"He was an outdoors guy, a classic mud-and-boots ecologist," says Brown. "Bill Wirtz was one of the foundational mentors in my life; without him, all the other sequences of my life would not have happened."

Wirtz was a longtime member of the Mt. Baldy Volunteer Fire Department and lived in the mountains with his wife, Helen, for many years. In the 1980s, he studied habits of coyotes who scavenged in the foothills of Claremont and Glendora, even adopting a rescued coyote. He did extensive work on the distribution of rodent populations in the San Dimas Experimental Forest and studied the nesting habits of the endangered California gnatcatcher that lives in endangered coastal sage scrub. These were just some of his many field research interests over the decades.

After retiring from Pomona in 2003, Wirtz and his wife became involved in equine rescue, including rescuing horses during fires, and served on the board of the Inland Valley Humane Society for some time. He also became more involved in one of his favorite hobbies: Civil War reenactments.

Wirtz leaves behind a large legacy of Pomona ecologists and biologists. "There's a lot of us around who got that start in our careers working for him," says Mayer.

Wirtz is survived by his wife, Helen, and a son, William.

Ved Parkash Mehta '52, noted author, died Jan. 9, 2021, at age 86 from complications of Parkinson's Disease. Blind from an early age, Mehta is best known for his autobiography, published in installments from 1972 to 2004. Born in India, he lived and worked mainly in the United States, writing for *The New Yorker* magazine for many years. Here are a few excerpts from the obituaries published around the world following his death:

The New Yorker

"His book *The Ledge Between the Streams* describes his life as a blind child in the India of the 1940s, as he learned to read Braille and to ride a bicycle and a horse. Throughout his youth and his maturity as a writer, Mehta was determined to apprehend the world around him with maximal accuracy and to describe it as best he could. 'I felt that blindness was a terrible impediment, and that if only I exerted myself, and did everything my big sisters and big brother did, I could somehow become exactly like them,' he wrote.

"Mehta came to the United States when he was 15, and attended the Arkansas School for the Blind, in Little Rock. After studying at Pomona College and Oxford University, he began to flourish in his working life as a writer. He asked David Astor, the editor of *The Observer*, about writing a 14,000-word piece about his travels in India. 'Something that long and boring,' Astor reportedly said, 'only *The New Yorker* would publish.'"

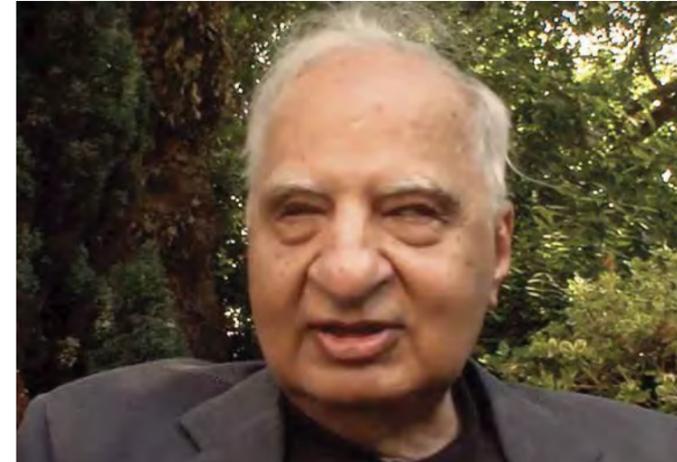
Mehta joined the staff of the magazine when he was 26 and, for more than three decades, wrote a stream of pieces, many of them appearing in multipart series. He wrote about Oxford dons, theology, Indian politics and many other subjects."

The Times of London

"So lush was Ved Mehta's description of visual detail, so painterly his attention to colour, the American author Norman Mailer

Ved Mehta '52

Author
1934–2021



refused to believe he was blind. Waving his fist in front of Mehta's face, the famously pugilistic Mailer said: "If you don't come out and fight with me, you will show yourself to be a coward."

Mailer's incredulity, if not his confrontational manner, was understandable; it was indeed hard to understand how Mehta, without his sight, could write such descriptions as this one, from the first installment of *Continents of Exile*, his 12-volume memoir: "The fields become bright, first with the yellow of mustard flower outlined by the feathery green of sugarcane, and later with maturing stands of wheat, barley and tobacco."

The New York Times

"... Mehta was widely considered the 20th-century writer most responsible for introducing American readers to India.

"Besides his multivolume memoir, published in book form between 1972 and 2004, his more than two dozen books included volumes of reportage on India, among them *Walking the Indian Streets* (1960), *Portrait of India* (1970) and *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles* (1977), as well as explorations of philosophy, theology and linguistics.

"*Daddyji* was the first installment in what was to become a 12-volume series of autobiographical works, known collectively as

'Continents of Exile.'

"Ved Mehta has established himself as one of the magazine's most imposing figures,' *The New Yorker's* storied editor William Shawn, who hired him as a staff writer in 1961, told *The New York Times* in 1982. 'He writes about serious matters without solemnity, about scholarly matters without pedantry, about abstruse matters without obscurity.'

"The recipient of a MacArthur Foundation 'genius grant' in 1982, Mr. Mehta was long praised by critics for his forthright, luminous prose—with its 'informal elegance, diamond clarity and hypnotic

power,' as *The Sunday Herald* of Glasgow put it in a 2005 profile."

The Sunday Herald of Glasgow

"His most enduring work is surely the 'Continents of Exile' series, which was written between 1971 and 2005. It began with stories his father used to tell Mehta and his siblings when they were small. Later, the narrative began to gain its own momentum and eventually a distinct design and architecture emerged. Though he took his lead from Proust and Joyce, his approach was different. As in their epics, memory was fundamental but no less so were other sources, such as letters, diaries, personal papers and newspaper articles. The series culminated in *The Red Letters*, which begins in New York and describes a disastrous dinner party, at which his father and mother met Shawn for the first time, and then backtracks to the 1930s when his father had an affair with a married woman.

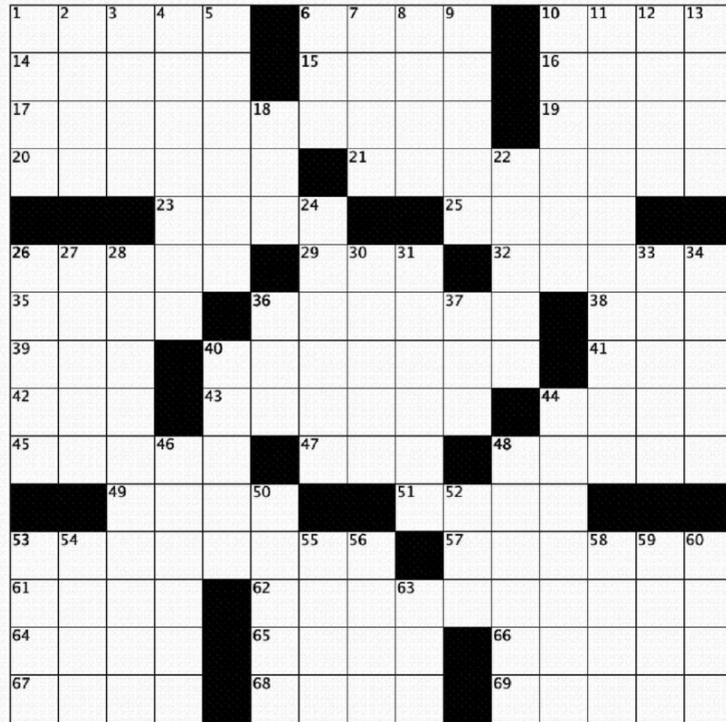
"Periodically, Mehta—who never had a guide dog or used a stick—would ask himself, "How can anyone be expected to read so much about one life?" His answer was that 'Continents of Exile' is not the story of one life but of hundreds of lives, with characters coming and going in the manner of a roman fleuve. Thus the past is regained."

"Bike Parts"

By Joel Fagliano '14

ACROSS

- 1. Green sauce for pasta
- 6. Expectant parents' purchase
- 10. Right away
- 14. Religion of nearly two billion
- 15. ___ fide
- 16. Freezing point of water on the Celsius scale
- 17. *Mascot in Aflac commercials
- 19. Picnic pests
- 20. Dwight's love on "The Office"
- 21. "London Calling" rock band
- 23. Seasonal employee
- 25. Split-screen TikTok function
- 26. Good thing to have
- 29. "You've got mail" company
- 32. Martial arts-based workout regimen
- 35. Animal representing England on the Royal Coat of Arms
- 36. 2021 film directed by Lee Isaac Chung
- 38. Mediterranean, e.g.
- 39. [That is ... rough]
- 40. *Exhaust
- 41. Munch on
- 42. Pistachio or pecan
- 43. Brainstorm, in business-speak
- 44. Medieval spiked club
- 45. Kick out
- 47. Neutral area between N. and S. Korea
- 48. Difficult things to give to cats
- 49. Nights before
- 51. "This doesn't look good"
- 53. Beans or slaw
- 57. Cute, in modern slang
- 61. Help for a college student
- 62. *Message that urges forwarding



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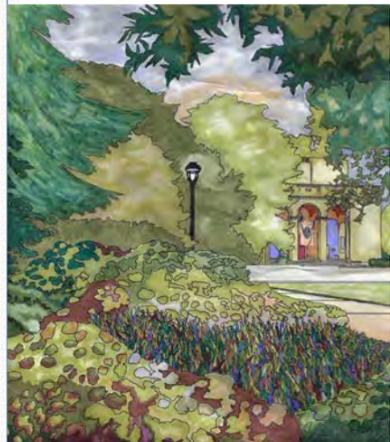
- 64. Ones who give a hoot
 - 65. Pottery oven
 - 66. Creature that can lick its own eyeball
 - 67. El ___, Texas
 - 68. Honey Bunches of
 - 69. Slightly off-center
- DOWN**
- 1. Leaning Tower of
 - 2. "Monday Night Football" channel
 - 3. Long, arduous task
 - 4. Go on a brief break
 - 5. Brunch order
 - 6. Trendy derivative of marijuana
 - 7. Lopsided victory
 - 8. Small amount of snowfall
 - 9. High as a kite
 - 10. Showy shrub
 - 11. *Position taken by Warnock or Ossoff in 2021
 - 12. Liberal ___ education
 - 13. Swanky
 - 18. Walton who founded Walmart
 - 22. Get the job done
 - 24. Connected via Bluetooth, say
 - 26. Unaccompanied
 - 27. Language from which we get "Minnesota" and "Missouri"
 - 28. *Downplays the significance of
 - 30. When "S.N.L." ends on the East Coast
 - 31. Founder of Taoism
 - 33. Appropriate place for Shelley and Sandy to visit
 - 34. Hall's partner in pop
 - 36. Partway: Prefix
 - 37. Regret
 - 40. Like many bathroom floors
 - 44. Patrick ___, quarterback in the 2020 and 2021 Super Bowls
 - 46. "Yeah, but still"
 - 48. Corner store
 - 50. "___ Mode," 2018 #1 hit for Travis Scott
 - 52. Flying Solo?
 - 53. Pig food
 - 54. State where Marilynne Robinson's "Gilead" is set
 - 55. Branch of 14-Across
 - 56. Stop
 - 58. Triangle on a pool table
 - 59. Vehicle with parts found in the answers to the starred clues
 - 60. Hit the brakes
 - 63. ___ and outs

← ---
CROSSWORD CHALLENGE

This crossword puzzle was designed by Joel Fagliano '14, the digital puzzle editor of *The New York Times* and assistant to the print crossword editor, Will Shortz. The solution is available on page 53.

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COLOR ME CREATIVE

For those who have joined the adult coloring craze—or who want to give it a try—here's another familiar image from the Pomona College campus. Send us a scan of your work (pcm@pomona.edu) to show off in a future issue.



This rendering of last issue's coloring challenge was submitted by Boston architect Harriet Chu '76





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