

**HOME SWEET MARFA** *Writer Rachel Monroe '06 found a real home in this quirky little Texas town. 26* | **HER LITTLE SLICE OF HEAVEN** *Fed up with city life, Jazmin Lopez '09 found peace and meaning on her 4.2-acre farm. 38* | **THE BEST A PLACELESS PERSON CAN DO** *A search for understanding led Sean McCoy '16 to a cattle ranch in Arizona. 44* | **THE WILDS OF L.A.** *Environmental Analysis Professor Char Miller examines the wild side of L.A. sprawl. 64*

COLLEGE MAGAZINE

# Pomona



*Spring 2018*

## RURAL VOICES

**LISTENING TO RURAL & SMALL TOWN AMERICA**

*Something's happening in Greensboro, thanks to Dr. John Dorsey '95*

**32**

# RURAL VOICES

*In recent years, Pomona has increased its focus on recruiting students from rural communities who, in the past, might never have had a chance to hear about the College. Here are four students who hail from rural and small-town America—and what they would like to tell you about the places they come from.*

## Sebastian Kahale Naehu-Ramos '21

*Kaunakakai, Moloka'i, Hawaii*

**"I WAS BORN** on another Hawaiian island, Maui, but my stepfather is from Moloka'i, so I moved there when I was 7, and that's been home ever since. It's a very close knit community. You grow up knowing almost everyone. Everyone knows you; they know your parents; so everything you do is a reflection on your family. The economy is not so great. A lot of people actually sustain themselves through gathering what's available. We have fish. We also have axis deer, though they're not indigenous. I do some deer hunting with my dad. This photo is of one of my favorite places. It's a fresh water spring what we call a *pūnāwai* that my dad and his best friend restored as a nursery for baby fish. It's really cold, but it's nice for swimming. On the other side of the bank is a traditional fish pond the kind we call a *kuapa*. It's about 800 years old. Coming from that setting to a place like Pomona was pretty intimidating at first. I was less politically aware than most people here, so coming here was pretty eye opening. I tell people I feel like I grew up on a rock. I've gotten used to California's faster pace, but I really miss my family and Hawaiian food and being close to the ocean all the time."



## Katy Swiere '21

*Orangefield, Texas*

**"MY COMMUNITY IS PRETTY SMALL.** We have a gas station, a fire station now that's new a school and a small grocery store. The lumber industry built my town, but today the main industry is the petrochemical plants along the coast of Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana. Most families have at least one member who works there. They call it the cancer belt because there are higher rates of cancer in the area. When I left my hometown, I was kind of like, 'I'm never coming back here.' You know a very typical, small town person who wants to get out to the big city. But then Hurricane Harvey affected my hometown in the first few weeks after I got here, and that was kind of like a slap in the face. My first thought was that my community really needed me right now, but the last thing they heard me say was, 'I'm never coming back.' That really made me think. And then, especially, going back home over break and seeing the destruction, but also seeing the recovery and the ways that my community was coming together and helping each other that was just a really awesome experience. Maybe that's not unique, but it's very special. And I think that's part of the strong communities these small places have. It's just that everyone feels so connected, and even if you don't know each other, there is this connection that you share."

# Malyq McElroy '18

*Soldotna, Alaska*

## RURAL VOICES

**"IT'S KIND OF WEIRD,** because there's a whole bunch of small Alaskan villages in the area, but they lump them together into cities. I live in a log cabin in the middle of the woods, roughly 10 miles outside of town, but I'm considered to live in Soldotna. A lot of the people there don't want government or neighbors or anyone interfering with their lives, so I guess it's not very communal. I don't want to speak for all Alaskans, but people in my town really pride themselves on being independent—being able to hunt and fish and provide for themselves. I really didn't do any of that—if I had, maybe I'd subscribe more to the Alaskan mentality. But I do feel like I don't rely on things as much as maybe some other people who weren't forced to live in that kind of environment. Along with a few Alaskan natives, my sister and I were among the only people of color in my school, so it's been a big contrast coming here to Pomona. But my experience is so different from that of most other people of color here that at first it was kind of uncomfortable. I'm still not a very social person, so I don't really participate in a lot of things, but I've become more acclimated. When I go back home, I enjoy seeing my family and knowing who everyone is when I go to the grocery store, but I don't think I would want to go back there permanently."



# Alyson Smock '20

Cozad, Nebraska

## RURAL VOICES

**"COZAD IS A TOWN** of 4,000 people, give or take a few. The last census was around 2010, and I'm sure we've lost folks since then. I was born and raised there. Both of my parents were born and raised there, and their parents came there from other places in Nebraska. It's a pretty stereotypical small, rural town in the Midwest. The nearest Walmart is in the next town over, so you have to drive like 15 minutes on the interstate to get there. The nearest mall's even farther than that—an hour away. But it's a place worth visiting. I ask my friends all the time—sometimes jokingly, sometimes seriously—if they ever want to come visit me in Nebraska, and usually the answer's no. But it's a place where people who don't know you make you feel welcome. If you've never been to rural, small-town America, it's an experience you need to have at least once in your life. I personally prefer small-town living to living here next to L.A, and I often think about going back after getting my law degree. The pace is slower. When you think of California, you think of it being laid back. You think of surfer dudes—or at least I do—and beaches and just a cool, chill pace. But the real slow pace is in rural America, where people aren't in a hurry to get from place to place. They're enjoying the day; they're enjoying talking with people they run into on the street, or when they come into their businesses. They're catching up. That's probably one of my favorite parts about small-town living."



# Kitchen Window Community

**My favorite anecdote** about growing up in the rural South is a childhood memory of sitting with my aunt and uncle at their red Formica kitchen table, which was strategically positioned in front of a double window looking out on the dirt road in front of their house. Each time a car or—more likely—a pickup would go by, leaving its plume of dust hanging in the air, both of them would stop whatever they were doing and crane their necks. Then one of them would offer an offhand comment like: “Looks like Ed and Georgia finally traded in that old Ford of theirs. It’s about time.” Or: “There’s that Johnson fellow who’s logging the Benton place. Wonder if he’s any kin to Dave Johnson.”

Inevitably, there would follow a speculative conversation about their neighbors’ personal and business affairs, about which they always seemed remarkably well informed. “Is her mom still in the hospital?” “I think they let her go home yesterday.” “Maybe we should take over some deviled eggs or something.”

For the most part, it was casual and benevolent. Though their nearest neighbors—my parents—lived half a mile away, beyond a screen of forest, they seemed to have a strong sense of being members of a real community where people knew each other well and looked out for one another.

Sometimes, though, a darker note would creep in. “There’s that Wheeler boy again. What’s he up to, do you reckon?” Then the conversation would turn to past misdeeds and present mistrust, accompanied by a disapproving shake of the head.

And on those rare occasions when they didn’t recognize the vehicle or driver at all, they would take special note. “Who in the world is that?” “Never saw him before.”

“Wonder if he’s the fellow who bought the old Pearson place.” “What kind of truck is that?” Looking back, it seems to me now that there was always a strong note of suspicion in their voices at such moments. Here was an intruder, not to be trusted until clearly identified.

Over the years, I’ve found myself conflicted about the sense of belonging that memory evokes. There’s something compelling about that kind of attentive and caring community—something that I miss to this day. The old clichés were true—doors were never locked, and people really did show up unexpectedly with food when someone was sick.

But there was also something intrusive—even coercive—about it, and as I grew older, I began to understand just how closed and exclusive a community it was and how ruthlessly it enforced its unspoken rules of conformity and homogeneity.

I don’t think my parents ever felt completely a part of that community, though they lived there most of their lives. Neither did I, even as a kid. We didn’t go to church. We didn’t hunt or fish. We had strange political views. But we kept to ourselves. We didn’t make waves. And so we were accepted, if never quite assimilated.

Today, I’m a suburban Angeleno, but my roots will always be there. For years, whenever I went home to visit my parents, I was treated by the community as a prodigal son. A couple of my many cousins would drop by to ask how I was doing out there in California. The few neighbors who still knew me would wave hello as I drove by. Even though I always felt apart, I don’t suppose I’ll ever feel quite so completely at home anywhere else.

During the past year, there’s been a lot of talk about the growing cultural and political divide between urban and rural America. Despite my roots, I don’t feel qualified to comment beyond that little anecdote. The last time I visited that community was to finish preparing my parents’ house for sale. They’re both long gone, as are my aunt and uncle and almost everyone I knew as a child. I doubt I’ll ever go back. In any case, I’ve become an outsider, the kind of stranger whom people stare at from their kitchen windows and say, “Who in the world is that?”

—MW



# Pomona

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EDITOR/DESIGNER  
Mark Wood ([mark.wood@pomona.edu](mailto:mark.wood@pomona.edu))

BOOK EDITOR  
Sneha Abraham ([sneha.abraham@pomona.edu](mailto:sneha.abraham@pomona.edu))

CLASS NOTES EDITOR  
Perdita Sheirich ([pcmnotes@pomona.edu](mailto:pcmnotes@pomona.edu))

CONTRIBUTORS  
**Alexis Barton** (“Something’s Happening in Greensboro”) is a freelance journalist based in Birmingham, Alabama. She is currently writing a memoir.

**Sean McCoy ’16** (“The Best a Placeless Person Can Do”) works and writes on a ranch in southern Arizona.

CONTRIBUTING STAFF  
Lupe Castaneda Gretchen Rognien  
Carla Guerrero ’06 Patricia Zurita Vest  
Robyn Norwood Michael Waters ’20

### Submissions and Changes:

For class notes, address changes, photos and birth or death notices, email: [pcmnotes@pomona.edu](mailto:pcmnotes@pomona.edu); phone: (909) 607-8129; or fax: 909-621-8535. For other editorial matters or submissions, phone: 909-621-8158, email [pcm@pomona.edu](mailto:pcm@pomona.edu) or mail to *Pomona College Magazine*, 550 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711. Magazine policies are available at: [www.pomona.edu/magazine/guidelines](http://www.pomona.edu/magazine/guidelines).

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### Pomona College

is an independent liberal arts college located in Claremont, Calif. Established in 1887, it is the founding member of The Claremont Colleges.

PRESIDENT  
G. Gabrielle Starr

VICE PRESIDENT &  
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Marylou Ferry

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## DEPARTMENTS

**Home Page** 1  
Rural Voices

**Stray Thoughts** 8  
Kitchen Window Community

**Letter Box** 10  
Eclipse Memories

**Pomoniana** 11  
Citrus Roots

**Book Shelf** 14  
Ideas That Feel Alive

**New Knowledge** 17  
Volcanic Venus

**How To** 20  
How to Advance Mathematics by Asking the Right Questions

**Team Work** 22  
A Voice for Change

**Picture This** 24  
Stanley Quadrangle in Winter

**Alumni Voices** 51  
Back to School at 81

**Bulletin Board** 53

**Class Notes** 55

**Births & Adoptions** 60

**Obituaries** 60

**Last Word** 64  
The Wilds of L.A.

## ON THE COVER

PHOTO BY PORFIRIO SOLÓRZANO



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## FEATURES

**26 Home Sweet Marfa**  
How freelance writer Rachel Monroe ’06 found a place to call home in Marfa, Texas.  
| BY MARK WOOD

**32 Something’s Happening in Greensboro**  
Dr. John Dorsey ’95 is building upon what’s beautiful in a little Alabama town.  
| BY ALEXIS BARTON

**38 My Little Slice of Heaven**  
Jazmin Lopez ’09 has found peace and meaning in building a working farm.  
| BY CARLA GUERRERO ’06

**44 The Best a Placeless Person Can Do**  
From a cattle ranch in Arizona, Sean McCoy ’16 meditates on the meaning of home.  
| BY SEAN MCCOY ’16

## Eclipse Memories

Thanks to Chuck and Lew Phelps (both '65) for the interesting article about the Pomona eclipse event in Wyoming in August. The opportunity to share the experience with Pomona friends and family was stunning, and the article captured the depth of the adventure. It is amazing that they had the foresight to plan two years in advance and to reserve one of the premier spots in the U.S. to view the spectacle. The twins worked tirelessly on every aspect of our time together, including housing, meals, a lecture series and guided stargazing, and they created a deeply memorable experience for everyone on the mountain.

Wishing to honor the Phelpses, attendees from the Class of '65, as well as the Classes of '64 and '66, created a Pomona fund to celebrate our time together. At the final group lunch, we announced the Phelps Twins Eclipse Fund to support Pomona summer internships in science. The response was heartening: 86 donations came from Pomona alumni and friends who attended the event and from some who did not but who wanted to support the fund. The final figure was \$52,242. The fund will support more than 10 summer internships for students in future years.

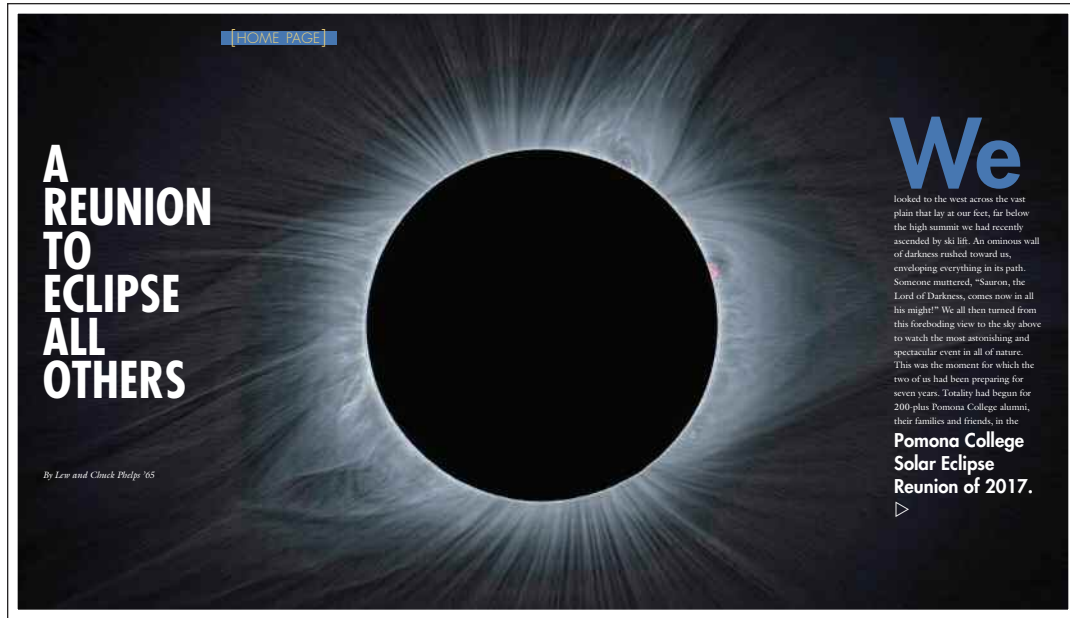
With appreciation to Chuck and Lew for making it happen.

- Ann Dunkle Thompson '65, P'92
- Celia Williams Baron '65
- Virginia Corlette Pollard '65, P'93
- Jan Williams Hazlett '65
- Peter Briggs '64, P'93

## Excelling Wisely

When I received the Fall 2017 edition of *PCM*, I was intrigued by the front cover's puzzle shapes, where work and life fit together. As a creative writing and reading intervention teacher at STEM Prep High School in Nashville, TN, I wrestle with this question of how to fit life and work together without work consuming both pieces. I was absolutely delighted, upon opening to the article "Excelling Wisely," to read these lines by the president of Pomona College: "We need to tell ourselves and each other that we can achieve and excel without taking every drop of energy from our reserves. That we all need to take some time to laugh." And later President Starr adds, "Creativity requires freedom, space and room to grow. And achievement isn't the only thing that adds meaning to our lives."

This article hit home to me as I was struggling with just one more bout of sickness after a challenging but fulfilling semester of teaching. Its message needs to be heard in every corner of our world. Yes, achievement is important. But the quality of our lives as we accomplish our goals is also important. In my work environment at STEM



Prep Academy, I am surrounded by motivated, hardworking, yet caring leaders who themselves are asking these questions. Students today are extremely stressed. Many of our students face particular language challenges, which further contributes to stress. How can we help to close the achievement gap and yet not become consumed by it?

STEM Prep High is intentionally trying to create balance this year by adding once-a-month Friday afternoon clubs. These clubs enable students to explore interests and to spend more relaxed time in a group of their choosing. I lead a sewing and knitting club, which has attracted a very "chill" group of students. I provide knitting needles, crochet hooks, yarn and other items, assisting as students explore these crafts. Other clubs include flag football, hiking, a Socrates club, games and yoga.

STEM Prep High has also created balance this year by offering elective classes such as Visual Arts and Imaginative Writing. My Imaginative Writing classroom is intentionally filled with creativity and fun, including a bookshelf full of children's stories, teen books and adult novels. A stuffed Cat in the Hat and a Cheshire Cat lounge on top of the bookshelves. Plants adorn the top of the filing cabinet near the window, creating a homey, relaxed atmosphere. During the month of November my students and I participated in NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month). This provided students with an opportunity to creatively express their own life stories or stories that they had made up.

And what about teachers? How can we create a tenuous balance between work and life? Certainly, our work is important, but so are our lives. I continue to wrestle with this question. One "solution" that my husband created was

buying season tickets to the Nashville Predators games. This allows my husband and me to enjoy downtown Nashville and to spend time together. We also enjoy motorcycle trips on my husband's Harley.

Most of us will continue to face this challenge of how to "excel wisely" throughout our lives. I was most grateful for this issue of *PCM* and the opportunity to reflect on ways in which I am trying to make this happen and ways in which I can continue to create a healthy balance between work and life.

—Wilma (Fisher) Lefler '90

## Wow!

**Wow! The recent** issue of *PCM* is superb. Each story is meaty and unique and engaging. I'm one who usually reads an issue from cover to cover, and this one left me wanting to start at the beginning again with the suspicion that I'd surely missed important details along the way.

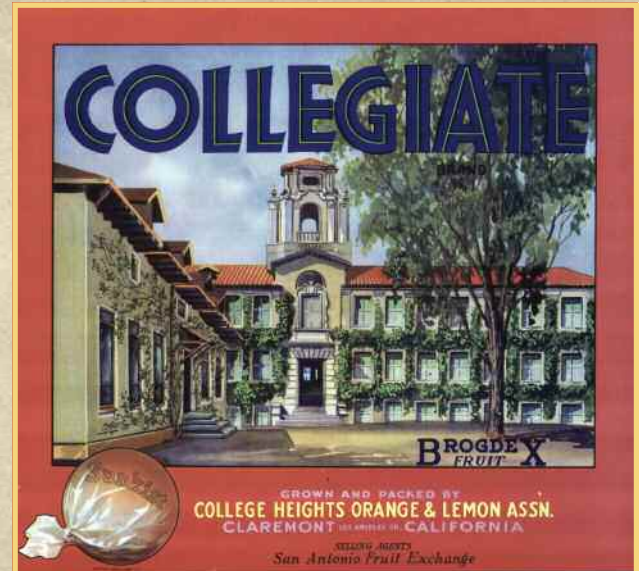
Thank you for the imagination, creativity and careful editing that you give in helping us feel connected and proud.

PS: I'm one of the trio who were the first exchange students from Swarthmore in spring 1962 at the invitation of Pomona. It pleases me that both colleges are currently led by African-American women.

—Betsy Crofts '63  
Southampton, PA

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

CLAREMONT'S CITRUS ROOTS, BUG HUNTERS, YELLOW BIKES AND MORE...



## CITRUS ROOTS

IN 1888, THE SAME YEAR that an upstart college moved in, the town of Claremont planted its first citrus trees. At the time, gravel and shrubs dominated the unincorporated town in a region once inhabited by Native Americans of the Serrano tribe.

Twelve years later, Claremont's 250 residents belonged to one of two camps—the College or the citrus industry.

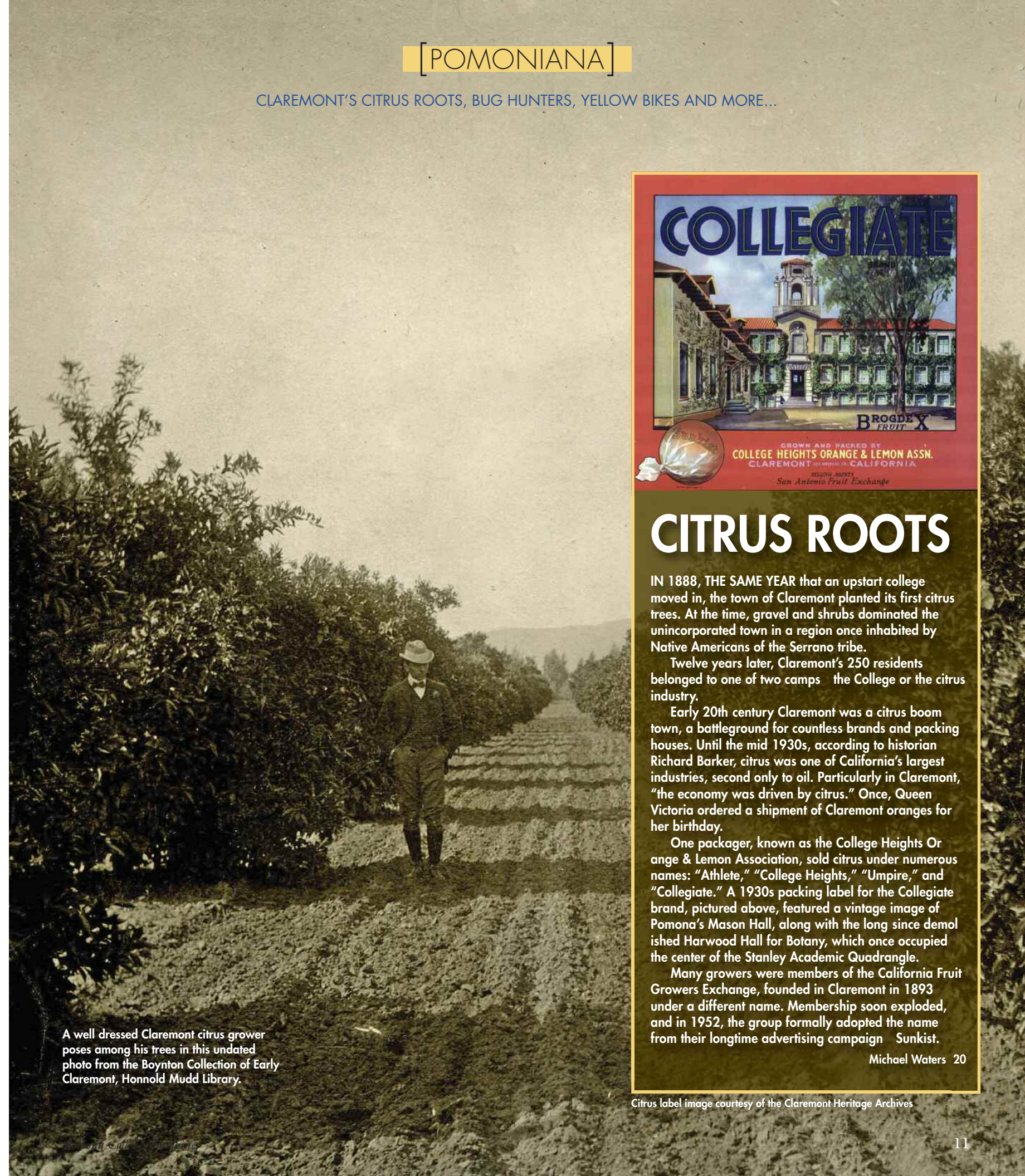
Early 20th century Claremont was a citrus boom town, a battleground for countless brands and packing houses. Until the mid 1930s, according to historian Richard Barker, citrus was one of California's largest industries, second only to oil. Particularly in Claremont, "the economy was driven by citrus." Once, Queen Victoria ordered a shipment of Claremont oranges for her birthday.

One packager, known as the College Heights Orange & Lemon Association, sold citrus under numerous names: "Athlete," "College Heights," "Umpire," and "Collegiate." A 1930s packing label for the Collegiate brand, pictured above, featured a vintage image of Pomona's Mason Hall, along with the long since demolished Harwood Hall for Botany, which once occupied the center of the Stanley Academic Quadrangle.

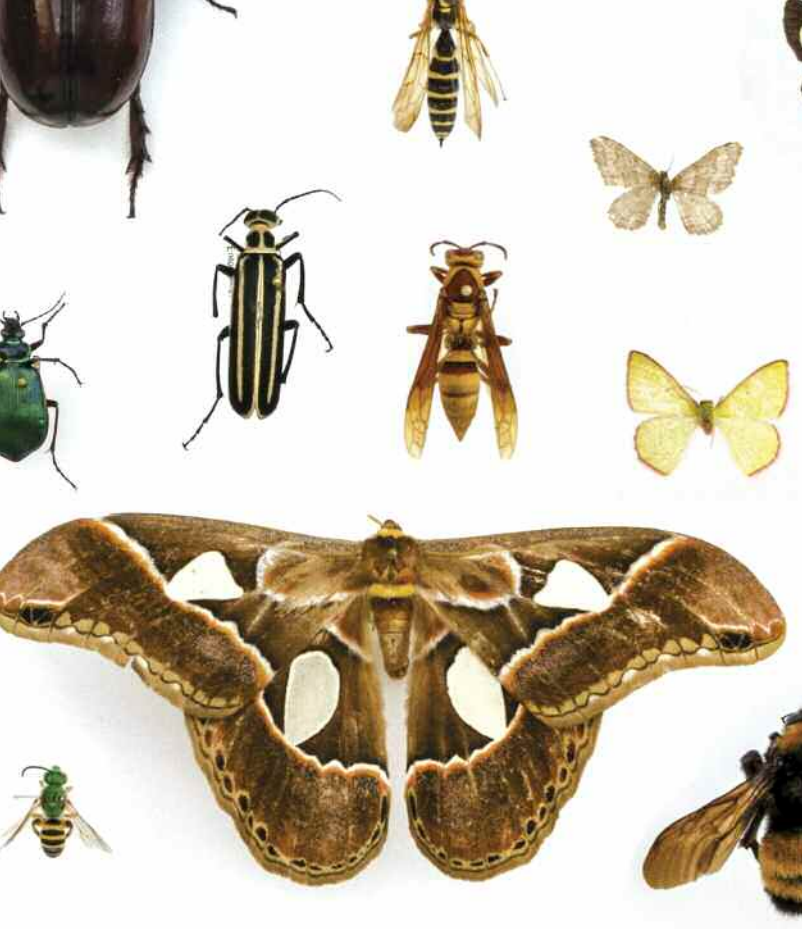
Many growers were members of the California Fruit Growers Exchange, founded in Claremont in 1893 under a different name. Membership soon exploded, and in 1952, the group formally adopted the name from their longtime advertising campaign—Sunkist.

Michael Waters 20

Citrus label image courtesy of the Claremont Heritage Archives



A well dressed Claremont citrus grower poses among his trees in this undated photo from the Boynton Collection of Early Claremont, Honnold Mudd Library.



# Bug Hunters

**Last October**, biology major Hannah Osland '20 biked to the Pomona College Farm with a single mission. She would wait by the compost bins, clutching a glass jar filled with ethyl acetate gas—her “kill jar”—until she captured a yellow butterfly she had seen earlier. In total, she spent an hour looking. “I was so frustrated that this little tiny butterfly was beating me,” she says. “It’s amazing how insects will evade me.”

Osland needed to catch and identify the butterfly, known as a small cabbage white, for her Insect Ecology and Behavior class with Professor Frances Hanzawa. For their project, Osland and nine other students captured 40 unique insect specimens from at least 11 different insect orders. Twenty had to be identified down to the scientific family they belong to—a difficult task given that, as Osland tells it, “so many beetles look alike.”

For Osland and other students, the project became a constant source of fascination among friends, many of whom tried to help nab new insect species. (A point of pride among one of Osland’s friends is the grasshopper he caught for her.) Her final collection of insects included bees, ants, butterflies, grasshoppers, beetles and more. “I don’t think I’ll ever forget insect orders now,” she says. “It’s totally ingrained in my brain.”



## Pomona Rewind:

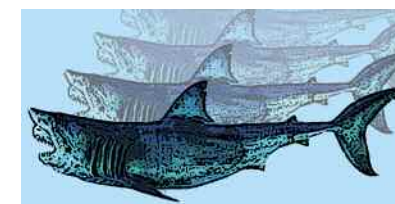
# 80 YEARS AGO

Four score years ago, the sciences were alive and well at Pomona, as evidenced by these brief stories from the mid-1930s.



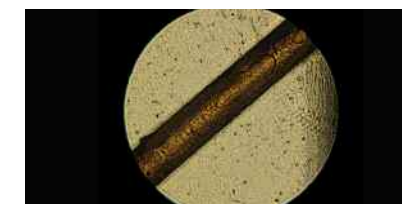
### 20,000 Year-Old Sloth Poop

**Pomona professors** Jerome D. Laudermilk and Philip A. Munz made headlines after traveling to the Grand Canyon to study a rare find: 20,000-year-old giant-sloth dung. According to an article in the Sept. 20, 1937, issue of *Life* magazine, the dung covered the floor of a cave believed to be home to giant ground sloths, which waddled on two legs and could grow as large as elephants. Laudermilk and Munz hoped to uncover the sloths’ diet and what it might reveal about plant and climate conditions of the era.



### Shark Embalming 101

**As a Pomona student**, the late Lee Potter '38 had a simple plan to pay his way through college: sell his skills embalming animals. Potter, a pre-med student, had more than four years of embalming experience by the time the *LA Times* profiled him on June 1, 1937. He embalmed fish, frogs, rats, earthworms, crayfish and sharks and sold them to schools for anatomical study in their labs. His best seller: sharks—once, he sent an order of 200 embalmed sharks to a nearby college. His ultimate goal was to embalm an elephant.



### Crime Lab Pomona

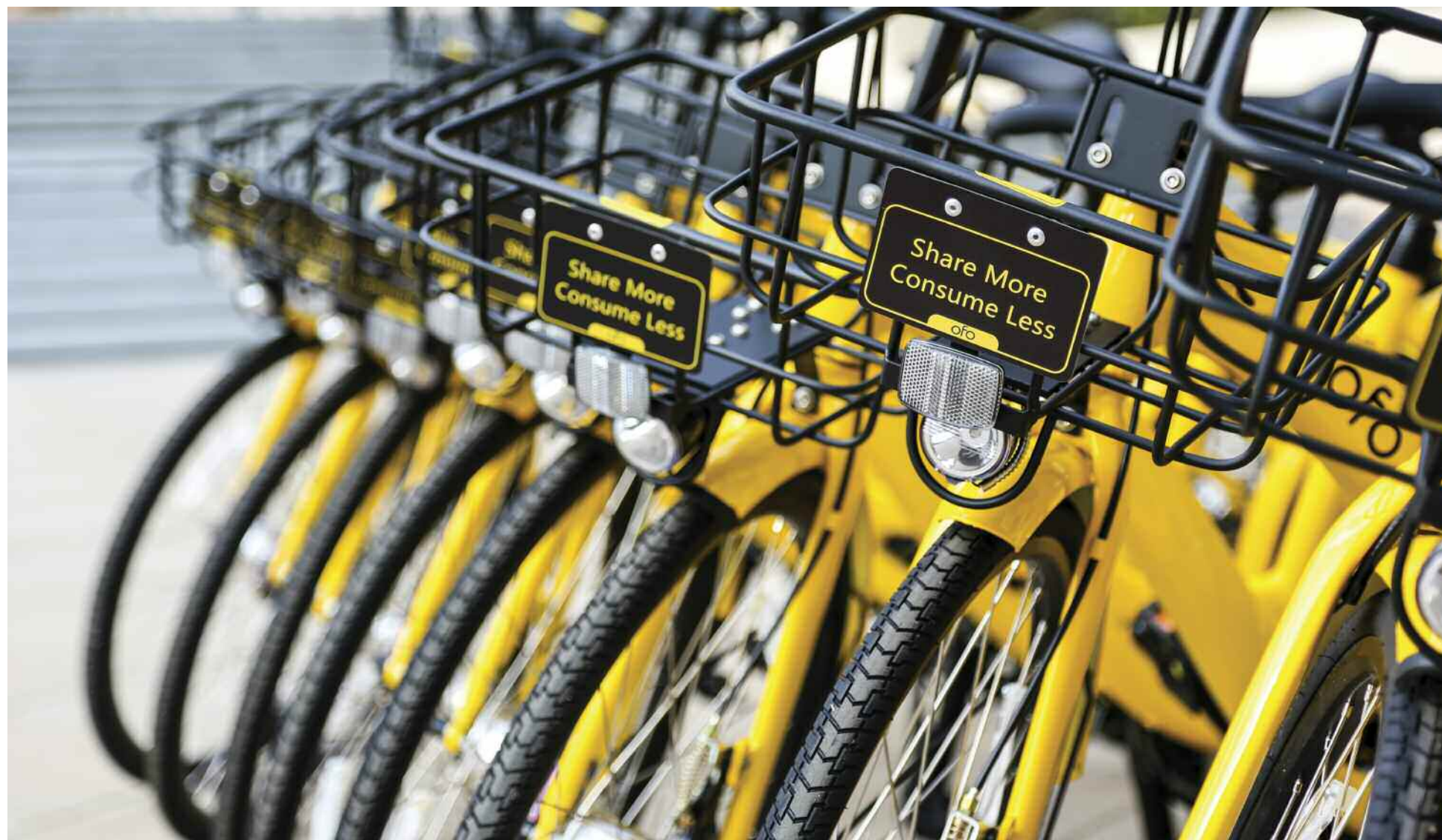
**In August 1936**, a Riverside woman named Ruth Muir was found brutally murdered in the San Diego woods, and the case ignited a media frenzy. A suspect claiming he “knows plenty” about Muir’s murder was found with 20 hairs that appeared to belong to a woman. In their rush to test whether the hairs were Muir’s, police turned to an unlikely source to conduct the analysis—Pomona College. Though the hairs do not seem to have matched Muir’s in the end, at least we can say: For a brief moment, Pomona operated a crime lab.

## Failing Better

**In its first year**, Pomona’s Humanities Studio will take as its inaugural theme a line from Samuel Beckett, “Fail Better,” according to its founding director, Kevin Dettmar, the W.M. Keck Professor of English.

Each year the program will bring together a select group of faculty, postdoctoral and student fellows in the humanities for a year of engaged intellectual discussion and research on interdisciplinary topics of scholarly and public interest. Programming will also include visiting speakers, professional development workshops and other community events.

Dettmar said the theme honors the late Arden Reed, professor of English, who spoke on the topic last year. Reed’s career, Dettmar notes, “was anything but a failure. But we will honor his memory by applying ourselves to the twin concepts of failure and its kissing cousin, error—seeking better to understand the uses of failure and the importance of error in the ecosystem of scholarly discovery. Together with the studio director, faculty and postdoctoral fellows, and a group of visiting speakers, writers and thinkers, Humanities Studio undergraduate fellows will take a deep dive into failure, to bring back the treasures only it has to offer.”



## A Leg Up for Bikes

**In the competition** between bikes and skateboards to be the top means of foot-powered transportation on campus, bikes just got a big leg up (so to speak).

In February, Pomona College and the dockless bike-sharing company ofo rolled out the firm’s first college pilot program in California. Founded in 2014, ofo is the world’s first and largest station-free bicycle-sharing platform. To date, the firm has connected over 200 million global users with more than 10 million bikes in 20 countries.

What makes this bike-sharing program unique is that ofo’s signature yellow bikes are unlocked by way of a smartphone. They can be shared among riders and parked at any bike rack on the campuses of The Claremont Colleges. To celebrate the February launch of the partnership, all rides for students, faculty and staff were free during the bike-sharing program’s first two weeks of operation.

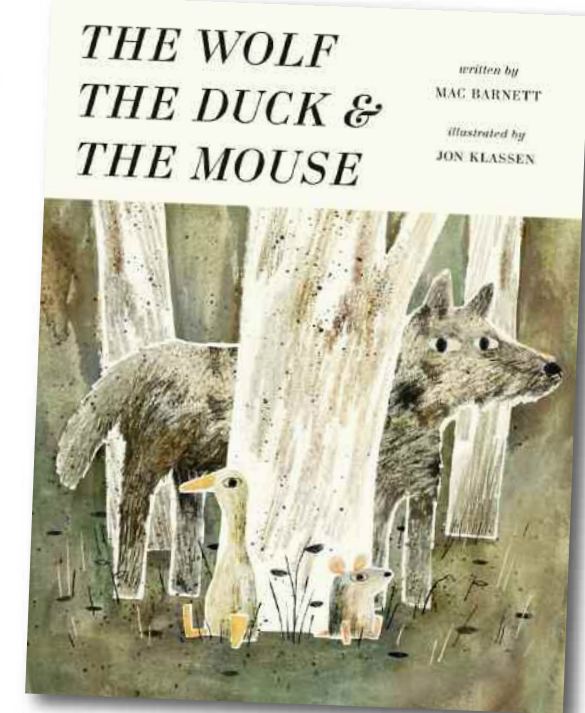
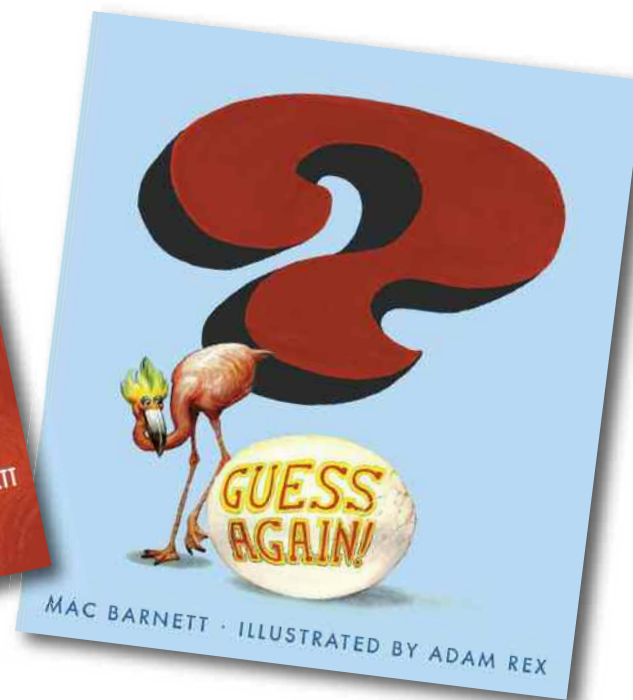
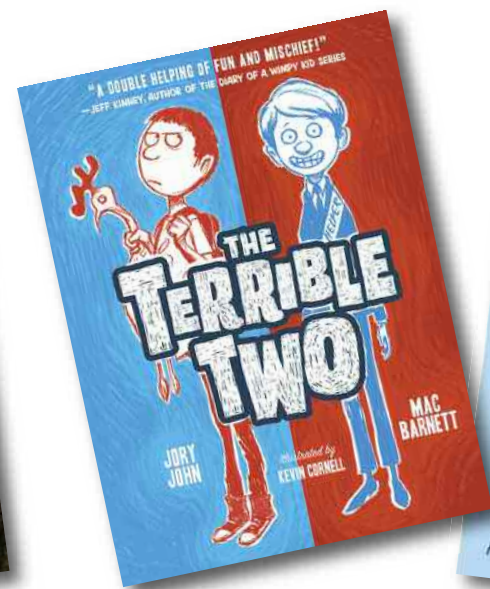
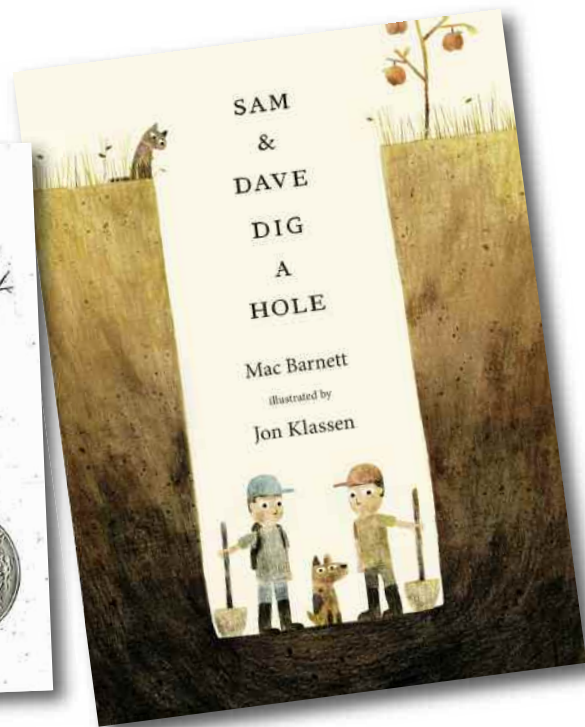
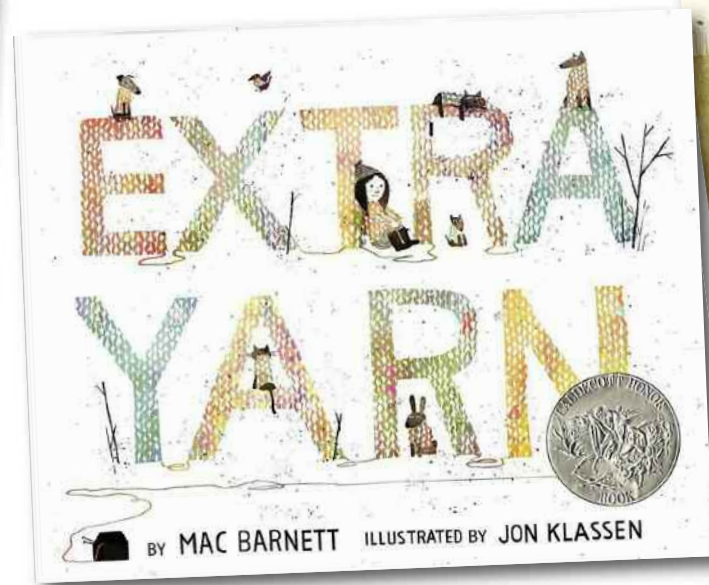
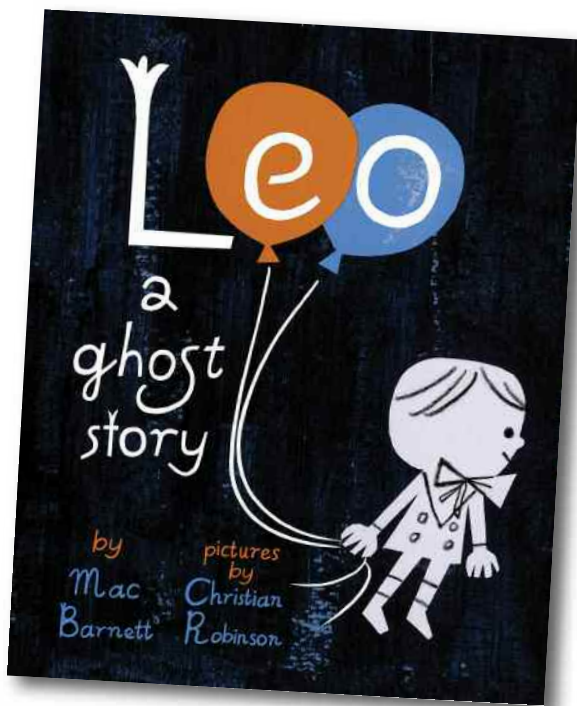
Pomona College Assistant Director of Sustainability Alexis Reyes sees these bikes as a key tool for the community. “As a top performer in sustainability, Pomona is always looking for ways to support opportunities for low or zero-emission commuting,” says Reyes. “Adding ofo’s services to our resources available to our students, faculty and staff helps Pomona on its quest to become carbon-neutral by 2030.”



THE AUTHOR OF 29 BOOKS FOR CHILDREN, MAC BARNETT '04 IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR STORIES THAT ELICIT STRONG FEELINGS.

# IDEAS THAT FEEL ALIVE

By Sneha Abraham



**New York Times**–bestselling and award-winning children’s author Mac Barnett ’04 started reading at the age of 3. As he was growing up, it was just Barnett and his mom. They didn’t have a lot of money, but Barnett says it was important to her that they had books. So they bought all of Barnett’s books secondhand—or third? fourth?—at yard sales.

“I grew up with the generation of children’s books before me and the generation before that,” Barnett says, noting that his collection spanned the years from 1935 to 1975.

Barnett cites some favorite authors and books from his half-pint days: Margaret Wise Brown, James Marshall, Wanda Gág and “The Frog and Toad” series by Arnold Lobel.

Books like those became touchstones for him in his writing, he says, and still evoke a particular set of memories: reading aloud with his mom and telling inside jokes in their family. They found some books ridiculously absurd and others heartbreaking. The best books, he says, made them feel something.

Barnett says that’s what drives him today as a full-time writer: strong feeling. To him, writers aren’t any better at ideas than anyone else, “I just think we tend to hold onto ideas, cogitate on them, turn them into something. The trick for me at least is not how do I come up with something but knowing which ideas are worth chasing down, which ideas feel alive to me.”

For Barnett, there is no barrier between his work and the rest of his life. Those “alive” ideas can come from anywhere.

“I write about the things I care about. Everything I see, every bad book I see, every good book I see, everything I care about that elicits a strong emotion. It’s just experiencing the world and paying attention to the world. That’s the work. That’s the thing that makes your brain a receptive place to an idea.”

Barnett first started crafting children’s stories when he was in college during his summers. He worked at a summer camp, telling original stories to the camp kids. He’d make up stories about his life: adventure stories, espionage stories and more. In the telling is where he found his dream. Barnett spends a lot of time on the road, visiting elementary schools and reading out loud to children. They are who he keeps in mind when he’s building an imaginary world; he pictures himself standing in front of a big group of kids and holding their attention with a book.

When he first told his Pomona College mentor, the late Professor David Foster Wallace, that he wanted to write for children, Barnett says Wallace winced. He said he didn’t have any advice to offer Barnett on how to write for children. But Barnett replied that he already knew how to talk to kids. He needed to learn how to write. He says Wallace’s counsel to respect the reader and always consider his audience was huge in his development as a writer.

Develop he did. Barnett has been writing full-time for 13 years, and in that time, he’s written 29 books. But Barnett is modest when he’s complimented on being prolific. He describes his process as a mess. There are a lot of scraps. There’s a lot of sitting.

“My impression is it’s very lazy. There are so many days when you sit in front of your computer and you don’t write a single word. But obviously *something’s* happening because there are these books.”

Indeed, something is happening because Barnett is winning lots of recognition, and his books have sold over one million copies, been

will tell him kids love horses, kids love robots—but he thinks it’s both simpler and more complicated. Kids love a good story. And lots of different kinds of stories.

“Kids’ literary tastes are as widely varied as adults’ literary tastes. You’re just trying to tell something true that’s stylistically important for that truth. That’s what good art is for adults, too. It’s just a kid’s experience of the world is different from an adult’s experience of the world. Kids love all kinds of different things. Literature for all kids should be as diverse as kids are.”

translated into more than 30 languages and racked up awards like the E.B. White Read-Aloud Award and (the icing on the cake for every children’s book) two Caldecott Honors. Barnett is quick to say that it’s actually the illustrator who gets the Caldecott award, not the author.

“They don’t even give me a certificate,” he says, laughing.

Still, even though it’s not technically his, seeing that Caldecott sticker on his books is very satisfying. He remembers that while growing up he was always attracted to books bearing that sticker. He remarks that it’s amazing that it means so much to readers even that young.

Meaning and memory are what make Barnett’s work, well, meaningful and memorable. Knee-high readers eventually become full-size readers. Barnett hears from college kids who grew up reading a series he wrote called “Brixton Brothers.”

“Some of them have told me that when they packed for college, they packed five books to take with them and ‘Brixton Brothers’ was one of those five. The books we read as children make up who we are... these kids are adults and they are deciding to bring those books with them in life. That is just overwhelming.”

Books and memories that young readers carry into adulthood are one day passed on to their own children, he says.

Barnett is keenly aware of the audience he’s working for. People

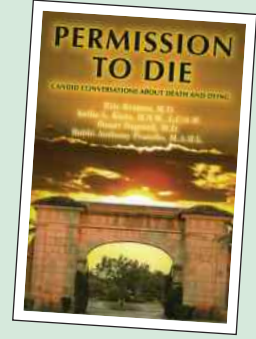
Barnett’s three favorite books of his own are a motley collection themselves: *Guess Again* (2009); *Leo: A Ghost Story* (2015); and his most recent, *The Wolf, the Duck, and the Mouse* (2017). He loves *Guess Again* because it is the lightest in tone, full of jokes, and yet his most philosophical work. His affection for *Leo* is due to Christian Robinson’s illustrations and the subject matter, which is a paean to friendship. *The Wolf, the Duck, and the Mouse* is special to Barnett because it poses big questions about life, death and why bad things happen—questions he wrestles with and that children pose all the time.

It’s a tough audience, Barnett says. The good part: his crowd isn’t fawning and fangirling over him the way grown-up audiences can do to their favorites. The kids are there because they care about the book; they’re not fawning over the author, he says. But because they care about the book, they keep it real. Really real.

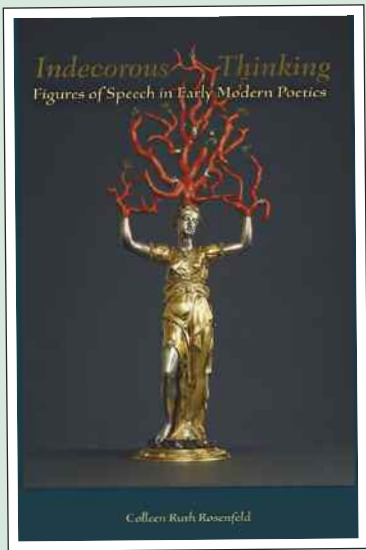
“They will just tell you anything they don’t like about the book.” And Barnett says he takes all of the criticism seriously.

Kids offer other kinds of fun-size observations as well.

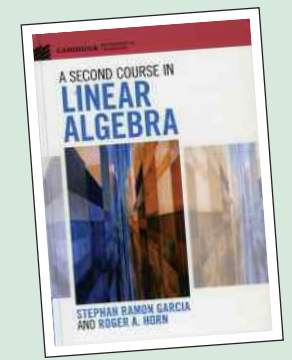
“I have a really big Adam’s apple, which I didn’t know until I started hanging around with kids, until they started asking, ‘What’s that on your neck, why is it so big?’ That changed the way I look at the mirror for the rest of my life. That’s all right though—they weren’t wrong. They weren’t wrong.” **PCM**



**Permission to Die**  
*Candid Conversations About Death and Dying*  
Rabbi Anthony Fratello '94 teamed with a neurologist, a psychotherapist and a physician to empower readers to think about death and dying.



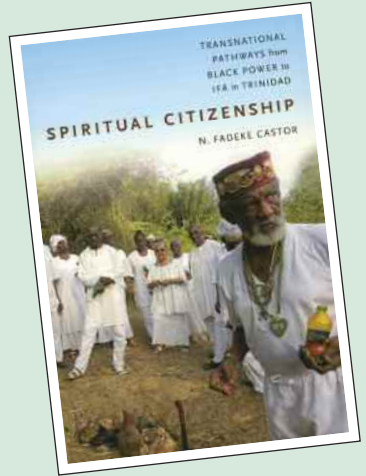
**Indecorous Thinking**  
*Figures of Speech in Early Modern Poetics*  
Professor of English Colleen Rosenfeld examines the use of figures of speech by such poets as Edmund Spenser and Mary Wroth as a means of celebrating and expanding the craft of poetry.



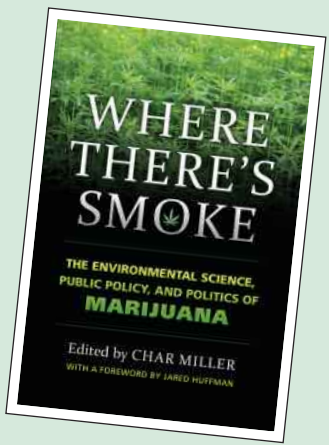
**A Second Course in Linear Algebra**  
This new textbook by Professor of Mathematics Stephan Garcia and coauthor Roger Horn helps students transition from basic theory to advanced topics and applications.



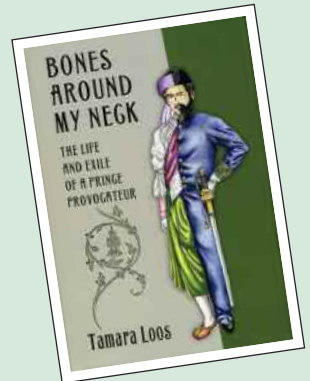
**The Party's Primary**  
*Control of Congressional Nominations*  
Hans J.G. Hassell '05 explores the ways in which political parties work behind the scenes to shape the options available to voters through the primary process.



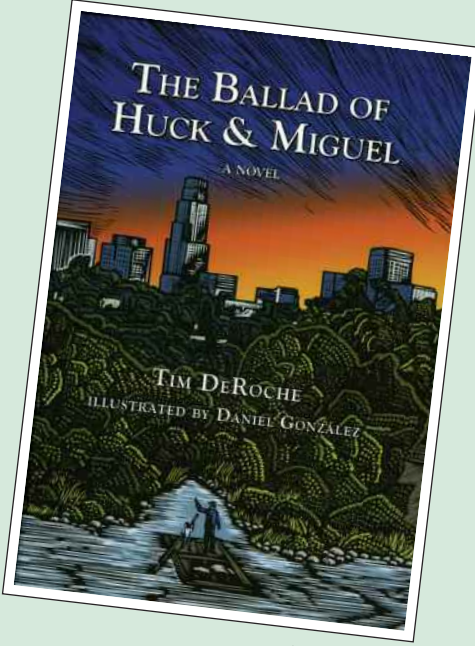
**Spiritual Citizenship**  
*Transnational Pathways from Black Power to Ifá in Trinidad*  
Nicole Fadeke Castor '89 explores the role of Ifá/Orisha religious practices in shaping local, national and transnational belonging in African diasporic communities.



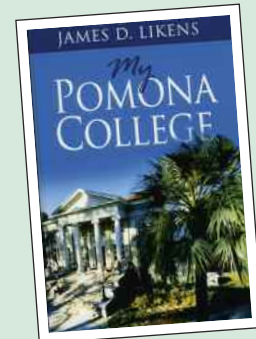
**Where There's Smoke**  
Professor of Environmental Analysis Char Miller edited this interdisciplinary anthology on the troubling environmental consequences of illegal marijuana production on public, private and tribal lands.




**Bones Around My Neck**  
*The Life and Exile of a Prince Provocateur*  
Tamara Loos '89 examines the life of Prince Prisdang Chumsai, Siam's first diplomat to Europe, and, through him, the complexities of global imperialism.



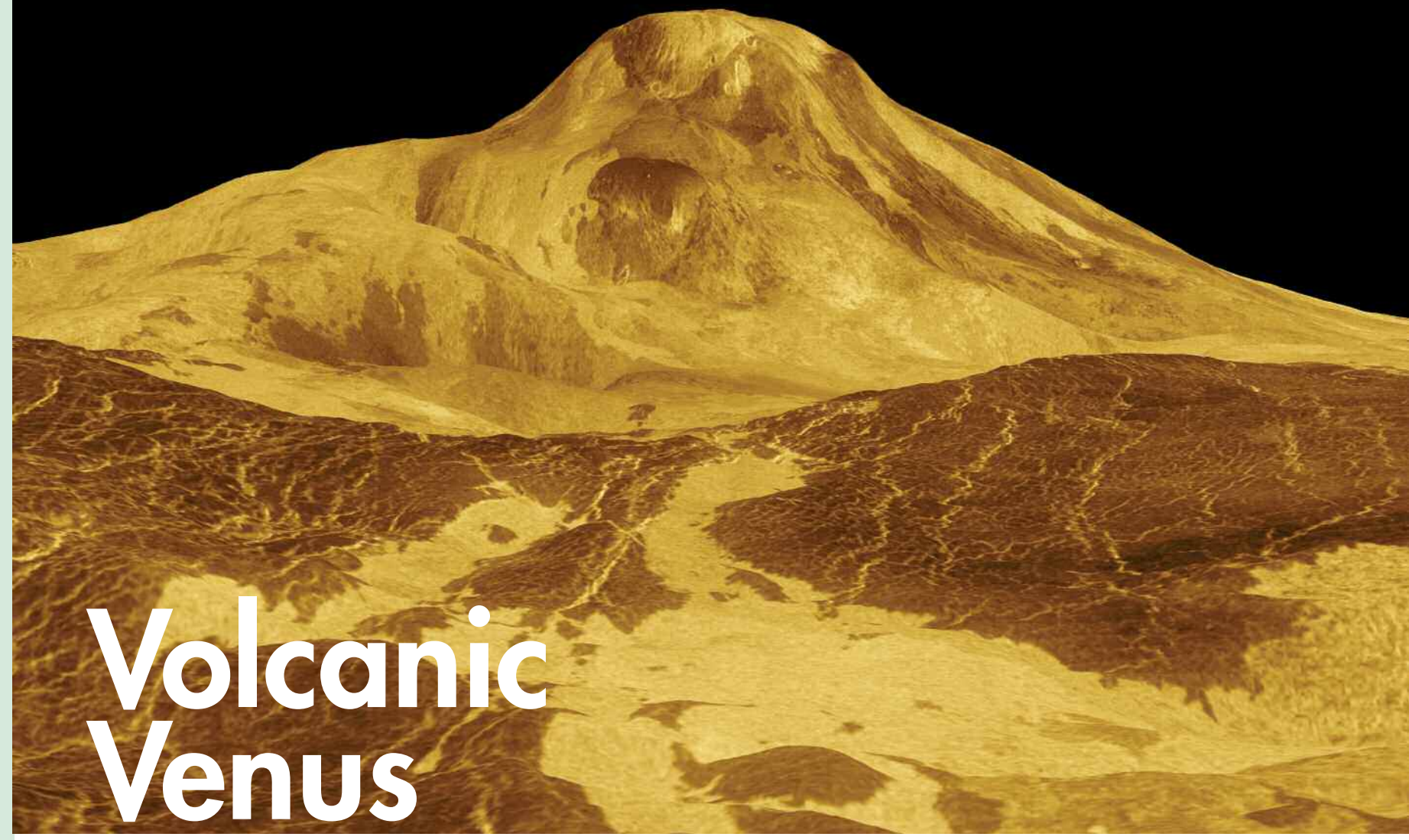
**The Ballad of Huck & Miguel**  
In a provocative tribute to Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, Tim DeRoche '92 transports Huck to modern-day L.A., following his escape down the concrete gash of the Los Angeles River in the company of an undocumented immigrant falsely accused of murder.



**My Pomona College**  
Emeritus Professor of Economics James D. Likens offers a memoir of 47 years on the faculty of Pomona College, stretching from the turbulent '60s to the new millennium.

The Pomona College  
**BOOK CLUB** 

Interested in connecting with fellow Sagehen readers? Join the Pomona College Book Club at [pomona.edu/bookclub](http://pomona.edu/bookclub).



# Volcanic Venus

For Professor of Geology Eric Grosfils, the scorching planet Venus is a “volcanologist’s playground,” where interpreting well-preserved geological records could help lead to better understanding of volcanoes here on Earth.

Now, a \$425,000 NASA research grant will allow Grosfils—the Minnie B. Cairns Memorial Professor of Geology at Pomona—and his research colleague, Pat McGovern from the Lunar and Planetary Institute, to push forward with their efforts to better understand the evolution of stresses within and beneath a volcano as it grows.

The grant proposal, “Breaking the barriers: Time-dependent, stress-controlled growth of large volcanoes on Venus and implications for the mechanics of magma ascent, storage and emplacement,” is a continuation of ongoing research started in 2006 by McGovern and Grosfils.

Their latest grant, awarded by NASA’s Solar System Workings division, provides funding for three years of research and will include a range of new opportunities for student involvement. For instance, students who are just starting their geology education can help perform GIS mapping and analysis of Magellan radar data—work that will help the research team “evaluate the sequence of eruptive events, as well as what structures were forming when, at several large volcanoes on Venus.” More advanced undergraduates can take on more

challenging tasks, such as numerical modeling.

In his research as a physical volcanologist, Grosfils investigates the mechanics of magma reservoirs—bodies of potentially eruptible molten rock within the subsurface—and what causes them to destabilize. The question is an important one because knowing when and how a reservoir destabilizes and ruptures is critical to efforts to understand whether escaping magma is likely to move toward the surface and erupt.

“When a magma reservoir destabilizes and feeds materials toward the surface, it can produce an eruption, and persistent eruptions gradually build a load—a volcano—sitting at the surface. The addition of that load over time flexes the crust, however, and changes the stresses around the magma reservoir. This can either enhance the ongoing eruption or shut it down,” explains Grosfils, “and we’re striving to decipher what controls how this mechanical process will play out.”

What makes Venus, the closest planet to the sun, a “volcanologist’s playground”?

“Volcanoes on Earth get affected by a lot of different processes: our atmosphere, oceans, erosion, humans, landslides, plate tectonics ... but on Venus, the geological record is in essence not compromised by any of those factors—no plate tectonics, minimal erosion, ▶





Elvis Kahoro '20 (left) with Professor Stephan Garcia

**Elvis Kahoro '20**  
Major: Computer Science

# HOW TO ADVANCE MATHEMATICS BY ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

One day last year, in Professor Stephan Garcia's Number Theory and Cryptography class, the lesson took a surprising turn.

To make a point about the use of seemingly random patterns in cryptography, Garcia had just flashed onto the screen a chart of the first 100 prime numbers and all of their primitive roots. (It would take too long to explain what primitive roots are, so suffice to say that they're important in modern cybersecurity applications.)

Looking at the chart, Elvis Kahoro '20 noticed something interesting about pairs of primes known as "twins" — primes that differ by exactly two, such as 29 and 31. The smaller of the pair always seemed to have as many or more primitive roots than the larger of the two. He wondered if that was always true.

"So I just asked what I thought was a random question," Kahoro recalls. It was the kind of curious question he was known for asking all through his school years, sometimes with unfortunate results. "Some teachers would get mad at me for asking so many questions that led us off the topic," he remembers.

But Garcia took the first year student's question seriously. And the next day, the professor called Kahoro to his office, where he'd been doing some number crunching on his computer.

"It turns out that Elvis's conjecture is false, but in an astoundingly interesting way," Garcia explains. "There are only two counter examples below 10,000. And bigger number crunching indicated that his conjecture seemed to be correct 98 percent of the time."

Garcia and a frequent collaborator, Florian Luca, then found a theoretical explanation for the phenomenon, resulting in a paper titled "Primitive root bias for twin primes," to be published in the journal *Experimental Mathematics*, with Kahoro listed as a co author.

"What I've taken away from this," Kahoro says, "is never to be afraid to ask questions in class, because you never know where they'll lead."

**1** **Come to the** United States from Kenya at the age of 3 and grow up in Kennesaw, Georgia, about 30 miles north of Atlanta. Go to public schools and discover that (a) you love math and (b) you love finding patterns.

**2** **In seventh grade,** play a video game based on the Japanese anime *Naruto*. Discover the source code for the game online and find yourself fascinated by the logic of its code. Decide you want to make computers your life's work.

**3** **Choose to attend** the STEM magnet program at Kennesaw Mountain High School because it offers lots of AP classes, including one in your #1 interest, computer science. Join lots of organizations, and do about a thousand hours of community service.

**4** **Learn about the** QuestBridge program from another student, apply and get accepted. At a QuestBridge conference, learn about Pomona College from your group leader, recent Pomona alumna Ashley Land '16, who urges you to apply.

**5** **Visit Pomona on** Fly in Weekend, meet a number of faculty who make you feel at home and discover that the College's support for DACA students like you is the best in the country. Apply for early admission and get accepted.

**6** **During your first** semester at Pomona, take a Linear Algebra course with Professor Stephan Garcia, whose problem solving approach to teaching impresses you so much that you can't wait to take another course with him second semester.

**In Number Theory** and Cryptography class during your second semester, look at a chart of prime numbers and notice something intriguing. Ask a question, and learn how just asking the right question can open unexplored frontiers of new knowledge.



LEFT: Alaina Woo '17 onstage with NCAA President Mark Emmert  
ABOVE: Woo driving the baseline during a game.



## A VOICE FOR CHANGE

**Alaina Woo '17** stepped to the free-throw line hundreds of times during her basketball career with Pomona-Pitzer. But she had never stepped onto an athletic stage quite like the one at the NCAA Convention in January when she stood in front of nearly 3,000 of the movers and shakers of college sports for a one-on-one talk with association President Mark Emmert.

“It was a completely new experience for me,” says Woo, who appeared in her role as chair of the first NCAA Board of Governors’ Student-Athlete Engagement Committee, tasked with considering some of the crucial issues facing college sports—including the hot-button topic of how the NCAA addresses sexual violence.

“I felt prepared in the sense that I obviously was very familiar with the committee’s work and I had worked on the Commission to Combat Sexual Violence, which is why I was named chair,” Woo says. “But it’s completely different when you arrive in Indianapolis and see the giant place you’re going to be speaking. The NCAA helped me out by making it be more of a conversation with President Emmert, rather than me giving this giant speech looking out to a crowd.”

Among the points Woo made onstage: “I think it’s a rare opportunity for student-athletes to have that direct line to the Board of Governors. And like I said, I was a public policy major, and I’m surprised by how often people craft policies or make changes without engaging the people that they’re making the policies for.”

Woo’s role is seeking change from within the NCAA.

“There is so much more to be done,” she says. Citing recent news

stories of mishandled cases of sexual violence in athletics and at NCAA institutions, Woo feels that athletics and higher education are a step behind. “Issues of sexual violence have plagued college campuses and athletics—both youth and collegiate—for years. It is imperative that the NCAA and other sport governing bodies continue to work on efforts to prevent sexual violence, support survivors and hold their memberships accountable.”

### Basketball and Advocacy

Now in her first season as an assistant basketball coach at Tufts University while simultaneously working as a research assistant at the Harvard Kennedy School, Woo was deeply active in NCAA issues while at Pomona, where she is the Sagehens’ career leader in three-pointers. She also is ninth on Pomona-Pitzer’s career scoring list and was the team’s leading scorer as a senior.

Woo was still a first-year student when a teammate took her to a meeting of Pomona-Pitzer’s NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. That friend and Lisa Beckett, a professor of physical education and associate athletic director, encouraged Woo to get involved.

“They said, ‘If you’re interested in making athletics something where you can make a difference off the court, interested in community service, interested in leadership, you should definitely check this out.’”

By Woo’s sophomore year, Beckett—“a wonderful mentor,” Woo says—suggested applying for the NCAA Division III national Stu-

dent-Athlete Advisory Committee. Woo was selected and represented Pomona-Pitzer’s Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and the Northwest Conference for a three-year term that ended in January. Among other roles, she also served on the NCAA Committee on Women’s Athletics for Divisions I, II and III.

“My interests really lie in women’s athletics and Title IX, advocacy for victims of sexual violence and underrepresented student athletes, so that was why I was chosen for those committees rather than a championship committee or something like that,” Woo says. “My interests were definitely inspired by being at Pomona, a liberal arts campus where there’s this sense to explore how something like athletics could make a difference.”

She hopes for further advances on sexual violence issues after the NCAA adopted a policy last year requiring coaches, athletes and administrators to complete education in

sexual violence prevention each year.

The new sexual violence policy has been an opportunity for the NCAA to reflect on what its role is, she says.

“It seems ridiculous that someone who has a low GPA might not be eligible but someone who perpetrates sexual violence is eligible. These are the types of conversations we are now facilitating on a national level.”

### Choosing a Goal

Woo’s work at the Harvard Kennedy School, where she is not enrolled as a graduate student but works part-time on a project called Participedia that seeks to crowdsource and map participatory political processes around the world, allows her to continue pursuing the policy interests she developed in her studies at Pomona with Politics Professor David Menefee-Libey.

At Tufts, a Division III women’s basketball power that has reached the NCAA title game the past two seasons, Woo got a foot in the door thanks to Pomona-Pitzer Coach Jill Pace, a former Tufts assistant coach.

Like a basketball player in position to pass, shoot or drive, Woo is something of a triple threat as she starts her career: She could continue coaching, pursue graduate work in public policy or possibly combine sports and advocacy as an athletic administrator.

“I’m still very on the fence,” she says.

“When I’m thinking about being a coach in college sports and mentoring young women, I’m thinking all about policies and politics and power and how to best advocate for my athletes or people in the athletic department who are struggling with things outside of athletics.

“It feels so connected. This work at the NCAA has really tied together my academic interests with my love and passion for the game of basketball.”

—Robyn Norwood

## SAGEHEN HIGHLIGHTS

Here are a few highlights from the 2017–18 seasons of Pomona-Pitzer Athletics.



### FOOTBALL: A Hail-Mary Memory

**For most Pomona-Pitzer fans**, the crowning achievement of the year in sports happened at the very end of football season, in early November 2017, when the Sagehens won the 60th edition of the “Battle of Sixth Street” against the Claremont-Mudd-Scripps (CMS) Stags, 29–28. The game ended with an overtime, fourth-down, Hail-Mary pass from quarterback Karter Odermann '20 that bounced off the helmet of a Stags defender before falling into the waiting arms of Kevin Masini '18, followed by an equally heart-stopping two-point conversion reception by David Berkinsky '19 to seal the victory. (In the photo above, Sagehen fans lift Berkinsky onto their shoulders.)

The football season was also marked by a series of team records. Aseal Birir '18 set both the all-time career rushing record (3,859 yards) and the single-game rushing record (275 yards), and Evan Lloyd '18 set an all-time record for career tackles with 275.

### BASKETBALL

**The men’s basketball team** won 13 of their last 16 games to advance to the finals of the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SCIAC) tournament before losing to CMS. For the **women’s team**, Emma Godfrey '21 was named SCIAC Newcomer of the Year after tallying at least 30 points in six games.

### SWIMMING & DIVING

**Both the men’s and the women’s teams** won SCIAC championships, the second in a row for the women and the first in program history for the men. Maddie Kauchi (PI '19) won SCIAC Female Athlete of the Year; Mark Hallman '18 was Male Athlete of the Year; and Lukas Menkhoff '21 was Newcomer of the Year.

### MEN’S WATER POLO

**For the second straight season**, the men’s water polo team claimed the SCIAC title both in the regular season and in the conference tournament. Daniel Diemer (PI '18) was SCIAC Player of the Year.

### MEN’S CROSS COUNTRY

**The men’s cross country team** won its first SCIAC title since 2005 and finished sixth at the NCAA Championships.



PICTURE THIS

This dramatic image of the Stanley Academic Quadrangle in winter is a view you don't see very often—unless, that is, you're a drone.

Photo by Jeff Hing

WHEN FREELANCE WRITER RACHEL MONROE '06 WENT SEARCHING FOR A PLACE TO CALL HOME, SHE SETTLED UPON A REMOTE LITTLE TOWN IN THE HIGH DESERT OF WEST TEXAS. HERE'S WHY.

# HOME SWEET MARFA

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MARK WOOD





# The easiest way

for non-Texans to get to Marfa, Texas, is to fly into El Paso. From there, it's a three-hour drive, the kind that turns shoulder muscles to stone from the sheer effort of holding the steering wheel on a straight and steady course for so many miles at a stretch. And when you finally get there, it looks pretty much like any dusty, dying West Texas railroad town. Except for the fact that Marfa isn't dying at all—in fact, it's thriving.

You may have heard of Marfa. In the past few decades, it's gained a kind of quirky fame among art lovers. As a writer with an interest in the arts, Rachel Monroe '06 was familiar with the name back in 2012 when she set out from Baltimore on a cross-country trek in search of whatever came next. At the time, she assumed the little town was probably located just outside of Austin, but as she discovered, it's actually more than 400 miles farther west, way out in the middle of the high desert.

After a long day's drive, Monroe spent fewer than 24 hours in Marfa before moving on, but that brief rest-stop on her way to the Pacific would change her life.

**A native of Virginia**, Monroe is no stranger to the South, but she never truly identified as a Southerner until she came to Pomona. "I grew up in Richmond, which was, and still is, very interested in its Confederate past," she recalls. A child of liberal, transplanted Yankees in what was then a deeply red state, she remembers feeling "like a total misfit and weirdo."

When she got to Pomona, however, she was struck by the fact that most of her fellow first-years had never had the experience of being surrounded by people with very different opinions about culture and politics. "It wasn't so much that I missed it," she says, "but I saw that there was an advantage, and that it had maybe, in some ways, made me more sure of myself in what I did believe."

It was also at Pomona that Monroe started to get serious about writing. Looking back, she credits the late Disney Professor of Creative Writing, David Foster Wallace, with helping her to grow from a lazy writer into a hardworking one. "He would mark up stories in multiple different colors of pen, you know, read it three or four times, and type up these letters to us," she explains. "You really just felt like you were giving him short shrift and yourself short shrift if you turned in something that was kind of half-assed."

She didn't decide to make a career out of writing until the year after she graduated. In fact, she remembers the exact moment it happened—while hiking with some friends in Morocco, where she was studying on a Fulbright award. "I remember having this really clear moment when I was like, 'I think I want to try to be a writer.' It was one of those thoughts that arrive in your head like they came from outside of you—in a complete sentence, too, which is weird."

A year later, she was at work on her MFA in fiction at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, but she wasn't particularly happy. Her goal was to write short stories, but even as she was churning out stories and entering contests and submitting to journals, she felt like a fraud. "I would get these subscriptions to these magazines that I was trying to get into that were rejecting me, and I didn't even want to read them. And at a certain point, I was like, 'There's something wrong here.'"

So she began to write essays, and something clicked. Essay writing immediately struck her as a more appropriate form for exploring the ideas that excited her, and after years of rejected short stories, as an essayist she found quick success.

Her first published essay, which appeared on a website called *The Awl*, was about a group of girls with online crushes on the Columbine killers. "I sort of related to these girls in the ferocity of their crushes," she recalls. "Female rage is something that's not really permitted, and so instead of being like, 'Oh my god, I'm bullied, I'm miserable, I'm so unhappy,' instead of owning that feeling, which is not socially permissible, then you idolize this boy who acted on it."

Being published was good. Caring about what she wrote was great. Doing research was fun. And she no longer felt like she was faking it. Suddenly, she was off and running on a new, entirely unexpected career in nonfiction.

After completing her MFA, she stayed on in Baltimore for a couple of years, writing for a website run by fellow Sagehen Susan Dunn '84, called *Baltimore Fishbowl*. And then, she simply knew it was time to move on.

"I've made most of my decisions in life kind of intuitively," she explains, "so they're hard to explain after the fact. But I had a sense that, 'OK, I've plateaued here. I've reached some sort of limit. Time to go.'"

So she packed up her car and drove west.

**According to the** Texas State Historical Association, the town of Marfa was founded in 1883 as a water stop and freight depot for the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway. The rail line slices straight through the heart of town, and a couple of times a day, seemingly endless freight trains come barreling through. The landscape here is flat and barren, covered with sparse grasses and low vegetation like creosote and yuccas, so you can literally see the train coming for miles. But the trains don't stop here anymore, and their only apparent contribution to the local economy is a negative one—the cost of earplugs provided to guests in a nearby hotel.

Back in the 1940s, the town's population topped out at about 5,000, bolstered by a prisoner-of-war camp and a military base. When those vanished after war's end, Marfa seemed destined to slowly fade away, like so much of small-town America. But in recent years, the town's population has stabilized at around 2,000, thanks to the two rather discordant pillars of its modern economy—arts tourism and the Border Patrol.

**Monroe doesn't remember** much about her first impression of Marfa, but she remembers the high desert landscape surrounding it. Somewhere around the town of Alpine, the scene began to shift. "All of a sudden, it just looked kind of rugged and open and empty," she says, "and I got really excited about the way it looked. I was like, 'Oh, I'm in the West.'"

In Marfa, exhausted from her eight-hour drive from Austin, she crashed at El Cosmico, a quirky hotel-slash-campground where visitors sleep in trailers, teepees and tents. The next day she took a tour with the Chinati Foundation, one of two nonprofits—the other being the Judd Foundation—that promote the arts in and around Marfa.

Then she drove on. But she couldn't quite leave Marfa behind. "When I got to L.A., I was like, 'You know, if I moved here, I would have to get a job because it's just expensive. And I don't want a real job.' Then I had this plan to drive back through Montana and Wyoming, but for some reason I kept thinking, 'That Marfa place was real interesting.'"

Since she hadn't been able to write much on the road ("It's hard when you're sleeping on friends' couches"), she decided to return to Marfa and find a place to settle in for a week or so and write.

What drew her back to Marfa? It's another of those intuitive decisions that she has trouble explaining. "I'm not sure I could have said at the time. I can make something up now, but I was just like, 'Oh, that's a cool place. It's real pretty. It seems easy to find your way.' It just seemed like the kind of place where you could go and be for a week and get some writing done."

That week stretched into six. "And at the end of that, I was like, 'I think I'm just going to move here.'"



**The Border Patrol** has been an integral part of life in Marfa since 1924, when it was created by an act of Congress—not to control immigration, but to deter the smuggling of liquor across the Rio Grande during Prohibition. That mission soon changed, however, and today, the Patrol's Big Bend Sector—known until 2011 as the Marfa Sector—is responsible for immigration enforcement for 77 counties in Texas and 18 in Oklahoma.

Headquarters for the whole sector is just south of town, near El Cosmico, and uniformed Border Patrol agents are a conspicuous presence in Marfa's coffee shops and on its streets. According >



to the sector’s website, it now employs about 700 agents and 50 support staff. Among them, Monroe says, are quite a few young men and women who grew up right here in town.

The other pillar of Marfa’s economy doesn’t jump out at you until you walk up Highland Street toward the big pink palace that houses the Presidio County Courthouse. Glance inside the aging storefronts, and where you might expect to find a Western Auto or a feed store, you’ll find, instead, art gallery after art gallery.

The story of Marfa as a destination for art lovers begins in the early 1970s with the arrival of minimalist artist Donald Judd. Drawn to Marfa by its arid landscapes, he soon began buying up land, first the 60,000-acre Ayala de Chinati Ranch, then an entire abandoned military base. In what must have seemed a grandly quixotic gesture at the time, he opened Marfa’s first art gallery.

Then something strange and wonderful happened. Artists began to gravitate to this dry little West Texas town to be part of a growing arts scene, and behind them, in seasonal droves, came the arts tourists.

**Monroe’s writing career** really took off after she moved to Marfa—a fact that she believes is no coincidence. “It wasn’t my intention in moving out here, but I think living here has been an advantage in that I come across a lot of stories,” she says. “Things kind of bubble up here—not just regional stories either.”

Some of those stories, which increasingly have appeared in prominent national venues like *The New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, *Slate*, *The New Republic*, and *The Guardian*, have grown directly out of her engagement in the Marfa community. In fact, the article that really put her on the map for national editors happened, in large part, because of her decision to join the local fire department.

“I read Norman Maclean’s book *Young Men and Fire*,” she says. “I just loved that book, and then I was like, ‘Oh wait, I’m moving to a place where they have wildfires.’” Fighting fires, she thought, would be a good way to connect with the land, and as a writer, she was drawn by the sheer drama of firefighting. “And then, you learn so much about the town,” she adds. “You know—not just the tourist surface, but the rural realities of living in a place.”

A year later, when a fertilizer plant exploded in West, Texas (“That’s West—comma—Texas, which is actually hours east of here”), Monroe found that her status as a first responder was her “in” for an important story. In the course of the investigation, a firefighter named Bryce Reed had gone from local hero to jailed suspect. Monroe wanted to tell his story, and her credentials as a fellow firefighter were key to earning his trust.

The resulting article, which she considers her first real work of in-depth reporting, became a study of Reed’s firefighter psyche and the role it played in his ordeal and his eventual vindication. “In my experience, it’s not universal, but a lot of people who are willing to run toward the disaster, there’s some ego there,” she says. “And it seemed to me that in some ways he was being punished for letting that ego show.”

The 8,000-word piece, which appeared in *Oxford American* in 2014, helped shift her career into high gear. Despite her usual writer’s insecurities about making such a claim herself (“As soon as you say that, a thunderbolt comes and zaps you”), she hasn’t looked back.

Recently, she put her freelance career on hold in order to finish a book, the subject of which harkens back to her very first published essay—women and crime. “It centers on the stories of four different women over the course of 100 years, each of whom became obsessed with a true crime story,” she says. “And each of those four women imagined themselves into a different role in the story. One becomes the detective, one imagines herself in the role of the victim, one is the lawyer, and one is the killer.”

She already has a publisher, along with a deadline of September to finish the draft. What comes after that, she doesn’t even want to think about. “For now, I’m just working on this book,” she says, “and the book feels like a wall I can’t see over.”

**That description**—a wall I can’t see over—might also apply to how I feel about Marfa as I walk up its dusty main street. From a distance, today’s Marfa seems to be a strange composite—a place where down-home, red-state America and elitist, blue-state America meet cute and coexist in a kind of harmonious interdependence.

As I walk, I see things that seem to feed that theory—like two men walking into the post office, one dressed all in black, with a shaved head and a small earring, the other in a huge cowboy hat and blue jeans, with a big bushy mustache and a pistol on his hip.

But at the same time, I’m struck by the sense that there are two Marfas here, one layered imperfectly over the top of the other, like that old sky-blue Ford F250 pickup I see parked in the shade of a live oak, with a surreal, airbrushed depiction of giant bees stuck in pink globs of bubblegum flowing down its side.

Monroe quickly pulls me back to earth—where the real Marfa resides.

**“This is not** a typical small town,” she says, “There’s not a ton of meth. There are jobs. It’s easy to romanticize this place, but it’s an economy that is running on art money and Border Patrol money, and I don’t know if that’s a sustainable model. You can’t scale that model.”

Monroe is quick to point out that the advantages conferred by Marfa’s unique niche in the art world are part of what makes the little town so livable. That’s why she’s able to shop at a gourmet grocery store, attend a film festival and listen to a cool public radio station. “You know, I don’t think I could live in just, like, a random tiny Texas town,” she admits.

But those things are only part of what has kept her here. The rest has to do with the very real attractions of small-town life—or rather, of life in that dying civic breed, the thriving small town. “This is the only small town I’ve ever lived in,” she says, “and it’s such a unique case. It does have, in its own way, a booming economy, right? And I think that’s not the case for a lot of small towns, where you get a lot of despair and disinvestment and detachment, because there’s not a lot of hope that anything can change or get better. People like coming here, people like living here, because it largely feels good, because it has found this economic niche, so that it’s not a dying small town. And that’s rare, and I think there’s a hunger for that.”

As a volunteer in the schools, the radio station and—of course—the fire department, Monroe is engaged in the community in ways that seem to come naturally here. “Yeah, you can’t be like, ‘That’s not my area. That’s not my role.’ Everybody here is required to step up and help out, and that feels like the norm.”

She has also come to appreciate Marfa’s small-town emphasis on simply getting along. “I wouldn’t say my lesson here has been assuming good faith on the other side or something like that. It’s more diffuse than that—just the sense that when you live in this small place, there is a strong sense of mutual reliance, just one school, one post office, one bank that you share with people who are different from you. And you realize that other people’s opinions are more nuanced.”


Anyway, she says, residents are far more likely to be vociferous about local decisions than national ones—for example, a move to put in parking meters on Marfa’s streets. “People can get way more fired up about that than about stuff that feels somewhat removed from here.”

All in all, Marfa just feels like home in a way Monroe has never experienced before. “It’s a quiet, beautiful life, but not too quiet. I think there’s an element of small-town, mutual care. We’re in it together. That is really nice. I like that my friends include everybody from teenagers to people in their 70s—a much more diverse group, in every sense of the word, than when I was living in Baltimore.”

Ask whether she’s here to stay, however, and her reaction is an involuntary shudder. “Who are you—my dad?” she laughs. “I don’t know. I can’t—no comment. I really have no idea.”

After all, a person who follows her intuition has to keep her options open.

**Leaving Marfa**, I stop for a few moments to take in one of its most iconic images—a famous art installation known as Prada Marfa. If you search for Marfa on Google, it’s the first image that comes up. And a strange scene it is—what appears to be a tiny boutique, with plate-glass windows opening onto a showroom of expensive and stylish shoes and purses, surrounded by nothing but miles and miles of empty scrub desert. Looking at it before I made the trip, I thought it was a wonderfully eccentric encapsulation of what Marfa seemed to stand for.

Here’s the irony—it’s not really located in Marfa at all. It’s about 40 miles away, outside a little town called Valentine. But I suppose “Prada Valentine” just wouldn’t have the same ring. 



# HAPPENING IN GREENSBORO



**S**omething's happening in Greensboro, Alabama.

The crisp winter air buzzes with activity one morning in early January: from construction at the historic Seay house to a pompom-making session at a nearby Victorian farmhouse to jokes and laughter in the converted kitchen of an old hotel downtown.

If you're looking for a kudzu-wrapped cliché about well-meaning do-gooders who rescue a fading town and its impoverished citizens—well, this isn't that.

"People have told the same old story over and over about Greensboro," Dr. John Dorsey '95 says. "This is a new story of potential and hope and movement forward." ▶

**“WHEN YOU HAVE SOMEONE WHO IS HOMELESS,  
IN CHAOTIC RELATIONSHIPS OR WHO ABUSES  
DRUGS OR ALCOHOL, A TEST IN AN ER OR PRIMARY  
CARE SETTING WON’T SOLVE THEIR ISSUES.”**

It’s the collision of past and present and future, all having a meeting in the middle of Main Street. In historic buildings downtown, brick residences serving as temporary office space and housing and a restored Victorian several miles away, Dorsey is leading a charge to provide a range of services through a series of community-based programs he founded under the name of Project Horseshoe Farm. These include adult and youth programs addressing mental and physical health, housing and after-school care, plus gap-year fellowships and internships for top recent college graduates from around the country.

His methods are creating a new model for the way mental health care and community health are addressed in communities while simultaneously helping reshape a thriving downtown and preparing the next generation of social entrepreneurs to create their own paths.

### **Alabama by Accident**

Dorsey, a licensed psychiatrist, initially thought he’d live closer to his family in California.

However, part of him was pulling him to a more personal way of living and practicing medicine. A tip from a colleague at a medical conference led him to an interview at Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. While driving cross-country to begin working, however, he learned Bryce no longer needed his services. Unsure of what he would find in Alabama, he drove on to Tuscaloosa and took cover in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in a motel room.

His savings dwindling, he had to come up with a plan—and a place to live—fast.

“I stumbled upon a mobile home sales office in Moundville and asked them to rent me a mobile home. They sent me down to Greensboro and connected me with a local pastor and nonprofit director,” Dorsey remembers.

“It was a quintessential small town with interesting energy, and they didn’t have a psychiatrist,” he says. “That’s how I ended up here 12 years ago. There was no plan that I was going to Greensboro.”

And yet, this little town of 2,365 residents would turn out to be exactly the kind of community where Dorsey could carry out his

grassroots vision of integrated, community-based health care—a vision that he developed in medical school while studying what he terms a “frustrating” disconnect between doctors and patients.

“Focusing my residency on community psychiatry and people on the margins really crystallized the mismatch: You have to understand the person’s housing, transportation, finances and relationships,” Dorsey says. “There’s a spectrum, and when you have someone who is homeless, in chaotic relationships or who abuses drugs or alcohol, a test in an ER or primary care setting won’t solve their issues. I wanted to set up systems to address the needs of the patients, particularly in underserved communities.”

Since then, Project Horseshoe Farm has grown through a series of small steps, beginning with an after-school program for kids that met a community need. Then, in 2009, Dorsey began building a housing program for women with mental illness. He also selected his first group of three student fellows to spend a year partnering with the community and learning to take care of patients in a holistic way. He describes his success at attracting them to a brand-new nonprofit with no reputation in little Greensboro, Alabama, as “a miracle. We had great fellows right from the start and have grown ever since.”

As the project celebrated its 10th anniversary last year, it had expanded to encompass a range of other services as well, including the Adult Day program, a kind of community center where people come together for companionship and mutual support, and the Health Partners program, pairing individual fellows with vulnerable adults to help them navigate the complexities of health care and social services.

### **“Welcome to the Hotel”**

Seeing is believing, so Dorsey offers a tour of downtown and Project Horseshoe Farm, starting at the old Greensboro Hotel property, donated to Project Horseshoe Farm in 2014 for use as a community center and project headquarters. Located right on Main Street, the old hotel was once listed as a historic building in peril, but now it’s being lovingly restored. One can see glimpses of its former grandeur in the embossed ceilings, pale mint walls and gleaming wood floors. ▶



Dorsey conducts a meeting with the Project Horseshoe Farm fellows in a room that is undergoing renovation by students of the Auburn University Rural Studio architecture program.



FROM LEFT: Dorsey visits with children at Greensboro Elementary School during an after-school program; Project Horseshoe Farm fellow Greta Hartmann (second from left) plays dominos with adults in the community center on Greensboro's Main Avenue; fellow Kevin Wang, right, offers support to resident Sylvia Deason at the farmhouse.

**“SO OFTEN PEOPLE LOOK AT THE DEFICITS. BUT YOU CAN’T BUILD AROUND DEFICITS. YOU BUILD AROUND WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL AND STRONG.”**

“There is such a rich, complex history here,” Dorsey says. His tone is reverent. In addition to being a hotel, the building also once housed a dress shop, a café and a sewing plant that employed some who now come through its doors as patients.

This morning, the place is bustling with students preparing a meal and guests in conversation. Kevin Wang, a first-year fellow from Northwestern University and future medical student interested in health care delivery systems, steps away from lunch preparations to describe his own experience here. “I was surprised at how willing people were to work with us, especially having no personal ties to Alabama. It’s a testament to the organization,” he says. “People know we’re here for them and understand we’re here to learn from them, and they’re willing to share. That’s really cool.”

Toward the rear of the building, retired nurse Jane Prewitt, known as “Nurse Jane,” organizes patient prescription trays with the assistance of Berkeley graduate Michelle McKinlay. “Until you truly get down here and walk with the people, you have no idea,” McKinlay says. “Walking through health care barriers with them and really getting to know people has changed me and helped me understand the issues better.”

Prewitt invites patients and visitors to sit in one of the outsized white Adirondack-style chairs that dominate the space, a striking change from the usual exam chairs or tables one might see in a doctor’s office. Her husband made them. Prewitt had brought one in to use and it was a hit with patients who found the chairs comfortable and easy to get in and out of. Another plus—staff found them easy to clean.

It’s one way the group has learned to meet needs with practical solutions. “You don’t have to be fresh out of college to understand,” Prewitt says. “You just wonder at how well people do with the minimal resources they have.”

The tour proceeds across rough-hewn floorboards and around paint cans and stacked chairs. Dorsey bounds up a flight of stairs ob-

scured by a tarp and stands in the center of his future office. “I love the light,” he says, walking to a window to point out the corner of the room where sunlight streams in.

Administrative space is planned for the area next to his, and the closed-off third floor may one day serve as housing for students in the health professions.

“Having a community center in the heart of Main Street where people are welcome and supported is a wonderful testament to Greensboro. It’s one of Greensboro’s strengths,” Dorsey says. “In most communities, Main Street renovation is about stores and restaurants. But Greensboro has embraced having people who are usually on the margins come right downtown. It’s not just about commerce. It’s about the soul of the community.”

**“Build Around What is Beautiful”**

Being situated on Main Street also allows the students to get a sense of how the community’s pieces fit together. A few doors down, a new sandwich shop and gym have opened. Across the street is the old opera house reimagined as event rental space, plus a specialty pie shop. The Hale County library and mayor’s office are within walking distance, and a technology center offers residents Internet access.

“There’s an interesting momentum on Main Street,” Dorsey says. “Each thing creates more movement.”

Construction equipment and stacked wood slats, piles of pale sawdust and brand new buckets of Ultra Spec 500 paint sit amid aged flooring and exposed beams. But one can see the dream taking shape throughout.

In another room upstairs, 10 church pews line one wall and windows look down over the grounds where a courtyard is being planned with the help of the Auburn University Rural Studio architecture program. “We imagine having community performances there,” Dorsey says, pointing.

Downstairs, he foresees a space where patients can gather while

waiting to be seen. And he’d like to turn the grand old ballroom at the rear of the building into a fitness center for program participants. Its filigreed mantels, honeycomb-patterned floors and ornate ceiling hint at the elegant atmosphere guests once enjoyed. In many ways, that legacy of graceful hospitality and comfort is being continued.


Dorsey is quick to acknowledge that his efforts are part of a network of engaged leaders working together. He also considers the relationships he made at Pomona College instrumental. “Professor Richard Lewis worked with a group of us to start a neuroscience major and created a wonderful community. I wouldn’t have gotten into medical school without that support.”

His continued Pomona connections have also been important, Dorsey says. Tom Dwyer ’95, a founding and current Horseshoe Farm board member, was Dorsey’s first-year roommate in Harwood. “We’ve had several past Horseshoe Farm fellows who were also neuroscience majors at Pomona and who had some of the same classes and professors I had.”

For the future, he anticipates exploring opportunities to replicate Project Horseshoe Farm’s successes in other small towns, but he urges humility for anyone looking to improve a community. “The idea alone is not enough. The missing piece is understanding who people are and what they want and developing trust in order for it to work. So often people look at the deficits. But you can’t build around deficits. You build around what is beautiful and strong in an existing community.”

Dorsey’s love for Greensboro and its people is evident as he speaks. “Here you have all this richness and the complexity of the culture. It’s humanity—in one word,” he says.

He gestures to the inviting shops and businesses lining Main Street, “Ten years ago, 80 percent of this was boarded up. Now 80 percent of it is being used. People are sensing that ‘Hey, something is going on!’ You may ask, ‘How in the world is that happening in Greensboro?’

But it is.” 



JAZMIN LOPEZ '09 WELCOMES YOU TO RANCHO COLIBRI, THE PLACE SHE CALLS...

# MY LITTLE SLICE OF HEAVEN

STORY BY CARLA GUERRERO '06  
PHOTOS BY GLEN McDOWELL

## Tucked away

in a corner of Greenfield, California, a rural town located in the heart of the Salinas Valley, Rancho Colibri sits on a narrow sliver of land bordering a large vineyard with dormant vines.

Standing at the center of the property, wearing scuffed leather boots and Levi's jeans—the unofficial uniform of most residents in the area—is Jazmin Lopez '09, who loves to welcome visitors to her “little slice of heaven.”

At 4.2 acres, Rancho Colibri consists of a renovated midcentury house, a large barn where two owls make residence, a mobile chicken coop with squawking residents, sprawling protea plants, a variety of citrus trees that include the unique Yuzu lemon and Australian finger lime, garden boxes made of repurposed materials and a variety of succulents, herbs and native California plants—and of course, the unwelcome gophers that Jazmin is constantly battling.

Although she and her husband, Chris Lopez CMC '08, took the name for their farm from the Spanish word for hummingbird *colibri*, Jazmin shares that her father nicknamed her property *La Culibra* (The Snake) because of its curving, narrow shape. Either way, it's home sweet home.

Here, with views of the valley floor and the Santa Lucia Mountains, Jazmin is at peace—but don't let that fool you. She is full of bursting energy, ideas and dreams for her farm. The goal: to one day have a working farm, grow the food she wants and make a living off the earth.

### A NAPA CHILDHOOD

Having grown up in 1990s Napa—a smaller, calmer place than it is today—Jazmin got a taste for the outdoors at an early age. Her parents come from a rural town called Calvillo, located in the state of Aguascalientes in Mexico, and settled in Napa, where they raised four daughters: Jazmin; her twin, Liz; and two older sisters.

“When they moved to Napa, they brought a little bit of their *rancho* to Napa.” ▷

The Lopez children grew up on a street that dead-ended at a creek. Childhood in Napa “had a rural feel to it because some of the sidewalks were missing. There were lots of walnut trees we’d go pick nuts from, and we had a surplus of wild blackberries at the nearby creek.”

They also grew up with a rural awareness of the realities of where food comes from that most urban Americans lack. “We had a lot of rabbits growing up. I thought they were my pets. But I soon realized at a young age that the chicken we were eating at our family barbecues was really rabbit.” That’s why, she says, when their neighbor

trips—practical skills she’s honed as an adult at Rancho Colibri.

“I’ve always been really passionate about gardening.” With a deft pinch or twist of the fingers, she was always bringing home cuttings to stick in the loamy Napa soil—a habit that her husband says continues to this day.

When it was time for college, the twins separated—Liz off to Bowdoin College in Maine and Jazmin to Pomona College. Today, as she sits in her living room, where a white and brown cowhide adorns the hardwood floors her father helped install, Jazmin tries to recall why she never worked at the Pomona College Organic Farm or visited the nearby Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens.

“It’s almost like I put it on hold,” she says adding that academics at Pomona

be outside and feel connected to nature.” She pauses and continues softly, “I don’t know. At times, it just felt overwhelming.”

Trusting her instincts, Jazmin left the city for the countryside with a feeling of coming home.

#### DREAMING OF “AG”

Located in the town of Gonzalez, off the 101 freeway, family-owned Pisoni Farms grows wine grapes as well as a variety of produce. For the past three years, Jazmin has worked there as compliance and special projects manager. In the office, Jazmin has an unobstructed view of the fields immediately to the south and west and the mountains that form the valley—a gorgeous view she doesn’t get tired of.

Inside her mud-speckled Toyota Corolla, Mexican *rancheras* are playing at a low volume, background music as Lopez expertly maneuvers the car through clay mud to a paved two-way street. As she drives past fields with budding greenery, she explains one project

After a short 10-minute drive to one of Pisoni’s vineyards, we see a small group of eight to 10 workers pruning dormant grapevines by hand, one by one—special care that they say makes for better-tasting wine. One of the older men, Paco, without missing a beat from deftly pruning branches, starts to wax poetic about *la maestra* Lopez—she’s a teacher, he says, because she gives them important training and workshops and, he adds, she’s just a “*chulada de mujer*” (a wonder of a woman).

“I get along with my co-workers,” she says. “I’ve had some of their kids come shadow me for a day. We bump into each other at the supermarket. We go to their family parties when they invite us. It brings a lot more meaning to my work, and it makes me feel like I’m a part of something bigger.”

Although it’s not totally unusual to see women in the California’s agriculture industry, her boss Mark Pisoni, the owner of Pisoni Farms, says it’s still not a very common sight. “Pomona should be very proud



FROM LEFT: Rancho Colibri; Jazmin Lopez '09 gathering eggs from her portable hen coop; eggs packaged with the Rancho Colibri label; and Lopez attending to the beehives on the Pisoni Vineyard.

gifted her and Liz each a rabbit on their first communion, she made it a point to tell her parents, “*Este no. Este es mi mascota. No se lo pueden comer.*” (“Not this one. This is my pet. You can’t eat this one.”)

Once, she remembers, her father brought home a cow that he had bought. Butchering the animal was a family affair that took place in the garage, with Jazmin having meat-grinding duty.

“We grew a lot of our own food. We always had fruit trees, strawberries, tomato plants, chiles, tomatillos—I hated harvesting the tomatillos. Every time I had harvest duty, my hands would turn black and sticky. They’re delicious in salsa, but a pain to harvest and clean.”

As teens, Jazmin and Liz would sometimes accompany their dad on the weekend doing odd jobs like gardening and landscaping, plumbing and electrical work. Jazmin picked up the basics from these

kind of career path. There’s no regret in that self-reflection. After all, she recalls college as four years to focus on her academics and try new things.

After Pomona, Jazmin accepted a yearlong Americorps placement at a legal-rights center in Watsonville that provided free legal services for low-income people. She liked the work, so after completing the Americorps program, she moved to Oakland—just a few hours north of the Salinas Valley but a world away—to work for a successful criminal immigration lawyer.

There, despite the joy of living with her twin sister and seeing friends who lived in the area, Jazmin soon came to a hard realization: City life was not for her. “It was easy to feel lost and insignificant in such a densely populated area,” she says. “I also missed being able to

were rigorous enough to demand most of her time and effort. An international relations major, she also felt pressure to follow a certain

where she was tasked with measuring the levels of nitrate in the soil to ensure efficiency in the use of fertilizer. Turning onto another dirt road, she parks her Corolla alongside another project that she oversaw—dozens of solar panels waiting to harness the power of the sun.

Jazmin’s days at Pisoni are always different, full of projects that balance office work with being out in the fields. Off the top of her head, she mentions a few recent projects she’s proud of, including the solar panels, which she researched and helped install on the farm, and getting to work with local high school students who helped test water moisture in the soil. “I love working in agriculture, so when I have the opportunity to encourage kids to learn more about the industry, I invite them to the farm. I like to expose them to how diverse this industry is—there are a lot of opportunities.

From the solar panels, Jazmin spots a familiar face on a tractor down the fields and sends a friendly wave. She seems to know almost every worker. Switching to her native Spanish, she’ll flag them down to ask them about their families and how the day’s work is going. Do they have any questions? Can she help them with anything?

of her. Her diverse skill set is huge—for us, it’s amazing. We’re all called to do what’s required to be done, and she just jumps in.”

#### FIXER-UPPER: SALINAS EDITION

Back at Rancho Colibri, the cold Salinas winds are picking up, but the hens and rooster remain unbothered as they cluck and crow in their chicken coop. A two-story affair covered by chicken wire, the coop was designed by Chris (hand-drawn on a napkin) and built by Jazmin in her basement, where the shelves are stocked with tools and supplies that would give any hardware store a run for its money.

The coop she says proudly, is portable. It can be picked up and carried to a fresh spot of grass. With a grin, Chris says Jazmin wishes she could do it all—build the coop and lug it herself—but Jazmin grudgingly cedes that job to her stronger husband. She, however, remains the builder in the marriage.

Chris, who recently launched his campaign to succeed his mentor as Monterey County supervisor, came home one day needing to build a podium for a rally he was holding the following day. With ▶

a gentle scoff at her husband's building skills, she came to his rescue. With scrap wood found around their farm, she designed and built her husband a rustic podium—all in one hour.

Jazmin admits that they had nearly given up their dream of buying a home because there were few, if any, properties that fit their budget in the area. As the housing crunch in the Bay Area and the East Bay pushes people out, it's created a trickle-down effect that has increased property prices in small towns like theirs. In addition, local policies are in place to preserve farmland, explains Chris. There's a big push not to subdivide under 40 acres.

Almost by chance, Chris found their farm for sale, but the house was in bad shape, unlivable really, and in dire need of some tender love and care. Jazmin—who admits to being a fan of HGTV's *Fixer Upper*, a home remodeling show—was not only undaunted; she was inspired. After fresh coats of paint, new floors and windows, new toilets and the coming together of family and friends, Rancho Colibri was born.

Upstairs, the living room's glass doors open to a deck that overlooks the valley floor and beautiful Santa Lucia Highlands where Pisoni Farm's vineyards are located. Jazmin, a newly minted beekeeper and a master gardener, has introduced beehives, an insectary and a new orchard of her own design to Pisoni's vineyard.

Jazmin still has a list of projects around the farm, but the place already has the indelible stamp of the Lopezes. A small hallway table with an odd assortment of jars is both a décor element and station for her kombucha tea fermentation. Midcentury modern furniture, bought used and restored by Chris, dots the four-bedroom home.

## A FUTURE SOWED

With her roots firmly planted in the soil, Jazmin is happy.

In early fall, she started a prestigious program she's had her eye on since the first year she started working in agriculture as a grower education program assistant for the California Strawberry Commission. She's part of the new cohort for the California Agricultural Leadership Program, a 17-month intensive program to develop a variety of agricultural leadership skills.

"I tend to be on the shy side, and when I attend meetings that are ag-related, I'm in a room full of older white men, and I lose my voice. I don't feel comfortable speaking up. And even though I know I bring a different perspective as a Latina in agriculture, there's still that fear that I haven't been in this that long, that I'm not an expert in this." The program is challenging her not just to find her voice but to own it.

"I hate public speaking—I can do it, but I avoid it when possible. That's one thing this program is pushing me to do—to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. It's a really big deal for me because I want to develop into an individual, a Latina who is able to speak up and share her perspective. It's a privilege getting to participate in this program."

Jazmin's drive doesn't stop there, however. On top of her full-time job at Pisoni, supporting her husband's campaign for county supervisor, the never-ending list of chores and home renovation projects on the farm, she's also just deeply committed to giving back.

For the past few years, Jazmin has been a volunteer with the Make-A-Wish Foundation. As a Spanish-speaking volunteer, she gets called on to interview Latino families to find out what wish a child

wants to see come true. "Make-A-Wish does a good job of making families feel special. A lot of the families I have interviewed are farm-working families or recent immigrants. When they get the red-carpet treatment and see a big black limo show up at their apartment complex, it just shines a light of positivity during a dark time."

Jazmin also recently joined the board of nonprofit Rancho Cielo in Salinas, an organization run by alumna Susie Brusa '84 that helps at-risk youth transform their lives and empowers them to become accountable, competent, productive and responsible citizens.

Lastly, Jazmin is a Master Gardener volunteer through her local UC Master Gardener Program. Through this program she provides public gardening education and outreach through various community workshops, activities and on the web.

For a normal person, this might seem daunting, but as Chris says, "Jazmin is a superwoman."

For Jazmin, making the time for what she loves to do is no chore at all, and Rancho Colibri is the battery pack that keeps her going.

## DOING IT RIGHT

The first two years of living on their farm was a lot of "trial and error" for Jazmin who would walk around the farm to discover what plants grew on the property. Since then she has learned to distinguish the invasive weeds like shortpod mustard from the native plants and is on the offensive to get rid of the invasives.


"She used to have this little hand pump and walk around the farm, so I got this big pump that hooks up to the battery of this Kawasaki Mule," says Chris, who explains he drives the small vehicle with Jazmin hunched next to him spraying the weeds. "The neighbors think we're crazy because I'll be driving as slow as possible and she'll be hitting these little things at the base. The neighbors ask why we don't just boom spray and kill it all and then bring back only what we want, but Jazmin is very passionate about the local flora and fauna."

Looking at her farm, Jazmin adds, "I've never owned this much land before, you know? It's exciting, and I want to take care of it the right way."

This coming year alone, they plan to install an irrigation system around the farm so they can plant more things further away from the house and expand their garden, to which they want to add hardscaping. They'll also continue the offensive against invasive weeds and the gophers. "The garden around the house—I have it all designed in my head," Jazmin says. "I know exactly how I want it to look and the purpose I want it to serve. On the weekends, I take either Saturday or Sunday, or both, to just work on it and make progress."

They also plan on building a granny unit for Jazmin's parents when they retire. "I really think they would enjoy living here in their retirement," she says. "They could have some chickens and make some *mole*. That's another project to figure out this year."

The more Jazmin learns about her farm, the more she wants to do it all. "I want to have a small fruit tree orchard; we want to have a small vineyard to make sparkling wine with our friends; we want to have a cornfield. We want it all."

"We've put a lot of our time and heart and soul into it, and it's just the beginning. We have so many dreams for our little *ranchito*, our Rancho Colibri, and I can't wait to see what we end up doing with it. I can guarantee you that in five years, it's going to look completely different." 



FROM THE SOUTHERN ARIZONA RANCH WHERE HE WORKS AS A COWBOY, SEAN McCOY '16 OFFERS A MEDITATION ON THE MEANING OF 'HOME.'

# THE BEST A PLACELESS PERSON CAN DO

ESSAY AND PHOTOS BY SEAN McCOY '16



# Ray

flicked his razor and bent over the lifeless heifer and cut a long backwards L across her torso. He sank his fingers into the seam and peeled away the hide, scoring and pulling until we could see the white outlines of rib. He stood and scanned the arroyo: tumbleweed, pigweed, bare earth, the remains of a nearby bone pile. He chose a weathered femur and brought it down on her ribs, hard, four times, stopping when we heard a crack. I shoved my boot behind her shoulder and pushed it forward to give him room to work. He severed the connecting ligaments, slipped and released a spew of guts, readjusted, yanked free the rib. I watched him place it carefully beside the femur, both bones propped perpendicular against the animal's jaw. More cuts, more blood, and a large slab of lung appeared in his hands, dark and splotched, scattered with pustules, smelling of rotten hamburger. He squeezed it gently. Hear the crinkle? It's not supposed to sound like that.

The heifer had been alive that morning. She lay with her head in the grass as we approached, forelegs splayed out, choking on the cool air. We returned 30 minutes later with syringes of Banamine, Baytril and penicillin but never got the chance to use them. At the end of the day, after doctoring 50 more calves, snotty and hacking from the recent cold snap, we took the four-wheeler down to the ranch graveyard to perform an autopsy. I rode home with her left lung in a plastic grocery bag.



A year ago, I never expected to be herding cattle in the deserts of the Southwest. I believed, as I had told Josie, walking the streets of Silver Lake one evening before I left, that movement was a strange way to understand settlement; that running off to work on a ranch would yield more of the road than the hearth; that departure was the wrong way to escape departure, but that it might also be the only way, or at least, the way for me.

We walked another circle around her block. Josie knew I had bounced around growing up. She knew what it was like because she had been through it too. I admitted apathy for the cycles of goodbye and hello, the expanding and fraying of social circles, the learning and forgetting of street names. She shared my feelings, but she didn't believe movement had rendered us homeless. She told me she felt at home wherever, whenever she was with her family, and that location was merely a means to that end.

Home requires time, I argued. It often has more to do with one's place in the past than one's place in the present. I don't have enough



history to be at home here, I told her. I also tried to tell her that she wasn't at home either, as if we were having an empirical disagreement about the location of the restaurant we just came from, and as if that dispute could be resolved by retracing our steps: a left turn, down the hill, over the bridge, another left turn.

She pressed me on the unavoidable connections that even a short stay in a new place can generate; how people, impressions, experiences pull us into unfamiliar orbits that soon become our own. She said I hadn't considered the depth of history within families. Those relationships exert more gravity than longitude and latitude.

We said goodbye and I drove away, wending between the glass and concrete hoodoos of downtown, the slush of automobiles, billboards of automobiles, billboards of movies, of movie stars. I won-

dered if it would be easier to navigate Los Angeles through a screen, and if people who have never lived here might, in some crucial way, know the city better than I do. I passed another billboard. We Buy Ugly Houses. At least they have seen what produced this place, what this place produced.



So I departed, traveling east, or West, into something I believed was my past. I stopped in Long Beach, where I was born, to say goodbye to my grandparents. I zipped through Phoenix, where I was raised, without veering from the interstate. I called my parents in New Jersey and explained that cell service would be spotty, and that they'd hear from me, sometimes. I drove until I arrived in the

mountains of the Mescalero Apache reservation, surrounded by pinyon and juniper, branding irons and barbed wire, the thrill of a blank beginning.

The work refreshed me and exhausted me, provided a welcome change from sedentary life as an editor in Los Angeles. I was outside and using my body, joined by a team of dogs and horses, caring for cattle, mending fence, keeping up with the waters. I lived in a small trailer an hour from town by dirt roads; the distance grounded me, seemed to override the experience of sleeping each night in a bed anchored by wheels.

I befriended an elderly Apache man—Bloody, he insisted I call him—who approached me near the entrance to a tipi at the Fourth of July feast. I soon learned that he, in his youth, had trained horses ▸

and herded cattle in the pastures I'd come from that morning. We stood and ate from paper plates, watching the descendants of Geronimo stomp to the same drumbeats that ushered their ancestor to war more than a century ago.

Bloody's nose was crooked, his teeth both there and not, his left eye missing a fleck of pupil. He lost the teeth because he started dipping at 17, he explained, but he was in better health than a lot of his friends; they had drunk too much trough water. He winked and told me to stay away from that stuff. Just stick to bourbon and Coke. I laughed. I said I just came from the rodeo; did you see it too? Ah, no, he had to miss it. He had been taking his daughter to the dentist, but how was it? Did any of the bull riders last eight seconds? Yes, there were a few, I said.

We continued to watch the ceremony. A new song began in honor of a member of the tribe—healer, father, friend—who had recently passed away. Bloody turned to me and put his hand on my shoulder. You're part of this now, he said. Being here, this is for you too. These dances, these songs, they are for everybody, all the Earth.



The next day, on a different ranch west of Tucumcari, New Mexico, I loaded the four-wheeler with buckets of toxic pellets and drove out to kill trees. Juniper, mainly, as well as mesquite. Our dog Sophie joined me, riding shotgun to the top of the mesa, where we parked our supplies and set to work. I pulled on gloves and grabbed the first bucket. I walked to the far corner of the pasture and dropped five pellets at the base of the nearest tree. I walked three more feet to another tree and did the same. My gloves turned white.

Tree by tree, pellet by pellet, beginning to perspire beneath an early August sun, I paced an imaginary grid. Certain trees I left alone, the largest ones, to provide shade for cattle on days like today. Sophie trotted and wagged alongside me. I was pleased to walk where I hadn't walked before, to be outdoors on a clear day with a sky that stretched from the Mesa Rica to the Canadian Escarpment, and pleased to be greeting every single tree.

I had never walked like that. I had walked between trees, through trees, among trees, but never *to* trees. I began to know them personally—their bark, branches, shape of overhang. I knew their knots and facial features, the emotion in each contortion. And with this knowledge, I bowed to them, depositing pellets at their feet. I remained estranged from those whose lives I spared. But my trees would not die yet; first they needed rain, a good storm to soak the earth and dissolve the pellets, allow poison to seep into soil and root.

I continued to walk and scatter pellets. I occasionally looked over my shoulder to ensure Sophie didn't taste any. Then, after another few hours, my pleasure dissipated. The work became boring, monotonous, and so, with more buckets and trees left to go, I searched for escape. I began flinging pellets. I sang tuneless, made-up songs in blank verse. I skipped and spun, engaging the torque of my body, hurling handfuls farther and wider and hoping blithely they fell within soaking range. My grid disappeared. I emptied the bucket, retrieved a new bucket, started again at the other side of the pasture. I stopped, at last, when I began scattering atop earlier pellets.

Killing trees grows grass, my boss had explained. He said a variety of factors—fire prevention, overgrazing, a change in climate—had al-

lowed saplings to spread without restraint, yielding denser, more resilient stands that suck precious water from the soil. Juniper, like eucalyptus, is an allelopathic species; the tree excretes chemicals which impede the growth of other plants—especially grasses. He showed me pictures of a savanna-like landscape. This was near here, he said, before we knew better.

He framed the killing as restorative: I was returning the land to its previous condition. I was also improving water retention in our soil, sequestering greater amounts of carbon, strengthening the habitat for rodents and insects, and diminishing the likelihood that a future fire would grow to outsized proportions. More grass means fatter cattle, my boss admitted, but fatter cattle can also mean a healthier ecosystem.

Sophie and I took the long way home. We dropped off the backside of the mesa into a valley where Spaniards and their descendants have been grazing livestock for centuries. We passed the rock-house ruins of early Texas homesteaders, bones of their deceased pear trees, a crested boulder with graffiti scratched alongside petroglyphs. I steered us to the old cemetery, where we read the tombstones with names belonging to our neighbors. Sophie jumped out in chase of wild turkey. I returned to my little blue single-wide.



I next saw Josie the weekend after Thanksgiving, when I was back in Long Beach to visit family. We chose a sandwich shop by the pier. The day was warm, though overcast, and we took our food down to the water and sat in the sand. I told her I came here often growing up. Nana would take me to play in the waves. We always parked in the same lot that dispensed gold dollars as change from the meters, and she would give me one to bring home. I would put it in a small cloth bag with the others, hidden at the back of my closet, where they would sit, unspent, waiting. I still have that bag, though I haven't seen it for years.

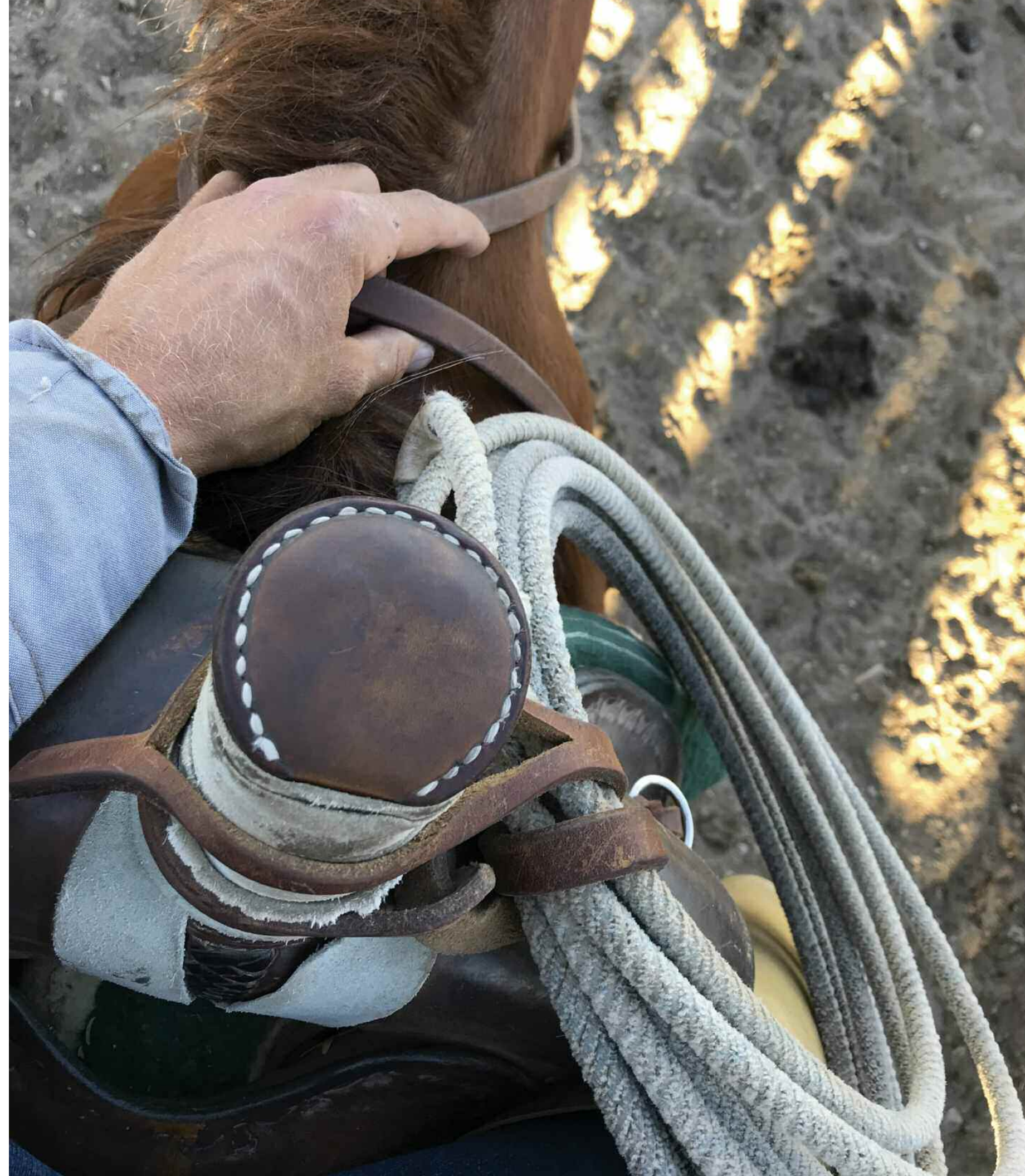
Josie told me the story reminded her of our conversation before I left. She said memory seems to survive through people and stories as much as place. If home requires time, as I had argued earlier, and if memory is how we preserve time, then the best we can do is gather and speak.

Fog had thickened over the ocean. We balled our wrappers together to thwart the pull of wind. Don't you think, she asked, that this is your home, here with family? I said I had forgotten about the bag and the coins until just now, returning to the beach. Movement reshuffles memory, divides us from place and history.

Then it follows, she said, that the best thing a placeless person can do is stay put.

You might be right, I said, but for many of us it could be too late, or too inconvenient. I described the autopsy on the calf on the ranch I now worked in southern Arizona. I recounted my morning killing trees—grass, soil, Spaniards, petroglyphs, tombstones, rock-house ruins. I said I wondered what Bloody had thought, chatting with me, a foreigner, while commemorating his deceased kin, engulfed by the song and dance of his ancestors, feet planted on tribal earth.

Let me ask you something, she said. What killed the heifer? Pneumonia, I said. And those trees—did you get the rain you needed? I said we got the rain, but I had departed for a new ranch before the trees had died. ▸



FOR CAROLE REGAN '58 AND VALKOR, GUIDE DOG TRAINING WAS THE BEGINNING OF A WONDERFUL FRIENDSHIP.

# Back to School at 81

By Carole Regan '58



Ray and I loaded our horses and trailered to the old family homestead at the base of the mountains. Established by Ray's great-grandfather, the building served as ranch headquarters at its founding in 1895. Today we live in the flats below, but the homestead, a melting, bat-infested adobe, endures as the best work base during the winter, when our herd grazes the slopes and canyons of the mountain range. Ray and I planned to ride in search of newborn calves. It was our job to find them and move them, along with their mothers, to lower country, away from mountain lions, where we can keep better watch.


We were easing along the washboard road, through muted groves of palo verde and mesquite, when we noticed a fresh set of tracks. Large, heavy, probably a rogue bull. We continued another half mile, then stopped at the camp of a hunter. Have you seen any cattle around here? Ray asked. No, the hunter said, he hadn't seen anything. But his friend had shot a white-tail that morning. He showed us the picture on his phone, a handsome eight-point buck cradled in camouflage arms. Wow, Ray said. Oh that ain't nothing, the hunter said. His friend who killed the buck was visiting from Pennsylvania; he owned a deer farm where they raised 18-, 24-pointers. It's all AI, stem cells, that crazy shit, said the hunter. For those Texas millionaires who pay to shoot a trophy to hang on their walls. He swiped on his phone and a photo appeared of a taxidermed buck. It looked as if four separate racks had been grafted to its head. They raise deer for

venison too, he said. For the rich folks in New York, they're paying \$95 for a venison dinner.

Well, it was nice chatting with you, said Ray; glad you guys got something. Yeah, the hunter said, I've had good luck here. Always seem to find those white-tail two-thirds up the mountains.

Ray and I drove on to the homestead. We parked beside the old mesquite corrals—corroded, in need of repair—and unloaded our horses. He chose the north canyon. I rode south to the top of the nearest ridge and paused to search for movement or the auburn smudge of Red Angus. Nothing. The slopes were dense with brush, mottled by rock, perfect cover for hiding cattle. I could make out the white cross in the family cemetery below, and see the reflection of water in the original pila, which was now pumped by an array of solar panels. I raised my binoculars and surveyed the distant flats: tanned hide of earth, taut and dry, home for someone, or home enough.

I crossed the ridge and dropped into the far canyon. I threaded between cholla and ocotillo, the stomped pads of prickly pear discarded by munching cattle, and emerged in the wash at the canyon's center. A few cows, but no calves.

Ray met up with me deeper in the mountains, just beyond the site of a crumbled concrete foundation where a house once stood. Are there any Indian ruins out here? I asked. Those are Indian ruins, he said. I bumped my reins and twisted in my saddle, peered back through the brush for a better view. You know what I mean, I said. 

**WHEN I BECAME** legally blind several years ago, I first asked the Braille Institute for a white cane. Although the institute gave me excellent mobility training, the cane only helps *detect* obstacles when you encounter them. As my vision worsened (now 20/350), I felt the need to *avoid* obstacles, and that's the job of a guide dog.

Applying to guide dog school reminds me of applying to Pomona many years ago: neither is for the casually interested and all requirements must be met. Once you've decided which school to attend (there are three in California, all funded through charitable donations), you'll need to line up references, including your physician (are you healthy enough to complete the strenuous training?), your ophthalmologist/optometrist (how bad is your vision loss?) and your mobility instructor (can you travel independently using a cane?). Last, you may be asked either to schedule a home visit or to submit a video of your walking and immediate environment.

The first school to which I applied sent a trainer to interview me, but after a walk, he announced that the school would be unable to match me with a dog because I walked "too slowly." I was stunned, then disappointed, then angry, as his reason smelled of blatant age discrimination.

After submitting another lengthy application to a different school, however, I was thrilled to receive a phone call from Guide Dogs of America (GDA) in Sylmar, accepting me for its November–December 2017 class.

And so, the Sunday after Thanksgiving, there I was sitting with a six-month-old Labrador puppy named June at my feet as Charlene, one of hundreds of volunteers at Guide Dogs of America and a puppy raiser, threaded her way through traffic in downtown L.A. As my apprehension grew, I peppered Charlene with questions about June, but silently, other questions arose that I dared not voice: At 81, how would I manage in a class of much younger students? Would I disgrace myself and future older applicants by "washing out"? These and other doubts would haunt me for the remainder of my stay at GDA.

When we reached GDA's dormitory, a pleasant young woman named Kim led me into a large entry hall dominated by a very long, corner sofa, explaining that this would be our meeting area. Then she walked me down the long hallway to my room.

At 4 o'clock, our group assembled on the sofas. Five men and four women introduced themselves and shared their causes of blindness, the only characteristic we appeared to have in common. The causes varied from childhood cancer to a severe fall to my macular de-

generation. Six of us were getting our first guide dogs and three were back for a refresher course.

The instructors' were as varied as their students: Two of the credentialed instructors, including Kim, had been trained at Eastern guide dog schools. The third, plus the apprentice instructor (in her first year of a three-year program), had started as volunteers. The head instructor had aspired to be a marine animal trainer at Sea World, but failing that, she had turned instead to training tigers at the Bronx Zoo before gravitating to the safer population of guide dogs.



We learned the rules: no in-room visiting, no alcohol on site, silenced cell phones, promptness for all meetings and meals, walking on the right side of hallways and respect for the rights of others. We would meet at 8 each morning and train until nearly lunchtime. After lunch, we would train again until 4. Only after feeding, watering and relieving our dogs would we have dinner, and after dinner we would often meet again. ▸

There was no free time, except for a few hours on Saturday afternoon and Sunday. A climate of anxiety filled the air. I think we all feared being sent home in disgrace without a dog.

In the evening, the hazards of living in a blind community became apparent: several of the students became confused about the location of their rooms and nearly collided. Collisions, in one form or another, would be a constant concern for the entire three weeks.

I slept very little that night. After breakfast the next morning, we gathered on the sofa for a lecture, then set off for a “Juno” walk, with the instructors playing the part of guide dogs. We were, it seemed, being evaluated for walking pace.

Excitement grew on Wednesday—the day we would be given *our* dogs. The instructors enjoyed our excitement, offering to give the first dog to the student who guessed her dog’s name. No one managed—certainly not I. (Who could have imagined “Valkor?”)

Wednesday came, and after lunch we were instructed to return to our rooms and be ready to meet our dogs. There was a knock at the door, and Kim and Valkor appeared with his trainer. Valkor, named by his puppy raisers for a character in a children’s cartoon, is an 85-pound black Labrador-retriever cross and quite handsome. He immediately headed for a toy I had brought with me. I felt somewhat intimidated by his size—it would take me some time to appreciate better his intelligence and calm disposition. Valkor then wanted to show me that he could sit on his haunches and hold up his front paws.

Exactly how we were matched with our dogs remains a mystery, but it seemed to be primarily a matter of walking pace and energy level. Our youngest student received a high-energy dog, and Valkor was described as “a gentle giant.” In any case, the matching seemed to work. We gathered for dinner with nine tails under the table. Everyone seemed very happy.

When packing for my three weeks at GDA I had thrown in a lightweight rain jacket, but instead of rain, that first weekend brought severe dry winds, the dreaded Santa Anas. Monday brought an acrid odor to go along with the strong winds. As we trained that morning, the winds became so strong that at times I had trouble remaining upright. Our eyes burned. All signs warned of fire, but we continued training.

Tuesday morning the odor worsened, and I was glad I had also packed several masks. After our usual morning lecture, we were sent to our rooms to relieve our dogs and wait for an announcement. We all assembled on the sofa to hear the GDA president tell us that those who lived in the area should make plans to return home; those farther away would be sent elsewhere. We were to take our dogs.

Three left; six were accommodated in the homes of staff members and volunteers. Instructions were to pack for an evacuation of several days. Fires had broken out in multiple locations, including Sylmar.

I stuffed a makeshift duffel bag with essentials, including several gallons of dog food. Valkor and I met Sue, the GDA bookkeeper,

who drove us to her home in East L.A. on the border of Pasadena. Freeway closures forced her to drive alternate routes.

Sue and her husband live in a Craftsman bungalow with two dogs and a grown daughter. Another daughter drops her dog off for day care, so that small house now sheltered four dogs. Luckily, their home also included a small yard accessible via a doggie door. Valkor needed no instructions on its use.

Valkor and I occupied an empty room used for storage. At periodic intervals, Sue’s son—also an employee of GDA—called home to report that the fires were still distant. Fortunately, they would remain so. Valkor amazed me by deferring to the two resident dogs and seemed to understand he was a guest. We were getting to know each other and quickly became fast friends.

Thursday afternoon, Valkor and I piled into Sue’s car for the return trip, stopping to retrieve one of my classmates and her dog on the way. That evening the returning students seemed sober as we recounted our experiences. We all speculated on whether graduation would be postponed. But instead, we were to expand our days and week to make up lessons missed. We would walk several miles in the mornings, afternoons and some evenings, including Saturday.

But what we had missed in techniques we had gained in the vital process of bonding with our dogs, difficult under tight schedules.

In our remaining time, we focused on essentials and tried to ignore the unhealthy air quality and ashes covering the ground. Happily our lessons were mostly out of the area as we learned to negotiate malls, suburban neighborhoods lacking sidewalks, the Pasadena light rail, a city bus, and comfortable parks surrounding lakes. We practiced fending off persistent strangers insisting on petting our dogs. We learned about “intelligent disobedience,” leading guide dogs to disobey the command

of “forward” if the situation is unsafe. Valkor, who looks both ways before crossing a street, will not proceed if a car is approaching.

As we entered the third week, our lectures became more intense, covering such complicated topics as negotiating the TSA and airline personnel. We were all exhausted from the stress and began to drowse on the sofas. My blistered, swollen feet hurt from constant walking.

When graduation came, we sat with our dogs in the front row of the large auditorium packed with families, friends and hundreds of volunteers with their dogs, and then took our turns at the podium. When it was my turn, after thanking Valkor’s puppy raisers and the instructors, I cited Joseph Jones, the welder who was rejected by several schools back in 1948, at age 57, because he was “too old” to profit from a guide dog. His machinists’ union then hired a trainer and found a suitable dog. Next, the union established what became Guide Dogs of America, with Jones as its first graduate.

I said that “many organizations espouse nondiscrimination, but GDA practices it.” Then I broke down in tears: At 81 I had survived strenuous training and would certainly profit from having Valkor as my guide.

Now it was time to celebrate. **PCM**

**EXACTLY HOW WE WERE MATCHED WITH OUR DOGS REMAINS A MYSTERY, BUT IT SEEMED TO BE PRIMARILY A MATTER OF WALKING PACE AND ENERGY LEVEL. OUR YOUNGEST STUDENT RECEIVED A HIGH-ENERGY DOG, AND VALKOR WAS DESCRIBED AS “A GENTLE GIANT.”**



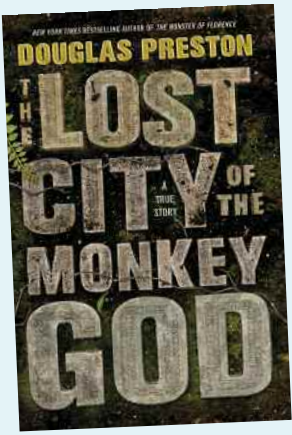
**2018 Winter Break Parties**

In January, 699 Sagehens in eight cities found warmth, treats and the kind of great conversation that bonds Pomona people at the College’s popular Winter Break Parties. 47 chirps to this year’s party hosts and speakers: Gladys Reyes ‘09 and Reena Patel ‘10 (Chicago), Diane Ung ‘85 (LA), Elise Gerrard P’20 (Miami), Elizabeth Bailey P’21 and David Bither P’21 (New York – cancelled due to weather), Steve and Tricia Sipowicz ‘85 (Portland), Michael Spicer (San Diego), President G. Gabrielle Starr (San Francisco), Allison Keeler ‘90 and Shelley Whelan ‘92 (Seattle), and Frank Albinder ‘80 (DC).



**And the Next Pomona Book Club Selection Is...**

This spring, the Pomona College Book Club will discuss *The Lost City of the Monkey God: A True Story* by Douglas Preston ‘78. Named a New York Times Notable Book of 2017, the story follows Preston’s rugged expedition in search of pre-Columbian ruins in the Honduran rain forest. Join the Pomona College Book Club at [pomona.edu/bookclub](http://pomona.edu/bookclub) and read along with your fellow Sagehens!



**Spring Webinar Series Offers Career Insights for Young Alumni**

Throughout the spring, young alumni were invited to participate in three online webinars focused on career growth. Presenters included Carol Fishman Cohen ‘81 P’12, CEO and founder of iRelaunch; Lindsey Polak, millennial career expert and best-selling author; and Christine Souffrant Ntim, startup ecosystem expert and international speaker. To view archived versions of these presentations, visit <http://bit.ly/2oDS7nb> and enter the password Pomona1887.

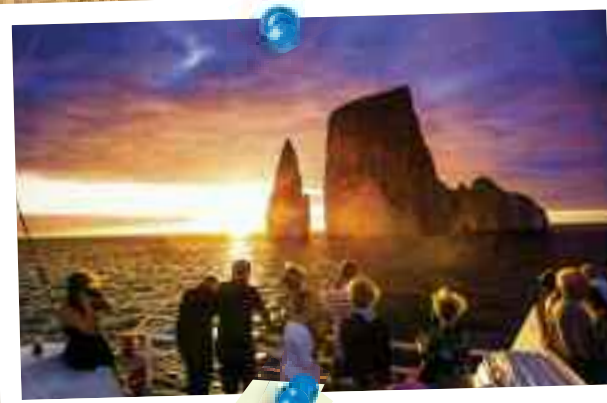
## 2018 Family Weekend

More than 750 Pomona parents and family members flocked to campus in February for the College's annual Family Weekend celebration. Guests spent four sunshine-filled days attending classes, concerts, plays, open houses and art exhibitions; hearing from faculty, staff and guest speakers during info sessions and the inaugural Ideas@Pomona: Family Edition speaker series; enjoying food trucks and a craft beer tasting on the Quad; and sipping Coop shakes with their students.



## Alumni Board & Student Leadership Get Creative About Collaboration

Student-alumni collaboration was one focus of the Alumni Association Board's creative energy at their annual February meeting. In a session hosted at the Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity ("The Hive") and facilitated by **Andikan Archibong '17**, the Board spent an afternoon with students from Pomona's Peer Mentor Groups and the Associated Students of Pomona College (ASPC), brainstorming ideas to develop and strengthen career networking, community service, and learning collaborations. Learn more about The Hive, a 5C center dedicated to exploration, collaboration and creativity at [creativity.claremont.edu](http://creativity.claremont.edu). To learn more about the Alumni Board, visit [pomona.edu/alumni/alumni-association-board](http://pomona.edu/alumni/alumni-association-board).



## Alumni Travel/Study: Galápagos Aboard National Geographic Islander

June 15 – 24, 2019

Join W.M. Keck Professor of Environmental Analysis **Char Miller PZ '75, PO P'03** for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the Galápagos Islands with Lindblad/National Geographic Expeditions. See Galápagos as Darwin did—aboard an intimate expedition ship equipped to give you the most engaging experience possible. Contact the Alumni and Parent Engagement Office at 909-621-8110 or [alumni@pomona.edu](mailto:alumni@pomona.edu) for more information.



## Mark Your Calendar: Spring Event Highlights

### Alumni Weekend 2018

Thursday, April 26 – Sunday, April 29

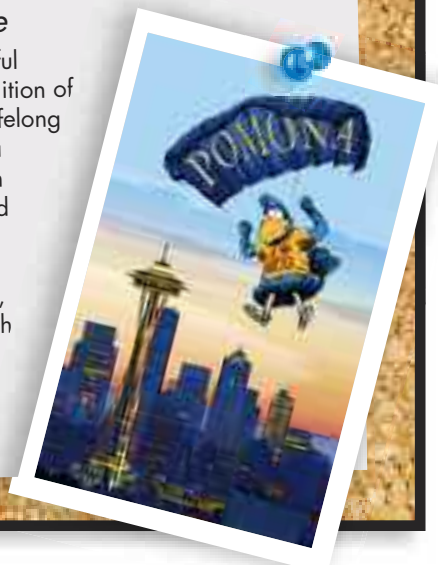
It's reunion time for classes ending in 3s and 8s – and, as always, alumni from all class years are welcome back to campus to enjoy the Sagehen party of the year! Don't miss out on new programs and favorite traditions like the Parade of Classes; "A Taste of Pomona" craft beer and alumni-vintner wine tasting; the All-Class Dinner under the stars on Marston Quad with President Starr; and Ideas@Pomona: a series of TED-style talks from Pomona-affiliated scholars and luminaries. Visit [pomona.edu/alumniweekend](http://pomona.edu/alumniweekend) for event and registration details.



## Pomona in the City: Seattle

Saturday, June 2 / Four Seasons Hotel Seattle

Join fellow Sagehens in the beautiful Pacific Northwest for the spring edition of this signature event designed for lifelong learners. Seattle sessions include a welcome and College update from President Starr, keynote lecture and breakout sessions from favorite Pomona faculty, and a networking reception for Seattle area students, alumni, parents and friends. Watch for registration and event details at [pomona.edu/pomonainthecity](http://pomona.edu/pomonainthecity)



Class Notes only available in print edition

# Class Notes only available in print edition

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IN MEMORIAM

## Arden Reed

Fanny M. Doyle  
Professor of English  
(1947-2017)

**Arden Reed**, noted scholar, lecturer and Arthur M. Doyle and Fanny M. Doyle Professor of English at Pomona College, passed away on Dec. 21, 2017, at the age of 70 from an aggressive form of cancer.

Born in 1947 in Denver, Colo., Reed was a boundary-crossing scholar—an expert on 19th-century English and French literature and visual art, including contemporary visual culture. His research covered the spectrum of English Romantic literature; 19th-century French painting and literature; modernism across the arts; relationships between painting and literature, image and text; contemporary art; and *tableaux vivants*. His most recent and seminal work, *Slow Art: The Experience of Looking, Sacred Images to James Turrell*, was published this past summer by the University of California Press.

Covering works from the Middle Ages to the present, *Slow Art* calls on everyday museum visitors to contemplate artwork and trust that their novice observations are just as meaningful as those of art experts. In its review, *The Wall Street Journal* called Reed “an enormously erudite writer,” and his book, “a lively ramble through high and low culture.”

Kurt Andersen, novelist and host of NPR’s Studio 360, reflected that “Arden Reed refused to stay in his lane: as a scholar and a human being, his extreme, gleeful curiosity about all kinds of ideas and art and people,

and the connections among them, was positively infectious, and an inspiration to me.”

His past work includes *Manet: Art, Words, Music* (2014), *Manet, Flaubert, and the Emergence of Modernism: Blurring Genre Boundaries* (2003), *Constance De Jong: Metal* (2003) and *Romantic Weather: The Climates of Coleridge and Baudelaire* (1984). He was the editor of *Romanticism and Language: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1984) and had numerous articles published in *Art in America*. In 1983, he was awarded a First Book Prize from Brown University Press for *Romantic Weather: The Climates of Coleridge and Baudelaire*.

In 2006, Reed received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, which he used to pursue research that helped raise the deep questions that would animate *Slow Art*.

In addition to the Guggenheim Fellowship, Reed’s distinguished awards and honors include a Bellagio Study Center Residency in 2007 by the Rockefeller Foundation; a fellowship at the American Academy in Rome in 2007; a Bogliasco Foundation Fellowship at the *Centro Studi Ligure per le Arti et le Lettere* in 2007; and a fellowship at the Clark Art Institute in 2006.

Under the auspices of The Albert & Elaine Borchard Foundation, he was a scholar in residence at Château de la Bretesche in Missillac,

France, from 1990 to 1991, and under the aegis of The Camargo Foundation, he served as a research fellow in Cassis, France, from 1994 to 1995. Through an award from the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, he was a fellow at the University of Edinburgh, among other honors.

Reed came to Pomona as an assistant professor in 1979 and was named the Arthur M. Dole and Fanny M. Dole Professor in English in 2004. Before Pomona, he was an assistant professor at Wayne State University and a lecturer at The Johns Hopkins University.

Reed earned his bachelor of arts from Wesleyan University, and his master’s and doctoral degrees in comparative literature from The Johns Hopkins University.

He is survived by his partner of 35 years, Drury Sherrod of Pasadena and Santa Fe; his beloved son, Jonathan Reed and husband, Jeffrey Dodd, of New York; his former wife, Anita Comtois of New York; as well as a brother, Edward Reed of Denver; a sister, Susan Reed of Sedona; an uncle, Stanley Ely of New York; and cousins Elissa Ely of Boston and Marcia Ely of New York.

Reed’s family has requested that those who wish to honor his memory do so through the Arden Reed Summer Undergraduate Endowed Research Fund at Pomona, which will support the student research he found so essential to a liberal arts education.

# THE WILDS OF L.A.

ESSAY BY CHAR MILLER

**Wild Los Angeles? That seems** a contradiction in terms, for surely it is nearly impossible to locate nature inside the nation's second-largest, and second-most-dense city. This metropolitan region, which gave birth to the concept of smog and sprawl—the two being parts of a whole—is now so thickly settled that it is almost fully built out and paved over. In the City of Angels, where even the eponymous river looks like an inverted freeway, there is no rural.

Yet as concretized and controlled as Los Angeles appears, it does not stand apart from nature—any more than do small towns tucked away in remote locales. Consider the natural systems that over the millennia have given shape to this region. They are still at work.

source of the alluvial soils on which the College is built and of the aquifer that supplies much of the potable water that contemporary Claremont consumes.

Perhaps the most dramatic signal of just how close Angelenos are to nature, and how compressed is the distance between where we reside and that space we imagine as “rural,” flares up every time a wind-driven wildfire sweeps down canyon or howls over ridge. We have endured too many of these fires over the past decade (unlike Northern California, which has a deficit of fire, SoCal has experienced a surfeit).

Some of these conflagrations have been massive, like the Station Fire (2009: 160,000 acres) and the Thomas (2017-18: 282,000 acres); others have been much smaller, such as

Fires also erupted as housing developments, following rail and road, pressed out toward an expanding periphery. For those with the requisite means, the lure of a quiet suburban arcadia segregated from the disquieting urban hustle, yet situated close enough to commute between family and work, was a powerful magnet. Even as this white flight rearranged the city's spatial dimensions, class interactions and racial dynamics, it proved incendiary in another sense.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, Army-surplus bulldozers leveled large lots for grand homes in the Hollywood hills and Beverly Hills, and furious firestorms erupted. For all its damage, then, the Bel Air Fire of 1961, which consumed more than 16,000 acres and incinerated 484 homes, was not unique. In subsequent years, blazes popped up in and around new subdivisions cut into the high ground above the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys, and, later still, crackled through upland acreage overlooking the Simi and Santa Clarita valleys. Like the August 2016 Blue Cut Fire that torched portions of the rugged Cajon Pass, shut down Interstate 15, and forced upwards of 80,000 people to flee for their lives, the Thomas Fire disrupted freeway traffic in its furious run from Santa Paula to Ventura to Montecito and drove 100,000 from their tree-shaded homes.

With fires come floods. Punishing winter storms, like those that pounded Montecito less than a month after the Thomas Fire sputtered out, can unleash a scouring surge of boulder, gravel, and mud that destroys all within its path. The resulting death and destruction—horrifying, terrifying—is, alas, also predictable. Since the late 1880s, some Angelenos have cautioned about the dire consequences of developing high ground, of turning the inaccessible, accessible. We have ignored those warnings at our peril—peril that climate change is accelerating as it intensifies the oscillation between drought and deluge, fire and flood.

Further evidence that this most urbanized place is, and will remain, inextricably integrated with wild nature.

Char Miller is the W.M. Keck Professor of Environmental Analysis at Pomona. His recent books include *Not So Golden State: Sustainability vs. the California Dream* and *Where There's Smoke: The Environmental Science, Public Policy, and Politics of Marijuana*.



LEFT: The 2017 La Tuna Fire in the hills above Los Angeles. ABOVE: A member of the California National Guard on a rescue mission following the January 2018 mudslide in Montecito, California. (Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Crystal Housman)

The most obvious of these is manifest whenever the grinding earth moves: Tremors radiate along the Southland's weblike set of fault lines, an unsettling reminder that we stand on shaky ground.

Even when (relatively) still, the landscape conveys an important message about how we live within and depend on the natural world. While strolling through Marston Quad, for example, look due north, focusing in on Mt. Baldy, which the Tongvan people call Snowy Mountain. The latter name is more evocative and revelatory of that 10,050-foot peak's role as the apex of the local watershed. It is the

the Skirball (2017: 422 acres). Notwithstanding their differences in size, these contemporary blazes follow a historic pattern: Wherever people have gone, fire has followed.

Beginning in the late 19th century, tens of thousands of residents and tourists hopped aboard the Los Angeles & Pasadena Railway's parlor cars that took them straight to the Altadena station, nestled in the San Gabriel foothills. There, by foot, bicycle or the Mt. Lowe Incline, they headed uphill to frolic in the rough-and-tumble terrain. By the 1920s, with the ability to drive a car to local trailheads or up into the mountains directly, those numbers swelled to millions. Some of those engines sparked. Some of the many visitors smoked. The resulting fires, especially the infernos of the late teens and the 1920s, turned the sky black.



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