

THE PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE

MAR/APR
2024

Emily Wilson's *Iliad*
Chip Zien's Broadway Journey
Q&A With Admissions
Dean Whitney Soule

For Aaron Karo
and Matt Ritter,
the Ultimate Prize
Is Friendship

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26 For the past 20 years, Aaron Karo W'01 and Matt Ritter L'05 have been part of a unique friendship tradition called "Man of the Year" with their childhood buddies. Now, the fellow comedians and writers have launched a podcast of the same name to encourage other men to create, maintain, and grow their own friendships.

By Dave Zeitlin

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Vol. 122, No. 4

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Published by Benjamin Franklin from 1729 to 1748.

Cover | Photo by Ethan Pines C'92

thepenngazette.com

Paths Taken

Reading through senior editor Trey Popp's interview with Admissions Dean Whitney Soule, "Admissions in Transition," this quote stuck with me: "The applicant pool is the future. Those are the students who are pursuing dreams for themselves—and their dreams are big."

Their discussion took place while Soule and her team were in the process of decision-making for next year's incoming Class of 2028. It touched on the Supreme Court's recent ruling on affirmative action; the lingering impacts and useful lessons of the pandemic; new technological issues such as ChatGPT; and why, with 65,000 applications and 2,400 slots to fill, plenty of students who have what Penn is "looking for" still won't get in.

But rather than just the future, I found myself also connecting Soule's words to the alumni featured in this issue and the impact that their time at Penn had on the paths—sometimes unpredictable, and perhaps diverging from the dreams and expectations they had for themselves when they first arrived on campus—that they've followed since.

The main focus of associate editor Dave Zeitlin C'03's cover story, "We Should Be Friends," is on *Man of the Year*, a podcast on male friendship cocreated and hosted by Aaron Karo W'01 and Matt Ritter L'05, who've known each other since childhood, but the article also describes how Karo made a name for himself at Penn by somewhat randomly deciding to send out humorous emails about his campus misadventures.

Called *Ruminations on College Life*, his messages went "viral before viral was even a word," leading to a career as a writer, comedian, and aspiring show creator in Hollywood. It took Ritter a little longer to switch gears after earning his Penn law degree than it did Wharton grad Karo—who chose a book deal over Morgan Stanley months after

graduation—but he soon followed his friend's example and also established himself in the entertainment industry.

The *Man of the Year* podcast—which debuted in 2022 and is intended to be the first building block in a hoped-for empire of friendship-fostering content—takes its inspiration from an annual ritual that has helped Karo, Ritter, and other friends from the Long Island town where they all grew up keep their friendship current. Each year they gather together at a New York steak house to reminisce, drink and eat too much, and

pick one of their number to receive the trophy with which Karo and Ritter are pictured on the cover.

Thanks largely to his mother's enthusiastic encouragement, Chip Zien C'69 already had years of

experience as a child performer in his native Milwaukee and in summer camp theatricals when he landed on Penn's campus, but the adulation he received from his participation in Mask and Wig certainly helped steer him away from a half-considered career in politics or the law.

In "The Chip Zien Show," Zien contemporary and longtime entertainment reporter and critic Jonathan Takiff C'68 celebrates his standout career on Broadway and his varied work in film and TV. The immediate occasion for the story was Zien's starring turn in the Broadway show *Harmony*, which opened in November. Zien's performance in a role he called "the best part I've ever been given" was widely acclaimed, but the show's reviews were mixed and it closed unexpectedly in February. The stage veteran was mostly philosophical about that. While admitting that this closing "really hurts," he also told Takiff that what's next "is always a pleasant possibility."



THE PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE

VOL. 122, NO. 4

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THE PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE (ISSN 1520-4650) is published bimonthly in September, November, January, March, May, and July by Penn Alumni, E. Craig Sweeten Alumni House, 3533 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6226. Periodicals postage paid at Philadelphia, PA, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Pennsylvania Gazette, Alumni Records, Suite 300, 2929 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-5099.

PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE COMMITTEE: David S. Graff C'79 WG'84 (Chair); Miriam Arond C'77; Jean Chatzky C'86; Dr. Alan Filreis, Faculty; Eliot J. Kaplan C'78; Randall Lane C'90; Michael R. Levy W'68; James L. Miller W'97; Sameer Mithal WG'95; Steven L. Roth W'66; Robert E. Shepard C'83 G'83; Joel Siegel C'79; Michael L. Barrett EAS'89, President, Penn Alumni.

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Resignation reactions, privilege checked, Sun Ra celebrated.

Beyond “Both Sides”

I am sure that at this difficult time for our University of Pennsylvania community [“From College Hall,” Jan/Feb 2024], many alumni will be submitting letters expressing strong opinions from both wings of our current intractable polarization. I would call out “both sides” for creating this situation.

As a proud Jewish person and child of a Holocaust survivor, I am disgusted that right-wing interests are exploiting a tragic and catastrophic situation in order to score political points. As one who generally finds myself aligned with progressives, I deplore the Israeli government’s decision to disregard international standards for protecting civilians during armed combat.

On the other hand, I am appalled at the failure of former Penn president Liz Magill and the former Harvard president to unequivocally condemn any call for genocide against any group of people, much less a group of people who have *already* been subjected to genocide. Saying that calling for genocide is unacceptable, full stop, should have been a no-brainer. I am not sure in what possible context a call for genocide could ever be tolerated.

Furthermore, I find that complaints from the Left that those on the Right are cherry picking and using gotcha tactics to torpedo people with long and distinguished careers ring hollow to me as those on the Left routinely pile on those who deviate in any way from Left orthodoxy and press for extreme measures to be taken against them. As a Jew and believer in universal human rights, I am horrified that those on the Left have ignored, excused, minimized, or even endorsed the



**“It is time to
pull together as a
community ... and
recommit to our
shared values.”**

atrocities committed by Hamas against Israeli civilians on October 7.

One may surmise from the above that I am writing merely to condemn “both” polarized sides. However, I am actually going to now call for a recognition that it is time to pull together as a community, honestly acknowledge the failures on everyone’s part (as well as the legitimacy of different viewpoints), do a lot of soul-searching, and recommit to our shared values. I am sure this great University that we all love can weather this controversy—probably the worst one in many decades. I will also say that I recently made my annual contribution to

We Welcome Letters

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the Penn Fund, as I have every year since I graduated, and that I urge all donors to continue to support this University. I am also publicly volunteering to be part of any task force the University would like to establish to investigate the situation and come up with recommendations for how we can do better in the future. I am sure this can happen if we all come together and work on it.

Elise Auerbach C’81, Chicago

Nothing If Not Predictable

I awaited the next issue of the *Penn Gazette* ever since Liz Magill resigned. I anticipated how you would cover one of the seminal episodes in recent Penn history, and you did not disappoint.

Cover story [“Chasing Justice,” Jan/Feb 2024] on a self-impressed social justice warrior? Check.

Anodyne little piece from Ms. Magill’s replacement about the “challenging times,” “important work,” and “coming together” (natch) that entirely failed to mention her name, or the words “anti-semitism” or “Jewish”? Check.

Nothing if not predictable. How is Penn going to turn things around without the candor to openly look in the mirror and address the hatred that has been exposed right on Locust Walk? Until then, here’s another observant Jewish alum whose kids and money will not be going to Penn.

Matthew Grad WG’98 G’98, St Louis

Meeting the Challenge of Campus Diversity

I was gratified to learn that J. Larry Jameson, dean of the School of Medicine, was named Penn interim president at a time of turbulence [“Gazetteer,” Jan/Feb 2024]. Having been trained as a physi-

cian, he is a healer who can restore diversity in its rightful place in a collegiate environment. I purposely chose Penn for my college education, knowing it attracts an international instructional and student body, which would enlighten me to views and opinions quite different from my familiar community. I learned, from personal experience, that debate and discussion broadened my perspective of the larger environment I would be entering after college.

The ensuing recent outrage tarnished Penn's reputation for not allowing divergent ideas to flow freely, in addition to punishing those who expressed them. From reading his extensive biography, I believe Interim President Jameson is most capable and appropriate to meet the challenge of campus diversity.

Jacqueline Zahn Nicholson W'62, Marietta, GA

Ugly Head of Ethnic Hatred

As a PhD graduate, I had always taken pride in my association with Penn, just as I have pride in my undergraduate institution, Harvard. I was especially pleased with the Palestine Writes conference in September.

But that was also the beginning of my displeasure with Penn. Alumni complaints of this conference raised the ugly head of ethnic hatred. This Islamophobia among Penn's alumni is embarrassing to anyone who believes in academic freedom and diversity. The Penn administration's acquiescence to the Israeli policy of ethnic cleansing in Gaza, as evidenced by the departure of President Magill, disgusts me.

Douglas Banik Gr'73, Redding, CT

Often Disappointed But Never Embarrassed—Until Now

I have been disappointed in Penn many times; my recent issue has been Penn's handling of women's swimming, but nothing has ever made me embarrassed to tell people from where I graduated until now.

The president's inexplicable testimony in front of Congress made me ashamed of my alma mater. To have said the things

she said was truly the epitome of ignorance. I understand she has stepped down, but that action will not erase her remarks. Surely, there were others who made similar embarrassing statements, but nothing will ever absolve her of the horrid impression she made for Penn at that hearing. Aside from the hearing, her inaction on campus in the face of antisemitic assaults on Jewish students was worse. This is a truly dismal time for Penn.

Ernest Price C'63, San Diego

What Exactly Was Inadequate?

I can't believe that our former president attempting to carve out a space for the subtleties of free speech on campus, even while being used as a political punching bag for the GOP, was enough to force her into resignation.

Since when did defending nuance in this decades-long, extremely complex conflict become such a controversial position? Calls for Palestinian rights and humanity are not automatically equivalent to antisemitism (no matter how much Hamas tries to conflate the two). Of course such a delineation is "context dependent."

The rights of students to represent their beliefs on campus are a key part of the college experience and should only be restricted in the most extreme, endangering scenarios. While I don't question the experience of my fellow Jews at Penn, what exactly was inadequate about Magill's newly established task force on combating antisemitism? Was this same level of care taken for our Muslim students during the spike of Islamophobia following September 11? The October 7 attack reopened some very old wounds and the temperature on both the pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian sides is higher than ever. But we can't heal these wounds with more vitriol and tearing down those leaders who are trying to help bridge that gap.

Benjamin Chirlinn EAS'11, Petaluma, CA

Current Crisis Cannot Be Ignored

I just briefly read the Jan/Feb issue of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (which I ap-

preciate receiving). But I was disappointed to note that there did not appear to be any significant discussion about the crisis that the University is currently experiencing: antisemitism on campus, concerns about anti-Palestinian behavior, a leadership transition in the middle of an academic year, impact on application numbers, and relations with high-level donors.

I realize that the market for the *Gazette* is alumni, and its focus must be on University growth and achievements. But this current crisis cannot be ignored, and I am sure that there are alumni who would appreciate a factual analysis of what has been happening.

Louise Braunschweiger CW'62 G'63, Brooklyn

As the letters above make clear, the events of last semester—which received widespread media coverage, not least in the Daily Pennsylvanian—have provoked sharply differing responses among the Penn community. Please see the stories in this issue's "Gazetteer" reporting on the University's initiatives to combat antisemitism, counter hate, and build community; and profiling Penn's new board of trustees chair for updates on how Penn is moving forward. —Ed.

Groan Eliciting Quotes

I enjoyed reading Julia M. Klein's piece on alumnus Rajiv Shah, "Risk and Reward" [Jan/Feb 2024]. Unfortunately, I do have a complaint about the quotes from Mr. Shah and his book *Big Bets*.

Klein quotes Shah saying that "he grew up in a pretty normal household in suburban Detroit." Klein then goes on to write that he was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, describing his parents' arrival from India in the late 1960s on academic scholarships and their subsequent professional careers; his tight-knit Indian American community in West Bloomfield, Michigan, where there existed a shared community of high aspirations for kids; and Shah's attendance at a magnet public school.

None of this is "pretty normal." Shah enjoyed a very privileged upbringing

and childhood. I am pleased he was able to do so.

Similarly, Shah writes in *Big Bets*, “My family and I faced our share of America’s racism—the hateful glances, the slurs, and, when I was a kid, the occasional shoves and punches—that come with being a skinny brown kid growing up in predominantly white communities.”

For such a privileged man to write this is disappointing. Loving parents with high aspirations for their son, magnet high school, the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, degrees in medicine and economics. I’m sure he worked hard and deserves every bit of his success. But this is not how I would describe “America’s racism” and its truly vile features.

This kind of thinking and writing needs to end sooner rather than later. It is just not helpful. I will go so far as to venture that there were many groans when this was read by other Penn alumni.

Catherine Carroll G’Nu’91, Dearborn, MI

I Accept My Sister As She Is

Thank you very much for publishing “Mind Tease” [“Gazetteer,” Jan/Feb 2024], the enlightening and also quite touching interview with Amy S.F. Lutz about her multiple roles in life as educator, writer, and parent of a severely affected autistic son. The latter role matters most to me because I have a low functioning autistic sister and am her legal guardian.

My 62-year-old autistic sister is nearly nonverbal, is unable to perform tasks that require more than a typical three- to four-year old’s cognitive thinking level, and resides in a group home with five other women where there is round-the-clock supervision. Most of the time she is cheerful and enjoys her life, but it can still be ... exciting if she is under stress.

I remember, so clearly, the toddler who seemed perfectly normal until one day, when she was about two and a half, our family realized that she was no longer talking. Then no longer wanting to be

hugged. Disappearing from home as a teenager and adult and found miles away. Having screaming fits and clawing her legs raw. She was 12 years old before my parents heard the term “autism”; before that, everything from deafness to auditory aphasia to schizophrenia had been raised as the problem.

I related so intensely to Ms. Lutz’s story of the “intact mind,” which supposedly was there “somewhere” and one-day would be found if my parents only got her to the right doctor, did the right exercises, exposed her to enough stimuli, etc. My parents never completely quit believing in the “intact mind.” I finally gave it up only when my sister was near 50 and I in my mid-60s. Now I accept my sister as she is, and always will be, rather the person who may yet be reached. But it’s been very hard to get there. And it shouldn’t have been.

Pat Shutterly (wife of Michael Shutterly C’74),

Richmond, VA

ICA Honored Sun Ra in 2009

“Secrets of the Sun” [“Arts,” Jan/Feb 2024] does not entirely do justice to Penn’s engagement with Sun Ra and his Arkestra. He was properly honored by a Penn institution in 2009 with an exhibition at the ICA, entitled “Pathways to Unknown Worlds: Sun Ra, El Saturn & Chicago’s Afro-Futurist Underground, 1954–1965” [“Arts,” Jul/Aug 2009]. My daughter (Class of 2011) was a student then, and knowing of my admiration for Sun Ra, she gifted me a precious T-shirt made especially for the exhibition.

When I was a student, I remember a day-long concert by Sun Ra and his Arkestra that took place on the roof of the International House on the Penn campus. The concert is documented in the 1980 film by Robert Mugge, *A Joyful Noise*.

The mention of Geno’s Empty Foxhole in the article brought back fond memories of some of the jazz greats who played there. I especially remember seeing Rahsaan Roland Kirk, who had the remarkable ability to play multiple instruments

simultaneously, even after having had a stroke that left him partially paralyzed.

Alan Kennedy W’72, Santa Monica, CA

Imagine My Surprise

I was excited to learn that the Penn Libraries acquired two collections of Sun Ra materials. He stands as a jazz icon, whose music, poetry, and cosmic philosophy were something to behold. But imagine my surprise to read in the article that Sun Ra never performed on the Penn campus. Luckily, I kept some of the posters from New Foxhole Café during my time on campus in the mid- to late 1970s. For just \$4, you could enjoy the likes of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Sonny Rollins, and, yes, Sun Ra.

Jack Eisenhower C’78 Gr’78, Santa Barbara, CA

Sun Ra Was Legendary

I loved reading Trey Popp’s article about Sun Ra. He was legendary in his approach to jazz freedom. In your article you stated that he never played on the Penn campus, but I distinctly and unforgettably remember having my mind blown by the Intergalactic Space Arkestra at Geno’s Empty Foxhole around 1971. I thought that was on campus. There was so much great music at tiny West Philly (and beyond) venues back then—Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee at Geno’s, Mississippi Fred McDowell at World Control Studios, Rahsaan Roland Kirk at I can’t remember the name of the place. Good times. Glad I had time to squeeze in my homework. “Space is the place.”

Robert Dautch C’72, Ojai, CA

Jazz history is blessed with many figures who still inspire enthusiasm decades after their passing, but leave it to Sun Ra to arouse enough fervor to blind more than one reader to the very first verb in my article about him—which stated neither that Sun Ra “never performed” or “never played” on campus, but that he was never formally “invited,” as John Szwed reflected with a tinge of regret. Fortunately for Quakers in those days, invitations were one of many earthly constraints Sun Ra transcended. —TP

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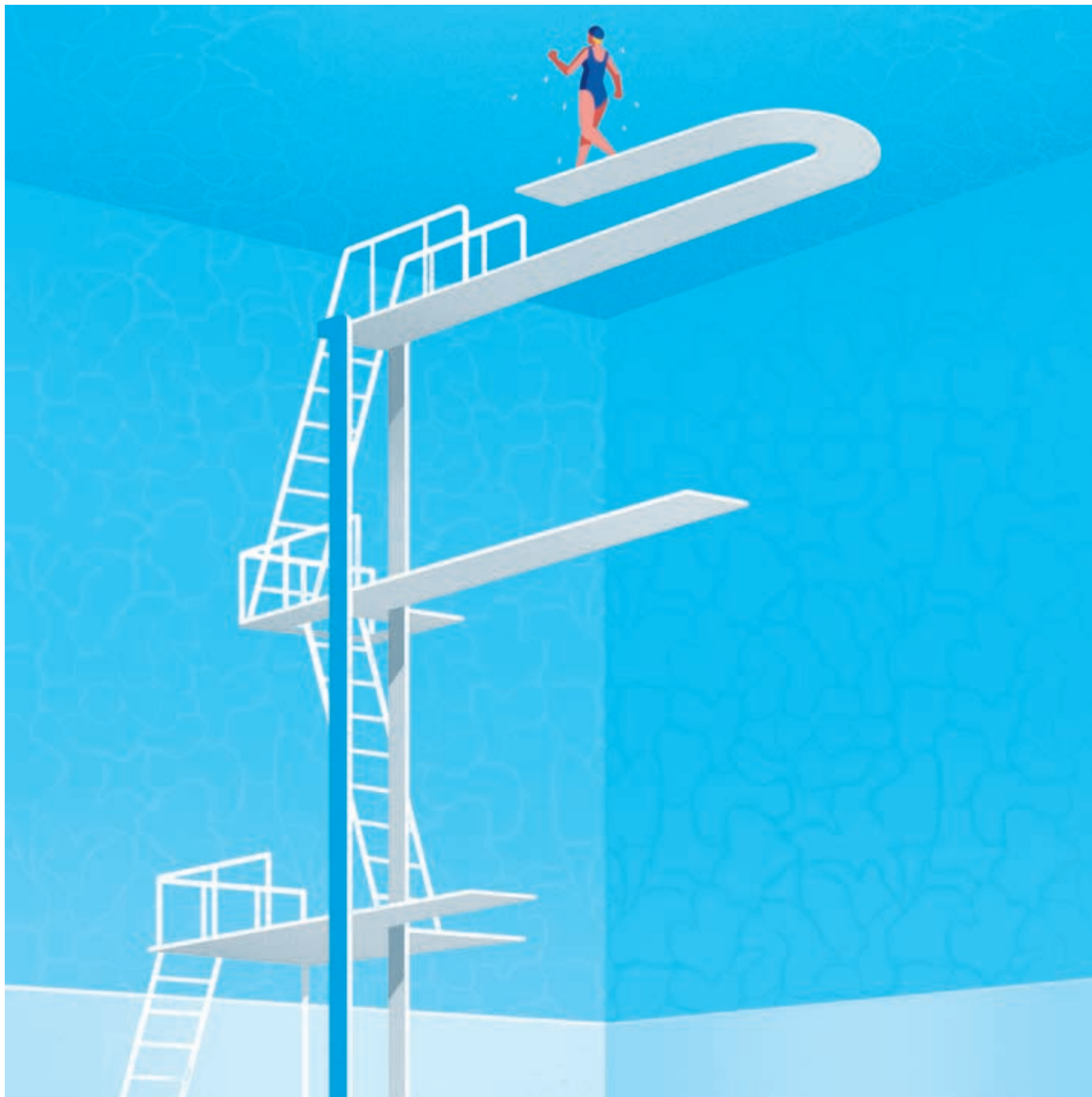
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Expert Opinion



The Limits of Will

On knowing when to persist, and when to resist. ▶

By Nick Lyons

Recently I watched a runner in a steeplechase event fall to the track halfway through the race, which seemed clearly to be over for him. But he picked himself up far behind the others, and against all odds willed himself to win, which he did.

I have long admired such willpower. It's the engine that provides the power for so much in our lives—the will to learn, to train one's body to excel in a chosen sport, to do two more push-ups when your body says “no more,” to invent, to conquer in war or sport, to walk or run farther, to survive in any of a hundred ways, to complete a thorny project, to be perfectly still, to grow, and even, for a stout fellow like me, to control what I eat. Will is needed to build a business or a boat, save a marriage, finish an essay or novel or poem—or even finish reading one of those.

I once picked peaches in a Colorado orchard, and as I groped clumsily and slowly for the fruit, I watched a family at the next tree. Their skilled hands and determination, working fast and even faster, picked their tree clean. I earned \$7 for a long, weary day, and left more peaches on the tree than I picked. The others, using their intense will and skill, filled eight orange crates and earned more than a dozen times as much, apiece. They knew how to pick and needed the money more, perhaps needed it to survive.

I sat next to the great runner Roger Bannister at the training table during the Penn Relays in 1951 in which he competed. No one had run a mile in less than four minutes, nor did he do so at Franklin Field. But I vividly remember him leaning closer to me and telling me, with quiet resolution in his voice, that he would surely do so soon—accomplishing what thousands of gifted runners had failed to do for centuries. And then a few years later he did.

I love to watch a great swimmer or runner with a will to win break a longstanding record. And I love the will of a sports team composed of members all working

in concert, driving to win a place in some local or national record book. The pole vaulter, alone, charges that elevated horizontal bar, with his long pole brandished like a lance, urging his body a few inches higher than ever before—it is a magnificent poetry, the lathed arc of his sideways turn over the bar. That vault is like a push beyond common thought, a single willing of all he is, in that one effort, to do the impossible.

And I love the literature of all such acts: the record of Peary's Antarctic pursuits; Slavomir Rawicz's struggle to find freedom in his book *The Long Walk*; the titular Martin Eden in Jack London's novel, vying to change himself from an untutored sailor into a serious and successful writer by severe will, learning how many hours he can fruitfully study—with less and less sleep. Beethoven, when he went deaf, still wrote brilliant music. “In the Will work and acquire,” says Emerson, “and thou hast chained the wheel of Chance,” and willed a life free from all arbitrary threats. (Maybe.)

But too much will, like too much ambition, can be corrosive, unfruitful, even dangerous. Think of the captains of industry who too often replace “enough” with “more,” who want a \$20 million apartment rather than their measly \$10 million space. Think of the demagogues and dictators who seek power through will and can never get enough of it—say Mussolini, Napoleon, or those of any stripe who think they can get whatever they want by willing it.

I once worked at a summer camp run by a demon worker who demanded that those who worked for him do likewise. Mostly I kept up with him and bought his frantic ethic, which could be demanding and exciting. One day I pointed out to Max that there was a large patch of poison ivy near the main office. Sadly, I'm an expert on the nasty plant, having been cursed by it half a dozen times. I'd had to douse myself with calamine lotion and sometimes even aerospace glue, which made me look like a leper until it had

“Poison ivy! It's all in your mind. A little willpower, Nick. Get out there!”

strangled the noxious rashes. Years earlier I had vowed to keep my distance. When I told Max about his ivy garden, he shouted (his usual way of explaining anything), “Nick, get your ass out there and pull it all out by the roots. And be quick about it, kid.”

I told him quietly that I would not do it. I knew I might be fired, but I would no more charge into that weed than into a hornets' nest.

He turned on me and shouted, with a mocking sneer. “Poison ivy! It's all in your mind. A little willpower, Nick. Get out there!”

I just shook my head.

“Well,” he said, “come out with me.” I followed at a safe distance. He wasted no time. He plunged into the bright green patch and began to pull the plants out by the roots. And then, laughing, he rubbed the leaves all over his hands, arms, and neck, on his nearly bald scalp, on his face. He smirked and said, “See? See that? Willpower. I did the whole thing in 15 minutes, kid.”

I guess you know what happened. Two days later the man had the single worst case of poison ivy I have ever seen. It was monstrous. Lesions heaped upon lesions burned bright red behind a film of white calamine lotion. Those on his face oozed.

He looked like that for several weeks, and much as I'd have loved to give him at least one “I told you so,” I resisted. I worked beside him much of that time but never mentioned the word “will” to him again—or heard him use it. But for many years, whenever I've thought of Emerson or Peary or Martin Eden, or had news of someone trading “enough” for “more,” I've smiled and thought of Max.

Nick Lyons W'53 is a longtime *Gazette* contributor.

House Keeping

“The Homestead simply wasn’t ready to be demolished.”

By Kathryn Levy Feldman



For years, I got a pit in my stomach every time I crossed the bridge onto the island where my in-laws lived and my parents once owned a summer home. It should have been a joyful crossing. This was the island where my husband and I met, on the very beach that separated our respective parents’ homes. But it had become complicated turf. Once we married and had three children in rapid succession, the question over where we would stay and how we would divide our time permeated every visit. When two first-borns are the first in their respective families to marry and reproduce, everyone on both sides wants to be the first to witness the myriad of firsts seemingly unfolding every day. No one was begrudging anyone their joy (or extra pair of hands), but it was hard to please everyone.

By the mid 1990s, both sets of grandparents had relocated to new homes in different states, and we divided our time among those residences. My parents had sold their shore house, but my in-laws held on to their 1947 brick colonial home, one block from the beach, which they referred to as The Homestead. My mother-in-law always said it was everyone’s house, and she made sure each member of the family had a key. I do remember one set of cousins taking her up on their offer to use the house one summer weekend when they were away, but I think even they felt their absence. The house was such an integral part of their personalities that it never occurred to me to use it without them being there. It would have felt haunted.

Over the years, my mother-in-law amassed a collection of American an-

tiques that were meant to be used, not admired, and it was her greatest pleasure when the house was bursting at the seams with family and friends. Wallpaper and curtains came and went but the bones of the house remained intact. That house survived countless hurricanes and nor’easters. It never flooded. My husband tells stories of his mother sending him and his sister out to hold down the trees in particularly strong storms.

After my father-in-law passed away in 2010, my sister-in-law moved in with my mother-in-law and the two of them painted the interiors the pale yellow my father-in-law had outlawed. The two of them rode out Superstorm Sandy in the house and endured five days without power but miraculously little damage. My sister-in-law suffered her first stroke in 2014 and after rehab returned to the house. She recovered well enough to take care of my mother-in-law who, by then, was in her early 90s. Strong and stubborn women, they relied on each other and managed to go out for dinner three or four nights a week.

We would still visit, of course, but now in shifts. Our kids were grown with families of their own and the house creaked and expanded to somehow accommodate them. There now were more outside caretakers as well, and the house had begun to show signs of wear and tear. When things broke, they were often put back together with spit and glue. The legion of people who knew how to repair the ancient systems dwindled and new appliances were too large to fit into the spaces that existed.

My sister-in-law suffered another more serious stroke in 2020. She became wheelchair bound, and she and my now 98-year-old mother-in-law required 24-hour live-in help. The house became a nursing home, albeit a poorly configured one, with narrow doorways and small bathrooms never meant to accommodate two wheelchairs.

In March of 2022, it simply became too dangerous to continue and they moved to a healthcare facility. By then, they were

ready to go. Within two months, my mother-in-law passed away peacefully in her sleep one month shy of her 101st birthday, while my sister-in-law spends her days in a lovely place where everyone knows her name and she is well cared for.

Before they moved out, my husband and I had decided to first renovate the house and then either sell it or rent it. Otherwise, we thought a buyer would likely tear it down, and in my opinion The Homestead simply wasn't ready to be demolished.

It was then late March, and my goal was to have the house ready by July 1 for the summer rental market. I reasoned that it was mostly a matter of fresh paint and new furniture, which could be accomplished quickly and reasonably.

I blitzed through the local Home Depot for new appliances, vanities, kitchen cabinets, and counters. I haunted estate and demolition sales and recycled as many things as I could from our house in the Philly suburbs. I made a spreadsheet of what was needed in each room and bought from outlets and sales. I rented a storage pod and slowly filled it with the contents of the new house. I enlisted the help of my incredible contractor from home, who literally camped out in the house three nights a week (rather than drive back and forth) and steadily worked miracles.

There was one point when I froze: a lot of discarding was going on, and I didn't want to destroy memories. By deciding to incorporate one original item in every room, I was able to move forward. The dining room chairs found new life around a game table; the dresser in the dining room that once held placemats moved into the primary bedroom. I hung my mother-in-law's Delft salt cellar in the sparkling new kitchen. Even the needlepoint piano bench found a home on the third-floor landing.

I drove to that island and back at least once a week. In early May, I became incensed when the summer people started to show up, and I couldn't get a parking spot at the hardware store. Somewhere



Loden Coats & Tyrolean Jackets
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—  —
ROBERT W. STOLZ

along the way, I began opening the windows to inhale the sea air.

I wish I could jump to the reveal like those design shows when all the challenges disappear. But there were too many to forget. The unseen ducts that were filled with mold and needed to be replaced. The sewer pipes that filled with sand and backed up. The water under the kitchen floor. The roof that needed to be replaced immediately—because the home insurance would not cover it after 50 years and we were at year 49. The two washers and dryers that arrived with doors that opened in the wrong direction. The powder room sink that literally dropped out one day. The hot water heater that died mid-project. The new fixtures that did not jibe with the existing wiring.

And I uncovered things about the house I'd never noticed. Who knew there was a bar beneath the boxes and medical

equipment heaped in the back room? Who knew the bedroom closet on the third-floor bedroom was as large as a full-size crib? For years you couldn't get into it. Who knew you could paint maroon tile white and transform a classic 1950s bathroom? Or the joys of a small U-shaped kitchen where everything was within reach? Who knew I would come to love the house I once dreaded visiting?

I did finish by July 1, but too late for this past summer's rental market. We have rented the house for next summer to one family, and they will have the benefit of us getting the kinks out. I can report that there are no ghosts. And that the house is truly what it always was—a refuge.

Somewhere, I am pretty sure, someone is not surprised.

Kathryn Levy Feldman LPS'09 writes frequently for the *Gazette*.



Authenticity Merchants

The rise (and fall) of woke branding.

By Michael Serazio

Last April, the rap metal and country rock singer Kid Rock posted a half-minute clip to the platform then known as Twitter.

In it, Rock, sporting a backwards MAGA ballcap, announced, with a coiled smile, that he was feeling “a little frisky” but would be as “clear and concise as possible.” Twisting away from the camera, Rock cocked his assault rifle and unloaded a torrent of bullets, annihilating a stack of Bud Light cans in the distance. Strutting offscreen, he flung a middle-finger and pair of f-bombs toward Anheuser-Busch to punctuate the performance.

The clip racked up more than 50 million views.

America’s culture wars are, generally, more metaphor than *literally* militarized, but Rock saw fit to bring a gun to an ideological fight. That the bullets passed through the cans was also metaphor, albeit macabre: Rock’s actual target was transgender rights; Bud Light was just the commercial vessel absorbing his outburst.

What triggered him?

Earlier that month, the popular beer brand had partnered with trans influencer Dylan Mulvaney, who posed for product placement in her videos as part of a promotional contest. That ignited ferocious conservative backlash, including celebrity calls for a boycott, a marked sales slump, and online attacks against Mulvaney.

In many ways, the Bud Light kerfuffle was the most dramatic example of a surprising recent shift in corporate posturing. In a fashion previously unimaginable—given the presumed marketplace advantage of selling to left and right alike—brands have been marching toward activist poses, some more idiosyncratic than others: Procter & Gamble and Black Lives Matter; Delta and gun control; Burger King and net neutrality. (“The Internet should be like the Whopper sandwich: the same for everyone”—get it?) By one estimate, over the last decade politicized ads have quadrupled during the Super Bowl, Madison Avenue’s premier occasion to reflect the national zeitgeist.

The shortest explanation for this trend, as with so much in today’s culture, is Donald Trump W’68. In the aftermath of his election, for example, Coca-Cola, Budweiser, Airbnb, and 84 Lumber all issued pro-immigration declarations during the big game. But the 45th president doesn’t fully account for what’s going on. Neither does a supposed outbreak of a “woke mind virus” in Fortune 500 boardrooms, as some bewildered conservatives seem to fear. A far more persuasive answer is hiding in plain sight amid the oldest dictum in advertising: know your customers and what they want.

And what obsesses American consumers these days is the notion of authenticity. Survey research by pollster John Zogby finds that the desire for authenticity tops the list of America’s political and cultural yearnings. Much as we want our elected leaders, reality TV stars, and social media influencers to come off as “authentic,” we now expect the same of the brands on our shelves.

Historically, buyers might have been swayed by a product’s features and benefits—i.e. what a consumer good actually *does*. “Now, societal issues have become brand attributes ... in terms of product purchase,” one PR executive told me as I researched my latest book, *The Authenticity Industries*.

To be sure, what a product supposedly *says* about the buyer has long been at

branding's core. American companies are old hands at disguising commodities as markers of personal identity: Bud Light for armchair quarterbacks, for instance, and Busch Light for NASCAR fans. But lately the dynamic has extended from lifestyle identities to identity *politics* (or "societal issues," if you prefer).

Pollsters have found that one-third of Americans care as much about brands' political positions as the products themselves, and two-thirds would switch brands because of them. These patterns are amplified among millennials and Generation Z.

In that context it's no wonder that *Adweek* implores marketers to strategize a "moral framework—some foundation of what a brand believes in and believes is worth fighting for." Nor is it surprising that almost 200 leading chief executives signed onto a Business Roundtable announcement declaring that the purpose of a corporation should not be limited exclusively to the pursuit of shareholder interest.

Milton Friedman, the high priest of neoliberalism who pledged *profit* as a business's foremost societal responsibility, may have rolled over in his grave over that last one. Or maybe not—because making a corporation seem like it "authentically" cares about more than just making money turns out to be a lucrative game. Brands seen as "purpose-driven" reportedly doubled their value and growth relative to competitors with "weaker" virtue-signaling, according to a recent analysis by *Ad Age*. Go woke, go broke? Maybe for Bud Light, but not always and everywhere.

One reason brands have pivoted toward this strategy is the slow-motion collapse of traditional forms of advertising. A process that had been fairly stable and straightforward—make ad, place ad—got thrown into disarray by digital developments: the cratering of local newspapers; the commercial deprivation of streaming models; the deployment of filtering technologies; and the laughable impotence of banner advertising. One industry cliché jokes that you've got better odds of

surviving a plane crash than someone actually clicking on your display ad.

And even if you somehow manage to get the marketing message in front of the target's eyeballs, they'll usually roll backwards with default disbelief—if not outright cynicism. But that's not to say that consumers don't want to believe in *something*.

"[Consumers] are laying more at the feet of brands," one chief strategy officer speculated to me. "They think and believe and expect brands to be able to make the change in the world that the government institutions cannot."

It is either tragic or comical (or both?) that consumers would look to companies to solve problems—both public and spiritual—where representative democracy and formal faith have floundered. As Sarah Banet-Weiser, the Walter H. Annenberg Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at Penn, has argued, even though "commodity activism"—that is, performing politics through consumption habits—traces a decades-long history, converting social movements into branding fodder has a way of subverting them, redirecting the energies of collective democratic action toward individual and idiosyncratic pursuits.

Still, from longtime practitioners of purpose (say, Ben & Jerry's environmentalism) to epic failures of it (think Pepsi and Starbucks gauchely piggybacking on Black Lives Matter), brand politics seek to replenish that void of belief in society's institutions and respond to newly politicized cultural domains.

Curiously, consumers themselves seem to be sorting along stark partisan divides. For example, despite Levi's and Wrangler originating, in common, among cowboys and railroad workers, the latter are now far more likely to be worn by Republicans and the former by Democrats (perhaps owing to the pro-immigration, anti-gun stances that earned Levi Strauss CEO Chip Bergh death threats).

Other companies have capitalized on the market potential of conservative consumers alienated by that perceived "woke"

turn that Bud Light and Mulvaney represented—from Chick-fil-A to Hobby Lobby to the Black Rifle Coffee Company's anti-Starbucks ambition to become a "cool, kind of irreverent, pro-Second Amendment, pro-America brand in the MAGA era," as its cofounder mused.

Values that once derived from where you prayed or how you voted now arrive from where you shop, as retailers pose as "arbiters of public morality" on issues they never wanted to touch before.

All this positions companies a long way from happily, apolitically, selling to both sides of the aisle. Republicans might buy sneakers, too, as Michael Jordan famously averred, but Nike now sees it as *inauthentic* not to believe in something—even if, as their award-winning Colin Kaepernick campaign noted, that means sacrificing everything. (Not all causes, however, are necessarily created equal: When the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, you heard nary a peep from most corporations, nor has the recent crisis in Israel and Gaza elicited much branding opportunism.)

And most of the time, none of this is actually selling the *product*, which is apt.

After all, commercial self-interest is precisely what advertisers must forever endeavor to obfuscate if they want to come across as "authentic." Hence, TikTok's slogan advice for brands: "Don't make ads, make TikToks." Hence, Patagonia telling shoppers in one famous Black Friday ad: "Don't buy this jacket."

In a crowded marketplace—and a landscape of social anomie—brands now have to hawk identity as much as material goods. The pretense of activism might humanize that commerce. Yet to believe that a brand *actually* has an authentic soul?

Don't fall for that pitch.

Michael Serazio ASC'10 is an associate professor of communication at Boston College and the author of, most recently, *The Authenticity Industries: Keeping it 'Real' in Media, Culture & Politics*, from which this essay is adapted with permission of Stanford University Press.

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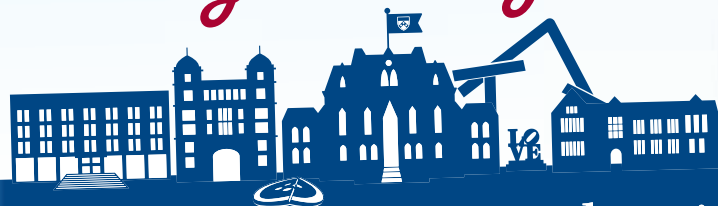
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Fighting a Pernicious Evil

Dental School Dean Mark Wolff has been leading a University-wide task force to combat antisemitism on campus. ▶

When Mark Wolff, the Morton Amsterdam Dean of the University's School of Dental Medicine, was asked to lead the task force associated with Penn's Action Plan to Combat Antisemitism, he didn't hesitate to answer the call. But he knew how difficult and "emotionally charged" the work would be.

"There's a lot of hurt and pain when we look at our Jewish community on campus, when we look at our Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities on campus," Wolff said. "That makes this both a very important mission, and it makes it a somewhat emotionally painful mission. It's that combination, that exists for everybody, that's most challenging."

Wolff began as chair of the University Task Force on Antisemitism on November 1, when former Penn President Liz Magill announced the action plan to fight the "pernicious evil" of antisemitism amidst a rise of it across the country and at Penn (where incidents have included hateful graffiti spray-painted in Meyerson Hall and next to a Jewish fraternity house, an individual vandalizing Penn Hillel, and staff members receiving antisemitic emails). The work has continued under Penn Interim President J. Larry Jameson, to whom the task force submitted a report on December 19, and with whom the committee met on January 11. On January 16, several points of progress were announced on the action plan's website (antisemitism-

action-plan.upenn.edu) in three primary areas: safety and security, education, and engagement.

The safety measurements implemented have included the provision by Penn's Division of Public Safety (DPS) of enhanced services to several locations and religious events; the formation of a review group to help make decisions about requests to schedule campus events that could pose security challenges; and improvements to a bias incident reporting form that allows Penn community members to confidentially report hate and harassment.

Steps taken in the area of education have included sending a delegation of Penn leaders to the Brandeis Leadership Symposium on Antisemitism in Higher Education in November; supporting faculty-led antisemitism programming through a Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies' lecture series; and the announcement of other programs to encourage dialogue and build connections, including two new ones (Conversations for Community and Dinners Across Differences) and the annual MLK Interfaith Commemoration which this year focused on Black-Jewish allyship ["Gazetteer," this issue].

Finally, in the area of engagement, the work thus far has centered around establishing a student advisory group (12 students were selected, from more than 80 applicants, and began meeting in the spring semester) in addition to building the Univer-

"Overall we have a safe campus and we have been able to maintain a safe campus."

sity Task Force on Antisemitism, which was convened on November 16 and has conducted interviews with a variety of Penn experts and whose members have attended conferences and developed partnerships with national organizations such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC).

The task force—which, in addition to Wolff, is comprised of seven faculty members, two students, and six staff, alumni, and trustee representatives—meets in person regularly. "They are incredibly dedicated and incredibly caring," Wolff said. "They care deeply for the University of Pennsylvania and want to see this become a better place for everybody."

Wolff has also worked closely with members of the Presidential Commission on Countering Hate and Building Community, which was convened on December 20. Cochaired by Vijay Kumar and Katharine Strunk—deans of Penn Engineering and the Graduate School of Education, respectively—that commission was formed to "address the interconnectedness of antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hate, discrimination, and bias on campus" and is "closely connected to the Action Plan to Combat Antisemitism and In Principle and Practice, Penn's recently announced strategic framework."

Noting that there are some commonalities between antisemitism and Islamophobia, Wolff has been pleased to see examples of Jewish and Palestinian faculty and students productively working alongside each other. "It's important that people, while they're expressing their personal feelings, not say something that is so offensive that the person sitting next to them in a laboratory or classroom doesn't want to be next to them anymore," Wolff said.

While recognizing the concern that many Jewish students and alumni have felt since October 7, Wolff noted that "we need to be very conscious that the social media picture of what's happening on campus is not actually what's happening on campus." He recounted a story about escorting an alumna down Locust Walk because she was apprehensive about walking alone—and how surprised she was not to see any protests or signs posted along the way. "I said, 'Well that's a normal day on campus,'" Wolff recalled, adding that "overall we have a safe campus and we have been able to maintain a safe campus."

Wolff also praised the University as "legendary" for long fostering a "thriving and large Jewish community" and welcoming Jews when other institutions limited their presence through quotas. The University notes this history on the action plan's website, touting the graduation in 1772 of Penn's first Jewish student, Moses Levy, who

later became the first Jewish trustee of the University; the establishment of the Jewish Students' Association at Penn in 1924; and the election of Martin Meyerson Hon'70 as the first Jewish Ivy League president in 1970. Although Jewish student enrollment has declined at Penn (and other Ivies) in recent decades, Wolff mostly chalks that up to Jews having more choices than they once did. "That being said, the task force is going to look to see to it that we have an environment that is safe and supportive of the Jewish community—and all communities."

On that front, he knows there's still a lot of work to be done, including daily conversations about "trying to understand how we best thread the needle between being a university that upholds open expression and, at the same time, is respectful of individuals and protects against hate." As they continue to collect data, Wolff hopes the task force will release additional benchmarks and recommendations to Jameson before the end of the semester and encourages alumni and other Penn community members to share feedback via their dedicated antisemitism-task-force@upenn.edu account.

Asked what else he would say to concerned alums, Wolff said: "Have faith that your institution is going to help lead the way in the future to a better position of understanding of people and culture—and our university will try to do the right thing at all times." —DZ

Ramanan Raghavendran Elected Trustees Chair

A fierce believer in the value of universities to society and a defender of academic freedom, Penn's new volunteer leader is determined to ensure that "no one is afraid to be who they are" on campus.



When he arrived at Penn from India as a freshman, Ramanan Raghavendran EAS'89 W'89 LPS'15 was struck by the exposure to students of different backgrounds from across the US and the world. "I had never met a single Jewish person. I had met maybe one Muslim child in fifth grade. And I think I knew one Christian person who was in the Indian Air Force with my dad," he says. "And it was just interesting to see the shared humanity. I made friends across all categories and

boundaries, and this has really shaped who I am."

Raghavendran was elected chair of Penn's board of trustees in early January, after a semester of controversy that culminated in the resignations of former board chair Scott Bok C'81 W'81 L'84 and President Liz Magill.

A Penn trustee since 2014, Raghavendran was named chair of the local, national, and global engagement committee in 2020 before becoming a member of the executive committee in 2022. That same year he was named chair of

the board of advisors for the School of Arts and Sciences, after having been a member since 2012. Other volunteer activities include service on the board of the Center for the Advanced Study of India (CASI) and as global coordinator for the Penn Alumni Ambassador Program. Outside of Penn, his volunteer involvements include SF Goodwill and Magic Bus, which works with 500,000 at-risk children in South Asia.

He "thought long and hard" before taking on the role of board chair. But he considers Penn a "civilizational artifact—one of a handful of great universities that define America, and American culture and society. And I felt I had something to offer at this time," he says. "To help bridge gaps and bring people together and remind us of our purpose—treasuring academic freedom, yet ensuring that our discourses are civil, and no one is afraid. So that was a complicated set of agenda items. But I think that's the job of a board chair and, even more so, it's the job of the president."

In a statement, Penn Interim President J. Larry Jameson called Raghavendran an "inspired and inspiring choice" as board chair, pointing to his three Penn degrees, varied leadership roles, and "professional experience in a rapidly changing business environment." Board Vice Chair Julie Beren Platt C'79, who had served as interim chair, praised Raghavendran as "someone who listens with intention and invests deeply in relationships."

"This is a moment when the role of a board and the role of trustees in a great academic institution is getting attention, not just at Penn but in many other places," Raghavendran says. "At the end of the day, the thing for trustees to remember is that, unlike other boards we have at Penn, which are advisory in nature, the board of trustees is the sole fiduciary body. And with that comes your classical definitions of fiduciary duty: the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, the duty of obedience. These are all things that we should know and do and exercise."

"And that is the prosaic answer: We defend the endowment, we oversee a presidential search, we exercise our fiduciary duties. We communicate our questions, concerns, suggestions to the president and the provost, who run the University in the framework of shared governance with the faculty leadership that we have."

In this "complicated place," the president, provost, faculty, students, and administrative staff all have roles to play, he says. "And in these respects and others, it is unlike anything else. It is unlike a for-profit command-and-control company. It is unlike a parliament. It is its own beast. It's got its own rules. And the good news for everybody is that it changes and evolves, but on a timeline that we all need to be patient [with]."

Raghavendran praises Jameson for "immediately prioritiz[ing]" the Action Plan for Combating Anti-

semitism and the Presidential Commission on Countering Hate and Building Community, first announced by Magill last fall, following his appointment in December. "We are on a much quicker timeline to see and then act on recommendations than we were on before. And I would really look to Larry for his leadership as president, in a sense, to make all these things happen," Raghavendran says.

"Just to be clear how I feel: We must privilege academic freedom, but we must also ensure that we're a campus where no one is afraid to be who they are," he adds. "And antisemitism is a great and ancient evil. And I think we need to crush it on our campus."

Raghavendran, whose father was a fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force, grew up on military bases in northern India and New Delhi. He always did well in school and was accepted into several of the "more interesting colleges" in India. But the Indian educational system holds fast to a "very examination-driven, non-holistic view of how you progress in life," he says, and when a relative living in the US suggested he consider college in the States he decided to pursue the option.

The application process back then was still largely paper-based, "with the added complexity of being half a planet away," he recalls. He applied to five US schools, got accepted by four, and ended up in Philadelphia "in large part because Penn had a really nice brochure," he

says. It also helped that he was interested in computer science and Penn's department, "even in that time, was viewed very favorably," he recalls. "I said, 'This is what I want to do,' and my life was changed in that instant."

Raghavendran has spent three decades in the world of venture capital and growth equity investments with a variety of companies. Currently the managing partner and cofounder of Amasia, a global venture capital firm focused on climate and sustainability, he admits he didn't give much thought to Penn for the first 15 years or so after graduation. "Life was just full, and I had a career and so on." But then, "I realized how much of the good that had happened in my life came from that decision to go to Penn," he says. "I sought ways of giving back."

He reconnected with Penn first through a fellow alumnus who introduced him to CASI, "which provided a psychological link." That led to more alumni involvement, focused mostly on the School of Arts and Sciences. "My work life is full of technology and business, and I really wanted my Penn engagement to be very different from my day job." His Wharton and Engineering degrees hadn't left much time for electives, he notes. "I'm a voracious reader. I'm interested in lots of things. Arts and Sciences is the most sprawling of all our schools. It touches every aspect of human endeavor, from biology to economics to history, and I felt getting en-

gaged with SAS just opened up this new vista of knowledge and intellectual ferment—and so it has."

The motivation was similar when he earned a master's degree from Penn's School of Liberal and Professional Studies, with the added benefit of a structured course of study. "The MLA was mentioned to me, and it felt like a lightning bolt had hit my head, because it is essentially a part-time degree in the humanities for working professionals." Now based in San Francisco, he's pursuing a similar degree from Stanford.

Though it's less high-profile than his other roles, Raghavendran says his "deepest and most time consuming" involvement has been with the Penn Alumni Ambassador Program, formerly known as the alumni interview program, which goes back 14 years. Designed to match alumni and prospective students for a conversation about themselves and the University, it is "by far Penn's biggest alumni volunteer engagement program," he says. "I get a lot out of it, in a few different ways. One, it's an amazing way for alumni to give back and be engaged. Second, it really shows Penn in its best light to tens of thousands of applicants. And third, there is value in it for our admissions team. So it's been inordinately rewarding. And even as recently as last year and the year before, I've been doing lots of interviews. It's one of my favorite activities."

Raghavendran brings what he has called a "slightly demented fervor" to his advocacy

for higher education. “If you’re an American, you should be able to realize how much these institutions have contributed and will continue to contribute to the greatness of the United States,” he says. “I think universities like Penn are a very important part of what makes us great and has made us grow.”

One “very tangible” example was last year’s Nobel Prize in Medicine awarded to Katalin Kariko and Drew Weissman [“Gazetteer,” Nov/Dec 2023], which he calls “the most consequential Nobel Prize in decades” and a “world-changing discovery” that saved millions of lives and trillions of dollars. “And it all happened at Penn from start to finish. And by the way, I think there are more Nobel Prizes waiting and scattered around the University,” he adds. “I think these great universities are great for America. And we should nurture and cherish them.”

Though Raghavendran listed hiring presidents as among the board’s duties, he and his fellow trustees are in no hurry to further exercise that responsibility at present. “We’re happy beyond happy that [Jameson] is there, and there is no real thought being given to the timeline” for the next presidential search, he says. “You obviously cannot have an interim president forever. We can acknowledge that. There will be a process and there will be great candidates. But I think for now, you know, Larry’s not a caretaker—he is an action-oriented human being, and he’s taking lots of actions I feel good about.” —JP

Facing Hate with Allyship

A rabbi, an actor, and a testament to the importance of Black–Jewish solidarity.

David Wolpe C’81 didn’t quite believe it at first when he got a phone call and the person on the other end of the line said, “Hi, this is Van Jones.” Wolpe—a prominent rabbi who was once named one of the world’s most influential Jews [“The Many Songs of David,” Sep/Oct 2015]—was even more gobsmacked at why the well-known CNN political commentator was calling him.

In the wake of Hamas’s October 7 attacks on Israel, “he said, ‘I want to put together a service for Blacks and Jews because we want to pray for you,’” recounted Wolpe at Houston Hall in late January. Wolpe returned to his alma mater to speak with actor and Jewish advocate Jonah Platt C’08 in a conversation that highlighted Penn’s annual Interfaith Commemoration of the Life of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and focused on allyship between the Black and Jewish communities.

Wolpe told the audience that he and Jones ended up working together to organize a service that featured about 100 people, including the prominent Black preacher T. D. Jakes, who prayed for the Jewish community. Before that, “I don’t think that I’ve ever had tears in my eyes at someone else’s prayer for me in my life,” Wolpe said. “It was so meaningful and so powerful.”

Echoing Wolpe’s sentiment, Platt noted that “this has been such a harrowing and trying time” for Jews and that “any support feels so good and nourishing—but especially the support and allyship of non-Jewish people and especially from the Black community, with whom I feel such a kinship. It means so much, every word of support. It’s like balm for the soul.”

The keynote discussion between Wolpe and Platt was moderated by William Gipson, the University’s special advisor to the vice president for social equity & community who started the MLK Interfaith Commemoration when he served as Penn’s chaplain 28 years ago. The event also featured performances from student musical groups West African Vibe, Off the Beat (the a cappella group Platt sang in when he was a student), and the Shabbatones; the presentation of community involvement awards; and remarks from Penn Interim President J. Larry Jameson and Chaz Howard C’00, the University’s chaplain and vice president for social equity & community.

In front of a background photo depicting King with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Jameson called “allyship” an important part of King’s legacy during the civil rights movement, noting

that Heschel, a leading Jewish philosopher of the 20th century, marched with MLK from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. “Now it’s time for allyship again,” Jameson said. “We serve a common purpose and the weight of addressing anti-semitism shouldn’t fall entirely on the shoulders of the Jewish people.”

In his remarks, Howard pointed to the lives and friendship of King and Heschel as an example of “courage and love in the face of fear and hate.” Those are attributes, Howard added, that Wolpe and Platt share as they try to counter antisemitic views by speaking truth without “a hardened heart.”

Platt—whose parents, the award-winning film and theater producer Marc Platt C’79 and Penn Trustees Vice Chair Julie Beren Platt C’79, knew Wolpe in college—has been active on social media, posting videos to Instagram to explain common misconceptions about the Jewish people and Israel. “I try to reach the people who I feel are reachable,” he said. “That’s who I am looking to educate, because I know there are many well-meaning, goodhearted, intelligent people out there who simply don’t know what they don’t know.”

Given the fact that there are only about 15 million Jews in the world—“Kim Kardashian has 24 times more Instagram followers”—Platt is trying to ensure that “with all of the noise out there, that you’re actually listening to the experience of

MLK Remembrance



A candlelight vigil on January 22, which began outside Du Bois College House and ended at College Green, was part of the University's annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Symposium on Social Change, sponsored by the African American Resource Center and the MLK Executive Planning Committee.

the Jewish people *from* Jews” and also that Jews are included in conversations on inclusion and equity.

“So much of how hate is allowed to grow and fester is well-meaning people who stay quiet,” said Platt, adding that he admired how King faced those who hated him with dignity and self-respect. “They may not be the ones introducing the hate, but they’re not stopping it either.”

Platt noted that he’s currently involved in his own acts of allyship, including work with a group called the Inheritance Theater Project, which is planning a Juneteenth Pass-over seder performance in Los Angeles. “The kinship of our communities is so important to me,” Platt said. “I’m very excited and hopeful for what’s on the horizon.”

Wolpe acknowledged that there are “real tensions” between the Black and Jewish communities in the US, including disagreements over

Israel and Gaza. It would be silly to hide them or pretend they don’t exist, Wolpe said, but it’s imperative to not “make them irrevocable.” Solidarity between the two groups, who have both suffered through hardship and oppression, has generally risen above tension, because “most of the time,” Wolpe said, “the people who hate, hate minorities of all kinds.” That allyship has stretched throughout much of the country’s history, from the important role Jews played during the civil rights movement to the summer of racial unrest in 2020, when Wolpe’s Los Angeles synagogue hung a banner that read, “We stand with our African American brothers and sisters against racism.”

“Anybody can bless anybody,” Wolpe said. “It doesn’t matter if you have political disagreements. You can learn and you can bless. And you can strengthen others who feel scared.” —DZ

Reproducing Racism

MLK Social Justice Lecturer Dorothy Roberts criticizes the Supreme Court’s colorblind ideology for enabling racism in new forms but with similar effects.

In the University’s 23rd Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Social Justice Lecture in January, Penn Integrates Knowledge Professor Dorothy Roberts offered both a bracing summary of the efforts required to gain passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and contended that the landmark legislation has failed to achieve the vision that King and others dreamed of 60 years ago. Her remarks have been slightly condensed and edited. —JP

“It took a mass movement like never before, entailing sustained organizing, marches, boycotts, strikes, sit-ins, rallies, arrests, jailings, beatings, an inspiring host of brilliant leaders, and tens of thousands of everyday dedicated women, men, and children, many of whom were murdered, to topple Jim Crow and usher in civil rights. That’s how important the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is. But like the victory over chattel slavery, the civil rights victory over Jim Crow was met by powerful efforts to reinstate white domination in new forms. ...

One of the reasons that civil rights have failed is the false view that in the passage of the civil rights laws, the civil rights movement did achieve all its aims. The US Supreme Court makes the civil rights era the dividing line in its jurisprudence on racial equality. It treats the 1960s civil rights acts as if they vanquished completely state racism in America. According to this view, apart from aberrational acts of overt prejudice by individual officials, the new civil rights ethos has purged the government of its white supremacist past. In its 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, for example, the Court struck down a key provision of the Voting Rights Act on grounds that it was no longer needed to protect against racist barriers to political power.

A majority of Supreme Court justices embrace a colorblind political ideology, a key post-civil rights strategy developed by conservatives to preserve white domination and laws that appear race-neutral on their face. ... The Court’s recent decision striking down the use of race in university affirmative action programs is grounded in this colorblind ideology. It holds that because the civil rights laws put people of color and white people in positions of full equality, social policies that take race into account constitute unconstitutional race discrimination. So the Court strikes down race-conscious remedies aimed at mitigating structural racism, while it upholds policies that are race-neutral on their face but, in fact, subordinate Black and other communities of color.

Claire M. Fagin, 1926–2024

The former interim Penn president and giant of the nursing profession passed away in January.



Claire M. Fagin Hon'94—who as interim president of the University in 1993–94 was one of the first women to lead an Ivy League school and whose many contributions to Penn Nursing as dean were honored by the school's building being renamed for her—died on January 16 at age 97 at her home in New York.

In a statement to the Uni-

versity community, Board of Trustees Chair Ramanan Raghavendran EAS'89 W'89 LPS'15 and Interim Penn President J. Larry Jameson called Fagin a “dear friend” and praised her as “a passionate advocate for universal health care, nursing education, and the advancement of women in health-related fields who brought Penn

Nursing to national prominence.” Her tenure in College Hall, from July 1, 1993, to June 30, 1994, served as a “vital link between the accomplishments of the Meyer-son and Hackney administrations and the promise of the Rodin administration that was to follow,” they wrote, and credited her with bringing the campus together in a “fractured time.”

(Penn had been thrown into the national spotlight over what became known as the “water buffalo incident” and the theft of copies of the *Daily Pennsylvanian* to protest allegedly racist columns in the waning months of Hackney's term in office, and while he was facing a heated confirmation battle to head the National Endowment for the Humanities in the Clinton administration.)

Before becoming interim president, Fagin served as the Margaret Bond Simon Dean of the School of Nursing from 1977 to 1992, joining Penn from the City University of New York, where she had chaired the nursing department and directed the school's Health Professions Institute from 1969 to 1977. Earlier, after earning her undergraduate degree in nursing at Wagner College, a master's degree from Columbia, and her doctorate from New York University, she had been director of the graduate program in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing at NYU from 1965 to 1969.

According to a statement on the Penn Nursing website, Fagin “set the school on a course of excellence in teach-

ing, research and clinical practice,” developing the first nursing doctorate program in the Ivy League and the nation's first center for nursing research, among other educational innovations. She also grew the faculty in numbers and quality, while attracting increasing support for the school. “Under her leadership, Penn Nursing became a well-known and respected institution. She challenged paradigms and opened new frontiers to nursing students, practitioners, and scientists.”

Along with 15 honorary degrees, Fagin's many honors included nursing's highest accolade, the American Nursing Association's Honorary Recognition Award, as well as election to the Association's Hall of Fame and to the American Academy of Nursing, which named her a “Living Legend” in 1998. The Nursing School renamed its building Fagin Hall for her in 2006 [*“Gazetteer,”* Mar|Apr 2006] and established the Claire M. Fagin Distinguished Researcher Award in 2003, in addition to a professorship in her name.

Fagin's doctoral dissertation, on parental overnight stays in pediatric facilities, helped foster acceptance of that practice, and she went on to edit influential books in psychiatric and pediatric nursing, to publish numerous journal articles, and to advocate for the profession in public policy discussions long after her retirement from teaching in 1996.

Current Nursing Dean Antonia M. Villarruel GNu'82

GIFTS

Record-Setting \$83.9 Million to SAS

A new gift from P. Roy Vagelos C'50 Hon'99 and Diana Vagelos will fund graduate education in chemistry and endow the Vagelos Institute for Energy Science and Technology, among other priorities, the University announced in late January.

The \$83.9 million gift is the largest single donation ever to Penn's School of Arts and Sciences (exceeding the couple's previous record-setting \$50 million for the Vagelos Laboratory for Energy Science and Technology, where the institute will be housed ["Gazetteer," May/June 2019]). It brings to \$239 million the total contributions to SAS by the retired chair and CEO of Merck (who chaired Penn's board of trustees from 1994–99) and his wife, a former member of the Penn Museum's board of advisors.

"Roy and Diana's philanthropic support has been expanding Penn's horizons in the sciences for more than four decades," said Penn Interim President J. Larry Jameson in a statement announcing the gift. "As a physician-scientist himself, Roy pioneered major advances that have improved human health. Their commitment to this University can be seen across campus and we are deeply committed to their bold vision for what Penn can accomplish, from discoveries in the lab to inspiring students in the classroom. The legacy of their partnership will have an enduring impact on generations to come."

The largest portion, \$50 million, will add 20 new Vagelos Fellowships, designed to encourage and advance energy research, and provide further support to graduate education in the Department of Chemistry. The rest will go toward a permanent endowment for the Vagelos Institute, to fund an endowed chair in chemistry, and support student leadership awards in three existing Vagelos-named interdisciplinary undergraduate programs in life sciences and management, energy research, and molecular life sciences.

SAS Dean Steven J. Fluharty cited the "incomparable impact" of the Vageloses' philanthropy on the school. "From supporting and recruiting exceptional chemists to educating future experts in top-notch research facilities and interdisciplinary undergraduate programs, we will continue to make great strides thanks to the partnership and incredible generosity of Roy and Diana," he said.

"Diana and I have always been great believers in the power of basic science to find solutions to global problems," Vagelos said. "Investing in students and faculty mentors is the best way we can think of to enable learning and advance discoveries. We hope that these funds will also help make this work more accessible and increase diversity among faculty and students pursuing these solutions."

called Fagin "a transformational leader" whose "impact cannot be understated" in the school's statement. "She was a friend, mentor, teacher, and inspiration to me, our students, our faculty, and so

many others. As we mourn her loss, we also remember her kindness, humor, and generosity. She touched generations of lives, and her impact and legacy live on in each of us." —JP

Climate Science



COP28 and Counting

In the trenches with the Penn delegation—and one young alumna—at the UN's annual climate conference.

Olivia Fielding C'21 laughed at the memory of her first time attending the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP), which was the 26th iteration of the annual climate meeting. The place was Glasgow, Scotland, the time mid-November 2021, and she, a freshly minted college graduate with a double major in environmental science and political science, was in possession of a very

hard-to-get Penn badge. "There were all of these professors and postdocs and little ol' me feeling totally over her head," she said. "I was trying really hard to soak up the lingo of negotiation and to learn the patterns of when *that* country always raised its flag to say *this*, and why *this* country always erupted over *that* innocuous phrase."

As program director for the non-profit International Peace

Institute (IPI), Fielding has returned twice more—to COP27 in Egypt in 2022 and COP28 in the United Arab Emirates in 2023, which drew some 85,000 participants.

The attention-getting take-away from COP28 was a first-ever consensus resolution from all 197 participating nations to “transition” away from fossil fuels. But Fielding’s third time was the charm for her specific focus too, in advancing work on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), which seeks to secure funding and establish measurable targets for ways to reduce vulnerabilities and boost resilience to the potential harms that climate change could bring to land, food, water, biodiversity, public health, and urban life.

The GGA came out of the Paris Agreement of 2015 but “was left pretty undefined,” said Michael Weisberg, interim director of the Perry World House until Marie Harf began as the institute’s new executive director on February 5. “Olivia was involved in the nitty gritty of the negotiations [to establish a framework for the GGA] by getting close to the negotiators,” and helped “give a lot of the intellectual shape” to the eventual agreement, added Weisberg, the University’s Bess W. Heyman President’s Distinguished Professor and Chair of Philosophy who was responsible for first bringing Fielding to COP in 2021.

Weisberg and Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, IPI’s president and chief executive officer and the Perry World House Professor of Practice of Law and Human

Rights at Penn Carey Law, were intent on seeing the agreement ironed out at COP28. And they counted on Fielding’s diplomacy and smarts to make it happen. “We left her alone and she got amazing results,” said Ra’ad Al Hussein. “Her accomplishment should give hope to young people like my students who feel the world is so complicated and that they can’t possibly play a part in resolving its issues.”

Penn has been sending a delegation to COP since 2019. As with other universities, attendees are given observer status. Such badges are extremely limited in number, though—just 24 for last year’s conference. These included representatives from the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy, which cohosted, with Perry World House and Penn Global, COP’s Higher Education Pavilion and arranged some 30 panels showcasing the work of Penn researchers. “It was a huge event and showcased Penn at its best,” said Cory Colijn, the Kleinman Center’s executive director.

Other Penn affiliates attend as senior advisors to participating nations—Palau in the case of Weisberg and Ra’ad Al Hussein. “We are there to support the government teams, to come up with ideas, to try to find a way into the resulting texts and be in the room when negotiations take place,” said Ra’ad Al Hussein. “In this way, we’ve gained admission to the inner circle. Most universities are not in that position.”

That’s been Fielding’s trajectory post-graduation. “There was a huge shift for me from

COP26 to COP27,” she said. “By 2022, I was working for IPI, and I had joined the partnership with the Maldives, which has its own small delegation. So I went from observer status with the Penn badge to party status. It was an awesome time for me.”

In 2023 she continued to work with the Maldives on its efforts to advocate for movement on the GGA, organizing and participating in four informal workshops, one of which she hosted in New York. A Maldives government change in October threatened to keep her from COP28 in Dubai, but a friend in the Surinamese government wangled a badge for her to attend. (Suriname, Palau, the Maldives, and 36 other low-lying nations comprise the membership of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which are especially vulnerable to sea level rise and other global warming impacts.)

Then when she arrived at COP, “the politics came out,” Fielding recalled, with some frustration. “Suddenly there were all of these other issues that made adaptation end up feeling like a chess piece in a larger game. There was a lot to wade through, things got really tense and uncomfortable.” When she read through the final text hammered out by the negotiators, she was not happy with the results at first.

But later Weisberg helped her “think about where we had started, and to look for the key pieces that we really wanted to get in and that I had worked so closely with the

AOSIS negotiators on,” she said. “We saw that some of the language that I had personally workshopped during the year had ended up being used.”

That so much haggling and hedging occurs during these two-week meetings may be the nature of negotiation, but some climate scientists find it maddening. After the conference ended, Penn Presidential Distinguished Professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Science Michael Mann [“Mann in the Middle,” Jul/Aug 2023], for one, volubly decried COP’s choice of the UAE (a major oil producer) as host country, the unilateral consensus format, and the tepid tiptoeing of its resolutions.

Fielding gets it. “The negotiations can feel very futile,” she said. “But there’s no alternative for this kind of global decision-making, and if we just left it to individual countries, we’d be in a much worse position. This is the only forum for the work we need to do.”

Ever since she first met Weisberg at a summer study abroad program in the Galapagos, Fielding has known that the work *she* needed to do centered on climate change. “So, I do want to keep going to COP,” she said. “The goal on adaptation has been set, but now we’ll be concentrating on how we achieve and measure it. As I continue that work, though, I would like to add an on-the-ground component. I really want to be part of this adaptation in the vulnerable communities, not just a person on a laptop in New York.” —*JoAnn Greco*

Keeping It Civic

David Grossman steps down and looks back after helming Penn's Civic House for the last quarter-century.



Civic House marked the end of an era in December when David Grossman Gr'04 stepped down as its founding director.

Grossman's 25-year tenure started auspiciously when then-president Judith Rodin CW'66 Hon'04 and former US President Jimmy Carter signed the charter to dedicate the launch of Civic House at the University's Commencement in 1998. Under his leadership, Civic House has become Penn's hub for civic en-

gagement, with a focus on social justice education and collaborations between the University and community non-profit organizations in Philadelphia ["Getting Engaged," Jul/Aug 2011].

"I have felt very fortunate to be at an institution that supports this work and takes it seriously—and in ways that it's not just the flavor of the month," Grossman said. "I feel Penn has a deep commitment to supporting initiatives and students who

want to be involved in this work and has senior administrators who really support it. It's in the ether at the University. I don't know if that's true everywhere."

Civic House supports more than 40 student-led service and advocacy groups. It offers six core programs open to all Penn undergraduates: Civic Scholars Program, Community Engagement Internship, Community Engagement Program, Penn Alternative Breaks, PennCORP, and

"I have felt very fortunate to be at an institution that supports this work and takes it seriously."

West Philadelphia Tutoring Project. Civic House also contributes to campus and community programming throughout the year.

Grossman said the time was right for him to move on to a new challenge, and he's taking time to decide what he wants to do next. "I thought about what I might want to achieve with my remaining time and haven't really taken the opportunity to step back and examine that. I still have a lot of energy and interest in doing more." He also felt that Civic House is in "a good place" with a strong staff including new faculty director Rand Quinn, an associate professor in the Graduate School of Education (GSE) who's been "a wonderfully supportive presence," added

Grossman, who will continue to teach courses in GSE.

In 1989, Grossman joined Penn as a career counselor in Career Services after working as a high school history teacher and youth program director for what was then called the National Conference of Christians and Jews in Philadelphia. By 1994, he was the director of Penn's Program for Student Community Involvement (PSCI), Civic House's predecessor.

In the mid-1990s Rodin proposed the idea of hubs where students could connect around an interest or set of interests in both curricular and non-curricular ways. Kelly Writers House became the first hub, launched in 1995 for writing programs and projects. Civic House followed in 1998 and took up residence in one of the oldest buildings on campus, a 19th-century former church rectory at 3914 Locust Walk. The building became Civic House's administrative headquarters and a gathering place for students involved in civic engagement, including those who were part of PSCI.

Under Grossman's leadership, Civic House programs have compelled everyone involved to reflect more deeply about civic engagement activities. "We're expecting more of ourselves and our students," he said. "We've moved to prioritize programs that more consciously integrate education and community engagement efforts, and that center our community partners."

"It's not to say that doing a

one-time service event is a bad thing at all,” he added. “Rather, we feel like we can add the most value to students’ experience and to how our community partners might benefit by helping our students think about the nature of their commitment and what it is they hope to learn, how they can best contribute, and to intentionally engage community partners in that effort as well.”

The creation of the Civic Scholars Program in 2007 by Grossman and Walter Licht—the Walter H. Annenberg Professor of History Emeri-

In Grossman, “students felt they had an ally and someone who could push for them,” said Licht.

tus who served as faculty director for Civic House and the Civic Scholars Program from 2002 to 2021—embodied Grossman’s vision of a more integrated experience for students. The program provides a small group of undergraduates with civic engagement opportunities, enrollment in a select group of courses, and faculty mentorship that is integrated with their education at Penn.

In Grossman, “students felt they had an ally and someone who could push for them,” said Licht. But Grossman also understood when to step back. Grossman empowered students by ensuring they were involved in the decision-making and steering at Civic

House. “David was dedicated to students’ sense of ownership in Civic House and was very clear that the students were stakeholders in this operation,” Licht said.

Civic House and Civic Scholars students have gone on to work in the public interest realm as well as in investment banking, real estate, and tech companies. Grossman said he hopes students will take what they learned into whatever careers they pursue. “Civic Scholars will come to me almost apologetically and say, ‘I’m going to go work in consulting.’ And I say, ‘That’s of course fine.’ It is not my place to disapprove of what they do—indeed, it’s to encourage them to follow their passions—but I ask them to think holistically about the lessons they’ve learned and how to engage the world through the broader perspectives they’ve gained from their experiences.”

As Grossman moves into the next phase of his own career, Civic House students will continue to benefit from his 25 years of leadership and passion for making a difference. Sharing that passion with those around him helped put any problems that arose into perspective. “On days I felt frustrated, I’d think about how I get to work with students and colleagues who care about building a better world,” Grossman said. “For all the frustrations that might occur, how bad is that? It’s pretty great.”

—Samantha Drake CGS’06

Niki Miles, left, and Izzy Rohr are the reigning Ivy League Attacker of the Year and Defender of the Year, respectively.



The Niki and Izzy Show

Fueled by battle-tested fifth-year seniors, Penn women’s lacrosse is a legit national title contender.

During their first semester at Penn, way back in 2019, Niki Miles and Izzy Rohr were taking extra shots on goal when Miles stopped what she was doing. Soaking in the Franklin Field surroundings, she told her new Penn women’s lacrosse teammate, “We’re going to be captains of this team one day.”

Four-and-a-half years, two scuttled seasons, and one

major injury later, Rohr smiles as Miles recounts that story. Does she remember that moment?

“I do, yeah,” Rohr says. “It’s ingrained in my brain.”

Miles and Rohr have high hopes that the 2024 spring season will mark a triumphant ending to a tumultuous time at Penn. Because they both took a semester off in 2021 when the Ivy League

canceled spring sports (following an abbreviated 2020 campaign at the onset of the pandemic), they are among a small cohort of fifth-year seniors on a team loaded with experience and talent. And yes, both Miles and Rohr—the reigning Ivy League Attacker of the Year and Defender of the Year, respectively—became captains, having come a long way since the pandemic cut their freshman seasons short after only five games.

“It feels like we’ve lived 20 lives since then,” Miles says. “I think something special about [head coach Karin Corbett] and the Penn lacrosse program is I’ve learned so much about myself—about being a leader, about being a good friend, a good teammate—from her and from being a part of this team. So being able to be here so long has been extremely rewarding.”

Not everyone stayed when the Ivy League became the only Division I conference to cancel sports in the spring of 2021. Transferring to another school was on the table; so was simply remaining on the typical academic track toward a May 2023 graduation. But taking a semester off was, “in hindsight, the best decision we could have made,” says Miles, who did it along with fellow fifth-year seniors Rohr and all-Ivy goalkeeper Kelly Van Hoesen and all-Ivy defender Grace Fujinaga (as well as midfielder Caitlin Cook, who’s currently injured).

“We were so locked into this team and everything that it embodied, in my mind I had

no option to transfer,” Rohr says. “It was always Penn.”

“I didn’t want to wear another jersey,” adds Miles. “I was like, *We’re going to do something special here.*”

They were bursting with excitement to finally get back on the field in 2022, but the comeback tour quickly stalled. Rohr, who tore an ACL in high school, tore an ACL in her other knee, sidelining her for the whole season. “I don’t think most people could handle three years of being told you can’t play the sport you love,” Miles says, marveling at how Rohr returned to “make herself a force on defense” in 2023.

Miles, meanwhile, had her own struggles in 2022. “She came back ready to take the field and show how good she was,” Corbett says. “But she needed to learn to play in a system.” As the attack failed to gel en route to an uncharacteristically poor 6–9 season, “we had a tough talk with her, and were like, ‘You have to trust us,’” the head coach adds. “And she turned it around. And because she’s such an influencer on the team, her buy-in really changed everything.”

Having “learned the lessons we needed to,” Miles and the 2023 Quakers stormed to a perfect record in the Ivy League, winning the regular-season title and the conference tournament. They won a game in the NCAA tourney, over UConn, before pushing eventual national finalist Boston College to the brink.

Miles enjoyed one of the best seasons in Penn history,

scoring in all 19 games and finishing with a program-record 63 goals. On the other side of the field, Rohr forced a team-high 25 turnovers and picked up 35 ground balls. Among other accolades, both were named 2024 preseason All-Americans, along with junior Anna Brandt, last year’s Ivy League Midfielder of the Year, who Miles calls “Captain America” and Rohr notes “has such an impact on every section of the field.”

Rohr, who Corbett says “has a fire and joy” to her game, committed to Penn early. Her brother, Sam Rohr C’16, played lacrosse for the Quakers, so she’d been a regular on campus since middle school, often making the short trip with her family from their home in Malvern, Pennsylvania.

Miles came a longer distance, from California, swayed by the combination of Penn’s high-level lacrosse program and a Wharton education. Her dad, Glen, was a three-time All-American lacrosse player at Navy who was named the nation’s top midfielder in 1986. Miles credits him for her competitiveness and setting a high bar. “I want to make him proud,” Miles says. “And after the game, I already know what he’s gonna say. He’d always been really tough on me, but in a way that he wants me to be the best player that I can be.”

Rohr and Miles quickly became close upon arriving at Penn. Off the field, they share an off-campus house with other teammates, where they enjoy cooking, watching doc-

umentaries, and going on excursions to the suburbs. On it, they complement each other well, though with differing personalities.

“We’re united in the fact that we’re competitive and we want to win more than anything, but I’m a little more outspoken,” Miles says. “I think Izzy’s true power lies in the fact that she just shows up every single day and does exactly what she sets out to do.” Miles may talk more on the field, and sometimes gets chippy—“I don’t think other teams would necessarily like me very much”—but Rohr is learning to become more vocal, too. “When she says things, people really listen,” notes Corbett, adding that Miles “is a person who, when the team isn’t doing well will say, ‘Hey this has to be better.’”

Despite their success last season, winning the program’s 14th Ivy League title (the 12th under Corbett), both Rohr and Miles believe the Quakers didn’t fully get the respect they deserved nationally. “We still have such a chip on our shoulder, which I think drives us every single day,” Miles says. “And I love being the underdog. I always carry that mentality.”

When Corbett, in her 25th year as Penn’s head coach, looks at the makeup of this team, she can’t help but think about spending Memorial Day Weekend at the NCAA Final Four for the first time since her 2007, 2008, and 2009 squads got there. “There’s something to prove for them,” Corbett says. “They really want that.” —DZ



WE SHOULD BE FRIENDS

For the past 20 years, Aaron Karo and Matt Ritter have been part of a unique friendship tradition called “Man of the Year” with their childhood buddies. Now, the fellow comedians and writers have launched a podcast of the same name to encourage other men to create, maintain, and grow their own friendships.

By Dave Zeitlin



“ just think with a lot of guys, they haven’t had *falling outs* ... they’ve had *falling offs*.”

Matt Ritter L’05 is sitting in a Manhattan hotel lobby with Aaron Karo W’01, his lifelong friend with whom he cohosts a podcast about male friendship, when he puts forth this epiphany.

“Oooh, have we used that already?” Karo says, looking over at Ritter and leaning forward in his seat.

“No, I just coined that!” Ritter replies excitedly.

“Dude, write that down,” Karo exclaims, before the two share an awkward high-five. “Genius!”

It’s the Tuesday afternoon before Thanksgiving and the two buddies have been buzzing all day—and will soon be sharing more embraces and laughs deep into the night. On tap for the evening is their annual “Man of the Year” dinner, in which Karo, Ritter, and seven other longtime friends meet at Brooklyn’s Peter Luger Steak House to vote on which friend had the best year. The tradition, Karo says, has kept their friendship going strong for 35 years—and became the foundation for the podcast Karo and Ritter launched in late 2022, also called “Man of the Year.” The podcast, which has been featured in the *New York Times* and on the *Today* show, is designed to help men make new friends and reconnect with old ones, often through yearly traditions like theirs.

But before embarking on their steak dinner (and pregame and postgame drinking festivities that rekindle their youth), the two 40-something native New Yorkers stop at a hotel lobby near Penn Station to discuss their unique tradition—and the art of male friendship—with another 40-something native New Yorker (me) who took a train from Philly to meet them on a day they call their “Super Bowl.” This one felt like an even bigger gameday as it marked the 20th consecutive “Man of the Year” dinner for the nine friends who grew up together in Plainview, Long Island. With a touch of childhood nostal-

gia, Karo and Ritter were reminded of the meaning of it by family members after they had flown back to the East Coast from Los Angeles, where they both work as comedians and screenwriters.

“My mom ironed my shirt today,” Ritter tells me when I arrive. “Steamed it, actually.”

“My dad dropped me off at the train station and was like, ‘Good luck, I love you,’” adds Karo with a laugh.

It’s not uncommon for people to reconnect with old friends in their hometowns the night or two before Thanksgiving, and annual *Friendsgiving* dinners probably rival family Thanksgiving celebrations for some. What anchors this reunion, among other quirks, is the giant trophy in tow, engraved with each winner’s name, which they plop on Peter Luger’s long wooden bar while waiting for their table. “It creates a scene and people are always coming over and asking about the trophy and what it means,” says Jason Epstein W’01, who along with his brother David Epstein C’01, rounds out the crew’s Penn contingent.

The dinner’s setting also adds to the charm: an old-fashioned steakhouse that’s been “marinating in history” since the late 1800s, as Karo puts it—though hasn’t exactly kept pace with the city’s fine dining vanguard. That’s what they like about it: a group of buddies trying to recapture the past inside of a place seemingly frozen in time.

“They took away their Michelin Star,” Ritter says, “and we’re like, ‘Good! Who even knew they had a Michelin star?’”

“We actually prefer Michelin-less,” Karo chimes in.

The dinners are “a bit of a sacred experience,” Karo notes, that can “get pretty rowdy.” There’s yelling and singing at their regular corner table, and more than enough dry-aged beef, thick-cut bacon, and martinis to go around. The “Man of the Year” voting happens near the end after one friend nominates another based on his personal or professional accomplishments in the past year

(Fiscal Luger Year, or FLY). “You’re not allowed to vote for yourself,” Karo says. “That’s called the Ritter Rule,” after the time when Ritter did indeed vote for himself (“It wasn’t a high point,” he says sheepishly), precipitating their “first and only constitutional crisis,” in the words of Karo, the group’s “parliamentarian.” During that regrettable episode, which led to a contested tie vote, a man celebrating his 91st birthday toddled over to their table to see what the hullabaloo was about. Turns out, he was a retired federal judge who listened to arguments, decided the “Man of the Year” that year, and gave them his business card in case his services were ever needed again. Ritter, a former corporate attorney, lost his case. “That’s how you know I wasn’t meant to be a lawyer,” he says.

Once the voting is completed, the winner “gets the trophy, you chug a beer out of the trophy, you get your name engraved on it, and much to your wife’s chagrin, you have to keep it in your house for the next year,” explains Karo, who, along with Ritter, has won twice before (but not this past year). “It’s like the Stanley Cup.”

If this all sounds a tad highfalutin, “it’s not really about the winning,” says Jason Epstein. “It’s just about being there and experiencing the friendship and the night.” More than anything, it’s about the inside jokes they’ve had since they hung out in abandoned Long Island parks as teenagers, and the Blink-182 songs they blast in the Uber to and from the restaurant that remind them of high school parties. That’s why they encourage their podcast listeners to build or maintain yearly get-togethers of their own, whether it’s a weekend fishing trip, a couple of hours at a fantasy football draft (my 20-year tradition with college friends), or something even weirder. The simple truth is that as men get older, and especially as they sink into family life, many have trouble making the time to see their oldest friends. And it can be even harder for some adults to know where to make new ones. According to

a 2021 survey, 15 percent of men reported having zero close friends—a figure Karo and Ritter have cited in their campaign against the “friendship recession.”

“We’re not saying everyone needs to have a trophy,” says Karo. “Like, you don’t even have to have a dinner even. It’s more about a ritual. The reason why you don’t see your friends is because you don’t make time for them—because you don’t have a recurring event.”

“We didn’t realize how lucky we were to have this group,” says Ritter. “The thing we always hear is, *I wish I had something like that*. So that’s been our biggest thing: It’s never too late. You can start a friendship tradition. We think that’s the backbone of lifelong friendships.”

RUMINATING ON RUMINATIONS

Alumni of a certain age might recognize the name Aaron Karo—especially those who attended Penn toward the end of the 1990s or early 2000s.

Before most college students had social media and smartphones, before they read blogs or wrote on Substack, Karo was “the definition of viral before viral was even a word,” as he puts it.

It all started his third week as a Penn undergrad in 1997. Unable to fall asleep on a Sunday night, he popped out of bed at around 2:30 a.m. in his single dorm room in the Quad and started typing an email on his desktop computer. He sent it to a few friends (some from high school, some he had just met in college) with the subject line: *Ruminations on College Life*. “Did I know what the word *ruminations* meant?” he says. “I don’t know.” He also didn’t know that spontaneous middle-of-the-night email would “change the course of my life.”

Karo had no aspirations of being a writer at that point but his ruminations (read: a lot of thoughts about getting wasted and falling asleep in class) made people laugh and seemed to resonate with other freshmen also adjusting to college. So he started writing more of them. The jokes, he says, “were not high

art”—throwing up in his shoe after a night of drinking; that “one all-purpose cup that you use for everything from cereal to orange juice to shots of Johnnie Walker Black Label and never ever clean”; the tote basket used to carry soap and shampoo that seemed so gross even though “it takes a shower every day.” In his first email, Karo confessed to having no idea how to do laundry and owned up to nursing a vision of a cute girl showing him how to do it when he got to college. “Dreams die hard, but I have no underwear,” he wrote. Then he ended the email with what would become his signature signoff: “Fuck me.”

Karo’s *Ruminations* emails spread quickly. People forwarded them to others who forwarded them in turn. “Then random people started emailing me like, ‘Can you add me to your mailing list?’ And I said, ‘What mailing list?’” The requests came from college students across the country, and before long he was getting fan mail from around the world, from people of all ages. (He says he responded to every single one.) By the time he graduated, Karo’s subscriber list stood at 10,000. At Penn, he became an “extremely minor celebrity.” Occasionally classmates would recognize him at parties and, in the pre-cell phone era, hand him little scraps of paper on which they’d scrawled their email addresses. He won a contest to speak at Wharton’s graduation ceremony, trying out some of his college humor on a different stage.

Looking back at those early emails, he realizes some jokes he wrote as an “18-year-old moron” don’t hold up well. “But I try to give myself some grace,” says Karo, who has every email archived at ruminations.aaronkaro.com. “It’s like a time capsule ... a kind of real-time account of college. I’m glad to have it.”

Karo’s subscriber list, which he also carefully preserved, would prove beneficial too. Shortly after he graduated in 2001, a Penn alum who worked as a literary manager reached out about turning *Ruminations* into a book. “We literally printed it

“That’s been our biggest thing: It’s never too late. You can start a friendship tradition. We think that’s the backbone of lifelong friendships.”

out at Kinko’s,” Karo says. “And I think he snail-mailed it to publishers.” Another *Ruminations* fan was a college intern at Simon & Schuster when the package arrived and emailed Karo to tell him she’d try to push the submission to the top of her boss’s pile. “And then, like six weeks later, I got a book deal,” Karo says.

At the time, Karo was on a more traditional Wharton path, as an equity research junior associate at Morgan Stanley. When he told his bosses there that he’d be publishing a book, he says they did not grant him permission to do so. But on the advice of his parents, he went ahead anyway with the book version of *Ruminations on College Life*, which came out in August 2002. “And they tried to fire me,” says Karo, adding that this is the first time he’s told the story publicly. “I got a lawyer. ... And they ended up paying me the rest of my year’s salary.” Karo used that money “to fund the beginning of the rest of my career”—which included standup comedy in New York, screenwriting, and rebooting the *Ruminations* email after a one-year lull, this time about post-college life.

Three years later, after selling the rights to a television show he’d created, Karo moved from New York to Los Angeles to continue to pursue his sitcom and stand-up comedy dreams. He’s since sold “at least a dozen shows” to various networks and studios; toured the country doing stand-up (including an appearance on the *Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson*) and released four comedy albums; and written several more books, including a couple of young adult novels and two more based on his *Ruminations* column, which continued until 2012—15 years after that first fateful email he fired off from his Quad dorm.

"I was so naive that I didn't even know what a big break that was," Karo says. "You know, I wrote these emails that went viral that became a book. And there's people out there who spend their whole lives trying to publish a book. I didn't have any appreciation of it at the time."

Although his writing career has had some tough breaks—none of the shows he's written and sold have made it through development and gotten on the air—Karo has persisted because "I don't take no for an answer," he says. "I don't give up. I know I can outwork everybody else." It's a trait, he says, that he shares with his friend Ritter, who was inspired by Karo to spurn a stable and high-paying career track for the joys and pitfalls of Hollywood.

THE LAWS OF COMEDY

Growing up, Ritter had a passion for comedy—obsessing over Eddie Murphy routines, acting as the class clown, performing in the high school senior show with Karo. He let it mostly lay dormant while in college at Binghamton University but felt the itch to perform while attending Penn Law, moonlighting as an amateur standup comic at open mics around Philly. He kept returning to the microphone after beginning his career as a corporate attorney at Kirkland & Ellis, often changing out of his suit after a 15-hour day at the office and running to a comedy club at midnight.

But after five years, Ritter grew tired of the "big law grind" in New York. "It wasn't so much that I hated it," he says. "I just kind of knew that I wanted to do entertainment. I think I had just been kind of afraid. Finally, one day, I looked at myself in the mirror and said, *You only live once. What are you doing?* And I had already seen that [Karo] was doing it out in California. So I was like, *Oh, this is possible.*"

In 2010, at 30 years old, Ritter uprooted his life to move to Los Angeles "on a wish and a dream," following his friend, who he says was "one of the first people I knew to break out of the traditional path." When he arrived, Ritter didn't have a job,

a real game plan, or a place of his own. He crashed on a friend's floor. "But they say necessity is the mother of invention," says Ritter, who, needing to make some money, cofounded a lawyer comedy troupe called Comedians at Law. "And we realized there was a market for that." The troupe toured the country, telling jokes at law schools and bar associations.

Ritter later had an idea to pitch a reality show about divorced couples living together. The show, called *Chained to My Ex*, was sold and had a one-season run on MSNBC—"sort of my introduction to working in Hollywood," he says. From there, he got hired on other "really ridiculous unscripted shows that I now look back at and laugh." Among them was a reality show called *Fat N' Furious* about "obese car mechanics who are best friends and eat donuts and make fun of each other while they soup up old American muscle cars." It wouldn't be long until he was again feeling dissatisfied and looking for another pivot.

In addition to comedy, Ritter had always been an action movie fan, bonding with his dad while watching Bruce Willis and Sylvester Stallone flicks. So a few years ago, he decided to write one of his own, a movie called *Doll Wars*, which never got made but did attract notice—and representation by the talent agency UTA. He's since been hired to write other action movies, and he was also hired by Wondery to host podcasts around that time. "That was sort of the precursor to have the confidence to say to Karo, 'We're gonna launch a podcast, and it's going to be fucking huge.'"

From the start, hosting their own podcast together just felt right. When Ritter arrived in Los Angeles, five years after Karo's westward move, he leaned on Karo for advice, guidance, and, of course, friendship. The two lived on the same block for a decade. Ritter even befriended most of Karo's friends. "I mean, I think the dream scenario for most people, if they really thought about it, would be to make stuff with your friends," Ritter says.

By then, the two writers were established enough to believe they could launch a successful venture together—and also at a place in their careers where they wanted more control. Karo had been feeling frustrated that none of the shows he wrote were ever seen by the public—particularly an animated series about talking viruses and germs that featured the voices of Channing Tatum, Michael B. Jordan, and Courtney Love. "That was a tough one, I'll be honest," says Karo, who's currently working with another good friend and writing partner, Lindsey Rosin C'07, on a TV adaptation of Karo's YA novel *Lexapros and Cons* (2012)—a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age tale about a teenager with OCD. Karo was officially diagnosed with OCD in 2017 but has had symptoms since high school, something he doesn't try to hide, whether it's eating the same meals every day or keeping everything in his life in neat spreadsheets. "He's very authentic to himself," says Rosin, laughing about how "he has a file of every meeting he's ever taken—every conversation with every executive. Not just like, *Oh I met with this person on this date*. But it's like, *I met with this person, they were wearing this outfit, they laughed at this many jokes*. It's so intently detailed."

The podcast gave Karo an immediate jolt of gratification; instead of being stalled in some corporate development hierarchy, his work is going straight out into the world. "This is the first thing I've done [since *Ruminations*] where people are emailing me because they listened and it affected them," Karo says. "And I think I have a much better appreciation for it now ... because I'm such a different person."

Ritter has felt the same way, noting that with "so many gatekeepers in this town ... it's been awesome in the sense that nobody's controlling us other than us." And the theme of the podcast has helped set them apart in a crowded marketplace, too. "We didn't want it to be just another two comedians talking," Ritter says, adding that they hatched their plan to be

“Breaking balls is love language,” declares Karo, who at another point in our interview, mocks his friend for musing that he fancies himself a “thought leader.”

“friendship experts” while brainstorming other ideas and seeing the “Man of the Year” trophy directly behind them. “On some level, at least for me, this is the first thing that I feel has really resonated directly with people—which is awesome.”

BANTER AND LOVE

At one point during our interview, Ritter stops what he’s saying to take a call. “It’s my agent,” he announces and scuttles over to the other side of the lobby.

“There’s absolutely no way his agent’s calling him right now,” Karo says.

A couple of minutes later, Ritter returns. “Sorry, just Hollywood talk,” he says facetiously as Karo smirks.

At that moment, I feel like I’m sitting between the two of them in the podcast studio, where they often trade barbs and crack each other up. Almost every episode seems to feature Karo guffawing, as Ritter puts it, tilting his head all the way back so that Ritter can see the bottoms of his teeth. Those laughs often come when Ritter calls him out on something he did or said—“Matt’s ability to sort of pinpoint my neuroses,” says Karo, who roasts his friend right back. In fact, Ritter asked Karo to roast him in an official capacity as the officiant of his wedding to Jessica Garvey C’09 (whom Ritter met at a Penn young alumni event). Later, during Ritter and Garvey’s wedding reception, Karo took advantage of the bubble guns and dove headfirst across the dance floor, picking up soap as he went, something he learned from his fraternity days in ZBT.

“I love it because when we start laughing about something, it’s just so organic,” Ritter says. “We never tell each other



what we’re going to say. We actually canned our first episode because it was over-rehearsed.”

“Breaking balls is love language,” declares Karo, who at another point in our interview, mocks his friend for musing that he fancies himself a “thought leader.” (To be fair, Ritter immediately tried to take it back. Karo wanted it featured as a pull quote in the article anyway.)

The key is balancing the playful ribbing with sensitivity and empathy—traits they’ve developed as they’ve gotten older and try to pass on to their listeners. “I don’t know what Frat Boy Aaron’s friendship podcast would’ve sounded like,”

laughs Rosin, who used to be on Karo’s *Ruminations* email list and would write back to him about her favorite jokes. “I think he’s the kind of person that just gets better the more you get to know him. He’s a big personality, he can be a loud personality ... [but] he gives advice from a place that’s very empathetic, which is not something I think everyone would necessarily associate with Aaron. You’ve just got to get in there with him and you’ll realize he’s very loving and affectionate.” Rosin—who, according to the hosts, belongs to a healthy demographic of female listeners who tune in hoping to help their male partners make new friends—adds that

Ritter “on the podcast is just like the best version of Matt” and that both of their abilities to be open with their emotions has “definitely tapped into something that a lot of people are thinking about.”

The advice they give during a segment called “Asking for a Friend,” in which they take listener questions from social media, isn’t always complicated. It might be something as small as sending a simple text to check in on a friend or remembering to ask how someone is *actually* doing after watching a game with them. “Someone that could really use a check in, you’re not gonna know that from the group text,” says Ritter, adding that he really needed his friends to be there for him when his dad died two years ago. “When you strip away all of it, friendship is just about showing up.”

If that seems oversimplified, it could be helpful to take stock of your own friendships (a “friendship audit,” as Karo and Ritter called it on a recent episode). My own self-audit yielded mixed results. For me, the group text with my closest college friends is primarily about sports these days. So are the texts with my oldest childhood friend, possibly with excessive trash talk. Making new dad friends in my tight-knit Philadelphia neighborhood community has been an unexpected joy of fatherhood, but the making of actual plans generally revolves around the kids. Rarely do I actually call a friend unprompted.

“The one thing I’ve learned about friendship is it’s the most underserved relationship,” says Ritter, who with a new baby, is currently in the new father phase of friendship, trying to be deliberate about putting his number in the phones of other dads. “Men weren’t taught to prioritize friendship. We’re taught that if you get married, get a good job, and have a nice house and have kids, you have everything you need to be happy. But, as it turns out, you need friendship. ... So we’re just basically saying, ‘Hey guys, you gotta prioritize it.’”

Karo cites a 2022 *New York Times* article about research showing a casual

and unexpected check-in text can be more powerful than we think to those on the receiving end. But do they happen enough? Last year, US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy released an advisory declaring a “public health crisis” of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection in our country. “When men don’t have friends, it’s not good for anyone,” Karo says. “It’s not good for them. It’s not good for women. It’s not good for society.”

Ritter says they’re “careful to not say we’re mental health experts” and he also acknowledges that they “just invented” the idea of being friendship experts. “But I wouldn’t say we’re faking it until we make it—because if you actually look at it, Aaron is the connector,” he says. “He’s got 10 different friend groups; when he has a party or event, he introduces people and then they become lifelong friends. And I like to entertain and throw all kinds of wacky parties in my house. I bring people together; that’s who I am at my core.”

Self-billed as the No. 1 friendship podcast in the country, the show has had a “cultural impact that I don’t know that I would have foreseen a year ago,” says Karo, adding that it’s drawn “tens of thousands of listeners from across the country.” Their “Man of the Year” Instagram page has more than 125,000 followers and on their website they sell “We Should Be Friends” merchandise. “When we started this, we really didn’t know how big it was gonna get, how much it was gonna resonate, or how desperately people really needed to talk about friendships, especially men,” says Ritter.

With that in mind, the two have big plans to grow the “Man of the Year” brand. While they’ve been happy with the guests they’ve already interviewed on the show, they hope to land bigger ones—from the surgeon general to famous friends like Matt Damon and Ben Affleck. They’re developing new formats that include a self-help book for men, a reality show, a sitcom, and a tour during which they’ll tape their show live while including the crowd in segments (think a dating

game, but to match audience members together as friends). They were invited to perform in May at the Netflix Is a Joke comedy festival, where they’ll try out that interactive version of their show.

“Last year we built the podcast and this year we’re building the business,” Karo says. “We really want to be a media company with friendship at its core.”

“We are trying to build community around this,” adds Ritter. “This isn’t like other podcasts or comedy shows where you’re one way on the microphone. Our goal is for other people to take action and go out and make friends.”

Ritter and Karo try to take their own advice to heart and constantly evaluate where they are with their friendships. Karo acknowledges he hasn’t been as close as he’d like with his college buddies over the last few years, and that even with his “Man of the Year” crew things change since he’s the only single one. His 2024 New Year’s resolution was to “honor the inner circle.”

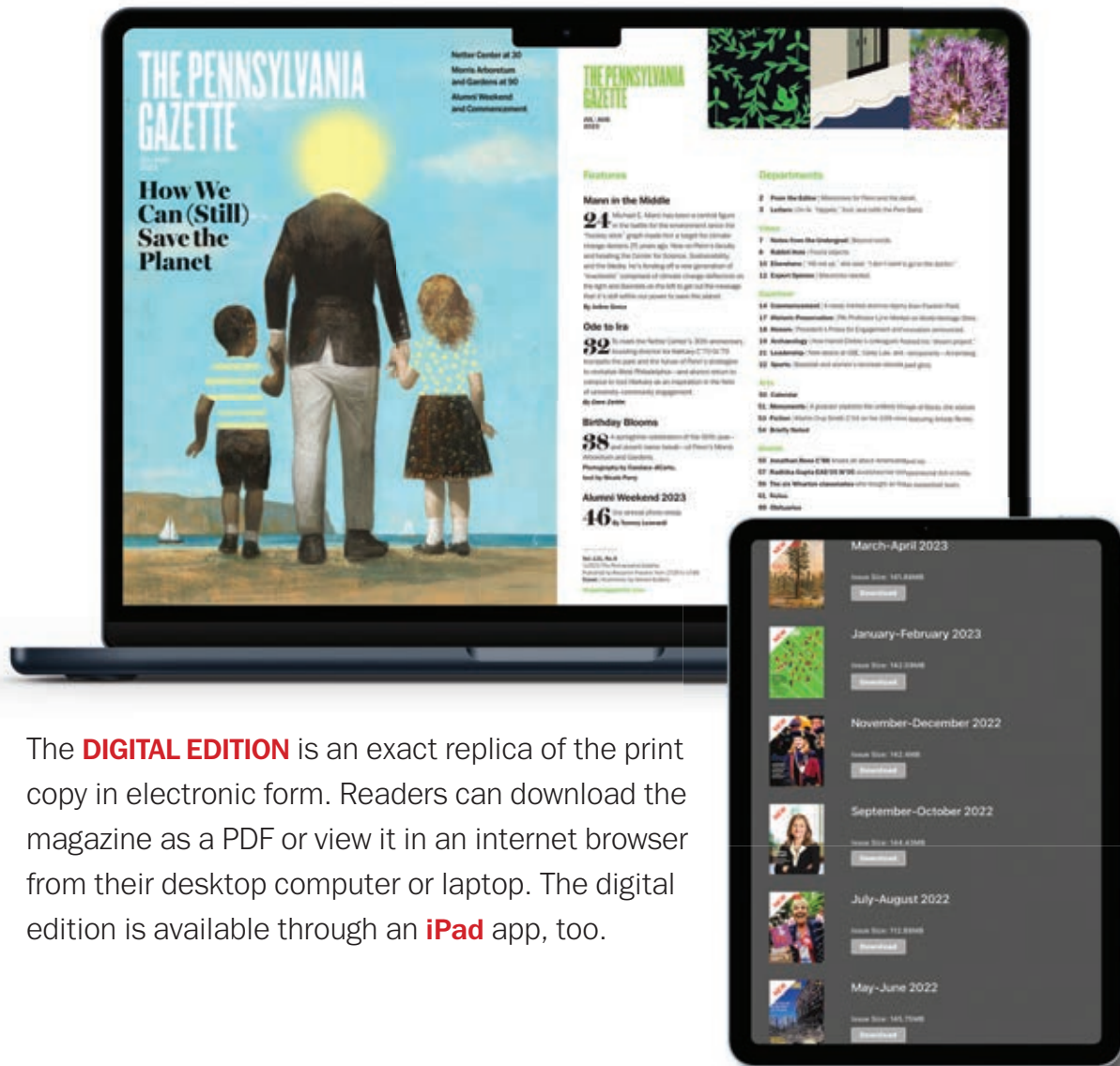
Ritter plans to do the same, and he has a new idea—for himself and listeners—to send gifts to close friends for no reason. “As you get older, you don’t see people as much,” he says. “So you really have to figure out how to make those relationships meaningful.”

Talking with Karo every week on the podcast has helped him “navigate all that stuff,” says Ritter, adding that his and Karo’s own friendship has only grown stronger. “We’re very open with each other and very vulnerable with each other. Especially with men, a lot of stuff gets unsaid. But I think, with him and I, the main thing is that we say it all now.”

Their relationship perhaps can be summed up by how they close every episode, when the comedy and banter is pushed aside. “Be good to yourself, be good to your friends,” Karo says. Then, the buddies of 35 years both say, in unison, something that most male friends probably don’t say enough:

“Love you, buddy.”

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Admissions in Transition

From test-optional applications, to questions about ChatGPT, to the Supreme Court's new limitations on considering race and ethnicity, college admissions are in flux. Admissions Dean Whitney Soule dissects the current state of play and how prospective applicants can navigate it.

By Trey Popp

"I hope everybody loves their job at Penn, but I think I have truly one of the best." So says Vice Provost and Dean of Admissions Whitney Soule, who started in the post in July 2021 after three decades of experience in the field, latterly as the dean of admissions and financial aid at Bowdoin College ["Gazetteer," May/June 2021].

The past three years have not exactly been smooth sailing for college admissions officers. Soule landed at Penn in the midst of pandemic disruptions and has spent the latest cycle bringing her office into compliance with a new legal paradigm in the wake of the US Supreme Court's June 2023 ruling effectively ending race-conscious admissions in higher education. But Soule professes to be energized by her work. "I love Penn," she declares, "and the applicant pool is the future. Those are the students who are pursuing dreams for themselves—and their dreams are big."

In late January, Soule spoke with *Gazette* senior editor Trey Popp about navigating some of the new challenges in college admissions. She began by laying out five values that guide her team's work. The first is "collective care," an overarching ethos that centers the experience of prospective students for whom applying to college is fraught with anxiety

and doubt. "Intentional equity," the second principle, stands for the effort to "offer the opportunity for applicants from all kinds of backgrounds and levels of support to fully represent themselves in a way that we can evaluate them" on the basis of their achievements and potential, rather than their access (or lack thereof) to costly score- and resume-boosting tactics.

"Clarity" is the next point of emphasis. "People want to know how everything works," says Soule, "but they can't have all the details, because they're not reading 60,000 applications with us. So what we can do is be really clear about what is important to us, what we're reading for, what we're trying to evaluate and where we go to the application to look for it, and why the questions we're asking help us get there. So the more clear we can be, the more likely each student may feel secure in being able to prepare an application for us that they can feel really good about."

The last two tenets relate more to her office's operational style, and how her team thinks about deploying limited resources. "Directed focus," Soule says, is intended to help her team evaluate new ideas for recruitment and assessment without losing sight of the central goal of creating a

class that is well-suited to Penn. "Strategic boldness" is a prod to embrace projects that may advance the other values.

The rest of the conversation delved into more detail about how Penn Admissions is facing particular challenges, and Soule's advice for high school students who are about to plunge into the process. Here it is, edited for concision and clarity.

When you began your tenure, the University was returning to something like normal academic life after the pandemic disruption. Your office was emerging from pandemic-era challenges as well, in areas ranging from student recruitment to applicant assessment. I wonder whether any of the practices Penn Admissions had implemented to address those challenges struck you as successful enough to retain—or whether you felt there were opportunities to start fresh in some regards.

Both. When I started, all of our work was still virtual. But there was an unintended benefit from COVID: We all learned the technology, and so did the students, which meant we could connect to them wherever they were. That created a degree of equity that was impossible to achieve with traditional in-person recruitment. And it really brought to light how



much we could do with technology and how far the reach could be. It's not perfect, because technology's not readily available to everybody, but it absolutely has increased the opportunity of how we can connect. And when we came back to welcoming visitors to campus, and also traveling, we began working through which opportunities really could only work well in person, which ones could stand alone as virtual and be really effective, and which ones could be replicated in both modes—just to expand how students could experience us.

Penn piloted a test-optional admissions policy in 2020–21 and has continued that approach through the current cycle. Now that you have a few years of data, what conclusions have you drawn about the impacts of the test-optional policy on the applicant pool and the eventual enrolled classes?

It's more complicated than most people expect. We, along with our peers, have been using testing in admission since its advent. But for Penn, test scores were not integrated directly into the academic assessment evaluation, even pre-COVID. The primary assessment was, and still is, dependent on the curriculum that's available at a student's high school, what the students chose to take, how well they were doing with those courses, and the ideas that they've conveyed in their writing and how their teachers describe them, and so forth. Testing was present, but it was separate. So when Penn had to pivot to test-optional during COVID, that primary fundamental approach to academic assessment didn't have to adjust.

It's our job to consider what required application materials are sufficient to support our evaluation. And it's not as simple as just looking at the GPAs of the students who submitted testing and those that didn't, because every cohort of enrolled students that we're going to be tracking at Penn, since becoming test-optional, has had many other influences—partly what year they were in school when COVID happened, but also what's

been happening in the world of education since. So it takes really careful analysis to determine the effect of a test-optional application on evaluation and enrollment. So we're taking it year by year.

So the jury's still out, in other words?

We haven't decided what we're doing for next year's applicant pool.

Test-optional policies have made it hard for some students to decide whether or not to submit their scores, because when low-scoring applicants withhold them, the institution's median scores get inflated. Anecdotally, I've heard about kids scoring in the 1500s on the SAT and deciding not to submit what seem like very good scores to some universities. What advice do you have for applicants in that regard?

The College Board has studied this. Students are more likely to send their test scores if their scores fit in the ranges of what schools are publishing. And if their scores are below that they're more likely to withhold them. That's not surprising. The advice for Penn applicants is that the basis of our academic evaluation is separate from reviewing the test scores. So students need to understand that when we're thinking about them as an applicant, we're talking about the courses they took, how well they did in those courses, what that progression has been, and how does that align with what they want to be doing at Penn? They should be thinking about their test scores relative to whether or not they think those test scores validate that or elevate that in some way. For the general public, it's harder to give advice because every school's admission evaluation process is unique, so where tests fit in might be different somewhere else.

The last year has focused public attention on college admissions like never before. In June the US Supreme Court ruled that race-conscious admissions programs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina were unlawful under the Equal Protection Clause of

the US Constitution and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. In a Penn Admissions blog post you wrote: "In light of this ruling, we will need to review and revise our practices to ensure that we are fully compliant with the law. What will not change is our commitment to creating a diverse community as central to the educational experience at Penn. ... Simply put, we cannot fulfill our educational mission without honoring and supporting the many and varied lived experiences of our students, faculty, and staff. While the way we do our work will change in compliance with the law, our respect for this foundational principle will not." What has the admissions office determined that the law now requires, and how did your work change this year as you strove to comply with it?

This is really challenging. We have adapted our review processes to adhere to the law, and we've done a lot of training with our staff. And now here we are, in the middle of application season, reading applications—and there is a lot that remains familiar. We are reading students with the full integration of complexity that they reveal about themselves. Every student is unique, so we're still reading that way. But do we know the race or ethnicity of applicants, like we did before? No, we don't. Yet we're reading every detail that they provide, and we're trying to understand how they see themselves and how they want to contribute. And that part feels consistent, even with less information.

Soon after the Supreme Court ruling, and in connection with a separate lawsuit by the same litigants, Yale University announced a series of admissions policy changes: that it would update its training materials to make the ban on considering race explicit to application readers and admissions counselors; take "technological steps" to ensure that nobody involved in admissions decisions has access to data on the racial identity of individual applicants; refrain from producing reports on the aggregate racial or ethnic makeup of applicants or admitted students; and ensure that race is not a factor in financial aid calculations or awards.

Has Penn adopted any new practices along these or other lines?

The straightforward answer is that anybody involved with application review and selection in Penn Admissions does not have access to any reporting or data fields that are related to race—in aggregate or at the record level. We just can't see it.

Has that change been refreshing? Has it been challenging?

The substance of how we think about reading the totality of a student within an application and the information they provide to us to think about them as an individual—that part does feel familiar. What is different, though, is that we can't know the racial or ethnic makeup of the class that we are intending to admit, and what that might represent for the students who enroll. And when we're thinking about the value of a diverse environment in a learning community, that feels really different to not see that kind of information, which we're used to understanding as one of the things that is coming together within our class.

The Court made an allowance for applicants to address their racial or ethnic backgrounds within the context of personal statements and essays, if applicants feel that those aspects of their identity illuminate the path they've traveled through school and life. Have you noticed an uptick in application essays that mention or focus on race in this manner?

It's hard to say. Before this ruling, many students were referencing aspects of their identity as they described their experiences and growth and ambition in their writing. So it would be impossible to quantify if that's more or less now; it's not new for students to incorporate their views of their identity in their writing. Of course we have to be careful to consider this only within the bounds of the ruling, but having students include their identity when talking about their lived experience and ambitions and so forth is not new.

“Do we know the race or ethnicity of applicants, like we did before? No.”

Some universities have added essay prompts that appear to invite just that kind of reflection. Has Penn done so, and why or why not?

We did not add a question, mainly because we already had one in our application that invited students to think about how they might contribute to community, and how Penn's community might influence them. [Editor's note: The essay prompt is, “How will you explore community at Penn? Consider how Penn will help shape your perspective, and how your experiences and perspective will help shape Penn.”] That question remains. Often when students think about how they might contribute to Penn's community and how it might influence them, they reflect on who they are and what's important to them, and their own definitions of what community looks like. So it's been a valuable question, because students are going to interpret the idea of community in their own way, and then respond to it like that.

Last year Penn added an interesting essay prompt to its application: “Write a short thank-you note to someone you have not yet thanked and would like to acknowledge. (We encourage you to share this note with that person, if possible, and reflect on the experience!)” Can you tell me about how you landed on this prompt, and how applicants used it?

Yes, and let me say that this is by far one of the most favorite experiences of my more than 30 years in higher-ed admissions. We were looking for a prompt that would give students the opportunity to show us that they could accept positive influence from other people. It's just a central component to being able to collaborate and learn. And we wanted to think of a question that wasn't tied to a



kind of experience that would require a student to have access to certain resources. We were playing with a couple of different sample prompts when I happened to be in a phone call with Professor Adam Grant and Professor Angela Duckworth [G'03 Gr'06], and they agreed that what we were trying to get to was really important. They both quickly recommended having the students write a thank-you note. Then they directed me to Professor Martin Seligman [Gr'67], who looked at our prompt and endorsed it.

That year we had about 60,000 first-year applicants. They all wrote thank-you notes. It was one of the most unbelievable experiences to read those thank-you notes, because they were all so genuine and personal. But even more, because some of those students read their thank-you notes to the person they were thanking—and some of *those* people wrote to us to thank us for that experience, because it was so powerful. There were teachers and college counselors who told us that they were really moved by what the student wrote, and also struck by the power of the exercise, so they had started incorporating it as part of their classroom experience or their college guidance preparation.

So I think it was good for students, and it did bring us the kind of information we were looking for. But the fact that it had this exponential effect was more than we could have ever anticipated. We've kept the question this year, so now we're getting to read more of them. And it's truly amazing.

Have you noticed any significant changes in this year's applicant pool, or the resulting class so far, compared to past years?

We're right in the middle of it now, but our application pools for both early decision and regular decision increased significantly. We're up just about 10 percent overall in our applications this year, and it's up in all kinds of categories. That presents us with more challenging choices because our class size will be the same. But it's a remarkable applicant pool. The students and their experiences, their aspirations, what they have committed to in their high school years already, and what they tell us they want to do with a Penn education is both humbling and inspiring.

Penn Admissions has for many years pursued low-income students through programs like QuestBridge and the Coalition for College (formerly the Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success). How do you see those efforts fitting into Penn Admissions' approach to recruiting and admitting students under the new legal paradigm?

In terms of the legal landscape, our recruitment can still be very broad, and we do collaborate with organizations that can connect Penn, and all that we offer, to students who are talented, motivated, and ambitious but might not otherwise have learned about us. I would include College Horizons, which is an organization that supports Native and Indigenous students on the path to college, and local organizations like Heights Philadelphia, with whom we partnered over the last couple of years to create and release a free online course on the Coursera platform called Applying to College 101. Coincidentally, that went live on Coursera the same day as

the Supreme Court ruling. And within six months we had more than 6,000 learners in there.

And there are other organizations as well, whose ability to do outreach into many different communities is greater than ours if we were to try to do it on our own. And so those partnerships remain really important. We've been thinking about how we can intentionally message the ways in which our community at Penn is diverse, and so are the opportunities within our campus, both socially and academically, so that students can learn about us that way.

Among the last several classes, what proportion of students have been eligible for Pell Grants?

The Class of 2027, which is our first-year class now, is about 20 percent. The year before was right about 19 percent, and the year before that was at 17 percent.

I wanted to bring up one of the biggest developments of the past year: generative AI, and specifically platforms like ChatGPT.

Does Penn Admissions condone the use of such tools by students completing their applications? Do you have any advice for high schoolers who will be applying next year in the age of ChatGPT?

It seems like it might lead to an easy answer—*use it or don't use it*. But some students are in schools that have embraced that tool and are guiding students on how to incorporate generative AI into their academic work. But then there are students in environments where the use of AI would be considered cheating. And the reality is that many college applicants have relied on generative support in preparing applications—primarily the support of other people, whether that's parents, or college counselors at school, or hired college-prep support. But that kind of support is not equitably distributed among the applicant pool, right? And we have many applicants who don't have adults who are prepared to help them think about preparing a solid applica-

tion—but ChatGPT is free, and so it's largely accessible. So the way that we've thought about it, for this year, is that applicants have been and continue to be required to sign an attestation when they submit the application that says the work they're submitting is their own. And determining what makes it "their own" is a judgment call and an ethical boundary for them to grapple with, whether that is with the support of humans, or the support of generative AI.

We're attuned to the advent of ChatGPT in this applicant pool, and we'll have a chance to review how we feel this evaluation season went when we're finished.

Is Penn Admissions using any AI-related tools to carry out its own work—which seems to have grown substantially along with the size of applicant pools? If so, what are they and how are they helping you accomplish your mission? If not, what kind of functionality would you look for in order to consider incorporating an AI tool into your workflow?

No, we're not using it. Everybody wants to sell AI to admissions officers. So there's an abundance of people's ideas of how we should use it. We are mindful that it is evolving really rapidly. But I don't see that AI could substitute for a person's discretion or review. So I don't know in what way AI could be useful. We haven't come across the right idea yet.

Let's take a step back into slightly more conceptual terrain. Your job is to enroll students, but then the University's central work begins. How do you interpret Penn's mission in terms of how it wants its students to grow during the journey from Convocation to Commencement?

The way that we interpret how to put a class together is to really think about the qualities that we believe are necessary for the students to be successful with all that the University can both *offer* for students, and also *expect* of students in the way that they participate and collaborate and innovate—and take hold of the experiences that are available to them. Penn continues

to evolve—the depth and breadth of the opportunity that exists for students is always growing and changing—so we can't be aiming for one particular thing. Instead, we think that the students we bring into this environment need to have demonstrated that they are energized by the activity of learning things and connecting information from one area to another, that they see how their experience—both academic and social—influences how they learn, how they problem solve, how they pivot and adapt. Those are the qualities that we know help students come into the Penn space and take advantage of what's available to them.

What kind of student is likelier to gain traction with the admissions office: a well-rounded one, or what admissions officers sometimes characterize as a “pointy” one—someone who stands out precisely because of an imbalance stemming from being off the charts in one very specific area, whether it's competitive robotics, violin, track and field, or what have you?

Both of those traits, and everything in between, are attractive, and really important in thinking about what a vibrant, productive, positively challenging learning environment would be like. So students who have a very specific interest or talent that they have dedicated themselves to, and are really focused on that, they may not have a lot of topic breadth but they're demonstrating this commitment to something that inspires them, and they're taking it to the next level. That's amazing. Things get discovered that way. But likewise, students who have a breadth of interests and can apply themselves in lots of different areas are also demonstrating a mindset of commitment to adapting to a lot of different topics and challenges in different ways. And they're also the ones who will likely invent things. And the power of having both, and everything in between, in the enrollment is that the creativity around questioning and problem solving becomes much bigger when they're all

learning together, rather than it being one type of student or another.

Holistic admissions is often framed in terms of creating a class—a group of a couple thousand individuals who in collective terms cover a diverse range of talents and aspirations. Yet for each student who enrolls, college is fundamentally an exercise in individual self-improvement. That's why they go. So there can be a certain tension between the goal of creating a diverse class and the goal of cultivating individuals who have multiple sources of proficiency and potential. How do you think about that tension? Do you see it as a predicament or a source of dynamism?

I do not see it as a predicament. I do see it as dynamism. I think the students who are applying to Penn, and who are choosing to be part of that first-year class, are demonstrating to us that they are interested in being in an environment where they see how they personally will grow and be challenged—and they're also thinking about what they might contribute. So they're articulating that, in their own way, when they're applying. It's an experience that our students find attractive, and they're able to articulate why they want to be part of it.

Next year a whole new crop of high school students will begin thinking about their college options and how to pursue them. What's your advice for how they can get the most out of the process?

What I'll offer is also a really big challenge to students who are teenagers, which is to be self-reflective. Self-reflection at that age is not necessarily where they would go first, but when students read the questions that schools are asking them to answer—or even in the college searching part, when they're thinking about where they want to go—there's an opportunity to think about *Where do I want to be?* And that's different. Because when the mindset is around, *I need to get into this place*, then the work becomes, *What do I need to do to satisfy this institution's interests, so that they'll choose me?*

“We had about 60,000 first-year applicants. They all wrote thank-you notes.”

But the reflective opportunity is: *What is it that I like to do? Why does my attention stay on these topics more easily than those? What are the teachers that I've really enjoyed the most, or the projects that I've had, or the activities that are easy for me to pursue and persist when things are hard?* Think about what is common among those experiences, and then look for a college or university that values those same things. Then the student is in a place of thinking: *This is already important to me, so how do I articulate this very important thing or things to the school that also cares about these things?* And it makes it much more of a shared demonstration to one another, than the student trying to match an institution sort of arbitrarily.

What about students who have decided that Penn is where they could thrive?

If a student has really set their sights on Penn, and one of the four undergraduate schools, take the time to think about not just what's important to Penn, but what's important to me, as a student and an applicant, and how do I find ways in this application to connect what I care about to the opportunity that exists at Penn. You want to make it as clear as it can be what that intentional connection is. That is a really important opportunity for students to take.

It doesn't always result in getting admitted, because the math is tough. There are 65,000 applications for 2,400 places. So there are a lot of students who've done a great job of showing us the connection between what they are inspired by, and what they want to be able to do, and how that fits into Penn. And yet we still can't admit them because we just can't admit that many people.

The Chip Zien Show

His acclaimed starring turn in *Harmony* was cut short
by the harsh economics of Broadway musicals,
but the theater, film, and TV stalwart is still looking
ahead after seven decades in the spotlight.

By Jonathan Takiff

Chip Zien C'69 has been having senior moments. The very best kind. Repeatedly.

At the tender age of 76, he's gotten to bask in the biggest, juiciest role in his near-lifelong career as a theater, film, and television actor and singer, top-billed in Barry Manilow and Bruce Sussman's ultra-tuneful Broadway musical *Harmony*.

Painfully, the show's run abruptly ended in February—a victim of the post-holidays Broadway sales doldrums. But Zien's tour-de-force performance is still resonating in the minds and hearts of those lucky enough to have witnessed it live or relish it via the original cast album—available on streaming music services and CD. And the stage turn still seems likely to earn him a Tony nomination for “Best Lead Actor in

a Musical” when announcements come on April 30, if not the *whole megillah* when the awards are presented in June.

“This may be the best part I've ever been given,” Zien mused after an early December Sunday matinee at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. “It's a big story with a vital message. And to get this opportunity and responsibility at this stage in my life ... well, it's really been kind of overwhelming.”

First downtown and then on Broadway for a collective 170 performances, Chip Zien both stopped the show and stitched it together—singing and dancing, jesting and lamenting as the lead character, nicknamed Rabbi and officially Josef Roman Cycowski, a Polish cantor who'd rather sing secular. *Harmony* relates the true saga of the Comedian Harmonists, a globally acclaimed six-man singing and clown-

ing ensemble spawned in Weimar Germany. Zien was on stage throughout, both narrating this memory piece (as its 87-year-old, sole surviving group member) and shadowing his young adult self. And to make sure he never caught his breath, Zien also popped up—surprise!—in a variety of cameo roles portraying famous figures of the period for extra comic and dramatic effect. (As many as five “carefully choreographed” hair and costume people swarmed around him backstage to make the transitions possible, he revealed.)

Half-Jewish, half-gentile, the Comedian Harmonists were a world-class study in cultural assimilation, brotherhood, and sweet, sweet vocal harmony. The “Boy Band of their day” (as *Harmony* show marketers liked to say), they traveled well, headlining at Carnegie Hall in 1933 and



Comedian Harmonists Steven Telsey, Blake Roman, Danny Kornfeld, Eric Peters, Sean Bell, Zal Owen, and Zien as “Rabbi Emeritus” at center stage.



co-billed and performing with Josephine Baker in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1934. As their tribute tells it, the group could have carved out a permanent career in the US, but foolishly went back to Germany just as the Nazis were tightening their totalitarian grip and ramping up their Aryan purity campaign. The Harmonists were initially granted a propagandistic “pass” as cultural ambassadors and naively hoped the hatred would pass. But when they dared to mock the repressive regime in song and dance routines, their numerous recordings and films were confiscated and burned, the group forced to disband, flee into exile, or (in some family members’ cases) suffer extermination. Today, for 99.9 percent of the world’s population it’s as if this popular entertainment phenomenon never existed.

“So this is more than just the Harmonists’ story,” Zien reflected. “It’s also about a moment in history when democracy slid into a fascist dictatorship and did some of the worst things imaginable, and the Harmonists were witnesses to it. And with antisemitism rearing its ugly head again, the timing of the production seemed prescient.”

“This may be the best part I’ve ever been given.”

Long a beloved figure in the New York stage community, with more than 15 Broadway productions under his belt, Zien has enjoyed originating major roles in significant stage shows before. Most notably he played the neurotic psychiatrist Mendel in William Finn and James Lapine’s *Falsettos* (1992–93) and the story-catalyzing Baker in Stephen Sondheim and Lapine’s fairytale mashup *Into the Woods* (1987–89).

In both outings, Zien experienced the thrill of having material tooled specially to suit his talents.

“When Steve [Sondheim] came to an *Into the Woods* rehearsal to first play us ‘No More’—the show’s deepest diving, second act ballad—“my heart almost stopped,” Zien recalled. “He’d set it in my optimum singing key—*D-flat*.”

Zien was likewise a key figure in the 10-years-plus shaping of *Falsettos*, hav-

ing played principal roles in the three prior one-acts (collectively referred to as *The Marvin Trilogy*) that then coalesced into a Broadway triumph.

At nearly three decades, *Harmony*’s development saga stretched even longer, and the latest version seemed to have been reworked specifically to exploit Zien’s versatility as a brash comedian; dramatic actor; big, belting singer; and decent hooper. His plot-stitching role as the elder Rabbi (he prefers “*Rabbi Emeritus*”) didn’t even exist in earlier renderings of the show—not the regional productions in San Diego (1997), Atlanta (2013), and Los Angeles (2014), nor in celebrations of the material by *popmeister* Manilow on his 2004 *Scores* album and tour.

Zien’s character was introduced only in 2022 “after Warren Carlyle came on board as a workshop director,” he said. “That’s what the workshop was basically all about, to see if the device of having an elder narrator threading in and out of the action worked.”

Carlyle, who was already a creative collaborator of Zien’s dancer/choreographer spouse Susan Pilarre on a New York City Center “Encores” show, knew just the guy

Zien's "classic six" apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side (acquired with the help of his "fat paycheck" from voice work on notorious flop turned cult-favorite

Howard the Duck) includes plenty of memorabilia from past shows, like these dolls of the Baker (the role Zien originated) and the Baker's Wife from *Into the Woods*.

for the job. And Manilow was instantly on board. "When we first chatted by phone, Barry let me know right off that he'd enjoyed my work in multiple shows," Zien said. "My mind was blown." He had the same feeling again when struggling with radical tempo shifts on some material and Manilow graced him "with a private recording of all my parts. Him singing it through, just for me."

The workshop morphed into an intimate downtown New York showcase production in the 350-seat theater of the Museum of Jewish Heritage that ran from March through May 2022 and was very well received by critics. That paved the way for a larger-scale, \$15 million Broadway rendering, which opened last November (after a month of previews)—to a decidedly mixed bag of notices, though Zien consistently reaped praise. The *New York Post* and *Chicago Tribune* reviewers were positive, with the latter's Chris Jones calling it "an emotionally powerful musical of the greatest import." The website *New York Stage Review* gave it five stars, while *Deadline* called it "stirring and compelling." But reviews in the almighty *New York Times* and *Washington Post* were just so-so. The *Times*' Jesse Green admired the music but grouched about underdeveloped characters (not every Harmonist gets equal treatment). And he seemed to be expressing fatigue from an abundance of Jewish-themed stage productions—maybe because the critic had just finished a huge magazine piece on the subject for the Sunday *Times*?

"Jesse didn't really grasp what our show was about," Zien shrugged. "'Too much hope and not enough fear,' as our historic consultant put it. And it's a musical with a brilliant, period-appropriate, new score, written, to many people's surprise, by Barry Manilow. Actors usually have a fair assessment of the show they're in. I've been in poorly reviewed shows before, but this time [with Green's notice], I was completely taken by surprise."

In the show rewrite, Zien's Rabbi functions dramatically as the Harmonists'



most fervent celebrant and guilt-stricken conscience whose "'punishment is to never forget.' Not really a stretch given my heritage," mused this mensch of an actor. His ruthlessly bitter, remorseful, vocally taxing 11 o'clock number "Threnody" was especially gut-wrenching, literally stopped the show, and left theatergoers in tears, leading more than one reviewer to compare the moment to the iconic "Rose's Turn" from *Gypsy*.

A LIFE IN THE LIGHTS

An actor's life is not for the faint of heart, Chip Zien counsels. In a world where flops greatly outnumber hits and the competition for parts is fierce, "you need a thick skin, an even temper. Connections help—you need to meet the right people—and there's also a large element of luck. I've managed to survive when better actors have not."

Zien heaps extra praise on his supportive spouse, Susan Pilarre—a longtime (now retired) New York City Ballet dancer, instructor, and re-stager of George Balanchine classics—for broadening his purview and always endorsing his bi-coastal work choices, certainly stress-inducing as they've raised two daughters. The couple have been together since 1971, meeting just months after his arrival in New York.

It may be a key to his professional longevity that Zien clearly loves the work, the sense of adventure and discovery in the creative process, and the temporary family he gets to embrace in a production. "There are 16 Broadway first-timers in *Harmony* to tell my stories to," he shared with bemusement. "Even when a show is lacking, the camaraderie isn't ... *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* [which had an eight-month run on Broadway in

2005] “was not the kind of intimate, bou-tique, sung-through musical I normally gravitate to. The flying car was the star,” said Zien, who had a supporting role as a bumbling spy. “But backstage was such fun, a circus every night.”

“It may sound odd,” Zien added, “but the most comfortable and alive I feel all day is under the lights, especially on stage, less so in front of a camera. To me, that’s a wonderful place to be, a safe space. I know the lines yet don’t know what’s coming. I’m dependent on others. We’re all in this emotional moment, on this journey. It brings out my best, truest self.”

HIS PENN STATION

Before he got seriously down to business with acting and singing coaches, started scoring some decent (initially off-Broadway) parts, and could quit his day job selling shoes, Zien “had fears, nightmares that I’d peaked at Penn,” he confided.

For certain, those undergraduate years were ultra-supportive ones for the younger him, officially known to the University registrar as Jerome Herbert Zien though answering to any and all as “Chip,” a nickname first laid on him by his dad. No one at the *Daily Pennsylvanian* ever wrote that he was “a miserable excuse for Jimmy Durante,” as the acerbic *New York* magazine critic John Simon would when Zien made his Broadway debut at 27 in a one-night-disaster of a Samurai musical (no joke) called *Ride the Winds* in 1974.

“Mr. Simon also wrote the best thing about the show was the dog that barked on cue,” Zien said with a laugh. “Danny DeVito was smart enough to walk away after the production’s first table reading. I was not.”

While small in stature like DeVito (“then five-six, lately shrinking”), Zien was a big man on campus. He had a leadership role on the Houston Hall Board, which booked and welcomed Spring Fling/Pal-estra acts Simon & Garfunkel and the Supremes, and was also a member of the Sphinx Senior Society and Phi Epsilon Pi

fraternity. A studious history major, his initial post-Penn game plan called for “law school then maybe something government related.” Back home in Milwaukee just after graduation, Zien “ran a Congressional campaign. My guy lost by half-a-percentage point. If he’d won, I’d probably have followed and worked with him in Washington, done Georgetown Law School at night, and my life would have turned out totally different.”

But first in his heart during his time at Penn was Zien’s “ever-joyful” four-year participation in the famed musical comedy troupe Mask and Wig, which culminated in a starring role in *The Devil to Pay* and his election as the club’s chairman in his senior year. “I was the first Jewish guy ever elected to the post, in a time when I still couldn’t step foot on the Locust Walk front porches of the Saint E’s [Elmo] or Saint A’s [Anthony] fraternity houses, though a lot of those frat guys were in Mask and Wig, too.” (While chairman, Zien was also an early proponent of making Mask and Wig coed, as he wrote in a letter to the editor following the group’s decision to accept all genders starting with the 2022–23 academic year [“Gazetteer,” Jan/Feb 2022].)

Longtime Mask and Wig coproducer and historian Steve Goff C’62 remembers that Zien had special star power “even in the freshman show” and was so good in his senior show “we took the production on tour all the way to California for the first time ever. Until then, we’d never gone further west than Chicago.”

Zien’s college pal Susan Schwartz Goodrich CW’69 recalls taking a bunch of girlfriends to Mask and Wig, “and when Chip sang a romantic song called ‘A String of Pearls’ they all swooned, were begging me for an introduction, all wanted to date him.”

This writer was a fan and minor league rival, too. As codirector and performer in “The Underground,” an alternative comedy revue in the Catacombs Coffee House (in the back-end basement of the Christian Association), I secretly wished

Chip would jump ship and join our little pirate brigade. Fat chance.

“I loved everything about the Mask and Wig,” Zien recalled. “Our own little Center City clubhouse at 310 South Quince, dressing up every night in tuxedos, meeting the alums who came to see us, hanging out around the piano after the show, having a drink or snack.” The kidder sometimes fooled with the Old Guard alumni by introducing himself as “Weightman Hall, Jr.”

Another good friend and castmate, William (then Billy) Kuhn W’69, remembers how, “after the curtain came down, the show just kept going for Chip—entertaining the rest of us cast members with Broadway songs from *My Fair Lady* and *Annie Get Your Gun*.” Attuned and sympathetic to how Zien was being pulled in multiple directions, Kuhn would later make a radical career change himself, quitting the family retail business to enroll in rabbinical college in his thirties, eventually becoming Senior Rabbi of Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia. “So now I’ve been able to tell Chip how proud I am of him for finally becoming a rabbi, too,” he jokes.

“Chip was and is a trailblazer in a lot of ways,” Kuhn adds. “Mask and Wig had a lot of talented people but no one else up to Chip’s level. Such a positive, upbeat guy. Extremely witty, with a dry sense of humor, but also capable of being quite serious, an outstanding person with a lot of depth. You can see it in the range of roles he’s taken on.”

There were, however, challenges amid the acclaim at Penn. Sophomore year was an especially gloomy one for Zien, when his mother and chief cheerleader Phyllis Zien succumbed to the rare, paralyzing disease polymyositis on March 20, 1967—which was her son’s 20th birthday.

MERRILY HE ROLLED ALONG

As revealed in his one-man (plus band) cabaret show *Seriously Upbeat*—also available for your listening pleasure on music streaming services—Zien hardly

Zien and his wife, the dancer and choreographer Susan Pilarre, have been together since a few months after he arrived in Manhattan in 1971 to try his luck on the New York Stage.

fell into Mask and Wig by happenstance. He was virtually born with a song in his heart and microphone in his hands. And in his Penn years the guy “secretly harbored” dreams of a *mixed bag* career “as a nightclub singer/lawyer” who played the Copa *and* argued cases before the Supreme Court “in the offseason.”

As a single digit tyke, Zien first caught the showbiz bug from his big sister Barbara’s Broadway cast albums, memorizing entire scores and singing along in a sweet soprano voice that got his mom Phyllis thinking “this could be a good outlet” for her small, then “hobby-less” child. Becoming “as much of a stage mom as you could be in Milwaukee,” cracked Zien, Phyllis signed him up at age six to perform on a local TV show—the *Tiny Tots Talent Contest*—where the kid knocked ‘em dead singing a cowboy song, decked out in full Western regalia and shooting off cap pistols at song’s end. “My prize was a giant bag of potato chips. When the host asked what I’d do with them, I said I’d eat them for breakfast because my mom never gets up to feed me. That was a lie, but it got a big laugh—which really pumped me up and taught me that sometimes fibbing is a good thing.”

Next big stop: his summer stage debut at age nine as the half-Polynesian Jerome (a fit made even better with mom’s application of bronzer!) in Milwaukee’s Melody Top theater-in-the-round production of *South Pacific*. “My big number was ‘Dites-mois.’ The show director suggested that if I moved to New York, I could get work, and my mom said, ‘Chip, do you want to go?’—which I emphatically didn’t. I yelled *Mom, are you trying to give me away?*”

Still the stage nurturing continued. His parents—dad Allen was a heating and AC contractor “with a great sense of humor,” Zien said—sent Chip off to a boys-only overnight summer camp where there was always a big musical production. His still pre-pubescent singing voice brought him lead roles he didn’t totally relish—Eliza in *My Fair Lady*, Lola in *Damn*



Yankees, Annie in *Annie Get Your Gun*. It took a temper tantrum over the type-casting by Zien, and his mother’s intercession with the camp director, for him to finally be given a male lead, as Howard Hill in *The Music Man*.

So when Zien landed at Penn, the notion of playing female roles in Mask and Wig revues was not a totally foreign concept for him. But “Chip was too good to waste on that kitschy stuff,” said Bill Kuhn. And Steve Goff “can’t remember him ever being” in the traditional show-closing “female” kickline.

Curiously, when the new rewrite of *Harmony* first tried out downtown, Zien’s surprise cameos included a wickedly funny Marlene Dietrich impression. (Historically, the Harmonists got a big break backing her up).

Alas, when I saw the show again on Broadway 18 months later, the Dietrich

shtick was gone. “The bit got yanked four days before the first preview,” said Zien, whose other cameos included Albert Einstein and Richard Strauss. “Marlene was my favorite,” he added, “but the producer decided to cut it for what I’d call ‘political reasons.’ There had been some complaints downtown that this was an inappropriate thing for me to be doing. There were fears this could come back to haunt us.”

OFF AND RUNNING

Three law schools admitted Zien. But in the heat of the Vietnam War, Uncle Sam wanted him too. So after running that Congressional campaign, he signed up to teach sixth grade in Milwaukee (a draft-deferrable gig) and started studying for a teaching degree. Then he ended up with a draft lottery number high enough to permanently keep him out of the Army’s

clutches. After one teaching year he felt free to take up an interesting offer from a stepsister, also theatrically inclined, who was directing a company of recent University of Wisconsin grads at a “kind of dinner theater” playhouse outside Chicago. She wondered if Zien could substitute for an ailing actor as the lead character Little Chap in Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley’s intimate musical *Stop the World: I Want to Get Off*. Zien went, killed it with the show’s most-famous number, “What Kind of Fool Am I?” and then ...

“One night we went out to eat, came back to the theater and discovered it engulfed in flames,” he said. “Everyone had been living there and lost everything but our two cars. Half the cast drove to California to try their luck and were never heard from again. I went with the other half to New York City, started borrowing couches from old Penn pals and looking for work.”

Soon after, Zien fatefully managed to crash an audition for *You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown* that “was supposed to be just an Equity call-back” for previously screened Actors’ Equity-card carrying actors. “I claimed there was some misunderstanding and they let me audition.” He scored the role of Snoopy for a production at Ford’s Theater in Washington, wangled his Actors’ Equity Card in the process, and was off and running in the wonderful world of professional show business. “I continued to put off law school. Finally, after four years, the last school I was still dangling, Wisconsin, sent me a letter: ‘Mr. Zien, We’re beginning to doubt your sincerity in attending. Either come now or drop out.’ So I chose the latter.”

A LIFETIME OF GREAT STORIES

One of Zien’s *Harmony* costars, Julie Benko—who played Ruth Stern, the Jewish wife of a non-Jewish Comedian Harmonist, in the show, and also starred as Fanny Brice during the recent revival of *Funny Girl*—said working with him has been “one of the greatest experiences” in her life. “He’s such a brilliant actor,”

Benko said. “He’s so funny but then he just rips your heart out. ... To watch him and learn from him and collaborate with him has been the gift of a lifetime.”

Zien has lots to share offstage as well as on. Even disasters have their bright side, he believes.

The guy still gets giggly over the night at *Into the Woods* when “the smoke machine wouldn’t quit, and the entire theater had to be evacuated.”

Or his scary first night as a cast replacement in *Les Misérables*, when Zien called another character by the wrong name “and no one would help me out of the predicament. There were ‘dead’ characters lying on the stage, shaking with stifled laughter.”

After a chance 1974 encounter near Bloomingdale’s—where it turned out their ballet dancer wives knew each other—Dustin Hoffman offered a then-new-on-the-scene Zien a great learning experience as a dramatic actor, understudying several roles (and briefly touring) in a show Hoffman was directing called *All Over Town*. “When we were first introduced, Dustin asked me what I did and I sheepishly said, ‘I work nights. I couldn’t bring myself to say I was an actor.’”

When he was cast as a nervous, irascible film producer in an all-star 2008 revival of Clifford Odets’ *The Country Girl*, director Mike Nichols gave Zien some practical advice: “Just vary your delivery from slow to fast, soft to loud and you’ve got the makings of a great performance.”

Zien was reluctant to step into the role of tap-dancing (and terminally ill) bookkeeper Otto Kringlein in the musical version of *Grand Hotel* but loved every night of his two-year stint in 1990–92. He credits staging master Tommy Tune “for coming up with moves that let me pass for a dancer, though my wife would dispute that achievement.”

SCREEN GEMS (AND RHINESTONES)

While mock-bemoaning that no one’s ever let him “play tall”—maybe code for being a leading man—Zien has long been

in demand as a utility player in TV and film roles that call for brash (or quiet) authority, comic cynicism, high anxiety, or all the above—often with a hearty dose of Jewish ethnocentricity.

“When I finished my last indie film *Simchas and Sorrows*” in 2022, in which he played the devout father of a son about to take a gentile wife, Zien said, “I swore to myself I wasn’t going to take any more elderly Jewish guy roles. Then *Harmony* came along and how could I turn this down?”

On the small screen, his favorite gig was as a glib, neurotic, chauvinistic scriptwriter on the mid-1990s CBS sitcom *Almost Perfect*. Premised on a female-led creative team writing a TV cop show, the comedy died a premature death halfway through the second season after network interference caused the show’s high ratings to plummet, he said. Zien also played a hard-bitten DA on *Cagney & Lacey* made-for-TV movies, a slick ad agency exec on NBC’s *Love, Sidney*, and a noxious gossip columnist on the daytime soap opera *All My Children*, among many other TV roles.

On the big screen Zien exuded confidence as the president’s chief of staff (and relished shooting scenes with Denzel Washington) in *The Siege* (1998), and that same year played a pugnacious sports agent helping cover up a major military/industry scandal in Brian DePalma’s *Snake Eyes*, going nose-to-nose with crime investigator Nicholas Cage. “I thought I was on a film career roll then,” he said, “but for some reason the train stopped.”

Zien didn’t actually appear in his most infamous film role, as the voice of the titular *Howard the Duck* in the rare George Lucas/Marvel movie flop of 1986. “A casting director came backstage to the La Jolla Playhouse where I was doing the first revised version of *Merrily We Roll Along*,” Zien recalled. “She said I had a voice that could pass for a duck, and would I like to audition to be the voice of Howard. Initially I was offended, then found out everyone in town was vying

for the part.” Zien initially lost out to Robin Williams, but the comedian/actor quit after a few frustrating days on the job and Zien got the call back.

“My first few days, I didn’t really think it was good either,” he said. And there was no way to fix the dry, often humorless dialogue, as the animated duck’s mouth moves had already been filmed. But he “eventually convinced myself it was the greatest thing ever,” he said, “what I now diagnose as my Howard the Duck Syndrome.”

The critics were cruel, the public stayed away in droves, “but decades later the movie became a cult hit with a new generation of 12-year-old Marvel comic fans. And the fat paycheck from Lucasfilm covered the down payment for a ‘classic six,’” Zien said, referring to the Upper West Side apartment he has shared ever since with Susan and their two now grown daughters.

Zien’s film career has also suffered from having some of his “best parts” left on the cutting room floor. In the 2006 9/11 docudrama *United 93*, you’ll find him pivotal to the plot but with virtually no dialogue as the passenger in first-class whose throat is cut by a terrorist.

In a decorative but flimsy 1994 flick about Dorothy Parker and the Algonquin Roundtable, *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*, Zien played powerful newspaper columnist Franklin P. Adams. But in the final edit he was mostly reduced to looking dapper, smoking a cigar. “The director Alan Rudolph came up to me before the first screening and confided, ‘Several actors are going to be very upset tonight because their parts have been slashed to the bone.’ I foolishly presumed he wasn’t talking about me!”

While the dark film comedy about elderly people seeking euthanasia, *Grace Quigley*, proved no laughing matter to critics, Zien (who played a psychiatrist) loved hanging out with its stars Nick Nolte and Katharine Hepburn—especially watching and learning from Hepburn in what would be her penultimate screen role. “After one take, the director

said to her, ‘That was a little fancy.’ So the next take, she made her performance smaller and more simple and more powerful. I’m still working on doing that.”

Zien also had private time with the Hollywood legend. “Kate insisted on meeting anyone she was doing scenes with, so I was invited to her New York brownstone,” he recalled. “We went into the garden—this amazing inner courtyard shared by the whole block of townhouses, like walking back into 1938. She said, ‘Do you know who my neighbor is? His name is Stephen Sondheim, and he’s a horrible person because he plays his piano at three in the morning. One night I climbed his rose trellis and pounded on the glass and shouted, ‘Stop playing!’”

Not long after, Zien got to visit Sondheim’s residence to go over material, again found himself in the shared courtyard, and asked the question in reverse, pointing to Hepburn’s place: “Do you know who lives *there*?”

“‘It’s the witch next door!’ Steve belted. That line later worked itself into *Into the Woods*, uttered by my wonderful stage partner Joanna Gleason,” Zien said.

CODA

“Closing shows is really complicated. Every time is a little different. This one really hurts,” Zien shared, shortly after producers sprung the February 4 closing on the *Harmony* cast.

Just a few weeks prior the money guys had predicted the run would last “until the Tony Awards”—and then hopefully get a big sales bump from their show exposure and victories. The *Harmony* score is likewise a strong Tony candidate. “I hate the whole ‘nomination disease’ that infiltrates every production at every level,” Zien grumbled. “On the other hand, I’d really like to win.”

Hindsight is 20/20. But what if *Harmony* had followed the popular practice of opening in the spring to be closer to the Tonys? Could they have advertised it differently? “Many people believed they were coming to see a show about a BOY BAND

A Zien Sampler

Want to belatedly catch up on Chip

Zien’s career? A video recording of *Harmony* is available for free, in-person viewing at the New York Public Library For the Performing Arts’ Theatre and Film Archive at Lincoln Center (nypl.org/locations/lpa/theatre-film-and-tape-archive). The original 1987 stage production of *Into the Woods* is ready for renting on the streaming sites BroadwayHD, Prime Video, and Vudu Fandango.

Almost *Perfect* episodes are available on YouTube. Zien’s “Cagney and Lacey” made-for-TV movie turn—*True Convictions* and *The View Through the Glass Ceiling*—are on free, ad-supported streaming services including Tubi and Roku Channel. His feature film appearances are all accessible on pay-per-view streaming services. —JT

singing Barry Manilow songs,” ruminated Zien in a late-night email (because he was trying to save his voice for the final performances). “It was a conscious decision to push that simple idea to the exclusion of so many deeper issues.”

On the upside, Zien has now established himself as a mature persona who can carry a show on his shoulders, though he modestly characterizes it as a team effort. And what’s next “is always a pleasant possibility. I’m not retiring ... though being 76 does make it harder. Harder to maintain your body, harder to maintain your voice. I wonder, how many shows can I do? Might this be *it*?”

Tony Randall once counseled Zien that, “If, in an entire career you get a couple Broadway shows, maybe three, where you get to introduce a really great role, consider yourself lucky.”

With Mendel, the Baker, and now Rabbi, Chip Zien has clearly been there, done that.

Jonathan Takiff C’68 is a longtime entertainment reporter/critic.

Emily Wilson's new translation of the *Iliad* brings the strange and brutal beauty of Homer's world into the English-speaking now.

By Stephanie McCarter

No poetry is as famous as the Homeric epics. To translate them is an act of creative daring that Emily Wilson, professor of classical studies in the School of Arts and Sciences, has now performed not once, but twice. Wilson is a translator of long standing who came to particular prominence in 2017 upon the publication of her celebrated English translation of the *Odyssey* ["An Odyssey for Our Time," Mar|Apr 2018]. She has now crafted a brilliant new translation of the *Iliad* (published in September) that captures Homer's thematic and tonal multiplicity while steadfastly maintaining his formal poetics. The result is an *Iliad* that feels—as Homer always should—beautiful and horrific, familiar and strange at once.

Wilson made the *Odyssey* sing anew largely because of the unyielding constraints she set for herself. She kept to the same number of lines as the Greek original, while also transforming Homer's dactylic hexameter into iambic pentameter, the traditional meter of English epic. The result was an *Odyssey* that moved readers with its concision and accessibility, and that felt alive in the present despite being composed with a metrical regularity more suggestive of Early Modern works such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In the *Iliad*, Wilson retains regular iambic pentameter while breaking free of the line-by-line constraint, a welcome choice that gives her more space to flex her poetic muscles.

One impetus for this change was Wilson's desire to retain Homer's use of patronymics, which must be spelled out at greater length in English than in Greek. Achilles, for instance, is the "son of Peleus," and Agamemnon and Menelaus the "sons of Atreus." Such patronymics, and the famous lineage they

signify, are a key facet of the *kleos*, "glory" or (as Wilson translates it) "name," for which Homeric heroes fight and die. Lineage is especially important in Book Two's "Catalogue of Ships," a famous enumeration of the Greek forces that comes unexpectedly to life in Wilson's rendition. When she reaches the Epeans, she gives herself space to tease out a two-line parade of patronymics:

[T]heir leaders were
Amphimachus, the son of Cteatus,
and Thalpius, the son of Eurytus –
who both were sons of Actor ...

In other versions, these names form an impenetrable tangle. For instance, Richmond Lattimore's 1951 translation:

Of two tens Thalpios and Amphimachos were leaders,
of Aktor's seed, sons one of Kteatos, one of Eurytos.

The clarity of Wilson's version brings these minor characters into sharper focus, and the astute reader might just recognize this Amphimachus 11 books later when Hector's spear pierces and kills him: "it struck Amphimachus, / the son of Cteatus, the son of Actor, / as he was running to the battlefield." Amphimachus obtains *kleos* through his brave death, yet this is also the moment when his glorious lineage, now twice told, comes to a brutal end.

Wilson's metrical regularity replicates some of Homer's formal features like never before, such as epithets. Such formulaic phrases—the "wine-dark sea" or "rosy-fingered dawn"—are features of the epic's original oral composition that acted as metrical "building blocks" to aid the composing bard.



These often, but not always, appear at the same place in the poetic line. An example of this in Greek is *podarkēs dios Akhil-leus*, a phrase that Wilson puts to the same metrical use as Homer, often employing it to occupy the first three-and-a-half feet:

swift-footed Lord Achilles stood and spoke
swift-footed Lord Achilles said to him
swift-footed Lord Achilles scowled and said

We also see the metricality of epithets in phrases such as “master strategist” to describe Odysseus, or “master of the war cry” to describe Menelaus or Diomedes. This fundamental Homeric feature is lost in translations that pay less rigorous attention to meter.

The great success of Wilson’s highly readable epic style is that she can achieve elevated poetry without making it excessively flowery, archaic, or overworked. Her clear expression lets her poetic devices shine through to great effect. We get a sensory experience of Homeric battle when, for instance, Diomedes hurls his spear at Hector in Book Eleven:

The spear struck Hector’s head,
the top part of his helmet. But it failed
to reach his handsome skin. Bronze beat back bronze –
the triple-layered helmet with its visor,
given to Hector by Apollo, saved him.

Wilson’s poetic skill here combines with Homer’s. The “h” and “b” alliteration picks up alliteration present in the Greek (*plankhthē d’ apo khalkophi khalkos*). Yet the spondees (bronze beat back bronze) that slow the spear’s strike are of Wilson’s own clever devising.

Wilson’s best poetry, like Homer’s, comes at some of the most gruesome moments, when the body breaks under violence, as in the death of the minor character Erymas:

Then Idomeneus
struck Erymas across the mouth. The spear
of pitiless bronze drove right up through his brain
and shattered his white skull, shook out his teeth,
and filled both eyes with blood. His mouth gaped wide
and spurted blood. Blood gushed out of his nostrils.
Then death’s black cloud wrapped round and covered him.

Compare Robert Fagles’ 1990 translation:

Idomeneus skewered Erymas straight through the mouth,
the merciless brazen spearpoint raking through,
up under the brain to split his glistening skull –
teeth shattered out, both eyes brimmed to the lids
with a gush of blood and both nostrils spurting,

mouth gaping, blowing convulsive sprays of blood
and death’s dark cloud closed down around his corpse.

Poetic taste is subjective, but to me so much of the scene’s power gets lost in Fagles’ ornate language—“glistening” for the straightforward *leuka* (“white”), “convulsive sprays” for *prēse*, (“gushed”)—or in his additions, such as “corpse,” which has no parallel in the Greek. Whereas Fagles leans on verbal exuberance to achieve pathos, Wilson’s translation is pared down, instead exploiting rhetorical devices such as alliteration (shattered ... shook; cloud ... covered; wrapped round), enjambment (and spurted blood), and repetition (blood ... blood ... blood), all of which have parallels in the Greek. In Fagles, violence comes across as somehow larger than life, whereas in Wilson war’s beauty is tied, more disturbingly, and intrinsically, to its unprettified horror.

Wilson also gets the tone right when translating the scenes of divine comedy that throw the unfolding human tragedy into relief. The *Iliad* is generally not a poem that makes me laugh, but I had to guffaw when, in Book Fourteen, Zeus delivers a catalogue of his sexual escapades to his wife Hera as she seduces him. Here again Wilson uses meter to great effect, capturing the metrical refrain *oud’ hote* (“not even when”) that runs through the Greek. Over and over Zeus tells Hera he has never wanted any woman as much as he wants her:

Not even when I wanted Danae ...
Not even when I lusted for the famous Europa ...
Not even when I wanted Semele ...
not even when I wanted famous Leto,
not even when I wanted you yourself ...

This over-the-top repetition captures Zeus’ mounting desire, but it gets lost in other translations, such as Stanley Lombardo’s: “Not even when I fell for Ixion’s wife, ... / Or Danae ... / Or the daughter of far-famed Phoenix ... / Or Semele,” and so on.

Sometimes Wilson wisely pulls back from overly literal renderings that would fall flat in a contemporary poem, particularly when women are described. The enslaved women Chryseis and Briseis, for instance, are both given the compound epithet *kalliparēios*, literally “beautiful-cheeked.” In Lattimore, this becomes the verbose “of the fair cheeks,” whereas Fagles dilutes it, with “in all her beauty.” Wilson gets this just right with “fresh-faced.” Similarly, in Book Nine, Patroclus’s own war captive Iphis is *euzōnos*, “well-girdled.” This literal translation nowadays evokes supportive undergarments, whereas the “girdle” in antiquity was more of a sash or belt. Translators tie themselves into knots trying to capture this: “sashed and lovely” (Fagles), “Iphis of the fine sashes” (Peter Green, 2015), “fair-belted” (Caroline Alexander, 2015). Wilson rightly lets literalism go and simply calls Iphis “well-dressed.”

A good translation will always make us rethink what we thought we knew, an experience I had repeatedly while reading Wilson's *Iliad*. I knew, of course, that the Greeks hated Paris, the Trojan prince who brought Helen to Troy and thereby started the war. Wilson excels at translating the insults they launch at him, as when Diomedes calls him a *parthenopipēs* ("spyer-on-girls") who is *kerai aglaē*, "splendid with his top-knot" (not a hairstyle Greek warriors sported). Lattimore's Diomedes describes Paris here as "lovely in your locks, eyer of young girls"—hardly the trash talk it is meant to be. In Wilson, Diomedes disparages Paris instead as a "sleazy flirt" and "cocky in your silly hairstyle," contemporary language that puts the sting back into these insults.

What did not fully come home to me before reading Wilson's translation, however, is how much the Trojans share Diomedes's assessment, especially one Trojan: Hector, who disdains Paris for failing to live up to the warrior code—to fight bravely in exchange for honor—that he himself prizes. I had never fully felt how involved Hector is in the enforcement of such masculinity. And *this* is what kills him. "Be men!" is his battle cry. Hector attacks Paris with even more venom than Diomedes does:

"Pathetic Paris! Womanizer! Cheat!
You are the very best at looking pretty.
Oh, how I wish that you had never lived
or died unmarried. That would be far better
than life as such an object of contempt."

Wilson's markedly gendered "the best at looking pretty" (*eidos ariste*) captures how Hector's assault feminizes Paris, especially when mere lines later he refers to Helen too using the related term *eueides* ("pretty"), a parallel Wilson keeps. Hector's language is unflinchingly the language of shame, his worldview one that cannot see beyond the cultural parameters he has inherited.

Nowhere is this clearer than in his exchange with his wife Andromache in Book Six, an exchange that, to many, turns Hector into something of a romantic figure fighting to protect his wife and child—someone we can root for and identify with. Wilson's translation, however, illuminates how his allegiance to the warrior code ultimately trumps his familial obligations. As she states in her introduction, "Hector loves his wife. He genuinely minds that she will be widowed and enslaved. But he does not mind enough to risk his honor." Wilson's verbal choices underscore this side of Hector:

"Woman, I care about all these things too.
But I feel overwhelming shame in front of
the Trojan women in their trailing dresses
and Trojan men, if I shrink back from war
as if I were a coward. And my spirit
tells me I must not stop, for I have learned
always to be a warrior and fight ...

Contrast Fagles' rendering, which adds padding to Homer's Greek that softens Hector's warrior mentality:

"All this weighs on my mind too, dear woman.
But I would die of shame to face the men of Troy
and the Trojan women trailing their long robes
if I would shrink from battle now, a coward.
Nor does the spirit urge me on that way.
I've learned it all too well. To stand up bravely,
always to fight in the front ranks of the Trojan soldiers ...

In Fagles, Homer's simple *gynai*, "woman," becomes "dear woman," while *emathōn* ("I have learned") gets the addendum "all too well," as if such inculturation now elicits Hector's regret. Wilson more accurately captures the deadly impasse to which the warrior code brings these fighters. Whereas Achilles vocally rejects it, killing those he loves in the process, Hector never questions it, and this too will bring death to those he loves. Wilson's Hector well and truly breaks my heart.

No two translators, of course, will ever agree entirely. Yet even when I might disagree with Wilson's choices, they are unfailingly interesting. One example comes when she gives English names to Hector's horses: "Now Swiftfoot, Blondie, Flame, and godlike Sparkle" (a line that Audra McDonald delivers with sheer virtuosity on the audiobook). "Sparkle," her rendering of the Greek *Lampus* ("shining," whence the English "lamp"), seems a bit more fitting for a child's My Little Pony doll than a war horse. On X, formerly known as Twitter, Wilson herself has admitted she "knew those adorable horse names would be controversial," playfully calling this perhaps her worst line, perhaps her best. Yet it is true that something arresting is called for in this moment. The battlefield constantly flashes with light reflected off weapons and armor. These men want to shine—yes, even to *sparkle*—in battle, and Hector cannot resist anything that glitters. Later, after he puts on the armor of Achilles that he strips from Patroclus's corpse, he too "sparkles," (*lampomenos*), though unfortunately Wilson does not bring out that parallel. Still, her attentiveness to such language nicely shows how these warriors continually rush toward death in pursuit of the most shimmering prizes.

Wilson's *Iliad* does what all the best translations do. It gives a deep, compelling reading of the original in language that bridges the temporal divide between us and the epic's distant past. Her poetics make us lean in and confront the strange and brutal beauty of Homer's world, so like and unlike our own, so that we laugh, despair, wince, and weep at all the right moments. This *Iliad* is unmistakably an ancient poem, yet one thoroughly at home in the English-speaking now.

Stephanie McCarter is a professor of classical languages at Sewanee: The University of the South.

Calendar

Annenberg Center

pennlivearts.org

DakhaBrakha Mar. 3

Ladysmith Black Mambazo Mar. 9

Rennie Harris Puremovement

American Street Dance Theatre

Mar. 22–23

Orquesta Akokán Apr. 12

Alarm Will Sound Apr. 14

MOMIX Apr. 19–20

Ruth Naomi Floyd Apr. 25

Arthur Ross Gallery

arthurrossgallery.org

open Tues.–Sun.

Barbara Earl Thomas:

The Illuminated Body

Through May 21

ICA

icaphila.org

Dominique White and

Alberta Whittle: Sargasso Sea

Tomashi Jackson:

Across the Universe

Both through Jun. 2

Above: Tomashi Jackson, *Here at the Western World (Professor Windham's Early 1970's Classroom & the 1972 Second Baptist Church Choir)*, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Tilton Gallery.

Kelly Writers House

writing.upenn.edu/wh

Ariel Djanikian C'04, Dan Finkel C'19

G'20, Sanaë Lemoine C'11, & Alicia

Oltuski C'06 G'06 Mar. 19

Harryette Mullen (reading) Apr. 1

Harryette Mullen (conversation) Apr. 2

The American Poet Laureate:

Conversation with Amy Paeth

and Robert Casper Apr. 3

Reginald Dwayne Betts (reading) Apr. 15

Maggie Nelson (reading) Apr. 29

Maggie Nelson (conversation) Apr. 30

Penn Libraries

library.upenn.edu

Time of Change: Civil Rights

Photography of Bruce Davidson

Through May 20

Victorian Maximalism in

Wallpaper Design Through Apr. 19

Revolutionary Aesthetics: Afterlives
of Central American Insurgency

Through May 24

Penn in the Field: Student Fieldwork
Photography Through Aug. 31

Penn Museum

penn.museum

Ancient Food & Flavor:

Special Exhibition (ongoing)

Earliest Hunters in the Mountains
of South America (lecture) Mar. 6

Foragers (film) Mar. 10

Digs & Dice: Let's Play Senet Mar. 21

The Decline and Fall of Classic

Maya Culture: New Finds and

Perspectives Apr. 3

Digs & Dice: Let's Play Koi-Koi Apr. 18

Daily Fare and Sacred Offerings

in Classical Greece May 1

World Café Live

worldcafelive.com

Koo Koo Mar. 2

The Moth StorySLAM: Dazzled Mar. 5

Sid Sriram Mar. 6

Maddie Zahm Mar. 7

Pub Choir Mar. 8

John Byrne Band Mar. 9

Anthony Green Mar. 12

Mason Ramsey Mar. 15

Jeremy Dutcher Mar. 19

Voices of Philly Soul:

Ladies Edition Mar. 21

The Feelies Mar. 22

Angie MacMahon Mar. 23

Ana Tijoux Mar. 26

Sam Barber Mar. 27

Fatoumata Diawara Mar. 28

Josiah and The Bonnevilles Mar. 29

Clap Your Hands Say Yeah Mar. 30

The Strumbellas Apr. 4

Black Violin Apr. 5

Ben Vaughn Quintet Apr. 12

Robyn Hitchcock Apr. 24

The Hip Abduction Apr. 26

Everything Is Illuminated

At the Arthur Ross Gallery, Barbara Earl Thomas presents Black bodies as transcendent eruptions of light.



“Bodies are like lamps: they are the thing that lights the way. The light of the world comes through the body.”

So declares Barbara Earl Thomas, a Seattle-based visual artist whose larger-than-life figurative cut-paper composi-

tions are the star attraction of an Arthur Ross Gallery exhibition that opened in mid-February and runs through May 21—right after Alumni Weekend. It’s the third and final stop for *The Illuminated Body*, which was organized by the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia,

and curated by Chrysler’s Carolyn Swan Needell. The Penn iteration, supported by a grant from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, is augmented by programming including a multimedia music performance by Grammy-nominated cellist Seth Parker Woods (presented on April 11 in collaboration with Penn Live Arts), as well as a site-specific installation converting a portion of the gallery into an immersive “Transformation Room” inspired by the marginalia of illuminated religious manuscripts.

Born in 1948, Thomas has long made use of Biblical stories, history, folklore, music, and literature to explore and interrogate “the stories we tell as Americans about who we are.” She has often been drawn to dark themes, such as the racial dimensions of guilt, innocence, sin, and redemption. She described a recent 13-month solo exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum as an attempt to portray “the apocalypse we live in now and narrate how life goes on in midst of the chaos.” But *The Illuminated Body* is an ode to the creativity and resilience of heroes both public and personal.

In layered paper assemblages up to four-and-a-half feet tall or wide, she depicts her Black subjects—artists, writers, musicians, and friends—as silhouettes of black construction paper intricately incised to reveal background layers of luminous color which form facial features and clothing details. Floral motifs abound, and her subjects are frequently graced by hummingbirds and tiny detonations of imaginary fire. The jewel-toned colors seem to pulse and glow, as though the works have been mounted on light boxes. But that’s an illusion fostered by hand-printed color gradients, observes Emily Zimmerman, the Arthur Ross Gallery’s interim director of exhibitions and programs. The effect resembles a sort of inverse of traditional stained glass (another medium Thomas is known for), in which skin is represented by ironwork while its boundaries and features appear in dazzling bursts of light.

In an accompanying exhibition catalog, Thomas likens the human body to "a sculptural form that carries its own light emitted in gestures, movements, sighs, and whispers that spill out into the cracks and fissures of the world." She presents her portraits as "opportunities to move past the skin of our outlines and into the shared light that joins us."

"Move past the skin of our outlines and into the shared light that joins us."

"Through this exhibition, I wanted to bring to life the idea that despite the challenges we face in modern day society, we find joy," she said. "The media often portrays Black people as constantly plagued by calamity. *The Illuminated Body* shows the other side—where strength and hope live."

The figurative works are complemented by smaller sand-blasted glass vessels and a towering and immersive "Transformation Room" whose walls Thomas fashioned from tall sheets of cut Tyvek. The artist also created new panels to overlay the gallery's windows, tracing motifs suggestive of Ottoman architecture.

"I'm influenced by moments in history when weapons are exhausted and the cello player appears in the midst of a war-torn Bosnian landscape to play his instrument to no one in particular," Thomas writes in the catalog, "sending out sound waves not unlike the voices of plague-worn Italians who took to balconies singing; not unlike freedom singers outside an Alabama jail; not unlike the songs of men bound together in a chain gang, syncopated to the metronome of cracking hard rock; not unlike the sequences of dialogue in an August Wilson play or a Charles Johnson novel that capture the meaning of a post-Jim Crow generation and narrate how we've arrived in this place and survived."—*TP*



Cardboard, Chicken Wire, and the Oxford Comma

The Angry Grammarian sings.

For about 15 years, on and off, Jeffrey Barg C'02 GCP'10 GFA'10 has written a newspaper column called the Angry Grammarian. If that sounds unlikely, this spring casts Philadelphia's leading (only?) arbiter of apostrophes in an even more improbable role—as writer and impresario of *The Angry Grammarian: The Musical*. The decade-long dream, for which Barg wrote the music and lyrics, is coming to fruition with a little help from Penn friends. The show is being put on by Pier Players Theatre Company, cofounded by Chelsea Cylinder C'17, with Noah Lee EAS'19 as the technical director and Jamie Warlick C'18 stage managing. The titular role will be played by Ben Behrend C'16. Performances run from March 7 to March 16 at Theatre Exile in Philadelphia. *Gazette* senior editor Trey Popp caught up with Barg in January to ask him a few questions.

When and how did you originate your alter ego as the Angry Grammarian?

It was around 2007, when I was an editor for the *Philadelphia Weekly*. Riding on the coattails of heroes like Lynne Truss and William Safire, I pitched a weekly column about grammar, language, and punctuation. All my colleagues thought it was a terrible idea. But they let me try it anyway, and it turns out there's a larger audience for a grammar column than one might think. I decided to start turning it into a musical in 2014, and in 2018 I rebooted the column for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, where it's been running ever since.

Whence the anger? And would the AG, let's call him, have scorned or



applauded a verbless question beginning with the word *whence*?

Whence *your* anger? Usually the expression “If you’re not angry, you’re not paying attention” applies to, shall we say, weightier matters, but language is important too. And it’s not just me: just a few months ago, a study in the *Journal of Neurolinguistics* found that for some people, when they encounter a sentence with bad grammar, their bodies have a physiological reaction similar to if they’re being chased by a tiger. Heart rates change. Stress increases. In other words: there’s a good reason why we’re like this. As for “whence,” it’s precise and concise, and old words are fun. So you’re in the clear.

Grammar has a curious capacity to rouse passions. Has writing a

combative column about it led to any memorable arguments or exchanges over the years?

Oh yeah. I usually use grammar and language as a lens to comment on news and politics. Depending on the week, my inbox can become a fetid cesspool of prejudice and hate. Readers tend to disagree with my politics more than they disagree with my grammar, but I get plenty of vitriol for both. Perhaps no topic has aroused more passion than the question of how many spaces—one or two?—follow a period. The correct answer is one; the word processors that we all use automatically insert extra space after a period, so if you put two manual spaces in addition to that, you’re left with gaping white holes on your page. But most people learned two spaces on monospaced typewriters, and that’s a hard habit to break. So of course one of the songs in the musical is called “The Right Space,” and it tackles that very problem.

How did you get the idea that grammar could form the basis of a musical—and a romantic comedy, no less?

Back in the early days of the column, I did a short-lived, not-very-good Angry Grammarian podcast. Like a lot of the internet in the 2000s, it was weird and formless: one week I’d interview an author, and the next I’d walk around Philadelphia asking if anyone could spell *Schuylkill*. There were a few weeks when I wrote grammatical parodies of popular songs, which were always fun for me. One day my old college friend Ben Kamine C’05, with whom I’d done theater, asked if I thought the Angry Grammarian could be the basis of a musical. Remembering those parodies, I thought it could. And what could be more romantic than grammar? The show isn’t autobiographical, but back in my 20s, I may or may not have written about language to try to get dates.

You cast a younger Penn alum, Ben Behrend, as the title character. What made him right for the role?

The Angry Grammarian is kind of a jerk, but you need to root for him, and Ben brings this immense likability. Plus he has a killer singing voice.

It's hard to imagine something more challenging to pitch to a producer or theater troupe than a musical about grammar. How did you manage to bring this to fruition, and what advice would you have for anyone else with a longshot idea for turning an offbeat passion into a play?

It was a lot of telling anyone who would listen about the idea, and being confident in the work and in my collaborators. We did a couple development workshops that helped improve the show, and—just like a grammar column had a bigger audience than my old colleagues predicted—I'm hopeful that the same will be true of a grammar musical. Some people are drawn in by the language hook, but the themes of finding connection and understanding how we communicate with each other are universal. Plus—and this isn't true everywhere, but it's one of my favorite things about Philly—the traditional rules of cultural gatekeeping don't really apply here. If you want to make a show in Philly, you can just do it—you don't have to get “permission.” Pier Players, the company putting on the show, is a young company of friends who just decided they wanted to make theater together, and they're leading the fundraising. Theater rentals are relatively affordable, and theater people are really good at taking cardboard and chicken wire and turning it into art.

At the risk of courting a spoiler alert, does the Grammarian find true love? And is he still angry?

I won't spoil it, but I will say that by the end, he understands that love isn't the only important thing he was looking for. He's still angry, but it's a more productive anger.

Sundered Union

A tumultuous 19th-century divorce trial spotlighting adultery and abortion opens a window on social shifts roiling post-Civil War America.

By Julia M. Klein

In late 1865, in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, a less sanguinary battle was exposing the unseemly underbelly of a New York high-society marriage. But the combatants in the Mary and Peter Strong divorce case were not just tabloid-worthy. The volley of charges they exchanged in the courtroom involved issues—marital roles, adultery, abortion, child custody—that still resonate today.

Such is the premise of Barbara Weisberg CW'68's cleverly titled book, *Strong Passions: A Scandalous Divorce in Old New York*, published in February. “The Strong's divorce demonstrated to a society at war with itself that the ‘perfect union’ was as much a fiction in marriage as it had proved to be for the nation, an analogy that did not escape Americans at the time,” Weisberg writes.

Hailing from socially elite, moneyed families, both Mary Stevens and Peter Strong initially seemed well-matched. But the marriage grew strained, and after the death of their youngest child Mary confessed to having an affair with Peter's brother Edward. She was pregnant at the time. She later charged that her husband not only compelled her to have an abortion, but had an affair with the abortionist. It was, for the mid-19th century, an uncommonly steamy brew of the illegal and the transgressive.

For the estranged Strong's, divorce seemed inevitable. But it was difficult to obtain. Divorce in 1860s New York re-



Strong Passions:
A Scandalous Divorce
in Old New York
By Barbara Weisberg CW'68
W. W. Norton & Company,
336 pages, \$28.99

quired a finding of adultery. And if both spouses were deemed to have been adulterous, Weisberg observes, no divorce could be granted. Custody arrangements generally favored the father. But prior to the trial Mary had absconded with the younger of their two daughters, and her whereabouts remained unknown.

The Strong's “encompassed and were a vehicle for discussing so many stories that touched women's lives,”

Weisberg says. “But, also, the characters seemed to me to prefigure a lot of our great 19th-century literature,” including the novels of Henry James and Edith Wharton, who was a younger cousin of Mary Strong. The complicated web of adultery and betrayal in the Strong case was “the kind of raw material they worked with.”

Drawing on newspapers, family letters, diaries, and other archival sources, Weisberg recreates both the historical backdrop of the Strong marriage and its aftermath. But the book's centerpiece is an intimate daily chronicle of the divorce case, as well as Peter Strong's earlier manslaughter trial for allegedly forcing his wife to have an abortion. The trials offered, Weisberg writes, “a series of overlapping narratives,” with clashing perspectives and disputed facts.

In a starred review, *Publishers Weekly* called *Strong Passions* “a page-turning glimpse into the lives of 19th-century New York's upper crust.” The 19th cen-

tury is familiar territory for Weisberg, an American Civilization major at Penn. She covered the same time period in her 2004 biography *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism* ["Briefly Noted," Jan/Feb 2005].

A poet who studied with Allen Ginsberg, Weisberg also has published four books for children and young adults. A former television producer, she cocreated the 1980s sitcom *Charles in Charge*. She lives in upstate New York with her husband, David Black, a journalist, author, and screenwriter.

Weisberg stumbled on the Strong story while researching the Fox biography, when she encountered the diary of Peter Strong's lawyer cousin George Templeton Strong at the New-York Historical Society. "I consider him the American Samuel Pepys," she says, referring to the celebrated 17th-century British diarist. In *Strong Passions*, she calls the journal "an extraordinary window into New York life."

Her initial idea was to write a biography of George Strong. But in reading the diary, she "came across the tragedy of his cousin [Peter]," Weisberg says. "For a number of years, I would dip in and out of that material, until I felt like I was almost living with those people." Waylaid at times by other projects, she spent about a decade completing *Strong Passions*.

A quotation from an Edith Wharton short story serves as an epigraph to the introduction and suggests one of the book's takeaways. "Was not all morality based on a convention?" Wharton wrote. "What was the staunchest code of ethics but a trunk with a series of false bottoms?"

In other words, morality is mutable. "We talk about issues of family life being embedded either in the Constitution or in the Bible or in natural law," Weisberg says. "And when you look at how these things have boomeranged back and forth, you realize that that simply can't be the foundation of these arguments."

One convention that was starting to gain acceptance at the time of the Strong trial, Weisberg says, was the notion of

using "the best interests of the child" to determine custody arrangements. Other social norms, too, seemed to be shifting. Both adultery and abortion were still illegal, though rarely punished. And it was "a time of significant confusion and transition in the relationship between men and women," Weisberg writes.

Both *Talking to the Dead* and *Strong Passions* entailed unsolved mysteries. In the case of the Strong, Weisberg says, "what most intrigues me is why, in heaven's name, did Mary go off and have an affair with her brother-in-law?" In his diary, George Strong had called her "straitlaced & stately." Weisberg speculates that Mary, accustomed to the bustle of the city, might not have enjoyed living in then-rural Queens with Peter's family. "She probably was strong-willed, and not thrilled about that."

Edward, a widower, was living in the same house. Weisberg raises the claim, made at trial, that the relationship might have involved coercion. "Was it a love affair?" she wonders. "Or did Edward exert pressure on her?"

Peter was acquitted of manslaughter in the earlier trial after the prosecution unaccountably failed to subpoena a key witness. It remains unclear whether he ever had a sexual relationship with Electa Potter, the alleged abortion doctor. Weisberg doubts it, and the jury in the Strong case could not agree. Only two jurors were convinced of the affair, while all 12 found Mary guilty of adultery.

The hung jury on Mary's countersuit left the Strong married, however unhappily. It took private negotiations and a decision by a court-appointed referee to finally secure their divorce.

"It's not possible really to do more than speculate on some of these mysteries, which is what I do," Weisberg says. "There are many possible interpretations of what is going on in this story," and those "elements of unknowability ... captured my attention." Readers are left to draw their own conclusions.

Briefly Noted



MY LIFE IN PAPER: Adventures in Ephemera

by Beth Kephart C'82 (Temple University Press, 2023, \$30.00.) This memoir follows Kephart's obsession

with paper, which emerged in the wake of her father's death. In it, she explores the paper legacies we forge and leave behind, in baby books, diaries, resumes, sewing patterns, recipes, and more.



NEW GROWTH: The Art and Texture of Black Hair

by Jasmine Nichole Cobb Gr'07 Gr'09 (Duke University Press, 2022, \$25.95.) Through close

readings of slave narratives, scrapbooks, travel illustrations, and other artwork, Cobb, a professor at Duke University, traces the history of Afro-textured coiffure, exploring it as a visual material through which to reimagine the sensual experience of Blackness.



WALK ME THROUGH YOUR RESUME: Essays

by Martha Cooney C'05 (BookBaby, 2023, \$14.99) Cooney's hilarious collection of essays describes how she tries to make ends meet in the

gig economy through a series of increasingly odd jobs. At what point does a resume go from well-rounded to bizarre?



SPYING: From the Fall of Jericho to the Fall of the Wall

edited by John D. Woodward Jr. W'81 (Waynesburg University Press, 2023, \$49.95) Woodward—a Boston

University professor, retired CIA operations officer, and former Department of Defense official—offers a comprehensive study of the history of intelligence activities through these lectures by his late Boston University colleague Arthur Hulnick, who was also an intelligence officer for the CIA and US Air Force.

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Total Eclipse With Some Heart

A “painfully cheerful” solar eclipse enthusiast is helping the country prepare for the singular astronomical event of 2024. ▶

One day in 2012, Debra Ross C'91's 11-year-old daughter, Ella, came home from an astronomy class at the Rochester Museum & Science Center with an announcement. "In five years, I'm going to be 16 and have my driver's license, and you and I are going to go on a road trip to Missouri to see the total solar eclipse."

"Sure!" Ross replied, though her inner monologue was skeptical. *It gets dark every night. I know what a shadow is. What's the big deal?*

But Mom kept her word, and in late August 2017, Debra and Ella began the 800-mile drive from their home in Rochester, New York, to St. Louis. Ella had liked the city on a prior visit, and it was close to the path of totality, where the moon would completely cover the sun during the August 21 eclipse.

Their first stop was the Saint Louis Science Center. Deb served on the board of the Rochester Museum & Science Center, and she was the creator of Kids Out and About, a web platform that lists family-friendly activities in communities across North America. Whenever she traveled, she visited the local science museum.

At the gift shop she bought two of the last three mugs commemorating the Great American Eclipse. She told the clerk she was from Rochester, which would experience its own total eclipse for three-and-a-half minutes on April 8, 2024. He leaned forward, conspiratorially. "Whatever merch you're thinking about

buying, double it," he said. The town was buzzing with tourists, and several large events were planned downtown.

Ross started to realize that the eclipse was a very big deal.

The next day, the Rosses drove 24 miles southwest to the hamlet of Kimmswick, inside the path of totality, and parked in a clearing. At 11:49 a.m., as the women watched through safety glasses, the moon began to creep across the sun's face. At 1:17 p.m., the sun suddenly disappeared, and the Rosses stood fully in the moon's shadow. The temperature dropped, taking the edge off the summer heat. Crickets began to chirp. A red-and-gold sunset glow lit the horizon in all directions. Mother and daughter removed their glasses to look at the sun's corona, the outer atmospheric layer that's ordinarily impossible to observe amid the brightness of the sun itself.

"My life was transformed during those minutes of totality," Deb says. "I was aware of four bodies in the entire universe: the sun, the moon, the earth, and me. You can read about celestial mechanics; you can watch Neil deGrasse Tyson; you can look through a telescope; but you feel the celestial mechanics with your body during an eclipse. You're not just looking at something, you're *in* something."

Gazing upward, Ella felt a swelling sense of calm and accomplishment. It was partly personal pride: she had completed the trip she had envisioned five years earlier. But it was also gratitude for the astronomers and mathemati-



"My life was transformed during those minutes of totality."

cians who had come before. "It makes me feel so happy about the time I live in, and the level of knowledge I have, because of what humanity has been able to figure out," she says.

The two reveled in the darkness for two minutes and 19 seconds, until the moon began to slip away from the sun and the eclipse drew toward its end.

"Then my mom and I headed home," Ella says. "And she went insane."

As they drove back to Rochester, Deb could think of only one thing: how she needed to help people prepare for April 8, 2024, so that every resident and visitor would have the best possible eclipse experience. That goal would dominate the next seven years of her life.

Ross serves as chair of the 750-member Rochester eclipse task force, and in 2019 she took on an even larger role as

the cochair of the American Astronomical Society's solar eclipse task force. That group helps cities in the 2024 path of totality—which stretches from Texas to Maine and encompasses 31 million people—prepare for extraordinary crowds seeking the dramatic experience of midday darkness.

Neither astrophysicist nor astronomer, "I'm just a painfully cheerful person, and I do nothing half-assed," Ross says. "If anyone has to get hundreds of people to work together for zero money for several years for something that happens for three minutes and 38 seconds, it has to be a painfully cheerful dork."

Ross wasn't always so outgoing. In fact, her high school classmates in Cranford, New Jersey, informally declared her "least likely to become a professional cheerleader." Ross sat quietly at the back of the classroom and graduated as valedictorian. As an English major at Penn, she continued to work hard to make good grades, but she noticed that many of her fellow students seemed "much bolder about stepping out of their comfort zone." Inspired, she realized that she too

could create her own definition of success.

Historian Alan Charles Kors—Penn’s Henry Charles Lea Professor Emeritus—also nudged her in this direction. “He wanted to help you learn how to think, not tell you what to think,” Ross remembers. “I realized that the distance between a B-minus and an A in his class was the same thing as the distance between a B-minus life and an A life. It was thinking for yourself.”

After graduation she worked for a small publisher in New York, implementing an enterprise management system to shift the company from paper to computers. Ross discovered an affinity for the work and went on to establish a technology consulting business. As a new parent in the early 2000s, she launched Kids Out and About, a constantly updated web calendar of activities for children and families. In 2009, she turned the site from a community service into a business and expanded it across the country.

By the time she saw her first eclipse in 2017, she knew “everybody” in Rochester. She also was the incoming chair of Visit Rochester’s travel industry council and began every meeting with a reminder about the 2024 eclipse and the up to 500,000 visitors expected to descend on the city. Ross assembled a local task force, including representatives from education, business, public safety, and tourism, to prepare. She made sure the organizations planning events—the science museum, the Rochester Philharmonic,

the Minor League Baseball team—were coordinating.

She also began attending meetings of the American Astronomical Society’s solar eclipse task force, which organized to share best practices from 2017 with cities in the 2024 path of totality. By the time the AAS sought a new cochair for the task force, Ross had impressed the group of astronomers with her energy, efficacy, and, yes, her painful cheerfulness.

“We decided that she would be perfect because she knew the community, she had the enthusiasm, she got things done, and she was a great motivator of people,” says Rick Fienberg, a professional astronomer and the AAS task force’s project manager. “She became critical to the whole endeavor and has proven to be exactly what we hoped for, which was a dynamic, involved cochair.”

As she helps other communities learn from highly prepared cities like Rochester, Ross still doesn’t know where she’ll view the eclipse on April 8. She may need to be on call for the city of Rochester. She might end up on national television.

Wherever she lands, she’ll consider the eclipse her legacy for Rochester and for the country. “It’s a singular, unequivocally positive moment in the 21st century,” she says. “I can point to that and know I helped make this amazing experience even better for millions of people.” —Robyn Ross

Writer Robyn Ross is not related to Deb and Ella Ross.



Vagabond Publisher

Meet the “professional nomad” who runs an online travel guide with more than 10 million annual readers.

As he approaches his 40th birthday, Nate Hake C’08 is homeless. He can fit all his possessions into two suitcases and a backpack. And he couldn’t be happier. “I feel like I’ve been living the dream,” he says.

Hake has been a “professional nomad” since 2016. That’s when he started *Travel Lemming*, which has grown from a personal blog into a growing travel guide website that competes with the likes of *Lonely Planet* and *Fodor’s*. He lives in hotels and Airbnbs, spending no more than a few months in

one place before decamping for the next adventure.

Life as a vagabond publisher was hardly what Hake had in mind back in college, when he was president of Penn Democrats and spent more time working on congressional campaigns than in class. Back then, the only question Hake’s friends had about his future was when he’d run for office himself.

After law school at Yale and a stint at a New York law firm, Hake joined Arnold & Porter’s law office in Denver. Colorado was home to him—as a military brat he moved around a

lot as a kid, but that's where his grandparents lived. He quickly hopped on the partner track, billing 2,500 hours a year as a corporate litigator.

But even though Hake liked his work, the long hours and nights spent sleeping in the office began to wear on him. "I had to miss my own birthday party because I was working so hard," he says. "My friends had dinner without me."

His quasi-nomadic childhood instilled a love of travel that Hake could finally afford. But even on those weeklong vacations abroad, Hake had trouble shaking the niggling feeling that he should be working. Then, on one trip, something dawned on him. "I was sitting on the Danube River in Budapest, across from the Hungarian parliament," he says, when an epiphany struck: "*Man, this costs nothing, but this is awesome. Why can't I just be here?*"

After a brief but exhausting stint as a campaign manager for Delaware Democrat Sean Barney's 2016 congressional run, Hake flew back to Denver and told his law firm that he wanted to take a year off to travel. To his surprise, the partners were supportive.

Hake rented out his house, bought a 46-liter backpack, and hopped on a one-way flight to Mexico City without much of a plan beyond seeing a global "bucket list" of sites. "I wanted to see Machu Picchu, I wanted to go to the pyramids, I wanted to go do a road trip in Australia," he says. "I did a safari in Kenya—all those sorts of things that I had in my mind [for] what it means

... to be a traveler, to have that identity."

During his first year rambling around the world, Hake visited 43 countries on six continents, hitting up all those "must-see" destinations and then some. Halfway through, he realized he didn't want the trip to end.

Around that time, he came across an ad for an online course on travel writing. Hake had already invested in a solid digital SLR camera and was sharing photos of his travels with short descriptions, so why not give travel blogging a try?

And so, in a hostel in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, *Travel Lemming* (travellemming.com) was born. He chose the name as a self-deprecating reference to the kind of tourist he was when he first started out—the guy who blindly follows the crowd to all the famous sites. Now he's an evangelist for "slow travel," advocating immersion in a single locale for longer stretches and rejecting the compulsion to constantly keep moving to the next spot.

He was hooked, but still scared to commit to travel writing full time. Even as *Travel Lemming* grew and started to make a little money, Hake didn't think of it as more than a side gig. When he returned home to Denver toward the end of 2017, some friends asked him to join their software startup. They offered him an ownership stake—and the ability to work remotely, permitting him to keep *Travel Lemming* going on the side. He quit the firm, took the tech gig, and started

living out of Airbnbs in more affordable countries like Mexico and Thailand.

After about a year at the software company, Hake quit to focus on *Travel Lemming* full time. Then in Argentina, he set out to expand the website by building a team of writers. By January 2020 he had six freelance contributors.

A month later, traffic on *Travel Lemming* cratered as word of a mysterious new virus began to spread. A month after that, Argentina, along with the rest of the world, locked down to slow the spread of COVID-19. Figuring "this whole dream I had finally allowed myself to accept as part of my identity" was dead, Hake went into "a tailspin emotionally."

As that was happening, Hake invited an Argentinian law student he had recently met on Tinder to weather the lockdown with him. "I thought it was gonna be two weeks," he says. "She didn't speak English, and I didn't speak Spanish hardly at all." Four years later, they're still together.

With her emotional support, Hake decided to keep *Travel Lemming* going. He cut most of his writers, but kept one, Taylor Herperger, on a part-time basis. "It was a tough period for our website and the competition, and yet Nate made all the right moves to steer the ship where it needed to go," says Herperger, who now is *Travel Lemming's* marketing director.

As the pandemic began to ebb in 2021, Hake knew there'd be a huge, pent-up demand to travel again. So he went all in on *Travel Lemming*. He

sold his home in Denver and used the proceeds to commission more writers.

The website evolved into providing on-the-ground, freshly reported travel guides written by locals. *Travel Lemming* now has a team of around 40 regular freelance contributors who drew in 10 million website visitors in 2022. Hake makes more money now than he did as a lawyer.

But the life of a professional nomad is no walk in the park. *Travel Lemming* now faces an existential threat from the proliferation of artificial intelligence. AI-powered chatbots and search engines pull images and glean descriptions from *Travel Lemming* posts, which means would-be visitors see Hake's content without looking at the site itself (and the ads that fund it).

Hake would like to see lawmakers across the globe take action but he's not holding his breath. "Young Nate would have thought there's a political solution to everything," Hake says. But now, "that's not even a thought."

Instead, he is exploring new revenue streams, like *Travel Lemming*-led tours of emerging tourist destinations. He has no plans to use his legal and political experience to lead a campaign against AI exploitation.

"I have a lot of people reaching out to me being like, 'You really should do some lobbying.' But, man, I just really want to make travel guides," Hake says. "It's so much fun to work with my team. ... I just want to keep doing that." —Jim Saksa C'08



Breaking the Mold

How a youth gymnast with a sunny disposition breakdanced her way into this summer’s Olympics.

Grace Choi W’11 bounds out onto the stage with a markedly different energy than her fellow breakdancers.

Her walk is not a practiced swagger or rehearsed stomp. The b-girl, as female breakdancers are called, has a spring in her step, flashing a smile and waving peace signs. Maybe it’s the fact that at age 35, she’s readying to battle competitors half her age, in a sport where some peak in their mid-teens. Or maybe it’s the bubblyness of her personality—hence her b-girl name “Sunny,” a play on her Korean birth name and her disposition.

“I do think I dance a little bit different from other people,” Choi says, “and I think it’s because I’m not trying to fit the mold of what a breaker should look like but just being me out there, and unapologetically so.”

Choi has followed a long road to that self-belief—and her journey just got a little longer. Her win at the Pan Am Games in Chile in November assured that she will represent the United States as one of the 16 b-girls competing at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris. It’s the first (and maybe only) time

that breaking, better known when it developed on the streets of New York’s hip-hop scene as breakdancing, will be included in the Games.

A first-generation American from a Korean family who was raised in Kentucky, educated in the Ivy League, and has worked in corporate jobs in New York, Choi may not fit the stereotypical profile of a breakdancer. But the onetime aspiring gymnast has become the face of American breaking thanks to a chance encounter on Penn’s campus.

Choi’s parents left South Korea for the US, where her father received a doctorate in chemical engineering. Sunny was born in Tennessee and raised in Louisville—one of four children expected to be high achievers in whatever they did.

Gymnastics captured her imagination from a young age. Transfixed by the 1992 Olympics, she pestered her mother into bringing her to a local YMCA class. She hoped to join the gymnastics team at Penn, but a knee injury in high school requiring two surgeries closed that door.

With a void to fill and feeling adrift at Penn, Choi one day saw kids breakdancing on campus. When they introduced her to the monthly gathering of the Freaks of the Beat breaking club at the Rotunda, it all clicked. “I walked into the Rotunda, and I was like, *Oh my god, this is incredible*,” she recalls. “I was scared out of my mind. I couldn’t participate. I was just watching from the sidelines, but the energy was amazing. It was something very new to me.”

In breaking, Choi found something she realized had been missing from gymnastics: a creative outlet to be herself. Whereas gymnasts follow a rehearsed routine as precisely as possible, breaking is a more free-flowing form of expression. Battles entail a call and response, whether playing off members of a crew or dancing in 1-v-1 battles (which will be the Olympic format). The music, generated on the spot by a DJ, requires dancers to be in the moment, to improvise and to flow. Choi found the challenge intoxicating.

But she didn’t see a future in it. When she graduated from Penn with a degree in marketing, she made her way in 2012 to New York to

work a series of corporate jobs, the most recent as director of global creative operations for Estée Lauder's skincare division.

"I thought it was just going to be a hobby, honestly," she says, figuring she would "work a corporate job just like everybody else, make a paycheck and a relatively stable living off that, and breaking would be my outlet and I would keep it as a pastime or a hobby. That's not really what happened, though."

The onetime aspiring gymnast has become the face of American breaking thanks to a chance encounter on Penn's campus.

She'd become a star in that hobby—and a world traveler, too. Choi first competed internationally in 2014 and her first big trophy came at Outbreak Europe in 2015 in Slovakia, an event only one American had won in the event's first five years. She finished second at both the World Urban Games in Hungary and her first World Dance Sport Federation World Championships, in Nanjing, China.

As Choi's profile grew, so did the sport. Breaking debuted successfully at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires. In 2019, the Paris Olympic Organizing Committee floated the idea of adding it to the

2024 Games, and the International Olympic Committee assented in 2020. (The Los Angeles Olympics did not put forth breaking as a candidate for 2028.)

Meanwhile, Choi finished seventh at the World Championships in 2021 and made the final of the 2022 World Games, an Olympic-style tournament for lesser-known sports.

The parallel growth trajectories of Choi and her sport eventually converged in a momentous decision. To pursue breaking full-time, she knew she'd need to go all in, with a trainer, nutritionist, and mental skills coach. Realizing how much of her life had been defined by "doing the thing that seems most responsible but not truly going after what I wanted," she zeroed in on an Olympic spot.

In the fall of 2022 Choi made the leap. It required an apprehensive conversation with her parents, explaining why she was giving up what they regarded as her dream career. "When I first told them, my mom said, 'I know you'll succeed in whatever you do, so I support you,'" Choi says. "That was really, really reassuring. Because I was scared." She sealed the deal that year by winning the Red Bull Cypher in Los Angeles with her mom in attendance. (As a token of that acceptance, Choi's mom volunteered her to coach kids in breaking at their church back home.)

"It's such a brave thing to do, and she had just complete support," says her brother Joon Choi W'04. "I

CHERELLE PARKER G'16 LPS'16

Madam Mayor



On January 2, Cherelle Parker G'16 LPS'16 was sworn in as the 100th mayor of Philadelphia—the first woman to hold the position. The 51-year-old former member of the Philadelphia City Council, who holds a master's degree in public administration from Penn's Fels Institute of Government, won a crowded Democratic primary last May and defeated Republican David Oh in November. She's stressed that her administration will focus on public safety and providing economic opportunities for all residents. Among the Penn alums serving in Parker's administration is Tiffany Thurman G'16 LPS'19, her chief of staff.

know that she really clearly had a dream and a vision, and I knew that she was going to be very intentional on what needed to be done to achieve that dream."

Choi's on-stage aura stands apart from her peers. She leans more on creativity than power moves. While some (especially younger) dancers wow solely with their array of spins, flips, and tricks, Choi's footwork shines with a gymnast's precision, and her transitions between moves lend the whole performance a cohesive, almost narrative quality. "There's a precise, analytical piece that shows in my breaking," she says, "which I feel like you see in most gymnastics but not something you always see in breakers."

It comes back to Choi knowing who she is when the

music starts, a journey in its own right. Choi's signature smile was many times a put-on; she's battled imposter syndrome along the way—at Wharton, in corporate America, and on the dance floor. Now, it's an authentic manifestation of joy—a recognition of having found her place in the world via breaking.

"I think the biggest thing I want people to take away is just being OK with being you," she says. "So much of my breaking story has been about accepting who I am and being able to be me on the stage, despite being told over and over and over again that I smile way too much on stage, because that's not what breakers do. But this is who I am, and this is a form of self-expression, and this is what I need to do."

—Matthew De George

“I’ve always worked 24/7, even while traveling, and don’t plan on retiring from the travel business and playing tennis until my 100th birthday.”

—Bobbi Penneys Susselman Laufer CW’68

1946

Evelyn Stanton Grain C’46 will celebrate her 100th birthday with family and friends on April 17. Her granddaughter **Mary Grain WG’20** writes, “We wish Evelyn a happy birthday!”

1956

R. Theodore “Ted” Moock Jr. W’56 writes, “During the months leading up to the 2020 presidential election, I wrote some 20 political blogs, almost all focused on the upcoming election. Then I went into writing retirement. With the 2024 presidential election approaching, I will take pen in hand once again to author political commentary on the election. If anyone would like to receive these blogs, a simple email to rtmoockj@gmail.com would do the trick.”

Celebrate Your Reunion, May 17–20, 2024!

1964

Stuart Resor C’64 writes, “Dear fellow classmates, Bonnie and I have been brainstorming how we can achieve a lasting gentle peace in all the Holy Lands. First: let’s combine this grumpy group into a larger cooperative, the United Tribes of the Holy Lands, then develop a series of arbitration and peace shelters. These buildings will replicate what our courthouses do here in US. Then better develop the water desalinization plants and add much more

farming. Then add massively more solar and wind power. Massively expand the schools and college buildings. Then as things calm down, add much more in the way of tourist facilities, like they have in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. Then add more airports. Then translate MLK’s 1963 ‘I have a dream speech’ into Hebrew and Arabic. ... Get Gulf states to contribute some to all this. Respond to stuartresor@gmail.com.”

1966

Thomas McEwan C’66 writes, “After graduating from Penn, I served for two years in the Peace Corps in Senegal. I recently wrote a book about my time there, called *Out in Africa: Senegal 1966–1968*. Upon returning to the States, I got a job in the fragrance supply business with International Fragrances and Flavors. After three years with them in New York, I was transferred to their Paris office where I remained for seven years before leaving IFF to become a founding partner at Azur Fragrances. I am retired now, but after 45 years the company is still going strong. I have French and American nationalities and have lived in Paris for over 50 years. Not bad for someone who was born and educated in Philadelphia.”

1967

Lawrence Beaser C’67, a partner at Blank Rome LLP, has been named the 2023 Giant of the Bar by the Philadelphia Bar

We Want to Hear from You

EMAIL gazette@ben.dev.upenn.edu

Please include your school and year, along with your address and a daytime telephone number. We include email addresses only when requested or obviously implied.

ALUMNI NOTE DEADLINES 7/15 for the Sep/Oct issue; 9/15 for Nov/Dec; 11/15 for Jan/Feb; 1/15 for Mar/Apr; 3/15 for May/Jun; and 5/15 for Jul/Aug.

Events

METRO NEW JERSEY

This spring we have a full calendar of activities to offer! In March, we enjoy the Mask and Wig show, then host our ever-popular wine tasting dinner, and round out the month with a turn on the dance floor as we learn to ballroom dance. With spring’s arrival we start up our engaging guided tours of art galleries in New York City on April 6 and April 20. We also invite everyone to join us in building a home with Habitat for Humanity on April 13. Then April 14, we invite everyone to make dumplings and feed the homeless with our Dumpling Diplomacy program. Visit www.pennclubmetronj.com to learn the latest information on the abovementioned activities and our club, and to register for events. To obtain more information about these and other programs, please contact club President Dan Solomon L’97 at danielhsolomon@yahoo.com

Association Business Law Section. The honor recognizes a legal giant who has had a “significant impact on the practice of business law in Philadelphia and beyond.”

Eric R. White GEd’67 GrEd’75, executive director emeritus of Penn State’s division of undergraduate studies, is featured in a journal article by Hilleary Himes, “A Place for Academic Advising Scholars: Dr. Eric White at the Division of Undergraduate Studies.” The article appears in Vol. 25 (2023) of *The Mentor: Innovative Scholarship on Academic Advising*, which is edited by **Junhow Wei Gr’16**. It can be read at doi.org/10.26209/mj2563329.

1968

Bobbi Penneys Susselman Laufer CW'68 writes, "I continue to sell travel all over the world, as I have been doing since 1982. I also escort tiny groups of two to eight travelers three times a year to very remote destinations such as Outer Mongolia, Tibet, Ethiopia, Papua New Guinea, Algeria, Greenland, Pitcairn Island, and Easter Island. I've always worked 24/7, even while traveling, and don't plan on retiring from the travel business and playing tennis until my 100th birthday. Maybe you'd like to join us? On March 7, I'll be playing tennis with a 100-year-old friend who has been a sterling example of a life well lived. She serves as a model for so many of us here in San Diego." Bobbi invites alumni contact at bobbilaufer@yahoo.com.

Barbara Weisberg CW'68 writes, "My new book, *Strong Passions: A Scandalous Divorce in Old New York*, released by Norton in February, tells the dramatic true story of an explosive divorce trial in the 1860s that riveted the nation with headlines about adultery, abortion, and child abduction. The book traces the trial's impact on laws and attitudes at the time and looks at its relevance today, when issues related to marriage, gender, and reproductive rights are once again making front-page news."

1970

Steven G. Friedman W'70 is an attorney specializing in commercial real estate in the Washington, DC, area. After being introduced to writer Samuel Beckett's work as a student at Penn, Steve purchased a graduation present for himself—a limited-edition (200 copies) set of the *Collected Works of Samuel Beckett* (Grove Press, 1970), signed by Samuel Beckett. For the past 50-plus years, Steve has displayed the books in his home in Potomac, Maryland. In December of 2023 he donated the Beckett book collection to the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at Penn Libraries.

1972

Robert A. Gibbons G'72 is a realtor living in Stuart, Florida. Previously, he retired

from NYNEX/Verizon, where he worked for 13 years in national sales and as a branch manager. In 1972, Bob and his first wife, Elaine, moved to Concord, New Hampshire, where Bob was a senior consultant to the superintendent of New Hampshire Hospital. In 1975, Bob ran for mayor of Boston. Although he didn't win, he shares that his campaign "exposed the 'busing fiasco' as a diversion from grossly unequal schools, and the corruption in Mayor Kevin White's administration." In 1990, Bob married his high school sweetheart, Brenda Ryan Gibbons. The couple each have two children from their prior marriages and spent many years sailing Buzzards Bay in Massachusetts. In 1995, they founded TRUCTOR(r) Vehicles, which developed patented tractor-truck vehicles for subsistence farmers and has won many engineering awards. At a yacht club dinner, Bob was asked what he did for a living. Bob said, "I work for my wife Brenda; she's a tractor manufacturer!"

Nancy Kreiger CW'72 retired from a career in epidemiology as director of prevention research at Ontario's cancer control agency and professor and head of the graduate epidemiology program at the University of Toronto's School of Public Health. She has now embarked on a new career in the health industry. In the summer of 2023, she completed her certification as a personal training specialist, and in late autumn she was hired by a boutique gym in the Beaches neighborhood of Toronto to work with individuals, focusing on functional strength training.

1973

Robert M. Steeg C'73 ASC'75, managing partner of Steeg Law Firm in New Orleans, has been selected to appear in the 2024 edition of *Louisiana Super Lawyers* in the category of Real Estate Law. He was also included in *New Orleans Magazine's* Top Lawyers 2023 for Real Estate Law.

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1974

H. Ronald Klasko L'74 has been elevated to chairman at Klasko Immigration Law

Partners. Ron, a founding member of the firm, will continue to concentrate on the strategic growth and vision of the law firm.

1975

Jay Rogoff C'75 won the Lewis P. Simpson Award for an outstanding book of American literary criticism for his new book, *Becoming Poetry: Poets and Their Methods*, published by Louisiana State University Press. The book includes essays on some two dozen poets, ranging from forebears to contemporaries. In examining their work and exploring how poets who have reached a level of achievement become identified with their poetry, it explains how each writer appeals to our imagination. *Becoming Poetry* aims to demystify poetic art, making it accessible and enjoyable for readers at all levels.

1976

Stephanie Urchick C'76 will lead the international service organization Rotary International as its president, beginning July 1. She is the second woman to hold this position.

1977

Marshal Granor C'77 see **Tamar E. Granor C'78 GEE'81 Gr'86**.

1978

Jeanne T. Cohn C'78 has coauthored a new book with Alan S. Tenenbaum, *Environmental Bankruptcy Law: A Practice Guide*. Jeanne explains that the book "provides the history and development of case law on the subject [of environmental bankruptcy law] and offers the environmental practitioner a wealth of information in how to handle an environmental bankruptcy case."

Tamar E. Granor C'78 GEE'81 Gr'86 writes, "I was recently named a senior member of the Association for Computing Machinery. Senior membership recognizes those who 'have demonstrated performance through technical leadership, and technical or professional contributions.' Last spring, my husband **Marshal Granor C'77** and I received the Morton Tabas Humanitarian

Award from our longtime synagogue, Beth Sholom Congregation in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. The biennial award is given to a person or couple who has shown a long history of commitment to helping others. As we put together a bio for this, we were stunned by how many ways we'd worked individually and jointly to make the world a better place. Among other things, we continue to be involved with the Hebrew Free Loan Society of Greater Philadelphia, which offers no-interest, no-fee loans to members of Philadelphia's Jewish community."

Gabriel Sucher C'78 G'78 reports that he had a letter to the editor published in the October 5, 2022, edition of the *Washington Post*. He writes, "The letter calls for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine, followed by a negotiated settlement. This could save many lives."

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1979

Frank Ballmann W'79 writes, "After a long and successful career using my Wharton accounting and finance skills, I decided it was time to use that dual major in political science I collected at Penn long ago and got involved in government relations in 2006. In 2010, I began representing NASSGAP, the state agencies responsible for funding almost \$15 billion annually in state student financial aid programs, on federal financial aid issues in Washington. In my finance jobs, I'd sit next to my investors on a plane and they'd thank me for making them wealthier. When I started this job, I sat next to a recent grad on a plane who, when she found out what I did, thanked me for getting the grants that enabled her to go to college and change her life. NASSGAP helps well over a million students pay for college every year, so while the job pays less, it feels great to change all those lives! And in this role, I serve on the board of the Committee for Education Funding, where I get to work in DC with Bill Andresen, Penn's associate vice president for federal affairs, on various issues and initiatives! Outside of work, I like to travel, and I was able to

get to all 50 states within four years of graduating from Penn. Perhaps because my spring breaks were spent following the Quakers in the NCAA basketball tournament, Florida was the last of 50 states for me. Now, my goal is to get to all seven continents; five down, two to go. Most recently, I hiked the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in late 2019. Looking forward to seeing my classmates at our reunion in May!"

Dr. Seth L. Matarasso C'79, a dermatologic surgeon, has been named president of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery and American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association. Seth is also a clinical professor of dermatology at the University of California School of Medicine in San Francisco.

1980

Dr. George Grillon D'80 received the Distinguished Service Award from the Maryland State Dental Association House of Delegates. The award acknowledges a member who has provided exceptional service to the profession and the state. George is a maxillofacial surgeon and trains surgery residents at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, where he is vice chairman. He is also chief of oral and maxillofacial surgery at Suburban Hospital, where he directs the education of surgery residents from the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

1981

Earle Hager W'81 reports from Los Angeles that he continues to be busy with his consulting firm, the Neutrino Donut. He writes, "Donut stands for the Direct Observation of the Neutrino Tau, but you already knew that. I am working with science-based startups and helping them with the grant funding process. It's always interesting and involves lots of online meetings. My daughter is graduating from UC Berkeley with a degree in economics this spring and my son is working in the media industry out here, having graduated from CalArts a few years back. I am also celebrating beating cancer, thanks to a few Penn Med doctors out here

at UCLA, as well as many other very amazing doctors, nurses, technicians, and other staffers. Everyone stay safe and get your checkups. I would love to hear from classmates. And fuck cancer!"

Cindy Shmerler C'81 was inducted into the Eastern Tennis Hall of Fame in August 2023. Cindy has covered the sport for 45 years for major newspapers worldwide and as a television commentator for ESPN, USA Network, and Tennis Channel. She is currently a sports and obituary writer for the *New York Times*. Several Penn grads attended in support of Cindy, including her brother **Bill Shmerler W'77**, and former Penn tennis players **Ricky Meyer W'77**, **Susan Wilf Morris C'80**, and **Lendy Smith Muller C'80**. Cindy's husband **Ford Levy EE'79**, copresident of the Class of 1979, and her children, **Kristen Levy C'15** and **Maxwell Levy C'18**, were also present.

1982

Robert Carley C'82 was recently featured on *News 12 Connecticut* for his meetings with Henry Kissinger, the former US secretary of state and national security advisor to Presidents Nixon and Ford who died on November 29. Robert met Kissinger on four occasions and drew several caricatures of him over the years. The video can be viewed at tinyurl.com/carleykissingner.

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1984

Jeff D. Lerner C'84 recently completed his 35th year with the New York State Workers' Compensation Board, serving as an administrative law judge for the agency for the past 30 years. As a judge, he presides over cases involving work-related accidents and occupational diseases, as well as line-of-duty injuries to volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers.

1985

Kathleen Brewer-Smyth GNu'85 Gr'01 has authored a book, *Adverse Childhood Experiences: The Neuroscience of Trauma, Resilience and Healing Throughout the Life*

Course (Springer, 2022), which won four *American Journal of Nursing (AJN)* 2023 Book of the Year Awards. It was awarded first place in three categories (Community/Home Health Care, Creative Works, and Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing) and third place in the Consumer Health category. No book has ever won this many *AJN* awards since *AJN* first began acknowledging high-quality publications on nursing and healthcare topics in 1969. Kathleen is an associate professor in the School of Nursing at the University of Delaware.

Farley Weiss C'85, a copyright and trademark lawyer at Weiss & Moy, has published his first book, *Because It's Just and Right: The Untold Back Story of the US Recognition of Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel and Moving of the US Embassy to Jerusalem*, coauthored with Leonard Grunstein. Farley writes, "The book goes into detail on the Jewish right to Israel including establishing the Jewish people's indigeneity to the land and its historic and legal right to Israel as well as the move of the embassy to Jerusalem and its recognition as Israel's capital. The title comes from [former US senator Jon] Kyl's response to people as to why he originated the legislation in 1995 when he would reply, 'Because it's just and right.' The book also discusses Hamas and its Covenant, the Palestinian Authority, and Iran, as well as US diplomacy. I have personal knowledge of the battle that led to the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 as I voluntarily worked with Senator Kyl's staff during the legislation and kept the faxes I received at the time. I have been interviewed on radio and television regarding the book. Please contact me if you would like me to speak about the current situation with Israel and about the book at jerusalemrecognition@gmail.com." More information about the book can be found at jerusalemrecognition.com.

1986

Jody Enders Gr'86 has received the Modern Language Association's Lois Roth Award for a translation of a literary work for *Immaculate Deception and Further*

Ribaldries: Yet Another Dozen Medieval French Farces in Modern English (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022). Jody is a professor of French and theater at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

John K. Fiorillo W'86, an attorney and partner at Unruh Turner Burke & Frees, recently presented at the Real Estate Institute, the Pennsylvania Bar Institute's flagship program on real estate law. The session, titled "Real Estate Assessment," delved into critical aspects of assessment law, focusing on uniformity challenges under the Pennsylvania Constitution's Uniformity Clause.

Greg Schlimm W'86 has completed his doctoral research on value creation with technology mergers at Warwick Business School in England. He shares that he "is enjoying guest lecturing and staying active in the space as an interested observer. Now working with the Transaction Advisors Institute, supporting corporate M&A teams to improve their deal performance. Still living in Washington, DC, but also spend time at Rehoboth Beach with Lynne and the two dogs. Hi to everyone from DC!"

1988

Jeffrey Eisen W'88 has been named a "Hollywood Troubleshooter" by the *Hollywood Reporter*. The publication compiled a list of "25 attorneys the entertainment elite have on speed dial for death, divorce and other disasters," and this is Jeffrey's third time on the list. Jeffrey is a partner at Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp LLP in Los Angeles, where he cochairs the firm's Trusts and Estates practice. He lives in Manhattan Beach, California, with his wife **Andrea Goldberg Eisen W'88**, and the couple has two adult children.

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1989

David P. France C'89 relaunched his dance company in Basel, Switzerland, in February 2023, after a nine-year hiatus. David P. France Dance Company was initially started in New York City circa 2009

and continued in Basel from 2010 until 2014. During that six-year run, the company performed and held dance workshops in Belgrade, Serbia; Rome; Paris; and Basel, Switzerland. Also during that time, David organized trainings through Human Resources and Employee Resource Group (ERG) stakeholders at Novartis AG in Basel. In August, David will be performing at Dance-Forms 79th International Choreographers' Showcase in Edinburgh, as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. David writes that he is looking forward to attending his 35th Reunion in May. Currently, he serves as cochair of the Class of 1989's 35th Reunion Giving Committee and senior vice president of outreach and events for the 35th Reunion Committee. If anyone has any questions about the reunion, please feel free to contact him directly through Penn Alumni Relations at alumni@ben.dev.upenn.edu.

1990

Robin Rothstein C'90 writes, "It's been an exciting couple of years! I celebrated my first anniversary as a staff writer at *Forbes Advisor* this past fall, followed by a promotion. I love my work and am grateful for this opportunity to fulfill my dream of writing full time in a role that gives me room to flex my creative muscles, level up my journalism skills, and serve readers. I'm available for contract work in topic areas outside of real estate, so if you're looking to boost your SEO with a proven writer whose articles receive thousands of monthly page views, give me a shout!" Robin invites alumni contact at robin@robinrothstein.com. Robin's website is robinrothstein.com.

1991

Thomas Bartscherer C'91, a senior lecturer in the humanities at Bard College, shares that the *New York Times* has selected an opera he wrote with composer Dylan Mattingly as one of the 10 Best Classical Music Performances of 2023, a listing that was revealed in the newspaper's December 5 issue. Earlier in the year, the *New York Times* had featured the duo's opera, *Strang-*

er Love, in its May 15 article, titled “A Six-Hour Opera Goes On for One Euphoric Night Only.” Thomas is also celebrating the November release of his latest book, co-edited with Ewa Atanassow and David A. Bateman, titled *When the People Rule: Popular Sovereignty in Theory and Practice*.

Jim Bucking L’91, managing partner of the law firm Foley Hoag, has received the 2023 Cushing-Gavin Attorney Award from the Boston Labor Guild. The award annually recognizes lawyers who have provided lifelong service in labor-management affairs, representing either unions or employers.

Andrew S. “Andy” Cohen C’91 is co-founder of Cohen Rabinowitz PLLC, a San Antonio-based law firm specializing in commercial real estate law. Andy concentrates his practice on development transactions with a focus on affordable housing projects.

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1994

John W. Glomb Jr. C’94 WG’02 has been promoted to CEO of Tokio Marine North America. In addition to this new role, John will also continue as CEO of Philadelphia Insurance Companies and Tokio Marine North America Services, and as an executive officer on the Tokio Marine Holdings Executive Management Team. The *Philadelphia Business Journal* recognized him as one of the “Most Admired CEOs” in 2023. The listing can be viewed at tinyurl.com/johnglomblomb.

1998

Abbey Pachter Gr’98 has written a new book, *A Monarch in Winter: Biography of a Butterfly*. Abbey writes, “This is an informative, journal-styled memoir about the life of one monarch that lived its life free-range in my home during the winter of 2021. The story also chronicles how, during that second winter of COVID-19, I passed from the relative safety of isolation to join the cadre of nurses and physicians who came out of retirement to contribute to the vaccination effort for which, incidentally, many of us were awarded Presidential Volunteer Service Awards from President Biden [Hon’13]. *Mon-*

arch is available on Amazon or may be purchased from me directly.” Abbey may be contacted at abbeypac@yahoo.com.

2001

Raymond Valerio C’01 writes, “After serving in the Bronx County District Attorney’s Office for 16 years, I moved to the Queens County District Attorney’s Office in 2020 to be the director of forensic sciences overseeing all forensic science-based prosecutions. *Scientific American* magazine recently published my opinion editorial ‘Firearm Forensics Has Proven Reliable in the Courtroom. And in the Lab.’ As explained in the article, firearms identification analysis involves the microscopic examination and comparison of fired ammunition samples (typically fired bullets and spent cartridge cases recovered at crime scenes), in relation to each other and to test fires produced from recovered firearms. Qualified firearms examiners can identify a particular firearm as having fired a specific bullet or cartridge case. Investigators can then connect firearms to shootings, and even one shooting to another. From New York City to Los Angeles, hundreds of shooting investigations benefit every day from this analysis.”

Celebrate Your Reunion, May 17–20, 2024!

2004

Melissa Byrne CGS’03 writes that she was “cringing as a few wealthy donors exploited the horrible massacre on October 7” to advance a “culture war” and “calls upon all Penn alumni across all ideologies to firmly oppose [their] attempts to remake Penn in their image—a small-minded, cruel place that eschews the beauty of Penn.”

2005

Adam Burgos C’05 and his wife Donna Padilla (who met thanks to **David Krulwich C’05**) are thrilled to announce the birth of their son, Matéo Ezra Burgos Padilla, on November 26 in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Adam writes, “Matéo is already best friends with our dog Fausto and is looking forward to visiting family in Philadelphia and New York as soon as he can.”

2007

Jasmine Nichole Cobb Gr’07 Gr’09, a professor of African & African American studies and art, art history, and visual studies at Duke University, is the author of *New Growth: The Art and Texture of Black Hair*. According to the press materials, the book “traces the history of Afro-textured coiffure, exploring it as a visual material through which to reimagine the sensual experience of Blackness.”

David Cassels Johnson Gr’07 and **Francis M. Hult Gr’07** were both recently elected to the board of trustees of the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), a nonprofit supporting effective policy and practice for linguistic diversity.

Greg Moran C’07 is CEO of the car-sharing platform Zoomcar. The company manages more than 20,000 cars across 45 cities in India, Indonesia, and Egypt. Zoomcar recently merged with Innovative International Acquisition, and the newly renamed Zoomcar Holdings now trades on the Nasdaq under the ticker symbol ZCAR for stock and ZCARW for warrants.

2008

Abigail Kolker C’08 and Roi Godelman are happy to announce the birth of their son, Raz Kolker Godelman, on June 19. Big sister Naya is thrilled with the new addition. Abby, Roi, Naya, Raz, and yellow lab Bana live in Washington, DC. Abby is an immigration policy analyst at the Library of Congress and Roi is a software engineer at Capital One.

Maura Connell Lightfoot C’08 completed a successful first year as a transformational executive leadership coach. With a Penn degree in cultural anthropology and a Cambridge MBA, concentrated in international business, Maura, who has lived in more than seven countries, works at the intersection of business and culture. Maura offers 1:1 coaching, group programs, speaking engagements, and retreats for individuals and groups seeking transformational change and greater professional impact. Maura invites alumni contact at maura@mclocoaching.org.

2011

Dr. Laura R. Gordon Gr'11 has been promoted to partner at the law firm Baker-Hostetler. Laura works out of the firm's Philadelphia office and focuses her practice on patent prosecution, portfolio management, and counseling for clients in the life science, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical spaces.

2013

Jake Cohen C'13 married Sara Saltzman on November 19 in Closter, New Jersey.

Holly Marrone G'13 LPS'16 has joined Remington & Vernick Engineers (RVE) as vice president of human resources. RVE is an engineering firm that provides design, planning, and construction management and inspection services throughout New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and North Carolina. Previously, Holly served as executive director and chief people officer at Penn's School of Nursing.

2016

Junhow Wei Gr'16 see **Eric R. White GEd'67 GrEd'75**.

2017

Austin Kreinz C'17, founder of Atomix Logistics, has been named to *Forbes'* magazine's 30 Under 30 list for 2024, in the retail and e-commerce category. Atomix Logistics is a startup that assists e-commerce brands in fulfilling orders. According to *Forbes*, "Brands pay for space within Atomix's warehouse, where products are packaged and shipped according to their specifications."

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2019

Kristin Tichenor GrEd'19 has been named board president of Tuition Exchange, which is a reciprocal scholarship opportunity for eligible faculty and staff dependents at more than 700 individual member institutions of higher education.

2020

Mary Grain WG'20 see **Evelyn Stanton Grain C'46**.

Felix Yerace LPS'20, a teacher at South Fayette High School in South Fayette Township, Pennsylvania, has received the 2023 National Earl Reum Award from the National Association for Student Activities. This award is given annually to someone who encourages and inspires others in the field of student leadership and is instrumental in student leadership training.

2021

Dr. Gregory Chen Gr'21 M'23, a resident physician at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, is included in *Forbes* magazine's 30 Under 30 list for the year 2024. According to *Forbes*, "Gregory Chen's research focuses on CAR-T cell therapy, a groundbreaking approach to genetically modify T cells to fight cancer. A paper Chen coauthored in *Nature* showed that a single dose of CAR-T cells in patients can hold certain cancers in remission for over a decade. This clinical breakthrough has led to a major rethinking in cancer immunology."

Alexis Holzmann GEd'21 completed a 2,198.4-mile thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, achieving a decade-long goal and joining the less than 25% of successful annual finishers. Backpacking continuously over the course of six months, Alexis hiked from Georgia to Maine, "battling through a severely sprained ankle, record-breaking rainfall, and treacherous terrain," she writes. During her hike, Alexis connected with people from all over the world, often staying up late at trail shelters "discussing the role of teacher attitudes about math on student performance and creative ways math instruction could be informed by students lived experiences, which were both topics inspired by research and coursework led by Dr. Caroline Ebby and Dr. Janine Remillard of the Penn Graduate School of Education." Alexis is currently writing a memoir, *All for Us: Tales from a Totally Average Thru-Hiker*, seeking to share her on-trail experiences and inspire anyone who feels like it is "too late" to pursue their dreams.

Alumni in Business

A guide for Gazette readers seeking to reach the business services of Penn graduates.

Tom Robinson, PhD, CFA, CFP, CAIA
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Notifications

Please send notifications of deaths of alumni directly to: Alumni Records, University of Pennsylvania, Suite 300, 2929 Walnut Street, Phila., PA 19104

EMAIL record@ben.dev.upenn.edu

Newspaper obits are appreciated.

1942

Dortha Brown Savage HUP'42, La Grange, KY, a retired nurse; Feb. 6, 2022, at 104. She served in the US Navy during World War II.

1945

Dr. David H. Hausman C'45, Harrisburg, a pathologist at Pennsylvania Hospital; Sept. 10.

Janet Bowen Siegner Ed'45, Orchard Park, NY, a retired therapist and a clinical assistant professor in the department of obstetrics and gynecology at SUNY Buffalo; Oct. 21, at 100.

1946

Mary "Bette" Suhr Bailey HUP'46, Pennsauken, NJ, retired head nurse and utilization review coordinator at Cooper University Hospital in Camden, NJ; March 20, 2023.

1947

Jerome M. Schlakman W'47, Boca Raton, FL, a retired printing executive; Nov. 8. He served in the US Army during World War II. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity. One son is Robert M. Schlakman W'82.

Mary Marticelli Visintainer Ed'47, Harrisburg, PA, an administrative assistant in government and broadcasting; Oct. 12.

1948

Joyce Smith Kuntz HUP'48, St. Marys, PA, June 20.

1949

Florence Fuller Hill HUP'49, Fort Loudon, PA, a retired nurse and manager of her family's shoe business; June 20.

Hugh W. Prettyman EE'49, Wheeling, WV, a retired electrical engineer; Oct. 31, 2023. He served in the US Navy.

Doris Ranieri Sproat CW'49, Bryn Mawr, PA, a pianist and fabric artist; Dec. 26. At Penn, she was a member of Alpha Chi Omega Sorority, Penn Players, WXPB, and the cheerleading team. She was also president of the Penn Panhellenic Alumnae Council. One son is Edward F. "Ward" Sproat III EE'73 G'88.

1950

Suzanne Evans Andrews CW'50, Malvern, PA, an artist and owner of an antique shop; Oct. 20. At Penn, she was a member of Delta Gamma women's fraternity.

Jack A. Brier W'50, Hillsboro Beach, FL, a former executive at Kleinert's Incorporated, which makes odor-control clothing; July 20, 2022.

1951

Thomas A. Kirwan Jr. Ar'51, Austin, a corporate long-range planning manager for a commercial architectural aluminum manufacturing business; Jan 16. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Nu fraternity, Friars Senior Society, and the cross country and track teams, where he was an All-American miler. He served in the US Air Force and competed in the 1952 US Olympic trials. One brother is Peter C. Kirwan W'58, and one grandchild is Georgia E. Ray C'21.

1952

Charles S. Ganoe WG'52, Princeton, NJ, a retired banker and consultant; Oct. 3. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Psi fraternity.

George A. Seymour Jr. SW'52, Saint Michaels, MD, a retired chief of social work at a hospital; Oct. 2. He served in the US Army during World War II.

Marjorie Fischman Shushan Ed'52, New Orleans, an interior designer; Oct. 7.

William J. Stewart Jr. C'52, Allentown, PA, a retired product developer for Unisys; March 30, 2022. He served in the US Army during the Korean War. At Penn, he was a member of Psi Upsilon fraternity. His wife is Marian Musgrave Stewart CW'52.

1953

John F. Cox W'53 WG'59, Myrtle Beach, SC, owner of a real estate company; Oct. 7. He served in the US Army. At Penn, he was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity, Glee Club, Mask & Wig, and the Choral Society. One brother is Harvey G. Cox C'51.

Ida Perlman Goffin DH'53, Boca Raton, FL, a retired dental hygienist; Dec. 16. One son is David R. Goffin C'90.

Warren S. Lexton W'53, Sarasota, FL, co-owner of a real estate firm; Nov. 15. He served in the US Air Force during the Korean War. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Delta Epsilon fraternity. His son is Michael L. Lexton W'79, who is married to Cheryl Orentreich Lexton C'79, and one grandchild is Scott R. Lexton C'11.

Nancy Balchunas Litwin HUP'53 Nu'53, Willow Street, PA, a retired director of nursing at a hospital; Oct. 31. Earlier in her career, she taught nursing at Penn.

Arnold Zeitlin C'53, Centreville, VA, a retired foreign correspondent for the Associated Press and United Press International ["Alumni Profiles," June 1974]; Dec. 26. At Penn, he was a sports editor of the *Daily Pennsylvanian*. One sister is Myrna Zeitlin Asher Ed'59 CGS'07.

1954

Bernard Borislow C'54 Gr'61, Dunedin, FL, retired executive director of PMHCC, a human service systems management company; Oct. 20. One grandchild is Daniel N. Borislow W'18.

Dr. Vahe "Gary" Garabedian GM'54, Endwell, NY, a retired ophthalmologist; Oct. 25. He served in the US Air Force.

Mary Conneely Gorka HUP'54, Glenside, PA, a former emergency room nurse who later practiced holistic nursing; Sept. 28.

Dr. Alan G. Harquail Jr. D'54 GD'60, Annapolis, MD, a retired oral surgeon; Oct. 12. He served in the US Navy as a dentist during the Korean War.

Ben F. Kaito L'54, Honolulu, a retired lawyer and former city councilmember; Sept. 1. He served in the US Military Intelligence Corps.

Paul B. Venuto C'54 Gr'62, Yardley, PA, a retired research chemist for Mobil Oil; Oct. 7. At Penn, he was a member of the fencing team.

Roberta Kravitz Weissman Ed'54, Los Angeles, Aug. 10, 2022.

Charles M. “Chick” Young Jr. W’54, Brighton, MI, a retired accountant; June 5. At Penn, he was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity.

1955

Marion Adair-Hinds SW’55, State College, PA, a retired professor of sociology at Sinclair Community College; Oct. 11.

Dolores Dreher Coombs Ed’55, Jenkintown, PA, Oct. 13.

Arnold R. Csipo W’55, Edison, NJ, owner of a travel insurance agency; June 17.

Frank S. Locke WG’55, Towson, MD, a retired manufacturing director at Black and Decker; Oct. 8. He served in the US Army during the Korean War.

David L. Schreiber W’55, Pittsburgh, Nov. 3. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity. His brothers are Harry Schreiber W’63 and Marvin Schreiber W’66, and his son is Daniel Schreiber WG’89.

Ronald H. Weintraub W’55, Oro Valley, AZ, retired CEO of Communication Skill Builders, which created products for people with special needs; Sept. 25. His daughter is Arlene Weintraub Moskowitz C’89. At Penn, he was a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity and WXPB.

1956

Richard L. Goerwitz Jr. C’56 L’59, Bryn Athyn, PA, a retired attorney; Oct. 15. He served in the US Army during the Korean War. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity. One grandson is Alexander D. Ball C’12.

William H. Gruber W’56, Woburn, MA, an organizational theorist and professor at MIT, Boston College, and Northeastern University; Oct. 31. At Penn, he was a member of the squash and lacrosse teams.

Marcia Bryant Holt Nu’56, West Hartford, CT, a nursing instructor at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and Boston University; Oct. 24.

Harvey A. Krasnegor GAR’56, Springville, PA, June 3, 2022.

Joseph Monaco WG’56, Honolulu, a retired communications specialist for the US Navy; Oct. 2. He served in the US Navy during the Korean War.

Kathleen Kirk Newman CW’56, Woods Hole, MA, a retired librarian and active volunteer; April 29, 2023. At Penn, she was a member of Alpha Chi Omega sorority.

Lawrence M. Rosenthal W’56, New Marlborough, MA, owner of a real estate investment company; Sept. 29. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity and the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Rev. Richard N. Ryley W’56, Lagrangeville, NY, a Methodist pastor; Jan. 7, 2022. At Penn, he was a member of Theta Xi fraternity.

Dr. Paul J. Suorsa V’56, Slippery Rock, PA, a retired veterinarian and horse breeder; Sept. 27. He served in the US Navy.

George D. Sutherland C’56, Grantham, NH, retired marketing director for a life insurance company; Oct. 8. He served in the US Army during the Korean War.

Allen Weintraub W’56, Sarasota, FL, retired CEO of an investment brokerage; Oct. 26. At Penn, he was a member of the rowing team. One daughter is Jill Weintraub Biros C’82.

1957

William J. Beatty W’57, Arnold, MD, retired deputy secretary of the Department of Banking for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Oct. 12. He served in the US Navy during the Korean War. At Penn, he was a member of Theta Chi fraternity.

Felix S. Budka WEv’57, Columbus, NJ, a retired account manager for Verizon; Oct. 23. He served in the US Marine Corps.

Paul L. Feldman ChE’57 GCh’61, Pawleys Island, SC, a retired air pollution control systems engineer; Dec. 28.

Dr. George Glanzberg W’57 V’74, Jenkintown, PA, a retired veterinarian and operator of a free clinic; Oct. 10. Two children are Michael J. Glanzberg C’87 and Paula A. Glanzberg-Glazier SW’89.

Helen Cox Horan HUP’57, Lawrenceville, GA, a retired nurse at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania; March 26.

Edward Kessel C’57 L’60, Springfield, VA, a retired lawyer and lecturer of law at Temple University; Nov. 22, 2022. He served in the US Army Security Agency. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity.

Paul E. MacDonald W’57, Garrett Park, MD, chairman of a life insurance company; Dec. 29, 2022. He served in the US Army and the US Army Reserve. At Penn, he was a member of the rowing team and the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Henry T. Paiste III C’57, South Salem, NY, Oct. 27. He worked in advertising for DaimlerChrysler, PepsiCo, and other national firms. He served in the US Navy. At Penn, he was a member of Theta Xi fraternity.

Cary H. Rush EE’57 GEE’67, Philadelphia, an engineering manager at PECO Energy; April 27, 2022. He served in the US Navy. At Penn, he was a member of the ROTC.

Marian Carrozzino Schneider CW’57, Devon, PA, a retired real estate agent; June 4. At Penn, she was a member of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority. Her children are George J. Schneider III C’81, who is married to Pamela Rolnick Schneider C’81; Sandra M. Schneider C’82; and Marian Schneider Cotsarelis C’84, who is married to Dr. George Cotsarelis C’83 M’87 GM’92.

Carol Johns Shimmel HUP’57, Asheville, NC, a retired nurse; March 23.

Alan Warner W’57, Weston, CT, a retired accountant; March 15.

1958

Margaret “Peggy” Jones Edwards HUP’58, Indiana, PA, a nurse practitioner in obstetrics and gynecology; May 13.

Erich G. Holzapfel C’58, Washington, DC, April 14, 2022. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity.

James H. Jacquette EE’58, Bay Shore, NY, an electrical engineer; March 20.

Ralph S. Levitan W’58, Saint Simons Island, GA, a retired attorney; Jan. 30. At Penn, he was a member of the tennis team.

Gail Watson McDermott CW’58, Rehoboth Beach, DE, June 19. At Penn, she was a member of the lacrosse and field hockey teams.

Evan W. Michener III W’58, Perkasio, PA, owner of a packaging business Oct. 29, 2022. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity.

Dr. Jerome Moskowitz C’58, Aventura, FL, a retired gastroenterologist and inter-

nal medicine specialist; Sept. 28. He served in the US Army. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity. One son is Scott A. Moskowitz C'91 W'91.

Robert L. Pfaltzgraff WG'58 Gr'64, Wayne, PA, an international relations expert who advised government officials on foreign policy and a former assistant professor of political science in Penn's School of Arts and Sciences; Nov. 17. While on Penn's faculty in the 1960s, he served as an assistant editor of *Orbis*, the journal of Penn's Foreign Policy Research Institute. In 1968, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to research political alliances of 19th-century Europe and a year later, he was selected to serve on the Board of Selection of the US Information Agency. In 1971, he accepted a faculty position at Tufts University where he taught for 50 years. One daughter is Suzanne Pfaltzgraff Scheel GEd'97.

Milton F. Sanderson CE'58, Rutland, VT, a retired supervisor for the Vermont Agency of Transportation; Oct. 26. At Penn, he was a member of Theta Chi fraternity.

1959

C. Edward Dunmire W'59, Kittanning, PA, a retired bank executive and volunteer firefighter; Oct. 19. At Penn, he was a member of the rowing team. One brother is P. Eugene Dunmire W'56.

Alfonso L. Georeno G'59, Mount Laurel, NJ, a retired teacher; May 10. He served in the US Marine Corps.

Phyllis Stein Levitan Ed'59, Saint Jacksonville, FL, a former teacher; Nov. 7, 2022. At Penn, she was a member of Alpha Epsilon Phi sorority.

George M. Lewis Jr. WG'59, Spokane, WA, a retired bank executive and a finance professor at Hofstra University; Jan. 18, 2023.

Dr. Alan M. Protzel GD'59, Plainview, NY, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon; June 21.

Dr. Barry S. Savits M'59, New York, a retired surgeon; July 2.

Gilbert W. Schlerf WG'59, Glen Mills, PA, a manager in the packaging and industrial polymers department of DuPont; Oct. 11. He served in the US Army. One son is Jeffrey M. Schlerf C82.

George W. Sharpe Jr. W'59, Vero Beach, FL, a retired advertising executive; Sept. 23. At Penn, he was a member of Psi Upsilon fraternity.

1960

David H. Alven WG'60, Bluffton, SC, a retired stockbroker; March 13.

Phyllis Bloom Beck HUP'60, Brooklyn, NY, a real estate broker; Jan. 9, 2023.

Jane Dickinson Cangalosi MT'60, Staunton, VA, Nov. 2. At Penn, she was a member of Alpha Xi Delta sorority. Her husband is Davis S. Cangalosi W'60.

Dr. Larry A. Fryer C'60 M'64, Dresher, PA, Feb. 14, 2022. His wife is Sandra Hoffman Fryer CW'62, and two children are Beth Fryer Blumberg EAS'88 and Dr. Eric J. Fryer M'90 GM'91.

Louis S. Glass W'60, Wynnewood, PA, a land use management consultant; Oct. 7. He served in the US Army.

William F. Holmes Gr'60, Tucson, AZ, 2023. He worked at the University of Arizona on the development of therapeutic radiation for the treatment of cancer.

Robert E. Menzer C'60, Gulf Breeze, FL, a professor emeritus of toxicology at the University of Maryland and a retired director of the US Environmental Protection Agency's water resources laboratory in Gulf Breeze, FL; Sept. 5.

William H. "Bill" Murray EE'60 GEE'68, Wynnewood, PA, an intellectual property lawyer; Oct. 29. He served in the US Navy. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Nu fraternity.

Steven D. Oppenheim W'60, Harrison, NY, an attorney; Feb. 16. At Penn, he was a member of Kappa Nu fraternity and the lacrosse team. His children include Laura A. Oppenheim C'91 and Michael E. Oppenheim C'93.

Dr. Richard M. Robb M'60 GM'64, Brookline, MA, retired chief of ophthalmology at Boston Children's Hospital; Nov. 6. His daughter is Dr. Erica R. Thaler GM'95, and one grandchild is Eliza L. Thaler W'22.

1961

Dr. William D. Dwyer C'61 D'69, Falls Church, VA, a dentist; Nov. 22. He served

in the US Navy. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, ROTC, and the soccer team.

Dr. Richard J. Freiheit D'61, Palm City, FL, a retired dentist; July 13, 2022. He served in the US Air Force.

Daniel B. Litwin C'61, Newtown Square, PA, an attorney and co-owner of a real estate asset management firm; June 21. At Penn, he was a member of the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Philip Pressel GME'61, Lincoln, MA, a mechanical engineer; Oct. 18. His daughter is Linda Pressel Rosenberg W'93.

Marcia Ries HUP'61, Venice, FL, Aug. 9.

1962

Richard F. Kotz W'62 L'65, Glencoe, IL, a corporate and securities attorney; March 5. One son is Kenneth N. Kotz C'89.

Thomas E. Means WG'62, New Berlin, WI, Feb. 8, 2022.

Barry Satlow C'62, Boulder, CO, a retired lawyer and former assistant attorney general for Colorado; Sept. 16. At Penn, he was a member of the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Ralph H. Stamm EF'62, Denver, PA, Dec. 22. He formerly worked in the molly fasteners division of Black & Decker. He served in the US Army during the Korean War.

1963

Carole E. Handler GCP'63 L'75, Beverly Hills, CA, an intellectual property lawyer and adjunct professor at the University of Southern California; Oct. 22, 2023.

Dr. Robert A. Howarth V'63, San Antonio, a retired colonel in the US Army Veterinary Corps; Oct. 11. He later became co-owner of a diner.

Phyllis Rusinowitz Karel DH'63, Los Altos, CA, a former dental hygienist; Feb. 19.

John P. Z. Kent W'63, New York, a retired executive at Verizon; June 6. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity and the squash and tennis teams.

James A. "Jim" Michelson W'63, Bloomfield Hills, MI, chairman of an advertising company; July 26. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity and WXP. His son is James A. "Jamie" Michelson Jr. W'87, who is married to Beth Ber-

man Michelson C'87; and two grandchildren are Rebecca L. Michelson EAS'16 GEng'16 and Brooke S. Michelson W'17.

David Soloway W'63, Wellington, FL, president and managing director of the executive search firm Madison Group; June 24. At Penn, he was a member of WXP. One son is Daniel Howard Soloway C'95.

1964

Samuel L. Baily III Gr'64, Medford, MA, professor emeritus of Latin American history at Rutgers University; March 3.

William J. Callahan W'64, Summit, NJ, a retired sales executive for a financial services company; March 22. He served in the Massachusetts National Guard. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity and the soccer and tennis teams.

Dr. Paul B. Jennings Jr. V'64 GV'70, Plainfield, IL, a retired colonel in the US Army Veterinary Corps; October 23. His wife is Barbara Booth Jennings DH'62, and one daughter is Carol A. Jennings C'92.

Michael H. Levin C'64, Washington, DC, a lawyer, environmental policy expert, poet, and longtime contributor to the *Pennsylvania Gazette*; Jan. 2. At Penn he was a member of Penn Players, the squash team, and a recipient of the Thouron Award. His wife is Nora Jean Bieler Levin CW'65 G'66, and one son is Jeremy B. Levin C'93.

Geraldine Savidge Martin Nu'64, Ocean View, NJ, a former professor at Gloucester County College; Sept. 28.

Jacob Nogi W'64 L'67, Dunmore, PA, an attorney specializing in labor, trusts and estates, and real estate law; Dec. 4. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity. His daughter is Jennifer Nogi C'98.

1965

David R. Barker C'65, Grand Rapids, MI, cofounder of a management consulting company and a former diplomat for the United Nations Development Programme, serving as deputy residential representative in Dhaka, Bangladesh and Jakarta, Indonesia; May 13, 2022.

Dr. Eric B. Bell V'65, Bowdon, Altrincham, UK, a retired reader in immunology

at the University of Manchester in England; June 1, 2022.

Harry K. Eng C'65, Millburn, NJ, Feb. 13, 2023. He held a leadership position at the Organization of Chinese Americans Long Island chapter, which provides scholarships and social gatherings for young Asian Americans. One daughter is Donna J. Eng C'86.

Dr. Ronald E. Feldman C'65 GM'73, Escondido, CA, a gastroenterologist; Sept. 14. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity.

Janice Hartung Lewis-Cameron PT'65, Fort Myers, FL, July 1, 2022.

Dr. Edgar P. Nace M'65, Dallas, a psychiatrist specializing in addictions; Sept. 23. He served in the US Army Medical Corps.

Paulette Lemay Peters L'65, Durham, NC, an attorney; Feb. 22, 2022.

Dr. Donovan B. Reinke M'65, Minnetonka, MN, a professor of radiology at the University of Minnesota; Oct. 19.

James R. Westkott GCP'65 GFA'67, Cumberland, RI, retired chief demographer for the State of Colorado; Oct. 26.

1966

Nathan J. Bayer C'66, Washington, DC, retired associate general counsel for special assets for the Overseas Private Investment Corporation; March 19, 2023. At Penn, he was a member of Tau Delta Phi fraternity, the fencing team, and the *Pennsylvania Punch Bowl* humor magazine. His wife is Leslie Maddin Bayer CW'68, one stepdaughter is Amanda S. Scott C'97, and one sister is Felicia "Jody" Bayer GNu'88.

David R. Bowen Gr'66, Royal Oak, MI, a former professor at Wayne State University; Aug. 4, 2022.

Marta Cavallo Bunge Gr'66, Brooklyn, NY, professor emeritus of mathematics at McGill University; Oct. 25, 2022.

George S. Douglas C'66 GAR'69, Omaha, NE, a retired architect; Oct. 3. At Penn, he was a member of Beta Theta Pi fraternity, Penn Players, and the Glee Club.

Moreau P. "Reau" Estes V WG'66, Saint Augustine, FL, a former economist at an investment bank; Oct. 20.

David W. Grow WG'66, Keswick, VA, a retired financial planner at American Express; Sept. 24. He served in the US Navy.

John R. Hagerty WG'66, Chester, MD, Oct. 16. He retired from IBM. He served in the US Navy.

James E. Hanlon Jr. Ed'66, Peabody, MA, a retired manufacturing engineer manager for General Electric; Oct. 3. He served in the US Navy during World War II.

Edmund H. Mantell G'66 Gr'72, Scarsdale, NY, a professor of corporate finance at Pace University and a forensic economic consultant; Oct. 26. His wife is Nancy Holstein Mantell CW'66 G'69 Gr'73.

Cynthia Cassel Phillips CW'66, Reading, PA, director of corporate training for Boscov's Department Stores; Oct. 3. At Penn, she was a member of Kappa Delta sorority. One brother is Thomas A. V. Cassel ME'68 GME'73 Gr'79.

Richard L. Read PT'66, Cherry Hill, NJ, a physical therapist specializing in diagnostic electromyography; Oct. 11. His wife is Mary Schmidt Read PT'77.

Norman S. Solomon W'66 WG'67, La Jolla, CA, an accountant who also taught part-time at San Diego State and other universities; Oct. 8. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity. His wife is Judith Leibert Solomon CW'69.

Cengiz Yetken GAR'66, Oak Park, IL, a retired architect, author, and professor of architecture at a number of universities in the US and Turkey; Sept. 24. Earlier in his career, he was on the faculty of architecture at Penn.

1967

Philip J. Cople WG'67, Qualicum Beach, BC, Canada, a retired engineering executive; June 4. As a student at Penn, he received the Thouron Award.

Dr. Donald T. Dockstader D'67, Exton, PA, a retired dentist; Nov. 28, 2022. He served in the US Army.

Edward P. Ferry III WG'67, Mill Valley, CA, a retired builder of custom homes; September 18. He served in the US Navy.

Judith Woodward Milne GEd'67, Malvern, PA, a retired high school math teacher; Oct. 16.

H. James “Jim” Pickerstein C’67, Fairfield, CT, a retired attorney; Aug. 30, 2022. Earlier in his career, he was an assistant United States attorney in Connecticut. At Penn, he was a member of the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Dr. John H. Valentine M’67 GM’74, Penllyn, PA, a retired psychiatrist; Aug. 7, 2022. He served in the US Army as a physician during the Vietnam War. His son is John Andrew Valentine L’97.

Ann Bolbach White Gr’67, Roanoke, VA, a former history teacher and dean at a high school; Sept. 29.

Dr. John K. Wiley M’67 GM’68, Chapel Hill, NC, May 31.

1968

Salvatore C. “Sal” Catania GEE’68, Hollis, NH, a retired information technology consultant; July 30, 2023. He served in the US Army during the Korean War.

James W. Kenney GEE’68, Broomall, PA, head mechanical engineer at Drummond Scientific Company; Nov. 14, 2022. His wife is Sandra R. Bates-Kenney Gr’74, and one son is Douglas A. Kenney W’09.

Vivian Loncoske Willson GEd’68, Morristown, NJ, a retired high school English and history teacher; September 10, 2022. One sister is Carolyn A. Lowther CW’68 WG’76, and her daughter is Kathryn T. Willson C’01.

1969

David B. Harper GCP’69, Oberlin, OH, an artist and former land user planner who also taught at the School of Landscape and Architecture at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry; Aug. 10.

James O. Kruhly C’69, Philadelphia, an architect, artist, and teacher, who was a visiting professor of architecture at Penn; Oct. 17. His children are Madeleine L. Kruhly C’13 and Alexander O. Kruhly C’13.

Henrietta Pfuelb Liberi Nu’69, West Chester, PA, retired director of the School of Practical Nursing at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center; June 25.

Charles A. “Rago” Pappas C’69, Berkeley, CA, an author and poet who published more than 10 books with Regent Press; Sept. 13, 2022. He spent 49 years as a quad-

riplegic, following a shooting and robbery in Philadelphia in 1973. Finding some relief in medical marijuana, he was also chairman of the Berkeley Marijuana Commission for eight years.

Hugh L. Quinn L’69, Hilton Head, SC, an attorney; Oct. 15.

Carl B. Shulman C’69, Taos, NM, a ski instructor; Sept. 26. At Penn, he was a member of Beta Theta Pi fraternity and the football team.

Donna S. Wolf-Palacio CW’69, Cinnaminson, NJ, a poet and former senior staff psychotherapist and supervisor at Pennsylvania Hospital; Dec. 4, 2022.

Andrew D. Zeitlin EE’69, Vienna, VA, a former engineer for the Mitre Corporation, a not-for-profit research and development organization supporting US government agencies in aviation, defense, and other fields; June 4. At Penn, he was a member of Theta Rho fraternity and a Benjamin Franklin Scholar. One daughter is Samantha Zeitlin C’97. His wife is Elaine Glick Zeitlin CW’70, who died Nov. 8 (see Class of 1970).

1970

Robert A. Albanese WG’70, Portsmouth, RI, a retired project manager for Fidelity; Sept. 21.

R. Daniel Disalvi GrEd’70, Union, NJ, professor emeritus of psychology at Kean University; Oct. 3. He served in the US Army.

Kenneth L. Giberson Jr. WG’70, San Antonio, an accountant; Sept. 24. He served in the US Air Force for 31 years.

William H. Hernandez W’70, Pittsburgh, chief finance officer of a paint and coating manufacturing company; Jan. 14, 2023. At Penn, he was a member of Pi Lambda Phi fraternity. One daughter is Lisa Hernandez C’97 L’01, and his brother is Robert M. Hernandez WG’68.

Gillian Widdowson Kerr GL’70, Ballynahinch, County Down, UK, July 25, 2022.

Myles T. “Tom” McDonald SW’70, Philadelphia, an administrator for Medical Fund Advisors, which administers trusts established by the US government for severely injured individuals; June 4. He served in the US Army Adjutant General Corps.

C. E. Stewart Patrick WG’70, Walnut Creek, CA, retired human resources director for Saint-Gobain, which manufactures building materials; Oct. 19.

Dr. Elliott N. Perla C’70, Fair Lawn, NJ, a former professor of clinical medicine at New York Medical College; May 26, 2022.

Rabbi Eric B. Wisnia C’70, Dresher, PA, senior rabbi emeritus at Congregation Beth Chaim in Princeton Junction, NJ; Sept. 29. His wife is Judith Glassburg Wisnia GEd’70.

Elaine Glick Zeitlin CW’70, Vienna, VA, a former programmer and analyst; Nov. 8. One daughter is Samantha Zeitlin C’97. Her husband is Andrew D. Zeitlin EE’69, who died June 4 (see Class of 1969).

1971

Dr. Christopher C. Barton V’71, Marietta, PA, a large animal veterinarian; Oct. 25.

Dr. Andrew J. Breslin V’71, Lenox, MA, a veterinarian specializing in surgery, dermatology, and orthopedics; Oct. 29.

Brian J. Connors C’71 GEd’72, Aberdeen, MD, an accountant; Nov. 16, 2022. His brother is Steven J. Connors C’74.

Stephen Crawford WG’71, Derwood, MD, a former research professor at George Washington University; May 2022. He served in the US Army during the Vietnam War.

Davidson Taylor Gordon GL’71, Rye, NY, a retired attorney; March 8.

James L. Grubbs WG’71, Venice, FL, a former executive at Citibank; Jan. 5, 2023. He served in the US Army.

Alima Dolores J. Reardon GEd’71, Philadelphia, a former teacher; Nov. 30.

Dr. George W. Volpetti Jr. GM’71, Dallas, PA, a retired general and vascular surgeon and owner of a power sports dealership; Oct. 14.

1972

David J. Gorra G’72 WG’74, Coral Springs, FL, a former executive at the New York Heart Center, a medical clinic; Aug. 6, 2022.

Harrison B. “Biff” Wetherill Jr. L’72, Philadelphia, a retired attorney; Oct. 17. He served in the US Marine Corps. His sister is Wendy W. Hughes PT’80.

1973

Robert H. Carlson WG'73, Saint Paul, MN, co-CEO of Reell Precision Manufacturing, which makes products for engineering; Oct. 22. He served in the US Army during the Vietnam War.

Marie Jacobus Hertzog Gr'73, Greenwich, CT, president of the Greenwich Scholarship Association; March 20, 2022. She also taught first-year English courses at Penn for several years. Her husband is Melvin R. Hertzog W'66 WG'67.

Robert C. Knapp Gr'73, Oakland, CA, professor emeritus of classics and of ancient history and Mediterranean archaeology at UC Berkeley; Sept. 17.

Edward J. McManus WEv'73, Margate, NJ, a retired cost analyst for L3 Communications, which supplied communications products for the aerospace and defense industries; June 16.

Robert L. Nefsky C'73, Lincoln, NE, a lawyer specializing in insurance regulation; Nov. 22. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity.

Walter J. Schoppe GEE'73, San Diego, retired deputy director of Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center; Sept. 23.

1974

Richard J. Hollingsworth GEE'74, Concord, MA, an executive at various large corporations and startups; Oct. 8.

Marie Farano McBride Nu'74, Prospect Park, PA, a retired nurse at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital; Nov. 27, 2021.

Timothy D. Smith C'74, Richmond, VA, cofounder of a residential design-build firm; Dec. 2. At Penn, he was a member of the rowing team.

Thomas C. Tritschler Gr'74, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, professor emeritus of art at the University of Guelph; Sept. 8. He served in the US Army.

1975

Medford J. Brown III L'75, Bryn Mawr, PA, a retired medical malpractice defense attorney; Sept. 16.

Dr. Michael V. Coseriu C'75, Cleveland, an ophthalmologist; Oct. 27. At Penn, he was a member of the sprint football team.

Robert D. Hahn GEE'75, Ambler, PA, a retired engineering manager at Honeywell and a financial planner; Jan. 14, 2022.

1978

James J. O'Reilly Nu'78, Hudson, FL, a retired nurse; June 8. One sister is Mary E. O'Reilly-Knapp Nu'66, GNu'74.

Don P. Palermo WEv'78, Ridley Park, PA, a contract administrator at defense contractor Raytheon; Oct. 17.

John R. Suter GAR'78, Haddonfield, NJ, retired director of quality at an architecture firm; Oct. 11.

1979

Dr. John T. Irwin GM'79, Yardley, PA, an orthopedic surgeon; Oct. 2, 2022.

1980

Leonard E. Ferguson CGS'80, Philadelphia, a retired probation officer; Dec. 6, 2022.

Dr. Mohammad Ghaemi GM'80, Royal Oak, MI, a retired physician; May 12.

Shirley M. Leininger WEv'80, Philadelphia, a retired bank executive; Feb. 16, 2023.

William D. Wong C'80, Port Washington, NY, a former administrator at Adelphi University; July 21, 2022.

1981

Edith Hahn Lundquist Nu'81 GNu'83, Albany, NY, a psychiatric nurse practitioner who specialized in treating children and adolescents; April 15, 2022. At Penn, she was a member of the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Bruce Rosenblum C'81, Somerville, MA, a former executive for Atypon, an online publishing platform; Dec. 13. At Penn, he was a member of the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Janet Burcin Sala Nu'81, Royal Palm Beach, FL, a former manager at St. Mary's Medical Center; Oct. 24.

Barbara Benely Schindler W'81, Westport, CT, Nov. 23, 2022. Her husband is Greg S. Schindler W'81.

Harry B. Van Sciver C'81, Cape Cod, MA, president of Whitebriar Financial, a receivables financing corporation; Jan. 8. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Upsilon fraternity and drummer for the rock n' roll band

The Limit. His wife is Margaret Greenfield Van Sciver W'82 C'82, and his children are Sarah Van Sciver Melnick C'14, Han G. Van Sciver C'14, Rebecca G. Van Sciver C'17, and Mariah H. Van Sciver C'23. One sibling is Chance M. Van Sciver W'92.

1982

Dr. James H. Davis M'82, Lancaster, PA, an anesthesiologist; Oct. 31.

Eva D. K. Orlow GEd'82, San Jose, CA, June 19.

1984

Richard M. Shupak EE'84, Kirkland, WA, a research software development engineer for Microsoft; Sept. 17.

1985

Lisa Block Cohen C'85, Brentwood, CA, a management consultant and strategic planner for healthcare businesses; Nov. 7. At Penn, she was a member of the *Daily Pennsylvanian*. Her husband is Jeffrey H. Cohen W'85, and one son is Justin B. Cohen C'15.

1986

Dr. Jocelyn Lee Bezner V'86, Hutchinson Island, FL, a primate expert and chief veterinarian for Save the Chimps, a sanctuary for chimpanzees rescued from research laboratories, the pet trade, and the entertainment industry; Sept. 17, 2022.

Christopher J. Blake C'86, San Jose, CA, May 10.

Timothy R. Martin WG'86, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL, June 11.

1988

Alexis C. Jones W'88, Middletown, DE, former owner of a financial advisory firm; Jan. 11. At Penn, he was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.

Dr. Jon Eric Popovich M'88, Mill Hall, PA, a physician at a VA medical center; Oct. 16. He served in the US Air Force.

1990

Kate Anne Herrod WG'90, Fort Collins, CO, former human resources chief for

Ashoka, a nonprofit that supports social entrepreneurship; March 19, 2023.

Katherine F. Laird C'90, Amherst, MA, Oct. 4, 2022. As a student at Penn, she was a Benjamin Franklin Scholar. Her father is Campbell Laird, professor emeritus in materials science and engineering at Penn Engineering.

Rev. David K. Louder C'90, Windber, PA, a Lutheran pastor and former campus minister at Western Michigan University; Oct. 20. At Penn, he was a member of the ROTC and a Benjamin Franklin Scholar.

Carol Romano Twomey GNu'90 GNC'94, Doylestown, PA, a nurse practitioner; Nov. 15, 2022. From 1998 to 2010, she was lead nurse practitioner for the cardio-thoracic step-down (post-surgery) unit at Penn Medicine.

1991

Dr. Allison J. Styne W'91, Roslyn, NY, an obstetrician-gynecologist; June 5. At Penn, she was a member of Sigma Delta Tau sorority. Her brother is Joshua M. Styne C'99.

1992

Michael S. Heiser G'92, Jacksonville, FL, a Bible scholar, author, podcaster, and executive director of the Awakening School of Theology and Ministry at Celebration Church; Feb. 20, 2023.

1993

Derek J. Kittle CGS'93, Arlington, VA, May 2, 2022. At Penn, he was a Benjamin Franklin Scholar.

Cheryl L. Neisser-Frankson GNu'93 Gr'03 GNu'15, Warminster, PA, an advanced senior lecturer in Penn Nursing's department of biobehavioral and health science; Oct. 9. She was a teaching assistant at Penn Nursing from 1991 to 2000. In 2004, she joined the faculty full-time as a lecturer; she was promoted to advanced senior lecturer in 2017.

1994

Helen B. "Brad" Foster Gr'94, Saint Paul, MN, a former special education teacher; Sept. 15, 2022.

Michael R. Kelsen L'94 G'99, Merion Station, PA, an attorney; May 24, 2022.

John P. O'Sullivan GEx'94, Kutztown, PA, a metallurgical engineer and a manager at Western Electric; Feb. 20, 2023.

1996

Dr. Guy R. Hammond V'96, Bath, NY, a veterinarian; Oct. 7, 2022.

Beth Smith White WEv'96, Philadelphia, president and managing member of the Wissahickon Stone Quarry and co-owner and general manager of a wellness spa; Oct. 19, 2022. She also served as CEO of the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

1997

Ronaldo F. B. Peralta WG'97, Muntinlupa City, Philippines, a bank executive; Oct. 19, 2022. His wife is Feliza Abella Peralta WG'97, and his children include Catherine Feli Peralta C'16 W'16, Eduardo Noel Xavier Abella Peralta C'21, and Jacob Ronaldo A. Peralta W'26.

Rebecca Lubove Sender CGS'97, Blue Bell, PA, a former arts administrator and founder of a shipping and logistics business; Dec. 10, 2022.

1998

Walter E. Doll Jr. WAM'98, The Villages, FL, a retired executive at Delta Airlines; July 24.

Thomas F. Robinson G'98, Paoli, PA, a railroad auditor in the office of the Inspector General Revenue Protection; Oct. 16. He served in the US Army.

2002

Ephraim Lenka Dewa WG'02, Las Vegas, chairman of WSN GlobAF, which focused on progressing global and local communities in Nigeria, and an adjunct professor at a number of colleges; Oct. 9.

2003

Josh R. Hardin C'03, Newark, NJ, Sept. 27, 2021. His mother is Joan Rothchild Hardin Gr'75.

2004

Joshua A. Kruger C'04, Philadelphia, a

freelance journalist in Philadelphia who previously worked in city government; Oct. 2.

2006

Tara J. Boehm CGS'06, Philadelphia, a Philadelphia Treatment Court case manager; Sept. 18.

2008

Dr. Karen Hook GM'08 GM'11, Plainville, CT, associate professor of medical sciences at Quinnipiac University; Oct. 29.

2011

Jason T. Robinson C'11, Atlanta, an insurance lawyer; June 5. His parents are Dr. Murray D. Robinson C'81 M'85 and Georgia E. Robinson GNu'83.

2012

Raymond Davies LPS'12, Philadelphia, Dec. 16, 2021.

2014

Page E. Masonson C'14, Derwood, MD, a graphic designer, custom picture framer, art gallery host, and self-taught silversmith who owned a jewelry business; Aug. 15. At Penn, she was music director of Keynotes a cappella group and a member of the University choir.

2019

Adrienne Ricks LPS'19, Pennsauken, NJ, a former student information coordinator in Penn Nursing's Office of Academic Affairs; Oct. 24. In 1989, she joined Penn's staff as a temporary employee in Student Health; she became a clerk in the same department in 1993. Four years later, she joined Penn Admissions, and in 2000, she moved to the School of Nursing, where she served as a student information coordinator until retiring from Penn in 2021.

William M. Tuseth C'19, Crookston, MN, a restaurant chef; Oct. 13. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity.

2022

Megan L. Fletcher SPP'22, Lancaster, PA, a social worker; Sept. 10.

2026

Natalie Kim V'26, Bryn Mawr, PA, Oct. 24.

Faculty & Staff

J. Scott Armstrong, Haverford, PA, professor emeritus of marketing at the Wharton School; Sept. 28. He joined Wharton's faculty as an assistant professor in the department of marketing in 1968, moving through the ranks to full professor in 1998. He was internationally recognized for his expertise in forecasting, which is the use of historical data to predict future trends. He held 24 international visiting appointments at 17 universities, founded the *Journal of Forecasting*, and published four books, among other achievements. He retired in 2020.

Dr. Luis Blasco GM'74 CGS'07, Merion Station, PA, a pioneer in infertility treatment and a professor emeritus in the department of obstetrics and gynecology in the Perelman School of Medicine and the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania; Oct. 23. At Penn, he was a Ford Foundation Research Fellow in reproductive biology, and when he completed his residency in 1971, he was hired as a postdoctoral trainee in the School of Medicine's department of obstetrics and gynecology. Three years later, he joined the department's tenure track as an assistant professor. In 1986, he became a full professor, and in 1994 he became the Nancy and Richard Wolfson Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He conducted pivotal research and served on the Penn in vitro fertilization team that performed one of the earliest IVF pregnancies in the US. He retired in 2005.

Joan DeJean, Philadelphia, Trustee Professor Emerita of Romance Languages in the School of Arts and Sciences and renowned scholar of 17th- and 18th-century French literature; Dec. 2. She started teaching at Penn in 1974 and received a Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1977. She then taught French literature at Princeton and Yale before returning in 1988 to Penn as the Trustee Professor of Romance Languages, with affiliations in English and women's studies. She remained at Penn from 1988 until her retirement in 2021. The author of

12 books, she was recognized with numerous honors and awards for her work on women's writing, the history of sexuality, the development of the novel, and material culture. She was profiled in "Slouching Toward Elegance" in the *Gazette's* Mar|Apr 2011 issue and was most recently featured in these pages for her role, arising from her 2022 book *Mutinous Women: How French Convicts Became Founding Mothers of the Gulf Coast*, in helping John Guttman C'75's family discover the stories behind the people in a centuries-old family portrait ["Arts," Mar|Apr 2023].

Claire Mintzer Fagin Hon'94. See *Gazette*, this issue.

Jorge F. Ferrer, Chestertown, MD, emeritus professor of microbiology at Penn Vet; Aug. 5. He joined Penn's faculty in 1969 as an associate professor of pathobiology at the New Bolton Center, Penn Vet's large animal hospital in Chester County, Pennsylvania. In 1972, he became an associate professor of microbiology; and then, in 1975, a full professor of clinical studies. In 1977, he was named director of Penn's Comparative Leukemia Studies Unit. His research in the viral oncology section of the leukemia unit provided a number of breakthroughs concerning the etiology and pathogenesis of bovine leukemia and dispelled false notions about the disease that had persisted for decades. During the 1990s, his research into the effects of virus HTLV-1 on a group of lambs was investigated for failing to meet safety guidelines. Committee findings resulted in sanctions being imposed, and he filed a lawsuit against the University in 1992. After a verdict and multiple appeals, he was awarded \$2.9 million in 2003 after a ruling by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. He retired from Penn in 2010. One son is Sebastian Ferrer C'87.

Dr. David H. Hausman. See *Class of 1945*.

Marie Jacobus Hertzog. See *Class of 1973*.

Marcia Bryant Holt. See *Class of 1956*.

Helen Cox Horan. See *Class of 1957*.

Dr. Sidney M. Kobrin, Bala Cynwyd, PA, the medical director of the fresenius dialysis unit in Penn Medicine and an associate professor of medicine in the Perelman School of Medicine; Oct. 30. He joined Penn's faculty in 1989 as a lecturer in the division of

renal electrolyte and hypertension. In 1992, he became an assistant professor, and in 1996, an associate professor, a position he held until his death. In 2010, he earned Penn Medicine's I. S. Ravdin Master Clinician Award. His children are Lara G. Kobrin C'08 and Dr. Dale M. Kobrin M'19.

James O. Kruhly. See *Class of 1969*.

Nancy Balchunas Litwin. See *Class of 1953*.

Cheryl L. Neisser-Frankson. See *Class of 1993*.

Robert L. Pfaltzgraff. See *Class of 1958*.

Adrienne Ricks. See *Class of 2019*.

Anita Arrow Summers, Philadelphia, a professor emeritus of economics in the Wharton School and a leading expert in public policy; Oct. 22. She came to the Wharton School as a research associate at the Samuel Zell and Robert Lurie Real Estate Center in 1979. In 1982, she became a professor of legal studies and, a year later, the founding chair of what is now known as the department of business economics and public policy (which she recalled in a letter to the *Gazette* published online shortly before her death ["Letters," Nov|Dec 2023]). During the 1980s, she held a secondary position in the School of Nursing. After retiring from Penn in 1991, she continued to teach in Wharton's MBA program until 2005 and worked in Wharton's Dean's office until 2012. She was an innovative and sought-after researcher. Her 1977 paper, "Do Schools Make a Difference?" first published in the *American Economic Review*, was the first to suggest that school-specific inputs are the best metric of individual schools' education quality, and colleagues lauded that paper as ahead of its time. She researched the economic changes taking place in southeastern Pennsylvania as it transitioned away from heavy industry, mainly shipbuilding, and wrote several books, including *Economic Development Within the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area* (1987), with Thomas F. Luce, and *Urban Change in the United States and Western Europe: Comparative Analysis and Policy* (1999), with two coauthors.

Donna S. Wolf-Palacio. See *Class of 1969*.

Cengiz Yetken. See *Class of 1966*.

Classifieds

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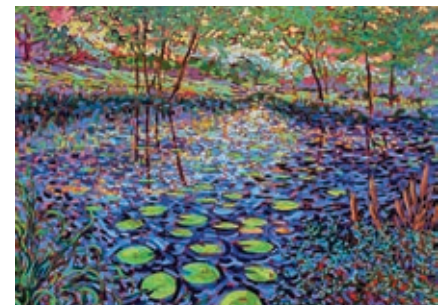
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“The Dark Day”

“The citizens of this Metropolis were all agog yesterday afternoon,” wrote the editors of the *New York Times* on August 8, 1869, describing the total solar eclipse of the previous day. One of the first popularized celestial events in the US, the eclipse crossed America diagonally from Alaska to North Carolina, leaving a shadow across the nation, on what *Times* editors dubbed “the dark day.” Watch parties were held on rooftops across the sun’s path, with people viewing its rays through bits of stained glass, smoked glass (created by holding glass over a candle flame), opera glasses, and small telescopes. Although the

eclipse was only partial in New York, the *Times* reported that the obscuration began at noon and lasted more than two hours. It was one big party.

This photo is from the collection of Edward Goodfellow C1848 G1851, who spent his career at the US Coast and Geodetic Survey (a precursor to today’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). After graduating from Penn, he started working at the USC&GS, where he began as a clerk, and then eventually worked his way up to executive assistant. He was also editor of the USC&GS’s publications, such as bulletins, annual reports, and appendices.

Goodfellow’s fieldwork included determining longitudes of places such as

Galveston, Texas, and traveling on the agency’s eclipse expeditions. On the Labrador Solar Eclipse expedition of 1860, he described collisions with icebergs and submerged rocks, but also the fishing industry off Nova Scotia and the lives of Alaska Natives. This photo from his collection is from the August 7, 1869, eclipse, an event which he also worked on.

The USC&GS sent an expedition to the Chilkat Valley in southeastern Alaska, led by astronomer George Davidson. Davidson collaborated with the Tlingit people, an Indigenous group living there, to find the prime viewing spot. The USC&GS also sent observers to St. Louis and three other points in Cedar Falls, Iowa. It is unknown which location this photo is from.

“One of the most intriguing discoveries made was that the spectrum of the solar corona had a mysterious green line in it,” reports *Old Farmer’s Almanac* (“History of U.S. Eclipses,” November 17, 2023). “This green line was in the same spectral position that was produced by iron in the laboratory, but how could iron be present in the corona? The mystery was not solved until 1941, when the corona was proved to include ionized atoms of iron, as well as nickel, calcium, and the rare gas argon, all at a temperature of a million degrees.”

Goodfellow spent his career at the USC&GS, minus a short stint as captain of the 45th Regiment, United States Colored Infantry, in 1864, during the Civil War. He resigned from his post due to ill health.

He was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1871, was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and cofounded the Cosmos Club, a private social club for men interested in science, in Washington, DC.

Goodfellow died on May 7, 1899, at the age of 71, in his DC apartment, of accidental asphyxiation. He left behind his wife and daughter. —NP



Photo Courtesy of the Office of University Communications

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