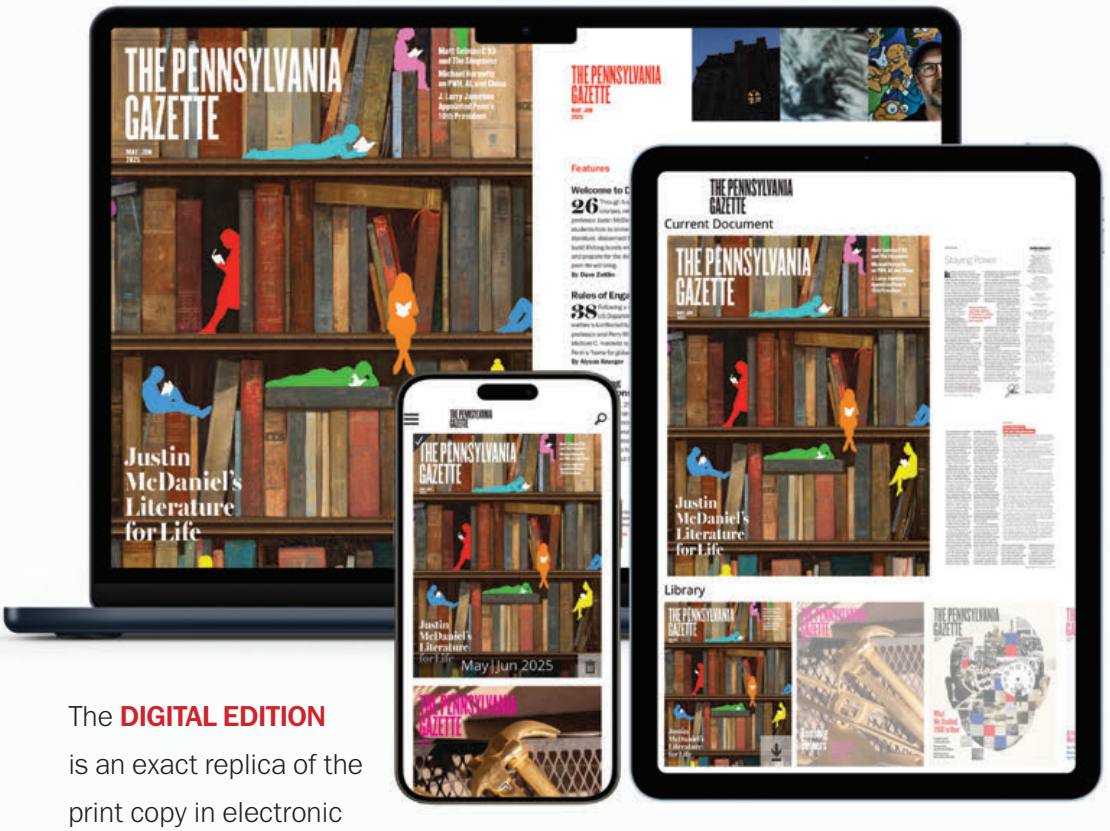
THE PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE

JUL | AUG
2025

Conclave Producer Michael Jackman C'85
Waste Wars Chronicler Alexander Clapp C'13
Alumni Weekend & Commencement

Every Cure Rx: Research, Repurpose, Repeat

DIGITAL+ IPAD



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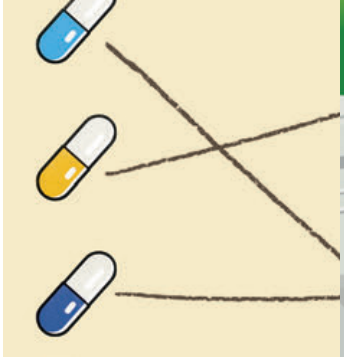

Features

Vol. 123, No. 6

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Departments

Data & Dumps

The illustration on our cover is specifically intended as a graphic representation of the promise behind an alumni-led nonprofit called Every Cure, which seeks to harness the power of artificial intelligence to sift through myriad data points with the goal of repurposing existing drugs to combat rare diseases for which no cure or treatment has been found—or, often, even been sought, given the relatively small populations affected and limited expectations of profit involved for pharmaceutical companies.

David Fajgenbaum M'13 WG'15 told the dramatic tale of his own desperate search for a cure for the rare disease that first struck him when he was in medical school in the memoir *Chasing My Cure*. In "Chasing *Every* Cure," frequent contributor JoAnn Greco traces how the experience also inspired Fajgenbaum to dedicate himself to broadening the search for unsuspected treatments by cofounding Every Cure with friend and classmate Grant Mitchell M'14 WG'14.

"Every Cure is a big tent for the thousands of rare diseases out there."

Its approach is based on a well-known phenomenon in which drugs approved or developed for one purpose turn out to be effective for another—drugs for erectile disfunction and weight loss, originally designed to lower blood pressure and control diabetes, respectively, being familiar examples. What's new is the data-crunching ability of AI to identify and begin to rank those potential drug-disease connections—out of about 75 million possibilities, Mitchell told JoAnn—which can then be pursued for further study and shared among researchers and health professionals. As one doctor who JoAnn spoke to put it, "What Every Cure does is make a big tent for the thousands of rare diseases out there."

Of course, our cover also echoes the universal symbol for recycling and its associated mantra of *reduce, reuse, recycle*. But that promise, to judge from Alexander Clapp C'13's new book *Waste Wars: The Wild Afterlife of Your Trash*, is largely a hollow one.

For "Travels in Trashland" senior editor Trey Popp interviewed Clapp about his international investigation of the shadowy network that transports the developed world's waste for a profit and offloads it to areas less fortunate—and what that means for the people in those places and the rest of us. Also included is an excerpt from Clapp's book, in which he describes a visit to a notorious dumping ground for the world's smartphones, computers, and other electronics equipment in Ghana.

Also in this issue, the recent real-life drama around the election of a new pope gave a renewed burst of attention to a fictional version—*Conclave*, produced by Michael Jackman C'85—but the film had already enjoyed critical acclaim, a healthy box office, and a clutch of award nominations, including for Best Picture at the Oscars. Though that was not to be, freelancer Susan Karlin C'85 describes Jackman's thrilling ride on the awards season roller coaster, along with the story of his steady by comparison ascent through the Hollywood hierarchy (as suggested by the title, "The Producer as Problem Solver").

Finally, see our annual Alumni Weekend photo gallery and coverage of Commencement, where speaker Elizabeth Banks C'96 gave a funny and relevant talk rooted in her own Penn experience (including learning to make choices like an adult and being hungover at her previous big moment on Franklin Field).

THE PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE

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Praise for "Despair," real and wonderful essay, SAT (math) question, higher ed debate, and more.

Appreciation and Thanks

The May|Jun 2025 issue of the *Gazette* captured my interest more than most. The article "Welcome to Despair" caught and captured my attention. The course strikes me as a liberal arts education in a semester. Obviously, it's not, but it seems an introduction and a world-broadening experience. The article also provided me with insight into the current generation of University students. Hurrah to you for devoting so many pages to this topic!

In addition to writing my appreciation and thanks, I am wondering if it's possible to get a book list of what Professor McDaniel has used in the past. Though I'm a voracious reader, his recommendations would be welcomed. Not that I'm looking for despair. … I have a sense that his recommendations form the basis of a well-rounded, educated reader. That is what I want to continue to be.

Laura Denton GEd'73, Oakland, CA

Professor McDaniel says he does not share a reading list but is open to hearing directly from alumni at jmcdan@sas.upenn.edu and will cater a list to their specific needs and tastes.—Ed.

Blown Away

"Welcome to Despair" was an incredible article. I first came to know author Dave Zeitlin's writing when he was a beat writer for the Philadelphia Union soccer team. When I finished his article about Justin McDaniel's course, I was really blown away. I looked back at the title page to see who wrote it and was not surprised to see his name. Keep up the great work!

Paul Costa C'96, Merion Station, PA

"Hurrah to you for devoting so many pages to this topic!"

Real and Relevant

I just finished Caren Lissner's essay "Close Your Eyes" ["Alumni Voices," May|Jun 2025], which was wonderful; I hated for it to end. Some very dear family members of mine are homeless, so the article really resonated with me, and I so wanted to read more as I worry about them constantly.

Caren's work is so real and relevant. I can't wait to read the memoir on homelessness she mentions that she is working on. I am proud of Caren for writing this piece, and of the *Gazette* for publishing it—for "keeping it real," and not pretending that all those who attend Penn have it "all ivy." The genuineness of her work is what makes it so impressive and engaging.

We Welcome Letters

Please email us at gazette@ben.dev.upenn.edu. Letters should refer to material published in the magazine and may be edited for clarity, civility, and length. For more letters, visit thepenngazette.com.

I received my degree from Penn in 1978 in sociology and later received my master's in writing from Portland State University. I'm retired now. My historical novel, *Avezzano and New York*, is on Amazon under my pen name of Glo Lewis, and I have a blog of fiction writing advice and my short stories at writingforseniors.blogspot.com.

Gloria Lewis C'78, Auburn, CA

Higher Math (and Verbal)

I noted with interest the story reporting that Penn has restored the SAT/ACT requirement ["Gazetteer," May|Jun 2025].

One would anticipate that, in a test-optional environment, the people most likely to report test scores would be the people who do well on tests. This does seem to be the case with Penn: according to the story, only 41 percent of matriculating students reported test scores, but "the median SAT score of incoming College students who'd chosen to submit it was a perfect 1600."

That is an awesome achievement, but I'm a bit puzzled as to how it was achieved. My statistics professor at Penn taught me (over 50 years ago…) that the "median" number in a set of numbers was the center number—that is, the "median" was the number where half of all the numbers in the set were higher, and half of all the numbers in the set were lower. If 1600 is, indeed, a perfect score, what scores could possibly have been higher? Or does Penn have a different, um, "mode" for quantifying statistical results?

I guess this means that 20.5 percent of Penn's incoming College students (that is, half of the students who reported test results) are better than "perfect." Put *that* in your pipe and smoke it, Hahvud!

Michael T. Shutterly C'74, Henrico, VA

Not better than *perfect, but more than half of the students reporting SAT scores got 1600—so perfection was the median.—Ed.*

Penn's Complicity Can't Be Cloaked

With respect to the article "Universities Targeted" ["Gazetteer," May|Jun 2025], where the administration attempts to explain their positions on transgender athletes to the Penn community, I was disappointed in their explanations: (1) Penn never had its own policy, (2) Penn followed the laws/rules then in place, and (3) Penn follows the NCAA policy of now. A statement worthy of *Hogan's Heroes*' Sgt. Schultz ("I know nothing!") if he had gone to law school.

Penn's complicity can't be cloaked behind the letter of the law/rules. It was wrong then and continues to be wrong today.

Peter D. McManmon C'70 GAr'74, Marion, MA

Egregious and Unfair

"Universities Targeted" quotes Penn President J. Larry Jameson on the University's concern over President Trump's "pausing" of $175 million in federal grants. Trump's executive order was to penalize Penn for allowing a transgender woman, Lia Thomas C'22, to swim on the women's team, garnering a personal NCAA championship while doing so. Penn is also under investigation by the Office of Civil Rights for Title IX violations in regard to its athletic participation policies.

President Jameson reiterated Penn's core values and contributions to valuable research in "innumerable and lifesaving medical research"—all of which is true. However, much of the nation's population outside of elite educational institutions find Thomas' incursion into women's sports egregious and unfair. Jameson's defense against this assault on Title IX appears to be somewhat tepid. He acknowledges the University has never had its own policy on transgender athletic participation (and one wonders why) but has consistently followed NCAA policy on that issue.

With his extensive medical background, President Jameson should know that if one were to test Lia Thomas' DNA, an X and a Y chromosome would be found. That signifies maleness and, regardless of Thomas's desire to be regarded as female, s/he is not. There is no "*trans*" gender—we humans remain binary.

Perhaps it's time for Penn to think beyond the vagaries of the NCAA and format fair rules (i.e., uphold Title IX) for Penn's female athletes. It would be an honorable and painless way to retrieve their federal grants.

Dr. Alan E. Deegan D'59, Highlands Ranch, CO

Exercise in Futility

In "Universities Targeted," President Larry Jameson says the right things, but his arguments that Penn contributes greatly to the economy and the health of the nation are an exercise in futility. President Donald Trump W'68 doesn't care. He will use any far-fetched pretext to justify reducing, even eliminating, federal funding. His goal is to render universities impotent, to have little influence. But that's just the tip of the iceberg.

The attack on elite universities is a component of a coordinated campaign to downgrade education. He put a wrestling executive in charge of the Department of Education on the way to closing it. He ended funding for educational television. Why is education the target?

Trump told us explicitly: "I love the uneducated, and the uneducated love me." *[After winning the Nevada primary in 2016, Trump listed the groups he had received strong support from, including "the poorly educated," and added, "I love the poorly educated."—Ed.]* This was a truly brilliant stroke for a candidate with no political training or experience, and with enormous baggage ranging from not paying income taxes to sexual mis-

conduct. He found a way to create a huge base, a mass of ordinary folks who came to believe that an avaricious billionaire would represent their interests.

Who are those uneducated? Uneducated people are not stupid, but they generally don't get trained in critical thinking. They are easily led by a charismatic leader; they don't question what he tells them. Admittedly, that's an elitist perspective; but it appears to be the reality in a deeply divided country.

The uneducated can't see that tariffs are merely sales taxes with a little animosity tossed in, instituted with the goal of reducing taxes on income, which are graduated, with taxes on consumption, which are not. Who benefits most from that shift?

Trump plays into xenophobia and racism, as with his reported reference to Haiti and African countries being "sh—holes" and calling for more immigration from places like Norway. He has successfully diverted the uneducated from the data showing that immigrants help the economy in multiple ways, while being less likely than the native-born to commit crimes (see the *Gazette*'s report on Wharton Professor Zeke Hernandez's research ["The Newcomer Dividend," Jul|Aug 2024]).

President Trump views trade as a competitive, zero-sum game, and he uses the economic and military strength of the United States to help him achieve wins. In contrast, and as I was taught in the one class I took in the Wharton School, trade can be the rising tide that lifts all boats. I get fresh summer fruits and vegetables during the winter, while those who grow them get cell phones and television that are not made in their locales.

I trust I speak for all alumni in supporting President Jameson's efforts to defend the University on rational grounds. I have little hope that will suffice. Perhaps a more practical approach to make things better before President Trump leaves office is to join the sycophants and award him an honorary doctorate.

David J Weiss C'66, Brea, CA

Beetle Mania

I found the passage about the former Volkswagen Beetle in "Sweet Chariots" ["Rabbit Hole," Mar|Apr 2025] very amusing, as it brought back wonderful memories of a trip I took to Europe after graduation in 1957, accompanied by fellow classmate Nick Taubman W'57.

We rented a Volkswagen Beetle for this tour, and often one of us had to exit the car and "push" it up hills, especially in Switzerland.

As many know, the Beetle had a small engine in the rear that reminded us of a sewing machine motor. Nonetheless, the Beetle was otherwise very reliable throughout this trip, and I was sorry to see Volkswagen discontinue the Beetle.

Ron Harwood W'57, Tulsa, OK

Welcome Recognition for Military Service

Thank you for including reference to the military service of the individuals listed in the alumni obituaries in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*.

The graduates in the years around mine (1968) knew that the war was close, but maybe not as close as it turned out to be for many, based on the frequency of service references in the listings for those years.

The times were such that many of those (us) who served were motivated to suppress any acknowledgment or recognition of military service in or around the Vietnam War … for years.

The reference to military service in the *Gazette* obituaries for all who served is fitting, for sure, and appreciated, I believe.

Anthony P. Morris C'68, Boston

The writer shared that he served in the US Navy from 1968 to 1973, including in Vietnam in 1968–69.—Ed.

Beyond Salvation

I prayed that no one got hurt.
Long story short, I did.

By Mollie Benn

Illustration by Gracia Lam

In the warehouse beside my grandmother's church in Seminole, Oklahoma, sitting in a fold-out chair with a half-eaten chocolate cupcake, I raised my hand to be saved. The preacher brought me up to a small stage along with the other kids who had raised their hands. He prayed over us. My face was red and there was a giant pit in my stomach. I knew no one there. My Mima was at "grown-up church" in the building next door. I wanted to jump off the stage and hide back in my chair. But if I didn't accept Jesus as my savior, ask him to forgive my sins, and become saved, I was going to Hell.

At the age of nine, I had already heard of all the sinister things the Devil was capable of. Every night, just before bed when I needed to go to the bathroom one last time, I would sprint to the toilet, just outside of my room, my bedroom lights already off. It was the perfect time for the Devil to pay me a visit. So, I'd hold my breath and do my business as quickly as possible.

When I raised my hand that day, choosing to be saved, that scene kept running through my mind. Technically, I had already been saved before—about half a dozen times—but I was always scared that it didn't stick.

Even though I didn't know exactly what it meant, only that I was rescued from being sent to Hell, I stood in front of those unfamiliar faces, telling them I was being saved. I felt their eyes warming my already flushed face. Sure, I loved Jesus, but I didn't even know him, not really. Nor did I understand why declaring my love for him would make a difference for my path to Heaven. But being saved felt like an obligation.

I couldn't let the preacher or my peers in the fold-out chairs know about my uncertainty, of course. Not unlike Jesus, they were strangers that I was obliged to please. I was simultaneously proud and embarrassed that I stood in front of them, being saved.

I wanted to jump off the stage and hide back in my chair. But if I didn't accept Jesus as my savior, ask him to forgive my sins, and become saved, I was going to Hell.

The last time I got saved came three years later.

I went to a summer church camp called Kanakuk, just outside of Branson, Missouri, for three summers in a row. This year was my third—but it was different from the previous two. It was the year I moved up to the teen camp alongside my best friend, Addie. Just as we had done before, we packed giant trunks and got on the bus. About seven hours later we rolled into camp and proceeded to our "teepee"—actually a cabin that also housed eight other girls for the week.

In the beginning, it was business just as it had been those last two years. On the first day of camp, we went tubing on the lake. Then Bible Talk. After that, a foam party where campers swarmed a few big bubble makers. The day ended in group prayer.

The next day, our teepee's first activity was pool time on the blob, a giant inflatable we took turns jumping onto. Once someone jumped and landed, they'd crawl to the end and try to stay on while someone else jumped and inevitably launched them into the air. Before we started, someone needed to lead a group prayer. Whenever our leader asked for a volunteer, I always cowered behind the other girls in my group. But this time I didn't hide well enough. Nervously, I gave the prayer. I prayed that no one got hurt.

To make a long story short, I did.

"You broke your arm really good."

That's what the doctor said while examining my X-ray at the hospital. He put me in a sling and sent me back on my way. Back at Kanakuk, my trunk was transferred from the teepee to the nurses' cabin. For my last six days, that's where I'd be.

I wondered what had gone so horribly wrong. Clearly, my prayer hadn't worked. In fact, it shot back at me with killer aim. I guess I prayed wrong. Worse, God was punishing me for something. Which could only mean that I wasn't really saved. Obviously, a person who was really and truly saved wouldn't break their arm the second day of church camp to be left in loneliness in the nurses' cabin for the rest of the week.

Still, I tried to make the best of a bad situation and began thinking about how I could get back in God's good graces. I joined my group occasionally throughout the day, mostly for Bible services and meals and prayers. For the rest of the week, I was "the girl who broke her arm on the blob." But I didn't complain. While everyone rock-climbed or played kickball or zip-lined, I walked around the camp, watching. I was frequently approached by campers I hadn't met. They stood in front of me with gaping faces while I told them what had happened. But at the end of the day, I prayed in my bed alone.

One night, the nurses urged me to go to the barn dance. There, the girls stood in a circle while the boys, on the outside, rotated. *Do-si-do* with your partner then switch. Every time a new boy would hop in front of me, he'd smile until looking down at my impairment. The rest of our time together was awkward. We could only swing one way. *Do-...-do*.

The final night was the most important of the week. Bonfire night. The nurse walked me over, and I found a spot. Everyone around me talked to the friends they had made throughout the week while they waited for the ceremony to begin. I watched the fire.

Ever since I'd been catapulted off that blob, I had been wondering if camp was really for me. I wasn't sporty like the other kids. I wasn't that outgoing. I wasn't struck by any of the sermons the camp director gave. Unlike other kids there, I didn't go to church every Sunday in my regular life, and I still didn't understand why declaring my love for Jesus would absolve me of my sins and pave my way to Heaven. Sure, Hell was the worst thing imaginable. But was publicly declaring Jesus as my savior the only way out? I wasn't sure. It hadn't even kept my arm in one piece. But what other options were there?

Suddenly, the floodlights dimmed. It turned out that this wasn't only a bonfire but a show. The camp director soon came out in front of the flames, draped in chains. A hoard of counselors surrounded him, each representing a different "sin." One wielded a liquor bottle, another a plastic baggie of white powder. The counselors weighed down the director with their sins until he finally broke away and declared his love to the Lord. Then the show ended, and the director asked if anyone else wanted to be saved.

This was my last chance to find salvation. My week had to be worth something—so I stood up, right along with a dozen other campers. Immediately, I felt my face get hot. My stomach sank. Even as I went through with it for what would be the final time, I regretted standing. Or I regretted being there. Still, I was saved. I tried convincing myself that this time, it would actually stick.

Mollie Benn C'25 graduated in May. This essay won the grand prize in the *Gazette*'s 2025 Undergraduate Essay Contest.

Trash Tribe

A meditation on collecting cans and bottles.

By Berenice Leung

I used to associate the jangle of bottles and cans with animals. The sound evoked mammalian scavengers—squirrels by day or raccoons by night, rummaging through trash.

But after eight years of living in New York and San Francisco, I've learned that this particular *clink-clank-clatter* more often signals the enterprise of older humans, not critters, reaching into waste bins for empty beverage containers. They proceed with job-like determination—and their collection efforts do, after all, get rewarded, typically at five cents a pop.

Across the 10 states with "bottle bill" laws, eligible containers can be redeemed at recycling centers for the cash deposit paid by the original consumer. Occasionally the influence of these laws reaches across borders: A friend recalled his college years at Ohio State, where non-students often descended on off-campus housing to pick up cans after parties. Ohio doesn't have a bottle bill—but driving roughly three hours north

Illustration by Jon Krause

from Columbus got you to Michigan, where empty cans fetch a coveted 10 cents apiece.

Nevertheless, such cross-state arbitrage seems like a hard way to earn one's daily bread. But maybe there's more to it than money. That was certainly the case for me, when I was a student at Penn.

In 2014, while my freshman dormmates joined groups like the Penn Society of Women Engineers, the Onde Latina dance troupe, and the Wharton Undergraduate Consulting Club, I chose another direction. Banding together with peers known variously as Waste Watchers or Eco Reps, I gloved up and got ready to divert garbage across three bins—Recycle, Compost, Landfill.

We stationed ourselves around big events like the Philadelphia Marathon, Penn Relays, and home basketball games at the Palestra. As spectators streamed by bearing single-use containers, I tried to make myself useful. "Your coffee lid? Recycle!" I'd affirm. "Wait—that cup's compostable!" Just your typical, friendly trash patrol.

If items still landed in the wrong bin, then manual correction was required. My arm became a claw machine, descending into the blue Recycle bag to retrieve wrappers belonging in the black Landfill bag, dropping plastics from green Compost into blue Recycle, or some other permutation. Anything saucy—especially ketchup-smeared trays of half-eaten fries—demanded extra care.

I will readily admit that this was not my most glamorous extracurricular. Yet I felt satisfaction doing it, all the way through senior year. Every event ended the same way: the fruits of our labor (to reduce landfill volume) visibly bagged, and the magnitude of post-consumer waste made concrete as I grasped it with blue-gloved hands.

Even after graduation, working in the renewable energy field, I stayed mindful of proper waste disposal—and the myriad obstacles to it. Once a coworker and I peered into a three-holed bin bearing the familiar labels—Recycle, Compost, Landfill—and admired our workplace's eco-minded design … only to laugh ruefully after observing that just a single large bag spanned the space underneath. Or take San Francisco, where I am constantly passing sidewalk trash cans topped by a distinctive toroidal shelf etched with recycling symbols. They suggest, as an enthused Waste Watcher would, "Empty bottles and cans go here!" Yet my own enthusiasm drops upon witnessing my discarded kombucha bottle roll through the center hole and plop into the trash below.

As spectators streamed by bearing single-use containers, I tried to make myself useful. "Your coffee lid? Recycle!" I'd affirm. "Wait—that cup's compostable!" Just your typical, friendly trash patrol.

Picking bottles and cans from trash is, as I see it, a last-ditch effort to salvage materials that might actually be recycled. It's an uphill battle to curb litter, reduce marine debris, and break wasteful patterns. But lately I've wondered: Do the can collectors of San Francisco share this view?

"I have this crazy curiosity project idea that I wanted to float by you," my friend Drew [C'18 W'18] messaged me one day. But it didn't sound crazy to me. So, prepped with our multilingualism and open minds, we met on a Sunday afternoon in Mission Dolores Park, where can collecting is as common as picnics on balmy days.

The first person we approached was facing the opposite direction while sifting through a trash can (maneuvering around that tricky recycling shelf) at the park's edge.

"Hello," Drew said as we walked closer.

The man turned around to reveal his round, sanguine face, emitting a soft "Hola."

Despite my inadequacy in Spanish, I could make out my friend's introduction and mirrored the man's wide closed-lip smile with mine. He and Drew conversed about the man's family members in El Salvador, his varied work to support them, and his life in the Mission neighborhood. The gathering of these small details added up to something less tangible but somehow more palpable than the weight of the cans in his sack. It was there in the man's eyes: the flicker of light that comes when people truly see one another.

We next spoke with a Chinese woman who was walking among groups of parkgoers to collect cans freshly drained of beer, hard seltzer, or sparkling water. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat, a face mask, and nitrile gloves, she projected a preference for social distancing—yet from the moment of greeting her, she walked closer and responded with warm tones of Cantonese.

She lived in Chinatown with one college-aged daughter and one unpleasant son-in-law who was withholding unsigned divorce papers. She had some family nearby, some far away.

"My older daughter has left," she said to me.

"Oh really?" I replied. "Where did she go?" It took only an instant for me to realize my misinterpretation. Her other daughter hadn't moved to a different neighborhood; she had died. Tears started to dampen her light blue mask.

"What's a young woman like you doing, talking with an old person like me?" she asked. Then she gestured toward her bag of cans. "If I'm not out here, what else is there to do? What do I have to live for?"

I was overcome with the desire to answer her question. What did any of us have to live for? The sun beaming down upon us. The health to stand and walk.

All the good people surrounding us. I tried to translate my mental gratitude list into spoken Cantonese.

When my words faltered, I hugged her. She, foregoing the light back pats we typically save for strangers, embraced me earnestly, impressing hand contours on opposite shoulders as our hearts drew closer. I had not predicted our conversation ending this way.

Neither of the people we met mentioned money or environmental sustainability. Both spoke with Drew and me without hesitation, even though it took away from their collecting time. When I offered the woman a beverage from a nearby cafe, she politely declined.

Having set out to learn what motivated a few San Franciscans to collect cans, Drew and I instead heard the life stories of two people who have lived far longer than either of us. The enjoyment of one another's company put me in mind of what had originally drawn me to recycling initiatives and kept me engaged. Which was a sense of community, and perhaps also of community-mindedness. My memories of waste sorting were saturated with friendships rooted in school, work, and volunteering.

Talking with a pair of strangers in Mission Dolores Park yielded nothing of any statistical significance. It was a sample size of two. Nevertheless, I left the park with a different lens on the gathering of bottles and cans. Yes, they could be redeemed for a little money. And yes, the act of recycling may constitute a small kindness to our environment.

Above and beyond those things, though, another value emerged that day from bringing together what otherwise scatters. Plastics, metals, and glass clang upon being bagged together. The sound resists an immediate, outward harmony. But listen closely and you can hear the resonance—the echo chamber—of our innate draw towards human connection.

Berenice Leung C'17 W'17 is a sustainability and wellness professional.

Bar Soap

An ode.

By Cynthia McVay

I was at the Sheep and Wool Festival in Rhinebeck, New York. It's an annual event, and for me an annual ritual. In years past, I bought reams of unspun wool, which I use as pillows; that day, I was focused on sheep and goat milk soap. I had already bought a half dozen bars, and I was sniffing my way through more, each wrapped in patterned paper and love. Peppermint. Licorice. Jasmine. Lavender. I couldn't narrow it down, so I bought all of them. I reasoned they make good gifts. I couldn't resist a paper bag full of slender tan soap squares perfect for the Airbnb cottage. Soap is one thing I buy without guilt.

Soap reflects what we value and, I submit, is a metaphor for how we approach life, whether the bar is common or extraordinary, branded, fragrant, creamy, or clear, just as a restaurant's crusty bread and home-whipped butter gives us a hint of the kitchen. Local, homespun soap—which reveals a lot about me—is one of the first things I give a friend who doesn't think about it much, maybe prioritizes convenience and value and stocks his bathroom with a half-dozen Lever 2000s, seduced by a Sam's Club deal.

An embossed name or telltale original shape obscures over time, as the bar's employment, its journey, and imposed

Illustration by Martha Rich

contours, overtake its provenance. A sink dweller cinches at the waist. A bar that lives in the shower is gentle and rounded. Perhaps it has one flattened corner—evidence of slipping from hands or the bathtub's curved edge, careening onto the hard tile floor. Whether it lives in the shower's direct spray in its own juices—a soap soup—or near an open window where it has a chance to dry between uses, reflects its owner's attentions, thoughtfulness, and commitment to its longevity. Deep cracks indicate that it's been a while since the outdoor shower or guest bathroom was used. I consign such a bar—along with mini, half-used soaps I've brought home from hotels or leftover from my Airbnb guests—to the kitchen sink. I try to get every wash from chips and fragments by gluing them onto larger bars with a gooey, soapy mortar. As a guest in someone else's home, I worry about soap dishes offering new, crisp soap. Where do the slightly used go?

A worn bar of soap is a small sculpture, crafted by its user, rolled and turned in wet hands. A byproduct of a grooming ritual, a bar of soap is a window into the psyche and etiquette of the lathered. Like an ancient stone staircase or wooden banister, a bar of soap is an artifact of time and process and touch, molded by a person or pod of people.

When soap is shared, its character is diluted by multiple, frequent wettings or varied cleansing strategies. The way a bar of soap is treated may become a source of friction for a couple or among roommates. A hair, of any kind, demeans and demotes a bar of soap, renders it untouchable. Living mostly alone, the bar in my soap dish is a direct product of my own handling.

An unsung hero in the invention lineup, soap is taken for granted and has been cast aside by a myriad of inferior substitutes. But the humble bar of soap, in breaking down dirt and oils lifted away under running water, is in part responsible for our survival as a species. Most of us spent more time washing our hands during the pandemic (contemplating doing so, reading about it, weighing the pros and cons of alternative sanitation methods) than over the course of the rest of our lives. We counted to 20. We sang *Happy Birthday*. Or not. Truth be told, I washed my hands a little more than usual in 2020 but find 20 seconds to be a very long time. (Separately, in an informal survey, it turns out few of us wash behind our ears.)

A worn bar of soap is a small sculpture, crafted by its user, rolled and turned in wet hands. It is a window into the psyche and etiquette of the lathered.

Like how we eat our corn or what we do with our napkin at the end of the meal, the shape and condition of our bar soap says something about us, how we spend our intimate moments, in our own nakedness—when (generally) no one else is looking. Our soap has been up close with our private parts and crevices.

Bar soap is personal and revealing. There's a tinge of vulnerability in a naked bar sitting in a soap dish. Perhaps this explains why many choose liquid soap, with a buttoned up, built-in standoffish-ness.

I resist, easily. Aside from the benefits of its notable intimacy and tactility—the complete experience that bar soap offers—it wins hands down for environmental reasons. The key ingredient of liquid soap is water—scarce, heavy, and bulky, requiring energy to produce, package and transport. In addition, most body washes have synthetic, non-biodegradable ingredients. The bar soap I buy has fewer, cleaner, locally sourced ingredients that biodegrade. Bar soap comes in infinite varieties to address allergies, sensitivities, chapped hands, and acne.

The plastic bottle of body wash or liquid soap will end up in a landfill on a good day, or the ocean (and in the belly of a whale) on a bad one. According to Reduce Plastic Waste, an estimated 250 million Americans buy some 1.4 billion bottles a year. The calculus may be different for public restrooms where liquid soap is bought in bulk and dispensed in permanent vessels, and there's a lot of people passing through. Buying liquid soap can make sense if bought in volume, from a local refillery, filling a refillable container.

Although soap was originally made from animal fats, most are now derived from botanical or nut-based oils—coconut, palm, almond, avocado, and essential oils such as lemon, lavender, and rose, and infused with floral or herbal aromas. No matter how efficient the process of packaged goods companies, carbon and toxic waste inherent in centralized large-scale production, packaging, and logistics—and cheap labor—is part of their equation. It might be a bargain for them, but not for this earth.

In a moment of weakness, I purchased liquid soap for guests at the start of the pandemic, believing for an instant nonscience nonsense circulating that liquid soap was more sanitary. As the extra careful and paranoid avoided touching things—all things—they certainly stopped fondling soap in other people's dishes.

Soap—dry, solid, and unbreakable—makes for easy transport. A handmade bar may cost more than one made by a large corporation; a friend suggests that it may be out of reach for some. I submit it is a matter of priorities. The extra annual cost amounts to less than a couple beers, what many drink in bottled water or soda in a day, a single pedicure or small tattoo. And, for me, is an essential luxury.

I store a fragrant bar in my underwear drawer until I need a fresh one. And when I do, with tenderness, I unwrap the paper, and a memory or two.

Cynthia McVay G'88 WG'88 is an artist, writer, rower and author of *A Field of My Own: A Memoir of Place*, from which this essay is drawn.

May the Odds Be Ever in their Favor

Actress, filmmaker, and Penn alumna Elizabeth Banks tells the Class of 2025 to "pursue anything and everything that scares you with absolute vigor."

Photography by Tommy Leonardi C'89

When Elizabeth Banks C'96 was a Penn undergraduate, she faced what felt like an impossible choice at the time.

While taking a course that only met once a week on Fridays, she asked the professor if she could miss one class to attend a cousin's wedding in Tennessee. She was told that she could but doing so would result in a half-grade deduction, just as any absence would. Banks desperately pleaded not to lose her A and offered to make up any work she might miss—to no avail.

"Meanwhile, [the professor] was so blasé about the entire interaction because, in her mind, she was an adult talking to another adult," Banks, an acclaimed actress and filmmaker, recalled during the Penn commencement address she delivered on May 19. "Which honestly felt like news to me. I still felt like a kid—and maybe some of you do too—but she was telling me, 'No, you're an adult. You have agency.' What a powerful thing to tell a young person."

"I didn't graduate *summa cum laude*—and that's never come up. Not once."

That lesson in "adulting" proved vital to Banks, who said she "took the hit" and road-tripped to the wedding with her family, including her grandmother, who died soon after. The cousin who got married "is gone now too," Banks said.

"I've never regretted that choice," Banks told about 6,000 graduates assembled at Franklin Field for the University's 269th Commencement. "I didn't graduate *summa cum laude*—and that's never come up. Not once. The profound lesson I learned through all of this was that our values conflict sometimes. And it's making choices in those moments that help you clarify who you are and what you value in this world. That's adulting … the series of decisions you make when your values conflict. GPA or family. Creativity or security. Loyalty or per-

Photography by Tommy Leonardi C'89; Photo of Elizabeth Banks by Scott Spitzer courtesy University Communications

sonal growth. Love or money. Your path is guaranteed to be paved with these decisions."

While she called that GPA versus family choice one of the "most impactful lessons" from her time at Penn, she shared other amusing college anecdotes with the students graduating almost 30 years after she collected her own diploma ("very hungover in my cap and gown, which I wore over a black bikini because it's hella hot on this field.") Some may have surprised the Zoomers, like the trips she had to make to Houston Hall in order to check her email. Others probably felt more familiar, like learning from professors about the dangers of climate change and why marijuana legalization is good public policy. "We knew this 30 years ago," she deadpanned.

"I came here to use the best tool for class migration that's ever existed: higher education."

Though she joked she may have looked the part of "a rich girl," Banks actually came to Penn as "a scholarship kid, first gen, loaded up on Pell grants and work study, which is actually quite isolating," she said. "I never went on a spring break. I never studied abroad. I never had an unpaid internship." A rusted bike she found in the basement of a frat house became her mode of transportation for three years. She strove to get "every penny's worth of my tuition" because, believing that the real division in this country is economic, "I came here to use the best tool for class migration that's ever existed: higher education," she said. "When people ask me when I knew I wanted to be an actor, my answer is, 'When I got paid for it.'"

Banks ["How to Succeed in Show Business by Really, Really Trying," Jan|Feb 2010] has enjoyed a fruitful acting career since her undergraduate days at Penn, making her feature film debut in *Wet Hot American Summer* before appearing in the *Hunger Games* and *Pitch Perfect* movie franchises. She made her directorial debut in *Pitch Perfect 2*, which had the highest opening weekend ticket sales for a musical when it was released in 2015 and the second-largest opening for a female director. She has since directed films such as *Charlie's Angels* (2019) and *Cocaine Bear* (2023), both of which were produced by the production company she cofounded with her husband Max Handelman C'95, whom she met at Penn.

"I used my agency to create my own opportunities," Banks said. "Rather than wait for those great acting gigs, I started producing, writing, directing, hosting a game show, becoming an investor and an entrepreneur, podcasting. Was this all in response to overwhelming disappointment? Yeah! Failure is a great motivator."

She told members of the Class of 2025 that they will likely fail at some point too—"which," she noted, "is your best opportunity to clarify what it is you really want and pivot if you have to." And she

Honorary Degrees

Elizabeth Banks
Honorary Doctor of Arts

Lonnie G. Bunch III
Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters

Lene Vestergaard Hau
Honorary Doctor of Sciences

Barbara D. Savage
Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters

Bios of honorands are at commencement.upenn.edu

Photography by Tommy Leonardi C'89

encouraged them to lean on the "safety net" that an Ivy League degree—and the people that "encouraged you, loved you, bandaged your skinned knee, fed you, taught you" along the way—affords. "Your job, from here on out, is to pursue anything and everything that scares you with absolute vigor—because you have that safety net," Banks said. "So many of you are rightfully excited about what's next and worried about what you don't have yet—so let this be a reminder to appreciate what you've already got. You have nothing to lose. You have loads of time, I promise. Use that freedom. Because your life isn't determined by your first job, or your second."

"The point is not perfection; it is that we always strive to be better."

Banks concluded her speech by praising her husband Handelman, whom she met "on 40th and Spruce on a steamy evening in 1992" and has been her "true safety net" because "cocreating your dream life and parenting kids is unfathomable with anybody who isn't going to catch you when you inevitably fall." An activist for women's rights and reproductive rights, Banks also called "access to reproductive healthcare the ultimate safety net." She signed off with a nod to the *Hunger Games* character she portrayed, Effie Trinket: "May the odds be ever in your favor."

In his Commencement remarks, Penn President J. Larry Jameson called on graduates to always strive for curiosity, creativity, and self-improvement. "Each of us and everything we do will be, to some extent, imperfect—with one exception: this year's flawless season for our men's squash team," Jameson said, shouting out the two-time defending national champion Quakers. "In already uncertain times, our flaws and failures can spark anxiety. That fear can hold us back. But the point is not perfection; it is that we always strive to be better. Curiosity, creativity, and self-improvement: these are Penn values. They are your values. Use them often, keep them sharp, and they will serve you well."

Before the graduates exited the stadium to celebrate with their families, University chaplain and vice president for social equity and community Charles "Chaz" Howard C'00 offered advice he gathered from the former classmates he'd reconnected with at his 25th reunion two days earlier.

"Be kind. Be curious. Be a good friend. Be a healer. Be your authentic self. Be your best self," Howard said. "Be gentle with yourself. Try not to compare yourself to others. Be balanced. Trust your gut. Remember that you are the dream of your ancestors. Don't underestimate what can be accomplished in one generation. Travel the world. Invest in yourself. Surrender to opportunity daily. Laugh a lot.

"And savor life every day—because you blink and you're suddenly at your 25th reunion." —*DZ*

Veterinary Medicine

Geddy's Gift

A dog's brain surgery could have implications for human care.

Geddy, a nine-year-old mixed breed 18-pound terrier, is no stranger to drama. Her original owner purchased the pup as a gift for his girlfriend. One small problem: he was driving a stolen car. When the police tried to pull him over, a chase ensued and, as Geddy's current owner, Michael Crotty, tells it, "he left Geddy in the car and ran." With the car thief in custody, the police took the abandoned puppy to a local veterinarian because there was no animal shelter in the area. Eventually Geddy was listed on the pet adoption website Petfinder, where Crotty found her, and the tiny pup found her forever home in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, with Crotty, his wife Erica, and their other dog, a rat terrier named Lemmy.

Everything was great until August of last year, when Geddy had a series of violent seizures two nights in a row. The local vet recommended seeing a neurologist, and the Crottys chose to bring Geddy to Penn Vet's Ryan Veterinary Hospital.

And so began Geddy's dramatic second act.

On initial examination, Penn Vet doctors Tessa Arendt, specialty intern in neurology, and Wojciech Panek, assistant professor of neurology and neurosurgery in the

Photo by John Donges courtesy Penn Vet

Department of Clinical Sciences and Advanced Medicine, were prioritizing neoplasia, an abnormal growth of cells. Geddy's MRI revealed a large lesion in the forebrain or frontal lobe of her brain that, on the imaging, looked like glioma or glioblastoma, a deadly form of brain cancer. A biopsy was the only way to know for sure, but from the size of the mass, they suspected Geddy had about two to three months to live. Since the tumor was at the front of her head, surgery was an expensive possibility, but there was no guarantee they could remove all the mass. Crotty didn't hesitate. "We had nothing to lose with two to three months," he recalls. "Let's do everything we can. Pull out all the stops."

A few weeks after being diagnosed, Geddy was on her way to making medical history.

Not all owners are able to justify, financially or psychologically, a stop-at-nothing treatment plan. But in addition to potentially lengthening Geddy's life, Panek knew the surgery would be an opportunity to pioneer a new procedure that might one day provide a more cost-effective means of treating other cases like hers. The centerpiece technique in Geddy's surgery was use of an augmented-reality surgery system, Visar, that projects the patient's three-dimensional scans onto the operative field. That meant there was no need to anesthetize Geddy for a second MRI to pinpoint the exact location of the tumor with markers or fiducials. The system was developed by a company called Novarad, of which Wendell Gibby GM'88 is the founder and CEO.

"You take the data from the MRI scanner and superimpose it on the body so that you are literally seeing the inside of the body inside the body," Gibby explains. The surgeon wears a heads-up display that overlays the scan data on the patient's physical anatomy.

According to Gibby, Geddy's case would be the first time in the world the Visar system would be used in brain surgery on a dog. So Panek layered on what he calls "extra tools" to confirm what he was doing. The second level of precision Panek used was a near-infrared imaging agent validated by David Holt, professor of surgery at Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine. Geddy received an intravenous injection of this agent 24 hours before the surgery, the first time it had been used in dogs with brain tumors.

During surgery, doctors were able to shine an infrared camera on the surface of the brain to better visualize the margins of the mass, which they suspected were invasive and diffuse. The combination of the neuro navigation system and the infrared imaging gave doctors a very clear view of the mass. But then—because, Panek admits, he is a bit "paranoid"—he added a third step, suggested by his friend and colleague in human neurosurgery, Nduka Amankulor, Presidential Associate Professor of Neurosurgery. "It was something very simple," Panek says. "We had intraoperative ultrasound with which we were able to confirm that everything we see in the visor and the infrared imaging done by Dr. Holt's agent was correct."

Both Panek and Amankulor scrubbed in for Geddy's surgery (along with the veterinary specialty team), and for both it was the first time using the augmented reality glasses in brain surgery. "For dogs, because their head shapes and then body sizes are all so different, being able to register with an augmented

HONORS

President's Prizes Announced

Nine graduating seniors were awarded the 2025 President's Engagement, Innovation, and Sustainability Prizes, which provide $100,000 in funding for projects designed to make a positive, lasting difference in the world. Each team member also receives a $50,000 living stipend and mentorship from a Penn faculty member. The largest of their kind in higher education, the annual prizes have launched the careers of many entrepreneurs since 2015 ["The Unexpected Entrepreneurs," Sep|Oct 2024]. Here are this year's winning projects:

PRESIDENT'S ENGAGEMENT PRIZES

PIXEL | Ejun Hong C'25 and Jack Roney C'25 will focus on building bridges between the creative industries and under-resourced public high school students in the greater Philadelphia area through photography and film. Mentor: Jarrett Stein C'09 SPP'17, UACS Director of Health Partnerships and Social Ventures at the Netter Center for Community Partnerships.

Nourish to Flourish | Imani Nkrumah Ardayfio C'25, Inaya Zaman C'25 W'25, and Rashmi Acharya C'25 GM'26, will implement nutrition programs in West Philadelphia schools by helping parents obtain fresh produce from local farmers, working to redesign school cafeteria space and changing food marketing to promote healthy food choices, and offering interactive nutrition education during and after school hours. Mentor: Heather Klusaritz SW'02 GrS'12, associate professor of family medicine and community health at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

PRESIDENT'S INNOVATION PRIZE

Sync Labs | Melanie Herbert EE'25 GEng'26, Nami Lindquist EAS'25 W'25 GEng'26, and Alexandra Popescu EAS'25 GEng'26 will address eldercare with a privacy-centric AI system that reduces staff exhaustion, fixes caregiving gaps, and offers solutions for other issues. Mentor: Jeffrey Babin C'85 WG'91, professor of practice and associate director of engineering entrepreneurship at SEAS and the engineering faculty director for Venture Lab.

PRESIDENT'S SUSTAINABILITY PRIZE

Nirby | Piotr Lazarek EAS'25 W'25 will grow his soil analytics and farmland-management system that's designed to address inefficiencies in fertilizer usage by integrating satellite data and drone-enabled soil measurements to provide real-time insights into field productivity and nutrient distribution. Mentor: Jeffrey Babin C'85 WG'91.

type of reality situation actually has some real practical importance," Amankulor says. "But I think what was even cooler for me, honestly, was the application across species of what I do every day. We were able to exchange information, the stuff we use in humans, like live intraoperative ultrasound, and that was super helpful."

Michael Crotty and his wife waited out the procedure at home. But Geddy recovered amazingly quickly, he says. "She wanted to eat dinner right away. You wouldn't believe she went through a five-hour brain surgery."

Six months on, Geddy has continued to defy the odds. Follow-up MRIs show no sign of regrowth. Equally significant news is that Gibby's technique has advanced the frontiers of brain surgery for dogs, and maybe even people. "My goal when I came to Penn Vet was to do research in the field of brain tumors. And that's how I started working with Dr. Amankulor," he says. "And what we are hoping for is that we can come up with novel tools that will allow us to do biopsy more routinely and at lower expense to the owners."

The Visar technique has implications for human neurological surgeries, especially spinal surgeries. According to Gibby, surgeries have been done in 15 countries that is very cutting edge. The system has been cleared by the FDA for stereotactic spine navigation as well as for preoperative evaluation of all types of surgery, although the FDA does not regulate animal surgery. "There are a lot of healthcare systems around the word that can't afford a $2 million robot or even a half-million-dollar navigation system. They don't do enough volume, and I think veterinary medicine is one of those [industries] because the cost is difficult," Gibby explains. "Pet owners would love to do everything for their dog, but not everyone can spend thousands on a surgery."

To date, Penn is the only veterinary hospital that has used the system for veterinary neurosurgery. Amankulor agrees that it has implications for humans, although he believes the threshold may be higher because of stereotactic technology currently in use. "But once it's perfected in the human space, it would be ostensibly better than just regular navigation in which we're just integrating lots of different visualization technologies, both virtual and real imaging," he says. "Right now, I'm still operating in reality with an image of an ultrasound that is telling me what the most recent version of the ultrasound of the brain looks like. But imagine if that ultrasound was actually the space in which you were operating. That takes it to a different level."

"I think it is going to transform how surgery is done," Gibby says. "In order for technologies to catch fire, they not only have to help but they have to be cost effective. And I think this has the magic mix."

—Kathryn Levy Feldman LPS'09

The Scopes Trial at 100

The issues raised by the famed "Monkey Trial" of 1925 continue to resonate a century later.

The most "significant insignificant trial in American history," as independent scholar Adam Shapiro framed it, took place a century ago in Dayton, Tennessee. According to Edward Larson, a history professor at Pepperdine University, it was a "collaboration to create a public spectacle"—one that turned out to be the "first battle in a conflict in which we are trapped to this day," as Binghamton University professor of education and history Adam Laats characterized the eight-day "circus" memorably, if inaccurately, depicted in *Inherit the Wind*, the 1955 play made into a 1960 movie.

The three historians of science, along with other scholars and an audience of about 70 people, watched the fictionalized film version of the court case at the opening of a two-day conference, *The Scopes Trial at 100: Secularism, Race, and Education*, organized by Donovan Schaefer, associate professor of religious studies at Penn,

Cartoon courtesy Penn Libraries

and held in March in the Class of 1978 Orrery Pavilion of Van Pelt Library. Next door in the Lea Library, a fascinating exhibit of materials relating to the leadup and aftermath of the so-called "Monkey Trial" was on display. It included several original editions of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, one of the most influential scientific works of all time that gave rise to controversies about whether the theory of evolution could be compatible with theistic religion.

But the Scopes Trial was also, perhaps mainly, a proxy for other concerns: about intellectual freedom and the degeneration of civilization as symbolized by the violence of World War I and, for conservative Christians, the decadence of the Jazz Age. By the mid-1920s, Darwin's grand idea that all life started in a simple form and had gradually, over eons, become more complex through a process of natural selection—whereby the fittest survived and reproduced—had been embraced as fact in much of the scientific community. As Shapiro pointed out, Nebraska had had its own anti-evolution trial, nine months before Tennessee, when a Lutheran college, in response to a pastor's complaint, reneged on a job offer to a teacher who was judged "morally unfit" for the post because he had written articles explaining Darwin's theory. The teacher sued for slander, and, as a local newspaper reported, "Genesis lost and Darwin won," even as the case faded from memory.

The Butler Act, which made it unlawful to teach "any theory that denied the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible" in state-funded schools, was passed by the Tennessee legislature in March 1925. The newly created New York-based American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) seized on the law to take a stand for freedom of speech and advertised for a volunteer to bring a test case.

Dayton civic leaders grasped the chance to put their town on the map. They persuaded John Scopes, a local high school teacher, to accede to a "friendly indictment," as Larson termed the charge. Two famous lawyers including former Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, a three-time presidential candidate who had become convinced of the "morally erosive effects of evolutionary biology," as Schaefer explained, volunteered to serve on the prosecution team, and Clarence Darrow, a high-profile ACLU ally and religious agnostic, represented the defense in the July 1925 proceedings.

What Schaefer called the "chain of visual artifacts leading up to, surrounding, and trailing in the wake of the Scopes Trial" began with cartoons. These mocking images published throughout the country helped instantiate the myth of Dayton as villain and Scopes as hapless victim. They also illustrated the interlocking religious, political, and cultural forces at play: fundamentalist perspectives on biblical authority versus theological modernism; individual liberty versus majoritarian democracy; God-fearing rural Southern folk versus secular outsiders from Northern cities seeking to impose their own value system; competing ideas about the control of public education; and issues of class and race.

While W. E. B. Du Bois (the legendary sociologist and activist who spent a year at Penn while researching his seminal work *The Philadelphia Negro*) saw the media spectacle as a distraction from more pressing economic and racial issues, the ballyhoo engendered by the town fathers and whipped up by contemporary journalists (ensuring a boost in newspaper circulations) echoed down the ages.

Scopes's crime was a misdemeanor. He was fined $100, but as Laats made clear during the symposium, the conviction, which had been a foregone conclusion and was later overturned on a technicality, was not quite the victory Darrow had assured his client. The cause of the evolutionists did not prevail across the land; rather, the trial in Dayton "was the start of a century-long culture war."

Laats described the United States in 1925 as "eerily familiar." Racial tensions led to summertime riots in Northern cities. Congress had restricted immigration a year earlier, and foreign-born radicals were deported without trial under an extension of the 1917 Espionage Act. A platform plank condemning

PRIZES

Penn's Benjamin Nathans Wins Pulitzer

"I still can't quite believe it."

That's what Benjamin Nathans, the Alan Charles Kors Endowed Term Professor of History in Penn's School of Arts and Sciences, told the *Gazette* nearly two weeks after winning the 2025 Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction for his engrossing history of civil rights and pro-democracy activists in the USSR, *To the Success of Our Hopeless Cause: The Many Lives of the Soviet Dissident Movement* (Princeton University Press, 2024).

The Pulitzer committee described the book as "a prodigiously researched and revealing history of Soviet dissent, how it was repeatedly put down and came to life again, populated by a sprawling cast of courageous people dedicated to fighting for threatened freedoms and hard-earned rights." The *Gazette* felt much the same way, running a lengthy Q&A with Nathans about the book earlier this year ["Arts," Jan|Feb 2025].

Nathans is also the author of *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (University of California Press, 2002), which won the Koret Prize in Jewish History, the Vucinich Prize in Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies, and the Lincoln Prize in Russian History. A frequent contributor to the *New York Review of Books*, he has taught at Penn since 1998, leading courses on Russian, European, and Jewish history as well as the history of human rights. —*TP*

Photo by Matthew Hamilton courtesy School of Arts and Sciences

the Ku Klux Klan failed by a narrow vote at the 1924 Democratic convention. The Butler Act, on the books until 1967, was upheld when appealed by the ACLU and four other states passed antievolution laws over the next several years. The late 1920s were marked, according to Laats, by a "groundswell in anti-evolution institutions," not least Bob Jones University, described by its evangelist founder as a place where parents could send their children assured that no "skeptical teacher" would lead them to question received beliefs.

The play and film versions of the trial, products of the McCarthy era, tended toward morality tales that ended with clear victories for a presumed liberal consensus. The character representing Darrow humiliates the character representing Bryan, who is made to look ridiculous. But Laats urged the conference attendees to note that the Darrow persona walks out of the courtroom carrying both the judge's Bible and a copy of Darwin's book as the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* is sung in the background.

Whose truth marched on? The Scopes trial amplified and escalated the conflicts it staged without resolving them. As audience members reflected with presenters on conference themes, the importance of intellectual humility was highlighted, as was the need to be wary of good versus evil narratives that have a way of distorting reality rather than illuminating it.

—Mary Ann Meyers Gr'76

Penn Museum's ongoing fieldwork at Abydos, Egypt, has uncovered the tomb of an unknown king from a lost dynasty.

After 125 Years, Abydos Still Holds Secrets

The massive tomb of an unknown pharaoh is the latest discovery at the ancient Egyptian site.

Buried for millennia by mounds of featureless desert sand, the sacred city of Abydos was one of the great sites of Egyptian civilization. And the Penn Museum has played a major role in its gradual unveiling for the past 125 years.

Working with Egyptian archaeologists, Josef Wegner C'89 Gr'96—curator of the museum's Egyptian section and a professor of Egyptian archaeology in the School of Arts and Sciences—has now discovered a massive tomb of an unknown pharaoh in the ancient city that sheds new light on a long-lost dynasty and a lesser-known period of Egyptian history. The discovery was made in January and announced in March.

Abydos thrived for almost 3,000 years as an important royal and religious center. The wider site covers more than six square miles some 300 miles south of modern Cairo between the steep cliffs of the Nile valley and the low-lying desert fronting the floodplain. Regal activity in the area, which is the focus of Wegner's work, was intensive from roughly 1800 to 1500 BCE. The once flourishing city and environs was known to the Greeks and Romans, but then largely forgotten and nearly invisible until the end of the 19th century when the earliest scientific excavations were conducted at the site.

The first professional Egyptological curator at the Penn Museum, David Randall-MacIver, who was appointed to his post in 1905, went to southern Egypt with the pioneering British archaeologist and Egyptologist William Flinders Petrie in 1899 on an expedition to which the Penn Museum had contributed funds. Almost immediately he noticed a worked limestone block protruding from the sand. It constituted part of the ruins of a large temple. Excavations revealed the mammoth tomb of the pharaoh Senwosret III, ruler of Egypt from 1878 to 1839 BCE at the height of a period of peace

Photo by Josef Wegner C'89 Gr'96 courtesy the Penn Museum

and prosperity—a discovery Wegner has called "a magnificent example of ancient Egyptian royal mortuary architecture and a truly remarkable engineering achievement."

Work by archaeologists directed by Petrie, along with the museum's own fieldwork in 1905–07 under Randall-MacIver's direction, yielded a steady stream of objects of historical importance and aesthetic interest for the museum's collections. Six decades later, a Penn Egyptologist returned to Abydos as codirector of a combined Penn and Yale expedition. David O'Connor, then associate curator of the Egyptian section and an assistant professor of ancient Egyptian history and archaeology, joined the faculty in 1964—the year he carried out a field survey covering 30 major Egyptian archaeological sites—and two years later was granted a concession to begin excavating in Abydos.

Over three seasons of excavations from 1967 to 1969 (at which point political developments in Egypt resulted in a suspension of his work), O'Connor detected the presence of a settlement site, including the surviving wall of a temple with inscriptions indicating it was one of many built by Rameses II (1304–1237 BCE). Wegner notes that scholars had long known that "Abydos was a royal necropolis for the first kings of a unified Egypt." A thriving city 5,000 years ago when it was a political center, later pharaohs were still building shrines, temples, and tombs at the site after the capital shifted north to Memphis. The city continued to flourish as a regional hub and remained an important link to Egypt's ancestral rulers.

The Greek historian Herodotus remarked wryly that the Egyptians were "religious excessively beyond all other men." Following Petrie's discovery of the symbolic tomb of the god Osiris, constructed around 1300 BCE, the excavations at the site that O'Connor resumed in 1977 and that Wegner has undertaken since 1994 confirm that Abydos was a major religious center. Association with Osiris, regarded as the first (mythological) king of Egypt as well as lord of the underworld, originally meant pharaohs would become one with Osiris in death, ensuring divine status in the afterlife. Over time, ordinary Egyptians also came to believe they could identify with Osiris. As early as 2000 BCE, pilgrims flocked to Abydos to worship him, participate in festival processions, and seek for themselves an existence after death.

O'Connor reinvestigated ruins of the large mud brick enclosures built for some of the early pharaohs and concluded that they had once been topped by towering mounds made of sand and gravel. His hypothesis (proven incorrect by later excavations) was that they were prototypes of step pyramids, making them, he thought, the forerunners of the monuments at Giza. In 1991, accompanied by Penn graduate students including Wegner, O'Connor also found the largest collection of boat graves in Egypt—12 long and narrow depressions under the sand lined in brick that had housed actual wooden boats. An excavated hull suggests they were impressively large. O'Connor described them as "a virtual fleet" moored by some unexcavated funerary enclosure to transport the souls of the dead.

Expanded excavations that Wegner undertook in 1994 resulted in the discovery of the ruins of a town called Wah-Sut, located to the south of the early monuments at Abydos. Further digging revealed its mayor's house, a building of "palatial proportions" that was the focus of the community's "social and economic interaction" for two centuries, Wegner says. Built around 1850 BCE, the residence, once 20 feet high and now no more than a few feet in the best-preserved areas, stands as a "visible statement of authority, wealth, and power," he adds. Wegner has written that it "offers unique information of daily life and society." One unique artifact is a painted birth brick used in rituals of childbirth, the only one of its kind that has been discovered in Egypt.

Clay seals impressed with hieroglyphic characters also preserved the names of the series of mayors who lived and worked in the complex as administrators of Wah-Sut and the mortuary foundation of Senwosret III. Wegner has translated the excavated evidence of the mayor's house into a three-dimensional computer reconstruction that, he says, "not only helps visualize the building but also helps us understand the principles behind the overall architectural design and the ways parts functioned in relation to one another."

Heralding his latest discovery, Wegner's 2013–14 field season resulted in the uncovering of the tombs of two pharaohs. A limestone stela identified the first sarcophagus chamber as likely that of King Sobekhotep IV, who reigned around 1800 BCE, and nearby was the vibrantly decorated chamber of a previously unknown pharaoh, Seneb-Kay (ca. 1650–1600 BCE). Although ancient tomb robbers had stripped it of its contents, Wegner found the skeletal remains of the king's body left by plunderers in search of amulets and jewelry. He believes its presence, together with the tombs of seven other royal personages he uncovered in the same vicinity, confirms that the site is the burial ground of perhaps two dozen kings—an Abydos Dynasty.

The necropolis lies at the foot of a high desert cliff ancient Egyptians called the Mountain-of-Anubis—where Wegner discovered the unknown pharaoh's tomb in January. The 3,600-year-old limestone burial chamber was nearly 23 feet underground. "It was protected by the drifting sand that most certainly contributed to its preservation," he says. The tomb's decorated entryway leads to several rooms and soaring 16-foot vaults made of mud bricks, Wegner says.

"The king's name was recorded in hieroglyphic texts on the painted yellow bands adorning the entryway," he adds, "but not enough survives of the inscription to read it." There are several possible candidates for owners of the tomb. When he returns to the site with his students in the summer and at the end of the year, Wegner plans to look for fragments of materials that may provide enough clues to solve the mystery.

"The new discovery is helping us understand the longevity of the Abydos Dynasty," he says, "and we will be searching for more evidence of where the unnamed pharaoh falls in the sequence of kings. Our excavations are illuminating an important but once obscure period in Egyptian history that we now know was marked by social and political conflict but also was an era of innovation that preceded and perhaps prompted the unification of the country under a single ruler."

In cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Wegner hopes to make the entire site visitable by tourists—who can now, as the result of his work, inspect the tombs of Senwosret III and Seneb-Kay. And even in the face of potential cuts in federal support for archaeological research, Wegner hopes that some combination of private and government monies will fund further excavations—and new discoveries—at Abydos in the years ahead.

—Mary Ann Meyers Gr'76

Michael Katz CCC'49 recounted his harrowing journey from Nazi-occupied Poland to Philadelphia during a discussion moderated by Ethan Burian C'25.

Survival Story

In front of a rapt Penn Hillel audience, a 97-year-old Penn alumnus recounted his harrowing Holocaust escape.

For Holocaust Remembrance Day, Penn Hillel managed a rare coup: an appearance by one of the dwindling cohort of Holocaust survivors, a 97-year-old Penn alumnus and former faculty member.

In an April 23 conversation at Steinhardt Hall, Michael Katz CCC'49 recounted his harrowing journey from Nazi-occupied Poland to Philadelphia before an audience of about 120 students and other Penn affiliates.

As a teenager, Katz dug his way out of a Nazi concentration camp, used false papers to hide his Jewish identity, witnessed the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, and fought in the 1944 Warsaw uprising. World War II and the Holocaust cost him his entire immediate family.

After the war he was able to immigrate to the United States, where he studied zoology at Penn in the College Collateral Courses program—a forerunner of the College of General Studies, renamed Liberal and Professional Studies in 2008—before embarking on a career in medicine and public health. An expert in tropical diseases, he served as the longtime chair of Columbia University's Department of Pediatrics, as well as a senior research adviser at the March of Dimes Foundation and a consultant to the World Health Organization.

Event moderator Ethan Burian C'25—whose late grandfather Andrew Burian survived the Auschwitz-Birkenau, Mauthausen, and Gunskirchen concentration camps and two death marches—helped guide Katz's discussion of his wartime experiences.

Born February 13, 1928, in Lvov, Poland (now Lviv, Ukraine), Katz was raised in a secular Jewish family with both Russian and Polish roots. His parents divorced when he was young. When Katz was 10, his stepfather, in the tea business, moved the family to Warsaw. But he and his biological father remained close. After a summer visit, they said what turned out to be their final goodbye the day before the September 1, 1939, outbreak of World War II.

"I never saw him again," Katz said. "And that was a major tragedy of my life."

After the German invasion, existence in Warsaw grew increasingly restricted and dangerous for Jews. Like tens of thousands of other Polish Jews, Katz and his mother fled east, rejoining her parents in Soviet-occupied Lvov. There, for a while, life was relatively normal. "We always had money," Katz recalled. "There was music, there was opera, there were movies, there was theater, and, most important, there was school."

But after turning on their erstwhile Soviet allies, the Nazis occupied Lvov in June 1941. Antisemitic restrictions followed, including the compulsory wearing of an armband with a Jewish star. "Things got, almost by the minute, worse and worse," Katz said. Barred from school, he became an auto mechanic at a German Army garage. "I was as much an auto mechanic as all of you are auto mechanics," he told the audience. But the job at least afforded some protection.

In August 1942, the Nazi

Photo by Jonathan Gilbert courtesy Penn Hillel

occupiers began the so-called Great Action, which included mass deportations of Jews in Lvov to the Belzec extermination camp. From his workplace, at the suggestion of his bosses, the 14-year-old boy fled home, making his way past several German checkpoints. But he arrived to an empty apartment.

When the war finally ended, he was brought to the United States by an immigration organization.

"When I got home," he said, "I realized that I had no family. And I was truly petrified. And all of a sudden I was hit by anger," an emotion he credits with saving his life.

Katz was taken to the nearby Janowska concentration camp, where he began plotting his escape. He realized that once the barracks were locked for the night, the guard force was reduced. He hid outside the barracks and used a shoehorn to dig his way through the fence. "I wound up in the local cemetery," he said. "There was a newly built grave, and I was able to sleep on it."

With the help of family friends, Katz acquired false identity papers and made his way to Warsaw. Passing as a non-Jewish Pole, he joined the Polish underground and worked for a German scrap iron firm. After the Warsaw Ghetto uprising began in April 1943, he remembers, "we saw smoke because the ghetto was burning." He did not join the fighting, but, at the behest of the Polish underground, he made his way through the sewers to deliver a package to the ghetto.

A year later, he fought in the two-month-long Warsaw uprising against the Nazis, a battle that led to the city's decimation. "There was tremendous chaos," as well as severe food shortages, he recalled. He served as a "runner," delivering items for the resistance, and also "would sit on the barricades with my rifle and shoot at the Germans from a distance."

Katz was luckier than many. When the war finally ended, he was brought to the United States by an immigration organization. Arriving in May 1946 as a refugee, he was met by US relatives. But he said the immigration agency discouraged his interest in higher education, advising him instead to become a plumber.

Katz, having survived far worse, was undeterred. Informed that Penn was Philadelphia's best university, he walked into the admissions office, explained his situation in "fluent … broken English," and asked to be admitted.

As Katz explained in a note to the *Gazette* on the occasion of his 70th Penn reunion ["Alumni Notes," May|Jun 2019], his request "was greeted with some amazement." But he was able to meet with the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Glenn Morrow, a philosophy professor. And, after consulting with the faculty, the dean advised him that he could enroll as a special student, tuition free. "It couldn't be any better," said Katz. He would go on to an eminent medical career, including a stint as an assistant professor of pediatrics at Penn from 1966 to 1977.

During a Q&A after the Hillel conversation, one audience member asked how Jews in the US should react to rising antisemitism. Katz said he found the current situation confusing, adding: "My answer is that no one should be afraid. First of all, being afraid defeats you to begin with. You should not be afraid to act when something is inappropriate."

The commemoration began with a ceremonial siren. It concluded with the lighting of six memorial candles in honor of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust and a prayer of mourning recited by Hillel Rabbi Joshua Klein. *—Julia M. Klein*

Photo courtesy Penn Athletics

Anna Brandt is the first player in Penn women's lacrosse history to score 200 career goals.

SPORTS

Anna the All-American

During her 26-year tenure as head coach of the Penn women's lacrosse team, Karin Brower has coached many players who have earned national accolades. But this year, Anna Brandt W'25 won something that no Quaker had ever won before.

Brandt was named the Midfielder of the Year by the Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association (IWLCA), marking the first time in program history a player earned that honor.

A consensus IWLCA First Team All-American, Brandt led the Quakers in goals (68), points (71), caused turnovers (28), and ground balls (60) this season. She was also named the Ivy League Midfielder of the Year for the second time and a unanimous first team All-Ivy selection for the third time, among several other honors.

For her career, Brandt set Penn's all-time record for goals (206) and draw controls (214). This year she also tied the program's single-game goal record (nine) and broke the single-season goals record during Penn's NCAA quarterfinal matchup at Northwestern. The Quakers lost the game (the second straight year they lost in that round to Northwestern) but Brandt's five-goal performance prompted a shoutout from Penn President J. Larry Jameson during his Commencement speech. Brandt had helped the Quakers get to that point by scoring three goals apiece in a 16–6 win over Army and a dramatic 11–10 double-overtime win over Maryland in the previous rounds of the 2025 NCAA tourney.

Brandt is only the second player in program history to earn a national position player of the year award. Sarah Waxman C'08 was named the IWLCA Goalkeeper of the Year in 2008. *—DZ*

(Top) This photo of the 1889 Penn baseball team is displayed in head coach John Yurkow's office.

A Century and a Half on the Diamond

For 150 years, the Penn baseball team has produced titles, pro ballplayers, and a supportive alumni base.

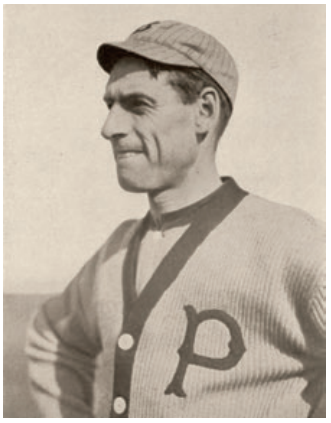
Over the last few years, John Yurkow has shepherded Penn baseball through one of its most successful runs in program history.

But hanging next to the recent Ivy League championship trophies, rings, and Coach of the Year plaque decorating Yurkow's office are older pieces of memorabilia that long predate the head coach's tenure. These include a photo of the 1889 team and a framed wool jersey worn eight decades ago by Robert Partridge Ed'41 GEd'47, the father of Penn Baseball Hall of Famer Glenn Partridge C'76.

For Yurkow, those connections to history serve as an important reminder of his role as a "placeholder" leading a program that this year marked its 150th anniversary.

"Obviously 150 years is a long time," says Yurkow, who became Penn's head coach in 2013 after serving seven years as an assistant, "and it's pretty cool to be a part of it."

According to Penn Archives, baseball was one of the earliest sports established at the University, behind only cricket and rowing. Though baseball games were believed to have been played in the 1860s, Penn's first documented season, organized entirely by students, occurred in 1875 with the team recording a 5–3 record.



(Below) Roy Thomas W1894 was a standout outfielder for the Quakers and the Phillies, before returning to coach his alma mater from 1909 to 1919.

"By the turn of the century," per Penn Archives, "collegiate baseball looked much more like baseball as we know it," with the University offering financial support for a coach, uniforms, and facilities. That 1900 season also produced short game recaps in the *New York Times*, including this one about an 11–2 win over Brown on May 17: "Brown disappointed the expectation of the baseball enthusiasts who braved the sun's rays to go to Franklin Field this afternoon by falling an easy victim to the Pennsylvania nine." (Yes, baseball games used to be played at Franklin Field—for 44 years, in fact—before moving to other venues, and eventually to Meikeljohn Stadium, which opened 25 years ago near I-76 and University Avenue.)

From the beginning, many Penn baseball alums graduated to the professional ranks, including Billy Goeckel C1895 L1896, a founding member of the Penn Band who composed "The Red and Blue" ["Gazetteer," Jul|Aug 2024], and Roy Thomas W1894, who played most of his 13 sterling seasons in Major League Baseball with the Philadelphia Phillies. Thomas returned to his alma mater to coach the Quakers for many years but is perhaps best known for fouling off so many pitches that an MLB rule was changed to make fouls before the third strike count as strikes ["Profiles," May|Jun 2005]. (Remarkably, the same era of Penn baseball also produced the prolific Western novelist Pearl Zane Grey D1896 Hon1917 ["Dentist of the Purple Sage," Mar|Apr 2004].)

The winning run of the 1912 World Series was scored by Boston Red Sox infielder Steve Yerkes W1909, who earlier that year recorded five hits in the first game ever played at Fenway Park. He remained the only Quaker to play in a World Series until pitcher Jake Cousins C'17 did it last year for the New York Yankees—which Yurkow was keenly watching.

Photos courtesy Penn Archives

(Top) Penn faces Carlisle in a 1907 game at Franklin Field back when the stadium only had one deck of seating. (Below) Bill Potter C'79 throws a pitch against Villanova during the 1977 season.

On the other side of Yurkow's office from his historic memorabilia is a photo of Cousins along with about a dozen other Penn alums who have been drafted in recent years, some of whom are still climbing the minor league ranks. As one of four Quakers selected in the 2017 Major League Baseball Draft (in what Yurkow called a "historic day" at the time), Cousins broke into the majors in 2021 and became the first Penn alum to pitch in an MLB game since Steve Adkins EAS'86 did it in 1990. Yurkow believes other Quakers have a shot to join Cousins there and says he makes it a point to recruit players who believe such a dream is possible because "those kids wind up winning a lot of games here."

Although more than 50 Penn alums in total have played in the majors, fewer have made the leap since 1950. Grover Powell W'66 ["Profiles," Nov|Dec 2015] and Adkins both had brief pitching stints with the New York Mets and Yankees, respectively, before Doug Glanville EAS'93 and Mark DeRosa W'97 enjoyed long and successful pro careers.

Both Glanville and DeRosa jumped on the bandwagon two years ago when the Quakers rekindled some of the magic from their eras with an Ivy League championship and a couple of wins at the NCAA regionals ["Sports," Jul|Aug 2023]. Members of Penn's 1995 Ivy championship team—which this year celebrated an anniversary, along with Penn's title-winning teams from 1990 and 1975—did a Zoom with the 2023 team to offer advice. DeRosa, as his teammate Michael Green W'95 recalled, stole the show on that call—just as he did during their playing days. "DeRosa was a character, man," Green says. "He was so funny."

One of Green's favorite Penn memories was joining DeRosa and his other teammates at Smokey Joe's to hear the team's named called when the 1995 NCAA bracket was announced. Other memories include watching *Bull Durham* and *Major League* on bus rides; making a trip to his native Los Angeles, which included a tour of Dodger Stadium thanks to teammate Kevin O'Malley C'97 WG'04, the son of then-Dodgers owner Peter O'Malley W'60; and early-season barnstorming tours through Florida. Unlike today, when the players stay in hotels, the team used to bunk up at the homes of Florida-based alums. Sleeping on the couch, "my feet were sticking two feet off," Green recalls. "That's just the way it was."

Bill Potter C'79 had similar recollections, praising "generous alumni" for tolerating the behavior of players prone to staying out late and partying in the Sunshine State. Potter also lauded Bob Seddon, who was "very diplomatic and friendly" with the alums while serving as head coach of the program from 1972 to 2005 (also coaching soccer for much of that stretch).

These days, both Potter and Green are part of the Penn baseball board, helping to raise money for a program that relies on significant alumni contributions to support road trips and other costs, including recent stadium renovations ["Sports," Sep|Oct 2020]. They also offer career mentorship for current players, plan alumni events to build camaraderie, and sometimes even suit up and retake the field for exhibition games. Green, whose .430 batting average in 1993 ranks sixth in program history, often takes batting practice with the team when he's back on campus—where he can usually only foul the ball off.

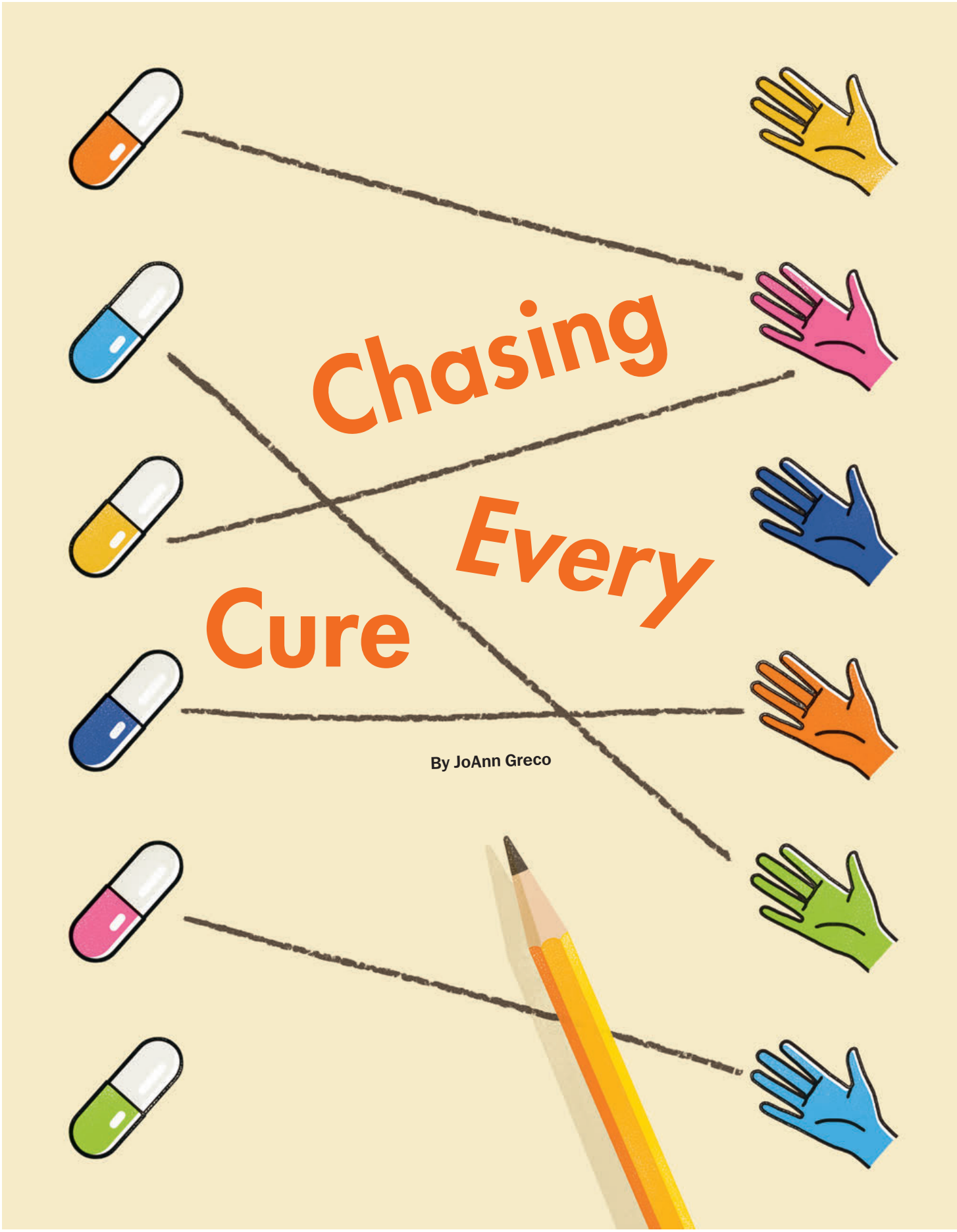
Both Potter and Green have noticed how much bigger, better, and stronger the Penn players are than the ones from their eras. "Penn really cranks out minor leaguers now left and right," Potter says. "It's a great program for somebody that wants to be a professional baseball player." Green adds that the influx of players drafted not only from Penn but across the Ivies "shows how much more elevated the league has gotten," he says. "I joke to people that I wouldn't even make the team now."

But Green is glad to remain connected to the program and to Yurkow, who he says is excellent at making the game fun for his players—the same way Green had fun 30 years ago. "For me, it's just about remembering how special the time was and how lucky I was to play Division 1 baseball at Penn with all of its history," Green says.

Yurkow credits the program's alumni community with bolstering a program that's emerged as a dominant force in the Ivies over the last four years—with a pair of regular-season titles, Ivy League Tournament championships, and NCAA tournament berths. (Penn once again qualified for the four-team Ivy tourney this year but didn't win it.)

Hearing alums talk about their playing days, "I can't help but think that hopefully the guys that I'm coaching now, when they come back 20 years from now, they'll be able to do the same thing," Yurkow says. "It's something they really cherish, and it continues to always bring them back and keep them together." —*DZ*

Photos courtesy Penn Archives and Bill Potter



Chasing Every Cure

By JoAnn Greco

His patient wasn't doing well, and Luke Chen was out of ideas. "We had tried every medication under the sun known to work with his disease," recalls Chen, a clinical hematologist at the University of British Columbia at the time. "The treatments would work for a few months, then things would devolve again. It got to the point where we were at the end of the line."

It had all started two years before, when Chen's patient, a busy Canadian surgeon, suddenly developed severe abdominal pain and fever. After three days of extreme pain, and with no sign that his symptoms were alleviating, the 47-year-old made his way to the emergency room and was admitted to the hospital. Tests revealed that his blood work was abnormal; a series of scans eventually revealed diverse enlarged lymph nodes.

After a biopsy, the patient at last received a diagnosis of idiopathic multicentric Castleman disease (iMCD). Diagnosed in fewer than 5,000 Americans a year, Castleman is characterized by enlarged lymph nodes in multiple regions of the body along with flu-like symptoms. In some cases, the disease can result in organ failure due to an excess of inflammatory proteins known as cytokines.

From onset to diagnosis took about four weeks. What followed was a years-long ordeal for the patient. Finally, with talk of palliative care hanging in the air, Chen placed a desperate, last-ditch call to Penn's David Fajgenbaum M'13 WG'15, a medical colleague whose successful quest to cure his own case of Castleman Disease was recounted in his dramatic 2019 memoir *Chasing My Cure* ["Views," May|Jun 2020]. It would prove a most surprising chat, and one that offered a ray of hope for his patient.

Fajgenbaum told Chen that his team at Penn's Cytokine Storm Treatment & Laboratory (CSTL) had recently found that some iMCD patients exhibited elevated levels of a protein called tumor necrosis factor (TNF). Further, by using machine learning they had identified a drug that might work for these patients. The drug, called adalimumab (commonly known as Humira), was a protein-inhibitor that was already FDA-approved to treat inflammatory conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, and psoriasis.

The news was an eye-opener for Chen—and a bit of a head-scratcher. "Not only was TNF not previously thought to play a significant role in Castleman," he says, "but it had never crossed my mind to use a TNF-inhibitor—because they're not that strong and I had used much more potent drugs that hadn't worked." Chen agreed it was worth a shot, though he wasn't expecting much of an effect. But within a few weeks of taking the drug, his patient was in remission. That was two years ago, and he continues to do well, taking adalimumab once a week, via subcutaneous injection.

When David Fajgenbaum unlocked his own treatment after being diagnosed with a rare disease, he saved his life. Now he has his sights on a higher purpose that's bringing hope to millions.

"In theory, it would be great to try and get adalimumab approved" for use as a treatment for Castleman, says Chen, who is now a professor of medicine at Dalhousie University in Halifax. "But this would require a prospective clinical trial that costs tens of millions of dollars to run. And we would probably only use it for less than 100 patients a year in North America, whereas there are many thousands of patients on the drug for its currently approved indications. So the economic numbers don't add up."

Even if the trial was done, he adds, "the drug company would then have to bring that new indication to the FDA—or Health Canada in our case—for an approval, which is another step that takes months to a year and costs many millions." Given these hurdles, "you can see why it's very hard and uncommon to get drugs approved specifically for rare diseases like Castleman," he says.

Soon after this encounter, Fajgenbaum invited Chen to serve as an advisor for Every Cure, a nonprofit he has launched devoted to using artificial intelligence (AI) to help identify existing drugs that can be used beyond their original intent to help patients with rare diseases that for the most part currently have *no* FDA-approved treatments. The story of Chen and his patient was recently published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. But more than a case study, it offers "proof of the power of combining lab research with AI-driven insights to uncover hidden cures to save lives," Fajgenbaum says. "The potential of repurposing existing drugs is enormous, and we're just getting started."

Repurposing isn't a new idea. Sildenafil, the active ingredient in Viagra, was originally developed in the 1980s to lower blood pressure but quickly morphed into a treatment for erectile disfunction, receiving FDA approval for that use in 1998. And just two years ago, the FDA approved the same molecule (under the brand name Revatio) as a treatment for a rare pediatric lung disease. Another prominent example of repurposing—as anyone watching television knows—are the several drugs originally used to control diabetes that have received approval as weight loss aids. Ozempic, while perhaps the most well known of this class (semaglutide), has not

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS GASH

yet been approved for the new use (and thus cannot be explicitly marketed for it). Since it has been approved by the FDA for *something* (as a diabetes treatment), however, doctors are legally allowed to write a prescription for it. This practice is known as "off-label" use.

Over the last decade, Fajgenbaum, who is also an associate professor of translational medicine and human genetics at the Perelman School of Medicine, and Grant Mitchell M'14 W'14 have watched these developments with interest. "We began asking, 'Why isn't this happening regularly and automatically?'" Fajgenbaum says. "And we learned a few things. One is that there are very limited incentives. First, of course, is that the market for any rare disease is by definition so small that the profit motive isn't there. Also, since more than 80 percent of drugs are generic, even if sales were to skyrocket, there are so many players that profits would be split and split again. That was a heartbreaking realization. Another thing is, there has never been an easy way to quantify and assess all of the approved drugs out there—the tools and technology didn't exist until AI came on the scene. Lastly, no one central organization is responsible for making sure that these drugs are being used in as many ways as possible."

To provide solutions, the two cofounded Every Cure in 2022 along with Tracey Sikora (who in October became vice president of research and clinical programs at the National Organization for Rare Disorders). Incorporating as a nonprofit, they planned to use new AI tools to identify possible matches between the world's 18,500 or so recognized diseases (less than a quarter of which have FDA-approved treatments) and some 4,000 drugs. By partnering with academic groups and other nonprofit organizations, Every Cure aims to serve as a central clearinghouse to share the information it gathers.

"What Every Cure does is make a big tent for the thousands of rare diseases out there," Chen says. "Clinicians like me who see lots of patients with variations of these diseases are part of that. We're not looking for one treatment, we're looking for everything that may be used. If it's another weapon in the arsenal, it's a win. With a repurposed drug, toxicity and risks are already well known. Repurposing is an understanding that viewing a drug as good only for gastroenterology, say, or rheumatology, is creating a totally false boundary."

The big question is "whether insurance companies will cover the new use" once the disease-drug matchup is identified, Fajgenbaum says. "So we need evidence. For us, it's all about generating that evidence."

Exhibit A for the potential behind Every Cure's ambitious goal has always been Fajgenbaum's own terrifying and riveting story. Diagnosed with iMCD while still in medical school, he came very close to dying five times in three and a half years, before deciding that it would be up to him to ensure that there wouldn't be a sixth time—a process he describes in *Chasing My Cure*. Plans are under way for a film version of the memoir, according to recent announcements.

Mitchell, who met Fajgenbaum on their very first day of medical school, has the real-life scenes from his friend's harrowing experience embedded in his mind. He still sounds astonished by the rapidity of what unfolded one summer day in 2010, in the third year of their medical training. "David went from being an unbelievably fit person, in peak form and vitality, bench pressing 300 pounds, to walking into our apartment and saying, *Man something is wrong, I just feel like I'm going to die,"* he recalls. "Medical students are notoriously hypochondriac—we're always diagnosing each other—so I was, like, *Calm down*. Boy, was I wrong. He was in a coma fighting for his life in a matter of weeks. The good news is he survived. The bad news was that there was very little information on this disease."

But Fajgenbaum was well equipped to surmount that difficulty. Before starting medical school, he had earned a master of science degree in public health at Oxford University. His dissertation, researched with a prescience that would come in handy later, concerned the lack of coordination and cooperation among researchers. "The biggest takeaway from that time was to not think about healthcare only on a doctor/patient level, but also on a systems level," Fajgenbaum says. "That can mean the environmental factors that come into play in the development of an illness, for instance. It's about considering the problem and seeing all the variables." The effort to think systematically to solve big problems has guided him throughout his career thus far, as he has worked toward breaking down the frustrating barriers between specialties, drugs, and diseases.

Mitchell, with his own training at the Perelman School and Wharton, was also intrigued by the idea of combining insights and approaches from medicine and business. Fajgenbaum's illness presented an opportunity to put their shared interest to work. "We had the advantage of being young and naive and thinking we could do something about getting to the crux of Castleman," Mitchell says. "We were trying to figure out what research was available, and we kept using this term *they*. What did *they* know? How could we reach *them?* But as we got deeper in trying to wrestle with the problem, we started to realize that *they* weren't really out there. It was a very imperfect network of half solutions and partial collaborations, and we looked at each other and said, 'Could we be *they*?' And that was what ignited him on this warpath."

That path would impel Fajgenbaum not only to read everything on Castleman that he could get his hands on, but to conduct experiments on himself—which, as he notes in his book, scientists have done for ages (including 12 Nobel Prize winners). In 2011, while

Perfect match: Fajgenbaum (right) and Every Cure cofounder Grant Mitchell, a close friend and experienced entrepreneur in the health field.

working as a staff member of the newly formed Penn Center for Orphan Disease Research & Therapy (now Orphan Disease Center) ["Gazetteer," May|Jun 2021], Fajgenbaum learned that "although each particular disease might be rare, the collective numbers are astounding."

More than 300 million people around the world are afflicted by one of more than 10,000 diseases that are characterized as rare, only a handful of which, like cystic fibrosis and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), aka Lou Gehrig's disease, are familiar to most people. According to Every Cure, 95 percent of these diseases have no recognized treatment, and they receive but a fraction of research and development dollars. In 2023, for example, just 14 percent of rare diseases attracted National Institutes of Health funding.

During his quest to learn everything about Castleman, what Fajgenbaum mostly discovered was how little there was to know. "Five and a half decades had passed since Dr. [Benjamin] Castleman reported the first cases [in 1954]," he wrote in *Chasing My Cure*, "but the cause, key cell types, and key cellular communication lines were all unknown; the only breakthrough was the finding that IL-6 [a cytokine] production is in overdrive, which came from a few studies of a few iMCD patients."

During his quest to learn everything about Castleman, what Fajgenbaum mostly discovered was how little there was to know.

The young medical student ultimately found his way to the only lab in America dedicated to studying Castleman, run by Frits van Rhee at the University of Arkansas. Dr. van Rhee helped get Fajgenbaum an experimental dose of siltuximab, a new drug then still in Phase II of a randomized controlled study—the first such clinical trial for iMCD ever. Siltuximab ultimately received FDA approval to treat iMCD in 2014 and it remains the only official treatment. But as was the case with Fajgenbaum, many Castleman patients do not respond to it as a first-line treatment.

Soon enough, he was sicker than ever, more terrified than ever, more frustrated than ever. Facing Round Four of his fight with Castleman, Fajgenbaum wrote, "the only thing the medical community 'knew' about iMCD was not correct for me." He made a vow. "If I survive this, I'm going to dedicate the rest of my life—however long that may be—to answering these unknowns and curing this disease."

During his illness, Fajgenbaum had become aware of two foundations that provided referrals to a small group of doctors and generated awareness and some research funding—neither of which,

Photo by Michael Branscom

however, was working to bring together the research community in any substantial way. "This effort to cure Castleman disease would be a challenge for a leader as much as for a researcher," Fajgenbaum wrote. "I set out to become both. I wasn't going to reform any existing structures. I was going to build something new."

For support and guidance, he enlisted van Rhee as cofounder of what became the Castleman Disease Collaborative Network. Within a few years, CDCN had "developed diagnostic criteria, developed a very large network of scientists around the globe who hadn't been working together, developed treatment guidelines, and developed a research agenda," van Rhee observes. "And, all the while, of course, we served as a way to bring together patients."

In late 2016, after years of applications and advocacy, Castleman finally received its own unique medical billing diagnostic code, enabling experts to better analyze trends and to collect more accurate data. Meanwhile, on the way to understanding Castleman, the network's research has also been instrumental in further unlocking the mysteries of the immune system and autoimmune diseases. "David is a very outstanding individual, and he's accomplished a lot in a relatively short career," van Rhee says. "For him, the sky is always the limit."

As he vowed, Fajgenbaum succeeded in finding his own treatment. He did so by addressing what he believes is a core problem plaguing medicine: you can see only what you look for. He reexamined his bloodwork and medical records multiple times, keeping an eye out for missed signals and overlooked clues. Crucially, he flipped his approach to understanding just what exactly was happening to him during his life-threatening bouts with iMCD. It all came together when he realized that, rather than a disease of the lymph node, his might be an immunity disorder—and, if so, an immunosuppressant created for another set of patients might help.

In February 2014, Fajgenbaum began taking sirolimus—a drug that had been used for 25 years to prevent organ rejection after kidney transplants—and he hasn't had a relapse since. With a new reason to look forward, he and his longtime love Caitlin Prazenica married later that year, and they are now the parents of a three-year-old and a six-year-old.

"I just feel so grateful and very optimistic," Fajgenbaum says. "My experience no longer creates anxiety. Over time, that anxiety has transitioned to urgency—urgency for solutions that can help thousands. I'm focused on the end goal of identifying new treatments." How many FDA-approved drugs are out there, ready to be used for treating many more diseases than they already were? Fajgenbaum has wondered this ever since he first entertained the idea of the CDCN. It's a "line of questioning that I would never again put down," he wrote in *Chasing My Cure*. "I became consumed with the idea."

In forming Every Cure with Mitchell, one of his best friends, the researcher has found his perfect match. A serial entrepreneur, Mitchell launched two start-ups while still a student at Penn. The first was a patented technology now marketed as Adhere Tech, which tracks dosages, reminds patients to take their meds, and intervenes if they miss a pill. The second, the app Curbside Care, was an early attempt at "Uberizing" medicine by tapping into the regional network of hospital shift workers who might be interested in making themselves available for house calls during off-duty hours. That one didn't do as well, "probably because it was a little ahead of its time, in light of what happened with telemedicine," Mitchell says. After graduation, Mitchell joined the international consulting firm McKinsey & Company, delving further into how data could be used to improve patient outcomes.

Every Cure's approach hinges on large language models (LLMs) that pull information on biomedical concepts—a drug, a disease, a gene, a tissue, a protein—from semantic sources like medical journals and databases and compilations. It then constructs a 'knowledge graph' that attempts to capture all of that information and examines it to find plausible new connections between existing drugs and diseases with unmet needs. In doing so, the organization is pioneering a new field of research called computational pharmacophenomics, visualized by the knowledge graphs that show lines connecting millions of nodes to each other, where every node is a biomedical concept and every line is a relationship between nodes. So, you might see one line between a drug and a disease, another one connecting that drug with reducing elevated protein levels, and another linking the same protein expression to another disease. The intersections can unlock pathways toward treating a rare disease with no known treatment.

"The beauty of this approach is that you can integrate knowledge from multiple modalities," says Mitchell. "The graph itself isn't raw data; it's the abstraction of knowledge and relationships found in raw data then representing the entirety of that knowledge in one place."

Every Cure started with preexisting knowledge graphs that were funded by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) and has enhanced them so they can be combined and layered. In addition the graphs have been enhanced with embeddings that use generative AI to incorporate more nuanced information about each node and edge. Now, instead of a single node being just "aspirin," for example, information on its molecular structure can also be included, widening the field for the machine learning algorithms to make new associations.

"Our technical and IP strategies will look a little different than if we were a tech company trying to maximize our valuation. We are more collaborative, and we have no pride of authorship. We're not trying to create a new tech company, we're trying to create a super valuable tool for society," says Mitchell.

"So while much of this has been built from scratch, it's also true that nothing comes from a vacuum. The newness is an ensemble of approaches that have been honed over time combined with cutting edge tech and applied together in novel fashion. It's soup to nuts—we're not just generating a hypothesis, but scoring and ranking pairings, generating evidence dossiers in seconds for our human experts to evaluate, then proceeding to validate discoveries in wet labs and clinical trials."

Mitchell says for now Every Cure is pursuing three different types of projects. *Frontier Explorers* involve therapeutic candidates that still require additional preclinical work before they can be tested in human clinical trials. *Clinical Gems* focus on medications that are ready for clinical trials. *Unsung Heroes* represent cases where there's a drug already on the market and compelling evidence—maybe patients are taking it off label, or some small trials have indicated its efficacy—that it could be successfully repurposed for another disease.

Last February, Every Cure announced its first unsung hero—leucovorin, a folate analog that could help improve verbal communication in some people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The group's algorithms flagged research done over the last two decades showing that a majority of children with ASD have autoantibodies against the folate receptor that helps shuttle vitamin B9 into the brain. "If you give children with ASD leucovorin, it bypasses that blockage and you see increased verbal fluency, faster cognitive processing, and enhanced executive functions," says Mitchell. Leucovorin is commonly used to reduce the toxicity of some chemotherapies, as well as to treat colon cancer and certain types of anemia. Although a few trials of leucovorin have shown positive effects on children with ASD, it is seldom prescribed.

"When pharma companies begin developing a drug, they start with a target of a particular disease area in the human body," Mitchell says. "There might be 20 other diseases that the drug might work for, but they make a strategic and commercial decision to pursue one. The differentiator for us is that we are agnostic as to the disease that we select, and to the drug that can treat it. We're not starting from a disease and saying that we have to cure *this* one—or finding a [particular] drug and working to find a new use for it. This way we get the most out of the 75 million possible pairings between drugs and diseases and let the data guide us to the highest impact opportunities."

"This way we get the most out of the 75 million possible pairings between drugs and diseases and let the data guide us to the highest impact opportunities."

Of course, doctors and their patients *are* fixated on a particular disease and frequently approach Every Cure, as Chen did, looking for a solution to a specific seemingly unsolvable case. "Because we only have limited time and resources, our plan is to help those kinds of researchers and physicians and patients help themselves by releasing some of our tools and capabilities to the public," Mitchell says. "We're hoping to do that by early next year."

Ultimately, Every Cure is looking to launch from five to 10 projects across its three archetypes annually. It's getting ready to launch its first clinical trial this year, according to Fajgenbaum, who adds that they hope to get to the point where the organization is running a few simultaneously at any given time. Every Cure's efforts have recently attracted the attention of the TED Foundation's Audacious Project initiative. Last fall it was selected as one of 10 global nonprofits to receive a five-year, $60 million commitment. The award builds on a $48 million, three-year contract with Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H), a federal agency that supports biomedical and health initiatives. Those two developments account for about half the funds Every Cure aims to raise to support its AI initiative. "Our AI platform is just a tool to achieve our goals," says Mitchell. "We will happily support and advance any line of investigation that comes from someone else. We will run our own checks, of course, but we want to work together to catalog all the repurposed drugs of the world."

Chen, for example, recently encouraged one of his residents "who has a great idea about Rosai-Dorfman disease [a rare disorder involving an accumulation of a type of white blood cell, primarily in lymph nodes] to send in a proposal about repurposing an existing myeloma drug. We've had some clinical success but want to see what big data shows."

Every Cure believes it will see a lot of opportunity in autoimmune and inflammatory diseases because the immune system is so overlapping and so interconnected. "We're very interested in looking at promiscuous drugs—drugs that work in multiple disease areas and address problems in the body that are known to be important to multiple diseases," says Fajgenbaum. Examples he cites include rituximab, which depletes B cells, a key player in many autoimmune diseases, and tocilizumab, commonly used for treating arthritis.

For more than 10 years now, Fajgenbaum has seen how repurposing common drugs can treat rare diseases and save lives. "I feel so happy thinking of my patients who have thrived after receiving repurposed drugs for Castleman, like Kalia, who started college last September, and Michael, who walked his son down the aisle recently," he says. "But the bigger concept is that we didn't stop with me. That's what I'm most proud of."

JoAnn Greco writes frequently for the *Gazette*.

TRAVELS IN TRASHLAND

Journalist Alexander Clapp set out to follow our trash to the end of the trail. Two years and five continents later, his debut book illuminates the surreal second life of the things we throw away.

Interview by Trey Popp | Excerpt by Alexander Clapp

Few experiences are as universal as throwing away trash. In 2018, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency, Americans jettisoned nearly 2,000 pounds of garbage for every man, woman, and child in the country. Our plastic waste from that year exceeded the nation's total body weight—218 pounds per person, up from 60 pounds in 1980. There's little reason to think that those numbers have fallen since then, and every reason to think that they've continued to climb. But the most staggering thing about our garbage might be how little we know about where it ends up.

That's what Alexander Clapp C'13 set out to discover. For two years the Greece-based journalist crisscrossed five continents, wending his way into the murky netherworlds of the global waste trade. What he found was a "strange, evasive, unbelievably massive business" whose through-the-looking-glass logic was gradually illuminated by encounters with Tanzanian plastic pickers, Aegean cruise-ship dismantlers, Javanese recycling gangsters, and Ghanaian boys who burn Western smartphones for cents an hour—or scam their erstwhile owners for thousands of dollars a pop. (See excerpt on page 37.)

The result is *Waste Wars: The Wild Afterlife of Your Trash*, which came out in February from Little, Brown. Eliciting praise from publications ranging from the *Guardian* to the *Atlantic* to the *Financial Times*—which called it "courageous and important"—Clapp's first book is an engrossing and unsettling exposé. It crackles with lively first-person reporting and, in its most effective sections, knows better than to simply blame this dirty business's bad actors (plentiful though they may be) for the sin of burning, burying, or burdening the world's most vulnerable people with waste that every single one of us creates. And although the byzantine maze of the global trash trade occasionally leads Clapp down blind alleys, *Waste Wars* serves up enough revelations to make up for it. As the *Washington Post*'s review concluded, "You will never look at plastic bags the same way again." And that might also go for cruise ships, iPhones, recycling bins, and the landmark US environmental legislation of the 1970s—whose counterintuitive dark side is as disturbing as many of the dystopian scenes Clapp witnesses in this book.

Clapp, whose reporting has appeared in outlets including the *New York Times*, *The Economist*, and the *London Review of Books*, connected with *Gazette* senior editor Trey Popp in March to talk about how he got interested in trash, what he learned from his travels, and how he thinks about plastic bags now that he knows what happens to them after they're wheeled to the curb.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN TOMAC

What sparked your interest in the fate of our trash?

Fair question! Most people don't spend two years of their life traveling around landfills and slums digging into what happens to our garbage.

I majored in Ancient Greek and Latin at Penn. The week after I graduated, I booked a one-way ticket to Athens. I wanted to get out of Van Pelt Library. It was the height of the financial crisis, and I started writing about the economic situation in Greece for British and American magazines.

I also began spending more and more time in Eastern Europe. And here I began seeing something really strange. Trash was *everywhere*. Plastic had scarcely existed in many of these places under half a century of communism. But now you couldn't go anywhere without seeing it. Along roads, clogging rivers, disintegrating in the countryside. I remember thinking, *How?*

And the more I looked into it, the stranger it became. Because a lot of that plastic waste I saw had actually arrived to Eastern Europe from Western Europe. One half of Europe—the rich, environmentally self-congratulating Europe—was in the business of offloading its waste onto the other half—the poor, environmentally devastated Europe. And it was a contradiction that only expanded in scale the more I examined the problem. Simply put, for more than a generation now, half the globe has been shipping much of its unwanted waste to the other half. Rich countries make waste; poor countries take it. I became determined to understand why this bizarre exchange had started—and why, even when we acknowledged that it was wrong, it had never ended.

When I was a kid in South Carolina, I can remember driving through rural areas where junk was routinely stacked in people's yards—anything from broken-down cars and rusted appliances to discarded toys and furniture and compost piles. It was an easy thing to look down your nose at. I can also remember hauling trash bags to a local dump during beach vacations—which was no one's favorite part of them. Now, in 21st-century Philadelphia, I probably wheel at least 100 pounds of garbage to my curb every month and never have to think about it again. I'll bet you can guess which of these situations is most convenient and aesthetically appealing to me. But after spending two years exploring the global waste trade, how do you think about them?

"Never have to think about it again"—yes, exactly. But it eventually does go somewhere, right? Your question gets to one of the underlying engines of the waste trade: There's psychological self-assurance in believing that your waste is disappearing into thin air, or possibly even helping the planet in some way. It makes all our consumption habits more palatable. And this is by design. We now have access to decades of the petrochemical industry's corporate memos and internal meeting notes. This idea—that the plastic you put into a recycling bin could in fact benefit the planet—was known to be nonsense in the 1980s. Petrochemical companies knew it wasn't true. But they also knew how much money it could make them.

But isn't some plastic recycled—or reused in some way? In the book, you describe Chinese farmers picking through piles of plastic for polyethylene, for example, which can be melted and molded into new products. So from a chemistry perspective, at least, some types of plastics are recyclable. What's the problem?

Most plastic in the world gets burnt or landfilled. Less than 10 percent of all the plastic ever discarded by humanity has even attempted the recycling process. And even that is a misleading statistic. Germany claims 57 percent recycling rates, for instance. But that figure assumes that all the plastic waste exported from Germany for "recycling" is actually getting recycled. It's not. A lot of it is just heading to places like Romania or Turkey and getting incinerated. Germany gets to claim it's getting "recycled" nevertheless.

Now some plastic, it's true, can be "recycled." PET is typically cited as the best example. This is what those Chinese farmers are scrounging around for in waste shipments that arrive from the US. But even PET figures are dismal. Less than 30 percent of it has historically gotten recycled.

Let's look a little deeper at the problem here. Even most of those plastics that can be recycled cannot be recycled an infinite number of times. Eventually they degrade beyond any ability to be resurrected. This means that "recycling" is never preventing final disposal. It is simply delaying it. And, because the manufacturing of new plastic invariably requires the input of virgin material for production, the "recycling" process is also never curbing waste outputs. It is only ever increasing them. Simply consider that every country on Earth that claims higher and higher "recycling" rates with each new year is simultaneously producing more and more waste.

And don't forget: Even if this process did in fact work, it is still ultimately toxic, leaking additives and contaminants into local water supplies! And it is also wrecking our oceans. We have studies from Vietnam that demonstrate that as much as 10 percent of plastic that is mechanically "recycled" is lost in the process, turning into billions of microplastics which head into local water systems, then the ocean. For good reason will there be—by weight—more plastic in the ocean than fish by 2050.

Here's the quiet part out loud, which almost no one is willing to be honest about: The best solution to our plastic may be to just landfill it.

How did the US environmental movement influence the disposal of trash?

It's a remarkable paradox. There's a long history of buying and selling waste. But the crucial shift happens in the 1960s and '70s. In a bid to reduce the output of certain forms of toxic residue, legislation in the United States and Europe made the

costs of disposal of those materials exorbitantly expensive. It's a bit like raising the price of cigarettes in an attempt to get people to stop smoking them.

So far, so good. But this Western environmental "progress" came with a dirty little secret. It didn't apply to poorer countries. By the 1980s, something bizarre had started happening. Western nations—and municipalities and corporations—had begun contracting toxic waste management out to middle men who shipped these residues to the developing world. The cost of disposing of a ton of lead paint in Ohio in 1985? A thousand dollars, give or take. In Africa? Two dollars, perhaps less.

Almost overnight a huge industry arose, one that profited off opening up the environments of the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries for destruction. We've still never really come to terms with the damage it has caused.

Most Americans have been conditioned to divide waste into two conceptual categories: useless garbage and recyclable material. Do you think that's a useful way to look at it, or is there a better one?

I think it's still a convenient distinction. There are many materials that are genuinely recyclable: steel, cardboard, paper, aluminum. One can create real circular economies out of these things. Where we start to get into trouble—and, looking back at the history of advertising and recycling, one might say we were *deliberately* led into trouble—is with materials like plastic or Styrofoam or Tetra Pak, or things like electronics or batteries. Most versions of these things cannot be safely or effectively or profitably recycled. Most really are just trash. And all are full of dangerous toxins and additives. They are messy. They pile up. They cannot organically break down. They are expensive to landfill. The solution has often been to turn them into someone else's problem.

You just cited a couple primary impediments to recycling: doing it safely, and doing it profitably. What kinds of waste are the biggest headache from a safety standpoint—and did you come across anyone who was making any headway toward making recycling them safer?

"The best solution to our plastic may be just to landfill it."

Toxic waste in steel drums. Airplane fluids, for instance, or asbestos. There is exactly zero upside to such waste. Its fate is simply to be dumped in a field or river or, if possible, incinerated in a cement kiln. For good reason have we historically had to bribe developing countries gargantuan sums of cash to take this stuff.

How about profitability—what's an example of a material that's technically recyclable but too expensive in a practical sense? And what would it take to make it financially feasible?

Let's take old cruise ships. These are valuable. They are made of thousands of tons of reusable steel. They also have other reusable things like wood deck paneling. But to dismantle them is extremely dangerous—by some measures, the most dangerous job on earth, statistically deadlier than mining—and incredibly polluting. And it's labor intensive, requiring thousands of dismantlers who are willing—or forced—to be exposed to all manner of toxins and hazards for months on end.

These are deemed unacceptable costs within those developed countries where cruise ships often operate. So the solution is to dispatch them for dismantling to places where those costs are lowered—that is, where labor is paid a pittance—and where those hazards are considered acceptable—where the toxins that are packed within modern cruise ships can simply be torched on a beachhead when the local environmental inspector takes his lunch break.

If you wanted the work of ship dismantling to be done in those countries that reap the overwhelming benefits of global shipping, you would likely have to automate the process. That requires tremendous technological and capital investment. As with so much else, it's easier, and cheaper, to just make it someone else's problem, to hand a Bangladeshi laborer a handsaw and pay him a few dollars a day to do it. ["Skeleton Coast," May|Jun 2015.]

Are there any types of waste that rich nations—or poor ones for that matter—actually try to hold on to?

Scrap metal is a good example. Many countries around the world now have export bans on it. This stuff is valuable. They don't want it exiting their borders. I remember traveling to Kenya in 2022, when the government had just put a ban on scrap metal's export. Anyone caught shipping the stuff was facing a heavy jail sentence. You had guys who once spent their existences rolling shopping carts around Nairobi piled with dirty cutlery and car fenders—who were now too scared to continue doing so.

One reason why scrap metal is so valuable? It's genuinely recyclable.

From mountains of smoldering electronic waste in Ghana to former Indonesian rice paddies piled knee-high

with single-use plastics originally jettisoned half-a-world away, you plunge your readers into some mind-boggling scenes. What discovery surprised you most during your travels?

The obscurity of this huge, billion-dollar, globe-spanning business that we all contribute to in one way or another.

Let's consider for a moment how our products are made. It's not always pretty, right? But there's at least a modicum of transparency. Companies like Nike or Apple are legally obliged to tell us where they are sourcing their materials, where these things are being put together, who is doing it. You look inside an H&M shirt and there's a tag that says, "Made in Bangladesh," or whatever it is.

But as for the fate of what happens to all these things? Your iPhone or your old Coke bottle or that old H&M T-shirt? The contractors and brokers that handle our waste are under zero obligation to tell us what is really happening to it—whether any of it is actually getting recycled, as they often claim, or whether it's simply getting torched in a cement kiln somewhere in Malaysia. There's a tremendous amount of money to be made in lying to you about the fate of your trash. And it's problematic for other reasons, too. Because it is the disposal process where all the nasty toxins and additives that have been injected into everything get unleashed into the atmosphere, bodies of water, soil, food supplies. A lot of this stuff is eternal. Once it's entered those environments, good luck ever getting it out.

One way to think about trash is that it's something everybody generates, nobody really wants, but almost anybody is allowed to receive. How does this combination of factors shape the way it moves?

A congressman from New Jersey once answered this question best: Like water flowing downhill, our trash tends to travel the path of least resistance. It tends to make its way to those places with the fewest inspectors, the least stringent environmental regulations, the most corruption, the cheapest labor. When you think about the trash trade, imagine the drug trade, only operating in reverse. Waste travels from rich countries to poor. The incentive is rarely to stop it. It's to let it travel unchecked. After all, rich countries are losing a liability when trash exits their borders.

Then there's that old adage: One man's trash, another's treasure. But, with a few notable exceptions, this just isn't true. Our garbage really isn't very valuable!

So where's the money here?

The money is in moving trash, relocating it, getting it away. Waste is not very profitable. Waste *diversion* is stupendously profitable.

So who tends to make the most money?

Well, you have Western municipalities which are saving a fortune off waste export. To landfill a ton of plastic waste is expensive. To export it abroad is not just cheap. There can even be margins of profit in it. You can contract a waste broker and sell this stuff to an importer in Vietnam or the Philippines for pennies. And a lot of these containers which have just arrived from Asia to the United States or Europe bearing all these cheap goods are often heading back empty, right? Why not fill them with trash? The transportation costs of shipping waste have historically been negligible.

Did you encounter any communities that receive waste knowing full well that it might jeopardize their own health or their own land, but make a reasoned economic decision to do it anyway?

Most communities in developing countries don't think about these problems in such abstract ways. Waste is a job, just like farming was for however many thousands of years. Workers I met in Indonesia or Tanzania are worried about feeding their families. They tend to give you a bizarre look if you ask about toxicity or health problems, almost as if to say, "That's the least of my problems." They're just looking to make ends meet.

You titled your book *Waste Wars*. At a global level, is trash disposal an inherently conflict-riddled enterprise?

I think trash displacement is inherently conflictual. And, again, it comes with a contradiction. As richer countries attempt to "clean up" their environmental footprints, it often comes at the expense of poorer countries, who are bribed or simply deluded into accepting our waste. It should come as no surprise that the countries that claim the highest recycling rates—Germany, for instance—are also the greatest exporters of waste. "Recycling," in this sense, just means making it someone else's problem.

While we now have robust discussions about transitioning to green energy, we still don't really talk about the ecological devastation spawned by our production and consumption habits. This problem isn't going anywhere.

In the process of researching and writing this book, did you learn anything that caused you to change your own behavior?

How destructive plastic is. I don't have any particular background in environmental studies or chemistry. But the more I learned about plastic, the more experts I spoke with, the more studies I looked into, the more horrifying this stuff became to me. Plastic exists for a reason. It is astonishingly cheap and convenient. But it comes at unsustainable cost. It's a ticking planetary time bomb. No matter what you do with plastic—whether you burn it or recycle it or landfill it—it never truly disappears.

If you don't care about the fate of the planet, fine. But presumably you care about yourself. And this stuff is wrecking us. It's being found in our brains, our blood, our bone marrow. This is just what we know about so far. It's an absolute nightmare.

EXCERPT

Catfisher Lagoon

A dispatch from Agbogbloshie, where electronics go to die.

From an airplane window, the city of Accra resembles a great brown-gray mass tacked to the littoral of West Africa. Veiny streets of ochre dirt cut through disorderly chunks of mudbrick and corrugated iron. At the city's southern edge, where Accra brushes up against the Gulf of Guinea, are a handful of thick granite monuments. They were erected in the early 1960s to commemorate Ghana's independence, sub-Saharan Africa's first successful decolonization movement. Shortly after midnight on March 6, 1957, a young revolutionary named Kwame Nkrumah [GEd'43 G'44]—the son of an Asona goldsmith—proclaimed the release of the former Gold Coast from the British Empire. "At long last, the battle has ended," Nkrumah told hundreds of Ghanaians who had massed in the center of the world's newest capital city. "We have awakened. We will not sleep anymore."

Today, the monuments to Ghana's independence jut out from the Atlantic coast and exude a vacant pageantry. There is Black Star Square, a tarmac parade ground that stretches out into sunstruck emptiness. There is Independence Arch, built in 1961 to greet the arrival of Queen Elizabeth, Ghana's erstwhile ruler. There is Accra Sports Stadium, a sepulchral coliseum that rises forth from the sizzling pavement like a stale wedding cake. It's unusual to find anyone else in this section of Accra, no matter the hour of the day, apart from a few bored guards armed with assault rifles and tasked with removing anyone caught dozing on benches. On either side of the monuments, along peninsulas stretching into the Gulf of Guinea, strongholds that once held enslaved people cast their shadows over the thrashing waves of the Atlantic.

Accra grows denser and denser as it pushes inland—so dense, in fact, that in the decades after Kwame Nkrumah oversaw his country's independence, a succession of "ring roads" were constructed in repeated attempts to encircle Ghana's capital and delineate its outer limits. One highway was paved in the mid-1970s, another in the late 1990s, both in vain: For half a century now, Accra has kept on pushing its way through the bush, undeterred. A city that 60 years ago boasted a population of some 300,000 is today a megalopolis of more than three million, a bead along the belt of West African urbanization stretching from Abidjan to Lagos that is poised to become, by 2100, the most populated coastline on the planet.

Tucked deep within the bowels of this unruly mass sits the market slum known as Agbogbloshie. It's a notorious place, a household name among security analysts, cybercrime experts, and environmental agencies the world over. For the US State Department, Agbogbloshie has proved a headache for security and intelligence safekeeping ever since it made itself known to Western authorities nearly two decades ago; in 2008, a team of researchers from the University of British Columbia traveled to Ghana's capital and chanced upon Northrop Grumman military contracts amounting to $22 million on hard drives rusting in an Agbogbloshie market stall that looked much like any of the thousands of others that crowd the slum. In the years since, dozens of other sensitive and precious documents—NASA mockups, Homeland Security memos, TSA spreadsheets, Defense Intelligence Agency files—have been recovered off secondhand computers discovered in the marketplace. It's probably a fraction of what's to be uncovered at Agbogbloshie. A recent Harvard study estimated that the value of the data that ends up in electronic waste streams could be as high as $13 billion a year. No small chunk finds its way to Accra.

That's the valuable material Agbogbloshie receives—accidentally or otherwise. Then there's the valuable material it *takes*. For the FBI, the slum is a den of identity thieves and financial catfishers. Their culprits tend to be enterprising young men in Ghana who have spent their lives rummaging through the piles of keyboards, desktop monitors, and smartphones that waste brokers in rich countries have shipped to Agbogbloshie; they are seasoned at restoring these busted electronics back to life — and, on occasion, using them to conduct epic long-range fraud against residents of the countries that sent them.

In 2017, after hundreds of thousands of dollars failed to reach the accounts of a Memphis-based real estate agency, its realtors came to the belated realization that dozens of their email addresses had been spoofed and used to siphon off brokerage payments from recent home buyers across Tennessee. The culprit: a group of fraudsters from Ghana. Other thefts are of a more intimate nature. Communities of Ghanaian teenagers, so-called browser boys, spend their nights luring Westerners into sending them gift cards, new phones, inheritances. In 2021, a 77-year-old man in Annandale, Virginia, matched on a dating website with a woman who claimed to be a widow in her thirties. A little more than one year and $500,000 in wired cash later, the man contacted local police with concerns that the widow may not have existed. She didn't; instead, he had sent the money to a network of scammers in Ghana whose total earnings over the previous two years, concluded Virginia prosecutors, likely exceeded $40 million. Indeed, even if you have never heard of Agbogbloshie, it's possible that someone in Agbogbloshie has heard of you. If an email has ever landed in your spam folder informing you that you've been designated as a handler of a West African prince's

lost banking fortune—*I can't transfer this fund to my personal account rather I want you to assist me!*—there's a good chance it was dispatched from one of the several thousand corrugated-metal shacks that make up the residential sprawl of Agbogbloshie.

As for environmental agencies, Agbogbloshie is a byword for ecological ruin. The New York City–based Pure Earth is an NGO that tracks toxin levels across impoverished countries; it routinely lists Agbogbloshie among the most polluted places on the planet. Chemical analyses of Agbogbloshie's chicken eggs have determined they are probably the most poisonous on Earth. According to the World Health Organization, a child who consumes poultry in the slum there will absorb 220 times the European Food Safety Authority's daily limit for intake of chlorinated dioxins, chemical compounds that can prove highly damaging even in minute quantities. "One can assume they"—the residents of Agbogbloshie—"will be looking at a drastically reduced life expectancy," Matthias Buchert, a chemist at the Institute for Applied Ecology in Darmstadt, Germany, has claimed. During afternoons spent in Agbogbloshie, it's not unusual to observe cows destined for the slaughterhouse chewing through last meals of yams mixed with plastic. According to researchers who have studied a similar phenomenon in India, the olfactory appendage of a cow—the vomeronasal organ—struggles to differentiate plastic coated in food from food itself.

Yet the most confounding thing about Agbogbloshie may just be its location. One would expect a place of so many competing notorieties to be tucked far from the center of a bustling national capital, at sanitized remove from the UN agencies and World Bank offices that, on the face of it, make it their purpose to prevent such dire places from existing. And yet Agbogbloshie is *right there*. It sits at the beating heart of Accra, a mere mile from the daunting granite monuments to independence that seemed to celebrate the birth of a Ghana bent on never becoming the object of Western exploitation again. Indeed, driving toward Agbogbloshie is an almost hallucinatory experience. A string of high-rise luxury hotels offers their guests acres of manicured gardens and womb-temperature swimming pools. Gradually the road gets bouncier. The air gets smoggier. The buildings get shabbier.

A bridge is lined with men hawking secondhand clothes. Below them is the Korle Lagoon, a stagnant channel that may take one a moment to realize is actually a body of water. Across its surface stretches a thick canvas of garbage. It jiggles now and then as pristine white egrets touch down upon floating chunks of Styrofoam, sending ripples through the flotsam and a surge of black water splashing into a mushy bank that scampers with rats gnawing through shopping bags in search of scraps. The Korle Lagoon doubles as a latrine. From the Okai Street bridge, next to a vendor selling toothpaste and brushes from a red pushcart, men unbuckle their pants to piss while nearby a line of wobbly makeshift outhouses has been constructed out of wormy wooden doors.

A cramped tongue of land extends for more than two miles into the Korle Lagoon. The residential section of Agbogbloshie, known as Old Fadama, is home to approximately 60,000 Ghanaians who have largely reached Accra from their country's desert northern fringes. Shielded from the sun by thousands of overlapping corrugated roofs, hundreds of passageways weave through Old Fadama, across the peninsula, forming a beehive of humanity tucked out of sight from Accra itself. There are tattoo parlors and seamstresses and public latrines adorned with murals depicting women squatting on toilets. Small mosques bristle with minarets that pierce through the metal-roof expanse like arrows through armor. In secluded nooks, shirtless boys gather around televisions that play karate movies and soccer matches. A refuge from the sunbaked city beyond it, one can wander the warrens of Old Fadama for chunks of the day without seeing the same shanty twice—or the sun at all. On three sides it is surrounded by the waters of the lagoon. Along the other, eastern edge, where Old Fadama runs back up against Okai Street, one finds the largest food market in all of Ghana, a great open-air bazaar known as the Onion Market. It sells not just onions but also yams, juices, coconuts, palm leaves, cookware.

Why have tens of thousands of Ghanaians relocated hundreds of miles from their ancestral villages in the north to live in such a place? The answer is to be found in the narrow strip of land that separates Old Fadama from the waters of the Korle Lagoon.

Every morning in Agbogbloshie, with the exception of Sundays, thousands of male residents of Old Fadama trickle out from their shanties and make their way toward the Korle Lagoon's banks. There, they hammer and shuck their way through a perpetually replenishing reservoir of secondhand electronics that have reached Ghana from the richer countries of the world.

First there is the phone dismantling station, Agbogbloshie being the destination for huge quantities of foreign and domestic smartphones that, owing to exhausted batteries or cracked screens, or any number of other problems, no longer work. They may be "condemned," as broken electronics are known in Agbogbloshie, but they still possess worth in the form of precious metals and parts. Those valuable elements must now be extracted and separated. At the phone dismantling station, men are arranged in circles in groups of five or six. One strips printed circuit boards from old Android phones and tosses them onto a glittering pile of green silicon. He then passes what remains of the phone to the man to his right, who uses a pair of tweezers to unpick its camera, delicately dropping it into a plastic water bottle on the ground beside him, where, I notice, several other such bottles are arranged in a neat row, each filled to the brim with amputated smartphone cameras. I stay for an hour to watch the men pass condemned phones round a circle. The phones lose more and more of their parts as they get farther round the circle, until they arrive at the final man, whose role is to toss their plastic encasements atop a growing anthill of smartphone

carcasses teetering along the edge of the lagoon. Then, just as the piles of phones requiring dismantling appear to be dwindling, that day's work nearly done, men aboard motorized wheelbarrows—the Nigerians who run much of the electronic waste market, I later learn—pull up to deliver dozens more rice sacks full of condemned phones. They toss them onto the ground as though they are bags of dirty laundry.

For decades the toil of dismantling at Agbogbloshie was done in a vast scrapyard on the distant bank of the Korle Lagoon. In July 2021, infuriated by Western press coverage of the area, and determined to end the work done there, Ghana's government sent in bulldozers, brutally levelling the site over the course of several days. The electronic dismantling never stopped, though. It merely relocated closer to the residential quarters of Old Fadama itself, along a dirt ribbon of track that runs the course of the Korle Lagoon. Some 15 feet wide, the path is an unrelenting vehicular torrent, juddering with motorized tricycles and pickup trucks and retrofitted tractors and choking with their comingling exhausts. Every morning, their drivers ferry hundreds of tons of mangled appliances (ceiling fans, washing machines, motorcycle engines, refrigerators) into Agbogbloshie; every afternoon they motor some of the world's most precious materials (cobalt, copper, gold, platinum) out—a 10-hour turnaround that extracts highly valuable material from Agbogbloshie, and eventually Ghana, and leaves little behind save a hazy mass of pollution and pittance wages. My feet crunch over shards of computer-screen glass and cracked iPad covers and stray Hewlett-Packard mice; a pink bra has been stamped into the mud by so many thousands of footsteps to the point of resembling a fossilized crustacean. Itinerant barbers bearing white plastic stools roam around doling out buzz cuts for 10 cedis, or a buck. Women shimmering in tribal dress meander through the morass, selling juices out of plastic laundry bins. The constant clank of hammers laying into electronics pulses through the scene like a heartbeat. *Clank! Clank!*

About halfway down the peninsula, the appliances that have arrived on those motorized tricycles and pickup trucks are being bashed to pieces. Hundreds of young men—known in Agbogbloshie as "dismantlers"—sit in dozens of small circles straddling gutted microwaves and disemboweled computer monitors. Most are wearing knee-high colored dress socks and open-toed sandals, which poke out of great rats' nests of electrical wiring crowding the ground. The dismantlers have one job: For eight to nine hours a day they pound fat gavel hammers into the seams of old ceiling fans, motorcycle mufflers, speaker systems. The work has a factory-line monotony to it, only it is the exact opposite of assembling. It is a *de*-manufacturing line, reducing all the amenities of our modern world—the air conditioners that cool our offices, the refrigerators that preserve our food, the motors within the mowers that shear the grass of our lawns—back into their constituent elements. It's a juxtaposition that, even after weeks spent in Agbogbloshie, never ceases to be jarring: The work of the dismantlers may be pre-industrial and backbreaking, but what lies beneath the strokes of their hammers tends to be some of the world's most advanced technology. And while a streamlined process of automation might have manufactured most of these products, it is human labor—of an almost unimaginably archaic kind—that remains one of the few ways to get rid of them.

I watch as a Japanese refrigerator engine gets obliterated in the span of several seconds with rhythmic discipline, its dismantler capable of locating the seams in its sides without hesitation and, three or four hammer smacks later, cracking its torso in two. Gathered in the center of his circle are mounds of filthy gadgets. Smashed TV screens abut cordless electric teakettles. Webs of wiring seem to lasso the piles of junk together like spiderwebs. Along the edge of the circle, a young dismantler is halfway through the work of disassembling an industrial Epson office printer when its cartridge sprays his socks with firecracker bursts of pink and turquoise ink.

A five-story mountain of unsorted waste lofts high above Agbogbloshie like an acropolis.

I leave the appliance dismantlers and keep walking. On the side of the path facing the Old Fadama slum, men are taking their breaks, lounging horizontally along banks of interconnected steel chairs that appear to have been lifted from an airport or bus terminal. A couple are putting back Club beers. As the path continues, after every thirty feet or so, I see one huge Alpha & Omega–brand scale after another, each of them capable of weighing up to 500 pounds of copper or aluminum. All around me, Frafra tribespeople—identifiable because they tend to be shorter than most other residents of Agbogbloshie—work fastidiously, hunched over at 100-degree angles, plucking sparkling shards of emerald silicon circuit board off the ground and depositing them in nylon sacks.

Finally, after nearly two miles, the Korle Lagoon path rises to a five-story mountain of unsorted waste that lofts high above Agbogbloshie like an acropolis, a trashy summit befitting a society that owes its existence to the processing of refuse. Lording over the slum, taller even than the minarets of its mosques, the garbage mountain bakes in the harsh beating glare of the sun. At its base, men doze beneath tarps held up by wooden stilts, battalions of flies buzzing around their eyelids. Around its peak wander the belated entries to the great scavenging hunt: gaunt cattle and bony dogs, rooting through pastures of plastic in search of scraps of yam.

The Producer as Problem Solver

Before the recent real-life election of a new pope, Michael Jackman helped bring a film version—*Conclave*—to movie screens and the awards circuit. It was a career highlight for a veteran film producer who often labored far from the Hollywood that lives in our collective imagination.

By Susan Karlin

This wasn't Michael Jackman C'85's first time at the Oscars. He'd been twice before, in 1989 as "picture car coordinator" for the 1960s-set *Mississippi Burning* and in 2017 as a coproducer for the sci-fi epic *Arrival*. Yet despite both films' multiple nominations, his titles still relegated him to the proletariat sections of the theater. Now, things were different. At the 97th Academy Awards ceremony on March 2, Jackman was part of the glitterati, seated down center among the featured players as one of the producers nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture for the lavish Vatican thriller *Conclave*.

Directed by Edward Berger, the film stars Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, and John Lithgow as rival cardinals scheming to sway the election of a new pope after his predecessor's death. It would turn out to be eerily prescient. Less than two months after the Academy Awards and six months after the film's October 2024 release, Pope Francis would pass away, prompting a real-life conclave culminating in the election of Robert Francis Prevost as Pope Leo XIV. The comparisons to the film would catapult its ratings on streaming platforms. But on Oscar night, Jackman, 62, was simply trying to catch his breath after a fairytale ride. The Best Picture nod, among the film's eight nominations, placed him squarely in the spotlight. And with it, the heady arrivals and sparkling scene inside Hollywood's Dolby Theatre finally gave the normally unflappable industry veteran pause. "I tried to be in the moment and just enjoy it," Jackman recalls. "This never happened before, and it may never happen again."

The Oscar ceremony was the climax of six increasingly peripatetic months that began with the film's late summer premiere at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado and followed with a fall theatrical release to glowing reviews and steadily burgeoning box office revenues that would eventually far eclipse its $20 million budget with more than $125 million in worldwide earnings. Still, Jackman's nearly 40 years working his way up the ranks on such films as *Arrival, Greyhound, Gangs of New York,* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* had instilled a more measured approach to Hollywood. By the time *Conclave* surprised with six Golden Globe nominations in December, he was already well into executive producing his next picture, the upcoming Boots Riley sci-fi comedy *I Love Boosters*, and on a family vacation in Brazil. Jackman and his wife raced home to attend the Golden Globes, commencing a whirlwind campaign of award shows, luncheons, screenings, Q&As, press junkets, swank hotels, and nonstop travel as the film landed on top 2024 film lists and captured several awards, including a BAFTA Best Picture win. "For the first time in my life, I wasn't keeping my own calendar," he says. "I got like a six-page calendar one day and thought, 'Oh, this is my calendar for the week.' It's like, 'Oh no, this is my calendar for the *day*!'"

PHOTO BY NATHAN BAJAR

After a career of working mostly behind the scenes, producer Michael Jackman called the awards season frenzy around *Conclave* "an amazing, thrilling ride."

While the media hyped the Best Picture horse race, the circuit bubble was more like a delightfully exhausting and endless party among friends and colleagues. Not only had Jackman's old employer, FilmNation Entertainment, produced both *Conclave* and fellow contender *Anora* (which lists Jackman in the production credits), but Jackman also found himself part of a triad of Oscar-nominated Quakers alongside Fred Berger C'03 ["Alumni Profiles," Jul|Aug 2017] and Marc Platt C'79—producers, respectively, of the Bob Dylan biopic *A Complete Unknown* and the film version of the (also-Platt-produced) Broadway musical *Wicked* ["Passion Plays," May|Jun 2006]. Berger and Platt had previously coproduced *La La Land*, the 2016 film that won six Academy Awards (but not Best Picture, though it was mistakenly announced as the winner at the end of a chaotic Oscar night eight years ago). Berger knew Jackman, but didn't realize he'd gone to Penn. "We were at some award show texting from different tables, and he said, 'By the way, we're both Quakers!'" says Berger, who is unrelated to the *Conclave* director. "We were laughing about it and said, 'OK, we gotta find Marc and take a photo.'"

Such was the leadup to Jackman entering the 3,300-seat Dolby Theatre for the Academy Awards. "I looked up at three mezzanines leading up to the sky, and realized, 'I've got a great seat in the middle, next to all of these other amazing filmmakers and casts that we'd been spending a lot of time with on the same circuit together,'" he says. "So, it was an amazing, thrilling ride."

Despite landing a Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar, *Conclave* ultimately lost Best Picture to *Anora*. But the evening's outcome couldn't shake Jackman's zen. "You want to be the movie that wins," he says. "But the big quantum step for me, personally and professionally, was the nomination."

Moreover, it reignited a long-abandoned dream. When *Conclave* landed at FilmNation in 2022, Jackman was serving as the company's executive vice president of physical production and post. For the previous 20 years, he had chosen jobs that kept him close to his Westfield, New Jersey, home while his kids grew up. This meant moving away from the producing roles that get awards recognition—but usually require extensive travel and exhaustive on-set oversight, often for months at a time.

"I really thought the opportunity to ever be in a position where I might be nominated for an Academy Award was done," he says. "I made this decision with the knowledge that it probably took this possibility away. While I never second-guessed it—being home for my family was more important—to then get nominated for an Oscar was a beautiful karmic moment."

Once his kids were off to college, Jackman ventured back to on-set producing, with Netflix's *The Good Nurse* followed by *Conclave*. The latter had Jackman planning the budget, production structure, and shooting locations, spending six months in Rome with the production team prepping and shooting the film, liaising between departments, and balancing creative visions with budgetary constraints—but always in service to the story and visuals. "I like going to set and solving problems," he says.

"Mike is passionate about not just film but filmmakers, actors, directors, designers, and all the other artists and craftspeople who bring a project to fruition," says the acclaimed actor Tucci, who plays Cardinal Bellini. "His friendly, easy demeanor makes him approachable to have a chat or problem solve. This is a very important trait for a producer, who needs to be across every department and have an understanding of that department's needs. Mike has it in spades."

Fred Berger has long admired Jackman's producing range since interning for him at Focus Features, which, among other duties, enlisted him as Jim Carrey's hand double on *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. "It's very rare to find a producer who has such a mastery of the technical processes and yet is really a creative collaborator who's always thinking, 'How can I protect budget and schedule *and* build the movie structurally to give the filmmaker more time and latitude?'" Berger says. "And above all that, is kind and generous, who lifts people up on set."

Jackman earned his toolbelt from decades managing crises arising in different departments on every film. Even *Conclave* wasn't immune. Its biggest Pepcid moment came when, a month before shooting and after they'd built a replica Sistine Chapel complete with a CGI ceiling, the production attorney asked whether they had the rights to the images. Jackman felt his soul leaving his body.

"We were like, '*We* don't have the rights. Wait…*what?* Like, who has the rights?'" he recalls, laughing. Turns out, the Vatican. On the rare occasions that it even leases rights, it only does so for five years, which doesn't work for movies. "We hadn't even shown them the script because we didn't want to risk them not liking it," Jackman says. "So, there were definitely a few hours where I was talking to our head of business affairs, going, 'What are we gonna do? We can't stop! Is the pope gonna sue us?'" Salvation came several torturous hours later in the form of Archivio Scala, a Florence archive that licenses the rights to Michelangelo's preliminary drawings for his Sistine Chapel paintings.

Jackman's ability to navigate uncertainty on set parallels his improvised career path. "Looking backwards, I can connect a lot of dots going forward," he says. But back then, "there were no dots to connect. It was just, 'What is gonna be interesting?' and 'What am I gonna learn?' So, for me, it's the curiosity and the restlessness."

Born in New York, Jackman grew up primarily in Cambridge, Massachusetts, after his father enrolled at Harvard Law School at 40. Despite living in the shadow of Harvard, Jackman was genetically predisposed for Penn. Both

Jackman photographed in the AMC at Lincoln Square 13 movie theater near his New York office and sharing a selfie with fellow Quakers and Best Picture Oscar nominees Fred Berger (left) and Marc Platt (center) at an awards ceremony.

his father, Norman Jackman W'53, and uncle, Robert Jackman W'56, graduated from the University, and he and his wife, Lisa Leavitt Jackman W'88, an executive recruiter, have since passed along the Quaker DNA to their kids, Alexandra Jackman C'21, a University of Michigan law student, and Sam Jackman C'25 W'25, who works for a real estate brokering firm. As a teen, Michael was so set on Penn that he thwarted parental pleas by not only refusing to apply to Harvard but also booby trapping his Dartmouth application. When asked, "Where do you see yourself in 25 years?" he wrote, "I see myself as a successful Harvard alumnus."

> "You want to be the movie that wins. But the big quantum step for me, personally and professionally, was the nomination."

At Penn, Jackman majored in psychology and continued his three loves from high school—football, crew, and performing. He found a whimsical perch with the irreverent a cappella group Pennsylvania Six-5000 (now known as Penn Six), where he met lifelong friends Jordan Foster C'86 WG'91 and Jim Karp C'88. "He was principled, almost to a fault, driven, and talented," says Foster, now a partner in a New York investment management firm. Foster remembers Jackman bringing down the house with a rendition of Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*, where he donned a black leather jacket and single sequined glove and moonwalked across the stage. "The crowd went nuts, and the girls would be all over him afterwards, like he was a rock star."

Jackman's closest academic flyby to producing was taking "Monday Night at the Movies," a legendary film analysis class taught at Penn by *Film as a Subversive Art* author Amos Vogel. But hints of leadership talents emerged when he took the reins of Penn Six in his senior year, engineering a group busking in downtown Philly to raise money to cut their first album and go on tour.

"He just figured out how to pull all these pieces together and get it done," says Karp, a London-based financier and investor. "He's organized and diligent, but also great with people. He can bring people around to his way of thinking without them even knowing it. I think if someone who knew what a movie producer does had seen Mike back then, they probably

(From top) Photo by Nathan Bajar; photo courtesy Fred Berger

Jackman (top, center) was a star performer and leader in the irreverent a cappella group Pennsylvania Six-5000. In the Quad with (left to right) Jim Karp, Larry Narun C'85, Doug Larson C'85 EAS'85, Josh Rosenberg C'87, Al Paprocki W'87, John Auyong C'88, and the late Rich Gentry C'86. He also found time for pranks like creating a parody Yo and Yo Mural on a wall in their dorm with roommates Geoff Berg (center) and Eddie Boyce (left).

"Mike always had a great sense of humor and was also really creative. So, he would take things and run with them."

could have predicted that he would end up doing something like that."

Jackman's other creative outlet took the form of absurdist pranks with partners-in-crime Geoff Berg C'87, now a San Diego commercial real estate developer, and Eddie Boyce C'85, a Maryland vintner. Randomly assigned as freshman roommates, they bonded over their dark humor. They not only continued rooming together all four years, but have remained close, still laughing over their antics more than four decades later. "Mike always had a great sense of humor and was also really creative," says Boyce. "So, he would take things and run with them."

Berg recalls Jackman and some other dorm friends once transferring Boyce's bedroom contents from their High Rise East dorm room and reassembling them in the same configuration in the floor lounge. Another time, they pulled an all-nighter painting a parody of a very earnest student-created Yin and Yang-themed mural gracing one of the floors. "Mike was a very good artist," says Boyce. The guys' version: The Yo and Yo Mural featuring a Sistine Chapel motif of God's outstretched hand dangling a yo-yo. "The group that had done the Yin and Yang mural actually were offended," says Berg.

Then there was the time they kidnapped a Mickey Mouse souvenir that belonged to Jackman's then-girlfriend and turned it into a prisoner of war, complete with a dangling cigarette, AA battery "bomb" strapped to its foot, and makeshift parachute that had it gliding to freedom from their 18th floor window over the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity. "Things you can't get away with these days," says Berg. "The three of us were just in hysterics. Mike's girlfriend didn't think it was funny."

Even after graduating, producing still wasn't on the horizon. "I thought I wanted to be an actor," says Jackman. He moved to New York, landing a job in 1986 as a production assistant at Orion Pictures to at least keep a foot in entertainment while he tried to jumpstart an acting career. He did grunt work at the film production and distribution company, but Jackman had two things going for him: computers and coffee.

At the time, film budgeting and scheduling was just beginning to transition to computers. At Penn, Jackman had come close to minoring in computer science before sidestepping a final class demanding too much math. But he still grokked computers more than the older executives. So, Jackman often stood out in meetings with studio brass as the lone PA who could work the machine.

And his other superpower? "This is my coffee story," announces Jackman. "And I've told this to my kids and their friends." Jackman's entrée job included coffee runs. He'd take orders for everyone, come right back so the coffee remained hot, and make sure people got their correct requests. Meanwhile, another PA, the son of the executive producer's friend, deemed it beneath him. He would run out before too many folks could order, stop at the newsstand on his way back so the coffee was cold, and confuse the orders. "So, when they were figuring out who to hire for the next film, and they said, 'Hey, should we bring in Jack?' They'd go, 'Jack couldn't even get coffee right. Let's bring in Mike.' It's a very simple lesson. It doesn't matter what the job is; you should be great at it because that's what you should do in a job. And you can also be recognized for being great at a terrible job."

The strategy worked. Jackman eventually graduated from coffee runs to more integral jobs—like the care and feeding

Photos and identifications courtesy Michael Jackman

of Liam Neeson, Dennis Quaid, and Cher during the legal drama *Suspect*, and the wrangling of some 300 vintage vehicles for *Mississippi Burning*, a thriller about the deaths of civil rights workers in the 1960s starring Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe. But he still wanted to act.

So early in preproduction of *Mississippi Burning*, Jackman told director Alan Parker he wanted to be in the movie. "And he looked at me and said, 'No,'" Jackman recalls. "But I brought it up again the next week. Parker still said no. Every week, I would ask him to put me in the movie. It became a running joke."

Three weeks into shooting, Jackman heard they were having trouble casting reporters and FBI agents. "I had pretty long hair at the time, so I went into the hair and makeup trailer and said, 'Can you give me a haircut?'" he says. "The hairstylist said, 'Sure. How do you want it?' I said, 'I want it like one of the reporters who haven't been cast yet.'" Shortly after, a shorn Jackman emerged from the trailer as Parker serendipitously walked by. "He looks at me, 'Did I cast you?' I said, 'Not yet.' So, he cast me the next day." Jackman ended up playing a reporter in several scenes, most notably in a two-shot with the legendary Hackman, who died earlier this year. ("I feel so sad about Gene Hackman," Jackman says. "He was a sweetheart.")

The part got Jackman into the Screen Actors Guild, not to mention adulation from an autograph seeker in front of a bemused Hackman. And his association with the film got him his first trip to the Oscars. ("I was 26 and starstruck," he says.) But after working on three movies in as many years, and getting an inside look at an actor's life, the bloom had withered. "I was like, 'I'm good. I don't need to do this anymore,'" he says.

"When an actor is in a movie, they're treated incredibly well, and when they're not in a movie, they're treated like cattle," he adds. "If you're really famous, it's very hard to have a personal life without being on the front page of a magazine if you fight with your spouse." Even the rejection faced by producers is far worse for actors, whose lack of success often has nothing to do with their talent. "I wanted to do something where, if I was good at something, I could excel."

Jackman shifted his full attention to producing, zigzagging between money gigs and those that piqued his curiosity, sometimes learning jobs *on* the job, but always trying his best regardless of circumstances. "Some of the worst starts to jobs became some of the best professional experiences of my life," he says.

But a pivotal moment came in 2003 when traveling began to impact his young family. When his daughter was three and his son was six months, Jackman found himself on location for 10 weeks in Gainesville, Florida, on an ill-fated movie that fell apart on the day it was supposed to start shooting. Jackman's "pay or play" deal earned him $100,000—the remainder in the film's account. But the crew had been working for two weeks without pay and were owed the same amount. "So, I paid the crew and came back with nothing," he says. "It was not a good time."

"Whether it's creative, budgetary, or logistical, I like to try to find solutions where we all win."

His family was equally frustrated. Despite returning most weekends, "my son didn't know me when I got back and my daughter was miserable," he says. "Every time I left, it would snow, and my wife was left to clear it out. It was not a great experience. I felt like, 'How am I going to raise my kids if I'm doing this? I want to coach basketball. I want to be here for every play. I want to hear all the recitals.'"

Jackman stopped traveling as a producer and shifted focus to New York-based post-production and related film work for entities like the Weinstein Company, Deluxe Creative Services, and finally FilmNation. That work—which had him overseeing the editing, sound design and mixing, visual effects, music, and other finishing elements—still fed his penchant for film and problem solving. "Whether it's creative, budgetary, or logistical," he says, "I like to try to find solutions where we all win."

These days, Jackman still feeds his performing bug through a local glee club and playing guitar. He's also maintained ties to Penn by mentoring students and alumni interested in the film industry and guest lecturing in cinema studies courses. "I love coming back to campus and talking to recent graduates," he says, with a grin. "If I'm lucky, I get to talk them out of acting."

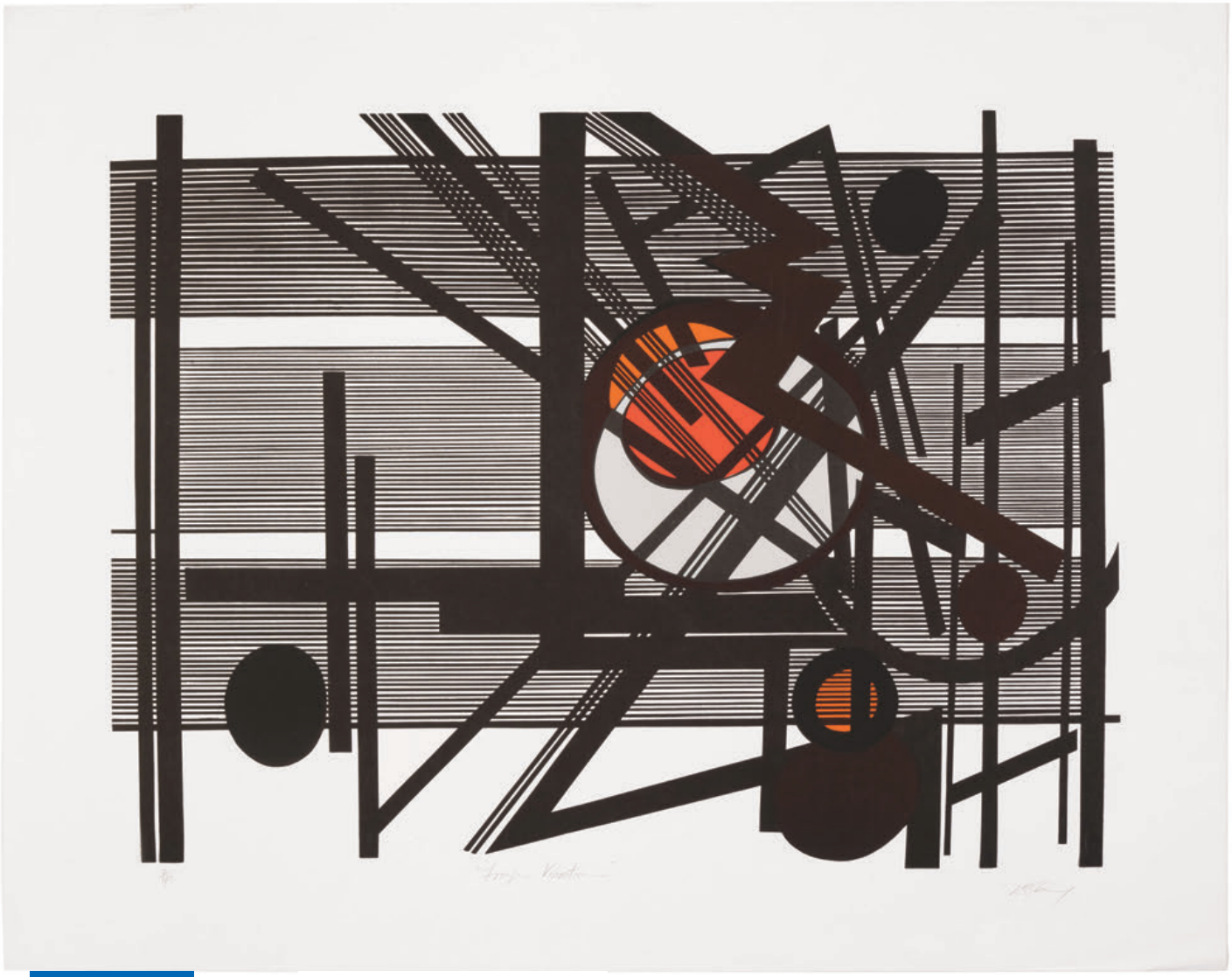
Despite the success of *Conclave*, FilmNation needed Jackman as an executive. Last fall, he amicably left his perch there to move into being an independent producer, guiding projects through the full production arc, from idea and development through shooting and post. He's now scouting ventures to work on with some of the producers he hit it off with on the pre-Oscar circuit, Berger among them.

"Now my guiding principle is more about letting great projects organically evolve from people I want to work with," Jackman says. "Instead of chasing a project or job, I'm chasing wonderful people. The reality is, the environment, or the personalities of the director, producers, or actors don't impact whether it's a good movie or not. People can be horrible and make a really great movie, or wonderful and make a bad movie. I just want to work with people I like and let the movies take care of themselves."

Susan Karlin C'85 is a regular contributor to *Fast Company*.

2025 Alumni Weekend

Alumni Weekend 2025



Calendar

ICA
icaphila.org
Mavis Pusey: Mobile Images
Jul. 12–Dec. 7

Morris Arboretum & Gardens
morrisarboretum.org
Open daily, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Penn Libraries
library.upenn.edu
Through Nursing's Lens: The Nurse in Wartime Imagery and Photographs
Through July 31
Revolution at Penn?
Through Aug. 29
"My Soul is Anchored in the Lord": Marian Anderson and Florence Price
Through Dec. 15

Penn Museum
penn.museum
Garden Jams:
West Philadelphia Orchestra July 9
Vertical Current July 16
Los Bomberos De La Calle July 23
Malidelphia July 30

World Café Live
worldcafelive.com
Dave Kiss Presents: Os Mutantes July 10
Cosmo Sheldrake July 11
Gaby Moreno July 12
Tiny Desk Contest On the Road July 15
Bear Ghost July 16
We Call It Jazz: Journey to the Heart of New Orleans July 17
TimaLikesMusic July 18
The Coronas July 23
7Horse July 25
Maui the Writer July 26
Upstairs Neighbors Podcast Aug. 7
This Paranormal Life—Live Aug. 9
Santiago Cruz Aug. 14
Ispíní na Éireann + John Byrne Band Aug. 15
Joel Sunny Aug. 16

Above: Mavis Pusey, *Frozen Vibration*, 1968. On view at the ICA Jul. 12–Dec. 7.

Judith Schaechter, *Super/Natural*, 2023-2025. Stained-glass panels and wood frame.

Glass Cosmos

An unusual artist-in-residence program begets a fantastical creation.

Philadelphia-based artist Judith Schaechter sat quietly in a lab at the Perelman School of Medicine, taking in a discussion about beauty and morality. As the talk pivoted to an examination of the human propensity to form negative judgments about people whose skin is scarred, she wondered how that might inform the art she'd been tasked with creating. Might she consider confronting viewers with images of badly disfigured faces? But Anjan Chatterjee M'85, the founder and director of the Penn Center for Neuroaesthetics (PCfN) ["Gazetteer," Sep|Oct 2019], had greater expectations of his newly appointed artist-in-residence. "I was looking for something inspired by our conversations in the lab," he says, "but I didn't want it to be illustrative or literally representative of our research."

For two years, Schaechter kept listening, week after week, as Chatterjee, his students, and guest speakers delved into the ways aesthetic perceptions trigger responses in our brain, whether by flipping the *Oooh* switch or igniting the *Ugggh* one. The project she finally dreamed up, *Super/Natural,* is an immersive eight-foot high, domed stained-glass installation that's on view through September 14 at the Michener Art Museum in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

The exhibition is a first for the PCfN. Schaechter, its second artist-in-residence (the pandemic lockdown derailed the work of the first), approached Chatterjee after seeing him speak and reading his 2013 book *The Aesthetic Brain: How We Evolved to Desire Beauty and Enjoy Art*. The neurologist struck a chord with the 64-year-old artist, whose stained-glass pieces are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Her late mother, Barbara Schaechter

Photo by Christian Giannelli courtesy of the artist and Claire Oliver Gallery, and Penn Center for Neuroaesthetics

SW'56, had been a scientifically oriented social worker with a particular interest in autism—and the family's home was full of books about the brain. "Ultimately, both artists and neuroscientists are interested in figuring out consciousness," Judith Schaechter says.

The PCfN's artist-in-residence program is funded by a Sachs Program for Arts Innovation Award, established in 2016 by Keith L. Sachs W'67 and Katherine Sachs CW'69 ["Gazetteer," Jan|Feb 2017]. "The idea was to have someone with similar concerns as us but who approaches them from a very different direction," says Chatterjee, whose lab welcomes guest speakers from realms ranging from architecture to tech to business. "It's a lab that functions better thanks to all of these different ideas."

"I was excited to hear—and to participate in—the conversations that they had during their meetings," says Schaechter, who doodled on paper all the while. "One thing that came up a lot was the idea of biophilic design," which attempts to enhance people's connection to nature via the built environment. "There was even a guest speaker who was interested in using mycelium [fungal root systems] to make insulation for buildings."

That particular talk took the artist into familiar territory. Her father, Moselio Schaechter Gr'54, is a retired microbiologist who indulged a special passion for mycology by collecting 17th- and 18th-century prints and manuscripts on mushrooms.

"As a kid, I became interested in these nature drawings and the work of early botanical illustrators like Maria Sibylla Merian and Mark Catesby," she says. "So when I noticed I had doodled all kinds of pictures of flowers and birds, they began presenting a design vocabulary where I could mix and match elements. Birds have beaks and wings, and flowers have stems and petals, and there are infinite combinations. All of these things were in the air—biophilic design, and their research, and my interest in nature, and the flexibility offered by these design elements."

Drawing inspiration from magnificent stained-glass windows in Gothic churches, Schaechter "decided I'd make my own church, despite my preconceived notion that scientists might be hostile to that idea." Yet the PCfN researchers surprised her. "In fact, they were very receptive to the idea of spirituality and wonderment." Just the same, she chose a punny title in homage to her father's scrupulously empirical cast of mind. "Whenever we saw religious people walking to church or synagogue, he'd say, 'We don't believe in the supernatural,'" the artist explains.

Her otherworldly and kaleidoscopic work now on view at the Michener can certainly be classified as "supernatural," especially since the flora and fauna that populate it are entirely made up. "I used no references, from either books or the internet," she says, "only my imagination and memories."

This wonderland of a chapel is organized according to the cross-cultural concept of a three-tiered cosmos. Step through its opening and 10 panels come into view at eye level; this represents Earth, only jammed with fantastical flowers and impossible insects—blossoms flaring into clam lip formations, bee-like bodies sprouting blood-vesseled wings—swirling around and against each other like phantasms encased in some intricate antique glass paperweight. Tilt your head and Heaven appears in the form of 40 triangular panels that line the geodesic dome; it's a domain inhabited by multihued birds that flutter hither and thither against a celestial blue sky. Crouch down and you're in the midst of a doomscape printed on wallpaper; here lies a murky underworld of creepy skeleton heads and unhatched larvae. "It bothers me that biophilia can be sterilized—with no cockroaches, feces, or thunderstorms," Schaechter explains. "I didn't want to make a space that has no bugs or death. This underground is about how all of the profusion of life that fills the space is coming out of the dead stuff."

Schaechter sandblasted, engraved, enameled, and soldered each glass piece by hand, turning to fellow craftspeople for help cutting the panels and assembling the dome. Using a traditional technique called flash glass, she layered paper-thin veneers of deeply saturated colored glass (vivid reds and intense blues) over clear sheets. To achieve a full spectrum of color, she added small amounts of black, yellow, and pink enamel paint to the glass pieces.

Taking cues from greenhouses, planetariums, and 'refresh rooms'—biophilic refuges in public places like hospitals, airports, and conference centers that she learned about in Chatterjee's lab—the artist sought to situate the viewer *inside* the stained glass, not as an outsider merely looking at illustrated panels. "When I first saw *Super/Natural* in Judith's home, she left me alone in there with a pillow and I just laid down and stayed still for a half hour," says Chatterjee. "It's perfect for that kind of immersion. In studying the aesthetics of architecture, we've found three components that elicit positive responses: coherence, fascination, and hominess. She nailed all three."

Chatterjee says a museum setting doesn't lend itself to measuring and testing the responses generated by her chapel, but Schaechter reports that she's received "much more feedback than I've ever had for any other piece." After its stay at the Michener, the dome will be exhibited at the Museum of Craft and Design in San Francisco.

"Awe is my favorite emotion," she says, "and I wanted to bequeath that to my viewers—I think it's one of the purposes of art. In the lab, we also talked about the 'alternative uses' test to measure creativity, which asks the subject to come up with as many uses as they can for an ordinary object. So I created 100 different designs for birds. I wanted to prove that creativity is infinite and boundless." *—JoAnn Greco*

Illustration by Jeff Koegel

Writers in the Kitchen

Is the pen mightier than the paring knife?

"I'm kind of a food writing truther," Pete Wells C'85 was saying. "I don't think food writing exists."

The longtime *New York Times* restaurant critic, who continues to write about food culture after stepping down from that post in 2024, was taking part in a Kelly Writers House Alumni Weekend event titled "Food Writing: A Panel Discussion"—and drawing nods of agreement from a varied collection of copanelists.

"Food is just a subject about which we write," he went on, "and the forms that we bring to food are forms that you find in any other subject. We can approach food through memoir, through news reporting, through feature writing, profile writing, through criticism. All of which are used in a wide, wide range of subjects. The only form of writing that's unique to food is probably recipe writing—and according to US copyright law, that's not writing. You can't copyright a recipe, because the government doesn't consider it writing; it's just a series of steps and instructions. So I think cordoning off writing about food into its own little universe is kind of terrible for everybody. Because if food writers only read other food writers, then we all get worse and worse and worse, and we'll all start using each other's words, and it's the end."

Although everyone else at the table had at least one cookbook to their name, it was a group with more differences than similarities. Bilingual novelist Sanaë Lemoine C'11 released her 2021 debut, *The Margot Affair,* in both English and French versions. Louisa Shafia C'92 operates the online Persian marketplace FeastByLouisa.com in addition to catering and writing ["Quakers in the Kitchen," Mar|Apr 2010]. Betsy Andrews C'85, a widely published travel and food writer who was an executive editor at *Saveur*, considers herself first and foremost a poet. And Lolis Eric Elie W'85, who cofounded the Southern Foodways Alliance, went from being a metro columnist for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* to jobs as a writer and story editor on HBO's *Treme* and other TV shows. (Unlike their Class of 1985 compatriot Wells, Andrews and Elie also managed to earn diplomas from their alma mater. The school/class designations used by the *Gazette* indicate alumni affiliation and not necessarily graduation status.)

Their wide-ranging discussion (viewable at tinyurl.com/PennKelly) found one of its liveliest exchanges in response to a deceptively simple question from moderator Hannah Filreis Albertine. Here it is, edited slightly for clarity and concision.

Albertine: Are you the same person when you're cooking as when you're writing?

Shafia: My gosh, not at all. So I write about food, but I still cater and I do pop-ups and private cheffing from time to time. When I'm cooking, it's very sensory. I'm very, very present. I'll usually put on my favorite podcast, and I'll just, like, get into the zone. And I love that. When I'm writing, that is a whole other thing.

Elie: I have a friend we lost recently, named Pableaux Johnson, who became famous for hosting these Monday night red bean parties, where he'd invite whoever happened to be around, and you'd get a very eclectic table. The good thing about red beans and rice is that it's a classic dump-and-stir. You can do it relatively easily, and he got to the point where he could do it at the last minute, in a way. I invited him to my house once when he was visiting LA—and I made

gumbo and tried to do a sort of elaborate appetizer that was moderately successful. And I began to realize that my conception of dinner parties was often a way to showcase all the fancy stuff I've written about, and all the fancy stuff I'm attempting to do. And in the back of my head is a sort of food critic saying, 'Why are you doing it like *that*?' And of course, that means that sometimes there'll be fails—as opposed to the Pableaux method of doing something that allows you to be more fully engaged with your guests and less fully engaged with the food. So in that sense, I guess when I'm cooking, I'm often the food writer in the kitchen—which is not necessarily a good thing.

Andrews: So, I cook to procrastinate from writing.

[Audience laughter.]

Wells: 100 percent valid. Recommended!

[More laughter.]

Lemoine: Yeah, I also do that. But it's interesting: I thought that my answer to this question would be, 'No, they're so different, the way that I write and I cook.' But actually they really are quite similar. And in both cases, I need to be completely alone. They're very solitary endeavors. I don't like to cook with other people. If I'm throwing a dinner party, I want almost everything to be done before anyone shows up. Even if I'm just cooking for one other person. It's my time. It's usually very intuitive—which is how I write. Like, I don't have an outline, I don't even have any kind of sense of what the next sentence is. And unless I'm following a recipe—it's very different if I'm recipe testing—but if I'm just cooking for myself or friends, it's a much more intuitive, ingredient-by-ingredient tasting experience, and completely alone. It's the same with writing. I have to do that alone. I don't share drafts early on. I share drafts very, very late in the process, and maybe just with a couple of readers.

Wells: They're obviously really, really different mental activities. Like, I think writing is right brain and cooking is left brain? I think if I'd ever been able to remember which was which, they might have let me graduate. But cooking, you are really in your body as you're doing it. You're tasting, and even if you're not tasting, you're smelling, and you're getting all this information from the sound of, like, what the oil sounds like in the pan—all this stuff that you don't really need to process through the front of your brain. And you shouldn't be processing through the front of your brain. As you get experienced at cooking, you just learn to react. And writing is, for me at least, never instinctual. You're just in this prison of words, trying to get out.

Lemoine: It's funny, because when you were just describing how you cook, I was like, 'Oh, that's how I write!' Like, I smell, I hear, I see—it's literally just like, passing in front of me and I'm feeling it.

Wells: Send me the steps, the instructions for how you do that.

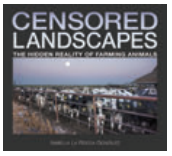
[Laughter.]

Andrews: I would say that with recipe testing and recipe development, you are using a lot of your frontal cortex, right? And I'm terrible! I'll be like, 'Oh, I forgot to put the timer on. I have no idea how long that took!' Then I have to remake it. So I'm repeatedly reminded of how left-brained you have to be actually—or right-brained, whichever is the really rational part—when you are creating recipes for publication.

Wells: I just wrote about Marcella Hazan a couple weeks ago. There's this new documentary about her, which is great. And one of the things I learned from this movie is that her son says, 'Well, you know, my mom never measured anything.' So this woman who wrote like, six cookbooks that are bibles of Italian cooking, never measured a thing. And so the son says, 'What would happen is, my dad would stand there with a bowl, and as she threw something into the pan, he would catch it, measure it, write it down, and then throw it into the pan.' So, they're just different ways of thinking—or not thinking. *—TP*

Briefly Noted

GINGKO SEASON
by Naomi Elegant C'19 (W.W. Norton & Company, 2025, $19.99.) Penelope Lin spends her days cataloging the Penn Museum's collection of Qing Dynasty bound-foot shoes. A chance meeting with Hoang, who confesses to releasing mice from the cancer research lab where he works, causes her carefully constructed life to unravel in a debut novel that limns the anxiety of contemporary courtship and the thrill of blossoming love.



CENSORED LANDSCAPES: The Hidden Reality of Farming Animals
by Isabella La Rocca González C'84 (Lantern Publishing & Media, 2024, $39.95) Through evocative photographs, poetry, personal narrative, and factual research, González unveils the hidden lives of farmed animals—drawing connections between animal agriculture, environmental devastation, human health, and workers' rights.

CLASH OF DYNASTIES
directed by Ben Hatta C'98 (multiple streaming platforms, 2024, $10.99.) This four-part docuseries from the team behind acclaimed wrestling documentaries *Team Foxcatcher* ["Grappling With Tragedy," Jul|Aug 2016] and *Angle* examines the fierce rivalry between two Ohio high school wrestling powerhouses in the 1990s: the St. Edward Eagles and the Walsh Jesuit Warriors.

POISONING THE WELL: How Forever Chemicals Contaminated America
by Sharon Udasin C'07 and Rachel Frazin (Island Press, 2025, $32.00.) Two climate reporters trace an ugly history of corporate greed, military impunity, and community devastation, based on original reporting in four regions highly contaminated with PFAS—a set of toxic chemicals most people have never heard of.

Visit thepenngazette.com for more *Briefly Noted*.

Marquis de Lafayette, by Thomas Sully (1824).

Philadelphia in 20 Canvases

Thomas Sully's "group portrait" of a city at the apex of its influence.

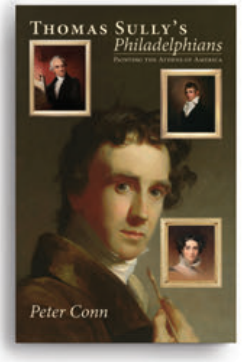
Review by Dennis Drabelle

Imagine yourself in a fictitious art museum devoted to the paintings of Thomas Sully and taking a guided tour of the Philadelphia Portraits Room led by a knowledgeable docent. That is pretty much the experience to be had from reading this delightful book by Peter Conn, the Vartan Gregorian Professor Emeritus of English and a professor of education.

From among the 2,300-plus paintings made by the English-born, Philadelphia-based Sully (1783–1872) during his 70-year career, Conn has chosen 20 portraits of men and women prominent during an era—roughly the first half of the 19th century—when, as per the book's subtitle, Philadelphia was considered the Athens of America. The city's claim to that honorific rested in large part on having the nation's first university (guess which one), one of its first museums (Charles Willson Peale's), and its first learned association (the American Philosophical Association). "No other American city offers the same opportunity," Conn argues: "to study what is in effect an important city's group portrait, painted over several decades, by the same artist."

Sully was a versatile portraitist. The subjects of his work chosen by Conn include a distinguished foreigner, the Marquis de Lafayette; a Jew, Rebecca Gratz; two professional actresses, Fanny Kemble and Charlotte Cushman; two Black men, Daniel Bashiel Warner and Edward James Roye, each of whom served as president of Liberia; and several illustrious white men.

Conn is at his charming best in glossing Sully's portrait of the Marquis de Lafayette.



Thomas Sully's Philadelphians: Painting the Athens of America
By Peter Conn
American Philosophical Society Press, 216 pages, $39.95

Conn is at his charming best in glossing the Lafayette portrait. The marquis's name minus his title was Gilbert du Motier. He was an only child whose parents both died when he was three; nevertheless, he carried on a family tradition by joining the French army. In 1777, at the age of 20, he heeded a suggestion from Benjamin Franklin, at the time an American diplomat posted to France, by traveling to the colonies. There Lafayette joined George Washington's staff as an honorary officer. Conn points out that Franklin had a hunch that "the young, high-born enthusiast would be useful in gaining French support for the Revolution."

Commenting on Sully's Lafayette portrait made during the nobleman's triumphant return to a worshipful United States in 1824, Conn notes that the artist "trimmed quite a few of the [Frenchman's] years and pounds and added some hair." Our docent also quotes from a contemporary *Saturday Evening Post* rave about "the galvanic effect [Lafayette had] on Philadelphians: 'We wrap our bodies in La Fayette coats during the day, and repose between La Fayette blankets at night. … We have La Fayette bread, La Fayette butter, La Fayette beef and La Fayette vegetables. … Even the ladies distinguished their *proper* from *common* kisses under the title of La Fayette *smooches*.'"

Among the thespians getting the Sully treatment was George Frederick Cooke, an Englishman whose 1811 appearance on a Philadelphia stage was such a big deal that fans waited outside the theater all night to be sure of getting seats when the box office opened. (The record is silent as to whether any Cooke smooches were exchanged under cover of darkness that night.) Conn calls Sully's portrait of the star costumed as Richard III "intensely dramatic, psychologically revealing, filled with meaningful detail. … His pose confirms Cooke's decision never to wear the customary artificial hump most actors employed." Instead, the actor relied on his posture to evoke the king's deformity.

The Cooke portrait, Conn notes, "secured [Sully's] reputation"—his national reputation, that is. According to E. Digby Baltzell W'39 Hon'89 in his study *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia*, Sully's "transatlantic reputation was secured when he painted young Queen Victoria's portrait in 1837." Baltzell also provides a roll call of Boston eminences painted by Sully, including John Quincy Adams.

Painting courtesy Independence National Historical Park

Something is missing from Conn's section on the Unitarian minister William Henry Furness. A powerful orator, especially when inveighing against slavery, Furness fathered two brilliant sons: the Shakespeare scholar, Penn provost, and Penn trustee Horace Howard Furness ["One of Those Prodigious Victorian Polymaths," July|Aug 2013]; and Frank Furness, architect of the striking Fisher Fine Arts Library building on the Penn campus. Horace is mentioned only as a friend of Fanny Kembles's, and Frank not at all. Not that Conn neglects the institution at which he taught with distinction. Penn gets a chapter to itself that ends with the rescue from obscurity of John Andrews C1765 G1767, who served as the University's fourth provost and "was regarded as one of the greatest classical scholars in the country and was reputed to be a successful and popular teacher."

If, like me, you knew nothing about the man Conn calls "probably the most significant politician in Philadelphia's history," have a look at Sully's portrait of George Mifflin Dallas, whose graduation from Princeton "with highest honors" in 1810 augured well. Dallas went on to become mayor of Philadelphia, a US senator from Pennsylvania, and vice president of the United States (under Polk) but seems to have accomplished very little with the power he wielded.

He was certainly easy on the eye, though, as were Rebecca Gratz and John Vaughn (an early stalwart of the American Philosophical Society). Insets of their portraits grace the dustjacket cover of *Thomas Sully's Philadelphians*, complementing a much larger reproduction of a Sully self-portrait. Paintbrush in hand, curly brown hair tousled, eyes intent on you, the viewer, the artist might be debating how many of your years and pounds to trim and how much hair to add.

Dennis Drabelle G '66 L '69 is the author, most recently, of *The Power of Scenery: Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origin of National Parks.*

Exhibition

Weissman Lab, mRNA development artifacts.

Trust Boosters

A special exhibition at the Mütter Museum highlights the roles Penn played in developing COVID-19 vaccines and trying to foster confidence in them.

By Julia M. Klein

The five-year anniversary of the COVID-19 public health emergency has sparked a stream of reflections on the pandemic's impacts and lessons. One such contribution, at the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, is *Trusted Messengers: Community, Confidence, and COVID-19*. The show, on view through February 2, 2026, highlights the roles Penn played in both developing mRNA vaccines and boosting vaccine acceptance.

Adapted from an exhibition at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Museum in Atlanta, this modest, local version discusses an array of community health initiatives—including the University's varied collaborations in West Philadelphia—designed to increase vaccine uptake. A timeline on the gallery floor pinpoints (mostly grim) pandemic milestones. The exhibition also poses more general questions about the relationship between trust and public health, while allowing visitors to draw conclusions of their own.

"We're hoping that people take away the very basic point that in order to trust the message, you have to trust a messenger, and that will require different tactics for different types of people," says Erin Mcleary G'97 Gr'01, the Mütter Museum's senior director of collections and research and a member of the four-person curatorial team.

Penn's greatest contribution was the pathbreaking work on mRNA vaccine technology by Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman, joint winners of the 2023 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine ["Nobel Cause," Nov|Dec 2023]. Weissman is the Roberts Family Professor in

Photo by Constance Mensh courtesy Mütter Museum of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia

Nurse in a Field by Kyle Cassidy.

Vaccine Research and director of the Penn Institute for RNA Innovation at Penn Medicine. Karikó, formerly senior vice president at BioNTech, is an adjunct professor of neurosurgery.

Their mRNA research made possible both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, which are credited with saving millions of lives. The exhibition displays pipettes and test tubes from their laboratory, as well as first-batch vials of those two vaccines. A 2021 *Time* magazine issue on display dubbed them "The Miracle Workers."

Penn also was active in spreading vaccine awareness and acceptance. *Trusted Messengers* describes several of those efforts without assessing their results.

Penn Medicine's Department of Family Medicine and Community Health led an umbrella group, VaxUpPhillyFamilies, that trained West Philadelphia parents and caregivers as vaccine ambassadors. Philly Teen Vaxx was an initiative of the School District of Philadelphia, Ala Stanford's Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium, and the Policy Lab of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Penn's pediatric partner. The group's teen ambassadors organized vaccination clinics and created social media content, promoting vaccination—and building community—with basketball, music, and free food.

Another Perelman School of Medicine community initiative was Safe Haircuts As We Reopen Philadelphia, or SHARP, which enlisted local salon and barbershop owners and faith leaders—quintessential trusted messengers—to share why they chose to get vaccinated.

One attention-grabbing exhibit not involving Penn is an animated music video by Hip Hop Public Health, a nonprofit cofounded by neurologist Olajide Williams and hip hop artist Doug E. Fresh. Its catchy verses, written by Baltimore teens for their peers, sought to rebut anti-vax myths and tout the virtues of vaccination.

Also arresting are grainy, solitary portraits of Philadelphia nurses by photographer Kyle Cassidy. Cassidy printed them using the inner fabric of discarded surgical masks and paired them with oral histories for a separate book project. One excerpt describes a nurse's frustrations when treating an unvaccinated patient. "You're prolonging the problem that is pushing everyone to the edge and yet I have to save your life," she complained in February 2022.

The exhibition reminds us that COVID-19 unleashed a flood of information, not all of it reliable. It includes a large photograph of Anthony Fauci, then-director of the NIH's Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and an important public health spokesman—hero to some and villain to others. Other images convey early-pandemic messages urging people to stay home and socially distance (a phrase that hasn't worn well with time).

In terms of inspiring trust, family and friends consistently rank high, the exhibition says. (Whether that trust is warranted is another story; no word here on what happens if one's intimates purvey conspiracy theories.) In other instances, demographic divides emerge: Older people are more likely to trust politicians than are younger ones; urbanites place more stock in doctors, scientists, and teachers than do rural Americans.

Trusted Messengers is deliberately limited in its focus. It doesn't attempt to analyze what the experts got wrong as both the virus and scientific understandings mutated. Nor does it discuss how evolving messages—on masks, vaccination, and more—themselves undermined trust. It offers just fragmentary takes on a complicated subject and is best viewed as part of a panoply of anniversary offerings.

To cite just one other example: Stephen Macedo and Frances Lee's *In Covid's Wake: How Our Politics Failed Us* (Princeton University Press, 2025) takes a far more critical look at the underpinnings and effects of pandemic public health measures. The two Princeton political scientists argue that all our lockdowns, social distancing efforts, school closures, and possibly even masking did little or nothing to affect COVID mortality. What's more, they say, the imposition of these measures caused serious harms, to the economy, education, social and political cohesion, individual physical and emotional well-being, and democracy itself. In accepting (insufficiently grounded) expert advice, the book suggests that the public was, if anything, too trusting.

Photo courtesy Kyle Cassidy and Mütter Museum of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia

The Master of Middle Grade

How a former Hollywood screenwriter became a prolific author of books for tweens.

Illustration by Jonathan Bartlett

Stuart Gibbs C'91 was listening to a podcast, as he often does, when he first heard about the animal urine industry.

Apparently, it's big business. Not just fox pee to keep rabbits out of gardens, but deer urine for hunters, and even mountain lion stuff to scare off coyotes. There are big-box brands, artisanal blends, and specialized farms devoted to collecting it all.

And just like that, Gibbs had finally cracked the opening sequence for his new novel, *All Ears*, which came out in May.

When you write books for middle-grade readers—kids roughly 8 to 12 years old—the discovery of something as offbeat and delightfully gross as bottled animal urine is pure gold. "I was like, yeah, this is exactly what I need," Gibbs recalls. Now his newest book starts off with a deer urine heist, a car chase, and a culprit soaked in the pee he stole.

That gut instinct for reeling in young readers has helped Gibbs publish 42 books in the last 15 years, several of them *New York Times* bestsellers. His *Spy School* series has been translated into a dozen languages, and all together his books have sold nearly 10 million copies—with more titles still underway at Simon & Schuster.

Whenever James Ponti, a fellow bestselling middle-grade author, goes on school visits and asks kids which books they love most (aside from his), "the only name that is mentioned at every stop is Stuart's," he says. "And he's usually the first one mentioned."

"He has a really strong sense of what appeals to kids," adds Ponti, who is also one of Gibbs's close friends. "That's the key to this job."

While deer urine and hippos flinging feces make appearances, there's more to a Stuart Gibbs book than excreta. Mystery and adventure abound and, underlying it all, "the deeper element is wisdom," says Adele Griffin C'93, another fellow middle-grade writer and Gibbs's pal.

Belly Up, his 2010 debut about a murdered zoo mascot, is stuffed with animal trivia while also dipping into the ethics around animals in captivity and, in its sequels, poaching and international relations. His most popular series, *Spy School,* introduces readers to the CIA and issues like surveillance and privacy.

"I don't really write down to my readers," Gibbs says. "There are a few topics that I have to avoid because of the age of my readers—basically sex and gratuitous violence—but I don't want to write about those anyhow. Almost anything else they can handle."

That extends to the language itself. "People always say that I put big words in. I just write however I would write it. Hopefully they'll look it up if they don't know it," he says, adding that he's especially fond of *vertiginous* and *malodorous*.

Gibbs has been captivated by stories and syntax for as long as he can remember. From the time he could read books, he was trying to write one of his own. A kind elementary school librarian added one of his creations to the school shelves. (It was called *The Day the Dinosaurs Came Back*, and Gibbs likes to joke that he scooped *Jurassic Park* author Michael Crichton.)

"I figured I'd maybe write one book and then go back to screenwriting. I did not ever think that 17 years later, I'd have so many books out."

By the time he arrived at Penn, he'd already spent years working on novels and trying to get them published. His then-agent had some advice: don't use college to take writing classes, since you already know how to do that; use it to study everything else.

So he took film classes in Annenberg and became a communication major and psychology minor. He wrote a play for Quadramics Theatre Comedy and performed improv comedy in Without a Net. A field biology class and grant from University Scholars took him to the Philadelphia Zoo, where he investigated capybaras. "I started to realize it was this amazing setting for a story," he says. The experience ultimately led to *Belly Up*, now his longest-running series, which is set inside a fictional zoo called FunJungle.

With his Penn graduation looming and rejections piling up for his latest mystery novel, "I figured the book thing hadn't really worked out for me, so maybe I would try Hollywood," he says. Film producer Mike Karz C'89 W'89 helped him land a job writing kickboxing movies for Imperial Entertainment. (Synopsis for the 1993 film *Showdown*, written by Gibbs and starring Tae Bo guru Billy Blanks: an ex-policeman/school janitor shows a new student how to defend himself from a martial arts bully.)

He soldiered on in Hollywood, writing a slapstick kids' movie (*See Spot Run*) and a raunchy body-swap comedy (*Repli-Kate*). But when the Writers Guild of America went on strike in late 2007, Gibbs—then on the cusp of turning 40—decided to give novels another shot. "I figured I'd maybe write one book and then go back to screenwriting," he says. "I did not ever think that 17 years later, I'd have so many books out."

But here he is, with book number 42, *Space Case: The Graphic Novel*, due out in August and number 43, *Spy School Blackout*, set for October. "I think I've figured out a bit of a system over the years for how to write books faster," he says. Some of it involves a new intern from Penn's Kelly Writers House every summer, who researches things like animal urine sales or panda poop quantities. (His first KWH intern suggested *Belly Up*'s title.)

He's also big on outlining and brainstorming, often tinkering with a plot for well over a year before he ever starts writing.

At this point, Gibbs is mostly adding to the universes he's already created. The FunJungle series is up to nine books; *Spy School*'s 13th installment comes out soon. Other series include *Once Upon a Tim*—medieval adventures for slightly younger readers—and *Moon Base Alpha*, which is set on a lunar colony.

"He's like a middle-grade Shonda Rhimes," Ponti says. "He's got all these series going. They all stand alone, but they all work together."

Gibbs's background in screenwriting is "the secret sauce" that makes his books so beloved, Ponti adds. "Knowing how the language of visual plays, the pace of a movie, the structure of a movie—it sucks kids in and propels them through."

With 15 years of books behind him, Gibbs has been confronting a new plot twist: some of his earliest fans have grown up. Three current CIA agents have told him that they went into it because of his *Spy School* books. "I hear from a lot of very young readers how much they enjoyed the books," he says, "but I'm starting to hear from people that my books made them who they are."

That's the most rewarding part for him—and why he does this in the first place. The heroes in his books don't have magical powers or super strength. They're just smart kids who know a lot and are good at figuring things out. Gibbs wants his young readers to recognize "the value of knowledge and school and intelligence," he says.

And fun. When you write for middle-grade audiences, you need to have some kid-at-heart spirit. Griffin remembers when she first moved to Gibbs's neighborhood and they went to a local fair. Her younger son was nervous about going on rides alone, so Gibbs—a father of two himself—hopped on with him and they bumped their way down a giant bouncy slide together.

An avid traveler who's mainly in it for the wildlife, Gibbs has gone on seven safaris in Africa. His visit to Botswana inspired last year's *Spy School Goes Wild* and his new FunJungle book *All Ears*. Observing gorillas in Rwanda led to another yet-to-be-announced book, and a trip to Indonesia brought him up close to orangutans and Komodo dragons (and supplied an idea for *Spy School Blackout*).

"He is never tired," Griffin says of Gibbs. "He's just always out in the world. It's great to be around that kind of energy."

It's no surprise to hear that Gibbs doesn't plan to stop writing anytime soon. "I still have lots of ideas that I want to get out there," he says. "One of the great joys of this job is that there is no retirement date built in. I came to this on the late side, but I'm going to stay as long as they'll let me."

—Molly Petrilla C'06

Beth Kaplan GrEd'21

Longing to Belong

A working mom's new book, *Braving the Workplace*, dives into how to belong—but not necessarily "fit in"—at work.

When Beth Kaplan GrEd'21 found out that her three-month-old baby boy had lung cancer in January 2008, she told only one person at her tech job. Each Friday for a year, she and her husband drove from West Orange, New Jersey, to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for chemotherapy, but she concealed the diagnosis from almost everyone.

"I didn't want to have sad eyes looking at me, and then it came to a point where there was never a good time to talk," Kaplan says. "I think it was a point of pride. … I was a top performer."

But should employees tell their coworkers and bosses when they're struggling? More broadly, how much personal information should someone share at work? And how much should employers be responsible for their employees' well-being?

Kaplan has been studying corporate interactions and dynamics since winding her way through the Penn Chief Learning Officer doctoral program in the Graduate School of Education.

In her new book, *Braving the Workplace: Belonging at the Breaking Point* (Mango Media, 2025), she wrestles with the idea that employees often feel the need to belong at work but aren't sure how to go about it.

Using examples from people's workplace experiences, along with some of her own, she hopes to help employees find more ways to connect at work, and help their bosses create an environment of belonging.

Illustration by Rich Lillash

"A sense of belonging can help individuals feel more confident, supported, and motivated in pursuing their goals, which can lead to greater success," Kaplan writes. "A sense of belonging can create a supportive and motivating environment that fosters personal and professional growth."

Kaplan's journey to studying workplace dynamics started in childhood. Born in Florida in 1977, she grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. Early on, she was drafted to help take care of her father, who had multiple sclerosis, and then her younger sister, while her mom served as the breadwinner. Nevertheless, she says, she felt that her family considered her "unlovable" and the "black sheep."

"Developing friendships in childhood was hard but doable as long as they didn't know what was happening at home," she writes. "It was hard to be my true self." Kaplan notes that she was so fearful that she "spent all of third grade silent in school." But that changed when her fourth-grade teacher became "the first person in my entire life to encourage me to use my voice," she says. "She cared about what I had to say."

Kaplan attended college at the University of Pittsburgh, where she met her future husband during the first month of freshman year. But she still struggled to find a sense of belonging. After joining a sorority, she constantly felt the urge to "bring people together," thinking it might help her connect, she says. "I didn't necessarily have language to give to it. I just knew I felt bad with other people, like they had more in common" with each other than with her. And if a sense of belonging didn't come easily, maybe she just needed to try harder. "I felt a lot of times in my life, the more I cared about people, the more I sacrificed, the more I'd fit in, and the more they would love me."

"This generation is holding the workplace accountable."

But it didn't work. "Fitting in" meant losing herself.

As she approached college graduation, her parents pressured her to be a lawyer, but she decided against it. She calls this her first "true act of rebellion," and it led to her mom being disappointed in her, she says.

Kaplan worked in sales for a series of financial and technical companies in New York City, San Francisco, and London. She and her husband settled in New Jersey, where they started a family. It was early 2008 when she picked up her infant son at daycare and was told he had briefly stopped breathing. She noticed that his coloring and breathing still seemed abnormal.

She took him to the emergency room. X-rays showed an "unusual growth" in his chest. Emergency surgery followed. "They biopsied him and came back that it was cancer," she says. "We had no family history. There was no rhyme or reason to it. … They told us, 'He'll be fine, but he'll never run a mile.'"

During that year of weekly chemo treatments, Kaplan spent a lot of time keeping her son safe at home—and looking back on her life. "I really wasn't having a lot of relationships where I felt like I fit in and gained confidence as a person, where I didn't need to sacrifice myself," she says. "I felt most [like] myself when I was *with* myself."

On one visit to CHOP, her son's alarming test results necessitated an overnight stay. Kaplan hadn't packed clothes, so she roamed Penn's campus to buy gear. Years later, that came to mind when she saw an ad pop up on her computer for Penn's Chief Learning Officer doctoral program.

She enrolled, and says she surprised her classmates with insights she had gained from her 20 years' work experience. When she talked about employees feeling out of place or like their backs were against the wall, "someone said, 'Is that your dissertation topic?'" she recalls.

One specific experience at work led her to return to the topic over and over. During her son's cancer treatment, she switched bosses. At one point, she told her new boss that she was depressed and "instantly regretted it," she writes. "I felt like a sellout and guess what? It was for nothing. Not one thing changed. I don't remember him reacting other than to tell me he had a meeting to go to."

It was while working on her dissertation, "A Social Constructivist Approach to Understanding Belonging in the Workplace," and interviewing people about belonging that she finally felt like she belonged herself. "I feel so much pride [talking about it]," she says. "It doesn't require me to be anyone else. It requires me to be myself."

In 2022, a year after she published her dissertation, she had a small ceremony to burn her Penn sweatshirt—signifying that she'd graduated from the program and that her son had no signs of cancer. (Now a rising high school senior, he has defied the odds by participating in track and field along with two other sports.) The next year, she began writing the book.

"I was inspired by the topic, by my dissertation process at Penn, from talking to people about how they construct their sense of belonging," she says, "and the desire to help people feel less alone."

In her book, she gives examples of language that bosses can use to improve employees' sense of belonging. "After I noticed my first participant [in dissertation interviews] struggling with her words, I stopped her and said, 'This is a judgment-free zone, and we are in this together,'" she writes, noting that the latter phrase caused the participant's body language to improve.

Kaplan also explores "bravery in the workplace"—how employees can share more of

Photo courtesy Beth Kaplan

themselves with coworkers, who might appreciate their vulnerability. "Human connection triggers the release of various neurochemicals in our brain, such as oxytocin, dopamine, and serotonin," she writes. "These chemicals play crucial roles in bonding, social reward, and feelings of happiness and well-being."

But she warns that people shouldn't necessarily try to "fit in"—which can mean hiding your true self. Some employees are "ducking," she says—appearing calm on the surface but struggling underneath.

Kaplan has seen the workplace evolve, with younger generations demanding a better work-life balance. "This generation is holding the workplace accountable," she says. "A sense of belonging used to come from religious institutions, community, family. We used to spend less hours at the workplace. Some employers make the workplace the main destination for belonging. If you're going to do that, you better be prepared to deal with employees' mental health."

Now that the book is out, Kaplan is looking forward to giving talks at book clubs, on podcasts, and in workplaces—particularly about "being yourself in a world that tells you every day to be someone different."

"Organizations have a unique opportunity in front of them now," she says. "They can create an environment that encourages individuals to be authentic, take risks, and express their ideas openly."

—Caren Lissner C'93

Hear the Future

Designing headphones that can track your focus level—and look cool too.

Jonathan Levine C'84's posh, retro-modern Master & Dynamic headphones keep popping up in high-visibility settings—making a statement on fashion runways and in commercials, films, and TV shows. Most recently, M&D's wireless MW75 and MH40 models adorned the pampered heads of the Ratliff kids (pictured top) on multiple episodes of HBO's hit drama *The White Lotus*.

"Some brands hire people and pay big sums to place products in TV shows and movies," Levine says. "But production managers, prop people, and art directors reach out to us to ask, *Can you send us headphones?* Which we're happy to do, even when we don't know if or how they'll be used." When the headphones show up in *The White Lotus*—and in *The Equalizer*, *The Penguin*, or a Cadillac commercial—"it's a happy surprise," he continues. "Art directors like using our headphones because they're so distinctive looking, a blend of both old and new styling cues, crafted from anodized aluminum and leather rather than plastic, with lots of special finishing details. As such, they also suggest something is different—special—about the character who's wearing them."

Also pleasing to the M&D cofounder and CEO are his newest wireless noise-reduction headphones, the MW75 Neuro. Codeveloped with neuroscientists at the software company Neurable, the headphones incorporate EEG sensors (discreetly built into the ear cups) and AI software to monitor brainwave activity and provide insights into the user's concentration and productivity. A companion app (on a smartphone or tablet) graphs your focus by the minute, using the sensors to detect distraction when you, say, look away from your book or computer screen. Users wary of burnout can also set the headphones to audibly prompt a work break after a long period of concentrated activity. (This easily distracted writer can testify that the MW75 Neuro can indeed guilt trip you to stay on the straight and narrow amid rampant multimedia bombardment and multitasking.) The headphones also offer a noise-cancelling feature to dull the sonic distractions of the outside world when you're aiming for quiet time rather than tunes.

Neurable reached out to collaborate with Master & Dynamic "because they saw us as a breed apart, willing to participate in what's currently a niche product category but hopefully one that will go mainstream," Levine says. It's an expensive product at $699 a pop (about $300 more than their other wireless headphones), but "we'd like to have a smaller, more affordable headphone model for kids," he adds. "As a parent, I know how significant an issue just staying focused is with young people today. And more features are on the way via software updates."

At a recent electronics trade show, Neurable's vice president of marketing and communications, Jessica Randazza-Pade, praised Levine as "a

(From top) Photo courtesy HBO; photo courtesy Jonathan Levine

great partner" and "a meticulous guy, hands-on with the project from day one. He's been concerned with every aspect of its development, wanting to make sure that it offers the best possible outcome for the consumer."

A serial entrepreneur with an eye for aesthetics and a taste for the finer things, Levine had early ambitions to pursue an architectural career, then as a Penn undergrad whetted his appetite for the restaurant business while working part-time at the old Sansom Street eatery La Terrasse. "But I came to realize that the restaurant business is a lonely, solitary profession," he says. So Levine shifted his sights after Penn, earned an MBA at the University of Chicago, toiled as a commodities trader on Wall Street for a spell, and then jumped into the gadget game—first with a small New York-based electronics shop "that sold products to Costco, Walmart, and Target" and then with his own company that struck gold with automotive accessories and "one of the first LED light fixtures."

He credits his elder son Robert Levine C'17 with nudging him into the headphone business. During a visit to a museum in Washington, DC, they "spotted these funky looking, metal and leather-banded World War II-radio operator headphones made by Western Electric. Robert was getting into DJing—which he'd then do on weekends while at Penn—and goaded me to come up with an equally tactile but more polished set of headphones that he could wear on the job, that would set him apart from the Beats-and-Bose-wearing DJ crowd. In the fall of 2014, a year after Robert matriculated at the university, we released our first corded models."

With his cofounder and partner Vicki Panzier Gross W'87 and other seasoned hands helping in product development, Master & Dynamic was off to the races. Audio reviewers were impressed out of the gate and a "different kind of following, people who appreciate and collect fine objects, cameras, watches, luggage and artwork," were lured by the industrial chic styling and high-end performance of M&D products.

Master & Dynamic has also produced an array of limited-edition cobranded products—including wireless earbuds for Louis Vuitton and Tumi and a curious concrete-composite speaker (MA770) designed by noted architect David Adjaye.

One of the most unique collaborations they've come up with so far is the Chanel-designed Premiere Sound Watch, a wearable that combines a necklace, time piece, and interlinked M&D wired headphones. This runway hit sold out "instantly" last year, despite a 14,700 Euro price tag.

"Stay tuned," Levine says. "We've got more cool projects in the works."

—Jonathan Takiff C'68

"Nostalgia inspired kudos for my alma mater."

—Harvey Kipper C'76

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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.

1947

Margaret Bishop Schock Ed'47 OT'48 celebrates her 100th birthday in July. Her daughter Cathie Schock Rappoport writes, "After graduation, she went on to have a career as an occupational therapist for school districts and private patients. She currently resides in Ocean City, New Jersey, where she retired to in 1991. She has spent part of every summer in Ocean City her entire life, and she moved into an assisted living facility only five years ago after living on her own. She is still very sharp (reads, plays bridge several times a week, and was on the board at her property). I believe the last reunion she attended was in 2010, and she was a sorority sister in Kappa Alpha Theta."

1951

Bob McKersie EE'51 writes, "I see **Harvey Cox C'51** quite regularly. He is retired from his position at Harvard Divinity School, and I am also retired, in my case from the MIT Sloan School of Management. Looking forward to our 75th Reunion next year. Cheers!"

1957

Hon. Albert M. Rosenblatt C'57 has been designated the first historian of the New York State Unified Court System. From the press release: "In this position, Judge Rosenblatt is tasked with encouraging and coordinating the preservation and cataloging of records of historical value located within the offices of the county clerks; encouraging research about the New York Courts to increase knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of its unique history; and advising the court system's leadership with regard to preserving matters of historical significance to the New York Courts."

1964

Stuart Resor C'64 writes, "In the summer of 1963, I spent a significant time going over to the Jersey Shore on weekends and bodysurfing in Atlantic City with my friend Anthony. In the evenings, the headline band on the boardwalk was the Isley Brothers and their big hit was "Twist and Shout." We got to know them somewhat as their very excellent organist was also out on the beach most weekdays. He was quick to visit and chat. He also played the organ at the local church. At that same time, the Beatles were not too well known here in the States, but that was all about to change. They recorded the Isley Brothers' song "Twist and Shout" and had a big hit with that. ... Did the Isley Brothers get any royalties? Later I would extend my bodysurfing ambitions to board surfing in Puerto Rico. And eventually to California, where I spent 50 years!"

Dr. Ed Rossomando D'64 writes, "Until recently, I was unaware of the oral history project at the Leon Levy Dental Medicine Library at Penn Dental Medicine. That all changed when I was contacted by Laurel Graham, head of the Dental Library. On a Zoom call she explained the oral history project and to my surprise invited me to participate. What followed was a series of Zoom calls with Laurel and her colleague Rachel Canter that resulted in my oral history, which can be found at guides.library.upenn.edu/edward-rossomando." For additional information about the oral history project please use the contact button on the webpage.

1966

David J. Weiss C'66, professor emeritus of psychology at California State University, Los Angeles, has published a book about bridge, the game he first encountered in Houston Hall. "*The Joy of Marital Swiss Teams* is aimed at advanced players who appreciate the beauty of the game almost as much as they appreciate winning," he writes. A Swiss match consists of seven challenging problems posed within a team game setting. The reader sees only one hand when asked to bid or lead, and only two hands when declaring or defending. After choosing what to do, the reader then sees the full deal and David's account of how the available information could have led to the correct conclusion. David says his mantra is "There's always a clue." The result of the reader's decision is then compared to what happened at the other table, where fictional teammates were playing. He writes, "Swiss match problems do not feature complex endings; the issue is usually resolved within the first few tricks. Choosing the right game plan is crucial." The book is available exclusively on Amazon. More information can be found at davidjweiss.com/BuyJOMST.htm.

1967

Martin Redish C'67 has been honored by the Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, where he has taught for the last 52 years, by the naming of a classroom after him ("Redish Hall") and the unveiling of a portrait that now hangs in that room. The portrait was unveiled at a ceremony at which two Northwestern University presidents as well as members of the fed-

eral judiciary, leading scholars, and members of the bar spoke. He is now at work on his 20th book, to be entitled *Federal Jurisdiction and Constitutional Democracy*. He says he has no plans to retire.

1968

Joe Cohen W'68 WG'70, president of the Switch Sports Group, and chairman and CEO of West Ridge Associates, has been inducted into the 2025 Cable Hall of Fame by the Syndeo Institute at the Cable Center. The honorees were "selected for their trailblazing leadership and influence in the connectivity, content, and entertainment industry." He was previously inducted into the Sports Broadcasting Hall of Fame for starting several TV networks ["Suiting Up," Jan|Feb 2017].

Bobbi Penneys Susselman Laufer CW'68 continues to sell travel all over the world and escorts tiny groups to remote areas two to three times per year. She writes, "October 2025 will be Ghana, Togo, Benin, and São Tomé and Principe." She can be contacted at bobbilaufer@yahoo.com.

1971

Gregory Djanikian C'71 is author of a new book of poetry, *Nostalgia for the Future*, written over several decades, from 1984 to 2023. According to the press materials, the subjects include "romantic love and its difficulties, the horrors of the Armenian genocide of 1915, the émigré experience and the joys and struggles of acculturation, the allure of landscapes and vast distances, the polarity of our material life on earth, and our longing for what is ethereal and elusive."

1972

Rob Elias C'72 has published a new book, *Dangerous Danny Gardella: Baseball's Neglected Trailblazer for Today's Millionaire Athletes,* about a little-known yet remarkable ballplayer who stood up to Major League Baseball and laid the foundation for free agency. Rob is a professor of politics and chair of legal studies at the University of San Francisco.

1973

Seth Bergmann GEE'73 writes, "On April 27, I competed in the Badgers Riverwinds Triathlon, in West Deptford, New Jersey, finishing second in the male over-75 age group."

Dr. Hazel Ann Lee CW'73, a retired veterinarian, educator, author, poet, and librettist, has been inducted into the South Hills High School Hall of Fame in Pittsburgh. At the induction ceremony, soprano opera singer Candace Burgess performed "The Wake," an art song composed by Hazel's sister, **Cynthia Cozette Lee G'77**, and written by Hazel. In 2024, "The Wake" was performed on a four-city tour of France by the Africa Lyric's Opera, a global initiative that promotes the talents of African, Afrodescendant, and diaspora opera artists. The song's voice and orchestra version was selected in 2023 to be a required song for the Africa Lyric's Opera voice competition.

James Schiffer C'73, professor emeritus of English at SUNY New Paltz, is the editor of a new volume in the series *Shakespeare: The Critical Tradition* that uncovers how *Twelfth Night* was received and understood by critics, editors, and general readers.

Robert M. Steeg C'73 ASC'75, managing partner of Steeg Law in New Orleans, is a top-rated lawyer in *Super Lawyers*' 2025 guide for real estate law.

1974

Ann Berman CW'74 G'74 has published a new book, *Louis Graveraet Kaufman: The Fabulous Michigan Gatsby Who Conquered Wall Street, Took Over General Motors, and Built the World's Tallest Building*. Ann is a writer and cultural journalist who has contributed to the *Wall Street Journal, Town & Country, Architectural Digest, Forbes, Martha Stewart Living*, and many other publications.

Dr. Larry P. Bleier D'74, a periodontist and founder of Cutting Edge Technology (CET), shares that he "just received another shaping and finishing patent and filed an important international patent application with the US Patent and Trademark Office's treaty organization." More information can be found at cetllc.com, and a demonstration video can be viewed at youtu.be/n4SKbJAP9WY.

Stephen Hall ChE'74, chief process engineer at Genesis AEC in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, was recently elected a fellow of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, the organization's highest grade of membership. The honor recognizes his distinguished professional achievements and the high esteem of his peers. He and his wife of 43 years live in Haverford, Pennsylvania.

1976

Harvey Kipper C'76 has published a new book, *The Declarations*. He writes, "[The book] has a fictional Penn professor as its protagonist. Nostalgia inspired kudos for my alma mater."

David Seltzer WG'76, a financial advisor serving the transportation industry, is the author of *Transit Tourism: The Iconic Art and Design of 22 Subway Systems Around the World*. This illustrated set of essays reveals how a subway system can reflect its city's character through architecture, art, and design. Featured transit systems include: Beijing, Boston, Brussels, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Glasgow, Istanbul, London, Madrid, Mexico City, Montreal, Moscow, Munich, Naples, New York, Paris, Philadelphia, São Paulo, Stockholm, Tokyo, and Washington.

1977

Bruce Curley C'77 has been the volunteer vice president of the American Civil Defense Association for 17 years. He provides leadership and has written 18 articles for the *Journal of Civil Defense*, including his latest, "Cybersecurity Is Everyone's Business." He is also on the board of directors for the National Museum of Civil Defense. As an additional way to help Americans prepare for natural and manmade disasters, Bruce also writes the *American Tactical Civil Defense Substack* (poetslife.substack.com). He lives in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and can be contacted at

poetslife@protonmail.com. He shares that his sons, "Josh and Eamon, besides being sound and vibration engineers, perform weekends as Billy and the Curley Brothers, playing classic rock, Irish, and country music in West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland." The band is on Instagram @billyandthecurleybrothers.

Elena "Ellie" Marie DiLapi SW'77 GEd'01, former director of the Penn Women's Center, was honored during Women's History Month by the Women for Greater Philadelphia, Stewards of Laurel Hill Mansion. She was among four women who were awarded for their contributions to exemplify the nonprofit's theme of "Moving forward together! Women educating and inspiring generations."

Cynthia Cozette Lee G'77 see **Dr. Hazel Ann Lee CW'73**.

1978

Jeffrey Golkin W'78, an attorney actively practicing in New York and New Jersey for the past 43 years, established his own music production company, Smiling Goddess Productions, in 2021. The company will be rolling out Jeff's third album, a 14-track collection, entitled *Orchestra in the Pit: A Tribute to Broadway*. Jeff shares that the inspiration for his most recent project was his nearly 10 years as a member of the Actors' Equity Association and on stage as a cast member in three Broadway musicals. Between Jeff and his two older brothers, both Penn alumni as well, the three Golkins appeared in a total of seven Broadway shows. Find more information and listen to Jeff's music at smilinggoddessproductions.com.

1980

Julie A. Fairman GNu'80 GrN'92, the Nightingale Professor in Nursing Emerita at Penn, has been elected as a member of the American Philosophical Society.

1984

Isabella La Rocca González C'84 writes, "After 30 years of teaching art and photography at the post-secondary level, I have left academia to devote myself full-time to my art practice. Almost 12 years in the making, my book *Censored Landscapes: The Hidden Reality of Farming Animals* has been published by Lantern Publishing & Media. Photographs, in-depth research, personal narrative, and poetry encourage the reader to confront the intricate web of connections between animal agriculture, animal suffering, environmental devastation, worker exploitation, human health, economic political structures, colonialism, and social justice issues. The book offers insight and inspiration for a way forward. It has been endorsed by Nobel Prize–winning author J. M. Coetzee, artist and author Sue Coe, musician Moby, and many others. It's available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, and various independent bookstores. The book website is censoredlandscapes.com."

Lawrence A. Herman C'84 is directing a limited engagement preview of his new play, *Thank You, Don Ameche*, a comedy set in the writers' room of a national hit radio show in 1938. The play will run for one week, July 7–13, at the Sargent Theater on West 54th Street in Manhattan in preparation for an off-Broadway run. More information is available at thankyoudonameche.com.

Curtis Penn C'84 lives on Long Island with his wife of 33 years and the youngest of their four children. After graduating from Penn, he earned an MBA in marketing and built a career in graphic design. In 1998, he founded Penn Design Group (pdgny.com), a creative studio based in Hauppauge Industrial Park, specializing in package design, retail displays, Amazon content, and videos. Clients include Cuisinart, Walmart, Fisher-Price, Mattel, and Delmonico's Gourmet Foods, among others. He can be reached at curtis@pdgny.com.

1985

Hollis Kurman C'85, a writer and former management consultant, has published her debut poetry collection, *Unlikely Skylight*. Publisher Barrow Street calls them "urbane, emotionally charged poems," and says "there are few sociopolitical or cultural spaces that are not transformed by Kurman's nimble craft and daring empathy." Hollis's children's books, *Counting Kindness: Ten Ways to Welcome Refugee Children* and *Counting in Green: 10 Little Ways to Help Our Big Planet,* are published in 11 countries. In addition to writing, Hollis is chairperson of the Ivy Circle Netherlands and a board member of the Fulbright Commission Netherlands. More information can be found on her website holliskurman.com.

Julia Mayer C'85's newest book, *The AARP Caregiver Answer Book*, cowritten with her husband, Barry Jacobs, was released in July. It is their third self-help book for family caregivers, as well as their third collaboration with AARP. Julia is a longtime clinical psychologist specializing in caring for individuals with relationship issues and caregiving concerns. She and Barry have lived for many years in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia.

1986

Dr. Carla Chieffo V'86 Gr'98 is the recipient of Penn Vet's 2025 Alumni Award of Merit. The award recognizes alumni who "demonstrate outstanding leadership and service to Penn Vet, excellence in the veterinary profession, and community engagement, and who embody the mission and values of Penn Vet." Carla spent 20 years in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors before transitioning to the nonprofit sector as a community veterinarian. Now retired, she is board president of the Spayed Club Veterinary Clinic, which provides affordable veterinary care for companion animals, and a founding member of Fair Farms Gambia, a demonstration and research farm in West Africa that promotes circular food systems, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility.

Jonathan Parks GAr'86 has been named to the American Institute of Architects College of Fellows, an honor recognizing architects who have made "significant contributions to the profession and society," according to the press materials. Jonathan is founder

and principal-in-charge of SOLSTICE Planning and Architecture in Sarasota, Florida.

Barbara Yates Vega C'86 has been invited to serve on the board of directors of the Fuller Center, a childcare facility in Boca Raton, Florida. Barbara is serving as a fractional chief development officer for the Center for Societal Aspiration, a start-up headquartered in Dallas.

1987

Lenore Kantor C'87, a transformational coach, author, mentor, career advisor, and speaker, has published *So, What Do You Do? The Authentic Alchemy Path to Find Who You Are*. Lenore calls the book "an unconventional guidebook and eight-step path for conscious leaders to discover their work in the world, along with the companion *So, What Do You Do? Workbook*." She adds that her "holistic multidisciplinary approach evolved over 30-plus years as a former corporate marketing executive, soulpreneur, and founder of Growth Warrior." Lenore divides her time between Brooklyn, Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, and Paris.

Margo Tucker SW'87 is founder of Tucker Senior Life Care. She writes that her company offers "valuable insights and practical tools to support your loved one and navigate the journey with confidence." More information can be found at her website, margotucker.com.

1989

Dan Gaylin C'89, president and CEO of NORC at the University of Chicago, a nonpartisan research organization, recently published *Fact Forward: The Perils of Bad Information and the Promise of a Data-Savvy Society*. The book guides readers through the "data pipeline," according to the press materials, "describing how data are gathered and analyzed and how to differentiate between trustworthy and untrustworthy data."

Maritza Mosquera GFA'89, a visual artist based in Pittsburgh, exhibited her recent work exploring ideas of body and mind in a show called "This; Ours" at StopWatch Gallery & Studio, May 17–June 25.

1991

Dr. Allison Steigman C'91 shares that she "moved from New York to South Florida in 2019 and finally met Mr. Right." She married Bill Newgent in February at the Eau Palm Beach, and the couple honeymooned in Australia and New Zealand. She "maintains a full-time psychotherapy practice and couldn't be happier."

1993

Elaine Chang C'93, director of partnerships for Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools, was recognized as one of the Top 50 Women Leaders in Maryland for 2025 by Women We Admire.

Jonathan Hoffman C'93, previously interim CEO at Globeleq since July 2024, has been confirmed as the organization's permanent CEO. An independent power company in Africa, Globeleq owns and operates 12 renewable power plants across South Africa, Mozambique, and Kenya, and has a number of landmark projects in its development pipeline. Jonathan joined the company in 2010 and lives in Cape Town, South Africa.

1996

Catherine Barbieri L'96, a partner with the law firm Fox Rothschild and cochair of its Labor and Employment Department, has been elected to the firm's Executive Management Committee. She lives in Philadelphia with her family.

Joshua Deringer C'96 has been elected to the board of the law firm Faegre Drinker. Josh is based in Philadelphia and helps private and alternative investment funds expand alternative investment options and implement innovative structure.

Dan Gingiss C'96 has earned the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation from the National Speakers Association, an honor bestowed upon fewer than 600 professional speakers worldwide. Dan is a keynote speaker and author who presents on how to make customer experience a competitive advantage by driving word-of-mouth marketing. He also published a revised and

expanded second edition of his book, *Becoming the Experience Maker: Turn Everyday Interactions into Remarkable Customer Experiences*. More information can be found on his website, dangingiss.com.

1997

Didem Un Ates EE'97 WG'97 recently launched LotusAI, which she describes as "a boutique advisory firm guiding organizations through the opportunities and challenges of AI and generative AI." She continues, "LotusAI works with leading financial services firms such as Goldman Sachs Asset Management, to shape AI strategy, ensure responsible AI practices, conduct AI due diligence, and support workforce AI upskilling and talent transformation." Didem brings over two decades of industry and consulting experience to her new venture, with previous leadership roles at Microsoft, Accenture, and Schneider Electric.

1999

Ella Woger-Nieves C'99 is CEO of Invest Puerto Rico, and **Sebastián Negrón Richard C'16 W'16** is the organization's recently appointed secretary of economic development. Invest Puerto Rico is a nonprofit with a mission "to elevate Puerto Rico as a world-class business destination," according to its website. In 2024, it secured $733 million in capital investment and 4,900 new jobs, and it has helped shape the island's identity as a key bioscience and aerospace hub for innovation. More information can be found at investpr.org.

2000

Dina Greenberg CGS'00 GGS'04 has received a Fulbright International Scholar Award for the 2025–26 academic year to undertake her project *Capturing Jewish Narratives of Kosovo: Oral History as Legacy*. She writes, "Hosted at University of Prishtinës's Sociology Institute, this project generates primary research via oral histories of Kosovo's small Jewish community. Informal meetings and workshops with members of Kosovo's Jewish and Albanian (Muslim) majority encourage interfaith dialogue. Finally, a series of photo essays provides a framework to hold this unusual narrative and adds to the historic record." This year Dina has also been awarded a writing residency in Zagreb with the Croatian Literary Translators' Association. Her hybrid collection of poetry, prose, and images, *Prayers for the Lost & for the Living* was released with Sligo Creek Publishing in April. She describes her collection as a means to "convey the universality of faith and human strivings for connection."

Andrew Zitcer C'00 GCP'04 CGS'07 WEv'07 WEv'08, a professor and director of the urban strategy graduate program at Drexel University, has authored a new book, *Democracy as Creative Practice: Weaving a Culture of Civic Life*. From the book's description, it "offers arts-based solutions to the threats to democracies around the world, practices that can foster more just and equitable societies." As a Penn undergraduate, while taking a course with Netter Center director **Ira Harkavy C'70 Gr'79**, Andrew hatched a revitalization plan for the Rotunda as a space for the arts and cultural events. He went on to work at Penn until 2008.

2002

Scott R. Elkins G'02, CEO of Zeus Fire and Security, has been named a 2025 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Regional Finalist for the Greater Philadelphia region. The designation "honors the outstanding achievements of leaders who demonstrate excellence in innovation, business growth, and personal commitment to their businesses and communities."

2004

Rachel Hicks Canter C'04, a native Mississippian, is the founder of education advocacy nonprofit Mississippi First, whose mission is "ensuring educational excellence for every Mississippi child." Thanks in part to the work Rachel has led, "the state has not only met the national average in math at fourth grade but surpassed it in reading, with gains shared among every group of students, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or achievement level," she writes. Now, after 17 years, Rachel is moving on to join the Progressive Policy Institute as its new director of education policy, where she will help chart a course "for reclaiming America's public schools as engines of opportunity, citizenship, and upward mobility."

Melisma Cox GEd'04 teaches English at Rochambeau, The French International School in Bethesda, Maryland. She recently published a memoir, *Adrift: Leaving the Bahamas and Losing My Mind*, which recounts her mental health journey after emigrating from the Caribbean as a child. Completing the Toastmasters public speaking program as a Distinguished Toastmaster has given her the confidence to speak out about mental illness in order to shed the stigma.

2005

Nicole Lerescu Jakubowski C'05 has been named the deputy general counsel and corporate secretary of the Options Clearing Corporation in Chicago.

Blair Kaminsky C'05, a partner and management committee member at the law firm Holwell Shuster & Goldberg, has been named to the Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys 2025 list from *Crain's New York Business*. The honor recognizes law firm leaders who are consistently involved in significant litigation and trial proceedings.

2006

Lindsay Fullerton W'06 has published her first book, *Ephemeral City: A People's History of Chicago's Century of Progress World's Fair* (University of Illinois Press, 2025). She writes, "This in-depth people's history takes readers inside the 1933–34 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. *Ephemeral City* draws on a wealth of personal photographs, scrapbooks, oral histories, and writings to illuminate the wildly different experiences of fairgoers against the backdrop of a sometimes-contradictory city in the midst of the Great Depression."

Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva C'06 writes, "I am thrilled to share that the American Library Association selected my book, *Mexico, Slavery, Freedom: A Bilingual Documentary History, 1520–1829* for its 2024 Best Historical Materials listing. The volume features 118 original documents that I transcribed from Spanish and translated into modernized English for students and the general public alike. The source collection provides colonial case studies through which to understand our shared histories of Native, Asian, and Black enslavement and freedom. More information on the book can be found at flexpub.com/preview/mexico-slavery-freedom."

2007

Sharon Udasin C'07 and Rachel Frazin, both reporters for *The Hill*, are coauthors of *Poisoning the Well: How Forever Chemicals Contaminated America*. Sharon writes, "In *Poisoning the Well*, we trace an ugly history of corporate greed, military impunity, and community devastation, based on original reporting in four highly contaminated regions across the country. We introduce readers to people who, while fighting for their own lives, take it upon themselves to fix a broken regulatory system. And we provide searing evidence as to how the makers of PFAS [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as "forever chemicals"] were aware of the deadly risks for decades while the government failed, time and again, to provide basic protections for citizens."

2009

Michael S. Kettler C'09 has been elected partner at Riker Danzig, a law firm headquartered in Morristown, New Jersey. Michael is a partner in the firm's Environmental Law Group.

Grace D. O'Connell Gr'09, a professor of mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley, received the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers from the US National Science Foundation.

2010

Rachel Fendell Satinsky L'10, an attorney and shareholder at the labor and employment law firm Littler, has been honored with the Edward D. Ohlbaum Volunteer Award from the Pennsylvania Innocence Project in recognition of her outstanding leadership and work in securing the release of two individuals decades after they were wrongly convicted.

2015

Carter Skeel C'15 was named executive director of the Institute for Family Studies (ifstudies.org) on April 7. He joins IFS after serving as director of institutional advancement of First Things.

2016

Sebastián Negrón Richard C'16 see **Ella Woger-Nieves C'99.**

2017

Nicholas C. Guth C'17 has joined Blank Rome as an associate in the General Litigation Group. He works out of the firm's Philadelphia office. Previously, he was trial department head and trial counsel for the US Navy's Region Legal Service Office in Yokosuka, Japan.

Jenn Schoen WG'17 is founder and president of Poppins, "a Pennsylvania-based digital health startup designed to support parents through one of the most under-recognized mental health challenges today: parenting stress." Jenn writes, "As both a founder and a local mom, I created Poppins to offer the kind of support I wanted to have—expert, accessible, and designed for real life." Poppins provides 24/7 access to licensed pediatric clinicians, on-demand parent coaching, and a combined behavioral and medical care model. More information can be found at heypoppins.com/pa.

2020

Chris Allen WG'20, cofounder and CEO of Osena, a zero-sugar spiked coconut water cocktail, recently appeared on a new Netflix series, *Million Dollar Secret*. The reality show brings 12 people to a lakeside mansion, where each is given a box, and only one box holds a million dollars. The "millionaire" has to deceive the other contestants into thinking they don't have the money so that they can keep it. To find out if Chris won, check out the first season of *Million Dollar Secret*.

2022

Max Strickberger C'22, cofounder of Critical Venture Partners (critical.vc), is a former recipient of the President's Engagement Prize, along with classmates and cofounders **Sam Strickberger C'22** and **Seungkwon Son C'22 W'22**. Max writes, "Critical is an early-stage venture firm that invests in students and dropouts building start-ups that tackle today's most pressing challenges. We believe that young entrepreneurs are building fundamentally different businesses. The world's most valuable companies will also solve existential threats in climate, healthcare, and economic mobility—and we aim to be their earliest partner." Get in touch with Max at max@critical.vc.

2023

Tamar Lilienthal C'23 was recently recognized by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for her production contributions to the Emmy Award-winning series *Molly of Denali*. Tamar currently works on Nickelodeon's podcast team.

Maxwell D. Pisciotta GEng'23 GFA'24 Gr'24 recently received an Inflection Award, given by climate tech venture studio Marble to 30 of the world's "most promising young scientists." All 30 awardees were brought to Paris for a two-day event where they met with some of the most influential figures in climate science, investment, and policy. Max is a cross-functional scientist specializing in techno-economics and interdisciplinary R&D for emerging climate technologies. Learn more at inflectionaward.com.

1946

Pauline "Polly" Benedict Campbell CW'46, Montgomery Village, MD, a retired high school teacher who taught economics, history, and psychology; Jan. 24, at 105. At Penn, she was a member of Chi Omega sorority.

Lois Wilkinson Keenan CW'46, Boerne, TX, May 5, 2021. She worked for the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. At Penn, she was a member of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority.

Guy Norman W'46, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, a retired corporate interior designer; Nov. 15, at 100. He served in the US Navy during World War II.

1948

Elizabeth Laws Bigger CW'48, Prospect Park, PA, a retired librarian; April 21.

Barbara Johnson Maes HUP'48, Ypsilanti, MI, a retired nurse at the University of Michigan Hospital; Sept. 18. She served in the US Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II.

1949

Joseph Boardman C'49 L'56, Bala Cynwyd, PA, an attorney; March 31. At Penn, he was a member of Pi Lambda Phi fraternity. His sons are Ian S. Boardman C'80 EE'80 and Clifford Adam Boardman L'86.

Harry M. Edenborn III C'49, Wyndmoor, PA, a retired sales engineer for Honeywell; 2025. He served in the US Army. At Penn, he was a member of the football team.

Irving J. Halpern W'49, Pittsburgh, a businessman, designer, and builder; March 21. At Penn, he was a member of Zeta Beta Tau fraternity and the *Daily Pennsylvanian*. One son is Stephen F. Halpern W'78 WG'79.

Shirley Binder Klein Ar'49, New York, a retired architect and the first woman appointed building commissioner for the City of New York; April 7. Her daughter is Janice B. Klein C'76.

J. Marilyn Sanders DH'49 Ed'52, Huntingdon Valley, PA, a retired grade school teacher; Aug. 2. At Penn, she was a member of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority and the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

1950

Donald T. Detorre W'50, Brentwood, TN, a former executive at American Metal Products Company; Feb. 16. He was a veteran of the Korean War. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Upsilon fraternity, Sphinx Senior Society, and the football and track teams.

Dr. William Douglass C'50 D'52, Wynnewood, PA, a retired dentist; April 1. He served in the US Navy.

Dr. John A. Galloway C'50, Duxbury, MA, an endocrinologist, a retired executive at Eli Lilly, and professor emeritus of medicine at Indiana University; April 4. At Penn, he was a member of Psi Upsilon fraternity.

Dr. Gerald W. Hedrick M'50, Harleysville, PA, a retired physician; March 27.

1951

Rabbi David A. Baylinson C'51, Atlanta, a rabbi and adjunct associate professor of religion and philosophy at Huntington College; April 13. At Penn, he was a member of Beta Sigma Rho fraternity and Penn Players. One grandson is Maxwell K. Levy C'17.

Elizabeth "Lou" Cummings Deitz G'51, Dayton, OH, March 29

Richard M. Gaba W'51, New York, a retired labor lawyer; March 3. At Penn, he was a member of Tau Epsilon Phi fraternity.

Leba Pesner Grodinsky OT'51, Montpelier, VT, a former occupational therapist; March 31.

Richard Kahn W'51, Beverly Hills, CA, a longtime marketing executive in the film industry who formerly served as president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; April 5. He served in the US Navy during the Korean War. At Penn, he was a member of Zeta Beta Tau fraternity, Penn Players, WXPN, and the ROTC.

Joseph P. Muldoon Ed'51 GEd'53, Blacksburg, VA, a retired director of a private, college-prep school library; March 27. He served in the US Army during World War II. At Penn, he was a member of the wrestling team.

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.

Curtis R. Reitz C'51 L'56, Philadelphia, the Algernon Sydney Biddle Professor Emeritus of Law at Penn Carey Law and Penn's provost from 1971 to 1972; April 2. He joined Penn Law's faculty in 1957 as an assistant professor, eventually receiving a promotion to full professor in 1963. He accepted the position of vice president and provost of the University in January 1971. As provost, he helped to improve the undergraduate experience by establishing the college houses, University Scholars, and freshman seminars. He also changed the financial structure of the University to end the running of annual deficits, requiring the deans to take on more financial responsibility for their schools. He resigned from the position of provost in December 1972, citing his desire to focus on the field of law. In 1973, he became the Algernon Sidney Biddle Professor of Law. He retired in 2008 but continued to teach courses that focused on contracts and commercial transactions, professional responsibility, sentencing and post-conviction remedies, and international commercial law. He served in the US Army during the Vietnam War. As a student at Penn, he was a member of Acacia fraternity, WXPN, the debate council, the *Law Review*, and the ROTC. His wife is Judith Nichols Renzulli L'80, and his children include Kevin R. Reitz L'82, Whitney A. Reitz G'90, and Joel E. Reitz EAS'05.

1952

Sumner F. Bissell W'52, Bloomfield, CT, a retired insurance executive; Feb. 11. He served in the US Navy during the Korean War. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity.

Lewis S. Dougherty Jr. C'52, Camp Hill, PA, a retired high school teacher and basketball coach; April 13. He served in the US Army. At Penn, he was a member of Acacia fraternity.

Marvin S. Fish W'52, Livingston, NJ, a retired attorney and faculty member at a number of colleges; Jan. 31. At Penn, he was a member of Kappa Nu fraternity and the Penn Band. One daughter is Pamela Fish Zingeser C'77.

Stephen V. Heine W'52, Huntingdon, PA, a retired civil engineer; Feb. 16. He served in the US Air Force during the Korean War.

Dr. Laurence A. "Larry" Somers C'52 M'56, Lafayette Hill, PA, a retired pediatric surgeon and professor of surgery at Temple University; April 28. He served in the US Air Force. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Delta Epsilon fraternity. Two children are Dr. Jonathan Somers C'82 M'86 (Dorothy S. Mayson GEd'81 WG'85), and Dr. Liza R. Somers M'93. His brother is Dr. Robert G. Somers C'54.

Beverly Mitman Stewart CW'52, Portland, ME, Jan. 29, at 99. Her children include George S. F. Stephans C'76 Gr'82 and Jay F. Florey C'80.

Marian Musgrave Stewart CW'52, Allentown, PA, an artist and teacher; Feb. 8. At Penn, she was a member of the softball, swimming, and field hockey teams.

Anita Bredt Stoll CW'52 G'53, Newton, MA, Jan. 3. She worked at the former Johnsville Naval Station in Warminster, PA. At Penn, she was a member of Phi Sigma Sigma sorority. One son is Daniel J. Stoll G'89.

1953

Anthony C. Albrecht G'53, Bethesda, MD, retired deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs for the US Department of State; March 15.

Elizabeth "Ibbie" Fischer Brownlow DH'53, Lenox, MA, a dental hygienist; April 27.

Arthur T. Castillo W'53, Vero Beach, FL, former CEO of an art publishing company; Jan. 26. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity.

Hilda Tomar Ederer Ed'53 GEd'54, Bethesda, MD, a former foreign language teacher; Feb. 25. At Penn, she was a member of WXPN.

1954

Richard E. Berkowitz W'54, Savannah, GA, a retired investment banker; Aug. 30, 2024. He served in the US Marines and the US Army. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity.

Florence Stewart Brown G'54, Amsterdam, PA, a former foreign language and Bible studies teacher at Christian schools; March 26.

Donna Hoke Dunkelberger DH'54, Pittsburgh, a former dental hygienist; Nov. 17.

Rose "Posie" Flood Fitzpatrick DH'54, Drexel Hill, PA, Feb. 17. She worked in the dental field.

Dr. Eugene A. Friedberg C'54, Alpine, NJ, a psychiatrist; March 21. He established an academic scholarship in his family's name at Penn. One son is Jared B. Friedberg C'94.

Allan B. Jacobs GCP'54, San Francisco, former urban planning director of San Francisco and professor emeritus of environmental design at UC Berkeley; Feb. 18.

Doris Turner Kemper HUP'54 Nu'54, Glen Mills, PA, a nurse trainer; March 26.

John R. "Jack" Leu W'54, Lenox, MA, an EMT and owner of an ambulance service; April 14. He served in the US Army. At Penn, he was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity.

Hon. Sheldon R. Lipson W'54, Bethesda, MD, a retired judge; Oct. 7. He served in the US Army and the US Army Reserve. At Penn, he was a member of Beta Sigma Rho fraternity. His brother is Dr. Maurice H. Lipson V'68.

Theodore Pedas WG'54, Washington, DC, cofounder and president of a film production company that distributed foreign and art films; March 21. One granddaughter is Paulina E. Pedas C'21.

Raymond B. Reinl L'54, Furlong, PA, a retired lawyer; Feb. 17. He served in the US Army.

Kenneth S. Roberts W'54, Cannon Falls, MN, a retired financial executive; April 14. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity.

1955

Dr. Harold J. Kobb C'55, Philadelphia, a retired physician; Jan. 29.

Dr. Budd E. Rubin D'55, San Diego, a retired orthodontist; Aug. 9.

Dr. Justin H. Stone D'55, Newark, NJ, a retired dentist; Sept. 12.

Dr. Robert D. Zanone GD'55, Crossville, TN, a retired orthodontist; March 14. He served in the US Army during World War II.

1956

Raymond S. DeMaria C'56, Brookfield, CT, a retired stockbroker; March 7.

Dr. Morris M. Fader D'56, Bayside, NY, a retired dentist; Oct. 3. He served in the US Navy. Two sons are Eric D. Fader L'83 and Dr. Gregg Robert Fader D'87.

Mary Crombie Gellert CW'56, Salt Lake City, UT, Feb. 20. She worked in the banking industry.

Elinor O'Connell Gibbons DH'56, Selbyville, DE, Nov. 24, 2023.

William E. Gusmer W'56, Windsor, CA, retired president of his family's business, a manufacturer and distributor of fermentation and filtration products; Feb. 28. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity. He served in the US Army Transportation Corps and the US Army Reserve. One daughter is Marla G. Jeffrey WG'86, and one grandchild is Peter S. Jeffrey G'16 LPS'16 W'16.

Robert J. Hochberg Ar'56, Glen Cove, NY, a retired architect; March 10, 2024. One daughter is Lisa A. Hochberg W'88.

Frank F. Katz Gr'56, Tinton Falls, NJ, a retired professor at Seton Hall University; Sept. 6. He served in the US Merchant Marine as a radio operator during World War II.

Alan G. Kirk II L'56, Trappe, MD, retired senior executive and general counsel for the Potomac Electric Power Company, and a former assistant dean at Penn Carey Law from 1956 to 1962; April 20. He served

in the US Merchant Marine during World War II, as well as in the US Army during the Korean War.

John C. Mierley W'56, Hollidaysburg, PA, Jan. 21. He worked at a hardware store.

R. Theodore Moock Jr. W'56, Dallas, a retired senior manager in the investment securities industry; March 12. In 2006, he endowed a Penn academic scholarship in the name of his father, Raymond T. Moock EE1923, and himself. He served in the US Army. As a student at Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, Friars Senior Society, and the squash and tennis teams.

Fred A. Sbrilli Jr. W'56, Somerset, NJ, a former real estate agent; March 28. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity.

Dorothea R. "Dot" Schmitt OT'56, Washington, ME, a teacher in the New York City public schools; March 23. At Penn, she was a member of Chi Omega sorority, WXPN, and the choral society.

Lynn Kreamer Sher CW'56, Voorhees, NJ, a former administrator for her husband's medical practice; March 29. Her children include Stephanie C. Sher C'79, Dr. Elisabeth Sher Horowitz C'81 (Dr. Ira D. Horowitz W'81), and Barry G. Sher W'86.

1957

Robert Q. Alleva ChE'57, Hatboro, PA, retired chief chemical engineer at Raytheon; April 4, 2024. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, and the rowing and swimming teams. One son is Dr. David "Quentin" Alleva C'90.

Joseph Auslander Gr'57, College Park, MD, professor emeritus of mathematics at the University of Maryland; April 7.

Elaine Wingate Conway FA'57, Bronxville, NY, former director of the New York State Division for Women; May 21, 2023. At Penn, she was a member of the Pennguinnettes synchronized swimming team.

Dr. John W. Feuerbach D'57, Larchmont, NY, a retired dentist; March 8, 2024. He served in the US Air Force.

Dr. Gertrude J. Frishmuth CW'57 GM'77, Albuquerque, NM, associate professor emeritus of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of New Mexico; Nov. 6, 2023. Earlier in her career, she worked at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. As a student at Penn, she was a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority and the basketball, softball, and tennis teams.

Herbert J. Gans Gr'57 Hon'03, New York, professor emeritus of sociology at Columbia University who studied American urban and suburban life; April 21. Earlier in his career, he taught urban studies at Penn from 1953 to 1964. He served in the US Army.

Dr. Richard H. Gross C'57, Xenia, OH, a retired physician; April 12. He served in the US Army during the Vietnam War as a surgeon. At Penn, he was a member of Beta Theta Pi fraternity and the heavyweight rowing team. His daughters are Erika N. Gross C'90 and Leslie Gross Padilla C'93.

John E. Molyneux ME'57 GME'61 Gr'64, Swarthmore, PA, a retired dean at Villanova University; April 6. He served in the US Navy. At Penn, he was a member of Psi Upsilon fraternity.

Jay G. Ochroch L'57, Bala Cynwyd, PA, a retired lawyer; April 17. He served in the US military. His wife is Joan Shuman Ochroch CGS'07; two children are Leslie A. Ochroch C'84 and Dr. Edward A. Ochroch M'91 GEd'99 GM'05; and one grandchild is Claire E. Ochroch C'22 L'27.

Dr. James A. O'Malley D'57, Little Silver, NJ, a retired dentist and former mayor of Allenhurst, NJ; Oct. 24. He served in the US Air Force.

Dr. Dewey B. Pavlock D'57, New Oxford, PA, a retired dentist; March 26. He served in the US Army. One granddaughter is Dr. Jacqueline Milone D'14.

Dr. Burton Rosan D'57 GD'62, Haverford, PA, professor emeritus of microbiology at Penn's School of Dental Medicine; March 31. Two children are Felice B. Rosan C'84 and Jonathan S. Rosan C'88 L'93.

Cornelius T. Ryan WG'57, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL, cofounder of a venture capital firm that invests in healthcare, technology, and life science companies; Jan. 1. He served in the US Army during the Korean War. His son is Christopher L. Ryan C'84.

Carl H. Shaifer III WG'57, Newark, NJ, a former insurance executive; March 5. One son is Stephen C. Shaifer WG'91.

Frederick C. Tecce C'57, Gladwyne, PA, a venture capitalist; April 26. At Penn, he was a member of Beta Theta Pi fraternity. His children include Frederick A. Tecce EAS'82, Dr. Marc A. Tecce EE'83, and James Charles Tecce W'92.

Rosita May Wambaugh SW'57, Philadelphia, a retired supervisor with the City of Philadelphia Department of Public Welfare; April 10.

1958

Robert P. Carlson WG'58, North Eastham, MA, March 21. He worked in the chemical industry and was focused on the marketing and manufacturing of high-temperature and high-performance carbon and boron composites for the aerospace industry.

Frances M. "Kiki" Cecci Nu'58, Scranton, PA, retired nursing director at a hospital; Feb. 18.

Phillip R. Delphos Jr. W'58, Hopedale, MA, former senior program analyst for Avery Dennison, an adhesive manufacturing company; March 23. At Penn, he was a member of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity.

Kenneth M. Goldman W'58, New York, a retired mortgage banker; April 7. He was also an accomplished photographer. At Penn, he was a member of Kappa Nu fraternity and the *Daily Pennsylvanian*. His children include Michelle Goldman Eisenberg C'87 GEd'88 (Jeffrey Eisenberg W'87) and Jonathan Goldman C'89; and his grandchildren include Rachel Ritchie C'15 GEd'16 (Robert Ritchie EAS'15 GEng'15), Matthew Eisenberg W'18, Max Goldman EAS'21, and Sophie Goldman EAS'24.

Dr. Arthur J. Gottesman D'58, Lake Worth, FL, a retired periodontist; Nov. 9, 2023. He served in the US Army as a dentist.

Robert N. Gurin C'58, Stuart, FL, an engineer; Feb. 19.

Harry R. Howard C'58, Chester, CT, a retired attorney; Nov. 19. At Penn, he was

a member of the debate council, WXPN, orchestra, and the rowing team. His children include Kenneth H. Wilan C'88 and Karen Howard Evans C'91.

Algis A. Lukas CE'58, Weston, MA, an engineering and architecture executive; March 26. He served in the US Air Force.

John H. Merrill WG'58, Bloomfield, CT, a retired systems engineer at IBM; Feb. 3.

Dr. David B. Payne C'58 D'61 GD'63, Sarasota, FL, a retired oral and maxillofacial surgeon; Oct. 29. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity and the swimming team.

James V. Rinnovatore GMT'58, Mount Arlington, NJ, a retired engineer at Picatinny Arsenal in Wharton, NJ, and a Eucharistic minister; Oct. 27.

Gerald N. Rubenstein W'58, Pittsburgh, owner of a uniform rental business; April 5. At Penn, he was a member of Beta Sigma Rho fraternity, the Glee Club, and the *Daily Pennsylvanian*. Two daughters are Ellen R. Livingston C'81 and Carol A. Rubenstein C'84.

Robert M. Sawyer W'58, Tisbury, MA, owner of a real estate development company; April 4.

Dr. Daniel F. Sazima GD'58, Chagrin Falls, OH, a retired dentist; March 22.

Gerald N. "Jerry" Sonnenblick W'58, Lakewood Ranch, FL, a retired attorney; Feb. 24. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Sigma Delta fraternity and Penn Players.

David Wayne Walker W'58, Surprise, AZ, a former reliability engineer at Lockheed Martin; Jan. 14.

Col. Dr. George H. Wyckoff Jr. V'58, Spring Branch, TX, a retired colonel in the US Army Veterinary Corps; Dec. 3, 2023. One granddaughter is Dr. Kathryn Wyckoff V'12.

1959

Arlene Mathews Baxter DH'59, Middletown, DE, a former dental hygienist and retired real estate agent; Jan. 15, 2024.

Paul M. Brown W'59, New York, a retired attorney; Feb. 11. He served in the US Army. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity and the baseball team.

Loretta "Tina" Davis Brubaker DH'59, Wynnewood, PA, a retired dental hygienist; March 8.

Dr. Edward Jaffee D'59, Cherry Hill, NJ, a retired dentist; July 21, 2023.

Rev. Thomas J. Miller GEd'59, Anderson, OH, a former professor of physics and mathematics at a Catholic prep school; Feb. 28, 2024.

Dr. Richard J. Pawelski M'59 GM'63, Fairfax, VA, a retired radiologist; Jan. 26. He served in the US Army.

Patti Barnes Tatnall CW'59, Alexandria, VA, a geneticist who worked at Johns Hopkins University and Penn; April 19.

Dr. Kenneth S. Woodman M'59, Richmond, IN, a retired general surgeon; Feb. 20. He served in the US Army during the Vietnam War.

1960

Dr. Stanley "Perry" Brickman GD'60, Atlanta, a retired oral and maxillofacial surgeon; Jan. 26.

Joan Turner Brode HUP'60, New Canaan, CT, a retired pediatric nurse; Feb. 25.

Dr. Vincent J. Cammarano D'60, Auburndale, MA, a retired dentist and lawyer; Aug. 29, 2023.

David R. Connor C'60, Washington, NC, a math teacher; April 22. At Penn, he was a member of Glee Club. His son is David F. Connor Gr'91.

Albert T. Crowley GEE'60, Manahawkin, NJ, a retired principal engineer at RCA; Nov. 9. He served in the US Army during the Korean War.

Richard M. Gale C'60, Lafayette, CO, a retired attorney; Feb. 23. He served in the US military. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Upsilon fraternity and Mask & Wig.

Dora Deady Gianoulakis CW'60, Saint Louis, a retired teacher and founder of a school; Jan. 6. At Penn, she was a member of Alpha Chi Omega sorority.

Jay L. Goldberg W'60 L'63, Bala Cynwyd, PA, a retired corporate tax attorney and board member emeritus of Philadelphia Ballet and Hassel Foundation; May 26. At Penn, he was a member of the lightweight rowing team. His son is Andrew H. Goldberg C'89.

Dr. Arnold G. Greene D'60 GD'61, Greenacres, FL, a retired orthodontist; Feb. 26.

Carol Balla Hutzell DH'60, Ligonier, PA, March 7.

David B. Landry W'60, Charleston, SC, a former advertising executive and real estate agent; Jan. 5. He served in the US military. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Tau Delta fraternity and Sphinx Senior Society.

Sheldon R. "Shelly" Lefkowitz W'60, Columbus, OH, an investment banker; April 8. At Penn, he was a member of Tau Delta Phi fraternity and the ROTC. His grandchildren include Matthew L. Lefkowitz C'20 and Abigail R. Lefkowitz W'24.

John F. Mangan C'60, La Quinta, CA, an investment banker; March 10. At Penn, he was a member of Sphinx Senior Society and the basketball and tennis teams.

Dr. Alan S. Poritzky D'60, Mohegan Lake, NY, a retired dentist; June 8, 2024.

Arleen Clements Barron Winters DH'60, Lebanon, PA, a baker; July 8, 2024.

1961

Juan J. Amodei GEE'61 GrE'68, Dunstable, MA, CEO of a laser and optical imaging company and former Penn trustee; March 13. He was a trustee of what is now Penn's School of Engineering and Applied Science from 1981 to 1990, as well as a trustee of the University from 1990 to 1995. One daughter is Maria E. Amodei C'82.

Mark E. Blum G'61 Gr'70, Louisville, KY, a history professor at the University of Louisville; Jan. 25.

Dr. Nicholas T. Hallick GD'61, Corpus Christi, TX, a retired oral surgeon; March 8.

Indra Tayal Malani SW'61, Springfield, VA, former dean of social work at the University of Baroda in India; March 12.

Lloyd E. Mitchell C'61, Elkins Park, PA, former manager at a software company; Feb. 20. At Penn, he was a member of the orchestra, Penn Band, and the swimming team. His wife is Sarah Wiggins Mitchell Nu'62 L'79.

Dr. Sheldon Paley D'61, Bradenton, FL, a retired dentist and real estate agent; Oct. 13.

David J. Prescott C'61 Gr'67, Newtown Square, PA, professor emeritus of biology at Bryn Mawr College; May 9. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Nu fraternity, Penn Symphony Orchestra, and the ROTC, and he was a Benjamin Franklin Scholar. Two daughters are Leslie S. Prescott WG'94 and Holly M. Prescott-Schultz C'00.

S. Reid Warren III SW'61, Phoenixville, PA, a retired social worker; Feb. 17. He served in the US Army. His brother is Alan Warren C'58.

1962

Dr. Charles W. Ashman D'62, Las Vegas, a retired dentist and professor of dentistry at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Jan. 19, 2024. He served in the US Army.

Dr. Jack W. Falsion D'62, Brockport, NY, a retired dentist; Jan. 27. He served in the US Army Dental Corps.

Judy L. Fishman CW'62, Santa Cruz, CA, a therapist; Feb. 24. At Penn, she was a member of Pi Lambda Theta sorority.

Douglas M. Hehn W'62, Guthrie, OK, March 8.

Stanley R. Jaffe W'62, Rancho Mirage, CA, an Oscar-winning Hollywood producer of films like *Kramer vs. Kramer, Fatal Attraction,* and *The Accused*; March 10. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Sigma Delta fraternity. One daughter is Elizabeth A. Jaffe C'91.

Florence Connelly Kollmar DH'62, North Wales, PA, a retired dental hygienist; Aug. 19, 2023.

George J. Leber Jr. GEd'62, Saint Petersburg, FL, a professor who later worked for W. B. Saunders Company; Nov. 24. He was a veteran of the Korean War.

Joanna Brinckloe Neyman CW'62, Draper, UT, a recruiter for the US Navy; March 10. At Penn, she was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority and the choral society.

Dr. Martin Phillips D'62, Boca Raton, FL, a retired dentist; Nov. 13. One daughter is Karen R. Phillips W'85.

Charles "Herb" Quackenbush Jr. CE'62, Liverpool, NY, a civil engineer; March 5. He served in the US Navy and the US Air National Guard. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity and the ROTC.

Nancy Holtzclaw Schappert DH'62, Cary, NC, a former dental hygienist; Aug. 1, 2023. Her husband is Dr. H. Robert Schappert V'64.

1963

Dr. Geoffrey M. Drawbridge D'63, Naugatuck, CT, a retired orthodontist and orthodontic consultant for the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services; Dec. 3. He served in the US Army as a dentist.

Hugh O. Maclellan Jr. WG'63, Chattanooga, TN, former president of Maclellan Foundation; April 4.

James H. Murphy GEd'63, Wakefield, MA, a retired chemistry teacher; April 10. He served in the US Army and US National Guard.

Dr. Jerome M. Pleskonko D'63, Philipsburg, PA, a retired dentist; April 14.

Margaret E. "Peggy" Ramsey Roughton G'63, Kitty Hawk, NC, Jan. 6.

1964

Dr. William H. Baile III D'64, Palmyra, PA, a retired dentist and former clinical instructor of dentistry for the University of Maryland; May 16, 2024.

Beryl "Butzie" Richman Dean L'64, Bala Cynwyd, PA, deputy director of career planning and placement at the Philadelphia Bar Association, former head of the Career Services Office a Penn Law, and professor of legal studies at Wharton; April 4. One grandchild is Owen G. Matthews C'22.

Walter M. Diener Jr. L'64, Spring Twp, PA, a retired attorney specializing in estate planning and real estate law; April 5. He served in the US Army. One daughter is Dr. Elizabeth B. Diener C'93.

Anthony D. "Tony" Duke Jr. C'64, East Norwich, NY, a retired executive at an investment bank; April 14. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Psi fraternity and the ice hockey and rowing teams.

Edgar W. "Bud" Ellermann Jr. W'64, Clayton, MO, a real estate developer; March 11. He served in the US Army during the Korean War. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity and the *Daily Pennsylvanian.*

Hans P. "Pete" Hansen C'64, Valley City, OH, a retired insurance agent; Jan. 16.

Robert E. Hartwell GEE'64, Pepperell, MA, a retired aerospace engineer for RCA and General Electric; Feb. 25. He served in the US Army.

Robert R. Harvey GLA'64, Des Moines, IA, a retired professor of landscape architecture at Iowa State University; Sept. 8.

Susan Oppenheim Jaffe CW'64, Philadelphia, a longtime member and vice chair of the Zoning Board of Adjustment for the City of Philadelphia; March 1. At Penn, she was a member of Sigma Delta Tau sorority.

Paul D. Pearson L'64, Buffalo, NY, an attorney, mediator, and arbitrator; Feb. 17. He served in the US Army.

Reena Friedman Sumerson CW'64 G'69, Largo, FL Dec. 30, 2023. Her brother is William H. Friedman C'60 G'62.

1965

Leoncio T. Ang GEE'65, Hayes, VA, a retired automotive engineer; March 5. His son is Jonathan L. Ang W'97.

Gustavo A. Gelpi Benítez GL'65, San Juan, Puerto Rico, an attorney; Oct. 22.

William D. Berberich WG'65, Harrington Park, NJ, March 9. He served in the US Navy.

Neil G. Epstein L'65, Wynnewood, PA, a retired attorney; Feb. 27. At Penn, he was a member of the *Law Review*.

Dr. William S. Hughes M'65 GM'71, Washington, DC, a gastroenterologist and associate professor of medicine at the University of Texas; March 13, 2024.

William K. Kruse EE'65 GEE'72, Winston-Salem, NC, April 13. He worked at the Logistic Management Institute at the US Department of Defense. At Penn, he was a member of the football team.

Kathleen A. Lewis DH'65, Hershey, PA, a former dental hygienist and women's swimming coach; Feb. 20.

Joseph A. Ryan L'65, Downingtown, PA, an attorney; March 10.

Bette Neeld Schregel CW'65 G'66, Newtown Square, PA, March 18.

1966

Dr. Stanley M. "Sandy" Baer D'66, Morristown, NJ, a retired endodontist; March 14.

Sara Manwell Bradford GLA'66, Providence, RI, a retired landscape architect; Feb. 15.

David A. Cameron G'66, Index, WA, a retired high school teacher and emergency management coordinator for the Town of Index; Feb. 4.

Thomas R. Edwards W'66, Bath, ME, a retired human resources executive at Citicorp; Feb. 15. He served in the US Air Force.

Marvin A. Genshaw Gr'66, Bel Air, MD, a retired research scientist for Bayer; March 26.

Richard Z. Goldstein Gr'66, Albany, NY, a retired mathematics professor at SUNY University at Albany; April 1.

Wilmot L. "Mike" Harris L'66, Greenwich, CT, a retired trusts and estates attorney; June 6.

John D. Hellings CE'66 GCE'67, Bellaire, TX, Aug. 30, 2024. He worked for Shell Oil. At Penn, he was a member of Friars Senior Society and the basketball and track teams.

Henry R. "Dick" Howland GEE'66 GrE'69, Pittsburgh, a retired senior engineer at Westinghouse Electric and an adjunct professor of mathematics, engineering, and computer science at a number of universities; March 4.

Dr. Suzanne Ruch Jenkins V'66, Midlothian, VA, retired state epidemiologist and acting director of the Office of Epidemiology for the Virginia Department of Health; March 8.

Edward L. Jeska Gr'66, Sanford, NC, professor emeritus of veterinary medicine at Iowa State University; April 5, at 101. Earlier in his career, he was an assistant professor of pathology at Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine. He served in the US Army during World War II.

Albert C. Lowenstein C'66, Cedar Park, TX, a retired computer science entrepreneur; Feb. 18. At Penn, he was a member of Acacia fraternity and cofounder of the Philadelphia chapter of Students for a Democratic Society in opposition to the Vietnam War.

Bernadette L. Maguire GEE'66, Philadelphia, a retired managing engineer for General Electric; Feb. 22.

Richard P. Morton GEE'66 GrE'68, Falls Church, VA, a retired computer scientist at the Institute for Defense Analyses; March 24.

Philip T. Rodilosso WG'66, Wilmington, NC, a retired investment banker; April 6. He served in the US Army during the Vietnam War.

Robert A. Sallavanti Gr'66, Dalton, PA, retired corporate scientific advisor at Gentex, an electronics and technology company; July 11.

John W. Searight SW'66, Absecon, NJ, professor emeritus of social work and former dean at Stockton University; March 26. He served in the US Army Corps of Engineers. His wife is Elizabeth Heim Searight SW'61.

1967

Dr. John T. Curtiss D'67, Groton, CT, a retired dentist; April 10. He served in the US Navy during Vietnam.

Lawrence M. Entis W'67, Aldie, VA, a retired tax attorney and former chief financial officer of Brown Technology Group and Infiniti of Chantilly; June 11, 2024. At Penn, he was a member of Pi Lambda Phi fraternity. One son is Ira Entis W'92.

David C. Evans C'67, Ligonier, PA, March 9. He served in the US Army. At Penn, he was a member of the volleyball team.

Poul Hornsleth Jr. C'67, St. Petersburg, FL, owner of a real estate and insurance business; April 2. At Penn, he was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and Friars Senior Society. His wife is April Caldwell Hornsleth CW'69.

James B. Lewis C'67, Saratoga Springs, UT, a former researcher at Bristol-Myers Squibb and writer/researcher for a nanotechnology company; April 6. At Penn, he was a Benjamin Franklin Scholar. One son is John B. Lewis EAS'90.

Dr. James L. Mullen M'67 GM'68, Newtown Square, PA, a retired longtime surgeon at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania; April 1. He was also chief of surgery at the Philadelphia VA Hospital. At HUP, he founded and directed Penn Home infusion Therapy, as well as the HUP Nutritional Support Service, paving the way for patients to receive care in the comfort of their homes. He retired in 2020. He served in the US Air Force as a surgeon. His son is James E. Mullen C'08.

Dr. Anne Nicholson Weller M'67, Wellesley, MA, a physician-scientist/investigator in the department of infectious diseases at a hospital and professor of medicine at Harvard; March 1.

1968

Barbara Gimbar Bickley GEd'68, Pennsauken, NJ, a reading specialist; Feb. 22.

E. George Cross III W'68, West Palm Beach, FL, a former bank executive; Aug. 26, 2024. He served in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, as a member of the First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and the Sphinx Senior Society.

Dr. William G. Fullard Jr. Gr'68, Haverford, PA, a retired professor of educational psychology at Temple University; Jan. 19.

Virginia "Ginny" Greene G'68, Philadelphia, a former senior conservator and director of the conservation lab at the Penn Museum; Jan. 23. She came to Penn's department of archaeology to earn her master of arts degree and concurrently joined the Penn Museum's staff as a secretary; in 1967, she became a conservator at the museum. She soon became involved in the Museum's Tikal Project, a long-running archaeological study of a Mayan city in the Guatemalan rainforest that was the largest excavation project in the world up to that point. After graduation, she studied in London, then returned to Penn to head the

recently established conservation lab at the Penn Museum. Under her leadership, the lab became a world-renowned resource for conservation practice and training. After retiring from the Penn Museum in 2008, she continued to work on her monograph, *The Pottery Figurines of Tikal*, which was published in 2024.

Robert S. Hamrin WG'68, Matthews, NC, a retired professor of management at the University of Memphis; Feb. 2. He served in the US Air Force during the Vietnam War.

John K. Kramer C'68 WG'70, New Vernon, NJ, a marketing executive; Jan. 27. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity and the downhill ski racing team.

Henriette Horchler Leanos Gr'68, Parkville, MD, a retired French professor at Goucher College; March 25.

Blue E. Wooldridge WG'68, Fredericksburg, VA, professor emeritus in the school of government and public affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University; March 22.

Anne Miller Zartarian CW'68 G'69, Cortland, NY, a former financial aid director at Cornell University; Jan. 29. One brother is Dr. William H. Miller. V'76.

1969

Gerald "Jerry" Santini ME'69 WG'71, Newark, DE, a private investor and retired financial analyst; April 7. At Penn, he was a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity, Friars Senior Society, and the football team, where he rushed for 880 yards in 1968, establishing a program record that would last for the next 18 years. He served in the US Army Reserve. His daughter is Laura Marie Santini C'92.

Shirley Biddle Schmid Nu'69, Milton, FL, a former nursing instructor at Penn; March 4.

Mary C. Selecky CW'69, Colville, WA, former secretary of health for the State of Washington and a clinical professor of public health at the University of Washington; April 7. Earlier in her career, she was assistant to the dean of women at Penn. As a student at Penn, she received the Althea K. Hottel Shield Award. One brother is John A. Selecky C'63.

1970

Swapan K. Chaudhuri GCE'70 Gr'75, Iselin, NJ, a structural engineer in the US and India; March 28.

William L. Focht Gr'70, Lynchburg, VA, Jan. 11. He formerly worked at Sweet Briar College and then General Electric.

Louise Bowie Gerow GEd'70, Ephrata, PA, professor emeritus at Bucks County Community College; March 14, at 100.

Stuart W. Henry WG'70, Baltimore, Ontario, Canada, a finance executive; Feb. 19.

Lester B. Ratcliff EE'70, Wantagh, NY, a retired technology equity analyst; Dec. 8. At Penn, he was a member of the wrestling team.

Lt. Col. James M. Scaccia Nu'70, Stratham, NH, a retired primary care nurse practitioner for the US Air Force and owner of a construction company; April 14.

Joan P. Snowden CW'70, Philadelphia, Feb. 11.

1971

Dr. Barry L. Alpert M'71 GM'77, Pittsburgh, a retired cardiac electrophysiologist; April 1. He served in the US Air Force. His sons are Joshua A. Alpert C'94 and Dr. Craig Alpert M'10 GM'13, and two brothers are Dr. Marc H. Alpert M'76 and Jonathan Alpert WG'76.

Dr. Robert S. Bar GM'71, Penn Valley, PA, retired professor of medicine at the University of Iowa, and director of the National Institutes of Health diabetes-endocrinology research unit and the Veterans Administration juvenile diabetes research unit; Feb. 23.

Dr. Robert A. Berselli GM'71, Bend, OR, a retired orthopedic surgeon; March 3. He served in the US Army during the Vietnam War.

Elva Christine "Chris" Mumma Booth G'71, Clifton, VA, a freelance writer for several design and decor magazines; Feb. 19.

Robert B. Bowser WEv'71, Marlton, NJ, a computer consultant for companies such as IBM, SmithKline, and JPMorganChase; March 29.

Dr. Thomas I. Leininger V'71, Appleton, WI, a veterinarian; April 5. He served in the US Air Force during the Vietnam War.

Richard N. Juliani Gr'71, Wynnewood, PA, retired sociology professor at Villanova University, a visiting professor of Italian studies at Penn, and an expert on Philadelphia's Little Italy; Feb. 20. The son of Italian immigrants, he became an expert on the immigrant experience in Philadelphia, countering ethnic stereotypes with his research. He was the former national president of the American Italian Historical Association and led waking tours of South Philadelphia for the Philadelphia Area Cultural Consortium.

Capt. Dr. Paul Robert "Bob" Moore D'71, Jacksonville, FL, a retired prosthodontist in the US Navy Dental Corps; Feb. 11.

John M. "Jack" Nickell G'71, Lansdale, PA, a retired business manager at Merck; April 2. While attending Penn, he was an assistant professor of statistics at Wharton.

Ruth Jacobs Perlmutter Gr'71, Bala Cynwyd, PA, professor of film history at Temple University and cofounder of the Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival; March 15. One daughter is Deborah Bonnie Perlmutter CW'72.

William J. Shaw WEv'71, Titusville, FL, retired director of sales for an automotive and industrial battery manufacturing company; March 19. He served in the US Army.

1972

Robert J. Epstein ASC'72, Philadelphia, a retired statistician and researcher for the School District of Philadelphia; April 4.

Dr. Richard B. Janney D'72, West Barnstable, MA, an orthodontist; Feb. 14.

Mark J. Powell C'72, Greenbrae, CA, a breast cancer researcher; March 10. At Penn, he was a member of Phi Sigma Delta fraternity.

Alan P. Shafer C'72, Trumbull, CT, a life insurance salesman; Dec. 4. He served in the US Army.

David W. Stroh GCP'72, North Andover, MA, an attorney specializing in affordable housing and land use; March 29.

1973

Dwarika P. Agarwal Gr'73, Redondo Beach, CA, a retired metallurgical engineering executive; Feb. 27.

Albert E. Brill WG'73, Kennett Square, PA, a social worker and philanthropist; April 7.

Thomas P. Logan Gr'73, Ridley Park, PA, retired director of the Pennsylvania State Police Crime Lab and a chemist for the US Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense; March 4. One grandson is Patrick F. Logan C'27.

Marguerite P. McAvinue CGS'73, Douglassville, PA, a retired librarian at St. Joseph's University; March 28.

1974

Marybeth Meditz Banks WG'74 G'77, McLean, VA, retired director of federal regulatory affairs for T-Mobile; Jan. 17. Her husband is Charles Banks WG'77.

Dr. Mark C. Harlow GM'74, Aberdeen, SD, a retired orthopedic surgeon; Feb. 22. He served in the US Navy.

Scott A. Keneman GrE'74, Princeton, NJ, Feb. 28. He worked for technology corporations including RCA, Sarnoff, and Siemens.

Robert A. McIntire L'74, Baltimore, a corporate attorney; April 3. One child is Stephen A. McIntire W'97 CGS'99 (Billie-Jo Warrick W'02).

Peter M. Perry Gr'74, Harwood, MD, a retired astrophysicist and director of science programs for Computer Sciences Corporation, whose projects included the IUE satellite and the Hubble Space Telescope; Nov. 22.

George R. Spann Gr'74, Belgrade, ME, retired president of Thomas College; March 26. Earlier in his career, he lectured at Penn.

John H. Trudeau SW'74, Philadelphia, a retired social worker and director of the Center for Social Policy and Community Development at Temple University; March 11.

1975

Dr. Donald W. Gulick V'75, Bradenton, FL, a veterinarian; April 13. His wife is Dr. Claire E. Blanchard Gulick V'75.

Jeffrey Malet WG'75, Washington, DC, a photojournalist and securities portfolio manager; May 31, 2023. His brother is Philip L. Malet EE'75.

Rev. Norman E. Minich GCP'75, Frederick, MD, a retired Lutheran pastor; March 5. He served in the US Navy.

Ellyn H. Modell CW'75 G'75, Lake Worth, FL, Oct. 11. At Penn, she was a Benjamin Franklin Scholar.

William K. Powers Gr'75, Kendall Park, NJ, an anthropology professor at Rutgers who established the university's Native American studies program and the Lakota Books imprint; Jan. 5.

1976

Dr. John F. Coyle II GM'76, Tulsa, OK, a clinical professor of medicine at the University of Oklahoma; March 13.

Suzanne Painter Welsh WG'76, Swarthmore, PA, retired vice president of finance for Swarthmore College; Feb. 28.

Frank J. Wilson GCE'76, Gilbert, AZ, a retired transportation expert and former governor of New Jersey; March 2. He led multiple transportation agencies, including the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Houston, TX).

1977

Rebecca A. Weber D'77, Riva, MD, a retired dentist; March 26.

1978

Carmen B. Kunyczka CGS'78 CGS'87, Medford, NJ, a retired nurse for Texaco; March 1.

Dr. Michael T. Mennuti GM'78, Ardmore, PA, professor emeritus of human genetics and of pediatrics in Penn's Perelman School of Medicine and the former chair of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania; April 7. He joined Penn's faculty in 1969 as an assistant instructor and later became a full professor in 1987. From 1987 to 2002, he chaired the department of obstetrics and gynecology at HUP, and in honor of his career, the department established the Michael T. Mennuti Associate Professorship in 2019. He also served a long tenure as director of Penn Medicine's genetics program and cytogenetic laboratory. His research and clinical interests included serum screening for Down syndrome, screening for cystic fibrosis, and prevention of folic acid–dependent neural tube defects. His wife is Nancy Mennuti GNu'72, and his daughter is Cara Mennuti Curley GNu'00.

Herman Zamora Gr'78, Maplewood, NJ, a retired attorney; Oct. 20.

1979

Dr. Donald P. Mullen V'79, Guilford, CT, a veterinarian; March 22. His wife is Dr. Christine Donahue Mullen V'76, and one son is Wesley M. Mullen C'04.

1980

Dr. Philip H. Ehret D'80, Hanover, NH, a former dentist; Feb. 10. He served in the US Navy.

1982

Soga O. Ewedemi Gr'82, Clarion, PA, professor emeritus of finance at Clarion University of Pennsylvania; Jan. 24.

Dr. Christopher V. Hughes D'82, Ocean Isle Beach, NC, retired professor of pediatric dentistry at the University of Mississippi; Feb. 25.

Janet Knaphle Loewe GNu'82, Clarks Summit, PA, retired director of nursing education at a hospital and a psychiatric nursing instructor at the University of Scranton and Penn State; Feb. 22. At Penn, she was a member of Chi Omega sorority.

1983

Nancy Passmore Beachem Alston C'83, Columbia, SC, a legal advocate who owned her own law firm focused on family, community, and LGBTQ rights; Jan. 2.

Dr. James A. "Brock" Brockenbrough GM'83, Philadelphia, a thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon; March 11.

1984

Rebecca Teitz Ackerman C'84 GEd'85 WG'88, Palo Alto, CA, a director of marketing in the catalog industry; March 2. At Penn, she was a member of Sigma

Delta Tau sorority. Her sister is Jessica T. Becker C'89 W'89.

David E. Prager L'84, New York, an attorney; Nov. 1.

Judith Sarayda Shapiro C'84, Clearwater, FL, an adjunct psychology professor at three Mississippi colleges; Feb. 22. At Penn, she was a member of the choral society.

Edward J. Szczepkowski W'84, Hollywood, CA, a retired attorney; July 13, 2022. At Penn, he served on the Undergraduate Assembly, University Council, and many academic committees.

Suzanne H. Waters C'84, Newton, MA, Feb. 15, 2023. She worked with people recovering from addictions and those with mental health issues. At Penn, she was a member of the rowing team.

Tobias A. Wolf C'84, Groton, MA, a landscape architect; Feb. 25. At Penn, he was a member of Penn Players. His husband is John W. Skurchak III C'87.

1985

Karen Evans Rose WG'85, Hockessin, DE, a retired senior bank executive; Nov. 15, 2023. One daughter is Allison Deforest Rose G'22 WG'22.

Dr. Felix Vega V'85, San Francisco, Feb. 14.

1986

Eli R. Brill C'86, Elkins Park, PA, an environmental attorney specializing in air law; Dec. 2. At Penn, he was a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity.

1987

Kristin M. Cuene L'87, Whitefish Bay, WI, an attorney; April 2.

Richard C. Hagan G'87, a high school teacher and football and basketball coach; Feb. 21.

Dr. Paul D. Meyer GM'87 GM'88, Iowa City, IA, a retired anesthesiologist; Feb. 26.

1988

Lisa Ann Lewis C'88 WG'93, Seattle, a former executive at Amazon.com. Aug. 29, 2023. As one of Amazon's first 100 employees, she founded and led its customer and market research team. At Penn, she was a member of the Chi Omega sorority. Her father is Steve Lewis WG'70.

Joseph W. Malloy W'88, Media, PA, a former executive at J.P. Morgan; March 31.

1989

James M. Ellis GrEd'89, West Chester, PA, a retired art and art history teacher, and a graphic designer; Jan 25.

1990

Christopher J. Macsisak CGS'90, Patchogue, NY, chief operating officer and controller in the electrical division of the tree management company Asplundh; April 23, 2024.

Charlotte A. O'Neill G'90, Philadelphia, former director of a center for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; April 5.

Stuart L. Singer WG'90, Briarcliff Manor, NY, co-owner with his father of Stephen Singer Jewelers; April 8.

Catherine M. Slowicki WEv'90, Cape May Court House, NJ, an administrative assistant at AT&T and Lockheed Martin; Jan. 14.

1991

Rafael Coloca C'91, Pembroke Pines, FL, a financial advisor; March 11. At Penn, he was a member of the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Jason B. Goldstein W'91, Houston, TX, an investment banker; Feb. 25. At Penn, he was a member of the tennis team. His wife is Amy Santos de Dios Goldstein C'95.

Rita Anne Lucey GNu'91, Wilmington, DE, a retired clinical nurse specialist in electrophysiology and implantable devices; March 7.

1994

Nicholas J. Battiste WEv'94, Haddon Heights, NJ, a retired computer analyst and systems administrator at the Camden County (NJ) Library; Jan. 13.

Dr. Suzanne Ruch Jenkins C'94, Midlothian, VA, a retired veterinary epidemiologist and acting director of the Office of Epidemiology for the Virginia Department of Health; March 8.

Jonas S. Johansson GM'94, associate professor emeritus of anesthesiology and critical care in Penn's Perelman School of Medicine; March 10. He joined Penn's faculty in 1994 as an assistant professor in anesthesiology. In 2003, he advanced to associate professor, a role he held until his retirement in 2024.

Dr. Steven M. Millheim V'94, Nazareth, PA, a veterinarian; March 8. For a time, he worked at Penn Vet.

Lindsay Gordon Nataupsky GNu'94, Shavertown, PA, a head nurse practitioner at Planned Parenthood; April 26. Her husband is Dr. Gary M. Nataupsky D'79.

1996

Dong Qin Gr'96, Atlanta, former associate director of the Center for Nanotechnology at the University of Washington; Dec. 1, 2023. Her spouse is Younan Xia G'93.

1998

Mark C. Spenner W'98, Burlingame, CA, CEO and cofounder of Rumble Entertainment, an online gaming company; June 10, 2024. At Penn, he was a Benjamin Franklin Scholar and a member of the swimming team.

1999

Mary F. Rosell GNu'99, Little Egg Harbor, NJ, a retired nurse; Feb. 27.

Anita L. Zelinski CGS'99, Wilmington, DE, a retired administrative assistant at Wharton in the Legal Studies department; Feb. 18.

2000

Joseph W. Saumarez Smith WG'00, London, a pioneer in online sports betting and former British Horseracing Authority chair; March 1. At Penn, he was a recipient of the Thouron Award.

2003

John P. "Jay" Coblentz III WG'03, Sammamish, WA, former worldwide head of enterprise and industry solutions at Amazon.com; March 27. At Penn, he was a member of the rugby team.

Megan Sandel GEd'03, Morrisville, PA, a retired first-grade teacher; Oct. 11.

2011

Abdulaziz K. Al Mulla C'11 WG'15, Dubai, a former management consultant at McKinsey and founder of Madar Farms, a vertical farming initiative based in Dubai aiming to grow sustainable, fresh produce in the desert; July 15, 2024.

2015

Aadithya V. Prakash EAS'15 GEE'15, Saratoga, CA, a former firmware engineer; March 28. At Penn, he was a member of the Penn Band. One sister is Sahithya M. Prakash EAS'18 GEng'19.

Daniel P. Siegfried WG'15, Austin, TX, a real estate developer; Oct. 7.

2021

Steven Hoang Truong WG'21, Philadelphia, cofounder of BioPhy.AI, a fintech drug company; March 6.

2026

Alex M. McEntarffer GEd'26, Los Angeles, March 6.

Faculty & Staff

Juan J. Amodei. *See Class of 1961.*

Beryl "Butzie" Richman Dean. *See Class of 1964.*

Scott R. Douglass, Durham, NC, Penn's former vice president of finance and treasurer, and Wharton's chief financial and operating officer; April 26. He first came to Penn in 1992 as associate dean for finance and administration at Wharton, a role he held until 1997, when he became the senior associate dean. In these roles, he led the programming, design, and construction of Jon M. Huntsman Hall and the launch and commercialization of Wharton Research Data Services. In 2004, he was named Penn's vice president for finance and treasurer. During this time, he also served on the board of Penn Medicine. In 2007, he left Penn to become the executive vice president at his alma mater, the University of Delaware. He later served as a vice chancellor at North Carolina State University before returning to Wharton as its chief financial and operating officer in 2018. He retired from Wharton and Penn in 2024. Prior to his death, he was serving as interim vice president of finance and administration at Southwestern University.

Dr. Gertrude J. Frishmuth. *See Class of 1957.*

Herbert J. Gans. *See Class of 1957.*

Virginia "Ginny" Greene. *See Class of 1968.*

Edward L. Jeska. *See Class of 1966.*

Jonas S. Johansson. *See Class of 1994.*

Richard N. Juliani. *See Class of 1971.*

Alan G. Kirk II. *See Class of 1956.*

Dr. Michael T. Mennuti. *See Class of 1978.*

Dr. Steven M. Millheim. *See Class of 1994.*

Dr. James L. Mullen. *See Class of 1967.*

Curtis R. Reitz. *See Class of 1951.*

Dr. Burton Rosan. *See Class of 1957.*

Shirley Biddle Schmid. *See Class of 1969.*

Mary C. Selecky. *See Class of 1969.*

Paul Shaman, Wynnewood, PA, professor emeritus of statistics in the department of statistics and data science at Wharton; March 19. He came to Wharton in 1977 as an assistant professor of statistics, rising up the ranks to full professor in 1985. He served as chair of the department of statistics and data science from 1990 to 2002. His sons are David R. Shaman C'87 and Jeffrey L. Shaman C'90. One grandchild is Ethan M. Shaman C'28.

George R. Spann. *See Class of 1974.*

Patti Barnes Tatnall. *See Class of 1959.*

Richard Wernick, Haverford, PA, a Pulitzer Prize–winning composer and the Irving Fine Professor Emeritus of Music in Penn's School of Arts and Sciences; April 25. He joined Penn's faculty in 1968 as an associate professor of music and became a full professor in 1977. At various times during his tenure at Penn, he served as the Magnin Professor of Humanities and the Irvine Fine Professor of Music before retiring in 1996. During his career, he earned awards and commissions from the Ford, Guggenheim, and Naumburg Foundations, among many others. In 1977, he won the Pulitzer Prize for *Visions of Terror and Wonder*, a powerful work for mezzo-soprano and orchestra set to texts from the Old and New Testaments and the Quran, all of which contain appeals for peace ["Three Penn Composers," December 1977]. He was composer in residence for the Philadelphia Orchestra for several years in the 1980s and led the Penn Contemporary Players for many years. His scores, photographs, and letters are stored in the Kislak Center at Penn.

Anita L. Zelinski. *See Class of 1999.*

School Abbreviations

Ar	Architecture
ASC	Annenberg
C	College (bachelor's)
CCC	College Collateral Courses
CE	Civil Engineering
CGS	College of General Studies (till 2008)
Ch	Chemistry
ChE	Chemical Engineering
CW	College for Women (till 1975)
D	Dental Medicine
DH	Dental Hygiene
EAS	Engineering and Applied Science (bachelor's)
Ed	Education
EE	Electrical Engineering
FA	Fine Arts
G	master's, Arts and Sciences
GAr	master's, Architecture
GCE	master's, Civil Engineering
GCh	master's, Chemical Engineering
GCP	master's, City Planning
GD	Dental, post-degree
GEd	master's, Education
GEE	master's, Electrical Engineering
GEng	master's, Engineering and Applied Science
GEx	master's, Engineering Executive
GFA	master's, Fine Arts
GGS	master's, College of General Studies
GL	master's, Law
GLA	master's, Landscape Architecture
GME	master's, Mechanical Engineering
GM	Medicine, post-degree
GMt	master's, Metallurgical Engineering
GNu	master's, Nursing
GPU	master's, Governmental Administration
Gr	doctorate
GrC	doctorate, Civil Engineering
GrE	doctorate, Electrical Engineering
GrEd	doctorate, Education
GrL	doctorate, Law
GrN	doctorate, Nursing
GRP	master's, Regional Planning
GrS	doctorate, Social Work
GrW	doctorate, Wharton
GV	Veterinary, post-degree
Hon	Honorary
HUP	Nurse training (till 1978)
L	Law
LAr	Landscape Architecture
LPS	Liberal and Professional Studies
M	Medicine
ME	Mechanical Engineering
MT	Medical Technology
MtE	Metallurgical Engineering
Mu	Music
NEd	Certificate in Nursing
Nu	Nursing (bachelor's)
OT	Occupational Therapy
PSW	Pennsylvania School of Social Work
PT	Physical Therapy
SAMP	School of Allied Medical Professions
SPP	Social Policy and Practice (master's)
SW	Social Work (master's) (till 2005)
V	Veterinary Medicine
W	Wharton (bachelor's)
WAM	Wharton Advanced Management
WEF	Wharton Extension Finance
WEv	Wharton Evening School
WG	master's, Wharton
WMP	Wharton Management Program

Classifieds

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"A Peaceful Place"

Newly dedicated Peace Garden (left) and a wooden mockup of the *Peace Symbol* being placed a few months before its formal dedication in 1970.

Born out of a controversy over the University's stance on the war in Vietnam, the stainless-steel *Peace Symbol* on College Green has witnessed many subsequent protests and vigils—as well as generations of sun-seeking Penn students—since it was dedicated on January 27, 1970. Last year, in honor of their 50th Reunion, the cohort of students who arrived on campus the following fall decided to refurbish the area and create a garden to complement the sculpture, along with an endowment to maintain the space.

The completed Class of 1974 Peace Garden was dedicated during this year's Alumni Weekend in May. In remarks at the ceremony, Penn President J. Larry Jameson praised the Class's choice—"the purpose of this peace garden is really very encouraging"—and noted his own fondness, as a "pacifist at heart," for the sculpture as "just a very memorable part of Penn's campus."

As detailed in the *Daily Pennsylvanian* of the time, the idea of a peace monument emerged from a debate during the fall of 1969 over whether to fly US flags at the University at half-staff as a protest against the Vietnam War. For a while in the midst of it, flags didn't fly at all, sparking protests from within and beyond the campus, including a potential loss of government support. *Peace Symbol*—designed by history of art professor John McCoubrey and constructed by a team of students supervised by fine arts professor Robert Engman—was embraced as an alternative gesture to mourn those killed in the war.

Class of 1974 copresident Susan Danilow CW'74 G'74 called the peace garden project the "brainchild" of William "Bill" Hohns W'74, who said it also symbolized how "a university can go through a period of tumult and come out of that stronger than ever before." He and class leaders worked with University Architect Mark Kocent C'82 GCP'91 GFA'91 on plans for the garden, which was designed by Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architects of Ardmore, Pennsylvania, and installed by Green City Works, a contractor in University City. Incorporating fieldstone and seasonal plantings, it features a pair of raised stone markers commemorating the garden and the original dedication of the *Peace Symbol*.

The garden will also serve as a space for the Penn community to conduct memorials, in a move that had been advocated by student groups and supported by University chaplain and vice president for social equity and community Charles "Chaz" Howard C'00, who also spoke at the dedication.

"By way of blessing," he concluded, "may this new garden be a peaceful place. May it be a reminder of our work for peace. May it be a cleft in the rock for students who need a quiet moment. May it be arms for those who need a hug during hard times. And may it stand as a reminder that we are never alone." —*JP*

From left: Photo by Tommy Leonardi C'89; *Daily Pennsylvanian* photo courtesy Penn Archives

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