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What the Kids Are Saying These Days
Psychologist Mike Frank, '03, set out to try to answer one of linguistics’ fundamental questions: Is language innate or influenced by children’s environments? He ended up building a global database that sheds light on how language acquisition varies—or doesn’t—by gender, birth order, culture and more. Spoiler alert: Kids have more in common than you may think.

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The Good Fight
Silicon Valley Community Foundation is one of the largest foundations in the world, with roughly $9 billion in assets. Critics say it has enabled well-heeled donors to take advantage of tax breaks without adequately tending its own backyard. Here’s how its new CEO, Nicole Taylor, ‘90, MA ’91, plans to put the “community” back in “community foundation.”

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ALSO AVAILABLE AS AN E-BOOK AND AN AUDIOBOOK
I just want to say how much I enjoyed reading the short graphic novel in the December 2019 issue! I have a bad tendency to quickly recycle the magazine, but the curious cover made me dig deeper. The story was an amazing way to learn more about Stanford’s history.

Katie Neville, MS ‘19
Menlo Park, California

I was so thrilled to see Jonathan Fetter-Vorm’s [’05] “The Curious Case of Thomas Welton Stanford” in your December issue. Other readers who felt the same about this venture into graphic narratives might be interested in an organization I’ve spent more than a decade engaged with: Graphic Medicine, a group dedicated to bringing the power of graphic narratives to illuminate experiences of illness, medicine, disability and caregiving.

Susan Squier, MA ’75, PhD ’77
Boalsburg, Pennsylvania

Already, as a psychology major at Stanford, I had read The Reach of the Mind, J.B. Rhine’s scientific research in parapsychology, and There Is a River, a biography of Edgar Cayce, America’s great psychic. Now, more than 60 years later, with a PhD in psychology and a career of research in this field, I find mountains of evidence for the factuality and usefulness of psychic phenomena. Stanford’s neglect of this research opportunity is a great loss for the university and the world.

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Fountain Hills, Arizona

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Herbert Bruce Puryear, ’57
Fountain Hills, Arizona

The cover story of the Stanford alumni magazine December issue is a comic! I’ll give more info after I read it!

Brittany Netherton
@b_netherton

Both delighted and amused that @stanfordmag put my book on a list with Susan Rice’s [’86] book.

Jasmine Guillory, JD ’02
@thebestjasmine

Democracy and Distrust
A feature in the December issue reviewed Stanford scholarship on democratic recession worldwide.

My STANFORD magazine came this week. I took it to bed so I could read and rest before I went to sleep. BUT! I read your article “Free Fall,” and it woke me up. First, it was amazingly written—you revealed the reality of this issue in a way that could be understood and form the basis for further discussion of this problem.

All Kinds of Reads

Both delighted and amused that @stanfordmag put my book on a list with Susan Rice’s [’86] book.

Jasmine Guillory, JD ’02
@thebestjasmine
Second, it is clear that a number of Stanford people are addressing the issue of American democracy’s survival. That is good news.

David Hopelain, ’58
North Fork, California

A more appropriate title for Jill Patton’s [’03, MA ’04] excellent and timely article might be “An Existential Moment for Civilization?” If democracy in the true sense of the word is indeed being inexorably undermined and weakened across the globe, including in the United States, then the future of human civilization could very well be in doubt. This conclusion requires us to consider only three facts. First, the ongoing process of global climate change; second, the possession of planet-ending weapons by antidemocratic state actors across the world; and third, the mind-controlling grasp of social media technologies that is already being put to nefarious use by narrow agenda-driven groups the world over. This deadly combination is unprecedented in history, and without the moderating influence of fully empowered democratic institutions and processes it could lead to the end of the world as we know it. It is deeply disturbing to see that while climate change does get some media coverage and discussion, the rise of antidemocracy is hardly ever brought up.

If I may, I would like to point out that even the subject article did not mention some key examples of antidemocratic forces at play in the world today, such as the fired-up Hindu nationalist regime in the “largest democracy in the world,” India, and the enormous power and influence of global (mostly American) corporations. The massively damaging impact of the United States’ “Global War on Terror” on human rights and democracy was also not given the focus and attention it deserves. And saddest of all, I find, is the ready ease with which our billionnaire elites, most importantly our tech giants, shamelessly collude with anti-human-rights and antidemocracy forces across the globe in their seeming quest for massive near-term profits. However, all in all, this article and the work of luminaries like Larry Diamond [’73, MA ’78, PhD ’80] and his colleagues give us some hope that all is not lost, and that if given half a chance, our younger generations will unite across nations and nationalities to establish a global culture of absolute, not relative, commitment to human rights, justice, fairness and democracy.

Saiif M. Hussain, MS ’84
Woodland Hills, California

Jill Patton claims, “In the past, America has played a critical role on the global stage as a model for developing nations, a crusader for human rights and a bulwark against the spread of authoritarian regimes.” Our real history, well known to the rest of the world, is quite the opposite: a sordid legacy of toppling democracies to install ruthless dictators—Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), and Chile (1973) being the most notorious examples from a long, contemptible list. We used the Cold War to disguise our neocolonial machinations then. Now we use the “War on Terror.” Nonetheless, despite our invading Iraq under false pretenses, our drone-bombing civilians in Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan, our heinous rendition/torture program as well as our obscene military-industrial complex, Patton unabashedly refers to “China’s menace” and “Russian mischief.”

If the United States is ever to reestablish democracy at home or elsewhere, we must begin by abandoning the specious myth we tell of and to ourselves.

David Ellison, MA ’88
Berkeley, California

The implication that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is an example of dangerous antidemocratic insurgency throughout the world must be disputed. Prorogue—the ending of a parliamentary session in anticipation of convening anew at a later date—is a fixed feature of the unwritten British constitution, and the British High Court’s invalidation of the prime minister’s effort (and his acquiescence in it) shows that their democratic system is at least as healthy as ours. With hubris, we tend to think our system is a democratic ideal, lots of evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. The slur in your magazine on one of our last human rights and a bulwark against the spread of authoritarian regimes.” Our real history, well known to the rest of the world, is quite the opposite: a sordid legacy of toppling democracies to install ruthless dictators—Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), and Chile (1973) being the most notorious examples from a long, contemptible list. We used the Cold War to disguise our neocolonial machinations then. Now we use the “War on Terror.” Nonetheless, despite our invading Iraq under false pretenses, our drone-bombing civilians in Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan, our heinous rendition/torture program as well as our obscene military-industrial complex, Patton unabashedly refers to “China’s menace” and “Russian mischief.”

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Larry Tracy, ’61, JD ’65
Los Angeles, California

The article makes the case that our democracy is in danger. To support this thesis, the article cites “an American president getting cozy with dictators.” Later in the article, a Mr. Abramowitz says “no president in living
memory has shown less respect for [the U.S. constitutional system’s] tenets, norms and principles” and Madeleine Albright says Trump is “the first anti-democratic president in modern history.” Wow! I disagree. Trump supports free enterprise, free and fair trade, limited government and an America that insists its allies share the responsibility for maintaining a free world. That agenda sounds very democratic to me. He does talk to our adversaries, but I would hardly classify that as being “cozy” with them. In contrast, the liberal wing of the Democratic Party derides capitalism and wants government to have a major role in running the country because it knows best what is good for its citizens. No thank you, I will take the Trump version every day. The “elites” quoted in the article and those running for the Democratic nomination are the ones who will ruin our democracy if given the chance.

Charles Hoppe, ‘54
Carmel, California

“Free Fall” was an excellent survey of the state of the world.

In my opinion, globalization is the major cause of the turmoil we have seen in the past few decades. Due to the internet and efficient shipping, there is little friction to the world becoming a single labor marketplace. This has caused wages to even out over the globe. The result has been great for developing countries, but not so good for those countries where wages went down, such as the United States.

The hardships thus created led to anger and the desire to elect someone who promises to fix it. Especially if that person promises to bypass democracy’s slow decision processes.

It has always been ironic that the organs of the economy—corporations—are not themselves democracies but are autocratic, top-down affairs. Small wonder that a person with experience in them gets frustrated when he tries to run the country that way.

John Page
Saratoga, California

Thank you for the article. For those of us who value rationality over partisanship, it was a godsend.

Charles A. Krohn, Gr. ’62
Panama City Beach, Florida

Kudos

I’ve been reading STANFORD for many years, beginning even before I graduated. I would say the issue of December 2019 is the best issue I have ever read—and the competition is formidable. The quality of the writing shines and reflects the impressive work of the authors and the staff working together. I always enjoy reading the comments and contributions of those in my era as well as younger (and older!) authors. But this issue is particularly effective in bringing Stanford to us alums in an unusually appealing and even captivating way. I know from working with many of them, past and present, that the staff producing this publication is dedicated as well as talented. And it all shows.

Thank you for keeping us alums connected!

Bob Hamrdla, ’59, MA ’64
Palo Alto, California

About
Meyer Green

I prefer the old, dismal take on Meyer—but I suppose this is OK.
Christopher Oslebo, ’10

Wouldn’t a better name be “Green Green”?
Bob Svikhart, ’80

Of Cancer and Control

A story in the December issue discussed a big-data technique, borrowed from sports betting, to continually calculate a patient’s cancer prognosis.

I passed along the article to a friend and neighbor who is currently battling a significant
Dialogue

Stanford 7 cancer (with some hope of success). Her insightful response: “I really don’t want to know the prognosis at this point. I am largely living day-to-day. My goals are simple . . . to enjoy peace, serenity and gratitude. So much is right in my life in this moment. That is what I focus on.”

Keep up the great coverage of Stanford’s amazing range of research. Given the current political times, it really is uplifting to see such exciting ventures—even though too often only in academia!

Jim Warren, MS ’77
Hansville, Washington

Relationship Redux

We asked readers to tell us about a relationship that has lasted since their Stanford days. Read more responses on our website at alu.ms/lifelong.

I am currently having a lot of fun working with my old roommate, Doug Schuetz. I’m Class of ’80 and he’s ’81, and we were roommates back in the late ’70s. We’ve stayed in touch over the years and it’s always good to hear from him.

I’ve written a couple of books, and a big audiobook company turned the first one into an audiobook. Shame on me—Doug is (among many other talents) a voice actor and he was disappointed that my book had been recorded by someone else. But never fear, my second book needed a reader, and who better than Doug?

So we’ve been working on it for the past month or so and having a blast. He’ll record chapters and send them to me, and then we’ll talk about them. He’s a terrific talent and always was—he wrote and acted and directed for Gaieties back in the day. When he records one of the funny passages in my book, I marvel at how it’s even funnier with him reading than it is on the page.

At the end of the book, there’s a short biography of me. I asked Doug if he’d like to add one for himself, and this is what he recorded: “Doug Schuetz, the reader, was Keith’s college roommate.”

Keith Van Sickle, ’80
Menlo Park, California
Must-See Tree-V
In which our digital editor steps into the trunk of an infamous mascot.

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Putting Ethics at the Heart of Innovation

Stanford centers the humanistic and ethical considerations of new technology.

FROM VASTLY SAFER CARS to smart home systems, bioprinting to AI-assisted surgery, new technologies are transforming human society and enriching our daily lives. But while new products and applications have great potential to improve society, many also pose risks to human values—like privacy, security, freedom and equity. As the pace of change accelerates, it has become urgent that we take responsibility for the societal impact of our work and act to ensure that the benefits and burdens of technological advancement are fairly distributed. We cannot simply focus on innovation and let others worry about the risks.

To this end, Stanford’s Long-Range Vision pays special attention to the intersection of ethics, society and technology across each of its themes of empowering discovery and creativity, transforming learning and accelerating solutions. The goal of this focus is twofold: to empower researchers to explore the societal and ethical consequences of their work, and to ensure that students are equipped to address the effects of technological advancement, now and in the decades to come.

Stanford’s Ethics, Society and Technology Integrative Hub was developed under the Long-Range Vision to support our community in this work. Our hope for the hub is that, by assisting students and faculty in all seven Stanford schools as they explore the ethical dimensions of innovation, these values will become second nature in Stanford’s culture and beyond. By integrating ethics and innovation, the hub also offers new perspectives that we believe will spark further discovery and advances.

Indeed, innovation within this framework offers tremendously exciting possibilities for the future. Stanford’s Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, which launched last spring, convenes experts in areas like law, philosophy and the humanities alongside leaders in computer science and engineering to consider AI’s impact on society. The institute’s goal is to develop artificial intelligence that reflects humanity’s values and complements our capabilities—rather than dividing or replacing us.

Another critical aspect of our work is preparing Stanford students to tackle the challenges of the 21st century and manage rapid advances in science and technology. A new course in computer science, Computers, Ethics and Public Policy, encourages students to consider the societal effects of technology, including issues related to bias, privacy, security and political polarization. The course leverages the knowledge and expertise of faculty from the schools of humanities and sciences and of engineering. Demand is clear: In its first year, the class enrolled 300 students and had to turn away many more. Our students hunger for the opportunity to explore these issues.

While this course tackles ethics and technology, we are also making broader efforts under the Long-Range Vision to support undergraduate students in learning what it means to be engaged citizens in today’s world. Faculty members have proposed a first-year course focused on the ideas of civic education and global citizenship, to be taken by all incoming freshmen. Stanford’s faculty is debating the proposal and the shape the course would take, but the goal is to prepare students to address challenging ethical situations head-on and to contribute to the advancement of human society.

Stanford was founded with a purpose: to promote public welfare by exercising influence on behalf of humanity. Our renewed focus on ethics is one way to help ensure that human values do not get lost amid the fast pace of technological innovation. As Apple CEO Tim Cook said at last year’s commencement ceremony: “Technology doesn’t change who we are, it magnifies who we are, the good and the bad.” By embedding ethics at the heart of innovation, we can focus on magnifying the good and harnessing human ingenuity to improve lives and communities around the world.
Precision Health is a fundamental shift to more proactive and personalized health care that empowers people to lead healthy lives.

Stanford Medicine is driving this transformation by leveraging the art and science of medicine to predict and prevent disease before it strikes and cure it decisively if it does.
Junior Tyler Abramson is poised for triumph during the men’s water polo NCAA semifinal match against USC in December. Abramson’s three goals helped the Cardinal to a nail-biting, sudden-death overtime win. The following day, the men defeated Pacific 13–8 for the Card’s first NCAA title since 2002. Hours later, the women’s soccer team secured its second NCAA title in three years. And by the end of the month, women’s volleyball swept Wisconsin to win its second consecutive championship, bringing Stanford’s total NCAA title count to 126.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSE MORENO
They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but pictures don’t begin to tell the story.

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Stanford TRAVEL/STUDY

alumni.stanford.edu/goto/travelstudy
WHO WE ARE

Meet Noel Vest
Former felon finds purpose as a postdoc studying addiction.

“You have this self-conscious feeling, with your shoulders always clenched, that someone is going to walk up to you and say, ‘You don’t belong here. You can’t go to school here.’”
When Noel Vest walked out of Lovelock Correctional Center in 2009, he had no money, no job and 14 felonies on his record, including identity theft and methamphetamine use. Vest headed home to Washington state, where his first move was to ask his dad to drive him to the local community college to register for classes. His second was to see a dentist friend to rebuild his front teeth, which had rotted from drug use.

While he was incarcerated, Vest found a passion for school. The self-described mediocre student and class clown liked competing with fellow inmates for the best grades. He thought he might become an alcohol and substance abuse counselor when he got out—and he did. But while earning his bachelor’s in psychology at Washington State University Tri-Cities, he discovered his knack for research. For his PhD in experimental psychology at WSU’s main campus in Pullman, he studied how prescription opioid misuse affects people with borderline personality disorder.

Today, Vest is a postdoctoral scholar in the Systems Neuroscience and Pain Lab at Stanford Medicine, where he examines how people recover from addiction. He tracks how substance use and mental illness affect incarcerated veterans after they are released. He also evaluates collegiate recovery programs on how well they reduce the stigma surrounding addiction and assist the students using them.

“In my 20s, I didn’t want to listen to anyone, and I thought I knew what was best. It slowly but surely got worse. My first arrest was for possession of methamphetamine. I remember making that call to my dad. That was when my life of always being given the benefit of the doubt ended. I started losing friends and family. I lost my job and my car.”

“I fell into a pattern of being arrested and released. The big arrest was in Las Vegas for identity theft. I walked into Sears and tried to get fake credit under someone else’s name. Then I had drugs on me. I ended up serving seven years.”

“Two years ago, I heard about ‘Ban the Box’ legislation [which can prohibit employers or universities from putting a criminal history box on applications]. I helped author, find a sponsor for, testify on and advocate for the Fair Chance to Education Act in Washington. Now I’m helping to introduce Ban the Box [for college applications] in California. You carry this stigma with you your whole life. Here is one way to help lessen it.”

“I hope to someday have my own research lab, where I am able to recruit formerly incarcerated scholars to work with me on these issues. I think that giving opportunity to this underserved population is actually an obligation I have, based on the incredible opportunities and mentoring I have been given.”

“Recovering from drug use for me was like I’d been wearing my glasses backwards. All of a sudden I grabbed the glasses and put them back on the right way. The reward in my life had been substance use. The only time I ever quit was in jail. Finally, I was able to let those cobwebs in my brain and those pathways that were so established heal. For the first time, I started making decisions that weren’t drug-related.”
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All Right Now

18 MARCH 2020

IT WAS NOT MY FAULT. I will admit I was lonely, but with only the company of seagulls and shushing waves by day and distant stars and cold winds by night, you would have been, too. Sometimes I used to comfort myself by thinking about how beautiful I was, sparkling like a foggy diamond or an enormous pale sapphire, a beacon of mirrored light. If that were true, then Frederick should have seen me before it was too late. Though he didn’t, I suppose it was not his fault, either. If the lookouts had been given binoculars, if the captain had reduced speed, if the hull’s seams had been stronger, if the passengers had not been rendered complacent by the warmth inside, if the water had not been so deceptively calm, if, if, if, and so on.

Well. By the end, it was very quiet, if you can believe it. I was horrified at what I had done. But I had also seen frantic arms dipping down as nearly empty lifeboats slid by, heard the last gurgles of the poor trapped below as water rose to necks and noses, smelled despair as parents realized they could not save their children, as lovers realized they could not save each other or themselves. Yes, it was not my fault, it was theirs, because human error compounded and compounded until most of them forgot what heroism and goodness and sense were, and, really, remembering would not have helped in the end anyway.

TriAL OF A LIFETIME
By Katiana Uyemura

Microfiction, also called flash fiction or quick fiction, shows readers a new world, a novel point of view, in just a minute or two. “This is a game that fiction writers like to play,” says Stanford creative writing lecturer and former Stegner fellow Edward Porter. “It can be just a way of getting going, but it also allows the fiction writer to live in the world that poets live in,” one where the pride of completion often comes more quickly. Porter leads undergrads through the exercise with prompts like this: Use an unexpected narrator to tell us about a historical moment. Katiana Uyemura, ’19, found a cool one.

SPEED READ

A Maritime Tale
And a writerly warm-up.
The Concussion Categories

Knowing which subtype you have can help your doctor treat it.

A CONCUSSION is a mild traumatic brain injury that can have a variety of symptoms. In a recent paper published in Neurosurgery, Stanford researchers, led by pediatric emergency physician Angela Lumbar-Brown and neurosurgeon Jamshid Ghajar, identified five subtypes of concussions and recommended a different initial treatment for each one. While the categories are not mutually exclusive and share some symptoms (most concussions include headache at the outset, and sleep disturbances and neck problems are common), researchers hope identifying the symptoms particularly characteristic of each subtype will ultimately lead to more effective treatments for all concussions.

Headache/Migraine
Symptoms: Nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light, sound or smell.
Treatment: Headache management.

Ocular-motor
Symptoms: Headache, eye strain, difficulty with reading and screen time, sensitivity to light, trouble focusing, blurred or double vision, eye pain or pressure, and difficulty judging distances.
Treatment: Dynamic vision training with an optometrist.

Cognitive
Symptoms: Attention issues, impaired reaction time and problems with memory.
Treatment: Neuropsychological assessment and follow-up.

Vestibular
Symptoms: Dizziness, fogginess, light-headedness, nausea, vertigo and disequilibrium.
Movement may exacerbate the symptoms.
Treatment: Balance and vestibular-ocular training with a physical therapist.

Anxiety/Mood
Symptoms: Nervousness, emotionality, being overwhelmed, sadness, irritability, fatigue and feelings of hopelessness. A history of anxiety or migraine may predispose someone to this type of concussion, as may concurrent stressful events.
Treatment: Counseling, including cognitive-behavioral therapies.

Tuition Transition

A century ago, Stanford trustees approved a charge of $40 per quarter. This year marks a little-known milestone: Stanford began charging tuition 100 years ago.

In January 1920, Stanford trustees, struggling to meet the university’s financial obligations and lacking a robust endowment from which to draw, established a tuition fee of $40 per quarter. Accompanying the new cost was a provision that allowed students to borrow money at 5 percent interest with no payments necessary for seven years.

One year later, the fee increased to $75 per quarter, mostly so Stanford could build more student housing, according to then-president Ray Lyman Wilbur, Class of 1896, MA ’97, MD ’99. Male students were living three or four to a room, and some had been forced to reside with Palo Alto families.

In making the announcement, Wilbur noted that “our alumni body is too young to make the large contribution necessary” to preclude the hike in tuition.
The World in a Box
Nepalese schoolchildren get a better way to learn.

DAVID SOWERWINE, ’61, MBA ’72, AND SKIP STRITTER, MS ’69, PHD ’76, are accustomed to thinking outside the box, but in this case the box was the answer. Their solar-powered computer and audiovisual projector, housed in a 1-by-1-foot plywood case, allows teachers in Nepalese schools that have little or no electricity or Wi-Fi to vastly expand the amount of material available. They unpacked their “Looma box” for STANFORD. —Bob Cooper

The epiphany.
Sowerwine earned awards for innovating chasm-crossing wire bridges and low-wattage light bulbs while living in Nepal for 14 years, but his Looma box holds the most potential. “When I heard about super-efficient LED projectors in 2011, I realized the problem of insufficient electricity and Wi-Fi in schools could be solved,” he says.

Super-streamlined.
Assisted by software specialist Stritter, chief architect of the first Macintosh microprocessor, Sowerwine recruited volunteers and students (including Stanford engineering undergraduates) to refine the hardware, software and content of Looma boxes. The cost of the box and its contents is $1,000; solar panels and storage batteries add another $1,000.

Stuffed with stuff.
Each 128 GB quad-core Odroid computer comes preloaded with most government-approved textbooks and 15,000 open-source media files, including Khan Academy courses, TED Talks, Wiki for Kids pages, history time lines, maps, educational games and videos covering all school subjects in Nepali and English for grades 1 through 10.

Show, don’t tell.
The AV projection system combines a 700-lumen LED projector with speakers, allowing the teacher, using a remote wand, to display content on a classroom wall while students hear and repeat English and Nepali words.

Ready for takeoff.
The box is being used this year in 12 Nepalese schools, benefiting more than 3,000 students. There are plans to expand to 50 or more schools in 2020–21. “The open-source technology of the boxes makes them adaptable for use in any country,” says Sowerwine, who is in discussions with officials from Kenya and Sierra Leone to fund and deploy the Looma box in those countries. “These boxes can help to transform education in the developing world.”
It’s Not Easy Being Green

An editor’s epic quest results in a documenTree.

STANFORDMAG.ORG editor Summer Moore Batte, ’99, has been pining to step into the Stanford Tree’s trunk for 15 years now, but the first five mascots she approached Treejected her outright. Some ideas, though, are evergreen, and this year’s Tree, Caroline Kushel, ’21, generously extended a branch. After enduring an entire hour of Kushel’s punishing training, Batte was granted the privilege of donning the sacred foliage at the Stanford vs. CSU Fullerton basketball game. And we filmed it: alu.ms/DocuTree.

People who have ever been the Tree (42 students, 1 middle-aged alum journalist, and 1 former ESPN columnist who shall not be named and shall forever be that alum’s nemesis).

Approximate weight, in pounds, of costume.

Approximate height, in feet, of the Tree when strapped to adult human.

Doorways bashed due to excessive height.

Times the Tree was greeted respectfully as “ma’am.”

Pounds lost from being the Tree. Dang it.

Aside from being temporarily shunned by society and cumulatively costing our employers billions each year, most of us suffer no long-term damage from colds. But everyone wants a cure. And Stanford scientists may have found it.

There are about 160 types of rhinovirus, representing about half of all cold nastiness. Rhinoviruses are mutation-prone and drug-resistant, which is how children and subway passengers can bring you a new one each month. But colds do have a weakness: They appear to need a specific protein in order to replicate within your cells.

A team led by microbiologist and immunologist Jan Carette and biologist Or Gozani identified the protein, then temporarily disabled it in mice and in human cell cultures—which stopped reproduction of a broad range of enteroviruses, including rhinoviruses and those associated with asthma, encephalitis and polio. So put a tissue in your scrapbook, because colds may someday be a thing of the past.

Who should Summer be next?
Tell us at dialogue@alumni.stanford.edu

See Ya, Sniffles

Closing in on a cure for the common cold.
AS APPEALING AS IT MIGHT SOUND to tell your manager to “take this job and shove it,” that approach rarely works in your favor long-term. At some point in our careers, most of us will find ourselves in a job—or with a boss—we don’t like. Fortunately, today’s labor market has high tolerance for people who change jobs frequently. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, adults hold an average of 12.3 jobs by age 52. And if it’s your first job you want to quit? First jobs are considered just that: It’s not the end of the world if you need to make a move.

Before you march into your boss’s office, consider the advice of Bill Burnett, ‘79, MS ’82, executive director of Stanford’s product design program and co-founder of the Life Design Lab, and Dave Evans, ‘75, MS ’76, a lecturer in the program and co-founder of Electronic Arts. The two authored the bestseller Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life and recently released the successor Designing Your Work Life: How to Thrive and Change and Find Happiness at Work. They recommend “generative quitting,” a multi-step process to help you leave well—if you leave at all.

ASK THE BOSS

Find out if you can redesign your current position to create the job you want. If you’re planning to quit, you don’t have much to lose by approaching your boss.

Pitch your idea so that it is clear that the change doesn’t just serve you but is also a good move for the organization. If you don’t ask, you’ll never know what would have been possible.
LOOK INSIDE, GET OUTSIDE

Examine your current workplace with fresh eyes. People don’t usually quit jobs—they quit bosses. “Often it’s not really that the company sucks,” says Evans, “it’s that this role or your boss is the problem.”

If you’ve been smart, you’ve made connections with people in other departments and groups. Maybe there is a role like yours in a different part of the organization, under another manager.

If it’s the role that doesn’t fit, you are more likely to have a shot at a different position right where you work now. They’ve already invested in you, so they may retrain you if they can see an upside. “Be sure you fully exploit the network you have,” advises Burnett, who adds that if you have a job while you’re looking for a new one, you’re four times more likely to be considered than if you’re unemployed.

But if the place is falling apart or the culture is untenable, it’s time to get out. Never stay in a situation that is abusive or toxic.

REV UP YOUR NETWORK

Your most powerful network is the people you work with: those who would be really sad if you quit. If you handle your exit well, they’ll be your referrers—and most employers say referrals are their best source of above-average candidates.

What if you realize, “These people are not going to say great things about me”? Spend six more months on the job and clean up your mess, because the same problems are going to follow you to the next job and the one after that. It doesn’t matter whether you like the environment. As Evans and Burnett put it, “The quality of your work has nothing to do with the quality of your boss.”

KEEP IT CLASSY

If you decide to leave and your departure has been announced, be sure not to tell “bad stories” about the place. Stay in touch with your former workmates, even the ones you’re probably never going to see again. People create opportunities. These are the people who will come back around and either help you or haunt you.

You won’t get to rewrite this part of your story, so make sure it says, “I am a productive, contributing person. How lucky they were to have me, and how lucky my new employer is to get me.”

WRITE A MANUAL

Evans and Burnett recommend writing a manual for how to do your job well and leaving it on your desk. The new person will walk in on Day One to find a three-ring binder to help them out. You can include a note: “I hope you have great success in this job. You know what to do, you’re a smart person, but just in case, here are some tips on how to pull this thing off.” Remember, you worked hard to learn this job. You put things in place. Is the work you did worth throwing away, or worth securing? Give yourself a chance to matter. Writing a manual also increases your own competence and can serve as helpful info for your references. “Here’s how this works. Oh, Jane did that.”

EXIT WELL

Your exit includes everything from how you deliver your resignation letter to how you talk in the hallway about why you’re leaving and your future plans. Leave the campground better than you found it. Write a positive letter telling your former boss what you learned and how you grew. Know what you are taking with you and what you are leaving behind. You want to look at the building one day and say, “Thank you for these gifts.”
HOW A SMALL NONPROFIT IS HELPING TRIBES BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

BY JILL PATTON

WHAT WOULD YOU DO with a personal day? Maybe get your hair cut. Take your kid to the dentist. Go for a run. Or, if you’re Mariel Triggs, MA ’12, you might dash down to Arizona, where—in a few hours—you’ll help set up the equipment that brings high-speed internet to the most remote community in the continental United States.

An educational consultant at the time, Triggs did just that in late 2017. A few months later, a provisional FCC license in hand, the 423 members of the Havasupai tribe living at the base of the Grand Canyon suddenly had new capabilities—and new prospects. Kids could do online research for their homework while they were actually at home. Head Start teachers could take the online classes required for their teaching certificates. Students in a pilot GED program—there is no high school in Supai, Ariz.—could connect by satellite to classes being taught 168 miles away. And for a place visited by 40,000 tourists a year but prone to flash flooding, and reachable only by foot, horse or helicopter, better connectivity for educational purposes has inspired the tribe to plan for even broader applications.

“There’s so much hope with this broadband and our self-deployment,” says Ophelia Watahomigie-Corliss, the Havasupai tribal councilwoman who heads the tribe’s telecommunications and health services initiatives. “We may be one of the most extreme examples of the tribal digital divide, but our problems are Indian country’s problems.”

In the United States, 17 million of the 21 million people who lack fixed-line broadband access live in rural areas. (That’s one-third of all rural Americans.) The issue is twice as bad on rural tribal lands, where two-thirds of people lack high-speed internet connectivity. Eighteen percent of people living on reservations have no home internet access at all, according to a 2019 study by the American Indian Policy Institute at Arizona State University.

The Havasupai were one of the first tribes to benefit from the work of a small Oakland-based nonprofit called MuralNet, where Triggs is now CEO. Its mission is to help tribal nations build and operate their own networks. Although Triggs is the sole full-time employee, the organization maintains partnerships with nonprofits, companies, law firms and other volunteers to provide tribes—for free—with the training, legal counsel and planning support they’ll need to become self-sufficient. On any given day, Triggs might be doling out a network starter kit, drawing up an engineering plan, installing hardware on a roof, teaching people how to connect to their network or calling the FCC’s wireless division—again.

“So, Mariel basically does everything,” says Martin Casado, MS ’07, PhD ’07, the venture capitalist who co-founded MuralNet in 2017 with networking consultant Brian Shih. “It’s unbelievable the amount of work.”

In a way, MuralNet’s story began when Casado was a child. He grew up in Flagstaff, Ariz., attended public schools that served mostly Native students, and earned his undergraduate degree from Northern Arizona University (NAU). He met Triggs when they were both interns at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Casado’s graduate research at Stanford on software-defined networking led him to co-found Nicira, a network virtualization company that VMWare acquired in 2012 for $1.26 billion.

Along the way, he met other Silicon Valley folks concerned with bridging the digital divide, but many were focused on faraway problems,
STEADY NOW: Maka’awa’awa, Matt Rantanen, Triggs and Darrah Blackwater help the Nation of Hawai‘i set up a community broadband network.
like bringing cell service to Africa. “There are a tremendous number of unconnected people in the United States, and almost nobody was solving the U.S. problem,” Casado says. He started noodling with ways to combine his doctoral research, his company’s technology and open-source software for use with small cell towers. The result was a DIY network that’s inexpensive (about $15,000 to set up, compared with $200,000 for a large cell tower) and easy to use. It can be installed in an afternoon.

Casado pitched his plan to Triggs during a dinner party. “We have a situation where someone has to travel around a lot, and they have to be a jack-of-all-trades, and they have to be willing to stay in really shitty motels,” he said.

“I’m in,” Triggs said.

A chemical and materials science engineer by training, Triggs earned her master’s at Stanford, where she tested online learning modules that could influence people’s mindsets about how they learn math. She then worked as a teacher and a consultant for 15 years. The opportunity to address the “homework gap”—the inequity between kids who can connect to the internet at home and those who can’t—was one reason Triggs joined MuralNet, first as a volunteer and later as its COO.

“It was hitting me hard that the stuff I was working on would actually increase the educational performance gap,” she recalls, “because people could use these golden bullets to do better educationally. And if you didn’t even have access to the internet…”

When it comes to the rural digital divide, infrastructure generally isn’t the problem. Under the Obama administration, fiber-optic cabling was trenched out to most schools. But many rural areas still lack connectivity, Casado says, because most broadband spectrum is owned and operated by the major telcos, which often don’t use it in rural areas because it’s not profitable. Even Educational Broadband Services (EBS) spectrum, once earmarked for schools and other educational entities, is controlled by telcos. While only schools and nonprofits could license it from the government, Casado says most of them turned around and leased their EBS spectrum to Sprint, thinking the company might build towers nearby and offer broadband to the communities. It didn’t.

MuralNet has set out to solve the spectrum problem for tribes.

“I’ve been talking to the chief of staff of the FCC’s wireless telecommunications bureau more often than my own mother,” Triggs says. “This is where being a little sister has been really helpful—I know how to needle people.” Last year, after months of consultations, the FCC announced the creation of a priority window, from February 3 to August 3, 2020, during which federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages can obtain unassigned EBS spectrum over their lands. In August, the remaining EBS spectrum will go up for auction.

Triggs describes the spectrum to tribal leaders as “invisible rivers in the sky.” She has made it her mission to ensure that people on all 514 tribal lands and Native villages with unclaimed EBS spectrum know about the opportunity to apply for it. She and a panel of partners are hosting regional meetings and visiting tribal councils across the country to spread the word. “There will be a representative for every tribal land who knows what the opportunity means,” Triggs vows. “Whether they can get through the politics, I can’t say.”

Chad Hamill, a descendant of the Spokane tribe and vice president of Native American initiatives at NAU, introduced the Havasupai to MuralNet and vouched for the organization to a wary tribal council. (Watahomie-Corliss says the tribe has been “used and abused” for years by people seeking free trips to the bottom of the canyon. For 15 years, they’d courted offers of support for their telemedicine efforts, all of which fizzled.) Hamill says the tribal priority window is a matter of justice. “An opportunity to claim this unused broadband is in some respects akin to claiming what rightfully belongs to tribal communities,” he says. “These frequencies travel over tribal lands. It’s an issue of controlling their own destiny. It’s an issue of self-determination.”

Sometimes communities have access to spectrum but lack infrastructure. And so, in November, Triggs was mounting antennas on a roof in the Oahuuan village of Pu’uuhonua O Waimanalo, helping leaders of the Nation of Hawai’i set up the state’s first community broadband network. Dating to 1994, the Nation of Hawai’i is the oldest existing Hawaiian sovereignty group, and it operates from a 55-acre parcel of land it won from the state after its 15-month occupation of nearby Makapu’u Beach. While Triggs was there, she trained the community’s members on how to connect to the network.

“We’re not the most high-tech people,” says Brandon Maka’awa’awa, the nation’s deputy head of state, “and she made it really comfortable and simple for us. We weren’t afraid to ask questions. It was all about empowering our people, and that matches our lifestyle. That’s what we stand for.”

Kids from Pu’uuhonua O Waimanalo used to travel to a Starbucks or a McDonald’s to get the internet connection they needed in order to file their homework. There was no broadband service, and residents relied on pricey cell phone hotspots and a few satellite dishes.

But Burt Lum, MS’81, the Hawaiian government’s strategy officer for broadband, sought a new working relationship with the nation and introduced them to a series of partners, including MuralNet, that helped them get fiber-optic cabling to their land and the other hardware they needed. Now, Maka’awa’awa says, three-quarters of the houses in the community—about 12—have internet access.

Back on Havasupai land, efforts to expand broadband access beyond the pilot program continue. Only houses in the line of sight of the tower have broadband speeds, and the council wants to better connect the people living farther from central Supai. “As sovereign entities, we do have the ability to create policy on our own land—we just need some help sometimes,” Watahomie-Corliss says. “We’re still working on it, but we’re farther than we ever have been. And MuralNet will be with us until the end—I know they will. They’ll make sure that the new telecommunications systems are up and running, they’ll give us training to monitor it and support it ourselves, and they won’t leave until we’re ready.”

JILL PATTON, ’03, MA ’04, is the senior editor of Stanford.
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STUDENT VOICE

Buddy System

‘You can’t make friends with everyone’ is quitter talk.

THINK YOU FREAKED HIM OUT,” my roommate said, after I tried and failed to entice my boyfriend’s summer roommate, whom I’ll call Benny, over for mac and cheese.

“Uh… I’m OK,” Benny had said, looking apprehensive before shutting the door.

In his defense, the sight of me sporting baby-blue oven mitts and proffering a pot of freshly broiled mac and cheese was probably, as the kids say, “a lot.”

“I was just trying to be friendly!” I said.

“This guy just moved in with some rando with an existing social group. I want him to feel welcome.” My roommate, Liz; aforementioned rando, Preston; and I sat cross-legged on my floor, picking at the remaining pasta.

“Friendly isn’t the issue,” Liz said. “It’s your whole vibe. It’s very… ‘Mom has supper ready.’”

“That’s ridiculous,” I said.

It’s really not. Admittedly, I radiate heavy mom vibes: the kind of intensely dorky, vaguely maternal energy that says, “Yes, I do have this cardigan in two other colors.” I use the phrase “hip with the kids” unironically. I cackle maniacally when I get a good parking spot. When I go to parties, I carry a cross-body purse filled with granola bars, shot glasses (for responsible drink measuring) and other people’s phones.

“Just don’t try so hard,” Liz said.

“I scoffed. “Now that’s really ridiculous.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever been naturally gifted at anything other than committing my entire being to an often questionable goal. Making friends is no exception. As an extroverted middle schooler with an analytical, sometimes misdirected bent, I figured I could offset my natural awkwardness through effort and research. So I wikiHow’d friend-making strategies and then wrote elaborate protocols for myself. (Maybe not that elaborate: One of them was “run toward crowds instead of away from them.”) In high school, I wrote “An Algorithmic Approach to School Dances” as a joke and an actual document of social algorithms not as a joke. I got heavily into the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator because the idea that there was some code to humans that I could crack if I studied hard enough seemed utopic.

“I think Benny thinks I’m annoying,” I said, dejected, a few weeks later.

“Yes,” Liz said.

“Oh, 100 percent,” Preston added.

“Thanks, guys,” I said. After a few weeks of my enthusiastically saying “hi” when I saw Benny in the halls, I had simmered down to giving him a wide berth when I walked through his room. “I mean, I guess in his position, I would also find me annoying.”

“No, you wouldn’t,” said Preston.

“Fine, you’re right. I wouldn’t,” I said.

“I would find the attention flattering and charming.” I sighed. “Alas.”

“You just come on kind of strong,” Liz said. “It took me a while to get used to.”

This concern is not new to me. Since high school, I’ve maintained a “friend hit list,” a dynamic set of interesting people I aggressively pursue as friends. To illustrate, I went up to someone in my dorm and said something like: “I’ve thought you seemed cool for a while now—would you like to get lunch on Thursday?” And now we’re friends! Bam, what a rush! I wished something into being, and then I made it happen. We are as gods.

I’ve done this enough times to understand that this level of bluntness isn’t
A new friend is a new mind
everyone’s jam, and I’ve read enough personal essays to know that the lesson I’m supposed to take away here is that, optimization be damned, I can’t be friends with everybody. But, like, where’s the fun in that?

“I’ve been Benny in this situation before,” Preston said. “I think he just genuinely doesn’t get why you’d want to be friends with him.”

I get that I don’t have to do this anymore. I am no longer the socially stumbling middle schooler grasping for connection—I have plenty of friends, fantastic ones. Nor do I need Benny’s approval to validate my social value; my self-conception isn’t damaged by his ambivalence. But for every person I annoy by pushing too hard, there’s someone (like Liz and Preston and countless others) I wouldn’t have gotten to know without the effort. People don’t default toward connection. We are asteroids in a void, glancing off each other and spinning out into oblivion, and it takes concerted effort to overcome our human predilections toward isolation and self-involvement. But a new friend is a new mind, a new universe of perspectives. So why wouldn’t I make strides to get to know a stranger who’s been cast into my orbit? The risk is embarrassment, but the reward is an entire world.

“Honestly,” Liz said to Preston and me later that night, “I didn’t think I was going to be friends with either of you. You’re both weird stereotypes.”

“Stereotypes?”

“Yeah.” She turned to Preston. “I thought you were, like, a nerd with no social skills.” She pivoted to me. “And you’re the most emotional person I’ve ever met.” She paused and looked sheepishly at the ground. “But you grew on me.”

Hear that, Benny? I’m coming for you.

Mei-Lan Steimle, ’21, a product design major, is a friend to some, a stranger to herself and the sworn enemy of potted plants everywhere. Email her at stanford.magazine@stanford.edu.
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What are the kids saying these days?

TRUCK

SISTER

CANDY
A STANFORD SCHOLAR HELPS THE WORLD ANALYZE HOW CHILDREN ACQUIRE LANGUAGE DIFFERENTLY—AND JUST HOW MUCH THEY HAVE IN COMMON.

BY DENI ELLIS BÉCHARD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIMOTHY ARCHIBALD

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GIORGIA VIRGILI
his daughter’s first word. In Madeline’s babbling, he’d already discerned those classic baby sounds “ba,” “da” and “ma,” but when she was 10½ months old, she began saying “BAba” each time she saw Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? The book, by Eric Carle, was one of her favorites. At first, Frank doubted that “BAba” constituted a word (the etymological root for “babble” is, after all, the repeated use of “ba” by toddlers), but as he observed Madeline speaking it, he noted its “word-y” qualities: the stress on the first syllable, the descending intonation and a hint of an R after each B. She made the sound only when the book was around, “with the exception of one or two potential false alarms when another book was present,” he wrote in his blog. This was, indeed, language, he decided. Then, three weeks later, she stopped using the word, and he never heard it again.

Frank, ‘03, wasn’t just an attentive father describing the nuances of his firstborn’s proto-language with the zeal of a connoisseur; he was also a Stanford psychologist specializing in that earliest of linguistic fermentations: children’s language acquisition. For the past five years, the associate professor has been building Wordbank, an online trove in which he collects the utterances of tykes from 8 to 36 months. So far, he has gathered those of 39,964 females, 40,113 males and 2,900 children whose genders are unidentified. They hail from 29 language groups, including Cantonese, Hebrew, Kigirima, Norwegian, Turkish, French in Quebec and France, and English in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

While Wordbank has many uses, its primary purpose is to answer a question that has long haunted linguists: How much of language acquisition is innate and therefore the same everywhere on earth, and how much of it is affected by environment? “Early language is our first clue about this process,” Frank says. “The approach we take is directly inspired by this idea of what’s universal across languages and across the process of language learning.”

The challenge in Wordbank—and Frank’s forte—lies in making sense of the sundry infantile proclamations that he has accumulated in the millions. He and his team have spent years building computational tools to create order from hullabaloo, and the first results began coming in around the time that Madeline was making her earliest forays into speech. They revealed that while education and nurturing are, of course, extremely important, in the end, tots and their linguistic tactics are unpredictable.

“There are a lot of differences between kids that can’t be explained by their demographics or their backgrounds,” Frank says. “Kids are really variable, and I find that liberating as a parent—that you can relax a little bit and watch them grow in the direction and at the pace that they want to, knowing that a lot of that variability is out of your control. It’s about the path that they want to take into language.”

The biggest constant, it turns out, may be difference. Rates and styles of language learning vary within social classes, schools—even the same home. In the forthcoming book on Wordbank, Variability and Consistency in Early Language Learning, Frank and three colleagues write, “Although some 18-month-olds already produce 50–75 words, others produce no words at all, and will not do so until they are two years or older.”

Even when there are patterns, such as in the
What the Kids are Saying

Most common first words (among the first 10 words uttered in many languages are “mommy,” “daddy,” “woof woof,” “no,” “bye,” “hi,” “yes,” “vroom,” “ball” and “banana”), babies can also be distinct in how they emerge onto the linguistic stage, as Madeline’s use of “BAba” reminds us. Many of Wordbank’s other findings show similar consistency and variability, such as how firstborns speak compared with their siblings, whether toddlers prefer nouns or verbs, which words are more likely to be spoken by girls or by boys, and how girls master language more rapidly than boys.

Though Wordbank can’t always reveal the reasons children learn in the ways that they do, its data allows researchers to see the patterns in child learning that hold steady across cultures. It also provides them with new avenues for exploration, allowing them to conduct studies with greater precision, searching for potentially larger, subtler or more complex factors that influence language acquisition.

And, like the children whose data it stores, Wordbank is growing, absorbing new data that, along with its code, is open to everyone.

Baby Steps Toward Baby Talk

Stanford’s first steps toward becoming a hub for the study of hubbub took place in the 1950s, when linguistics professor Charles Ferguson became interested in how people spoke to infants and pets. After Eve Clark joined the linguistics faculty in 1971, she took over teaching language acquisition. In 1973, she and a committee of graduate students began organizing the Child Language Research Forum, the first—and for many years the only—conference on language acquisition, which ran until 2009. During Clark’s half-century in the field, Stanford researchers made a number of discoveries, such as that small children know a great deal about how language is used and adapt their role-playing to take into account gender, social status and setting. However, much of the research from that time was in response to MIT linguist Noam Chomsky’s proposal that

DATA DRIVEN: Frank studies the language acquisition of 82,977 children at work and two—Jonah and Madeline—at home.
children had an innate capacity for language. “He argued that children didn’t need feedback,” Clark says, “and that they could learn things that weren’t even present in the input they were getting.” Research at Stanford, in contrast, showed that a staggering 60 percent of children’s errors in word choice, word form and pronunciation were implicitly corrected when parents interpreted the talk (“So a child might say,” explains Clark, “‘I come that in,’ meaning ‘I brought it in,’ and the parent might say, ‘Oh, you brought it in?’”) Furthermore, when children used verbs incorrectly, their parents provided interpretation of this nature 90 percent of the time.

The debate around innateness was still very much alive in 1999, when Mike Frank came to Stanford as an undergraduate with a fascination for languages. He double-majored in comparative literature and symbolic systems, an interdisciplinary program created in 1985 by faculty in philosophy, linguistics, computer science and psychology. “Language was this window into human uniqueness,” he says, “and the uniqueness of our ability to tell stories and narratives to define ourselves. Language allows us to coordinate our activities at unprecedented scale and leads to a tremendous number of uniquely human achievements.”

During his sophomore year, Frank investigated whether the language we speak changes how we think about the world. Under Lera Boroditsky, PhD ’01, a Stanford doctoral student and later assistant professor who now teaches at UC San Diego, he worked on a study evaluating whether Russian speakers, who have two words for blue—one for light blue and one for dark blue—distinguished those shades more readily than English speakers, for whom the two colors are just called blue. (They do, the study concluded.)

Frank also steeped himself in the history of linguistics—the debates over whether all humans, regardless of culture, have a similar universal linguistic template in their brains or whether “language emerges from an intersection of specific abilities and orientations, not just innate grammar,” as he puts it. The latter theories argued “that languages are learned through social interaction and that learning is more gradual,” he says. Michael Ramscar, then a professor of psychology, told him that the best way to investigate philosophical questions about the nature and origins of language was to study children. That, Frank remembers thinking, “was an immensely powerful and exciting argument.”

As a doctoral student at MIT, he created computer models to predict how children would learn under different circumstances—for instance, how a child might acquire language when observing other people speaking and interacting as opposed to when being taught words directly by an adult.

“But once you create the theory,” Frank says, “you need to go out and get the data to test it.” This is precisely what he began to do in 2010, after he joined the Stanford faculty. “I looked around and there weren’t any more data on offer. Nobody had the data that I needed.”

In 2015, Frank approached psychologist Virginia Marchman, who is now one of his co-authors on the Wordbank book. Marchman was on the advisory board of the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (CDIs), questionnaires created by language researchers in 1988 to allow parents to record how their children communicated. Having parents inventory their kids’ vocabularies at home, in their natural environment, had been shown to be more effective than studying children in the lab. Researchers around the world also adapted CDIs to their languages, using words important in those cultures. And in every region, before the researchers could use CDIs to evaluate individual children, they had to do norming studies—surveys of thousands of monolingual children to establish local norms. The studies turned out to be an untapped trove.

“Each of those groups had CDIs for thousands of kids, often in a filing cabinet or in an Excel file or whatever on their computer,” Frank recalls. So he made a proposal to Marchman: Would it be...
possible to bring all that data together to stimulate innovation and answer the most challenging questions about linguistics?

The idea appealed to her. “Making data open and accessible to other people is good for the field,” she says, “and it’s good for science in general.” She told him that the CDI board meeting would be the following week in San Diego and invited him to make his pitch.

Shortly after doing so, he began receiving CDIs, but several years passed before many of the researchers responded. “I like to say that I started with the Field of Dreams model: ‘If you build it, they’ll come running and they’ll give you your data,’” Frank says. “But I ended up much more with a sense that if you build something really compelling, then it forms a way for you to ask them repeatedly to contribute.”

**CROATIAN OR CANTONESE? FIRSTBORN OR LATER-BORN?**

The heart of Wordbank is its openness. Looking back on his presentation at that CDI conference five years ago, Frank sees it as the moment when he transitioned away from focusing on theory. “That experience moved me toward being somebody who works on getting data out there and sharing it openly and trying to create tools for dealing with those data.”

Wordbank pages have a link to GitHub, a software development and sharing platform, where users can download the data as well as the code that Frank and his team developed to analyze it. This allows other researchers to evaluate how Wordbank’s results were derived, to apply the code to their own work or to crunch the information in a different way.

The data itself has many applications, Frank explains—from studying cognitive development to evaluating notions of fairness among children. There is one limitation researchers are working to remedy: It’s hard to use Wordbank to study language acquisition in multilingual children, since the bulk of its CDIs were taken from norming studies, which tested only monolingual children to ensure consistency.

Despite his pivot to information-sharing, Frank remains committed to his theoretical investigation. “We use our data to do a cross-linguistic look at what is consistent across languages and try to use the data to constrain our theories,” he says. “But it all comes down to understanding why and how kids learn language—what’s the shared core of these abilities across different languages and cultures.”

Frank’s tenacity has paid off with insights about how children around the world engage with language. At times, Wordbank has shown consistency within one language group but variability across groups, as with the question of whether kids prefer nouns or verbs early on. Children in most Western language groups, such as French, Norwegian and English, tend to learn nouns first. “You’ve got these really annoying verbs like ‘make’ or ‘do’ that are hard to figure out from context.”

Frank says, “because you could make the bed, you could make lunch or you could make a mess. That’s a complicated thing to figure out by looking, because there’s not that much in common between making the bed and making a mess.” Cantonese and Mandarin, however, have concrete verbs that small children can identify and learn early on by watching those who speak them.

Wordbank also reveals how children’s birth order affects their speech. Firstborns often speak earlier than later-born children, most likely because they get more one-on-one attention from parents. And they favor different words than their siblings. **Whereas firstborns gable on about animals and favorite colors, the rest of the pack cut to the chase with “brother,” “sister,” “hate” and such treats as “candy,” “popsicles” and “donuts.”** The social dynamics of siblings, it would appear, prime their vocabularies for a reality different than the firstborns’ idyllic world of sheep, owls, the green of the earth and the blue of the sky.

Children also adopt vocabulary quite differently depending on their mother’s level of education. In American English, among the words disproportionately favored by the children of mothers who have not completed secondary education are “so,” “walker,” “gum,” “candy,” “each,” “could,” “wish,” “but,” “penny” and “be” (ordered starting with the highest frequency). The words favored by the children of mothers in the “college and above” category are “sheep,” “giraffe,” “cockadoodledoo,” “quack quack,” the babysitter’s name, “gentle,” “owl,” “zebra,” “play dough” and “mittens.” (Frank tends to focus on word production, which is more reliably measured than comprehension because it involves less subjective evaluation by parents.)

Since few American children gambol with giraffes or zebras—or—in a country where more than 82 percent of people live in urban areas—even with sheep, ducks and roosters, Wordbank users can surmise that the favored words for this group were learned from children’s books and trips to the zoo, rather than from expeditions on the Serengeti. Given that Frank’s wife, Alison Kamhi, ‘03, a Fulbright scholar and an immigration attorney, is in the “college and above” category, it’s no surprise that “BAba,” Madeline’s first word, was inspired by a book about a brown bear—an apex predator she has surely never had to outrun.

**DOLLS ARE PRETTY AND TRUCKS GO ‘VROOM’**

One area of remarkable consistency across language groups is the degree to which the language of children is gendered. The words more likely to be used by American girls than by boys are “dress,” “vagina,” “tights,” “doll,” “necklace,” “pretty,” “underpants,” “purse,” “girl” and “sweater,” whereas those favored by boys are “penis,” “vroom,” “tractor,” “truck,” “hammer,” “bat,” “dump,” “firetruck,” “police” and “motorcycle.”

Even for those who don’t speak many of the languages in Wordbank, a quick scan of the lists reveals easily recognizable words, especially for the boys: “vroom” (Quebecois French), “vroum” (Latvian) and so on. In nearly every list of boys’ words, “tractor,” “helicopter,” “police,” “hammer,” “motorcycle” and other mechanical objects stand out. The words for girls rely less on onomatopoeia (the creation of a word for an object by...
evoking the sound associated with it). On their lists, “pretty” and “dress” make frequent appearances.

Wordbank also includes information on British sign language—and children use it in a significantly less gendered way than they speak British English. The top three words more likely to be signed by boys than by girls are “peekaboo,” “hello” and “shower”; the three more likely to be spoken are “tyre,” “vroom” and “cowboy.” The pattern holds true for girls, though in sign language and spoken English, “pretty” remains a favorite.

“You don’t have to be an expert in gender socialization,” says Frank, “to see that it’s interesting that you’re getting these sex-linked words early on.” The challenge in analyzing the data, he points out, is in determining whether children speak this way because of nature or nurture. “We don’t know whether it’s the parents saying these words to the kids or the kid being interested or both.”

Miika Braginsky, a lab tech who helped create Wordbank and co-authored the forthcoming book, agrees with the challenges of assigning significance to such gendered results. They (Braginsky is nonbinary) say, “By ‘girls’ and ‘boys,’ we have the assigned sex at birth of these kids. There’s not really a way to disassociate what is and isn’t genetics- or socialization-related.”

Wordbank’s results become even more difficult to explain where they show the rates of learning for girls compared with boys. “Girls are more or less better at just about everything,” says Frank. “If you go into a preschool classroom in the United States, you might notice that the girls talk more than the boys on average. They have larger vocabularies. They’re better with language. Is that because of gender socialization in the United States or some feature of the way we culturally interact with different kids? Or is that due to a more invariant mechanism that’s kind of the same across kids in different cultures? It turns out it’s actually the latter. Across most of the languages that we have data for, girls have a bigger vocabulary than the boys and with a relatively similar degree.”

Wordbank can’t explain why girls acquire language with relative ease; it doesn’t tell us whether the gender difference results from societal features that hold constant across cultures or earlier development in babies with two X chromosomes. (Decades of studies by Eve Clark show no differences in production or comprehension between boys and girls; Clark doesn’t know why Wordbank would yield different results but considers the possibility that parents might talk more to girls and therefore have a clearer sense of their vocabulary when completing CDIs.)

Wordbank has, however, presented a few clear patterns—how children’s interests and social environment appear to drive language learning in ways that are surprisingly similar across cultures, and how variable children are in the speed and approach with which they acquire language. “We have found some interesting consistencies across cultures and languages,” Frank says. “I still hesitate to call them universals.”

When to Worry—and When Not To

Though as a new father Frank found reassurance in the varied rates of learning, he also saw the long-term repercussions of the different speeds at which children acquire language.

“Something really striking is how well different aspects of children’s language hang together. Kids who gesture more early on also have bigger vocabularies. Kids who have bigger vocabularies tend to combine words more and have a stronger knowledge of grammar. They tend to put the right endings on words. So one of the things that’s really consistent across culture is that we see all of the different parts of language hanging together. Language is kind of one unified system or one unified skill, which is, I think, fascinating from a cognitive science perspective. If you go to a linguistics department, there are different courses on syntax, grammar, morphologies, phonology, but in acquisition, they all fit together. They’re all part of the same system, and that is really robustly true across all the languages we look at.”

Anne Fernald, associate professor
emerita of psychology at Stanford, has shown that socioeconomic factors affect language learning and that underserved children often have smaller vocabularies. Marchman, who works in Fernald's research group, explains that early levels of language acquisition correlate with performance in many areas later in life—“with your literacy level,” she says, “with how well you do in math, with high school graduation rates. We’ve learned that birth to 5 is an important critical period in development. Language is one of the important skills that we can give our children early on. So I’m interested, given that there’s so much variability, in when that variability is just natural variability and when it is telling us that a child might need some extra help.”

Amidst it all, variability is high, which is why Frank emphasizes that children have many styles and paths in terms of language acquisition. “We may have a naive story like, ‘Oh, well, parents are really different in all parts of the United States and we’re a diverse nation with lots of different kids from different backgrounds. Maybe that’s why there’s variability.’ But if you go to, for example, a Beijing Mandarin sample where all the kids are monolingual and going to the same state-sponsored early childhood care, the variability is just as high.”

On the flip side, Wordbank allows educators and medical professionals to better identify the normal range of variation. Frank points out that if children are unusually delayed in comprehension or production by the age of 2, parents should consider consulting a pediatrician.

Fortunately for Frank, as Madeline was developing language, he saw from the Wordbank data that she was within the normal range. “It was just super fun to watch the interesting and idiosyncratic things that she did as she broke into language,” he recalls.

He now also has a son, Jonah, whose first word he awaits.

As for whether Wordbank has provided answers to all the questions with which generations of linguists have struggled or has validated the computational models of how children learn that Frank devised in his PhD days, he isn’t sure. He still needs more data.

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Nicole Taylor has taken the reins at the world’s largest, most beleaguered community foundation. Here’s how she’s working to turn it around.

Nicole Taylor stands at her second-floor office window looking at the tan and white Tioga camper parked on a side street below. Two adult bikes hang on a rack attached to the rear of the vehicle; the children’s bikes are piled on the roof. Each weekday morning a young woman dressed neatly in a skirt and heels steps out and waves goodbye. The camper doesn’t leave. A family lives inside.

“That motivates me,” Taylor says, gesturing to the camper below. “We have to do better than that.”

The view—a family living in a vehicle right outside one of the richest foundations in the world—illustrates the wealth gap that has made Silicon Valley a national focal point for the contrast between the
haves and have-nots. It’s also why housing is one of the priorities of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF), where Taylor, ’90, MA ’91, took the helm in November 2018.

SVCF has come under fire in recent years. It grew by 507 percent in the decade spanning 2008 to 2018, making it the ninth-largest foundation (and largest community foundation) in the United States, with $8.9 billion in assets. At the same time, criticisms mounted: that the foundation had allowed billionaire donors to benefit from tax breaks by parking their funds without making many disbursements; that it enabled donors to pursue international philanthropic interests while failing to adequately serve its own community; that it created an intimidation-fueled workplace.

Scathing articles referred to the “meltdown” or “implosion” at SVCF, turning it into a national news story. The CEO and the top fund-raiser resigned. Nearly half of the staff departed. The board named an interim leader, shifting its sights from fund-raising and asset building to survival mode and a global search for a new leader.

Community foundations don’t usually attract this much attention as they quietly raise money from individuals, families and businesses to make grants that improve the lives of people in their own regions. In contrast to private foundations, which are established by one or a handful of sources and must pay out 5 percent of their assets each year, community foundations are public charities under IRS rules, and do not have the same payout requirements. Typically, they serve an important role in pooling gifts from many sources, then organizing their distribution to local programs. According to the Council on Foundations, there are more than 750 community foundations in the United States.

SVCF’s history in some ways mirrors that of Silicon Valley. Both amassed vast wealth over the past decade, but along the way left many behind and opened themselves to social critique. As SVCF’s new president and CEO, Taylor is tasked with returning more of the foundation’s focus to the acute problems of its own neighborhoods, including out-of-control housing costs, lack of public transportation, a widening economic divide and rising homelessness.

Taylor acknowledges the big task in front of her. For now, she says, her motto is, “I want to put the ‘community’ back in community foundation.”

Making People Count

On a September morning nine months into the job, Taylor sits behind her desk sipping tea from a black Stanford mug. Having spent her early months as CEO revitalizing a demoralized staff, filling vacant positions, and learning the internal and public workings of the foundation, she is anxious to get moving, particularly in the housing sector.

“I’m trying not to be in knots, but I feel a sense of urgency more now than when I came in,” she says. “This is a big organization and an institution in the community so you can’t just change overnight. There are a lot of moving pieces, but I see where we can be that resource and I’m like, ‘Let’s get to this!’”

Taylor’s “listening tour” took her from visiting a safe-parking lot for RV dwellers at an East Palo Alto church to facilitating a discussion with the governor and 16 business leaders on how to most effectively address the housing crisis in the Bay Area. Along the way she has continually posed two questions: “What do you want us to be? What does this region need in its community foundation?”

For the past decade, SVCF has focused on transportation, housing, civic participation, immigration and education. While these priorities remain, they may shift in the near future as Taylor and her colleagues and advisers finish the foundation’s new strategic plan.

“Our philosophical priorities won’t change,” she says. “What we actually land on as to where we put our resources and where we put our money—that is still in sausage-making mode.

“Community foundations are complicated organizations,” she adds. “My role is to help connect the resources with the needs. And to understand we are all completely interdependent.”

One of Taylor’s early actions has been to support local efforts to ensure a complete and accurate count in Census 2020, the national survey that she considers an urgent priority because it will directly affect how much federal money is allocated to California counties, which in turn pay for schools, hospitals, roads, public works and public safety. The census count also determines the number of seats each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives.

In partnership with the Bay Area Census Funders Collaborative, SVCF has so far provided $3.3 million in grants to more than 130 nonprofits throughout the region. The goal is to use trusted grassroots leaders and community centers to reach hard-to-count populations. At Puente, a community resource center in southern San Mateo County, a grant of $50,000 has helped identify “invisible” residents who are often overlooked because of their immigration status or housing situation. For example, those who reside in garages, in-law units or vehicles may not have mailboxes, so they may not even receive an invitation to complete the census. Puente is contributing to an accurate map of housing units that will include those residents.

Puente’s efforts may even ripple beyond 2020. “The census grant means we are able to train Spanish-speaking women to go out and canvass their own neighborhoods,” says Mayra Pelagio, one of the organizers. “Once the census is over, we will have developed leaders who are willing and able to advocate for their community.”
Today’s philanthropy, says a Stanford political scientist, disproportionately benefits the wealthy. Community foundations can be part of the solution.

Is it uncharitable to scrutinize philanthropy? It may seem almost heretical to question something designed to create positive change. But according to political science professor Rob Reich, faculty director of the McCoy Family Center for Ethics in Society and co-director of the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, charitable giving warrants more than simple gratitude and praise.

In his 2018 book, Just Giving: Why Philanthropy Is Failing Democracy and How It Can Do Better, Reich, MA ’98, PhD ’98, examines whether philanthropy is “an exercise of private power with objectionable public consequences.” Part of the problem, he says, is who gets the tax incentives for charitable giving “in an age of great and growing inequality.”

The charitable contributions deduction costs the U.S. Treasury roughly $60 billion every year, with the overwhelming majority of those benefits tilted toward the wealthiest, Reich says. The highest earners have the highest subsidy rate and exert the greatest influence over the public sphere. They often make massive donations to private foundations and donor-advised funds at community foundations that in turn disburse grants, making their ultimate effect on social policy difficult to detect.

“Most people think that philanthropy is an unadulterated good thing,” says Reich. The charitable tax deduction, however, is “a deeply unjust policy mechanism that bakes a plutocratic bias into the incentive to give, systematically benefitting the wealthy and amplifying their voices.” Big philanthropy, he says, becomes an exercise in power and ultimately exacerbates inequality rather than redressing it.

One way to balance the equation, says Reich, is to revise tax policy to benefit small donors and those in need. Community foundations, he says, can also be part of the solution.

Reich likens the traditional community foundation to the Community Chest in the board game Monopoly. Donations from local individuals and businesses contribute to a “community pot” that is governed by representatives of the community who decide how to spend it. In modern community foundations, however, the prevalence of donor-advised funds, which are directed by the individuals who made the gifts, subverts that notion. (DAFs are the fastest-growing form of philanthropy today, according to a recent study by DAF provider National Philanthropic Trust.)

“American philanthropy has long been a story of ordinary donors, and community foundations are at the heart of that,” says Reich. “They are a classic kind of civil society response to local problem-solving.”
Other local organizations are tailoring their programs to support different constituencies. Pars Equality Center, a San Jose resource center for Middle Eastern immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, used its $20,000 grant to open four questionnaire assistance centers for seniors in San Mateo, Santa Clara and Alameda counties, offering public computers and tablets along with staff who can help.

“I think about my mother,” says Taylor. “She knows how to read the news on her phone but not how to text, let alone fill out a survey. How many other people are in that boat?”

A Shaky Foundation

Taylor wasn’t at all sure about leaving ASU to take on a troubled Bay Area organization that the local nonprofit community was referring to as “the black hole” and “the Death Star.” But Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s board of directors had no doubts that she was the one.

“When she walked into the room, it was evident within minutes that she brought what we needed,” says board chair Dan’l Lewin, CEO of the Computer History Museum in Mountain View. “We started with a pool of about 200, but when we met Nicole it was clear she wasn’t selling herself. She was herself. She just brings a level of listening and empathy to the problems we face that we hadn’t seen with anyone else. It is her life’s work.”

SVCF formed in 2007 from the merger of the Peninsula Community Foundation in San Mateo and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation in San Jose. Its assets have ballooned in the past 10 years, primarily
One grant paid to hire and train women in an African village to track and collect data on endangered zebras. Another covered the purchase of a four-wheel-drive SUV to transport NGO staff to rural towns in Kenya, where they gave microgrants to widows starting small businesses, like serving up food from a roadside hibachi grill or rearing goats and chickens to sell eggs, milk and offspring. A third grant paid to build girls’ restrooms in South African schools, giving female students a safe and private place for personal hygiene.

Six times a year, 13 to 19 Bay Area women gather to choose projects they want to support to improve the lives of women and children internationally. Their grassroots group, Caridad Partners (caridad means “charity” in Spanish), began 13 years ago when Stanford development officers Pam Cook and Patricia Stirling decided to set up a giving circle. To date, the circle has included 14 Stanford alumni and five former staffers, and has made $500,000 in grants.

The idea of a giving circle, Cook explains, is to combine the donations of many to have a greater impact in giving. Call it a community foundation writ small. Each member of Caridad commits to donating $3,000 per year. The group makes its decisions through voting, usually funding three or four projects annually. Each gift, typically $8,000 to $20,000, goes straight to a Bay Area nonprofit that assists women and children around the world to improve education, health, economic self-sufficiency or environmental outcomes.

“We’ve discovered there are amazing opportunities to change people’s lives,” says Cook. “Such a small amount of American giving goes overseas, yet it can have such huge impact. We hope there’s a ripple effect and that our gift, being bigger because we work together, will inspire others.”

Caridad’s “sweet spot,” says treasurer Debbie Hall, MBA ’81, is making grants to organizations that fall between a “raw start-up” and a million-dollar NGO.

“Caridad’s partners are fond of quoting a proverb that inspires their work: “If you want to go fast, go alone;” says Cook. “But if you want to go far, go together!” I think that’s what we are doing. We are going together.”

Unlike foundations that solicit grant proposals, Caridad Partners conducts its own research and outreach. In the fall, two committees explore nonprofits that fit their interests. Come February, the committees bring their recommendations to the full group, which votes on which ideas to pursue. Caridad then invites a few NGOs to come to a meeting in April to present specific projects for which they need funding. After the presentations, the members vote, determine the amount of each grant and notify the lucky grantees. More than a year later, the recipients report on how they have spent the money and what they have accomplished, and everyone celebrates at a so-called gratitude dinner.
because it has become a popular receptacle for donor-advised funds (DAFs), individual accounts that can be sponsored and housed in a community foundation. A 2018 Forbes article named 17 billionaires who had established DAFs at Silicon Valley Community Foundation. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his physician wife, Priscilla Chan, donated $214 million in Facebook stock on the same day the foundation announced Taylor’s hiring. (The median DAF at the foundation is $86,000, and the minimum is $5,000.)

DAFs are controversial because they provide the donors with generous tax breaks in the year of donation but can legally sit untouched for years without disbursing grants. California AB 1712, slated for upcoming review, would improve transparency into how the funds are being spent and increase accountability through annual reporting. For now, though, the details of individual DAFs are not public.

Under Taylor’s predecessor, DAFs became 60 percent of the foundation’s assets. Moreover, in 2018, SVCF awarded 91 percent of its grants beyond San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Although that still left $126 million to be donated within the two counties, it raised questions about why a community foundation wasn’t doing a better job of focusing on its own community. Taylor is working to change that.

“The goal is to give to areas about which donors are passionate and to give to the community from which their wealth was made,” she says. “That has been our goal since the beginning. We do not want to hoard assets. That isn’t our story.”

SVCF staff now meet regularly with DAF holders to advise them on how to tailor grantmaking to their local interests. And a new dormant-fund policy ensures that funds do not remain inactive for more than 24 months. If there is no payout in that period of time, the money will be transferred into the Community Endowment Fund, operated by the foundation.

“There’s a real opportunity for the foundation to reconnect itself to the grand and gloried history of community foundations in the United States in the form of a community trust that’s collectively governed,” says Rob Reich, MA ’98, PhD ’98, a Stanford professor of political science who recently wrote a book critiquing modern philanthropy (see sidebar, page 43). “And from what I know about Nicole, who is a brilliant and inclusive leader, I’m not skeptical; I’m hopeful.”

Jim Steyer, ’78, JD ’83, who has known Taylor since she was a 19-year-old in his Stanford course on civil rights, civil liberties and poverty, concurs. “Even as a freshman, she wanted to change the world and make it a better, more equitable place,” says Steyer, CEO of Common Sense Media and an adjunct professor in comparative studies in race and ethnicity. “Now she has a huge responsibility to right the ship. She is a healer, and that is what the foundation needed.”

Impact, Impact, Impact

Taylor readily acknowledges that she heads a foundation with enormous assets and, therefore, enormous potential. “But that alone won’t do it,” she says. “I don’t want to talk about our assets. I want to talk about our impact.”

Impact is not only Taylor’s watchword. It’s also the term her colleagues most often use when they talk about her work.

Take Janet Spears, former COO at the East Bay Community Foundation, who is now CEO of the San Francisco nonprofit Metta Fund: “Nicole is able to go across the vast different areas of a community foundation and cover the breadth of what has to be done. She also knows she is just one person, so she finds the best partners. One of her greatest abilities is to move donors from thinking simply about charity to what will be the impact.”

Or Jackie Schmidt-Posner, EdS ’86, PhD ’89, who worked with Taylor at the Haas Center: “Nicole is one of those rare people who is the same whether she is talking to the undocumented worker or the janitor or a Mimi Haas [president of the Miriam and Peter Haas Fund]. She wants to have impact, and that thread runs through everything she has done.”

Having impact, however, has an impact on Taylor’s personal life. She devotes her days and evenings to “SVCF 2.0,” as she calls it, typically not winding down on the couch with her labradoodle, Louis (as in Armstrong), until about 10 p.m. She and Seleznov eloped in July, but he remains in Phoenix as CEO of the Arizona Community Foundation. They talk every morning and night—“we ‘get’ each other and our days,” Taylor says—and visit each other regularly.

Taylor credits her mom, who has moved and lived with her for the past 20 years, for enabling her to have her career and raise Evan, now 20, as a single parent. When Taylor arrives at her house in Menlo Park, a warm plate of home-cooked food covered with foil awaits.

If friends question why she still lives with her mother, Taylor tells them, “You want to live with my mother! She makes my life possible.”

The Power of an iPad

In a brightly lit SVCF conference room last September, Taylor steps to the podium to introduce San Jose mayor Sam Liccardo and the city’s new Digital Inclusion Program. Smiling broadly at the audience of middle school teachers, parents, administrators and potential donors, she says, “This subject matter brings me back to the classroom where I started my career. It’s where my heart still is today, and it’s where we can create real change.”

Taylor tells the audience that in San Jose, home to such tech companies as
Adobe, eBay and TiVo, 95,000 families cannot afford to connect to the internet. Children in these households are unable to do research for school projects or get emails from their teachers and friends. Parents are cut off from their PTA and school administration. It is one more example of the divide that makes it hard for so many to keep up in the Valley.

Over the next 10 years, the Digital Inclusion Program hopes to put $24 million toward providing internet connectivity to 50,000 San Jose households. Liccardi and Taylor believe it will be a national model.

Each of the families who participate will receive free training in using the internet to assist in all aspects of life, from accessing health care to finding employment to signing up for public services. One student told Taylor that the iPad she received through a pilot program not only helped with homework but also became her family’s only source of illumination once night fell.

Closing the digital divide, which the city says affects 47 percent of African American families and 36 percent of Latino families in San Jose, is an important means of bridging the equality gap that Taylor sees at the heart of the foundation’s mission. She is well aware of how fine the line can be between thriving and struggling.

“For most of my son’s life, I was a single mother,” she says. “To think that if my life had gone a different way—if I wasn’t fortunate enough to go to a school like Stanford that opened the opportunities it did—I see that I could have ended up in an RV with my child. It’s just not right that that is where so many people are right now.”

Melinda Sacks, ’74, is a senior writer at Stanford. Email her at msacks@stanford.edu.
Pro basketball is a powerful social and cultural force. These former Cardinal players aim to keep it that way.

by Deni Ellis Béchard
Got Game

by Deni Ellis Béchard

Chris Ebersole, '10

Christy Hedgpeth, '94

Amy Brooks, '96, MBA '02

Jamila Wideman, '97

Bethany Donaphin, '02

Chris Ebersole, '10

Amy Brooks, '96, MBA '02
The Advocate

Nneka Ogwumike, '12, talks with Ramona Shelburne, '01, MA '01, about her role as president of the WNBA Players Association, and the new collective bargaining agreement that significantly enhanced compensation, at alu.ms/WNBA.

The Starting Five

Amy Brooks, '96, MBA '02
President, Team Marketing and Business Operations, and Chief Innovation Officer, NBA

Brooks, the first in this role, faces a compelling challenge: The NBA has 1.6 billion social media followers in rapidly changing societies around the globe; in today’s shifting media landscape, she finds ways to engage the 99 percent of fans who will never attend a game. She credits her success in part to the teamwork she learned while a walk-on at Stanford. “My role during a game,” she says, “was to know which way the possession arrow was pointing.”

Chris Ebersole, '10
Director, International Business Operations and Elite Basketball, NBA

As the head of Basketball Without Borders—the NBA’s basketball and community development outreach program—Ebersole has supported youth around the world. BWB training camps have resulted in hundreds of scholarships to American colleges, 69 NBA players and, this year for the first time, a WNBA draft pick. “As someone who never played professionally but was still able to carve out a career in basketball, I enjoy seeing young people develop,” he says. “We emphasize education, leadership, health and wellness, character development and life skills.”
As she oversees scouting, scheduling, venues and playing rules, Donaphin's favorite days are those when she can influence many aspects of the WNBA, from negotiations with the players' union to creating programs that support the athletes as they transition into new careers. But realizing the league’s promise is her primary concern. “There is an incredible convergence of factors that we must capitalize on,” says the former forward for the New York Liberty, “which includes a climate of women’s empowerment.”

A starter on Stanford’s 1992 national championship team, Hedgpeth has taken the helm of the WNBA at a time when women’s sports get 5 percent of sports coverage and 1 percent of sponsorships. Having cemented deals with CBS Sports and AT&T, she strives to make a “modern, younger, edgier brand” out of the league, which turns 24 this spring. “The WNBA has such untapped potential,” she says. “I focus on how far it will go much more than how far it has come.”

Drafted out of Stanford in 1997 by the Los Angeles Sparks, Wideman later became a lawyer and an activist who built mentorship networks for underserved women of color. Her mission with the NBA is to provide personal and professional development for players. The league’s effort to expand opportunity across cultures and continents connects with her experience as a player: “For diversity to become strength,” she says, “the collective must be prepared to be disrupted and changed by the people around you.”
A superstar at Stanford, she is now helping the next generation of players succeed.

AS A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR, Jennifer Azzi would have refused her Stanford recruitment offer if her parents hadn’t encouraged her to reconsider for the sake of her education. “I grew up in Tennessee,” she says, “and, honestly, I didn’t even know where Stanford was.” She now sees the decision as one of the best in her life, setting off a streak of career successes: leading the Cardinal to its first NCAA women’s basketball title in 1990, winning an Olympic gold medal, playing in the WNBA, being inducted into the Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame and becoming the women’s basketball coach at the University of San Francisco.

“If there is a single player who put Stanford women’s basketball on the map nationally and helped define the values of the program, it’s Jennifer,” says Christy Hedgpeth, ’94, the WNBA’s chief operating officer. “She helped recruit me to Stanford, and I’ve always felt an enduring connection to her. There’s something special that binds all of us former players together, so it’s been fantastic to team up with Jennifer on initiatives at the NBA and WNBA.”

Now, as the technical director of the NBA Academy Women’s Program, Azzi, ’90, recruits talented young women for training camps in Australia, China, India, Senegal and Mexico. She focuses on both developing the players and finding opportunities for them in the United States.

“One of the biggest successes was last year’s next-generation game,” she says, referring to a program that brings players to the United States for a showcase tournament. “I think we had 13 or 14 different countries [represented]. It was like a mini-Olympics. That’s the thing I love about basketball. It brings people together. It’s life changing—culture changing.”

Since the NBA Women’s Academies began three years ago, 11 participants have gone on to play at American prep schools or junior colleges, and five have been recruited by Division I schools. This year, Sanjana Ramesh became the second Indian-born female player to receive a Division I scholarship, and China’s Han Xu was drafted into the WNBA.

Basketball provides the platform, but it’s the power of connection that makes her job rewarding, Azzi says. As she brings young women together from different language, tribal and national groups, she feels touched by the warmth that players show one another, and she cultivates these same qualities in her work. She recalls speaking in Mexico when discussions of the border wall were often in the news. “You don’t want to get into politics with people when you’re in this role,” she says, “but the one thing I told them is that I get to represent what’s great about the United States. More than anything, the job is just to show kindness and love and care and respect toward other countries and other people.”

Deni Ellis Béchard is a senior writer at Stanford. Email him at dbechard@stanford.edu.
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In Defense of Elitism: Why I’m Better than You and You Are Better than Someone Who Didn’t Buy This Book

Joel Stein, ’93, MA ’94, Grand Central Publishing

AFTER THE MAINSTREAM
media incorrectly predicted the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, a number of mostly coastal journalists set forth to figure out why they’d been so off base. Generally, this involved going into the heartland to interview white working-class voters, then writing anecdotal stories that humanized a handful of individual subjects without shedding much light on why certain groups of voters—and not just the white working class—defied expectations. This journalistic voyage became known, pejoratively, as a Cletus safari.

Is a Cletus safari more tolerable when it’s undertaken by Joel Stein, ’93, MA ’94, the journalist-humorist whose penchant for self-deprecation is his stock in trade? Yes, yes it is. Stein opens In Defense of Elitism: Why I’m Better than You and You Are Better than Someone Who Didn’t Buy This Book with a sojourn from his home in Los Angeles to Miami, Texas. “I’ve come,” he writes, “because in the past, I’ve been found guilty of maligning people in print before meeting them, which taught me a valuable lesson: meet first; malign second.” He engages local residents in cordial conversations about race, religion and community; makes friends who keep in touch; and concludes that just about everyone in town is named Dee Ann. (Sorry, Cletus.)

It’s after Stein disembarks from the safari, though, that In Defense of Elitism really takes off. He talks about whether decisions should be based on knowledge or instinct with Dilbert’s Scott Adams, and examines the pitfalls of believing in meritocracy with commentator Tucker Carlson. In perhaps the most revealing section of the book, Stein chats with writers who have deliberately created fake news and observes that all of us, no matter where we fall on the political spectrum, are susceptible to falsehoods when they confirm what we want to hear.

This freewheeling book is simultaneously thoughtful and funny, but its definition of elitism is wiggly. Sometimes, Stein uses the term to refer to anyone who attended a name-brand college; other times, to the select few who are invited to Davos (that’s the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, for those of us not on the invitation list). In the end, though, the various depictions of elitism contain a through line: evaluating facts for credibility, then marshaling said credible facts as evidence in support of an argument. And whether or not you call that elitism, Stein makes the case that it’s something worth defending.

REVIEW
Facts and Public Figures

KATHY ZONANA, ’93, JD ’96, is the editor of STANFORD.

What infuriates the judge and the people here is that while they’re doing the dangerous work of extracting energy from the earth so I can sit at a desk and write, I blame their industry for global warming. And fly in two planes each way to tell them that.

In Defense of Elitism: Why I’m Better than You and You Are Better than Someone Who Didn’t Buy This Book, by Joel Stein, ’93, MA ’94, Grand Central Publishing
We Recommend

More than Mystique

Toxic Femininity in the Workplace: Office Gender Politics Are a Battlefield
Ginny Hogan, ’13; Morrow Gift. The best humor touches on the truth; this snarky gem is a full-on embrace.

The World That We Knew
Alice Hoffman, MA ’75; Simon & Schuster. Mothers and daughters find hope in the form of a female golem during World War II.

Worn on This Day: The Clothes That Made History
Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, ’94; Running Press. A meticulous, fascinating collection of stories, from the men’s clothing used to convict Joan of Arc to Princess Diana’s flak jacket.

The Book of Gutsy Women: Favorite Stories of Courage and Resilience
Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chelsea Clinton, ’01; Simon & Schuster. Consider this a sourcebook of heroes.

The Tubman Command
Elizabeth Cobbs, MA ’84, PhD ’88; Arcade Publishing. When you think of Harriet Tubman, do you think Civil War spy and military leader? You will.

March is Women’s History Month
We invite you to join our open learning community.
Spring registration opens February 24, and most classes begin the week of March 30.
Please visit our website to view the entire course catalogue and to register.

continuingstudies.stanford.edu

Discounts available for Stanford Alumni Association Members.
Policymakers trusted Joan Petersilia’s insights in wrestling with criminal justice system reforms in part because her groundbreaking research began with evidence from the prisoners themselves.

Joan Petersilia, the Adelbert H. Sweet Professor of Law Emerita at Stanford, died September 23 from ovarian cancer. She was 68. Her 40-year career was devoted to making connections between empirical, data-driven findings and the real-world needs of politicians, legal authorities and penal-system experts.

“I have always considered myself an applied criminologist, and I believe that research is valuable only if it ultimately affects policy and practice,” Petersilia wrote in 2007 when she accepted the Academy of Experimental Criminology’s Joan McCord Award. Petersilia, who earned two degrees in sociology and a doctorate in criminology, joined the Stanford Law School faculty in 2009. She became co-director of the Stanford Criminal Justice Center and, in 2014, was awarded the Stockholm Prize in Criminology, her field’s major international honor.

Petersilia advised governors and worked with former inmates like Michael Santos, whom she helped in his rehabilitation efforts after he spent decades behind bars for a nonviolent drug crime. “She was a pioneer in the concept of re-entry,” he says. In 2012, Santos wrote about his experience serving time and working to turn his life around for The Oxford Handbook of Sentencing and Corrections, which Petersilia co-edited.

Her work had a major impact in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2011 decision mandating that California reduce its prison population, when the state shifted inmates to county jails in a move known as realignment. With colleagues, Petersilia produced guidelines to measure the public safety outcomes of the new plan. She also launched a practicum in which students focused on a single California county, Santa Clara, to evaluate realignment’s effects and reported the results to then-Attorney General Kamala Harris.

“Joan was a committed visionary who saw what is possible, even when others couldn’t see it,” he told the Stanford Lawyer. “She energized and excited many people around reforming the criminal justice system before it was even popular.”

Stanford public policy scholar and former California assembly member Joe Nation says, “Joan had more of an impact on criminal justice reform in California than any other person I know. She was smart, strategic and not afraid to push reluctant politicians in the direction of better policy.”

Petersilia is survived by her husband, Steve Thomas; sons, Jeff and Kyle; and two sisters.

—John Roemer
Farewells

Prevention Program, Aid to Retarded Children and other nonprofit and civic organizations. He supported his community by serving on the civil grand jury, Council on Children, Public Health Advisory Committee and the Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee, and also supported individuals and institutions in the local art and music community. He was predeceased by his former wife, Delia. Survivors: his wife, Coleen; children, Jodi, John Jr., Jill and James; and four grandchildren.

Edward Perry French, ’48, MS ’50 (chemistry), PhD ’53 (materials science), of Santa Cruz, Calif., October 30, at 95. He flew 24 combat missions for the Army Air Force during World War II. He met his future wife while singing in the Memorial Church choir. He spent his career at Rockwell’s Space Sciences Laboratory and helped developed the ion rockets that are only now coming into use on spacecraft. In retirement, he enjoyed sailing on Monterey Bay and guiding tourists past the elephant seals as a docent at Año Nuevo reserve. He was predeceased by his wife of 65 years, Helene (Perham, ’46). Survivors: his daughter, Alison; six grandchildren; and sister.

Mansion George Hamilton, ’48 (social science/social thought), of Arlington, Va., September 4, at 93. She played for the golf and tennis team and met her husband while working for the Boeing Corp. They married in Memorial Church. After raising their sons, she worked in banking and retail before becoming a tour guide for the Nuevo reserve. He was predeceased by his wife of 68 years, Mary Ann (Hice, ’51); children, David, ’85, MBA ’95, and Michelle Driskill-Smith; five grandchildren; and brother.

Dorothy Ray Lamar Corr Skelley, ’48 (physical therapy), of Azusa, Calif., September 27, at 93. She was a member of the tennis team and played the organ at Memorial Church. She earned a master’s degree in nursing from UC San Diego. She ran a polio clinic in Santa Clara, Calif., and directed health services at the University of Fallbrook, Calif., October 22, at 94. He worked in private practice until receiving a judicial appointment. Survivors: his wife of 64 years, Avery; daughters, Mary Kelly and Catherine; three grandchildren; and great-granddaughter.

Donovan Craven, ’51 (political science), of Bedford, N.Y., December 15, 2018, at 92. He served in the Navy during World War II. At Stanford, he was a member of the crew team. After Harvard Business School, he worked as a sales engineer for Alcoa. During the 1970s and 1980s, he worked with fellow Bedford residents to preserve the rural character and ecological health of their community. Survivors: his wife of 60 years, Mary; children, David, ’85, MBA ’95, and Michelle Driskill-Smith; five grandchildren; and brother.

John Donald, Jane Cellia and Beth Smith; five grandchildren; and two great-grandsons.

**Geophysicist and Underground Explorer**

Magnetism—combined with an innate curiosity and inventive mind—was the force that Sheldon Breiner harnessed to “see” what’s hidden beneath our feet.

Sheldon Breiner, ’59, MS ’62, PhD ’67, wielded magnetometers of his own design to find avalanche victims in Colorado, a buried 10-ton Olmec head carved from basalt in Mexico and a 400-year-old Spanish ship that sank off the California coast. He died October 9 at his home in Portola Valley from pancreatic cancer. He was 82.

The scientist, inventor and serial entrepreneur founded his first company, Geometrics Inc., in 1969. It built sophisticated instruments, including magnetometers, which, by measuring magnetic fields, can detect what’s not visible to the human eye and create an underground map for excavators. He became known not only as a leading expert on the device but also for his sharp sense of humor. Breiner’s website featured an article dubbing him the “Merlin of Magnetics,” and in a 1997 interview, he explained that a magnetometer “works much like a laser” but “looks like a beer can on a broomstick.”

“He had a lot of fun. It wasn’t work for him,” says his wife, Phyllis “Mimi” Farrington Breiner, ’61. “The children and I went through all his papers, and our heads spun at the variety of his interests.” Late in life, he founded Potential Energy to detect shale oil hydrocarbons and determine drill locations.

As a geophysicist at Stanford, Breiner identified seismic activity along the San Andreas Fault using a rubidium magnetometer. Years later, when he moved into his Portola Valley home—located near the fault line—he developed an interest in earthquake prediction and designing home features to withstand a major earthquake. He was a frequent visitor to his basement to record tremors in the Earth’s crust, along with canned food, drinking water and a collection of fine wines.

“Shelly was amazing, a very diversified guy,” says W. Gary Ernst, an emeritus professor in Stanford’s department of geological sciences. “The magnetometer had been around a long time, but he made it useful for many things. And unlike some of us in academia, he was in business, and he made money. Not only that, the guy was an incorrigible, ebullient fun-lover. Always with the puns and the jokes, with a smile on his face.”

Breiner is survived by his wife of 57 years; children, David, ’85, MBA ’95, and Michelle Driskill-Smith; five grandchildren; and brother.

—John Roemer
Northminster Presbyterian Church. Survivors: his wife of 66 years, Doris (Graves, ’52); daughters, Karen, MS ’79, Leslie Tabernier and Alison Bowman; six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Mary Katherine Miles Morrison, ’52 (English), of Kohala Coast, Hawaii, October 13, at 90. She was a lifelong member of the Historic Hawaiian Foundation for her writing. After raising her children, she set sail from Coyote Point on San Francisco Bay, roamed the South Pacific for five years, spent a decade living in French Polynesia and then to Arcata, Calif., before her return to Portland, Ore., May 30, at 89, of progressive association with the Central California Section of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association for more than 50 years and a longtime member of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco. Survivors: his wife of 58 years, Stella; and children, Tina and Steve.

Vctor Gus Kyriakis, ’57 (political science), of Milbrae, Calif., October 3, at 84. He earned a JD from UC Hastings. He was a city council member and served two terms as mayor of Daly City. He was a member of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association for more than 50 years and a longtime member of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco. Survivors: his wife of 58 years, Stella; and children, Tina and Steve.

Eric A. Wittenberg, ’55 (civil engineering), of Newport Beach, Calif., September 15, at 86. He was a member of Zeta Psi, ROTC and the basketball team. As co-founder of Wittenberg-Livingston, he developed and built homes throughout Southern California. He was past president of the state chapter of the Building Industry of America and was voted Builder of the Year in 1978. He was an avid scuba diver and also pursued adventure while flying-fishing in Kamchatka and Chile, traveling to New Guinea and Antarctica and exploring the wreck of the Titanic in a Russian submersible. Survivors: his former wife, Claudette Yeoman Shaw; his wife of 38 years, Cynthia Easley Robinson; his children, Eric, Carla Wilson, Tom, Brooke Meyer and Ben Robinson; nine grandchildren; great-granddaughter; and brother.

Frank Robert Nunes, ’53 (economics), of Pebble Beach, Calif., September 2, at 85. He was a high school teacher, athletics director and science teacher for elementary schools and at the Legion well House Coffee, he became an investment counselor in Sacramento. His community service included membership on the boards of the Sacramento Symphony and the Sacramento Regional Foundation. He also enjoyed dancing, traveling, camping, fishing and Stanford events. Survivors: his wife of 58 years, Claudia; children, Derek, Heather, Hillary and Holly; and four grandchildren.

Mary Katherine Manning McCarthy, ’56 (education), of Los Altos, September 23, at 85. She spent most of her career as an elementary school teacher for elementary schools and at the Legion

Homer Theodore “Ted” Craig III, ’57 (political science), JD ’61, of Alameda, Calif., June 22, at 86, after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease. He served in the Navy. As an attorney, he practiced in partnership and then in solo practice, where he specialized in family law. He was an avid sports fan and coach for his children’s teams and he enjoyed sailing, running, bicycling and playing tennis. He was also a devoted student of a wide range of spiritual practices, and together with his sister and others developed their own workshop, Agape, in the early 1980s. Survivors: his children, Carrie, Ted IV, Katherine, Andy, Eric, Kristen and Lara; and 12 grandchildren.

Gerald Forbes “Jerry” Bays, ’58 (sociology), of Sacramento, Calif., October 1, at 83, after a long battle with Parkinson’s disease. He was a member of Theta Xi. He served two years in the Navy on the USS Midway. After an initial career with Maxwell House Coffee, he became an investment counselor in Sacramento. His community service included membership on the boards of the Sacramento Symphony and the Sacramento Regional Foundation. He also enjoyed dancing, traveling, camping, fishing and Stanford events. Survivors: his wife of 58 years, Virginia Fischer; children, Cole, MS ’93, and Carl; and six grandchildren.

Theodore H. Pope, ’59 (civil engineering), of San Luis Obispo, Calif., October 2, at 81. He was a member of Delta Upsilon. After graduation, he served in the Navy on board the USS Lexington and in Antarctica. He later worked in sales for Kaiser Cement and Raychem, then as a regional manager for the construction laser division of Spectra Physics. After management positions with Pacific Architects and Mirafi, a Parkinson’s diagnosis motivated him to retire, open a franchise of Wild Birds Unlimited together with his wife, and devote more time to birding and the Audubon Society. Survivors: his wife, Bonnie; children, Elizabeth Courteau and Jonathan; four grandchildren; and sister, Claudette Yeoman Shaw.

Donald Lochead Cieland, ’53 (biological sciences), of Portland, Ore., October 7, at 87, of a stroke. He was a member of Alpha Kappa Lambda. He earned a master’s degree and MD at the U. of Oregon medical school (today Oregon Health & Science U.). As a captain in the Army, he directed the surgical program at Second General Hospital in Landstuhl, Germany. He practiced general surgery for nearly 30 years and taught surgical residents at OHSU, where he was professor emeritus. He served his profession and community on numerous hospital boards, committees and foundations. He enjoyed fishing and was a lifelong member of Phi Sigma Kappa and the boxing team. With his brother, he co-founded a fresh produce company and built it into an industry leader. He served on numerous professional and civic boards, including the Western Growers Association, and was president of Central California Lettuce Co-Op. For his service and philanthropic support of the SPCA and other organizations, he was honored with awards from the Grower-Shippers Association of Central California and the Community Foundation of Monterey County and United Way.

He also enjoyed traveling, skiing, water-skiing, tennis and golf. He was predeceased by his companion, Marie Weerz. Survivors: his children, Bob Jr. and Kimberly; five grandchildren; and brother, Tom.

Mary Katherine Manning McCarthy, ’55, MA ’56 (education), of Los Altos, September 23, at 85. Her long-term work with the Assistance League of Santa Clara County included chairing a program for blind children, and she helped create an apartment complex for people recovering from illnesses at Stanford. She cooked and served meals for the Urban Ministry soup kitchen in Palo Alto. She was especially active as an art docent and volunteer art teacher for elementary schools and at the Legion of Honor and de Young art museums. She was also a devoted member of the choir at St. Nicholas and volunteer accountant at the Jesuit retreat house in Los Gatos. Survivors: her husband, William, ’52, MS ’55, PhD ’66; survivors: her eight children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Eric A. Wittenberg, ’55 (civil engineering), of Newport Beach, Calif., September 15, at 86. He was a member of Zeta Psi, ROTC and the basketball team. As co-founder of Wittenberg-Livingston, he developed and built homes throughout Southern California. He was past president of the state chapter of the Building Industry of America and was voted Builder of the Year in 1978. He was an avid scuba diver and also pursued adventure while flying-fishing in Kamchatka and Chile, traveling to New Guinea and Antarctica and exploring the wreck of the Titanic in a Russian submersible. Survivors: his former wife, Claudette Yeoman Shaw; his wife of 38 years, Cynthia Easley Robinson; his children, Eric, Carla Wilson, Tom, Brooke Meyer and Ben Robinson; nine grandchildren; great-granddaughter; and brother.

Forrest Goldsberry “Gerry” Bays, ’58 (sociology), of Sacramento, Calif., October 1, at 83, after a long battle with Parkinson’s disease. He was a member of Theta Xi. He served two years in the Navy on the USS Midway. After an initial career with Maxwell House Coffee, he became an investment counselor in Sacramento. His community service included membership on the boards of the Sacramento Symphony and the Sacramento Regional Foundation. He also enjoyed dancing, traveling, camping, fishing and Stanford events. Survivors: his wife of 58 years, Claudia; children, Derek, Heather, Hillary and Holly; and four grandchildren.

Loretta Ann “Lori” Reeves Keller, ’59 (history), of Pleasanton, Calif., September 29, at 81. She earned a master’s degree from George Washington U. She spent most of her career as an elementary school teacher. The teaching she most enjoyed was serving as a docent for more than 30 years at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. Survivors: her husband, Alan, ’57, MS ’58; sons, Rick, MS ’93, and Carl; and six grandchildren.

Theodore H. Pope, ’59 (civil engineering), of San Luis Obispo, Calif., October 2, at 81. He was a member of Delta Upsilon. After graduation, he served in the Navy on board the USS Lexington and in Antarctica. He later worked in sales for Kaiser Cement and Raychem, then as a regional manager for the construction laser division of Spectra Physics. After management positions with Pacific Architects and Mirafi, a Parkinson’s diagnosis motivated him to retire, open a franchise of Wild Birds Unlimited together with his wife, and devote more time to birding and the Audubon Society. Survivors: his wife, Bonnie; children, Elizabeth Courteau and Jonathan; four grandchildren; and sister, Claudette Yeoman Shaw.
Farewells

1960s James Marc Elster, ’60 (political science), of San Diego, September 15, at 88. He was a member of Sigma Nu/Beta Chi. He earned a master’s degree from American U. and also attended the Naval War College. He started his military service as an aviator and went on to command an air anti-submarine squadron and the naval air station on Guam. As a civilian research analyst in the 1980s, he was selected as a special assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and helped formulate national defense strategy at the highest level. In retirement, he enjoyed restoring antiques, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, giving swimming lessons to the children of the Special Olympics and playing bridge. Survivors: his wife, Carol; children, Colin, Christopher and Jennifer; and four grandchildren.

Thomas D. Petersen, ’60 (biological sciences), of La Mesa, Calif., October 2, at 81. He was a member of Beta Theta Pi and the swim team. He earned his MD from Washington U. and helped advance the field of orthopedic surgery. As the founder of Alvarado Orthopedic Research, he held 31 patents for surgical instruments and other medical innovations. He also was a property investor and, with his daughter, co-founded a nonprofit tutoring service. Survivors: his wife, Mary Gill; children, Donald, Michael, Laura Nuno and Theresa Bozhor; eight grandchildren; a great-granddaughter; and two sisters.

Sue Ann Pullin Bailey, ’61 (English), of Salem, Ore., April 20, at 81. She focused her efforts on raising her children and managing the family business in Woodinville, Wash., for 40 years. Her interests included gardening, sewing, quilting, cooking, theater, travel and helping animals in need. She and her husband were active members of Cottage Lake Presbyterian Church in Woodinville, and she served as a deacon and an elder at the Salem First Presbyterian Church. Survivors: her husband of 59 years, Rod, ’59, MBA ’61; children, Elizabeth Earls, Ben and Will; three grandchildren; and sister.

Bradley Douglas Inman, ’62 (civil engineering), of Medford, Ore., August 30, at 78, of myeloid leukemia. He was a member of the crew team and Sigma Alpha Epsilon. He continued his career in construction management. He was a fellow in the American Concrete Institute and served a term as president of the American Society of Concrete Contractors. He was also instrumental in forming Green Springs Fire and Rescue. Survivors: his wife, CJ; children, Wayne and Tonya; seven grandchildren; and sister.

Barbara Lynn Behrend Rouds, ’62 (basic medical sciences), MD ’66, of Fair Oaks, Calif., July 5, at 85. She completed her Stanford degrees while her children and managing the family business in Woodinville, Wash., for 40 years. Her interests included gardening, sewing, quilting, cooking, theater, travel and helping animals in need. She and her husband were active members of Cottage Lake Presbyterian Church in Woodinville, and she served as a deacon and an elder at the Salem First Presbyterian Church. Survivors: her husband of 59 years, Rod, ’59, MBA ’61; children, Elizabeth Earls, Ben and Will; three grandchildren; and sister.

1970s Maureen Roberta Sweeney Norgaard, ’70 (English), of Aberdeen, Scotland, July 22, at 72, of metastatic adenocarcinoma. She played tennis, was a member of the Glee Club and Theta Chi and studied abroad in England. After eight years with Arthur D. Little, she guided organizations through strategic and organizational change as an independent management consultant. She developed a particular passion for golf and, in combination with her talents for writing and strategy, published books on Scotland’s top golf courses. She was predeceased by her daughter, Lindsey. Survivors: his wife, Josie; daughters Caitlin and Melissa; and two siblings.

1980s William Anthony “Bill” Aiello, ’81 (physics), of Vancouver, British Columbia, October 1, at 59, of cancer. He earned a PhD in applied mathematics at MIT. He worked at Bellcore and AT&T Labs in network security and cryptography research before becoming head of the U. of British Columbia computer science department. In this position, he helped develop UBC’s Academic Development Leadership Program to help improving administrators build confidence and expertise as leaders. He was passionate about environmental protection, U.S. politics and Stanford sports, and he deeply loved his family and friends. He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Karen Parrish; children, Sam and Juliana; father, Frank; and four siblings.

1990s James Kan-Chao “Jim” Foo, ’94 (economics), of Philadelphia, August 10, at 47, of complications from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. He earned an...
MBA in finance from NYU. He worked first for Ernst & Young, then at Bryn Mawr Capital Management. In 2017, he and a partner founded an investment firm, Tourus Capital Partners. His interests included world travel, collecting fine wines and the films of Alfred Hitchcock, but he was especially passionate about sports and an avid supporter of Stanford athletics. Survivors: his wife, Elizabeth; children, Cassandra, Vivienne and Kent; mother, Susanna; and brother.

**BUSINESS**

David Pershing Hull. MBA '47, of Santa Barbara, Calif., July 26, at 101. He flew 145 missions as a Navy fighter pilot in World War II. He worked for Merrill Lynch for 33 years in Houston, where he became a vice president and branch manager. In retirement, he enjoyed playing golf and tennis, acting (including a part in The Two Jokes) and writing. He was predeceased by his wife, Diana, and son Bennett. Survivors: his children, David, Holiday Cowan and Margaret Wright; stepchildren, Marcy Burton and Allison Boomer; five grandchildren; two stepgrandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Richard Joseph "Dick" Dunn. MBA '56, of San Francisco, October 29, at 95. He served in the Army during World War II and was awarded a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. He spent his career as an investment counselor with Scudder, Stevens and Clark and retired as partner. As a member of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, he organized a pilgrimage to Lourdes and participated personally 23 times. He was elected president of the Order's Western Association and to the Order's sovereign council. For his community and church service, he was knighted at the Vatican as a Knight Commander with star of the Order of St. Gregory the Great. He was predeceased by his wife, Marygrace. Survivors: his children, Richard, Mari-anne Daly, Anthony, Noelle Petersen and Gregory; nine grandchildren; and two brothers.

Rolf Erik Westgard. MBA '57, of St. Paul, Minn., May 20, at 89. He served in the Army. After a brief position with Burroughs, he moved to 3M and spent much of his career working on classified imaging products for the U.S. government. He became proficient in both French and Japanese and also pursued interests in astronomy and Mayan history. In retirement, he enjoyed golf and remained actively engaged with the Lions Club, in Democratic politics, as a Big Brother and a lecturer for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. He also served on the session at Macalester Presbyterian Church and was a trustee for Metropolitan State University. Survivors: his wife, Lindy (Wells, ’55); children, Erik, Richard, Lisa and Karen; and eight grandchildren.

Donald Warren Peterson. MBA ’58, of Portola Valley, Calif., September 5, at 88, of secondary sideroblastic anemia. He served in the Navy. He spent his career in finance and retired after 20 years as chief financial officer of Morgan Equipment Co. in San Francisco. He had a lifelong love for ice cream and jazz music. He was predeceased by his son, Michael. Survivors: his wife, Nancy (Simons, ’59, MS ’61, MA ’75); daughter, Karen Peterson-Iyer, ’88; and five grandchildren, including Chris Iyer, ’22.

**EARTH, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**

Horace Edward "Ed" Tolle. MS ’56 (geology), MBA ’64, of Barrington, Ill., October 11, at 85, of congestive heart failure. He served in the Air Force. He held leadership positions in administration, marketing, and travel management at Exxon and United Airlines. In retirement, he continued to represent the airline’s retirees and devoted himself to church service in the form of fund-raising for Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital. Survivors: his wife of 62 years, Jean (Bashor, ’55, MA ’56); children, Jeff and Anne; and five grandchildren.

**EDUCATION**

Merton Thomas Jones, MA ’51, of Daly City, Calif., October 9, at 95. He taught biology and chemistry for 33 years at his alma mater, George Washington High School in San Francisco. He enjoyed volunteering, square dancing and golf. He was predeceased by his wife, Catherine, and daughter Gwen. Survivors: his sons, Jeff and Garrett; five grandchildren; and great-granddaughter.

Theresa Wai Tow Leong. MA ’63, of Foster City, Calif., July 21, at 91. She taught math for many years at Field Moore Academy in Burlingame, Calif., and then at San Mateo High School. She later had a career in accounting with Varian. She enjoyed taking long walks, gardening and lifelong learning. She was predeceased by her husband, James. Survivors: her sons, Douglas and Reynold; and five grandchildren.

### Author and Gender-Studies Scholar

As a cultural historian, Marilyn Yalom wasn’t afraid to tackle broad subjects—from the role of women in the French Revolution to the evolution of marriage.

Marilyn Koenick Yalom died at her Palo Alto home on November 20 of multiple myeloma. She was 87.

After her husband, the eminent psychiatrist Irvin Yalom, joined the Stanford faculty in 1962, she traveled to CSU Hayward to teach French for 13 years. In 1976, as the women’s movement was gaining momentum, she took an administrative position at the newly formed Center for Research on Women, now the Clayman Institute for Gender Research, building it into a hub of gender studies when the field was struggling for recognition. She served as director in 1984–85 and stayed on as a senior scholar.

Yalom was animated by feminism but never allowed her views to become polemical. “My mother in her demeanor was anything but radical,” says her son Ben, ’91. “She wasn’t interested in burning her bras or being on the front lines.”

Instead, she was engaged by intellectual discourse and dissected the origins of cultural institutions, symbols and gender roles. At a book party in the 1990s, she met Sandy Dijkstra, a women’s studies professor who was transitioning to literary agent. They identified a niche where Yalom could expand on her academic research and write for a general audience. The History of the Breast was published in 1997, followed by A History of the Wife (2001), How the French Invented Love (2012) and The Social Sex (2015). To the surprise of the chess-playing men in her family, Yalom fastened on the game’s gender dynamics, curious as to how the queen had attained its dominant position. After a year of research for what became Birth of the Chess Queen (2004), not only had she resolved this historical conundrum but she’d also taken up the game, and started winning. She brought a similar curiosity to The Amorous Heart (2018), which asked why the image of the heart had become linked to romantic love.

For a writer who delved into matters of the heart, it was fitting that she enjoyed a long and happy marriage. Her husband of 65 years recalls how they met as bookish teenagers, both children of immigrant grocers. She was thrilled to discover that he wrote poetry, and he to learn that she once missed school after staying up to read Gone with the Wind. They would forge a remarkable literary partnership (she referred to him as “my most demanding reader”) and, soon after receiving her diagnosis, had started collaborating on a book about mortality.

In addition to her husband and Ben, Yalom is survived by her daughter, Eve, ’76; sons, Reid, ’78, and Victor; eight grandchildren; and sister.

—Vicky Elliott
Farewells

Jack Dean Christensen, PhD ’73, of Fresno, Calif., at 92. He served in the Navy during World War II. He taught in the history department at Fresno State. His passions included photography, travel, foreign languages and especially literature and music. He also enjoyed following college football, cooking and caring for his backyard orchard. He was predeceased by his wife, June, and son Dean. Survivors: his children, Eric and Lane; eight grandchildren; sister; and step sister.

ENGINEERING
Homer J. Olsen, MS ’49 (civil engineering), of Gig Harbor, Wash., October 20, at 95. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. He worked as area manager at Peter Kiewit before founding his namesake company in 1963. He contributed to more than 200 construction projects, including major highway, river and water infrastructure projects. He established scholarships at several universities, including Stanford, to return the support he received as a student. He was predeceased by his second wife, Alice Joyce Deyoe. Survivors: his first wife, Janet Whitehead, Gr. ’49; children, Mary Kelly, Barbara Curtis and Robert; grandson; and two siblings.

Henry George Prosack, MS ’61 (mechanical engineering), of Fairfax, Va., October 30, at 90. His career in the Air Force included service in the Vietnam War. As a civil engineer, he worked as an engineer with Vitro Systems and Delex Systems, primarily focused on Navy defense programs. He was also a youth football and baseball coach for many years.

Survivors: his wife of nearly 70 years, Frances; children, Kathleen, Carl, Eugene, Joan and Henry; 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Paul Jonathan Young, Gr. ’68, of Arlington, Tex., September 9, of heart failure. He had more than 45 years of civil and environmental engineering experience, specializing in water quality management, computer modeling and regulatory compliance. He participated in numerous national water professional associations and taught water quality studies at the U. of Texas at Arlington and Manhattan College. In retirement, he became editor and publisher of a journal on agriculture and Asperger’s syndrome. He was an active Kiwanis member and served on the board of Shepherd of Life Evangelical Lutheran Church in Arlington. He was predeceased by his wife, Nancy Riney. Survivors: his wife, Lynn; four stepchildren; six stepgrandchildren; and sister.

Roy Don Dodson, MS ’80 (civil engineering), of Spring, Tex., December 10, 2018, at 63, of Parkinson’s disease. He established his own civil engineering and hydrology firm in 1983. As a member of Champion Forest Baptist Church, he sought to use his talents to serve the Lord through the church. Survivors: his wife of 38 years, Pamela; children, Alana Harrison and Bradley; and grandson.

HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES
James Edmond Furman, MA ’70 (history), of Los Angeles, February 24, at 71, after a long illness. He earned a master’s degree from Church Divinity School of the Pacific, an Episcopal seminary, and was ordained a priest in 1974. He assisted at several churches in Los Angeles and in the Diocese of San Diego before becoming rector of St. Peter’s Church in Honolulu. His most recent service was as rector of St. Nicholas’ Church in Encino, Calif. He published articles on church issues and a book on Christian education. He also served as chaplain of the Canadian Society of Southern California and president of the Inter-American Study Program, and was a member of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.

Caroline Matheny Dillman, MA ’76 (sociology), PhD ’79 (education), of Roswell, Ga., September 30, at 92, of Alzheimer’s disease. She taught sociology at Agnes Scott College, then moved to Reinhardt College where she also directed off-campus programs and continuing education. She served as president of the Roswell Historical Society and on the board of the Alpharetta Historical Society. She wrote prolifically on education, sociology and genealogy, and launched her own genealogical press in 1990. She was predeceased by her husband, Frederick. Survivors: her children, Cynthia Meyers and Sandy Santra.

Mark Louis Von Hagen, MA ’81 (history), PhD ’85 (history and humanities), of Tempe, Ariz., September 15, at 65, following an extended illness. He was Bakhmetyev Professor of History and chair of the history department at Columbia U. before accepting a position at Arizona State U., where he was founding director of both the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies and the Office of Veteran and Military Academic Engagement. He also served as dean of the philosophy faculty of the Ukrainian Free U. in Munich. His numerous publications focused on modern Russia and Ukraine. He was an outspoken advocate of human rights and defender of dissidents, including support for the LGBTQ community. He served terms as president of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies and of the International Association for Ukrainian Studies. Survivors: his spouse, Johnny Roldan-Chacon; and brother, Luke.

LAW
Donald W. McMurchie, LLB ’49, of Sacramento, Calif., September 9, at 97. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. In 1952, he and a Stanford classmate founded Files and McMurchie, a firm that continues today as Lenahan, Lee, Slater, Pearce and Majernik. In his 40-year practice of law and additional consulting work in retirement, he advocated for local government agencies and was responsible for the creation of many recreation and park districts in Sacramento. He was passionate about history, classical music, long drives on back roads, and travel with his wife and friends, but he saw his family as his crowning achievement. He was predeceased by his wife, Doris. Survivors: his sons, David, Paul and Stephen; five grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

George Edward Stephens Jr., LLB ’62, of Edina, Minn., October 11, at 83. After practicing with other firms, he joined Paul, Hastings, Janovsky and Walker and headed the probate and trust department for 35 years. In retirement, he pursued interests in golf, skiing, bridge, music and art. He was a docent at the Huntington’s Chinese Garden and was on the board of the Armory Center for the Arts. Family and friends were his greatest source of happiness. Survivors: his wife of 54 years, Graet; children, Thad, JD ’96, Mary Stephens-Leyv and Ned; five grandchildren; and two brothers.

Walter Michael Uhrman, LLB ’65, of Encino, Calif., October 10, at 78. He worked as a lawyer in Los Angeles. He lived with a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis for 46 years, all while the maintaining close relationships with friends from school and his havanrah. Survivors: his wife, Judy, five daughters; and 12 grandchildren.

MEDICINE
Robert Alvin Fairbanks, MA ’84, of Norman, Okla., June 4, at 74. His education included a JD, MBA and master’s degrees in four fields.

He retired with the rank of colonel after a decorated career in the Air Force. His civilian career included teaching law and political science and work as a medical negligence attorney. As a member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, he was an advocate for Native American rights. He published numerous works on Native American sovereignty and constitutional law issues, promoted educational preparation and opportunities for Native American students and was founding editor of the American Indian Law Review. He also enjoyed fishing with his children and grandchildren, coaching softball and serving as a Scout leader. Survivors: his wife of 52 years, Linda; children, Chele Crosby, Kim, Robert II, Michael, Richard and Joseph, ’05, eight grandchildren; and six siblings.

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Grace for the Grasshopper

He fiddled away his summer. Why should he share in their harvest?

"‘THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER,'" my student Riswanda said, "teaches us that we must help others, even if they have not made the most practical decisions."

I gave her a tight smile. I was six months into my year teaching English at an Islamic high school in East Java, Indonesia. Riswanda’s class was the seventh I had taught that week, and each had missed the point of this Aesop’s fable. A grasshopper who plays his fiddle all summer and fails to collect grain for the winter goes hungry, while the industrious ant family who works hard during the summer months is rewarded with full bellies. As I lectured on the virtues of hard work and planning ahead, I saw Riswanda’s face scrunched in confusion.

In my sophomore year at Stanford, I took lecturer emerita Ann Watters’s class on cross-cultural communication. We studied social psychologist Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory, which attempts to quantitatively explain cultural differences. In the individualism rankings, America scores a 91, the highest in the world. Indonesia scores a 14, one of the lowest.

The country’s strongly communal culture showed up in every dimension of my life. My host family included two grandmothers, a widowed aunt, three cousins who tinkered with motorcycle parts all day, and a constant flux of distant and unemployed relatives. I thought about myself a few months before, a Stanford senior desperately searching for jobs so as not to burden my parents by showing up on their doorstep after graduation.

I also saw differences at school. Teachers actually skipped class to visit relatives in the hospital or dropped everything to drive neighbors to the airport, something that would have been unimaginable in my public high school in North Carolina. On test days, my brightest students would share their answers with those who had put in absolutely no effort. It was the perfect example of ants helping grasshoppers, and it seemed acutely unjust.

Riswanda came up to me after class, still clutching her photocopied fable. “Miss, I don’t understand,” she said. “What’s so wrong with playing the fiddle all summer?”

Her question has stayed with me. The grasshopper’s job was far from practical, but it added beauty to a dreary field. The cousins taking refuge in my host family’s basement didn’t bring home paychecks, but they never failed to brighten my day with their belly laughs. Teachers skipped class not because they were lazy, but because they believed that helping others in tough situations was more important than drilling tired teenagers on geometric equations. What I perceived as cheating in my classroom could also be seen as a selfless act: lifting up the entire class rather than elevating oneself.

I’m learning to question my own fable: that you can measure people’s worth by their productivity. As I transition back into American life, I’m bringing with me the wisdom of my students, teachers and housemates—the ants and the grasshoppers alike.

Elizabeth Wallace, ’18, is an intern for the Legal Services Corporation. She plans to attend Harvard Law School in the fall. Email her at stanford.magazine@stanford.edu.
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