Meet Sam McDonald
He came to the university to build roads and left with a road named after him

The Life-Changing Challenge of Chatbots
Professor-Podcaster Andrew Huberman
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Roll with it
Paul Ehrlich’s Life
Carpe diem, kiddo
His advice went beyond our finances, it was lifesaving.

My wife always tells me to cool down. She knows how competitive I can be, especially when playing polo. One day, while on the field during a big match, I collided with another player and was thrown from my horse, resulting in rather severe injuries. Thankfully my wife, remembering conversations with our advisor, Dean, knew he was the perfect one to help. She phoned him on the way to the hospital, and he was able to find a top surgeon in the area who could see me right away. Thanks to Dean, I’m able to get back on the horse—literally. I now know what a huge difference the little things can make.

— Sean, San Jose
I regard the Anthropocene as a useful concept, but for ecological purposes and with a vague start date. For the Anthropocene to be considered a true geologic epoch, it should be recognizable by geologists 10,000 years from now. By then, most radioactive products in sediments will have disappeared or dispersed, and extinctions of terrestrial animals will not be recorded in marine sediments. Epochs of the Cenozoic era are best distinguished by the appearance and disappearance of calcareous marine microfossils. My prediction is that the Anthropocene will be defined by widespread extinctions of calcareous plankton due to ocean acidification caused by increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which hasn’t happened yet but will.

Bill Neill, MS ’75
North Hollywood, California

Both Sides Now

Our May issue included an excerpt of dean Jenny Martinez’s memo to the Stanford Law School community following the disruption of U.S. Circuit Judge Kyle Duncan’s talk at a Federalist Society event.

Jenny Martinez’s spot-on defense of the First Amendment deftly navigates the issue of defending inclusion while not trying to prevent unpopular views from being heard, and manages to find a space for both. It is the most important article I have read in your publication in years, and I hope it is widely read not only within the Stanford community but far and wide.

Leif Wellington Haase
Kensington, California

The fact that Law School students feel that because Judge Duncan’s views are contrary to theirs, that gives them the right to shut down a speech, shows that maybe Stanford’s selection process needs some work. Is there a more fundamental right than the freedom of speech?

If these law students don’t understand that, then maybe the Law School’s faculty and curriculum should be reviewed.

Patrick C. Crow, ’81
Sloughhouse, California

As an openly lesbian alum of Stanford Law School, a former First Amendment litigator, and a longtime LGBTQ civil rights advocate, I think Dean Martinez is drawing the proper line between dissension and disruption. I wholeheartedly agree that “strong protection for freedom of speech is a bedrock principle that ultimately supports diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Amelia Craig Cramer, JD ’86
Tucson, Arizona

I thought that I agreed with Dean Martinez all the way—until I remembered [philosopher] Karl Popper’s admonition: “In order to maintain a tolerant society, the society must be intolerant of intolerance.” I agree that disrupting a lecture at a university is bad form, but there is a larger question that her essay did not resolve. When should we fight back against intolerance? When does intolerance become so grievous...
that an unequivocal response becomes absolutely required?

It is not surprising to this old grad that there might be a Federalist Society active on campus. However, I wonder if this reactionary organization is representative of the highest ideals of the quest for greater knowledge and understanding. We look to the past not to resurrect it but to guide the future.

Bruce Eichinger, PhD ’67
Seattle, Washington

The dean’s exegesis fails to grapple with a speaker, reputed for wreaking havoc, who walked into the presentation filming the crowd. Elsewhere, the dean has expressed an intent to plan for possible future efforts to raise awareness about LGBTQ+ rights in the current legal environment. If Judge Duncan has his way, that will mean no rights at all. That’s why every civil rights movement is accompanied by disruption and disobedience. Had the dean started with concern for the well-being of marginalized students, she might still have concluded that the crowd’s conduct was inappropriate. Or she might revisit some aspects of the Law School’s speaker policy in order to mitigate the damaging effects of hate-mongers. The dean and administration say “that our LGBTQ+ students, faculty and staff are valued members of our community of scholars.” Saying it isn’t enough; they need to act like it.

Kathleen Purcell, ’74, JD ’77
San Francisco, California

Dean Martinez’s defense of the “right” of the Federalist Society to bring an extremist right-wing judge to the Law School to speak at an open meeting, without recognizing the equal rights of the protesters to attempt to drown him out, misses the point that this speaker and this group is different; that the truly heinous and hateful policies and positions of that judge in particular, and the Federalist Society in general, have adopted are profoundly harmful and dangerous to our society and democracy. He deserved to be shut down, and I applaud the students who did so.

Adrian F. Roscher, JD ’84
Los Angeles, California

We all have at least two media/knowledge biases. One, the more often we see something, the more likely we are to believe in that event or fact. And two, a blind spot to the limited sources of information that we use in our daily lives—and, consequently, a blind spot to the likely skewed viewpoint or database of opinion and position that we draw from. The only way to counteract this—for those interested in actually better understanding a large group or population—is to share the data of that group’s opinions in a scientific form. In the case of your article and related discussions, it would be to collect, anonymize, and share to all the variety of responses, the nuances that the community cares about, and the likely broad agreement of an often quiet (or rather, quieted) majority. We could, of course, be wrong and see in such data only “polarly opposed” groups. In either case, applying data to such discussions—and sharing it—is a starting point for the role, as you say so well in your article, of law and legal thinking to mediate in the university and in our society.

Dan Chung, ’84
Brooklyn, New York

Fun and the Farm
In his column in the May issue, university president Marc Tessier-Lavigne explained how Stanford leaders are working to enhance student social life on campus.

President Tessier-Lavigne’s recent column may be the most disingenuous thing I’ve ever seen the administration promulgate. It’s filled with warm sentimental phrases, like “carefully listening to student feedback,” “to rebuild a campus life that is both enriching, and yes, fun,” and “honoring Stanford’s traditions.” In fact, the opposite is true. The university, with its new army of administrative bureaucrats, is systematically trying to sterilize campus life. Witness the touted neighborhood residential plan, where students will be forced to live in the same sterile format for all four years.

He makes the claim that the administration wants “to preserve the best of Stanford’s traditions, including Greek houses.” Anyone observant in recent years knows they are targeting fraternities for elimination. Probably because they’re in the way of the neighborhood plan. He cites the Band as an example of “unique” and “quirky” student life. They once were—they’ve long since been neutered by the administration. “Simplifying the party planning process?” Just try and have a simple keg party under the new regime.

Two recent student incidents say it all about this hypocritical administration. The law students whose outrageous behavior toward Judge Kyle Duncan’s speech violated campus policy and made a national embarrassment of the school suffered zero consequences. The Tree walked across the football field during a game holding a sign reading “Stanford Hates Fun” and was immediately punished.

Wayne Raffesberger, ’73
San Diego, California

That the president felt the need to write about efforts to create a vibrant student life on campus speaks loudly about how poor the current situation has become for students at Stanford. Perhaps instead of hiring more staff and doing more research on how to help the students have fun, he should consider removing or replacing the staff that created the “no fun” environment in the first place.

Bill Farley, ’66, MBA ’69
Naples, Florida

CORRECTIONS

In May, a letter from Wes Rose of Menlo Park was mistakenly attributed to Wes Rose, MBA ’80, of Menlo Park.

A May feature about efforts to define the Anthropocene epoch misstated when scientists believe the Earth was formed. It was roughly 4.5 billion years ago.
That Time ChatGPT Wrote My Column
And other thoughts on why humans are still useful.

PREPARE, WE WERE TOLD. This time it’s coming for your job.

Writers and editors are accustomed to reports of our obsolescence being greatly exaggerated. For years, we’ve been subject to gotcha stunts: Can you tell the difference between the article written by a human and the one written by AI? (Admittedly, I usually guess wrong. But in these set-ups, both articles tend to be workmanlike, and—here’s the catch—rely on a set of previously known, rather than newly gathered, facts.)

We are also a curious lot, and we get to wondering: In the age of generative AI, which of our human character-istics aren’t slated to be supplanted? So we asked a group of Stanford faculty to opine on four areas that are central to our well-being: careers, health, relationships, and creativity. (Have you seen the one where DALL-E tries to draw hands?)

In our story, which begins on page 48, professor of law and of political science Daniel Ho observes that one of the tasks still firmly in the province of humans is analogical reasoning, or the ability to apply principles from a known situation to a new situation. This is why we’ll still need lawyers, but it’s also why we’ll still need science writers, who frequently rely on analogies to explain complex discoveries to lay readers. In the May issue of the magazine alone, heart sensors became postage stamps, polymers became meandering country roads, and the discernment of a geological epoch became the plot of an Oscar-winning film.

Assistant professor of computer science Diyi Yang points out that as AI writes more and more of our emails and texts, we’re all going to start sounding the same. Oh, indeed. As ChatGPT put it when I asked it to take a crack at this column, “Striking a balance between leveraging AI’s capabilities and fostering genuine human connections remains a challenge.” Its points were broad, its platitudes numerous, its transitions facile.

Perhaps the chatbot’s most incisive observation was this: “Creativity, often regarded as a uniquely human trait, faces both disruption and augmentation by AI.” True enough, according to associate professor of music Ge Wang, who teaches a course in which students use AI tools to make new compositions. But he also observes that part of what makes art great is the suffering behind it, and the stories we tell that illuminate that suffering.

I have not yet met the AI creation that can follow its nose, calling new sources to report on a historical subject in greater depth than has ever been done before (see our cover story on Sam McDonald, page 40). Or that can think, Given the happenings in Major League Baseball, wouldn’t it be great if we talked to members of the 1962 frosh and JV teams about their experience with speedup rules, and then, when the reporting strikes out, pen a charming story about the effort (page 19). Or write a sentence like “It was a questionable media launch: a podcast with a professor lecturing on complex biology for hours while his dog snored,” that makes you want to drop everything and read a profile of professor-podcaster Andrew Huberman (page 56).

Which means I’ll be writing this column again in September. I think.

Email Kathy at kathyz@stanford.edu.
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CARMEL VALLEY MANOR
CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
Academic Freedom at Stanford
The university is rolling out new initiatives to strengthen the culture of academic freedom on campus.

Over the past several months, there has been an intense focus on academic freedom at universities around the country, including at Stanford. Here on the Farm, we have been thinking hard about the ways in which a strong culture of academic freedom and free expression supports not only our university’s mission, but also our learning environment and our bonds of community.

Stanford’s foundational purpose, and what most binds us together as a community, is learning. Learning is the basis for everything we do—in the classroom, in research, and in countless interactions with one another.

Learning thrives in an environment of discussion and experimentation. Breakthroughs in understanding, whether in the classroom or in the research lab, come not from thinking through the same familiar ideas but from considering a broad range of ideas, debating new models and viewpoints, and seeing familiar concepts in a new light. Such an environment requires diversity—diversity of thought, background, identity, and experience—that can be brought to bear on the discussion.

Learning also requires humility and a recognition that no single person has every answer. It requires our willingness to hear new ideas and reconsider our own preconceptions, and to do so from a place of openness and productive engagement, even over contentious issues. Our goal is an environment where members of our community can engage in reasoned discussion and in constructive debate across difference.

A truly inclusive culture is therefore one in which people from many backgrounds and perspectives feel empowered to participate in the discussion. That’s why, rather than being in opposition, free expression and a diverse and inclusive culture are two parts of the same whole. This type of learning environment is especially important for students, who will graduate from Stanford into a world where they will encounter a broad diversity of viewpoints and need to work with people across the ideological spectrum.

This spring, we announced steps to strengthen Stanford’s culture of academic freedom and free expression. First, we are working to introduce these concepts to prospective undergraduates during the admissions process. This included an Admit Weekend panel this past April, moderated by the provost, on the importance of open and vigorous discussion in and beyond the classroom. The dean of undergraduate admissions is also reviewing admissions materials to help prospective students understand that Stanford is a place where civil discourse and academic freedom are prized.

Second, we are working to ensure that these concepts are incorporated into programming for first-year students. In fact, this is a major focus of the Civic, Liberal, and Global Education program—also known as COLLEGE—a new first-year requirement that focuses on civic responsibility and establishing a common baseline from which to approach and debate difficult issues. An important goal of the program is to teach our students how to disagree without being disagreeable. Third, we are developing training for staff on free speech on campus, including for staff who support student speaker events, as well as staff who are themselves involved in developing and leading training sessions.

The goal of these steps is to ensure that these ideals are woven throughout our campus culture from the moment an individual joins our community. For Stanford to live up to its potential as a true learning community, we must ensure that our campus is an environment where ideas can flourish and interact—where they can encounter dissent, sharpen, and grow. The work of creating such an environment requires intentional and sustained focus. I’m committed to ensuring that Stanford is a vibrant and inclusive intellectual environment, one in which a diverse range of ideas isn’t just a possibility—it is a reality.
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Good Times Roll

It didn’t take much to entice Alison Rogers, ‘25, to attend Roller Rinc, one of a flurry of neighborhood-sponsored events during spring quarter. “I skate almost every day,” says Rogers, who is majoring in symbolic systems and in theater and performance studies. “It’s my main way of getting around campus.” She landed some cool jumps; she met an ice skater trying to transfer her skills to asphalt. (“That was fun to watch.”) The vibe was casual, Rogers says. Good music, ice cream, a limbo stick, and friends just freewheeling.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NIKOLAS LIEPINS, ‘25/ETHOGRAPHY
Freelance Writing: How to Make Money
By Peter Saxton Schroeder, MBA '70

“The business advice of other freelance writing books is wrong,” explains Schroeder, a 30-year freelance writer. He presents strategies for both beginner and established writers to fly free worldwide, increase article income 50 to 100 percent, get comped accommodations at top hotels and major resorts, resell the same articles, self-syndicate your writing, and earn an income comparable to that of a corporate CEO.

The Fastest Tortoise
By Ken Hersh, MBA '89

Ken Hersh recounts with honesty and humor his improbable journey. With no specific training, he led one of the nation’s most successful private investment franchises then transitioned to lead a major policy think tank. The Fastest Tortoise tells valuable lessons and what can happen if you just raise your hand.

Flat Space Cosmology: A New Model of the Universe
By Eugene Terry Tatum, '78, and U.V.S. Seshavatharam

This compilation, based entirely upon recent peer-reviewed scientific journal publications, encapsulates how the Flat Space Cosmology model has become the primary competitor to the inflationary standard model of cosmology. New ideas concerning black holes, dark energy and dark matter are presented and shown to correlate well with astronomical observations. Available now in online bookstores.

Dr. Ochoa's Stellar World: We Are All Scientists/Todos somos científicos
By Ellen Ochoa, MS '81, PhD '85

Ellen Ochoa’s first book, in her five-book STEAM series, explores how children have an innate drive for discovery. From learning physics by juggling and grasping biology through observing a nest of fledglings, this book inspires young readers to embrace the fact that the world is their very own scientific playground.

Breakdown: Lessons for a Congress in Crisis
By Jeff Bingaman, Stanford Law School '68

In his thirty-year career representing the citizens of New Mexico in the US Senate, Jeff Bingaman witnessed great things accomplished through the legislative process. Al Gore called Bingaman’s recent book, “essential reading for anyone entering public service,” and Bill Bradley said, “it is full of common sense and in-depth understanding.”

High Road Books/University of New Mexico Press, 2022

Empirical Regional Economics
By Richard S. Conway, Jr., '66

This textbook is an introduction to the field of regional economics for juniors, seniors, and graduate students majoring in economics, business, and geography. It should also appeal to anyone in the private or public sector who has an interest in gaining a better understanding of regional economic behavior and the practical methods of regional economic forecasting and analysis.

Buffalo Dreamers
By John Sutthoff Newman, '71

Sam Comstock, a young Iraq war vet, suffers from suicidal PTSD. His Marine sniper skills lead him to Montana on a mission to kill migratory buffalo that are presumed to carry an infectious disease for cattle. Taken hostage by a band of Indian warrior-dreamers who are determined to save the buffalo from slaughter, Sam comes to depend on his captors and together they fight for survival. Johnsnewman.com

The Black Fives: The Epic Story of Basketball's Forgotten Era
By Claude Johnson, MS '84

A narrative non-fiction about the pre-NBA history of African Americans in basketball. Going back to the late-1800s, it humanizes the once-forgotten Black pioneers whose vision and efforts shaped today’s game, weaving through New York City, Washington DC, Pittsburgh, and Chicago to create an irresistible new sports quilt that rewrites basketball history. Abrams Press, May 2022, 480 pages. Available on Amazon.

TO PURCHASE A BOOK, VISIT PUBLISHER’S WEBSITE, SEARCH AMAZON.COM OR BARNESANDNOBLE.COM, OR VISIT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE.
[Family Caregiver Distress]
By Dolores Gallagher-Thompson, PhD (Stanford faculty); Ann Choryan Bilbrey, PhD; Sara Honn Qualls, PhD; Rita Ghatak, PhD; Lynn Waelder, PhD
Do you have questions about who “caregivers” are, what they experience, and how caregiving impacts mental health? This book provides a comprehensive overview and includes current information about evidence-based practices that reduce caregivers’ distress. Health care providers working with family caregivers will find it an invaluable resource. 2023.

[The Burnout Challenge: Managing People’s Relationships with Their Jobs]
By Christina Maslach, PhD, ’71
The Burnout Challenge provides a new understanding of a major problem in the workplace, which is commonly misunderstood. The broad research base for this book, both in psychology and other disciplines, was recognized by the World Health Organization in 2019, when it officially defined burnout as an occupational phenomenon with negative outcomes in employee productivity and health.

[Born in the Most Modern Time]
By Carter B. Forbes, edited by Candace Forbes ’68 and Bert Forbes ’67
Carter, born in the Texas panhandle in 1905, said “I don’t remember a thing about it, and if I had, my Mother would have been the most embarrassed woman in 27 counties.” And the stories go on from there. His style is Mark Twain-ish; you’ll be captivated by his observations of people and places. His was not an easy life, but it was filled with curiosity about the world. “If you enjoy reading this, it is your own fault,” he said.

[Violent Victors: Why Bloodstained Parties Win Postwar Elections]
By Sarah Zukerman Daly, ’03
One of the great puzzles of electoral politics is how parties that commit mass atrocities in war often win the support of victimized populations to establish the postwar political order. Sarah Z. Daly combines case studies of victim voters in Latin America with experimental survey evidence and new data on postwar elections around the world. In electing bloodstained parties, voters tend to gain peace, but sacrifice justice, liberal democracy, and social welfare.

[The Un-Poet A Memoir of Microtales]
By Ratko Blackheart, ’68
Narrative, lined pieces with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Unique in the history of writing.

“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its outcome than to take the lead in introducing a new order of things.” —Niccolo Machiavelli

50 percent profits benefit Doctors Without Borders.

[The Infinite Staircase]
By Geoffrey Moore, ’67
The journey from the Big Bang to now is a profound mystery. How did the universe self-organize to create us absent intelligent intervention? What anchors our values and gives our lives meaning? The Infinite Staircase boldly surveys diverse disciplines to uncover answers to these questions while revealing insights into our existence and the principles underlying its development.

[Which Future?: Choosing Democracy, Climate Health, and Social Justice]
By David Greene, PhD ’74
Which Future? presents a bold, provocative alternative to conventional thinking from a synthesis of cognitive, cultural, and biological sciences. Its worldview of “natural humanism” integrates democracy and ecology into a vision of people interconnected with the planet and each other, and morally committed to everyone’s well-being and fulfillment. www.whichfuturebook.com

[Tuning In: A Memoir of Transformation Through the Magic of Radio]
By Sandy Miranda, Stanford Continuing Education Writing Program
From humble beginnings yearning to escape a dysfunctional family to finding herself alone and pregnant at 15, follow Sandy’s journey working her way through 6 years of college, joining a nascent Apple, and having a life-changing experience at Esalen at age 43. As she becomes a successful international broadcaster, her programs on music, culture, and spirituality help her become whole.
Spring Mountain Story
By John Gantner, '62
John's Gantner's book about growing up on Spring Mountain. It spans ten years, 1940-50, telling stories of his youth and the early days of School House Vineyard. It is filled with many historical notes about the beginnings of the renaissance of Spring Mountain as a major grape growing area. This book features watercolors and drawings done by Mary Fisher of Portland, Oregon, who graduated from Stanford in the mid 1930s.

Through The Glass Ceiling to The Stars
By Eileen Collins, MS '86
Eileen Collins was an aviation pioneer her entire career: one of the Air Force's first woman pilots, the second woman in the elite USAF test pilot program, and the first woman to pilot and command a US space mission. NASA entrusted her to command the daring return-to-flight shuttle mission two years after the Columbia disaster. She shares her life lessons with the aim of inspiring a new generation.

Nothing But The Tooth: An Insider's Guide to Dental Health
By Teresa Yang, '77
Have you ever been told you need a “smile makeover,” with the implication that if your teeth were whiter and straighter, you would be more successful and happier? Perhaps your dentist said you need a root canal or a crown—and the tooth doesn't bother you. This practical reference book addresses these questions—plus the ones you didn't even know to ask—and explains how important dental health is to overall health. Pre-order on Amazon.

Exploring Existence
By Gary Hansen, SAA Affiliate Life Member
Exploring Existence focuses upon the essence of existence, examining time, space, energy, matter, relations, intellect, volition and the affections. The book comprises 212 essays, each with a single-word title, designed in a sequence to flow logically from each to the next, or read independently. Further information may be found in the dedicated website itsinmybook.com or www.januspublishing.co.uk

They Called It Pearson: The History of Mata Ortiz and the Casas Grandes Valley
By Walter P. Parks, '54, MBA '59 and Richard D. O'Connor
Chronicling the events that swirled around Mata Ortiz in the Casas Grandes Valley before this little town in northern Chihuahua, Mexico, became a famous pottery center. Beginning with the extensive Casas Grandes Pueblo culture, and extending through Spanish exploration, Apache domination, foreign invasion, the Mormon diaspora, two revolutions and Pancho Villa.

The French Historical Narrative and the Fall of France
By Christine Evans, BA/MA '76
The fall of France in June 1940, La Débâcle, posed a challenge to France's understanding of itself. Could the existing “sacred” narrative of French history established by the Third Republic hold in the face of the defeat of France's military and political systems, both built upon its foundations? This study focuses on French assessments of the Debacle produced during wartime and Occupation and places philosopher Simone Weil's writings of 1938 to 1943 within this continuum.

Enchanted: Time and the Mountain
By Jerilyn McIntyre, '64, MA '65, Illustrated by Ken Shuey
This tantalizing time travel tale for pre-teen readers is a tangled yarn that weaves together three stories of intrigue on a mysterious mountain with threads of magical realism and environmental consciousness. Available on Amazon or by order at The King's English Bookshop in Salt Lake City, Vroman's in Pasadena, and Jerrol's in Ellensburg, Washington.

Photographic Memories: A Story of Shinjitsu
By Risa Shimoda '77 and Bob Fleshner
Midori’s extraordinary life included a solo, trans-Pacific trip at age 9, incarceration, and internment enforced by J. Edgar Hoover. Passion for family and photography drove him to seek refuge after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in Utah with a Mormon family, and his indefatigable spirit propelled him to NYC where he worked with the iconic Grace Kelly, Fay Wray, and Betty Hutton. Visit Amazon.com.

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WHO WE ARE

Meet Teresa Nguyen

A medical resident connects flight with life.

“People say I’m very calm in the operating room during an emergency. I learned that from helicoptering.”
THE STORIES TERESA NGUYEN’S parents told her as a little girl growing up in Vietnam planted a seed. They were memories of the day, in 1975, that Saigon fell to North Vietnamese troops, marking the end of the Vietnam War.

“They told me about the droves of people who ran toward American helicopters, hoping to escape the new communist regime,” Nguyen says. Her parents, then children, watched as crowds of people tried to reach American GIs—climbing buildings, even handing up their babies to take to the United States. To them, “the sounds of helicopters signified that hope was leaving.” But to their daughter, who immigrated to the United States with her parents in 1999, the sound of flight sparked something different: excitement. “It meant a chance of hope, opportunity, and a better life,” she says.

The family made a new life in Renton, Wash., her parents eventually working for Boeing, and a sister was born. Nguyen, ’14, MD ’20, studied chemistry in college and then worked as a research scientist at Genentech before returning to Stanford for medical school. The sound of a Life Flight chopper hovering above Stanford Hospital triggered memories of her parents’ stories, and she thought about how much their lives had changed. These helicopters saved lives. That resonated with her, especially now that she was a doctor.

“I just really wanted to learn to fly,” Nguyen says. So when she started her anesthesiology residency at Stanford three years ago, she also signed up for flight lessons. She wanted to become a helicopter pilot.

“When I was living in Ho Chi Minh City, we lived in a very small, meager house [in an area] with unpaved roads. There was a lot of drugs and crime. My aunts were boat refugees who settled in Renton, Wash. My dad tried several times to escape to Malaysia right after the war but never made it. After many years, my aunts became U.S. citizens and started the paperwork to sponsor us. When I was 7, we flew to America. The flight we took was the first plane we had ever been on.

“I went to Stanford, then got a job in drug design. My personal project was in creating treatments for pain. But I realized I wanted to know more about the patients we were making these medicines for. I wanted to go to medical school.

“When I arrived in America, my dad found a job as a janitor and my mom worked in a warehouse. When I was 14, we all became U.S. citizens. I was taught you go to school—that was the thing—and you always try to make your life better.

“I chose helicoptering because helicopters save people. I would love to one day fly for Life Flight, but, as a physician-researcher, I may not make the 4,000 hours of flight time required. A dream of mine, though, is to set up the first Life Flight system in Vietnam.

“There’s a synergy between flight prep and prepping for surgery. You’re constantly scanning, checking the warning lights in a helicopter or oxygen levels in a patient. In a helicopter, if the engine fails, you have 1.5 seconds to respond. You’ve got to remain calm—just like during a medical emergency.

See Nguyen in flight at ALU.MS/TERESANGUYEN
Discover luxury senior living at Coterie Cathedral Hill. With a tailored approach to care founded on strategies developed by Mayo Clinic, Coterie supports your complete wellness.

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Compassion’s Champion

The Davis community mourns David Breaux.

IT’S HARD TO THINK ABOUT. David Henry Breaux, ’95, was a serene, forgiving, often unhoused man cherished by the community he elevated with his single-minded dedication to compassion. On April 27, he was stabbed to death on a park bench where he often slept. It was the first of three outdoor stabbings in a week that shook the city of Davis, Calif., claiming the lives of Breaux and a UC Davis student, Karim Abou-Najm, and wounding 64-year-old Kimberlee Guillory while she was sleeping. (A suspect has been apprehended.)

Breaux was an urban studies major, appeared in Centennial Gaieties, and worked at Stanford Sierra Camp. After graduation, he made the finals of a screenwriting contest but did not pursue a career in the field.

In Davis, Breaux was known as the Compassion Guy. For the past 14 years, he stood on a downtown corner and asked passersby to write their definition of compassion in his notebook. In 2011, he turned their answers into a book, Compassion: Davis CA. Two years later, he inspired the city to build a Compassion Bench, and shortly after that, he went on a Compassion Tour funded by the Dalai Lama’s foundation.

“He was so genuinely interested in the search for knowledge,” says Yolo County supervisor Lucas Frerichs, a former Davis mayor who helped build the Compassion Bench.

Breaux’s journey to becoming the Compassion Guy began in 2008, when he was experiencing depression after the end of a relationship. Heeding religion scholar Karen Armstrong’s call for a Charter of Compassion, he gave away his car and most possessions and moved from Oakland to Davis to live with a friend. He couch-surfed, became homeless, and declined offers of housing until shortly before his death, when he was getting ready to move into a local shelter.

His sister, Maria Breaux, ’91, calls him “the sweetest, most gentle, most chill person I knew.”

He was also forgiving. Breaux’s father physically abused him, Maria, and their mother, who had schizophrenia, Breaux wrote in a post on Medium in 2016. Yet when his father was in poor health and asked Breaux to come home to Duarte, Calif., to take care of him, he did.

Also in 2016, he wrote a telling message to Maria: “If I’m ever harmed and unable to speak for myself, forgive the perpetrator and help others forgive that person.”

Maria says she will carry on his legacy by doing exactly that. —Bill Ainsworth, ’83

THE TICKER

Toluse Olorunnipa, ’08, MA ’09, White House bureau chief for the Washington Post, and co-author Robert Samuels have won the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction for His Name Is George Floyd: One Man’s Life and the Struggle for Racial Justice. Vauhini Vara, ’04, was the finalist in fiction for her debut novel, The Immortal King Rao. . . . Also immortalized are Dianne Calvi, ’84, and Rey Saldaña, ’09, MA ’10, recipients of the President’s Award for the Advancement of the Common Good, for their work as CEOs of Village Enterprise and Communities in Schools, respectively. . . . Tops in the seafaring community is Helena Scutt, ’14, MS ’17, named the Foiling Awards Female Sailor of the Year for her achievements in navigating a boat with winglike hull attachments that lift the craft out of the water to achieve high speeds. . . . Oscar-winning director Cynthia Wade, MA ’96, is more immersed in what’s happening under the sea. Her Netflix docuseries, MerPeople, explores the lives of underwater performers who have turned their passion for mermaiding into high-stakes careers.
On the Clock

In which we inquire about the baseball speedup rules of 1962.

TINKER WITH THE RULES OF A BELOVED GAME and watch the opinions fly. Nowhere is that more evident than in Major League Baseball, now well into a season that features a pitch clock, restrictions on defensive shifts, larger bases, and ghost runners in extra innings. The ostensible goal is to speed up play and generate more action, and perhaps to give the press and fans something to yap about.

Among such yapping was a February episode of Slate’s Hang Up and Listen podcast, which ran through a history of speedup experiments in the national pastime. As journalist Stefan Fatsis recounted, in 1962, the Stanford frosh and JV teams endured a strict regimen: no warm-up pitches between innings, no tossing the ball around the infield after outs, and penalties for players who didn’t run off and on the field between innings.

Tongue-in-cheek, Fatsis predicted an eventual backlash to 2023’s new rules. Might there have been any actual backlash among the Stanford players 60 years ago? Your intrepid alumni magazine endeavored to investigate but ultimately struck out.

“To tell you the truth, I don’t remember that this happened, and I played in every game,” says Carter “Buzz” Riegel, ’65, “or my memory of such things 61 years ago has failed me.”

Marsh Howard, ’64, Rich Berra, ’65, Bill Young, ’63 . . . nothing. Maybe Bob Cox? Surely a pitcher who played several years of minor-league ball would remember a season with no warm-ups, a sacrosanct routine everywhere from Little League to senior softball.

“Sorry, I don’t,” says Cox, ’65. “The game was different back then. Hitters didn’t constantly step out of the box to adjust equipment like elbow guards. We didn’t even have elbow guards. We just sort of got on with it.”

George Thacher, ’65, wondered about the rationale for the 1962 changes. “Our games were, by any standard, not uncomfortably long,” he says. “No TV ads, always short, sharp pitcher warm-ups between innings, umps eager to get home.”

Maybe the collective shrug is proof that changes in procedure will always fade into the background while primary reasons to play or watch the game still burn bright decades after the fact.

Or not. “I don’t really follow baseball at all,” says Dave Ashworth, ’65. “I prefer to play and am addicted to pickleball, a really fun sport sweeping the country.”

—Geoff Koch
For the Birds
A requiem, in three parts.

WHEN PASSENGER PIGEONS WERE PLENTIFUL, they could darken the skies for days. Flocks a mile wide were described as blocking out the sun as they passed overhead. “I think we have a hard time even imagining how animated our continent was with life,” says sculptor Todd McGrain, who spent years creating a six-foot-tall sculpture of a passenger pigeon to serve as a memorial to the species. The sculpture resides in Ohio, where in 1900 the last passenger pigeon in the wild was shot and killed. Four other sculptures—of a Labrador duck, a heath hen, a great auk, and a Carolina parakeet—sit perched around the country as part of the Lost Bird Project, McGrain’s effort to highlight extinctions that have occurred in modern times.

Second editions of each sculpture arrived at Stanford earlier this year thanks in part to two-time Grammy-winning composer Christopher Tin, ’98, MA ’99. Tin first heard about the project more than a decade ago, when he signed on to write the score for the documentary chronicling McGrain’s efforts. “When we talk about the arts tackling the great issues of our time, often it takes a multidisciplinary approach,” Tin says. The sculptures, in his eyes, generate discussion. The documentary educates. And the music kindles emotion. Tin himself was so moved by the stories of the extinct species that, after the film wrapped, he spent the next decade working on a 12-movement choral composition that celebrates the birds’ beauty and mourns their loss. This year, he premiered his new album, The Lost Birds, at Bing Concert Hall, accompanied by a screening of the documentary and the installation of the five sculptures. The composition, recorded by British vocal ensemble Voces8 and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, was nominated for a 2023 Grammy.

“In my mind, the core message of the album is really that bird extinction is just a preface for our own extinction,” Tin says. “Music cannot solve the world’s problems on its own, but it can inspire the next generation of leaders who will solve the world’s problems.” 
‘Life Doesn’t Always Go as Planned’
John McEnroe sends off the 2023 graduates.

IN JUNE, under 72-degrees-and-sunny skies, the university conferred 1,075 doctoral, 2,503 master’s, and 1,580 bachelor’s degrees. Many of the graduates were enrolled at Stanford when the COVID-19 pandemic began—including undergraduates, most of whom left campus before spring quarter of their frosh year, only to return as juniors. Tennis legend, author, and actor John McEnroe, the featured speaker at the university’s 132nd Commencement, noted how that experience could fortify them in unexpected ways. “You pivoted to virtual options, maybe you took a gap year, found other ways to connect with your peers and your teachers—but the point is, you kept moving forward—coming out a little stronger on the other side,” said McEnroe, ’81. “Life doesn’t always go as planned,” he said, advising graduates to shift gears when necessary and to redefine victory. “Know that the real victory in life is the long game,” he said. “Measure your success by how much you evolve, not necessarily how much you win.”

WATCH McEnroe’s Commencement Address

Clockwise from top: David Gonzales, ’93; H. Taghap; Andrew Brodhead/Stanford News Service; David Gonzales, ’93 (3)

ANSWERS
First in Class

See if you can match the photos with the milestones.

**JOHN McENROE** was the first professional athlete—and the first Stanford dropout—to deliver the commencement address. “I am gratified that my lack of an undergraduate degree from Stanford has not been held against me or disqualified me from this prestigious honor,” he said when named speaker. Which got us wondering: Who else was a first? (Answers on page 22.)

1. **First alum**
   
   1921, Ray Lyman Wilbur, Class of 1896, MA ’97, MD ‘99, university president. He’d give the commencement address at 10 ceremonies between 1921 and 1943.

2. **First Cabinet member**
   
   1925, Herbert Hoover, Class of 1895, U.S. secretary of commerce. He would speak again in 1935, as a former U.S. president.

3. **First woman**
   
   1941, Lou Henry Hoover, Class of 1898, former first lady. The gender barrier wouldn’t be broken again until 1976, with Carla Hills, ’55, U.S. secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

4. **First and only knight**
   
   1953, Sir Percy Spender, Australian ambassador to the United States.

5. **First to become the namesake for a Row house**
   

6. **First Supreme Court justice**
   

7. **First senator**
   

8. **First and only astronaut**
   
   1996, Mae Jemison, ’77, founder and director, Jemison Institute for Advanced Technology in Developing Countries, at Dartmouth College.

9. **First and only to do the Macarena**
   

10. **First high-tech exec**
    

11. **First to don Nerd Nation glasses**
    
    2014, Bill and Melinda Gates, directors of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

12. **First actor**
    
Key Change

Persis Drell, who steps down as provost this fall, isn’t quite sure what’s next. But that’s music to her ears.

For Persis Drell, the hardest part of walking away from her job as Stanford’s 13th provost this fall will be saying goodbye to “the most spectacular group of individuals I’ve ever had the privilege of working with”—the more than two dozen vice provosts, deans, and others who call her boss. “Those were hard phone calls, to call them up and say that, for me, it was time,” she says.

The responsibilities of provost at Stanford are dizzyingly vast. The position serves not only as the university’s chief academic officer but also its chief budgetary one. It has purview over areas as diverse as student affairs, athletics, religious life, and faculty housing. Drell—a self-described doer—relished that challenge. “There is a satisfying feeling waking up every morning and knowing you’re going to be in a position to do something good for the institution—or to do your best to do something good for the institution.”

But in a career ascending through academic leadership—including serving as director of SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory and dean of the School of Engineering—Drell has never been one to linger. When she took the provost job, she indicated she wouldn’t necessarily be around as long as her record-breaking predecessor, John Etchemendy, PhD ’82, who held the job for more than 16 years. “I have never known with certainty what I was going to be doing in five years,” Drell told Stanford in 2016. “Life is just way too long.” When she steps aside, she notes, she will have served “6 ⅔ years” as provost. “That’s the longest I’ve been in any job,” she says. “It was just time.” An advisory committee of Stanford community members appointed by President Marc Tessier-Lavigne will make recommendations for her successor.

STANFORD BONDED

Drell isn’t quite Cardinal from birth, but she’s close. Her father, the late theoretical physicist Sidney Drell, brought his family to campus when she was 6 months old, and Drell grew up in one of the original houses built for faculty, often with some of the world’s most acclaimed physicists in the living room. After earning degrees at Wellesley and UC Berkeley, she began her career as a cellist who met her violist husband, SLAC accelerator physicist Jim Welch, through a shared love of music. They’ve long dedicated their Sundays to playing in a string quartet, but COVID-19 made that outlet vital. In one stretch, the ensemble—suddenly “a pod,” says Drell—worked through every one of Haydn’s 68 string quartets, in order. “We did every Sunday though the pandemic,” she says. “I would not have survived otherwise.” Her other major release from life’s stresses was less easily replaced. A thrice-weekly fitness kickboxer, Drell had to make do with unloading on a punching bag rather than on her instructor. “It’s much more fun to hit him,” she says. “It’s very empowering.”
physics professor at Cornell before returning to the Farm in 2002. But it was only as provost that Drell says she appreciated the larger picture of the university she’d called home for decades. “The perch of provost lets you see the whole institution, and the depth and the complexity of the institution really hit home,” she says.

THE L-WORD
Drell is not easily drawn out on the topic of legacy. “I hate the whole legacy thing,” she says, in part because it suggests a completeness to accomplishments that she thinks is inaccurate. “It’s all about handoffs to the next generation, because if they don’t totally own it, it’s not gonna happen.” She’s happier to talk about what she’s proud of, a list that includes helping establish the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, the university’s first new school in 70 years; launch (and teach in) the COLLEGE frosh curriculum; and spearhead what she calls “a great, great evolution for Stanford”: IDEAL, the university’s initiative to advance inclusion, diversity, equity, and access in a learning environment. “Those are all things that faculty did with help from the deans,” she says. “My job was to support and help them make those things happen.”

WHAT’S NEXT
Every summer, Drell retreats to a tiny cabin in the northern Adirondacks, which has running water and electricity “most of the time” but no phone or internet. “We are just off the grid,” she says. Her family is looking forward to seeing a bit more of that unplugged version of her year-round, she says. And she anticipates having time to read again. She’ll still be on the faculty at Stanford, and in the classroom—“I have always seen myself as a teacher,” she says. But the details have yet to be established. “It’s a little like just jumping off a cliff and seeing where I land.” And while she won’t have the provost’s perch, her goals won’t be so different. “I would be very, very happy to be a faculty member, just a faculty member, and doing service for the institution in any way that I can,” she says. “For the next couple of years, I would find that deeply satisfying.”

Sam Scott is a senior writer at Stanford. Email him at sscott3@stanford.edu.
We Are Family
The evolution of Blackfest.

BY RACHEL LIT

Blackfest wasn’t always a music festival. For decades, beginning in the early 1970s, it was a family picnic of sorts, sparked from the need to bridge an east-west campus divide. “The largest number of Black students living together outside of Ujamaa were in Mirrielees,” recalls Mary Haynes, ’83.

But they could all meet up at the Black Family Picnic, an annual gathering on Roble Field organized by the Black Student Union (BSU) and the Black Community Services Center (BCSC) that included students, staff, faculty, and members of the East Palo Alto community. “There was this sense of wanting to reaffirm that Stanford was a place where you can still have community and find the support of other Black students,” says James Jordan, ’93, who was assistant director of the BCSC from 1998 to 2002.

In the early years, there were games, like bid whist and backgammon, and sports—football, lacrosse, Frisbee. “It provided an opportunity for Black students and staff to gather in a nonacademic, fun setting,” recalls Grace Carroll, ’71, MA ’75, PhD ’75. “Folks ate, played ball, and just hung out.” Al Perry, ’77, remembers a man they called Big Daddy—who ran the Faculty Club kitchen—barbecuing ribs and chicken for the event in the mid-1970s, but by the late ’70s, student organizers were in charge of the food. “One year,” recalls Richard Craven, ’82, “with long-distance phone calls to our mothers to guide us, Odell [Mays, ’82] and I cooked 23 sweet potato pies in our Mirrielees apartment!”

Roughly 50 years later, Blackfest is known as the largest free hip-hop event in the Bay Area. This May, rapper and producer Pi’erre Bourne headlined the festival in Frost Amphitheater before a multicolored light show. Over the course of the afternoon and evening, thousands of music fans crowded together near the stage, swaying and bouncing, while others picnicked on blankets on the upper slopes and perused the wares from local Black businesses—cartoon-sketched streetwear from Hella Bay Clothing, or Avocurl hair products, or SDNectar’s crystal pendant necklaces.

“As someone from the East Coast, it’s been pretty shocking to come [to Palo Alto] and see the lack of Blackness,” says Kyla Windley, ’22, one of this year’s co-directors of the Black Family Gathering Committee, which now coordinates the event. “It’s very difficult, down to finding people to braid my hair. There is no soul food. Last year at Blackfest, I remember tearing up when I saw all the middle-aged Black people because they reminded me of my family.”

Organizers expanded the event in the 1990s, adding bouncy houses for children, step performances, three-on-three basketball tournaments, and vendors selling handcrafted African garments and jewelry. “It was an exposure day for folks to be able to come to campus and feel welcome at Stanford,” says Jordan. By then, it had become known as the Black Family Gathering.

In 2003, organizers added live music to the mix, including student groups such as the Stanford Gospel Choir, and rebranded the event as Blackfest. The student-led Stanford Concert Network signed on as a co-sponsor that year, which bolstered the name recognition of the artists, starting with Oakland-born singer-songwriter Goapele. In 2009, the R&B rap group Day26—known from MTV’s Making the Band reality show—performed on Roble Field, and in 2014, rapper Ty Dolla $ign headlined the event on FloMo’s Levin Field. Attendance climbed from 700 in 2007 to an estimated 4,000 in 2011. Some 3,000 came to hear the 2023 lineup at Frost, which also featured DJ Bia Baby (Engubia Fontama, ’23), singer Jean Deaux, and rapper Kenny Mason.

This year’s co-directors, Windley and Catherine Harbour, ’24, tried to keep one guiding principle in mind. “Some Black artists specifically use their art to promote the Black community,” Harbour says. She and Windley asked themselves: “Who is someone that everyone is going to be excited about and who is going to maintain the integrity of the event?”

In the end, Blackfest 2023 did what it has always meant to do, Windley says. “It serves as a mutual acknowledgement that we see you and we see each other, and that’s super meaningful to me.”

Rachel Lit, ’25, is an editorial intern at Stanford. Email her at stanford.magazine@stanford.edu.
All Together Now: In the '70s and '80s, the gathering focused on food and games. By the late '90s, the event had grown to include poetry readings, a hula hoop contest, and a basketball tournament. Major musical acts began in 2003. From top, in 2006, members of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity did a step performance. Catch A Fyah Caribbean dance team was seen in 2007, and members of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority appeared in 2008. Pi’erre Bourne headlined in 2023.
HIS JULY MARKS 50 YEARS since the United States ended the draft and moved to all-volunteer armed forces. The Army, however, didn’t exactly march past the milestone with its chest held out. In 2022, the military’s largest branch missed its recruiting goal by 25 percent, a historic shortfall equivalent to 15,000 missing soldiers. That’s a concern for Gabe Camarillo, JD ’02, who was confirmed last year as the undersecretary of the Army, where he is chief management officer and the second-highest-ranking civilian. The roots of the problem, he says, include the lingering effects of the pandemic, a tight labor market, and a pair of worrying downward trends: Not only are fewer young people open to joining the military, but many aren’t even eligible—they don’t meet the health and aptitude requirements.

A military career was an about-face for Camarillo, who grew up in El Paso, Texas. His mom—also from El Paso—ran a home day care and later worked in accounting, while his father, who immigrated from Mexico and whose schooling ended in fourth grade, worked as a movie projectionist. That job allowed his son—a budding film buff—to while away hot summer days hopping from screen to screen. “I saw a lot of 1980s cinema,” he says. “Probably more than I should have as a kid.” Nearby Fort Bliss was a mainstay of El Paso life, but like a lot of teens today, Camarillo didn’t consider that the military might match his ambitions. He headed to Georgetown University intent on becoming a lawyer. In Washington, D.C., he caught the political bug as legislative assistant and deputy press secretary to Democratic Rep. Calvin Dooley, MA ’87, from California, adding experience in national security and military construction to his portfolio. He started at Stanford Law School in 1999.

After working on Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign, Camarillo was offered a position in the Department of Defense. He was drawn in by the chance to again work on national security. His role with the Army quickly required him to stretch well beyond his legal skills. He was soon heading a $30 billion research and development portfolio overseeing weapon system acquisitions. “At first, it was like sitting in a room with people speaking a completely different language,” he says.

He was hooked, however. “You’ll never work anywhere where everyone from the top to the bottom is as aligned around a common purpose,” he says. Camarillo has spent more than eight years in civilian leadership for the Army and the Air Force during Democratic administrations. (He returned to private employment during Donald Trump’s presidency.) Stanford talked to Camarillo about the importance of an all-volunteer Army, the reasons for the enlistment shortfall, and possible solutions to the problem.

STANFORD: Is the 50th anniversary of an all-volunteer military reason for celebration?
Camarillo: It’s absolutely a cause for celebration. For 50 years, to be able to not only attract and recruit talented men and women to serve in all the armed forces for that long of a period of time, but also to be able to recruit and attract the very best talent the nation has to offer, to give them the training and experience they need to continue to serve as the world’s absolute greatest and most impressive military
WON OVER: Camarillo, left, didn’t consider a career in the military when he was young. But after he was offered a Defense Department position in 2008, he soon became hooked on the mission and the camaraderie.
force in the world—it’s the envy of every other country.

How worrisome is the recent recruitment shortfall?
What keeps the United States safe is a strong deterrent capability and its partners and allies, but it takes the talented men and women that serve in our military to make it happen. Today, we can perform any mission in the world that we have to do, and we have exceptionally talented people do it. I’ve got to worry about the pipeline of people coming in behind them. A 25 percent reduction, or any drop-off in the number of Americans that are willing to serve, I think, is of concern for all of us.

So why are fewer young people joining the Army?
We did some research among the population of 16- to 20-year-olds last year. The top factor that prevented most of them from considering a career in the Army was a fear of getting hurt, whether in training or combat operations, and the second was that it would take these young people off their chosen career path. But, you know, there’s a wide range of things you can do. You could be a veterinarian, a doctor, a lawyer. You can be a coder. You can be a nurse. You can do just about anything you can think of in the Army.

What about the narrative that the military has become “too woke” and has alienated conservative communities where enlistment has traditionally been strong?
We specifically asked whether these kind of culture issues, whether efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, or to address climate change—which has an operational impact to the Army and other military services—were seen as impediments to wanting to join the Army. And we found in our survey results that they were among the very lowest responses.

How did the pandemic affect enlistment?
In a normal year, there will be a lot of engagement by high school recruiters at school job fairs, at military appreciation events, and other opportunities. Statistically, most of the people who end up joining the Army aren’t initially open to doing so, so that engagement with a recruiter is vital for our success. So, having the pandemic close that access, it meant that we were operating at a significant deficit in terms of interpersonal exchange, awareness, and education.

The pandemic also impacted test scores academically, and we see that borne out in the academic tests that recruits have to take to join the military. We also saw it in the number of students meeting our physical skills and requirements. Students were not engaging in athletic activities. Team sports were canceled. It had an effect.

The tight labor market must have hurt too.
We’ve always been able to offer competitive benefits and incentives to potential recruits. What I think has changed in the last two years, given the tight labor market, is that private employers are becoming much more competitive with the types of benefits they’re offering to kids coming out of high school.

What’s an example of the Army’s response?
We have a nine-week online program we started last year [for] interested men and women. We’ll give you a special academic skills training to be able to help you to perform better and to get better scores on the test for entrance into the military. If it’s a physical training issue, we have dietitians, trainers, and other folks who will help you get into shape in a healthy way that’s sustainable. A little over 3,500 young men and women have come through this program, and the success rate has been above 90 percent so far.

You have two kids, one old enough to serve, the other not far away from that age. What would you say if they asked you about joining the military?
I would certainly encourage them to pursue it. If you are at that age, regardless of your career choice, you have an opportunity to get incredible training. You have a chance to see the world. You have an opportunity to be part of some highly sophisticated teams doing some great missions. And depending on what you specialize in, you’re going to get a chance to work on problems you won’t get anywhere in the private sector.

You’ll never work anywhere where everyone from the top to the bottom is as aligned around a common purpose.’

Sam Scott is a senior writer at Stanford. Email him at sscott3@stanford.edu.

‘You’ll never work anywhere where everyone from the top to the bottom is as aligned around a common purpose.’

Tour of Duty: Among Camarillo’s concerns as undersecretary of the Army is improving soldiers’ quality of life at posts such as Fort Cavazos, Texas.
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**CONTACT**

650.543.8501
ken@deleonrealty.com
HEN AL YSSA LONDON was in second grade, her parents came to class and told a Northwest Coast Native story about the Raven, one in which the trickster-transformer brings light to the world. It was a new story for the Seattle-area 7- and 8-year-olds, as was the news that London was Native, a member of the Tlingit Nation of southeast Alaska. Steeped as they were in the Disney depiction of Pocahontas—the film was released the summer before they entered kindergarten—not all of them were receptive to the information. "I have lighter skin," says London, '12, whose father is also a member of the Tlingit Nation and whose mother has Norwegian and Czech ancestry. "The kids started teasing me: ‘You’re not Native. You don’t look like Pocahontas.’" The backbiting about her multiracial identity followed her out onto the playground and, well, continues to this day.

"This desire to know who you are and where you come from," London says, "was instilled in me early on."

It wasn’t until one day in February 2017—under the bright glare of lenses and lights, when she became the first Tlingit person to wear the Miss Alaska USA crown—that she says she stopped questioning her identity and felt true acceptance and pride in who she is. "I remember wearing my gown and having the Native community up on stage with me," says London. "They were saying, ‘You are Native, and still, you are here.’ I felt so claimed by that. It took me until I was 27 to really accept that we are Indigenous no matter what we look like."

"I don’t like the way mainstream media has portrayed Native Americans," says London. But as a former pageant winner who has springboarded to a multimedia career, she has put herself in a position to do something about it. She uses several platforms—as a motivational speaker, a radio and video host, a children’s book author, and, most recently, an NBC News and MSNBC contributor—to fight for recognition of all Native people, increase media coverage of Native issues, and help keep Native cultures alive.

PAGEANTS WITH A PURPOSE
Like most Indigenous people in the United States, London didn’t grow up on her nation’s ancestral lands. Native culture, though, was built into the fabric of her family’s life. There were after-school Native education programs and summer camps in Alaska for London...
and her three younger siblings—two sisters and a brother. London, especially, took to learning about her Native culture, says her father, J. Tate London, ’84, JD ’88, an assistant U.S. attorney and tribal liaison. “My grandpa called me his freckled Indian,” says London. Her grandfather Ernie Boyd lived on ancestral lands in Ketchikan, Alaska, and was an original Tlingit enrollee under the 1971 federal Alaska Native Land Claim Settlement Act. Tate London is an enrolled member of the Tlingit tribe, and he and his wife, Debi, applied for and received a Certificate of Degree of Alaska Native Blood, issued by the federal government, for each of their children. Since eligibility in their tribe is passed on through lineal descent, London was officially recognized, as her children would be, and their children after them, in perpetuity.

“When I was growing up, I didn’t understand that being Native Alaskan was citizenship-based, and that it couldn’t be taken away from me,” she says. In high school, London followed in the running shoes of her mother, who was a track star in college. An article in the Bothell-Kenmore Reporter featured London the summer after high school graduation as the winner of the Young Native Writers Essay contest who had set track records and was preparing to compete for the title of Miss SeaFair at her first pageant. (She didn’t place, but a spark was kindled.) Then it was off to Stanford, where, she says, “I considered myself more Nerd Nation than anything else.” She connected with other Native students on campus, helping plan the annual student-led Powwow and tutoring Indigenous children in the community. Still, she got the occasional odd look when she told people she was Native, and it bothered her. She continued to search for answers to those nagging questions about her identity, this time through academic lenses, like anthropology and history. She learned about the cultures of the Indigenous people of the Americas, their stories, and their pasts.

“Many still want to see to it that Native Americans disappear,” says London, who majored in comparative studies in race and ethnicity and wrote an honors thesis on rural economic development in Southeast Alaska. She worries about the controversial practice of using blood quantum—requiring a minimum fractional ancestry, such as 1/4 of one’s ancestors being from the tribe—to determine citizenship. Initially a system that the federal government developed to limit benefits, blood quantum is now one of two main methods—the other being lineal descent—that sovereign Native nations use to establish criteria for citizenship. Those who advocate for its continued use say it helps nations preserve culture and safeguard resources; those who prefer lineal descent, like London, are concerned that after generations of intermarriage, many nations could cease to exist.

After graduating, London moved back to the Seattle area, where she worked in marketing for Microsoft and returned to competing in pageants. “I loved pageants—the sisterhood, the performance aspect,” she says. “For me, pageants provided a platform to speak about the beauty and vitality of Native culture today and embracing all aspects of who you are as a mixed-race person.” Sometimes she sang Native songs for the talent competition, like the Eagle Raven love song, and sometimes it was pop ballads, like Beyoncé’s “I Was Here.”

“For her, it was always a pageant with a purpose,” says Tate London. “And she was good at it.” London was crowned Miss Alaska USA in February 2017, then a few months later placed in the top 10 for Miss USA. She appeared on national television in a Tlingit-inspired robe that bore the crest of her Eagle/Killer Whale clan. The Las Vegas audience watched as she began her walk down the runway in red high heels, pausing for effect to throw the deep red robe back. It transformed into the train of an elegant evening gown. The video went viral.

“I wanted to show that Native Americans can live in two worlds,” London says. “We can be Native and wear regalia, then throw it behind you and be a mainstream member of Western society. We can transform back and forth, just like the Raven.” The next day, a Juneau Empire newspaper story used her own words from the pageant for its headline: Tlingit áyá xát. I am Tlingit.

Still, there were the trash talkers, the
insults, the uninformed questions. Contestants asked her, “How Native are you?” One YouTube commenter sniped: “She doesn’t look at all Native. She gives me the ‘Oh … I’m 1/32nd exotic! So, I’m special’ kind of vibe.”

“It’s still very hurtful,” London says. “I always have to go back to my dad, who reminds me, ‘You know who you are.’”

**BECOMING A STORYTELLER**

After winning Miss Alaska USA, London worked as a cultural spokesperson for the Sealaska Heritage Institute, traveling across Alaska for speaking engagements and to host Native events. She discovered a passion for public speaking and began remaking herself as a broadcaster and a media host, as well as an executive communications coach. From 2021 to 2022, she hosted *Native America Calling*, a live call-in program broadcast on 90 public, community, and tribal radio stations in the United States and Canada. Throughout it all, she continued to produce her YouTube series *Culture Story*, traveling throughout Indian Country to interview Indigenous people about their food traditions, their artwork, their celebrations, and their lives. In 2020, PBS-affiliated FNX—First Nations Experience—began to broadcast episodes of *Culture Story* on national television. And that got her noticed by NBC.

Last year, London moved to the Los Angeles area after signing a contract as an occasional on-air contributor for NBC News and MSNBC. She works primarily as a commentator when news breaks on Native American issues. She also was hired to host MSNBC’s *The Culture Is: Indigenous Women*, one in a four-part series on women of color.

“I’m now in a position of being a Native voice at NBC, to shine a light on Native cultures today,” says London, who led a roundtable discussion with seven prominent Indigenous women during the June 4 MSNBC show. They discussed issues long important to children’s book to read to them that embraces the identity of multiracial Native Americans like her—a book that might have helped her as a second grader—but never found one. During the pandemic, when her public appearances slowed down, she decided to write and self-publish a picture book (she is now under contract for two more). It’s titled *Journey of the Freckled Indian: A Tlingit Culture Story*.

“What the vast majority of Americans know about Indigenous culture is through movies or mascots,” says Omnika Thompson, the producer of the show. “How do we change that? By bringing people like London, and her expertise, to the table.”

London hopes this leads to a regular gig. “That would be my dream, an ongoing show that talks about current events in our country as they affect Native American culture,” she says.

During her reign as Miss Alaska USA, London traveled across the state speaking, reading, and singing to Native kids in schools and in hospitals. She went looking for a

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Tracie White is a senior writer at Stanford. Email her at traciew@stanford.edu.

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*Stanford*
First Contact

Garry Nolan is the man you call when there’s no earthly explanation.

Garry Nolan has published more than 300 papers over a 30-year career as an immunologist, but none like the one that appeared in the January 2022 issue of *Progress in Aerospace Sciences*. It wasn’t just that the article (and journal) had nothing to do with the typical interests of a Stanford professor of pathology—in Nolan’s case, cancer biology, pathogenic infection, and retroviral design. It was that the paper explored a topic that few academics of any stripe seriously consider in their work: the possibility of UFOs.

The paper revisited Council Bluffs, Iowa, where a luminous red mass was reported as having fallen to earth on a cold December night in 1977. The event—observed by multiple witnesses, including two who claimed to have seen a hovering object—left some 35 to 55 pounds of molten iron smoldering in a field, confounding investigators who ruled out meteorites, satellites, or aircraft as the cause. Nor did they find plausible signs of a hoax.

Nolan, PhD ’89, and three co-authors used modern technology to reassess the materials. The results weren’t earthshaking. The metal, they found, was mostly iron with isotopically ordinary elements, albeit atypically mixed. Nonetheless, their paper was quietly historic.

After positing possible earthly explanations, Nolan and his colleagues noted that the iron could have been discarded fuel from an advanced aerial vehicle. It was the first—and to Nolan’s knowledge, the only—time a paper in a mainstream, peer-reviewed journal had seriously interrogated alleged UFO artifacts, though the authors were careful not to draw conclusions. The paper’s broader goal, Nolan says, was to present data in a manner that could be applied to other remnants of alleged UFO encounters, to create a pipeline of research that ultimately would bring scientific clarity to a realm in which it has been in short supply. “In good science, you work on what is possible,” Nolan says. “Slowly moving up the proof scale is the best way to do science.”

At a time of heightened interest in UFOs, Nolan has become a point person on the topic—being quoted in newspapers, appearing on television, consulting with military officials, and founding a nonprofit to work on the implications of alien spacecraft on policy, science, and the economy—all while batting away the slings and arrows of skeptics. “If there are others doing this, they’re doing it more quietly because people are still afraid of the stigma,” says Leslie Kean, an investigative journalist who has covered UFOs for the *New York Times* and other publications. “I think he’s absolutely unique.”

Nolan’s role at the Stanford School of Medicine, of course, is about something different altogether. He is known as a trailblazing biotech toolmaker, a reputation that stretches back to his days as a postdoc for Nobel laureate David Baltimore at MIT. There, Nolan co-developed a widely used system that harnesses retroviruses to deliver DNA to cells, an essential tactic in gene therapy. He realized that by creating platforms for other scientists, he could achieve an influence surpassing that of his own lab discoveries. “I’m not the world’s best immunologist,” he says. “But my tools are used by the world’s best immunologists.” Nolan’s more recent successes—spun off into several start-ups—have come in the realms of deep cellular analysis and imaging devices. “If Garry does something new, everyone is going to sit up and pay attention,” says Peter O’Toole, head of imaging and cytometry at the University of York, in England, who interviewed Nolan last year for his pathology podcast, *Flow Stars*.

Nolan’s pursuits may not have obvious overlap, but associates see them as expressions of a common urge to look beyond the status quo. “The fact that Garry is pushing...
the UFO subject forward, it comes from the same place that got him to push all these other technologies forward,” says Michael Angelo, an assistant professor of pathology and former Nolan postdoc. “It is all driven from the same thing.”

Nolan isn’t the first Stanford scientist to go deep on UFOs. In the 1970s, Peter Sturrock, today a professor emeritus of applied physics, hired a French scientist named Jacques Vallée—shortly to inspire Steven Spielberg’s 1977 movie, Close Encounters of the Third Kind—to join his astrophysics group. Wanting to better know his new associate, Sturrock read books Vallée had written on UFOs, which led him to a 1969 study, funded by the U.S. Air Force, that had effectively declared the whole subject bunk. But Sturrock couldn’t reconcile that conclusion with the evidence cited within the report itself. In 1982, he founded the Society for Scientific Exploration to bring attention to the topic.

Meanwhile, Nolan’s introduction to the field was experiential. In an indelible childhood memory, Nolan recalls seeing an apparent spacecraft above the woods while on his newspaper route in his hometown of Windsor, Conn. In another, as a 5- or 6-year-old, he awoke to alien figures in his bedroom. Decades later in a bookstore, he saw the cover of Communion: A True Story, Whitley Strieber’s best-selling account of his own alleged encounters with aliens. “I just remember having a near nervous breakdown because it was what I had seen as a child in my bedroom,” Nolan says.

Those experiences cemented his interest in the extraterrestrial, but they didn’t have much effect on Nolan’s day-to-day. Then, in 2012, he learned that a documentary film crew would have access to a tiny, mummified skeleton discovered a decade earlier in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile. Ata, as the skeleton was nicknamed, had an array of unusual physical characteristics—including 10 ribs instead of the usual 12, giant eye sockets, and an elongated skull—that had fueled rumors it was of alien origins. Nolan, who suspected the skeleton was terrestrial, offered his team’s services to clarify its provenance.

DNA testing soon established that the remains were of a girl, perhaps stillborn, with a constellation of rare mutations. But Nolan’s involvement had another purpose. “When I agreed to be in the movie, I was like, ‘OK, this is going to bring me to the attention of people who might really know what’s going on, and maybe people will contact me,’” he says. “And they did.”

Not long after the release of the documentary, Sirius, in 2013, two men stopped by his campus lab. Nolan declines to name them but says one claimed to be ex-CIA; the other, an executive with an aerospace company. They came carrying MRIs showing brain scans of pilots, intelligence agents, and others suffering from a host of ailments whose possible causes included alleged proximity to UFOs. They knew that Nolan—a pioneer in a technique called CyTOF that was revolutionizing cell analysis—had a powerful machine for blood analysis, and they wanted his help getting more data.

Nolan signed onto the project. His path would bring him in contact with veteran UFO scholars—including Vallée, who would co-author the Council Bluffs paper—and governmental officials investigating UFO reports. One of them was Jay Stratton, who retired from the U.S. government in 2022 as the first director of the Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force. He gave Nolan’s name to pilots who were concerned they’d been exposed to the propulsion systems of UFOs but were reluctant to speak with a military doctor. “He has just been one of the guys in my Rolodex, and he’s there anytime we needed him and his expertise,” Stratton says.

One might surmise that a scientist would pay a reputational cost for embracing what was once largely seen as tabloid fodder. Nolan recalls a senior figure from the National Cancer Institute taking him aside in a bar around 2014 to warn him he was ruining his career. Nolan is an easy conversationalist, but he’d throw niceties to the wind if someone tells him scientists should hold certain topics out-of-bounds. “That’s not how a scientist operates,” Nolan says. “If you take a potential solution off the table and you throw it in the garbage, you could spend the rest of eternity searching around on the table for the answer, and you threw it in the garbage.” He soon had the man in retreat.

Moreover, Nolan contends, the research payoff could be high. Take the discoveries that led to the microprocessor. “Just that little insight about how to manipulate semiconductors changed civilization,” Nolan says. “Imagine if there is a nonhuman intelligence here doing something extraordinary with physics and we’re ignoring it because we just don’t think it fits our equations.” Even when
UFO inquiries hit dead ends for the paranormal, they can lead to progress elsewhere. The MRI scans delivered to Nolan’s lab in 2013, for example, showed activity in two areas of the brain, the caudate and the putamen. That inspired Nolan to collaborate with Harvard scientists on research that has expanded awareness of their role in intelligence and intuition.

It helps that Nolan has taken on his UFO work during a period when the subject is getting new respect. This new era arguably announced itself on December 16, 2017, when the New York Times ran a front-page story—co-written by Kean—revealing that the Pentagon had been running a covert UFO program for a decade. Since last year, the Director of National Intelligence has been required to submit an annual report to Congress on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena, the government’s official term for UFOs.

When Nolan appeared as the sole guest for the full hour of Tucker Carlson Tonight on Fox News last year, he got more grief for where he appeared than what he talked about—not that he cared. “I was more than willing to take the pelting,” he says. “If this isn’t bipartisan, I don’t know what is.”

Thus far, though, anyone waiting for confirmation of UFOs from the government is still waiting. The Department of Defense’s All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office “has found no credible evidence thus far of extraterrestrial activity, off-world technology, or objects that defy the known laws of physics,” the head of the office recently told the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities.

It may turn out that whether you call them UFOs or UAPs, the most important letter is the one that doesn’t change. The many objects that witnesses report could end up with prosaic explanations should they ever lose the U and become identified. Or not. “I used to believe that it was all mythology,” says Kean. “And then, over the years, I came to really understand that that’s not the case. I’m absolutely convinced some of these objects are not made by humans.”

Nolan has a bifurcated stance. As an individual, he believes in UFOs—a conviction based on his memories and on things he has seen and heard in the years since he became immersed in this field. In June, he made international headlines after saying at a conference that he was 100 percent sure that alien intelligence had visited Earth.

But that was speaking from his gut. As a scientist, he knows the threshold of proof remains publicly uncrossed. “I don’t have something that I could put on the kitchen table that will float with anti-gravity that I can point my friends to,” he says. “I agree with you that the hard data is not in your hands yet, but don’t stop me from getting it.”

Sam Scott is a senior writer at Stanford. Email him at sscott3@stanford.edu.
As superintendent of athletic buildings and grounds, he was Stanford’s first Black administrator. That was just the start of his legacy on the Farm.

Sam McDonald’s Road

The Stanford community hardly kept its esteem for Sam McDonald a secret during the beloved administrator’s lifetime. A Daily journalist claimed that McDonald had more friends on campus than any other person. Even Ray Lyman Wilbur, Class of 1896, MA ’97, MD ’99 – Stanford’s longest-serving president and not one for flip remarks—once claimed he’d be mighty afraid to face McDonald in a vote for the university presidency. Yet, when McDonald died, in November 1957, the admiration crescendoed.

The Daily announced the news with a page-spanning headline befitting a major world event, the Board of Trustees reportedly adjourned its November meeting in his honor, and the Band took the field at Big Game to spell out “S-A-M,” a gesture repeated by the card-stunt performers in the crowd. “This was his University,” the Daily declared. “This was his Farm. Let us hold his memory high.”

The outpouring was rooted in more than McDonald’s job as superintendent of athletic buildings and grounds and his reputation as an expert on constructing and maintaining tracks. McDonald was a Stanford institution who had been part of campus for more than 50 years—long enough to greet Jane Stanford herself, work under five university presidents, and become integral to Farm life and lore. He was friend, correspondent, and occasional Cupid to generations of Stanford students; host and chef of countless campus barbecues;
and committed benefactor of the Stanford Home for Convalescent Children, a precursor to Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford, where he often read to patients, gardened, led holiday festivities, and played songs on his concertina. All royalties from his 1954 memoir, Sam McDonald’s Farm, and a third of his estate would go to the home. The rest would go to the university proper.

Time, though, is a great eraser. Sixty-six years after McDonald’s passing, the road named for him in 1941, now called Sam McDonald Mall, still runs along the southern flank of the track. But the identity of its namesake faded faster than perhaps it should have. McDonald didn’t just do all the things described above; he did so as the first Black man to hold an administrative post at Stanford, maybe even at any American university outside of historically Black institutions. He is one of the great characters of Stanford history. Yet even as the first true cohort of Black students—seven of them—arrived on campus five years after his death, his fame had already waned.

Roger Clay, ’66, one of Stanford’s first Black football players and later a university trustee, says that as a student he knew McDonald’s name from the street signs, but it was only in the past four years that he learned any details of his life, including that McDonald was Black. As a young man adjusting to life as part of a tiny minority on a campus where, Clay recalls, “even the ditch diggers were white,” he used to peruse old yearbooks, searching for Black faces. Knowing about McDonald would have offered a connection that he had found absent, he says. “I assumed there was no Black history before me.” Memories always fade, especially in a group as transitory as a student body. But Clay guesses that on a campus with few Black students, and no Black faculty members, perhaps there were fewer inclined to keep the memory alive. “There was no one to know him,” he says.

McDonald’s great-niece Leana Brunson McClain can fill in the blanks to McDonald’s legacy as succinctly as anyone. Her great-uncle, she says, started at Stanford as a laborer hauling gravel and left it as a friend to professors, politicians, and school presidents. He came to campus to build roads and departed with one named after him. And he did it all despite the liabilities and limits imposed on a Black man in segregation-era America. “He was a Black man in a time that being a Black man was very hard,” McClain says. “But he was so motivated, so sure of himself, that what he was able to accomplish I think is phenomenal.”

Westward Bound

Emanuel Bruce McDonald—Sam was a nickname yet to be bestowed—would hardly have seemed primed for a long stay when he walked the 18 miles from downtown San Jose to the town of Mayfield on the cusp of campus in 1901. For one, he was a Scripture-quotting teenage teetotaler in a town teeming with saloons and street fights. (After sleeping the night under a pepper tree, he witnessed two brawls on his first morning in town.) But more so because McDonald’s life to that point had been one of constant relocation.

He was born January 1, 1884, in Monroe, La., to a mother born into enslavement on the eve of the Civil War and a Methodist preacher whose own father had been enslaved until freed by his owner. His memoirs leave unsaid why the family left for California in 1890, but McClain says they were fleeing racial oppression. Certainly, Monroe had no shortage of that. Of the five Southern counties with the most lynchings from 1877 to 1950, three are in Northern Louisiana, including Ouachita Parish, where Monroe sits. “It was a really bad place to be a Black family,” says history professor James Campbell, MA ’83, PhD ’89, who specializes in African American history. And, Campbell adds, it was the leaders and the educated—like a minister—who were often the targets of such terrors.

McClain says McDonald, three brothers, and their parents journeyed to Southern California via wagon—a long, grueling affair. At first, they settled in Tustin, in Orange County, then in nearby Santa Ana. In 1893, they moved to Chino, where Sam’s father, Peter Bird McDonald, made a go of beet farming. It was a hard life. McDonald’s mother, Priscilla Wheatley, who McClain says fell ill coming west, soon died, and the overfarmed soil failed. The McDonalds
He was a Black man in a time that being a Black man was very hard. But he was so motivated, so sure of himself, that what he was able to accomplish I think is phenomenal.

Seven months after leaving his father and brother, he arrived in Sacramento and then San Francisco, where he was turned away by the Marines for being Black and by the Navy for being too young. After working briefly as an artists’ model—he’d been approached on the street—he fled in horror at being asked to pose nude. He ended up as a chore boy on a Sacramento Delta riverboat, where his boxing skills and tall, athletic frame earned him an extra role—and the promise of more pay—as a bouncer responsible for keeping idlers away from the galley. When the extra pay failed to appear, McDonald vowed to drop this dangerous duty, prompting immediate capitulation from his boss. Even at 17, McDonald was alert to his worth.

He left the boat after six months, intending to return to Gilroy to farm, when a stranger in San Jose told him of jobs on Leland Stanford’s stock farm. Together they made the trek toward Palo Alto, McDonald carrying little more than two blankets and a change of clothes. The stock farm wasn’t hiring, but others were, including a farmer and tavern owner named Fred Behm, a Swedish immigrant whose difficulties pronouncing Emanuel would lead to McDonald’s lasting nickname within his new community: Sam. (His family never used the name, McClain says. They called him Uncle Man, short for Emanuel.)

In 1903, at age 19, McDonald came to work at the university as a teamster hauling gravel to build campus roads, including Palm Drive. But he nursed grander ambitions. Though his formal childhood education ended in seventh grade, McDonald was a relentless self-improver, taking correspondence courses in law, meteorology, criminal investigations, and more. He had dreams of becoming a lawyer and hired a Stanford student at $1 a session to tutor him. He would soon take a position as deputy marshal in...
the town of Mayfield (now part of Palo Alto), where he fostered a reputation as someone to go to for legal and political advice. A blacksmith, McDonald recalled, was the only other Black person in town.

In 1904, looking for a job more aligned with his law enforcement interests—he was hoping to work for the U.S. Department of Justice—McDonald signed on as one of two university night watchmen. On April 18, 1906, he had planned to rise early to take a train to San Jose for a day of sightseeing on bicycles with his boss, a semiregular ritual that usually began with a predawn coffee at the campus power station. But exhausted by his double-duty working and studying, McDonald slept in, only to be catapulted to the floor in the morning darkness. He rushed outside to see the 1906 earthquake rolicking campus. “The commotion is indescribable,” he wrote. “The scrubs are tormented as if being twisted out of the earth. The very tops of the tall eucalyptus trees and others, without exaggerating, appear to meet the ground.”

After the terra had returned to firma, he set out to check on Encina and Roble halls, and then the powerhouse, whose signature smokestack—“like the Hoover Tower of today”—had collapsed. Near the spot where he would have been making coffee, McDonald helped pull bricks off the body of 22-year-old facilities manager Otto Gerdes, one of two fatalities on campus that day. Had he gone through with his original plans, McDonald guessed he would have been a third.

The acute need for labor to rebuild the university brought McDonald back into campus construction, where he oversaw student crews cleaning brick from destroyed buildings for reuse. In 1908, the grad student in charge of student body business affairs approached him to become athletic caretaker. McDonald demurred, not least at the thought of working under students, who then controlled athletics and who had a reputation for disorder and rebellion. But the student was persistent, and McDonald tells a tale of being lifted off his feet by his relentlessness. In truth, there was only so far McDonald could be moved. The offer was for $45 a month, $15 less than McDonald was already making. As on the riverboat, McDonald knew his value. The student said he’d keep the stadium turf short, the university acquired six sheep, a flock that would soon expand into the hundreds. McDonald hired a Scottish shepherd to tend the

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played chef to his first athletic barbecue for the track team, a feast for 200 where local lamb was likely on the menu. Almost immediately, McDonald was in such demand as a cook he had trouble keeping dates straight. He once confused two students named Smith and double-booked their events for the same afternoon. One May alone, he cooked for 14 barbecues.

His new role was in keeping with entrenched racial dynamics of the day, says Adrian Miller, ’91, author of Black Smoke: African Americans and the United States of Barbecue. Largely because of the huge amount of labor required—often including digging the pits and slaughtering the animals—by the 1820s “Blackness and barbecue are wedded,” an association lasting well into the modern day. But despite those dubious origins, the expert barbecue chef had a celebrated status, Miller says. “The chief barbecue person is a very honored status in communities Black and white,” he says. “Very few people could do this and do it well. So this is quite an achievement for him.”

Certainly, McDonald leaned into the showmanship. “He wasn’t in any hurry to serve his meals,” Holly Hansen Ceideburg, ’40, the editor of McDonald’s memoirs, once said in recorded comment. “He said, ‘When something good’s about to happen, let them crave.’”

His talent over the flames led to the defining relationship of his Stanford tenure. In 1920, he started barbecuing for “Labor Day,” the culmination of a weeklong event of cleaning up and fund-raising for the Stanford Home for Convalescent Children. Con Home, as it was better known, had been founded the year before in the old Stanford Mansion to serve children with polio and other chronic diseases. At first, McDonald was shy around the patients, according to a 1983 article in Sandstone & Tile, the journal of the Stanford Historical Society. But the home’s supervisor would take those children who could walk outside, to watch McDonald light his fire. And she enticed McDonald inside, where he would soon become a fixture as a storyteller, musician, and guest of honor on holidays, including Christmas, when he would roam into the woods to find the children a tree. During World War II, McDonald plowed a five-acre victory garden next to Con Home, where he and a contingent of volunteers grew corn, beets, carrots, squash, and more. “Our bountiful harvest was more than sufficient to meet the needs of the Home, and the surplus was exchanged or sold to a vegetable vendor,” he wrote. In 1954, the year he retired, he led the barbecue, where 2,350 pounds of beef served 5,000. By that time, the fundraiser’s name had been changed to Sam McDonald Day.

Last fall, the Lane Medical Library hosted an online exhibit of McDonald’s life entitled “Sam McDonald: A Stanford Pioneer.” It’s a reflection of McDonald’s importance to Con Home, and in turn to Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford, which descends from it, says Drew Bourn, the library’s historical curator. It’s also a reflection of the paucity of Black stories from the Medical School’s early history. Stanford’s first known Black med student graduated in 1961, Bourn says, and there were no Black faculty members. Even as a volunteer, McDonald was the highest-profile Black staff member associated with the Medical School’s history through the mid-20th century, he says.

Land and Legacy

McDonald seems to have been imbued with an entrepreneurial instinct. Even as he sojourned down from Oregon as a teenager, he managed to turn a profit on two horses he acquired along the way. As a farmhand new to Palo Alto, he raised his own hogs and poultry. Infections soured the investment but did little to dampen his instinct to work for himself. For most of his time at Stanford, McDonald lived in an apartment in the attic of the Track House—the present-day Visitor Center—but he always maintained an office in Mayfield. There, he managed his own business interests, including property at California Avenue and El Camino Real, where he ran a billiards hall with an adjoining barbershop. During World War I, he was granted permission to grow his own crops on campus, thus becoming a “hay king” with nearly 1,000 acres under his control. His 40-cow herd supplied dining halls with milk.
Not all those investments would flourish in the long term—collapsing hay prices, for example, would later cost him dearly—but during the latter part of World War I, McDonald apparently had a better-balanced ledger than the university, which had seen enrollment plummet and athletic revenues evaporate as a result of the conflict. McDonald made his own funds available to meet payroll and to help buy things, such as a truck the athletic department couldn’t afford. “[T]o this day, I am not at all sure that we have repaid him in full for all the expenses he incurred for us,” a former secretary-treasurer of the Board of Athletic Control wrote in a letter that McDonald included in his book.

In 1919, McDonald began acquiring the investment that today forms his most visible public legacy—400 acres of land near La Honda in the Santa Cruz Mountains, which he turned into a retreat called Chee-Chee-Wa-Wa. He hosted many barbecues there, including one for both the Stanford and Cal football coaching staffs. Stanford’s first president, David Starr Jordan, an ichthyologist by training, once held forth on the retreat’s fish. And it was where McDonald’s own extended family, the descendants of his older sister, came to stay with him during the summers. McClain recalls her cousins—full from eating steak and homemade ice cream—crowding the floor of the screened-in porch as they fell asleep to the sound of a running creek.

It’s also where McDonald nurtured a deep sense of spiritual communion with God and nature. One weekend, Ceideburg, McDonald’s editor, got an invitation to join McDonald for Sunday services. She and her husband, John, arrived in their Sunday best, expecting to go to church. Instead, McDonald led them up to the ridge of his property to a circle of 12 towering redwoods he had named after the Apostles of Jesus. There McDonald read a passage from the Bible, sang out several verses of a hymn, and gave a long benediction before they all returned, she recalled, to a “lumberjack’s breakfast.” As befits a holy place, McDonald made the land a sanctuary from hunting where, according to his memoir, not even a wood rat would be harmed.

“He was such a naturalist and an environmentalist before it was the thing to be,” McClain says. “As a child, I just saw him as a giant, like the redwoods.”

The land also stands as further example of McDonald’s role as a racial pioneer. McDonald’s memoir does not delve deeply into his experiences with racism, though it reveals itself in passing anecdotes. He recalled that in multiple western towns, children touched his skin, expecting their hands to come away stained. There was an undercurrent at Stanford too. A Daily columnist in 1952 quotes a pro-segregation student saying, “I wouldn’t give a cent to the Con Home Drive”—aka Sam McDonald Day—“because it’s an inter-racial affair.” Even the much greater volume of reverence for McDonald could seem wincingly condescending. A 1952 book on Stanford sports extolled him as a “Lincolnesque Negro.”

In La Honda, though, McDonald was in proximity to racial prejudice with the force of law. Two miles away from his land, the community of Cuesta La Honda had a covenant prohibiting inhabitants “not wholly of the white Caucasian Race” in place from 1941 until California outlawed such restrictions in 1948. (The community finally removed the language legally in 2007.) McDonald thrived despite such neighbors. He was not only a major landowner in the area but also ran a water company with dozens of customers who relied on him for service.

At his death, McDonald—a bachelor—bequeathed his estate, including those 400 acres in the redwoods, to Stanford and to the Con Home. The land was then sold to San Mateo County to keep as a sanctuary. Today, it forms the heart of Sam McDonald Park, an 850-acre preserve on Pescadero Creek Road, a winding 17 miles from campus. “Most people have never heard of Sam McDonald but leave a hike or talk wishing they could have met him,” says Katherine Wright, a San Mateo County park ranger who has done research into his life, including on the racially restrictive covenants nearby. In 2021, she gave a presentation on McDonald on behalf of the Stanford Historical Society.

McClain, an education lecturer who specialized in children’s literature, would like his legacy to find other audiences. She often told her uncle’s story to her students at Indiana University, and she would love to see his life as a children’s book, an inspiring tale of finding your way against the odds. She knows younger audiences may pause on aspects of his story. From one angle, his love of cooking and of entertaining Stanford’s mostly white student body might look less like service and more like servitude.

“Young people might see that as servitude, but I don’t see it as servitude,” McClain says. “I see it as a Black man in the ‘20s and ‘30s finding his way and finding a niche.”

“He worked his way up and became friends with, you know, the president of the University and other people. It was not on equal footing because that just didn’t happen in those days, but they accepted him for who he was and not as a servant but as a part of the Stanford family.”

He was a man making his own path in a world that gave little to those in his position. At Stanford, McClain says, he found his place. “He didn’t let the barriers that were in front of most African Americans at that time stop him from doing what he wanted to do,” she says. “They never stopped Uncle Man from doing what he wanted.”

**Sam Scott is a senior writer at Stanford. Email him at sscott3@stanford.edu.**
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Artificial intelligence has entered a new era. Here's how we stay human.

by allison whitten
AI isn’t coming for your job, but your job will change because of AI

Once thought to be the bane of factory workers or cashier clerks, these days AI seems poised to infiltrate work of every stripe. But most of that, so far, is speculation, says Erik Brynjolfsson, director of the Stanford Digital Economy Lab and a senior fellow at HAI. “My takeaway is that [AI] will not lead to mass unemployment or mass replacement of jobs wholesale, but it is leading to a big transformation of work and reorganizing what’s done by humans and what’s done by machines,” says Brynjolfsson. Artifical intelligence—computer systems with the ability to reason, solve problems, and learn—has been developing around us in some capacity for more than 60 years, beating chess legends, zooming about living rooms to vacuum up dust, and (Hey, Siri) reminding us to take dinner out of the oven in 10 minutes. There was always someone warning us about the rise of the machines, but most of us got used to Netflix divining our next binge-watch and carried on. Until ChatGPT. The natural-language prediction model can write just about anything the way a (possibly dry and boring) human would—albeit nearly instantly, with the entire internet at its disposal, and lacking in the social norms that would stop most people from terrifying first graders. While it’s not alone in its capabilities, it has vaulted AI into the public consciousness at a new scale and somehow made the whole concept feel much more personal. “It’s almost like no matter who you are right now, you have some form of AI FOMO—fear of missing out, or fear of being left behind,” says Ge Wang, an associate professor of music and founder of the Stanford Laptop Orchestra. At the same time, you can hardly avoid the headlines about AI’s pitfalls, from its potential to fuel disinformation to how it can enable cheating to whether it might end humankind altogether.

Our future with AI is brimming simultaneously with unprecedented promise and profound risk. “It’s a very exciting time, but it’s a time that requires a lot of thoughtfulness,” says Fei-Fei Li, a professor of computer science and co-director of the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI), which seeks to harness AI in the service of humanity. We asked Stanford faculty steeped in AI how we should be thinking about the changes coming in four essential areas: our careers, health care, relationships, and creativity.

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skill set that the best lawyers really master, is the ability to take the body of case law in a common law system and identify the common principles to apply them to a set of things that we haven’t seen before,” he says. Whether AI will ever gain that skill is “a real if.”

That doesn’t mean AI couldn’t do good in the legal world. The United States has one of the highest numbers of lawyers per capita, says Ho, yet most people cannot afford legal services. Commonly needed legal support, such as drafting a demand letter to a landlord or writing a will, could become much more accessible with the advances in AI, provided those services don’t become so expensive that they exclude large swaths of people. Ho also points to the backlogs of relatively simple procedures—name changes or disability insurance applications—that get stuck for months at government agencies. AI legal assistants could help sort through records to speed up decisions. “There is a very real possibility,” says Ho, “that the incredible advances that we’re seeing in natural language processing can help support people in these kinds of processes.”

AI algorithms that generate text and images are beginning to pass the Turing Test, which assesses whether a machine can exhibit behavior indistinguishable from that of a human. Brynjolfsson calls it the Turing Trap instead. “We should not have machines that mimic,” he says. Better would be to use AI to extend, amplify, and augment human capabilities—as a sort of copilot to help with challenging or tedious tasks while we focus on more creative responsibilities.

Brynjolfsson believes the next decade could see a boost in productivity (defined as the amount of work produced per hour) across all jobs, fueled by AI that assists workers with repetitive tasks, such as bookkeeping or mining spreadsheets to summarize data. And because productivity growth across the economy is the best predictor of an increased standard of living, this scenario could mean far-reaching, positive changes for people in terms of purchasing power but also societal improvements in areas like health care and poverty.

But there’s no guarantee. “The painful reality is there’s no economic law that says that everyone is going to benefit from technical change,” says Brynjolfsson. The rise of the internet helped more-skilled workers (by increasing their relative productivity and thereby relative demand) and hurt less-skilled workers, “so the gap grew bigger and bigger,” he says. This new wave of AI could be worse. Managers and organizations, not to mention governments, may struggle to keep up with technology. Leaders, Brynjolfsson says, should be proactive to ensure there are safety nets that cushion the early shocks and flexible labor markets that allow people to switch jobs more easily. And the charge for us all, he adds, is to think about how we—as individuals and as communities—can shape these technologies to create benefits for the many, not just the few.

**People put the care in health care. AI can help with health.**

Imagine arriving at a doctor’s office and talking with a chatbot in the waiting room to create a previsit summary for your doctor. Then, when you’re with your physician, an AI system listens to the conversation and generates clinical notes for your chart. As a result, your doctor can focus on being present with you. Afterward, your doctor talks to a second chatbot about the most likely diagnosis, and that chatbot offers some she may not have considered. The chatbot suggests tests to help narrow the possibilities and, once the results are in, makes a prediction about the best medication to offer, based on your individual circumstances.

“Those are really powerful things that could dramatically improve what a clinic visit looks like,” says Curtis Langlotz, a professor of radiology, of biomedical informatics, and of biomedical data science. Having AI log details or act as a diagnostic manual could free up a
physician’s time and cognitive load to check a patient’s emotional state, integrate knowledge, and draw conclusions—the kinds of things at which humans excel. Li, whose research areas include intelligent systems for health care delivery, began to see the need for these tools while taking her father to his medical appointments. “Speech recognition and natural language models could do [many tasks] on the side, and the doctor could look at my dad, an elderly ailing person, who would love that human warmth. That is my purpose doing research,” she says.

For now, medical AI is at work seeing things that our eyes can’t. These models analyze images pixel by pixel, zooming in at the same level of granularity across the entire picture. “Many of the perception tasks that [radiologists] do are tasks that humans aren’t that good at, like finding a needle in a haystack, or quantifying the amount of tumor that’s throughout the body,” says Langlotz, ’81, MS ’83, MD ’89, PhD ’89. As for the near future, he says it’s possible that you could go home from a doctor’s visit and talk to a chatbot about your newly diagnosed condition. Under the Cures Act, in 2021 the federal government began requiring that health care organizations give patients access to their own electronic health records. But that means people are often seeing terminology and test results they don’t understand. AI systems could explain the concepts in a more straightforward way. “They can vary their explanations based on the reading comprehension level of the patient. So that can be a very powerful tool,” Langlotz says.

Beyond helping patients, AI has one more prospective role in medicine: being the patient. Or, rather, millions of patients. Russ Altman, PhD ’89, MD ’90, a professor of bioengineering, of genetics, of medicine, and of biomedical data science, says that while researchers can currently share discoveries and statistics with one another, it’s cumbersome to de-identify study participants according to federal regulations in order to share a data set with a colleague who might want to analyze it in a different way. So Altman’s team compressed 40,000 features from actual patients into a simpler, summarized list of 512 values that an AI algorithm uses to randomly generate “patients” and create large synthetic datasets that could be used by scientists around the world to make novel discoveries about disease characteristics. Altman’s team has also pit algorithms against each other: One algorithm creates patients while another judges whether the patients are real or fake. The creation algorithm learns, getting better and better until its AI arbiter can’t detect the difference between real and synthetic datasets, ostensibly making fake patients as realistic as possible—so that discoveries about, say, heart attacks might hold true in real people who have coronary heart disease.

Altman doesn’t believe that AI will replace randomized, blinded, controlled human trials—“that’s the peak of evidence,” he says. But synthetic patient stand-ins could help contribute to our collective health in three situations. In studies looking to increase cohort size, synthetic patient data could be an effective way to improve the validity of results. Some studies rely on historical control subjects, which could be decades old; synthetic patient data may better correspond to that of current living humans. And synthetic patient data could serve a purpose in remedying medical inequity. Often, trials don’t include enough data from historically underrepresented groups. Altman says increasing participation of those groups in real clinical trials “should be job number one.” In addition to that, “taking full advantage of their data by multiplying it, the way we are doing for other patients, might be a good thing,” he says. “It may be part of a multipronged solution.”

How to relate to a chatbot, if you must

Every human relationship we have must be nurtured with time and effort—two things AI is great at removing from most equations. But here we are in a world where you can pay $1 a minute to have a social media influencer—that is, the chatbot version of her—be your girlfriend. “I worry that it’s going to be easier to just talk to the AI and starve out those moments of connection [between people],” says Adam Miner, MS ’19, a clinical assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences. In human relationships, the times when we don’t agree teach us the most about how to communicate better, build trust, and strengthen bonds. With easy access to information—and validation—from a bot, Miner says, “does that diminish or wither our human connections?”

Amid a loneliness epidemic, talking to a chatbot could have benefits. Sometimes we might not want to
disclose information to anyone, or we might not know a safe person to talk to. Miner cautions, though, that AI-human relationships bring issues—often the same ones that arise when we confide in other people. They can give us incorrect information. They can betray us, revealing sensitive information to someone else. And at their worst, they can give us horrible advice when we’re vulnerable. (In an extreme case earlier this year, a Belgian woman accused a chatbot named Eliza, having allegedly presented itself as an emotional being, of persuading her husband to end his life.) “We don’t yet know how to make sure these AI systems say the right thing,” says Miner. “And, also, humans have a hard time saying the right thing.” Some of this comes down to our perceptions. These chatbots are so impressive in some domains, he says, that “we expect them to also thrive in difficult conversations. And of course they won’t.”

Even if AI can manage to say the right thing, the words may ring hollow. A study by Diyi Yang, who researches human communication in social contexts and aims to build socially aware language technologies, found that the more personal a message’s content—such as condolences after the death of a pet—the more uncomfortable people were that the message came from AI. “Saying something like, ‘Oh, I’m so sorry to hear what you are going through. I hope you feel better tomorrow’—although AI can produce this message, it wouldn’t really make you feel heard,” says the assistant professor of computer science. “It’s not the message [that matters]. It’s that there is some human there sending this to show their care and support.”

Who or what is crafting the message is becoming easier to disguise, but in Miner’s opinion, it’s critical that we know when a message is coming from AI. We tend to change our conversational style depending on with whom we think we’re speaking: more laid-back with family and friends; more formal with government officials or the police. “We can expect that same conversational change to occur if someone knows they’re talking to a chatbot,” Miner says. And we can expect people to feel embarrassed if they realize late in the game that they’ve been talking to a bot all along. If we’re unaware, we also might disclose something sensitive that an AI system records and then has access to forever. Or it could be rating or evaluating us without our knowledge in ways that we might not expect. For example, Miner’s research has shown that an AI algorithm can successfully detect depression by analyzing language via audio, video, and text. “How do we make sure those systems remain fair and respectful,” says Miner, “especially to groups that are already marginalized?” Informed consent, he says, “is a crucial part of it.”

There may be a better way forward: Both Yang and...
Miner are pursuing projects that allow AI chatbots to nudge humans in the right direction when chatting online with a peer in need, rather than replacing human communication. The capacity to vicariously experience the feelings of another is a hallmark of humanity—and there are linguistic patterns to the ways we convey it. AI algorithms could sift through millions of conversations to find those patterns, then use that knowledge to suggest the best language for us to use in the moment. Think of it, Miner says, “like Grammarly for empathy.”

You’ll still find meaning in making

In April, a song featuring the voices of Drake and the Weeknd went viral. Only they didn’t actually write or record the song. A TikTok user generated their vocals using AI, prompting questions about copyright law and possible reputational damage to artists. Meanwhile, ChatGPT is composing poems and DALL-E can produce remarkable images from a brief description. From the outside, it appears to be a devastating time to be an artist. But Wang, who specializes in computer music design, views AI-created products as simply different from their human-made counterparts. Many artists find more meaning in the process of creation, he says, than in the finished piece. “Making things is hard,” he says. But that effort—even when it’s painful—helps us understand something about ourselves. “And that process is something that I think is actually intrinsic and vital to the value and meaning of art.”

Wang considers Beethoven’s third symphony—widely accepted as a masterpiece and a turning point in music—a prime example. Beethoven, Wang explains, was slowly going deaf while he composed it. It was such a harrowing time that the composer contemplated taking his own life but ultimately decided that music would get him through. “I will never listen to that symphony ever in my life without thinking all about Beethoven’s story,” Wang says. If AI could be prompted to generate a symphony equally brilliant, would it be the same? “I would argue not by a mile.”

The meaning we can derive from making extends beyond the top echelon of artists to our everyday hobbies and pursuits. Wang recalls the joy he experienced when a backpacking trip along the John Muir Trail led him to a double rainbow over Evolution Lake. “You could not have teleported me or helicoptered me into Evolution Lake and have me experience it in the same way,” he says. “That experience came through the process of suffering.”

Still, we use all kinds of tools in our creative pursuits. Wang believes that AI can occupy a place in the process not unlike that of the humble paintbrush. In his winter quarter course Music and AI, for example, Wang asked his students to create three interactive AI utilities or toys. “These don’t have to be useful,” the prompt reads. “In fact, whimsical is good! Absurd is good! Playful is wonderful!” It’s one of the ways he gets students to think beyond technical aspects of what they’re building. “It’s an ethical and aesthetic and cultural question of, ‘How do we want to live with AI as part of our lives?’”

Take writing. Yang wonders whether, as AI becomes our primary ghostwriter, we will lose some of the depth and beauty of language spoken by individuals. “Usually, we think that writing expresses our identity or opinion in a very unique way. [If we all use AI] we might become very similar to each other,” she says. “I don’t know whether it’s going to be an increase or helpful for creativity, or if it’s going to be a decrease of the uniqueness of the creative selves that we have.”

At their best, some of our tools aid us in finding greater meaning and purpose in our lives. Li believes generative AI has a role to play. “It does change the way that we do things to a point that even fulfilling our purpose can be supercharged,” she says. On the other hand, Li points out that it’s up to us whether we use AI to our ultimate benefit, since some of us humans have a tendency to choose the “lazy” option when we have technology at hand—trading, say, the joy of movement for the ease of an elevator.

Our future with AI—and all the myriad ways it already is changing and will change humanity—is up to us. “Being human is a profound experience,” says Li. “We are mortal. We are vulnerable. But we are so rich. And if AI takes that away from us, it’s a failure of the species.”

Allison Whitten is a science writer in Nashville, Tenn. Email her at stanford.magazine@stanford.edu.
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Why This Neurobiologist Has The Hottest Podcast in Science.
By Deni Ellis Béchard

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE BLABAC
was a questionable media launch: a podcast with a professor lecturing on complex biology for hours while his dog snored. But Andrew Huberman, an associate professor of neurobiology at the Stanford School of Medicine, believed he could improve people's lives. In December 2020, with his beloved 10-year-old, 90-pound bullmastiff, Costello, at his side, he recorded the podcast's introduction in a studio cobbled together in a closet. He promised he would delve into one topic at a time, such as motivation or focus, explaining the biology underpinning it and offering tools to enhance it. The podcast would also be interactive, allowing listeners to suggest and upvote future topics. Lastly, he pointed out that Costello would be in the studio. Many episodes later, as Huberman Lab soared to the top of the Apple and Spotify charts, some fans complained about the old dog's labored breathing. On-air, Huberman replied that he and Costello were a package deal. Costello had little time left, and Huberman intended to spend as much of it with him as possible.

The podcast's introduction, and the first episodes that launched in January 2021, blended Huberman's passions: biology, animals, self-improvement, and knowledge sharing. The formula transformed him into a science celebrity frequently mentioned in newspapers and avidly discussed on social media, where he has amassed 4 million Instagram followers and more than 3 million YouTube subscribers. But the podcast's timing was also significant. In the slow grind of the COVID-19 pandemic, Huberman—who'd conducted groundbreaking research on restoring vision and the biology of stress—was addressing people's urgent desire to find ways to stay healthy. Unlike many podcasts that cover a topic only once, Huberman revisited previous discussions, reminding listeners how to improve their sleep, nutrition, and exercise. Even as episodes ran three or four hours, his following grew. As months passed, the podcast's effect became increasingly striking—that this hyper-educated stranger, with his deep, slightly gravelly voice and his seemingly limitless passion for the minutiae of biology, didn't just care about health; he also cared about you.

**Big Talker**

Had podcasters existed in the early 1980s, Huberman might have announced his intention to become one. Born in 1975 at Stanford Hospital, he grew up in Palo Alto and early on developed a grunting tic that he found two ways to control: either hitting his head while playing sports, or learning something new and talking about it. Complicating his urge to speak was a genetic mutation that earned him the nickname Froggy, after the raspy-voiced character in *The Little Rascals*. By third grade, he was spending his weekends with the encyclopedia, independently researching topics—often biology or medieval weapons—and drawing up reports with pictures and bullet points. In class, as his teachers tried to provide instruction, he talked to the kids around him in his deep man's voice, distracting everyone. The solution was to let him lecture the entire class. “They realized that if they let me talk for a half hour or so at the beginning, then I would sit quietly,” he recalls. “Otherwise, I wasn’t going to shut up.”

Those early years, he recalls, were idyllic—soccer and swim team and building forts. His family was close knit, with Huberman and his older sister; their mother, an American children's book author; and their father, an Argentine physicist who worked for several Silicon Valley tech companies and is a consulting professor in applied physics and in the symbolic systems program at Stanford. Then, when Huberman was 13 and his sister had left for college, his parents divorced. The emotional turmoil derailed him. The boy who catalogued tropical birds and read up on fish-tank chemistry at the local pet store—and who was so outraged at the thought of harming fish that, on his own dime, he handed out DeChlor at the local carnival's goldfish booth (“You had to listen to a lecture on the dechlorination process first,” he says)—found himself drawn to his more rebellious peers and took up skateboarding. Unlike with soccer or other sports, “parents weren't involved,” he says. “You didn’t need a mom or a dad to go to the game.” Soon, he was frequently skipping school to spend days in San Francisco. He latched on to what would become known in skateboarding lore as the EMB crowd (after the city's Embarcadero), from which many celebrity skateboarders emerged. “We were all pretty feral teenagers,” he says. “That became my first nonbiological family.”

Equal parts delinquent and industrious, Huberman lost interest in school, successfully lobbied the Palo Alto City Council to build Greer Skatepark, and, at 13, forged a work permit to get a job at Susanne's Muffins and at Palo Alto Sport Shop and Toy World. In 10th grade, he skipped school so often he was sent to a detention center for at-risk youths. After a month, he was released on the condition that he continue the weekly therapy he'd started there. “I was probably depressed,” he says. “I was pretty heartbroken over my home life, which at that time was empty, but I had the benefit of working with this incredibly talented therapist who started teaching me about introspection and self-care.” The therapist emphasized that no one was going to look after him—he had to do so himself. He started focusing on his health and got his first girlfriend. “I heard that her previous boyfriend was a football player. I was like, ‘I'm this skinny dork. I'll start working out,’” he recalls. “I got really into fitness and nutrition and into taking care of my body and my mind. I built up a lot of stabilizing forces from those.” Enjoying physical exertion, he took classes at Mission College to become a firefighter. When his girlfriend,
a year older, enrolled at UC Santa Barbara, he wrote his application essay to the university, describing how he often lived in a car in her dorm parking lot. Admission, however, didn’t increase his interest in school.

As a UCSB student, Huberman maintained what he considered a skateboarder mentality—jumping fences at night to swim laps or squatting in vacant apartments to save rent money. On July 4, 1994, after he and his girlfriend broke up, 18-year-old Huberman went to a barbecue at a friend’s house only to find that four young men were burglarizing it, and he ended up fighting them. “Somehow I stayed on my feet,” he recalls. When the police arrived, they congratulated him on preventing the theft, but upon returning to the squat where he lived with his pet ferret, he took stock of his life. “I remember thinking, I’m officially a loser.” He worried that he would end up dead or in jail, as had already happened to a number of his friends. He wrote a letter to his parents, vowing to get his life on track. He began by asking himself what he was good at. He loved animals and biology, often spending hours reading about them in bookstores. Therapy had also kindled his interest in psychology. Taking a leave of absence from UCSB, he moved back to Palo Alto to attend Foothill College. “Honestly, I was scared,” he says. He put himself on a strict study schedule and discovered that he loved what he was learning. After two quarters, he returned to UCSB a straight-A student passionate about biopsychology, a field that would later be included in the neuroscience academic major. He completed a bachelor’s degree there in psychology, a master’s in neurobiology and behavior at UC Berkeley, and then a PhD in neuroscience at UC Davis. As a postdoctoral researcher at Stanford, where he once congregated with other skateboarders at the front steps of the Quad, he developed genetic tools to study the visual system while moonlighting as a columnist for Thrasher, a skateboarding magazine, to help pay the same therapist he’d had since high school. In 2011, he opened his lab within the division of biological sciences at UC San Diego. Then, in 2016, he returned to his old stomping grounds, taking a faculty position at Stanford.

Broadcasting Biology

At Stanford, the physical Huberman Lab—not the podcast, which is unaffiliated with the university—continued his work on mapping the visual system. The lab made headlines in 2016 when it used light patterns in virtual reality to stimulate regrowth of retinal neurons. During that same period, Huberman also began developing personalized nonpharmacological treatments for anxiety disorders, using VR to expose people to stressors (such as heights or great white sharks), which allowed them to confront fears and build coping strategies. He also explored how specific breathing patterns could reduce anxiety and improve sleep. “Getting sufficient amounts of quality sleep is the foundation for mental health and physical health. Period,” Huberman asserts. Improvements in mood, cognitive performance, immune system function, and more correlated with ample sleep, and higher levels of stress with a lack of it. “There was a tremendous amount of research on stress but very little on tools to mitigate stress that could be linked to specific biological processes,” he recalls.

One tool his lab investigated was by no means new. In 2017, while visiting a Florida trauma-recovery center with high success rates, Huberman learned that participants were guided in daily yoga nidra (yogic sleep)—a state between sleep and wakefulness. “I was struck by how restorative it was,” he says. He learned of Eastern traditions using it to heal trauma and found research showing significant dopamine increases after a single session. Some data suggested it could replace lost sleep. Concerned that the spiritual framework of yoga would deter some people, he coined the term non-sleep deep rest (NSDR) to describe the aspect focused on the body. “I’m not trying to erase the contributions of yogic communities,” he says. “Rather, there are billions of people who suffer the ill effects of minimal sleep, who suffer from trauma, who suffer from stress, and the idea was that we could use a name to describe what the practice accomplishes—non-sleep deep rest.” Work on NSDR from other labs has since shown that it boosts learning and neuroplasticity.

Another stress mitigation tool that drew Huberman’s attention was even more ancient, wired into mammalian biology. Huberman’s lab, in conjunction with that of professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences David Spiegel, “found that one physiological sigh—a big inhale through the

‘Getting sufficient amounts of quality sleep is the foundation for mental health and physical health. Period.’
One physiological sigh—a big inhale through the nose and then a second sharp inhalation through the nose, in order to maximally inflate the alveoli of the lungs, and then a long, extended exhale until the lungs are empty—is the fastest way to de-stress in real time.

Huberman’s focus on harnessing biological research for health rapidly attracted a social media following. Toward the end of 2020, he was a guest on a top technology podcast—that of Lex Fridman, an MIT researcher working on artificial intelligence. Fridman encouraged him to start his own. “Just make sure it’s not just you blabbing at the camera—you should have a guest,” Huberman recalls him saying.

In January 2021, Huberman released the first episode. “The timing was right,” he says. “The pandemic did many things, but it cued people to the fact that they needed to take some control over their own mental and physical health.” The podcast also offered a voice of authority in a noisy internet where a Google search can bring up myriad competing health claims. “People don’t know who to trust, and I have the great benefit of a lot of formal training under my belt in terms of how to read and interpret data, but also how to read and interpret sources.”

The Formula

Huberman’s podcast episodes discuss an ever-expanding variety of topics, including fitness, learning, creativity, hormones, fertility, grief, trauma, and happiness. The website features free newsletters with “tool kits” that offer guidelines, such as those to improve sleep or neuroplasticity. “I mostly talk about topics that have nothing to do with the specific work in my laboratory,” Huberman says, “so that’s good in the sense that I’m not vested in any particular outcome.” Since he is not a specialist in every topic, he creates episodes where he interviews leading experts—“shining light on the work of other academics,” says Anna Lembke, MD ’95, a Stanford professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences who appeared on the podcast to discuss her book *Dopamine Nation.* Similarly, Spiegel, another guest speaker, who has investigated the therapeutic benefits of hypnosis, says that the podcast “has been helpful to the acceptance of hypnosis as a scientifically grounded and effective treatment technique.”

Despite the long expositions (“I’m not known for being succinct—I’ve never been succinct,” Huberman says), he has a formula. “I always wear the same black shirt. I always explain the mechanism and then tools and then how those tools emerge from the mechanism. I always offer zero-cost behavioral tools, and I give options and considerations for people who need to talk to a physician.”

Sadly, one of the elements of the formula has changed: Costello the bullmastiff passed away in April 2021—one of the few subjects, Huberman says, that makes him cry.
Spiegel, who regularly listens to the podcast, attributes its popularity to Huberman’s ability to merge “abstract intellectual investigation” with a “common man, plain-talking, here’s-what-you-need-to-know-about-this kind of thing.” Mohr, who says that his own life has been transformed by using the protocols, sits in with Huberman on every episode. He recalls a three-day period when, filming a 4.5-hour podcast on fertility, he didn’t notice that the camera’s memory card was full and an hour of recording was lost. Huberman responded in a way that Mohr sees as emblematic of his approach. “It allows for me to do that section better,” he recalls Huberman saying.

In 2021, Huberman and Mohr established Scicomm Media, which produces science-related content in its Los Angeles studio. Huberman Lab now offers a premium-level subscription that lets people send questions directly to Huberman. A portion of the proceeds raised, matched dollar for dollar by the Tiny Foundation, funds biology research at Stanford and elsewhere, and Huberman is increasingly committed to philanthropic efforts that support science.

Lab work still commands much of Huberman’s time. This year his lab published the paper on stress mitigation in collaboration with Spiegel, as well as a study on visual system regeneration. He also guest-lectures to undergraduates in human biology and is part of the team that teaches The Nervous System, mostly to medical students. He splits his time between the Bay Area and Los Angeles and has someone drive him back and forth so he can work en route. His wellness advice, of course, shapes his daily schedule. Upon waking around 6:30 a.m., he goes outside to view morning sunlight (to set his circadian rhythm), hydrates, walks or skips rope for five minutes, and then reads a science manuscript or writes ideas for projects or podcasts for an hour. At that point, he drinks his morning caffeine (he prefers unsmoked yerba maté tea); waiting 90 to 120 minutes to do so after waking helps avoid the afternoon crash in energy so many people otherwise experience. He then does a cardio or resistance workout for 45 to 60 minutes, eats a meal while reading, rehydrates, and handles emails before plunging back into data analysis, writing, work calls, and reading more papers. Once fatigued, he does NSDR, takes a quick walk, has a snack, works more, posts on social media, and then has dinner. Once a week, he spends hours—“Yes, hours,” he says—alternating between sauna and ice bath. “It makes my mind stronger so other things in life seem easier.” Saturdays he dedicates to family or friends, and Sundays he works no more than half the day and spends time outdoors so he can start the week refreshed.

Today, 32 years after Huberman began therapy in detention, he meets with the same therapist twice a week. “Therapy is hard work, especially if you’re trying to gain real insights,” he says. “It’s like going to the gym and doing an effective workout.” It has also shaped him to see the importance of having tools to navigate a core set of challenges that he believes everyone contends with. “There were times over the years when I felt really alone and really lost, where people around me seemed to either do everything easily or be completely incapable of healthy living,” he says, “and in those times, having some sense of positive control over my mind and body in a way that would allow me to show up in the world again and again was everything.” These experiences have, in many ways, inspired him to share accessible tools and to research them in his lab. Though he frequently hears from listeners who are sleeping, eating, and exercising better, his favorite compliment is “I can’t believe this is free.”

As for the work of researching a weekly podcast and speaking for hours—pleasure alone doesn’t drive him to do it. He feels compelled, as when he was a child, to learn and share the knowledge with everyone. “I really believe, in a completely nonmystical way, that when we fall in love with some aspect of life and incorporate that love into our daily routine, the amount of energy and the quality of work and attention and presence that we can bring to something or to someone increases exponentially,” he says. In fact, he believes there is no upper limit. For him, everything he does is inspired by this love: “I just want to share the beauty and utility of biology.”

DENI ELLIS BÉCHARD is a former senior writer at Stanford and the author of eight books. Email him at stanford.magazine@stanford.edu.
The Long Run

IN 1968, Stanford biology professor Paul Ehrlich exploded into international consciousness with *The Population Bomb*, a slim book warning about the catastrophes facing an ever more crowded world. Its message was bleak, but its urgency sold millions of copies, inspired the movement for zero population growth, and catapulted Ehrlich to unlikely fame. In the first three months of 1969, he appeared three times on *The Tonight Show* with host Johnny Carson, a vaunted perch he would return to more than 20 times. It’s a detail that exemplifies an irony running through Ehrlich’s new memoir, *Life: A Journey Through Science and Politics*. For a noted prophet of doom, Ehrlich sure seems to have had a lot of fun.

Ehrlich discovered his life’s passion chasing butterflies as a boy at summer camp, and he was never far from the field for the next seven decades. *Life* follows Ehrlich’s adventures across the globe, from fleeing a polar bear in the Canadian Arctic, to transporting a decomposing chimpanzee corpse across Tanzania for an autopsy, to reef diving in Australia, the place on Earth that consistently left him most astounded. He was typically in the company of his wife and collaborator, Anne, the uncredited co-author of *The Population Bomb*. And often with scientist friends and good wine.

That’s not to say Ehrlich’s life has been a lark. He wrote some 50 books, contributed to 1,200 articles and scientific papers, and regularly clocked 80-hour workweeks. “I have literally never seen him putter around,” his daughter, Lisa, writes in the foreword. His observations of the entwined relationship between cabbage butterflies and cabbage plants resulted in a landmark paper that established the field of coevolution. And his legacy will likely be enshrined at Stanford so long as it exists. Besides co-founding the human biology program for undergraduates, Ehrlich was instrumental in protecting what is now Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, “probably the best on-campus field site in the world,” he writes.

Still, Ehrlich remains most associated with the book that made him famous. *The Population Bomb* is filled with dire and unfulfilled predictions. What to make of it more than a half-century later? Ehrlich expresses some regrets, but he stands on the ultimate point: Either address humanity’s burden on the Earth through lowering the birth rate or suffer an inevitable rise in the death rate from environmental, agricultural, and societal failings. Now in his 90s, still writing and researching alongside Anne, he is philosophical about his own death, which he views as a return to the agreeable nothingness from which he came: “I experienced it for at least 14 billion years before I was born, and it didn’t seem so bad—I had neither nightmares nor the need to stumble out of bed to pee.”

Nothing is more impractical for humanity than *not* developing a massive and clever response and instead plunging on to experience a ghastly future.

WE RECOMMEND

Changing Directions

The Good Enough Job: Reclaiming Life from Work
Simone Stolzoff, MA ’18; Portfolio.
Bye-bye, burnout: Swap your career-centric existence for a life that sustains and satisfies.

The Shift: Change Your Perspective, Not Yourself
Tinx (Christina Najjar, ’13); Simon & Schuster.
Straight talk and mindset-shifting prompts tilt toward Gen Z but hold broad appeal.

Magic Words: What to Say to Get Your Way
Jonah Berger, ’02, PhD ’07; Harper Business.
You, too, can become one of those people who have a way with words.

Money and Love: An Intelligent Roadmap for Life’s Biggest Decisions
Myra Strober, professor of education, emerita, and Abby Davison, MA ’08, MBA ’08; HarperOne.
At a crossroads? Make sure neither your head nor your heart grabs the wheel.

Outlive: The Science and Art of Longevity
Peter Attia, MD ’01; Harmony.
For aspiring centenarians, evidence-based strategies to deflect the insults of aging.

The Good Enough Job
Simone Stolzoff

The Shift
By Tinx

Magic Words
Jonah Berger

Money and Love
Myra Strober & Abby Davisson

Outlive
Peter Attia, MD
Choose your own adventure.

Walk in the footsteps of your favorite author on one of our literary trips, savor fine wines on an arts and culture expedition, lace up your hiking boots for an active adventure. Your perfect-for-you adventure awaits.

alu.ms/travelstudy
Farewells

FACULTY/STAFF
Paul Allan David, of Palo Alto, January 23, at 87, of Alzheimer’s disease. He was an economic historian best known for his research on technologi cal change and how it affects social and economic behavior. He was awarded tenure before earning a doctorate, a testament to his intellectual fire power. While serving as chair of the department of economics, he proposed the creation of what is now the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Survivors: his wife of 41 years, Sheila Johansson; children, Matthew and Rachel; stepchildren, Kenneth Johansson and Elizabeth Allan; and five grandchildren.

John Merrill Dorman, of Menlo Park, February 26, at 81, of Parkinsonism. A graduate of Harvard Medical School, he spent 44 years at the Cowell Student Health Center at Stanford, receiving a lifetime achievement award for his contribution to college health in the United States from the American College Health Association. He served as editor and executive editor of the Journal of American College Health and as a clinical profes sor of medicine at Stanford. Survivors: his wife of 58 years, Charlene; children, Todd, Bianca Dorman Humphries, MA ‘00, and Lydia Smith, ‘99; six grandchildren; and four siblings.

Peter Duus, of Stanford, November 5, at 88. An expert on the history of Japan and East Asia, he served as director for Stanford’s Center for East Asian Studies three times and was named the William H. Bonsall Professor of History in 1985. He also served as executive director of the Inter University Center for Japanese Language Studies, a consortium school Stanford founded in Japan for American students pursuing Japanese studies. His research focused on Japanese colonialism and imperialism, the development of Tokyo, and modern political cartoons. His wife, Masayo, died nearly two weeks after her husband. Survivors: his son, Erik, and four grandchildren.

George Leonard “Len” Tyler, MS ‘65, PhD ‘67 (electrical engineering), of Port Townsend, Wash., March 16, at 82, of Alzheimer’s disease. He was an expert in radar astronomy, chosen by NASA to lead radio exploration of the planets and moons. He was best known for pioneering and perfecting the science of radio occultation, where radio signals pass through planetary atmospheres and bounce off the harder surfaces below to map the underlying structures. He received the NASA Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement in 1977, 1981, and 1986. Survivors: his second wife, Joanne (Phelps, ’66); children, Virginia Kimmel and Matthew; and grandson.

1940s
Jean Williams De Nault, ’41 (graphic arts), of Boulder Creek, Calif., March 7, at 103. The daughter of Stanford’s first registrar, she became an accomplished apparel and accessory crafts woman, knitter, crotcheter, needlepointer, and seamstress. She enjoyed gardening, golf, and watching Stanford football. She and her husband established the John B. and Jean De Nault professorship and built the De Nault Research Facility at Hopkins Marine Station. She was predeceased by her husband of 75 years, John, ’41; granddaughter, and great-grandson. Survivors: her sons, Kenneth, ’65, PhD ’74, and John; four grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

Marilyn Nash Hadley, ’44 (health education), of Visalia, Calif., March 6, at 99. She was on the tennis team and played field hockey. She spent 25 years at Exeter Union High School as a physical education teacher, tennis coach, guidance counselor, and dean of girls. She and her husband raised cattle, melons, and walnuts, and enjoyed exploring the Pacific Northwest in their travel trailer. She loved gardening, card games, and a gin cocktail at 5 o’clock. At age 89 she self-published My Life to share with family. She was predeceased by her husband, Joshua. Survivors: her children, Mary, Carol, and Josh; eight grandchildren; and great-grandchildren.

Margery Jane Thomas Morrison, ’46, of Aberdeen, Wash., February 1, at 96. She joined Stanford to join her husband in Oklahoma, where he was in the Army Air Corps. She shared her love of travel, the culinary arts, and literature with her family. She enjoyed friendships formed at her local PEO, Review Club, Bridge Club, and St. Andrews Episco pal Church. She enthusiastically supported the library. She was predeceased by her husband, Benjamin, ’43, and son, Christopher, ’71. Survivors: her daughters, Kathryn Morrison Braun, ’68, and Kerry Morrison Daniel, ’77; and three grandsons, including James Myersson, MS ’19.

Sanford Malone Wilbourn, ’47 (general engineering), MS ’48 (civil engineering), of Little Rock, Ark., February 27, at 96. He served in the Army. He was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon and the Stanford Band. In 1958, he and a partner incorporated Garver & Garver, an engineering firm, where he became president and CEO and was instrumental in designing and constructing hundreds of local infrastructure projects. He was predeceased by his wife of 50 years, Mary Virginia; and second wife, Carlyn Langston. Survivors: his sons, Sandy and Chris; stepchildren, Ann Cooper, Sandy Watson, Laurie Brookes, and Hodie Langston; 13 stepgrandchildren; and 17 step-great-grandchildren.

Jack Vickery Harris, ’48 (mechanical engineering), of Los Altos Hills, March 25, at 96. He served in the Navy and was elected to the Tau Beta Pi engineer-
Farewells

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sica Aylward, '10. Her children, including Chris Aylward, '09, and Jesse Aylward, '03, and grandchildren, including Laura Nisbet Peters, '88; and 11 grandchildren. In retirement, he and his wife appeared at Stanford's centennial celebrations for 15 years. She was a dedicated Boy Scout volunteer and earned numerous awards. She had a talent for making everything warm and beautiful for family and friends. She was predeceased by her husband, band, Edwards, '49, and sons Chris, '76, and Matthew, '78. Survivors: her son David, '82, MS '83; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and great-great-grandchildren, including Carey, '15, Virginia Palmeck. She was predeceased by her husband, Ed. Survivors: her children, Jill Green, Bruce, Lynn, and Carol; and three grandchildren.

Susan Grotheer Lippstreu, '52 (education), of Fairfield, Calif., May 15, 2022, at 92, of congestive heart failure. She was a fourth-generation farmer in Suisun Valley and took over Grotheer Ranch when her father passed away. She and her husband owned Lippstreu Realty, Inc., where they conducted real estate sales, property development, property management, and rental business. She served as director of both Solano County’s Agricultural Advisory Board and the Farm Bureau. She loved bridge, golf, and book clubs. She was predeceased by her husband, Ed. Survivors: her children, Jill Green, Bruce, Lynn, and Carol; and three grandchildren. Nancy Virginia Cord Phelps, '53 (law), of Reno, Nev., February 26, at 91, after a long illness. She was a dedicated Boy Scout volunteer and earned the BSA Silver Fawn Award, the highest award for female volunteers at the time. She loved languages, history, and travel. She was predeceased by her husband of 48 years, Bob, '49, MS '52. Survivors: her children, Sharon, '76; and seven grandchildren, including Carey, '15, Virginia Palmeck, '06, MA '07, Nancy, '12, MA '13, Nordstrom, '03, and Cord, '09, MA '18; 11 great-grandchildren; and sister, Sally Cord Hummel, '54. Robert Walker Simon, '53 (economics), MBA '59, of Los Altos, December 17, at 91, of congestive heart failure. He was a member of Alpha Kappa Lambda and the track and field team. While working at Stanford Research Institute, he spent 18 months living in Bangladesh and made a documentary about the postwar generation and the changing attitudes of college students. He was an assistant dean for corporate development at Stanford Business School for 15 years. Known as a writer of light verse, he wrote a poem that was recited as part of Stanford’s centennial celebration in 1991. Survivors: his wife, Annette; and children, Suzi Dalley, Glenn, '82, and Sally. John McCarthy 'Harp Coakley, '45, MBA '54 (economics), MBA '58, of Belvedere, Calif., December 5, at 90. He was a member of Phi Gamma Delta and served in the Army. He worked in commercial real estate in San Francisco for more than 40 years and served as a director of the San Francisco Real Estate Exchange, and as a CPA, he played tennis in his free time. Guardsmen, enjoyed coaching his children in basketball and soccer, and was a lifelong member of the Olympic Club. He was predeceased by his wife, Katherine. Survivors: his children, Jack and Betsy; and three grandchildren.

Thomas Power Lowry, '54 (basic medical sciences), MD '57, of Petaluma, Calif., March 22, at 90, of cardiovascular disease. He was a member of Zeta Psi and contributed to the Chaparral humor magazine. He served as a medical officer in the Air Force. He practiced medicine in California, New Mexico, and Nevada. He retired early and lived in northern Virginia to conduct research into Civil War courts martial using original documents. Over his lifetime he published more than 25 books on various subjects. He was predeceased by his wives, Francis Smith, Anthea Snyder, and Beverly Lowry. Survivors: his children, Shawn, Richard III, and Margot; two grandchildren; and brother, Richard Jr., '59. James Gilbert Chandler, '55 (basic medical sciences), MD '58, of Boulder, Colo., February 18, 2022, at 88.

Robert Pierson Gledhill, '55 (art), of Lafayette, Calif., March 31, at 89, of congestive heart failure. He was a member of Delta Tau Delta. He was a magazine editor in the Marine Corps. He worked in the steel industry for 40 years, and when he retired he bought stakes in Kaiser Steel, Birmingham Steel, and Baraboo Coast Steel. He was a proud member of the Olympic Club in San Francisco. He loved fly-fishing and Stanford baseball, and he made annual backpacking trips to Yosemite until the age of 83. He was predeceased by his wife, Carole (Moody, '59). Survivors: his children, Susan and Scott; grandson; and brother, Alexander Mazour, '55 (industrial engineering), of Belvedere, Calif., May 9, 2022, at 88. He contributed to the Stanford Daily. He worked at Pan American World Airways, was a stockbroker at Merrill Lynch, and then formed several successful financial management firms. He had an enduring love of travel and was an avid rower, serving as president of the Marin Open Water Rowing Center in Sausalito. He was predeceased by his wife of 55 years, Rosemary Lowman. Survivors: his children, Michael and Mari; and two grandchildren.

Joseph Patrick O'Neill, '55 (law), of Santa Rosa, Calif., May 18, 2022, at 93. He was a member of the Stanford Band. He attended law school at the University of Oregon and then spent 40 years with State Farm Insurance in Northern California, holding various management positions. His deep love of family informed most every aspect of his life, and he and his wife extended hospitality to all. He was predeceased by his son, William. Survivors: his wife, Elizabeth (Timby, '54); and daughters, Kathleen O’Neill Cabe and Kathryn.

Barry Ross Brown, '56 (economics), of Sparks, Nev., December 20, at 88. He was a member of Sigma Chi and played basketball and volleyball, competing in the 1964 Olympics on the U.S. volleyball team. He worked in commercial real estate sales and later shifted into management, where he received top awards in leadership from Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis. He lived in California, New York, Connecticut, and Nevada. His retirement years were spent in beautiful Lake Tahoe. Survivors: his wife of 64 years, Barbara; three children; and three grandchildren.

Albert Allan Gulick, '48, MBA '56 (economics), of Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, October 13, at 88. He was a member of Phi Sigma Kappa. After a successful marketing career, he set out on his own and founded the Fan Factory, delving into real estate and other ventures. He was the founding principal of the LVA Group real estate agency in Oahu, Hawaii, and was later honored as the state’s top agent. He was a master magician, practicing skills

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he first developed at age 7. He died just short of 40 years of sobriety. He was predeceased by his ex-wife, Marilyn Hoth, ‘61. Survivors: his daughters, Karen, ‘88, and Kristin.

Robert Anthony Holden, ‘56 (political science), of Oakland, February 12, at 87, of complications from a stroke. He was a member of Theta Chi and the fencing team, and he contributed to the Stanford Daily. He was an artillery officer in the Marine Corps. He devoted 30 years to the executive search and selection field, starting at Korn/Ferry International, Palatine, Ill., and Spencer Stuart and then at his own firm, Anthony Hodge & Associates. He was predeceased by his wife, Edith, and son, Robert, ‘82. Survivors: his daughters, Jane Athanasakos and Kate; two grandchildren; and sister.

Josephine Ann “Jodie” Kegley Hunter, ‘56, of Santa Barbara and Atherton, Calif., February 7, at 88. She served as vice president of the family business, Industrial Boxboard Corporation. She was an active volunteer for Peninsula Family Service, the auxiliary for Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford, and a supporter of many other local charities. She loved her dogs, the ballet and symphony, and hiking in the Presidio. Survivors: her husband of 63 years, John, ‘51; children, Jane, Wendi, Elizabeth Hunter Kerrigan, John, and Mary Hunter Leman; 12 grandchildren; and sister.

John Giboney Tatum II, ’56, MS ’57, Eng’r ’60 (electrical engineering), of Port Saint Lucie, Fla., December 19, at 87, of a fall and cardiovascular disease. He was one of the first engineers at Hewlett Packard hired to design electronic instruments with the newly invented transistor. He helped develop the world’s first RF power transistor and later worked at ITT Semiconductors/Shockley Labs. He enjoyed hiking and hunting and racing sailboats. He was predeceased by his wife in 1949, Blanca; and stepson, Brian Colina. Survivors: his stepdaughter, Karen Farrell; three stepgrandchildren; and step-grand-grandson.

Arthur Louis Godi, ’57 (economics), of Stockton, Calif., April 15, at 87, of pancreatic cancer. He was the student body president in 1956. After opening Art Godi Realtors, he served on the National Association of Realtors’ board of directors and was president of the California Association of Realtors. He represented the United States at the United Nations World Shelter Conference in Istanbul in 1996. He taught real estate classes at local colleges and in eight countries in the former Soviet bloc. He was predeceased by his son, Michael. Survivors: his wife of 60 years, Joyce; children, Ria Holdaway, Mark, John, and James; 11 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Leon Castle Nelson, ’57 (sociology), of Redding, Calif., August 27, at 87, of Lewy body dementia. He was on the club ski team and in the Stanford Band. He ran a successful dental practice and home business, NOVA Dental Supply, for 43 years. Nicknamed “Tarp Man,” he enjoyed skiing, fishing, backpacking, camping, and photographing the outdoors. He was a longtime member of the Pilgrim Congregational Church, Survivors: his wife of 66 years, Donna (Jones, ’57); children, Michael, Marcia, Karina Lapp, and Katherine Conover, ’84, MA ’87; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Sheila Joan Maguire Nilsson, ’57 (history), of Scottsdale, Ariz., October 17, 2021, at 85, of Alzheimer’s disease. She was an avid reader of mystery novels and loved classic movies, especially Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. She grew up in Boston, she was a lifelong Red Sox fan, and she and her husband were season ticket holders for Stanford football games. She enjoyed traveling, and her favorite destinations included Kauai, Vienna, and Paris. She was predeceased by her husband, William, ’57. Survivors: her daughter, Laurie Nilsson Kelly, ‘Val,” and grandson, Travis Kelly, ‘12; Robert Fenn Saurice, ’57, MS, of Wheat Ridge, Col., October 26, 2021, at 83. He was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon. He was a research fellow at Caltech and an assistant professor at Harvard before becoming a longtime professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he conducted theoretical and multi-wave-length observational studies of Supernova 1987a. He was a Guggenheim fellow, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was predeceased by his first wife, Sandra Broomfield. Survivors: his wife, Susan Bloch; daughters, Julia McCray-Goldsmith and Carla; and two grandchildren.

Willard Francis “Bill” Tunney Jr., ’59 (electrical engineering), MBA ’61, of St. Helena, Calif., February 14, at 84. He was a member of Zeta Psi. He worked on aeronautical guidance systems in the early years of NASA’s space program. Later, he joined Pacific Union Company, then founded Pacific Union Homes and Pacific Union Land Company, where he developed master planned communities and more than 2,000 homes and apartments throughout Northern California. He was predeceased by his son Chico. Survivors: his wife of 59 years, Lynda; children, Matt and Jono, ’90; seven grandchildren; and sister.

1960s

Coleen Lois Neff Love, ’60 (political science), of Dumont, Colo., February 21, at 84, of colon cancer. She worked as an insurance broker and served on the boards of Mile High Girl Scouts and the Denver Junior League, participating in the same Junior League gourmet cooking group for five decades. She also helped shape the Dumont Historical Society as a board member and supported many charitable organizations. She loved Colorado and its mountains, was a passionate skier, and enjoyed reading, traveling, sailing, and gardening. Survivors: her children, Julie and Scott; two grandchildren; and sister.

Christian Louis M. Van Den Berghe, ’61 (psychology), MA ’63, PhD ’71 (French), of Santa Rosa, Calif., November 14, at 84, of acute leukemia. Survivors: his wife, Isabelle.

James Wesley Bryan, ’62 (biological sciences), of Murrieta, Calif., February 12, at 83. He was a member of Sigma Chi and played basketball. He attended Cornell Medical School, served in the 44th medical brigade in Vietnam, and completed his residency at the Mayo Clinic. He practiced ophthalmology in Southern California for more than 40 years. He was sober for 30 years and helped others in recovery. He never stopped wearing his Stanford ring or rooting for the Cardinal. Survivors: his wife, Michelle; daughters, Lisa and Holly; five grandchildren; and two siblings, including his twin, Timothy, ’62.

Jean Louise Mayo Howell, ’62 (hearing and speech), of Los Alisos, December 7, at 82, of respiratory failure. She worked at San Diego Children’s hospital and later taught in Southern California and in the Cupertino Unified School District, where she was a resource specialist and a second grade teacher. She was active in the Junior League of Denver, Alto; loved tennis, art, and traveling; and enjoyed golf as a member of the Deep Cliff Ladies Club. Survivors:
Years before Paul Berg would become a biochemist, and decades before he’d win a Nobel Prize, he conducted mini-research projects in an after-school science club, encouraged by a teacher to seek his own answers to scientific questions.

“The satisfaction derived from solving a problem with an experiment was a very heady experience, almost addicting,” wrote Berg in his biography on NobelPrize.org. “Looking back, I realize that nurturing curiosity and the instinct to seek solutions are perhaps the most important contributions education can make.”

Paul Berg, whose work with recombinant DNA led to his sharing the 1980 Nobel Prize in chemistry, died February 15 at his home on campus. He was 96.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Berg graduated from Penn State University and Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University). He came to Stanford in 1959 by way of Washington University School of Medicine, where he’d worked with fellow biochemist Arthur Kornberg. Kornberg, who would win a Nobel Prize later that year, asked Berg to join him on the faculty of the Stanford School of Medicine. There, the two established the biochemistry department.

Berg’s discoveries helped to launch the biotech industry and led to such advances as hepatitis vaccines and synthetic insulin. “He was a pioneer in DNA splicing, putting different pieces of DNA together to modify genes,” says professor of molecular and cellular physiology Brian Kobilka, who won a Nobel Prize in 2012. “That is the foundation of probably 80 percent of what bench [researchers] do. We manipulate DNA all the time.”

In the 1970s, after he combined DNA from two organisms, Berg faced a public outcry that such genetic engineering could potentially damage human and environmental health. He organized the now-famous 1975 Asilomar Conference on Recombinant DNA, during which scientists wrote guidelines for themselves regarding ethics in genetic technology research, setting a precedent for how future researchers would respond to controversial new scientific knowledge.

At Stanford, Berg helped raise $50 million for the Beckman Center for Molecular and Genetic Medicine, which opened in 1989. As a professor, he trained thousands of scientists, his goal to nurture the same curiosity that motivated him, says biochemistry professor Mark Krasnow.

“It was never his ambition to be this rock-star scientist or to be famous,” says his son, John Berg, ’84. “What he was most proud of was to know that he had been an inspiration or a catalyst to the career of a medical student or a graduate student or postdoc.”

Berg was predeceased by his wife of 74 years, Mildred. In addition to his son, he is survived by his brother Jack.

—Tracie White

Recombinant DNA Pioneer and Nobelist
with cerebral palsy. He was never at rest, filling his home with gizmos, constructions, and clever innovations, including a widely used software suite to diagnose and treat pet fish. Survivors: his wife of 55 years, Ellen (Boozer, ’69); and sons, David, ’05, Louis A. Highman Jr., ’01, and Ethan L. Highman, both of Piedmont, Calif., March 23, at 74. He volunteered with AmeriCorps for two years. After law school, he worked as a legal aid attorney for the San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation before becoming a founding member of Highman, Highman & Ball, where he helped establish precedents that continue to bolster the rights of employees and consumers. His sense of adventure and intellectual curiosity were matched only by his profound kindness. He was predeceased by his wife, Shannon. Survivors: his daughters, Alice and Molly; and two brothers, including Bruce, JD ’81.

1970s Raymond Cross, ’70 (political science), of Tucson, Ariz., January 24, at 74, of complications from a spinal cord tumor. He was born on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, the son of the tribal chairman. After graduating from Yale Law School, he worked as an attorney for the Native American Rights Fund, where he helped the Klamath Tribe secure their aboriginal hunting and fishing rights. He then returned home, served as lead tribal attorney, and won reparations of $149 million from the federal government’s seizure of 156,000 acres of land. His work also included two victories before the U.S. Supreme Court. Survivors: his wife, Kathy; and children, Helena, ’13, and Cade.

David Francis Pugh, ’70 (political science), of Austin, Texas, January 26, at 74, of complications from kidney disease. He was a union organizer, an editor for the communist party newspaper The Revolutionary Worker in Chicago, a civil rights attorney in New York City, and a teacher in public schools in the Bronx and Harlem. In recent years, he taught ESOL to immigrants and prepared incarcerated youth for the GED. He explored the world on Road Scholar trips and loved brash, progressive music. Survivors: his daughters, Jacqueline Sackler and Ali, ’00; four grandchildren; and two siblings, including Elizabeth, ’76.

Ned H. Chambers, ’73 (human biology), of San Diego, March 5, at 71, after suffering a brain injury. He played football on a full scholarship as well as clarinet, cornet, and saxophone, and loved cooking, skiing, fly-fishing, traveling, and the Denver Broncos. Survivors: his wife, Jill; former wife, Debbie; children, Krista St. Charles and Oliver; grandsons; and two sisters.

2000s Stanley Tobias Wilson Jr., ’04 (urban studies), of Carson, Calif., February 1, at 40. He was a member of the Alpha Mu chapter of Omega Psi Phi and played cornerfor the football team. He was also heavily involved in volunteer work and mentored East Palo Alto youths through a university program. In 2005, he was drafted into the NFL in the third round by the Detroit Lions. He played three seasons for the Lions and suffered a career-ending Achilles injury in 2008.

BUSINESS Parley Boyd Hales, MBA ’65, of Mapleton, Utah, February 8, at 85, of a heart attack. He started his career at Northern Telecom, rose to United Launch Alliance, where he worked until his retirement. He devoted 36 years to the aerospace industry and was proud to have been a part of over 150 spacecraft launches. He loved cooking, skiing, fly-fishing, traveling, and the Denver Broncos. Survivors: his wife, Jill; former wife, Debbie; children, Krista St. Charles and Oliver; grandsons; and two sisters.

Edward William Riemersma, MD ’69, of Santa Clara County. She was a lifelong San Diegian and love any music involving acoustic guitar, which he played religiously for most of his life. He was a devoted father and volunteered as a grief counselor for many years through the nonprofit Kara.

Survivors: his former wife, Leigh Flesher, ’79; sons, Jason and Jay; and sister, Martha.

EDUCATION Maurice Joseph Fitzgerald, MA ’55, of Hillsborough, Calif., March 9, at 94. He served as an Army lieutenant in the Korean War. He taught English at the College of San Mateo for 31 years. In 1971, he successfully led the Don’t Shut Colleges Campaign to keep all three college campuses in the San Mateo County Community College District open. He was the executive secretary of the Cemetery Workers Local 265. He spent weekends sailing and racing sailboats on the San Francisco Bay. Survivors: his wife of 63 years, Alana Branick; children, John, Mary, Maurice Jr., Alana Jr., Vincent, and Brian; and nine grandchildren.

ENGINEERING Gordon Edward Graham, MS ’57 (mechanical engineering), of Alexandria, Va., February 18, at 88. Survivors: his wife of 55 years, JoAnne; daughters, Marybeth and Amanda; and two grandchildren.

Daniel Gould Dow, PhD ’58 (electrical engineering), of Seattle, January 2, at 82, of a stroke. He joined the faculty at Caltech and later accepted a job with Varian Associates. In 1968, he became chair of the electrical engineering department at the University of Washington, while also holding leadership roles with the Applied Physics Lab and the Washington Energy Research Council. An avid musician, he was skilled on the clarinet, cornet, and saxophone, and he built a harpsichord. He was predeceased by his daughter Jennifer Dow Walls. Survivors: his wife, Kathleen; children, Sarah, Suzanne Nakaki, and Gordon, ’92; five grandchildren; and brother.

Donald George Seehusen, MS ’65 (civil engineering), of Boise, Idaho, and Phoenix, February 21, at 83, of pneumonia. He served in the Navy and was construction project manager on the Roscoe Maples Pavilion. With his patent, he built more than 100 stone-faced, industrial tilt-up buildings in Silicon Valley during the 1970s. He founded, grew, and sold several companies in electronic, construction, and home improvement markets. He served on several boards and commissions, including the Portola Valley Planning Commission. Survivors: his wife of eight years, Helen Nason Miller, ’58; daughters, Amy Seehusen Johnson and Ashley; three stepchildren; three grandchildren; and six stepgrandchildren.

Chadwick Whelan, MS ’06, of Egan Management Engineering, of Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec, September 11, at 74. He came to Canada to pursue better oppor-
Farewells

Eugene Marion Wells, MS ’78, PhD ’82 (aeronautics and astronautics), of Huntsville, Ala., January 10, at 72, of pancreatic cancer. He was an instructor pilot in the Northrop T-38 Talon at the Columbus Air Force Base, where he accrued over 1,200 hours of accident-free flight. During his 40-year career as a rocket scientist, he became a subject matter expert in guidance and navigation systems. His final job was as a contractor on the SpaceX and Space Launch System programs. He earned a black belt in karate, held two patents, and built his own plane. Survivors: his wife, Carol; children, Erica, Haley, and Derek; and two sisters.

José Luis Leiva, PhD ’80; sons, Bruce, Peter, and David; and president of the Morning Forum of Los Altos.

Erica, Haley, and Derek; and two sisters.

HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

Marcia Harriet Katzman Allen, PhD ’63 (biological sciences), of Palo Alto, April 14, at 88. She worked at Syntel and Nelcor. Her longest position was as a lecturer in biology at Stanford, where she ran the undergraduate labs. She was highly active in the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women, where she led many committees. She served as the program chair and president of the Morning Forum of Los Altos. Survivors: her husband of over 65 years, Mathew, PhD ’59; sons, Bruce, Peter, and David; and two grandsons.

Lawrence Edmund Rose, MA ’67, PhD ’76 (political science), of Oslo, Norway, February 12, at 78, of a severe brain injury. He taught at the University of Virginia before moving to Oslo, where he joined a leading social science research institute. He later became a full professor of political science at the University of Oslo. His work focused on local democracies and international comparative politics and took him and his wife on trips around the world. He loved cooking, hosting dinners, and classical and folk music concerts. Survivors: his wife, Leslie; and brother, Gerald. José Luis Leiva, MFA ’75 (speech and drama), of San Francisco, February 1, at 84. He earned his teaching credential and was involved in local theater in his native Guatemala before coming to California to study at the University of San Francisco and Stanford. He taught theater design and history at USF and the City College of San Francisco for 35 years, and his play, Chiché, was produced on both college campuses. He turned many of his whimsical paintings into greeting cards, and he led tours of Mayan sites in Central America. Survivors: his wife, Kate Stadler; daughter, Maya; and sister.

Patricia Liggins Hill, PhD ’77 (English), of Brentwood, Calif., January 23, at 80. She started her career at the University of San Francisco in 1970 as one of three Black faculty members, later becoming the first director of the ethnic studies program. She retired after 45 years as an English professor. She was the general editor of the groundbreaking and highly acclaimed anthology, Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition. She was an active community organizer and a prominent figure in social justice. Survivors: her children, Sanya, JSM ’96, and Solomon, ’87; and two grandchildren.

LAW

Jerry Glover South, LLB ’58, of San Rafael, Calif., December 29, at 90, of congestive heart failure triggered by COVID. He served in the Navy. He joined the legal department of Bank of America in 1957, and son Phillips. South was a corporate trial lawyer. He eventually left the active practice of law to serve as the bank’s corporate secretary and president of the BoFA Mortgage and International Realty Corporation. Later he worked as a residential and commercial real estate broker. He loved hiking, running, downhill skiing, and playing bocce. Survivors: his wife, Marilyn (Page, ’57); daughters, Alison, ’84, Lindsay, and Marian; eight grandchildren; and great-granddaughter.

Maurice Kemp Jr., LLB ’61, of Bozeman, Mont., February 8, at 90. He served four years in the Navy as a pilot and spent 14 years in the Navy reserve, retiring as a lieutenant commander. He worked for 40 years as an attorney in Palo Alto, specializing in criminal defense and then family law and estate planning. He coached and umpired in Palo Alto Little League, completed 17 marathons, and loved his dogs. Survivors: his wife of more than 50 years, Susan; children, Audrey, ’78, and Jon; stepchildren, Gray Thornton and Elizabeth Wilmore; three grandchildren; and two step-granddaughters.

Melvin Robert Goldman, JSM ’63, of Hillsborough, Calif., January 11, at 86. He spent almost his entire career at the San Francisco law firm of Morrison & Foerster, where he became a national expert in securities and antitrust litigation. He served as a senior partner at the firm for decades and as president of the Bar Association of San Francisco in 1995. He was an avid 49ers and Stanford football fan. He was predeceased by his children Phillip, Gr. ’89, and Alexia. Survivors: his wife of 59 years, Bonnie, ’63; sons Tyler and Colin; and nine grandchildren.

MEDICINE

Vernon Joe Henderson, MD ’80, of Stone Mountain, Ga., February 22, at 69. He devoted 11 years to Stanford, where he completed medical school, residency, and a fellowship in cardiac surgery. He was a matter expert in guidance and navigation systems. He eventually left the active practice of law to serve as the bank’s corporate secretary and president of the BoFA Mortgage and International Realty Corporation. Later he worked as a residential and commercial real estate broker. He loved hiking, running, downhill skiing, and playing bocce. Survivors: his wife, Marilyn (Page, ’57); daughters, Alison, ’84, Lindsay, and Marian; eight grandchildren; and great-granddaughter.

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SUSTAINABILITY

Grace Phillips Johnson Perkins, MS ’56 (geology), of San Francisco, February 1, at 91. She worked for Standard Oil of California—the first woman ever hired by the company as an exploratory petroleum geologist. While raising her children, she founded a small maternity clothing shop on Union Street and ran a preschool out of her home. Later, she launched a career in residential real estate and served as president of the San Francisco Board of Realtors. She never tired of learning or rising to a challenge. She was predeceased by her husband, Perk, ’57, and son Phillips. Survivors: her sons, Roland, Chris, and Jon; and seven grandchildren.

Chapman “Chan” Young III, MS ’64 (geology), PhD ’66 (geophysics), of Steamboat Springs, Colo., January 28, at 85, of glioblastoma. He worked as an assistant professor at Stanford and then as a geophysicist at Science Applications. In 1971, he took a position at Institut CERAC near Lausanne, Switzerland. Later he became a research professor at Colorado State University before opening the Fort Collins office of Science Applications. He founded CFI Technologies, where he designed foam-injection rock fracturing tech-nology for tunneling and mining applications. Survivors: his wife of 62 years, Chris; children, George, Catherine Young Alexander, and Mary Young Swanson; 12 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and five siblings.

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LAST WEEKEND, I TOOK MY 2-year-old grandson, Rio, to the park so he could run around and see the duck pond. My goal was to get him outside for a while, let him burn some energy, and teach him about the ducks. They’re actually geese, but duck pond sounds cuter, so that’s what we call it.

He had no goals. Two-year-olds don’t need goals.

That was the first of several lessons I learned that day. I had expected to be the teacher, but I had it backward. My grandson helped me remember things we’re born knowing but forget in the process of becoming an adult.

Rio had a sense of wonder. As soon as we got out of the car and walked 50 feet into the park, he looked up at the sky. It was a cold day, with big, pillowy clouds drifting across the sky, and he found joy in watching them. I’d forgotten how magical and hypnotic clouds could be.

Next, he stared at the sycamore trees and watched their leaves rustle in the wind. He laughed and tried to catch the leaves as they fell. At that moment, nothing could have amused him more.

His curiosity was constant, endless. He was always on the search for sticks, big and small. He knew that a stick could be used for many things. He scraped the ground with them, rapped a drumbeat with them on trees and benches, waved them in the air like a flag, and stacked them into piles. No thought of a stick being used as a weapon. No need for toys or electronic devices, unlike at home. Just sticks.

There were a few kids playing in the park with a parent and a regular procession of people out for their morning dog walk. Rio said hi to everyone and stuck out his hand for a high-five with a few 4- and 5-year-olds, who weren’t sure how to respond. But they all said hi back. His emerging language skills are typical for his age, part vocabulary and part babble. He tried to strike up conversations with enthusiasm. It was clear he didn’t care what people looked like, how old they were, or whether they said hello first. No judgment. No fear. Just a sincere desire to connect.

My biggest revelation from our hour in the park was that Rio was fully present no matter what he was doing—searching for sticks, petting a dog, running across the lawn, or looking at the sky. He never asked what time it was, when we were leaving, or what we were going to do next. He was, every second we were there, completely and absolutely in the moment.

I wish I could be. Don’t we all.

Brad Blake, ’80, MBA ’85, is managing partner at Blake Griggs Properties and lives in Alamo, California. Email him at stanford.magazine@stanford.edu.
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