



PENNN68

Dearest friends,

With every passing month I hear from classmates about the birth of a grandchild, the launch of a new project or a new emerging enthusiasm -- and sadly, I learn of the loss of loved ones. Sharing our lives' journeys matters to all of us and its why I believe our 50 plus years of relationships and connections are so powerful and valuable. Perhaps it's also why we can develop and enhance friendships even at our age (the age that we feel rather than the age we actually are!) Our ability to connect cheers me. With so much of the world in chaos, your friendship and your passion for life invigorates and nourishes me.

This month Doctors Harrison Bloom and his wife Pat share their African saga with us. I'm impressed – awed- by our classmate's vision, by their action and the profound and life changing impact of what they have accomplished. Our classmates are inspiring. I hope you will continue to share your stories, since we all enjoy hearing about classmates' endeavors. Mt Everest? Trekking? Crafting—knitting, woodworking, needlepoint? Auto rallies? It seems that there is no end to these amazing personal adventures. Please share your story about your new project or the non-profit programs you support, or perhaps share discoveries on a recent memorable journey? (Bobbi Penneys Susselman, Don Morrison and Jane Nagler Rich—all in Paris and we want to know more! AT the very least send us a photo!) Perhaps you have written a new book? Have you gone sky-diving? Spelunking? We all love reading about what you are doing - especially, about those things I/we probably will never do. I am growing tomatoes and basil and more.. That's a new one for this city girl! Please send your story our way. Your classmates and I want to know what's up elsiehmiami@gmail.com.

Our Friday Zoom calls have brought us together, enjoying fantastic presentations these past few months. We have an exciting Zoom schedule ahead, and I truly hope you can and will join us. If you are not able to sign on, we record the Zoom and share the link in the month

following. We also maintain a history of all communications on our class website www.alumni.upenn.edu/1968.

Please join us for our upcoming Zooms in November and December. Our **Homecoming Zoom is planned for 5 pm on November 5th**, when we welcome two Penn speakers -- Monica Montiel Stepanow who is the Associate Director with the Penn Alumni Admission's Interview Program and Valerie de Cruz, Director of the Albert M. Greenfield Intercultural Center and Mike Elias Executive Director, University Life Strategic Initiatives. We have talked about how we can individually – and virtually – support Penn programs.

Most important, on the Homecoming call we will begin our conversations about **what would bring you back to campus for the 55th reunion in May 2023**. Randy Elkins requested that we again schedule a Veterans Event. Colin Hanna has already agreed to work on that special event with Randy. Our first event is scheduled. Please register now!

[Please Register Now! »](#)

Class of 1968 Friendship Hour Friday | November 19

On **Friday, November 19th, at 5 PM ET**, we welcome [Dr. Paul Offit](#), from CHOP, world renowned vaccinologist, and voting member of the FDA vaccine committee. Dr. Offit will update us on COVID, vaccines and boosters and he will answer questions. Dr. Offit will take the mic at 5 and after his presentation and the Q & A we will hear from Penn's [Megan Kassebaum](#) will update us on the Museum's repatriation of artifacts, with a focus on returning artifacts to Alaskan indigenous people. Dr. Kassebaum will also take questions. To learn more about our speakers, [read their bios here](#).

[Please Register Now! »](#)

Class of 1968 Friendship Hour Friday | December 17

On **Friday, December 17** we will have the privilege of welcoming outstanding Penn Law Professor and inaugural Director of Perry World House, [Dr. William Burke-White](#), who is a leading expert on U.S. foreign policy, multilateral institutions, and international law. He

researches and writes on the relationships between law and politics in international affairs and has special expertise on the design and implementation of complex global governance solutions that involve multiple countries, international institutions, and multilateral legal regimes. He has significant regional expertise on Russia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. His current research examines the role of sub-state actors in the international legal system and the impacts of changing global power dynamics on the norms and structures of international law.

[Please Register Now! »](#)

No matter where you are in the world, and no matter how busy you are, I hope you will join us for the Zoom calls. If you attend regularly, I am grateful. If you have not yet joined, please give us a try. We always welcome suggestions for speakers and for topics.

We hope you will tell us 'What will bring you back to campus for the 55th reunion'? There's no deadline since we want to have this conversation over the next year! We will take notes during the Homecoming meeting discussion and then, we will share your suggestions and ideas in the future newsletters.

Did you know that you only need one space after a period? I only have my old Strunk and White – and it's from 1965 so it's a bit out dated. I just ordered a new one. My grandkids told me I had this wrong, and they were right. So- just sharing, FYI. It's a hard habit to break, my friends.



Sending love,

Elsie

Class President

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Editor's Note: If you have taken – or will take-- photos of fall leaves where you live or are traveling, please send those photos to us to be included in an upcoming newsletter -- and, my dears, please show-off your photography skills. Its okay if people are in the photos – or if, you prefer, just photograph trees or apples or fallen leaves. ESH

East Africa Revisited: The Gift of Service

By: Harrison Bloom, MD

After I graduated from Penn in June 1968 with a major in Russian History, a combination of wanderlust, desire to be useful, and desire to avoid going to



Vietnam lead me to the Peace Corps and a stint in Gimbe, in far west Ethiopia, with my girlfriend. I loved that time of adventure and loved teaching my students, many of whom would walk 2 hours each way to school, often barefoot and wearing the only clothes they had. I taught English and African and World History, but had a nagging sense that there was something else needed more. After I had some of my students do a survey of latrine availability in the area I was hooked on the idea of returning with an MD to do public health. That took me back to the University of Minnesota for a year of premed, and then embarking on the rigorous path that becoming a doctor entails. In 1973-74 my wife Patricia, also a Minnesotan and a fellow med student, and I took some time off to work with the Pokot tribe in western Kenya under the mentorship of a British missionary-turned-government doctor. Pat was fully on board with the idea of working in East Africa, despite her parents' qualms about us living in a mud hut for the rest of our lives. That year was a grand adventure that included traveling in Europe, the Middle East, and India, as well as in the game parks of Kenya and Tanzania. However, the message we got pretty loud and clear from health professionals we met was: "We are training our own primary care doctors and public health policy makers. Come back when you have some other skills that we need."

This project has been a true gift to Pat and me. Through the hard work and dedication of Moses, the DGH staff and the VHWs, many older people who have previously felt forgotten by the health care system have benefited in tangible ways. We have taken biannual trips to Kisoro (at our own expense) that have been extremely fun and gratifying (including safaris in the amazing game parks of Uganda), and have made many friends there. A wonderful network of family and friend supporters has provided funds for equipment, staff, VHW stipends, and continuing education of VHWs. And my long ago dream of working in East Africa has come true; what could be better? [Read Harrison's full story here.](#)



VHW Graduation, February 2019



Question of the Month

**What is your proudest achievement?
How did your Penn experience influence your life?**

To find out your classmates' proudest achievements and how the Penn experience influenced their lives, [visit this link.](#)

Thanks to our contributors:

Marilyn Kanas, Carol Greco, Randy Elkins, Mark Grant, Linda Kates, Lee Gordon, and Ted Pollard

From Don Morrison: The days dwindle down

Poets and baseball fans would assert that spring is the time of hope, fecundity, and new beginnings. But for me, life begins when the days grow shorter, the air crisper.



Yes, let's hear it for autumn, best season of the year. It's when school starts, football season kicks off, voters head to the polls, and the hills are alive with color and excitement.

I'm still in France, where the year really does begin during this tumultuous season. It's called the "rentrée," the return, and it's as much about culture as nature. The rentrée is when important books get published, major plays and museum exhibitions open. When business and government wake from their summer slumber, the tourists are gone, and the truffles are back.

Of course, France can't match the vivid fall foliage we're used to back home in the Northeast. Around this time every year, the roadsides are truffled with crimson and gold. For now, at least. We recently learned from various environmental experts that our annual autumnal miracle is under threat.

Climate change is producing more droughts and storms, as well as warmer temperatures. These new afflictions are confusing our trees, making them drop their leaves earlier or

change their colors later – and then maybe not much at all.

The big problem seems to be heat, especially at night. Leaves use sunlight to produce sugars. Cool nights keep those sugars in the leaf, aiding the production of pigments that produce the brilliant yellows and reds of autumn. If nights are too warm, the leaves stay green or fade to brown, eventually separating from the tree without having pleased anybody.

That scenario could have adverse economic consequences for a region heavily dependent on visiting leaf peepers. It also takes some of the fun out of fall.

I know: summer-lovers are not used to hearing the words fun and fall together. But life isn't just a day at the beach. It's also the smell of wood smoke in the evening, the smile on a pumpkin, the sound of biting into a freshly picked Macoun or Winesap – the taste of which can be simultaneously tart and sweet. Like life. Speaking of which: As evenings lengthen, autumn gives us more quiet hours for evening fires and serious reflection – about the need to store up provisions for winter and old age, about the meaning of our short stint on this fragile earth, and – inevitably – about death.

You'll have to sort that last one out for yourself. But the climate change thing sure does suggest that our years of mindless consumption may, like the golden moments of autumn, be running out – that some enormous bill is coming due. Fall has a way of reminding us that good things don't last forever.

Mercifully, the season also holds reminders of hope and rebirth. Those leaves? They fall for a purpose. Their departure allows trees to batten down for the winter, shed unneeded possessions as frantically as Marie Kondo on tree sap. The downed leaves themselves provide food and shelter for insects on the forest floor, mulch for the soil, seeds that will – as soon as next spring – produce new life.

It's all quite poignant, really. In a gesture filled with poetry and bravado, the leaves of autumn take that last big, heroic dive quite literally in a blaze of glory. A good way to go. A good season to be alive.



Homecoming: November 1-7

We look forward to celebrating Homecoming Weekend featuring Arts & Culture this November! Enjoy virtual programs throughout the week, join fellow alumni at Franklin Field as Penn Football takes on Cornell on Saturday, November 6! Sign up for the Pre Game Grab and Go on College Green to purchase a boxed lunch before you head to the game!

[Sign-up for events today!](#)



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