

Alumni Bulletin

DECEMBER
2021

RESCUE AND RECOVERY ▶

— 56 —

Tjada D'Oyen McKenna
is leading a comeback
at Mercy Corps.

WHAT'S THE WORD?

— 46 —

The business lingo that
defined 2021.

are 2 GL that play a major role, but the other 14 do have an effect. For most traits, however, there are many, many GLs, and even finding them is hard. Fortunately, using artificial intelligence to figure this out is in our future.

What gives you the most hope? Well, related to this genetics class, I am impressed by how much progress has been made since I last took biology, about 10 years ago. Back then, we thought most of our DNA was “junk” and that only specific parts, condons—the genes (aka exons)—mattered. We now know much more of it matters, and we are starting to figure out how. I’m hoping we will soon figure out how to make all of us reverse aging. I guess it means I’ll need to go back to work, but that would be fun, too!”

Finally, **Scott Wendelin** noted, “The pandemic created the opportunity for our four daughters and two respective others to work remotely and from our home. Every night was a dinner party! I have been very involved in high school education and local parish activities. Who knew I could be helpful! I learned I could still learn and that I am just as curious about the world and our fellow mankind! Curiosity is a gift.” Thanks, Scotty. Never stop learning!

As for my news, Robin and I both got our Moderna shots earlier this year. We have been living life as normally as we can, including attending a family reunion at the Columbia River Gorge this summer. I recently had a great deal of musical fun, as I was asked to play guitar in my high school’s 50th reunion band. I had to learn a set of nine songs, none of which I knew, from the Beatles to James Taylor to Led Zeppelin. I realized how much more effort it takes to learn new things as we age. I had to work pretty hard to learn and memorize the music. What would have taken me a week 50 years ago, took me two months of regular practice! Ouch! That’s all, folks. I hope to have more news next issue.

79C

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Fellow Seers, the *HBS Bulletin* staff sent me an article on **Elaine Chao**. Apparently, they have computers that



Chao

scan the news about us mortals. It featured her appointment to the board of Kroger (a public company and the seventh-largest private employer in the United States). Reading the article reminded me of her lifetime accomplishments: It said she was the first Asian-American woman to fill a US cabinet seat, and she’s the longest-serving US cabinet secretary since World War II. I remember she took over the Peace Corps right after HBS and then United Way. Her full résumé is a book with pages like that. Oh, and we all know she’s married to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Oh, and in her free time, she and her family donated a major building to HBS that was named for her late mother.

So, your correspondent tracked down the tireless Chao and negotiated another *HBS Bulletin* exclusive. I really just asked her for three insights that made her successful, but she did more. Here’s Elaine’s report: “Thanks, Bill, for working so hard to get everyone to contribute to the first *Alumni Bulletin* to come out in hard copy since the pandemic. Content, content, content. Everyone is looking for content! At least you don’t make it up out of whole cloth! [Ed. Sometimes I do.]

“Having stepped down from government after Jan. 6, 2021, I’ve reaffiliated with a think tank. It’s the easiest way to keep in the stream of information and ideas. My husband is still in public service, so I have to be careful of conflicts. I’m on some public and private boards, focusing on new-economy boards, especially in the mobility sector. I have a public speaking schedule, and I am returning to help my 94-year-old father with his philanthropic activities. (I am his best volunteer staff!) Most recently, he’s contributed to a major project at National Taiwan Ocean Univ., but due to

the pandemic, the project has been a bit delayed. It is my privilege and honor to help my father; he and my late mother have been such wonderfully supportive and empowering parents to their six daughters. He is increasingly frail, and it makes me sad. I wish my sisters’ children could have seen him in his prime: so full of energy, ideas, and determination. He and my late mother were full of goodwill and desire to do good, to help others, to contribute to society. They had such a hard time accessing education when they were young, which is why they were so focused on helping outstanding young people today have the chance to pursue their education. He’s also teaching his daughters about how to grow old gracefully.”

From there, Elaine shared her three insights: “(1) The real treasures in life are priceless: family, faith, the respect and affection of friends and colleagues, and the opportunity to contribute to a better world; (2) people are the key; managing human relationships is the most complex task in life; and (3) live every day with a grateful heart! It actually makes you a happier person! Thanks for being our scribe!”

Elaine’s second insight captured my attention. “People are the key.” I remember in Aldridge 9 her 20-something smile, always in the front row. I think that she was the only one at HBS who knew the first names of all 800 of us. Or it seemed that way. I recall running into her on occasion, going to Kresge Hall for lunch, and she’d invite me to join her table like I was her best friend. I think she made many feel that way, and it is why we all elected her 1979 class secretary, apparently for life. Even today, she sends out year-end greeting notes. So I’m guessing she knows every senator on a first-name basis and even crosses the political divide, because she routinely gets confirmed with full bipartisan support. “People are the key.” Yes, she benefits from being married to one of the top-placed senators, but I suspect that it is *he* who benefits the most from his association with *her*: the tireless Elaine Chao.

A few other notes crossed my desk. Here’s one from **Teresita Alvarez-Bjel-**



Alvarez-Bjelland and family

land, direct from Oslo, Norway: "You ask for news so enthusiastically that I have been moved! The recent photo was taken in Minneapolis on the occasion of our granddaughter's baptism. My husband, Chris Bjelland (MBA 1978), is holding our grandson, Theo; our daughter, Tracy (AB 2008, then MBA but not HBS), who is holding our granddaughter, Charlotte, is next to yours truly; and next to me is our son, Christian (AB 2010; MBA 2014, where he took **Chet Huber's** class!)." Congratulations on your granddaughter. I think that means that your two kids got three Harvard degrees between them (and another three between you and Chris). That's pretty remarkable, Teresita. I wanna find out what breakfast cereal you all eat. Harvard crackers straight up with brunost.

Jim Hackett filed this report: "Heading to Arizona soon to start teaching in an accelerated semester on moral leadership at Arizona State Univ, my wife, Maureen's, alma mater. The school's president is doing great things there with public education, and I want to support ASU with time and treasure. Not sure anyone will view my efforts as 'talent,' so didn't include that."

Finally, **Ken Freeman** sent this from the United Kingdom: "The only major news I have is that I am helping prepare another grant proposal and finalizing the final claim from the last one. Other than that, Kenny is still teaching sailing on the Isle of Wight, will finish in early November, and still hopes to arrange a similar job somewhere along the Mediterranean for at least part of the winter (assuming no more COVID-19 lockdowns). Sarrina is focusing on her A-level exams. I am hoping that they both will both be able to celebrate at home their 19th birthday and then Thanksgiving

in November. So we shall see." Ken, let's hope indeed the pandemic lifts for all of us in the year just ahead.

This *Bulletin* comes out in December; my best, from each of us in our section, to all of us. And may the new year bring us and our families peace, good health, and prosperity. It is written; let it be so.

79D

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For a story about Ron Smith, see p. 38.

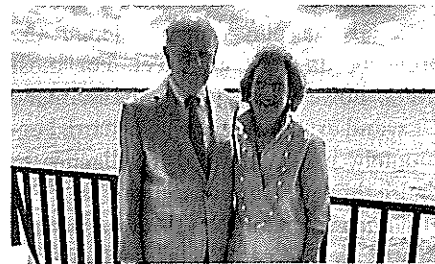
79E

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With life continuing to be affected so often by the pandemic, the fact that many of us seem to be managing well is comforting. I'm happy to have good news to share! **Anne de la Morandiere Cooper** tells us: "After a luxuriously quiet year in Charleston, SC, visitors are back in full force, clogging the sidewalks and streets. No masks, of course; thanks, governor. Tom and I escaped COVID-19, thankfully, and have rather enjoyed the



De la Morandiere Cooper with her husband

quieter time with Zoom connections. Back to more normal now, though, which is welcome. We actually had dinner out recently with friends!"

Jim Ledlow shares an update on his rapidly growing family: "We now have quite a group of young ones (three new grandbabies from July 2020 to July 2021), so the daughters are making up for a slow start. With the grandnieces and grandnephews, it is bedlam when they all show up." From **Bryan Kiefer**: "All is great here on California's central coast, but I have no exciting news to share with our sectionmates (other than a seventh grandchild on the way)." That's plenty exciting, Bryan, and puts you in competition with the Ledlows. Until next time, all the best!

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The Ledlow extended family