

Thank you, Dr. Penprase. What a delight to be back in the mix again. I am honored and charmed to be here with all of you in a brief pause of maximum academic potential energy before we all accelerate into the next kinetic enterprise. I am beholden to President Oxtoby, the Board of Trustees, and the faculty for this honor, which provides me yet another opportunity to return to the scene of my undergraduate crimes.

this moment we share on the brink of all of your next enterprises. Confounding that expectation except for brevity I am going to say something about Pomona College and astronomy. Astronomy may not seem to deliver a universally relevant theme, but it is why I first came to Pomona College, where the humanities and sciences are linked. So astronomy does infiltrate this 118th Pomona College Commencement.

Astronomy was actually part of the earliest fabric of Pomona. Frank P. Brackett was one of the first three professors on the Pomona College faculty. He taught astronomy, and by 1908, he had built an on-campus observatory. So, Pomona College, with cosmic perspective, always had its priorities right.

The observatory was subsequently named for Professor Brackett, and long after his tenure, I was privileged to live there. I was installed in the observatory by Dr. Bob Chambers, my sor. I am ever grateful to him.

Several responsibilities accompanied residence at Brackett Observatory. The six-inch refracting telescope atop the historic stone building had to be operated for public viewing for students and for anyone else who happened to come by at what was then the edge of civilization in Claremont. There was no moment of epiphany for me, but somehow I absorbed an essential experience and everything else at Pomona College that humanizes knowledge and analysis cultivates an informed framework for action in any subsequent endeavor.

Being the resident astronomical agent at Brackett Observatory, of course, added some glamour to my on-campus profile, but in fact, I was really a caretaker. Brackett Observatory had historic buildings and historic instruments and historic pictures and historic books and historic charts, and they had to be protected and maintained.

This sounds very mundane and obvious and even unpromising, but it resonates with something else I learned at Pomona College, from Professor Vincent Learnihan, in History of Western Civilization. Professor Learnihan was very quick, wickedly funny, and persuasively insistent on intellectual commitment. He said a lot of things, and in one of the discussion

Pomona College. At Pomona College, I had become a fan of civilization, and as new

responsibilities emerged, taking care of things, reinforcing their foundations, enhancing their usefulness, and ensuring their survival for future users became fundamental priorities.

Maintenance now seems like a lofty vocation to me.

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first arrived at Pomona, I instead imagined it would deliver knowledge and insight kind of like
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