



SPRING 2021

# OMICRON IN THE TIME OF COVID





# EDITORIAL: LIVING IN A COVID WORLD

By Mark Fernau '82

**P**erhaps the dominant social issue of the last year has been the COVID-19 pandemic, and that has certainly been true for the Omicron undergraduates, but also for brothers of all ages. This issue recognizes that reality by giving a voice and a platform to brothers young and older to document what it has been like “living in a COVID



**Mark Fernau**  
**Editor**

world.” Some of these articles were written several months ago, and to some extent they have been overtaken by the vaccination campaign and the subsequent efforts to reopen our society and economy, but they document what has been a momentous time in the life of the whole brotherhood and the alumni chapter. Few areas of functioning were not affected in some, at times dramatic, way. Here we document some of those stories and capture the strength and resilience of Omicron and its brothers as they strive to do good, thrive in a difficult setting, and epitomize the five pillars and seven core values of Lambda Chi Alpha. Before I go on, I wish to give a huge thanks to Omicron Alumni Association (OAA) board member and High Pi Jason Cho '98, who kept me mostly on track this spring and contributed greatly to this issue both by generating story ideas and by doing serious virtual legwork to get in touch with both undergrads and alumni and document their stories.

We chose a photograph of senior Terence Burke to grace our cover and put a face to Cornell and the fraternity world's efforts to remain strong through the trials of COVID. More on him later. We start out with some alumni board reports. OAA President Rick Meigs '80 was asked to give a few words on our theme, and his response reminded me of a time, de-

cadecades ago, when he was watching me wash the dish soap off the lenses of my glasses, and as I held them under the water for a few minutes he looked at me and said, “You do realize that you are down to the parts per trillion level by now.” The Hammer is an engineer down to his bones. ISWZA President Chris Turner '94 and his board update us on how Edgemoor has weathered COVID and give a look to the future. Along with the reports we mention a few dates for alumni get-togethers to keep in mind and we issue a call for a new cadre (and generation) of volunteers to help keep Omicron going well into the future. Undergrad High Alpha (President) Liam Vinal provides an optimistic and inspiring report on the undergraduate experience over the past year, and we list the house vital statistics and the current officers and introduce the 19 new members of Omicron.

We kick off the features with a conversation with Brother Terence, who provides some insights on his tenure as both as a chapter leader during Omicron's period of suspension and review, in which he was a key player in the house's ability to regroup and regrow, and as president of the Interfraternity Council during three semesters of topsy-turvy COVID campus life. He hopes that some of his work to reconfigure rush will lead to a safer and more sensible process for both rushees and chapters. We then hear about the experiences of a diverse group of alumni as they grappled with COVID in their jobs and lives. Among our regular columnists, Steve Ashley '62 gives us a glimpse into how the Cornell leadership who were so instrumental in the aggressive and successful implementation of Cornell's industry-leading on-campus response to COVID are selected and function. Wayne Mezitt '64, who last issue reported on COVID's effect on the horticultural business, tells of how COVID has led to a renewed interest in home horticulture. Seasoned traveler Alan Fridkin '65 gives a first-person account of the effects of COVID on foreign travel and the difficulties of repatriation. Jim Sollecito '76 provides a thoughtful take on how to respond to the upheaval that has been our national response to COVID and how his chosen profession (avocation!) has helped him make it through.

We wrap up the issue with a few articles that remind us that there is life outside of COVID. Cliff Manko '80 relates how his liberal arts education at Cornell eventually led to an unexpected but satisfying career in the

scientific and technical publishing industry. Omicron historian Jason Cho contributes a story that shows how a few Omicron brothers responded during an earlier period in our nation's history in which the twin crises of World War and the flu pandemic threatened to prematurely end the fledgling LXA brotherhood at Cornell. We end with evidence that, pandemic or no, time and Omicron march on, with our updates on the

news of alumni across the decades and the stories of those brothers who have moved on to eternal rest after a life of exemplifying what it means to a Lambda Chi from Omicron. I hope that you will enjoy this issue, and please give thought to in the future contributing your own alumni feature articles or acting as a "correspondent" for those brothers from your era. I can be reached at [mef29@cornell.edu](mailto:mef29@cornell.edu). ❖

## OMICRON ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REPORT

By Rick Meigs '80

I am amazed at the collective skill exhibited in rush recently with a recruitment success of 15 new brothers in fall 2019, 23 in spring 2020, 7 in fall 2020 (virtual), and 12 in spring 2021 (also virtual). I do not know the details of the Delta recipe, but we need to write it down somewhere! Great job by all concerned. OAA is turning its attention to increasing



**Rick Meigs**

board membership, engaging younger alumni, and planning a return to a more regular and in-person schedule of Homecoming, Reunion, and other alumni gatherings, with tentative plans for a large get-together in April of 2022.

Editor Mark has asked me for some observations on COVID:

I am astounded at the apparent inability of U.S. citizens to comprehend even the most rudimentary of scientific principles as it relates to the spread of COVID. There is no understanding the simple fate of human saliva and mucus in the air and why a mask can help and when it is pointless to wear one. I see my fellow Davis, California, inhabitants walking the bicycle trails and walking paths in a 20 mile-an-hour wind battling to put their mask on as we close on each other, only to remove it about twenty steps away. We are both more likely to be struck by a meteorite than to contract COVID by walking

by each other in a 20 mile-an-hour wind. The WHO (not the band) has a document on "Natural Ventilation for Disease Control." A substantial portion of the world does not use mechanical ventilation in their health care facilities. The document indicates that about 24 air changes per hour virtually eliminates the risk of airborne pathogen spread. If we pretend that we are standing outside in a 10 ft x 10 ft cube, then 24,000 cubic feet of air per hour is all we need to meet this threshold, which is 400 cubic feet per minute, which would flow across the 10 ft x 10 face of our imaginary cube at 4 feet per minute. That is 0.045 mph. In all likelihood, the stillest day of the year still has an outdoor wind faster than this. OK, I'll get off my soap box.

My other observation relates to the inability of some people to function efficiently in a home office situation. I have been an engineering telecommuter for over 15 years using email and file shares for 99% of my communication, with phone and travel being the 1% balance. Several of my colleagues in recent years had no issues working that way, but as soon as they started working from home were endlessly haranguing me to Zoom and call. Expensive handholding, I think. Anybody else experience this phenomenon? ❖





# ISWZA FRATERNITY, INC.

By Chris Turner '94 and the ISWZA Board

**T**he new Edgemoor, 5 years on is a thriving showcase and an integral part of the success of Omicron. The house has fared well since the major rehabilitation was completed in 2016. It has become a draw for events and for rush, and it has made life enjoyable for several generations of brothers. The design of the new spaces complements

the original concept of the house.

The new rooms work well and continue to look striking as they flood the house with natural light. The finishes are durable and are easily cleaned. Our house is now one of the finest on the Hill.

House maintenance and cleaning have been both effective and regular. Ruff Maintenance continues to keep the

house in good condition, responding promptly to any issue; Pristine Cleaning and the work crews organized by the Mu keep the house clean and sanitary; Pristine cleans three times each week plus a deep clean during winter and summer breaks; and the work crews clean after house events.

We continue to have challenges completing the work to the house because of the half-century of deferred maintenance and the asbestos found during the rehabilitation, both of which required correction. We need to repair the east roof and balconies; open the new bathrooms; rebuild the original stairs; and replace the electrical system and room finishes in the original section of the house. We hope to be able to accomplish these tasks within the coming several years.

Our immediate financial goal is to refinance our current mortgage with the local bank to a fixed 15-yr mortgage that would give us lower payments and more certainty, and treasurer Mike Agostin '92 is working with the bank to reach that goal. Following that, the next step would be to try to transfer that debt into loans from alumni brothers that would be a competitive investment, removing threats of foreclosure and moving control of our future into our own hands. Meanwhile, we are looking into what the next capital campaign



Chris Turner





## ISWZA FRATERNITY, INC

might look like as alumni from the late 1970s and 1980s begin to move into a stage of life where they can think about continuing the strong commitment to improving Edgemoor that the generations from the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s and earlier have so ably executed. ❖







# HIGH ALPHA REPORT

**By Liam Vinal '22 (O-1970)**

**I** became president of Omicron in an emergency election back in March 2020, right as Cornell, like most of the country, closed down for in-person activities. Restrictions had been ramping up—a ban on international travel, then on gatherings of 100 or more, then on outside visitors—but this was totally unexpected. I wasn't sure how best to lead a



**Liam Vinal**

young, still-rebuilding chapter through a full lockdown. But now, with Omicron healthy in every sense of the word, I am proud of what we have accomplished this year, and I think our alumni brothers can be as well.

Despite the image of college students in the news, we all understand the terrible reality of COVID-19, which has taken the lives of some brothers' grandparents and placed incredible pressures on our parents working in frontline professions and industries. The atmosphere on campus is definitely tense. Everyone on campus must check in daily and must take a nasal swab test twice per week—three times for athletes and Greeks. On your way there, a random stranger might shout at you from across the street if you take your mask off to take a sip of water. On your way back, you can't join a pickup football game on the Arts Quad, because they're limited to 2 on 2. There are no concerts, no sports, and needless to say no mixers or parties. And while we

understand the reasons, everything still is terrible—until you walk into the house.

There's no better situation for a college student to be in this year than living with 33 of his best friends, where you can feel at home, relax, and be yourself. Many students in the dorms and apartments complain about isolation and boredom there during the lockdown, and that just isn't possible at the fraternity. There's always a card game going on, or someone watching basketball, or heading to Cass Park to play soccer. There's always someone giving you a spot in the gym (our gym—the ones on campus are closed), checking in on you, making you laugh, or giving you a ride to your vaccination. The groups are small enough to be safe but big enough to be social.

Cornell's vaunted dining halls have earned a lot of criticism this year, but at Edgemoor, Chef Pat has been doing a fantastic job—once he figured out that portions had to be 3 times as large as at the sorority where he previously worked. He was recently diagnosed with prostate cancer, and just a couple days after surgery, was back at the house to make us a great dinner of pulled pork, mac and cheese, and coleslaw. Cornell is putting the squeeze on fraternity meal plans, by no longer allowing freshmen to drop their meal plans midyear, but we hope that Chef Pat stays healthy, and we hope to keep him as long as we can, and the dining room open as long as we can, as another valuable experience for brothers to share.

Spending so much time at home has definitely given us extra appreciation for our amazing house and location on the gorge. Eating out on the back patio when the weather is nice or watching your Zoom lecture from the gazebo are incredible privileges. Naturally, we've put more attention into improving the house this year. Pristine Cleaning has done a stellar job of cleaning and

# SAVE THE DATES

## Reunion 2021

Because of the continuing uncertainty over public health and New York State quarantine restrictions, Cornell has announced that Reunion (June 10–13) will again be online.

The house is still an essential stop. The Omicron Alumni Association will host a Zoom meeting on Sunday afternoon in which brothers will give an update on the chapter and the house, followed by “breakout rooms” where brothers can connect privately with others of their generation. We hope you will join us.

Omicron Zeta Zoom

Sun., June 12, 2021, 4:00 pm Eastern Daylight Saving Time

RSVP to [www.iswza.org/reunion](http://www.iswza.org/reunion)

## A Century at Edgemoor

April 30, 2022 (tentative)

In 1922, we celebrated our first year of living at 125 Edgemoor Lane. One hundred years on, it is as beloved as ever. We invite brothers of all classes back for a bit of revel to kick off the next century of fine living at Edgemoor. Details forthcoming.

## Homecoming 2021

September 17–19 (tentative)

## Reunion 2022

June 9–12

### HIGH ALPHA REPORT

sanitizing, and house manager Alek Mehta '23 worked with John Barney '95 and ISWZA to push through a massively appreciated upgrade to the house's WiFi.

James Czech '22 and I converted a broken dining room table into new cornhole platforms last fall, which see pretty regular use. Beckett Fine '24, our new fashion major, has taken over the design of its replacement. Colby Cheung '24 refurbished the bar in the Mitchell Room as a personal project. We are also working with the Cornell Botanic Gardens and Cornell Outdoor Education on our annual cleanup project in Cascadilla Gorge.

Cornell's all-virtual rush, held in the middle of the semester, was not the best, as exemplified by a new preferencing system that was poorly implemented and seems to have sent the wrong prospects the wrong links for every house. Still, we recruited 19 top men for the year (fall plus spring rush), who bring the energy and diversity we are known for to another generation. Parts of their initiation ceremonies had to be conducted online. These were a success, under the capable direction of High Phi Joe Hayes '22, but we are looking forward to the solemnity of in-person Ritual again in the fall.

As of April, things are slowly opening up on campus. Brothers are excited for the return of intramurals, even though the fraternity league is still inactive and the general league is limited to teams of three. Our workaround is to field three teams each for spikeball and beach volleyball and to flood singles and doubles

tennis. Philanthropy, too, has been mostly internal and online, like an Instagram bingo fundraiser with Pi Beta Phi, and brotherhood game tournaments that have raised a few hundred dollars for Feeding America. And, all through the chilly Ithaca spring, triathlete Felipe Santamaria '23 has been pretty successful on his own, raising money through sponsorships to benefit Dare2tri, a para-triathlon non-profit.

I have weekly calls with Sara, our Chapter Support Coach (the replacement program for the Educational Leadership Consultant) from International Headquarters, as well as the ISWZA board, and of course the High Pi. Sara warns us that nationally, Lambda Chi Alpha has problems with member engagement, with some chapters losing up to half their members after the first year. I am proud to say that, for all of the ups and downs of Omicron and of Greek life at Cornell over the last few years, 100% of our members have remained loyal, which is a testimony to the strength of our bond and the resilience of our community.

This has been a year of sacrifice, for sure. But for me personally, this has actually been my favorite year at Cornell—because this is the first year that I've been able to live in the house, and the boys there always find a way to have fun. I want to thank all of the alumni who have remembered the house in these hard times, and I invite you all to visit as soon as safely possible for a booster shot of pride in Lambda Chi Alpha. 💎

# A RUNNING START ON RE-OPENING

If Cornell achieves herd immunity to COVID-19. It expects to re-open in the fall with minimal constraints—a long-desired “**return to normal.**”

The **next few months will be critical for Omicron Zeta.** After every crisis in the past, we have come back stronger than before thanks to the team efforts of alumni and undergraduates. **We ask you to join the team** ensuring we hit the ground running this fall.

The house needs experts, mentors, and creatives—but most of all, we just need brothers. Modern technology makes it easier than ever for alumni anywhere in the world to stay involved. Visit [www.iswza.org/volunteer](http://www.iswza.org/volunteer) or contact Chris Turner '94 at [cturnergsb@gmail.com](mailto:cturnergsb@gmail.com) if interested.

		Level of Interaction (5 = highest)	
Ask	Opportunity	Alumni	Undergrad
Talent	<b>Finance Experts:</b> Brothers with experience in financial modeling, tax structuring, and similar topics to serve as advisors to ISWZA.	2	1
Talent	<b>Facilities Expert:</b> Brothers with experience in facility management, construction, infrastructure, etc. to serve as advisors to ISWZA.	3	2
Time	<b>Education Advisor:</b> Work with the High Pi to advise undergraduate officers on improving chapter education and ritualism (Kappa, Phi).	1	5
Time	<b>Programming Advisor:</b> Work with the High Pi to advise undergraduate officers on improving social and external programming (Beta, Theta, Epsilon).	1	5
Time	<b>Event Director:</b> - Help OAA coordinate Homecoming and Reunion events at the house in Ithaca.	3	2
Talent	<b>Oracle Correspondent:</b> Help OAA collect and curate materials for the <i>Omicron Oracle</i> : alumni news (decade coordinators), photographs, articles, and interviews.	4	1
Time	<b>ISWZA Board of Directors:</b> Help manage the strategic direction of the house corporation in the areas of capital fundraising and property management.	5	2
Time	<b>OAA Board of Directors:</b> Help manage the strategic direction of the alumni corporation and its communications and event programming.	5	1



# THE NEWEST OMICRONS



Recruiting amidst COVID-19 restrictions—including the cancellation of all in-person events and any gatherings of more than 10 people (even the class photos needed to be stitched together!)—was a challenge that Omicron Zeta met well.

Seven were initiated into the bond last fall: Seattle sends us our mighty High Iota, sophomore **Troy T. Bailey II O-1995**. The Dyson School major has been involved with Humanity Forward, a charity founded by Andrew Yang that provides assistance to families suffering income loss due to the pandemic. He is also active with BlackGen Capital, the first BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)-owned student investment fund at Cornell.

We have a varsity rower in the ranks again in **Stephen J. Batter Jr. O-1996**. A chemistry major from Wilton, CT, he did independent research at Yale's Human Neuroscience Lab last year but now favors less-clinical interactions with Cornell Unmasked, a student group that aims to counteract pandemic-induced social isolation.

Computer science major **Sunny M. Chavan O-1997**, a sophomore engineer, has a strong interest in development and sustainability issues, and too strong an interest in '90s music, especially Green Day. The Nanuet, NY, native coaches youth football at home, and at school he keeps busy with the Engineers Without Borders project team and the Cayuga Capital

business club.

Louisville, KY, sends us **Sergio P. Diaz O-1998**, a sophomore in the engineering school and one of our current High Iotas. Serge is a member of the Cornell AppDev project team when not carving up the slopes with the Ski and Snowboard Club. Last year he was involved with the AguaClara lab, part of an international collaboration creating sustainable, low-cost solutions for water purification.

Our new High Delta, **Ryan H. Moon O-1999**, hails from Syosset, NY. The sophomore ILR major is involved in 180 Degrees Consulting (180DC), a student group that provides high-quality, high-impact consulting services to non-profit organizations and socially conscious businesses in the Ithaca community; as well as the Diversity on the Streets (DOTS) student finance/investment club.

Mechanical engineer **Felipe Santamaria O-2000** is a sophomore from New York City who is active with Cornell Electric Vehicles, but his first love is endurance sports. One of our representatives on the triathlon team, he bicycled from Manhattan all the way to Ithaca last fall, raising funds for the REACH program, which helps to prepare students from disadvantaged backgrounds for admission to New York's selective public and private high schools.

**Ryan H. Thompson O-2001**, a junior econ major



# THE NEWEST OMICRONS



from Los Altos, CA, is active with the Sustainable Design and Sustainability Consultants Project Teams but mostly sustains his heart rate as a member of the triathlon team. He recently completed a half Iron Man in New Zealand.

Our 12 spring associates were initiated on April 3; longer profiles will be provided in the next *Oracle*. They are **Christian Bougas**, Hotel '24 of Fullerton, CA;

**Colby Cheung**, Arts '24 of Menlo Park, CA; **Rohan Chugh**, Hotel '24 of Wilmington, DE; **William Czech**, ILR '24 of Salt Point, NY; **Beckett Fine**, HumEc '24 of Westport, CT; **Kyle Harris**, Eng '23 of Briarcliff, NY; **Colin Holdreith**, ILR '23 of Manhasset, NY; **Andrew Hubschmidt**, Arts '24 of Bryn Mawr, PA; **Ian Machado**, Eng '24 of Lake Elmo, MN; **Rory McIntosh**, CALS '24 of Pittsford, NY; **Maxwell Stein**, CALS '24 of Berkeley, CA; and **Parker Venator**, CALS '24 of Buffalo, NY. ♦



# OMICRON FACT BOX: SPRING 2021

## *Omicron Zeta*

Number of members (fall)	51
Spring 2020 GPA:	3.83
Fall 2020 GPA:	3.58
2019–20 philanthropy raised:	\$3,000

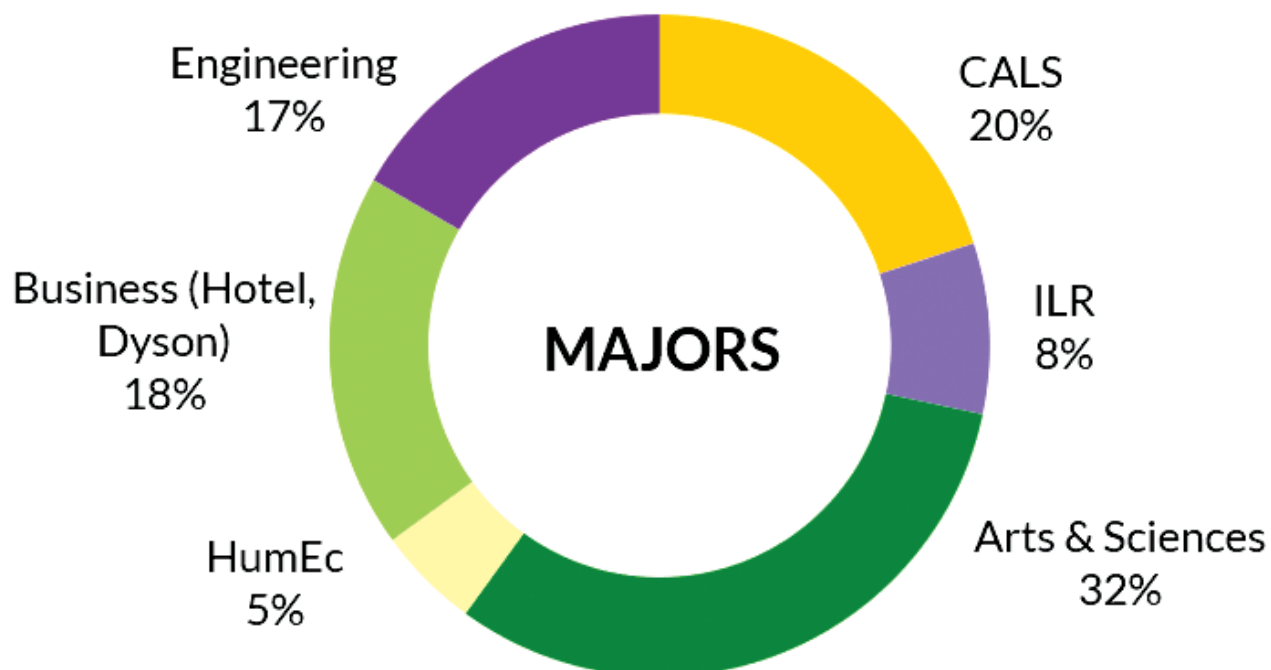
High Alpha/President  
 High Beta/Vice President  
 High Tau/Treasurer  
 House Manager  
 High Theta/Philanthropy Chair  
 High Gamma/Secretary  
 High Iota/Risk Manager  
 High Kappa/Fraternity Educator  
 High Delta/Recruitment Chair  
 High Phi/Ritualist  
 High Sigma/Scholarship Chair  
 High Epsilon/Social Chair  
 High Rho/Alumni Relations Chair  
 Standards Chair  
 Steward  
 Jock/Athletic Chair  
 Ast. Athletic Chair  
 Diversity & Inclusion Chair  
 High Pi/Alumni Advisor

## *Cornell IFC*

Average membership:	42.5
Average fall 2020 GPA	3.62
Number of chapters	28

Liam Vinal '22  
 Nandan Aggarwal '23  
 Daniel Vebman '23  
 Alek Mehta '23  
 Stephen Batter '23  
 Andrew Peng '23  
 Troy Bailey '23 and Sergio Diaz '23  
 Terence Burke '21  
 Ryan Moon '23  
 Joe Hayes '22  
 Nandan Aggarwal '23  
 Martín Gutierrez '23 and Stephen Snabes '23  
 Bjorn Kroes '21  
 Rey Rodriguez '21  
 Thomas Weiner '23  
 Joey Ibáñez '23  
 Felipe Santamaria '23  
 David Cabello '23  
 Jason Cho '98

**House Phone: 607/319-3125 • Instagram: @lxacornell • Website: [www.iswza.org](http://www.iswza.org)**



# UNDERGRADUATE FEATURE: A CONVERSATION WITH TERENCE BURKE

*The Omicron Oracle (OO) caught up with former IFC president Terence Burke '21 (O-1936) for his reflections on the last four years.*

**OO:** Let's get the first-day-of-smokers part out of the way. What's your major, where are you from, and what do you like to do?

**Terence:** Sure, I'm a senior from Greenwich, Connecticut, majoring in economics and classical civilization, and getting a minor in business. On campus I'm involved with the IFC, Consent Ed, the business fraternity Phi Chi Theta, and the re-opening committees last summer, and I helped set up the COVID Ambassadors program. I play in a lot of the house intramurals like basketball and inner-tube water polo, volleyball, and flag football. We haven't had much of that this year, but I've been getting to see Ithaca's parks and trails more.

**OO:** When you rushed, there was something of a cloud over Lambda Chi Alpha's reputation. You and the other guys in your class had options, you could have joined any other house. Who or what at Lambda sealed the deal for you?

**Terence:** Yeah, that kind of thing is hard to keep a secret, I think everyone pretty much knew there was some sort of disciplinary thing going on, and they told us before we signed our bids. My sister had gone here, she had had a couple of friends in Lambda, and one of her good friends was in a sorority that really liked our house, and that's why I first came over. I had also seen the online house tour ([www.iswza.org/edgemoor](http://www.iswza.org/edgemoor)) with Nikita [Dubnov '17 (O-1876)] and some of the other guys, and the location was cool.

Mainly though, when I came around for events, we just naturally clicked. It's kind of hard to describe but I just felt that this was where I was supposed to be at Cornell. It came from the atmosphere the brothers kept; it didn't seem like anyone was trying to put up a front. They were interested in me as a person and not where I was from or

what my parents did. Everyone I met was really genuine. **OO:** You went out for leadership roles pretty early on, High Iota, then exec board of the IFC.



**Terence Burke '21**

**Terence:** I definitely wanted to get involved in some capacity, and I did want to be responsible as well as social, so Iota seemed like a natural role. And Iota wasn't too competitive an election, honestly. I got involved with IFC because Max Wulff '18 (O-1909) and Nicky Kacena '20 (O-1926) were on the board and they suggested I give it a look. It would be a really good way to represent the house but also have an impact beyond.

**OO:** Having seen our inner workings and the more system-level view, do you think the challenges our house faces are the same as or different from those of the Greek system in general at Cornell?

**Terence:** Definitely a lot of houses share similar difficulties. I think we have a more unlucky history

of getting in trouble for things other houses do or do more egregiously. But there are things we do pretty well. New member education is really strong, we've shifted away from anything that could even remotely be considered hazing, and the new members integrate pretty well and feel comfortable. That's a difference I've seen when compared with a lot of other houses. I really like our living environment where we have a mix of sophomores, juniors, and seniors living in the chapter house, and everything doesn't fall down along class lines.

**OO:** You served in two different roles on IFC, and that's enough for most people, but then you ran for president right after the news of Antonio Tsialas was coming out, which implicated another IFC chapter. Are you a glutton for punishment?

**Terence:** I had started out with member and alumni development, then stepped in as VP of Recruitment. I think part of what led to Antonio's death was related to the recruitment structure, and my biggest desire was to overhaul rush. I'd been considering president before, and that incident actually reaffirmed my desire to step into that role



## UNDERGRADUATE FEATURE: A CONVERSATION WITH TERENCE BURKE

and change the system, and as president I got more time to work on that piece of unfinished business. I spent a lot of time on a panel to revamp rush with undergrads from other chapters and some alumni, including Jason Cho '98 (O-1512), and though COVID has curtailed some of the new programs, I think we'll see results with the reforms come next year.

**OO:** So on the question of recruitment, numbers that year were down severely systemwide, but Lambda Chi had our most successful rush since World War II. What made us stand apart?

**Terence:** Part of it is that we are a creative house, and I'm pretty close with the rush chair that year [Bjorn Kroes '21 (O-1942)], so we were able to bounce ideas off each other for what was going to work within the new restrictions. That was also the year we had come back after the national membership review and the loss of spring 2019 rush, so the remaining brothers had become really close, and the 15 who joined in the fall grew really ingrained really quickly. We used that fact that we were a smaller house to become a tighter house. We'd made changes to the Kappa program and more brothers were involved—also because of being smaller, everyone had to be involved, and we knew it was a make-or-break cycle for us, and happily it all worked out.

**OO:** So we're having this great year, and all of a sudden in the middle of everything, the pandemic hit. What did that look like at the council/system level?

**Terence:** We were sent home in March and spring break was right after, but right after that we shifted to virtual meetings while we waited for Cornell to make a decision about re-opening. I served on a lot of re-opening committees over the summer. Around July, Cornell released their plan for move-in and testing, and I met with chapter presidents online in small groups of 5 or 6 to hear their individual concerns. Every chapter was tasked with creating their own COVID safety guidelines and quarantine plan, but at the IFC level, we voted early on for a social moratorium and virtual recruitment.

In the fall, there was a big shift from the usual focus on community service and social events to controlling COVID, helping with move-in, and making sure everyone was doing well. I think we've done a pretty good job of that. I am sent a lot of articles about fraternities at other campuses that have endangered their communities, and Cornell's Greek system has really exceeded expectations I

think. We've never had a major outbreak or even close to it, and now we're shifting into vaccination mode. Everyone was worried about the spring and COVID fatigue, but it hasn't been a large issue for undergraduates as a whole; basically, there was one outbreak among freshmen and one among business school students. But it'll be another more involved summer for planning across the board.

**OO:** You had another chance to retire, but you ran for High Kappa and have remained very active. What keeps you motivated?

**Terence:** Kappa was a great way for me, as a liveout, to connect with the guys in the house. As a freshman, I didn't get to see the seniors much, and I wanted to have a better relationship when I was a senior. It's been pretty rewarding. I participate in the Exec and Zeta meetings because I care about the house but also to interact with the guys outside our usual social circles. Now that I've been in it for three years, I appreciate the life cycle of the brotherhood more, and it's been good to present my perspective.

**OO:** What are your plans for after graduation? How do you think your experiences in the fraternity will help you?

**Terence:** I'm starting at the end of September in business consulting with Ernst & Young's financial services practice. I'm not too sure what I want to do career-wise, but this way I can get involved in different projects and roles in finance. I'm hoping to live with some brothers in New York City, and I know we have a big alumni presence there, but first we're planning to rent an RV and go across country this summer to continue the adventure before we transition totally out of college life.

**OO:** Years from now, what do you think you will remember most fondly about Cornell?

**Terence:** The experience and the community of the house, definitely. It's not a memory of any single event or funny story, it's the whole experience, the journey I had with guys older than me, and with the younger guys I've just met. I've had a great opportunity to meet over a hundred brothers, to share a house with them, and to share meals with them. The difference from my freshman fall to my senior spring is huge, and I'm beyond grateful and happy to have been a part of this place.

**OO:** Thank you Terence. We hope to see you at Homecoming. ❖

# ALUMNI FEATURE: WORKING THROUGH COVID-19

## Reporting by Jason Cho '98

*More than a few brothers have lost someone to the COVID-19 pandemic, including some of our own, and many more of us have endured the lockdown living of postponed visits, distanced celebrations, and restaurant takeout. Not all of us have the luxury of working from home, though, and The Omicron Oracle caught up with a few brothers to learn about the impact that COVID-19 has had on their lives.*

### Nursing



*In addition to his job as nursing administrator at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center (NYP), nursing shifts, and his Ph.D. program at New York University, **Frank Hamilton '04** (O-1638) is a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps. The Oracle caught up with him in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he is currently deployed.*

A year ago, I was working for Northwell at a small hospital on Long Island that was hit very, very hard with COVID early on. There are 25 hospitals in the system, and we had to pull in resources from every one of them. Staffing was very difficult, and we were hiring as many travelers [OO: traveling nurses] as we could. Many of them came up from Florida for the ridiculous rates we were paying.

For the second wave I was at NYP, which was nowhere near as bad, because there were more hospitals in the City to share the load. We had learned a lot more by then too, and we made improvements to patient care—like not intubating as quickly, which was helpful—and for the second round, people were smarter when they came in and the volume was more manageable.

But hospitals were still hard places to work, with so many of your coworkers getting sick. The hardest hit were definitely the frontline staff, and many, many bedside workers are burnt out. I've taken patient care shifts, and it's emotionally and physically taxing. The most recent was a hospital in Staten Island designated

for COVID patients, and you're in full PPE—mask, gown, face shield, and all— for 12 hours at a time.

We've also dealt with shortages from the beginning and had to move fast to create new policies to work around them. Before, I'd use a fresh N95 mask every time I walked into a room, with a TB patient let's say. When COVID hit we were told to reuse them until they were "soiled" or until the strings broke, and eventually we were allowed one per shift and had to sign them out.

I drill once per month with the Navy Reserve, and the last time that we drilled together in person was February 2020. Since then, my unit has drilled by telework. Many reservists have been mobilized during the pandemic to provide all kinds of medical support to other units, and we were activated in March, so I'm in Cuba until November. I had to quarantine for two weeks in Mississippi before leaving, then I have another two weeks of quarantine after I arrived. Unfortunately a contractor here tested positive, so everything is closed, but I'm looking forward to attending a bonfire with the other officers to celebrate re-opening in a few days.

### Food Production

***Chris Olney '96** (O-1516) and **John Olney '99** (O-1549) work for their family business, Michigan-based honey distributor HoneyTree. The honey supply may not have been at the top of everyone's minds, but Chris reports they were affected very dramatically.*

There was a massive run on shelves all over the country in March and April, and we were struggling to keep our customers stocked. We're heavily retail in our business, and retail food consumption was going up, and that reflected in a 24% increase in honey consumption. Plus, honey has a "health halo," a profile of being a more natural sweetener, and millennial moms who are very concerned about kid nutrition were doing a lot more baking.

We ran into issues with getting people to come in to work. Honey is seasonal, and we rely on a lot of temporary labor. We have about 50 employees regularly and about 72 during high season. But the unemployment benefits were so good that we couldn't get any. It really made things tough on the regulars,



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with everyone putting in 50–60 hr weeks. John and I did a few shifts running the bottling lines ourselves.

John has had the brunt of it, struggling with keeping the place staffed, and then trying to work the line himself on top of that. He was putting in 15-hr days, 90-hr weeks. We're still having stronger sales than 2019, but we're finally starting to cycle in against last year's crazy hoarding. Which is just fine with us.

### Theater Arts



*While working at a nonprofit last year, Khalfani Louis '19 (O-1914) came to terms that a traditional career path might not be the way for him.*

I've actually had encouragement about a career in the arts from my family; my godmother said "when I was your age I would have just gone for it." With COVID and the closing of the theatres in New York City, a lot of the opportunity to work

is in Los Angeles, but I really got set on moving because I visited Conrad [Perez '19] there in October and fell in love with California.

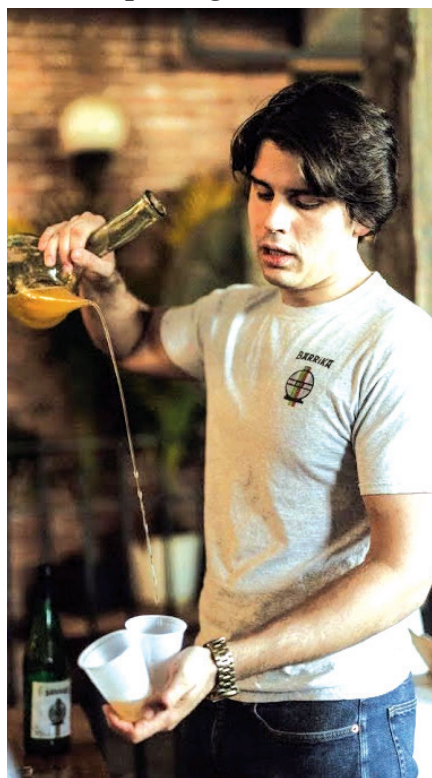
I did *Romeo and Juliet* last summer with the Ithaca Shakespeare Company, the first time I got paid to act as an adult— \$75, after three months of rehearsals. And I loved every second of it, it was great. We started via Zoom in May, peak pandemic, and it was the one thing that gave me hope, working on that project. When I could get into rehearsal space I felt free; there's no negative energy, we're creating art.

It was weird at first acting to a screen—looking at this green dot and trying to form an emotional connection to it—but with time and practice it became easier. I'm a student at the Identity School for Acting (IDSA), which has alumni like Letitia Wright, John Boyega, and Damson Idris. I film myself on my phone, learning to be vulnerable because a screen is recording me.

We'll see what I can get into in Los Angeles. I'm not

crazy, I do have a 9 to 5 lined up. But I've also already booked a commercial.

### Wine Importing



*David Cascione '13 (O-1773) is founder of Barrika Imports, which imports wine and cider from Europe and distributes it in New York, Washington, D.C., and Georgia.*

The pandemic has been interesting for the booze business. Restaurants are very cliquey, and it's all about who you know. It's much easier by comparison to get into a liquor store or wine shop. I'd say 80% of my customers were

liquor stores. So when restaurants closed I lost 20% of my customers, but with people drinking at their houses a lot more, the rest were buying double.

I wasn't able to grow my portfolio last year, because no one wanted to taste anything new; I was lucky that I had a couple well-established brands. Now, restaurants are starting to open up in the City, and people are open to new products.

In the fall of 2016, I had picked up and moved to Spain to work at the producers' place. I sold my first bottle in July 2017, self-distributing some really esoteric products, but now I carry about 23 different wines. I haven't been able to get back to Spain since COVID hit, but hopefully I'll be able to spend August in San Sebastian.

### Commercial Cleaning

*Chris Di Napoli '84 (O-1333), one of the many American Power Conversion alumni from the 1980s and 1990s, remains in Rhode Island and is president of System4 IPS. My company does commercial cleaning and a little facility management, but mostly commercial cleaning.*

In terms of business we were fine, because even though we had accounts that were suspended because people were working from home and their offices were closed, others increased the frequency of cleaning.

We started doing disinfection spray and antimicrobial coating treatments, and that helped make up for any loss. Early on, the transmission routes for the coronavirus were thought to be surfaces, and we were proud to be helping keep police stations, nursing homes, town halls, all sorts of places safe with disinfecting and applying the coating. As we've learned more, it's about droplets and aerosols of course, but we're still busy.

### Medicine



**Alan Workman '13** (O-1771) is a third-year resident at the Harvard Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery training program in Boston, Mass.

When COVID arrived, surgeries stopped almost entirely as the hospitals readied for an incoming surge of patients.

For the surgeries that could not be delayed, we would operate in many layers of gowns and masks, attempting to mitigate our exposure risk as best as we could. As the pandemic went on, pre-operative testing and a better understanding of the disease allowed us to get back to some level of “normal” fairly quickly.

Related to this, I think that one of the more unexpected outcomes was how little my life changed relative to those around me, as there was no transition to virtual work. For the most part we still went into work every day, seeing coworkers and patients in a somewhat “normal” setting; this was in stark contrast to some of my friends and family who were working and living exclusively at home for months.

Staying in touch with brothers from AXA, in Boston

but also virtually with those in New York, Portland, and Switzerland, was an excellent outlet throughout this time. We had Zoom catch-ups and were able to see each other outside once infection levels died down a bit. Now that things are slowly returning, we are looking forward to trips back to Ithaca and getting together more regularly.



**Alon Mass '08** (O-1672) is a urologist with New Jersey Urology.

I had been in private practice for about three years, and living in Essex County, which became a hotbed in New Jersey. They weren't even letting us operate on patients with cancer, which is sort of crazy. So my involvement early on was mainly putting catheters in people

who were intubated, especially if they have difficult anatomy or other reasons for more specialized insertions.

The hospital was nearly shut down for surgeries because they needed to expand the ventilator area into the PACU [post-anesthesia care unit], recovery rooms, etc.—even though we were short on ventilators in late March and early April. Our main hospital, which had 450 beds, had 370 COVID-positive patients, and up to 100 people intubated in the first wave.

Honestly, I'm a very optimistic person, who rarely gets stressed or anxious, and last spring as I was going to work every day, I had a constant headache and chest tightness from severe stress. That peaked during my actual quarantine, where I convinced myself I had it, even though I tested negative. I isolated for a week and watched Tiger King. It was terrible. Later I was watching an ICU doctor from Cornell talking about all the things he does as a daily routine in terms of prevention of transmission, and I snapped out of my stress phase and never went back.

My wife got the vaccine when she was 32 weeks pregnant, so that was a little scary, and our kids have had multiple cases in their classes, both students and teachers, but amazingly we've all made it out healthy.





**Matt Liakos '08 (O-1652)** is an interventional cardiologist with MemorialCare.

I was two months into the new job when COVID hit. I had always loved going to the hospital, there was some new challenge every day, and this was the first time I dreaded going to work. There were a lot of people dying, and some of them were very young.

The entire emergency room was full of people with COVID, some in very bad shape, screaming for help. It was a very brutal situation overall.

We also didn't know what to make of it at first. We were trying doxycycline, hydroxychloroquine, later remdesivir. Couldn't get enough remdesivir. Testing was difficult to find and get done. I had some friends who were repurposed and ran COVID floors, but I didn't have to do that. I would put in dialysis catheters or various lines, and do consults on heart attacks, defibrillation, and so on as complications from COVID. Things got a lot better in the summer, especially with monoclonal antibody treatment.

I ask a million questions of my infectious diseases colleagues. We've learned a lot since the first wave how to treat it, and that's helped reduce the chance of hospitalization, and that's a big deal. People who shouldn't have been sick have gotten sick, and then their families aren't allowed to visit. Sometimes the families find out where their loved one is and stand outside the window just trying to see them.

### Food Distribution

**Joe Willis '72 (O-1122)** is a poultry farmer and food distributor with JFS Curve in central New York.

In our industry, I tell people, everything touches everything. Take something as simple as eggs: the chickens lay 'em, easy. But with cafeterias and restaurants closed, now 90 percent of them go to a store, so you need a 3-week lead time for retail cartons instead of 4 months, and you run out of egg cartons. When Smithfield closed those pork plants, they didn't reopen at 100%, and the products coming out are worth a lot more now, so things that

were byproducts become scarce and expensive too, like salami and pepperoni. Some of my cooks have gotten COVID and recovered, but now they can't smell or taste anything, which isn't too good for a cook.

There is an outdoor farmer's market I go to in winter. I know how to dress for 15° and 30 mph wind, but 7 hours of it is a bit much. The people who support local dining did come out and support us, though. They said they felt safer because fewer people had handled the food.

It's been frustrating for the businesses because they have no recourse against strange rules. Indoor axe throwing is open but not pool halls. You can't drink in bars but you can in bowling alleys—if you order food, so get one plate of french fries or "Cuomo pretzels" and you're good for the whole night. They want a different person to handle the money and to handle the product. Gloves would help with that. But gloves that used to cost \$35 a box were going for \$130, and they still can't make them fast enough.

### K-12 Education



**Drew Seery '11 (O-1725)** teaches fifth grade with Albert Einstein Academies in San Diego.

I worked at the [San Diego] Zoo for five years and loved every minute of it, but it was tough. The zoo shut down, then rushed to re-open, which I didn't love either, and with the openings and closures and being hourly, I had to look somewhere else. I

had maxed out my advancement, too, because it was a union job.

I worked for summer camps and then at the Jewish Community Center as a pod leader and inclusion specialist. Basically, I was in charge of 12 kids in-person in September (they got special permission to reopen), working with special needs students one-on-one and seeing the challenges on the special ed side with distance learning. I got my credentials in order and got a job teaching; it's from home for now, and we're supposed to go back in May.

San Diego has been fairly locked down, but not like the East Coast. It's a very young town, so unfortunately a lot of

the people that moved here in the last couple of years were expecting the SD lifestyle and got hit with the restrictions. It's a very bar-oriented scene, too, and that's been tough on a lot of my friends who were bartenders. I enjoy the quieter life now, but I'm also a little bit older now.

My whole A.M. [Associate Member at Omicron] class Zoomed together for the first time since graduation, then started a group chat, and have kept that going. Thanks to the pandemic I've appreciated that I was more connected to people a lot farther away, my real brothers, even as I've lost connections with people next door.

### Pharmaceuticals



*Mike "Trout" Filiatrault '95 (O-1480) is Director of Vaccines Pricing and Contracting for Pfizer, but is quick to point out that the COVID-19 vaccine is being handled directly by more senior management.*

Pharmaceuticals is an "interesting" business. I think pharmaceutical companies are always looking for the world's biggest problems and how to solve them—be-

cause that's where the business opportunity is. You always have to be inventing new things, or you'll fall behind—the molecules are not that difficult to manufacture, and there are 20 people waiting to eat your lunch with generics once your patent expires.

Vaccines are a little different in that you're injecting something into perfectly healthy people, often newborn infants. The process is very heavily regulated, and vaccines tend to be long-lived products because they are expensive and difficult to develop, and there aren't as many manufacturers.

All the pandemics—HIV, SARS, Zika, etc.—people think are once in a lifetime, but they come up pretty regularly. We got "lucky" this time in having the technology to quickly develop a vaccine, to develop an mRNA vaccine against an mRNA virus. The coronavirus being so easily transmittable also meant you could get enough exposures and observations and cases to complete the studies very quickly.

The scientists are the real heroes, and I hope that society will sing their praises more. As far as my role, I've had this zigzag career in manufacturing, then corporate finance,

and now this world of "pricing." There's no "pricing" major in college, but it has a lot of people involved in it—analysts, lawyers, marketers, finance people—strategizing what drives the market, and how your products compete. I've been fortunate enough to be able to pivot and find new paths, and that's the real value of a Cornell education: to learn how to learn, and develop the skills beyond the specific technical ones.

### Healthcare IT



*Elliot Sloane '74 (O-1152) has been involved in numerous roles with the World Health Organization (WHO), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and other academic and industry organizations as an expert clinical engineer. He is also a visiting professor at Villanova University. Elliot currently serves as head of the Edgemoor Leadership Foundation.*

I'm working longer hours than I have in decades, and about 60% of my time is supporting WHO [the World Health Organization] in various projects conducting webinars. I publish a daily newsletter called Hacking Coronavirus that goes out to about 10,000 people around the globe, including citations from the literature about all sorts of medical technologies—ventilators and vaccines, but also tele-opthamology and tele-dermatology and tele-dentistry. So many innovations have erupted in tele-psychiatry and dealing with depression and isolation.

We have more COVID-related literature than we've ever had access to, especially because back in February 2020, all the publishers agreed to open all their paywalls for COVID-related research. We scan about 2000 articles a month and curate a couple hundred of them specific to technologies. I meet with my editorial board every morning, and we've served as a platform to share technical information from CDC, WHO, FDA, ministries of health, everyone.

I'm still teaching graduate students 1–2 nights a week at Villanova. It was already an online class. The difference now is that my students have access to the world's data on coronavirus. Over the past 7 years the students had not been able to see real patient data, but now they have access to massive amounts they can use to design apps or databases and so forth.



## ALUMNI FEATURE: WORKING THROUGH COVID-19

I have other projects too, like educational webinars for low- and middle-income countries, and research projects with Virtual Hospital in Australia and Canada. I'm keeping busy, and feel grateful to be able to make a contribution.

### Hospitality

*Tyler St. Pierre '11 (O-1732) is General Manager of Ospero, a new restaurant by Wolfgang Puck at Pendry West Hollywood.*

It's crazy, but I'm good. We're opening [the new Pendry hotel] on the 2nd of April, right on Sunset Blvd. in West Hollywood, and it's a mad dash to get everything set and ready to go.

Billy [Cole '08 (O-1664)] just finished his veterinary residency at OSU and we knew we were moving to California. He's had crazy protocols, testing every week, but he's been working the whole time. We moved last August, planning our road trip so that it was low risk (and dog friendly), but it was strange to move to the heart of WeHo and not be able to leave our homes and for everything to be closed.

Hospitality has been all over the place of course. I started interviewing for this position in September and had five

separate interviews. They've postponed opening four times, but now it's full steam ahead, and every day has been a new challenge. We had planned to open without indoor dining, for instance, but now California has allowed it at 25% capacity, when it hasn't been allowed all year. So we've had to do massive hiring to staff eight outlets within the hotel, while partnering with Pendry and Wolfgang Puck.

Pendry is a new brand of Montage International, and West Hollywood will be the flagship of the brand. [Dax Acosta '10 (O-1716) also works for Montage, and the founder of Pendry and the son of the founder of Montage are good friends with Dax.] Being in the hotel space while there is expansion happening is exciting, but especially when the whole industry has been flipped on its head. We bring our associates in tomorrow to start training on-property, and it will be interesting to see how it goes, getting people who haven't been out of their homes in a year and throwing them into service again.

It's been a whirlwind experience for sure, and trying to open a new property in the middle of COVID is insane, but if you're able to adapt the way we've had to adapt, I think we can handle any curve ball. ♦

## AN OMICRON TIMELINE

### By Jason Cho '98

#### 25 Years Ago: Fall 1995

In an ironic twist, the City of Ithaca Building Department rules that no one is permitted to sleep in the third-floor dorm. Brothers discuss two proposals: to convert the space into 1) a TV lounge or 2) a weight room, but with brothers like Adam Borah '94, Trevor Connor '95, Eric Helmy '96, and Greg Knight '96 putting their muscle behind the latter, there is no contest. The Dormer Gym is born, paid for entirely out of undergraduate funds, and still a signature amenity of the house.

#### 50 years Ago: Spring 1971

Retired house treasurer Gary Hedge '72 (O-1113), having rescued the chapter from almost a year of unpaid bills, founds the Student Management Corporation. SMC succeeds where many previous attempts to form a buying cooperative for fraternities and sororities had failed. The group is able to negotiate substantial discounts on food and supplies, and it boasts 32 members by the fall. SMC continues today and remains one of the largest college co-ops in the United States.



Jason Cho

#### 75 Years Ago: December 1945

As postwar student life takes shape, alumni and undergraduates converge on Ithaca to help restore Edgemoor, on which 18 months of service as U.S. Navy housing has left its mark(s). High Pi Edward Hall, Auburn '24, provides critical financing out of his own pocket. Reports the *Oracle*, "The desire of the brothers to have a dance the first week in December no doubt provided the motivation necessary to get the house in shape quickly."

#### 100 Years Ago: January 1920

Differences between Warren A. Cole, the national founder of Lambda Chi Alpha, and prominent early leaders Jack Mason and Albert Cross of U. Penn, and Cornell's own E.J.C. Fischer '10 (O-34), come to a head at the national convention. Fischer defeats Cole in the election for Grand High Alpha and sets about reforming the organization's governance, but the brotherly bond is a casualty. Mere weeks thereafter, Cole is expelled from the very fraternity he founded.







# CORNELL TODAY: CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP—HOW THEY HAPPEN

By Stephen Ashley '62

**It** has taken extraordinary leadership to guide Cornell through this evermore complex era of rapid change in the midst of COVID and turmoil to come out the other side as still one of the most highly regarded institutions of higher learning in the world. That vision comes from



**Stephen Ashley**

many sources, but the university's provosts and, especially, its deans have been critical to making it work so that Omicron and the rest of the student body can go about the business of getting a top-flight education. This article gives some insight into how these critical positions are filled.

Most Cornellians are aware that Cornell University consists of the composite of colleges

serving the undergraduate population, a graduate school, and four professional schools. To be more specific, there are seven undergraduate colleges, but within that framework there are subsets of schools; for example, the S.C. Johnson College of Business incorporates the Johnson Graduate School of Management, the Hotel School, and shared responsibility with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for the Dyson School. Cornell Tech in New York City is structured as a graduate division of the College of Engineering. The School of Computing Information and Science spreads across all undergraduate divisions, which has enabled students in the Arts College to major in Computing Science. Dropping down to the department level, there are now a number of departments that cross college boundaries. A good example is Economics, which traditionally was housed in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) and is now shared between A&S and Industrial and Labor Relations where a very strong Department of Labor Economics has existed for years.

Most recently, a plan was put forth for a broadened college approach to social sciences. To an outsider, all of this can be extremely confusing and hard to understand and can be perceived as lacking rationality, but there is a logic and purpose to it.

For the last decade or more, the academic world has been faulted for being highly "siloed." Cornell has come in for its fair share of criticism in this regard. The last five years have seen the university move steadily toward cross-border collaboration and erosion of barriers that previously stood in the way of collegial enterprise. The Provost's Office is the principal driver for these changes, but the provost can only move as fast as the faculty and funding sources permit. Increasingly, major research grants necessitate different disciplines joining forces to strengthen their proposals and to win recognition from the funding agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, and National Institutes of Health. An example of this is the Cornell Institute for Digital Agriculture—a collaborative of geneticists and plant scientists in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, structural and systems engineers in the College of Engineering, faculty from the School of Computing Science and Information, and agricultural economists in the Dyson School. The broad goal of the institute is to address the challenges of doubling the global food supply over the next 30 years in the face of climate change, dwindling soil and water resources, and global population growth.

I referenced the role that the provost has played in supporting and stimulating collaborative enterprise. The provost can bring resources from the central administration to support these initiatives, but the faculties doing the research have their academic homes in a department that rests within a college, or combinations thereof. I will submit that one of the great strengths of Cornell that is not often recognized enough is the leadership skills of the various deans. These individuals must not only have recognized academic accomplishments that give them credibility with the faculty but also must possess extraordinary communication and personal skills that enable them to reach out and gain support from various constituencies—alumni, policy makers, funding sources, regulators, and,

most importantly, students. The deans serve 5-year terms and may serve two consecutive terms (10 years in total) but no more. There is good rationale for the two-term rule inasmuch as knowledge across virtually all disciplines is being created at an increasing rate. A new energy and strategic thinking can work to keep the faculty and, in turn, the curriculum fresh and motivational.

In the last three years, Cornell has seen new deans in the College of Arts and Sciences; College of Art, Architecture and Planning; College of Engineering; S.C. Johnson College of Business; School of Computing Science and Information; Cornell Tech; Hotel School; Dyson School; College of Human Ecology; College of Industrial and Labor Relations; and, most recently, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Some of these positions

have been filled from within, and others have resulted in individuals coming to Cornell from other institutions.

The process for selecting a new dean, even in cases in which an interim dean may have been appointed as is the case today in the Dyson School, is well established. The Provost's Office will establish a search committee, usually chaired by a vice-provost. The search committee will then consist of 10–15 individuals, predominantly from the faculty and with several others that may have knowledge or relationships that are beneficial to the college and the search process. Many of the faculty representatives will be department chairs who bring their unique perspectives of the college and the needs of the college going forward. A comprehensive profile of the college and a position description are prepared that are then used as a guide.

National search firms—such as Spencer Stuart, Heidrick & Struggles—are commissioned to bring a pool of candidates to the search committee. When there is a position open at Cornell, there is a high level of interest for the position across the country. The search firm will winnow a pool, sometimes in excess of 100 candidates, to 20 or so for the search committee to evaluate. That is usually a paper process, and ultimately a pool of 8–10 candidates is invited for a first round of interviews. The 8–10 are then brought down to 4 who would be considered finalists and are invited to campus, if they are not already on campus, for visits that include discussions with the provost and meetings with department chairs, college administrative staff, and senior central administration leadership. A final decision then rests with the provost and president after input from the search committee and the various groups from the campus visit. The provost makes the recommendation to the Cornell University Board of Trustees for approval. This process can take up to a year. When the selection is announced, the introduction of the new dean begins.

The beginning of this article focused on the structural complexity and evolving interdisciplinary climate driven by the faculty, funding sources, and pace of knowledge growth. The deans play a most significant role in maintaining and growing the intellectual productivity that contributing to the success of the student, thereby assuring the continued greatness of a top-10 research university. The leadership works to ensure the faculty have a strategic framework that will bring resources, both financial and human, that enable teaching, research, and outreach to go forward at the highest levels. The faculty is the true capital of Cornell University, but the deans make it possible for them to do their work. ♦





# HORT SENSE: DON'T CONFUSE ME WITH THOSE SCIENTIFIC NAMES!

By R. Wayne Mezitt '64



When people visit our garden centers or view our website, they sometimes ask why we can't simply use common names for the plants we sell: those scientific botanical names seem so complicated to pronounce and remember! While



Wayne Mezitt

this approach may sound appealing, it tends to create confusion because many common names are ambiguous. For example, "ironwood" is a common name for a tree that could be *Carpinus caroliniana*, *Ostrya virginiana*, or *Parrotia persica*; "red maple" could be either *Acer rubrum* or a red-leaf form of *Acer palmatum*. And bamboo could be any of the dozens of species and cultivars on the market.

Also, some plants can have more than a single common name depending upon where you live. Our friends from other countries (or even from different regions in the USA) often call the same plant a different name. For example, we use beebalm or Oswego tea for *Monarda didyma*, but others can refer to it as bergamot, scarlet beebalm, crimson beebalm, and scarlet monarda. Some plants that are really closely related can have significantly different common names; blueberry, cranberry, bileberry, cowberry, huckleberry, and lingonberry are all *Vaccinium* species.

Scientific botanical names on the other hand, are specific and succinct, using an agreed-upon system to minimize confusion: the tree correctly identified as *Tilia cordata* is identical everywhere, whether you are in the USA, China, or South Africa, even though various people use the common name of linden, lime, or basswood. Many plants like *Forsythia*, *Magnolia*, *Rhododendron*, and *Viburnum* already share the same common and scientific genus name.

In the mid-1700s, Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (often called The Father of Taxonomy) created the system

that we now use to classify all plants. Linnaeus devised the system which was quickly adopted to become the worldwide standard for naming species, and it's still in use today. He did this by simplifying the previously cumbersome plant-naming practices using a binomial system (<https://fromfathertodaughterhorticulture.com/science-lessons/plant-taxonomy-how-plants-are-named/>) that designates one botanical name to indicate the genus and one for the species. The result is a simpler but exact designation for the name of every plant: swamp maple (also known as red maple) is *Acer* (its genus, always capitalized) *rubrum* (its species, always lowercase).

We sometimes refer to "the Latin name" for a plant, but some names were not originally in Latin. Many scientific names are actually "Latinized" forms of words from other languages that have been accepted by the main authority for naming plants, the International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants (<https://www.iaptglobal.org/icn>). This code applies the principle that the earliest recorded name for every plant takes precedence over any others.

Most plant species can be grown from seed; every seedling plant is similar to other plants of that species but is genetically an individual. You'll see that many plants on the market today are cultivars (meaning "cultivated varieties", often abbreviated as "cvs."). Cultivars are clones that are selected from the species or hybrids. Every true-to-name cultivar is genetically identical to its parent because cultivars can only be vegetatively propagated (i.e., from cuttings, grafts, or divisions). Cultivar names are always written in English, are capitalized, and should be enclosed with single quotes: *Clethra alnifolia* 'Ruby Spice' is a single clone of a native plant that is commonly called sweet pepperbush or summersweet.

So even though using scientific botanical names may appear as complicated to those unfamiliar with horticulture, it greatly simplifies communication; it also avoids potential confusion, ambiguity, and disappointment, and it ensures that the proper plant is being considered.

With the recent COVID restrictions, people are increasingly recognizing the gratification afforded by plants and gardens—so beneficial for both mental and physical rejuvenation in many regards. We're perceiving their increased willingness to gather information about plants

before they buy, and they are even becoming more confident using botanical names. This is satisfying, and it makes a lot of sense in assuring that we're all talking the same language when we're discussing plants.

R. Wayne Mezitt, O-952, is a third-generation nurseryman and a Massachusetts Certified Horticulturist (<https://www.mnla.com/page/mch>), and is now chairman of Weston Nurseries of Hopkinton, Chelmsford,

and Hingham, MA (<https://www.westonnurseries.com/>). He is also the owner of "Hort-Sense," a horticultural advisory business (<https://hort-sense.com/>). Wayne currently serves as a trustee for the Massachusetts Horticultural Society at The Gardens at Elm Bank in Wellesley, MA (<https://masshort.org/>) and is chairman for the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group (<https://www.massnrc.org/MIPAG/>). ♦

# TRAVEL NUGGETS: DODGING COVID OVERSEAS

By Alan Fridkin '65

E

ven the most experienced surfer knows that the powerful wave behind them could prove to be an exhilarating ride or a disastrous wipeout. We were in Italy from late January through March 8 of 2020. We were reluctant observers and, to some extent, participants in Italy's early and not entirely successful response to a new and fearsome disease.



Alan Fridkin '65

Governments and the medical community are committed to protecting their citizens and their foreign visitors. When the threat is so new and is not fully understood, the response can be uncertain, change frequently, and be difficult to assess, especially in a language other than one's own.

The first takeaway is that, like it or not, you will be following another country's rules and will pay their penalties if you do not. Actually, we were fairly comfortable with what we saw unfolding, and thankfully we were some distance from the "red zones."

The first major outbreaks and hotspots in Italy were on the outskirts of Milan and Turin, in the northwest sector of the country. Patient zero was purportedly an Italian businessman who had been in China and came home. He went jogging with a friend and then on to

his friend's family-owned bar for a night of socializing. Less reported is that there are a lot of Chinese who work in the clothing and other industries near these and several other cities. They travel back and forth.

Italy has some very fine hospitals and some that are not so fine. They also have a high population of the elderly, many of whom live in multigenerational homes. COVID spread quickly. Some hospitals were overwhelmed, forcing difficult triage decisions as to who would get access to an inadequate supply of ventilators. Treatment options were being developed on the fly.

Our little Italian Riviera town was a relatively quiet pandemic backwater, with very few cases. Most were attributed to elderly tourists from the "hotspot" towns 125–200 miles to the north. Two small adjacent hotels were quarantined when an elderly guest who had been rushed to a hospital was confirmed to have COVID. After about 2 weeks, the other guests and a few hotel workers were allowed to go home, the tourists by a bus chartered from their province. One gentleman was there to celebrate his 80th birthday with his wife. The town's mayor bought him a birthday cake at the most famous bakery in town. It was winched up to a second-floor balcony. The hotel association arranged for catering for the entire period.

We kept up with the news through Google Translate and discussions with our long-term Italian friends. Within 2 weeks, we saw many Italian customs abandoned. People stopped hugging and shaking hands. Restaurant tables had to be 2 m apart. You could no longer take coffee or beer at the bar. Limited supplies of hand sanitizer and cloth masks began to appear at the pharmacies. People were reluctant to take the bus



## TRAVEL NUGGETS: DODGING COVID OVERSEAS

and train except when absolutely necessary.

We were scheduled to head home via Nice, France, on March 8, first spending two days there and then flying to Kennedy Airport in New York City on the 10th. March 8th was a Sunday. On the night of the 7th, the Italian government decreed that all people in most of the northern part of the country were not allowed to travel, with a few limited exceptions. “Essential” supplies, the greatest amount traveling by truck, were permitted. We looked at the map. Our tiny province, Liguria, was just below that barrier line.

On Sunday morning, our taxi took us the 60 or so miles across the border into France. We were worried that France might not let us in, but the border was quiet and open. On the way, we saw only a handful of cars along with the usual steady truck traffic. Nice was very quiet. No one was wearing a mask, although people seemed to stay a little farther apart than we had observed over some 35–40 years visiting this city!

On Tuesday, we flew from Nice to Orly Airport (Paris) and then on to JFK. All three airports were very quiet. We didn’t know what to expect when entering the United States. There were no health checks. A few posters on the back walls in both France and New York advised frequent handwashing, keeping social distance, and so on. There were no formal requests but rather some vague directions to self-quarantine for 14

days when coming back from Italy.

A few days later, our President barred European travelers from entering the United States and indicated that Americans had better come home. That action generated a stampede that we missed by 4 or 5 days.

Shortly after we left Italy, things there got very stringent. People were only allowed to leave their homes to get groceries, go to the pharmacy, or go to a doctor’s office. You were not allowed to leave your town and had to carry a piece of paper saying exactly where you were going. There were significant fines for violations.

Traveling is one of our favorite pastimes. But when the world is unsure of how to combat a new and nasty disease, it is not the best time to be on foreign soil. Our embassies and consulates overseas have limited ability to help. Although tourism and tourists are crucial to every country’s economy, where a foreign traveler might fall in triage calculations is anyone’s guess. It is hoped that treatments, vaccines, and sound protocols will soon make foreign travel reasonably safe and attractive again. As we all know, we are not there yet. If you decide to travel internationally, now more than ever, sign on to the State Department’s “STEP” (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program). It will keep you posted on country-specific conditions. It will also inform the relevant embassy/consulate that you are there! ❖





# ALUMNI FEATURE: DON'T GET STUCK

By Jim Sollecito, '76

**We**

are at the conclusion of an unforgettable year and the conception of yet another unknowable one, with many of the same unanswerable questions. No need to become overwhelmed at what may or may not happen. As we look every day for something positive to build on, two things are apparent: 1) Nature always wins and 2) we don't get to make the rules.

Of course, change is difficult, but if you stop changing then you stop growing.

The ability to persevere and grow is like having an emotional muscle, and all muscles need exercise. Use it or lose it. We can accept the fact that much of what we commonly enjoy is on pause and likely will be for some time. We can deal with that. In the meantime, find out what's inside of you. Grow your soul. Do things this year because you enjoy them, not merely because you are good at them. If you do a



**Jim Sollecito**

variety of things that stretch and teach you, life will be more interesting.

It's not as much fun growing older as I had hoped. It's weird being the age that I used to consider old. One of the reasons I cherish my time fishing is that as an older person I choose to do it at a different pace. I take the time to make the next cast just a bit crisper than the previous one. I work on the process, instead of merely focusing on the results. Fly-fishing forces me to focus on the next few seconds and not on the future in general. I find it helps to cleanse my mind of some of the debris that clutters positivity and creativity. When I am not physically on the water, I am mentally rehearsing. You may not fish, but you probably have a goal in mind. Imagine the possibilities. What you lack in experience you can make up with passion!

As we hope that our new normal eventually reprises some of the old, here are two light posts that have helped guide



me for more decades that I can remember. 1) I'd rather look back on my life and say, "I can't believe I did that" than think to myself, "I wish I'd tried that." 2) One of the happiest moments ever is when I found the courage to let go of what I could not change. I still struggle with that one.

I consider myself very lucky in my nearly half-century career, and I anticipate that I will plant until I am planted. Plants always make people happy. Our team just keeps getting better. And I am so very excited about the new varieties we have planned for spring. Improved plant selections stay smaller and produce more flower color with less work. As together we meet and greet 2021, let's not get stuck. We'll keep gaining positive traction. Let's see where this journey takes us. And by the way, this old truck in the photo is not wearing its mask correctly. Look where it got him. Remember Walter Cronkite? He was "the most trusted man in America." Fellow Cornellian and scientist Dr. Anthony Fauci is my beacon now. ♦



# ALUMNI FEATURE: A CAREER IN CORPORATE FINANCE – HOW MY HISTORY DEGREE HELPED ME GET THERE

By Cliff Manko '80

*This article originally appeared on May 24, 2018 in the AHA Today section of Perspectives on History, published by the American Historical Association, and is used here with permission.*

**W**hen I interviewed for a job in corporate finance at Houghton Mifflin in 1992, the publishing firm's CEO was far more interested in my history degree than my CPA. He grilled me about what I'd studied and how the history courses



I'd taken had been taught. To this day, I believe that my passion for what I'd studied in college was the tipping point in getting what I consider to be the most important job in my life. I've remained in the publishing industry ever since. And my history degree helped me get there.

My history degree has inspired lifelong learning and influenced my 32-year career in corpo-

rate finance, much of which has been in the field of publishing. Learning about the past, reflecting how it influences the present and the future, and navigating through the challenges of using original source material has remained an intellectual passion of mine years after graduating. In my experience, much of what we do professionally on a day-to-day basis is learned not in college, but through work experience and enterprise. For instance, the personal computer, powerful desktop software, and the internet have radically changed my profession and the publishing industry. None of these technologies existed when I began my career. My history degree, however, imparted skills that made it

easier for me to tackle whatever challenges arose in the professional and technical world. The major's emphasis on documenting and vetting sources of data, organizing one's thoughts and ideas into coherent narratives backed by evidence, and communicating complex ideas in a clear, concise fashion, for example, are skills that I use to this day.

I graduated with a BA in history in 1980 from Cornell University and into a severe economic recession. I had considered an academic career during college, but by my senior year I was itching to try living in New York City (NYC) and to explore the business world. My first position—which I landed through a bit of networking—was in operations at a brokerage firm in NYC. This was before the internet, and I dealt with mainframe systems and lots of paper. After two years, I scaled up to working in the trust department of a small bank, also in an operational role, where over time I assumed some financial reporting tasks. I had not taken any business courses in college, but I had taken economics, calculus, and statistics, which helped me learn the data and accounting skills I needed to progress at work.

After four years of working, I settled on finance as my career. I obtained an MBA and then entered the public accounting profession as a CPA. Three years into my career at a large accounting firm, I transferred to Boston, lured by the city's rich history and culture. One of the firm's clients was Houghton Mifflin, the distinguished 150-year-old Boston publisher of educational materials and great literary works. When an opportunity in the corporate finance area of Houghton Mifflin opened up, I pursued it. I am now CFO of Beacon Press, a small and very prestigious 160-year-old publisher of adult nonfiction, with a deep list of historians and scholars as authors, including Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Marcus Rediker, Jeanne Theoharis, Howard Zinn, and Robin DG Kelley. [The accompanying photograph (taken by Christian Coleman) shows me holding a copy of *The Pentagon Papers*, published by Beacon Press in 1971. The press was the first to publish the papers after three

## ALUMNI FEATURE

dozen publishers declined to do so.] My publishing background at Houghton Mifflin, as well as my familiarity and deep respect for the firm's history and great authors, helped me secure my current position at Beacon Press.

The publishing industry and the content industry in general are a great place for history majors to pursue careers. Both at Houghton Mifflin and Beacon Press, the editorial, production, sales, and marketing departments are full of liberal arts majors. In recent years, there has been an explosion of data and content, mainly packaged for online use, although print still has a life. A history degree provides a great background for anyone interested in the content industry, including at firms that create reference databases for professionals in business, science, and the government. (These firms have armies of people analyzing and organizing vast quantities of data, essentially using the same skills as historians.) If you haven't already, consider content in-

dustries in your career planning. Also, positions that involve writing and dealing with scholars are another natural segue for history majors. At Beacon Press, our editors and production team work closely with scholars and authors. The passion our team has for the topics our authors write about is a key reason authors sign on with a small publisher like Beacon Press.

I truly believe the study of history provides great preparation for life, both intellectual and professional. Much of what one will learn professionally in life comes from actual work experience, but a history degree bestows skills that have a much longer shelf life. Organizing and analyzing data and writing are more important than ever in the digital era. As I've learned, following one's passion usually leads to the right outcomes in life.

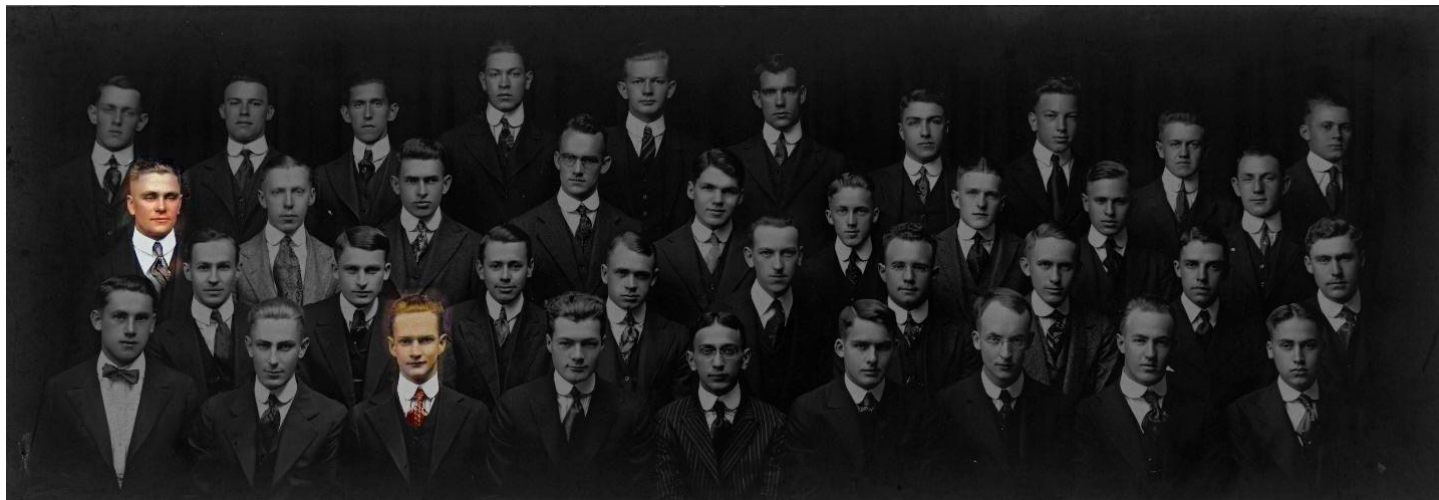
*Clifford Manko joined Beacon Press in 2016 as CFO. Prior to Beacon, Cliff was senior vice president of finance at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and vice president of finance at Cengage Learning. He began his finance career at Ernst & Young, where he was a CPA and audit manager. Cliff is a graduate of Cornell University and NYU Business School. ♦*





# HISTORIAN'S CORNER: BETWEEN THE WAR AND THE WOOFEN-POOF

## A Scotsman, a pilot, the Gobi Desert, and the founding of the Omicron Alumni Association



By Jason Cho '98

**It** is an era of racial and labor unrest. A new and terrible plague has wrong-footed established medical science, the recent president seems peculiarly insensitive to the times, and even baseball has been tainted with corruption and scandal. As for our humorless universities, students and professoriate are equally disconsolate. What seemed indispensable aspects of college life just a few years ago—college bars, college sports, college fraternities—are scorned now, frivolous and obsolete in this era of social progress and advancing technology and ongoing horrors. Our own fraternity house is closed, and our members scattered to the corners of the earth.

It is the year 1919, and the poet writes: *The ceremony of innocence is drowned/ The best lose all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity.*

Two years earlier, Omicron Zeta had been in the rudest imaginable health. There were 68 fraternities on the Hill, with an average membership of 34. Lambda Chi Alpha, one of the youngest, had 35, with 11 pledges being trained up. There were varsity footballers and baseballers, editorial board members, and performers in the “Charity Vaudeville a la mode,” plus **Gene Allen '20** (O-91), admired as a piano virtuoso but even more for “having winning ways with the ladies.” Not a single one had “busted out,” whereas other houses had lost up to a dozen the previous term. “We have— not been very active socially the past term,” **Don Maclay '17** (O-43) admitted, but in penance

for this outbreak of scholastic excellence, “we will have a very good house party Senior Week, which we expect will surpass anything of its kind ever held.”

The alumni were keen on the house as well. **Rod Rodriguez '15** (O-19) and **Denny Dennison '15** (O-27) had made trips to Ithaca “for which there was a reason.” **CT Keet '15** (O-12) hoped to see them up at Spring Day (aka Slope Day). Sure, there was a war about, somewhere. All male students drilled with the R.O.T.C., and **Sidney Cook '18** (O-85) had left school to volunteer with the American Field Service in France, the renowned Ambulance Corps. But for a while, life in Ithaca had continued mostly as it had in the Edwardian idyll of Mug and Jug days. Morris Bishop writes

“*The Sun* mentioned the *Lusitania* editorially merely to reprove a student who was circulating a petition against warmongers, chauvinists, and jingoes. The editors and letter writers were chiefly exercised about senior blazers, the convocation hour, the holding of the Arts Association in dry Prudence Risley, and student apathy with regard to the crew.”

But when the war came for real, there was a “grand stampede” to the service. Cornellians arrived on the Aisne front as early as May 1917, only a month after war was declared, among the first group of combatants to carry the American flag in action. By the end of 1917, there were only 13 undergraduates left at Lambda Chi Alpha, and only 8 live-ins. Offices were reshuffled weekly. The Inter-Fraternity Rush-

ing Association (IFC) abolished rush restrictions, but there were none to fill the ranks. Finally, on December 13, these minutes:

“Special meeting called to order by High Alpha in Chapter Room at 7:00 p.m. Purpose of meeting to reorganize house affairs due to High Alpha and High Tau’s leaving for war service Sat Dec 15.”

The new Selective Service Law and the creation of the Students’ Army Training Corps finished the job. And with that, the chapter was no more. Omicron Zeta had barely survived four years: a single generation.

There was only one brother left in Ithaca, C.B. “Soc” Fraser, and he was not pleased with this situation. Not one bit.

To this day, there is no name on the chapter roll more grandiloquent than **Cuthbert Bancroft Fraser ’19** (O-81). The Fraser part alone carried weight in his hometown of Inverness, where the Frasers of Lovat had featured in every Scottish war going back to William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. His father had himself enjoyed a successful career in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, attaining the rank of colonel.

When Cuthbert was only 13, however, the elder Fraser went to rest in Tomnahurich Cemetery, and not long thereafter, the younger was uprooted from home and country. His mother remarried into a prominent Western New York family, and transplanted to his stepfather’s house on a leafy stretch of Linwood Street in Buffalo, they were fixtures of the Social Register.



In the old country, as Cuthbert, he would have marched off with his older brother Eldred to one of the Old World’s state-of-the-art corpse factories. Gallipoli and the Marne

were already churning away; Verdun was soon to come online. A million boys had died in the first five months of conflict, more than had died for Napoleon across decades. In hindsight this was to be expected; tactics and philosophy and even uniforms had scarcely changed since Bonaparte, despite the development of phosgene gas and the machine gun. Not that the foot soldier was to be denied his traditional companions just yet; trench foot and gas gangrene could never displace such classics as dysentery and the corpsefly. But the catastrophic admixture of incompetent generals and overly competent industrial engineers had produced a scale of violence hitherto unknown in the entirety of human experience since the dawn of the species.

Thankfully, he was not in the old country. While Europe immolated herself, America was investing in education; in the decade to 1915, college enrollment had increased 70 percent. Cuthbert—now “C.B.”—excelled at the elite Technical High School (now Hutch-Tech), and won a state scholarship to Cornell’s Ag school with the thirteenth highest score in all of New York state. Fall found him on the Lehigh Valley train to Ithaca, cars trimmed brightly in “Cornell Red,” no doubt debating with his seatmate which team’s imperialist depredations were to be condemned and which to be overlooked as they rambled toward the yellow brick Ithaca station.

Then as now you could sight the clock tower atop the hill. A brand-new stadium, the Crescent, welcomed a black bear cub named “Touchdown,” its first mascot. The Big Red Machine would go on to trounce Michigan 34-7 on the way to its first undefeated record. Elsewhere, one of Cornell’s youngest fraternities voted to take a spring rush class. Lambda Chi Alpha, barely two years old, initiated C.B. Fraser— “Soc,” we called him—as Omicron-81. If Eldred could only see his reedy little brother now, a full-fledged Cornell fraternity man.

The house appreciated his keen mind and scholarly disposition and elected him High Gamma. His careful handwriting records the deep discussions of the era: should the High Beta remain in charge of seating arrangements at dinner? Motion not carried. Moved that a Lambda Chi Alpha spoon shall be presented to the first child born to a member of Omicron Zeta. Motion carried. Moved that the chapter contribute to the Belgian War Relief Fund Committee. Motion tabled.

But this would not prevail; conflict was leaking out beyond Europe; some were calling it the “World War.” The United States declared war on the German Empire in April of Soc’s sophomore year, and he burned to join



up, but the Army would not have him. His enlistment physical had turned up a back defect, which he strongly denied. His careful handwriting could not conceal the rage penned into his war record form: "NO HISTORY OF ANY SUCH CONDITION!" His brother Eldred lay dead on the fields of Cambrai, and he would remain a civilian and return to school. But not to the house—there was no house to return to.

In September 1916, Cornell had 1,743 students in fraternities. By the end of the school year, 878 had entered military service, and the situation was untenable. Some chapters survived on gifts from wealthy alumni, but Lambda Chi Alpha had no millionaires, or anything close to it. We had been chartered for only three and a half years when war broke out, and there were fewer than 100 total initiates. Those alumni, being young, were likely as not in the service themselves. The war was the end of Nayati, which **Ernst Fischer '10** (O-34) had almost joined. And it was almost the end of Lambda Chi Alpha, which he did.

But being the only brother left in Ithaca, Soc had a view of how dismal student life would be without the fraternity, particularly the literal view from his room at the bottom of Catherine Street. And so he wrote letter after letter to creditors, families, but especially the scattered alumni, his careful handwriting warning that the brothers would need to save the house ourselves.

It would not be easy to get their attention. **Charlie Ennis '19** (O-73) was already a captain and combat veteran of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood, a recipient of the French Croix de Guerre. **Frank German '18** (O-62) had been awarded a Croix de Guerre with palm for exceptional bravery in action near Rheims during the Champagne Offensive; the second lieutenant had taken command of a battalion after the commanding officer had been killed. And as for Gerry Brower, who even knew how to find him?

**Gerald Brower '16** (O-29) was the son of a Brooklyn coal tar industrialist, whose success gave him a comfortable childhood a couple blocks from Prospect Park and an elite education at Boys' High School. He might have followed. But Gerry found the lifestyle about as appealing as the Gowanus Canal which his father's factories and others' had already made noxious.

The more appealing role model was his adventuresome grandfather, an expert military diver and deep water surveyor. Grandpa Brower had been credited with mapping

out all the places to plant mines around Sandy Hook during the Spanish-American War. Instead of the depths of the sea, Gerry looked upward to the limitless skies. He had been ten years old when the Wright Brothers had achieved their famous flight, becoming part of the first generation of ten-year-olds ever to be transfixed by powered flight. When he arrived at Cornell to study engineering, he quickly got a side job with the Thomas Bros. Aeroplane Company, run by family friends who had recently relocated to Ithaca.

Dark-haired, square-jawed Gerry was a senior when Soc was a freshman, a brother with an idea of who he was and exactly where in the world he needed to be, only working out how he was going to get there. He was president of the Cornell Aeronautics Club, a colonel in the Corps of Cadets, and an inductee of the Scabbard and Blade military honor society. Within a few months of graduation he had passed the Army's second lieutenant exam near the top of his class, married a local Ithaca girl, and transferred to a unit he knew was heading for Europe.

It was not easy to track down a brother driven overseas with this kind of passion—Gerry was listed as a "lost" brother in the very first issue of the *Omicron Alumni News*. Soc got a hold of him through Gerry's sister, who had conveniently married Chuck Ennis. She wrote that he had made it safely across, with only one U-Boat scare, then traversed across France in cattle cars. He jockeyed his way into the First Division, seeing action at St. Mihiel and the Argonne, and finally achieved his dream of flying when a call went out for volunteer aerial observers. But now in his mailbox was a letter from Soc, back at Cornell, and a letter from Ithaca was worth a pause.

Soc's careful handwriting reported dire conditions in Ithaca. Spanish flu afflicted the residents. The city council had voted to go dry. But above all, the brothers had scattered, the house was nearing foreclosure, and the fraternity was all but disbanded. Just the bookworm from Buffalo was left to hold it all together.

Gerry had other concerns. He was supporting a family on a meager military salary. He had, too, a bright career ahead of him, as one of the first members of the newly formed Army Air Corps. In the coming years he would become chief of staff at Mitchell Field, earn a master's degree from MIT in the new field of aeronautical engineering, and be appointed commander of America's first military aviation unit, the First Pursuit Group. He could have put the letter

February 5, 1919.  
Acknowledged Mar 2 1919

Dear Brother,

Your letter of December 16<sup>th</sup> has just reached me. I am certainly very sorry to learn of the rather sad state of affairs (particularly as regards AXA) at the "U" these days. However, I was very glad to hear from you. News of any kind is welcome these lonely times over here.

I am sending you enclosed a P.O. money order for \$10.00 as my "drop in the bucket". If I ever get back to the U.S., after due consultation with my wife and

aside. He did not.

Gerry immediately replied with a money order for \$10.00 as his self-described "drop in the bucket" for the tens of thousands of dollars owed on the mortgage, contacts for other brothers he had kept in touch with, and some encouragement:

"I have gotten nearly enough air work in piloting so that I expect soon to be able to start making landings. I don't expect to get back home for many months yet, because they are keeping all Regular Army officers here at present. When I do get back, though, I'm going to make a big effort to visit old Ithaca and renew the old ties with the 'U' and AXA."

Others wrote in as well, offering \$10 here and \$15 there. **John Van Kleek '13** (O-2), the future famed golf course architect, promised \$100 to buy a bond, and **Otto "Toot" Brandt '08** (O-38), one of the original members of Mug and Jug, wrote to say the alumni in New York were prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with the undergraduates. They would not suffer to ask the national for help—nor let them take over the house, as had been threatened to shore up national's finances. The alumni would soon gather in New York for postwar planning, and he was "extremely optimistic."

And slowly, the house came back to life. The Omicron Alumni Association was officially founded March 29, 1919 at the Hotel Bristol in New York City, a permanent organization to foster a lifelong brotherhood. The undergraduate chapter re-opened in October 1919 with 12 returning veterans, paying \$20 a month for rent and \$8 per week for board. New brothers were initiated: **C.S. Robinson '21** (O-99), future founder of Mohawk Airlines; **Charlie Stotz '21** (O-105), future historical preservation pioneer and figure in the famous Herman Vosberg hoax; **Bob Burt '20** (O-103), who'd answer whether 614 Stewart Avenue was really the best Lambda Chi Alpha could do for a home.



Brower in 1941

There was a place for the fraternity in the postwar world after all (if not, in the opinion of some, a place for beer). The devastation of war and plague showed not that carefree youth and college life were wasted, but that they were rather to be cherished. The vets had an experience of camaraderie and mutual support that they aimed to preserve, and to which their younger brothers aspired. **Gene Allen '20** (O-91) and **Joe Carr '13** (O-3) had died for the American way of life, and it was left to the house to find

a way of living it.

Gerry Brower's trajectory continued to soar. He became commander at Clark Field, in the Philippines, and then became a Royal Air Force observer with the U.S. diplomatic legation in Egypt. He died in an expected way in an unexpected place, when the Curtis 81 Tomahawk he was flying stalled on a mission in Sudan. Col. Brower is recorded as one of the first U.S. casualties of World War II, eight months before the U.S. entered the war, and is interred at the American cemetery in Tunis.

After the war, in contrast, Soc faded in health and faded from view, and the memory of his efforts to keep the fraternity alive faded with him. He returned to Buffalo to marry a Logue and work as office man-



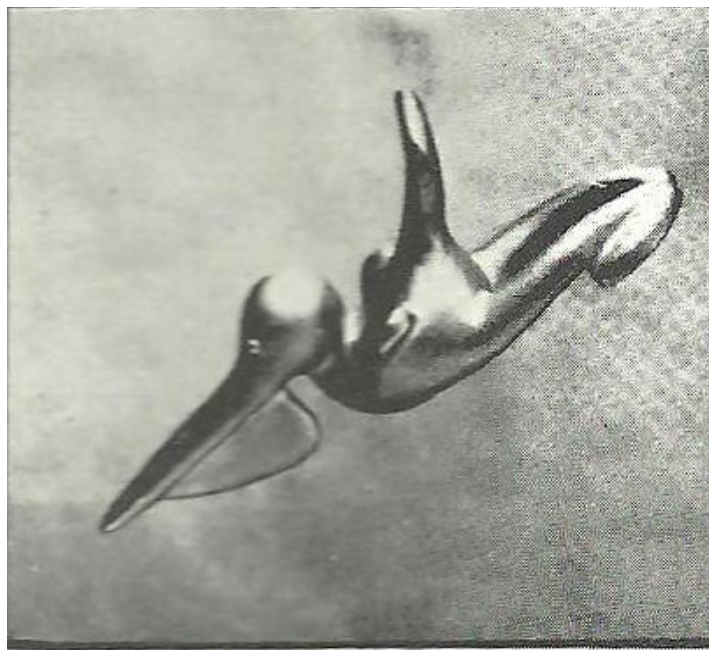
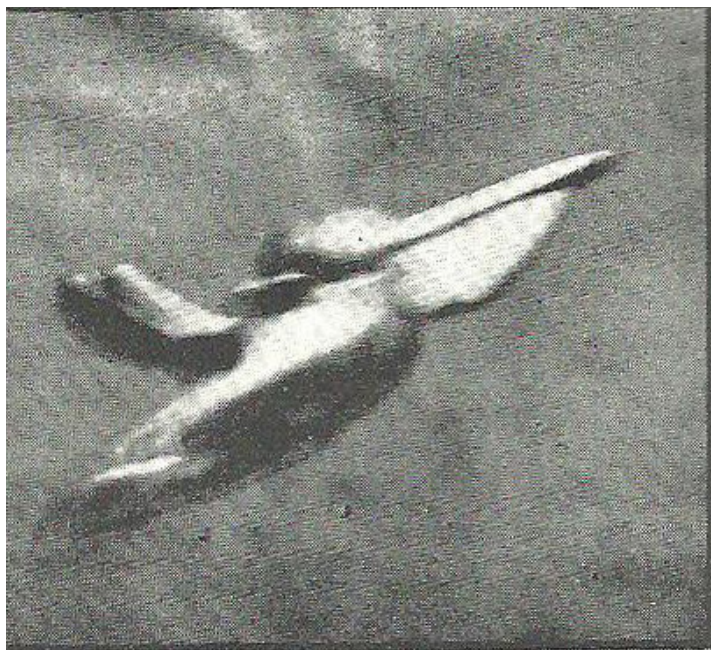


FIG. 23. The woofen-poof in flight. This exposure was made with a shutter working at 1/1000 second.

FIG. 24. The woofen-poof in flight. This photograph was made with the Wemyss-Cholmondeley seleniometric shutter; exposure approximately 1/8900 second. Emulsion used, Mrsicski ultra-green AAA.

ager for the King Manufacturing Company—not yet specialized in sewing machines, and also known for their cream separators and radios. He fell seriously ill in 1928 of an unidentified ailment, was confined to bed, and was gone within a year.

But Soc found a couple of ways to live on. The first was assisting a botany professor. Lester W. Sharp had given a presentation regarding an extraordinary bird which had been discovered in the Gobi Desert, known to locals as the “woofen-poof.” It had been clocked flying 414 km/h, the rapid beat of its wings producing a musical note three octaves above middle C. Sharp’s colleagues were skeptical.

But in 1928, a monograph was published by Augustus C. Fotheringham, scientific director of an expedition led by Brigadier-General Sir Cecil Wemyss-Cholmondeley, which documented the creature in greater detail. They captured a photo of woofen-poofs flying in their distinctive Sumerian arrow formations, and Fotheringham found references to the bird in cave paintings and Egyptian tombs and asserted that its monogamy had inspired the same practice in human beings. It was, of course, a hoax by the well-known Dr. Sharp—and a little-known fellow named Cuthbert Bancroft Fraser, transcribed from the latter’s careful handwriting. It would receive a number of citations in other scientific papers

over the next few years, and it remains a familiar burlesque in the ornithological world.

And of course, Soc lives on in Omicron Zeta, now one hundred and two years and more than two thousand initiates since his one-man campaign to save it. We know very little of what transpired in his life between the war and the woofen-poof, but we know a great deal about what happened back at school. The 1920s would be one of our most successful decades, coming into our own as a chapter to be taken seriously, not to mention acquiring a grand house on the most prime property to be found on the hill.

More than a century later, the Omicron Zeta re-enters operations after different crises, facing a society no less skeptical of its value, yet feeling more strongly than ever that our fraternity is the best place for a young man to spend his Cornell days. And if one pale Scot with a pen can convince the Gerrys and the Toots and all the others to pay heed to the house, after a single generation, our brotherhood today can surely secure its own future for another century to come.

*The Omicron Alumni Association needs a few good brothers to carry the torch to the next generation. Email [lxacornell@gmail.com](mailto:lxacornell@gmail.com) or visit [www.iswza.org/contact](http://www.iswza.org/contact) to learn about volunteer opportunities.* ♦

# NEWS FEATURE: "STRENGTH THROUGH SERVICE" – ONE OF THE FIVE PILLARS OF AXA

*The Oracle* has learned of several alumni and undergraduate brothers who, through their personal example over the last year during the time of COVID, have embodied the pillars and values of Lambda Chi, demonstrating duty, service and stewardship, and, in at least one case, personal courage. Here are their stories.

## Chris Braden '83



One brother the *Oracle* has not been able to reach for an interview has a reasonable excuse: he is Dr. **Christopher Braden** (O-1279), Deputy Director of the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) since 2016, when he retired from the Commissioned Corps

after rising to the rank of captain in the U.S. Public Health Service while also serving at CDC. Back in January 2020 at the very start of the outbreak, you may have heard him in the news, helping to screen U.S. diplomats and others evacuated from Wuhan, or a few years back, addressing public concern about nurses who had contracted Ebola from the outbreak in Liberia.

A veteran medical epidemiologist, Brother Braden has almost three decades of experience at the CDC, previously serving as director of the Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases, among other roles, and working to detect and stop outbreaks of illness all around the world. He led the cholera prevention and treatment program after the 2010 Haitian earthquake, and he has helped to head off the spread of everything from antibiotic-resistant Salmonella to new strains of fungal meningitis to spinach-borne *E. coli*.

## Joey Ibáñez '23



Like most other undergraduates, **Joey Ibáñez** (O-1982) (pictured wearing the Barcelona jersey and unloading milk with his cousin), a sophomore in Arts and Sciences, returned home a year ago after Cornell shut down the campus in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. Home—Mayagüez, Puerto Rico—had endured significant earthquakes just a few months earlier and was still recovering from the effects of Hurricane Maria, in the aftermath of which his house had no electricity for 106 days. Now, it was struck hard by the effects of the pandemic, with the elderly in isolation and some people subsisting on crackers and rice.

He and his brother Héctor (Cornell '20), became involved with the group A Comer Puerto Rico, which delivers food to at-risk communities. In addition to the basic labor of collecting and distributing supplies—bread, milk, drinking water, medical supplies—they threw their energies into fundraising. Joey secured a Serve in Place grant from Cornell's Office of Engagement Initiatives, and Héctor established a GoFundMe, and in July, they received a boost from television host Mike Rowe, who devoted an episode of *Returning the Favor* to the group.



## NEWS FEATURE

By the end of summer, they had helped to feed more than 13,000 people in both urban and rural communities. Visit [AComerPR.org](http://AComerPR.org) to support their ongoing efforts.

**Joaquin Jerez '19 (O-1899), Leo Andriuk '19 (O-1894), and Max Kester '20 (O-1920)**



Who wouldn't want to play with drones for your master's? But the Hoplite project came together to serve a real need, for fast delivery of medical assistance, especially in rural areas. **Joaquin Jerez (O-1899), Leo Andriuk (O-1894), and Max Kester (O-1920)** had a design goal: to enable a 911 dispatcher to send an automated external defibrillator (AED), which could be employed by a bystander while the ambulance was still en route.

With the house mostly emptied after the pandemic hit, the M.Eng guys were able to set up a makeshift lab there with everything from soldering irons to 3D printers. Their prototype, a cross between an RC plane and quadcopter drone, includes a monitor which a remote doctor can use to assess the situation and provide instructions to bystanders. Such technology has the potential to save many of the over 325,000 Americans who die of sudden cardiac arrest each year.

### Felipe Santamaria '23



Spring Break was canceled again, to discourage travel amidst the pandemic, and in its place, the university scattered a few "wellness days" across the semester. On the March 10 wellness day, newly initiated brother **Felipe Santamaria (O-2000)** went with a group of friends to picnic at Taughannock Falls State Park, where he learned

that a 62-year-old man had fallen into the icy waters while fishing with his grandsons. Felipe rushed over to the dock and, with two other Cornellians (Alexander Chung '21 and Anjan Mani '23), entered the freezing water and helped in the successful effort to pull the man to safety on the shore, where he was taken by ambulance to Cayuga Medical Center and later released. In recognition for their heroism, Ryan Lombardi, Cornell's Vice President of Student Campus Life, presented them with certificates from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary on April 19, as seen in the photo (Felipe is on the reader's right). They were also honored by the Finger Lakes chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America. ♦



# NEWS FROM ALUMNI

## ► 1962



From **Sandy Gilbert** (O-933) "Despite limited social contact because of COVID, Emmy Lou and I have managed to continue our respective main activities with her real estate business and my work fighting red tide (see the photo) with the Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START) organization. After years of merely studying the problem in the scientific community, local Florida governments are now applying major resources to address the problem. In Sarasota County, where we live, the county government has set in motion a \$150 million plan to expand and upgrade the Bee Ridge wastewater plant to Advanced Wastewater Treatment standards. This will reduce nitrogen, the main food source for red tide, in processed reclaimed water down from over 10 to less than 3 milligrams per liter. This will make reclaimed water which is a principal source for irrigation and any spills from the wastewater plant much less harmful to the environment. There is more work to do on the problem, but after 20 years of working to promote more meaningful steps to control red tide, this is a very encouraging turn of events.

"When not doing Zoom meetings with government officials and environmental groups, I manage to sneak in a round of golf at least once a week at The Meadows where we live. Playing from the senior or far forward tees has definitely helped my scoring average and made the game more fun. I also enjoy cooking things like gumbo and vegetarian chili, and gardening. We have Nora Grant ixoras here that produce large red blooms all year long. Just a little fertilizer and a light trimming keep them healthy and productive. Being inside a lot, I have continued my painting with acrylics. I have always



wanted to do a Jamaican-style painting, and Jammin' (see photo) is the result. I was also taken with the stylized picture of Beethoven that was on the cover of the 2020 program for the Sarasota Orchestra and decided to paint a version of it for myself (see photo). I hope that all of our Omicron brothers and their families stay

well through the pandemic and would welcome hearing from anyone at sandem133@aol.com or (941) 217-5151."

## ► 1963

**Bob Elliott** (O-935) writes to say that he and Connie have done what most of us have done during the pandemic: shelter in place at home and wear masks whenever they venture out. They have used their time at home to shop on the Internet and pack up and ship some stuff to their friends at The Vineyards, their new condo down in Naples, Florida. Bob especially misses the exercise workouts at the Y and the fun of being in the crowd at Seton Hall home basketball games. Now that they are on schedule with their COVID-19 vaccinations, they hope to get out more when they go to Florida in early March. Once they land in Florida, they plan to set up a lunch or dinner with Warren Lem '69 (O-1041) and his wife, Lee, and Sandy '62 and Emmy Lou Gilbert. You'll find Bob at bobell89@aol.com.

## ► 1965

**Tom Shineman** (O-979) says, "Last May Jan and I purchased a second home in a gated Scottsdale (AZ) golf community where we had been renting for several years. We already had a number of friends in Scottsdale including my two business partners, a former client, the pastor who married us in Massachusetts, a high school classmate of Jan's who leads the Phoenix opera chorus, our daughter's best high school friend, etc., etc. We have been very busy remodeling and refurnishing our new place. I have been active in our new community's garage rock band, although we are far from ready for prime time. Another advantage



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of our Arizona home is more opportunity to visit our son, daughter-in law, and new grandson in Los Angeles. Our other five grandchildren are all back East. I am still active in my sales talent assessment business. One of my business partners just started up a sales training business and invited me to run their marketing function. So I've gone from about 40% employed to about 70% employed. Jan is still 100% employed with IBM and is fortunate to be able to work remotely wherever we are living. We've been playing golf about 2 times a week—which is about the only activity allowed in Massachusetts or Arizona these days. Wayne and Beth Mezitt live about 15 miles from us in Massachusetts, so we're fortunate to periodically join them for golf and supper."

### ► 1966

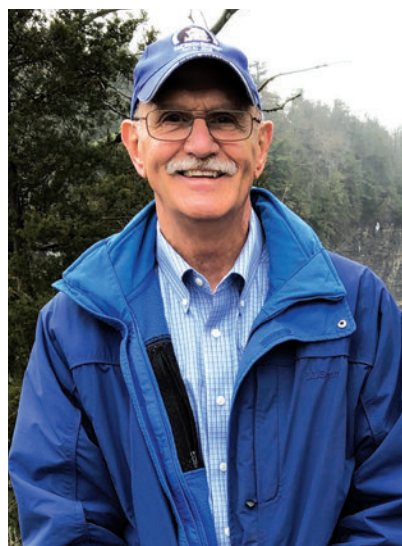
Ex-pat **Edward Lortz** (O-970) checks in from the other side of the International Date Line: In February 2021, as we approach five years in our adopted retirement home in the provinces of the Philippines, we still are happy to have made the move. After 40 years in San Francisco, we decided in 2015 to get out of the big city. We researched 50 states and some foreign countries, and even visited the Philippines for a month. Dumaguete in Negros Oriental, 500 miles from Manila's 20 million people, has about 200,000 in the greater area, at this end of the island. People are very friendly, 90% speak English, and we've made a lot of friends, both local and ex-pat, with about 5000 "foreigners" living here. It is a very relaxed, inexpensive lifestyle, the weather is great with typical tropical rain, and most of the time it's between 75° and 95°F. The hot months (over 90°F) are pretty much April and May.

That's the good side, as every place has some problems. One is traffic; it's pretty heavy, but, since downtown is only 6 blocks by 6 blocks, not unbearable. Real estate is getting expensive, lots of apartments are being built, even getting to the point of "tear-downs," but since my partner and I bought a nice lot with a view of the ocean several years ago about 9 miles from town up the mountain near Valencia at a good price, we are well situated, and we are building a small house (at \$35 per square foot, as compared with SF's \$400 per).

Being that this is a medium-sized town, restaurants are good but not great, some very good, none as good as Alan and Gayle Fridkin's Italian adventures, but the biggest problem, especially during COVID, is some shortages, "out of stock." Inter-island travel and international travel

have been virtually shut down since March 2020, but that, combined with 95% mask compliance and pretty rigorous quarantine for the first month and for exposed people, has allowed shopping and restaurant take-out to start in April 2020 and dine-in since May 2020. Cases are almost never over a couple hundred in our 1 million population province. With costs low, one of our favorite pastimes is helping schools and charities and hiring as many people as possible for our projects, along with double tipping at restaurants. I manage to keep up with a bunch of classmates from LXA and have an email group of 2/3 of my high school class with occasional Zoomies.

### ► 1967



**Gary Gould** (O-1016) (713gag@gmail.com; Instagram @713gag) gets us up to date: "So what have I been doing since I left Ithaca back in 1969? Really exciting stuff like 43 years in the insurance business. I started out as a property inspector and ended as manager of a small insurance company in central Pennsylvania when I

retired in 2012. Oh yes, 23 years in the Army Reserve, private to major. Trained in Georgia; Watertown, NY; and California. No Nobel Peace Prize and not a multimillionaire but it has been a good ride. Now that I'm closer to the exit in life rather than the onramp (birth) into the world, I can reflect on where I've been and all the knowledge and encounters through the years.

"My Mom and sister still live in Lansing, NY, outside Ithaca and not far from where I grew up, so I get back to 125 Edgemoor infrequently. Yep the "townie" still knows the hot spots in Ithaca. I talk every May 1st with Henry McNulty '69 (O-1043) and he is in touch with Dave Shannon '69 (O-1049) in New Zealand. I heard from (Cola) Dick Nelson '69 (O-1063) up in Bernardston, MA, chatted with brothers at Homecoming, and have been in contact with Ed Lortz '66. He's in the Philippines now. All are good.

"As far as what's up? I live in Locust Grove, VA, a small community between Fredericksburg and Culpeper. I'm right in the middle of the National Parks that are preserving Civil War battlefields—Chancellorsville Battlefield,

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Spotsylvania Battlefield, and I live 2 miles from the Wilderness Battlefield. *But*, in the middle of March we'll be moving to North Chesterfield, a suburb of Richmond VA, where three of my daughters, their husbands, and our grandkids live. Eight of my grandchildren live in and around Richmond; my other daughter is in Falls Church, VA, with 2 grandchildren and then my wayward son is in Boston and they have two children. My life is keeping up with the kids, grandkids, and not becoming a grouchy old man. When the weather is better, I get out on the local lake, kayak, shell, or biking the 6.6 miles around the lake. Prior to COVID I was doing some substitute teaching, which has been most rewarding.

My move to Richmond means a new chapter in my life and a new start. I'll be out on the James River and off to the beach, and I hope to travel cross country a couple more times. Oh yes, and get back to the House more often. All the best!"

### ► 1976



From Jim: "The Moderna Man: **Jim Sollecito** gets his reward for making it this far in life. Please stay safe."

### ► 1980



**Brian Rooney** has had an "interesting" year, with COVID turning his business inside out just as he and

his partners at their East Memphis Athletic Club gym (<https://eastmemphisathletic.com/>) were gearing up for great things, followed by some significant (non-COVID) health challenges of his own over the last few months. The dedicated managers persevered through the crisis, and now it looks like things at the gym are starting to resemble normal with the wave of vaccinations and a loosening of restrictions. "Rod" himself is feeling well enough again to put in an appearance on the gym mat and even share a cocktail or two with his wife Natalie at a local eatery. We are sure that he would love to hear from people at [brooney80@gmail.com](mailto:brooney80@gmail.com). Brian and Natalie, we hope that the summer brings a return to green grass, sunshine, and picnics for us all!



In 2009, **Dave Dupont** founded his company TeamSnap to provide mobile and web service application for managing ongoing activities including recreational and competitive sports teams, social groups, and other organizations through an easy-to-use online interface

that allows users to easily track participants, schedules, attendance and availability, payments, statistics, etc. TeamSnap has become one of the fastest-growing team and group management solutions available, being used in 195 countries and more than 100 different sports and other types of groups. Now TeamSnap has entered into a growth capital partnership with Waud Capital Partners that gives Waud a majority stake, with Dave retaining a financial stake in the company and transitioning from CEO to playing a critical role on the new executive team, working directly with key customers and partners. Says Dave, "We are very excited for our team and our customers. As we now look to take the next step as the premier provider of sports management software, we see a unique opportunity with a well-capitalized partner to accelerate our growth and further distinguish ourselves as the leader in the exciting and passionate amateur sports market." Hard work pays off, Rex—congratulations!



# NEWS FROM ALUMNI

## ► 1982



**Mark Portera** of Alpharetta, GA, recently went to the Atlanta Braves home opener in a start to some form of normalcy as we move on from COVID, which prompted him to post a picture from his High School baseball days on Long Island—gotta love those double knits! Mark also played on the varsity squad at Cornell. He recently helped his son Andrew celebrate his

28th birthday; Andrew followed in his dad's footsteps as a four-year pitcher on the Worcester Polytechnic Institute varsity.

## ► 1986

The sharp eye of Asa Davis '87 (O-1361) caught a quote by **Jonathan Naughton** (O-1339) in *USA Today* regarding the new administration's climate plan. Jon is frequently cited in the media, as director of the Wind Energy Research Center at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, where he has been a professor since 1997. In 2017 Jon was one of a select group of international experts convened by the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory, which identified key challenges in wind energy research and issued a call to action published in *Science* in 2019. As wind projects expand in the West, he has been increasingly visible in countering the myths advanced by wind power enthusiasts and detractors alike.

## ► 1991

**Steve DelRosso** (O-1436; sdelrosso@gmail.com) reluctantly moved back to the United States in July 2019 after a long stint in Germany, "wanting to stay another year sans kids to do more travel, but in hindsight we are so thankful!" From their "new-to-us" house in Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, Steve reports he is still working for W.L. Gore in the GORE-TEX Fabrics division. He says, "My oldest son has 2 more years to go on his West Point after-grad commitment and is stationed at Fort Drum. My second son wrapped up his second year of teaching middle school math in Columbus, OH. Oldest daughter will graduate from Bowling Green State in May in public relations and is pounding the pavement for a job, and my youngest daughter is wrap-

ping up her sophomore year in systems engineering at Ohio State. Missy and I are surviving my year of working from home with a lot of home improvement, golf, and travel to see all the kids."

## ► 1994



Since the pandemic began, **Sandy Gordon** (O-1466; sanford.gordon@gmail.com) has been splitting his time between New York City and Stockbridge, MA, where he relocated with his family to improve the odds that his daughter Julia (12) could attend school in person. Fortunately, the gamble paid off, although it has meant frequent trips back to NYC for work. Sandy became Chair of the Politics Department at New York University in the fall of 2019 and confidently reports that the charms of academic administration are significantly enhanced during a global health crisis. He wishes all of you the very best.

## ► 1995

After almost 15 years at Merck, **Mike Filiatrault** (O-1480; trault@gmail.com) joined Pfizer in September as Director of Vaccines Pricing and Contracting. He is careful to note, however, that all aspects of the COVID-19 vaccine are firmly in the hands of more senior management. He remains in the Philadelphia area, and his eldest is a freshman at Drexel.

## ► 1996



**Bing Chen** (O-1510; bingch@gmail.com; Instagram @binichen1) has resurfaced in early retirement in Hamburg, Germany, where he is raising his daughter, now almost 2. The coronavirus lockdowns there have been fairly draconian—masks required at outdoor children's playgrounds, only one guest allowed at an outdoor barbecue, non-grocery retail completely shut down. At least he has been able to stay relatively active playing one-on-one volleyball—

# NEWS FROM ALUMNI

two-on-two is not allowed. A photo of him playing was recently featured in the local paper; he is on the left.

## ► 2000



After almost two decades hopping the globe, **Rafael Nam** (O-1555; rafaelnam@gmail.com) has returned to the United States. He served as 2020 campaign editor for *The Hill* in Washington, DC, and in August joined National Public Radio as a senior business editor. Raf's career in business and finance journalism has taken him to Belgium, South Korea, Hong

Kong, and most recently six years in Mumbai as chief correspondent on monetary policy and markets for Reuters India.

## ► 2001



**Mark Feliciano** (O-1562; markfeliciano1@gmail.com) caught up with Jason Cho '98 in Washington, DC, in February. He has been enjoying South Florida since shortly after graduation and is currently unit sales manager and an investment advisor with Bankers Life in West Palm Beach. His son Matt graduated from high

school last year and is working with him.

## ► 2005

As of March, **Bryan "Hed" Achtyl** (O-1640; bja2106@gmail.com) has the same job, but a new location: Madrid, Spain. He remains the Chief Technology Officer (i.e. one-man IT department) for clothing brand Vlixes. Because of travel restrictions in Spain, he and Julie can't leave Madrid yet, but he says he has a lot of Spanish homework to finish anyway.

## ► 2007

**Dan "Dan-O" Ornatowski** (O-1656), who publishes under Dan Takahashi (高橋ダン) (Instagram: @dantaka-

hashi1), financier turned YouTube celebrity, has just published his latest book, ウォールストリート流 自分を最大限運用する方法 (*Wall Street Style: Making the Most of Yourself*). His last offering, reported in the last *Oracle*, reached No. 1 on the Amazon and Apple bestseller lists in Japan.

## ► 2012



**Henry Olano-Soler** (O-1741; henryaolano@gmail.com; Instagram @henspective) got an eyeful this summer, interning with Rep. Donna Shalala as lawmakers grappled with the COVID-19 crisis. He had worked at the CDC as a public health associate during the Zika crisis, but he returned to school to get his MPH, and is now working on his MD, both at the University of

Miami. After his medical mission to Nicaragua was canceled, he got involved with the Miami team for Connect for COVID-19, which helped patients with the disease stay connected digitally to their loved ones. He and other medical students were profiled in the fall issue of the University of Miami Medicine Magazine. This spring, he was elected student government president of the Miller School, and he will be focusing on the COVID response for the next year.

## ► 2016



With pandemic restrictions in play, **Mike Nester** (O-1869; mln66@cornell.edu, Instagram @nessssty\_) hadn't seen any other brothers in over a year. They determined that



## NEWS FROM ALUMNI

the safest way to meet up was in the middle of winter in the middle of nowhere: snowmobiling, skiing, and snowboarding in Yellowstone National Park. He writes "It was great to reconnect with people and happy to report that we all stayed safe/no one got sick. We got almost a foot of snow per day, which was pretty ridiculous." Others on the trip included Alex Fernandez '17 (O-1851), James Gallagher '17 (O-1867), Aaron Goldberg '18 (O-1893), Bryan Harriott '17 (O-1854), Max Murray '17 (O-1860), Mike Reed '18 O-1861, Jon Schedelbauer '16 (O-1814), Matt Spoth '20 (O-1925), Pat Spoth '16 (O-1870), and Kenny Wronka '16 (O-1842).

### ► 2018

Nascent travel vlogger **Doug Barnard** (O-1872; Instagram: @doug\_barnard), who had been in Egypt since November, made an unscheduled excursion to the Suez Canal, where the *Ever Given* and the 18,300 shipping containers aboard it had been stuck for almost a week. Workers freed the mas-

sive ship the day he arrived. Coincidence? Yes, obviously. Early last year, Doug had been a rare Western tourist to Saudi Arabia, where he was given a celebrity endorsement by actor and influencer Meer3i (Alharthi Sultan). Doug's YouTube video meeting lo-



icals in Riyadh has almost two million views as of April 3, when he arrived in Sudan. He was in Turkey when the *Oracle* went to press. Follow his continuing adventures at [www.youtube.com/doug\\_barnardtravel](http://www.youtube.com/doug_barnardtravel).



## OBITUARIES

*The Omicron Oracle notes with sadness the passing of the following brothers:*

### **Lt. Col. Thomas B. Kempster, USAF (retired) '59**

*June 4, 2019*

The elder of the great Kempster brothers, Tom (O-854) from an early age to his passing had a passion for all things related to flight, from aircraft models to flight simulators. An excellent student in the aerospace engineering program and the ROTC, he served the chapter as High Alpha before entering the Air Force, where he served 26 years as a pilot and another 20 years as a civil servant in the Department of Defense.

Tom (call sign "Curly") flew 135 combat missions and had over 5000 hours as a command pilot in the C-141 Starlifter and the B-57G Night Hawk. He earned numerous awards and decorations including two Distinguished Flying Crosses for his service in Vietnam, stationed at Ubon, Thailand.

After retirement, he enjoyed many years of travel with his second wife, Patricia, as well as his passions for railroads, reading, and listening to classical and organ music. He is survived by his brother Jack Kempster '62 (O-926), another High Alpha and distinguished Air Force veteran; his wife of 37 years Patricia; and many children, stepchildren, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

### **Arthur C. Delaney '49**

*April 29, 2020*

One of the last surviving World War II combat veterans of the 10th Mountain Division, Art Delaney (O-648) died of natural causes, surrounded by his family, at the age of 98. He had joined up as a ski trooper after Pearl Harbor. A native of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, he had never actually been on skis, but had spent two years after high school on a surveying crew in Alaska, and the Army deemed that good enough. He saw combat at Kiska Island, Alaska, and in Italy, and he was wounded in battle in 1945 at Monte Della Vedetta. He later attended the Hotel School on the GI Bill.



At Cornell, he participated in the usual Hotelie pursuits like Ye Hosts and the Fall Weekend Committee, but most impactful was working in the kitchen at Kappa Alpha Theta, where he met his future wife of 57 years, Nancy Persons. They married soon after graduation and worked at several resorts before returning to Colorado, finding opportunity in a network of fellow veterans, including a successful distributorship for Coors. Art and Nancy were active in community and alumni affairs, were avid tennis and golf players, and enjoyed time with their four children and four grandchildren.

### **George C. Christensen '49 (Vet School)**

*August 1, 2020*



One of Omicron's most prominent veterinarians and academicians, Dr. George C. Christensen (O-576) grew up on Staten Island and served in the U.S. Army during WW II returned to Cornell to complete his DVM (1949), Master of Science (1950), and Ph.D. (1953) degrees. He was married for almost 50 years to Janeth Reid Christensen, who predeceased him. He leaves his wife of 13 years Susan Sinclair Christensen, four children, seven grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

His long academic career began in 1950, teaching veterinary anatomy first at Cornell and then Iowa State and Purdue. He returned to Iowa State as Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine in 1963. In 1965, he was named Vice President for Academic Affairs, serving for more than two decades. In 1989, the University of Alaska Statewide System appointed George as Vice President for Academic Affairs and, for a period, Acting President of the System. Upon his 1992 retirement, George returned to Ames, where Iowa State made him Distinguished Professor of Veterinary Medicine Emeritus.

Iowa State would further honor him by naming Christensen Drive at the Veterinary College after him. Among his numerous other honors were an Honorary Doctor of Science (1978) degree from Purdue; Fellow, U.S. State Department; Distinguished Service Award—North Central Association of Colleges and Schools; Good Guy Award—Iowa Women's Political Caucus; and a Trail Blazers Award from the Office of Minority Student Affairs.

George was directly involved in the establishment of numerous new academic institutions and programs,



creating international student-faculty exchanges with universities in over 40 countries, and serving in many professional leadership positions. He was the coauthor of a mammalian anatomy textbook and the author of numerous published papers in professional journals on anatomical research, higher education, and international education. He visited dozens of countries and all seven continents, addressing professional conferences and serving as a higher-education consultant, a consultant to the U.S. AID, and a member of U.S. federal and state trade missions.

As an active community volunteer in Ames, George served as president of the Octagon Center for the Arts, vice president of the Ames Public Library Foundation, president of the Homeward/Hospice Advisory Committee, Vice President of the Ames Community Arts Council, and president of the Rotary Club of Ames. He was a devoted member of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church. George's lifelong avocation was photography and photographic art, and his black-and-white landscape, architectural, and other images have won numerous Best of Show awards and have been exhibited at museums and galleries throughout the Midwest and at the U.S. Capitol.

### **Perry A. Brown '93**

*March 1, 2021*

Classes of the early '90s were stunned to hear we lost one of the most charismatic and memorable brothers of his generation, Perry Brown (O-1462), on March 1. His ex-wife Abbie had reached out to Sum Tze Tsien '94 (O-1491), who began the painful task of reaching out to their classmates around the world.

Perry had lived an extraordinary life even before coming to Cornell, having served eight years as a Navy Corpsman embedded with the U.S. Marine Corps. He ran track competitively for the Navy, specializing in the 100 hurdles, and achieved a black belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. After leaving the military, he had attended SUNY Farmingdale and been elected student body president before arriving in Ithaca to study ILR, compete in judo in the Empire State Games, and regale brothers with war stories from Okinawa, Norway, and the romantic front.

He excelled as a lively and creative High Epsilon, as one might expect. He served in more hidden

roles as well. He was often called upon to serve as a mentor, officially or unofficially, particularly with African-American students, of whom there were few at Cornell, and even fewer in the IFC. After school he worked as a labor negotiator, then for Onondaga County in human resources and as Assistant Commissioner of Social Services, later earning a master's in hospital administration with a specialty in gerontology. He lost his older son Diop in a tragic accident in 2014, and is survived by his younger son Thor; his ex-wife, Abbie; and legions of family and friends.

Around the house, his presence was always felt. Tom Boorady '92 (O-1461) remembers Perry as one of the few field hockey devotees around, often strutting around the house wielding a stick—and wearing a kilt. But he also recalls an incident when these devotions came to a head. Three very large and very rowdy intoxicated young men, on a summer road trip from their Southern university, were demanding entry to the house. Perry, wielding a field hockey stick (but not in a kilt), had calmly held them off for some time when Tom arrived.

"The three men asked if I was a brother at this house, and if Perry was a brother. I said yes on both accounts. Like some kind of spell, my words were enough for them to look at each other, turn around, and leave. For a moment I felt like Superman—Perry and I had scared off three pretty huge guys looking for trouble. But I turned to see Perry slouched and sitting on the front step breathing heavily in relief, and then in apparent despair.

"This not being the reaction I expected from a military guy, I asked Perry what was wrong. He explained that before I got there, the three men were questioning him because they didn't believe a Black person was a member of ΛΧΑ. They thought he must've been an intruder because of the color of his skin. Apparently my words, as a white-skinned person, were instantly believable to these guys and enough to send them on their way; Perry's words, as a Black man, meant nothing. I can only hope Perry's life experiences after this event weren't nearly as horrible during his short time on Earth."

"I know Perry fell out of touch with many, including myself, since the early '90s. However, I know when he was an active brother he loved us, loved the house, loved field hockey, and would do anything to protect them. Here's to brother Perry Brown, the 'Great Protector of the House,' and may he Rest In Peace."





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