



NOVEMBER 2017 ► VOLUME XIII

## NEW DIRECTION

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# COVER STORY: NEW DIRECTION

By Sandy Gilbert '62

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nwise Choices:

As you know, The Omicron chapter was placed on Interim Suspension last spring because of some questionable hazing activity and the use of alcohol during Rush and the initiation period. The suspension was subsequently lifted by Cornell following an agreement forged with the Alumni Boards, the undergraduates, and the University that called for expanded alumni supervision of Chapter activities and the establishment of a live-in Alumni Advisor. On the basis of that understanding, Cornell then placed the Chapter on Provisional Status for one year.



**Sandy Gilbert**

Under the misguided notion that other Cornell fraternities had occasionally held mid-day unregistered social functions where alcohol was served, the Chapter hosted a party on Labor Day. A cell-phone video was taken of the festivities and ended up as a post on Instagram. Lambda Chi Alpha International Headquarters (IHQ) was forwarded a link to the video and notified our alumni officers and the undergraduates. By the time Rick Meigs '80, President of the Omicron Alumni Association, viewed it, the entry had received 200,000 hits. The unregistered violation was compounded by the fact that the video clearly showed some foolish and potentially dangerous behavior and a general lack of control of a university social event serving alcohol. These violations required IHQ to also inform Cornell of the video. The video has since been removed from the site.

New Direction:

Given the Chapter's already existing Provisional Status, the situation was deemed by both IHQ and Cornell to be especially onerous. Fortunately, our alumni officers quickly realized the gravity of the situation and took the lead in working with IHQ and Cornell to propose a plan for moving forward that would provide our undergradu-

ates with a great deal more supervision and guidance in the planning and execution of House activities.

After an extensive discussion among the board members of ISWZA Fraternity Inc., the Omicron Alumni Association, and the Alumni Advisory Board, it was decided that it was important to form an Alumni Control Board (ACB) to temporarily replace the existing Alumni Advisory Board, take over operations of the undergraduate chapter, and personally deal with the difficulties at Edgemoor. The members of the ACB are Mike Agostin '92, Scot Brown '81, Jason Cho '98, Mark Fernau '82, Dan Freshman '11, David Glazer '17, Zach Halpern '08, Doug Levens '92, Phillip Prigmore '69, Patty Russell '16, Bill Smith '10, Chris Tupino '00 and Joe Willis '72.

The ACB then adopted the formation of a Membership Review Board (MRB) to conduct a formal Membership Review of the undergraduate brotherhood. This is a major undertaking in which every active member is personally interviewed at length and is asked questions about his understanding of and compliance with existing Lambda Chi and Cornell codes for proper social behavior. During the process, it is not uncommon for certain troublesome individuals to be suspended for a period of time or even asked to resign from the fraternity. IHQ and Cornell were notified of our decisions to create an ACB and conduct a member review, and they approved of this proactive approach in place of a complete suspension of the Omicron Chapter.

After considerable deliberation and a comparison of available travel schedules, the MRB was formed to include ACB members Brown, Cho, Glazer, Halpern, Levens, Prigmore, Russell, Tupino, and Willis along with at-large alumni volunteers Joseph Kane '79, Brad LaPoff '10, and Gabe Mahan '13. Given the participants' range in age, experience and extensive involvement with the Omicron Chapter, it was felt that this group was the most appropriate body to undertake the Membership Review process.

Under the leadership of Doug Levens '92, The Membership Review was held on Saturday and Sunday September 30th and October 1st. As you would expect, the tone of the hearings was deliberately serious and quite stressful for all concerned. The MRB interviewed all 56 undergraduate brothers individually to assess their attitude and fitness for membership and to understand other factors that may have contributed to the repeated violations of policies and procedures intended to reduce risks to person and property.

On a positive front, the interviews revealed a strong sense of brotherhood among the undergraduates and that there were no discernable “bad actor” individuals or groups within the current members. As a result, it was determined by the MRB that it was not necessary to suspend or remove any undergraduates from the Brotherhood.

However, it was also uncovered during the interviews that the Chapter had some ongoing systemic communication and operational shortcomings that needed to be addressed and changed, including:

1. A general poor understanding of the rules: Chapter leadership had not made the overall brotherhood sufficiently aware of either Cornell or Lambda Chi rules or the terms or seriousness of their Provisional Status.
2. Not enough focus on risk mitigation: Chapter leadership was preoccupied with a focus on which rules were important and which ones weren't based largely on hearsay from older brothers in the House or other fraternities on campus. The MRB found a very low awareness of or attention to possible outcomes and measures for harm reduction.
3. Lack of Knowledge transfer: The Chapter does not have a process for capturing and archiving important lessons learned from an officer to his successor. The current officers had not effectively explained all the policies and procedures of Chapter operations to the rest of the brotherhood.

At the conclusion of the Membership Review, the MRB met with the entire brotherhood to review their findings and requirements for the future. The participating alumni felt that the process was a real wake-up call for the brotherhood and that the undergrads were very receptive to more direction to improve the Chapter and their ability to recognize and handle risky behavior.

Following the review process, the MRB spent several hours with the undergraduates in small discussion



**Edgemoor at Twilight**

groups covering the following topics:

1. Recruitment: How can the undergraduates ensure that they have an effective Rush knowing that alcohol cannot be part of it?
2. Leadership: Steps need to be taken to create better communication between officers, the Executive Committee, and the general undergraduate brotherhood. Improved succession planning and the possible restructuring of officer responsibilities is needed.
3. Philanthropy: The House needs to find more ways to be a positive force in the community so as to improve their image and that of the fraternity system in general.

4. Risk Mitigation: A strong focus must be placed short term on specific steps to stay out of trouble and long term on explaining not only what rules are in place, but why they must be followed.
5. Personal Accountability: The undergraduates need to actively practice “See something, say something” to uphold our standards of brotherhood and need to adopt the mental outlook of “If something is wrong, fix it.”

The direct outcomes from the successful Membership Review process include LXA IHQ's removal of the Chapter from a “Limited Operations” status and the allowance of the undergraduates to now be able to meet and conduct House operations without direct supervision from alumni. However, the House officers must maintain at least weekly contact with their alumni mentors either in person, by email, phone, or video conference. Cornell continues to limit the ability of the Chapter to hold social events. The term of the President will be changed to a school-year timing, and the position must be held by someone who is at least a Junior. Recent experience has shown that the House would benefit from an older, more experienced leader at the helm. After polling the undergraduates, Thomas Suesser '17, a former High Alpha, was appointed as the interim President. To ensure better continuity, a “President Elect” will be appointed early

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# ALUMNI ASSOCIATIONS REPORTS

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With the reorganization of the ISWZA Alumni Association into three separate boards with different responsibilities and participating board members, *The Oracle* will now provide reports on alumni activity filed by the three respective Board Presidents.

## ISWZA FRATERNITY, INC.



**Doug Levins '92**  
**President**

I am joined on the board by two other officers, Phil Prigmore '69, Vice President and Chris Turner '94, Treasurer / Secretary. This board is the owner of the Edgemoor Chapter House and functions as the House's landlord overseeing the following:

1. Setting and assessing room rent
2. Administering room deposits
3. Maintaining and improving the House and its facilities through scheduled

maintenance and necessary capital improvements

4. Owning and managing the debt on the property including the mortgage, loans and Brother Bonds

Funding for ISWZA Fraternity, Inc. will come from rental fees from the undergraduates.

The renovation at Edgemoor continued with the restoration of the first Floor Ladies Room with new lighting and plumbing fixtures, a new vanity and mirror and a fresh coat of paint. In an attempt to generate more funding to upgrade some of the older living quarters, we closed the House for the first time this summer to rent it out to the Telluride Educational Program. Pending agreement with Telluride, we are considering extending the program as an added revenue source for the immediate future.

Rick Meigs '80, who lived in Ithaca over the summer,

agreed to be the summer House Manager to help keep an eye on the Telluride experiment and to perform some valuable upgrades to the building. After the Telluride rental period was over, he installed a reverse osmosis water filtration system throughout the House to improve the drinking water. This environmentally friendly application will save the undergrads some money and will reduce trash from water bottles. In addition, Rick has replaced the tiles in the front vestibule between the inner and outer doors. Apparently, this fix was last done back in 1978 by then sophomore undergrad, Rick Meigs.

Thanks to the generosity of Beth Mezitt's Ladies' Room Fund supported by donations from participating wives from the '60's, we were also able to restore both the aging game tables that have been a traditional fixture at Edgemoor and add oriental rugs in some of the first floor Commons area. Other renovation plans for the future include the installation of lofts in the smaller bedrooms to create more living space and the addition of new fencing between our property and Chi Phi to completely fence off the gorge area.

I hope you enjoy seeing the ongoing improvements at the Chapter House on your next visit and welcome any questions about our plans for the future at [levens@cox.net](mailto:levens@cox.net).

## OMICRON ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



**Rick Meigs '80**  
**President**

The Omicron Alumni Association will assume the alumni duties and services not performed by the landlord ISWZA Fraternity, Inc. that are needed to run the fraternity. This includes:

- Promoting fellowship and social interaction among our alumni
- Handling alumni communications including *The Omicron Oracle*, *Cross And Cres-*



## ALUMNI ASSOCIATIONS REPORTS

cent Chapter News, the [iswza.org](http://iswza.org) website, President Letters and event announcements for Homecoming and Reunion.

- Managing Homecoming and Reunion events
- Overseeing the annual dues process and raising other necessary funds
- Maintaining periodic contact between alumni board members and our interns (undergraduate officers)

Joining me on the board to perform these functions are:

Mark Fernau '82	Secretary / Treasurer
Joe Willis '72	Property Manager
Jason Cho '98	Communications Director

The primary funding for this Board will come from alumni dues plus some funding from the landlord, ISWZA Fraternity Inc., for services performed by the Property Manager like needed repairs and snowplowing.

I am very pleased to report that we had record attendance at Reunion last spring with over 60 alumni and guests stopping by the Saturday afternoon reception at Edgemoor. As mentioned in the Cover Story, Homecoming was downplayed this year to include just the alumni board meetings. We plan to reinstate Omicron's traditional Homecoming Celebration in 2018 on the Weekend of September 21-22 with a major gathering of '60's era alumni already planning to return to The Hill. For details, contact Sandy Gilbert '62 at [sandem133@aol.com](mailto:sandem133@aol.com).

To continue our popular alumni activities program, we need your support through your annual dues. Your dues are the sole source of funding for our alumni communications including *The Omicron Oracle* and the [www.iswza.org](http://www.iswza.org) House website and they help underwrite our Reunion and Homecoming events. You can update your dues by mail by sending a check payable to Omicron Alumni Association, or a slip of paper with your name, credit card number and expiration date, amount and signature to Omicron Alumni Association, Records Office, P.O. Box 876, Ithaca, New York 14851-0876: or using the Omicron iTransact account at <http://www.iswza.org/give>. Your support is greatly appreciated. If you want to learn more about our

alumni activities, contact me at [rmeigs@comcast.net](mailto:rmeigs@comcast.net).

### ALUMNI ADVISORY BOARD

For the reasons explained in the Cover Story, the Alumni Control Board has assumed the role of the main advisory link to the undergraduates until further notice.

Again, the ACB will take the necessary steps to expand the supervisory relationship with the undergraduates to assist them through the provisional requirements set forth by both Cornell and Lambda Chi IHQ. This includes naming a new High Pi and finding a new graduate Live-in Advisor.

When the Chapter has satisfied the necessary provisional requirements, the Alumni Control Board will morph into the Alumni Advisory Board under the direction of the new High Pi as originally planned. ♦

### NEW DIRECTION

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in the spring semester so that he can work closely with Thomas to learn the demands of the position and become familiar with the operations of the House.

It was also decided to look for a new High Pi who will be able to spend more time working directly with the brotherhood and to locate a new live-in Graduate Advisor to guide the chapter on a daily basis.

All Omicron brothers owe a great debt of thanks to the dedicated alumni who have so generously given their time and expertise to participate in this critical process to move the Chapter forward into the future.

Omicron needs Your Help:

As noted above, most of our House corporation and alumni board members have already agreed to volunteer in one or more of the important new additional advisory and oversight ACB roles. With this expanded supervisory effort, our board members need some additional volunteer manpower to help continue the normal ongoing activities necessary to sustain our alumni services. Please consider offering your help to run upcoming alumni events like Reunion and Homecoming or assist with communications or fundraising to lessen the burden on our now highly leveraged Board members. You can help by simply contacting Doug Levens '92 at [levens@cox.net](mailto:levens@cox.net). ♦

# CORNELL TODAY: NEW BEGINNINGS

By Stephen Ashley '62

**F**riday, August 25, 2017 in Ithaca was a beautiful day – sunny sky, temperatures in the 70's and the Cornell Campus was in celebration mode in honor of Martha Pollack, soon to be installed as Cornell's 14<sup>th</sup> President. The



**Stephen Ashley**

Inaugural Ceremony took place on the Arts Quad with full academic ceremony as chimes, choral music, and appropriate speeches – all reminding one of the 152-year history of the University as Ezra Cornell looked down from his granite plinth. Martha's Inaugural Address was as solid as the granite underlying Cornell's Founder. The President, borrowing from historian, Carl Becker, called for the University to maintain and promote the humane and rational values that preserve a democratic society. She went on to share her vision of Cornell's responsibility in preserving those values – pursuit

of distinguished scholarship, thoughtful education of the next generation and fulfillment of civic responsibilities.

Bringing these goals to application will mean:

- Strengthening and investing in our faculty.
- Driving the synergy between Liberal Arts and the applied fields – Engineering, Life Sciences, Professional Studies.
- Recognizing that the Cornell Tech Campus on Roosevelt Island (which is being dedicated as I write this) is transforming New York City, New York State and Cornell in particular. However, Pollack has clearly stated Ithaca will remain as the heart and soul of the University.
- Bringing “verve” to the educational experience in order to bring a sense of joy to learning and leading to a lifetime of discovery. The President believes that there is much to learn in new applications of technology and information science in the educational experience. Remember, the President's own academic field has been in artificial intelligence. When the President speaks of civic responsibilities, she makes strong statements regarding the University's obligations to “stand up for the very notion of knowledge and truth.”

The President speaks passionately about the obligations of the



University to protect freedom of speech and the need to hear all ideas to assist in discerning the truth.

Recently, Martha met with approximately 30 Emeritus Trustees and spoke more directly to the principles outlined above. She gave direct and forthright answers to questions for nearly two hours and displayed a remarkable grasp of the University, its people and its issues. Remember, she has only been on campus approximately six months. Cornell, indeed, is in good hands.

Other items of interest:

The Trustees have approved increases in undergraduate enrollment over the next five years of 1,000 students. The seven undergraduate colleges will receive allocations from the Provost's Office for their additional enrollment quotas.

Coinciding with the increase in enrollment, the Trustees have approved new on-campus housing of 2,000 units – the stated goal is to house all freshman in University-owned housing and to provide all sophomores with opportunities for University-owned or affiliated housing. In this case, affiliated housing is intended to speak to fraternities and sororities. This effort is in response to dismal housing options in College Town, a very tight market, unsafe living conditions and the necessity for freshmen to begin finding their sophomore housing before their first semester ends.

The Provost's Office is formulating initiatives that will instigate “radical collaborations”. These are designed to harness different fields to create new knowledge and generate new solutions to the issues of humankind – disease, sustainability, and economic wellbeing. Previous initiatives have been more narrowly focused – economics, nanotechnology, genome, bio-medical engineering – just to name a few. Radical collaborations will represent the next generation of research, teaching and outreach.

I close with a quote that President Pollack included in her Inaugural Address from Cornell historian, Carl Becker.

*“Democratic society, like any other society, rests upon certain assumptions as to what is supremely worthwhile. It assumes the worth and dignity and creative capacity of the human personality as an end in itself. It assumes that it is better to be governed by persuasion than by compulsion, and that good will and humane dealing are better than a selfish and a contentious spirit. It assumes that man is a rational creature, and that to know what is true is a primary value upon which in the long run all other values depend. It assumes that knowledge and the power it confers should be employed for promoting the welfare of the many rather than safeguarding the interests of the few.”*

Becker's words were penned in 1940 at a time when democratic and western values were being severely challenged and darkness was falling over Europe. These words of Becker's have great meaning for today. ♦



# HORT SENSE: POLLINATORS

By R. Wayne Mezitt '64

I am gratified that the issue of pollinators has recently caught the attention of the media and the public. Decade after decade, dedicated members of the nursery industry have searched and tried countless approaches to raise awareness of the importance of horticulture in the minds of the public. Over the 50 + years I have been involved with the industry, the pollinator issue is one of the few topics to be so universally relevant. That's very encouraging.



**Wayne Mezitt**

Given how fundamentally critical the world's food and fiber sources are to human existence, we all should be concerned about the wellbeing of pollinators. According to Wikipedia, "at least 80% of world crop species require pollination to seed.

It's estimated that one of every three bites of food comes to us through the work of animal pollinators." And "declines in the health and population of pollinators pose a significant threat to the integrity of biodiversity, to global food webs and to human health."

Pollinator "animals" include many species like the bee shown above, butterflies, birds, bats, moths, flies and beetles, all of which are in some way threatened by human activities. Pollinator Partnership, the worldwide organization dedicated exclusively to the protection and promotion of pollinators and their ecosystems, cites "disturbing evidence that pollinating animals have suffered from loss of habitat, chemical misuse, introduced invasive plant species, diseases and parasites." Who hasn't been aware of the "sudden hive collapse" reported in the media that has plagued farmers in recent years.

Fortunately, we all can take steps in our everyday lives to make a difference in protecting pollinators and enhancing their wellbeing. We can encourage beneficial insects to thrive better by limiting the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides. Instead, apply organic principals and techniques for our gardens and yards. You should mulch around your plants and use manual or



mechanical maintenance methods like mowing, cutting, pulling and tilling to control weeds and intrusive vegetation. Some pollinators use plants as their overwintering sites, so consider that at fall garden cleanup time.

Instead of focusing your home plantings for peak spring-time blooms, try using more trees, shrubs and plants that spread their flowering features across the entire year to attract more pollinators. Summer, autumn and even the "shoulder seasons" of early spring and pre-winter offer exciting flowering opportunities that attract pollinators and weeks of visual enjoyment to your yard.

Native plants are favored by native insects and animals, so using native plants is important. However, many pollinators have been introduced from other areas of the world, so using so called "exotic" or nonnative plants can be beneficial too.

As summer turns to autumn, here are some suggested plants that bloom near the end of the growing season in the northeast and are particularly favored by pollinators:

Woody trees and shrubs: Hydrangea, bluebeard (*Caryopteris*), summersweet (*Clethra*), rose-of Sharon (*Hibiscus*), seven-son-flower (*Heptacodium*), harlequin glorybower (*Clerodendron*) and witch-hazel (*Hamamelis*). Herbaceous plants: goldenrod (*Solidago*), Joe-Pye-weed (*Eupatorium*), Russian sage (*Perovskia*), Japanese anemone, blue mist (*Caryopteris*), tickseed (*Coreopsis*), balloon flower (*Platycodon*), and autumn crocus (*Colchicum*).

Many resources are available for more information on plants that support pollinators at local garden centers and online. For the northeast, selecting *Plants for Pollinators* is a particularly relevant publication. For advice or questions, you can reach Wayne at [waynem@Weston-Nurseries.com](mailto:waynem@Weston-Nurseries.com). ♦

# TRAVEL NUGGETS: BRITTANY AND NORMANDY

By Alan Fridkin '65

**B**rittany and Normandy-With or Without Lists Most travel media try to grab your attention with “top 10 lists” and “must see or do” places. I first thought of heading this column: “Asterix, Gauguin and Eisenhower Were Here”. There is so much to see and do in the nearly 25,000 square miles of these two adjoining French regions. Two or three pages, and two or three weeks, for that matter, will only scratch the surface.



Alan Fridkin

What do you look for in a vacation? Plenty of history, scenery, genealogy, art, music, craft, fine food and drink will keep you entertained in this corner of France. The rural areas, coastline and small cities, encourage a rambling driving trip. France's excellent railroad system would take you to some of the key attractions. There are bus tours or perhaps you might charter a boat, houseboat or camper if a car isn't your ideal transport.

“Big ticket” destinations include: the painter towns (and museums) of Pont Aven and Honfleur. The Bayeux Tapestry. Many WWII, and some WWI cemeteries and battlefields. Omaha Beach and the American National Cemetery above it is unforgettable. Iconic Mont Saint-Michel. The Cathedral in Rouen and the Abbey of Saint Etienne in Caen are inspiring. The walled city of Saint Malo and the medieval town of Dinan. Hundreds of miles of sea front with resorts, fishing villages and sparsely populated stretches beckon. Celtic, Viking and even British culture strains blend into the local heritage. A good 2,000 years or so of armies, navies, pirates and local barons running amuck have left their mark.

This isn't wine country. But there is plenty of fine cider (soft and hard), Calvados, whisky, local beers and

wonderful cheeses and produce to sample. Fine wine also makes an easy journey to your table from Bordeaux, Burgundy, Cotes du Rhone and the Loire.

What we remember most fondly are deserted country roads; fine food and hospitality in small villages; and oysters, scallops, mussels and fish just hours off the boat. The landscapes are as pretty and reminded us of Ireland and Wales. Every little village has a big church, and most a small Gite and/or Auberge. In one tiny hamlet, too small to have a post office, we dropped off our post cards at a local bakery. There was a “Relais Poste” sign above it, and a small in box tray for letters to be picked up by an itinerant mail man (or woman) on a motor scooter.

There are some small airports in the two regions, Nantes perhaps the biggest. But most visitors arrive by ferry from the U.K. and Ireland or through the Paris airports. There are pockets of UK retirees and many British vacationers who feel their Pounds go further here. While separatists are a tiny fringe, locals are Breton and Norman first and French by default.



Mont Saint-Michel



# ALUMNI MILESTONES: RACING TO BERMUDA

By Andre Martecchini '78

**G**oing to sea in a small boat is always an adventure. There are so many things that can go wrong – storms, collisions with other boats and floating debris, equipment failures, injury and of course sea sickness. But it's the allure of the unknown that I find so enticing.

In June, I competed in the Marion-to-Bermuda sailing race. This 650-nautical mile race from Marion, MA near Cape Cod to Bermuda is as much a test of endurance and will as a competition between boats. This was the 10th year that I raced to Bermuda. The Marion-to-Bermuda race alternates every other year with the more famous Newport-to-Bermuda race, one of sailing's grand-prix racing events.

We sailed on the boat "Attitude," a beautiful 42-ft. Beneteau 423 sloop. Although 42-ft. sounds big, when you get out in the middle of the ocean, it looks and feels real small! The boat's skipper is a good friend from Duxbury, MA. We sail "shorthanded," with a crew of only four.

The race began on Friday June 9th. The start of the race was actually moved up a week so that the fleet of 50 boats would arrive just in time for the start of the America's Cup finals racing in Bermuda.

Being a race, our goal is to get to Bermuda as fast as possible. Weather and Gulf Stream currents have the biggest effect on boat speed. The ocean is actually a swirling cauldron of currents, especially the Gulf stream,



which can reach speeds of 5 knots. Plotting your course to ride the current instead of bucking it is a key part of race strategy. There's nothing worse than sailing through the water at 6 knots while having a 3 knot current in your face!

In the days leading up to the start, there was a very

strong low-pressure system with 50 knot winds just south of Cape Cod that was a big worry. Luckily, the system just passed as we started, so the winds turned out to be very reasonable.

Compared to other races, this year was a relatively smooth ride. You quickly get into the rhythm of life on board: be on watch, eat, sleep, come back on watch. The boat is in constant motion, which takes getting used to. Simple movements on shore like changing your clothes, eating and taking a pee can become adventures, especially if the waves are big. Things are wet and slippery, so avoiding injury is job one, especially as we are a shorthanded crew.

Sailing through the night is my favorite – with almost

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## ALUMNI MILESTONES

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no moon and no other light, the stars are intense. I saw lots of shooting stars and the brightest Milky Way I have ever seen.

Wildlife on the ocean is always a treat. Lots of porpoises come up to the boat to play in the boat's bow wake, flying fish, Man-o-War jellyfish, and the occasional sea turtle. A few years ago, we actually hit a whale, but none this year. As you get closer to Bermuda, the birds start to arrive and even land on the boat to rest.

You know you're getting close to Bermuda, when the water turns a beautiful turquoise and the strong smell of lavender comes wafting off the island.

We finished in Bermuda at 11:30 pm on Wednesday June 14th, a total elapsed time of 5 days-10hours. After handicap time corrections, we ended up in the middle of the fleet – 20th out of 50 boats. Not great, considering that 3 years earlier we ended up with the 6th best corrected time out of almost 200 boats in the Newport-to-Bermuda race!

Once we hit the dock at the Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club, things quickly shift from race mode to fun mode. Our families flew down, and we had a great time on the Island. Our favorite mode of transportation is the moped. The island has some of the loveliest beaches and scenery that you will see on any island. Hitting our favorite bars like the Swizzle Inn and the Hog Penny is always on the agenda!

One of the highlights this year was attending the America's Cup races. We were in the grandstand for the first



two races. Unfortunately, USA's boat, Team Oracle, lost both races and ultimately the America's Cup to Team New Zealand, but the race village and the whole experience was fun. The racing is on 50-ft. foiling catamarans, which are incredibly fast. Actually, it does not really resemble sailing as the normal person practices it, but it seems that foiling technology is the new thing.

After a few days on the island, we set sail for a 5-day return trip. My daughter Emily joined the crew for the return. This was her 3rd return passage, and now she thinks she's ready to do the actual race. If you've never experienced an offshore sailing experience – try it! ♦





# THE WINE RACK: Some Very Good Inexpensive Wines

By Sandy Gilbert '62

**D**ave McIntyre of The Washington Post recently wrote an interesting wine column on good inexpensive wines that revealed some startling revelations. He gathered a supply of some of the most popular selling wines in the country, mixed in with some more expensive brands that he chose and had a group of friends and associates try them in a blind taste test. The test was “blind” because all the wines were in bags so the tasters could not identify them by the label.



pointing. Most were judged to be sweet and dull. Only three Cabernets were considered noteworthy and they were all from Dave’s added list, not the more popular brands. The group’s favorite Cabernet was the Santa Rita 120 followed by the Cousino-Macul and the Los Vascos. All three of these Cabernets are from Chile and priced in the \$10.00 range. Overall, however, the group felt that to really get your money’s worth for a Cabernet you need to look at least in the \$15.00 to \$25.00 range.

The selection of wines included the well-known mass-market labels of both Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon like Barefoot, Yellow Tail and Cupcake that you typically see served at many social events and private parties. The tasting included a total of 10 Chardonnays and 19 Cabernets all priced at \$10.00 or less per bottle.

Among his tasters, the Chardonnays faired much better than the Cabernets proving that you can find a delicious Chardonnay for under \$10.00. The first choice by far was Robert Mondavi’s Woodbridge Chardonnay at only \$7.59 a bottle. The wine was described as “fresh, fruity and so well balanced that the tasters thought it was one of the more expensive wines “. Perhaps one reason the Woodbridge Chardonnay stood out from the crowd is that it is only 77% Chardonnay. The rest is a blend of various grapes including French colombard, Viognier and muscat. This “secret sauce” or blend is not mentioned on the label, but is listed on a tech sheet that was provided by the parent company, Constellation Brands. This blend makes Woodbridge legitimate as a wine can be labeled Chardonnay as long as the blend is composed of at least 75% Chardonnay grapes. Most of the other Chardonnays were pleasant enough, but overly sugary in an attempt to appeal to the famous American sweet tooth.

The inexpensive red wines as a group were disap-



# NEWS FROM ALUMNI

## ► 1947

Ralph Kelley tells us that he has turned 92 and gave up driving back in 2016. He was a Navy V-12 student and Edgemoor was his dorm while at Cornell. He became a brother and recalled the day when he and George Getman '44 made the frontpage news when they nearly drowned when their dingy capsized in a squall on Cayuga's waters. Ralph lost his wife after 57 years to Alzheimer's, but he is comforted by the company of his nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. You'll find Ralph at [rkelley@century-tel.net](mailto:rkelley@century-tel.net).

## ► 1948

Bob McKinless writes that he has sold his house that he shared with his late wife for 60 years and bought a three-room condo in a retirement community in Arlington, Virginia. He is very happy there with many interesting neighbors and engaging activities. His youngest son lives only two miles away, as does Jason Cho '98, and his three children are within an hour's drive. His condo has great access to D.C with the Metro only two blocks away and he is only four miles from his church where he continues to sing in the in-house chorus and the choir. He also sings with the Washington Men's Camerata. He is still able to drive which helps him keep up with his various activities around town. At the urging of his family, he has bought a safer bike, a three-wheel recumbent and has agreed to ride only on rail trails which have gentle grades and no automotive traffic. He has used his new bike on three short trips with his grandson collecting 25 new counties. Bob has an extra bed and you'll reach him at [Bikerbob@mac.com](mailto:Bikerbob@mac.com) if you are headed to the D. C. area.

## ► 1961

Don Coleman expressed his appreciation to the alumni officers who contributed to the Edgemoor Ten Year Plan ([www.iswza.org/plan](http://www.iswza.org/plan)) for compiling such a thorough report. He goes on to tell us that he has now retired from the railroad construction business that he and his wife, Diane, ran for 28 years. They only had two customers, The Union Pacific Railroad and the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad, but together they accounted for 70% of the track in the U.S. Don feels that the key to their success was the mentoring they did with their 25 employees emphasizing quality construction with no shortcuts with a

premium on safety. The result was that his firm went 25 years without a single lost time accident.

Diane wanted to retire so they sold the business and Don is now staying busy as 49% owner and funder for a nephew's new start-up mechanical contracting company that will service E&P operators in the Marcellus Utica Shale area in Northern Pennsylvania. This will frequently take him to the Ithaca area and he hopes to stop by the House more often. You'll catch Don at [colemanheavyconst@yahoo.com](mailto:colemanheavyconst@yahoo.com).

## ► 1962

Sandy Gilbert is pleased to report that he, his family and their homes in the Sarasota area of Florida were fortunate to come through hurricane Irma in very good shape. He was especially gratified to hear from so many Omicron alumni inquiring about his well-being during and after the storm including Charlie Way '55, Chris Napjus '62, Bob Elliott '63 and Alan Fridkin '65. For his part, Sandy checked on the status of nearby Omicrons Dave Landrey '66, John DeWitt '65 and Elliot Sloane '74 and is glad to say they all also came through the storm without any serious damage. Sandy and Emmy Lou have just moved to a new golf villa at The Meadows Country Club in Sarasota with a new phone number (941) 217-5151 and the same email [sandem133@aol.com](mailto:sandem133@aol.com).

Already experienced veterans with an extensive travel history, Chris and Barb Napjus are excited about their plans for 2018 including a once in a lifetime Asian Pacific cruise that will take them to Beijing, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore and Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Chris promises to send along some pictures for the Oracle. You can contact Chris at [cnapjus@verizon.net](mailto:cnapjus@verizon.net).

## ► 1963

Bob and Connie Elliot tell us they had a very enjoyable vacation in Naples, Florida where they were able to rent a great condo at Pelican Marsh. The weather was perfect and a welcome change from the brisk early spring weather back home in New Jersey. During their stay they got to visit the Everglades and take their first air boat ride. Bob reports that alligators are ever present in the area. He and Connie also had a chance to catch up with Sandy and Emmy Lou Gilbert for an enjoyable lunch in nearby Bonita Springs. Bob lives at [bell89@aol.com](mailto:bell89@aol.com).



# NEWS FROM ALUMNI



Lee Leonard reports that he had a memorable experience this past summer as one of the leaders of an annual high school mission project sponsored by the Reynoldsburg, Ohio United Methodist Church.

About 50 adults and youth went to Portsmouth, Ohio on the Ohio River and spent five days doing various projects for elderly and low-income families who cannot do or afford to hire someone to do household repairs. The group split into five work crews and built three wheelchair ramps, painted part of the house for an ailing 93-year old woman and painted two large rooms in a senior center. All this was done in last summer's 90-degree heat. However, it was very gratifying work and there were tears of joy from the various family recipients. Lee's work group is pictured above and you can find him at [rlleonard@mail-station.com](mailto:rlleonard@mail-station.com).



Tom Miller decided to build a model railroad after his third grandchild was born. He had electric trains growing up and remembered the relationship he had with his uncle's HO scale layout and hoped his interest would pass on to his grandchildren. Brother John Lutz has been very active in the hobby and they discussed the modern aspects of the pastime at their 50th reunion. John is very knowledgeable in what is now known as "operations" which involves several people showing up at someone's layout and trying to run trains on a schedule with cars destined for specific business locations. Today's model train engines contain small computers and the power packs can send signals down the track to control speed, sound and lights. The system is

called DCC and is similar to operating a local area network. John got him started in learning the "modern" train hobby and Tom took it from there. His current layout is relatively modest, but it still has managed to capture the interest of his three-year old grandson shown here at the controls. His attention span is currently about 20 or 30 minutes, but it is the highlight of his visits. Tom is now building new houses and factories to expand the layout and add more operational options. You can track Tom down at [tdurhammiller@yahoo.com](mailto:tdurhammiller@yahoo.com).

## ► 1964



Wayne Mezitt has been named Trustee Chair of the Massachusetts Horticulture Society at the Gardens of Elm Bank in Wellesley, Massachusetts. As he has done for the past few summers, he has joined the Adirondack Group of Omicrons from the '50's and '60's who meet near Gloversville for some R and R. As shown in the picture above, the group has grown nicely over the years and looks forward to the gathering every summer.

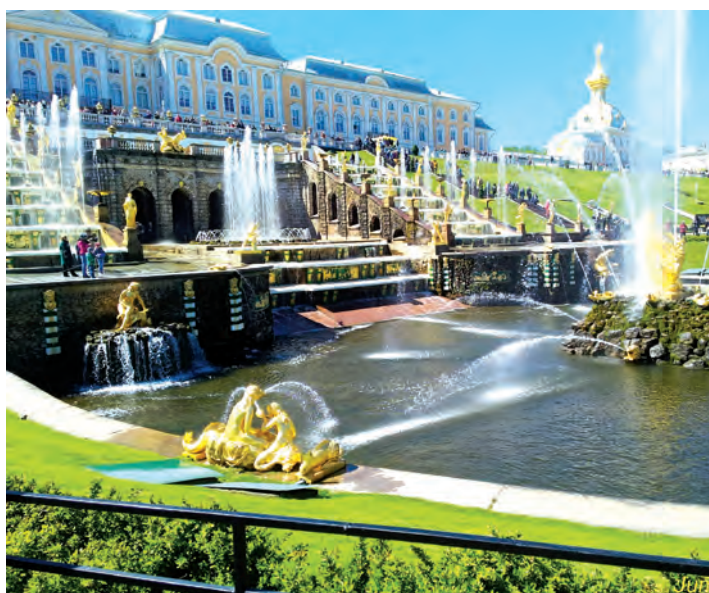
## ► 1965

Scott Fenstermaker writes to say that after graduating from Cornell with a B.A. in 1965 and J.D. in 1967, he and coed Jo Cleveland '65 got married. Jo worked as a secretary in the Dean's office to help put him through Law School. After Law School, Scott worked as an FBI Special Agent from 1967 to 1971 in Atlanta where he was involved with the investigation of the Martin Luther King assassination and later in Newark, New Jersey investigating organized crime including the interstate gambling charges that led to the conviction of the inspiration for HBO's Tony Soprano. While they lived in New Jersey, Jo got a Master's Degree in library science at Rutgers.

# NEWS FROM ALUMNI

He later left the FBI to become a partner in a law firm in Syracuse. While they lived there, Scott and Jo had two sons, Adam and Clay. In 1976, he left the law firm and moved to Michigan to do international legal work for Ford. This stint involved living in San Paulo, Brazil for three years where he was Manager of Legal Affairs at Ford Brazil. He retired from Ford and he and Jo now live in The Villages, Florida, the world's largest playground for retirees. They both love it there where Scott enjoys playing pickleball. Scott answers at [scott\\_fens-termaker@yahoo.com](mailto:scott_fens-termaker@yahoo.com).

## ► 1966



Rich Fleming tells us that he and Linda caught up with Tom '66 and Ruki Willis in Williamsburg, Virginia to visit the Botticelli Exhibit at the College of William and Mary. Back in June they took a two-week Viking River Cruise in Russia starting at St. Petersburg and ending in Moscow. One of the landmarks of the trip, the Peterhof Palace in St. Petersburg, is pictured above. A special personal touch on the voyage was having a light breakfast with cake, tea, and of course, homemade vodka in the home of a Russian family. You'll find Rich at [richardlylefleming@gmail.com](mailto:richardlylefleming@gmail.com).

## ► 1969



Henry McNulty, the longstanding keeper of *The Oracle*, had the chance to spend three days with classmate, Dave Shannon and their wives in Nice on the French Riviera back in May. Dave and Terri came from New Zealand on their way to Italy while Henry and Anne flew in from Con-

necticut in route to Paris and Normandy. Henry reports that the weather was beautiful with some fine food and lots of catching up. Henry lives at [henry.b.mculty@gmail.com](mailto:henry.b.mculty@gmail.com).

John Steed reports that all is well in the Southern Tier of New York as he and Jo Ann are doing well and are "still above the sod." It's been busy lately in the Steed family as three of their sons all got married in the fall of 2015 within a six-week period. They are now enjoying the outcome with three new grandchildren and another due this fall. This includes a set of twins. John says he is still working with no plans for retirement. They did manage to getaway in March for a week in Hilton Head and a week at the Cloister on Sea Island, Georgia. John is looking forward to seeing everyone from the '60's era next year at Homecoming 2018 in September. John answers at [jdsteed1@aol.com](mailto:jdsteed1@aol.com).

## ► 1974

Like others in the Florida contingent, Elliot Sloane had quite an experience evacuating and returning home from the impact of hurricane Irma. He and his family drove north to escape what was originally forecasted as a category 5 storm. Under the circumstances, this was a good plan except for the fact that there were no hotel rooms available from Pensacola, Florida all the way to Biloxi, Mississippi. The weather in Biloxi was idyllic even though Florida was getting devastated. The trip home which should have taken about 10 hours stretched into 16 hours of intense bumper to bumper traffic because of flooding on several of the main roads leading back through Florida. The good news is that his family and his home are safe and he only had to deal with some debris cleanup in the yard. You'll catch Elliot at [ebsloane@gmail.com](mailto:ebsloane@gmail.com).



# NEWS FROM ALUMNI

## ► 1978



Bob Shaw tells us that everyone had a great time at John Sovocool's wedding in September at Fieldstone, their resort near Cooperstown, New York. Pictured above from left to right are John, the groomsmen, Dan Sovocool '81, Mark Todd, Bob Shaw, and John's new wife, Jeanie. John has also recovered from some recent health problems and is now back running up to ten miles a day. He has quite a running history and has participated in 50 marathons in all 50 states. Bob also caught up with Brian Kelly this summer for lunch and learned that Brian and Laurie just had a second daughter. Bob can be reached at [shawrw@gmail.com](mailto:shawrw@gmail.com).

## ► 1982

As he has done over the years, Mark Fernau (MEF) has



kept in touch with many Omicron contemporaries from the '80's era. Shown here are Mike Lennon and his wife Julie resting near the top of Overlook Mountain in the Catskills during a visit with MEF and his wife Melissa. The visit was especially memorable as MEF encountered his first rattlesnake in the wild on the trail on the

mountain. He also attended his 35th Reunion last June and enjoyed the reception at Edgemoor where he visited with classmates Doug Skalka and Randy Marcus. He also enjoyed hanging out with some classmates on the famous porch of Bill Veg Noon'84. MEF keeps up with Facebook news from '82ers Steve Corn, Mark Portera, John Servis, Bill Dennon, Mike Curtis, and Mark Morrow. The Fernaus had a great visit as shown below with Rick Meigs '80, his wife, Pam Lein, and their "kids" black dogs, Sadie and An-

gus. The Meigs spent the summer in Ithaca where Pam did a sabbatical and Rick did some much-appreciated fix up work at Edgemoor. MEF lives at [mfernau@ametsoc.org](mailto:mfernau@ametsoc.org).

## ► 2008

Peter O'Brien, *The Oracle's* webmaster who gets the issues up online, tells us it's been a busy year. He and his wife, Meg, were married on a mercifully dry March afternoon out in Portland, Oregon. Since then, they have been busy hiking and camping including a week in Glacier National Park and in central Oregon for the total solar eclipse. They bought their first house in July. As a former Mu, Peter feels he is well prepared for the task as he now is unfazed by anything that doesn't involve dealing with 100-year old wiring and plumbing and the Ithaca Fire Department. He is looking forward to another La Nina winter which means lots of powder skiing out his way in the Pacific Northwest. You'll catch Peter at [peterjobrien@gmail.com](mailto:peterjobrien@gmail.com).

## ► 2015

Ari Rubin tells us that after graduating from Cornell, he moved down to Charlotte, North Carolina and spent two years working at the Spectrum Center, home of the NBA's Charlotte Hornets, where he oversaw the food and beverage operation. This summer he switched jobs to become the Concession Manager at Bank of America Stadium, the 75,000-seat home of the Carolina Panthers. He is looking forward to the challenge of serving the needs of a crowd that size in the span of about five hours. Last summer he also had the chance to travel to D.C. to visit friends and to travel with his family to Denmark, Sweden and Finland. He loves to travel and is hopeful of getting to somewhere in Asia or Africa after the football season. Ari also made it up to Ithaca for his 6th consecutive Slope Day and enjoyed seeing a few of the brothers in Collegetown. You can reach Ari at [ericarirubin@gmail.com](mailto:ericarirubin@gmail.com).

## OBITUARIES

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

Clarence T. Shoch Jr. '51  
December 5, 2016

Carl S. Atwater '50  
March 3, 2017

Speros D. Thomaidis '51  
January 17, 2017

James N. Ottobre '49  
March 5, 2017

Kevin A. Corbett '77  
February 11, 2017

Charles L. Phillips '49  
March 23, 2017

Philip A. Snyder Jr. '46  
February 11, 2017

Paul E. Gillette '49  
Not Available

