



# NEW YORK ALPHA NEWS

NEW YORK ALPHA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION • CORNELL UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



**Gus Noojin '69** |  
**President,**  
**New York Alpha Alumni**  
**Association**  
*gusnoojin3@gmail.com*

NY Alpha has seen amazing progress in just 2-1/2 years. The chapter has been recognized by both Cornell and SAE National. Thanks to a strong recruiting effort, the membership is up to 50+. The house is nearly full and the kitchen is in operation. The actives are busy planning their philanthropic and social events for the new semester. It seems as if things are "back to normal" and it would be tempting to exhale and relax.

But that is not what we need right now. It was a long road back and your unwavering support was critical to getting us to this point – thank you, thank you, thank you. However, the young

men in our chapter need your support more than ever. So, what does support look like? It is still comprised of the three traditional elements – time, talent, treasure- but with a different twist from what it has been for the last decade.

The young men entering the chapter have no experience with fraternity life and are short on the skills needed to manage a property as large and complex as Hillcrest. Their big brothers who are supposed to teach them are, themselves, relatively new to the game. Your wisdom and experience could go a long way toward getting them over this hump. The actives are anxious to get to know our alumni, so the appetite is definitely there. The best way to offer your



time and talent is to volunteer for the Chapter Advisory Board. Contact Dave Martin and he can fill you in on the specifics.

Our agreement with Cornell for use of Hillcrest is based on the principle of "self-sustaining operation in lieu of rent". This means that the actives pay the operating costs (from room rents) and alumni fund major maintenance and capital improvements (through tax-deductible donations to the Hillcrest Development Fund). The next major project will be replacement of the boilers. Our century-old home always seems to have an expensive surprise or two to offer, so your ongoing financial support is critical.

So, what will it be? Time, talent or treasure – or hopefully some of each. The actives need our support and, in my opinion, they've earned it.

*Gus Noojin*  
**Gus Noojin '69**

## EMINENT ARCHON'S LETTER



**Alden Hey '26**

Phi Alpha, Brothers! My name is Alden Hey and I will be serving as Eminent Archon for New York Alpha for the 2024-2025 school year. I am a transfer student from Carnegie Mellon University, where I was initiated Sigma Alpha Epsilon at the Pennsylvania Phi chapter. I look forward to serving our chapter to the best of my ability as we navigate our first year of the post-rechartering process.

Heading into our second year at Hillcrest, our outlook is strong throughout all key performance indicators. In terms of recruitment, we have recently initiated five Sophomore brothers as part of the Zeta class. Additionally, we are projecting a class of twenty to twenty five new brothers in Spring 2025 on account of record high interest in Hillcrest from first-year Cornellians.

We have also expanded our focus on philanthropy and community service. Throughout this semester we have scheduled community service events with SAE national charities like NMDP, as well as external organizations like the American Red Cross.

New furniture for the chapter room will be arriving soon, with renovations expected to be completed in late November. Replacement of the second and third floor hallway carpets with vinyl tile is scheduled for late December, with renovations being completed before the end of break in January. On behalf of the actives of New York Alpha, I would like to thank the NYAA for approving and funding these projects, as well as their continued support throughout our return to campus.

The future of Hillcrest is bright, and the actives could not be more excited to develop further relationships with alums throughout the NYAA network.



## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD

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**Jim Becket '85**

**Cory Jackson '86**

**Eric Jorgensen '84**

**Hal Sieling '62**

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: DAVID LENHARDT '91



David Lenhardt '91

**David Lenhardt** graduated from Cornell University in 1991 with a Bachelors in Government (Arts and Sciences), Magna Cum Laude. Originally from Chicago, David joined SAE his sophomore year and then spent his junior year abroad at Oxford University before returning back to live in Collegetown with fellow fraternity brothers his senior year. He worked for Merrill Lynch & Co. in New York City and London as an investment banking analyst after graduating and then attended the Amos Tuck School of Business Administration at Dartmouth College, where he received his MBA in 1996.

David then moved to Dallas to work for Bain & Company, where he led consulting teams focused on various business strategies for clients in the retail, defense, ecommerce and technology industries. In 2000, he left to join PetSmart, Inc., his last Bain client and the leading pet retailer in the US, where he held a number of senior leadership positions and ultimately was named CEO in 2013. David led the strategic review process of PetSmart in 2014, resulting in the sale of PetSmart to BC Partners for \$8.7B, representing the largest retail LBO in US history. David stepped down as CEO in March, 2015 upon the closing of the transaction.

David and his wife Dawn live in Paradise Valley, Arizona and have a 13-year old son Cole who is in 8th grade. They are avid collectors of contemporary art. David is the Vice Chair of the Phoenix Art Museum board of trustees and also serves on the national committee and paintings and sculpture committee of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Additionally, he currently serves on the board of directors for Casey's General Stores, The Michaels Companies, Dogtopia Enterprises, and Phoenix Children's Hospital.

### How did you rise the ranks to become CEO?

It was not something I had as a goal when I joined PetSmart. I started running their Services business which was pet grooming and training. I was very excited to leave consulting and be able to run a business with an actual P&L and to have the accountability that comes with that. That was my focus and I learned that I knew very little about managing people and that I really needed to work on that. From there, I continued to be given different responsibilities within the organization that ultimately helped me gain the experiences I needed to be prepared for the CEO role. It was a 13-year journey with ups and downs that I wouldn't trade for anything.

### What advice would you give to others who want to advance their careers in large organizations?

The biggest piece of advice I give to others who are starting out and are thinking about their future in any organization, not just large ones, is to go after opportunities that will take you out of your comfort zone and that may not be the most traditional avenues for your career. Five years into my time at PetSmart, I was asked to go into the stores for 18 months, first as a store manager and then as a district manager managing 8 stores in Phoenix. All of my other job responsibilities were taken away. I went through the training programs for all the management positions in the store, ran the

register, closed the store and then ran the store up the street from our house for 8 weeks during the Christmas holidays! That is being dropped in the deep end of the pool and I will tell you when I was first told about this my first reaction was abject fear, because I was scared I couldn't do any of this! It was way out of my comfort zone. At the end of the day, though, this was one of the best career experiences I have ever had and I learned so many elements of the business that were critical to my future success at PetSmart.

### Did joining SAE have any impact on your career or personal life?

Absolutely- I have made friends for life (even if I am notoriously bad at keeping in touch) and being an SAE brother gave me the confidence to be myself, which has been invaluable. I actually attended Leadership School in Evanston, and while I don't remember what I learned, I do remember thinking it would be cool to lead something and that it looked like a really hard thing to do!

### A favorite memory as an SAE?

Actually, a lot of favorite memories- hanging out in Collegetown with Carl, Dan and Saurabh, Dunbars across the street, Paddy Murphy, our amazing beach party with tons of sand brought in downstairs, foosball, and the overall camaraderie and brotherhood that made my time at Cornell so special.

## Homecoming

By Zach Schutzer '26

The SAE NY Alpha Homecoming Tailgate on September 28th was a huge success, thanks to the efforts of brothers Ron Demer '59 and Ron Skalko '73. The Cornell Big Red pulled through a big win over the Yale Bulldogs with a score of 47-23. Following the exciting game, the active

brothers hosted a memorable dinner for all alumni present, making this homecoming a truly unforgettable experience.

There will be an event in NYC before the Frozen Apple hockey game on November 30th against Quinnipiac at Madison Square Garden. All active brothers and alumni are welcome to join. If anyone is interested in attending, please look out for an RSVP that will be sent out soon.

We will not have a NY Alpha block of tickets, but this link can tell you how to get tickets and other groups with ticket blocks. <https://alumni.cornell.edu/come-back/cornell-traditions/hockey/>.

## By Benjamin Roberts '10

As fall arrives and the Ithaca trees turn red and gold, it's hard not to feel nostalgic for our days at Hillcrest. The energy of Cornell in the fall—Homecoming, Schoellkopf, and our traditions at Sigma Alpha Epsilon—brought us together and shaped us into who we are today.

Our house remains central to the brotherhood, and the new brothers at Hillcrest are carrying that legacy forward. But they need our help. Donations are crucial for ongoing infrastructure projects, keeping Hillcrest one of the best houses on campus. One large ticket item is the boiler, which will need to be replaced in the near future.

One of our most famous alum's, William Faulkner, was shaped by his SAE experience. His time in the fraternity taught him values of loyalty and resilience, which influenced his legendary writing career. It's stories like Faulkner's that remind us how our brotherhood transcends generations, but the bones of Hillcrest remains.

As you flip through this newsletter, please consider making a contribution to sustain our legacy—for you, your class, or to remember those in Chapter Eternal. Whether it's \$50 or \$500, every bit helps. Let's ensure that future brothers can enjoy Hillcrest as much as we did.

### WAYS TO GIVE TO SAE

There are two ways to donate:

**Hillcrest SAE Development Fund:** Gifts are tax deductible and go towards renovations and capital improvements to Hillcrest.

**Annual Alumni Dues:** While not tax deductible, dues support maintaining the website and mailing newsletters as well as alumni events such as reunion.

Visit [sae-cornell.org/ways-to-give](http://sae-cornell.org/ways-to-give) to donate online.

## By David Martin '94, Chair

The active chapter is enjoying their 2nd fall back in Hillcrest, and the semester has started off well. It has been very interesting to watch the chapter evolve from a small emerging chapter, which started 2-1/2 years ago with 12 guys that really didn't know how to act as a fraternity, into a much larger group (currently 50+), that has learned, sometimes the hard way, how to run a fraternity, live together in a house, and self-govern their members. Each semester the bar gets higher as the group performs at a higher level and continues the re-building process.

The chapter had a successful fall upperclassmen rush, initiating six (6) new members. They have a busy social schedule planned for this fall, and will be making preparations for an important, and likely very competitive, spring rush.

The undergraduates continue to try to find ways to engage with the alumni community, and are very interested in getting to know as many alums as possible, learning the history and traditions of the chapter, seeking academic and career advice, and becoming part of the SAE and NYA networks. Whether it is a formal role with the chapter advisory board, a less formal role mentoring undergrads, or simply stopping by the house to have a meal with the guys and talk about the "good old days", your interaction, as an alum, with the active chapter is very valuable and will be quite rewarding. Please contact me for ways to engage or ideas for additional avenues we can create for positive alumni-active interaction.



"Decorations for the undergraduates' Gatsby party"

## CLASS NOTES

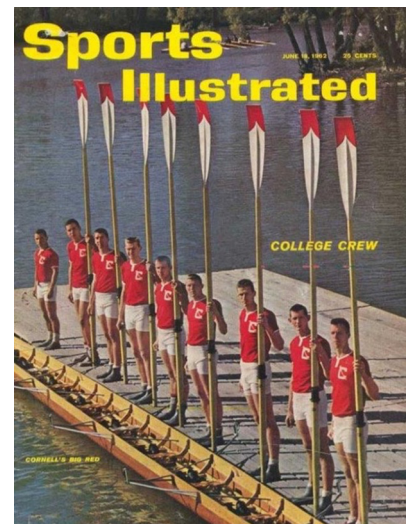
Here is some news about Dave Nisbet '62 and Don Light '64 who both rowed at Cornell, won the IRA (Intercollegiate Rowing Association) National Championship in 1962, and were featured on the Sports Illustrated cover in June of 1962. They are my SAE fraternity brothers.

"Hi Ron,

*Hope all is well. My wife Regina and I are doing well, living comfortably here in Boston. I'm still coaching rowing part time to kids at Community Rowing on the Charles River.*

*I was in touch with Don Light recently and he is retired and living on the Cape. Don is in the 3 seat (3rd from the right) and I'm next to him in the 2 seat. This was taken the week before the IRA national championship race in 1962. Of course we heard all about the SI cover curse predicting we would likely lose. We won by a comfortable margin anyway beating powers Washington, Cal and everybody else.*

*Cheers,  
Dave"*



## CLASS NOTES

From Ralph (Rennie) Boericke '59, BME '60, and wife Nancy Lynch '60 Kappa Alpha Theta:

*"Nancy and I muddle along here at Stone Ridge Retirement Community in Mystic CT. We have a comfortable two-bedroom suite with expansive kitchen/living greatroom on third floor, overlooking a forested preserve. As our kids tell us, it's sort of like living on a cruise ship - we have entertaining events, lectures, movies. And the food is outstanding. Nancy's mobility is poor and we get her about in a wheelchair for the most part. My mobility is only a bit better with neuropathy in both legs. We still have our car, so don't feel trapped." Reach Rennie at: rrb866@gmail.com*

*Jim Glenn '59 BME '60 writes from Taos: "Wife Gwen and I have been preparing for the visit of our daughter, Melanie, her husband, and four grown-up sons arrive tonight from Seattle and Austin. Two grandsons will run in the "Up and Over" 10 k race from 9,200 feet above sea level at the base of the Taos Ski Valey to 12,000 feet and back down again.*

*We are enjoying the first veggies from our garden. I chased two hares from our pumpkin patch. The deer have long gone back to the nearby mountains. We occasionally hear coyotes howling at night. Temperatures in the mid-eighties to about 50 at night. Dry, little humidity. After all, this is the desert." Email Jim: jamesglenn@taosnet.com*

## CHAPTER ETERNAL

### Michael J. Belleville (1978-2024)

Died May 8, 2024  
Class of 2001

Michael Joseph Belleville, 45, of Albany passed away on May 8, 2024. Born on November 5, 1978, in Albany, New York he spent his childhood years in Albany and Slingerlands. Even as a young boy it was clear he had a brilliant mathematical mind coupled with a love for reading and learning. As an adult he remained just as curious and adventurous. Conversations with him were lively, intellectually stimulating, and you could not walk away without something new to think about. He had a passion and gift for working with computers and technology, which he used professionally and generously to guide any friend or family member. There was no computer challenge Mike would not tackle and quickly solve.

Michael graduated from The Albany Academy in 1996 excelling academically and going on to study Economics at Cornell University. He joined the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and served as Rush Chairman making a host of lifelong friends. Michael, a skilled snowboarder, spent many vacations gliding down the slopes of Whistler, Telluride, Big Sky, Snowmass, Steamboat Springs and Lake Tahoe alongside his father, brother and nephews. As an avid traveler, he spent six months living in Costa Rica where he mastered surfing and perfected his Spanish. More recently his travels took him all over Europe including Italy, Poland, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Switzerland and several days of revelry at Munich's world famous Oktoberfest with his brother and friends. At the time of his death he was planning further adventures in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia.

Michael is survived by his parents, Bill and Rosa Belleville of Guilderland, his brother Bill Belleville Jr. (Melissa) of Rye, NY, nephews Will and Wyatt Belleville and a close family of aunts, uncles and cousins.

Relatives and friends are invited to visit Wednesday, May 15, at New Comer Cremations & Funerals, 343 New Karner Road, Colonie, NY from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. A Funeral Mass will be celebrated on Thursday, May 16 at 1:00 pm at Christ the King Church, 20 Sumter Ave. Albany, NY.

The family has established a scholarship at Cornell University in Michael's memory so that another bright young mind might access higher education at the institution he so cherished. Donations may be sent to the Michael Joseph Belleville Scholarship Fund #0020920, Cornell University Box 37334 Boone, IA 50037-0334.

[https://www.newcomeralbany.com/Obituary/277615/Michael-Belleville/Albany-NY?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR1a-qOpc2diDQcjgKQOq3GPpweb4IDLgXRngeDaNPTPUwl8tetyfEFxxMs\\_aem\\_Adof2-e4cP2TDJQzY3a4AQo9e\\_](https://www.newcomeralbany.com/Obituary/277615/Michael-Belleville/Albany-NY?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR1a-qOpc2diDQcjgKQOq3GPpweb4IDLgXRngeDaNPTPUwl8tetyfEFxxMs_aem_Adof2-e4cP2TDJQzY3a4AQo9e_)

### James Baden '61 Obituary

March 22, 1939 - July 14, 2024

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina - James Paul Baden, 85, of Hilton Head Plantation, passed away peacefully at home on July 14, 2024.

Born in Hamilton, OH he graduated from Hamilton High School in 1957, Cornell University in 1961, and Cornell Medical School in 1965. Between Surgical Residencies in University Hospitals Cleveland, OH and University of Nebraska, Omaha, Jim served as a Captain in the US Air Force Department of Surgery from 1967 -1969. Following additional Research Fellowships, Jim returned to Hamilton, OH to practice General Surgery. He was married to Marcia Stafford Baden from August, 1963 until her death in 2002. In 2003 he married Sheila Henderson Baden, whom he had known since the eighth grade.

His love of music from an early age continued with him. As a member of the Cornell Glee Club he traveled in the 1960 European tour to the USSR, and in his retirement, he was a member of the Hilton Head Barbershoppers.

Jim was very active in his retirement, working with Volunteers in Medicine for over 15 years, the Hilton Head Lighthouse Chorus, an SAE Alumni Association President, Rotary Club member and board member for The Seabrook.

### Brett Klyza Obituary

Brett Christopher Klyza, 49, of Brookhaven, Georgia, passed away on Tuesday, August 29, 2023 in Atlanta, Georgia after a heroic battle with Glioblastoma an aggressive brain cancer.

Brett was born on July 30, 1974 to parents, Dr. James P. Klyza and Mrs. Maria G. Klyza in a small country town, Paris, in Kentucky.

After graduating from Paris High School in 1992, Brett attended Cornell University School for Hotel Administration, graduating in 1996. He is a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity.

Since 2006, Brett has worked for Silverpeak Real Estate Investments, a private equity firm, in the role of Senior Vice President Asset Management leading out in the Hotel and Transportation Logistics space.

Brett married, his wife, Victoria in 2010, in Venice Beach, California, welcomed his son Drew a year later and Grayson in 2013, both born in Atlanta, Georgia.

His sense of wanderlust and passion for adventure was best expressed in the ocean, he loved to sail and found peace in the depths of the water while scuba diving. This love was instilled as a youth with numerous family memories and continued with his wife, Victoria. He was thrilled that Drew and Grayson loved the boating life and was looking forward to the boys getting old enough so we could dive as a family.

He had a love of sports with a passion for SEC football, Go Wildcats! He enjoyed watching games with his family and friends, especially college football and basketball.

Brett was a family man, a devoted husband and a loving father. Drew and Grayson were the center of his universe. Over the years, he coached soccer, flag football and baseball for his sons. He spent countless hours teaching the fundamentals and instilling sportsmanship and how to be respectful young men with strong character.

Brett enjoyed good parties and the Klyza family was known for their epic annual Derby Party. Many good memories were made with our dear friends over the years.

Brett is survived by his wife, Victoria, two young sons, Drew and Grayson, his parents, Dr. James P. Klyza and Mrs. Maria G. Klyza and his brother, James P. Klyza Jr. and numerous extended family members and close familial friends with a special place in his heart.

Brett was a unique and curiously original character with a wicked sense of humor that touched people's lives in a powerfully subtle way. His relationships were authentic and meaningful and it was one of his most loved attributes. It was a joy to behold. He is deeply cherished and will be greatly missed.

A Memorial Mass will be held at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church in Brookhaven on Saturday, September 9, 2023 at 11:00 AM. The family will receive friends for a time of visitation beginning at 10:00 am.

Memorial Donations can be made to the Glioblastoma Foundation: <https://glioblastomafoundation.org/get-involved/donate>. Please designate in the message section the donation is on behalf of Brett Klyza.