



THE TRAVELER

Acacia Fraternity, Cornell Chapter

February 22, 2021

Building Better Brotherhood

by Lorenzo de Alba

Since the first time I came to Northcote, the Bar Room has been the staple of the house, and now that I have the honor of serving as Venerable Dean, I'm thrilled to be able to oversee its long overdue refresh. The actives who arrived at the house early in January are carefully working on repainting the ceiling and columns white, and the walls a vibrant red, along with freshening up the famous Acacia insignia on the back wall. Once repainting is finished, we plan on getting new lights, electronics, speakers, and furniture to completely overhaul and modernize the look and feel of the Bar Room. We are also getting the pool table professionally restored so that it can once again be used for its intended purpose.

I would personally like to thank our tireless Brotherhood Chairman, Armoni, for having the drive and dedication to spearhead such a large project. This project would also not be possible without the generous help of Steve and the Corporation Board, which has provided funds, insight, and even hands-on help. We look forward to sharing the final result with all of you very soon!



Looking Forward

This semester was difficult for recruitment and, consequently, new member education. Last semester, the pledge process was sidelined by Covid-19, and pledges for the Spring semester had to almost completely restart the pledge process, which was understandably frustrating for pledges and current brothers. Pledges had to make time to be active members of the house while dealing with the newfound stress that came with being a Cornell student during the pandemic. The Fall 2020 pledge class, however, had smiles on their faces throughout the whole process. They never came to any meeting, nor any of their commitments with a negative attitude. These young men were always committed to learning more about the history of Acacia and what it meant to be an Acacian. We are all proud to call the newest additions to the Acacia legacy, William, Prajeet, and Robert, our brothers.

Socially Distant Socializing

by Kiran Tin, Armoni Brightly Bailey

As Junior Dean (Kiran Tin) and Brotherhood Chair (Armoni Brightly Bailey), we decided that a semester as unique as Fall 2020 required us to join forces and collaborate. Given the situation with COVID-19, the events we held fell predominantly in the brotherhood category, with the exception of a few outdoor socially distanced events such as a movie screening. It was a difficult semester in terms of fostering outside involvement at the house as well as being able to invite Potential New Members (PNMs) to events, but we did the best with what we had and assisted in the recruitment of a great pledge class. Looking forward, we expect to be doing more of the same for Spring 2021, although we will search for new avenues to safely connect with people outside of the house and keep interest strong in Acacia.

This semester was a difficult time for all of us, and though the prospect of having events seems like an impossible task during a pandemic, it was one of the few ways in which Acacia safely let brothers and guests know we were still here. A lot of people have lost contact with each other over the past several months, and people have lost contact with Acacia as a house; however, our events were a constant, a hand reaching out during a hard time. After this pandemic is over, it will not only be brotherhood or JD events letting people know that Acacia and its brothers are still offering the same sense of community they always have. It will be every brother, family member, alumni and everyone whose life Acacia has influenced for the better letting people know one thing: We are still here, and stronger than ever.



Keeping Up With Northcote

by Lucas Wesselius

Covid-19 has offered a challenge to each officer position, for Senior Steward the problem was a reduced population of brothers in a large house that still needed cleaning throughout its entirety. While for some fraternities this issue may have grown and become overwhelming, I'm happy to say that thanks to the due diligence and commitment to cleanliness that the house continued to be a beacon of tidiness. While there may have been points in time that offered increased stress on the house, the dedication of the brotherhood to maintaining a household that we can all be proud to call our home has kept the house in great shape. The brotherhood also stepped up beyond just clean ups, seeing to it that areas that often find themselves cluttered were cleared out, leaving us with more space enabling us to have a more hygienic and open environment to live in.

What's Cooking?

by Matt Block

This semester's unique circumstances did not just end at novel approaches to the fraternity's academic and social lives – The activities and culture of the kitchen had to undergo significant shifts, both for the health and wellbeing of the brothers, and that of our great house chef as well, Gio. The risks posed by the Covid-19 pandemic had the brothers carefully limiting our contact with Gio and wearing masks at all times when in the kitchen area – a routine that was held up with plenty of Gio's assistance, helping to provide the house with disposable masks and plenty of sanitation supplies. Besides the precautions taken, fewer brothers living in the house also meant more rigorous crew schedules – this has been the first semester in years where it became common for every brother to have kitchen cleanup duty more than once per week. Despite this increased workload, I am proud to say that every brother still pulled through for one another, and the kitchen was kept as clean and orderly as ever.

Fewer brothers living at the house also translated to fewer mouths to feed, and so it also became the norm for smaller meals to be served – in fact, the only true crisis we encountered this semester in terms of the kitchen was the fact that we had too many leftovers. Several of the brothers, myself included, also took interest in utilizing the kitchen’s array of tools ourselves, and it was not uncommon to find several brothers milling about the kitchen cooking their own meals – for this, we also have Gio to thank, as he did an excellent job keeping the kitchen stocked and supplied with all the essentials we needed. Gio also provided us a wonderful thanksgiving meal, a perfect sendoff for this strange and challenging semester.

Human Service

Due to the circumstances surrounding the semester, it was difficult to find safe in-person events for brothers to volunteer at. Some of the brothers joined Cornell COVID Ambassadors, an on-campus volunteer group that distributed masks, hand sanitizer, and other hygiene products that help reduce the spread of COVID-19 as well as information. Upon returning to campus in early January, a simple initiative that we will be spearheading is the clearing out of storage items that are not in use or needed by any active brothers, purging of old clothing items left by alumni, and donation to the Salvation Army. Looking forward, we aim to have a virtual fundraiser for a local food bank that brothers participate in and share to foster charitable involvement outside of the house as well.

Health is Wealth

by Armoni Brightly Bailey

As Covid-19 affected how Cornell, Ithaca, and the world operated, Acacia had to adapt as well. As Health and Wellness Chair, I set out to prioritize the health of the house as much as possible. Primarily, I did so as the Brotherhood Chair when I was working with Acacia’s Junior Dean, Brother Tin. Kiran and I ensured that all Acacia events took place outside whenever weather conditions permitted it and to be sure that the events also fell in line with regulations set by Cornell and the CDC. To our knowledge, the house was able to remain functional in most regards compared to past semesters without having any positive cases for coronavirus.

As Health and Wellness Chair, I also took part in Cornell’s Covid Ambassador program where I and many other Cornellians handed out PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), hand sanitizer and Cornell memorabilia on campus. As an ambassador, I was trained to encourage community awareness and participation in stopping the spread of Covid-19, and I brought this mentality to Acacia where we often tried to make stopping the spread of the coronavirus the job of everyone at the house, rather than that of one individual.

A Message from our Corporation Board President

Obviously, if you are reading this Winter 2021 (we were unable to get things together for the Fall 2020) edition of *The Traveler*, you know that we only sent it out electronically. We realize that not every Alumnus has an email account, and we certainly don't have accurate email addresses for all that do have them. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, there simply weren't enough resources or time to produce our award-winning newsletter in a printable format. We hope to resume printing *Travelers* in the Spring (look for it in early April).

The Year 2020 (which included both Spring and Fall 2020-2021 Academic Years) is almost indescribable. In March 2020, Cornell and most of the world started shutting down due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Acacia Corp Board was faced with the difficult decision of whether to keep Acacia open and allow Acacians to continue to live there or shut down, as Cornell encouraged us to do. We opted to do what was best for our members and remain open, since traveling would have many more health risks, especially to our international students. We offered to keep Acacia open as long as the residents formulated a plan and agreed to stick with it. Part of that plan was that the 3rd Floor would be off-limits, being reserved for any resident who may be forced to quarantine. They agreed and we had about 10 remain at Northcote to finish out the Spring 2020 semester. Then, as we planned for the start of the Fall 2020 semester, it was determined that only 9 Brothers would be living at Acacia (most of the others would be attending classes from their homes) and they could not afford their share of the rent (which is charged to the Active Chapter and is not based on occupancy). So, they asked for a rent reduction (25%), which the Corp Board unanimously agreed to. With little change in the severity of the Pandemic and the fact that we will probably still have only about 10 Actives living in, the Corp Board has agreed to keep the rent the same (\$30k) for the Spring 2021 semester.

Last spring, water was noticed on the floor of the Bar Room. Initially, we thought it was due to the refrigerator being left open, icing up, and then defrosting (because this had happened before), but it turned out there was a sewage backup, perhaps due to wipes being flushed down toilets. Initially, the blockage simply slowed the waste as it travelled to the sewer under the road, and the water was due to water from people showering. To compound matters, there was a small hole in a vertical waste pipe in the Boiler Room Hallway, and that was where the water was finding its way into the Bar Room. Eventually, the blockage was total, and you can imagine the mess! We had to pay Servpro almost \$2,800 for the cleanup, and then had Drain Brain attempt to clear the waste pipes. As it turned out, the cleanout in the Bar Room was too small to allow their bigger and longer equipment to be used, so we then had to have a plumber come in and replace the cleanout. Once that was done (about \$400), Drain Brain came back and completely cleared the blockage. What an ordeal!

The Corp Board has been saving money for the replacement of Acacia's shingled roof which has reached the end of its expected life. We had to deal with a fairly inexpensive leak repair in the Fall, and our plan is to replace the roof in the spring at a cost of about \$60k.

Acacia was fortunate to have received a very large and generous donation from the estate of Brother David Odegaard '70 (743) who passed away 10/21/2019. This money (over \$325k) was received on 11/22/2020. We have set aside enough cash to pay for the roof repair and

are in the process of transferring the remainder into an investment account. Our plan is to fund the expense of hiring a Live-In Advisor (a Cornell mandate, effective Fall 2021) with the interest from the investments. While this is a large sum of money, it won't last forever, as we have some ambitious plans to continue renovating Northcote, including new flooring in Living Room and Commons, new range and convection oven in the kitchen, the expensive roof repair, paving the back parking lot, repaving the Service Entrance lot, landscaping, and all the typical maintenance and replacement of items that eventually wear out, fail, or break. Also, our actual rent income was \$20,000 less than we budgeted.

This Academic Year will continue to be a challenge, but I have the utmost confidence that we will survive and succeed if we make intelligent choices and decisions. We are all in this together.

Acacia was still not completely filled in the Fall, nor will it be in the Spring. Acacia still relies on Alumni financial support which has not been very strong lately. I continue to be perplexed and bothered by the fact that the majority of our 600+ alumni choose to NOT even pay their annual dues (which can be done via snail-mail or PayPal www.paypal.com to AcaciaCorpBoard@cornell.edu). Also, please check out the Cornell Acacia website (<https://www.cornellacacia.org/>) which has undergone a major overhaul recently. We need your financial assistance, and we need it now. I realize some percentage of you might have financial, personal, or health issues, but not most of you! How about some of you sending part of your COVID-19 "stimulus" checks to Acacia? To those alumni who generously financially support Cornell Acacia, our thanks!

On a personal note, I continue to work full time for Cornell Information Technologies. Tomorrow, my wife, daughter, and I have appointments to receive the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. I hope all of you are able to get vaccinated soon.

Please email or call me if you have comments, concerns, suggestions, want to get involved, or simply want to say hello. It would be wonderful if I heard from some of you so I know you are as concerned, yet encouraged, as I am about the future of our beloved Acacia. The Mailbag column continues to be extremely short of news to share! Certainly there must be news (good and bad), so please share it.

Stay safe.

Fraternally,

Steven L. Stein 1973 (787)
[[339 E. Miller Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850-9431](mailto:339.E.Miller.Rd.,Ithaca,NY14850-9431); 607-277-3125; cell 607-351-3901; sls8@cornell.edu]

The Mailbag – Alumni News

John M. Walsh II '58 (603) [[296 Watercure Hill Rd, Elmira, NY 14901-9233](mailto:296.Watercure.Hill.Rd,Elmira,NY14901-9233); jmwiii9@hotmail.com] is enjoying his work as a Trustee of Elmira College, the Arnot Art Museum, and an elder in his local church.

Preston W. Shimer '61 (635) [[217 Thornberry Cir, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1024](#); pws25@cornell.edu; pwshimer@gmail.com] and wife Annette '62 are active volunteers with the League of Women Voters (Pittsburgh and PA State Leagues). She does the local version of vote411.org and Preston serves as treasurer and tech person. He was setting up candidate forums using Zoom and implementing Google for Non-Profits.

Dr. David A. Gorelick '68 (717) [[3316 Old Forest Rd, Baltimore, MD 21208-3101](#); DavidGorelick1@gmail.com] writes that the Coronavirus pandemic has been very frustrating. It kept him from visiting Jerry Kreider '68 (720) in April and new grandchildren born last spring.

Jerry W. Kreider '68 (720) [[200 Price Ave, Unit 2, Narberth, PA 19072-1953](#); jerrys2k@comcast.net] wrote in April after most of us had been told to stay home and campus is closed. He is glad to hear Northcote will remain open for those who need to stay. Thanks to Steve Stein '73 (787) as always for his conscientious work!

James W. Greig II '74 (795) [PSC 41, Box 5069, APO, AE 09464-0051; jim.greig@outlook.com] writes that after retiring from civil service a couple of years ago, had the opportunity to come back to work at RAF Lakenheath in England. They've been there for a little over a year, and except for the limitations of the lockdown, are enjoying the opportunity to explore the UK.

David J. Sangree '84 (917) [[1052 Maple Cliff Dr, Lakewood, OH 44107-1252](#); dsangree@hladvisors.com] is spending a lot more time at home in Cleveland with COVID affecting work and personal travel. Lucky the summer weather was beautiful!

Mark A. Schaten MD '84 (923) [[S4W31227 Hidden Hollow, Delafield, WI 53018](#)] continues to work as a Locum tenens (temporary worker) traveling hospital list, currently in La Junta, CO. They were just starting to see COVID-19 cases in May 2020. He hopes everyone stays well!

Chapter Eternal

Francis Michael Hugo '62 (597) – 4/16/2020 (due to Coronavirus)
Richard Blazey '60 (650) – 6/1/2019
