

# Hotelie

FALL 2017





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## Hotelie

Fall 2017

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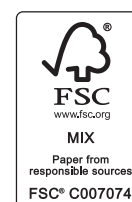
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# Honoring Our Past and Creating Our Future

**We are celebrating** three anniversaries this year that serve to remind us of the importance—and the storied history—of our place in the hospitality industry. The first is the ninety-fifth anniversary of our founding in the fall of 1922. The second is the ninetieth anniversary of the Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series, which was launched in the spring of 1928, and of course the third is HEC, which has been going strong for the past 93 years.

The credit for our founding goes to the American Hotel Association, which was committed to raising the standards of hospitality by educating the industry's future leaders in service, business, and the state-of-the-art technologies of the time. The credit for Lectures on Hotel Management, as the Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series was first known, goes to Dean Meek, who invited the participation of industry leaders as a means to bridge the gaps, in both numbers and knowledge, among his threadbare early faculty. HEC was also Dean Meek's way of testing experiential learning in its most profound way.

From these traditions, our school grew to become the hub of the hospitality industry. Our alumni have been the guardians of our traditions from the 1920s, when they began to make a name for themselves in the hospitality industry, to today, when our alumni count themselves among the top leaders in our

industry. Just as you do now, our early alumni helped create and educate the industry's emerging, future leaders.

Ninety-five years after our founding, we remain dedicated to our original mission, but our conceptions of service, business, and technology have all evolved and expanded greatly. We continue to look to you, our alumni, for guidance in creating our future. With your valued input, we are currently undertaking the first comprehensive review of our undergraduate and graduate curriculum in over 20 years. We look forward to offering our students opportunities to expand and customize their educational experience in exciting and meaningful ways.

We are also developing graduate-level programming that will take advantage of SC Johnson College's presence on the Cornell Tech campus and elsewhere in New York City. Our college's dual-campus model offers tremendous possibilities for our students and faculty, as well as our alumni and friends in hospitality, to engage in experiential education at an entirely new level of interaction and partnership.

We are all extremely fortunate that Dean Meek gained the trust and support of E.M. Statler, whose foundation sustained our school through its challenging early years. All of us who are the successors to those two great industry pioneers are even more fortunate that our alumni in the global hospitality industry have

continued to support our school for all the years since. I look forward to continuing to work with the members of our outstanding Dean's Advisory Board, our wonderful faculty, and our extraordinary alumni to create a new future of ever-greater value for our students—our future leaders—and for the hospitality industry. My heartfelt thanks go to all of you for your care, engagement, and partnership with us in continuing to offer the most exceptional educational experience in the world.

Sincerely,



KATE WALSH

*Dean and E.M. Statler Professor*

# RED ALL OVER



## PROMOTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS



**KEITH BARR '92** was elevated in July to chief executive officer of IHG, a company he has served in a succession of senior positions. Most recently, he served four years as IHG's chief commercial officer; for four years prior to that post, he was chief executive officer of IHG's Greater China business. In China he led the development and launch, in 2012, of the Hualuxe Hotels and Resorts brand. Earlier positions included vice president of operations for midscale brands in North America, vice president of operations for the Holiday Inn brand in North America, and chief operating officer for Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific region. Barr joined IHG in 2000 when it acquired Bristol Hotels and Resorts, where he had held several senior positions.



**SCOTT BRODER '11** joined global real estate development firm Witkoff in May as senior vice president and head of hotel investments. In his previous role as director of acquisitions with Sunstone Hotel Investors, Broder participated in more than 1.5 billion dollars' worth of transactions, including the acquisitions of Boston Park Plaza, the Hyatt Regency San Francisco, and the Wailea Beach Marriott Resort and Spa. He earlier worked in Sunstone's asset management group, which oversaw more than 30 hotels, and had responsibility for developing the Sunstone Energy Efficiency Program, which reduced utility expenses substantially across the portfolio.



**DIONISIO D'AGUILAR '86, MBA '87** was appointed the Bahamas minister of tourism and aviation on May 15. In this capacity, he will lead efforts to increase the number of visitors to the Bahamas and improve the overall visitor experience. D'Aguilar is the former chief executive officer of Superwash, a Nassau chain of laundromats. He is also a certified public accountant.



**GREG HARTMANN '86** was named senior vice president of luxury, lifestyle, resort, and corporate development at Hilton in April. For the preceding six years, he was managing director of the hotels and hospitality group at Jones Lang LaSalle, with responsibility for leading the strategic advisory and asset management services practice. Hartmann had previously spent 24 years as a managing partner at HVS before founding the analytics division of STR.



**BRADLEY KRAUS '08** in February became president and chief operating officer of Spectrum Retirement, one of the largest privately held senior-living owner-operators in the United States. He has worked at Spectrum for four years, most recently as senior vice president of business development. In his new role, Kraus is responsible for overseeing all facets of the company's operations, including 33 senior-living communities in twelve states. Before joining Spectrum, Kraus was a senior associate in the real estate practice of Cerberus Capital Management. He began his career as an analyst at Morgan Stanley, working in the real estate investment banking and real estate private equity groups.



**GRACE LEO '77** was appointed in July 2016 as the chief executive officer of Ledunfly Hospitality. Credited as a pioneer in the design-led boutique hotel sector, Leo is noted for projects including the hotels Montalembert and Lancaster in Paris, the Royal Riviera in Cap Ferrat, the Guanahani and the Toiny in St. Barths, and the Cotton House in Mustique. Most recently, she oversaw the development of hospitality elements of Ten Trinity Square in London, a 430-million-dollar hotel and residential project that opened in January 2017. In addition, Leo has been a member of the executive committee of the Leading Hotels of the World for nine years. She has won numerous international awards.

## PROMOTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

**JOSH LESNICK '87** was named in March to head Associated Luxury Hotels as president and chief executive officer. Lesnick came to his new post from Wyndham Hotel Group, where he had been executive vice president and chief marketing officer, with responsibility for all aspects of revenue generation for eighteen brands encompassing more than 8,000 hotels in 77 countries. In that role, he led the rollout of Wyndham's new loyalty program, which earned a first-place ranking from *U.S. News and World Report* in 2016. Prior to his tenure with Wyndham, he served for six years as president and chief executive officer of Audience Rewards, an industrywide marketing alliance created by the major Broadway theater owners and national arts presenters to promote the development of new audiences and reward loyal patrons. He had previously spent nearly two decades working for Starwood and Hyatt in executive leadership roles focused on hotel marketing, customer relationship management, online marketing, and loyalty and membership programs. He led the successful rollout of the Starwood Preferred Guest program and the company's field marketing organization for online and customer relationship management. At Hyatt, he developed the first desk lamp with a built-in power outlet for the use of guests with laptops.



**BILL NAVAS '90** joined Digney York Associates, a full-service contractor for hotel renovations nationwide, as president in late June. Navas previously held senior positions at the Trump Organization, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, and Hospitality 3, a boutique hotel development and project management firm. Over the span of his 25-year career developing, building, and renovating high-end hospitality assets, he has been directly responsible for delivering projects including the Turnberry Resort and Golf Course in Scotland, the W Retreat and Spa in Vieques, Puerto Rico, the Sheraton Toronto, and the W Mexico City.



**HELEN SMITH '81** has been promoted to the position of chief customer experience officer of the Dorchester Collection, the first such appointment within the luxury hospitality industry, according to the company. She joined the Dorchester Collection in 2004 as director of sales and marketing and was promoted in 2007 to vice president of sales and marketing. For the past ten years, she has played a central role in the creation, development, and execution of the company's hotel brand.

## HONORS AND AWARDS



**ANDREA BONILLA '97** and **HANS PFISTER '96**, vice president and president, respectively, of Cayuga Sustainable Hospitality, won the 2017 National Geographic World Legacy Award, in the category of Earth Changers, for their Cayuga Collection hotels and lodges in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The award, which was presented at ITB Berlin in March, recognizes cutting-edge leadership in environmentally friendly business practices and green technology, from renewable energy and water conservation to zero-waste systems and carbon-emissions reduction. At Lapa Rios in Costa Rica, Cayuga also aids scientific research to protect highly endangered wild feline populations, provides environmental education to area children, and offers back-of-the-house tours to guests to showcase sustainability efforts. Other initiatives include plant-a-tree programs, electric carts, biogas production to reduce the use of propane, and a “dock-to-dish” pilot program connecting local fishermen with chefs to save ocean species.



**JACOB DUNN '06**, a private wealth advisor at Merrill Lynch, was named to *Forbes*'s first list of America's Top Millennial Advisors, ranking 31 out of 500 on the list. Dunn is a principal of the Dunn Group, a wealth management team within the Private Banking and Investment Group at the company, which he joined in 2008 as a trainee in wealth management. He began his career as a restaurant and beverage manager at the China Grill in the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.



**CHRISTINA SURIADJAJA, MMH**, chief strategy officer of Travelio, a company she cofounded at age 23, accepted the EY NextGen Award during the EY World Entrepreneur of the Year 2017 Forum in Monaco in June. The award highlights the entrepreneurial achievements of young successors to family business leadership. Travelio, a short-term home rental provider for the Indonesian domestic and inbound market, is an indirect subsidiary of PT Surya Semesta Internusa, her family's business, in which she is a third-generation member. Travelio offers more than 3,000 rental properties in 25 cities and aims to be Indonesia's top online alternative booking rental platform by the end of 2017. Also this year, *Forbes* named Suriadjaja to their 30 Under 30 Asia list in the category of retail and e-commerce.



**PETER YESAWICH '72, MS '74, PHD '76** was honored on March 1 as the recipient of the Destination and Travel Foundation's Spirit of Hospitality Award. The annual award recognizes exceptional dedication and commitment to the travel and tourism industry. Yesawich, a partner and vice chairman of MMGY Global, the leading integrated travel and marketing firm in the United States, is an oft-cited expert and frequent major-media commentator on the habits and preferences of American travelers. He has received a number of other significant awards and recognitions during his 40-plus-year career in hospitality, including the World Travel Award from the American Association of Travel Editors, the Koehl Award from the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIAI), the Silver Medal from the American Advertising Federation, a place on HSMIAI's list of 25 Most Extraordinary Marketing Minds, and listing in *Who's Who in America*.

## CAMPUS NOTABLES

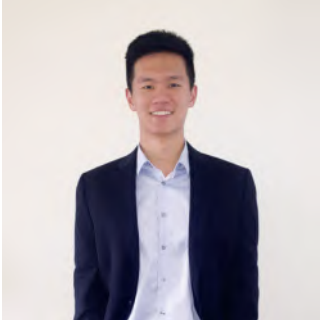
**SHERYL KIMES**, professor of services operations management, was presented with the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International's Vanguard Award for Lifetime Achievement in Revenue Management at the organization's Revenue Optimization Conference Americas on June 28. The award honors true innovators in the field of pricing and revenue optimization in the hospitality industry who have made substantive, enduring contributions to the betterment of the revenue management profession. Through her research, Kimes is credited with defining and establishing the business practice of hotel revenue management. At Cornell, she was named a Menschel Distinguished Teaching Fellow in 2014; she is also a visiting professor of decision sciences at the National University of Singapore School of Business.



**HEATHER KOLAKOWSKI '00, CIA '02**, a lecturer in food and beverage management and the faculty advisor to Hotel Ezra Cornell, was awarded one of Cornell's two 2017 Kaplan Family Distinguished Faculty Fellowships in April for her dedication to service learning. The Kaplan Award will allow her students in Hunger, Health, and Nonprofit Social Enterprise to create a long-term project with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier. The class, which Kolakowski said was inspired by the work of former SHA faculty member Therese O'Connor, will enhance students' skills and project management abilities while addressing the social challenges of food insecurity. O'Connor, the 2004 Kaplan Family Faculty Fellow, taught a course on hunger and housing issues for the poor.



**JACK HENRY KAPP '17, CAROLINA DE PAOLI '17**, Tara Oberoi '18 (AAP), and **GRANT BEHNKE '17** won this year's IHIF Student Case Competition, held March 6 during the International Hotel Investment Forum in Berlin. This year's teams were required to conduct a financial analysis of a complex hotel deal on a fictional upper-scale property in Amsterdam and recommend an investment approach, from offer amount to exit strategy. The SHA team was coached by Daniel Quan, the Robert C. Baker Professor in Real Estate and Arthur Adler '78 and Karen Newman Adler '78 Director of the Center for Real Estate and Finance, with assistance from faculty members Chekitan Dev, professor of services marketing, and Amy Newman, senior lecturer in management communication. Runners-up in the competition were the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne and Hotelschool the Hague.



**IAN CHU '19** has been selected as this year's recipient of the U.S. Travel Association's Meredith Travel Marketing Scholarship. He won the national competition with an essay about the service-dominant logic theorem and how it applies to the future of tourism marketing. His studies are focused on finance and accounting with a minor in real estate. Chu interned in finance at Major Food Group last summer and has spent the fall 2017 semester studying in Rome.



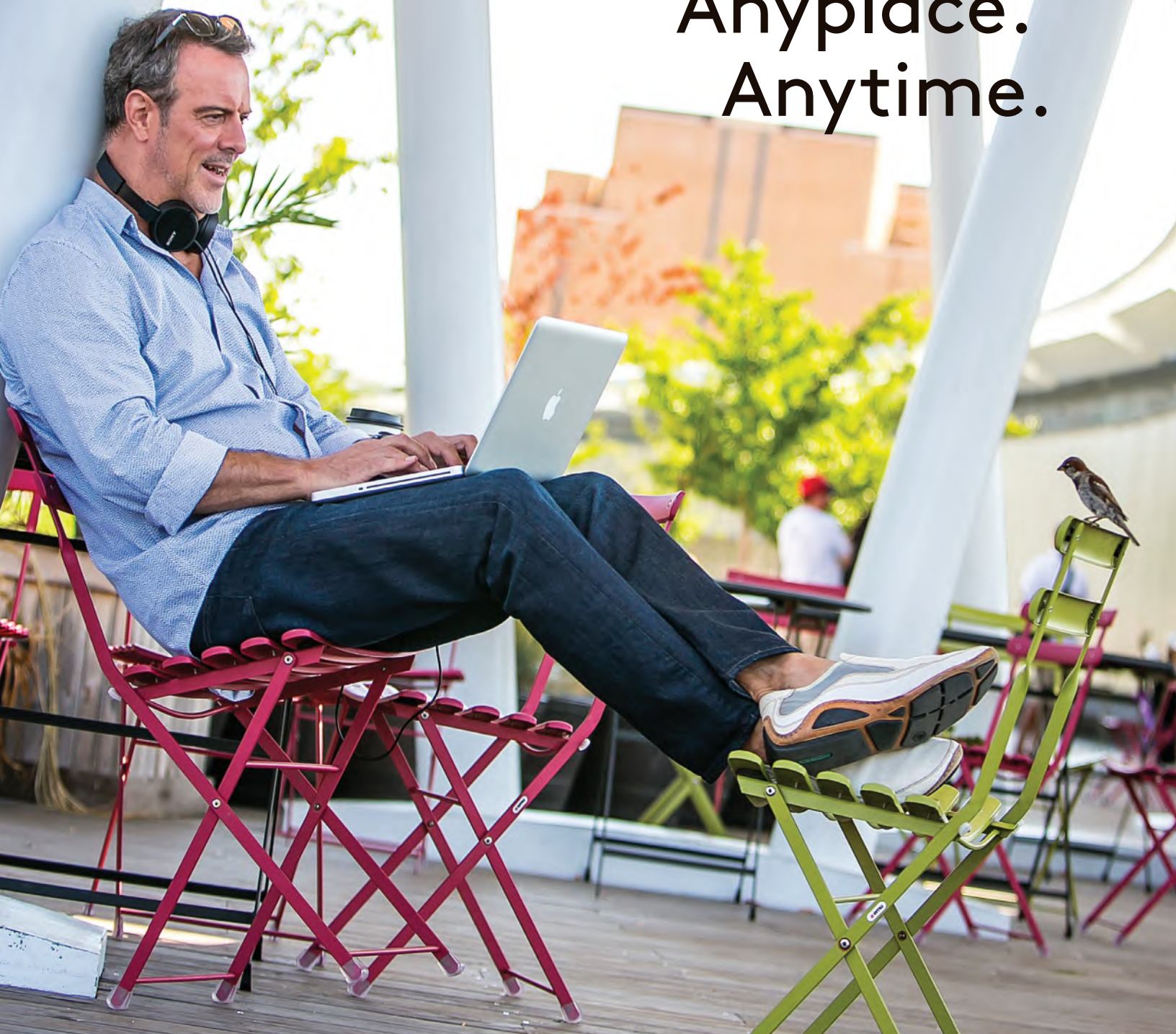
The team of **CAMERON KRANE '17**, **ARTURO RIQUELME '19**, and Mark Skoglund, Seth Urbanek, and Marie Guido-Miner, who are all CALS graduate students in viticulture and enology, won the Millesime competition hosted by the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne on June 3. The team, which was coached by **Cheryl Stanley '00**, lecturer in food and beverage management, made it to the finals in third place, tied for first place in the final round, and then won in an individual-elimination taste-off. This round was doubly blind, as the wines were served in black glasses.



**MATT GUARINI '18**, **SARA DEWITT '17**, and **WARNER HAZELL '17** won the ninth-annual Sciences Po International Tasting (SPIT), a blind tasting of wine and champagne held April 1 on the Sciences Po campus in Reims, France. The students competed against eleven teams from ESSEC Business School, the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne, the University of Oxford, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Paris-Saclay, the Ecole Normale Supérieure, the University of Saint Andrews, the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, the Université Panthéon-Assas, Agro Paris Tech, and Emlyon Business School. The team was coached by Cheryl Stanley.

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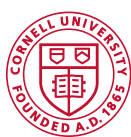
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**HOW ONE GROUP OF AMERICAN  
IMMIGRANTS BECAME A PHENOMENAL FORCE  
FOR HOSPITALITY**

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◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ *By Sandi Mulconry* ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

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**Dharmendra “D.J.” Rama, MMH ’96**, president and chief executive officer of AURO Hotels, grew up at his family’s Sunset Motel in Pomona, California. Every night, while his classmates watched television or played video games, he helped his mother clean rooms as his father picked up the truckers who, by contractual agreement, would fill the beds. Today, at the Greenville, South Carolina corporate headquarters of AURO, whose portfolio includes 40 Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt hotels, Rama displays photos from each of the 90-plus motels and hotels his family has owned. “I don’t want to forget the past,” he said.

For thousands of immigrant families who, like Rama’s, originated in the Indian state of Gujarat, the path to the American Dream led through roadside motels with such iconic mid-century names as the Sunset and the Starlite.

Gujarat, a textile and gem-cutting center on India’s western coast along the Arabian Sea, has a culture that prizes commerce and entrepreneurship. For centuries, its people had followed opportunity where it beckoned; oftentimes, that meant Africa. Starting in the 1950s and accelerating in the sixties and seventies, as civil unrest spread throughout the continent (Idi Amin expelled some 60,000 Indians from Uganda in 1972), many Gujaratis emigrated from Africa and India to the United States. “They left for a better life, both economically and in terms of the way they were treated,” said Jan deRoos, the Hotel School’s HVS Professor

of Hotel Finance and Real Estate.

Although most had professional degrees or had owned businesses, a lack of Western credentials limited their opportunities in most industries. One notable exception was the motel industry, where properties had fallen into foreclosure as owners grappled with the triple whammy of a recession, high gas prices resulting from the 1973 Arab oil embargo, and grown children who had little interest in taking over their parents’ businesses. As the Gujaratis were seeking affordable enterprises to buy, the banks were seeking buyers.

These properties, often in rural towns, satisfied the Gujaratis’ quest for an entrepreneurial opportunity. They required a small capital outlay (typically about 5,000 dollars for a down payment, which could be cobbled together with the help of family and friends) and provided a family residence at no additional cost. “Most of the time, the entire family—husband, wife, grown-up children, cousins—worked in the business, and they worked hard,” said Rohit Verma, dean of external relations at the Cornell SC Johnson College of Business and a Singapore Tourism Board Distinguished Professor in Asian Hospitality Management.

.....  
AURO Hotels’ North  
Charleston Marriott

As more people or resources were needed, owners looked to extended family and the Gujarati community for support. “The Gujarati hotel community rallies around each other,” said Binita Patel, MMH ’10, managing partner of HMB Hotels. “When a fellow hotel owner is in need, others help in any way they can—providing financing, giving advice, or using their extensive network to resolve the issue.”

The Gujaratis were further aided by their culture of hospitality. “In India, guests are revered when they come to your home,” said Has Mukh P. “H.P.” Rama, D.J.’s uncle and AURO Hotels’ chairman of the board. “So, despite their lack of experience in the hotel business, despite their being accidental hoteliers, despite the communication challenges they faced, the first generation was able to successfully run hotels because they had always welcomed guests. This is our culture.”

Within one generation, the Gujaratis expanded their purview from low-cost independent motels to branded properties, full-service hotels, and development and management companies. As their influence grew, they pushed franchisors to make “more economically rational decisions, taking into account the needs not only of hotel companies, which receive royalty fees based on revenues, but also franchisees, who get whatever’s left after everyone else has been paid,” said deRoos. Their success sparked its own term: the “Patel phenomenon” (“Patel” is a common Gujarati surname related to profession and caste). The Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), of which H.P. Rama was the founding chairman, now has more than 16,000 members, predominantly Gujarati, who own some 23,000 properties—almost one in every two hotels in the United States.

“Members of the first generation had limited resources and lacked access to wider networks within their adopted

.....  
D.J. Rama, MMH ’96, president and chief executive officer of AURO Hotels, and his uncle, H.P. Rama, AURO’s chairman of the board. Photo by Dave Burbank, Cornell Marketing Group





.....  
The lobby of AURO's  
Hyatt Regency in  
Greenville, South  
Carolina, the city where  
the company is based

country,” Verma said. “In contrast, members of the second generation attended top universities, like Cornell, and are much better connected. They’re able to create businesses that are larger in size and scope, and at a much higher level. They’re not just running

hotels—they’re creating REITs [real estate investment trusts] to invest in hotels, and companies that manage multiple hotels.”

Jay H. Shah ’90, chief executive officer of Hersha Hospitality Trust, a self-advised hospitality REIT, expects that trend to gain momentum. “Among my generation, I’m seeing less entrepreneurship in the owner-operator area and a lot more development in private equity and finance,” he said. “You’ll still have your entrepreneurs who go into restaurant hospitality and create a great chain of restaurants, or who own and operate a portfolio of hotels. But hotel real estate finance, where there’s an ability to have impact at scale, appears to be the growing area of interest.”

D.J. Rama, Binita Patel, and Jay H. Shah are just three of the dozens of second-generation members of Gujarati immigrant families who attended the Hotel School before assuming leadership roles in their family businesses. One day soon, the third generation will begin to make its mark—Rama’s son, Keval,

and Shah’s son, Avikar, are now SHA freshmen.

Here are these three Hotelie families’ American stories.

#### THE RAMAS AND AURO HOTELS

AURO Hotels is named for the three brothers who founded it in 1973: J.P. (D.J.’s father and AURO’s vice chairman), H.P., and M.P.

H.P. Rama came to the United States in 1969 to pursue an MBA at Xavier University in Cincinnati. His introduction to the hospitality industry was as a waiter for a Howard Johnson’s restaurant in Manhattan; thirteen years later, he would own four Howard Johnson motels. His first motel, purchased with 8,000 dollars of his own and 22,000 dollars that he borrowed from family and friends, was the Sunset. “I bought a motel before I bought a car,” he recalled. Not knowing anything about hotels, he convinced the seller to stay on for two weeks to train him. Next, he bought motels in Nashville and in Greenville, South Carolina and “foreclosed properties from banks that were undercapitalized, undermanaged, and undermarketed. That’s how we disproportionately

created value in a short period of time,” said Rama, who later shared some of his know-how with SHA students as an executive-in-residence at the school.

AURO Hotels went on to buy franchises and build properties throughout the Southeast and in California, Chicago, and—more recently—India. As is true of other Gujarati enterprises, D.J. Rama said, a key to AURO’s success was the owner-operator model—“the domino effect of the brothers starting the business and then adding value by reinventing the asset, affiliating with a stronger franchise brand, and operating the hotel efficiently.”

In the late 1980s, after seeing billboards and motel marquees advertising properties as “American-owned-and-operated,” H.P. Rama worked to establish AAHOA, both to counter bias and to raise Asians’ stature within the industry by providing training for other “accidental hoteliers.” He served as founding chairman from 1990 to 1993. Later, feeling the need to build bridges with the mainstream lodging industry, he became chairman of the American Hotel and Lodging Association, which in 2016 honored him with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

D.J. Rama worked for Holiday Inn Worldwide, Interstate Hotels, and the Marriott Corporation before entering Cornell’s MMH program. He recalls an AURO



benchmarking study that he conducted for a course taught by Cathy Enz, the Lewis G. Schaeneman, Jr. Professor of Innovation and Dynamic Management and a professor of strategy. “It required a lot of strategic thinking, and it provided a great road map,” he said, noting that, of the 40 hotels (with 7,024 rooms) that AURO now owns, just two are holdovers from back then.

Upon graduation, D.J. Rama joined AURO Hotels and held a variety of management positions before assuming the presidency in 2012. Shortly thereafter, he created the ONE (Outreach, Nurture, Encourage) initiative, a charitable-giving and volunteer arm of AURO focused on poverty relief and education. He also has worked to develop lifestyle hotels, focusing on “the little touches that create a competitor differentiation in the marketplace.” Another point of differentiation comes from the family nature of the business. “Our people really admire the family culture that’s alive in the company,” he said. “They know we genuinely care. I think guests sense that, too.”

D.J. Rama has maintained close ties to the Hotel School. A former board member of the Leland C. and Mary M. Pillsbury Institute for Hospitality Entrepreneurship, he currently serves on the Dean’s Advisory Board and as president of the Cornell Hotel Society of South Carolina. In 2013, he received the Cornell MMH Outstanding Alumnus of the Year Award.

The Rama family has had a lifelong dedication to education. In 2011, they founded AURO University, in Surat, Gujarat, whose offerings include a school of hospitality management. “An AURO degree prepares you



**ABOVE**  
Members of D.J. Rama’s family, from left: brother-in-law Nilesh Patel, uncle H.P. Rama, cousin Kamal Rama, cousin Swati Patel, mother Laxmi Rama, H.P.’s wife Gita Rama, Kamal’s wife Bindiya Rama, and father J.P. Rama, vice chairman of AURO Hotels

**LEFT**  
SHA freshman Keval D. Rama ’21 with his parents, Sapna Rama and D.J. Rama, MMH ’96



not just for a job; it prepares you for life,” said H.P. Rama in explaining the university’s value-based education. To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the brothers’ first motel purchase and to honor those who helped them along the way, they established the Rama Scholarship for the American Dream with an endowment of 1,000,001 dollars. (Gift amounts ending in “1” are considered auspicious in Indian culture.) Administered by the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Foundation, the fund supports study at thirteen hospitality management schools, including Cornell. The family also made a 250,000-dollar gift to the Hotel School to create the Hasmukh (H.P.) and Jayanti (J.P.) Rama Endowment Fund for Faculty and Industry Relations, to support industry immersion trips and other intensive learning and research opportunities for the school’s faculty. In recognition of the family’s generosity, a meeting room in the Marriott Student Learning Center has been named in honor of the two patriarchs.

#### THE PATELS AND HMB HOTELS

The first member of Binita Patel’s family to come to the United States was her maternal grandmother’s brother, in the late 1960s. In a little over a decade, he was followed by Patel’s grandmother, her mother and father (who had not yet married), and numerous other family members, all of whom lived in one huge apartment in Jersey City, New Jersey. After they married, her parents moved to Long Island to work at a pharmaceutical manufacturing company. By 1989, her father had saved up the funds to buy two Days Inn hotels in Asheville, North Carolina. “People would typically buy a 20-room motel and learn the business, then move up to bigger properties. My dad didn’t follow that path, whatsoever. He jumped in head-first with two 122-room properties, not knowing a thing about the hotel business. He didn’t even know what a folio was,” Patel said with a laugh.

Her parents lived at one hotel while Patel and her brother lived with relatives at the other hotel, where the school system was better. “By the second year, my dad, who always needed a new challenge, had bought two gas stations,” she said. That was followed in quick succession by a third gas station; two more

hotels, in Charlotte, North Carolina; and the family’s first development project—a Comfort Inn in Black Mountain, North Carolina.

#### LEFT

Binita Patel, MMH ’10, managing partner in HMB Hotels. Photo by Cristina Sullivan



#### ABOVE

HMB Hotels’ newest property, a Hilton Garden Inn in Springfield, New Jersey

Finding the Deep South “a bit more than they had bargained for” in terms of race relations, Patel said, her parents returned to the Northeast. In 1996, they opened a Holiday Inn Express in Allentown, Pennsylvania. “That’s where the magic happened,” she said. After selling their North Carolina properties, they reinvested the capital, opening three hotels in New Jersey and three more in Pennsylvania. Today, HMB Hotels owns and operates sixteen properties in New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, with another three in development.

Despite knowing from a young age that she wanted a career in hospitality, Patel followed her father’s advice to earn a business degree and studied international business and marketing at Drexel University. The summer after she graduated, the general manager of the Allentown Holiday Inn Express left, and Patel stepped in until a replacement could be found. “At 22, I was managing a property across from a theme park,” she said. “We were at 99- to 100-percent occupancy almost every day.” Although she characterizes it as “a great learning experience,” it made her realize that she wanted to be on the development and ownership side of the industry, not the operations side.

At the end of the summer, Patel went to New York and, as her father had done years earlier, jumped in head-first, taking on three public relations positions concurrently. Six months later, becoming disillusioned with both PR and living in New York, she accepted an invitation from her father to return to HMB and work with him on development projects. After the Great Recession hit, she set her sights on a graduate hospitality degree. “I only considered Cornell,” she said, “and it was the most amazing experience of my life.” She spent one semester in Ithaca, where

she met her husband, Jared Green, MMH '10, and one semester in Singapore, at Nanyang Technological University.

At the Hotel School, where she studied real estate finance and investment, Patel learned of career paths that she never knew existed. “In the hospitality industry, you can be so much more than an owner-operator—you can be a revenue manager, an asset manager, work on the brand side, work on the design side. I’d been an asset manager my entire life without realizing it,” she said. Bob Alter ’73, president of Seaview Investors, who taught an asset management class as an executive-in-residence, helped her connect the dots.

Her MMH in hand, Patel returned to New York (“This time, I liked living there!”) and took asset management positions with Beacon Hospitality Partners and Ramsfield Hospitality Finance.

In 2014, she rejoined HMB and reimmersed herself in the family business before moving to Miami, where Green was based. As an HMB managing partner, she has refinanced most of the company’s portfolio and diversified it by purchasing hotel loans and investing in tech funds and fast-casual restaurants; handled asset management; and sought development opportunities for the company in South Florida.

Earlier this year, Patel concluded a three-year term as young-professional director of AAHOA. (“I got involved because I wanted to replicate the types of events and speakers offered by the Hotel School,” she said.) She was a translator and tour guide for AAHOA’s 2007 delegation to India, and she received AAHOA’s Future Hotelier of the Year Award the next year.

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The Patel family celebrates Binita’s marriage to Jared Green, MMH ’10. Flanking the couple are her brother, Manan; his fiancée, Shama Amin; her mother, Tina; and her father, Atul.

#### THE SHAHS AND HERSHA HOTELS AND RESORTS

Named for Jay H. Shah’s mother, Hersha Hotels and Resorts had its roots in real estate, not motels. Shah’s father, a chemical engineer who came to the United States from Bombay at eighteen to attend college, first bought houses in foreclosure and renovated and rented them. Next came garden apartments. “By the time we bought our first motel (the Starlite, near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), my father, a self-taught real estate entrepreneur, realized that the hospitality industry had a unique advantage—it provided an operating business stacked on top of a real estate business,” Shah said.

The Starlite, an eleven-unit fixer-upper, was followed by the Red Rose Motel, in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania and, in 1985, by Hersha’s first full-service hotel, the Riverfront Inn, in Harrisburg, which took longer than expected to turn around. “There were some very, very lean years there, some scary times,” Shah recalled. He worked in housekeeping, at the front desk, and at the Riverfront’s restaurant before attending the Hotel School, where he found the entry-level classes “eye-opening.” “After growing up in this entrepreneurial style of lodging business and then, as a freshman, hearing the big talk at Cornell, I was left wondering, ‘Is this the same industry?’” he said with a laugh. At the Hotel School, he learned the importance of being information-led: how “bringing

background, best practices, and peer practices to bear on a decision creates far more efficient execution.”

One summer, applying his new-found insights, he established the Riverfront Inn’s first sales office and secured contracts from associations headquartered in Harrisburg, the state capital. “That was an interesting time in Hersha’s development, because we were melding this very enterprising entrepreneurial spirit, this fiercely independent spirit, that my parents had with more of an institutional approach to the lodging business,” Shah said.

Feeling the need “to do something a bit different” after he graduated, he went to Capitol Hill to work as a legislative assistant to the late Senator John Heinz (R-Pennsylvania), and then to Temple University, where he earned a joint JD/MBA degree. He





then practiced law for a few years before founding a boutique real estate, construction, and corporate law practice in Philadelphia. In 1998, he returned to Hersha to take the company public and to develop a new focus on urban markets.

Hersha has since grown to encompass three entities: Hersha Hospitality Management, a hotel management, investment, and development firm; Hersha Purchasing and Design, a hotel furniture, fixtures, and equipment distributor; and Hersha Hospitality Trust, a New York Stock Exchange-listed REIT of which Shah is chief executive officer and his brother and partner, Neil, is president and chief operating officer. Hersha Hospitality Trust owns 57 hotels and is valued at 2.5 billion dollars; Hersha Hospitality Management manages 121 hotels.

Shah attributes Hersha's success to its focus on innovation and its capital allocation and portfolio management strategies. "We were a small company when we became a real estate investment trust back in 1999," he said. "People, including those at the Hotel School, thought we were crazy to go public. But having access to public capital, as difficult as it was in the early years, has allowed us to build a very high-quality and differentiated portfolio."

Hersha was at the forefront of the move to bring select-service hotels to urban areas, building New York

City's first Hampton Inn in 2003. "The conventional wisdom was that a Hampton Inn in New York would command a fifteen- or 20-percent premium over its roadside equivalents," Shah said, "while my brother and I believed we could price it at a fifteen- or 20-percent discount from its full-service peers in the marketplace. The gap between those assumptions is significant." The brothers were proven right, and today Hersha owns fifteen select-service hotels in New York and several others in Washington, D.C., Boston, and Los Angeles.

Those four coastal gateway cities, along with Philadelphia, Miami, and Seattle—"areas that Neil and I believed, early on, would benefit disproportionately from the megatrends of globalization, urbanization, and digitization"—make up Hersha's cluster strategy. Within each of those clusters, "we own and operate everything from three-star to five-star hotels, which gives us insights into these markets that we can leverage to the benefit of our portfolio," Shah said. The innovation submarket has been of particular interest: Hersha has sited hotels in or near such areas as the Seaport Innovation District in Boston, Silicon Alley in New York, Silicon Beach and Playa Vista in Los Angeles, Silicon Valley in the Bay Area, and South Lake Union in Seattle to cater to the tastes of innovation- and tech-sector business guests.

The company also introduced its own brand, the Independent Collection, "to develop or acquire hotels that are situated in the most interesting neighborhoods of its strategic gateway markets

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Jay H. Shah '90, chief executive officer of Hersha Hospitality Trust, with Sapna Bhatt, director of programs and development, in his Philadelphia office.  
Photo by Jim Roese



## LEFT

Jay H. Shah '90  
at the Rittenhouse  
in Philadelphia.  
Photo by Jim Roesse

and can be positioned to deliver a unique local lifestyle experience,” Shah said. Today, independent hotels make up a third of Hersha’s portfolio.

Decades after graduating, Shah continues to reap almost daily benefits from his Hotel School education. “The number of Hotelies I come across in leadership positions, and the value of that network, is incalculable,” he said. He serves on the Dean’s Advisory Board and has addressed the freshman class in the Dean’s Distinguished Lecture Series. Additionally, his company is an industry fellow of the Center for Real Estate and Finance. In 2007, Shah received the Cornell Hospitality Innovator Award. This past year, he pledged 1.625 million dollars to establish the Hersha Center School of Hotel Administration Endowment; the gift included matching funds from the SC Johnson Challenge and provided 125,000 dollars for the school’s annual fund. In recognition of the gift, SHA’s experiential learning space on the second floor of Statler Hall was dedicated on September 21 as the Hersha Center in honor of his parents, Hersha H. and Hasu P. Shah, founders of Hersha Hotels and Resorts.

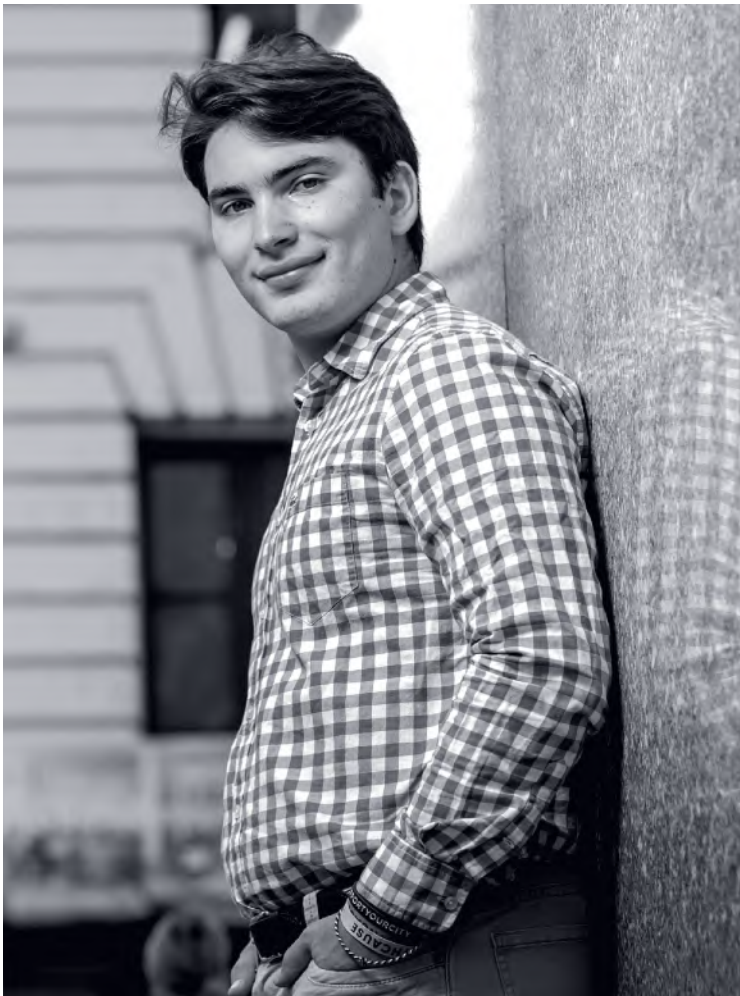
Looking ahead, Rohit Verma believes the Gujarati experience may be at a tipping point. “We saw the rapid rise of the first generation because there was a large influx of individuals with similar backgrounds, all coming from countries where they had a home base. They lost that base, but in starting new businesses in the United States, they created a big community of entrepreneurs. As the second generation responds to changes within the industry, they’ll have to decide how they want to evolve,” he said, noting that he wouldn’t be surprised if they become more individualistic and function less as a group, in much the same way as many other second-generation immigrant families from various cultures have done. Regardless, H.P. Rama expects the Gujaratis’ “tremendous success rate in hotel ownership” to continue unabated. “There’s no relenting,” he said. “Success breeds success.”



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The Shah family celebrates the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Hersha's founders. From left are Neil H. Shah, president and chief operating officer of Hersha Hospitality Trust and Jay's brother; Neil's wife, Juhi Saigal-Shah; Jay's daughter, Aryana; Neil's daughter, Simrin; Hasu P. and Hersha H. Shah; Neil's son, Arhan; Jay's son and Aryana's twin, Avikar '21; and Susie and Jay Shah.



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# FOUR DEGREES OF INSPIRATION

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BY DICK ANDERSON

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A good idea can spring from just about anywhere. For Rob Karp '19, the notion of starting his own travel business came after years of managing his father's frequent flyer points. Kobina Ansah '08 saw the difficulties facing overseas students in accessing credit in the United States and responded with a product to meet their need. Harsha Chanrai, MMH '14 resolved to replace despair with opportunity by teaching hospitality skills to locals in economically challenged regions. And working on a destination-branding project with a group of MMH students inspired Ethan Hawkes '07, MBA '10 to develop a novel approach to customizing a world of travel experiences.

Clockwise from upper left:  
Rob Karp '19, photo by  
Jesse Winter; Harsha Chanrai,  
MMH '14, photo by Matt Dayka;  
Kobina Ansah '08, photo by  
Jesse Winter; Ethan Hawkes '07,  
MBA '10, photo by Caitlynn  
Ramsey, MMH '09.



## Rob Karp '19 Founder and CEO MilesAhead

When it came to starting his own business, Rob Karp was miles ahead of his peers. He was all of fourteen when he turned his passion for airlines and his prowess for numbers into a travel consulting company. “I became interested in helping my dad with his business travel,” he recalled, and that quickly spilled over to other family members and friends as well. His parents suggested turning it into a business. “I didn’t like the idea at first,” he said, “but I was getting a lot of encouragement from others.”

Karp took 600 dollars he had earned refereeing soccer games as a high-school freshman and bankrolled the entire venture, founding Karp Enterprises, LLC in November 2012. As his enterprise spread its wings, he rebranded the company as MilesAhead (milesahead.co), which he calls

“a high-end travel concierge that focuses on helping people optimize their points and develop unbelievable experiences.”

### ABOVE

An ad for MilesAhead appears on the electronic billboard behind Rob Karp in Times Square.

Redeeming is believing. In partnership with Valerie Wilson Travel and Virtuoso, a luxury travel network, MilesAhead sold more than three million dollars’ worth of travel and redeemed more than 25 million frequent-flyer points in 2016, and the company is on pace to continue its year-to-year trajectory of 100-percent growth.

From the outset, MilesAhead was tailored to meet its clients’ needs. Whether it’s Snapchat, Instagram, or texting, Karp and his team of luxury travel advisors “will use whichever communication tool is best for our customers,” he said, adding, “Our business is driven by a computer and a phone.” Of his ten-member crew, five are enrolled at Cornell. “Most of them are part-time, working ten to fifteen hours a week.” Karp himself logs 40 hours or more a week, even during the school year.

Midway through college, he is balancing the demands of growing his company—which has worked with over 500 unique customers, from individuals to families to businesses—and furthering his education. (His courses this fall include Airline Service and Operations Management and a class in intercultural communication, and he plans to

study in Europe next semester.) Karp and his team are working with Cornell’s eLab, an intensive student business accelerator located in Collegetown, to scale and grow MilesAhead “from a service business to a technology-powered service business,” he said. “My vision is to become a leading brand in the hospitality industry with a fantastic company culture and a mission focused on positively impacting the lives of our customers.”

Over the last several years, Karp has been the subject of admiring profiles on *Fortune.com* and *Forbes.com*. (“We’ll do anything from planning a seventeen-day safari to getting someone from New York to Los Angeles tomorrow night using only points,” Karp told *Forbes* writer Allen Adamson.)

As he summed it up, “We’re in the business of helping people with their leisure time, which is a resource you can’t get back.” Spoken like an old soul—and a fast learner.

**Harsha Chanrai, MMH '14**  
**Founder and CEO**  
**Saira Hospitality**

As Harsha Chanrai sees it, hospitality and humanity can go hand in hand—and she can provide great service for her guests while doing a great service to the community. While traveling in the Maldives in 2010 for her job as director of marketing at the Six Senses Residences, she came to the conclusion that the hospitality industry was not always making the best use of its native employees and that they were often treated differently than their foreign-born counterparts. While working at a luxury hotel in Sri Lanka, she also found that the lack of career opportunities was forcing many at-risk youth there to turn to the sex and drug trades out of desperation. There had to be a better solution—one that would benefit not only the locals but the luxury hotel industry as well.

Through Saira, Chanrai aims to create opportunity and stability in the service industry by providing hospitality training to less privileged locals and thereby fulfilling the needs of hotel operators who are looking for highly trained and motivated local hospitality professionals. At the end of 2015, Saira launched its first pilot school in South Central Los Angeles at A Place Called Home, a safe haven for underserved youth. There, Chanrai, who has an undergraduate degree in media and cultural studies from the London Institute, spent four hours a week teaching hospitality to a handful of students who had never set foot inside a hotel. Following the eight-week course, several received employment offers from luxury properties including the W Hotel.

Last fall, in partnership with Bunkhouse Hotels, Saira created a nine-week pop-up hotel school and enrolled 48 locals in the small Mexican town of Todos Santos. Of the 42 students who graduated, all but two now work in hospitality, and Bunkhouse was able to fill 25 positions at the Hotel San Cristóbal.

“This is a new way of hiring and making an impact in the community,” said Chanrai, whose concept for Saira Hospitality won

the 2014 Cornell Hospitality Business Plan Competition. “Now there are other forms of sustainable hiring instead of poaching from competitors or flying in talent from overseas.”

Chanrai hopes to build a permanent hotel school and resort in the not-too-distant future, but for now she is focused on her second pop-up school, which is teaching hospitality and English to 70 students in partnership with Costa Palmas Los Cabos, a master-planned community in Los Cabos, Baja California Sur. Plans for this exclusive resort community along the Sea of Cortez include a Four Seasons Resort and Residences, she said.

“Our mission is that the luxury and lifestyle hospitality industry will look to community education in hospitality as a long-term solution for sourcing talented, loyal, and ambitious employees,” Chanrai said in announcing the new venture. “Together, we will be able to provide high-quality education and a lifetime of opportunities for our students.”

Harsha Chanrai. Photo  
by Matt Dayka



**Ethan Hawkes '07, MBA '10**  
**Cofounder and CEO**  
**PlacePass**

After seven years at McKinsey and Company, junior partner Ethan Hawkes was on a solid career path and receiving “encouraging feedback” about his future. But with the soul of an entrepreneur, he set out to create his own adventure: PlacePass ([placepass.com](http://placepass.com)), a platform that brings “great things to do in any destination” to travelers around the world under a single aggregator—an Airbnb, so to speak, for the experience-seeker.

Those experience-seekers now include Marriott International’s 100 million-plus loyalty members. Marriott recently led PlacePass’s twelve-million-dollar Series A round of venture capital funding and launched Marriott Moments ([moments.marriott.com](http://moments.marriott.com)) powered by PlacePass.

“This is one of the final frontiers of travel that hasn’t been digitized,” said Hawkes, who cofounded PlacePass in February 2016 with chief brand officer Emily Bernard, who had previously worked at *Foreign Policy* magazine doing “nation-branding” campaigns with

foreign governments. “It felt like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, both in terms of the market and from a personal perspective,” said Hawkes.

As part of his Johnson MBA studies, Hawkes also had an encounter with nation-branding when he helped Rob Kwortnik, an associate professor of services marketing in the Hotel School, to lead a project by a group of MMH students to develop destination branding for the nation of Zambia. He encountered some “pretty amazing” vacation experiences, from walking-safari tours to hang-gliding over Victoria Falls—and saw an opportunity to create a digital platform to highlight activities like those.

According to Hawkes, less than one-third of all travel experiences are transacted online, but he expects that number to more than double within five years. PlacePass offers over 100,000 experiences—aggregated from partners including Urban Adventures, TripAdvisor, and GoBe—“far beyond what I thought possible when starting the business,” he said. “Anyone can go online anywhere in the world on PlacePass.”

For every booking made, PlacePass donates one dollar to EGBOK, the nonprofit organization founded by Ben Justus '08 to provide vocational training in hospitality to at-risk Cambodian youth. “It’s a win-win partnership where, as we grow, they grow. EGBOK has incredible impact preparing youth for careers in hospitality,” said Hawkes, who has a team of twelve data engineers working in Cambodia for PlacePass.

One challenge for PlacePass is making the platform itself a destination. But website traffic is steadily growing, and the newlywed Hawkes (whose wife, Caitlynn Ramsey, MMH '09, helps manage her family’s hotels in New England) is confident that his site offers a compelling value proposition for travelers. “People are spending more on experiences now than on material things,” he said. “Both younger and older generations find more happiness in experiences than in buying, say, another handbag.”

Ethan Hawkes and Ghim Chuan Chia, MMH '10 enjoy a guided canoe trip in Zambia in March 2010.





Kobina Ansah shows off his new credit card in his co-working space in New York City. Photo by Jesse Winter

### Kobina Ansah '08 Cofounder and CEO Credit Without Borders and ModernLend

Growing up in Ithaca, Kobina Ansah earned spending money by cutting his neighbor's lawn. That neighbor happened to be Jan deRoos, the Hotel School's HVS Professor of Hotel Finance and Real Estate. "That was one of my earliest entrepreneurial ventures," said Ansah.

Ansah's parents, who came from Ghana, West Africa, have a strong entrepreneurial history, so the son felt compelled to follow suit. He noted that his mother, who owns Alta Spa in downtown Ithaca, was one of the people who inspired him to pursue an SHA degree. Later, while pursuing his MBA at Wharton, he heard about the difficulty that some of his classmates were having getting access to traditional credit cards, which require a Social Security number or a U.S. credit history. "Because traditional banks have relied upon the U.S. FICO score for 30 years, these customers are virtually invisible," he observed.

ModernLend, the online lending company that Ansah cofounded in 2014, aims to remedy that. In a 2015 global fintech competition sponsored by multinational Spanish banking group BBVA, ModernLend beat

out 650 other startups and gained welcome international exposure. The next year, the team won a second international fintech competition, this one hosted by *Wired* magazine, further enhancing their global presence. Last fall, using alternative data metrics such as education, employment history, financial transactions, and behavioral data to evaluate its customers, the firm introduced its first credit card, which is fully customized for international students aged 21 or older. Los Angeles-based City National Bank, which "seeks to become the bank of choice for multicultural clients," according to its website, serves as ModernLend's lending partner.

"As a Hotelie for Life, I think that our approach to serving our customers takes a little bit more of a hospitality approach," Ansah said, adding, "I try to give a white-glove experience to our customers when onboarding them into our system." That experience begins with a welcome message in sixteen languages on the company's sister website, Credit Without Borders ([creditwithoutborders.com](http://creditwithoutborders.com)), and includes financial education tips on the company blog and customized content tailored to customers' demographics.

After graduating from the Hotel School, Ansah took a job in the real estate transactions group at Ernst and Young in Los

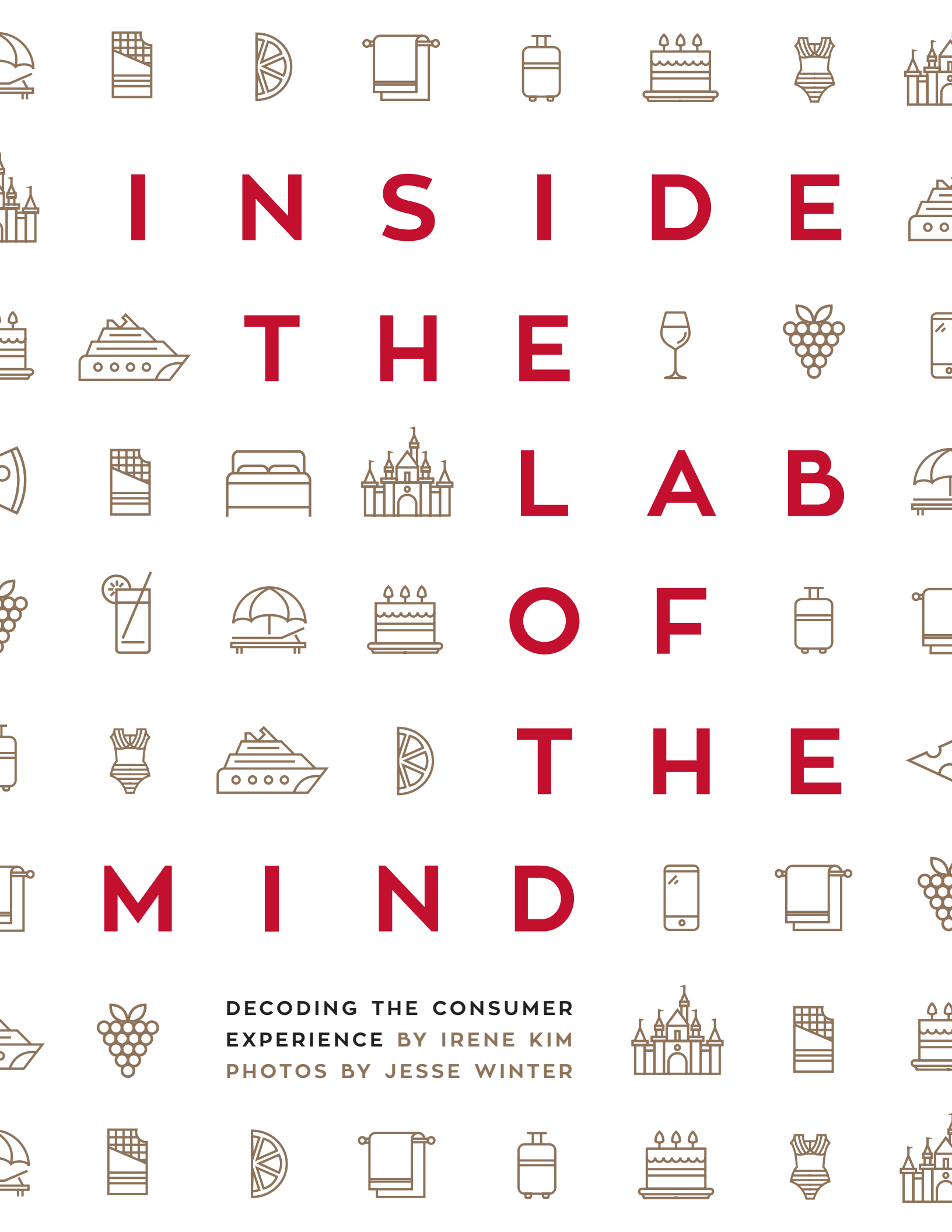
Angeles. He subsequently worked in the hospitality finance group at Wells Fargo in Washington, D.C., where he underwrote over a billion dollars' worth of specialty-lending loans. "It was cool getting to be part of such large projects, but I didn't feel a direct connection to my customer base," he said.

Through his new venture, Credit Without Borders, Ansah hopes to turn his budding clientele into customers for life by adding other financial services, beginning this fall with auto loans.

"As we learned at the Hotel School, a typical day is customers first," he said, adding wryly, "Unfortunately for us, a lot of college students lose their credit cards." ♥



DICK ANDERSON is a writer and editor based in Los Angeles. His parents met as graduate students at Cornell in 1954.



# INSIDE THE LAB OF THE MIND

DECODING THE CONSUMER  
EXPERIENCE BY IRENE KIM  
PHOTOS BY JESSE WINTER

**QUESTION:**

What do dark chocolate, reused towels, and Bugs Bunny have in common?

**ANSWER:**

They're keywords in the research of Hotel School associate professors Kathy LaTour and Helen Chun, two thought leaders who specialize in consumer marketing—specifically, in the roles played by experience, memory, and perception.

**The human mind** is a mysterious landscape where memory and experience collide—where emotion and sensation affect recall and recollection shapes perception. Both Chun and LaTour have devoted much of their research to exploring how myriad factors interact to form the consumer experience—the main driver of consumer behavior.

**BACK TO THE FUTURE**

For example, hospitality providers can influence consumers' feelings about their services before, during, and after the delivery of a service such as a trip or a hotel stay, noted Chun. "A lot of hospitality companies have focused on what you need to do during delivery—how to make people

happy while they're at your hotel, at your theme park, or on your cruise ship," she said. "But the paradigm I'm trying to expand is: how can you begin consumers' excitement about the experience *before* they come in?"

While a movie might last only a couple of hours, or a trip might last only a few days, providers can affect consumers' perceptions throughout the pre- to post-event continuum. "From anticipation-boosting practices before, to managing your memories afterward to make them more favorable, I look at a dynamic span of stages," she said.

Carefully selected and packaged information can heighten consumers' anticipation of an event. Disney sends customized content to customers weeks before they arrive, and

Hilton provides patrons with an app that shows them real views from available rooms. "You can bring a lot of service delivery before they get there, maximizing positive emotions before they arrive," Chun said.

Most recently, Chun has been investigating the use of virtual reality (VR) as a communication tool. She's excited about new opportunities that VR technology presents to hospitality marketers to create more engaging and immersive pre-consumption experiences. "I am looking at when VR can really enhance the experience beforehand, and also asking when it may unexpectedly backfire and undermine the consumer experience," she said.

"When you're able to make people savor their upcoming experience and make

them attentive to their positive emotions before the event, that can influence the actual experience as it's unfolding," said Chun. "All these positive moments that they've reflected on beforehand are triggered and integrated into how they actually enjoy the event while they experience it. Because they get to enjoy the experience more, it also creates a more enjoyable memory in retrospect."

#### REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST...THAT NEVER HAPPENED

Memories are surprisingly malleable, as it turns out. In her award-winning 1999 dissertation, LaTour, who is the school's Banfi Professor of Wine Education and Management, was the first consumer researcher to demonstrate that marketing can actually change people's memories.

"Prior to that, everyone thought that memory for an experience was like a videotape that you had stored in your brain—you just had to find the right cue to call it up, and that memory would be basically intact," she explained. "My research introduced the idea of reconstructive memory: every time we recall something, it's going to be different from how we actually experienced it.

"And marketers, through the way they communicate with consumers, can alter the way that consumers remember," she continued, and not just specific details, either. "They can suggest things that never actually happened in the consumer experience and get people to think that they had that experience."

In one study, participants tasted a sample of orange juice, then saw advertising describing it as fresh-squeezed and flavorful. Even some individuals given samples adulterated with vinegar, water, and salt used the ad's positive wording to describe the juice. When subsequently given five samples of juice ranging in quality from very good to very bad and asked to identify the same juice they had tasted earlier, some of these participants picked the best-quality sample—because the ad had made them "remember" having tasted a flavorful sample.

It's the stuff of science-fiction thrillers. A study that LaTour conducted with eyewitness-testimony expert Elizabeth Loftus demonstrated the chilling power of suggestion in revising memories. By showing participants an ad suggesting the event, she said, "We could get them to remember, as a child under the age of ten, meeting and shaking hands with Bugs Bunny in a Disney park." (Bugs Bunny works for Warner Brothers. He wouldn't be caught dead at Disney.)

"People had very clear memories of that experience, and they reported very detailed recollections: how excited they were to finally shake his hand, and how it felt," said LaTour. "They had vivid recollections of something that never could have happened, and it was only possible because of the ad they saw that suggested this experience."

Sensory inputs, such as the visual cues in the orange-juice and Disney ads, can be key to shaping people's memories. "A thing like the visual aspect of the false information is really important, because that creates an image in consumers' minds that they really had the experience."

Of course, LaTour doesn't advise marketers to try to manipulate people's memories. Rather, she suggests that people be aware that their recollections can be faulty.

We forget a lot more information than we think, said LaTour, and service providers should be particularly mindful to create experiences that, from beginning to end, are positive and memorable. In one research project, she worked closely with Pizza Hut





U.K. to design a consumer experience that would better stick in customers' minds—and it translated to stronger sales.

#### ONE FOR YOU, ONE FOR ME

Hospitality companies can also make their consumer experience more memorable by carefully planning their strategies for complimentary gifts, said Chun. Is the consumer visiting the area for the first time, or the tenth? Is it a routine trip or a birthday or anniversary? “I advise service companies to think carefully about consumers' individual goals, motivations, and what they want while they are there,” she said.

For “mundane” visits, Chun advises giving experiential gifts, such as free snorkeling, drinks, dinner, or a day tour. “That can heighten an otherwise ordinary experience and increases happiness,” she said.

To commemorate a special event or first-time visit, a well thought-out keepsake can be a winner. “You want to make it a

little more memorable by making it tangible,” said Chun. “Consumers are willing to let go of heightening their experience in favor of a meaningful, material gift as a salient reminder of the cherished experience.”

Service providers can benefit from tailoring their offerings to specific consumer segments, too. Take participation in “green” or pro-social programs: some hotel visitors love being asked to opt out of having their linens changed every day and voluntarily participate. “These consumers experience a feeling of ‘warm glow,’” explained Chun. In turn, they are more satisfied with the service provider that offers it. Interestingly, incentivizing participation with “other-benefiting” or “pro-social” initiatives, such as donating to a charity or a local shelter, further increases customers' “warm glow,” because now their actions not only benefit the environment but also contribute to the community the charity serves.

But what about a consumer who doesn't want to participate—say, a business-class

traveler who sees re-used towels as shoddy service? Offering a green program as the only option may

seem judgmental to a nonparticipant, who may downgrade his or her opinion of the business. To counteract this effect, Chun and coauthor Michael Giebelhausen, an assistant professor in the Hotel School, suggest throwing different incentives into the mix, such as “self-benefiting” free-drink coupons or loyalty points. “They can pass up the drink coupon or loyalty points and justify their lack of participation in the green program,” she explained. “They use that incentive as an excuse to say no to the green program without harming their ego.”

To complicate matters, green-program fans often feel quite unhappy about self-benefiting incentives. “I want to reuse my towels two or three times because I am a good citizen and want to take care of the planet, but now you are giving me cash or

Helen Chun greets Lauren Leizman '19 in the Marriott Student Learning Center. Josie Strang '18 is at left.

## BELOW

Kathy LaTour in her office in Statler Hall

loyalty points, which questions my integrity!” Chun said. “That dilutes their intrinsic motivation of ‘I’m a good citizen.’”

Analyzing data from the J.D. Power Satisfaction Index confirmed this insight: compensating hotel guests who participated in the towel reuse program with loyalty points actually decreased their satisfaction. “Fundamentally, people are motivated to maintain a positive self-image. When you provide consumers with a mixed bundle that has both self- and other-benefiting options, the green-program participants selectively focus on other-benefiting elements, nonparticipants selectively focus on self-benefiting elements, and both are happy—an ideal outcome for managers,” said Chun.

## TONGUES WITH PERFECT PITCH

Understanding different groups and their preferences is a central thread of some of LaTour’s recent research. Take supertasters, for example. Constituting about one-fourth of the population, these folks are genetically predisposed to experience a heightened,

sometimes intolerable bitterness from foods that most others find unobjectionable or even palatable, like dark-roasted coffee, dark chocolate, kale, green tea, or grapefruit.

In taste tests, supertasters tend to prefer sweeter drinks and eschew the many foods they find unpleasant. As a result, they can exhibit greater product loyalty than non-supertasters. “Our hypothesis is that they’re sensitive, and there are so many things they might not like, that when they *do* find something they like, they tend to stick with it,” explained LaTour. “They’re an important segment that marketers should understand because, one, if you get them, they’ll be more loyal to you, and two, how they taste and the tastes they like are very different from the other 75 percent of the population.”

Are supertasters natural experts in a profession that requires a discerning palate? Can they ignore marketing “noise” and withstand memory manipulation? LaTour began looking at wine experts, primarily to explore the question of revisionary memories.

“I started investigating at what point



people disregard marketing misinformation and rely on their own experience,” she said, adding that this is basically the definition of an expert. (As it turns out, while many supertasters end up as wine experts, there are also non-supertaster wine experts. Both groups require intensive training.)

“That’s how I got into the wine world,” noted LaTour, who has completed sommelier certification. With hundreds of thousands of labels, wine is a highly differentiated product with confusing marketing descriptors like “cigar box,” “laser-like,” “steely,” and “flamboyant.” “I wanted an ambiguous product, but one with lots of levels of consumers ranging from very novice to very expert, with a lot in between.”

That includes a big group called aficionados, who claim greater wine knowledge and more reliance on their own experience but tend to be even more swayed than novices by marketing. “We looked at ways in which to help people out,” LaTour said. “We provided them with some language that helped them give a more tangible description of their experience.” In a similar vein, some of LaTour’s recent endeavors address ways to help consumers retain and understand more about their taste experiences for various foods, such as wine, coffee, chocolate, and beer.

For the classroom, LaTour developed a wine-marketing course that she has taught for several years now to Hotel, Johnson, Dyson, and CALS viticulture and enology students. “Cornell students are all very engaging and they like to talk. It’s been good to get people from different parts of the university to talk to each other.”

A certified Master of Champagne, LaTour has developed a special field trip with Richy Petrina ’01, the private client director at Moët Hennessy USA. Last spring, she and her students had the opportunity to tour five houses in Champagne, an opportunity she hopes to offer students again in 2018 as a bridging experience between two courses she has planned, a seven-week wine-marketing class and a seven-week luxury-marketing class.

#### HOW THINGS WORK IN THE REAL WORLD

A current research challenge for both LaTour and Chun is relating experimental findings to practical application in the industry. LaTour recently teamed with the Dr. Konstantin Frank winery in New York’s Finger Lakes region to investigate the effect of music on the consumer experience, pairing custom-composed music with wine tastings. Collecting data without disturbing the customer experience has been a challenge, however—while some participants love the idea of providing feedback, others don’t appreciate the intrusion. The researchers have adjusted their survey design to better accommodate the customer.

Chun considers real-life studies to be more relevant than online or laboratory research, but agreed, “It is challenging to find an organization that is willing to work closely with you to implement experimental studies in real settings and use their consumers as the participants.” Even though some companies are happy to provide data sets or even collaborate in a field study, coordinating the elements can be difficult.

In one real-life study, Chun and a colleague from Human Ecology studied consumer response to noise mitigation at Saigon Kitchen, a popular—and noisy—downtown Ithaca restaurant. “We replaced the ceiling with a sound-absorbent material and approached consumers before and after the intervention,” she said. The quieter environment increased their taste perception as well as their intentions to return.

Chun, who has received multiple teaching awards, finds cutting-edge research invaluable for her classroom teaching. “I believe that teaching and research are two cornerstones of academic knowledge that strengthen each other. I enjoy having students learn how researchers in the field approach the problem at hand but, more importantly, how the new scientific knowledge advances our approaches to evolving market issues.”

Over the years, Chun has focused on relating academic theories of marketing

and consumer behavior to real-life issues that students will address in their careers as marketers, business leaders, and creators of public policy. “I bring real-life marketing issues to the classroom so that students have hands-on experiences with which to build their analytical and creative mindset during the semester.”

As an example of a rich academia-industry partnership, LaTour, who worked at a market research firm prior to earning her PhD, mentions her collaboration with Gerald Zaltman in Harvard Business School’s Mind of the Market lab. “We had a consortium of companies that were interested in brain science research; he was the interface between the CEOs and CMOs and the academics,” she said. “It was great preparation for me to be here at the Hotel School, because that’s what we need to do: find that bridge between what we do in our lab studies with the students and show how that relates to how consumers actually behave in the real world.” ■



IRENE KIM is an Albany, New York-based freelance writer who considers herself a longtime member of the extended Cornell family.



# Spreading Happiness, One Lyft at a Time

BY SANDI MULCONRY  
PHOTOS BY MATT DAYKA

When John Zimmer '06 was a boy, he thought seriously enough about becoming a magician to attend magic camp one summer. "There was nothing better than seeing the look on people's faces when I performed a small trick, and I loved making people happy," he remembered. As a teenager, while working as a telephone operator at a local Hyatt Regency, he strove "to make each guest's experience a little better. If someone called with a broken light and I heard kids in the background, I'd send up milk and cookies."



Flash forward two decades, and Zimmer is still creating shared moments of happiness. But now he does it on a much larger scale, through Lyft, the nation's fastest-growing ridesharing company, which he founded with Logan Green in 2012 and now serves as president. As of June, Lyft was facilitating more than one million rides a day across 49 states—the largest coverage area of any rideshare service. In October, Lyft raised one billion dollars (supplementing the 2.6 billion in venture capital raised previously), bringing its post-money valuation to eleven billion dollars.

In the highly competitive ridesharing marketplace, Lyft's competitive advantage is its hospitality-based culture. "We never set out to build a better taxi," Zimmer said. "Our mission has always been to effect positive change and bring communities together through transportation. We see every ride as an opportunity to make a lasting human connection, to brighten someone's day."

Lyft does that, he said, by "creating a great environment for drivers, so that they, in turn, can provide great service to passengers." Drivers are encouraged to customize the user experience by such means as arriving in costume or offering free snacks, activities, or the convenience of phone chargers. "Every few weeks, I speak with new hires about the power and importance of a single Lyft ride," Zimmer said. "Each experience, each shared connection can make

a difference." Examples he cites: a passenger, going through a tough breakup, who was comforted by her driver; a driver and passenger with opposing political views who found common ground during a ten-minute commute; passengers who met and later married. "These human connections are possible because of incredible service provided by the driver community, set up through a series of brand values centered on caring for people," he said.

Ultimately, Lyft hopes to improve people's quality of life by eliminating the need for car ownership. "Within the next ten years, I believe private car ownership will all but end in our cities," Zimmer said. In his vision, fewer cars on the road "will lead to reshaped cities and communities. By seeing life through the lens of hospitality, we'll redesign our cities around the people living in them, instead of the cars parked in them."

John Zimmer talks with drivers in the Lyft hub in San Francisco.

## Reconnecting People and Communities

Zimmer was a student at the Hotel School when he started to think about how to expand the notion of hospitality to everyday life. Reflecting on the E.M. Statler “Life Is Service” credo inscribed on a plaque in the entryway to Statler Hall, he sought to become “one who gives his fellow men a little more—a little better service.”

The idea for Lyft was born when Zimmer, then a senior, took Green Cities, a course in City and Regional Planning. Learning that cities’ impending population growth would soon overwhelm their infrastructures, he looked at Americans’ attachment to their automobiles through a hospitality lens and likened cars to “transportation hotels”—ones with “high costs and horrible occupancy.” “While the average American household spends about 9,000 dollars per car per year, each of those cars, on average, is used only four percent of the time,” he said. Taking note of the vast amounts of space devoted to parking—“we have 700 million parking spaces in the United States—more than

twice as many spaces as we have cars”—he began to think about how communities could reclaim that territory and turn it into parks and common spaces “where culture could thrive.” A class taught by Stephani Robson ’88, MS ’99, PhD ’10, an SHA senior lecturer in properties development and management, got him thinking further about the power of design.

So, as other entrepreneurs set out to create a better mousetrap, Zimmer set out to create a better transportation hotel. After a short stint as an analyst at Lehman Brothers, he teamed up with Logan in 2007 to form Zimride, a ridesharing service for companies and universities. The two sold that first venture to Enterprise Holdings in 2013.

Zimmer and Logan cofounded Lyft, the first company to establish peer-to-peer, on-demand ridesharing, in 2012. “We took a big bet on the power of community,” Zimmer said. “Strangers riding together in their personal cars was a crazy idea—we needed people to embrace the idea of being there for one another.” Which they did, and are continuing to do, at an extraordinary pace. During the first six months of 2017, Lyft provided more rides than the 162.2 million provided during all of 2016 (a number that, in turn, was three times greater than the number provided in 2015). Thanks to the efforts of its 2,000 employees and more than 700,000 drivers, Lyft is a brand that delivers on its promise. Nationally, the average wait time for a ride is three minutes, and nine out of ten rides result in five-star ratings. A third-party survey found that “Lyft drivers are happier,





higher-paid, and higher-rated” than drivers working for competing services.

“Everything we do flows from a commitment to service, community, and treating people right,” Zimmer said. “Cornell was influential in showing me the importance of those values in life and in business. As Lyft has grown, these same values have become a key differentiator helping to drive our growth.” Beyond the Hotel School, Zimmer said, he has drawn inspiration from Starbucks and its “one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time” mission statement, and from Disney, a company “that provides magical experiences.” (Recently, Lyft partnered with Disney World to offer a Minnie Van—driven by Disney cast members on park property—to guests at select Disney World resorts.)

The importance of community, Zimmer told *Entrepreneur* magazine, was reinforced for him during a college trip to Nicaragua: “I had a really amazing time there living

with different communities who...had a better sense, I would argue, of family and community than many of the cities I had seen. That influenced me to decide that, whatever I was part of, I wanted to bring people that sense of community.”

By reconnecting people through better transportation, Lyft is making communities stronger as well as happier. Through Lyft Concierge, a service piloted in New York City, partners can request rides for their customers who don’t own a cell phone. Often, these are senior citizens needing rides to and from routine medical appointments. Lyft’s Round Up and Donate feature allows passengers to better their communities and the world by rounding their fares up to the nearest dollar and donating the difference to such charities as Girls Who Code, Habitat for Humanity, the World Wildlife Fund, the USO (United Service Organizations), the Human Rights Campaign, and the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) Foundation. Earlier this year, Lyft pledged 100,000 dollars to the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund and, in response to President Trump’s travel ban, donated one million dollars to the ACLU.

In recognition of how peer-to-peer ridesharing has “absolutely revolutionized the way we think about this industry,” according to Kate Walsh, the Hotel School’s dean and E.M. Statler Professor, Zimmer received the 2017 Cornell Hospitality Innovator Award, presented by the Leland C. and Mary M. Pillsbury Institute for





in partnership with drive.ai, Lyft announced plans to test autonomous vehicles in the San Francisco Bay Area.

At the same time, “more and more, we’re looking to create a great in-car experience, to the point where you have autonomous rooms on wheels, which can be cafes or theaters,” Zimmer said.

How has he remained true to Lyft’s “Happy Drivers. Happy Riders.” promise while upending an industry? Zimmer told the *New York Times* that one of his earliest leadership lessons was the importance of empathy, which he drew from “the mentality of hotel management,” where “you have to understand every job you’re managing.” Speaking to *CBS*

*This Morning*, he said, “There’s always been doubt behind our set of values. Taking care of our drivers, taking care of our passengers was really important, and many people said, ‘That’s gonna hold you back. The other competitor’s too aggressive.’ And we said, ‘These are two different things. We’re aggressively pursuing our values of taking care of people.’ And that is actually good for business.” ■

Hospitality Entrepreneurship. In 2015 and 2017, he was named to *Fortune* magazine’s “40 Under 40” list of the most influential young people in business; in 2014, he was named to *Forbes* magazine’s “30 Under 30” list of brightest stars in technology and *Inc.* magazine’s “35 Under 35” list of coolest entrepreneurs.

### The Road Ahead

Zimmer expects autonomous vehicles (AV), now in their infancy, to play a key role in Lyft’s future, accounting for the majority of Lyft rides within the next five years. The shift to self-driving cars, he said, will “expand dramatically” over the next decade, creating a transportation revolution and turning transportation into “the ultimate subscription service,” with plans based on mileage and user preferences. “On the one-year horizon, it’s still very much in the testing phase where there’ll be safety drivers behind the wheel, but the technology is evolving quickly,” Zimmer told *Vanity Fair*.

To help accelerate that development, Lyft has formed a business division to develop AV software and hardware and launched an open platform to give select partners—Waymo, nuTonomy, Jaguar Land Rover, and drive.ai—the ability to connect with its millions of passengers and access data based on real-life scenarios so they can develop systems around actual experiences and behaviors. Lyft also has partnered with General Motors to build a network of on-demand autonomous vehicles; through that partnership, GM will establish national rental hubs where Lyft drivers can access short-term vehicles. In September,



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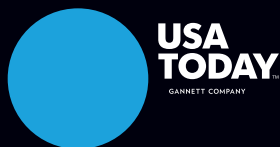


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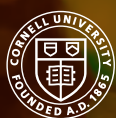
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# CHS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Wow, what a busy year it has been so far! Heartfelt congratulations to Kate Walsh on being appointed as the seventh dean of the School of Hotel Administration, the first female dean, and only the second alumnus to lead the school! Dean Walsh's focus on re-engaging alumni and building stronger ties between Hotel School faculty and the industry are very much consistent with the Cornell Hotel Society's goals. We look forward to continuing to work together to further her agenda in these areas. As a Hotelie herself, Dean Walsh truly understands the alumni passion for our beloved Hotel School!

As the Hotel School welcomes the class of 2021 to campus this fall, it is important to reiterate that the Cornell Hotel Society is dedicated to maintaining the school's "Hotelie culture" within the SC Johnson College of Business. A critical part of this initiative is to ensure that students desirous of a career in the hospitality industry are able to attend the Hotel School. Consistent with this mission, CHS this year committed \$250,000 to student financial aid over the next five years, which garnered an additional \$83,333 in matching funds from the SC Johnson gift challenge.

Also in line with this goal, CHS is pleased to announce the establishment of the Hotelie

for Life Award. Each year, the prize will be awarded to a Hotel School senior who has demonstrated academic excellence, extracurricular leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, social responsibility, and well conceived career goals and aspirations. The award is co-sponsored by CHS and the CHS Foundation and replaces the former Joseph Drown Special Prize. The first winner of the Hotelie for Life Award was **Giovanna Cavagnaro '17**. To learn more about Giovanna, visit the CHS website: [cornellhotelsociety.com/students](http://cornellhotelsociety.com/students).

Speaking of amazing students, I would like to thank the CHS Collegiate Chapter for initiating and conducting the Senior Spotlight Project and Alumni Conversations, which highlight, respectively, seniors as they begin their careers and the varied career paths of our impressive alumni.

There have been so many terrific CHS events in 2017. The organizing committees of the APAC meeting in Macau and the EMEA meeting in London truly outdid themselves! The bar is always so high for these occasions, given the history of extremely well executed events in exciting destinations and, once again this year, both programs were outstanding. CHS was pleased to work once again with the Hotel School to support student travel to these events. **Natalia Ruiz '17** and **Eddie Cruz '17** were able to participate in the Macau meeting, and **Caroline Shone '18** and **Nelson Billington '19** attended the London meeting.

None of what I've mentioned above would be possible without the support of our CHS members. Membership dues are the main source of funding for scholarships, student activities, and faculty engagement via faculty roadshow events. If you haven't already renewed your dues, please do so and consider becoming a Lifetime Member, because we are all Hotelies for Life!

I have been incredibly fortunate to work with a team of dynamic Hotelies who continue

to push the envelope in thinking about ways in which CHS can continue to evolve and grow. Together with our first vice president, **Bill Minnock '79**, second vice president, **Dexter Wood '87**, treasurer, **Susan Wood '87**, and secretary, **Carmel D'Arienzo '88**, as well as our extraordinarily dedicated regional and chapter leaders, it has been a privilege to serve the world's most engaging alumni network. I would particularly like to thank **Robert Mandelbaum '81**, who is one of the most engaged CHS past presidents, and who continues to inspire us.

Our efforts are supported by the staff of the school's Office of Development, Alumni Engagement, and Outreach: Meg Hardie Keilbach '88 (CALS), Julie Pizzuti, MPS '06 (CALS), and Nickie Fredenburg. Additional thanks to CHS Foundation chairman **Tim Dick '88** and to **Cheryl Stanley '00**, liaison to the CHS Collegiate Chapter, led by **Caroline Shone '18**. I would also like to recognize **Jeanne Sander '66**, immediate past chairwoman of the CHS Foundation. Jeanne embodies the definition of "Life is Service," and we thank her for her leadership and dedication to CHS.

Please connect with us on Facebook and Twitter. Considering how important social media has become, CHS will be augmenting its efforts in this area with additional support from **Ali Hoyt '12** and **Lindy Robinson Paz '09**, so look forward to hearing more from us over the coming months.

Bill Minnock will be leading the charge as CHS president in 2018. With his office in Singapore and home in Ithaca, you can expect to see a lot of him next year!

Yours in service,

Cheryl Boyer '87  
#Hotelie for Life

# ALUMNI EVENTS



## COLORADO-ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Sage Hospitality's Halcyon Hotel was the setting for February's Denver Hospitality Summit, which the Colorado-Rocky Mountain Chapter again co-presented with Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck. About 100 people attended the program, which began with a presentation of industry trends by **Ali Hoyt '12**, STR's director of consulting and analytics. Nicole Ament of BHFS then moderated a panel discussion covering millennials, the shared community, and hotel brands. Joining her on the panel were **Mike Everett '99**, CIO of Sage Hospitality; Tom Luersen, COO of Two Roads Hospitality; Anne Bertsch, vice president of lodging development at Marriott International; and Brian Corbett, founder and CXO of Inspirato.

## FINLAND, RUSSIA, AND THE BALTICS

CHS members gathered at Linnanmäki Amusement Park in Helsinki for a meeting of the Finland, Russia, and the Baltics Chapter on May 30. Following coffee and a tour, host **Pia Adlivankin '94**, the park's managing director, gave an interesting talk about the park's strategy and how they take care of their staff. Linnanmäki is owned by various children's organizations, which used 4.3 million euros in proceeds last year to help children.

**1 Arizona:** Steve Eberhart '82, Bruce Sandground '84, southwest regional vice president **Scott Roby '99**, new chapter president **Julie Allen, MMH '10**, Doug McCorkle, MMH '88, and Lenka Hospodka '76 take in a spring training game.

**2 Colorado-Rocky Mountains:** About 100 people gathered at Sage Hospitality's Halcyon Hotel for the Denver Hospitality Summit in February.

**3 Finland, Russia, and the Baltics:** Kent Nadbornik '69, Esko Paalasmaa '76, Pia Adlivankin '94, Deiv Salutski '71, Martti Palonperä '77, MPS '94, and Jere Talonen, IMHI '97 meet at Linnanmäki Amusement Park on May 30.

**4 South Florida:** Miami-area alumni and NABHOOD conference attendees mingle at a networking reception in July.





**5 South Florida:** The Lilt Lounge in the EPIC Hotel was again the scene for the CHRIS-HOLA reception, which 75 people attended on April 26.

**6 South Florida:** Victor Younger, the Hotel School's director of diversity and inclusion, and **Lindy Paz '09**, president of CHS South Florida, get to know guest of honor **Dionisio D'Aguilar '86**, Bahamas minister of tourism, center.

**7 South Florida:** Students **Vincent Harrison '18**, **Itohan Orobator '18**, and **Chandler Cooper '19**, shown here with Victor Younger, on left, attended the NABHOOD conference.

**8 France:** Panelists **Karl Bieberach '96**, **Stephani Robson '88**, **MS '99**, **PhD '10**, Tristan Auer, and Dan Kwan discuss design at Atelier Tristan Auer, Wilson Associates in Paris.



#### SOUTH FLORIDA

The School of Hotel Administration hosted a networking reception on July 28 for area alumni in conjunction with the meeting of NABHOOD, the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators, and Developers. Victor Younger, the school's director of diversity and inclusion, was on hand to help the group welcome the guest of honor, **Dionisio D'Aguilar '86**, the newly appointed Bahamas minister of tourism. The gathering was held in the Presidential Suite of the Miami Marriott Biscayne Bay.

#### FRANCE

CHS France staged a panel discussion, "Measuring Design Success," at Atelier Tristan Auer, Wilson Associates, which co-hosted. The June 26 event in Paris featured panelists **Stephani Robson '88**, **MS '99**, **PhD '10**, a senior lecturer in the Hotel School; hospitality developer **Karl Bieberach '96**; Dan Kwan, chief creative officer of Wilson Associates; and Tristan Auer, principal of Atelier Tristan Auer, Wilson Associates.



#### GEORGIA

Thirteen alumni and guests got together in early February at Three Sheets in Atlanta for dinner featuring five different gourmet grilled cheeses, each with its own wine pairing. The cheeses and wines were introduced and explained by the host and wine distributor. Thanks to **Drew Wallace, MMH '12** for organizing the get-together.

In August, the chapter continued its tradition of greeting new students by gathering at the Mellow Mushroom in Brookhaven for pizza. This year's guest of honor was **Tyler Sturdivant '21**. On hand to provide contemporary guidance and insights were **Mark Svenjak '18**, **Nina Bachich '19**, and **Sharonee Vaca '19**, who were all in town for summer internships. The Georgia Chapter wishes all students from the Peach State great success this year.

#### GERMANY

The annual CHS Germany Chapter ITB Breakfast in March was held in a new location this year, the International Club Berlin. About 35 people attended the networking event, giving the new venue great reviews, enjoying getting to know each other, and hearing remarks from chapter president **Michael Toedt, PDP '12**, **Melissa Carlisle '97** (Dyson), **Cornell SC Johnson College of Business**, and **Christian Walter, PDP '08**, who introduced some scholarship opportunities. All in all, the event was a great success.

**1 Georgia:** Students **Nina Bachich '19**, **Sharonee Vaca '19**, and **Mark Svenjak '18** joined members of the Georgia Chapter in welcoming **Tyler Sturdivant '21**, second from left, at the Mellow Mushroom in August.

**2 Georgia:** **Nancy Chan, MMH '13**, **Bhavnes Vivak '11**, **Kate Redford '16**, and **Drew Wallace, MMH '12** at Three Sheets in February

**3 Germany:** The annual ITB Breakfast in Berlin





5

**4 Germany:** Members enjoy cocktails and hors d'oeuvres in the bar of Berlin's new Hotel Provocateur. From right to left are Silvia Möller, **Melanie Whittaker, PDP '94**, **Andrea Wrba, GMP '14**, Alexander Diecke, Maja Schneider, Matthias Kiesel, **Christina-Editha Koch, PDP '95**, and **Therese Christerson, PDP '16**.

**5 Hawaii:** **Mark Woodworth '77, MPS '78** discusses the hotel investment landscape at CHS Hawaii's lodging industry update on Jan. 27.

Chapter members met on April 25 for a tour of the newly opened Hotel Provocateur in Berlin. Guided by general manager Ronald Spicale, the guests were introduced to the "Provocateur mood and visual effects." They enjoyed special cocktails and sensational finger foods in the bar, which was already a popular scene just three weeks after the hotel had opened.



4

#### HAWAII

CHS Hawaii teamed with CBRE in January to present a lodging industry update at the Waialae Country Club in Honolulu. CBRE Hotels executives **Mark Woodworth '77, MPS '78**, senior managing director of Americas research, and **Amelia Lim '94**, vice president of valuation and advisory services, shared their analysis of the current state and future prospects for hotel investment and capital markets in Hawaii and nationally. CBRE sponsored the invitation-only event.

1 **India:** Soumitra Dutta, dean of the Cornell SC Johnson College of Business (center), and Chekitan Dev, SHA professor of services marketing (second from left), got together with **Lalit Nirula '66**, **Sunder Advani**, and **Prahlad Advani '99** at A13 Anand Niketan New Delhi on June 4.

2 **Kansai:** The Kansai Chapter held a get-together with Rohit Verma, Cornell SC Johnson associate dean of external relations and executive director of the Cornell Institute for Healthy Futures, and **Chiaki Tanuma, MPS '80**, CHS Japan's regional vice president, on Feb. 27 at the Kyoto Hotel Okura. The two are seated behind the banner.



#### NEVADA

Thirty-five players teed up for CHS Nevada's tenth annual Scholarship Golf Tournament on April 2, enjoying a great day at Bear's Best Golf Club in Las Vegas. The tournament raised \$3,000 to be split between the CHS Southwest Regional Scholarship and the general Cornell scholarship programs. Hotelies who participated were golf chairman **Justin Cohen '02**, **Steve Rueben '90**, **Zach Conine '03**, **Andre Carrier '92**, and **Alex Koch '04**.





#### NEW ENGLAND

Even with a brutal New England snowstorm on the initial party date and a Patriots game to compete with on the rescheduled date, CHS New England hosted their annual holiday party for over 40 Hotelie alumni at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel in January. Alumni spanning multiple decades connected over delightful cocktails and bites, enjoyed a silent auction with lots of donations from proud alumni to benefit the CHS New England scholarship fund, and finished the evening with the annual tradition of singing the alma mater.

On May 24, the chapter celebrated better weather with a happy hour on the roof deck of the Residence Inn by Marriott Boston Back Bay/Fenway. The group got to share blue skies and some great camaraderie with their gracious sponsors, Neirbi, on the night of a Red Sox victory. The chapter is now looking forward to the seventh installment of their signature event, the Boston Lodging Pulse. This year's program, the Future of Hospitality Labor, will take place on October 3.

#### ORANGE COUNTY-LOS ANGELES

Seventeen adults and six kids enjoyed a beautiful day at Sherman Gardens in Corona Del Mar on April 23. The outing started with a 20-minute garden tour of the 2.2-acre horticultural retreat, followed by a four-course brunch. The kids enjoyed yoga and a scavenger hunt.

4 New England: Joseph Gleason '85, Yu Qin Lu '16, Tania Naaman '88, Sebastian Colella '05, Shawn Weger '11, Greg Bodenair '10, Robert Beuret '65 and his companion, and Nate Berkowitz, MMH '11 got together with team members from event sponsor Neirbi Analytics to enjoy a great view of Fenway Park at their happy hour in May.

5 Orange County-Los Angeles: Enjoying an April brunch at Sherman Gardens are, from bottom left, Scott Legel '10, Julie Margolin '99, Jay Malejki '13 (ILR), Hamid Pezeshkian, MPS-BPRE '13, Tiffany Aguiar '14, Stephen Breedon '14, unidentified, and Brandon Stoller '09.





**1 Pan-Hellenic:** Christos Seferiades '95, Irini Varda '95, Sofia Kalfopoulou, MMH '14, Pano Panayotopoulos '91, and Themis Trakas '95 gathered at the Premier restaurant in the Athenaeum InterContinental in Athens on Jan. 27 to celebrate the New Year.

**2 Singapore:** Hotelies gather inside the doors of the JW Marriott South Beach for the Singapore Chapter's HICAP reception in March.

**3 Singapore:** Rohit Verma joined Si Mei Ng, MMH '14, Paul Kitamura '88, and Sunnie Park '13 for a run in East Coast Park and brunch at Melba, a Singapore cafe, in April.

#### SINGAPORE

The three-day annual HICAP Update conference in Singapore in March always presents a great opportunity to connect with fellow Hotelies from near and far. Leveraging JW Marriott South Beach's close proximity to the HICAP venue, CHS Singapore family gathered this year for a casual reception at the Court Martial Bar, which also served as a launching point for property tours throughout the night. With 35 to 40 members in attendance, the event proved to be another roaring success for the Singapore Chapter, whose members are already looking forward to next year's reception.

In April, the chapter welcomed Rohit Verma, Cornell SC Johnson associate dean of external relations, with a casual wine tasting. Robert Hecker, MPS '87 and the great team at Horwath HTL generously hosted the event. Dean Verma timed his visit well, as eight excellent pinot noirs from various regions were being put to the test in a blind tasting for the local wine connoisseurs. Joining the wine tasting were fifteen members from the local CHS community as well as Prof. Sherri Kimes. Dean Verma provided insightful updates on the Hotel School and the Institute for Healthy Futures, and even managed to squeeze in an early-morning run the next day with CHS Singapore's running group, led by Sunnie (Sunjung) Park '13.





4

4 **Singapore:** Chapter members welcomed Rohit Verma to Singapore with a fun tasting of excellent pinot noirs. Clockwise from left are **Kim-Seng Tan '85**, **Natasha Singh, MMH '13**, **Sherri Kimes**, **Sunnie Park '13**, **Rohit Verma**, **Vicky Jian '15**, **Sam Sheldon '14**, **Eric Ricaurte '01**, **Min Ho Hong (EHL)**, **Grace Kang '99**, **MBA '06**, **Eric Levy '80**, **Paul Kitamura '88**, event host **Robert Hecker, MPS '87**, **Jess Chow '07**, **Jasmine Chua, MMH '12**, **Cecile Jamouille-Ogren**, **Vicky Chen, MBA '10**, **Alex Liu, MMH '09** and baby **Max**, **Suneet Nigale, MMH '12**, and **Jonas Ogren '93**.



5

#### TOKYO

CHS Tokyo celebrated the New Year in high style at their annual general meeting on Feb. 17. The group met at the top of the Andaz Tokyo, where they enjoyed amazing food and drinks and a breathtaking view of the city lights. The group was hosted by the hotel's general manager, **Ross Cooper**, and by **Hirohide Abe, MPS '93**, Hyatt's senior vice president for Japan and Micronesia.

5 **Tokyo:** Members gathered at the Andaz Tokyo on Feb. 17 for CHS Tokyo's annual general meeting and New Year's celebration.



# Remembrance

Jack F. Robinson '36

APRIL 3, 2017

Richard Selby '46

JULY 3, 2017

Howard King '47

JANUARY 20, 2017

Donal A. Dermody '53, MS '68

AUGUST 22, 2017

Neil P. Koopman '53

APRIL 11, 2017

Francis J. Quinn '54

APRIL 4, 2017

Charles E. "Chuck" Woolf '56

APRIL 11, 2017

Allan Holmes Sanford '57

MARCH 13, 2017

John L. "Jack" Hitzel '59

APRIL 17, 2017

Dardenne "Dar" Tiffany '59

MARCH 16, 2017

Lincoln "Link" Higgins '60

DECEMBER 30, 2016

Richard Schucker '60

DECEMBER 4, 2016

Robert Kochli '61

MARCH 21, 2017

Frederick Savage '67

JULY 4, 2017

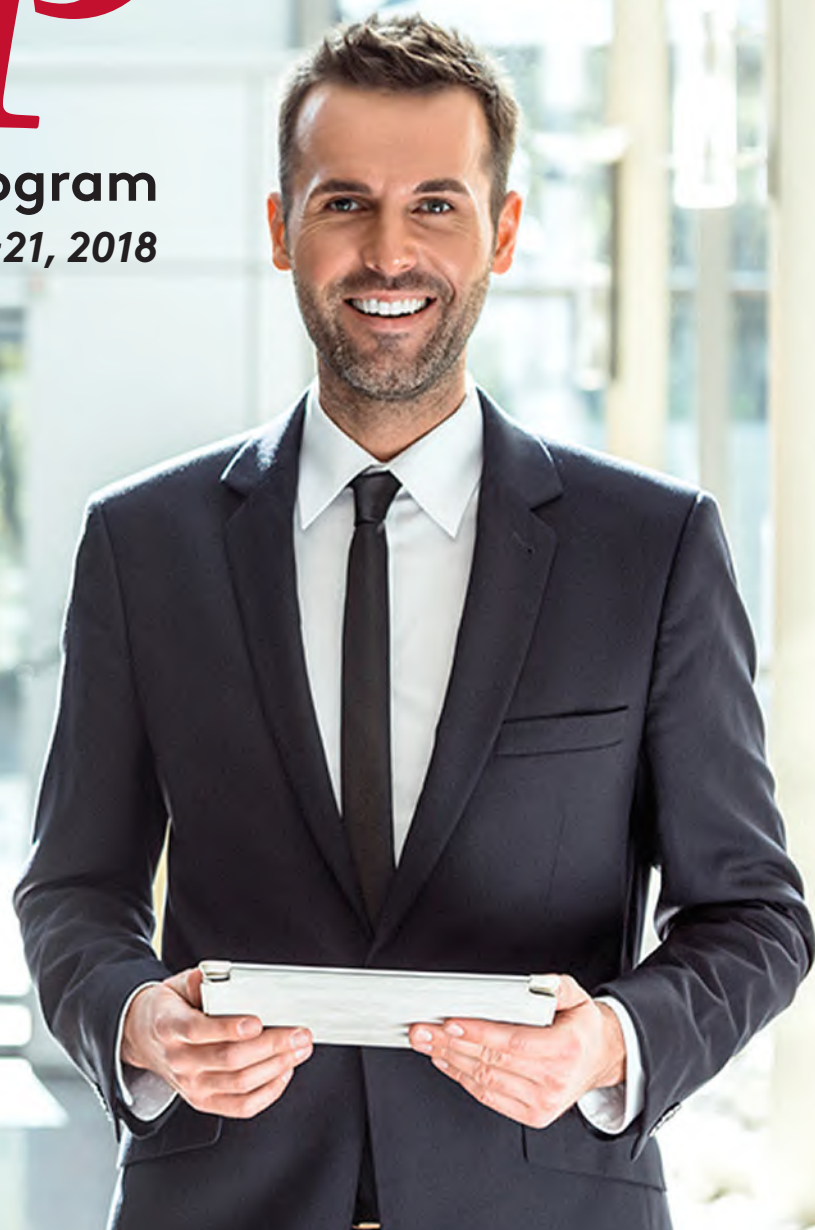
Adam Minton '84

JULY 7, 2017

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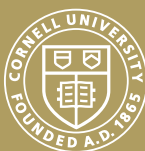
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