

### FEATURES

[Through a Glass, Darkly  
Vegging in](#)

### CURRENTS

[Flour Power](#)  
[Starry Nights](#)  
[Eat Different](#)  
[Learning Curve](#)  
[Scoop Dreams](#)  
[California Greening](#)  
[Tweet Music](#)

### DEPARTMENTS

[From David Skorton](#)  
[The Big Picture](#)  
[Correspondence](#)  
[Letter From Ithaca](#)  
[From The Hill](#)  
[Sports](#)  
[Authors](#)  
[Alma Matters](#)  
[Alumni Profiles](#)  
[Alumni Deaths](#)  
[Cornelliana](#)

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[Special Sections and  
Advertising](#)

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## Alma Matters

# Highest Honor

Tuesday, 04 January 2011



## CAA presents the 2010 Rhodes Awards

By *Scott Pesner '87*

In September, Cornellians gathered in Ithaca to honor this year's recipients of the Frank H. T. Rhodes Awards for Exemplary Alumni Service. Named in honor of Cornell's beloved ninth president, this highest of honors recognizes individuals and couples who have donated their time to better Cornell. Said Alumni Association president Nancy Abrams Dreier '86: "The Frank H. T. Rhodes Award winners are special because in addition to providing the University with invaluable insights and expertise, they have also demonstrated a unique ability to inspire hundreds of other Cornellians—including alumni leaders, students, staff, and faculty—to follow their leads, exponentially increasing the value of their precious gifts of time and talent." This year's winners are:



Crystal clear: One of the Frank H. T. Rhodes Awards for Exemplary Alumni Service given last fall

### Carol Bagdasarian Aslanian '63

Carol Aslanian has devoted her life to supporting higher education. Professionally, she has been a research assistant at Harvard University's School of Education, a master teacher in the Peace Corps Training Program, and an associate director of Future Directors for a Learning Society. As a volunteer, she has served as president of the Class of 1963 as well as chair of its 40th Reunion major gifts

committee, a member of the President's Council of Cornell Women and the University Council, president of the Cornell Association of Class Officers and the Cornell Alumni Association of New York City, and chair of the Committee on Alumni Trustee Nominations. One Cornell volunteer called her spirit and enthusiasm contagious. Another said she inspires her every day to do more for the Cornell community.

In accepting her award, Aslanian recalled her first trip to Cornell. "I remember the cold day in February of 1958, trekking from Syracuse to Martha Van for that interview to explain why I wanted to attend the College of Home Economics. Enrolling in the college and this institution was the best decision of my life." The mother of two Cornell alumnae, Aslanian said, "I truly believe that it is I who has been the winner, having gained so much from Cornell in so many ways with a fifty-year relationship with this institution. This award is an honor that I will cherish forever."

### Nancy Radick Lynk '52 and Bob Lynk '54, DVM '61

For Nancy Lynk, her relationship with Cornell is longer than her relationship with her husband, a co-recipient of the Rhodes Award. But together they have worked to create the foundation for the Cornell Club of the Greater Capital Region in the Albany area, in both programming and running regional phonathons. While Bob has also been involved with the Vet college, Nancy was able to use her community connections as a member of Cornell's government affairs staff in Albany to give alumni access to behind-the-scenes tours and attend events featuring prominent alumni. Said Nancy: "Cornell is one of the best things that has happened to us." Recalling his move into a boarding house on Dryden Road to start his freshman year at Cornell, Bob said, "I had no idea I was starting a lifelong relationship with the University." Now, he said, "an award that has Frank Rhodes's name attached to it is as good as it gets."

## Worth a Closer Look

### Highest Honor

#### About the Award

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In her remarks about Keith Kennedy, Dreier said that he "has played so many roles at Cornell and has changed the lives of so many Cornellians that it is wholly appropriate that this campus will continue to bear his name for future generations through the building named in his honor, Kennedy Hall." An alumnus, professor, and ultimately provost during Rhodes's presidency, as well as a lifelong Cornell volunteer, "his clear and gracious management style resonated deeply with so many across campus, influencing the career paths of some of today's most effective and beloved staff, faculty, and volunteers," said Dreier.



The winners: Present at the ceremony were (front row, from left) Nancy Lynk '52, Carol Aslanian '63, Rosa Rhodes, Kristen Rupert '74, and Nancy Abrams Dreier '86. Back row: Bob Lynk '54, DVM '61, Jay Waks '68, JD '71, Frank Rhodes, John Foote '74, Nels Schaenen '50, MBA '51, and President David Skorton.

In accepting the award on behalf of Kennedy, vice president for student and academic services Susan Murphy '73, PhD '94, said, "As one of the many people who have had the privilege to call Keith their mentor, he so deserves this recognition. He's embarrassed that the Alumni Association is recognizing him in this way. I told him that it was not a mistake, that there would be a room full of people who know that the Alumni Association had made the wisest of choices."

### Nels Schaenen '50, MBA '51

Cornell wasn't even on Nels Schaenen's mind when his father, a member of the Class of 1923, sent him an application while Nels was serving in the Navy. And his relationship to Cornell as a volunteer didn't begin until his 15th Reunion, when past Rhodes Award winner Patricia Carry Stewart '50 asked him to be class vice president. He was then on the road to donating his time to Cornell, culminating in terms spent as a member of the Board of Trustees during the Seventies and Eighties. He has also spent time raising major gifts for his reunion campaigns, working with Athletics, the Johnson Museum, and his fraternity, Delta Upsilon. "Cornell and her supporters have a wonderful way of gradually and quietly involving you without you ever realizing it," said Schaenen. "Working with so many talented trustees has been one of the most enriching experiences of my life." About his time spent serving the University, Schaenen said, "Volunteering for Cornell is a partial repayment for what Cornell has done for me. Whatever I've given to Cornell has been returned to me many-fold."

### Jay Waks '68, JD '71

One of the most significant memories Jay Waks has of his time at Cornell is when he was called in front of the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to explain why he wanted to transfer to the School of Industrial and Labor Relations. "He tried to convince me that I would be wasting my Cornell education and ruining my life," Waks recalled. "But it only stiffened my resolve to be a credit to myself and my family."

"Great Cornell volunteer" doesn't even begin to describe Waks's commitment to the university. He is a devoted alumnus to both ILR and Cornell Law School. For ILR, Waks helped to establish an initiative that increases understanding of international cultures and the world of work, and he has been just as avid a supporter of the Law School. In addition, he has been an active member of the University Council, serving as its president as well as the chair of its Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid, and has played a pivotal role with the Cornell Black Alumni Association's annual Alvin Ailey fundraiser in New York City.



Mentors remembered: Waks spoke about the professors who most influenced him.

Accepting the award brought back a flood of memories for Waks, especially about professors he had in the Arts college, ILR, and Law, such as Allan Bloom and Alice Cook. "My forty-six years of random Cornell adventures are now in sync, crowned by this year's Frank Rhodes Award," he said. "I embrace this award as much for its deep personal meaning, as well as for the ability to be here, my second home, for this occasion."



Dedicated Cornellians: Rupert (right) and Foote celebrate with Dreier after the ceremony.

### Kristen Rupert '74 and John Foote '74

You must have graduated from Cornell at least thirty-five years ago to receive the Rhodes Award. Kristen Rupert and John Foote—a couple described as "consummate Cornell"—are among the few ever to receive this award in their first year of eligibility. And for Kristen, it's even more special: she is the first-ever second-generation recipient, as her father Jack Rupert '49, JD '51, won the award in 1995, its inaugural year.

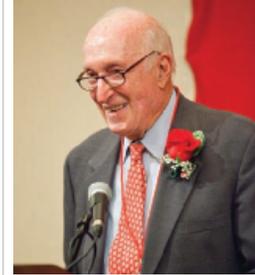
Whether it is their leadership of the Class of 1974, the Cornell Alumni Association, the Cornell Clubs of Boston and Philadelphia, the Plantations, Cornell Athletics, or Sigma Chi fraternity, these two Cornellians give it their all. And beyond their time commitment is

their ability to find unique ways of supporting the University. John is the author of *Touch-down, the Story of the Cornell Bear*, whose proceeds go to benefit Cornell. And their house in Ithaca is a place where alumni are always welcome.

In her award acceptance, Rupert gave advice to both current and future

In her award acceptance, Rupert gave advice to both current and future alumni. "Expect the unexpected," she said. "Be receptive to new ideas. Stay flexible. Look for opportunities to work with new volunteers, new staff members, and new programs. Discover a part of Cornell you don't know about. Push for what you believe in. Make Cornell better and better still. In the end, it's all about the students. They're the ones who make our volunteer efforts worthwhile. Making this place stronger, broader, and better is the greatest gift we give our students."

In his acceptance, Foote paraphrased his favorite poem, *Ithaka* by the Greek poet C. P. Cavafy: "Cornell has given me the beautiful voyage; without her, I would never have taken the road."



Giving back: Schaeen called volunteering his 'partial repayment' to the University.

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Last Updated ( Tuesday, 04 January 2011 )

Owned and published by the Cornell Alumni Association

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