2018 CAA Alumni Medalists

John C. Connell, Esq.’76CC is a partner/shareholder with the law firm of Archer & Greiner, P.C., in Haddonfield, New Jersey, where he practices civil litigation as a first-chair trial attorney in jury and bench trials and appeals in state and federal courts. As the head of the firm’s Appellate Advocacy and the Media and Communications Law Groups, he recently appeared as counsel of record to argue before the Supreme Court of the United States, representing Simon Shiao Tam in Matal v. Tam, obtaining a favorable 8-0 decision in a precedential trademark/First Amendment dispute. John has been actively involved as an ARC member for almost 35 years and has chaired the regional Southern New Jersey ARC for some 25 years. He has also served as Chair of the Columbia University Club of Philadelphia (CUCP), which this year celebrated its 40th anniversary as the oldest alumni club outside of New York City. He has made a concerted effort to include the representation and participation of all divisions of the University among CUCP’s members and leadership. During John’s tenure as chair, CUCP was recognized in 2015 with the Domestic Club of Excellence Award. He is also a member of the Columbia Alumni Association’s Associations and Clubs Committee. Three of his four children are Columbia College alums.

Joseph Ehrlich ’92GS, is Executive Vice President, Owens Group Insurance. He joined the Owens Group in 2004 and represents the third generation of the Owens family to work at the firm. He leads its Private Equity and Financial Services Practice Area. Joe is a known expert on Representation & Warranties and Transactional Insurance products, frequently giving presentations and educating lawyers and other professionals. Prior to joining the Owens Group, Joe spent many years practicing law with O’Melveny & Myers LLP and its predecessor, O’Sullivan Graev & Karabell LLP. During that time, he assisted clients in evaluating, structuring, negotiating, and consummating private equity transactions. Joe graduated cum laude from Columbia University with a BA in Classics in 1992. He received his JD from New York University’s School of Law in 1997. Joe also serves on both the Owens Group Board of Directors and its Advisory Committee. Among other philanthropic activities, Joe is a member, and the immediate past president, of the NYU Law Alumni Association Board. He also volunteers as Chair of the Columbia University Benefits Committee, is a member of the Columbia Alumni Association (CAA) Strategic Planning Committee, and serves on several other committees of the CAA. At the Columbia Club of New York, Joe is a board member and chairs the Membership Committee. Joe is a former board member of the Columbia Alumni Association (CAA), having joined the board shortly after the CAA was launched. While on the CAA board, Joe served on several committees, including the Leadership Weekend Committee, where he also moderated a panel on Alumni Relations and Development. Joe was also an original member of the CAA Collaboration Committee.
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James P. Gerkis ’80CC, ’83LAW is a partner resident in the New York office of Proskauer Rose LLP, an international law firm where he practices corporate law and has extensive experience in sophisticated U.S. and global corporate transactions. James has made presentations at numerous industry and bar association conferences and has authored many articles on different legal topics. James was admitted to Columbia College without finishing high school, and he received his BA degree in January 1980. In the College, he majored in political science and was on the staff of the Columbia-Barnard Course Guide. James received his law degree from Columbia University School of Law in 1983, where he was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar and a teaching fellow. James started doing alumni interviews for Columbia applicants upon his graduation from law school. James is currently the president of the Columbia University Club of New York and serves on its Board of Governors. James also serves on the Columbia College Fund Development Council (FDC) and the Board of Directors of the Columbia College Alumni Association (CCAA). Previously, he was co-chair of the FDC and served on the Executive Committee of the CCAA. He also has worked as a class agent for the College and has been on reunion committees for both the College and the Law School. James is on the board of directors of HABA-Hellenic American Association for Professionals in Finance. He is an active member of The Hellenic Lawyers Association and he received the 2017 Attorney of the Year Award from that organization. James lives in Larchmont, NY with his wife, Agathy Vasilopoulos Gerkis, who has two graduate degrees from Columbia. They have two daughters, Catherine, a risk and quantitative analyst, and Laura, a special education and early childhood teacher.

Margaret (Margie) McBride Lehrman ’70JRN is a TV news producer and executive who spent 30 years at NBC News in Washington, DC. There, she earned two national news Emmys, the Edwin M. Hood Award for Diplomatic Reporting (from China), and worked in 40 countries. Her career includes radio, newspapers, magazines, and staff jobs at Peace Corps and the U.S. Senate. In six years on the J-School Alumni Board, she worked on the School’s Centennial Committee, chaired both the Development and Programs Committees, and was Board Vice Chair. Now she represents the Journalism School on the Alumni Trustee Nominating Committee. In 2015, she received the J-School’s Distinguished Alumni Award. Margie has co-chaired nearly all her J-School class reunions, and continues to meet with students, research potential donors, and serve as a class agent. She is a member of Columbia’s 1754 Society and the CUDC Alumni Club. Margie graduated with a BA from the University of Oregon where she’s endowed a fellowship, and where she served 10 years as a UO Foundation Trustee. She is a skier and pilot, and has flown the North Atlantic in a small plane with her husband Michael Lehrman. They live in Washington, DC.
Dr. Thomas J. Magnani ’80DM is a graduate of Columbia University College of Dental Medicine, Class of 1980, and has been practicing general and cosmetic dentistry in Manhattan for thirty-eight years. He has been a faculty member of the College of Dental Medicine since 1980 and presently holds the title of Assistant Clinical Professor. His many ties to the College of Dental Medicine include: President of the 1852 Society; member of the Admissions Committee for the Dental School; member of the Executive Board of the Alumni Association; member of the Board of Advisors to the Dean; and Director of the Global Outreach Program for Central America. In May 2014, Dr. Magnani received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Columbia University College of Dental Medicine. Dr. Magnani has lectured and given continuing education courses nationally and internationally. His greatest achievement in dentistry is that his daughter graduated from Columbia University College of Dental Medicine in 2017 and, after her residency, will join him in his practice.

Louis A. Parks ’95GSAS, ’03BUS, ’12GS has spent a distinguished career on Wall Street where he is currently an executive in the hedge fund industry, serving as Partner/Principal Investor, Advisory Board Member and Chief Operating Officer for several domestic and international investment funds. He began his career at Merrill Lynch and for over 30 years, worked at global firms such as Morgan Stanley, Sanford C. Bernstein, and Raymond James Financial. While working at investment banks, his roles included Senior Managing Director/ Head of Equity Trading and Head of Equity Capital Markets. Louis has dedicated over 20 years as a volunteer at Columbia where he was Committee Chair for Development on the GSAS Advisory Board, President of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences Alumni Association, and Chair of the Alumni Trustee Nominating Committee. In 2001, he endowed the Louis A. Parks Fellowship in Classics at the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences and he was awarded the Dean’s Distinguished Alumni Award for his service to GSAS in 2010,.  As a student, Louis played inside center on the rugby team, volunteered in the Office of Career Services, and graduated from GS magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa. His daughter, Kira, is a ’13 graduate of Barnard College and a ’15 graduate of the Columbia School of Social Work.
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Teresa Saputo-Crerend ’87CC, ’92BUS graduated Columbia College in 1987, the first fully co-educational class. Her older brothers had already graduated from Columbia (Douglas, ’81CC and Paul ’83CC) and her mother Helen Norman Saputo had earned a Masters at Teacher's College in 1983. Teresa was a Captain of the Women’s Tennis Team and a four-year Varsity "C" recipient. Teresa remains the closest of friends with her Columbia and Barnard teammates as well as her East Campus roommates to this day. She returned to Columbia to earn her MBA from Columbia Business School in 1992. She worked for fifteen years in marketing, ten of those years for Evian Natural Spring Water/Group Danone, where she oversaw corporate sponsorship, including Evian’s multi-million dollar sponsorship of the US Open Tennis Championships in Queens, her hometown. Today she consults for the Each One Counts Foundation, a foundation that provides complementary pain-relieving services for terminally and chronically ill children, and is pursuing a Master’s of Social Work at NYU’s Silver School. Through all of life’s milestones Columbia has remained her focus and “community”; she has served on College boards and committees for the past twelve years. Teresa has served on the Board of the Columbia College Alumni Association, Dean’s Alumni Task Force, and Alumni Legacy Council. She is currently on the Board of Columbia College Women and on the CAA’s Strategic Planning Committee. She served as Co-Chair of She Opened the Door, the first ever Columbia University Women’s Conference, in February of 2018 where she worked with her former tennis teammate Donna MacPhee (’89CC and President of the CAA) and former Alumni Medal recipient, Kathleen Crowley (’91PH, ’13PH). She relishes her work with women at the College and the University and is truly excited about the myriad opportunities for Columbia women on and off campus. Teresa lives in Bedford, NY with her husband Bill and is the proud mother of Lucy (Columbia College Class of 2022), William, and Sabrina.

Michael J. Schmidtberger ‘82CC, ’85LAW is the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the international law firm of Sidley Austin LLP, where he is also co-head of the Investment Funds, Advisers and Derivatives group. His principal areas of practice are securities and futures-related funds, and related regulatory matters, with a specialization in hedge funds. Mike is ranked in Band 1 of Chambers USA in the category of Investment Funds: Hedge Funds, a practice in which Sidley is a first-tier firm. Mike received financial aid from both the College and Law School. From the College, he earned a BA, cum laude, as well as admission to Phi Beta Kappa and the Bennett Cerf Memorial Prize for Critical Writing. In his sophomore year, he co-founded The Columbia Guide to New York. In Winter 1981, Mike cast his vote as the sole student senator present at the University Senate Executive Committee’s historic meeting, at which the decision to admit women to the College was made. In 1985, he earned a JD from the Law School, where he was editor-in-chief of the Columbia Human Rights Law Review. Mike served two terms as a member of the College’s Alumni Association Board of Directors and served as his class reunion co-chair a number of times. He was a 2013 recipient of the John Jay Award for distinguished professional achievement. Aside from work and Columbia, Mike is Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of the United Way of New York City. Mike, his wife, Margaret Sung, and daughters, Calee (SEAS Class of 2022) and Mollie, reside in New York City.
Helen Doyle Yeager ’85BC is a Managing Director at MUFG, the leading financial services institution in Japan, and the world’s 5th largest bank. Helen manages the Institutional Client Group for the Americas and is a Senior Relationship Manager at MUFG Securities. Having graduated with a BA from Barnard College in 1985, she also earned an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School in 1989. Helen has spent 25 years in the securities industry, working in senior management at several firms, including Merrill Lynch and Deutsche Bank. Helen was a two-time captain of the Columbia women’s basketball team, and for the past decade, has served as Chair of the Alumnae Advisory Board for Women’s Basketball, spearheading an increase in fundraising and outreach. One of three female members on the Leadership Committee for the Columbia Campaign for Athletics: Achieving Excellence, and a member of The Women’s Leadership Council, Helen is a major supporter of the women’s basketball program as well as The Campbell Sports Center. As a Barnard student, she was proud to be the female student representative on the inaugural committee when the Columbia-Barnard Athletic Consortium was founded and, 25 years later, was honored as one of the 25 most influential women in the Columbia-Barnard Athletic Consortium’s history. Helen currently serves on the Board of Citius Baseball, a not-for-profit inner city baseball program based in Mt. Vernon, NY. Citius Baseball helps develop and prepare inner city and underprivileged kids, through high-level training and SAT Prep, for college and/or professional baseball.

Nick Yen, ’91SEAS, ’92SEAS is the founder of Mad Scientists, a company with interests in modular building systems and product design. He also operates Orgo, a restaurant that he named after Orgo Night at Columbia. Nick was one of the founding members of CAA Singapore and continues to serve as an adviser. In addition, he is ARC chair and helps with regional clubs as the Alumni Delegate on the Associations & Clubs committee. Over the last few years, Nick has been spending much of his time shuttling between his responsibilities in Singapore, the family business in Thailand, and the CAA Board. A strong proponent of the Columbia education, Nick started as a tour guide in his sophomore year and has always been engaged. He hopes to continue to contribute towards a vibrant Columbia community in which students and alumni can engage on multiple levels to create long-lasting relationships. Nick is also a Columbia parent.