The Beacon to the Future Campaign is off to a Great Start!

After many years of quiet preparation, the capital campaign for the renovation of 532 Beacon Street has officially begun. “The Beacon to the Future” is an ambitious but achievable effort to raise $4 million from Alpha Theta alumni and friends in order to conduct a complete renovation and restoration of our historic chapter house. When completed, 532 Beacon Street will provide a first-class living and learning environment for Alpha Thetas for many decades to come.

Campaign committee chairmen Doug Bailey ’72 and Karl Büttner ’87 have assembled a core of lead donors paving the way with contributions more than $2.5 million. Now, it is up to the rest of us to finish the job. With about 600 living alumni, it will require participation from as many of our alumni as possible. To that effort, several dozen alumni spanning decades of pledge classes have volunteered to reach out to brothers from their own classes and eras. These class agents and era captains will help familiarize you with the project and the campaign, in addition to the materials sent through the mail and on the campaign website, sigmachi.mit.edu/renovation.

Assuming a successful campaign, the renovation, itself, is slated to begin in January 2013 and conclude the following August in time for Rush 2013. During those eight months when the actives are temporarily relocated to campus, 532 Beacon Street will be refitted and restored for the future. All the major systems in the house will be replaced including the heating, plumbing, electrical, and life-safety systems. A redesigned kitchen will provide meals, while a new elevator will create greater access for brothers and guests.

The renovation will enable a “greening” of the house through improvements such as modern insulation, efficient windows, and other methods used in LEED-certified buildings. The heating, and potentially, whole-house cooling systems will also be upgraded to the latest high-efficiency technology. Through all these efforts, the chapter will reduce its carbon footprint and operating costs.

Most significantly, the house will gain an additional floor. Despite freshmen now living on campus, Alpha Theta has actually expanded in size over the past decade and is still filled to near-capacity. Total occupancy will remain the same, but the bedrooms will be “de-crowded” so that quads will become triples and triples will become doubles. To maintain a competitive living option as new dorms become available, we can no longer afford to have the least square footage of living space per person in the entire FSILG system.

This is a very exciting project that has been many years in the making. With your help, we can provide a home worthy of our great fraternity for generations of future Alpha Thetas. We hope that you will be generous with your support at whatever level you can manage. We also hope you can join us at the 130th Reunion Banquet in April to celebrate the dawn of this next phase of Alpha Theta’s history.
In Memory of Our Brother, Brian David Robertson ’96
August 6, 1973–December 22, 2011

Brian David “BDR” Robertson ’96 died in a plane crash in York County, Pennsylvania, on December 22, 2011. Passing to the Chapter Eternal, Brian leaves a lasting legacy as a successful entrepreneur and a dedicated brother.

Brian achieved success very early in life, and continued his meteoric rise until his passing. In 1996, with a Course 6 degree in hand, Brian co-founded PlanetAll, one of the first social networking sites on the internet. A few years later, he sold it to Amazon.com for more than $100 million on August 4, 1998, two days before celebrating his 25th birthday. After spearheading the launch of the online toy store at Amazon.com, Brian left to build Visible Markets, the first electronic trading platform for the U.S. bond market. He then decided to attend Harvard Business School (HBS).

While a student at HBS, he helped build the first solar energy system on Harvard’s campus, which led him to his next few successful ventures. Upon graduating from HBS, he co-founded and became president of SunEdison. After SunEdison was acquired by MEMC Electronic Materials for $200 million, Brian became CEO of Amonix. During Brian’s tenure as CEO, and before he passed away, Amonix became the largest manufacturer of concentrated photovoltaic (CPV) commercial solar power systems. The public will remember Brian for these accomplishments, but many Alpha Thetas and I will remember him as a remarkable brother.

Brian’s time at 532 Beacon is almost legendary. Known simply as BDR back then, Brian was a natural leader among us, and committed himself to the chapter and brotherhood with full abandon although he was paying his own way at MIT by working 20 to 30 hours a week at a local software company. He served as Work Week manager and Quaestor for two terms each and was elected consul his junior year. Even outside of his leadership roles, Brian had a powerful influence on everyone and everything at Alpha Theta. In 1995, Brian had the foresight to network the house with ethernet, and we became the first “wired” house across the river. Some of the younger brothers might say “big deal,” but to put it into perspective, back then we only had five total phone lines.

Brian was also a devoted father and husband. He found his perfect match in Eileen McGuire and together, they had three beautiful kids: Melanie, Brooke, and Max. To make the world a better place for his family, especially his three young children, he tried to harness the power of the sun to help solve the global energy crisis. It turned out to be his final bold act.

Brian will be missed as his influence and impact were felt by many generations of brothers. Indeed, throughout his many ventures, he partnered and employed many fellow Sigs. Brian also helped many brothers with their own entrepreneurial efforts. He planned to be a lead supporter in the upcoming capital campaign for the chapter’s renovation. But, most importantly, since I’ve known him for the past 18 years, Brian was there when many other brothers and I needed him. Alpha Theta lost a great brother. Brian David Robertson, with his pursuit of high ideals; noble purposes; and his commitment to serve well his families, friends, and communities, exemplified the Sigma Chi Mission and Creed, and he conducted himself until his death a credit to our fraternity.

In boc,
Kenneth “Dino” Dinovo ’97
Dear Brothers,

I am pleased to report on a great fall 2011 semester. Following a very successful spring semester during which the chapter earned the highest average GPA of all MIT fraternities, brothers continue to hold one another to high academic standards. Several brothers attended the Balfour Leadership Training Workshop over the summer, and I am pleased to announce that the chapter has once again earned the Peterson Award, continuing our strong tradition among the international fraternity.

The Alpha Theta Chapter had a strong start to the semester with a cohesive and well-planned rush led by Rush Chair Bryan Beller '12. After extending bids, we were extremely pleased that 13 men of good character pledged Sigma Chi. Brother Gabriel Blanchet '13 (after returning from his spring semester on the Appalachian Trail) has organized and implemented a fantastic pledge program. These 13 young men are already well on the way to becoming great Sigma Chis.

Active brothers also continue to be involved on campus, from athletics to community service. Approximately half of our brothers are members of varsity teams, including team captains on the swimming, volleyball, lacrosse, and sailing teams. Community Relations Chair and Pro Consul Michael Gibson '13 has organized several volunteer opportunities throughout the semester, including Sigma Kappa's Memory Walk. Several brothers will be teaching classes at Splash this semester, an event hosted by MIT that brings high-school and middle-school students to MIT to learn. 

Our semester has also been extremely successful socially. Our annual Sweetheart Formal, honoring our new sweetheart Rachel Fraunhoffer (MIT '13), displayed our chapter's great synergy and vibrancy. We continue to host regular social events, large and small, including the now 41-year-old tradition of Wednesday Night Tea.

I am honored to serve as Consul to our chapter this semester. I am proud of the great success and sense of community that permeates our house each and every day. We look forward to seeing all Alpha Theta alumni at the 130th Anniversary Reunion in April.

In hoc,
Patrick Vatterott '13
Consul

The Sweetheart Formal Unites Sigma Chis Everywhere

According to Paul Uche '13 (this year's sweetheart chair) the best day of our lives as Sigma Chis has occurred. He said this in reference to this year's Sweetheart Formal, which took place on November 14, 2011, in honor of the sweetheart of the Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi, Rachel Fraunhoffer.

Around 6:15 p.m. that Saturday, the brothers and pledges dressed in their tuxedos, left from 532 Beacon Street to pick up their dates and escort them to the house for a reception in the library. After half an hour of mingling and picture taking, we made our way to the Fairmont Copley Hotel for dinner. During the banquet, in adherence to tradition, speeches were given about the sweetheart by the first pledge in every pledge class—Chris Cook '15, Michael Klinker '14, James Byron '13, and Charles Bernstein '12.

Shortly after eating, we serenaded Rachel with “The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi,” then all returned to the house for more singing. Although some were easier on the ears than others, the songs from each pledge class were creative and entertaining as usual, in true Sigma Chi fashion. The song from the dates, however, stole the night with their rendition of a modern-day classic, which served to massage the egos of the brothers and pledges.

When we finished singing, we moved the party to the ice and skated the night away. After about two hours of skating, including the pledge class races—won by the '13s—the night wrapped up with the brothers’ circle on center ice, and everyone returned to the house at 2:30 a.m. for breakfast.

In all, this year’s Sweetheart Formal was thoroughly enjoyed by all in attendance. I, for one, love what it symbolizes. This is not only a night dedicated to honoring a girl who most embodies the characteristics of a true Sigma Chi, but also serves to unite the brothers of the house to one another, as well as to the international fraternity, as we join our fellow chapters celebrating sweethearts across the world.

In hoc,
Obinna Okwodu '14
Chapter Editor

Memorial Service for Brian Robertson

Memorials for Brian Robertson took place on the East and West Coasts. On December 30 was a very somber viewing in York, Pennsylvania, at a funeral home near the site of the crash followed later by a more lively “roast and toast” at The Baltimore Museum of Industry.

More than two dozen Sigs, plus a number of wives, and even a few of the kids made the journey on very short notice. Several brothers spoke at the event including Sam Choi ’93, Babak Azad-Tatari ’95, Fred Ackerman ’96, Sean Beckett ’97, and Sherrett Walker ’93. It was great to share some of our choice memories about Brian from his time at MIT and the house. It was also wonderful to hear brothers share stories from our time after graduation—an amazing example of how our bonds of brotherhood and friendship extend beyond our time at college.

Walter Vonkoch ’97 and Ken Dinovo ’97 put together a terrific slide show where many brothers provided pictures of Brian from their own albums. Jay Henderson ’96 even went to the house and rummaged through the old historian’s reports.

It was comforting to think that Brian would have really enjoyed the event—open bar and bite-size portions of salted red meat (mini meatloafs topped with bacon)! He also would have loved that the venue celebrated the intersection of business and innovation, and that it highlighted his passion for flying with an airplane hanging in the main exhibit hall.

The event was bittersweet. It was amazing to see how many people’s lives Brian had touched, but also tragic to say goodbye to an old friend and brother. Brother Brian, our lives were better, happier, and more fun because we knew you. We miss you, BDR.

In hoc,
Jay Henderson ’96
Magister Reports on Pledge Program

On Sunday, September 18, 2011, all active brothers of Alpha Theta Sigma Chi were thrilled that 13 men of good character accepted bids to join our fraternity. Since then, I am proud to report that the process of introducing the pledges to our house and preparing them for initiation into our brotherhood is well underway.

In addition to teaching the pledges about the history and ideals of Alpha Theta and the international fraternity, the pledge program this year is focused on enhancing the pledges’ integration into the house, as well as encouraging them to be introspective and to question their own motivations. A variety of inter-class activities—big brother-little brother events, and individual pledge-brother discussions—have all supplemented the strong traditions already in place for teaching the pledges about Sigma Chi and fostering a strong bond among pledge brothers. Our hope is that the actives and pledges will benefit a great deal from the cultivation of these relationships.

As Magister, I am continually impressed with and reassured by the active brothers in our chapter. Frankly, I can’t imagine a better environment in which to grow and blossom during the formative years at MIT. Our GPA placed us as the highest achieving fraternity this past semester; brothers are active and involved in many campus groups including a strong, but diverse, athletic core; they are engaged in research; and are highly sought after for internships and job placements. I am impressed by the character and ambition of the men by whom I am surrounded, and to whom the class of 2015 will attempt to emulate.

The Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi proudly announces the class of 2015: Christopher Cook, Nikolas Albarran, Austin Gromatzky, Colin Hong, Brad Eckert, Thomas Altmann, George Hartoularos, Jeffrey Castillo, Miles Burr, Nicholas Diamantoni, Andrew Busse, Tyler Nolan, and Orevaoghene S. Attah. The members of the pledge class of 2015 have already demonstrated passionate leadership by joining committees, planning events, and maintaining a positive presence in the house, on campus, and in the community.

We invited all alumni to join us at the house on Sunday, February 5, where we welcomed these young men into our brotherhood. I personally look forward to introducing you to the newest members of Alpha Theta Sigma Chi.

In hoc,
Gabriel Blanchet ‘13
Magister

Summer 2011 at 532 Beacon Street

My decision to remain at 532 Beacon Street over the summer was the best decision I’ve made in the past year. The memories and experiences I was lucky enough to share with my brothers and our guests during those three months were truly remarkable.

My roommates, Mike Klinker ’14 and Ken Siebert ’14, in 2 Large Back contributed more than anything to my unforgettable experience. The lifelong bond we forged rooming together made me realize the deep nature of the brotherhood I shared with them. From walking to my summer UROP every morning with Kenny to the endless prank war between Mike and I, my friendship with and understanding of my fellow ’14s grew to a level I did not know was possible to achieve.

We were joined intermittently this summer by Sigs from all over North America including the Omega Chapter at Northwestern, the Beta Omega Chapter at the University of Toronto, and the Theta Beta Chapter at the University of Southern Florida. Most remarkable of these were definitely our neighbors to the north, whose boisterous disposition made for a rowdy and very entertaining weekend. The Canadian Sigs eventually continued to travel down the coast to Florida, stopping to stay at as many Sigma Chi Chapters as possible.

Although I took the end of June to swing back to my hometown of Dallas, Texas, I made a point to return to Boston for the Fourth of July because of all the amazing stories I had heard. Indeed, Independence Day was quite the event, although it was comprised mostly of lazing on the Esplanade with our brothers and house boarders. The image of the fireworks against the night sky over the Charles River as I watched them from the back balcony will never leave my mind.

One of the biggest highlights of the summer, however, did not take place in Boston, but rather Chapel Hill, North Carolina, at the Balfour Leadership Training Workshop. Accompanied by Mike Gibson ’13, Kevin Lang ’13, Garrett Winther ’11, and Jeff Mekler ’10, I had the great fortune of attending the largest fraternity gathering in the country. Exchanging stories and ideas with actives and alumni gave me great material to bring back to Boston to enrich the Alpha Theta Chapter. More importantly, I truly felt a meaningful connection to the international fraternity for the first time. If I can take away anything from this past summer, it was the bond that grew between my brothers and I at the house, on the road, and across the country.

In hoc,
David Christoff ’12

Alumni Send Their News From Far and Near

Winchell T. “Win” Hayward ’46 is active in local historic preservation groups and his Presbyterian church. He plans to attend the April 2012 gathering. Get in touch with “Win” if you’ll be at the 130th as well (208 Williard North St., San Francisco, CA 94118; winhayward@mailbug.com).

Thomas L. Bell ’47 attended Ted Davis’s ’47 memorial service and wanted to submit these few remarks about his dear friend: “During an early week in September 1941, Ted was about to be a freshman joining the class of 1945 at MIT ... and so was I. The week before classes began was orientation and Rush Week for fraternities. Ted pledged Sigma Chi. A day later, so did I and six others including Milo Wilson ’44, who later married Alice. They chaperoned Ted on his first date with Nancy. New pledges met the older brothers, including Wallace “Sunny” Dunlap ’44 who later married Nancy’s sister, Barbara. Meeting Ted was an experience—what a guy! He was a head or so shorter than I, but a very agile and a natural athlete. He was obviously a very bright individual, although quiet and modest about his many accomplishments in high school. At orientation, all students were required to prove they could swim; Ted had no trouble. Physical Education was a required course unless one went out for an intercollegiate sport. Ted went out for crew (as MIT did not have a football team then) ... so did I. The freshman crew team rowed against Harvard and other college eights. Ted was a natural leader in everything he did. At the Sig house, he was soon the leader of the freshman pledges. In later years, he was elected to a variety of positions in the chapter including...
The late Robert A. “Bob” Swanson ’69 was one of seven honored as the inaugural members of the Entrepreneur Walk of Fame in Cambridge's Kendall Square. The MIT Entrepreneurship Center, the City of Cambridge, and several foundations and nonprofits joined efforts to celebrate the bright minds of American business and promote Kendall Square's reputation as a hub of innovation.

Bob was among very elite company in the initial honorees. Joining him were Thomas Edison, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Mitch Kapor, Bill Hewlett, and David Packard.

Bob Swanson Honored On Cambridge’s Entrepreneur Walk of Fame

Occasionally, as I lie in my 3SF bed at night puzzling over the hecticness that is so typical of life here at MIT, I hear piano chords playing on repeat from the floor above. I always smile. I know the musician well, and I love his music.

Joey Perricone ’14 is studying physics and math (Courses 8 and 18). In addition to excelling in his coursework, Joey happens to be absurdly musically talented. Before enrolling at MIT and pledging Sigma Chi, Joey drummed for “Our Last Night”—a post-hardcore band he was deeply involved in. He helped write the band’s music and played shows in front of hundreds of people in cities around the Northeast. Joey faced a tough choice in 2007 between continuing with the newly signed band or pursuing his passion for physics. He chose to attend MIT, but that doesn’t mean he’s abandoned his musical career; Joey has simply shifted musical gears.

Joey switched from a hardcore genre to a super catchy pop/rock genre and now writes and records a few songs every month. In addition to drums and piano, Joey strums guitar and belts out vocals. The chapter usually gets a sneak preview before Joey posts his songs to YouTube for the world to listen to. He most recently performed his song “Birds in the Sky” at Sigma Kappa’s campus-wide talent show, Late Night, on October 7.

If you are interested, search YouTube for “Joey Perricone” and listen to some of his work. Joey doesn’t have enough time in his days to promote his music just yet. He’s too busy working out the effects that super-fast neutrinos will have on special relativity and glancing up from his keyboard out of his fourth-floor window as the Charles River freezes over.

Several others contribute to the musicality of the house, as well. Paul Uche ’13 loves to write and record rap and hip-hop songs (check out “Paulo Chuck” on soundcloud.com), and Andrew Busse ’15 entertains brothers and guests at Tea most weeks, with enthralling drum freestyles (he led his marching band in high school). I’m not musically inclined, but due to the great diversity of temperaments, talents, and convictions we house here at 532 Beacon, our horizons are continually broadened.

In hoc,
Gabriel Blanchet ’13

The Musical Stylings of 532 Beacon Street

In July 2011, Gabe Blanchet completed his thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, covering 2,181 miles in 124 days. Several Alpha Thetas joined Gabe and his family as he reached Mt. Katahdin in Maine, the northern terminus of the trail.

The hike also served as the catalyst for a fundraiser in support of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the Baystate Pediatric Endocrinology Group. Brothers, friends, and family helped raise $11,124 to benefit the two organizations.

Learn more about Gabe’s adventures at the Alpha Theta Academy event (130th Reunion) in April!

Gabe Completes Thru-Hike of Appalachian Trail

Occasionally, as I lie in my 3SF bed at night puzzling over the hecticness that is so typical of life here at MIT, I hear piano chords playing on repeat from the floor above. I always smile. I know the musician well, and I love his music.

Joey Perricone ’14 is pursuing his passion for physics, while continuing to try and promote his music on the side.

Bob Swanson’s (’69) space on the Entrepreneur Walk of Fame in Cambridge.

Manoj Viswanathan Finds Success at World Series of Poker

In his first World Series of Poker, Manoj Viswanathan ’05 finished day four as the overall chip leader. He was eliminated in the following round, finishing 191st out of 6,865 players, but not without collecting a sizable prize.

Unlike most modern poker players, Manoj does not play much online. Instead, he plays socially with friends and Alpha Theta brothers, several of whom encouraged him to join the tournament and bankrolled his entry.

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In hoc,
Gabriel Blanchet ’13

Manoj at the World Series of Poker.
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How Can We Email You?
Please visit the alumni section of the Alpha Theta website to make sure we have your most recent email address: http://sigmachi.mit.edu/alumni.

In Memoriam

Alfred Bellows '62 retired after 45 years of practicing engineering at Polaroid, ECA, Foster-Miller, GTE, Sylvania, and various consulting jobs along the way. He has more than 30 patents and loved his jobs designing gadgets that went into space, the bottom of the sea, coal mines, power boilers, the telephone system, and the hands of millions of photographers. He and his wife, Sandy, moved to Cape Cod three years ago, but migrate to Naples for the cold months. His “big plan” for next year is to gather all seven Sigma Chi 1962s on the Cape for a mini-reunion in June before the MIT one. Email Al if you are interested in the mini-reunion at albellows@comcast.net.

“I am currently medical director of neonatology at Swedish Medical Center (we have a 76-bed NICU, largest in the region),” writes Terrence J. Sweeney ‘75. “My wife, Victoria, and I are marrying off our two oldest children this year, leaving two at home/school with us. I welcome any contact from MIT Sigs if anyone is out this way” (727 17th Ave., E, Seattle, WA 98112; terry@seanet.com).

“My family and I have been in the Philly area for a year now, and I’m enjoying my new job at DaVita, providing care to dialysis patients,” wrote Charles L. Choi ’92. “Drop me a line if you’re in the area (choi@alum.mit.edu).”

Sherrett O. Walker ’93 welcomed a baby boy, Isaiah Coltrane Walker, on May 5, 2011. Sherrett, his wife, Monica, and their children Abigail and Isaiah reside in Santa Clara, California, where he is a third-year law student at Santa Clara University. Keep in touch with Sherrett at buznaotta@yahoo.com.

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