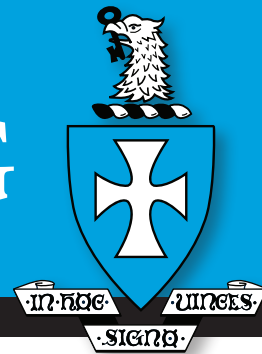


# THE BEAVER SIG

Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS | SIGMACHI.MIT.EDU | FALL 2020



## In the Shadow of the Virus

### Life on Campus Resumes with Heavy Restrictions

*Extraordinary Support from MIT Keeps FSILGs Healthy During Closure*

By Dan Craig '03

Following the sudden interruption in March, life on campus resumed during the first full semester of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the fall semester, MIT invited only rising seniors and a small fraction of other students to return to campus for a mix of in-person and online instruction, while the remainder of students have lived and learned remotely. Access to campus is restricted to only those students who are living in de-densified dormitories, with all rooms being singles. Masks and social distancing are mandatory, and gatherings, both on and off campus, are prohibited.

FSILGs have been closed to students since March, and will remain so through the upcoming spring semester. Such a prolonged closure would have been catastrophic, but MIT has provided unparalleled financial support to sustain the entire FSILG community through the pandemic. Starting with the closure of campus in March, the institute has generously reimbursed all normal operating expenses, including our regular payments of principal and interest on the mortgage from the 2014 renovation. Our alumni have also stepped up contributions as well, and we thank everyone who has given in this challenging time. Thanks to MIT and alumni support, Alpha Theta will be well-positioned to resume residential life when it is safe to do so. The chapter will take a first step toward regrowth this spring, with a delayed and virtual rush.

The active members have been scattered across the globe during this time. Several groups have been living together in Oregon,

*(continued on page two)*

## Living on Campus During COVID-19



By Aaron Mäkikalli '21

As a senior, I was one of the few undergraduates welcomed back to campus this fall. When contemplating whether to return to campus, I felt torn between the draw of being physically at MIT and the opportunity to explore other parts of the country during the semester.

tribulations. Along with every other senior student-athlete, I am missing my final season, access to academic facilities like music practice rooms has been extremely limited, and the isolation and long days on Zoom are taking a toll on everybody's mental health. I often find myself wandering through campus, missing the bustle of the Infinite Corridor, long nights spent in the libraries, my daily walk across Harvard Bridge, and—most of all—my home and family at 532 Beacon Street.

*“Hopefully, a year from now, campus life will return to normal and our brothers will all be in the same spot.”*

Ultimately, I decided to return to campus.

Initially, being on campus with reduced capacity presented several benefits: the other on-campus Sigs and I—along with many of our close friends—were housed together on the same floor of Simmons Hall, the dining hall lines have never been long, tennis courts are always available, and the weather has been wonderful, so I've spent many hours studying and attending classes from Kresge Lawn and Killian Court.

However, there can be no denying that this atypical semester has brought many unique

Nevertheless, I remain optimistic for MIT and Sigma Chi in the coming semesters. This spring, the number of undergraduates housed on campus is expected to triple from this semester as underclassmen are welcomed back. Hopefully, a year from now, campus life will return to normal and our brothers will all be in the same spot. Throughout this capricious pandemic, the brothers of Alpha Theta have unwaveringly supported and encouraged each other: we have been, and will continue to be there for each other during these uncertain times.

## From the Consul: Staying Together While Apart



By Peyton Greve '22

As you may know, the fall semester has been virtual for most in the house. This has brought a challenge of staying connected and keeping our sacred bonds with one another afloat as we continue our MIT experience. I'm very proud of each brother as we still continue to make being an Alpha Theta a great deal in our lives.

In what has been a semester that we all will remember for the rest of our lives, brothers are still staying together and advancing the fraternity as a whole. I have had the pleasure of living with two groups of Sigs in two very different parts of the country, the Oregon coast and Austin, Texas. Our groups have been living together in Airbnbs as we all have tried to stay together while also

getting some time away from home. What I have loved the most about living with several brothers in both locations is the memories that we are still making during our college days. Immediately after getting sent home, I was thinking about all the memories that were lost in the spring and it's been great trying to create those in new places. We also have some seniors who are living on campus, as they were the ones invited back, and we also have another “pod” of people who have lived in Boston, Colorado, and Newport Beach.

The bonds between us remain strong as we have kept up with virtual ritual ceremonies. It's more important now than ever to be an ear for anyone to talk to and a voice of reason to bring up what needs to be said. As the country is divided, we have made it our goal to remain connected, with open hearts to all. Julian Manyika '22 and

*(continued on page two)*

## Alumni Board of Directors

Elected at the annual meeting of the house corporation on November 8, 2020.

**PRESIDENT** Mike DeLaus '82  
**TREASURER** Josh Littlefield '81  
**CLERK** Mike Gibson '13

Alex Cai, RPI '14  
 Dan Craig '03  
 Mark Curtiss '87  
 Herb Mower '65 ('82)  
 Bill Tsacoyeanes '84  
 Jim Wilber '81

## Fall 2020 Undergraduate Officers

**CONSUL** Peyton Greve '22  
**PRO CONSUL** Dan Pilsbury '22  
**ANNOTATOR** Ben Wolz '22  
**ASSISTANT QUAESTOR** Kael Kordonowy '23  
**RECRUITMENT CHAIR** Ben Wolz '22  
**ASSISTANT RECRUITMENT CHAIR** Haran Nadarajah '23  
**TRIBUNE** Timothy Kostolansky '23  
**CHAPTER EDITOR** Timothy Kostolansky '23  
**HISTORIAN** Dan Pilsbury '22  
**KUSTOS** Hamilton Forsythe '21  
 Timothy Kostolansky '23  
**SWEETHEART CHAIRMEN** Ben Wolz '22  
 Paul Ruh '21  
**COMMUNITY RELATIONS** Aaron Makikali '21  
 Haran Nadarajah '23  
**SOCIAL CHAIRMEN** Rafael Fernandes '23  
 Aaron Makikali '21  
 Dylan Ryan '23  
 Brad Levin '21  
 Eli Kramer '23  
**HOUSE MANAGER** George Stultz '22  
**WEB MASTER** Peyton Greve '22  
**CONCESSIONS** Dylan Ryan '23  
**CORP. BOARD REPRESENTATIVES** Timothy Kostolansky '23  
 Kael Kordonowy '23  
 Rafael Fernandes '23  
 Matas Masys '23  
 Dylan Ryan '23  
 Ben Wolz '22  
 Rafael Fernandes '23  
 Hamilton Forsythe '21



6Z

## Looking Back on a Semester "Abroad"



By Mark Heatzig

After I got the news in March of last semester that everyone would have to go home to quarantine, I was, of course, devastated, but never considered that it would continue into my senior year. Recently, all winter and spring sports were cancelled as well. All of this information has posed very

together this semester, we could really make the most of the circumstances and have a great time. We had the vision of going to multiple places and doing two- to four-week Airbnbs. The first place we went to was Boston, as a few of the older Sigs were there, and it's always great to be in Boston for the fall weather. We then picked up and moved to Aspen, which was a great experience hiking and being in the mountains with our group of guys. A few of us then drove to Moab, Utah, where we went

*"This semester has been memorable, and I feel that my class really made the most of this experience."*

unfortunate circumstances for my pledge class to have the senior year we'd all hoped for. Although we're not on campus living with our brothers in the house, this semester has been awesome, and I've really grown to appreciate how we can have unique experiences traveling and doing our course work virtually.

I'm currently living with six other Sigs of the '21 pledge class. We knew that if we were

hiking and mountain biking. From there we continued west and have been living in an Airbnb in Newport Beach, California, surfing, enjoying the beach, and making friends! This semester has been memorable, and I feel that my class really made the most of this experience. With our final semester coming up this spring, we're planning to do the same type of experience.

## Connect with Alpha Thetas on LinkedIn

By Ben Collins '16

In an effort to add a new layer of connectedness amongst brothers, an Alpha Theta Sigma Chi group was recently launched on LinkedIn. The purpose of this group is to facilitate connections in a professional context and leverage the collective success of the chapter to the benefit of its brothers. The group serves as a platform to connect with old friends, seek advice, find collaborators, offer perspective, post resources, share job opportunities, and more.

Since launching this summer, the group has grown to include 120-plus brothers spanning six decades of pledge classes. Thank you to all the current members and we hope others will consider joining in the near future. Anyone interested in joining please reach out to Ben Wolz '22 (wolz@mit.edu) or Ben Collins '16 (bentcollins@gmail.com). Please note that this is an unlisted group, meaning it is not searchable and your membership is only visible to other members.

## In the Shadow of the Virus

(continued from page one)

Texas, and California. Both the chapter and the house corporation have continued to meet virtually to maintain the bonds of brotherhood. We all eagerly look forward to the end of the pandemic and returning to our beloved 532 Beacon Street.

### How Can We Email You?

Make sure we have your most recent email address!

**Return the enclosed news form, or email Dan Craig '03 with your updates at [drccraig@alum.mit.edu](mailto:drccraig@alum.mit.edu).**

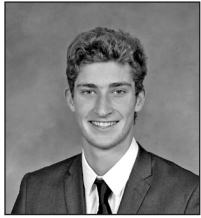
## From the Consul

(continued from page one)

Eli Kramer '23 led us in a fantastic discussion about the racial inequality that has been and continues to take place in the country and even at MIT. They opened our eyes to a lot of things that we normally wouldn't think about otherwise.

Looking forward, we hope to maintain our touch with one another as we separate from our pods and look forward to the challenge of what the spring semester will look like, including virtual rush and pledge for brotherhood. With all of the great work that has been done by Ben Wolz '22 and Haran Nadarajah '23 in preparation for what is one of the most important rushes yet, I'm excited to welcome the newest pledge class in Alpha Theta.

## Learning During COVID: A Gap Year Story



**By Troy Oliviera**

This has really been a year for the history books, but for none of the right reasons. The coronavirus pandemic has swept the nation and everything that used to be normal simply no longer is. One significant change in America has been colleges shutting down in-person classes and going online. While each school gets to make its own decisions about what their students will be allowed

to do and not allowed to do, MIT has taken it upon itself to set a good example for the rest of the country, and put out very strict rules about attending in the 2020-21 academic year.

Due to this, I decided to take a semester off for the fall of 2020, and I am extremely happy that I made this decision. Online classes in the spring of 2020 were organized well, and the whole staff did a great job with the short transition, but online classes will never be close to the experience we students get in the classroom. So, I finished up the semester then told MIT I would see her later.

During my leave of absence, I have had lots of time to learn new

things that I think are cool that might not necessarily be in a university curriculum, and also focus on my mental and physical health. I have two part-time jobs to make money, and I also live at home, so I have little to no expenses. I am planning to extend my leave of absence into the spring, since classes will still be online.

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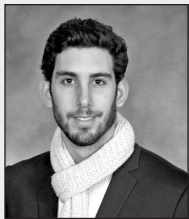
*"I couldn't be more excited to go back to campus and be with my friends, classmates, and teachers. I miss Boston, Beacon Street, lecture halls, Anna's, walking across the bridge, but, most importantly, I miss all my brothers."*

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Overall, the semester off has been a great time for me, but I couldn't be more excited to go back to campus and be with my friends, classmates, and teachers. I miss Boston, Beacon Street, lecture halls, Anna's, walking across the bridge, but, most importantly, I miss all my brothers.

Please, COVID, go away and let us go back to normal.

## An Abrupt End to Senior Year



**By Francis McCann Ramirez**

If one thing is apparent about our country and world's situation, it is that things are changing. With the advent of COVID-19, we,

as undergraduates, were shoved into very foreign situations. Being at home with my cousins as guests, sharing a room with my younger brother, and dialing into class every day was not how I envisioned the end of my senior year going. However,

ourselves, boardgames that had been collecting dust for years made a comeback. While we all felt robbed of a proper senior spring, we were provided with a once in a lifetime opportunity to reconnect with family and travel (safely and with COVID best practices) without the traditional restrictions of work or school.

Deep introspection and personal growth are always fun, but after a while this new normal settled into a more melancholy mood. My cousins went back home to Mexico, my siblings returned to work and school, and WFH began. The more removed I am from my time at MIT, the

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*"Being at home with my cousins as guests, sharing a room with my younger brother, and dialing into class every day was not how I envisioned the end of my senior year going."*

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while strange and uncomfortable at times, I was able to take some value away from my time away from the institute.

While it was unwelcome at first, the isolation of social distancing also forced me and the fraternity at large to adapt. Zoom teas ensued just a few weeks after leaving campus, and within a few months, we had already planned pledge class trips to Moab and Fort Lauderdale. In addition, the time alone provided ample opportunity for introspection. With quarantine blending days together and the constant allure of Netflix, I quickly realized just how badly I was addicted to my phone and constant stimulation. In a search for more productive and alternative ways to entertain

more I miss the day-to-day interactions of the house. Casual conversations over the shower dividers, the daily pointless yet passionate arguments at dinner (e.g. would LeBron James beat Floyd Mayweather in a street fight?), and the simple ability to walk downstairs and see some friendly faces aren't easily replaced. While we are all in an odd limbo of waiting for COVID to pass, I am fairly confident that these things are not lost. Soon, I will move to New York City with Connor Bradley '20 and Adam Gumbardo '20 to start a job at Google, and soon the house will see new faces at the dinner table. It seems that family is fairly constant, and luckily, I found plenty over my four years at Sigma Chi.

## The New Age of Recruitment



**By Benjamin D. Wolz**

With 13 seniors graduating this year, Alpha Theta will say goodbye to nearly half of its upperclassman population. Without fall rush, the fraternity's traditional flow has been disrupted, but the brothers are optimistic and energized for a

potential virtual rush this spring. Although many of our traditional recruitment channels have disappeared in the wake of COVID-19, a new perspective on virtual recruitment has greatly strengthened the house's approach to recruitment and PNM evaluation.

Since CP\* (2020's virtual replacement for CPW), brothers have leveraged online platforms to create engaging and informative events about Sigma Chi. During the weekend of CP\*, brothers competed with freshmen in a virtual poker night and hosted an interactive music making session, led by brother Grant Miller '22. The event featured a live polling system that participants used to pick various soundbites that Grant would have to compose into a song.

At the beginning of the fall semester, MIT IFC kicked off a series of formal virtual rush events where fraternities held weekly presentations highlighting their houses, brotherhood, and presence on and off of campus. After some presentation critique by Chapter Advisor Alex Cai, Assistant Recruitment Chair Haran Nadarajah '23 and I led presentations to nearly 50 first-years, many of whom we already had formed existing connections with prior to the presentation.

Recruitment this year is going to be pivotal in determining the future of Alpha Theta on campus. Thanks to vigilant efforts by brothers throughout the house, we aim to welcome an extraordinary new class to define the new normal when Alpha Theta returns to campus.



# ENSURING A CONTINUED SEAT AT THE TABLE

## *Chapter commissions five new dining room tables*

By Jim Wilber '81

You probably still remember the first time you saw the dining room at 532 Beacon Street set up for a formal dinner. It's a dramatic sight, even when dimly lit—perhaps by candlelight: the deep wood tones of the five sturdy tables, each surrounded by the high backs of eight stout chairs, each proudly displaying "ΣΧ." And the whole scene enveloped by the dark wood paneling.

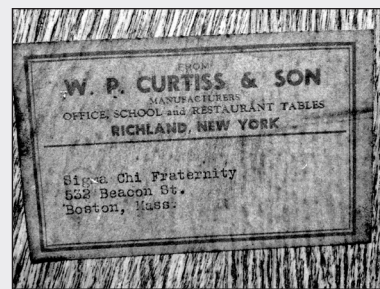
Over the decades, the experience of dining in this room, on this furniture, is something that has bound together the long blue-and-gold line of Alpha Thetas—fellow engineers who continued to strive mightily as we ate and drank as friends.

The four-foot square tables, the centerpiece of this tableau, are ample in size, yet small enough to afford an intimate dining experience. So when did these tables first arrive at 532 Beacon Street? The origin is unknown to this writer, but perhaps some alumni can fill in the picture—was it shortly after moving into the house around 1919? We can work backward from the present...

I am pleased to convey to all that we have commissioned a master furniture maker, Peter Benedict of Groton, Massachusetts, to make five new tables that are faithful to the original design. We expect the tables

to be completed and delivered in early December. So, the next time you visit the house, you will find the familiar tables (and chairs) in place, but perhaps in unfamiliarly pristine condition. (Well, hurry back.)

As of the 2014 chapter house renovation, the current tables had been carefully maintained from the late 1950s, when they were provided by the W.P. Curtiss & Son furniture company of Richland, New York. Brother Mark Curtiss '87, the son of Bill Curtiss '58, wrangled some of the furniture history for MIT's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in 2012. For that event, the MIT Museum borrowed and displayed one of our chairs as an emblem of MIT's oldest fraternity, our 1882 Alpha Theta Chapter (see links on next page). Mark learned that his grandfather loved to make the trip from New York to Boston to visit Mark's father, and, while doing so noticed that some of the older chairs had fallen into disrepair. He responded by personally making about a dozen replacement chairs and tables and having them delivered to the house.



*The 1950s table label.*

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*“Over the decades, the experience of dining in this room, on this furniture, is something that has bound together the long blue-and-gold line of Alpha Thetas—fellow engineers who continued to strive mightily as we ate and drank as friends.”*

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Parts of the 2014 renovation effort included commissioning a new batch of our signature chairs and rejuvenating the five tables. The latter effort was less than successful, as the tables started to break down at an alarming rate, and by 2019 it became clear we were in need of a crop of new tables. Prior to that, in 1979, brothers Dave Gailus '80 and John Kappus '80 made four replacement chairs from scratch, as well as shored up some of the older chairs.

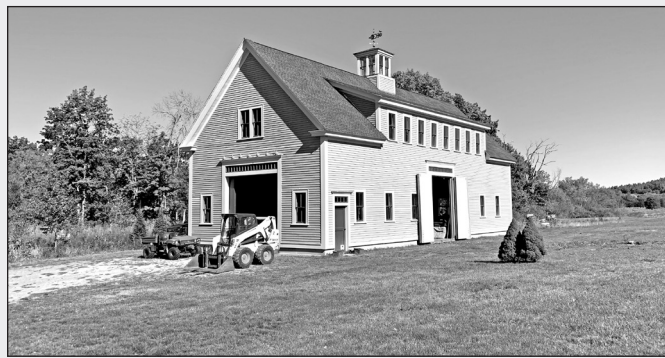
I met Peter around 2016 at a family social gathering and saw  
*(continued on next page)*



*White oak after milling.*



*Almost ready for finishing.*



*The workshop.*

## Maintaining An Empty House

By Bill Tsacoyeanes '84 | [billtsa@alum.mit.edu](mailto:billtsa@alum.mit.edu)

Serving as the alumni house manager was especially appealing to me for the opportunity to work with the actives. Unfortunately, one week into this role in early March, MIT sent everyone home. Imagine someone screaming, "Everybody out of here by this weekend!" and you get the idea of what the house looks like. While the physical condition of the house has been stabilized—somehow this isn't quite the same place.

*"While it's easy to think that with the recent major renovation, the house must be all set, it has been over six years and our fraternity house needs normal maintenance."*

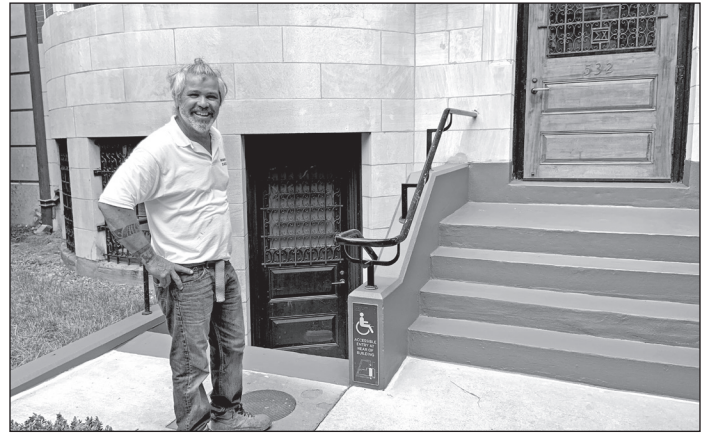
Meanwhile, we've been trying to maintain the house as if nothing's changed. Minor plumbing, electrical, and mechanical issues are being addressed. We've got replacement balusters being carved. (Do they just spontaneously break?) In the front of the house, the masonry of the stairs has been redone, the front door refinished, and the door window grates are getting renewed. MIT has updated the WiFi, and we've created an AirTable site as the house manager information repository.

While it's easy to think that with the recent major renovation, the house must be all set, it has been over six years and our fraternity house needs normal maintenance. Like any "new house," we've learned what sounded good (in the planning process) isn't exactly right and now it's time to tweak it.

Anthony Tabet, our graduate resident advisor, has decided to stay in the house so he provides some eyes and ears on-site day to day. Mike

DeLaus has helped extensively with maintenance. George Stultz, current house manager and quaestor, is helping remotely. Karl Büttner and Josh Littlefield have provided historical perspective and advice. Jim Wilber has new dining tables contracted. Alex Cai monitors the security cameras. Any additional alums or actives in the area who wish to be involved during these pandemic days, please reach out to me. This is our house. We have plenty of tasks for those handy and willing.

Know that your support, both hands-on and financial, for the house really matters and ensures that we can keep it one of the finest on campus—thank you. All of us look forward very much to the days when the actives repopulate the house and it returns to the vibrant house we all know and love.



Nuno with completed front stairs.

## A Continued Seat at the Table

(continued from previous page)

examples of the superb quality of his furniture making and took a tour of his workshop. When it came time to gather quotes for new tables, I was pleased that he was available to help us. After Whitman College, Peter decided to specialize in woodworking and graduated from the prestigious cabinet and furniture making program at the North Bennet Street School (NBBS) in Boston. Some of you may know that the NBBS school was founded in 1881 and is famous for helping generations of New England immigrants develop the skills they needed to flourish in their new home.

We are thrilled to have had Peter bring his master-level skills to our humble tables, but I hope you will find a few minutes to take a look at examples of his fantastic craftsmanship at [benedictfurniture.com](http://benedictfurniture.com). Click on "Gallery."

Will we get 60 years of use out of our next batch of dining tables? Hard to imagine, right? But our hope and expectation is that the superb tables just made by Peter Benedict will carry the Alpha Theta dining experience well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



Peter in his workshop.



Putting finishing touches on a leg.

## Alpha Theta chair at the MIT Museum

<http://museum.mit.edu/150/59>

MIT 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

<http://museum.mit.edu/150/theme/uniquely-mit>



# ALPHA THETA ALUMNI NEWS & NOTES



**Ken Morse '68** writes, "Wishing you every success in the years ahead." Note his new address: 212 Quisset Ave., Woods Hole, MA 02543; kenmorse2@aol.com.

**Alan "Al" Brennecke '61** wrote in July: "I appreciate the tough times the house is going through with the cancellation of in-person classes and the closing of living groups for the fall semester. Hang in there!" (2477 Winding Brook Ct., Rochester Hills, MI 48309; abbottbrennecke@comcast.net)

"Since my last posting to alumni updates (never), I have gotten married, raised two kids, and completed a 39-year career in engineering and management at GE Aircraft Engines," **Bruce Kirch '81** wrote in May. "All challenges, but far exceeded by the rewards. Retirement, at the end of 2019, began with some great skiing (successful powder hunt to the Cascades), the annual **Iain Hueton '84** rendezvous in Salt Lake, and a meet-up (again next year?) with **Dock Williams '80** and **Kirk Scattergood '79** in Aspen. (**Jon Glaudemans '80** was redirected by the birth of a grandchild at the last minute). The COVID-19 lockdown began right after that, pushing out the travel itinerary, but allowing for unlimited biking and running on the roads and trails around home in Weston, Massachusetts, just outside



Dock

Kirk

Bruce

of Boston. Hopefully, by the time you read this, we will all be on the go again (maybe with an EPIC pass secured for the '20-'21 ski season)!" (269 Merriam St., Weston, MA 02493; kirch@alum.mit.edu)

**Alan "Buzz" Spahr '56** wrote in April that he is "surviving in the hills of New Hampshire. Still ski and play tennis." (1 Pheasant Ln., Claremont, NH 03743; aspahr7@comcast.net)



## DECEASED

We regret to announce the deaths of the following alumni:

**WILLIAM W. CLARK '44**  
April 9, 2020

**THOMAS H. DUPREE '55**  
February 11, 2020

**JAMES F. NICHOLS '56**  
June 14, 2020

## Seeking Alpha Thetas in the News

Have you seen an Alpha Theta in the news who should be recognized in the next *Beaver Sig*?

Let Dan Craig '03 know at [dcraig@alum.mit.edu](mailto:dcraig@alum.mit.edu).



## GRA Anthony Tabet Named a Soros Fellow

(From [www.pdsoros.org/meet-the-fellows/anthony-tabet](http://www.pdsoros.org/meet-the-fellows/anthony-tabet))

Alpha Theta Graduate Resident Advisor Anthony Tabet was among 30 graduate students nationwide selected for the 2020 class of the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans. Tabet is a Ph.D. student in chemical engineering at MIT and has been the sole occupant of 532 Beacon St. since the undergraduates were sent home in March.

Anthony is passionate about translating research ideas from the lab into a commercialized technology. After graduating from the University of Minnesota with a degree in chemical engineering, Anthony became frustrated with the barriers entrepreneurs face in starting companies in the Midwest. He co-founded the company CoCreateX to streamline how scientists and engineers find resources, capital, and community. When Anthony was 21, he was named to *Minnesota Business Magazine's* "35 Under 35."

*"Anthony is passionate about translating research ideas from the lab into a commercialized technology."*

Raised in both a town outside of Beirut, Lebanon, and in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Anthony is not afraid of the uncomfortably hot or the bitter cold. Born after a civil war that nearly killed his entire paternal family and forced them to flee to the countryside, Anthony immigrated to the United States with his parents in search of opportunity and freedom from violence.

Now pursuing a Ph.D. in chemical engineering at MIT, Anthony is creating brain-machine interfaces that can permanently integrate into the brain and be used to study or treat brain tumors like glioblastoma. After his training, Anthony hopes to start a research lab at a university that can perform both fundamental and translational research on technologies that can improve human health in the most challenging-to-treat diseases.

*The Beaver Sig* is published regularly by the Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity at MIT for its friends and members. News should be sent to Alumni Records Office, Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity Inc., P.O. Box 390528, Cambridge, MA 02139-0006.

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