

THE BEAVER SIG

Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity



CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

HTTP://SIGMACHI.MIT.EDU

FEBRUARY 2010

From the House Corporation

Dear Brothers,

I hope this issue of *The Beaver Sig* finds you doing well.

Although I don't believe it was planned this way, two different articles in this issue talk about Alpha Theta alum business ventures, including the intergenerational Alpha Theta connections being made therein.

This spring term, the chapter and the corporate board are hoping to organize one or more events to help introduce the undergraduate brothers to some alumni and their chosen careers and career paths. The hope is that these events will help to shed some light on different careers, offer career advice, and encourage undergraduates to reach out to the amazing group that is Alpha Theta alumni, both prior to and during their professional careers.

If you would be willing to be contacted by undergraduates seeking career advice, please send me an e-mail or give me a call.

Finally, what are your thoughts on the best way to encourage and facilitate communication *among* the full Alpha Theta community in this day and age? Is it Facebook? E-mail? LinkedIn? *The Beaver Sig*? Some combination? Again, please let me know your thoughts!

With best wishes to all—

In hoc,
Karl Büttner '87
Corporation Board President
kbüttner@alum.mit.edu
617-504-6670

P.S. Two of the articles in this issue were submitted by alumni—please keep those submissions coming!

Consul Reports on State of Chapter

As Alpha Theta approached the sixth week of the semester at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the excitement in the chapter continued to grow. The activity at the house was in full swing even before the academic semester began. Twenty-five brothers returned from summer internships, studies abroad, and cross-country bike trips to kick off the year with Work Week 2009, which I led. The brothers cleaned and repaired the house for a week in preparation for recruitment and the rest of the semester.

In addition, the week included putting the finishing touches on the remodeling of the chapter's new computer room (see photos below). Both active brothers and alumni of Alpha Theta undertook this major project to successfully transform the second-floor closet next to the Library into a fully upgraded study room (two workstations plus a large white board wall). The computer workstations are integrated into the recently completed network upgrade at the chapter house, and the room now gets heavy use by brothers and pledges alike.

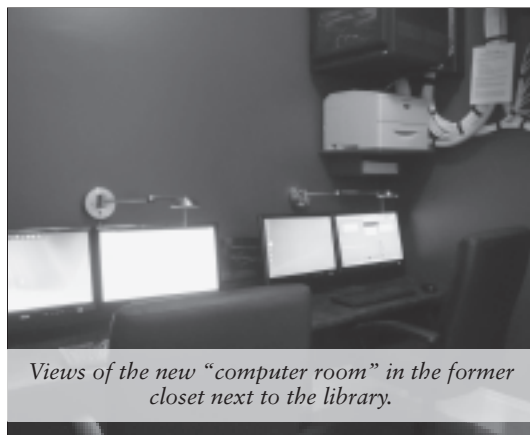
After work week, Rush Chair Michael Demyttenaere '10 finalized preparations for the coming week of recruitment. The brothers ran an extremely successful week

of events, resulting in a pledge class for 2013 consisting of 13 new members. As the academic semester started, brothers and pledges both began classes and participation in the wide range of extracurricular activities that characterizes Alpha Theta. From varsity sports to UROP (Undergraduate Research Opportunities) projects, the members balance these activities with chapter responsibilities and an active social life.

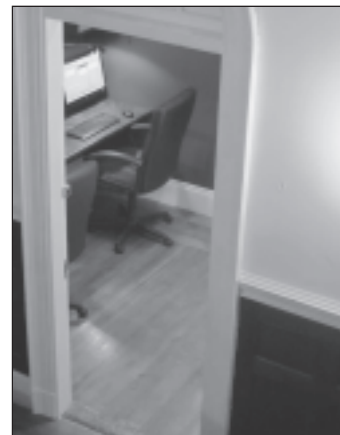
At Boston University, our fellow brothers coordinated and, in conjunction with our chapter, hosted visiting brothers during the 2009 North Atlantic Province Conference. A variety of events were planned in addition to the meetings between all the chapters in the conference. Other events included Alpha Theta's Sweetheart Formal and a chapter camping retreat.

After holding various other offices in the chapter, I was extremely proud to serve as Consul last semester. The chapter is enjoying many exciting opportunities this semester, and I look forward to being a part of them. The history of the chapter has set an excellent foundation for a promising new semester.

In hoc,
Eric Roselli '11



Views of the new "computer room" in the former closet next to the library.



2008-2009 HONOR ROLL FOR ALPHA THETA CHAPTER OF SIGMA CHI

Alpha Theta would like to extend a hearty thank-you to the brothers listed below who supported the Annual Campaign in difficult times this past year (donations reported below received between 03-Feb-09 and 11-Feb-10).

THE ORDER OF THE WHITE CROSS

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Benjamin Hellweg '97
William E. Stafford '88

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Kenneth P. Morse '68
John B. O'Brien '64
James W. Overbeck '60
Lawrence W. Speck '71
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Chester M. Patterson Jr. '49
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Basil C. Safos '80
Ian D. Sigalow '01
Robert F. Smith '58
C. Bruce Tarter '61
Gerald E. Tourgee '77
William C. Tsacoyeanes '83
Charles C. Wykoff '98
Michael Dendy Young '70
Peter N. Zacharias '69

CONTRIBUTORS

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Christopher Webb Young '92
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Gordon H. Zuerndorfer '78

Since 1992: A Camping Tradition Continues

Every summer, somewhere at a campground in the wilds of the Northeast, a tradition continues that traces its origin back to 532 Beacon Street. A group of Alpha Thetas gather with their families for a weekend of camping, hiking, swimming, eating, and fellowship. Most hail from the classes of the late '70s through mid-'80s and now live somewhere between New York and Maine. Some join from farther afield: Dock Williams '79 from California and Iain Hueton '83 from Utah are regulars, and Arne Lund '80 and his wife traveled from Washington state for a very wet weekend in 2008.

This all started when a handful of brothers, wives, and girlfriends decided to go for a weekend camping trip to Moosehead Lake in Maine. The next year's trip was Acadia, and it became an annual event. Over the years, more folks have joined in, and as families grew, the children came along. Now there are usually 8-12 families and a total of 30-50 people. This last summer was typical, with about 40 people, half of them kids ranging in

age from six into the teen years.

Organizing nowadays is mainly done via e-mail during the winter and early summer. A weekend is picked, a camp reservation is made, and people volunteer to take charge of meals for the group. Dave Gailus '80 brings along his camping van loaded with equipment (the pot and pan set is the same used back in the days of chapter trips to Acadia and elsewhere) and tarps, big tarps. Others bring additional camp stoves and lanterns as well as their tents. The action starts Friday evening as families arrive. Tents are pitched, tarps are strung up to make a kitchen area and provide shelter from rain, a fire is lit, and dinner is started. Everyone pitches in, chopping, cooking, serving, entertaining, washing, drying, fetching water...all while old stories are retold and refined, and new stories are passed along, long into the night.

On Saturday after breakfast, somebody eventually organizes a hike or two, usually an easy one for the younger crowd and a more difficult one for the ambitious and teenaged among us.

Lunch is packed and it is to the hills until the afternoon. The late afternoon finds the activity picking up again in the kitchen (it takes a lot of work to feed 40 people), while some make their way to the nearest swimming hole and others fire up a game of Wiffleball or Koob. Someone is likely to start an interesting project to amuse and enlighten the group, be it studying nutrient-induced photoluminescence on Acadian shores, potato-gun optimization in the Vermont woods, or observing the effect of jack-in-the-pulpit on the inner lip. Saturday night is a replay of Friday, with a different menu and different cooks, but it never gets old, and we never run out of things to talk about.

Sunday it's time to break camp (after breakfast, of course), divvy up the leftovers, maybe plan a short hike for on the way home, and talk about where to go next year. And yes, a good time is had by all.

In hoc,
By Steve Morris '82
Photos by Pam Wood (Wellesley '79)



Tom Gow '80 (left) and Bruce Kirch '79 in the kitchen.



Iain Hueton '84 (left), Bruce Kirch '79, and John Piotti '83 relax by the fire.



The next generation tends the fire.

Brothers Welcome Large, Diverse Pledge Class

Last fall brought one of the biggest and most diverse pledge classes to Alpha Theta in the history of the chapter. With 13 young men from three continents, Assistant Magister Jordan Lopez '12 and I have our work cut out for us as we prepare the class of 2013 for brotherhood.

The pledges met their big brothers on the fifth of October; each member of the 2012 class received a little brother, as did Colin Taylor '10, Garrett Winther '11, and Michael Dobson '11. The new members of the house have involved them-

selves in our Wednesday night tea gatherings and intramural sports while interviewing brothers and eating dinner at the house.

Our pledges met the new members of Alpha Phi and Sigma Kappa sororities in the first weeks of the term, serenading each house and then performing in Sigma Kappa's "Late Night" talent show. While they did not win best act, they made the house proud with a freestyle rap effort led by Paul Uche '13.

During Columbus Day weekend, the

pledges headed to Henniker, New Hampshire, for a weekend of camping and bonding as a class. The weather was beautiful, if a bit cold, and on Sunday, the brothers joined the pledges for some fun together in the great outdoors. As Jordan and I educate these young men in the high ideals of Sigma Chi, we look forward to introducing the new class to the unique traditions of the Alpha Theta Chapter.

In hoc,
Pall Magnus Kornmayer '11

Recent Alums Start Company with Sig Spirit

After two short years of working in management consulting following graduation, this past summer, Josh Lake '07 and I decided to move on from the corporate world and pursue our higher ambitions of starting and growing our own business. With little more than the idea that we wanted to do something “technology-related” and live in Southern California, we incorporated under the non-committal, mutually reminiscent, and generally ambiguous name “532 Technology Group.”

We first sought out opportunities to do the only thing we knew how to do: consult. We formulated an interim business plan to consult on everything technology-related, launched a website, and began barraging our networks with requests for opportunities. As it turned out, we found a few early projects—one in mobile software and two in alternative energy—and immersed ourselves. Within about two weeks, our technology blog feeds accumulated long backlogs, and we realized that keeping track of all things technology was too much to swallow. We needed to narrow our focus. Grasping a common interest among us and capitalizing on the projects we had generated in our first few weeks, we decided to focus on alternative energy.

Thinking back to our days at MIT, having firsthand experience cultivating technology business ideas in research labs, we hypothesized that there must be untapped opportunities at the local universities. We began an intense search for technology ideas and interviewed licensing offices and professors at every major university in southern California. We traced contacts and the networks of the people we spoke with, and even conducted interviews with some successful local technology entrepreneurs. We found it pretty amazing how responsive people were to a few inexperienced guys with MIT on their resume masquerading around as entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, we didn't find anything that seemed like it would be worth devoting complete attention.

In parallel to scrounging around the labs, we began connecting with brothers from earlier classes who have started companies. Perhaps it's the nostalgia created by invoking that famous address, 532, as our name, but in every single conversation, we were greeted not just by enthusiasm and encouragement, but also an unflinching willingness to go out of the way for us. Since making those early introductions, several brothers have lent their ears and offered advice, others have

provided leads or direct opportunities, and one, Rolf Brauchler '69, even joined our team.

In recent weeks, the focus of our efforts has now converged on solar energy development, and we have refined the name to: 532 Development Group (www.532devgroup.com). If our luck persists, we are mere days away from signing a contract that will allow us to launch our first development project, which by no coincidence was an opportunity provided by an Alpha Theta. This vote of confidence, we hope, will be the moment we remember as that which turned us from “guys trying to start a company” into real entrepreneurs, like the legendary Alpha Thetas we all revered as undergrads.

While we now find ourselves nearing a mere three months into our adventure, still with uncertainties aplenty, we thought it might behoove us to remind the brothers, both young and old, what a tremendous organization they have affiliated themselves with, and for those who seek them, what tremendous opportunities lie ahead.

In hoc,
Nick Haschka
(’07 Graduating Class, ’08 Pledge Class)



The actives ham it up at a recent '80s party.

Active Finds Work through Alpha Theta Network

When hearing about summer internships from older guys when I was a freshman, it was hard to believe that I would ever be in the position to field one. I remember sitting on the brown, worn-in leather couch in the library during a house meeting and hearing Thatcher Clay '08 talk about a lucrative software internship he had with Sigma Chi alumni the previous summer. It seemed both too good to be true and non-applicable to someone like me who enjoyed summers working as a camp counselor and relaxing at the beach. After a job two summers ago as a website designer for a plastic-surgery office, which I quit after two weeks of misery only to regroup and surf everyday, I was scrambling to make some money this last summer and potentially make a dent in the portion that I owed my parents for MIT.

The job hunt seemed hopeless after months of sending e-mails, resumes, and cover letters. It was demoralizing not even getting e-mails back to say no positions were available. I believed in the economic downturn and lack of jobs and had moved on to thinking about maybe being a surf-camp instructor or doing some other minimum-wage job. In a last-ditch effort, however, at the suggestion of my older and wiser roommate, Jeff Mekler '10 (who was also president at the time), I e-mailed Karl Büttner, asking him if he



knew any Alpha Theta alumni in the Bay area. Within a week, I was directly corresponding with John Rodkin '95 and Colin McKee '94 about working for them on a new software project, WebPosition.

I wasn't at all sure what to expect the first day, although I knew I could easily get used to the short, scenic drive down Interstate 280 to John's house in San Carlos. When I got there, his dog Stella attacked me, and I immediately felt a little weird for showing up wearing khakis, a dress shirt, and leather shoes. The second day was much better; I showed up in more appropriate attire—jeans, sneakers, and a T-shirt—and I started to use the program they were working on totally rewriting. Although I was never going to touch the code directly, I started to think about ways to improve it and got working on future plans with Colin. Lunch that day was great: Colin, John, and Leo Chang '94 rock-paper-scissors to decide on both where to go to lunch and who would pay for everyone. By the end of the summer, I probably could have done a full synopsis of San Carlos restaurants for Yelp—we had eaten at Stacks, Carl's Jr., Bangkok Bay, the Carvery, Mr. Chan's, Yan's, Broadway Dinner, Azure, Jamba Juice, and every dive Mexican place in the town.

The work itself was exciting at times, and dismal at others. A few weeks in, I

took over customer service to gain some more work hours. I had to deal with a slew of customers with varying intellectual abilities, a few of whom threatened to sue and then chastise me publicly on the internet in their blogs. On the flip side, there were some great days at work where we would bang on competitors' software late into the afternoon until we had them completely figured out. It was satisfying to see that I could add valuable work to a company and that I had skills applicable to the real world.

In the end, though, regardless of the work I did and the experience I gained, the best part was connecting with local Alpha Thetas. They would joke about girlfriends they had and great parties, and I was there to fuel their reminiscing with current updates on the recent parties and affairs of the house, such as whether or not having tank tops for rush was too "fratty." I'm enjoying still working for them while at MIT, although I am no longer on the John, Colin, and Leo Chang lunch plan. I talk to Colin once a week about the house, how the pledges are doing, how his family is, how lunches are, to see if John is still raving about how no Italian restaurant compares to pasta in Tuscany, to see if Leo is still making everyone eat greasy Chinese, and then a little bit about work.

In hoc,
Spencer Currie '11

Report from the Road: The Adventure of a Lifetime

In pursuit of adventure, Ben Judge and I left Boston on our bikes, each with four panniers full of gear. We had no destination in mind and only wanted to follow our compass south along the East Coast until our time ran out. After three days, we decided to decrease our loads by getting rid of two panniers' worth of gear each, leaving us with the minimal amount of gear needed. Our clothing consisted of two cycling shirts, two pairs of spandex, one pair of shorts, a sweater, raincoat, three pairs of socks, and a "nice" T-shirt. Each night, we set up our small tent in locations that included graveyards, beaches, churches, fire stations, or simply along the road. As long as we stayed "out of sight, out of mind" of the police, things were okay, and some nights we "stealth camped" to stay out of trouble. Every morning, we woke up, ate a whole box of oatmeal, biked about 20 miles, and ate a very large breakfast. Throughout the day, we stopped another two to

three times for full meals until we found an interesting place to sleep and make dinner. Using a small stove, we heated up canned goods and hot dogs. At one point, we were given each a week's worth of MREs (Meal Ready to Eat) used by the military, which we taped onto our bikes. We set no goal, so we biked anywhere from zero to over 100 miles each day.

The trip was devised to create adventure, to force myself into positions that I have never experienced. Having nothing planned, there was nothing to look forward to, so I had to just live in the moment. If we saw an interesting location, we stopped, or if we met a group of new people, we stayed and talked. Everyone was very nice to a level that we were not prepared for. A family gave us a room in their condo in Virginia Beach during their vacation, another family let us sleep in their basement for the night, twice we were offered rides to catch a ferry, and we

even received many offers of money for dinner. Also, the people we met always seemed to leave with giving us a piece of advice, which was interesting, due to the broad spectrum of people we met. We talked to a homeless couple biking up the East Coast in search of work, a man who had just gotten out of prison a week earlier walking to find work, a soldier home from Iraq, and two college boys the same age as us traveling in the opposite direction.

Ben and I ended our trip in Key West at Mile Zero after biking 1,900 miles in 31 days. There were a total of 46 flat tires, one broken shifter cable, one warped rim, and one collision with a car. Not once during the trip did I not wish to be anywhere else. We left looking for adventure and found it. Problems were expected, so when weather approached or we got a flat tire, a smile was the best medicine.

In hoc,
John Walton '12

Alumni Send News From Far And Near



"The *Beaver Sig* continues to provide a link to one of life's most pleasurable experiences," writes **James Veras '49**. "Thank you to all responsible. It is with great regret that Betty and I were unable to attend our class's 60th reunion. Doctor's orders. However, the spirit runs high and great family reunions in Florida make life exciting. Reading the extensive publications provided by MIT and Sigma Chi maintains the interest in all developments. Without doubt, we were privileged to receive our higher education in one of the great educational institutions of our life. Ginny and **Howard Hendershott '49** remain our lifelong friends and spend month in Florida nearby. Howie and I thrive in recalling our youth. Thanks to a great Sig Alpha Theta house, we have the fondest of memories. They include hosting the great Sir Winston Churchill in the Mid-Century Convocation of 1949, an unforgettable experience for this WWII combat veteran. Hail, Alpha Theta—all the best for the future." Get in touch with Jim at 3610 S. Ocean Blvd., #508, Palm Beach, FL 33480; jimveras@gmail.com.

"Still practicing a little law and monkeying around in real estate," reports **Christopher Colton '64**, "while splitting time between Michigan and the Texas

Gulf Coast." Chris has a new home address: 8283 S. Jackson Rd., Clarklake, MI 49234. Drop him an e-mail at coltonassociates@gmail.com.

"I'm the director of the neonatal intensive care unit at Swedish Hospital, Seattle," writes **Terrence Sweeney '75**. "It's a 61-bed NICU, the largest perinatal/neonatal service in the region. I have four kids, two out of college, two still at home." Check in with Terry at 727 17th Ave. E, Seattle, WA 98112; terrys@seanet.com.

"Our family continues our efforts to bring medical and dental care to the indigenous Zoque people of Chiapas, Mexico," reports **David Brody '77**, "through The Chiapas Project (www.chiapasproject.org). After eight years and 16 volunteer trips to the remote community of Ocotepec, work has begun on establishing a permanent health center. The project serves a local population of 15,000 ethnic Mayans. Medical and dental professionals and students are welcomed on our March and August trips. My wife, Joanne Liegner, an OB/GYN, has retired from private practice. Our son has graduated from Reed College (Portland, OR) with a degree in Classics. Nick will begin teaching high school in New Orleans this fall.

Our daughter, Kim, has one more year at Cornell before attending law school. Kim, who has studied in Peru, Chile, and Scotland, will seek a career in international law, specifically human rights in emerging democracies. All in all, life is good. We travel a few times annually. Our home in the Mexican mountains is completed and lovely. We will build on our Mexican Caribbean land (400' of beachfront) once retirement is imminent. My memories of life at 532 Beacon Street, at least those that come through the haze, are fond. I miss my old friends and hope they are all well." Dave can be reached at 3 Romney Ct., Lafayette, NJ 07848; divedoc@ptd.net.

DECEASED

We regret to announce the death of:

William H. Schlegel '44
February 23, 2009

Wilbur P. Fiske '54
June 5, 2009

James W. Overbeck '60
August 7, 2009

Thomas S. Downey '76
November 14, 2008

Alpha Theta Wins Gold at Senior Olympics

Palo Alto was the host city in August for the 2009 National Senior Olympic Games, and Bro. Bill Stern '40 came home with a gold, silver, and bronze medal. Bro. Bill, a Life Loyal Sig, was initiated into Alpha Theta on February 14, 1937. Following graduation from MIT, he served in the U.S. Army during WWII.

When he returned to Boston in 1961, he was invited by Bro. Bill Carlisle '27, then chairman of our trustees, to become a chapter trustee. In those days, 532 Beacon Street was "owned" by the trust. Bro. Stern became chairman of the trustees in 1964. He was instrumental in various projects with the house, including the renova-

tion of 1977 and the fundraising efforts to support this, which culminated in our centennial celebration in 1982. As a part of the centennial, the trusteeship was disbanded and the corporation succeeded it.

Aged 90, Bill competed in the 90-94 age bracket. He brought home a gold in the 1500-meter run, a silver in the 200-meter dash, and a bronze in the 100-meter dash. All of his family was there to encourage Bill in his races, and then they enjoyed a festive reunion in Palo Alto and at the Point Reyes National Seashore thereafter.

In hoc,
Herb Mower '65 ('82)



Bill Stern '40 (left) with Herb Mower '65 after Bill's medal wins.

Can We Reach You via E-mail?

Please visit the alumni section of the Alpha Theta website to make sure we have your most recent e-mail address:
<http://sigmachi.mit.edu/alumni>

The Beaver Sig

is published regularly by the Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for its friends and members. News and photos should be sent to: Alumni Records Office, Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity Inc., P.O. Box 390528, Cambridge, MA 02139-0006.