

THE BEAVER SIG

Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity



CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

[HTTP://SIGMACHI.MIT.EDU](http://sigmachil.mit.edu)

SPRING 2009

Welcome Ben Pope as Chapter Advisor

Dear Brothers,

I hope this issue of *The Beaver Sig* finds you well, despite the global economic recession.

As reported via e-mail last year, our own Ben Pope '08 was awarded the International Balfour Award by the Sigma Chi International Fraternity, recognizing him as Sigma Chi's most outstanding senior! This being the first issue of *The Beaver Sig* since that exciting news, it seems very appropriate to repeat it here.

Perhaps just as exciting for Alpha Theta is the news that Ben is now our chapter advisor. The corporation board is thrilled to be working with Ben, and we know that the chapter will be well advised with Ben on the job.

Best wishes to you and your families.

In hoc,
Karl Büttner '87
Corporation Board President
kbuttner@alum.mit.edu

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://sigmachil.mit.edu/alumni>

Consul Reports on State of the Chapter

Summer ended three weeks before classes for work week and rush, as brothers flocked back to the house from around the U.S. and the world. Chris Bukowski '09 was finally back from a semester in Spain, and Eric Rueland '10 and Dominik Kmita '10 finished up their internships in Germany. When that Monday morning finally came, Jeff Mekler started cracking the whip as the rest of the brothers revitalized the house for another long year of school. Some floors were refinished, while others were replaced. A new Sigma Chi sign was

painted, all house surfaces were scrubbed and polished, and some water-damaged ceiling was repaired in the room designated for our RA, Amon Milner. With the weather beautiful and the house spotless, we were ready for some new pledges.

This year, recruitment was led by Andrew Ji '09. In my opinion, the highlight of the week was our incredibly successful trip to the beach. The sun beat down on us as we played in the waves and organized sports on the sand.

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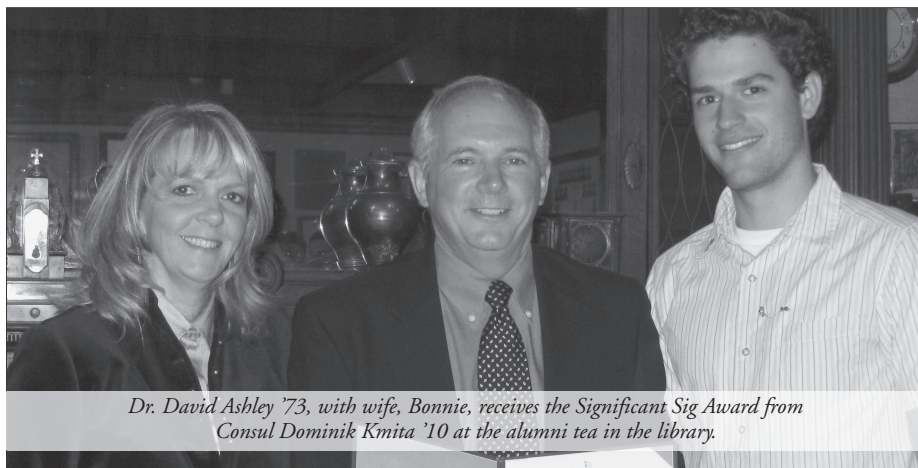
David Ashley '73 Named Significant Sig

Dr. David Ashley '73, president of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has been named a Significant Sig by the Sigma Chi International Fraternity. The Significant Sig award recognizes "those alumni members whose achievements in their fields of endeavor have brought honor and prestige to the name of Sigma Chi."

Prior to his role as president of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Brother Ashley served as executive vice chancellor

and provost at the University of California, Merced, and held the Shaffer-George Chair in Engineering. He has also served as dean of engineering at The Ohio State University and has held civil engineering faculty positions at the University of California-Berkeley, the University of Texas at Austin, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Brother Ashley's principal research
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Dr. David Ashley '73, with wife, Bonnie, receives the Significant Sig Award from Consul Dominik Kmita '10 at the alumni tea in the library.

Discovering My Roots: A Summer in Iceland

Sigma Chi prides itself on its reputation as the international fraternity—not just for chapters in both the United States and Canada, but also for the diverse backgrounds of its brothers. Alpha Theta shines in this respect especially, boasting brothers not just from all parts of the United States, but also from overseas. My heritage is split American and Icelandic; my father the former, my mother the latter. This summer, I traveled to Reykjavík, Iceland, to participate in the Snorri program and gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of my mother's heritage.

I grew up for most of my life in a suburb north of Atlanta, Georgia, visiting Iceland four times on vacation with my family. These trips to Iceland were brief—only about a week long, too short a time to get a true taste of the distinct culture and lifestyle of my mother's homeland. The Snorri program, sponsored by the Icelandic Snorri Foundation, offers North Americans of Icelandic descent between the ages of 18 and 28 the opportunity to spend six weeks on the island to take part in a work-study program. I decided to apply for the 2008 trip and, upon my acceptance, enrolled in a life-changing adventure.

The first two weeks of the program

occurred in the capital city of Reykjavík, where the 13 other participants and I engaged in a crash course of Icelandic language, culture, history, and geography at the city's university. Outside of class, we enriched ourselves through a variety of activities—we celebrated Þjóðhátíðardagurinn, Iceland's independence day; hiked Mount Esja, a 3,000-foot peak that overlooks the city; visited the American embassy, where an employee graduated Course 12; met the president, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, at his home; sampled traditional Icelandic cuisine, such as Skeyr, Brennevin, and Hákarl, better known as rotten shark; and practicing our Icelandic. The weather was exceptionally beautiful during these two weeks. Iceland lies just outside the Arctic Circle, and as a result, the sun never sets in the summer.

After the two weeks spent studying, I moved to the suburb of Grafavogur and spent three weeks living with my second cousin and worked a job with Landsbanki, the second-largest bank in the country. This was the heart of the program, as I settled into a typical Icelandic teen's summer schedule, experiencing a life completely unlike the one I have always known. I gained a fair amount of ground in my Icelandic abili-

ties—it's a notoriously difficult language, and six weeks wasn't nearly enough time to do it justice.

My favorite parts of the program came during the final week, in which we visited deCODE, a genetics firm that specializes in genealogy and maintains Íslendingabók, a computer database that connects the ancestry of every Icelandic citizen back to the year 800 in most cases. I received printouts that showed my relation to the other participants in the program, various Icelandic political and social figures, and even Leif Erikson (my second cousin, 23 times removed). We traveled roughly half the country, moving through small towns of 300-1,000 people, stopping along the way to swim in the North Atlantic just outside the Arctic Circle and rafting down glacial rivers.

Six weeks passed quickly, and before I was ready, I was headed back to America, back to Boston, and back to the MIT workload. Charged with a new appreciation for my heritage and the strong taste of shark still in my mouth, I look forward to returning to Iceland again in the near future and to developing my relationships with my many family members there.

In hoc,

Páll Magnús Kornmayer '11

A Pledge Recalls His Weekend Away with His Fellow Pledges

When I was in high school, I never understood why a guy would join a fraternity, especially if he was hazed and had to live in a huge house full of guys. When I arrived at MIT, I was amazed at all of the awesome fraternities. During rush week, I went to many different events, and after checking out several fraternities on both sides of the Charles River, I knew that Sigma Chi suited me best.

Once I received my bid, the fun began. I pledged on Massachusetts Avenue and got to watch all 25 brothers come running and

screaming up the street. They gave me my pledge shirt and sang me the initiation song. I officially was a pledge. Afterwards, I was able to go to house meetings, I got to do fun activities with all the great guys in my pledge class, and best of all, I got to eat delicious dinners at the house with all of the brothers. Even though school was under way and problem sets were beginning to pile up, I still spent most of my time at the house.

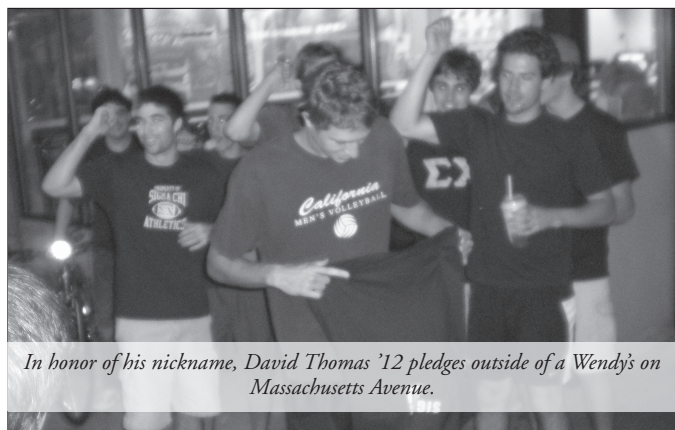
Every Monday night, we had pledge meetings at which we would have to learn about and memorize the house's history and standards. At the end of one meeting, the pledge supervisor informed us that we would need to meet at the house the following Saturday morning for a three-day weekend. None of us knew what to expect, and all the brothers were keeping it a secret. That weekend, the brothers took us to a small camp-

ground in New Hampshire and gave us tents, sleeping bags, and food for the weekend. It was an awesome weekend.

We got to eat oatmeal for breakfast, sandwiches for lunch, and chili and smores for dinner. One of the pledges was an Eagle Scout, and he was able to make a cozy fire to cook with and keep us warm at night. Another pledge brought his guitar, so at night we shared stories and sang around the campfire. On Sunday morning, there was a campground-wide horseshoe tournament that the pledges competed in. The tents were too small and we had to cram into them. On Sunday night, it rained and most of our stuff got wet, but being crammed in the tents together, listening to the rain, was an awesome experience.

At school the next week, I felt like all of my pledge brothers were my best friends and would always be there for me. It was a great way to start the year. Now whenever I am walking through the hallways between classes, I see some of my fellow Sigma Chi pledges, and we will laugh and think about that awesome weekend in New Hampshire. To me, that is why men join fraternities.

David Thomas '12



In honor of his nickname, David Thomas '12 pledges outside of a Wendy's on Massachusetts Avenue.

Cycling Across America in 41 Days

Take two 20-year-old college students. Give them 40 days of summer freedom and a budget of \$2,000. What do they do with it? They biked nearly 3,500 miles across America.

That's what MIT sophomore Luke Cummings and his college buddy, Dominik Kmita, did from May 28-July 6. From Los Angeles to Boston via the TransAmerica Bike Trail, they averaged 80 miles/day, seeing America the way few of us would dare to.

They budgeted \$2,000 for the ride, bought road bikes and camping gear in California, and started out determined to do the ride as cheaply as possible. They camped in city parks or asked at local fire or police stations where to camp, went to local libraries to go online, and relied on the TransAmerica Trail maps for information like free swimming pools or good diners.

According to Luke, "We were really lucky to meet nice people in most every town

we rode through. It was amazing to see people in their 60's doing the ride, and the encouragement from other cyclists was awesome."

Luke said he didn't train much before deciding to do the ride. "I biked maybe three or four times for about an hour each time," said the laidback future engineer. They tried to streamline their gear, but Luke figured he had an extra 70 lbs. of bike gear added to his 6'4", 200-lb. frame.

The weather seemed to be in their favor as well. With temperatures in the mid-80s when they rode through the Yucca Valley of California, the pair made it to the Grand Canyon feeling pretty good. "We met a lady in line at a McDonald's who offered us a free shower since she and her family had checked out of their motel room early," said Luke.

Colorado was a high point for both of them, and the scenery kept them going. "It snowed on us a couple of nights on the

Western Slope. We didn't have any warm clothes, so we had to wrap T-shirts around our hands to keep warm as we got going in the morning."

Once they hit Kansas and then Missouri, though, the going got tougher. "The Ozarks were the worst...It was hill after hill and there were a lot of big diesel trucks that would sneak up behind us, blow their horns, and pass really closely."

When they made it to Pennsylvania and a part of the Appalachian Trail, the guys knew that they were almost finished. "I would definitely go back to the Appalachian Trail to hike," said Luke. "It was beautiful." Almost as an anticlimax, they rode into Boston on bad roads in a driving rain. When asked what kept the two going, Luke answered in one word: "Persistence."

—Margaret Carroll

Reprinted from "Door County Silent Sports Alliance" website

Consul Reports on State of Chapter

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Andrew's leadership and our brothers' enthusiasm at that event and throughout the rest of the week rewarded the chapter with 10 talented and committed pledges. The pledges immediately began integrating into the house and taking great advantage of their new pledge room. There was no hesitation in getting to know the brothers through interviews or Sigma Chi's history through pledge meetings. By October, their magister, Eric Rueland '10, made sure they knew their Greek alphabet and Jordan Standard by heart. Also, for the first time in recent history, Eric organized a camping trip in the fall geared to pledge bonding and brotherhood.

Brothers keep bonding through social events and community service. In September, almost half of the chapter participated in the Alzheimer's memory walk that started at the Cambridge Galleria. The event doubled as a chance to support a good cause and mix with the sisters of the Sigma Kappa sorority. The weather that day wasn't great, but the free barbecue at the end was.

The position of song master was credited with extra responsibilities as our chapter created a new band. An electric guitar, a bass guitar, the grand piano, and our new drum set make up the instruments, but the brothers' musical talents and enthusiastic attitudes are what make the band exceptional. Although the band hasn't put on any shows yet, the brothers

have promised to perfect their skills and maybe even write some original music by the end of this term.

All these activities wouldn't have taken place without the great leadership of our officers this term. We have all been busy and diligent in our duties and have tried to set great examples for the pledges and all other brothers. We officers can't take all the credit, though, because we too have somewhere to go to when we need assistance. Ben Pope '08, our very own International Balfour Award winner, has come back this year as an MIT graduate student to act as our chapter advisor. He has proven to be a valuable source of knowledge about life, leadership, and Sigma Chi, and I am grateful for everything he has done and continues to do for our chapter.

After almost two-and-a-half years at MIT, I am still amazed at how committed, close-knit, and successful our chapter of Sigma Chi has always been. From community service and academics to intramural sports and the house band, our brotherhood and accomplishments have never been so meaningful and numerous. With a smile on my face and a badge on my chest, I can honestly say that I have never been so proud to be a brother of the Alpha Theta chapter of Sigma Chi.

In hoc,
Dominik Kmita '10
Consul, Alpha Theta

David Ashley '73 Named Significant Sig

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and teaching have focused on construction project planning, primarily in risk analysis and management of large-scale, complex projects. His recent studies have addressed innovative project financing and new project procurement approaches.

His work in this field has brought him recognition as a National Science Foundation Presidential Young Investigator, and the American Society of Civil Engineers has honored him with the 2004 Peurifoy Construction Research Award and the 1992 Construction Management Award. In 2000, he received an honorary doctorate from the Chalmers University in Sweden for his academic contributions.

Brother Ashley's professional experiences as a civil engineer and as an expert in construction management include work on major projects around the globe. He has been called upon to work on the expansion of the Panama Canal and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

Brother Ashley, joined by his wife, Bonnie, was presented with his Significant Sig Award at the house on January 21, during the alumni tea event of I-Week. David and Bonnie had just attended the presidential inauguration in Washington the day before. Please join us in congratulating Brother Ashley in receiving this very prestigious honor!

Alumni Send News From Far And Near



Winchell T. Hayward '46 is keeping very active in his retirement. He's an elder, pianist, and committee participant at the Mission Presbyterian Church; he assists retired city and county employees in San Francisco, where he also serves on the citizens' advisory committee of the public utilities commission. Win plays piano for singing groups at local hospitals and is active in the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs. He holds season tickets to the SF opera, ballet and symphony. Write to Win at 208 Willard North, San Francisco, CA 94118; send e-mail to winhayward@mailbug.com.

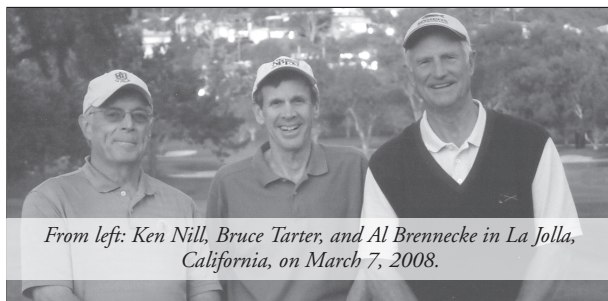
Thomas L. Bell '47 writes, "It's great to live in Denver where I often get to see fellow Alpha Theta Sigs **Ted Davis '47**, **Milo Wilson '45**, and **Andy Pfeifferberger '49**. All of us are holding up, even in our 80s. In September 2008, my wife, Joanne Kouris, and I took a month-long trip to the East Coast to visit family and friends in our new Highlander Hybrid, averaging 30 mpg. We visited another Alpha Theta Sig, **Gordon Shingleton '49**, at Falcon's Landing in Sterling, Virginia, a great retirement place for military brass for which he well qualifies as a retired army colonel. It was hard to keep up with him on the tennis court even though he says he has slowed down a bit from his 4.5 rating. We played together with the stars (retired generals). In nearby D.C., we saw the Holocaust Museum (a must-see for everyone) and were reminded that the 42nd Airborne Division (with Milo Wilson) saved many lives when it liberated one of the German concentration camps in WWII. Later, in Maryland, we visited Barbara Coit, the recent widow of another Alpha Theta Sig, **Garry Coit '46**, who died in February 2008." Stay in touch with Tom at 3482 W. Dartmouth Ave., Denver, CO 80236; send e-mail to tombell@alum.mit.edu.

Robert H. Jenkins '48 writes, "In the fall of 2007, my wife, Pat, and I moved to Valley Verde, a full-medical retirement community in Santa Barbara, California. We are quite happy here; there are about 300 residents on 70 beautiful acres. Everyone calls it a 'college campus'." Reach Robert at 1115 Senda Verde, Santa Barbara, CA 93105.

Chester M. Patterson Jr. '49 writes,

"I had a wonderful visit to Palm Beach in August 2008, seeing Betty and **Jim Veras '49**. I don't often get back to the U.S. as I am still working full time in Costa Rica, my home." Reach Chester by e-mail at cpatterson@setec-cr.com.

Joe Brazzatti '54 is alive and well. He reports, "Like Mark Twain said, the report of my death was greatly exaggerated. I don't know how things went wrong and I don't care to know. Just put things right in *The Beaver Sig*. Anyway, I'm fine and I'll have another Guinness to prove it." Write to Joe at 6625 Vanderbilt St., West University Place, TX 77005; joebraz1@yahoo.com.



From left: Ken Nill, Bruce Tarter, and Al Brennecke in La Jolla, California, on March 7, 2008.

Alan R. Brennecke '61 lives at 2477 Winding Brook Ct., Rochester, MI 48309. He writes, "Some of the Alpha Theta Sigs from the class of 1961 gathered together in La Jolla, California, to enjoy the hospitality of Gale and **Ken Nill**. There was golfing, dining, and gathering around the kitchen table to enjoy old memories. Those Sigs present were Ken, **Bruce Tarter**, **Earl Van Horn**, and me." Stay in touch with Alan at abbottbrennecke@comcast.net.

Earl Van Horn '61 has a new address: 13 Henley Rd, Acton, MA 01720. Send him e-mail at earl@ecvanhorn.us.

Alfred H. Bellows '62 reports, "I retired three years ago after practicing mechanical engineering for 43 years at Polaroid, ECA, Foster-Miller, GTE, and Sylvania. I still consult, mostly as an expert witness for Fuji Photo in a lawsuit over their single-use cameras. Sandy and I have moved to Cape Cod and put our family house on the market. Our daughter, Meredith, works and lives in Seattle with her husband. Our son, David, is an actuary in Boston and lives near MIT. Stepson Rick has given us two delightful grandsons. Stepson Jamie is a develop-

ment officer for Massachusetts Law Reform in Boston. I will never forget that Sigma Chi kept me above water through four tough years at MIT!" Keep in touch with Al at 29 Admiral's Ln., Osterville, MA 02655; abellows@alum.mit.edu.

Lawrence W. Speck '71 reports a new address: 800 W 5th St., #1102, Austin, TX 78703. E-mail lwspeck@mail.utexas.edu.

Gerald E. Tourgee '77 is now self-employed as a telecom consultant in submarine cables and mobile networks. His oldest son, Adam, is attending MIT. Stay in touch with Jerry at 2 Bradley Rd., Morristown, NJ 07960; gtourgee@opticonnect.biz.

Sig Sweetheart News

Melissa (Kendall) Halliburton '00, our 1996 sweetheart, reports, "I got married in Smoky Mountain National Park on September 20, 2008. My husband, sadly, is not a Sig, but I'm sure you'll all like him anyway. I'm looking forward to the next reunion." Reach Melissa at 635 N Interlachen Ave., Winter Park, FL 32789; send her e-mail at melissa@bringfido.com.

DECEASED

We regret to announce the deaths of:

John Jacob Freiburger '45
December 27, 2008

Lew Garry Coit Jr. '46
February 2008

Otto K. Wetzel '48
July 31, 2008

Alexander d'Arbeloff '49
July 8, 2008

J. Edward Snyder '55
November 4, 2007

David V. James '71

Honor Roll Update

Chester M. Patterson Jr. '49, listed as a "Carlisle Society" donor in our last honor roll, should have been listed in the "532 Patron" category. The editor regrets the error.