

The Back Bay Beta

The Beta Upsilon Chapter
of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity
at the Massachusetts
Institute of Technology

www.beta-mit.org

WINTER 2009-'10

Mark your calendar for Beta Upsilon's 100th!

We are proud to announce the dates for the 100th anniversary celebration of the Beta Upsilon Chapter of Beta Theta Pi. Mark your calendars for October 4-6, 2013 in Boston. We're planning a big weekend of activity and Beta brotherhood to celebrate the 100th anniversary of our chapter. The agenda for the weekend is still being finalized, but it will include events in Boston, at MIT in Cambridge, and a celebration banquet on Saturday night, October 5, 2013. We'll reserve a block of rooms for out of town guests, and families are welcome. We already have a great list of committed attendees (below), and most of them have also volunteered to help us recruit their con-

temporaries to attend. We expect Betas from every era to be there, and you'll undoubtedly meet old friends when you join us.

Victor Sinow '08 is heading up the organization committee for this event. If you are interested in recruiting your Beta contemporaries to attend, please contact Victor at vsinow22@gmail.com.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Yours in ~kai~,
Mike Feinstein '82

Vice President
mike_feinstein@yahoo.com

Initial Committed Attendees

R. Gordon Black '56	Mike Feinstein '82	Christian Hamer '94
Allan J. MacLaren '60	Michael Flanagan '85	Alex Bakst '08
Richard Oeler '60	Robert Struble '85	Steve Russo '08
James Draper '62	John Springsteen '91	Victor Sinow '08
Michael Monsler '64	Frank Leibly '93	Daniel Hochbaum '09
Herman Marshall '78	Dave Samuel '94	Adam Paxson '09

Undergraduate president reports: Preparing for change

Being heavily involved in the leadership and administration of Beta Upsilon for the last two years has been challenging and rewarding. I have held the positions of risk manager, house manager, president and rush chairman. As a chapter, we've recently seen many successes in improving the level of house participation, brotherhood, academics, and recruitment, among other things. Some of the highlights include having the fourth highest chapter GPA on campus two out of the last three semesters, winning the Sisson Award in 2008, and gaining four pledges in the spring of

2009. Not all of our endeavors have been successful though, and as a house, we have learned many valuable lessons. Recent sources of headaches have included holding philanthropy events, improving communication with alumni, and increasing the size of the chapter. As always, we are striving to identify the reasons for past difficulties so that we can continue to improve as a fraternity.

Now that I am a senior, it has become apparent to me that, more than addressing all of the
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Beta cruised in style when we rented a school bus for the fall semester's house trip to White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire. Read more on page two.

House travels to White Mountain National Forest

Last semester, we planned an exciting house trip to the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire. With more brothers came a bigger budget, some of which our treasurer allocated for a charter bus so we could enjoy the three-hour ride in style and comfort. Upon our arrival, we enjoyed a 1.4-mile hike along an old logging road to Champney Brooke, where we branched off to hike up to the scenic Champney and Pitcher Falls.

This was a great chance for brothers and pledges to get away from Boston and enjoy the outdoors before winter kicked in. Furthermore, the pledges had the opportunity to experience the house as a whole in a much more casual setting against the placid fall background of the National Forest.

Yours in ~kai~,
Stanton Jones '10, 1117
Vice President

E-mail Stanton at enigma15@mit.edu if you have any questions.

SAVE THE DATE!

The Beta Upsilon Chapter of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity is hosting an open house on Friday, June 4, 2010, during reunion weekend from 3:00-5:00 p.m. at the chapter house, 119 Bay State Road. We would love for you to drop by, tour the house, and meet some of the actives. No RSVP required!

THE BACK BAY BETA

is published regularly by the Beta Upsilon Chapter of Beta Theta Pi at MIT. News, address changes, and photos are welcome and should be sent to Beta Theta Pi at MIT, Alumni Records Office, P.O. Box 390528, Cambridge, MA 02139-0006.

Beta helps to beautify the Charles River

Beta Theta Pi continues its longstanding commitment to community service this year with a project that strikes very close to home: the maintenance and improvement of the grounds surrounding the Charles River. Just a short jaunt from 119 Bay State Road lies the magnificent Charles, a historic Boston landmark and popular destination for tourists, water sports enthusiasts, and casual walkers alike. The river is a Boston treasure that can be enjoyed by all walks of life—it requires no entry fee and is easily accessed by the elderly and handicapped. Beta understands how much the Charles means to the people of Boston, and Beta understands that the grounds surrounding the river cannot flourish without human attention.

In 2000, the Charles River Conservancy was founded in dedication to the maintenance and upkeep of the esplanade and parks that abut the Charles. The conservancy's projects include repaving the paths around the Charles, replenishing the river's natural vegetation, and large-scale endeavors such as maintaining Hell's Half Acre, one of the only wetlands in the Boston area. Over the next few weeks, Beta Theta Pi will be sending brothers to the conservancy to contribute to these and other projects.

While the brothers have no formal training in park conservation and preservation, they are a hardworking and cooperative bunch. Beta will be sending brothers from the house to areas around the Charles to trim vegetation surrounding the banks, plant new trees, control vegetation, and repair benches and fences lining the esplanade. The brothers also participated in two "open-to-all-comers bulb plantings" in October to prepare for the following spring. House enthusiasm for the project is high; the brothers are eager to contribute to a project so immediately rewarding and so important to the people of Boston. Indeed, the fraternity's participation this fall may serve to ignite a lasting partnership between the Beta Theta Pi and the conservancy in our mutual interest of maintaining the Charles.

Yours in ~kai~,
Paul Jaffe '12, 1128
Community Service Chair

For questions about community service at Beta, please e-mail the community service chairs, Paul Jaffe '12 and Maximus St. John '12, at pjaffe@mit.edu and maximuss@mit.edu, respectively.

One small leap for man...



Betas leap off a 40-ft.-tall waterfall in Washington during the visit to Trout Lake. Many Betas took the lunge into the ice-cold rapids of Washington State. Note the brother at the bottom of the picture about to hit the water.

Introducing the pledge class of fall 2009!

I am honored to introduce the super new and awesome pledge class of 2013!

Brian Anderson, one of two Minnesotan pledges, enjoys football and wrestling. Brian plans to study Brain and Cognitive Science.

Jake Brown, aka DJ Breeze, is our second Minnesotan, bringing to the house a reciprocated love of music and talent for dropping phat beats on the dance floor.

Stewart Douglas is our oldest pledge, hands down. He graduated from Cambridge University last year and is excited to study math.

Aaron Fryman, left the Florida Keys for the opportunity to experience the great northeast winters. Aaron is interested in biology and neuroscience.

Emilio Andres González-Cervantes hails from El Paso, Texas. With interests in philosophy and neuroscience, Emilio is excited to study Brain and Cognitive Science.

Vlad Puscasu is helping to expand the international faction of the '13s, having traveled to the States all the way from Romania to study at MIT.

Ari Umans, exquisite violinist and tennis enthusiast, made the long trek to Cambridge from Belmont, MA. He plans to study mechanical engineering.

Entering my second semester as pledge educator, I have found a few key aspects of the pledge program that could be improved to make the pledge experience more engaging. I am shifting

the main focus from national history to the function of house officers. While teaching national history, it is important to conserve the traditions of our fraternity and maintain awareness of the historical significance of our chapter, I've learned that it is essential to bring the focus of the pledge program into the foreground of the pledges lives. By having the intricacies of chapter operation as the focus of our weekly pledge meetings, the freshmen are gaining a new perspective each week on a different officer's role in helping Beta thrive. Someday, they will be holding critical chapter positions, and I want them to understand the responsibility, knowledge and effort necessary to keep our houses in working order. By gaining this foresight, the '13s have the opportunity to contribute to Beta's success and to help our chapter to always strive for improvement.

I am also testing a new reward system to encourage more pledge interviews of actives, which I consider an extremely valuable portion of the pledge program. I feel very strongly about the emphasis of the values of Beta Theta Pi, and I strive to impart their importance upon the pledges.

I am very excited and proud of our pledge class this fall. We have an exceptional group with varying interests and very different backgrounds. They have great potential and I can't wait to see where their college experience takes them all.

Yours in ~kai~,
Ari Miller '11, 1119
Pledge Educator

For questions about pledge education info, feel free to e-mail Ari at apmiller@mit.edu.

Undergraduate president reports

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issues listed above, I have one responsibility of utmost importance. That is to ensure that the knowledge gained by the outgoing leaders of our chapter is passed on to those who are incoming. Due in part to the small sizes of some of the classes that preceded us, I and other members of my pledge class have held many of the crucial leadership positions in the house for well over a year at this point. The juniors and sophomores who will need to step up to fill our roles once we graduate are aware that they, too, will need to focus on learning to shoulder important responsibilities over the course of the next semester. This was stressed at the recent officer transition meeting, which was held at the house and attended by all of the alumni advisers to the chapter. We owe a great deal of thanks to Beta Upsilon's chief adviser, Nathan Sanders, for organizing that meeting.

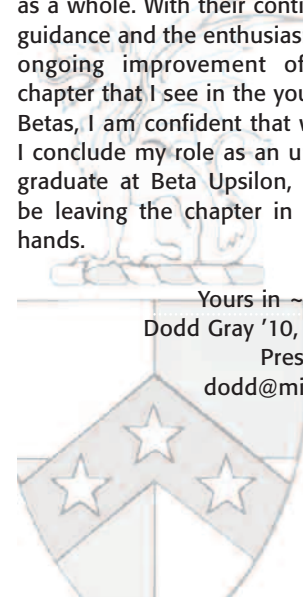
Nathan and all of the other Beta alumni who donate their time as advisers have been a great source of advice and support to both me and the chapter as a whole. With their continued guidance and the enthusiasm for ongoing improvement of the chapter that I see in the younger Betas, I am confident that when I conclude my role as an undergraduate at Beta Upsilon, I will be leaving the chapter in good hands.

Yours in ~kai~,
Dodd Gray '10, 1111
President
dodd@mit.edu

What's going on here?



Be sure to visit the Beta website at www.beta-mit.org to see this picture and many others. If you have photos or other content you'd like to have posted to the website, send them to us by e-mail at alumnirecords@beta-mit.org.



The pain and the glory: East Coast Grill's "Hell Night"

On the ninth day of the illustrious month of October, I had the privilege of attending East Coast Grill's infamous "Hell Night." Hell Night is, contrary to the name, a three-night-long event held annually where the most delicious, destructive, spiciest, savory dishes imaginable are served. Among these dishes are a "deviled egg Russian roulette," an appetizer where a potentially deadly concoction of peppers is hidden under a layered of delicious deviled egg filling; various meats and sausages made with Scotch-bonnets, one of the hottest peppers in the world; and a dish known as hell pasta, made with three ghost chillies—THE hottest peppers in the world.

I hope at this point it is somewhat clear that those of us who were in attendance were there solely to abuse and misuse our taste buds. We achieved this and then some. Accompanying me in this endeavor were Tristan Delaney '11, Ari Miller '11, Adam Paxson '09, Daniel Hochbaum '09, Dodd Gray '10, Dan Briggs '07, and Dion Cabeche '11.

I personally went with one singular objective: to brave the depths of hell itself, dominate the pasta, and emerge victorious with the T-shirt belonging only to the victors.

Unfortunately, a few of us were late in arriving at East Coast, so our adventure began when many others were ending, but that wasn't enough to set us back. We worked our way into the depths of the Grill, where the rest of our party was lounging. Several waivers had already been brought around by the great "Dr. Pepper," a man of legend who runs around armored excessively in pepper-themed regalia; I promptly found one and signed it. As with any great tale, a story cannot reach its fullest without an antagonist. In this tale, the nay-sayers were at the opposite end of the table, spouting nonsense about how it was impossible and that I couldn't do it. This, of course, only fueled my determination to succeed.

The first stop on our crusade was the deviled egg roulette. An egg for each person at the table was served, then distributed, then...a countdown, followed foolishly by consumption. Several minutes later, we received the table's plate of pasta. I declined to assist in the consumption, as I was saving my strength for my whole dish, but I was allowed to watch the reactions of my table-mates eating singular noodles. They were disheartening, to say the least. Most people were floored, lost hearing in one of their ears, sweating all over, or went numb. It continued for maybe 10 more minutes until our dishes

were served.

I knew what I was getting myself into, I knew I was going to be in for a fight unlike any other I've ever experienced. I knew my enemy was remorseless, had no respect for my well-being, and would do everything in its power to prevent me from achieving my goal. I knew what had to be done. I took a bite, waited a moment, and then the tears came and I allowed them to flow freely. Breathing came hard at first, but once there was a sufficient amount of self-defensive fluids built up in my mouth, things were much easier. I realized promptly that any stray noodle that met the side of my face was going to cause immeasurable pain, something I was ready for; but preventing problems is better than dealing with them. I proceeded to puree my pasta; it would be easier to take a forkful of pasta paste, bite it, and swallow it quickly without chewing than to actually wind up the noodles, chew them, and then swallow—all the while, the sauce from hell would be in contact with my precious skin cells.

Over the course of the next 40 minutes, I

took forkfuls two at a time, with a five-minute interval in between, giving my mouth time to recover. At the end, I emerged victorious and the wait-staff was utterly floored (but all looked at me like I was an idiot). I got a super sweet T-shirt and the glory of saying that the man who does food challenges for a living (Adam Richman of the Travel Channel's *Man vs. Food*) is of lesser fortitude (or greater intelligence) than I.

The story doesn't end here, though. Three full peppers with a rating of one million scovilles each does not sit well in one's stomach. Needless to say, it didn't. I took my T-shirt and proceeded slowly, patiently, cautiously toward the automobile that brought me to the place where I could bring this misery upon myself. Unfortunately at this time, I felt like I was dying. I couldn't breathe, and I was in more pain than I had been in a long time. But I got a sweet T-shirt and the unlimited glory because I was stupid enough to eat a bowl of pasta. From hell.

Yours in ~kai~,
Nick Grabenstein '10



Dodd Gray '10 and Brian Basham '12 in the Beta kitchen. Dodd is trying a deadly hot sauce called "Ground Zero." A number of hot sauces were sent to us by our alumni association vice president, Mike Feinstein '82—we *think* this was in good spirits.

Beta Upsilon Alumni Send Their News

Norman C. Bedford '38 sends greetings from 124 Lincoln St., Hingham, MA 02043.

"I recently had lunch with one of my roommates, **Paul Sommer '42**," reports **Donn W. Barber '42**. "We had a great reunion as we had not seen each other since we graduated. Mail and phone calls, pretty sparse for long periods, have maintained our friendship, but there's nothing like a personal meeting. While I was with Paul, I met his grandson, Arthur Sommer of Duxburg, MA, who has been accepted at MIT and began his freshman year there in the fall of 2009. I was very impressed with Arthur and his family. I told him that although his legacy via Paul would make him a prime candidate for Beta Upsilon, I would be proud to be a second sponsor. I am sure that MIT and Beta will both be proud to have him as part of their membership." Catch up with Donn at 1207 Greenbriar Lane, West Grove, PA 19390; evdoba@aol.com.



Paul Sommer '42 (left) and Donn Barber '42 recently got together for a mini-reunion.

busy year for him and his wife, Sally. "Our highlight was a three-week, 6,000-mile trip during June across all of Russia from Vladivostok on the Pacific to St. Petersburg on the Baltic via the Trans-Siberian railroad. With airplane connections from Los Angeles to Vladivostok and from St. Petersburg back to LA, it was our first and probably last round-the-world adventure." Find out more from Ron at 5811 Kentland Ave., Woodland Hills, CA 91367; ronmckay@socal.rr.com.

Ronald L. McKay '54 writes that 2009 was a

Donald Evans '55 reports a new address: 78975 Nectarine Dr., Palm Desert, CA 92211. E-mail him at devans16@dc.rr.com.

"Although retired, I have been teaching one course per semester until the economy make it impossible to pay anyone other than full-time faculty," writes **Robert Brigham '56**. "I'm quite liking the time off. I entered a marathon training program. I never intend to do a full marathon, but I have completed two halves at incredibly slow paces. My greyhounds look at me with pity." Bob can be reached at 700 Euclid Ave., Orlando, FL 32801; e-mail: brigham@cs.ucf.edu.

"My wife, Michele, and I just returned from Europe," announces **Ward Halverson '56**, "having visited her home city, Paris, and our grandchildren in Graz, Austria." Ward receives snail mail at 25 Hutchinson St., Cambridge, MA 02138; e-mail at wdhalverson@aol.com.

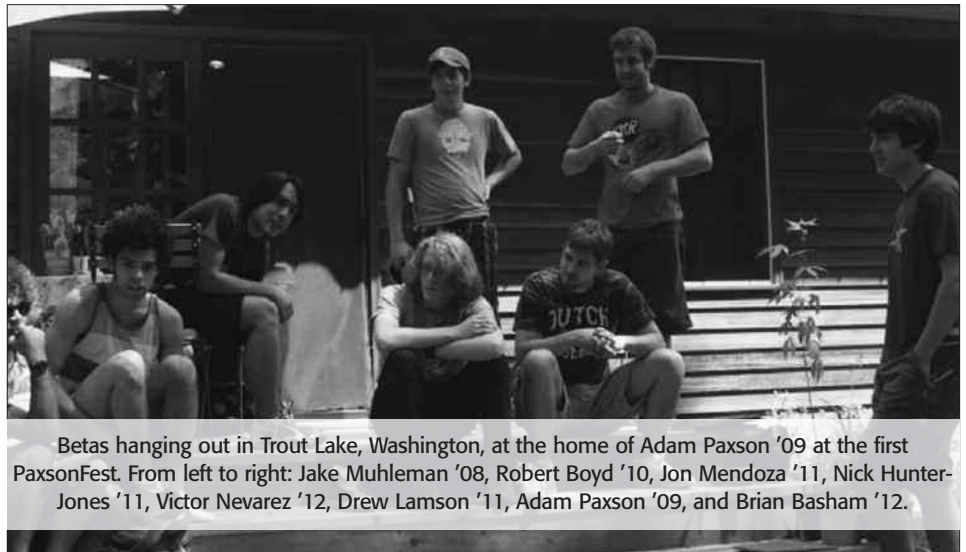
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Fall 2009 rush report

This year's rush brought many due changes and new practices to our recruitment program. One aim was to distribute responsibilities a bit more evenly through the house to take advantage of our growing numbers. Brothers began taking a more active role, not only in contacting prospects, but also in the execution and logistics of activities. The end goal was to make the position of rush chair no longer one solely for the masochist. Any former rush chairman can attest to the formidable workload that rush requires, but also the fulfillment that comes with every new pledge.

A Beta of yore once said, "If you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll keep on getting what you've always got!" In this respect, by trying out new strategies for recruitment, the chapter has learned a great deal.

Nicholas Hunter-Jones '11 and Andrew Lamson '11 will replace Dodd and me as rush chairmen for the spring semester, and in anticipation of this, meetings to discuss some of the lessons learned in the past year have already begun. Our goal is to springboard into a strong rush by successfully recruiting more



Betas hanging out in Trout Lake, Washington, at the home of Adam Paxson '09 at the first PaxsonFest. From left to right: Jake Muhleman '08, Robert Boyd '10, Jon Mendoza '11, Nick Hunter-Jones '11, Victor Nevarez '12, Drew Lamson '11, Adam Paxson '09, and Brian Basham '12.

Betas this spring, just as we did last year. Mike Feinstein '82 is our alumni recruitment adviser, and he has been a great asset to us over the last several months.

There is no doubt that with the lessons learned this year, and his wealth of experience not only in recruiting for Beta, but also in advertising in general, Beta Upsilon will continue to strengthen each year.

Yours in ~kai~
Robert Boyd '10, 1110
Rush Chair

For questions about rush, feel free to e-mail the former rush chairs, Dodd Gray '10, dodd@mit.edu, and Robert Boyd '10, robert_b@mit.edu, or the current rush chairs, Nick Hunter-Jones '11, nickrhj@mit.edu, and Drew Lamson '11, aclamson@mit.edu.

Beta Upsilon Alumni Send Their News

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Edwin C. Bell '58 recently moved to 625 Biltmore Way, #804, Coral Gables, FL 33134. His home e-mail address is edwincbell@aol.com.

William S. Widnall '59, who resides at 22 Summit Rd., Lexington, MA 02421, sent the following news: "In my undergraduate years at MIT, the most fun and feeling of accomplishment came from being on the sailing team. In my junior year, we won the national intercollegiate sailing championship—the last MIT team to do so. The most important thing that happened to me at MIT is that I met Sheila Evans '60. We married in June 1960 and have shared an exciting life together ever since. Our two grown children now live in San Francisco, and our married daughter has given us two delightful grandchildren. Sheila breezed through MIT and has had an amazing career marked by many firsts, including being the first (and so far, the only) woman to head up one of our military services as Pres. Clinton's Secretary of the Air Force. After earning my BS and MS degrees in electrical engineering, I switched to AeroAstro for my doctorate. As a research assistant and later full-time engineer, I made several important contributions to the development of the Apollo digital autopilots. Being part of the team that put the first humans on the moon was my first job as a young engineer, and it turned out to be the most exciting, challenging, and personally rewarding effort of my entire career. Following the first lunar landing, I worked on a project developing navigation software for the new GPS satellite navigation system. For a number of years, I was an associate professor at MIT in the AeroAstro department. I continue to enjoy sailboat racing, and since retiring, I've added other sports. Sailing in 1967 in Norway, Sheila and I first won the world championship in the IOD class, and over the years, we've won the worlds nine times. Sheila and I enjoy cycling, and for a few years, I was cycling more than 5,000 miles a year. In running, I ran in my third Boston Marathon in April 2009 and achieved my personal best time."

"For two years, I have been 'retired,' which means that I have been working part time at MIT Lincoln Laboratory," writes **Richard Williamson '61**. "A flexible schedule has

allowed me to better enjoy my five grandchildren, two in Framingham and three in Pennsylvania. The oldest grandchild just turned five, so I am still getting used to my new role. As part of the lab's educational outreach program, I gave over 70 science demonstrations last year in area schools. Following in his father footsteps, my youngest started grad school at MIT this year, but in system design and management, not physics like his dad." Get in touch with Richard at 21 Pendleton Rd., Sudbury, MA 01776; richardcw@verizon.net.

B. Greg Brown '62 writes, "At age 69.5, I am running a \$70 million NIH/industry grant to study HO2-C-raising therapy to prevent vascular disease. Another four years 'til it's done. How stupid can I be!" Catch up with Greg at 3201 Evergreen Pt. Rd., Medina, WA 98039; bgbrown@u.washington.edu.

"Many thanks for the regular newsletters reporting the chapter's good works and news of other alumni," writes **Leslie Boring '64**, "which I always appreciate receiving. It is heartening to read about the continuing good spirit and fine traditions maintained by the chapter. Congratulations to you all! Our own Beta class of '64 continues to stay in frequent and enjoyable contact with each other, as well as with MIT Betas of other classes, despite being far-flung in our careers and homes. With my wife, Anne, and I located in the Paris region, we are fortunate to benefit from many visit opportunities, which recently gave us ten days with **James Draper '62** and his wife, Jane. We shall see **Mead Wyman '62** soon. My wife and I regret not being able to join other members of our class to attend our 45th reunion. However, we plan to be in Boston in September, where Fred Luconi '64 and I are involved in organizing an art exhibition of our paintings with another American and three French artists at the French Library of Boston on Marlborough Street. We look forward to visiting the Beta house at that time to renew our memories and make new acquaintances. On the work front, I have not totally retired from my advisory services, working with developers and government entities to organize large land area development programs in the Middle East, but with the global economic crisis bringing reality to places like Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, it looks like it may be coming to an end. We shall see..." Leslie can be contacted at 12, rue de Seine, 78230 Le

Pecq, France; lmbinternational@aol.com.

Fall 2009 should be busy for **John O'Leary '84**. He and his wife, Nancy, are expecting child #3, and John will be coming out with a new book. Titled *If We Can Put A Man On The Moon...*, it looks at how government can get better at tackling big challenges. Johnny O is currently a research fellow at the Ash Institute at the Harvard Kennedy School. E-mail him at johnoleary@alum.mit.edu.

"The company I work for finally came out of 'stealth' mode: We are OnLive, the future of gaming," reports **Mike Miller '96**. "True on-demand video gaming for PCs, Macs, and your TV. Having a blast and now looking to hire the best we can find. If interested, check out www.onlive.com and drop me a line!" Take "Millieaux" up on his offer at 315 Anna Ave., Mountain View, CA 94043; mike.miller@onlive.com.

Jaydeep Bardhan '00 is an assistant professor of molecular biophysics and physiology at Rush University Medical Center. His new mailing address is 343 S. Dearborn St., #1501, Chicago, IL 60604. E-mail him at jbardhan@alum.mit.edu.

chapter eternal

We regret to announce the deaths of the following alumni:

Richards L. Loesch Jr. '39
August 8, 2007

Joseph K. Night '40
July 2007

Robert F. Danner '47
February 14, 2009

Evan Evans '51
September 14, 2008

Peter D. Kirkwood '66
January 8, 2009

Michael W. Ryba '67
January 4, 2008