

# the back bay beta

BETA THETA PI AT MIT | OCTOBER 2014



## ANOTHER MILESTONE FOR BETA

This fall marks a major milestone in our work to restore Beta Upsilon to its position of prominence on the MIT campus. For the first time since our restart, our active undergraduate members will be moving into the main house and living together as a fraternity. This is the result of years of effort and almost \$2M of support from our alumni and volunteers. I want to thank everyone who has contributed so far. We could not have made it this far without each of you!

As you can read elsewhere in this issue, our main house will be full of Betas. A meal plan will be reinstated, and our active members will be taking charge of the care and maintenance of our renovated facility at 119 Bay State Road. We will also rent out rooms in our annex to MIT graduate students, through outside professional management. This model will continue as we grow the chapter and ultimately fill the annex. Since we have a 'young' chapter in terms of demographics, a few successful years of rush can quickly get us to a size that fills up both buildings. It's exciting to work with our strong Men of Principle as they lay the foundation for our future success.

If you visited the chapter during our centennial last fall, you saw how beautiful the main house looked. This is due to the

renovations we have funded from the nearly \$2M we have raised in gifts and pledges. We need to raise another \$500K to be able to renovate the annex, which is sorely needed. Please respond to an upcoming solicitation of support for our campaign, if you have not done so already.

To commemorate our centennial, we published a photo album that is available for ordering. It's a great reminder of this wonderful event! Even if you were not able to attend, you will probably recognize many of your chapter brothers in this fantastic book. You can order a copy online: [www.beta-mit.org/202-centennial\\_album.asp](http://www.beta-mit.org/202-centennial_album.asp).

Lastly, I'd like to invite you to consider volunteering to help the Beta Upsilon Association. We have a small, dedicated group of volunteers, but can always use new people to assist with finance, facilities, communications, and overall management. Please contact me at [mike\\_feinstein@yahoo.com](mailto:mike_feinstein@yahoo.com) if you are interested. It's helpful if you are in the Boston area but certainly not required.

Thanks for all of your support over the past few years. I'm proud to be a Beta and proud that you are one too.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
Mike Feinstein '82

## RUSH WEEK AT BETA UPSILON

The Beta Theta Pi Upsilon Chapter at MIT has just gone through rush week, and there have been many ups and downs. The new recruited pledges at Beta Theta Pi are outstanding men, exemplifying the Men of Principle, and they are on their way to becoming high-quality members of our great fraternity. Unfortunately, the number of pledges is very disappointing and far under the sustainable numbers. There will most likely be only five men who will be on the road to becoming brothers of Beta Theta Pi this semester. As a chapter, we see the huge need to extend rush so that others who did not see our fraternity during rush week can get the chance to be a part of Beta. We recruited far below expectations and have failed to make a strong appeal to the incoming freshman class. We hope to recruit more outstanding men here at MIT and hope to see a much larger pledge class in the spring. Despite this pitfall, we still see a bright future for Beta Theta Pi.

John La '17



Fall 2014 rush outing to Skyzone.

## BROTHERS TAKE OVER A NEWLY RENOVATED 119 BAY STATE ROAD

On August 24, 13 brothers and two friends of Beta moved into 119 Bay State Road for the fall semester of the 2014–2015 school year. This was our first year moving into the newly renovated main house, and we are constantly impressed by how clean, well organized, and functional everything is. We will make sure to do our

part to keep it this way.

We spent the week before rush cleaning up the house, putting up composites on the staircase walls, tweaking the library to make it an ideal study room, ramping up the kitchen, and fully organizing the house for a successful year.

While there will certainly be many un-

foreseen challenges that arise throughout the course of the year, we are confident that living in the house will bring us together and strengthen brotherhood among our already tight-knit group. We'd love to have you all stay up-to-date with our website at [beta.mit.edu](http://beta.mit.edu).

Youyang Gu '15



Potential new members enjoy dinner with the brothers during fall rush 2014.

## CHAPTER UPDATE

As a whole, the chapter could not be more excited for the upcoming semester. We are very fortunate to have the opportunity to take back the house and to live among brothers, and for this, we are very grateful. The house is beautiful, and is the kind of place that we can create great memories in, similar to the ones that all of you share.

While rush was far from what we expected and desired in terms of numbers, we believe that the work of the House Corporation, alumni and advisory board, and undergraduates has created a foundation upon which we can successfully build throughout the semester. Obviously, we as undergraduates will need to redouble our efforts to obtain sustainable growth and a healthy chapter. We are already targeting several men on campus for spring rush and others who told us during rush week that they would prefer to rush during spring. We can assure you that we will work throughout the semester to ensure that our spring pledge class puts us in a better position.

Overall, Beta is back on campus and back in the house, and we couldn't be happier about that. We are grateful for the opportunity that we have, and will do our best to make the most of it. I can safely speak for the undergraduates when I say that we are proud to be Betas.

Luke Verdi '16



The newly remodeled dining room.

## TWO '16s RECOUNT THEIR SUMMER EXPERIENCES

Peter Haine '16

For those of you who haven't met me, my name is Peter Haine, and I'm a junior from northern New Hampshire, studying (pure) mathematics. My academic interests center on a branch of mathematics called algebraic topology; more specifically, I focus on homotopy theories from the perspective of higher categories.

I lived in the Beta house this summer and was working on a number of projects. My main project was writing an interactive online differential-equations text to be used on the MITx platform (essentially, MIT's internal version of edX) as the main text and source of materials for 18.03. Since this text runs on an online platform and is essentially a website of sorts, it also serves as the course website, providing all of the course content in one location. This project is the main component of an initiative to totally revamp the 18.03 curriculum to focus more on engineering and the applications of differential equations, because the vast majority of the student population taking 18.03 is comprised of engineers and scientists rather than mathematicians.

We're still working on this project, and I'll probably be working on it for at least the next six months. The course went live last week, and we're using input from the students to modify the course to make it better in every way we can. My team's overarching goal is to make differential equations feel more understandable and applicable to our audience by using real-world examples, as well as by de-emphasizing some of the mathematical theory lurking in the background, thus addressing the main complaint from other departments which sparked this curriculum overhaul. Our secondary goal is to take advantage of the MITx platform to integrate concept questions into our learning sequences so that students using the course materials can constantly practice the material they've studied while getting instant feedback about whether they have actually learned the material or not. In doing this, we've tried to integrate a diverse

array of problem types (not just multiple choice) that can be used to test knowledge in different ways, as well as to make the text more interesting. Our last main goal is to make the content more accessible by integrating everything into one platform and by using only SVG images so that images are accessible to the visually impaired. I'm really excited to be working on this project, because I get to directly affect how the next generation of MIT students learns differential equations.

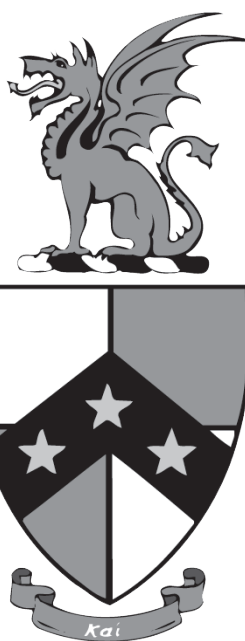
I was also working on two other (in some ways smaller, and in some ways bigger) projects this summer in my small amount of spare time.

One of the projects was working on a paper on the linear stability of a certain class of Newtonian models for rimming flow, where I prove that this certain class of rimming-flow models are inherently unstable. The other project started this past spring when I took a topology seminar taught by Clark Barwick. In the seminar, professor Barwick pointed us toward a construction of a homotopy theory from the perspective of higher categories that generalizes classical homotopy theory. We ended up proving a number of results that, to our knowledge, have never been proved before. During the class, I coordinated the collaborative writing of a book outlining these results. With nine other collaborators, the book was pretty rough, so I've been spending a lot of my extra time trying to polish it and get it in good enough shape to potentially be published.

Dan Getty '16

This summer, I had the pleasure of working for one of our very own Beta alumni, Herman Marshall '78. Herman is an astrophysicist developing a device that will be launched into space to measure the polarization of x-rays emitted from black holes. My job was to help run the testing facility, a 17-meter-long vacuum apparatus designed to simulate the environment of space. It was a real privilege to observe how a physics lab runs and to see firsthand

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## TWO '16s RECOUNT THEIR SUMMER EXPERIENCES

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE) how astrophysics research actually gets done. And when Herman's running the operation, things certainly get done.

Along the way, I was able to learn some basic machining skills, as well as to gain some electrical engineering experience, which was pretty fun. I also programmed a lot, which might or might not have been a bit less fun, but it was still a

great learning experience.

Another fun thing I got to do this summer was live in the Beta house, which is absolutely gorgeous, if you haven't checked it out recently. I lived in 3FR and 3FL with four other guys, three of whom were fellow Beta brothers. I saw a lot more of Boston and managed to catch a few Red Sox games (no foul balls, unfortunately). All around, I'd say I had a pretty cool summer experience.

## THE NEWS FROM NATIONAL CONVENTION

This summer, from August 7 to 10, Betas from across the country gathered at the University of Miami (Ohio) to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the founding of this great and good fraternity. Dan Getty '16, Jake Wachlin '16, and Luke Verdi '16, all current brothers from the chapter, were in attendance. In addition, alumni Neil Best '95 and Ken Bryan '88 and advisors Chris Dunaj and Victoria Brown were among the fifteen hundred or so in attendance.

As a whole, the week had a celebratory atmosphere, with cook-outs, concerts, marches, and large

sessions designed to strengthen and build brotherhood among all in attendance. The weekend also highlighted the positive steps that Beta has taken nationally, leading to the largest average chapter size and highest average GPA of any fraternity in the nation. Aside from all the fun, the undergraduates were also able to participate in the annual legislation, where they received advice on next steps as a colony and gained valuable insight into the re-chartering process.

Luke Verdi '16



Staircase at the Beta house.

## REMEMBERING ERIC RAEFSKY '76

Eric Raefsky was a Beta at MIT from 1972 to 1976, majoring in biology. He was from Warminster, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, and was an ardent fan of the Philadelphia Phillies, Flyers, and of the Grateful Dead. He died in a senseless auto accident on August 5, 2014, when he was hit by a drunk driver who ran a traffic light. He was 59.

Eric was a highly respected and regarded hematologist/oncologist in the Nashville, Tennessee, area. His memorial service was attended by about 1,500 people, including family, friends, colleagues, and many former cancer patients who benefited from his expert care and came to love him as a friend. He is survived by his wife of 31 years, Victoria Heil, his "adopted" daughter and her family, his sister and her family, and, as Eric and Tori are devout animal lovers, their many rescued pets and animals who live on their "farm" in the Nashville area.

There is really no coming to grips with

Eric's untimely and senseless departure. The only solace one might latch onto is that he accomplished in his 59 years more than most of us would in three lifetimes. He graduated from MIT with near-perfect grades and was first in his class at Temple University School of Medicine. He did top-notch medical research as a fellow at the National Institutes of Health. He published many papers in the field of hematology/oncology and was elected to the National Academy of Medicine. His most important accomplishments, however, are represented by the (literally) thousands of cancer patients he treated, helped, and saved throughout his years as a practicing clinician at Tennessee Oncology Associates.

Eric was my pledge father at MIT Beta. We had fierce one-on-one wiffle ball tournaments, he dragged me through freshman calculus, and he tried on many occasions to convert me into a Grateful Dead fan (unsuccessfully). We roomed together one year at Beta and nearly killed each other.

What would start off as a friendly wrestling match rolling around on the floor (he was good wrestler) would often end up with one or two bloody noses and numerous rug burns. It made for a lasting bond—like true brothers.

Eric and I were not in close contact over the years, but, when we did get together, we seemed to pick up right where we left off. He was in Boston at a medical conference the last time I saw him. We came back to my house so he could visit with my family. Somehow it came up that he had always wanted to see the movie *Saving Private Ryan* but could never convince his wife Tori to see it with him. So we put it on DVR and watched the first 30 minutes together.

A memorial service for Eric was held on August 16, 2014. It can be viewed online at [vimeo.com/user11268665/review/103625716/ec4976b39f](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11268665).

Jeff Manni '77

# alumni updates

BETA UPSILON BROTHERS SHARE THEIR NEWS AND NOTES WITH US

**Donn Barber '42** has been part of the team soliciting money for the recent renovations to the house on Bay State Road. As such, he has called all BY members from the classes of 1940–1944. He reports on the following brothers. **Don Ross '40**, who lives in Dunedin, Florida, has some cancer problems, but is otherwise okay. **Dick Markey '41** is living in Morristown, New Jersey, obviously retired but keeping busy. **Dick Richards '42** is living in Sayville, New York, retired from teaching. **Paul Sommer '42** is living in the same house in Peoria, Illinois, that he has lived in all his life. He was associated with Keystone Steel and Wire, a family company. **Lewis Johnson '43** is living in Verona, Pennsylvania, and **Don Axon '44** is living in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Donn also talked with the widows of **Chuck Loomis '43** and **Franklin "Spud" Loesch '44**. He has always kept in touch with his classmates in BY, and has gotten together with Paul Sommer once, "but he is the only one I have seen in many years." Donn keeps in touch with **Tom McEvoy '47**, who lives in Connecticut but has a son living near Donn. Drop Donn a

note to let him know how you are doing: evdoba@aol.com; 1207 Greenbriar Ln., West Grove, PA 19390.

"Margie and I have retired to fly-over country, just north of Nashville in the hills, lakes, and woods of Brown County, Indiana," writes **Maynard Brandon '68**. "We have a married daughter in Chicago and a married son who lives in Cincinnati, and we are looking forward to welcoming a granddaughter in Cincinnati in May. I am still trying to figure out what I want to be when I grow up." Get in touch with Maynard at mbrandon@acm.org or at 2279 Turning Tree Dr., Nashville, IN 47448.

**Leland Bristol '69** reports: "Started a non-profit to install solar photovoltaic electric systems and computer networks on remote health clinics and schools in the developing world (Hati and Tanzania so far). Looking for retired volunteers who can donate two days per week to a worthy cause: 240-479-1510; lee.bristol@globalsolace.org." You can also contact Lee at 20530 Beallsville Rd., Beallsville, MD 20839.

## DECEASED

We regret to announce the deaths of:

**Miguel Negrin '44**

December 7, 2013

**Joseph M. Rault Jr. '48**

February 2, 2014

**Walter E.H. Massey II '51**

**George R. Pflasterer Jr. '51**

August 9, 2014

**Markwick K. Smith Jr. '51**

February 20, 2014

**Dean L. Jacoby '54**

**Ellis James Braman '58**

July 24, 2014

**Spencer S. Swinton '59**

April 1, 2014

**Mark S. Cooper '66**

July 14, 2014

**Eric L. Raefsky '76**

July 5, 2014

**Marc A. Breton '80**

July 28, 2014

## BETA REMEMBERS MARC ANDRÉ BRETON '80

Marc André Breton '80 died July 28, 2014, following an almost three-year battle with pancreatic cancer. He left behind a wife, a 12-year-old daughter, a 20-year-old step-son, a father, seven sisters and brothers, numerous nieces and nephews, and a host of people enriched by his friendship. Overflow crowds at two memorial services, one in Minnesota, where Marc lived, and one in Connecticut, from whence he hailed, testified to the reach of his spirit and the richness of his life. Memorials offered by friends and loved ones returned over and over to Marc's warm heart, interest in others, encouraging words, and unquenchable optimism. In his pursuit of life, Marc both led the way and inspired others to achieve things they didn't know they were capable of. His seeming motto: "How hard can it be?"

Marc's life as a Beta began in the fall of 1976, as a member of a pledge class of eleven. He would go on to major in chemical engineering, show an interest in every-

thing and everybody, fix whatever was broken, get the girl, fall through the neighbor's skylight, be part of a crew that, for some reason, thought it imperative to make off one night with a lamp post, tell the funniest damn stories about those and other antics, and, in general, do much to make the house the special place it was. Following graduation, Marc worked as a chemical and environmental engineer before embarking on a world tour, travelling extensively in Europe, northern Africa, and Asia. Marc went on to earn an MA in economics at the University of Minnesota and worked for 15 years for the state of Minnesota.

Throughout, Marc's life was marked by his friendliness, good humor, courage, competence, interest in others, and a desire to make the world a better place. Memorial donations can be made in Marc's name to Pancreatic Cancer Action Network ([www.PanCan.org](http://www.PanCan.org)).

Steve Adams '80



Marc Breton '80.



### the back bay beta

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