

the back bay beta



BETA THETA PI AT MIT | NOVEMBER 2015

AN ALUMNUS'S VIEW OF RUSH

I volunteered during rush week this fall along with a few other alums. It was a great experience helping our chapter with the daunting task of rushing a pledge class at least 60 percent the size of the total chapter, and seeing how rush at MIT has changed since I pledged more than 35 years ago.

First, we spent two evenings training for rush. With the chapter being new with only a small number of older brothers, there isn't as much institutional knowledge about rush as we had back in the day. And there are some good lessons to be learned from how things went in the old days, even in today's changed environment.

My view of rush is that we want everyone who attends our events to want to become a Beta. Our job is to choose which of those people receive a bid. We discussed how to be more welcoming and engaged. We also discussed rush processes and how it is critical for every member to be involved. Based on the rush results, the brothers really took all of my lessons to heart.

The rush events themselves have changed. Rush is very strictly controlled and "dry"—no alcohol. Many houses still have large parties as their primary rush events. Our brothers focused on events that would better show the character of the chapter and would stand out as unique to the prospective new members. This turned out to be a big success.



The chapter members have developed a "maker" culture focused on building things with their hands. They have purchased and set up a shop in the basement of the Annex,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE)



Betas mix it up on Halloween with members of Pi Beta Phi.

BETA BROTHERHOOD PREVAILS!

We had some great success! If you read through this issue you'll learn about the great guys we recruited this rush and about our events—we did some unique and pretty cool things this time around.

I want to write about the general direction of our chapter here at MIT.

We went through a lot of rough patches this past fall and spring. I'm happy to say that we've come out stronger than we were before, but it was a close call. In the previous edition of this magazine I spoke about the alcohol debate our chapter experienced in the fall of 2014—right after we moved into the house. I may not have emphasized how bad of a debate it really was and the consequences it meant for our chapter. I'll describe it briefly here.

As a restarted colony we had to focus on laying down the foundations of our chapter—voting on the bylaws and ensuring we all agreed on the rules—once we were living in the house together. The upperclassmen at the time had been told by their Beta advisors that they would be able to choose whether or not they would be allowed to have alcohol in the house. This turned out not to be true, and when it came time to recruit my class of brothers we were told the house would be strictly alcohol free. You can see the problem. So, when we voted on the bylaws about half the chapter didn't want to allow alcohol in the house and the other half did. The younger classmen felt they had been lied to by the upperclassmen, and the upperclassmen felt they had been lied to by the advisors. It was not a good situation, and although we

came to an agreement in the end—you could have alcohol in the basement of the Annex if you were over 21—our local alumni decided this was not the right choice. We had to be completely dry.

I felt this was the right decision on the part of the alumni, though I was watching what was happening to my close friends—the sophomores, my class. They all talked about quitting Beta because—despite things working out—they felt the upperclassmen had lied when recruiting them. Personally, I agreed with them. The situation was bad. But I didn't want my friends to quit—not after I had only been in Beta for a semester and had finally found some great friends in college. I'd had an incredibly lonely and difficult time during my freshman year at MIT, but these guys had brought me into Beta and into their friend group. I didn't want to see that group split because everyone had to move back to campus. I ran for president because I wanted to keep my friends together and keep the chapter together. That meant patching things up with the upperclassmen, which was difficult.

Out of a 20 man chapter, nine individual brothers came up to me and told me they wanted to quit, that Beta was just a burden. Three of those brothers did quit. It was hard on me because those guys were my friends; they still are. The ones I managed to get to stay I couldn't ask for help. Young men around the age of 20 can be incredibly selfish. That left, out of a 17-man chapter, very few who were willing to work. Some bro-

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PREVAILS

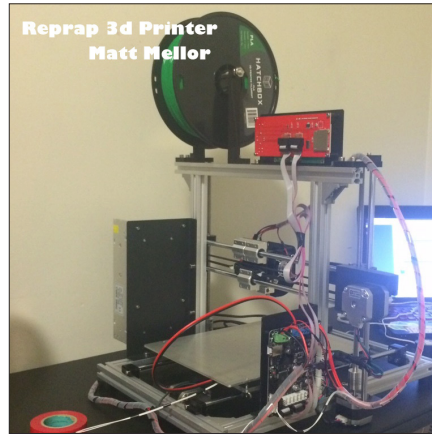
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ers even refused to work when tasks were given to them, and they were officers. If we had taken them to Kai committee it would have destroyed the already shaky group and people would have left until we didn't have a chapter. It was difficult. As president I didn't know how to handle the situation—how do you discipline someone who is thinking about leaving and get them to stay?

But there were some who were willing to help—pillars of our community whom I am incredibly proud to call brothers. They are the true founding fathers of our chapter, the ones who didn't let it slip away. We pulled things together last semester with a group of about four people who wouldn't let things go.

Now I'll tell you how well things have gone—it hasn't been all struggle. To patch up brotherhood we began last semester by holding events more often. We worked together and got a beat-up pool table off Craigslist for \$100. Brothers still play on that pool table every day after dinner—it's great bonding.

We started having study breaks every other Wednesday just to get guys in the same room outside of chapter. We organized an exercise competition where we gave awards to people for taking care of themselves (MIT is a stressful place). We hosted a seminar to teach others around MIT how to create their own websites—we got a lot of the brothers to make their first websites, too. We played football in the snow. We had a mixer that all the guys and girls who were involved still talk about. We created art to fill up the house, which still



looked like a hotel. We got past the alcohol debate early on in the semester—although it left us rocky—and we got things done. We went to the movies as a group. We figured out our chapter's finances, which were basically nonexistent and poorly documented. We funded engineering projects so brothers could work together and learn from each other, and we showed those projects off during rush. We did a lot—and it was difficult—but we did it for our brothers.

This summer, we did something fantastic: I coordinated with MIT and the local alumni to get equipment and set up a workshop in the basement of the Annex.

The brothers cleaned out and painted the storage room in the Annex and put in tools and work benches. Now we are the first fraternity at MIT to have a shop! Pretty cool!

And we got 10 new members this rush! Twenty-seven members ... wow. It makes the chapter entirely different. The brothers who weren't willing to help before now ask how they can help and organize events. The pledges are fantastic and well, it feels like I've done my job. We're in a good place now as a chapter and I'm happy. We're going to keep improving.



I want to end with something one of the brothers said after we had finished rush and were discussing the chapter that really impacted me. This was a brother who had told me he was going to quit last semester but didn't. "Beta is the best fraternity at MIT. I'm glad I joined."

We've been through our dark time as a chapter, but we've come out of it strong. We care for our members, and we are brothers. We're a responsible fraternity, men of principle when so many groups aren't, and I believe what he said too: we *are* the best fraternity at MIT. I've never been more proud to be a Beta.

Matthew Mellor '17
Chapter President

We are still trying to improve our machine shop. Right now we have three 3-D printers, a small drill press, and a band saw. We would like to purchase more equipment. We have a GoFundMe account and the brothers have donated most of the money themselves up to this point. If you would like to help out and donate you'll help us work on engineering projects and learn. To donate go to:
www.gofundme.com/tz2cw458



BETA UPSILON OFFICERS

Matthew Mellor '17

President 2015

Previous: Treasurer Fall 2014

Michael McGraw '17

VP Brotherhood 2015

Previous: VP Pledge Educator 2014

Jack Erdozain '17

VP Programming

Luke Verdi '16

VP Pledge Educator 2015

Previous: President 2014

Erik Gest '17

VP Risk Manager 2015

Marshall Craft '17

VP Communications 2015

Previous: VP Communications 2014

Andrew Montanez '17

Treasurer 2015



The new Beta shop in the basement of the Annex.

BETA UPSILON HOSTS NEIGHBORHOOD BARBECUE

On September 3, Beta Theta Pi, in collaboration with the MIT Office of Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living Groups (FSILGs), hosted a neighborhood barbecue to better connect with its neighbors on Bay State Road and the Kenmore Square area. Attendees came from other MIT Boston-based living groups, residents of Bay State Road, Boston University, the Kenmore Square Business Association, and the Bay State Road Neighborhood Association. We enjoyed barbecue from Redbone's and built some strong bonds with our neighbors and key people at MIT.



Barbecue attendees came from all over MIT and the Kenmore Square area. The event provided a great way to get to know our neighbors.

ALUMNUS'S VIEW

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

including a 3-D printer, band saw, drill press, CAD stations, electronic test equipment, and a wide range of hand tools. Touring the shop and showing off its capabilities was a big draw.

However, the biggest draw was an MIT-approved flamethrower (!) that was used to toast marshmallows. This was designed and built by one of the brothers and drew such a crowd that we ended up scheduling an encore showing to satisfy demand. Other big events were poker and video-game tournaments, a high-speed harbor cruise, go-cart racing, and an exotic-meat barbecue.

Much of the real help I provided was manning the grill at a couple of barbecues, freeing up the brothers to mix with the large crowd of freshmen. In addition to cooking huge quantities of traditional hamburgers and hot dogs, I also cooked wild boar, buffalo, and rabbit sausage, python filets, and venison burgers. Testing out exotic meats drew a curious crowd!

One thing that remains the same as rush from years gone by is the huge effort required to attract and entertain prospective members. Rush is very competitive, and significant time and financial resources are required to put together an attractive list of unique activities. It also takes the full effort of all of the brothers to rush a pledge class that will add significantly to the size of the current house. A great job by our active members led to a very satisfying result.

Mike Feinstein '82

BROTHERS WORK TOWARD SUCCESS AT HOME AND BEYOND

This past summer saw a number of house projects come to fruition. In particular, the machine shop began to take real shape as the brothers cleaned and painted a room in the basement of the Annex—previously used for parties apparently—so that it could be used for the new maker space. We added a band saw, a drill press, and three 3-D printers. The electrical engineering lab, consisting of numerous circuit testing and building tools, was also moved into the Annex from the main house basement.

Most of the help came from the brothers who were living in the house over the summer. Matt Mellor, the current president and a junior majoring in EECS, was helping out with the MIT Interphase program for the new freshmen. While doing so, he met and befriended a number of the current pledges. Marshall Craft, a junior majoring in MechE and EE, was also in Boston while working with MIT Beta alumnus and research director Herman Marshall on an X-ray polarization telescope experiment.

Mike McGraw, a junior CS major, was the brother who went the farthest afield—to Germany, in Regensburg. He was working for the German Continental Corporation on their AUTOSAR software for its intelligent car project. He stayed with the same family that hosted him over the winter when he was tutoring in the same city. He

managed to find time to travel and hiked over the Alps from Germany into Austria, staying in mountain huts the whole way. At this point he considers himself at least conversational in German and is hoping to further develop his connections there.

Jake Wachlin, a senior in Mechanical Engineering, worked at Amazon robotics while staying in Boston. Jack Erdozain, a junior in EE, also spent the summer working at Amazon; he was stationed in Seattle, working on a secret developmental project that he's really not supposed to tell us anything else about. Apparently it looks like an airplane though. Martin also worked with airplanes this summer, but in Air Force ROTC. He is a senior this year and helped run its summer training program, as well as leading our rush effort. Next year, he will stay at MIT to get his masters, after which he will go into the military for a while (possibly going career).

Overall, it was a productive summer for MIT Beta. The house was improved in some significant ways—the new machine was a major selling point during our successful rush this fall—and many of the brothers took significant steps in furthering their careers. Since then the semester has started up well, and we look forward to making similar progress through the close of the year.

alumni updates

BETA UPSILON BROTHERS SHARE THEIR NEWS AND NOTES WITH US

“Not exciting, but I am really enjoying life,” writes **Donn Barber ’42**. He volunteers at his local Lions Club, at NAMI, where he has a friend, and at church. “I am enjoying frequent contact with my family. I have four children and their families, a daily coffee group, several bridge groups, and a resident-run pub that’s open five afternoons a week for a beer or whatever, where I have interesting conversations with my retirement-community friends.” He also keeps in touch, every few months, with the only other surviving member of his pledge class, **Paul Sommer ’42**, “who has had a number of physical setbacks during the past year,” he adds. Keep in touch with Donn and let him know what you’re up to at 1207 Greenbriar Lane, West Grove, PA 19390, or evdoba@aol.com.

Charles Beaudette ’52 writes that after graduation and two years of fulfilling his obligations to the Air Force, he worked in various electronic engineering jobs in the Boston-area, which involved the then-new technology of transistors, chips, and comput-

ers. “Some of the first modem and digital-picture processing came my way, and we found efficient solutions.” In 1973, he remarried and moved to Portland, Maine. “Having had two daughters by my earlier marriage I was, for several years, a house husband, raising our boy.” A five-year consulting job designing electrostatic-based products brought him to retirement in 1985. In 1989, along came the announcement from Utah of cold fusion. Six years later, he decided to look into it seriously and began by attending international meetings where he could talk with those doing the research. “During the next seven years I wrote a book, *Excess Heat*, and then a second edition, which still sells on Amazon. In 2002, we moved to a fishing village on the coast of Maine, from which I follow the field, now referred to as LANR (Lattice Assisted Nuclear Reactions). I follow closely the work of MIT professor Peter L. Hagelstein—he is sleuthing out a possible energy transfer path, starting from an excited compound nucleus and moving by fractionation, enabled by excited optical phonons, into the myriad

DECEASED

We regret to announce the deaths of:

Walter J. Sawyer ’51
May 27, 2015

John C. Zimmer Jr. ’55
April 19, 2015

nuclei of a crystalline matrix—for as long as mind and body hold out.” Get in touch with Charles for more details at 61 Thompson Inn Road, South Bristol, ME 04568, or cgbeau@gwi.net.

Wilford Gardner ’72, his wife, and his daughter hiked/climbed to the top of Half Dome in Yosemite this past June. “Seventeen miles, 13 hours, perfect weather, tough trip, worth it. Just got another NSF grant, so we’ll be working at least two more years.” Send Wilf a line at 6403 Windwood Dr., College Station, TX 77845.

BΘΠ

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CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

As I write this, we are about to close up our successful centennial campaign. Thanks to all of our generous donors to date. If you haven’t yet made a commitment or wish to make an additional commitment, please let me know at mike_feinstein@yahoo.com. Any donor who commits at least \$2,500 to the campaign will have his name on the plaque that will be installed in the main house.

We began the campaign hoping to raise more than \$2 million. We ended up raising \$2.3 million, with many members stretching to help us raise more than the \$85,000 needed to match an end-of-campaign challenge gift from several generous brothers. With the financial support of MIT’s Independent Residence Development Fund and the Beta Theta Pi Foundation, we completed the renovation of the main house two years ago. We expect to complete a smaller-scale renovation of the Annex next summer. With your generous support, we have been able to improve the quality of our facilities, which is required in today’s competitive housing environment, as well as provide start-up capital for our new chapter.

Thanks to our honorary campaign chairmen **David Koch ’62** and **Fred Wilson ’83**,

as well as our campaign committee: **Jeff Dardarian ’99**, **Alex Romeo ’86**, **Dave Samuel ’94**, **Lei “Crash” Tung ’87**, and particularly **Alan Laves ’82**, **Bob Struble ’85**, **Ken Bryan ’88**, **Frank Leibly ’94**, **Robert Harris ’82**, and **Bob Grant ’64**. And thanks to all of our pledge class captains for making sure all our brothers had an opportunity to support this critical effort.

Mike Feinstein ’82



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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, or alumnirecords@beta-mit.org.