

The Back Bay Beta

Beta Upsilon Chapter

Beta Theta Pi Fraternity • Massachusetts Institute of Technology

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

SPRING 2004

From Our Alumni Association

Fire Devastates Main House!

Fellow Alumni of Beta Upsilon Chapter of Beta Theta Pi,

Sometimes, it takes a jarring event to awaken our dormant attention to what we once held dear. We have before us such an event that could provide the catalyst that will strengthen the bond between Beta brothers and unite the alumni in a common cause.

I'm sorry to report that on Friday, January 16, 2004, the main house suffered a major fire. The fire department was called that freezing night and limited the damage to the fourth floor rear. Much of the house was affected, however. No one was hurt, but the impact on the daily lives of the actives has been substantial.

The entire fourth rear (a.k.a. the lounge) was badly burned. The ceilings were torn down to get to the part of the fire that was in the rafters. The walls were torn down past the lath. The wooden paneling and the fireplace mantle were scorched to the point that they look like embers of a fireplace. Several skylights were broken by the fire department to gain access or to provide water. The wall separating 4RR and 4RL was down to burned studs. Some of the copper sheathing was removed on the top floor, and the windows no longer resembled windows so much as a patio entrance. The floor was a shambles. The bathroom ceiling and a few other room ceilings were torn down in many places to check for

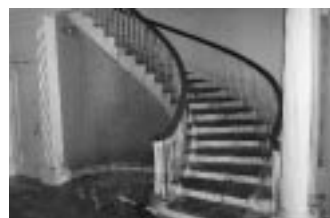


View of the north side of the main house after the fire.

fire traveling along the rafters, but they were otherwise undamaged directly. Other floors are merely (!) water damaged. All the floors had ice on them after the firemen were done (including the stairs), so we will probably have to replace the subflooring as well as the hardwood. There was water on the banisters as well as the walls, so these may have to be refinished or repainted. It was hard to describe the full extent of the damage at the time because there was significant water in the walls. A few pictures are included with this article, and a few more

can be found at my website: <http://space.mit.edu/~hermann/Beta/betafire.html>.

There was an unfortunate sequence of events involving several failures that led to the fire. Until 11:00 p.m. that night, my main concern had been the numerous frozen pipes—over a dozen. We had a cold snap (below -10°F overnight on Thursday, January 15), so some of the sprinkler pipes froze. The sprinkler system didn't activate because there was no pressure drop. It was drained as much as possible for a later repair, and the Boston Fire Department (BFD) was notified. The BFD came out late on Thursday night (early Friday morning) when a frozen heating pipe caused enough steam to set off a sprinkler. The BFD turned off the



The stairs.

heat and had the few main house residents who were there over IAP move to the annex. The fire started late Friday evening, so there was no one living in the main house.

The insurance company hired a fire investigation company to determine the cause of the fire, concluding that there was a spark at the point where a space heater was plugged into a power strip. It's not clear if any alarms were triggered at the house when the fire started, but the sprinkler system was off, so the BFD had the job of putting out the fire.

The actives retrieved the more valuable Beta property items from the chapter room, which was relatively unscathed, except for

water that dripped in through cracks in the ceiling and down the walls. We should be able to save the shelving and nice paneling. Some of the ritual materials were upstairs in the fourth floor closets that were heavily damaged, but the materials themselves do not appear to be damaged significantly.

The residents are currently living in the annex. The alumni association will be reducing rent to make up for the loss of the kitchen, storage, parking,

etc., so the students will be obtaining meals elsewhere because there is nothing more than a refrigerator, a toaster, and a microwave in the annex. We have started a fund to help students whose losses are not covered by parents' insurance or to help with deductibles.

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Northeast corner of the lounge.



View of the fourth floor rear, where the fire began.

From The Chapter President

Brothers Unite In Face Of Post-Fire Hardships

My term as president had a less than auspicious start. I was elected at the end of the fall semester, and, as I would be traveling for most of IAP, my plan was to begin my tenure with a chapter meeting at the start of classes in February. Upon returning from the first of my two trips, however, I received a voice mail message from someone at the house informing me that there had been a "small fire" on the fourth floor of the main house. I came home and was utterly shocked at the extent of the damage. The lounge was destroyed, and there was ice and mud covering every floor. I hardly had time to absorb what had happened, though, as I was leaving to visit family in Taiwan within days.

Thankfully, the people who had been living at the house during IAP assumed many of my responsibilities during my absence and patiently dealt with the flood of contractors and insurance representatives who came in the following weeks. When I finally returned to Boston to stay, the situation was already much improved, but still far from ideal. There were twice as many people living in the annex as before, and they brought with them twice as much clutter. It was all too easy to be pessimistic about how the term was going to progress.

What actually happened, however, was entirely the opposite. The density of our living arrangements has brought back

some of the pleasantly chaotic atmosphere that has been missing ever since freshmen have not been allowed to live in the house. As a result, the brothers have become far closer, and the effects of this closeness are evident in all house affairs. Chapter meetings have become a forum for telling amusing stories from the past week as well as a place to discuss important house issues. Also, a jazz concert in which Jonathan Kroner '07 and I were performing was well attended by Betas, including several who had just come back from a house trip to Maine. Even as I write this article, Betas are returning from an intramural basketball game at which brothers were playing on the court, cheering in the stands, and even wearing a shirt and tie to coach (as a side note, the basketball team improved to 11-0 with a triple overtime victory, advancing to the intramural finals).

I look upon this upcoming semester with great optimism. Our rush chairs are already planning for campus preview weekend, and our newly initiated freshmen are taking on various house responsibilities, planning social events, and updating our website. I don't think that I've ever felt our brotherhood as strong as it is now, and I honestly believe that things can only become better.

—kai—

Kevin Chen '05



Betas battle for a football in the snow during a house trip to Maine.

THE BACK BAY BETA

Published regularly by the Beta Upsilon Chapter of Beta Theta Pi at MIT. News contributions, 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. Photos will be returned after use in the newsletter.

Beta Makes Life At MIT Easier

I had a really rough summer. Between breaking up with my girlfriend and some family troubles, I came back to MIT six months ago in a pretty fragile state of mind that I knew would only get worse as the workload of the term increased. To my surprise, however, I did not feel stressed out this term and felt quite the contrary.

In the past few weeks I have been wondering how I went from being depressed all summer to being happy and at ease. At first I thought it must have been because I was enjoying my coursework for the first time in my life, but then I questioned how interesting I really found organic chemistry and thermodynamics. Then I thought it might have been because I enjoyed my job, but I'm not sure if cataloging scores for the music library is very exciting. Then it occurred to me: this is the first year I have lived at Beta.

I thought about how good it feels to come home after a day of working on campus to find people eating together and playing Ping-Pong. I thought about how reassuring it is to have someone to study with, even if they're not in the same class. I thought about how much I love all the brothers of the Beta Upsilon Chapter of Beta Theta Pi and how each brother gives me a unique perspective on life. I thought about how each brother brings something completely different to the table and how it is accepted by everyone in such a pure and honest way. I thought about Beta Upsilon and how we are what we are and don't pretend to be anything we are not. I thought about all of these things, and it put my mind at ease, because I know that even when life is hard and things start to seem hopeless, there are 20 guys who are always there to make me feel loved and help me through it all. Finally, I thought about how proud I am to be a brother of Beta Theta Pi.

—kai—

Austin Taranta '06



The seniors assert their dominance over the grill during a trip to visit an alumnus in Vermont.

As we go to press, we're making plans for an
ALUMNI PARTY

...to be held the weekend of **MAY 15-16**. We intend to use the Sailing Pavilion instead of the Beta house as the site for an afternoon barbecue with food brought in from a local restaurant (perhaps RedBones), followed by a few hours in the late afternoon when alumni can visit the annex for light snacks and get a tour of the main house. Plans for the evening are still being made.

Mark your calendar, and watch your mail for more details!

Fire Devastates Main House!

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We have a general contractor cleaning up and assessing the physical damage, which is likely to exceed \$500,000. The repairs will be substantial, starting with replacing floor boards and sub-flooring on all landings and rooms in the rear of the house (including the kitchen, chapter room, and dining room) and repairing and repainting the corresponding ceilings and walls. The stairs and banisters will be refurbished, the tread carpeting will be replaced, and the stairwell will be patched and wallpapered. Skylights will mostly be rebuilt. Some windows and copper cladding will be replaced on the fourth floor, while the exterior doors and side lights in the chapter room will be repaired. There is also some work needed on walls and ceilings in the bathroom and the front of the fourth floor. Insurance will cover this except for the deductible (which is \$2,500 for the fire and \$10,000



View into 4RL from lounge.



Wall between 4RR and 4RL.

period is an opportunity for maintenance work such as repairing or replacing all bathroom fixtures, replacing all other windows, and copper sheathing.

In other alumni association news, Mike Feinstein '82 organized a wonderful reunion dinner for recent alumni in the Boston area to gather to talk about the state of the alumni association and how to support the goals of the association. Out



The parking lot.

of that meeting, several of the younger alumni volunteered to work within the alumni association more fully: Andrew Heitner '92, Frank Leibly '93, Christian Hamer '94, and George Whitfield '03. Frank is willing to take over the treasurer position from Mike Feinstein, who will be concentrating more on alumni communications and fund-raising. Andrew will be keeping track of the house maintenance issues. Christian developed a Beta e-mail listserv and will support other web-based activities (see <http://mail.betaupsilon.org/mailman/listinfo/betas-alumni>). George is also interested in alumni communications.

filling both houses comfortably. We encourage our Beta brothers to comment on this possibility or the alternative of selling the annex to pay for additional renovations to the main house (e.g., adding a fifth floor). Please send your comments to Mike Feinstein (Mike_Feinstein@yahoo.com).



The fireplace.



Fourth floor looking north.

I would like to acknowledge other alumni who have joined the alumni board e-mail discussion group and occasional board telecons: Robert Grant '64, Mike Flanagan '85, Mike Rechtin '89, David Samuel '94, and Matt Saunders '03. I also thank Bob Ramstad '90 for creating a Beta bulletin board at <http://www.bobramstad.com/phpBB2/>.

All of this has prompted us to discuss long-term plans for our houses, especially in light of the fact that many other MIT fraternities are making significant upgrades to their facilities. Given the recent successful rush that resulted in 10 new initiates, Beta may well be strong enough to maintain an average of 30 or more members,

This incident calls us to action, and it is gratifying to see how many alumni have responded with enthusiasm. Thanks to all alumni for your contributions and support.

yours in -kai-
 Herman L. Marshall '78
 President
 Beta Upsilon Association of Beta
 Theta Pi

Brothers Excel In IM Sports

It has been an exciting year for Beta Theta Pi athletics. Beta has not lost a single soccer, basketball, or hockey game all year. In addition, Beta took home the championship bowling trophy this fall after a strong tournament finish under captain Jason Mueller.

Not only have Beta sports drawn crowds of enthusiastic fans, but they have also strengthened our brotherhood and given our pledges a sense of Beta pride. Moreover, Beta has not had any sportsmanship issues or forfeits this year.

We are proud of our 15-0 overall record and hope to win the intramural basketball league for the first time in recent history. Our team, the Beta Ballers, has a combined 19-3 record over the past three years under captain Jeff Aristoff. With a strong core of seniors and talented underclassmen, we have a strong chance to win the tournament. This spring we will compete in hockey, volleyball, and softball, and both actives and alums should be proud of Beta's athletic success.

-kai-
Jeff Aristoff '04



Freshmen play a little poker between classes.

Beta Wins Bowling Championship

It was a dark and snowy Saturday morning, one of the largest snowfalls in some time. Confusion lurked in the distance; no one knew whether the IM bowling championship was to continue as scheduled or if it was to be canceled due to heavy snowfall. Team captain Jason Mueller phoned the event organizers, and we heard the news: bowling was on!

We braved the heavy snow in pursuit of yet another bowling championship trophy. We arrived unscathed only to find that no other teams were there. After some time only the other three of the top four teams were brave enough to show for the finals.

We came to the tournament seeded fourth since we had missed several games at the beginning of the season (because we were rushing one of the best pledge classes ever...but I digress). As the fourth-ranked team, our first challenge was to roll against PKT, the top-ranked team in the league. To move on we had to win at least one of two games and win total pin fall.

Hand injuries prevented our beloved team captain from bowling the first game in peak condition. We lost, and team morale fell through the floor. Had we trudged all this way for nothing? NO. We regrouped and refocused. They had not won by many pins, so the total pin fall and the second game were still ours for the taking.

The Beta Bowling Team

- Team Captain. Jason Mueller
- Team Driver Bert Lue
- Chief Spiritualist. Mark Brigham
- Humorist Jeff Bridgham

The second game was intense. Their top roller bowled seven strikes, each one the proverbial nail in the coffin. But we responded well. Realizing the championship was at stake and that this team was the supposed best in the league, our captain bowled through the pain and answered the strikes. Proving that bowling is a team sport, each one of us rolled our hearts out to come through for the win, winning both the second game and the total pin fall.

Baker had defeated the third-seeded team, so on we went to roll against them in the finals. The bowling was fierce, but Baker proved to be no match for the Beta Bowling Team. We won both games and total pin fall, despite some bellyaching from the opponents. The Beta bowling team captured the first place trophy, and we proudly carried it home.

-kai-
Jeff Bridgham '04



Profile of a Successful Beta: George Calvin Whitfield '03

George Whitfield grew up in central New Jersey, loving science. Part of a musical family, he learned to play guitar and enjoyed attending heavy metal rock shows. His excellent high school physics and chemistry teachers inspired him to apply to MIT where he could further his technical education.

The summer before enrolling at MIT, Jaime, his girlfriend, told George that she was pregnant. Faced with a difficult decision, he decided to marry Jaime, his true love. He also decided to follow his original plan and attend MIT, despite the ensuing hardship.

In his first semester at MIT, George pledged Beta Theta Pi and promptly moved in. George spent his first semester adapting to college life and the difficult workload. In addition to his studies, he had to find appropriate housing and prepare to be a father. George Jr. was born on Monday, March 27, 2000, and George Sr. was initiated into Beta the following weekend. George and Jaime were married on August 19, 2001.

All at MIT are under intense pressure, but George more so than others. He had to be a model of responsibility and had to resist the temporary lapses of judgment that plague college students. He also worked 10 to 30 hours a week to bring in additional income. George's experience wasn't easy—it tested his limits—but in

the end it showed him what he was capable of and increased his talents. In the end, he successfully completed a degree in electrical engineering and computer science in the spring of 2003.

George was also a part of the MIT-Japan exchange program. In 2003, he worked for Dainippon Screen Manufacturing, an engineering firm in Kyoto, designing semiconductors. There he had to adjust to a foreign culture, overcome language barriers, and make new friends. His difficulties were alleviated by his wife and son, who accompanied him. Together they toured shrines and gardens and visited the Hiroshima memorial. In the end, a little Japan rubbed off on all of them, and George Jr. learned a couple words of Japanese.

From the beginning, George had the support of his fellow Betas. When his son was born, four of his brothers stood by George's side in the delivery room and joined him in a celebratory cigar. Later that week, when George was at home with newly born George Jr., unable to attend many activities leading up to initiation, his pledge brothers carried a symbolic egg dressed like him. Twenty Betas attended George's wedding and danced with George's grandmother. Whenever he felt overwhelmed, George could always go back to 119 Bay State and recover his sanity.



George and George Jr.

Beta was also a place that he could bring George Jr. At Beta, George Jr. loved by the actives, was showered with attention. Today, George Jr. at the age of three can name 30 of his Beta "uncles" and loves to talk to them on the telephone. George Jr. can't wait till he's old enough to go to Beta for pub nights, a weekly social gathering.

George is currently completing a master of engineering in material science at MIT. He plans to continue his work on semiconductor manufacturing and applications. In the future, he hopes to see George Jr. wearing a brass rat as well. George is grateful for all the support of his selfless brothers and proud to be Beta forever.

Benjamin Wasserman

INBOUIS NEWS

Stay in touch with THOMAS B. LACY '48 at tlacy@monad.net or at P.O. Box 729, Fitzwilliam, NH 03447.

HERBERT B. VOELCKER '51 writes, "Although I am retired from Cornell in a *pro forma* sense, I continue to do some teaching (mainly because I flourish under the discipline needed to teach very able students), some scut-work for my department (mechanical engineering), and bits of personal research. The big event in 2003 was 'building the ultimate boat.' In late '02 my wife and I commissioned a 37-foot 'Downeaster' (a power cruiser built on a lobster boat hull) at the Atlantic Boat Company in Brooklin, Maine. I did a good deal of the boat's design and engi-

neering, and so the year was marked by massive internet flows of CAD files and almost monthly trips from Ithaca to Maine to oversee construction. We did sea trials in early October of '03 and brought her home (about 1,000 miles, half salt water and half fresh water) in late October. She's a beauty!" Write to Herb at 205 Valley Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850, or at hbv1@cornell.edu.

Mail reaches DONALD B. MILLER '53 at 1111 Highway 75 N., Hiawassee, GA 30546, and e-mail at dbmillerat@alltel.net.

RONALD L. McKAY '54 reports that he and Sally are well and busy, as are their

sons, Andrew and Kenneth, and grandsons, Kevin and Sean. He writes, "We are traveling fairly often, seeing friends and colleagues, listening to music, viewing art and architecture, learning (bits of) new languages, and experiencing our varied world." Ron and Sally live at 5811 Kentland Ave., Woodland Hills, CA 91367.

"I retired in June 2003 after 33 years of teaching mathematics at the University of Central Florida," writes ROBERT C. BRIGHAM '56 (700 Euclid Ave., Orlando, FL 32801; brigham@cs.ucf.edu). "I am now a student, taking lessons in Spanish, playing the recorder, and doing improvisational comedy. Since I have no ear
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INBOUIS NEWS

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for languages, no musical ability, and no acting talent, this all represents farce at its best.”

While visiting their son's family in Atlanta over Christmas, Gretchen and KARL M. DUFF '57 had dinner with Barb and JIM AUSTIN '58 near Lake Allatoona, Georgia. “They also gave us a nice tour of their floating house on the lake waterfront,” writes Karl. The Duffs live at 6112 Wynn Jones Rd. E., Port Orchard, WA 98366, and e-mail reaches Karl at kduff@ix.netcom.com.

Please note this new address for EDWIN C. BELL '58: 24341 La Glorita Circle, Newhall, CA 91321.

WILLIAM S. WIDNALL '59 reports that he still enjoys competitive sailboat racing as well as sprint and Olympic distance triathlons. (He's currently the New England champion in his age group!) His wife, Sheila, is still very active professionally and was recently a member of the space shuttle *Columbia* accident investigation board. They reside at 22 Summit Rd., Lexington, MA 02421.

ALLAN J. MacLAREN '60 retired from Lockheed Martin last year, and since then he's traveled to Helsinki, Saint Petersburg, Singapore, and Hong Kong (to visit granddaughters). Drop him a line at allanmaclaren@alum.mit.edu or at 1125 McIntosh Creek Dr., San Jose, CA 95120.

Write to GARY W. BICKEL '61 at 3761 Holden Circle, Los Alamitos, CA 90720, or at gbickel@socal.rr.com.

HAROLD O. BRANSON '63 has moved to 14857 Oaks North Place, Dallas, TX 75254, and he can be reached by e-mail at rgrizwald@yahoo.com. His daughter, Jenny, is an actress, dancer, and musician and a freshman at Boston College, and his son, Joshua, is a sophomore at Northwestern. As a high school senior, Joshua won a national debate championship, for which Harold credits KEITH

GLICK '62 and GEORGE WYMAN '62 (“for debate inspiration”).

When we last heard from JAMES W. GIFFIN '64, his son, John, was planning to marry Monica Tyler on the MIT campus this summer. Jim writes, “Jackie and I have sons in Boston and San Francisco—great trips from our home on the Black River in Michigan.” Their address is 4021 N. River Rd., Fort Gratiot, MI 48059; gifdad@msn.com.

Retired from Motorola, MICHAEL G. TAYLOR '66 makes his home at 104 Swinley Forest, Williamsburg, VA 23188.

DANIEL J. NADLER '72 writes, “I'm currently challenged by my life as a physician in private practice, dealing with the malpractice insurance crisis in Pennsylvania. Equally challenging are my two teenage sons, Zach (17) and David (13). Zach is a junior in high school and showing some interest in MIT.” Write to Dan at 471 School St., Sewickley, PA 15143.

PAUL M. HAINES JR. '78 reports that son Zach is going into the Peace Corps after earning a business degree from the University of Texas at Austin, and son Andrew just turned 16 and got his license—“another Haines on the streets!” Paul now works in IT at Kerr-McGee Oil & Gas after a 23-year career at Schlumberger. He still keeps in touch with DAVE WARGO '76 and BOBBY KNECHT '78, and last year he got a surprise visit from HERMAN MARSHALL '78. Beta friends visiting the Houston area are encouraged to look Paul up at 2614 Silent Spring Creek Dr., Katy, TX 77450 (phaines@houston.rr.com).

“I was one of the fortunate few to get to cash out (partially) before the internet boom went bust,” writes BRUCE H. COTTMAN '79 (35 Battle Flag Rd., Bedford, MA 01730; bcottman@alum.mit.edu). “I had planned to take six months starting in November 2002. From 1991 until I sold it in June 2000, I had been working much too hard building up I-

Kinetics. I am now 13 months into ‘vacation’ and am finding it very difficult to think about going back to an office ever again! Besides becoming reacquainted with my wife and four daughters, I have dusted off my old skills in BJ and have also taken up poker.” Bruce made a big push to get back in shape to play tournament-level tennis, but then he blew out his Achilles tendon trying to keep up with 19-year-olds playing in the MIT “A” level intramural league. “I had better get a job soon,” he writes, “as all this fun is probably going to kill me.”

KENDALL R. BRYAN '88 reports a new address of 2056 Branard St., Houston, TX 77098 (kbryan@dow.com).

JONATHAN S. LUBETSKY '00 is an environmental engineer and policy analyst for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Write to him at jsl@alum.mit.edu or at 4100 Massachusetts Ave., NW, #409, Washington, DC 20016.

Stay in touch with ERIC D. MUDAMA '96 at edmudama@alum.mit.edu or at 1495 Clover Creek Dr., Longmont, CO 80503. Eric works for Maxtor Corporation.

DARNELL W. KEMP II '01 is living in Boston and dancing with Salsa Encendida Dance Company in his spare time. Write to him at 15 Harbor Point Blvd., Apt. 408, Dorchester, MA 02125, or at darnell.kemp@hotmail.com.

MATTHEW J. SAUNDERS '03 is an engineer at Boeing in Long Beach, California, where he lives at 108 Roswell Ave., Apt. 9 (90803). Send e-mail to “El Guapo” at saunders@alum.mit.edu.

DECEASED

We regret to report the death of the following alumni:

JEFFERSON FARMER '35
November 5, 2003

FRANCIS J. KEARNY '38

EUGENE D. RICHTER '53
September 28, 2003

ALBERT H. RIEHL '41
December 7, 2003

GEORGE C. UNDERWOOD '51
April 17, 2003

Your news is important!

Let us know what you're doing—where you've traveled, whom you've seen, how your family is prospering. Mail your news today to the address on page two.