



November 2004

# Alphabet



Alpha Chapter • Theta Xi Fraternity • Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute • Troy, NY

www.alphaofttheta-xi-alumni.com

Alumni

By Demetrius Mossaidis a1391

## House Renovations Report

Though we don't think seriously about it, the Alpha Alumni play an important role in the condition of our house. After all, we own the property. And after 71 years of using 1490 Sage Ave as Alpha's mailing address, the house is ripe for fixing and now more than ever.

The actives are currently taking an important lead in maintaining the house. Their most recent project, with help from alumni donations, includes rebuilding the front steps and repairing the masonry and wooden paneling façade over the front entrance. The actives have also worked on improving some of the "eye sores" within the house and more importantly, have passed a complete fire/safety inspection, unbelievably, a practice not commonly thought of. In the coming years, active participation and continued cooperation with the alumni association will ensure the house can sustain live-in members.

One day, the alumni association will own a renovated fraternity house that will functionally serve our active and alumni community better than ever before. As alumni, this should be our long term goal. This can not be done overnight. We first need to address critical areas that undermine the structural integrity and safety of the house, upgrade/replace the heat and power infrastructure, modernize the finishes to provide longevity and functionality to the actives and at the same time preserve the classic appearance of the house.

Some major concerns right now are seen in the roof. It is leaking, showing signs of depression and the dormers have been slowly falling apart. Old piping has taken its toll of structural elements underneath the third and second floor bathrooms and underneath the kitchen. Runoff water continually affects the basement and weaker areas of the foundation walls. New electrical service was recently brought to the house, although it still running through the original wiring. The windows are extremely heat inefficient. The hardwood floors are stripped of much of the poly coating and can not be refinished. Essentials and conveniences throughout the house are quickly approaching the end of their life.

A complete renovation project would take time and committed involvement and investment from the alumni. As resources are secured and a long-term implementation schedule is established, we will be addressing the most critical areas without displacing the actives. Protection from the elements, structural integrity and fire/hazard safety for active members is our primary concern.

Currently the main concerns are the roof and the basement walls. There are critical areas on the roof that must be addressed before the start of winter, including a two-foot hole on the south-east slope. Estimates from local contractors are pending. Addressing the other evident roof issues will most likely cascade into a larger project certainly worth implementation but best scheduled for the spring/summer of 2005. Wall plaster and underlayment cement backing on the southern-most internal corners of the basement are beginning to crumble. A structural review is scheduled for late October '04. Additional projects include fixing all electrical outlets throughout the first floor, tree removal and assessing window replacements, structural damage from leaky water pipes and repairing the more questionable parts of the electrical infrastructure.

I look forward to seeing many of you at 6294 this year and encourage your involvement in Alpha of Theta Xi's house renovation project. ■



President

By Justin Scaduto

## UpDates

### State of the Union – President's Address

This semester has been a largely uneventful one, because of the unfortunate situation that occurred at the end of last semester. We were unable to hold our fall rush and remain on suspension currently. While this incident was not a joyful one by any means, we as a brotherhood have worked together to try to overcome our sanctions and our chapter has become more closely knit than we were before. Also, we have implemented a new Risk Management plan that complies with both our National plan and the schools policies in an effort to avoid such violations in the future. In addition, several brothers took it upon themselves to create more effective rules to prevent violations of any kind from happening, which led to the creation of many new by-laws.

During our Judicial Hearing with Dean Mark Smith, we received extreme sanctions, including a one and a half year suspension, and a two year probationary period, during which we would be required to have a live-in advisor. Because of the excessive nature of these sanctions our members decided it was necessary for us to appeal for a lower set of punishments. Many of our members worked extremely hard on the appeal and we hope the outcome will be to our benefit. The appeal is on Friday, October 15th.

In a house-wide effort to improve the conditions of our house, we have implemented several new work parties, an all member Sunday morning cleanup, and weekly cleanup crews, who are responsible for the general upkeep of the house during day to day activities. Due to these changes our house has improved visually, but even more importantly our brothers feel more responsible than before.

Besides these inopportune events, we have had an enjoyable semester. For example, a group of fourteen brothers took a weekend trip to Montreal, Quebec a few weeks ago, and everyone enjoyed themselves immeasurably. As well as

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# Report

By Bill Knoth A1047, Chapter Advisor

## Farewell Knoth resigns; Search for New Advisor Begins

It is with deep regret that I must announce my resignation from the Chapter Advisor's position effective October 31, 2004. Serious family health problems require my wife and me to relocate to Connecticut.

I have enjoyed my "second" association with the Alpha chapter over the past eight years. I hope that my efforts have been beneficial to the chapter. I know I am leaving during a critical period in the house's existence at Rensselaer. Unfortunately, this cannot be avoided.

The house is currently experiencing a tough period; however, I have confidence that they will come out of this stronger and, I know, much wiser. Alpha chapter members have realized that the actions of one individual can have disastrous results on the group as a whole. Last May, the Troy police entered the

house with a warrant to search an individual brother's room. There, they found a quantity of drugs. That person was arrested, but the house was not cited. The school levied sanctions against the house and these sanctions are being appealed. The appeal is based on the relationship statement between the school and the fraternities - this was the action of one person and not the group.

The house is receiving strong alumni leadership through the Alumni Association. The Chapter Advisor's position is vital to insuring that strength. I urge brothers who reside in the capital district to search your hearts and make the commitment to become Chapter Advisor. It has been and will continue to be a challenging job. But, more importantly, it is a rewarding job. ■

### Alumni

## Profile

Lee Wilcox A944

### Wilcox Learned Importance of Relationships at Theta Xi

Lee Wilcox A944 came to RPI from a Minnesota farming town. "I had never been east of the Mississippi. On the day I went to Troy, I took my first plane ride, first train ride and first taxi ride," he says. He knew no one and was in awe of the "brilliant guys from prep schools." Alone on a college campus, Lee Wilcox A944, 'Wilx' to his brothers, believed that joining a fraternity would mean becoming part of a social group.

His decision to join Theta Xi in 1956 turned out to be one of his best decisions. Not only did he get a busy college social life, he also learned from his fraternity experience. Lee says, "The biggest lesson was the critical importance of relationships in everything we do." Theta Xi created many special memories. Lee says, "I remember singing around the piano in the bar at the end of parties, road trips, Hell Week and especially the many supportive friendships."

He lived in the house his last five semesters rooming mainly with now-deceased John Fullam A940. Lee clearly remembers a visit to John's home in Massachusetts. John's mother was preparing lobster - a delicacy Lee had never experienced. "They said it would be OK to put my finger in the claw," states Lee. Not necessarily good advice he remembers now.

In addition to Theta Xi, Lee played freshmen football, swimming and tennis. He continued to play football throughout his college days. "I ended up being quarterback and co-captain my senior year. We were the last team to win a game before the record-setting losing streak," Lee remembers. At that time, about half of the starters on the football team were members of Theta Xi.

After graduating from RPI, Lee returned to Minnesota where he attended graduate school and got his Ph.D. in Psychology. He has

worked at the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin, RPI, Montclair State University and finally Georgia Tech serving as Vice President for Student Affairs much of the time.

Lee still stays in contact with Vern Purdy A945 who lives in Denver and fellow football player John Parry A918 who lives in Florida. "When I worked at RPI from 1979 to 1994, I got a lot of TX's to come back for class reunions," he remembers.

Lee retired from Georgia Tech March 2003 and spends much of his time now playing tennis. "I play about 20 hours a week and captain several 50+ and 60+ teams," he says. His goals are to improve at tennis, stay healthy, nurture relationship and find a mate. Lee has three grown daughters - two in Madison, WI and one in Christchurch, New Zealand. He also has four grandchildren. Brothers can contact Lee at leewilcox88@hotmail.com. ■



### Alpha Chapter Officers

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Alpha Chapter of Theta Xi

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### Alumni Association

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Alpha Chapter brothers show their formal side.



There's always room for some fun and relaxation at the house.

## Treasurers

# Report

## House is Financially Stable despite Challenges

We are experiencing a strong semester financially. There are 37 brothers living in the house, only four short of full capacity, four brothers out-of-house and one away on co-op. These numbers mean improved food and supplies and the ability to assist in house maintenance and repair costs. This year's approximately \$12,000 projected surplus will go to the building fund, which under the direction of the Alumni Association, will be used for renovation projects. If, after our appeal, the current suspension is upheld, Rush and Social funds may also be put towards house maintenance and an outstanding 6294 celebration in the spring. National Headquarters has raised the chapter service fee by almost \$1,000 this year to \$3500. In addition, due to our suspension, the Risk Management policy fee was increased by ten percent to \$4000. Even with these increases in National fees, we still have a strong budget and forecasts show us in the black throughout the difficult semester ahead. ■

## President

# UpDates

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road trips, every Tuesday we have a house poker tournament, and on Thursday prizes are awarded for the weekly winner.

Overall, this semester we have grown as a house, with stronger inter brother relations, a more

powerful Risk Management plan, several new by-laws, and an overall sense of responsibility. Lastly, I would like to congratulate Rohun Gholkar, Alpha 1515, who is graduating this December. ■

## Fundraising

# Acting on a Good Idea

*By David Fowkes A1275, dfowkes@seaburygroup.com*

During our first annual Alpha of Theta Xi fund drive, we received 75 donations totaling over \$15,700. Brothers from every decade from the 1930s to the 2000s gave. The quick response was amazing and appreciated. Now the 2004-05 annual drive is underway with the same expectation of amazing results. We have already received five donations including checks from four alumni who did not participate in last year's efforts. Please don't let it stop there.

Over ten years ago, I was with a group of alumni at 6294 discussing an annual fund. We knew that the alumni had just invested \$200,000 in the house and realized that a similar commitment would be needed every 15 to 20 years. We thought the best way to assure long-term viability was to have a large number of alumni give a small donation each year. We believed that if 100 to 200 brothers made a modest annual donation, we could use that \$10-20,000 per year on maintenance and avoid a large fundraiser periodically to renovate the entire house.

It was a great idea then and remains a great idea today. I wish we had implemented the idea. Instead, we

went back to our lives without acting and find ourselves in the position we all knew we would be. As predicted, after 20 years of normal wear and tear and minimal maintenance, the house again needs a significant amount of renovation. We continue to implement an annual fund program to complete needed renovations and avoid the same situation 20 years from today.

Last year, we promised to better organize alumni communications. We have improved and continue that focus while building on the success of last year's fund drive. We also promised to begin emergency repairs and formulate a renovation plan. The house has been upgraded to meet current fire codes. The front steps and façade are safer and look better than they have in 20 years. That's just the beginning. More emergency repairs and other work will be done over the next ten months. A detailed renovation plan will be completed over the next 12 to 18 months. With this plan, we will conduct a more extensive renovation fund drive in the fall of 2006 to coincide with the 75th anniversary of our house construction.

Thank you for your support. If you



*The house is looking better. Your support will make it even better – inside and out.*

participated in last year's fund drive, please continue your annual support this year. If you did not participate, please consider making your first annual commitment to the house upkeep.

Will you join us at 6294 on April 29-30, 2005? We expect a large turnout this year; last year 40 alumni returned; this year, 27 alumni have already committed to return. Check the alumni web page at [www.alphaofthetaxi-alumni.com](http://www.alphaofthetaxi-alumni.com) to see who plans to return. ■

# Alumni UpDates

**Howard Bursch A750**  
(23 St. Pauls Place, Garden City, NY 11530; hcjbmjb@cs.com) I've been meaning to comment that every time I see the Alphabet I am reminded that in fall of 1947 when I became editor of the Theta Xi Newsletter, I initiated the now lasting name Alphabet.

**Richard Sweitzer A765**  
(3 Longwood Drive, Andover, MA 01810; rmsweitzer@comcast.net) I am semi-retired working one day a week at GHK in Boston. I also do consulting work designing residential additions and renovations. I do two projects a year, which pays for our vacations. Other than Parkinson's and a knee replacement, I am in good health. I swim at the YMCA and work out in the fitness center two times a week. My wife, Barbara, and I are still able to golf, but with the help of a cart. We have been married 48 years, and have five children and nine grandchildren. I continue to be active with the RPI alumni club of Boston.

**Robert Bozzone A848**  
(311 Hillcrest Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068) I have been married for 45 years to a terrific girl and have 10 grand-

children (the oldest is 10)! I am adjunct trustee at RPI.

**Richard Cronenberg A941**  
(2700 Weaver Rd., Batavia, OH 45103) I am still working full time in my own business preparing construction cost estimates for commercial buildings. Pat and I recently moved to a 35-acre farm in the country and we enjoy traveling. Pat owns a full-service travel agency. We have two married children and three grandchildren. Our winter vacation home is in Naples, FL.

**Peter Bordas A969**  
(907 Spring Tide Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660) I have attended each reunion since 1987. I stay in regular contact with **Dick Tolmie A975**.

**Philip Cutrone A1388**  
(Stamford, CT; pcutrone@unclemings.com) I own a bar in New York City called Uncle Ming's. I also work for CGI-AMS.

**Jason Romano A1407**  
(11340 Orchard Ln., Reston, VA 20190; romano1407@yahoo.com) We just moved back to the D.C. area last year and now have our first baby on the way.

**Derek Stott A1440**  
(922 Stratford Ct., State College, PA 16801; dms527@psu.edu) I am currently in my first year of business school at Penn State (Smeal College).

**Mark Rothfuss A1461**  
(43 W River St., Waterloo, NY 13165; markrothfuss@alum.rpi.edu) I got married on July 4, 2003. My son, Michael, was born on Christmas Eve 2003. After working for IBM a bit, I returned to my hometown of Waterloo to work for Ferro where my wife, Ryan, and I are purchasing a home.

**Matthew Goss A1482**  
(122 Riverwalk Way, Cohoes, NY 12047; goss@alum.rpi.edu) I was engaged this past spring to Kristy, my girlfriend of three years. We are looking forward to a July 2005 wedding. In addition to all of the other things currently happening in my life, I will be finishing my master's degree in December. At this point, I am looking forward to a little more free time.

**John Viggiano A1488**  
(vig@vigcraft.com) In the spring, I teamed up with Ben Haynes A1526 to incorporate VIGCraft Arts (www.vigcraft.com) as a partnership and have since been involved in



*Our own John Viggiano A1488 stars on the front of the Orange VIP, which his company designed.*

several projects in Central New York. One of our most recent projects involved the season ticket holder program at Syracuse University for which we developed a website and designed the cover of the inaugural issue of the OrangeVIP magazine. I blessed the cover. We are continuing to develop new relationships with local businesses and hope to have enough business to hire another employee in the spring of 2005.

**Stephen Kereakoglow A1502** (116 Saddlechase Ln., Columbia, SC 29223; sck22@yahoo.com) I will be married on August 28 to Amanda Nicole Schramm. The wedding will take place in Winchester, TN, followed by a week-long honeymoon in Maui. ■

## Theta Xi Fraternity Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

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