



ALPHA *bet*

Theta Xi Association of Troy, New York | Winter 2010 | Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Alumni Relations Office | P.O. Box 80828, Atlanta, Georgia 30366 | www.alpha6294.com

Alumni Spotlight: Duncan Sparnell A1160

“Enjoy your work. Find what you like to do and do it. The world changes faster than you can believe so your job will continue to change. Use that change to your advantage to tailor your job to rewarding work you enjoy.” Words of wisdom from **Duncan Sparnell A1160**. For the past 31 years, he’s been working for the same company since his initial interview at RPI’s Career Center, AT&T.

This philosophy has also come in hand for Duncan; for 17 years he represented AT&T and USA at the International Telecommunications Union and has been awarded the US Intelligence Seal Medallion and the AT&T Science and Technology Medal. He explained, “I’ve been very lucky to be involved in so many things that have had a wide ranging impact; it’s hard to narrow it down to one. The telephony work, the ITU work, the government work, and the cyber-defense work have all been very rewarding and just plain fun.”

Duncan started from designing processors for telephone switches, moved into software and signal processing, and even wrote a code in 1979 that handled over 1 trillion phone calls over the next couple of decades. Duncan has also been a visionary, working on voice coding algorithms and voice packetization, the technology we used today for VoIP, work Duncan was doing back in the 80’s. His work today has helped support the FBI counter-intelligence and counter-terrorist programs, although he still can’t talk about the really cool and important programs he was working on. With 3 patents and 4 patents pending under his belt, Duncan has done a lot with his EE degrees from RPI.



Duncan Sparnell and his wife, Patty, while vacationing in the Canadian Rockies this summer.

Duncan pledged Theta Xi his freshman year at RPI. His roommate knew **Justin Victoria A1150** from high school, who introduced him to Alpha Chapter. Duncan also played football and lacrosse with several Theta Xis, so joining was an easy choice. His days at Theta Xi were filled with memories. Duncan fondly remembers **Chip Moehlau A1166** saying “these would be ‘our good old days’ and we were in school to create the stories we’d be telling the rest of our lives. He was right. While at RPI, you really get to know your Brothers and once you are out in the real world - keep in touch with them.”

Theta Xi also helped prepare Duncan for life. While serving as Chapter President, Duncan learned to resolve disputes, both within the house and the ‘unfortunate run-ins’ with the Dean. Although Duncan refers to himself as a ‘geek’s job’, he still values his involvement in Theta Xi. “A lot of the real world is still about people interacting with people. I learned a lot about

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Alpha Alumni Association – 100 Years Old and Going Strong

By John Reinhardt A1358, Alumni Association President, john@teamreinhardt.com

We’ve recently been busy with work, holidays and the New Year. It’s an appropriate time to reflect upon the progress the chapter has made in the past year. The Brothers of Alpha Chapter have kept themselves busy as both Actives and Alumni continue to make great strides. December 2009 marked the 100th Anniversary of your Alumni Association. We are busy at work preparing for the 150th Anniversary of the founding of our Fraternity to be hosted in Troy in 2014. Chairman **David Fowkes A1275** has been busy working with National to plan an anniversary that will make Theta Xi, RPI and Alpha Chapter proud.

Your Alumni Association maintains alumni relations by providing web content

and sending newsletters, postcards and letters to our alumni to inform them of collegiate and Alumni events. We strengthen our bonds by sponsoring Alumni events in conjunction with the Active Chapter (Homecoming and 6294) and through Theta Xi clubs in New York City, Boston, Washington DC, Albany and, in our newest club, Chicago. Our main charter is to maintain and improve the Chapter house. This year we accomplished this through work week participation (where we contributed funds, skilled labor and tools and materials) and by funding targeted renovation projects. As an association we also provide guidance to the actives through Alumni led seminars (our rush

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Edward P. Hamilton A206: Former National President, Order of the Unicorn Recipient

*By Matthew Glaccum A1324, Alumni Historian,
mglaccum@geosphereinc.com*



Edward P. Hamilton A206 as pictured in the April 1930 issue of the Unicorn.

All brothers of Theta Xi are indebted to **Edward P. Hamilton A206**, Class of 1907, for his many contributions and years of involvement and service both as a student at RPI and later as head of Wiley & Sons publishing house.

He served as president of Alpha chapter and later the Alpha Alumni Association before becoming Theta Xi National President (1930-1933).

Brother Hamilton was also one of those who helped make the Alpha Chapter’s home at 1490 Sage Avenue a reality.

At a December 1947 reception held at the Columbia University Club in New York City, Brother Hamilton was feted as the newest member of the Order of the Unicorn. Over 150 Theta Xi’s from twenty-five chapters were in attendance.

Brother Hamilton’s legacy lives on at RPI in the form of the **William H. Wiley [A11]** a fellow Order of the Unicorn recipient and Hamilton’s uncle] 1866 Distinguished Faculty Award and two professorships he endowed: the Edward P. Hamilton Distinguished Professor of Science Education and the Edward P. Hamilton Distinguished Professor of Mathematical Sciences.

For more information about Brother Hamilton, please visit the Alumni website at www.alpha6294.com.

Alpha Chapter Continues to “Clean Up”

by **Mike Martin A1586**, Fall 2009 Active Chapter President, martim6@rpi.edu



I would like to offer my congratulations to **Chris “Norm” Baldauf A1487** for winning the Chapter Advisor of the Year (Northeast

District) at our 145th Anniversary convention in Chicago in August. Alpha Chapter thanks him for his help and involvement in our Chapter’s affairs. Active Brother **Spencer Anunsen A1581**, Assistant Chapter Advisor **Carl Busta A1575** and Grand Lodge Director **David Fowkes A1275** represented Alpha Chapter at the convention. Spencer and Busta came back with many new insights and strategies for chapter operations and a stack of awards in recognition for a great year for the chapter. They both hope to attend the 147th Convention in St Louis in 2011.

In August the brothers returned early for Fall Semester to participate in our annual work week during which we completed several small projects. Alumni Association President **John Reinhardt A1358** led a team of Active Brothers replacing missing door trim and floor molding on the second and third floor. The couches in the formal room were repaired and re-covered. The active brothers showed renewed interest in bedroom renovations (many of which are being occupied for the first

time in a couple of years), investing their money and labor to refinish floors, lay carpet, paint walls and ceilings and replace old furniture. I’d like to offer special thanks to the other Alumni who returned to help us during work week including **Chris ‘Norm’ Baldauf A1487**, **Jamie Smith A1492** and **Tim Wise A1561**.

The Chapter hosted two very successful events as part of RPI’s Homecoming Weekend. On Friday, October 2nd over 30 Alumni, neighbors and faculty attended a wine and cheese mixer at the Chapter house. On Saturday, Alumni returned for a barbeque and tour of the house. The Active Brothers would like to especially thank the Class of ‘59 for returning and sharing memories of their college experiences with us. Brothers in attendance for one or more events included **Elwood (Woody) Phares II A753**, **Jim Angus A912**, **Ken Vaught A919**, **Dick Besha A924**, **Fred Preiss A925**, **Charles Mackey A933**, **Mike Gass A1011**, **Hank Malafrente Jr. A1020**, **Roland Cavalier A1060**, **Dick Greenlaw A1063**, **David Fowkes A1275**, **Kenyon Thayer A1405**, **Chris ‘Norm’ Baldauf A1487**, **Brad Spencer A1517**, **Jake Woudenberg A1562** and **Dan Jahne A1582**.

I look forward to continuing my work with the Chapter and helping my newly elected replacement **Jeff Kopera A1594** to maintain our strong momentum.

Alpha Chapter Scores Big

by **Carl Busta A1575** – Assistant Chapter Advisor, bustac@rpi.edu



Last Spring I finished my undergraduate degree in Materials Science and Engineering. I am currently a graduate student at RPI majoring in materials science. Last Fall I was named Assistant Chapter Advisor by the Grand Lodge. In this position I attend Chapter meetings, provide day to day advice to the executive board

and act as an older (but not too old) contact point between the Actives and Alumni.

In August I attended the national convention in Chicago. It was a lot of fun meeting Brothers from other Chapters and being a part of such a large event made up entirely of Theta Xis. Alpha received several awards at the convention. We were one of only 2 Chapters nationwide to have the highest GPA of all fraternities on their campus. We were recognized for outstanding recruitment. Our newsletter, the *AlphaBet*, was named the best newsletter nationwide. Our Chapter Advisor **Chris “Norm” Baldauf A1487** was named outstanding Chapter Advisor in our region. Finally, **David Fowkes A1275** was re-elected to a 2 year term as a Director on the Grand Lodge.

The recognition did not end at convention. Alpha Chapter was one of a very few Theta Xi chapters nationwide to earn a 9/9 on our annual accreditation report. Theta Xi’s accreditation process evaluates and grades each Chapter in 9 key operating areas. We scored well in all 9. Alpha Chapter also received 4/5 stars on the RPI accreditation scoring. We hope to maintain our perfect rating with National and push the RPI rating up to 5/5 this upcoming year.



Spring 2010 Chapter Officers

President	Jeff Kopera A1594
Vice President	Nihar Shah A1603
Treasurer	Matt Laird A1616
House Manager	Nick Senno A1620
Scholarship	Graham Cabrey A1617
Steward	John Miner A1614
Secretary	Eric Jordan A1618
Rush Chairmen	Alex Meola A1602
	Jeff Kopera A1594
Scholarship	Graham Cabrey A1617

2009-10 Alumni Association Officers

President:	John Reinhardt A1358
Vice President:	Demetrius Mossaidis A1391
Treasurer:	Paul Dalton A1512
Chapter Advisor / Member at Large:	Chris ‘Norm’ Baldauf A1487
Member at Large:	Chris Blanc A1404
Member at Large:	Rohun Gholkar A1515
Member at Large:	Jamie Smith A1492

Plans Progress for our 150th Anniversary Convention

by **David Fowkes A1275**, Chairman of the 150th Anniversary Committee for the Grand Lodge, david@rfowkes.com

It's been a busy and productive year:

- In August, the 145th convention passed legislation to raise funds for a 150th Anniversary memorial on campus at RPI. The exact location and design is yet to be determined, but we have been in discussions with RPI for well over a year to locate a suitable place on campus. The convention gave the Grand Lodge permission to assess a small charge to each active brother nationwide and to each Alumni Club over the next 5 years. The plan is projected to raise over \$100,000 towards the memorial.
- Newly elected Grand Lodge President Don Meringer announced a number of appointments to steer the anniversary planning. **David Fowkes A1275** was named Chairman of the 150th anniversary planning committee. **Matt Glaccum A1324** was named Chairman of the History Sub-Committee
- As we continue to evaluate our options for location, a new Hilton Garden convention center has opened on Hoosick Avenue a few blocks from campus. We've been encouraged with our discussions with RPI and their willingness to provide meeting space and sleeping accommodations for convention activities and guests. The Hilton Garden provides us with a second viable option to explore between now and 2014.

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engineering from classes, but I learned a lot about people from my time at the house.”

Duncan has continued the friendships with his brothers from Theta Xi. From discovering that his big Brother's (**Justin Victoria A1150**) daughter was good friends with his own daughter to attending **Mike Lyden's A1173** Change of Command Ceremony with **Rich Way A1168** and **Mike 'Mongo' Moy A1177**,

Duncan has continued to keep in touch with many of his Alpha Brothers. From seeing **Tom White A1180** when back home visiting his family, to catching up with **John Murphy A1176** or **Bill Fredericks A1154** when he and Patty visit friends and family, Duncan takes the time to keep up with his Brothers from Alpha Chapter and to come back to 6294 annually.

Duncan has been married to his wife Patty for 31 years and they have 3 daughters. They have lived in several states and traveled extensively to 6 continents. Despite his busy career, Duncan finds time for Theta Xi. **Dane LeBanc A1192** and **Rich "Goa" Way A1168** talked him to going back to 6294 and he has for the past few years. It has been a regular event for him and he suggests that all Brothers get in contact with Brothers from their era and those that live in their area.



Duncan Sparrell, with Dane LeBlanc A1192 and Rich "Goa" Way A1168 at 'Sutters' on Friday night of 6294.

You can find contact information for Brothers on our password protected website (www.alpha6294.com) or email **Matt Glaccum A1324** at mglaccum@geosphereinc.com for help locating alumni.

Alpha Remembers: A Tribute to James Lichtenberg A1203 (1958-1999)

This past October marked 10 years since Brother James Lichtenberg's untimely passing. For most, the news of Jim's death came as a complete shock. For the Brothers who knew him, it was a blow to hear that one of their own had passed on to Chapter Eternal. He had taken a strong interest in the goings on of the Chapter quite a few years after his graduation in 1980, and many of the Brothers who attended RPI in the 1990's came to know him well. In recognition that Jim's generosity and spirit had left an indelible mark on the brothers of Alpha, the Chapter's Alumni Award came to be named for him. Read on for some personal reflections about Jim:

By **Matt Flaherty '94, A1350**

It's hard to know what to write about Jim. We were very close and I took his friendship for granted until he was gone. His generosity is the stuff of legend, but it extended to more than just money (although he was the house's largest donor for a number of years). He was also generous with his time and attention. He knew everybody by first name. Girls who were one time dates of some Active Brother to the formal would be amazed by his total recall. During my active tenure Jim was a permanent fixture every weekend and some weekday nights as well. He looked after the lot of us and made sure we didn't get into too much trouble. But what really stands out in my memory is this: having already accepted an invitation to my wedding in April 1999, Jim later phoned me to say he wasn't sure he could come after all. He confessed that he hadn't been feeling very well for a number of months and the doctors thought he might have a form of lung cancer. He sometimes found it difficult getting out of bed. He said that he might just have to pull out so that I didn't end up wasting two dinners and a seat on him and his date. I was dumbstruck. After all the times he'd treated me to late night breakfast at the '76 diner and all the hundreds or thousands of beers and whatnots, this was his concern. Naturally I told him that he was one of the important guests and that I wouldn't mind if he had to suddenly cancel. I would eat his dinner rather than have him not coming at all. He did make it to the wedding. I found out later after speaking with his family that Jim had rested for days so that he'd have the strength to put in a proper appearance. Maybe that's why it came as such a shock when I heard that he'd gone. He had seemed so vital. That was the last time I saw him. I made the trip over from England to attend the 6294 in April 2000 because I had to pay my proper respects. I broke down crying relating to his family the story I've just told here, which still has the power to move me. I still think of him every now and again and wonder "what would Jim make of this or that". The place will never be the same again without him.



By **Chris Blanc '96, A1404**

Anging graces our lives with the gift of reflection on events, places and people. How deeply we may be touched by a passing acquaintance in a defined period doesn't always come into clear view until years later. In the timeline of human life, Jim and I were merely passing ships. Our brief years of friendship, however, left my heart with his indelible hand print. His simple life lessons were as deep and numerous as his laugh. In a time of aimless coming of age, Jim was always there to guide my ship's course. Many of us attribute our RPI survival to Theta Xi, and Jim was at the center of this relative success for many who called 1490 Sage home. News of Jim's passing in 1999 was a blow to me. In the years after his passing, I carried Jim's wisdom and voice in my head nearly every day. In 2005, I was happy to name my son, James, after Jim as a tribute to an improbable mentor and committed Brother of Theta Xi.



Do you have your own stories, memories or photos of Jim to share? Please e-mail them to Matt Glaccum mglaccum@geosphereinc.com. They will be posted to the memorial page on the Alumni website at www.alpha6294.com.

CALENDAR

February 27, 2010

This year's District Leadership Academy for the Northeast Region will be held at Gamma Mu Chapter at Montclair State University in Montclair, New Jersey.

April 24, 2010

Join us on Saturday for our annual corporation meeting and 6294 Celebration in Troy, New York.

October 15-17, 2010

Homecoming/Reunion. RPI has combined Reunion with Homecoming in the Fall.

UPCOMING REUNIONS

All reunions have been combined with Homecoming Weekend in the fall.

2010 – October 15-17

2011 – October 21-23

A1024 Rick Gordon

jrgordonfla@yahoo.com -- try to get a group back for 2010's homecoming - and hopefully build interest in the 2014 party.

A1091 Joe Massery

joe.massery@gmail.com -- would be interested in reconnecting with guys of his era. A reunion would be a possibility.

A1192 Dane LeBlanc

leblancd@cisco.com -- looking to get guys together for 6294 this year. We hope you will come join us at a future Alpha event!

CLUBS

Albany, NY Club – Brad Spencer A1517.

Email Brad at bspencer1517@gmail.com about upcoming events.

Boston Club – Chris Blanc A1404 – For more

information please contact Chris at cblanc@gmail.com.

Chicago Club – Weston Harding Gamma Tau

1 – Contact Weston at weston.harding@resavvy.com if interested in future events.

NYC Club – David Fowkes A1275 – next

meeting Thursday March 4th, 6:45pm, Mustang Harry's, 352 7th Avenue, NY, NY (a few blocks from Penn Station). Please send an e-mail to david@rfowkes.com for more info.

Washington DC – Dan Daly Beta Omega

187 – The Washington DC Alumni Club has a happy hour the first Friday of every month. For more information, please contact Daniel Daly, DC Alumni Club President at dand187@gmail.com. **John Reinhardt A1358** has also recently gotten together Alphas in the DC area. Contact John at john@teamreinhardt.com for more details.

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seminar was held on January 23 before Spring classes begin), mentoring programs and the development of officer notebooks to help the actives plan and better transition officers from one semester to the next.

As you work to keep your New Year resolutions, why not consider putting Alpha on your list? Anything you can contribute to Alpha will help, whether it is reaching out to find lost Alumni, acting as a mentor for an Alpha Chapter officer or helping to organize a mini-reunion with your pledge class brothers for 6294 this year. Your contributions to Theta Xi, both volunteering and monetary, will help Alpha continue to excel and grow.

Recession Impacts our Work at Alpha Chapter

by Paul Dalton A1512, Alumni Association Treasurer; pdalton1512@gmail.com

The good news is that our Alumni Association remains on solid financial footing, the Active Chapter is strong and is in a position to continue to pay full rent on the Chapter house and we re-financed all of our long term obligations last year into a long-term (20year), low rate mortgage. The bad news is that Alpha Chapter's annual fund, like most organizations which rely on charitable donations, has seen a dramatic drop in donations both by number and total dollar value (by almost 50%, from a peak of nearly \$40k and 152 donors a few years ago to just under \$23k and 92 donors last year).

What does that mean? First of all, after years of hard work the "bones" of the house are solid. The roof does not leak, there is heat in all of the rooms and the plumbing and electrical systems are operating, safe and up to code. We also have the financial resources to continue our communication program and a safety nest egg to help insure us against unforeseen emergencies. The real impact is in the speed and type of renovations that we will be able to accomplish. We've put big ticket items like the much needed bathroom renovations on hold. With the 150th anniversary coming to Alpha Chapter in just under 5 years now is not the time to slow down our momentum.



Recent repairs include repairing and recovering the couches in the formal room.



Your continued support of the Alpha Chapter allows us to make necessary improvements to the house.

We understand that times are tough. What can you do to help? All we've ever asked is that each Alumnus donates something every year - whatever they think is appropriate for their situation. Some of our most recent graduates donate \$5 per paycheck. Other alumni give \$50 or \$100 or \$250 per year. A handful of our largest benefactors have given over \$1,000 per year. We've had 283 individual donors give at least once over the past 5 years. So we have 191 Alumni who were "lapsed" donors last year. If you donated last year, thank you. We appreciate your continued support.

If you are one of the 191 who did not or could not donate last year, please consider renewing your participation today. If your name is not on our donor list, please consider joining me and your Brothers in support of your house. Any amount helps. Thank you again.