



Beta Sigma Psi

Alpha Alumni Newsletter

2026 Homecoming

I October 3, 2026
Illini vs. Purdue **P**

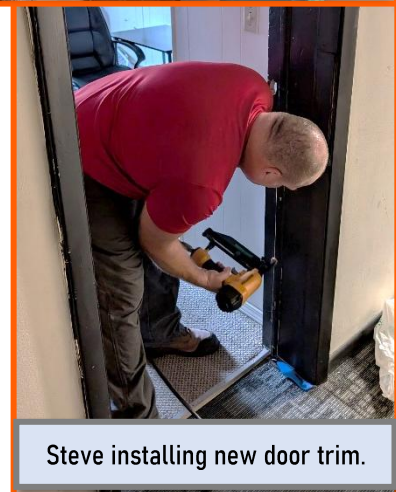
Chapter House Improvements – Spring 2026 *(report written by Andrew Elders)*

Spring 2026 kicked off with an alumni work weekend, held on January 17-19. Several alumni showed up to help: **Steve Meyer** (Fall '97), **Joel Kahling** (Spring '80), **Alex Johnson** (Fall '05), **Mark Toledano** (Fall '18), **Nathaniel Stoll** (Fall '15), and **Nic Talley** (Fall '21). It was a fruitful time with two room rehabs being kicked off, general cleaning, door repairs, trim replacement, and some electrical fixes. Also on the list was stripping and resealing the dining room floor...that didn't quite go as planned. The chemical stripper reacted with the sealant put on last year and formed a sticky orange mess on the floor. Seriously, I now know how a rat in a glue trap feels! After some deliberation, we decided to hire a professional janitorial service to correct the problem. They scrubbed the floor thoroughly to the point where a bit of the floor surface was abraded away, thus removing stubborn stains and fading. The entire floor was resealed with a wax that with an annual spray buff should last us several years. And honestly, it was a good thing to have done. The floor looks even better and is now easier to clean and maintain.



Alumni Work Weekend
Jan 17-19, 2026

Andrew and Alex removing old wood paneling.

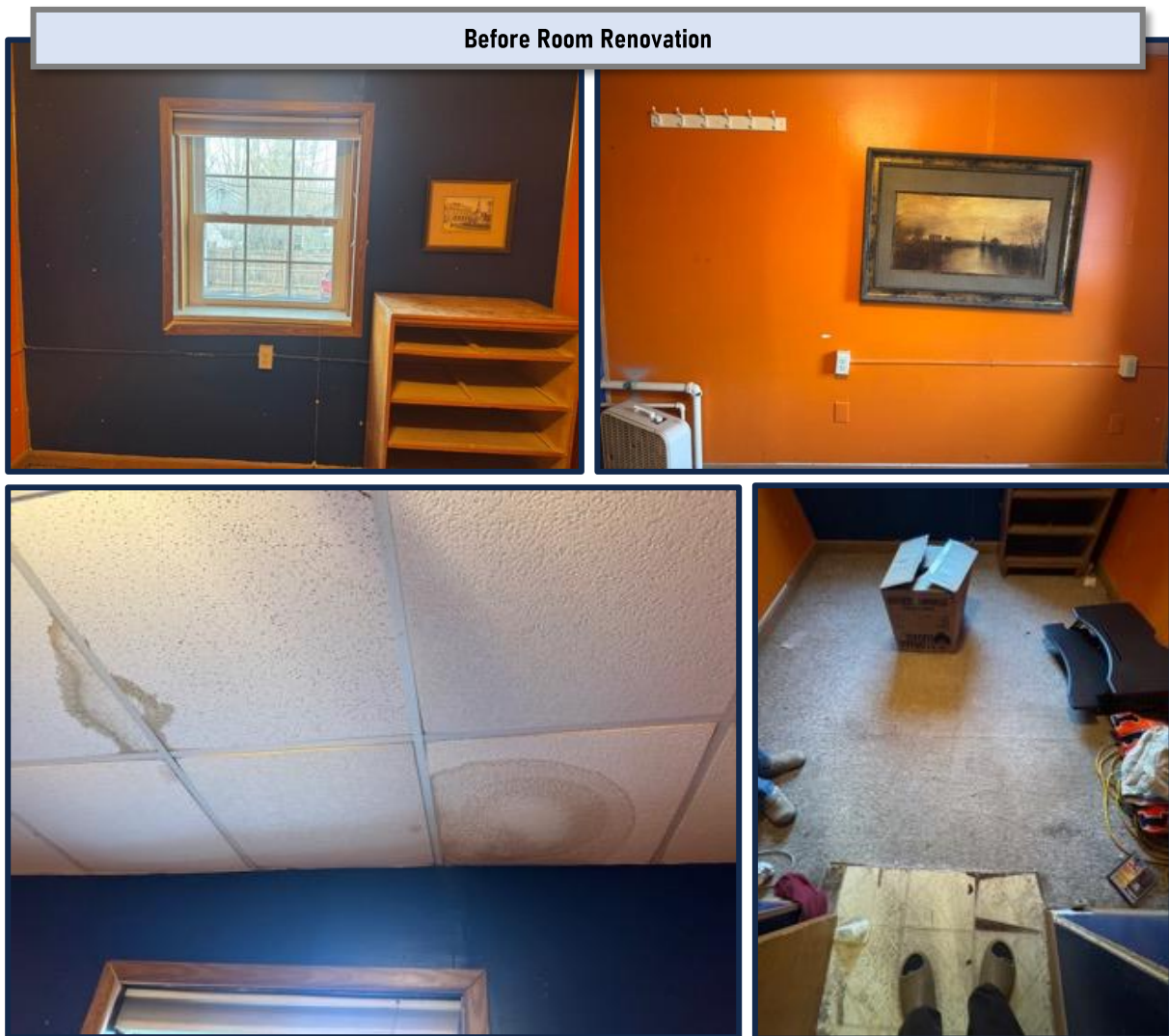


Steve installing new door trim.



But as you can see in the picture to the left, there are still things in the dining room to address. This summer we want to get some plaster repair done, repaint the walls, and replace rotted baseboard. Also on deck is some new furniture – we’re hoping to buy new dining room chairs to match ones we already have so we can seat more than 18 at a time. We’re also scouting new dining room tables, so the hope is that the dining room will be nice and fresh for the fall semester, not to mention Homecoming.

We targeted Room 4 for the first rehab with a goal of having it set up as a model room in time for Scholarship Weekend, for interviewees and parents to see. It was pretty nasty - so nasty that it hadn't been used for several years. The walls were in need of a face lift, the plastic trim pieces were falling off, ceiling tiles were stained, and the carpet and tile honestly smelled.



That weekend, we removed the ceiling tiles, flooring, and plastic trim. We repainted the walls, installed clean ceiling tiles and a “fandelier” with LED lights that can change color, and put down some new tile in the entry. Late in February, **Mark Leesman** (Fall ‘00) joined me to finish the

room by finishing formerly unfinished drywall corners and installing new wood trim that I selected to mimic the original 1928 trim still present in the closet. I laid a new carpet tile floor and hung a curtain in place of a closet door. The final touches were added the night before Scholarship Day, when we installed new furniture including a desk, desk chair, bed (with Illini bedding), a nightstand, a vintage lamp (that I inherited from **Brian Garkie** (Spring '97) way back in the day), and the extra lounge couch. We received so many positive compliments about the room on Scholarship Day, so it was well worth the effort!



We actually received a lot of compliments about the whole house on Scholarship Day; many parents told me that not only were the people not what they were expecting, the house wasn't what they had expected either. They appreciated the historic character of the place and that it seems like a comfortable place for guys to live, clean and nicely furnished. It's feedback like that that makes it all worth it!

As of this writing, we have 20 signed housing contracts for the fall – the highest in-house number since pre-Covid times with all bedrooms being needed! That means we have some more rooms to address. Worst-case scenario includes new drywall walls and ceilings, new trim, new flooring, and new lighting. Depending on condition of walls, we may not need to drywall. Also planned are steel door jamb for each room. **At least two rooms need a complete overhaul this summer, and two more could use some buffing up at the very least.** I'd like some help from guys who are experienced with drywall and trim carpentry, so if that's you, please reach out to me at aeillini@gmail.com. And I still want to address a few other items like landscaping, exterior painting, and relaying the uneven pavers in the moat so if you'd like to help with that, we welcome it! All this does cost money, and I'm diligent in keeping costs as low as possible while getting the quality outcome that we need. If the spirit moves you, do feel free to donate some

funds via check attn: Greg Treichler at 118 Birch Lane, St. Charles IL 60175, or via Venmo @Beta-Sigs-Illinois-Alumni. It's always welcome!

And if you are available the weekend of **Sat, June 6th** and/or **Sat, July 18th**...

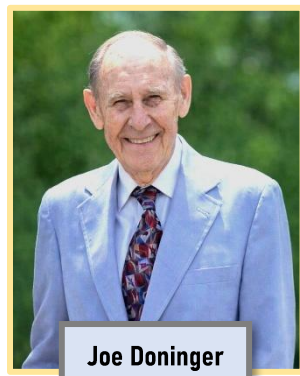


SUMMER ALUMNI WORK WEEKENDS!

June 6th & **July 18th**

CONTACT ANDREW ELDERS IF YOU ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP!
 AEILLINI@GMAIL.COM - (309) 373-2538

Alumni News



Joe Doninger

Brother ***Dr. Joseph E. Doninger, PhD***, 86, passed away on January 18, 2026. He earned his B.A. from the University of Illinois, where he was a member of the Beta Sigma Psi fraternity. He went on to complete his Ph.D. at Northwestern University, beginning a distinguished career in chemical engineering. He worked for many years at IMC before becoming Senior Vice President of Research and Development at Superior Graphite. Joe was a leading expert of the use of graphite in battery applications; addressing congress, authoring books and holding patents on carbon-based materials. Never one to slow down, Joe later founded his own consultancy, Dontech Global, and continued working

right up until the time of his death. Outside of work, Joseph traveled extensively around the globe with his devoted wife, Ruth. Joe enjoyed the arts. He frequented the theater, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Lyric Opera, and Milwaukee Symphony. He was always happiest at the Chicago Botanic Garden with his grandchildren. A devoted foodie and gardener, he took pride in his vegetable and rose gardens. While an avid Chicago sports fan, his greatest allegiance was always to his beloved University of Illinois Illini. Above all else, Joseph's greatest joy was his family.

Brother ***James Godfrey Blankenburg***, 85, passed away on January 20, 2026. James was an avid and skilled golfer whose love for the game



James Blankenburg

brought him joy. Whether spending quiet mornings on the course in Savannah or celebrating a well-played round, golf remained one of his greatest passions throughout his life. James will be remembered for his dry humor and the steady presence he brought to those who knew and loved him.



Congratulations to brother and Professor Emeritus **Kenneth R. Young** on being awarded the **Preston E. James Eminent Latin Americanist Career Award** in the January 2026 meeting of the Conference of Latin American Geography in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Ken is an emeritus professor of the University of Texas at Austin, and visiting professor in San Marcos University in Lima, Peru. This award is given in recognition of a life-time achievement towards the understanding of the geography of Latin America. Recipients have strong career-long research contributions that build on the solid foundations of academic Latin American geography, or that have impacts beyond academia in the forms of policy implications and/or education to a broader audience. Dr. Young has done research throughout Latin America, with special attention to Peru and the ecosystems of the Andes and Amazon.

Congratulations to brother **Jack Brennan** and his wife, Lydia, on the birth of their daughter, **Cecilia Jo Brennan**, who was born on... Founder's Day—April 17th (2026)!



Homecoming 2026! – October 2-4 *(report written by Nick Schwingbeck)*



Homecoming planning is well underway and we are excited to announce that Homecoming 2026 will be hosted for everyone on the weekend of October 2-4. Our Fighting Illini will be taking on Purdue (time Saturday TBD) and hopefully we can keep up our recent success against this heated historic rival. Further details regarding itinerary & accommodations to be included in the Summer newsletter, as well as the Facebook Group. At the time of writing, the order form is not quite ready to send out, but I expect it to be ready before the next newsletter and will make an extra announcement with the order form & hotel reservation information. For those that attended last year's event, I'm happy to report that we will be back at the City View Event Space in Downtown Champaign in the downtown Amtrak station. This location will give us the space to hopefully celebrate another Illini football victory accompanied by a plated dinner and only steps

away from Downtown Champaign where folks can enjoy after dinner drinks to keep the night going!

I think I speak for the entire Alumni Board in saying that last year's celebration of 100 years of Beta Sigma Psi was amazing! Though 2026 isn't a significant fraternity milestone, we still hope that you will be able to attend to reconnect with our fellow brothers but also hear about the great happenings within the Active Chapter. The Actives have been working tirelessly to keep the momentum going from 2025 and are looking forward to hosting the Alumni Base for another great weekend.

As such, similar to last year, I would like to close this report by asking a favor of everyone reading this. I invite you to reach out to one of your brothers. It could be someone that you see on a regular basis, or someone that you've fallen out of touch with. Ask them if they've got Homecoming marked down on their calendars yet, if they've joined our Facebook Group, or if they're receiving regular newsletter updates. We're always looking to improve our alumni engagement and grassroots connections continue to be one of the most effective ways to bring our brothers back into the fold.

I would also like to make an annual plug to become one of our Lifetime Members. By securing a lifetime membership, you secure your voting eligibility, attendance at homecoming, and participation at events throughout the year for life (no more yearly dues!). Lifetime membership forms will be available with the next newsletter (along with the homecoming registration form). If you're unsure of your membership status, feel free to reach out to myself or anyone else on the Board. We'll be more than happy to assist you!

Thank you all for your unwavering commitment, and I look forward to seeing everyone!

March Madness 2026! *(report written by Nathaniel Stoll)*

Bragging rights go to brother **Tyler Mathews** on winning the annual Beta Sig March Madness Bracket Challenge. He took 1st place out of 35 bracket submissions within the Beta Sig alumni pool and ended up in the 96th percentile of all brackets on ESPN. Congrats, Tyler!

Also shout out to brothers **Justin Keel** and **Chris May** on getting some screen time in South Carolina, helping cheer the Illini on to what turned into a Final Four appearance in the big dance this year for the Fighting Illini!



**Tyler Mathews is 2026
March Madness
Bracket Challenge
Winner**



**Brothers Justin
Keel and Chris
May camera
man favorite in
South Carolina**

Summer Alumni Golf Outing – Sat, June 27, 2026 *(report written by Joe Baldwin)*

2026 Beta Sigma Psi Alpha Chapter

Summer Alumni Event - Four Man Scramble

Saturday June 27, 2026 at 10:30am

University of Illinois Golf Course - Orange Course
800 Hartwell Dr, Savoy, IL 61874

\$300 per team to register, or \$75-person solo
Price includes 18 holes, cart and meal afterwards


Email Joe Baldwin at
joebaldwin2014@gmail.com

Or call/text **618-406-0284**


Sign up by
Memorial Day
May 25th 2026

Make checks payable to Beta Sigma Psi Alpha Chapter Alumni.
Venmo: "@Beta-Sigs-Illinois-Alumni"

Scholarship Day 2026 *(report written by Josh Baggett)*

On Saturday, March 28, the chapter house was buzzing with energy as we hosted our Annual Scholarship Day. This cornerstone event remains one of our most vital recruitment events, allowing us to meet the next generation of Illini students and welcome them into our community.

This year, we were honored to host 17 prospective incoming freshmen and their families. Throughout the day, our finalists engaged in interviews and tours, getting a firsthand look at the brotherhood and the standards of excellence we uphold. The caliber of talent and character displayed by these young men was truly impressive, making the selection process as challenging as ever.



An event of this scale succeeds only through the collective effort of our entire network. To our Active Chapter: Thank you for your professionalism and hospitality. You represented the house with pride and ensured our guests felt at home from the moment they walked through the door. To our Alumni: We are deeply grateful for your continued dedication. Thank you for volunteering your time to sit on interview panels and for your ongoing financial support that makes these scholarships possible. Your mentorship is what sets our chapter apart.

We look forward to officially announcing this year's scholarship recipients soon. Thank you to everyone who helped make this day a resounding success!

Revised Loan Payment Schedule Approved *(report written by Greg Treichler, Nathaniel Stoll)*

In March, Beta Sigma Psi's Housing Foundation approved our request to extend our loan repayment out until 2033. This is for the \$100,000 which was borrowed from the Housing Foundation in 2022 and 2025. The revised schedule is shown below:

Housing Foundation Repayment Schedule

Disbursement #1: \$25,000 Disbursement in January 2022 at 3%
January 2026 - \$15,500 Loan Payment (\$12,500 + \$3,000 interest)
January 2027 - \$12,875 Loan Payment (\$12,500 + \$375 interest)

Disbursement #2: \$25,000 Disbursement in July 2022 at 3%
July 2028 - \$17,000 Loan Payment (\$12,500 + \$4,500 interest)
July 2029 - \$12,875 Loan Payment (\$12,500 + \$375 interest)

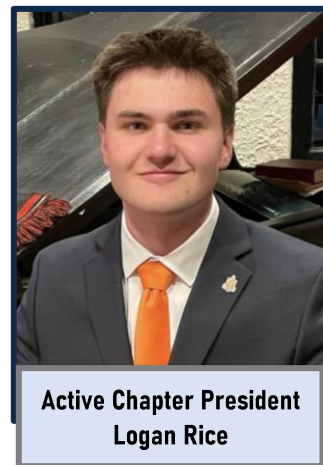
Disbursement #3: \$50,000 Disbursement in July 2025 at 5%
July 2030 - \$25,000 Loan Payment (\$12,500 + \$12,500 interest)
July 2031 - \$14,375 Loan Payment (\$12,500 + \$1,875 interest)
July 2032 - \$13,750 Loan Payment (\$12,500 + \$1,250 interest)
July 2033 - \$13,125 Loan Payment (\$12,500 + \$625 interest)

Active Chapter Report *(report written by Active Chapter President, Logan Rice)*



ACTIVE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello Everyone! My name is **Logan Rice**, I'm a sophomore studying Finance, and I have the privilege of serving as the **President of Alpha Chapter for 2026**. Before college, I never expected to go Greek, or to grow so much as a leader, nor have the good fortune of being a Beta Sig. During my time as an active member, I've witnessed Beta Sigma Psi transform in incredible ways, and **I've never been more proud to be a Beta Sig**. For years, we've faced problems of dwindling membership. Last year, our chapter showed signs of relief and hope as we reached big milestones – initiating 8 active members by the end of the year. This year, we're wrapping up with **10 initiated members for the 2025-2026 year**. Before the upcoming fall starts, we're proud to announce that we've **already received 8 returned bids for Fall 2026 alone** – with more to come.



Active Chapter President
Logan Rice

Much of this success can be attributed to the support of the Alumni Chapter. We'd like to thank all of the alumni who also attended our Scholarship Day, and are grateful to have received generous sponsorship for our Annual Overnighter, sealing the deal for 7 of our 8 soon-to-be associate members. During our overnighter, we spent the weekend playing sports on the lawn, visiting Old Orchards Mini-Golf, having dinner at Briks Pizzeria, attending service at University Lutheran, and having lunch at Legends Bar & Grill. We're optimistic to share that **we expect 12-15 associate members for the fall** alone after on-campus rush. I'm also pleased to announce that **come August, our house will be full again!** The numbers speak loudly, but I believe that this accomplishment wasn't a matter of quota – but of character. **We continue to recruit quality Christian men** recruited through local churches and Christian ministries such as *Cru* and *InterVarsity* on campus. All of our incoming associates for the Fall live out the meaning of "Beta Sigma Psi", leading in the church, excelling academically, and being socially well-rounded.

With a full house around the corner for the first time in 8 years, our Alumni Housing Director, Andrew Elders, is rallying support in preparing our facilities. He successfully led a **renovation project of Room 4** as a "model room", updating nearly every aspect of a room that sat vacant for 6 years. This project deeply impressed parents at our Scholarship Day, helping to show that Beta Sig sets a higher standard for fraternity living. I'm confident that these efforts helped tilt the scales in bringing in five new freshmen in-house. We've also received **two new house fridges, professionally resealed the basement floor, and plan to acquire new dining room furniture**. With his efforts, it comes as no surprise that **Andrew** was voted by the actives to receive the **Outstanding Alumni Volunteer Award for a third semester in a row this Spring!**

This year marked another milestone for Alpha Chapter. Once again, we ranked in the **top 10 GPA Averages amongst all IFC Chapters**, climbing up to the **4th highest GPA** at an **average of 3.63**. With this accomplishment, we succeeded in bringing the **Hingst Award home to Alpha Chapter, our third consecutive year**, also receiving the **Outstanding Scholarship Award for our second year in a row** from Fraternity and Sorority Affairs! We're excited to continue elevating our high scholastic standards, as we continue to instruct all new members in discipline and goal-setting. By next fall, we hope to be recognized as a chapter ranked top three in GPA on campus. While at the Greek Oscars, my pledge son, **Samuel Biruduganti**, was **awarded the Living Your Values Award, a back-to-back chapter win!** Outside of the classroom, our members are preparing for post-graduate plans, with over 40% of our chapter, mostly freshmen and sophomores, interning this summer.

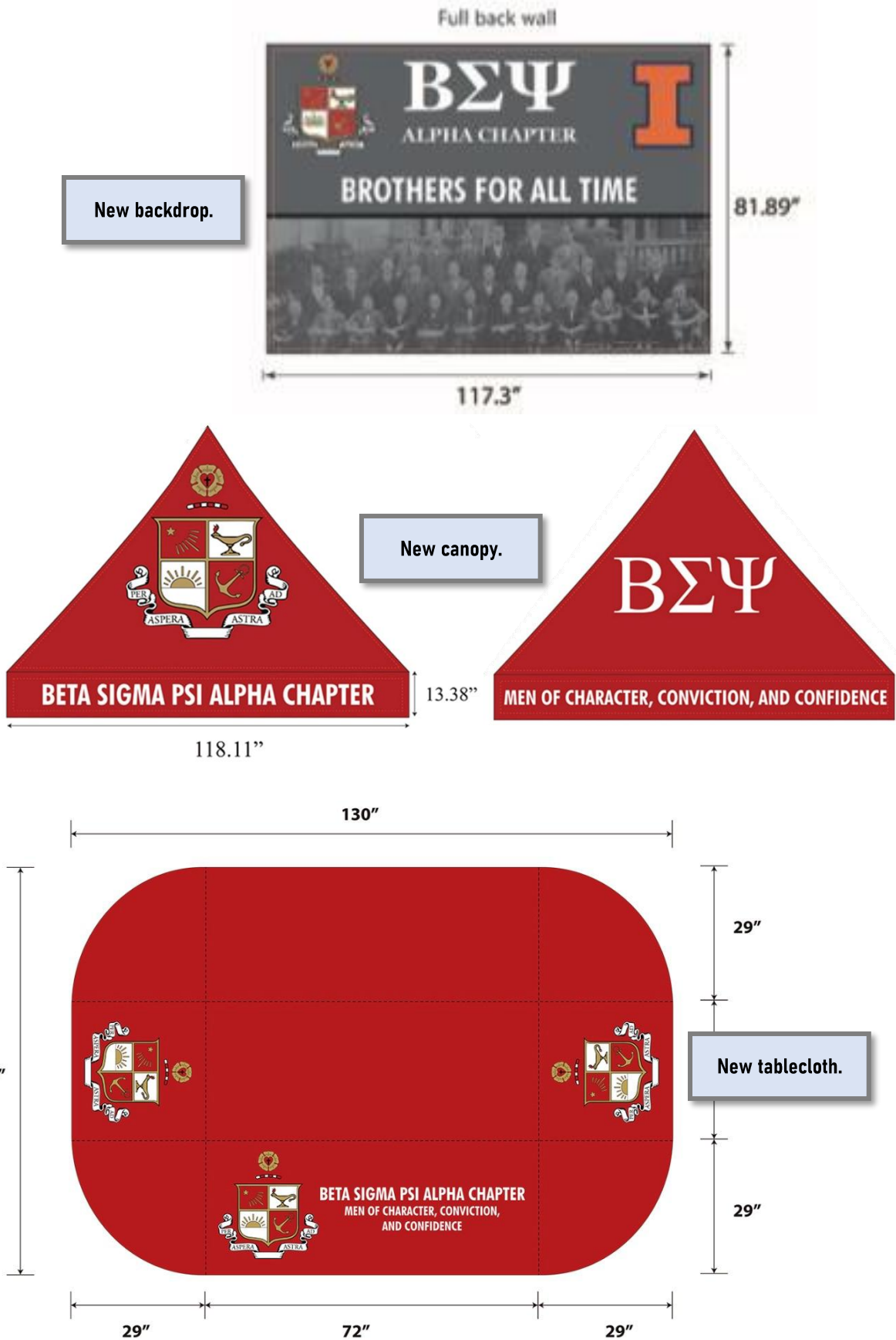
Church involvement and spiritual welfare have risen to the best it has been in my time. Nearly all of our members are attending church every single week, with **30% actively serving instrumentally or within children's ministry** in their congregations. Our relationship with our Pastoral Advisor, Rev. Michael Schuerman, has noticeably strengthened within the past year. **On average, 60% of the chapter attends our weekly Bible Studies**, and we've begun hosting him for our brotherhood dinner on Thursday nights. As president, I'm honored to experience all of the gospel-oriented conversations that now occur in our house daily, with the capability to be sharpened and reproved by my brothers.

Being a Beta Sig isn't just valuable – **it's a lot of fun!** Each week, a large portion of us attend Cru Large Group to worship and be engaged with the word with our peers. Earlier this semester, we competed against 13 other Greek chapters in Greek membership attendance and won – **bringing home a \$200 donation for Habitat for Humanity!** New traditions are forming all the time, along with all the old classics. We've developed a habit of hanging out at Tumble Inn (which some of you may remember from your own time on campus!), often going to play cards, enjoy a drink, and even celebrate a birthday (The big 23 for our Alumni Advisor, Nic Talley!). **We've revived our philanthropy house show program, Concordia**, bringing in hundreds of college students in a single night to watch live bands perform, with proceeds going to charity. On any random night, you may find the brothers playing poker on **our new poker table** (courtesy of our Fall 2025 Pledge Class!), binge-watching Marvel movies, hooping in the driveway, enjoying a pint at Legends, or hosting worship nights in the lounge. After all, we can't work without a little play on the side. We are looking forward to the return of tailgate season and are excited to host you all for Homecoming very soon!

Fraternally,
Logan Rice
2026 President, Beta Sigma Psi Alpha Chapter

CANOPY, BACKDROP, AND TABLING DONATIONS

The chapter is incredibly excited and optimistic for on-campus rush! Not only has our budget and reach expanded, but we recently added a boon to our public relations/advertising for years to come. We've noticed a trend while tabling amongst other Greek chapters during Quad Day and the IFC Barbecue... the chapters that are set up with custom tents, table cloths, and backings seem to be seen as more serious and professional, and attract more attention. Now, Beta Sig has stepped up a level with our image.



We're excited to unveil a new Beta Sigma Psi Alpha Chapter canopy tent! It will be seen on Quad Day, the IFC BBQ, Homecoming, and many more events to come. This gift was made possible by the generous donation of **Chris Nack (Fall '87)**, who also sponsored our 2nd-floor

bathroom renovation a couple of years ago. Purchased through Capital Banner, the canopy tent, also including an iconic *Founders Day* photo of the 1925 charter members as a backdrop, will serve as a new staple to all Beta Sigma Psi outdoor events. Though our intended audience isn't students superficially looking for the "top house on campus", we believe that attention to our chapter throughout the rush process will improve immensely. Alpha Chapter thanks you, Chris, for your many years of service towards our fraternity and your continued kindness. You show our young active chapter what it means to be a brother for all time. We look forward to showing it off at Homecoming this year, as we look forward to celebrating another 101 years of Beta Sigma Psi!

SPRING 2026 PLEDGE CLASS



<p>Joseph Whetzel Class: Sophomore Major: Music Education Hometown: Wood River, IL</p>
<p>Chris Koester Class: Freshman Major: Music Education Hometown: O'Fallon, IL</p>
<p>Luke Jewison Class: Freshman Major: Electrical Engineering & Physics Hometown: Watertown, MN</p>

FALL 2026 PLEDGE CLASS

<p>Dallas Alavarez Class: Freshman Major: Pre-Law Political Science Hometown: Auburn, IL In-House: Yes</p>	<p>Calvin Andrews Class: Freshman Major: Accounting Hometown: Heyworth, IL In-House: Yes</p>	<p>Robert Hocking Class: Freshman Major: Physics Hometown: Mattoon, IL In-House: Yes</p>
<p>Matthew Pikus Class: Freshman Major: Engineering Undeclared Hometown: Evergreen Park, IL In-House: No</p>	<p>Thomas Fisher Class: Freshman Major: Engineering Undeclared Hometown: Tamora, IL In-House: Yes</p>	<p>Benjamin Czarnowski Class: Freshman Major: Business Management Hometown: Elmhurst, IL In-House: No</p>
<p>Nicoli Micele Class: Freshman Major: Music Technology Hometown: Champaign, IL In-House: Yes</p>		<p>Jacob Maxwell Class: Sophomore Major: Finance and Accounting Hometown: Elk Grove Village, IL In-House: No</p>

SPRING 2026 BROTHERHOOD AWARDS



Logan Rice
Sophomore
President

Steven Broquist Outstanding Active Award

Description: Awarded to the active member that best lived out the balance of all of our core values—Spiritual, Scholastic, and Social—for the Semester. It is the highest honor awarded in the Alpha Chapter internally. Named in honor of Steven Broquist, an alumnus of the Alpha Chapter from the Fall 1962 Pledge Class, who served as chapter president, battalion commander of the UIUC NROTC battalion, president of the Lutheran Student Foundation, and a varsity member of both the Illinois Track and Cross Country teams as an active. Lt. Broquist sacrificed his life in the line of duty while serving in the US Marine Corps on May 14th, 1967, in South Vietnam. For his valor and selflessness, he was posthumously decorated with the Silver Star by order of President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Outstanding Associate Award

Description: Awarded to the associate member that best lived out the balance of all our core values—Spiritual, Scholastic, and Social—for the Semester.



Luke Jewison
Freshman



Logan Rice
Sophomore
President

Greg Treichler Unsung Hero Award

Description: Awarded to the member (associate or active) who has received the least recognition for the most over-achievement in their role and to the success of the Active Chapter with the highest humility during the Semester. Named in honor of Greg Treichler, an alumnus of the Alpha Chapter from the Spring 1991 Pledge Class, who for nearly 30 years has served consecutively as the alumni board treasurer, guiding behind the scenes the success and longevity of both the alumni and active chapters.



Martin Luther Award (Spiritual Excellence)

Description: *Awarded to the member (associate or active) who best lived out the Spiritual values of Beta Sigma Psi during the Semester.*

Samuel Biruduganti
Freshman
Chaplain

O. John Rogge Award (Scholastic Excellence)

Description: *Awarded to the member (associate or active) who best lived out the Scholastic values of Beta Sigma Psi during the Semester.*

Samuel Biruduganti
Freshman
Chaplain



Brian Bunte Illini Spirit Award

Description: *Awarded to the member (associate or active) who is the most passionate in their school spirit and Illini Pride during the Semester. Named in honor of Brian Bunte, an alumnus of the Alpha Chapter from the Fall 1979 Pledge Class, who has built a memorable reputation over four decades as one of the Alpha Chapter's biggest Illini fans, and for his infectious school spirit.*

Elijah Searles
Sophomore
Social Chair

Social Excellence Award

Description: *Awarded to the member (associate or active) who best lived out the Social values of Beta Sigma Psi during the Semester.*



Elijah Searles
Sophomore
Social Chair



Andrew Elders
Alumni Housing Director

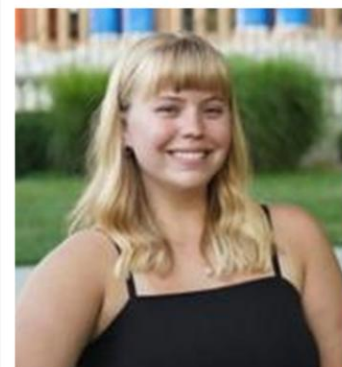
Outstanding Alumni Volunteer Award

Description: *Awarded to the Alpha Alumni Chapter member who has contributed the most to the Alpha Active Chapter for the Semester. This award serves as a formal "Thank you" to that alumnus from the active chapter, those who they mentor and lead.*

FALL 2026 EXECUTIVE BOARD

- President: Logan Rice, Junior, In-House
- 1st Vice President: Josiah Rutledge, Junior, In-House
- 2nd Vice President: Raiden Daichendt, Senior, In-House
- Treasurer: Gavin Fack, Junior, Out-of-House
- Social Chair: Samuel Joellenbeck, Sophomore, In-House
- Philanthropy Chair: Matt Cole, Senior, In-House
- Sr. Recruitment Chairman: Max Richardson, Sophomore, In-House
- Recording Secretary: Elijah Searles, Senior, In-House

2026-2027 House Sweetheart



Aubrey Charles
Senior
4H House Cooperative Sorority

FALL 2026 APPOINTED POSITIONS

Jr. Recruitment Chairman: Christopher Koester, Sophomore, In-House

Chaplain: Samuel Biruduganti, Sophomore, Out-of-House

Apparel Chairman: Ben McKenzie, Junior, In-House

Brotherhood Chaplain: Carter Puracchio, Senior, In-House

Scholarship Chairman: Luke Jewison, Sophomore, In-House

Property Management Chairman: Sebastian Gasinski, Junior, In-House

Financial Secretary: Tyler Sass, Junior, In-House

Commissar: Sebastian Gasinski, Junior, In-House

Athletics Chairman: Matt Cole, Senior, In-House

Risk Management Chairman: Joe Whetzel, Junior, Out-of-House

Public Relations Chairman: Elijah Searles, Senior, In-House

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS



Beta Sigs and Etas at the Beta Sig Gold Rose Formal on April 25th at the Illini Inn.

Beta Sigs Accept awards at the 2026 Greek Oscars on March 10th. L to R: Nicholas Talley (Alumni Advisor), Samuel Biruduganti (Chaplain), Logan Rice (President), Tyler Sass (Risk Management Chairman).



Beta Sigs celebrate the Illini Men's Basketball Elite Eight win and Final Four appearance at Alma Mater on March 28th.



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The Beta Sig intramural flag football team, captained by Junior Matt Cole (far left). The Beta Sigs made a semi-finals appearance, finishing in 3rd place in campus-wide Spring flag football. Matt Cole will captain the Fall 2026 teams as well as the incoming Athletics Chairman.

Beta Sigs host dinner for 7 of our 8 Incoming Fall Pledges (and counting!) at our Spring Overnighter on April 17th.



“The Last Full Measure of Devotion” – Alpha Chapter’s Casualties of the Second World War *(report written by Nicholas Talley)*

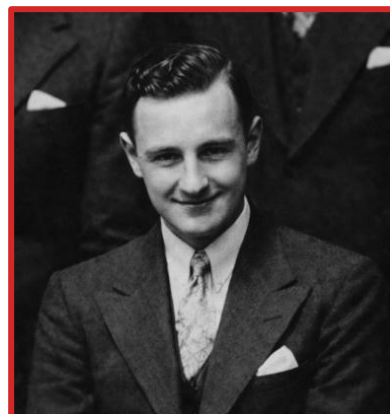
When the Second World War arrived on America’s doorstep on December 7th, 1941, Alpha Chapter had approximately 208 alumni. At least 58 of our alumni, as of now recorded, raised their right hand and swore an oath of service. They represented every branch, in nearly every theatre, by air, by land, and by sea. After all, Beta Sigma Psi exists to build men of character, confidence, and conviction. Men of these qualities, Beta Sig men, live selflessly – even at the greatest cost.

Of the Alpha Chapter men who left their homes, schools, and families to serve our nation overseas during WWII, almost all of them returned home – and for this we can be thankful to God – but two of our brothers did not. They made the ultimate sacrifice, or as President Abraham Lincoln described it in his Gettysburg Address, they gave “the last full measure of devotion”. Our brothers; Irvin Vetesnik, a member of the Fall 1934 Pledge Class, and Roland Purkey, a member of the Fall 1938 Pledge Class, both gave their lives while serving during the Second World War.

Here are each of their stories.

Part 1.**1LT Irvin A. Vetesnik**

Irvin Albert Vetesnik was born on September 19th, 1914, to Albert and Pauline, the first generation of his family to be born in America, alongside his older sister. Irvin's father, Charles, was 5 years old when he came to America from Bohemia, what is today the Czech Republic, with his family in 1890. Likewise, Pauline had come to America from Bohemia in the same year with her family. The two met as young immigrants living and working in turn-of-the-century Cicero, Illinois, and they married in 1911. Irvin's father did well to provide for his young family. He started out working as a painter, but by 1930 owned his very own paint shop. Growing up in a home on South 56th Avenue, Irvin came up in what was a bustling neighborhood of fellow Slavs. The population of Slavic immigrants was so considerable in the first quarter of the 20th century that Cicero was often referred to as "Little Bohemia." Irvin graduated from Morton East High School in 1933 and began classes at the University of Illinois in the Fall of 1934.



Irvin Vetesnik pictured in the Spring of 1938, his last semester as an active and at the University.



Hattendorf	Moore	Vetesnik	Glaser	Van Mullem	Schuette	Reinhardt	Fisher	Cleveland	Bleuer	Stiegemeyer
Klockau	Bakkemo	Olsen	Hrnak	Baumann	Vokac	Fichte	Amling	Eilertsen	Rouge	Cluver
Dueker	Jost	Fick	Weers	Jacobson	Telleen	De Wolf	Geissendoerfer	Steinwart	Youngstrum	

The Alpha Chapter of Beta Sigma Psi in the Spring of 1935, Irvin's first semester as an active member. Irvin stands in the top row, third from left.

Irvin was the first of his family to attend and graduate from college, doing so at the height of the Great Depression, and we can imagine today both the difficulties that Irvin faced, as well as the pride his family had in him. He came to the University of Illinois pursuing a degree in Civil Engineering. As was required of all men at the time, he was also a member of ROTC on campus, where he took an interest in the mechanics of the Army's machines, and he joined the Coast Artillery Club. Irvin was part of the 9-man Fall 1934 pledge class at Alpha Chapter, where he was referred to as "Zotz" or "Irv" by the brothers. Irvin graduated in May 1938 with his B.S. in Civil Engineering.

Irvin continued his education by studying for a Master's Degree in Engineering at the Armour Institute of Technology. Irvin graduated in the Spring of 1940 – the last graduating class to do so before Armour became the Illinois Institute of Technology, which is still operating today. Following his graduation from Armour, he was employed as a civilian engineering contractor at the Naval Training Station, Great Lakes, but only for about 10 months. On May 15th, 1941, Irvin enlisted in the United States Army.

After his enlistment, Irvin was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and trained as a Coast Artillery Officer – a role he filled well with his ROTC training and education as an engineer. Coast artillery was key in defending coastlines, harbors, and strategic islands from enemy naval attack in the age when naval warfare won and lost wars, including at the outset of WWII. Coast artillery units specialized in large fixed guns, harbor defense systems, and anti-aircraft weapons. In the Pacific Theater in

particular, coastal artillery played a key role protecting naval bases and island fortifications against potential attacks by the Imperial Japanese Navy. In September of 1941, Irvin Vetesnik arrived at his first and only assignment with the 92nd Coast Artillery Regiment at Fort Mills, Corregidor Island, in the Philippines – perhaps the single most important coastal artillery position in the Pacific Theatre.



A US Army recruitment office in New York pictured in June of 1940. Irvin would have enlisted in a pre-war recruitment office very similar to this one.



A 1942 USMC map of the Manila Bay Area, including the area surrounding Corregidor.

Fort Mills was an extensive fortification, taking up the whole of Corregidor island, protecting the mouth of Manila Bay from seaborne enemies. Manila Bay provided critical access to Manila – the capital of the US backed Philippine government, and the headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur – US commander of the Far East. Manila was the lifeblood of American operations beyond Hawaii, and its protection was of paramount concern. Irvin worked not only with the American soldiers under his command, but with the Philippine Scouts, Filipino soldiers who were often poorly trained and supplied. It is an understatement to say Fort Mills was antique, a relic from the Spanish American War era and the days of the “Great White Fleet”. Its walls were crumbling, the artillery outdated, and the soldiers undersupplied. As the fort was built before the age of airplanes, it was designed with no protection or defense from airborne enemies. Despite the conditions, 1LT Vetesnik and the men of Fort Mills worked tirelessly to ensure the readiness of their positions, as the men recognized both the importance and danger of their position, should war come. When the news finally reached the Philippines

of the attack on Pearl Harbor, it confirmed what the men in the Philippines already suspected in their gut was coming. Four days later, the Japanese siege began.

Japanese armor and infantry advance on Manila, December 22nd, 1941.



In less than a month after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had dominated the field of battle in the Philippines. The Americans had been overwhelmed and humiliated to the East and South of Corregidor. The Philippine Government had fled, and Manila was declared an open city by January of 1942. The last American forces remained at Fort Mills on Corregidor or were grouped together Northwest of Fort Mills at Bataan. The situation was desperate. On March 12th, General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Pacific Theatre, and his staff fled the Philippines. On April 9th, the last American ground forces – totaling 78,000 – surrendered at Bataan. Fort Mills was all that was left of American troops in the Philippines. Irvin and his men were surrounded, slowly running out of rations, abandoned by the US High Command, and relentlessly bombarded. Finally, on May 6th, 1942, after five months of resilience, facing starvation and high casualties, the men of Fort Mills could take it no longer, and they surrendered to the Japanese. Irvin and his men had been captured as Prisoners of War.



Japanese soldiers stand triumphant over one of the coastal artillery batteries in Fort Mills, once operated by Irvin and the men of the 92nd, on May 7th, 1942.

The 10,000 men of Fort Mills were collected by the Japanese and held at Fort Mills until the end of the month. At the end of the month, they were transported by ship to Manila where it is remembered, in an account written by Irvin's commanding officer US Army Captain Geroge Steiger:

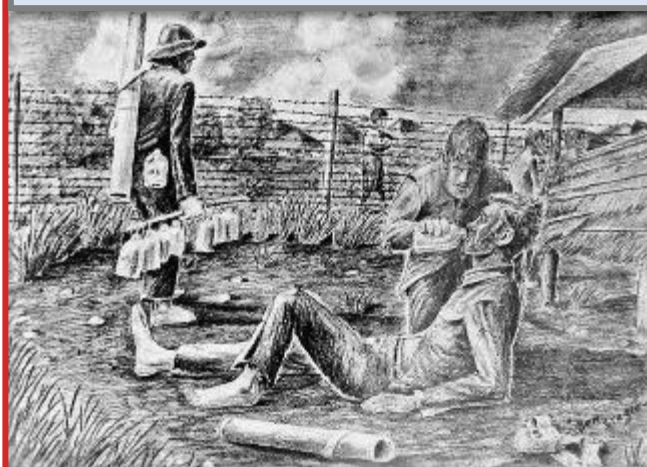
"We were marched 5 to 6 miles through Manila up Dewey Blvd. This was to show the Filipinos our disgrace... We were dirty, poorly dressed, almost all had dysentery and were forced to stop and relieve ourselves on the roadside. The Filipino women were crying, many held their index and middle fingers in the sign of a V before their faces. They showered us with food but we were not allowed to pick it up..."

From there they traveled by train north into the country, and on May 29th, 1942, Irvin and the men of Fort Mills arrived at Cabanatuan POW Camp #1, where Irvin would call home for the next 29 months.

The conditions at Cabanatuan bordered on horrific. As Japan had not ratified the Geneva Convention, the POWs were transported out of the camp and forced to work in factories to build Japanese weaponry, unload ships, build railroads, and work in mines while being provided very little food or aid. The population of POWs held at Cabanatuan fluctuated during the war but peaked around 10,000 at the arrival of the men from Fort Mills. The poor conditions that Irvin and the men were held in resulted in a high death rate through the summer of 1942. In July, the deadliest month, 799 prisoners died, and it was not until December 15, 1942, that the prisoners celebrated a "zero death" day. Body lice, scurvy, dysentery, and malnutrition became the routine. As the war continued, and the Americans slowly approached, in October of 1944 the Japanese ordered that all able-bodied POWs be transported to Japan for labor.

Irvin and the men of Cabanatuan were marched from the camp to Manila Bay, where on October 11th, 1944, they were loaded upon the Japanese "hell ship" Arisan Maru, with the destination of Tokyo. 1,803 American POWs were crammed into the hull of the ship. Each POW was given eight five-gallon oil cans for their waste, which quickly overflowed due to a number of men afflicted by dysentery. Temperatures reached over 120 degrees, and with no water provided, many men died of heat exhaustion in the first days. On October 20th, the Arisan Maru left Manila Bay for Tokyo, but rerouted to Taiwan on October 21st due to the impending arrival of American submarine patrols, which were much quicker than the 8 miles per hour that the overloaded Arisan Maru could manage.

A sketch drawn by SGT Ben Steele, a POW at Cabanatuan POW Camp #1, of aid being administered to a sick and fallen POW by one of his fellow prisoners.



A sketch drawn by SGT Ben Steele showing the chow line and starvation of prisoners at Cabanatuan. Rice, typically served with maggots, and "soup" was the standard meal.



Japanese "Hell Ship" Arisan Maru

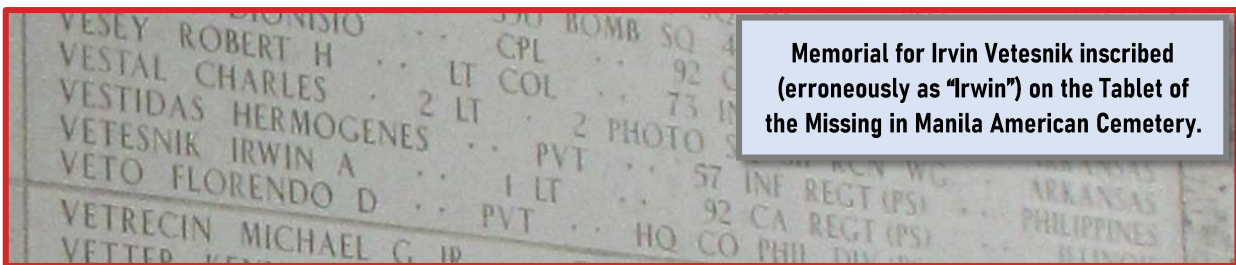


Irvin, the men of Cabanatuan, and the Arisan Maru's final day came on October 24th, 1944. The POWs were on deck that evening, preparing dinner for the ship at around 5PM when they watched as the suddenly panicked Japanese guards ran to the bow of the ship and a torpedo passed by. Moments later, another was seen passing behind the ship. As guards began hurriedly pushing the POWs back into their holds,

the ship was hit twice by torpedoes, and the Arisan Maru came to a stop – it was sinking. The Arisan Maru, travelling alone, was unmarked – the Japanese had rejected the 1942 proposal by the International Red Cross to mark all ships carrying POWs. The USS Shark, an American Submarine, had no way of knowing that they had just sunk a ship containing over 1,800 American POWs. The men of the USS Shark never learned of their mistake – the Shark was sunk as well that night by a nearby Japanese destroyer, and all 89 sailors aboard were killed. At 6:30PM, the ship buckled midship, and the masts fell. Finally, at 7:40PM, the Arisan Maru sank. In a few hours, Japanese destroyers came to the site of the sinking, and the survivors, both Japanese and American, sighed with relief. But the Americans floating at sea watched as the Japanese were careful only to rescue their own. The POWs left floating were pushed away from the rescue ships and beaten with bamboo rods. The Japanese collected their own through the night and left. The POWs were left for dead at sea. After the war, US Army Corporal, Donald Meyer, recalled the night of October 24th:

"Darkness came on fast... A bitter wind blew up and the cold went through me chilling my very blood. It was a dark night – no moon and the stars were faint and far away. I could see no one, but I could hear men screaming and calling to one another – someone cried out in pain and the next minute a very large contraption, probably a piece of the ship, floated by with about fifty men on it. They were yelling and singing loudly altogether... 'God bless America, land that I love! Stand beside her and guide her, Through the night with a light from above. From the mountains to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam. God bless America, my home sweet home! God bless America, my home sweet home!'"

Of the 1,803 American POWs of the Arisan Maru, 1,795 died that day. Our brother, Irvin, was one of them. To this day, it is the deadliest maritime tragedy in American History.



Memorial for Irvin Vetesnik inscribed (erroneously as "Irwin") on the Tablet of the Missing in Manila American Cemetery.

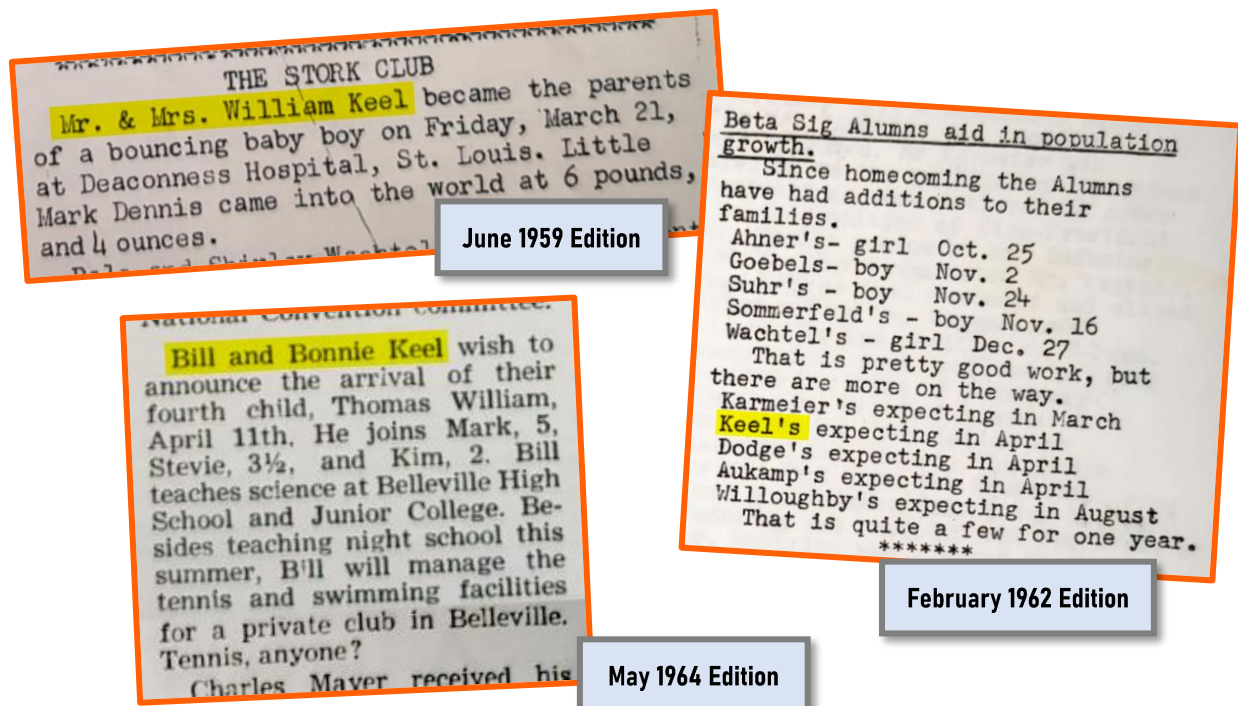
Irvin Albert Vetesnik is remembered at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial. 16,859 Americans are buried there, and 36,286 missing Americans are memorialized there. Our brother Irvin can be found there, his name inscribed on the Tablet of the Missing. Irvin was posthumously honored with the Purple Heart Medal and the Prisoner of War Medal. In those timeless words Abraham Lincoln spoke at the Gettysburg Address we are reminded "that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain".

(Part 2 of Alpha Chapter WWII Memorials to be featured in upcoming newsletter.)

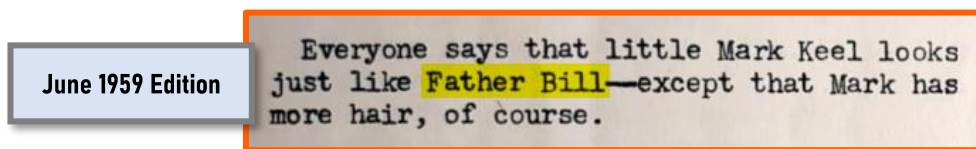
Beta Sigma Psi. Pass it on down! *(report written by Merle Aukamp, Nathaniel Stoll)*

Merle Aukamp called me (Nathaniel) the other night and said, “I have a request for you.” “What’s that?” I asked. He said, “In one of the newsletters last year, I saw the active chapter gave out a Pledge Father and Son award. Well, in the spirit of father-son relationships within Beta Sig, I think we should recognize one of my great friends and fellow fraternity brothers.”

The name he then proceeded to mention was one I had seen a number of times in our archive of Alpha Chapter newsletters. And the last name was one that seemed to be multiplying as I read on.



(And because Merle was the one who requested that I put together this article, I figured I shouldn't leave out this one-liner that Merle wrote in the June 1959 edition of "The Alpha Alumni News".)



That's right. Merle told me the name, "Bill Keel". Merle wrote the following in a letter to me:

"Pursuant to our recent telephone conversation, please find enclosed a list of Bill Keel's relatives that he influenced to become Beta Sigs. It certainly is an impressive list of individuals that he encouraged to join our fraternity. Therefore, any recognition that you can provide for Bill will be greatly appreciated."

Here was the list:

Dr. William R. "Bill" Keel
University of Illinois
Alpha Chapter - ΒΣΨ
1954-1958

Mark D. Keel – Son
University of Illinois
Alpha Chapter - ΒΣΨ
1977-1981

Steven H. Keel – Son
University of Illinois
Alpha Chapter - ΒΣΨ
1978-1980

Thomas W. Keel – Son
University of Missouri
Iota Chapter - BΣΨ
1982-1987

Anthony J. Keel – Grandson
University of Illinois
Alpha Chapter - BΣΨ
2006-2010

Justin M. Keel – Grandson
University of Illinois
Alpha Chapter - BΣΨ
2016-2020

Tyler W. Keel – Grandson
University of Missouri
Iota Chapter - BΣΨ
2008-2012

Weston T. Keel – Grandson
University of Missouri
Iota Chapter - BΣΨ
2013-2017

Jonathan D. Schmidt – Nephew
Missouri S&T
Eta Chapter - BΣΨ
1987-1991

Andrew T. Bauer – Nephew
Missouri S&T
Eta Chapter - BΣΨ
1992-2000

*All Lutheran Men – followed Bill Keel
to pledge Beta Sigma Psi.*

Here's to you, Bill!

Alumni Spotlight – Matt Niermann

Year Graduated: BS in 1997, MS in 1998

Undergrad Major: Civil Engineering

Post-Grad: Geotechnical Engineering

Hometown: Elgin, IL

Current Location: Ashburn, VA

Current Employment: Vice President at Schnabel, a specialty geotechnical construction company

Family: Married my wife Melissa in 1998 and we have six kids: Victor, Trevor, William, Rachel, Phillip, and Mirabelle.

Church I'm Attending: Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church in Broadlands, VA

Recently I've Been Into: Recently I've been into: Paying college tuition for my kids at Virginia Tech, University of Virginia, and James Madison University.

Most fond memory of Beta Sig: Meeting my fellow Fall '93 pledges at the house for the first time. There was also the time we accidentally filled the radiator system with water and had to burn furniture in the fireplace to stay warm.

If you can recall, why did you join Beta Sig: My older brother was a Beta Sig at Alpha Chapter and I of course followed in his footsteps.

Why should young men join Beta Sig: To develop friendships that will positively influence them for the rest of their lives.

Who is someone you'd like to reconnect with/who should we spotlight next: Tim Norsen.

How can people reconnect with you: matt.niermann@yahoo.com or 703-431-0264.



Beta Sig brothers from left to right: Kyle Russell, Matt Niermann, Tim Norsen, Mile Woolery, and Tim Goetting.



Matt and a friend from high school, Beth Mensching, enjoying a fine red.

Alumni Spotlight – Father/Son Duo: Luther and Mark Leesman

- LUTHER LEESMAN -

Year Graduated: 1974

Undergrad Major: General Agriculture

Post-Grad: None

Hometown: Hartsburg, IL

Current Location: Lincoln, IL

Current Employment: Leesman Construction

Family: Married (Mary), Son (Mark), Son (John)

Church I'm Attending: St John's Lutheran Church, Hartsburg, IL

Recently I've Been Into: Getting back into construction, and working with my hands.

Most fond memory of Beta Sig: Always felt loved by the brothers in the house.

If you can recall, why did you join Beta Sig: I needed a house to live in.

Why should young men join Beta Sig: Common fellowship with others.

Who is someone you'd like to reconnect with/who should we spotlight next: Kevin Smith.

How can people reconnect with you: Home football games.



Luther Leesman and Mark Leesman

- MARK LEESMAN -

Year Graduated: 2004

Undergrad Major: Business Administration

Post-Grad: Graduate School of Banking in Colorado

Hometown: Hartsburg, IL

Current Location: Jefferson City, MO

Current Employment: Director of Youth and Facilities at First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, MO

Family: Married (Kailey), Son (Connor), Son (Erick), Daughter (Rikeley)

Church I'm Attending: First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, MO

Recently I've Been Into: Recently changed jobs from banking to full time with the church in youth and facilities. Also recently went to the house to fix up Room 4. Was fun to get to know the guys and give back to house.

Most fond memory of Beta Sig: Hanging out with the guys in the house on the weekend.

If you can recall, why did you join Beta Sig: I stopped by the house one night and enjoyed meeting the guys.

Why should young men join Beta Sig: Finding a place to ground yourself at college.

Who is someone you'd like to reconnect with/who should we spotlight next: Brian Shaw.

How can people reconnect with you: Facebook.

Addendum to “Chapter House Improvements” *(report written by Andrew Elders)*

We are planning to rehab several rooms each year for the next several years. To help that along, the house would really benefit from having a miter saw, a reciprocating saw, a table saw, electric sanders, drills, etc. If you are upgrading your equipment or downsizing your workshop, might you consider donating surplus tools to us? Other tools are helpful as well. You can bring them to the house or we could arrange pickup - any supplies are always welcome and appreciated!



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For past editions of the Alpha Alumni newsletter, please see our alumni website:

<https://alpha.alumni.betasigmapi.org/newsletters.php>

Distinguished Alumnus Award

The Distinguished Alumnus Award is chosen each year at the Spring Business Meeting. The Executive Board is always interested in obtaining names of alumni worthy of the title of "Distinguished Alumnus." Please read through the criteria below and think of someone who falls into one or more of the categories listed. Nominees may have done something recently or in the past that sets them apart from their peers.

Distinguished Alumnus Judging Criteria:

1. Activity in Beta Sigma Psi as an active or alumnus
2. Activity in the Community (school, clubs, volunteer, etc.)
3. Activity in Church (offices, committee, etc.)
4. Awards (professional, civic, etc.)
5. Outstanding personal achievement
6. Any other characteristic qualifying nominee as a Distinguished Alumnus

Distinguished Alumnus Nomination Form

Name of Nominee _____

Person Nominating _____

Address _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

Describe why the person you are nominating deserves this award.
(Attach additional sheet if necessary)

Return Form To (or fill out via Google Form; see link: <https://forms.gle/SaywS3J3yvc6Qwx48>):

Dan Ross
1742 Oxford Street
Rockford, IL 61103



