



# beta button

Beta Chapter of Theta Chi Fraternity at MIT • Winter 2013

## Save the Date!

### Alumni Weekend 2013

528 Beacon & your brothers are waiting for you!

#### Friday, April 26

- Poker Night & Annual Crossroads Memorial Tour!

#### Saturday, April 27

- Alumni-Active Softball Grudge Match
- Alumni Corporation Annual Meeting
- Cocktail Hour & House Tours
- Catered Semi-formal Dinner
- Renovation Donors Commemorative Plaque Dedication Ceremony
- Stories, Songs, & Shenanigans

#### Sunday, April 28

- Farewell Brunch

#### All are welcome!

Events are free for brothers and guests, but be sure to RSVP.

For more details and to register online, please visit <http://ox.mit.edu/alumni/weekend>

### MIT Reunions Open House

- June 7, 2013  
(more details on page four)

<http://ox.mit.edu>

## Beta Chapter celebrates its 110th anniversary

In October 2012, Beta Chapter hosted three days of events to celebrate its 110th anniversary. It was great to hold an event outside of Boston because it gave us a chance to take a break from school and really connect with brothers. Friday night we traveled to the home of Harold Jones '67 for a New England-style clam bake. Chowder, lobster, steak, and a variety of shell fish were served. The food was delicious, and the environment was very relaxed. The active brothers met with past Beta Chapter brothers and their spouses, and the actives enjoyed hearing stories and learning more about the rich history of the house. We would like to express special thanks to Harold Jones '67 and his wife, Cheryl, for opening up their home for such a memorable event.

A semi-formal dinner took place on Saturday, back in Boston at the house (within which Beta Chapter is enjoying its 90th year of residence), and the brothers enjoyed the delicious catered Italian food. It was a wonderful opportunity for alumni to see the fully



finished renovations, including the brand-new kitchen that was completed this past summer. As usual, the actives had a great time carousing with alumni after dinner, and the revelry lasted well into the night. After the anniversary celebra-

tion was over, several brothers weighed in on their weekend experiences:

*"The 110th anniversary coincided with my 21st birthday, so it was a weekend I'll never forget. As a new member of the fraternity, it was great for me to see the history behind the house. Meeting with alumni was as interesting as it was funny. It really makes you realize you can make a difference in the house and that you don't join a fraternity just at college: it is a lifelong membership. Oh, and yeah, alumni know how to party!" –Nicolas d'Estais '14*

*"One of my favorite parts of the 110th was hearing the entire story about how Theta Chi*

(continued on page two)



Undergraduates and alumni gather at Harold Jones's ('67) house during the 110th.

# An update on the fall semester from the president

Entering the fall 2012 semester, Beta Chapter of Theta Chi was looking forward to the exciting events and possibilities of the new school year. We had 26 brothers move into the house, had come off a great rush the previous year, and had made some great strides toward fulfilling our house initiatives. Our plan was to carry this momentum forward, and while we ended up with a smaller pledge class than we had hoped for this past fall, the four pledges that we got are all great guys who have already contributed a lot to this house.

At the beginning of the semester, our brothers showed excellent enthusiasm, discussing our strategy for improving the internal workings of our house and our external image on campus. Over the course of the semester, that enthusiasm and hard work really paid off.

First, we received great news about our performance in the previous semester: Theta Chi had made it back on the FSILG Honor Roll, with a house GPA of 4.47! Along with our Best Risk-Management Program Award from the previous semester, these

accolades have given us confidence that our hard work to improve our house is paying off and being recognized. We are eager to keep working on our academics to improve our house GPA further and remain on the FSILG Honor Roll.

Furthermore, the house had a busy calendar distinguished by events that helped us bond with one another and develop our external relationships. The 110th Anniversary was a great way for us to meet alumni and learn about the history of our house, and we sincerely thank everyone involved in the planning. Over the past semester, we hosted a guest speaker from campus at house meetings about once a month in our ongoing effort to increase our campus presence by connecting with organizations that regularly help all FSILGs and the MIT community in general. Additionally, our intramural program has been thriving, with a semifinal appearance (the only undergraduate team to make it that far) in outdoor soccer, MIT's largest intramural sport with more than 30 teams. We also worked hard to expand our social program, including

hosting a mixer with the Wellesley Society Zeta Alpha this past semester and working on scheduling three mixers for the upcoming spring semester.

With all of these improvements, we are striving to increase our membership and share the excellence. Our very own Haldun Anil '15 has been elected as the IFC Rush Chair, and he will be cooperating with our rush chairs to ensure that we are as prepared and ready as we can be. We also managed to get one more pledge at the end of the fall semester, and we are planning a spring rush for the upcoming semester to create a solid spring pledge class to initiate sometime around April.

As I look back at the past semester, I am encouraged by the dedication of our brothers to making Theta Chi a great place to live. All of the ongoing initiatives and dedicated work to improve our chapter and the impressive results of that work make me proud to be a brother of Beta Chapter. I look forward to further improvements this upcoming semester.

Preston Thompson '14

## Beta Chapter celebrated its 110th anniversary

(continued from page one)

*was the first to hack the Green Building. I'd always heard that we were the first and even heard lots of the details, but hearing the story directly from someone who was in Theta Chi at the time was a whole new experience."*  
—Preston Thompson '14

*"It was funny to see people wearing bibs for the lobster bake."*  
—Steven Ojeda '12

*"The 110th anniversary proved to be a great opportunity to finally meet some of the more recent alumni of whom I'd heard so much about. I was also pleased to see that the friendships among these alumni have endured beyond their undergraduate years at MIT."* —Jared Katz '14

*"When you live in Theta Chi while going to school at MIT, it's so easy to get caught up in academics, extracurriculars, and life at the house in general that you often forget just how much history lies beneath the umbrella of Theta Chi. For me, this was the part of the 110th that made the greatest impact: seeing all of the previous generations of Theta Chis coming together to celebrate made that history a bit more concrete."*  
—Vinay Ramasesh '12

The house sends our thanks to John Helferich '79 and the other members of the 110th committee who organized the event, and to Harold Jones '67 and his wife, Cheryl, who opened up their home to us. The undergraduate brothers look forward to seeing the alumni again at the next Alumni Weekend this spring.

The Actives





# I am: Jim Poitras '63; from 1957 to 1963 (officially)

## WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

Sent by Rick Gander '65

*We all know and appreciate all that Jim Poitras '63 has done on behalf of the future of 528. Are there any hints in Jim's memories of his time as to why he has undertaken this effort?*

## MOST VIVID MEMORY:

During dinner one night, Angie made up way too much of a bad batch of tapioca pudding. Nobody was eating it, and John Cadwallader '60 with his usual warped mind came up with the idea of making a tapioca pudding bomb. The idea resonated. So a few plastic bags were put together for strength, a cherry bomb carefully inserted through a hole in the bottom, and the bag was filled from the huge aluminum bowl of pudding.

Off to the roof where John took his fishing pole and cast across to an accomplice on the other side. I forget who it was, but we had an "annex" there. A strong line was then stretched across the street between the buildings. A coat hanger was attached to the top of the bag so the bag could slide easily, the fuse was lit and the bag released. Unfortunately, our calculations of the strength of line required were off, and the line broke immediately and the bomb dropped on the fourth floor parapet. Since the window was open in fourth large front, there was severe redistribution of tapioca pudding in Clyde Reedy's ('60) room.

Strongly chastised by Clyde but undaunted, the group decided to engineer the project properly. More plastic was commandeered and another larger bomb was made with the rest of the pudding. (I told you it was a big batch.) Again, John cast across to the other side, and a stronger line was pulled across and secured. As we were attaching the bomb, we noticed that a passerby was watching our efforts from across the street. He seemed totally amused when the bomb was released, because the line initially stretched so it looked like the pudding was dropping down; however, the line went taught and the bomb headed directly at the passerby who did the best he could to dodge the tapioca-shrapnel.

## THE HOUSE:

When I arrived in 1957, the bar was in the basement, but the space was converted over to a room after a couple of years. During the work week at a very early morning meeting, a concerned group of citizens managed to get approval to install a bar on the second-floor

front room.

Everyone slept in bunk beds in the dorm on the fifth floor. It was always a tradeoff being in a lower bunk—not having far to fall. The larger rooms had couches that were handy for napping during all nighters.

Frank Ford was the butler/entertainer, and Angie Elmore was the cook. Frank also felt it was his duty to wake up anyone still asleep when he came up to make the beds around 10:00 a.m.—regardless of why you needed sleep.

Most major work was performed during Work Week, and that preceded Rush Week. The elected house manager coordinated work and was responsible for getting things done throughout the year.

Sunday breakfast and supper, and Friday dinner were the only meals not routinely served. Weekday dinners were at 5:30 and 6:30 (I think), and Angie was always careful to save meals for people who were playing sports and missed dinner.

## ACTIVITIES:

Joe Bianco '61 and I had a regular Sunday show on WTBS (*under Ware*) one year, Clyde Reedy '60 was popular music director for a bit, and I had a regular morning show (*Rise & Shine*) for a couple of years. We had a group that worked on *Voo Doo*, MIT's humor magazine. Does it still exist?

Intercollegiate sports were always big—soccer in the fall, and crew and lacrosse in the spring were the biggest ones during my time. Dean Webber '60 and Chet Riley '62 led the rowers, and during this time, the head of the Charles and the Eastern sprints were a big deal.

We competed/tried to compete in most intramural sport. In 1957 and 1958, Norm Kneissler '60 and Bill Maczko '61 coached winning intramural swim teams. Lars Larson '61 won the 100 meters by reaching out instead of taking a last stroke, and that was a key unexpected victory. Bill Jessiman '63 led a feared Theta Chi hockey team.

I had learned how to tear phone books in half one spring, and as a result of various demonstrations and teaching programs, there was hardly a Boston phone book to be found in any fraternity on the block. I guess this counts as a sport.

## SOCIAL:

Dates came from everywhere. Boston was a wonderful collegiate town. Boston University (B.U.) had Charlesgate, a major dorm, on the corner of Beacon Street, plus

a dorm right across the street at 519 Beacon. The Fensgate on the other corner, across from Charlesgate, housed women from the Chandler School. Chamberlain had a dorm on Comm Ave. As I remember, dates came from blind dates (that's how I met my wife), B.U., Brandeis, Chamberlain, Simmons, and Wellesley plus women who were simply living and working in Boston.

During the late '50s, every Saturday and many Fridays, there was a party of some sort, usually focused around beverages, and the Theta Chi song books were frequently used. During the early '60s, the parties tended to be Saturday only and a bit more formal. (Decorous?) We even served mixed drinks at the bar!

There were occasional theme parties: Sadie Hawkins Day, Hawaiian Luau, etc. plus there were some fraternity open houses. Key party games: Thumper, Bizz, Buzz and Bizz, Buzz, Bam, Pope Puff (occasionally). Big Weekends: J. P. (Junior Prom) and Spring Weekend usually had big entertainment—at least one headliner, often two, including: Count Basie; Duke Ellington; Fats Domino; Ray Charles; Peter, Paul, & Mary; Joan Baez; and Sarah Vaughn.

Popular Restaurants included Dragging the dregs: Spoon, Joe & Nemo's Hot Dogs, Bickford's in Kenmore Square late at night. Best bang for the somewhat upscale buck: Durgin Park, Sunday buffet at the Lord Fox (pig out!). Entertainment in Boston: Scollay Square—Half Dollar Bar, the Casino (burlesque), The Palace, Hillbilly Ranch, Storyville, Blinstrub's. Special mention: Peter & Dick's men's bar; 14-ounce beer for a dime. Winter Break Recreational Activities: There was usually a ski trip arranged for winter break. (Note, it was like two weeks between finals and the start of the next term, not the month of January plus like the softies have now.) One year, someone arranged to rent two trailers for the 12 or 14 of us. Two problems: (1) Only three beds, so we had to double/triple up for sleeping; (2) which was not as bad as you might think, because the trailers had no heat. We had to take our boots to bed with us at night; otherwise, they would be frozen in the morning. The Zebra Lounge (the Zebe) was a familiar meeting place. There was happy hour where you got the second drink "free." Gus, the bartender, and Jane, the waitress took good care of us. It was a rite of passage to have a "finally legal" drink there on your 21st birthday. Most everyone smoked; I would guess that Luckies

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# 528 Beacon Street kitchen is finally complete!

The last phase of improvements to the Theta Chi house was completed this past fall. In addition to refinishing wood floors on the first and second floors and new carpet for the grand stairway, the work included the complete renovation of the kitchen in the basement. In 2011, a new stove, exhaust hood, fire protection, freezer, and lighting were installed. This past summer, the kitchen was gutted and all new cabinets, countertops, sinks, and storage were installed to comply with current regulations for commercial kitchens. The kitchen renovation cost \$50,000, plus the new appliances, and included the following: solid wood base and wall cabinets in a chestnut cherry finish; solid surface "Silestone" countertops and backsplash; GFI electrical wall outlets with additional circuits; stainless steel preparation table; a stainless-steel space-saver hand sink; a three-compartment stainless steel commercial sink with flexible faucets and garbage disposer; new grease trap; refinishing the existing tile floor and repairing the floor drain; and fresh paint on all walls, ceiling, ducts and pipes with washable paints, including the pantry.



## I am: Jim Poitras '63; from 1957 to 1963 (officially)

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were the most popular brand in the late '50s and that Marlboro became the most popular brand in the early '60s.

Chet Riley '62, Dave Manchester '64, and I shared an apartment on Beacon Street. One evening we arrived and were met by Mr. Rosetti, who was the building supervisor. He noted that a delivery truck had come by to drop off some drinks, and he had offered to pay for it, to save us some trouble, until he was told that there were 50 cases to be delivered. Mr. Rosetti was still in a state of shock when relating this.

### THE WORLD:

The Cuban revolution was big, and Fidel Castro had a parade through Boston. John Cadwallader '60 wanted to watch the parade but didn't have any binoculars, so he went up on the roof and used the scope on his rifle. Try doing that today, John!

The JFK assassination was followed by around-the-clock television coverage. We saw Jack Ruby kill Lee Harvey Oswald live.

## Reunion Open House: June 7, 2013

All brothers returning to MIT for their Reunions in 2013 are invited and encouraged to visit 528 Beacon for the open house, on Friday, June 7, from 3:00 to (at least) 5:00 p.m.

This occasion affords returning alumni a chance to relax and see the house and renovations firsthand. For the previous year's Reunions, this event was just terrific, bringing together graduating seniors, their parents, Reunion-bound alumni, local Boston-area alumni, and a scattering of actives living at 528 over the summer. Let's do it again! A number of brothers from the alumni corporation and the summer active officers will be on hand to greet people. And as always, local alumni are invited as well. We hope to see as many brothers and families as possible on Friday afternoon, June 7. If you are interested in attending, RSVP to [thetachi@mit.edu](mailto:thetachi@mit.edu). You can expect a warm welcome.

## Renovation Campaign drawing to a close

The fundraising committee has decided to bring the Renovation Capital Campaign to a close in April 2013. We launched the campaign in the fall of 2008 and have raised more than \$550,000. We greatly appreciate the gifts that we have received.

To commemorate our donors, we are preparing a plaque to hang in a place of honor at the house. All donors' names will be engraved on the plaque.

We want to make sure all alumni have a chance to be commemorated. We will finalize the list for the plaque on March 31, 2013. So if you want to be included in the plaque, please make a donation by March 31.

Thanks to all of you who have given, the house is now on a sound fiscal footing. Looking ahead, we will soon be re-orienting our fundraising toward an annual campaign to repay the mortgages on the house and to found a reserve fund for future endeavors. Watch for more details on these efforts in the near future.

John Helferich '79



# Meet our fall 2012 pledge class

This year for fall rush, we scheduled a week full of events ranging from Formula-1 racing to rock climbing to amusement parks and more. During the day, we took freshmen on jaunts to our exciting events, and then at night we hosted dinner parties like Raising Cane's catering and Steak and Lobster night. Then, as a staple of our house, we would have a larger-than-usual midnight snack every night of rush to give people a chance to have some awesome late night conversations over some incredibly "healthy" deep-fried food. Midnight snack was consistently our most popular event. This spring, we're going to have another rush, albeit smaller, to try to recruit more brothers and increase our presence on campus. We are excited to introduce this year's pledge class!

## JOHN GRAHAM:

"As a child raised in a military family, I look forward to serving my country in the United States Air Force after graduating from MIT. Keeping a balance of faith, athletics, academics, and service to others, I'm looking forward to having a positive impact in the Theta Chi community. I know the next four or five years will be some of the best of my life, and I'm excited to



discover the role that Theta Chi plays in my life and vice versa."

## DENIZ AKSEL:

"I am a freshman from Istanbul, Turkey. I attended the German High School of Istanbul prior to MIT, where I graduated as valedictorian of my class. I am interested in biological research and hope to study biological engineering (Course 20) at MIT. I am a member of the varsity lightweight rowing team, and I like to spend my free time playing guitar."



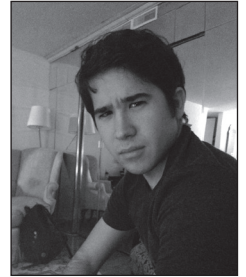
## NICOLAS D'ESTAIS:

"I am French, but I have lived most of my life abroad (London, Tokyo, and Paris). I am studying engineering at the University of Cambridge (UK), and I'm currently spending my third year at MIT. I have a passion for off-shore yacht racing. However, when I'm stuck on mainland, I enjoy rugby, hanging out with friends, and reading."



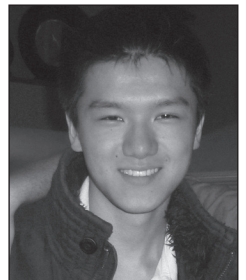
**NAIM LUJAN:** "A junior born in McAllen

Texas, I've loved playing sports, especially soccer, since I was a young boy. Of Puerto Rican descent, I come from a large family of seven. I came to MIT to study computer science, and so far, I'm loving it. Since joining Theta Chi, I have been continually impressed by the quality of the brothers here, and I could not be more excited for my remaining years as a Theta Chi."



## OLIVER HUANG:

"I'm from Atlanta, Georgia, but I had always known that I wanted to go to MIT since I was a little kid. Growing up, I liked to play soccer and football with my friends. I also learned how to play the piano from a very young age. Now that I'm at MIT, I am studying economics and mathematics as a double major. I am president of the Traders Club at MIT, and I want to be a consultant once I graduate from college."



Alessandro Lira '15  
Marshal



*When Superstorm Nemo struck the Back Bay this past February, the brothers decided to let loose and do a rendition of the popular internet video meme "Harlem Shake." Their clip was featured on boston.com and other local news sites, and has received nearly 25,000 hits. The full video can be found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=S36daWCbD6Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S36daWCbD6Y).*

# our alumni send their news

**Richard "Dick" Ballman '46** writes: "When I was at Mamaroneck High, my parents foolishly gave me a chemistry set. I started working on gunpowder and made significant improvements on it (my test was to hit a teaspoon of powder with a hammer and rate the sound). Potassium nitrate was replaced by potassium chlorate. Carbon was replaced by aluminum dust, and I think the sulfur was untouched. On July 4, I'd put a tablespoon of this mix on a piece of crumpled newspaper and carefully put a round stone on the powder, crumpled and twisted the newspaper over the rock. The missile was then thrown upward to land on concrete. The results were spectacular, and all the neighborhood kids were proud of my bomb. (I later found out that the U.S. solid rocket repellant used a similar mix.) I moved into 528 Beacon a few years later. The next-door fraternity had the temerity to throw a cherry bomb into our ward one night. But my bomb had no hard surface to explode inside Sigma Chi. So we hooked up several hoses, stole across the roof one night, and gave them a terrible dousing! During the day, we hooked up a telescope on our roof and observed sunbathing activities at a womens' school over on Commonwealth. Then I found out that the roofs were almost level all the way over to Mass Ave, and that a fancy apartment house was along the way. It was built around a paved central open courtyard. The noise in that courtyard from my dropped bomb put Hiroshima to shame. The entire apartment lit up, and the police and sirens took only a few moments to arrive. Fortunately, I had a nice girlfriend who put me up for the next week or so until the affair blew over. The police could not understand what had happened and arrested no one. The Boston newspapers had a small write-up on the event, and I completely dropped this line of endeavors. I shifted to the MIT crew, where after some months of handing out towels, I became crew manager. At the time, we had a very talented varsity eight and coxswain. I made arrangements to row against Cornell, and we gave them a sound thrashing on Cayuga Lake. Our next victim was Navy on the Severn, and then to cap it all off, we beat Harvard for the first time in history. In gratitude, the school awarded several of the rowers, the cox, and even me the Straight "T" award (at that time, it was the highest award given for athletic excellence at MIT). I was supposed to go to the boathouse for picture-taking, but I was too lazy for that and yearbook photos. I wonder if there is any remembrance there of those years? One of my favorite courses at MIT was western philosophy, given by the renowned Norbert Wiener. We had to write an essay about our favorite philosopher. I picked Baruch Spinoza, which to

my surprise was also Wiener's favorite. He had me read my essay to the rest of the class. My next encounter with Wiener was on VE Day. I was eating at the Greasy Spoon (on Mass Ave, near Beacon). In the midst of the huge celebration outside, the door opened, and in came Wiener. He looked around, spotted me, and sat down at my booth, where he ordered a drink. We sat in silence until he finished. Then he got up, shouted 'Damn Lindbergh,' and stalked out the door. The inventor of cybernetics was an awesome man." Reconnect with Dick at 416 N Sunset Blvd., Gulf Breeze, FL 32561; ballman\_rl@hotmail.com.

"Still breathing," reports **William "Bill" Freeman Jr. '51**. "I now have four children, 13 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren." Catch up with Bill at 60 Morehouse Rd., Easton, CT 06612; mcfwrf@aol.com.

## A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Brother **Ilkka Suvanto '68** recently retired as a full-time architect, who headed the 528 Beacon Street renovation project, volunteering all his labor but employing all his considerable experience. Ilkka was absolutely essential in bringing in the project on time—and way under the original budget. For this great contribution, he was recently honored in the MIT Alumni Association's Volunteer Honor Roll of Service. Ilkka was one of only six alumni selected to the 2011–2012 Volunteer Honor Roll "for his terrific work on behalf of MIT's Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living Groups". The member list is online at [alum.mit.edu/volunteering/recognitionawards/volunteerhonorroll/member\\_list.jsp](http://alum.mit.edu/volunteering/recognitionawards/volunteerhonorroll/member_list.jsp).

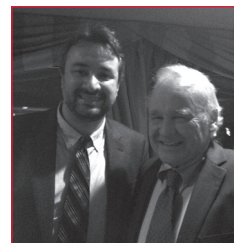


**Tom Moebus '70** writes: "I'm working in NYC at the Levin Institute of SUNY; I live there during the week, and in Madison, Connecticut, on weekends. Hyper-busy at work, with three roles: director of Confucius Institute for Business, deputy director of Levin Institute, and director of investor development for SUNY Research Foundation. Anyone interested in job sharing?" Write to Tom at 42 Suffolk Dr., Madison, CT 06443; trmoebus@gmail.com.

"In May, the Harrisburg School Board appointed me to their board vacancy," reports **James Thompson '79**. "The city and school districts are in a dismal financial condition. We struggled to balance a budget for the coming year and turned our attention to an updated

strategic plan for better academics for our struggling students. Among the bright spots: The valedictorian of our SciTech High School attends MIT this fall." Reconnect with James at 2302 Bellevue Rd., Harrisburg, PA 17104; jrthompson2302@gmail.com.

**Mark Tompkins '02** wrote, "When I was at a friend's wedding in Quincy, Massachusetts, a few months ago, I randomly met up with **Norm Kneissler '60** at the rehearsal



dinner, who was there with the aunt of the groom. After finding out that he was an MIT alumnus, as well as a fellow Theta Chi, we spent a few hours reminiscing about life in the house and sharing stories about our respective eras, including the famous story from the '60s when more than 15 brothers stacked on top of each other in the phone closet and took a picture. It was awesome making that connection with Norm, and I look forward to catching up with him again at future alumni events." Get in touch with Mark at [markt022002@yahoo.com](mailto:markt022002@yahoo.com).

"I moved to Honolulu early in 2012, and was flying Navy P-3s from our air station on the windward side of Oahu," writes **Evan Karlik '07**. "But my first deployment was in December. I'm glad I was able to see many brothers at Jonathan Stritar's ('07) wedding last year." Keep in touch with Evan at [evan.karlik@gmail.com](mailto:evan.karlik@gmail.com).

## deceased .....

**Edwin B. Judd Sr. '42**  
November 10, 2012

**Robert P. Fried '46**  
September 4, 2012

**Robert W. Devine Jr. '47**  
May 28, 2012

**Alden A. West '47**  
July 24, 2012

**Benjamin D. Cowley '49**  
August 24, 2012

**Robert D. Darden Jr. '49**  
December 1, 2012

**William L. Whalen '49**  
August 22, 2012

**Charles A. Church '50**  
August 22, 2012

**Robert I. Millard '55**  
October 23, 2012