



beta button

Beta Chapter of Theta Chi Fraternity at MIT • Spring 2022

FINISH THE “RAISE THE ROOF” ON A HIGH NOTE!

We have entered the fifth and final year of the Beta Chapter’s “Raise the Roof” campaign. There are still a few important items to complete, but our brothers should be very pleased with what has been accomplished. The house at 528 Beacon Street is over 120 years old and has been home to Theta Chi for the last century! Thanks to the generosity of so many and the hard work of the alumni corporation, we are well prepared to make it our fraternity’s home for decades (if not centuries) more.

Specific improvements include (1) repairing the external façade of the chapter house, (2) installing a brand new, energy-efficient boiler, (3) gut-renovating the third-floor bathroom (including correcting some of the “handiwork” of prior work weeks), and (4) replacing all carpeting in the bedroom and common rooms. We also have plans underway to repair/replace the interior doorways of the chapter house and fix all windows. All this work has been done by professional contractors. However, the undergraduates have “sweat equity” in these projects as well, and they did significant work in preparing the house for this work to be completed.

Our ability to do all of this work in such a short amount of time has been driven by you, our alumni. The annual goals of the campaign have been exceeded every year since the “Raise the Roof” campaign was announced in the fall of 2018. A major thanks go to the four previous matching donors, who stepped forward to match every gift over \$250. These generous brothers are:

2018 – **Jim Poitras ’63**

2019 – Anonymous ’83

2020 – **Chip Hance ’81**

In honor of brother **John Helferich ’79**

2021 – **Ricky Ramirez ’09**

2022 – TBD!

We are hopeful to find a fifth and final matching donor to carry us over the campaign finish line. If anyone wishes to step up to be the matching donor for this year, please contact Theta Chi’s Alumni Treasurer **Bob Ferrara ’67** at bobferrara@alum.mit.edu.

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ANASTASIOS “BUTCH” TSIATIS

Recently, **Ryan Andrews ’10** sat down virtually with **Anastasios “Butch” Tsiatis ’70** to discuss his time in the chapter and career afterward. The following is an edited version of their conversation:

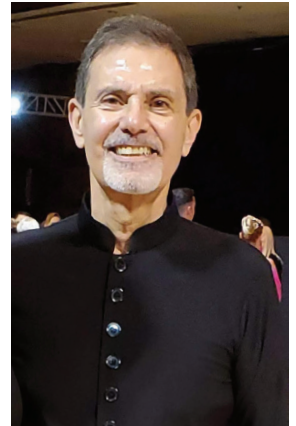
Ryan: What brought you to MIT and Theta Chi?

Butch: As a kid who was interested in math and science, I couldn’t think of a better place to go to college than MIT. While I was approached by a few other chapters, the guys at Theta Chi (particularly Dan Anderson and Tom Moebus) made the decision to join easy. It was by far the best thing to happen to me: it turned this shy Greek kid from New York City into a much more outgoing person!

Ryan: Can you briefly describe your career path after MIT?

Butch: While at MIT, I took a few courses in probability and statistics from the MIT economics department, and I ultimately wanted to go to graduate school to study statistics. All my friends were still in the Boston area, so I applied to Harvard and was accepted. However, this was the Vietnam War era, and for bureaucratic reasons, the US military told me that if I went to Harvard, I would be drafted into service. I ultimately went to the University

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HALFWAY TO A HUNDRED: A 1972 SNAPSHOT

by **Bob Holzwasser ’76**

2022 is the 100th year at 528. Half that time, 50 years ago, I pledged Theta Chi as an 18-year-old freshman right out of high school in 1972. Being from Newton Mass, just seven miles west on Beacon Street, allowed me to participate in several fraternity rush events. This gave me a head start on rush week. I took one look at my dorm assignment in East Campus and never looked back. I moved into my assigned small fifth-floor room in September 1972 and was aware all pledges would be sleeping in the ward. For those unaware, this room was filled with bunk beds and made up 70% of the fifth-floor space (fifth middle was cut out the following work week). This arrangement was a mixed blessing in that we all bonded as a large class of 13 but had to put up with a few noisy pledge-mates and angry fifth floor brothers who did not



appreciate our antics.

Reality set in as we found out in our first house meeting that we were responsible for our own cooking, food purchasing, waiting on tables, house cleaning, minor repairs, accounting, general management, and phone duty (“Hello, this is Theta Chi. How may I help you?” This was the pre-cell era). I remember Tony Castrucci, our initial house manager, making the detailed assignments and checking the quality of our work.

Some of the traditions then were if the meal was not up to standards, the cook (and perhaps the steward) would be forcibly taken to the showers. If we knew your birthday, shower time could come at any moment. If you pinned your girlfriend, you would be besieged by a gang of brothers arriving at your room smoking cigars that you were required to provide, until breathing

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BETA BUTTON HOUSE NEWS SPRING 2022

As the spring semester is upon us, the house is bustling with activity. Currently, 20 actives are living at 528 and we are preparing for more to move in next semester after having initiated 13 new brothers in the fall, followed by three new pledges from a very small and selective rush this spring. After recovering from the lengthy third-floor renovation, the brothers have allowed contractors back into the house to replace all the carpets from the third floor up as well as in Cavern. The old carpet was buckling, ripped, and littered with stains from what I imagine to be bleach, wine, and various unknown substances. While replacing the carpet, the contractors will also be repairing and repainting all the baseboards, most of which are very damaged.

A new addition to the house this semester has been our chef, Kenny. After attempting to rely on takeout from various restaurants in the area during the fall (which had us eating Domino's pizza at 10

p.m. more than I'd like to admit), the house voted to hire a private chef through Gill Grilling like many of the other fraternities around campus. It's safe to say this has been a huge hit among the brothers as many now look forward to coming down for dinner to enjoy a menu that has included dinners such as baked salmon and chicken and waffles.

On a social level, the house has been through many ups and downs so far this semester. Around campus, we have become known to "own" Friday nights, a reputation that spread a little quicker than we would have liked to the surrounding Boston schools. As the police have recently been "owning" Fridays on Beacon, brothers have learned valuable lessons on how to NOT mass advertise parties on Instagram. As we are currently taking a hiatus from hosting large social events, we have been focusing on the brotherhood through events such as Around the World.

BIG BROTHER TREE PROJECT EXTENDING A HAND

I graduated this January, which means that I am passing on the stewardship of the big-little tree. It has been a pleasure to hear from so many of you as I have worked on this tree. Please keep sending updates so we can grow the tree at <http://ox.mit.edu/alumni/#tree>. Send all future updates to **Mauricio Barba Da Costa** (barba@mit.edu). While I am not quite sure where I am going next, I would still love to correspond with any of you who are interested! Feel free to reach me at andrew.r.komo@gmail.com.

Faternally,
Komo '22

CURRENT CHAPTER OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Spencer Yandrofski '24

VICE PRESIDENT

Andre Hamelberg '24

TREASURER

Kevin Awoufack '23

VICE PRESIDENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

Leon Fan '24

SECRETARY

Arman Dave '23

MARSHAL

Lucas Marden '24

RUSH CHAIRS

Nick Shultz '24

Jose Martinez '24

Raj Mehta '24

HOUSE MANAGER

Nick Schultz '24

BROTHERHOOD

Albert Garcia '22

Mario Peraza '22

Jose Martinez '24

WORK WEEK

Spencer Yandrofski '24

Juan Reyes '25

Alex Edwards '25

STEWARD

Leon Fan '24

SCHOLARSHIP

Leon Fan '24

ALUMNI

Derrick Liang '24

CHAPLAIN

Julian Hamelberg '22

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Juan Reyes '25

TECH CHAIR

Kevin Awoufack '23

SOCIAL CHAIRS

Andre Hamelberg '24

Dankwa Buckle '24

Mau Barba da Costa '24

PUBLIC RELATIONS/ SOCIAL MEDIA

Andre Hamelberg '24

RISK MANAGER

Lucas Marden '24

Jackson Zhang '24

HISTORIAN

Alex Edwards '25



CLASS OF 2022

Arman Dave:

From the lows we experienced during the pandemic to the highs of these past two semesters, I am proud to have called Theta Chi my home for the past four years. I'll treasure the memories I've made during my time here, and I'm looking forward to all the younger brothers will accomplish and the memories they'll make.

Roberto Sarabia:

My favorite Theta Chi memory is the day we became lower upper tier after putting the other frats in their place.

Julian Hamelberg:

From our lowest lows to our highest highs, or from Cavern to the roof: I'm thankful for the active brotherhood, whether it was good of the frat or around the world, I'm glad we could hang out. I hope for many more!

Andrew Komo:

It's been an incredibly fun time being part of the brotherhood these last three years. I'm so grateful for all the friends I have made. Starting next year, I'll be back at MIT doing a PhD in economics.

Mateo Hernandez:

It doesn't feel real yet... the nights of brotherly shenanigans, Little Steve's pizza (RIP), and malfunctioning fire alarms will stick with me forever. It's been an honor!

Albert Garcia:

Favorite memory: relearning all of our traditions in one night.

Vijay Dey:

Favorite memory: fraternizing with my brethren in the treasurer's lounge.

Erik Thompson:

After I graduate, I will commission into the army as a second lieutenant. From there, I will go to the Army's Cyber Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC).

Mario Peraza:

After graduation, I am planning on attending Stanford University for their master's program in mechanical engineering. I am going to miss all of our brothers, but I'll always remember all the great times we had as a brotherhood and the family that I gained at MIT.

CREED OF THETA CHI

"I believe in Theta Chi, its traditions and its ideals. Born of sturdy manhood, nurtured by resolute men, ennobled by high and sacred purpose, it has taken its place among the educational institutions of America as a promoter of knowledge, an advancer of culture and a builder of character."

"It inspires true friendship: teaches truth, temperance and tolerance, extols virtue, exacts harmony, and extends a helping hand to all who seek it."

"I believe in the primacy of alma mater; in the usefulness of my fraternity, in its influence and its accomplishments and I shall do all in my power to perpetuate its ideals, thereby serving my God, my country and my fellow-man."



From left to right: Mario Peraza, Albert Garcia, Julian Hamelberg, Mateo Hernandez, Roberto Sarabia, Vijay Dey, Erik Thompson, Arman Dave (staying one extra semester).

SPOTLIGHT

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of California, Berkeley, where I studied under Jerzy Neyman (one of the founders of modern statistics).

I then went to the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where I had a joint appointment in the departments of statistics and preventive medicine. I really enjoyed this position, as it allowed me to work on applied health problems rather than theoretical statistics all day.

After about seven years, I left Wisconsin for a position at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. That was an incredibly exciting time, as I was involved with the first clinical trials that showed that HIV/AIDS was treatable. In the early 1990s, my wife and I moved down to the "Research Triangle" area of North Carolina, and I took up a primary faculty position at North Carolina State University and an adjunct faculty appointment at Duke. I have now largely retired, but recently, I was very involved with the COVID-19 vaccine trials that you may have heard about on the news.

Ryan: *Yes, I think everyone has heard about COVID-19. Can you say more about what your involvement with the vaccine trials was?*

Butch: Around June 2020, I was approached by Dr. Fauci to serve on the National Institutes of Health Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) for the COVID-19 vaccine trials that received federal funding (i.e., those run by Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Sanofi, and AstraZeneca; notably, not Pfizer because they never took government money). As you can imagine, clinical trials are very expensive and have a lot of moving parts. There can be enormous pressure for a trial to report positive results, and the main job of

the DSMB is to be an impartial review committee that guards the safety and wellbeing of the participants in the trial. If participants are being harmed by the drug, the DSMB will either halt the trial or ask that it is modified. On the other hand, if it's clear that the participants are clearly benefiting from the drug, the DSMB will also step in to end the trial early so those not in the trial and those assigned to the placebo arm can also benefit.

The COVID-19 vaccine DSMB consisted of 11 total members from the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, and South Africa. The members were recruited based on expertise in infectious diseases, immunology, biostatistics, or medical ethics. As a statistician, I played a large role in helping the DSMB understand things like data quality and variability. Every one or two weeks, we would meet to go over the data and results from one of the ongoing trials, and we were sworn to absolute secrecy.

I was the lead DSMB statistician for the Moderna trial, which started on July 27, 2020, and recruited 30,000 participants (50/50 split between the vaccine and a placebo injection). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has a rule that you must wait two months after the median number of participants enter the trial for an interim analysis to be done. That meant that the interim analysis would not be done before the November 2020 elections (in fact, it was done about two weeks after Election Day). This made some people in the Trump administration frustrated, as they really wanted to point to positive vaccine news to bolster their chances of re-election. During the interim analysis, we discovered that there were 96 COVID-19 infections, but 91 of them were in the placebo arm. We had hoped

for an efficacy of around 70% to declare the vaccines to be a success, and we had 95% efficacy! On top of that, there was 100% efficacy against severe COVID-19 infection. There was an emergency meeting soon thereafter, and I was the one to tell Dr. Fauci about the exciting Moderna results, and in December, Moderna applied for emergency use authorization for their vaccine.

Ryan: *That sounds very exciting! As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has been quite polarizing in the country, and many people have offered thoughts about how the country responded to the threat of COVID-19 (for good or for bad). Has your time on the vaccine DSMB influenced your own thinking on how the US did responding to the pandemic?*

Butch: There were of course areas where we could have done better, particularly early in the pandemic. But you must realize that we were facing a new communicable disease, which meant we had to learn things along the way. That is how science works and progress is made. The things that frustrate me are the "vaccine denier" movement and the various conspiracy theories about Bill Gates and Dr. Fauci. I wish those people could see the rigor that goes into the design, conduct, and analysis of these trials. They were done with the utmost care, and in the end, we learned something very, very important: the vaccines worked, and they were safe.

Ryan: *On a lighter note, what has been keeping you busy outside of work?*

Butch: Believe it or not, my wife and I have taken up ballroom dancing!

RAISE THE ROOF

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To recognize every alumnus who contributed to making the "Raise the Roof" campaign a success, we plan on listing every donor on a plaque that will be hung at the chapter house. To ensure that your name will be listed, be sure to donate! There are several ways to contribute to the future of Theta Chi, including electronic payments. Please visit our website at ox.mit.edu/alumni/#giving to see the full list and instructions. Questions? Ask us at thetachi@mit.edu.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Have alumni news? Know of a brother who would be an interesting alumni spotlight? Ideas for future stories or articles?

Let us know!

Send info to:
Alumni Records Office
Theta Chi Fraternity at MIT
P.O. Box 397253
Cambridge, MA 02139

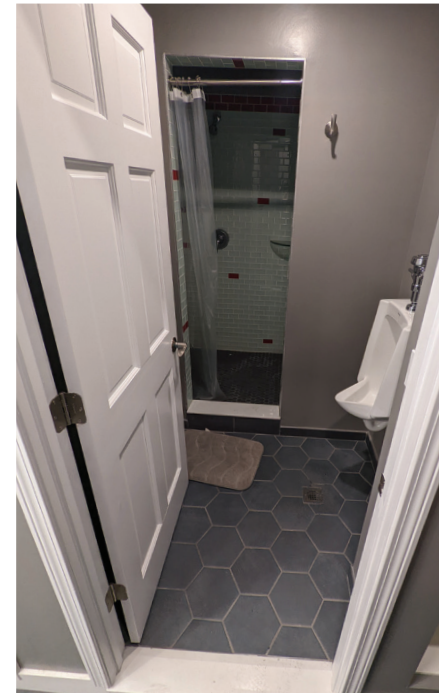
THIRD-FLOOR BATHROOM RENOVATION

The largest project of the current mini capital campaign is now complete. The third-floor bathroom, Third Head, has seen a series of brother-led renovations during workweeks over many decades, including those in roughly 1991, 1999, and 2005. While certainly enthusiastic and ambitious, nobody would really claim professionalism of those attempts, with leaks and out-of-code plumbing in evidence. Anyone who contributed to those renovations in the past is encouraged to visit <http://ox.mit.edu/alumni/#giving>.

As a result of the pandemic, the alumni corporation took advantage of the empty house to do a gut renovation of Third Head, this time by

professional contractors. Through this work, everything was torn out and plumbing and electrical were all updated, along with the subfloors, framing, fixtures, tiles, walls, and paint. The result is a modern facility with an appropriate design to match the architectural history of the house.

Tackling projects like this keeps our nearly 130-year-old house up to current standards of livability. A thank you goes out to all of those who have participated in our “Raise the Roof” campaign, especially our matching donors, for making this possible and making this and other house improvement projects possible.



ALUMNI NEWS

Clare Billing Jr. '73: I retired from Pfizer in 2012 and since then have been working part-time as a statistics consultant for several biotech companies. I've also been coaching high school cross country running every fall. Natalie and my son Jeff (MIT class of 2001 and ATQ brother) live about an hour away in West Hartford, Connecticut. He has a four-year-old son whom we very much enjoy watching at least one day a week.

Paul Tompkins '92: I moved to the Seattle, Washington area in January 2020 to take on a role leading flight operations for Blue Origin lunar and

commercial space station programs. It's been a great experience so far, and it appears we have a very exciting future in space. Aside from work, I've spent a good amount of free time enjoying the natural world of the Pacific Northwest, both in the mountains and underwater. I've been diving with Global Underwater Explorers (GUE) one to two times a week, racking up lots of dry-suit hours and learning the basics of technical diving, while seeing all sorts of sea creatures in Puget Sound. Please feel free to reach out, whether to catch up or if you're looking for an internship or full-time employment charting humanity's future in space at pdtompkins@gmail.com.

deceased

We regret to inform you of the death of the following brothers:

Daniel M. Kelley '46
February 5, 2020

**Brigadier General
Nichola R. Hurst '60**
April 19, 2020

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became impossible. Everyone, even Southerners, had to at least try to play hockey in the then-outdoor and uncovered MIT rink. Wind, cold, and snow were often factors. The fall alumni football games were an annual no-holds-barred slugfest. Broken bones were not uncommon. The actives, who usually lost, finally won in 1973 when a classful of genuine athletes had recently pledged. This was followed by a party and songfest led by the great Frank Ching. Massachusetts lowered the drinking age to 18 on April 1, 1973, and the whole pledge class ventured out together and barely survived the raucous night.

Rival fraternities were often the target of pranks. We were victims as well. We stole flags, doors, trophies, plaques, and even the guts of a stove. We exploded food waste in rival doorways and threw dummies off the parapet while screaming, "Help!" We had snowball fights and an ether cannon both aimed at the BU dorms across the street. We spread contact explosives on the sidewalk to the delight of some and distress of others. I think I'll stop there and shift gears.

Once or twice per year, we would meet the trust, which was the precursor to the corporation. The trust was created in 1922 to hold title to the property, pay the taxes and water bills, and essentially rent the house to the actives. It was good to know there were some adults with real-world experience involved with the house. We discovered that the trust would dissolve 20 years after the deaths of the original members. To transition into a new entity, I joined the trust and we operated as usual for a time. As the dissolution date was nearing, we researched alternatives and selected the corporation arrangement we have today. A few alumni stepped up with me and we drew up the governing documents, did the legal work, and by the early 1990s, we were off and running. I wish I could remember all the names of the alumni who were key in these early corporation days. David Campanella, now in his 50th year of Theta Chi involvement, certainly was one. The corporation was designed to be much more involved in oversight and these alumni and active corporation members certainly were up to the task.

We met at the house regularly and determined what the structural needs were and employed contractors, if necessary, after a bidding process. Some of the jobs done while I was active were bathroom plumbing, boiler

replacement, sub-cellar maintenance, extensive electrical work, window replacement, a sprinkler system addition, a full kitchen makeover, adding a roof deck (and rebuilding it after a fire), and roof sealing. We also managed a house apartment, took out loans for the larger projects, and represented the fraternity in legal matters. Some of the more memorable happenings were when a summer boarder in third LF had her designer shoes damaged from the pesky parapet leak. She wanted to sue, but we eventually settled it. Another time one brother collided with another coming around a corner holding a drill and suffered permanent eye damage. A lawsuit ensued and I was called to testify in the matter. The "Back Bay biddies," aka the Back Bay Architectural Commission, were often complaining about our structural changes including the roof deck and the color of our entryway paint. They unfortunately have a lot of sway.

We had a run-in with the Boston City Council who threatened to pull our license to operate. This stemmed from a series of alcohol-related incidences at fraternities, including a death at the MIT Fiji house which ended their existence. We recall fondly the Fiji Island parties they held for all fraternities. Our involvement stemmed from a girl suffering some sort of injury at one of our parties. We beat back that threat at the council meeting after telling our side of the story.

What was also rewarding was being able to advise the actives on issues of concern. We were always glad to be there. The most difficult event we involved ourselves in was when the house president came to us about massive behavioral issues involving several of the brothers. A civil war was brewing. We decided to suspend all active brothers, interview each one, and determine who should be invited to stay and who needed to go. We chose to evict four after talking to their parents and rearranging the room assignments. I believe it worked. Some of you guys from that era about 25 years back hopefully agree.

I maintained my corporation president position after relocation to NYC in the late 1990s because I was often in Boston. But by 2002 or so, my kids had gotten older, and I visited Boston less often and gave up my corporation involvement. There were so many brothers who took a lot of their time in service to Theta Chi as actives and alumni. I hope this continues for another 100-plus years.

Bob Holzwasser '76 aka Holzy

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