



Marching Along

A Publication of Beta Theta Pi at the University of Florida | Summer 2009 | Gamma Xi Chapter

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Spring Recap

by Brad Fortune '92, brad1541@bellsouth.net



The Alumni Association, in conjunction with the active chapter, wrapped up a very successful spring semester with our annual Orange & Blue Weekend. The program kicked off with a golf tournament at Ironwood in Gainesville. After

a great day of golf, the events continued with an alumni reception at the Beta house, followed by a short trip over to McKethan Stadium to watch the UF baseball team play Ole Miss.

Saturday's events began with the semi-annual meeting of the Florida Beta Theta Pi Alumni Association, where **Mike Vernacchio** ('74) was elected to the board and the schedule of summer and fall events was discussed. Following the meeting, the actives and their dads, who were visiting for Dads Weekend, joined the alumni for a pre-game BBQ before walking up to watch the Orange team, with a strong performance from John Brantley, beat the Blue team 31-21 in this year's Orange & Blue game. After the game, the chapter presented awards: Brother of the year – **Brian Sayre**; New Brother of the Year – **Jake Silvola-Finch**; Athlete of the Year – **Mike Kampel**; and Alumnus of the Year – **Brad Fortune** ('92).

The official ground breaking ceremony, as well as the public kickoff to the capital campaign, capped a very busy Saturday at 13 Fraternity Row. The weekend's events concluded with the semi-annual meeting of the House Corporation, where **Brian Brasington** ('92) signed the contract with Anglin Construction to begin the expansion and remodeling of the house. As I write this, construction is proceeding full speed ahead and we hope everyone will come to our dedication of Phase I to be held the weekend of September 18-19th (Tennessee weekend). Please visit our new website at www.ufbeta.org to check the progress of construction and to find out more about upcoming events.

There are a lot of positive things happening with Gamma Xi, but the next step in the evolution of this chapter requires immediate support from our alumni base. I would encourage any alumni willing to volunteer their

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Brothers in Beta

Michael Williams ('75) and John Williams ('79)

All Betas are brothers, but Michael and John Williams were brothers before they ever stepped foot in 13 Fraternity Row in Gainesville. Growing up together in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, they shared many fun times and experiences. In those days, Ft. Lauderdale was a fairly small town, and they often spent summer days playing sports together from dawn to dusk. Along with two sisters and a younger brother, theirs was a very happy childhood.

“Being a Beta, you make friendships that last a lifetime.”

Mike was the first Williams son to attend UF, being the older brother. He became interested in pledging as he had heard much about Greek life from a soon-to-be brother-in-law who was a fraternity brother at Florida. He had been told of the many benefits of joining a fraternity, including the academic, social, and athletic aspects. He rushed a number

of houses, and ultimately pledged Beta Theta Pi in the fall of his freshman year. Not surprisingly, the future brother-in-law, who had told him so much about fraternity life, was a Gamma Xi Beta. Although his goal was a career in building construction, Mike went on to earn a degree in Civil Engineering at UF.

John came to campus four years after Mike's arrival. Naturally, after hearing years of stories about the Beta house from his brother, and being a Beta legacy, he pledged Beta. He studied in the Business College and earned his degree in marketing.

Both John and Mike have many fond memories of their time at Florida, and as Beta brothers. These include competing for the President's cup, trips to Crescent Beach, and Beta Weekends. They spoke of watching pledges become brothers, of boys becoming



Mike Williams



John Williams

See Brothers, continued on page 4

Campaign Tops \$1 Million

The Campaign for the Future of Gamma Xi reached an important milestone in May when our campaign pledge total surpassed \$1 million! A \$250,000 gift gave the program a major boost, moving the total much closer to our \$1.5 million goal. As a result of this contribution, the meeting room/library will be named in honor of the Gamma Xi Class of 1943.

With construction well underway, this news couldn't have come at a better time. The project is gaining momentum and excitement is building. Following the formal campaign kickoff during Orange and Blue Weekend, Beta volunteers have been reaching out by phone to all alumni. The active members have pledged their support in a major way,

and now it is time for the rest of us to step up.

Our chapter has emerged as a leader in virtually every aspect of campus life. With strong membership, leadership development, community service, academics, intramurals, and social activities, Beta is definitely the place to be at Florida. The newly-redeveloped chapter house will be a hub not only of active chapter life, but also of a rich and varied schedule of alumni events designed to reconnect us all. Brother Dan Farmer's architectural plans are an inspired blend of the house's traditional façade with all the amenities and safety upgrades necessary to compete in the 21st century.

See Campaign, continued on page 4

Chapter News



State of Gamma Xi *by Stephen McLaughlin, President*

What a great time it is to be a Florida Gator, and an even greater time to be a Florida Beta. The gentlemen of the Gamma Xi chapter had an excellent school year and are awaiting an even better

one to come. This past year, we succeeded in everything from sports to service, proving our greatness at the University of Florida and all of Beta Theta Pi.

This was the first year we put on our philanthropy, "Beta Bring it On," a competition cheerleading event for the sororities. The philanthropy raised over \$12,000 for the Thomas Oliver Brown Memorial Scholarship and was the most liked philanthropy by the sororities. You can read more about "Beta Bring it On" on page 4.

For the second year in the row, the Gamma Xi chapter won the intramural champions President Cup with first places in softball, football, and track and field. Our service project, Beta Buddies, won the Service Project of the Year award for the second year in a row. This service project is a mentor program for young boys at Rawlings Elementary School.

While devoting a great deal of time to Beta activities, the Gamma Xi chapter had a 3.34 grade point average which was third best of all fraternities. Along with our scholarship, we are excelling even more in campus involvement. Including having brothers that serve as the General Chairman



Florida Beta brothers celebrate another successful Delta Gamma Anchor Splash competition!



(l to r) Jordan See '08, Stephen McLaughlin, and Alex Hammel (Beta HQ Staff) at last year's President's Leadership Academy in Oxford, Ohio.

of Homecoming and the Chairman of the Florida Blue Key Mathematics Bureau for the upcoming school year, we have members with positions in Student Government, Accent Speakers Bureau, Gator Growl, Dance Marathon, and Florida Blue Key.

With so many exciting things going on this fall and the opening of the new renovations on the house, we would love to see you in the upcoming school year. The brothers are going to continue striving for perfection, and living up to being great Betas.

Yours in _____ kai _____,

Stephen McLaughlin
Stephen McLaughlin
Chapter President
stephen3@ufl.edu



Member Spotlight: Robert Clarke

Robert "Robbie" Clarke, a fifth year senior, joined Gamma Xi because, "I came to school the summer before my freshman year and ran

into some of the current actives. I enjoyed my time with them that summer, then really loved the house when I walked in during rush. I knew that I wanted to join this fraternity."

When asked how membership in Beta has benefitted him, Robbie said, "Aside from

the obvious benefits with learning about true brotherhood and selflessness, I was afforded opportunities to become involved with the chapter and on campus." Robbie was named General Chairman of Homecoming for the Fall 2009 football season; he worked as an Assistant General Chairman of Events last year. This spring, he was also inducted into Florida Blue Key, Florida's greatest honorary. He is a Tourism and Hospitality/Management major; his favorite class at UF has been Revenue Resource Management.

Robbie lived in the house for four semesters. He joins the rest of the chapter in looking forward to enjoying the renovations being done to the house: "As a fifth year senior, I have seen the house [membership] change dramatically, improving in every aspect from leadership on campus to relationships we have built with some of the campus' top sororities. It will be nice to have a physical representation of the improvements we have achieved."



Dan Noice (l) and Robbie at the 2008 Florida - Georgia game.

2009 Spring Pledges

John Cahallwi	Gary Cantor
Cory Justice	Danny Lewis
Adam Lucke	Brandon Martin
Jared Nager	Anthony Parilla
Eric Podmeyer	

Executive Officers

President: Stephen McLaughlin
 Executive Vice President: Aaron Clossey
 Administrative Vice President: Jason Johnson
 Membership Vice President: Devin Hernandez
 Pledge Trainer: Mike Shapiro
 Risk Manager: George Voren
 Alumni Secretary: Brian Sayre
 Treasurer: Clay Rusch
 Rush Chairman: Dan Heaton
 Philanthropy Chairman: Jake Silvola-Finch
 Social Chairman: Eric Russel
 Social Chairman: David Duncan
 Secretary: Alex Heshmaty
 External Philanthropy Chairman: Tyler Jensen
 House Manager: Grant Coyle
 Scholarship Chairman: Ian Dawley
 Intramural Chairman: Ian Lott

Alumni News

Harvey E. Adkinson, '56 – retired 5 years ago as VP of Sales & Marketing for a computer software company. Now working on producing and marketing a “Best of the Dream Weavers” CD.

Phillips “Phil” A. Easterling, '56 – retired and started traveling, visiting all SEC stadiums with the Gators. World travel too. Still have lots to see. Enjoy a senior program at UCF called Learning Institute For Elders; approximately 400 seniors enjoy 2 lectures a week. Volunteer with the Orlando Health Foundation. My wife of 45 years, Jane, and I have 3 kids and 8 grandkids to keep us busy. Life has been good. *-kai-*



Phil and Jane Esterling at a Florida game.

Philip L. Markham, '60 – has retired.

Gary M. Seibert, '70 – is still working, currently overseeing corps of engineers computer network world-wide.

Charles F. Sutton, '71 – retired after 30 years at General Reinsurance in 2006. Now lives in Seagrove Beach. Immediately following my licensing for real estate sales two years ago, I was diagnosed with kidney cancer. With the help of doctors at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, I have been battling this disease with

improving results while still working with my real estate team to meet the needs of my clients. I remember my time at Gamma Xi fondly and continue to maintain contact with a few of the brothers from my time at the house. Unfortunately, none of my three children have chosen to attend Florida or go “Greek.” The current brothers are doing a great job from what I read and I’m proud to be a Beta!

James “Jimmy” E. Saunderson, '73 – retired in February.

Patrick J. Dillon, '79 – is an Independent Studies teacher working with high-risk students in California. Want to get back to Gainesville in the next year or two for a game. Californians just don’t understand college football. It has been wonderful with the Gators football and basketball National Titles the past few years. It is truly great to be a Beta Gator!



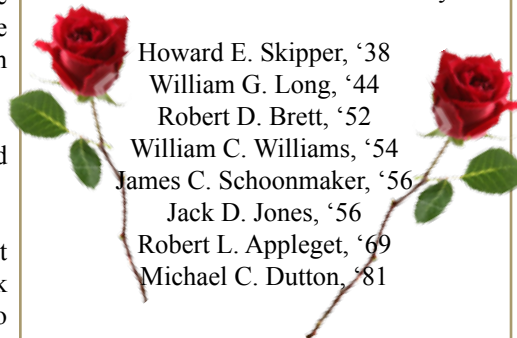
Patrick Dillon at Spyglass.

John C. Jones, '94 – graduated from the Executive MBA program at the University of Central Florida in May 2009.

Lex M. Taylor, '98 – married Jossy Dieguez, a UF Kappa Kappa Gamma, in June of 2008.

Memory and Our Mystic Shrine

We have learned of the passing of the following brothers. We send out condolences to their friends and family.



Howard E. Skipper, '38
William G. Long, '44
Robert D. Brett, '52
William C. Williams, '54
James C. Schoonmaker, '56
Jack D. Jones, '56
Robert L. Appleget, '69
Michael C. Dutton, '81

Paul J. Atkins, '01 – is engaged to a beautiful gal named Angelynn; the wedding will be Summer 2010.

Shelby J. Denman, '01 – graduated from Boston University as a DMD and works as a dentist at the Smile Center in Austin with his twin brother. Joined a Gator Club in Austin, never misses a UF Football game at a favorite local pub, and occasionally attends a game.

Alexander S. Hammel, '08 – graduated with a degree in Public Relations and a minor in Chinese Language. Currently employed at the Administrative Office for Beta Theta Pi as the Project Manager for the fraternity’s magazine.

Have news you want share with us? Provide it, along with any photographs, in the enclosed envelope. We look forward to hearing from you and sharing your updates with other Florida Beta alumni!

Save the Dates

The Florida Beta Theta Pi Alumni Association asks you to please mark your calendars for these fall events.

September 18-19: Florida vs. Tennessee/Dedication Ceremony for the New House

October 16-19: Florida vs. Arkansas/Homecoming Weekend

(now taking orders for Gator Growl tickets in the Beta Alumni Block)/Pledge class reunion for 1979, and 1988-1992

November 20-21: Florida vs. FIU/Family Weekend

For more information, please visit our website: www.ufbeta.org or contact us at gammaxievents@bellsouth.net.

Beta “Bring It On”



On Monday, March 2, Beta held the inaugural Beta “Bring It On” philanthropy benefiting the **Thomas Oliver Brown** Scholarship Fund. Thirteen Panhellenic sororities participated in the competition, which consisted of a routine of both cheer and dance. The UF Competitive Cheer Team put on a special performance during the intermission.

Brother Brown was an undergraduate member who was killed during the Florida vs. Georgia weekend in 2005. Over \$12,000 was raised for the scholarship fund in his memory. The chapter hopes to raise enough money by next year to endow the scholarship and disperse it to a UF Building Construction student. Philanthropy Chair Brian Sayer started working on the event in August. It was held at the University Auditorium before a sold-out crowd of 900. The event will tentatively be held in the Phillips Center next year to allow more students to attend.



Upper left: Zeta Tau Alpha’s team; Bottom left: There was an overflow crowd on hand to watch the “Bring it On” competition. The philanthropy project raised over \$12,000 this year. Right: Beta Brothers get the crowd warmed up prior to the competition.

Campaign, *continued from page 1*

Success is within our grasp, so please look over the campaign brochure you received in the mail and welcome the committee member’s call. He is one of many Gamma Xi brothers who is working hard to help us complete the long-awaited renovation of our chapter home at 13 Fraternity Row. Together, we can assure both Gamma Xi’s tradition and future.

Stay tuned for news of coming celebration events. We look forward to welcoming you, your families, and all Beta brothers back to Gainesville to rekindle old friendships and build new ones.

I know we can count on your support.

Yours in *kai* _____,

Steve Becker '69
Campaign Chairman

Alumni Update, *continued from page 1*

time in an advisory role to contact me (brad1541@bellsouth.net or 404-391-6935). We’re in need of alumni (particularly those within driving distance of Gainesville) to take a more active role in mentoring Beta’s future leaders. We will hold our 2nd annual active/alumni advisory retreat in Orlando the weekend of August 7-9th, when undergraduate chapter officers and alumni advisors will meet for goal setting sessions. If you would like to assist in this role, either by attending as an advisor or sponsoring an undergraduate officer, please let me know. Your support would be appreciated.

Beta Brothers, *continued from page 1*

men, and the good feeling of helping them on that journey. They both feel they benefited greatly from their Beta experiences. “Being a Beta, you make friendships that last a lifetime,” commented Mike during our recent conversation. John agreed and continued, “Beta taught me how to get along with people having different attitudes and personalities, which was a great life lesson. It also taught me the value of team work.”

Today, both Williams brothers are successful entrepreneurs. Mike started MH Williams Construction in Melbourne, Florida, in 1987. Over the years, his firm has built many types of structures, including multi-family homes, medical facilities, and auto dealerships. Other projects include five buildings on the campus of the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. His many repeat customers are a sign of a quality product! John rose to be VP and General Manager of Toyota for the Southeast before leaving to start his own business, the Toyota Auto Mall in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2000. Today it is the largest retail auto dealership in the state. He also opened Wesley Chapel Toyota in 2008, and is opening an Infinity dealership in Ft. Myers, Florida, in a few months. Even with their success in business, when asked about their greatest accomplishments, both spoke first of their families.

Mike and John have one other thing in common. Both are making a financial commitment to the Campaign for the Future of Gamma Xi. “We have all known for a long time that the house needed major work,” was Mike’s explanation for helping. “With the undergraduate chapter doing so well, we really need to make improvements to the house so they can keep the legacy and traditions of Beta at UF going strong,” he continued. John expressed a similar feeling when he said, “We need to help keep the dream alive for all the thousands of Betas who will follow us, and improving the house will help tremendously.” And so we shine our Alumni spotlight on two Brothers in Beta who are joining many others to *Preserve the Legacy* of Beta Theta Pi at the University of Florida.