

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Homecoming 2008

**Saturday, October 18**

11 a.m. – Meeting at the house  
4:30 p.m. – Kickoff

### Local Alumni Dinner

**Thursday, November 6**

6:30 p.m. (see page 2 for more details)

### Alumni Work Weekend

**February 27-29**

## ALUMNI SHOUT OUT

A special Alumni Shout Out to **Bill Herron '90**, who designed and implemented the new searchable password protected alumni database. Thank you Bill for all your time and effort!

## IN MEMORY

### William Renton '46

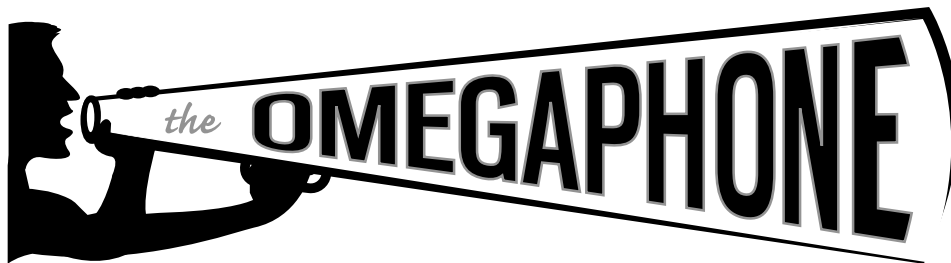
"My dad passed away this morning (September 22, 2008) after a long illness at the age of 84, at my sister's house, surrounded in love by his family. Given the circumstances, it doesn't get much better than that.

As a child, our vacations were spent at various Theta Chi meetings and conventions across the country, and we were able to know his friends and Brothers such as Howard Alter and George Kilavos and many, many others. Dad served many years on the Grand Chapter and it was a source of joy to both him and Mom, and set an example of service for his children.

Dad is being cremated and we are going to have a service for him at St. Margaret's Catholic Church in Bel Air, MD"

**– William D. Renton, Alpha Beta/Pittsburgh '77**

Visit [www.thetachiomega.com/alumni/2008/080924eternal.html](http://www.thetachiomega.com/alumni/2008/080924eternal.html) for more information.



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## TREASURER REPORT

### YOU Hold the Key to Omega Chapter's Future

*Get Involved in One of the Three Key Areas Needed to Help Us Continue to Grow Stronger*

*By Chris Burke '93*

As many of you may know, I have taken on the role of alumni treasurer. **Rich Maltz '90** asked me to write this edition of the alumni letter to discuss some of the ways in which you can help Omega improve the financial position of the Alumni Corporation.

I want to start by pointing out how lucky we were to have a strong national organization that was willing to extend the helping hand by purchasing the chapter house for us, and holding it in trust until we could take back ownership. More importantly, we now have a GREAT undergraduate chapter that has built its membership back up to be able to have a good number of brothers living in the chapter house. However, National can not hold the chapter forever – we need to grow stronger on our own so that we can buy back the chapter house from them.

So what do we need from you to help us to continue to grow stronger? We have developed three key areas where we need your help:

**1. Increase alumni participation in the alumni organization.** I have been very blessed to serve with Rich on the Omega Board of Directors over the past two years, and have been continually amazed by how much time he puts into our alumni and undergraduate organization communications. I would not be here if it were not for Rich reaching out to me and challenging me to do more. I would like to ask each of you to find a way to contribute your time to help Omega at least once in the next six months: Your "time donation" can come through writing a letter for the alumni newsletter, filling out a personal profile on the web, volunteering for an activity, or simply stopping into the chapter house to say "hi."

**2. Help maintain an attractive chapter house to promote strong membership.** The undergraduates have done a tremendous job of taking good care of the Omega Chapter house. Please consider joining us for the next alumni work weekend on February 27-29. If you cannot join us there, please send a donation earmarked for that purpose. You would be amazed by how hard the undergraduates can work when they know that their alumni are behind them.

**3. Create long-term alumni financial strength through a capital campaign.** This is going to be the tough one. We have met with multiple people inside of the Penn State and Greek world to understand what this process looks like. It will not be easy. We need 15 to 20 key Omega alumni willing to work very diligently to build true financial strength. Over the next several months, we will start to reach out to various individuals from all different age groups to ask them to step-up and help with this effort. If anyone has interest in volunteering for this before we reach out to you, please contact us so that we can move most effectively.

Please continue to look to all of the alumni communications (web site, email letters, *Omegaphones*, etc.) for a section devoted to providing other ways in which you can strengthen Omega in each of the three areas.

Please also take a second to send a thank-you note to any brother that you see in a "shout-out" for their participation. I know it is great to hear from brothers I have not spoken with in a long time, even if they just let me how "long-winded" I am in my alumni letters!

## CHAPTER REPORT

### Omega Chapter Gearing Up for Another Overall Homecoming Win

Once again, it's the fall semester at Penn State, and that means football, Homecoming, and massive recruitment efforts! With 26 brothers living in the chapter house, it will surely be a fun and exciting semester!

Recruitment always tends to be our first major focus once returning to campus. This semester we have several new recruitment ideas and a new rush pamphlet that will help bring new members to the house and to the fraternity. With Homecoming right in the middle of new member education, brothers and new members have plenty of time to mingle and get to know each other while preparing for another overall Homecoming win!

This year, Theta Chi will be working with the ladies of Omega Phi Alpha Sorority on a "Little Mermaid" theme. During Homecoming, we invite all alumni to visit the house and the undergraduate brothers and share stories.

Later in the fall, the undergraduates will be hosting a dinner for all local alumni on November 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm in the chapter house. This is our way of encouraging more local alumni to get involved with undergrads, and to thank everyone for a great year. The brothers are always asking about alumni and we always welcome visitors with open arms. It would be great to see some alumni at our many events this semester:

- IM Volleyball—Will Theta Chi be the champs for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row?
- Homecoming 2008—"The Little Mermaid"
- Football—Spend a Saturday tailgating with the undergrads!
- Alumni Dinner on November 6
- Initiation Week—WE NEED YOU!
- Holiday Lights—Deck the halls of Theta Chi!

These are just some of the many events that Theta Chi will participate in this year, and we look forward to seeing you there! Together, we can make this fall semester the best yet!

## ALUMNI UPDATES

### Eugene A. Whitehouse '53

(1516 Lynn Ave., Marquette, MI 49855-1635; ewwhiteo@nmu.edu) After graduation, I served in the Army for two years, got married, had one child (a son), and did graduate work at the University of Michigan. I was employed at Northern Michigan University as a History professor and as the long-term Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences. I retired in 2000 and still live in Marquette. My son, his wife and my two grandchildren, a boy (17) and a girl (14) all live in Marquette. I helped home school the boy. He is attending Michigan Tech as a freshman this fall.

### James Lucas '55

(2203 Hedgewood Drive, Bloomington, IL 61704-2405; jlluc33@aol.com) It is so refreshing to see the positive news regarding the Omega chapter of Theta Chi.

### Alfred Romanoski Jr. '67

(P.O. Box 999, Dillon, CO 80435-0999; romanoski@comcast.net) For the past 18 years, I have been a Professional Services Consultant for large law firms.

### Ronald Biernacki '81

(7229 Riverfront Dr, Nashville, TN 37221-6596; rbiern@aol.com) I moved to Tennessee eight years ago to take an orthopedic position at Vanderbilt University. This year we opened the new Vanderbilt Eye Institute. I am currently the President of my National Organization, the AACO. This has afforded

me to do some traveling in the US and recently to Belgium. I have two stepchildren and one step-grandson. My youngest started at the University of Tennessee this fall. I couldn't convince him to go to Penn State. However, the PSU flag flies at our house. I belong to the PSU middle-Tennessee alumni association and we meet every week during football season to watch the games at a local establishment. My neighbors went to OSU and Illinois so the Big Ten is represented in SEC territory. I look forward to Bob Mooney's emails to keep me up to date during football season.

### Scott Mahan '85

(221 North Drexel Avenue, Havertown, PA 19083-4915; scmahan@aol.com) My wife Danielle and I are living in marital bliss in Havertown, PA. We have two kids in college

this fall. My stepson Justin just started his third year at West Chester State University and my son Shaun entered his freshman year at Bard College. My stepdaughter Brianna is in 10th grade at Haverford High School and our "baby" Hallie will be a 4th grader at Manoa elementary.

### Jason Ross '92

(500 Austin St., Greensburg, PA 15601-4985; jasonpross@yahoo.com) I was selected as "The Pennsylvania State Athletic Administrator" to represent all of the junior highs and middle schools throughout the state. I will also be beginning my fourth year as an assistant football coach at Seton Hill University, while also being named as a special kicking coach at the prestigious Penn State football camp. I served as the best man at the wedding of Jamie Wilkins this summer in Kentucky.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

We need your help to build our online photo archives! If you have great pictures from your Theta Chi days, please share them at [www.thetachiomega.com](http://www.thetachiomega.com). Your submissions could be chosen to appear in an upcoming issue of *Omegaphone* and will be available for the brotherhood to see!

**In this photo:** (L to R) Dennis Foley, Rodney Miller, Robert Kramer, Jamie Koppersmith and Robert Mills at the 1987 Skullympics.



## Hail to the Lion! Alex Gregal '54 Roared into Penn State as the University's Cherished Mascot

WE ARE ..... PENN STATE!!! **Alex Gregal '54** has not only roared these words during his tenure at Penn State, but he also lived them as one of the few people who have seen the crowd through the eyes of the Nittany Lion.

At the age of 17, Alex was very young and naïve when he entered Penn State. His parents were immigrants from Eastern Europe. Growing up on a farm without electricity and indoor plumbing, it was quite a stretch for Alex to even think of attending a large university, but his parents knew that it would be the best for him.



*Brother Alex Gregal '54*

Like many at the time, there was no room for Alex at the main campus of Penn State, so he started his college days at the Mont Alto campus. After his freshman year, Alex made it onto the “big campus” and stayed at a boarding house for one semester. A blessing in disguise, it gave him the opportunity to explore various housing options. Making a decision that a fraternity might be the best way to go, he decided to rush Theta Chi. Since he already had several friends at the fraternity, it was an easy decision. He went through the process and in 1951 became a brother at Theta Chi.

Shortly after his initiation, Alex decided to spread his wings and try out for the football team as a walk-on. Being a high school football player and having wrestled in college, he thought that it wouldn't be an issue, but he was in for a big surprise. He was no match for the players on the team, so he decided to try out for cheerleading. Unfortunately, that didn't

work out for him either.

Then he saw a notice for try-outs for the Nittany Lion. Still to this day, Alex believes that he must have been the first person to walk in the door. In high school, he did some acrobatics, which helped a bit during his audition. The rest is history. He was named the Nittany Lion, and with the mascot coach providing directions, he performed at his first game. For three years, Alex represented Penn State as the Nittany Lion.

Alex performed many of the same feats that the Nittany Lion does today. Attending all of the home football games and most of the away games, his happiest moments were when the crowd responded to his playfulness on the field. Alex fondly remembers that he had to be very careful around the fans because they often pulled his tail off, quite by accident. To help alleviate that problem, Alex used to carry a bunch of pins with him and the fans would help to pin his tail back when necessary.

At that time, his lion suit was made of rabbit fur and cowhide, and was very hot. Although Alex would lose 9 to 13 pounds during a game, he would try to make up that weight loss in the evenings, enjoying a sip or two of beer with his buddies. During his time as the lion, Alex petitioned for a new costume made of synthetic materials that would be much tougher around the fans. He eventually won the battle and received a new lion suit that would prove to be invincible, never having to have his tail pinned on again.

How did he have the courage to perform in front of so many fans? Alex attributes his confidence and pride to the brothers and institution of Theta Chi. Now Alex never imagined standing up in front of thousands of fans as the Nittany Lion, but being a member of Theta Chi helped him to build the skills and confidence necessary for such a feat.

It doesn't hurt that Alex was somewhat of a socialite as well. Instead of running for President or Vice-President of the chapter, Alex was elected Social Chairman. He

had a reputation for throwing some great parties. These parties were not just simple get-togethers. They were formal dances where the ladies wore beautiful gowns and

***“How did he have the courage to perform in front of so many fans? Alex attributes his confidence and pride to the brothers and institution of Theta Chi.”***

top bands came to delight the audience. Giffy, a well-known cook, would enhance the evening with wonderful formal dinners and appetizers.

Alex also excelled in academics and became a test pilot after graduation. He remembers the day he received his wings. The lady who pinned on his wings, congratulated him, and he said, “This is the culmination of everything that I have done in life so far, to become successful.”

Success did not end as a senior pilot for Alex. Although he did not spend his life as a professional soldier, he did serve in the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserves, eventually retiring as a Lt. Colonel, an accomplishment that Alex is very proud of.

Applying his experiences as a pilot, Alex spent a good portion of his civilian career selling corporate airplanes. A very competitive and fascinating job, he could never have been successful without the skills and confidence that he gained from other positions in life.

Alex is now retired and living in State College, and staying in touch with the Penn State community. He feels that he is “just plain lucky, making the right decisions at the right time.” Throughout his entire life, everything just fell into place and all his achievements just built on each other. Alex attributes his success to hard work and being a member of Theta Chi, where he built the self-confidence to attain any goal.

*Do you know of a Theta Chi alum who would make a good profile subject? If so, contact our editors at [content@affinityconnection.com](mailto:content@affinityconnection.com) (mention the “Omegaphone” in the subject line).*

## WHY DO YOU SUPPORT THE ANNUAL FUND?

Thanks to our alumni donors, we have already raised \$13,036 for the 2008 annual fund! With three months left in the giving year, we are well within reach of surpassing our historical highest annual giving total of \$15,515 from last year!

Recently, we asked our alumni donors to tell us their reasons for supporting the annual fund. Here's what some of them had to say...

"I support the annual fund because I believe in the brotherhood of Theta Chi. Theta Chi was an instrumental part of my college life. Although I don't see a lot of my brothers on a yearly basis, I try to catch up with them at least every decade and it seems like it was just a year. I think of them often and of the great memories we had."

**- Ron Biernacki '81**

"To be honest, if it was not for Theta Chi I would not have made the many strong friendships that have lasted a lifetime."

I think that it is important for others to have the same chance. Also, Theta Chi was down for awhile, but the actives, the national and some dedicated alumni are making a strong comeback. Giving financial support to this effort is a good thing to do."

**- Hugh McClure '72**

"I credit the fraternity for developing my self-discipline, social graces, and ability to get along with and work with people. These attributes are so vital in having a successful career in the corporate world."

**- George L. Walz Jr. '55**

"I have always tried to support Omega Chapter because I have always valued the relationships and college experience that I enjoyed as a Theta Chi at PSU. The fraternity values and life long bond are something that I value. I am always surprised when someone I know finds out that I am a Theta Chi and lets me know that they are also a Theta Chi from another chapter. A small donation each year is not too much to ask a brother so that someone else can also enjoy these terrific experiences."

**- Jack Weiss '70**

Not yet a donor? Visit [www.thetachiomega.com](http://www.thetachiomega.com) to make a secure online contribution.

Though our mascot's costume has changed drastically through the decades, the spirit of the person inside has not changed. See page 3 for the story of our Theta Chi brother who saw the crowd through the Nittany Lion's eyes in the 1950s.



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**You Hold an Important Key to our Chapter's Future...  
See Page 1 for Details!**