

The "Better Really-Freaking Late Than Never!" Edition

Theta Sigma Tau/Sigma Nu Alumni Association / 414-435-0516

Winter/Spring 2005

Volume 52

"Emily gets her own stadium 'cause she makes more homeruns than the Brewers!"

- Lexie Natkin (01)

"He's so delicious he couldn't stop eating himself."

- Mandy from *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy*

Blackship III

For an extended period in November 2004, the websites for the House and the Alumni Association, as well as the Exploder, were all off line.

We suffered what can only be described as a massive hardware failure; the motherboard for the machine that hosts our web services, nicknamed Blackship, gave up the ghost.

For a week or so we were without service, since Blackship is the property of Rich "Wookiee"

Dammkoehler (92), there was a delay in getting a new machine purchased and set up. Happily, the hard drive was not damaged so once we got everything up and running we were back in business.

The "new" machine, actually the third server we have had for this purpose, is also a used computer but it should last us for a while.

Of course, donations to defray the cost of the server, its maintenance, and support are always welcome.

Tauster Update

Locked away behind the "Members Only" part of the website is our little Tauster web page. Currently it has a haphazard group of musical items: pledge songs, silly songs, etc.

One of our goals in the past few months has been to better organize that page by creating a few sub-pages. Of course the Pledge Songs remain, but we've added some other stuff.

We have the "official" Tau Party Mix cds that were made in the late 90s. They contain a nice variety of music from a lot of different styles of music.

Another page we have conceived of is the "Songs that should never have been (re)made" page. On this page we have put music that is disturbing, painful, or just "wrong." For starters this includes Leonard Nimoy

singing the Ballad of Bilbo Baggins (a truly horrifying song), a remake of Stairway to Heaven by Dolly Parton; and whatever else we can find that will fit the bill.

If you have or come across something that would fit this page (or any others), please submit it to us; we'd love to add it to the site.

We are also including a page that will include music from members' bands (or members' significant other's bands), a page of miscellaneous tunes that have meaning to some or many members, a page of audio dramas (like The Hitchhiker's Guide), and a page of amusing animations and short movies.

So give Tauster a look and enjoy the music and other silliness there.

"If anyone doesn't believe me, they're free to taste test!"

- Roxy Ross (05)
re: her breasts

The newest reality series:

Boys to Men
with Emily Dillon

Captain André Cunningham (99) is stationed in Iraq and will be there until January of next year. After getting back from Afghanistan in 2004 he attended the Signal Captain's Career Course at Ft. Gordon. In October of 2004 André took command of the 3rd Brigade Signal Company and is now responsible for the lives of over 100 soldiers. If you'd like to drop him a letter or care package: CPT André Cunningham; OIF III; FOB Warhorse, 3-3 BTB, 3ID; APO, AE 09397. His email is andre.cunningham@us.army.mil.

Sad news from Bruce Davis (82) of Lynn, MA: On November 24 Bruce's wife of 20 years, Beth, passed away unexpectedly. We're so sorry, Bruce.

Ken Dillon (03) worked the spring season at the Bridgework Theatre in Goshen, IN. A touring children's theatre, they perform educational plays at elementary and middle schools. Ken worked with them through May and is working with the Bristol Renaissance Faire for the summer.

Jennifer Hoffman (95) moved to Madison, WI, to take a management job at a Fazoli's Restaurant there. Her hunka hunka burnin' love, Jared Billings (03), made the move with her.

Daven Howard (98) lives on the south side of Milwaukee and is co-habitating with his fiancée, Stephanie Schmude (and their dog, Fiesta). Earlier this year, Daven was featured in the Cardinal Stritch University magazine and student newspaper for his work announcing at their sports events. Shortly afterward Daven gave up his 8 years of being underpaid by Stritch for his announcing work. He now announces for the Milwaukee School of Engineering for men & women's volleyball, soccer, basketball and men's hockey and softball.

Dave and Alyx (Fulkerson) Humfleet (03/03) announce the birth of their son, Stephen William, born on April 1, 2005.

George Johnson (53) and his wife live in Walnut Creek, CA.

Captain George Johnson (01) has been stationed in eastern Afghanistan since the end of April. He says the altitude will kick your @\$\$ (but not his, he's a bad boy!) If you'd like to send him a note or a care package send it to: George Johnson (DO NOT INCLUDE HIS RANK); HHC, 1st BDE, 82nd ABN; APO, AE 09314. His email is still el_jefe99@hotmail.com.

Tau Notes

Chris Boydston (87) has moved from Lincoln to Fremont, NE. In Fremont she works with a small law firm doing family practice and criminal defense work. Chris regularly updates her website (www.geocities.com/twodrus) with pictures of herself, her son, Matt, and the work she is doing on their new home

Denise Canale (93) is attending Keller Business School online to obtain her master's degree in Public Administration.

Kurt (94) and Leslie Kapplinger announce the birth of their son, Dane Stephen. Dane was born on December 6 by Cesarean section since Dane was a breach. Mother and baby (and father) are doing fine. Congrats!

Paul Karp (98) passed his exams and is now officially an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). You can look up his status at www.nremt.org using his registration number: B1652194

Pete and Viola (Martin) Lenz (89/02) announce the arrival of their daughter, Lillian Mae. Born January 5 at 2.51am, she weighed 7 lbs., 1 oz. and measured 20 inches. Lily was born in time to pledge the house for the spring semester and had the pledge name of *Little Bear*. See Lily and the entire Lenz clan at TheLenzFamily.net

Barb (Thompson, 89) Pamperin is seeking a new job as Web Manager. She's gotten fed up with the politics and weirdness at her current employer and is looking for someplace better. She has also created a website that she can use to update people on her and her family's doings: www.nconnect.com/~barblp/

Andrew Rich (03) is studying at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, where he will be working on his doctorate in archaeology.

Dave Shogren's (84) band, Barefoot Jones, played at the Class of 84 Reunion in June of 2004, which was held in the sculpture garden behind Rodman. Dave says "it was the next best thing to the gig I once played with 'Uncle Wiggly' on the Tit in the Quads." Kurt Ristow (84) also made it to alumni weekend as was found singing some nasty heavy metal songs karaoke-style on Friday night. More recently Barefoot Jones has been hitting a lot of places in and around St. Louis. They were recently broadcast on KDHX 88.1 FM on their River City Acoustic program. On June 10 they opened for Badfinger at the Off Broadway. When we can get some samples of their music, it will get posted to Tauster.

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More Tau Notes

Lisa Sottile (88) is stage manager of the Milwaukee Ballet as well as singing with the Milwaukee Symphony Chorus. She's still living on Milwaukee's south side, happily married to her husband, with two kids (Rebecca and Anthony) and holding.

Laura (Niña) Wolf Storzer (89) lost her father this year to cancer. He died peacefully in his sleep just 30 days short of his 60th birthday. We're so sorry, Niña.

Shmuel (Sam, 89) and Rivkah Temple announce the birth of their daughter, Miriam Aidel. Miriam was born on November 3, 2004 and everyone is doing fine. Congrats!

"That wasn't a movie, that was
a snuff film!"

-Stan Marsh from *South Park*
re: *The Passion of the Christ*.

House News

This spring the house had nine pledges:

Reuben "Special Sauce Bear" Berman's big is Jessica Fuoco
Matt "Frosty the Snowbear" Biwer's big was Colin Rafferty
Greg "Frag Bear" Bruce's big was Jharick Shields
Tyler "X-Bear" Brunette's big was Roxanne Ross
Maggie "Bubble Bear" Hall's big was Amanda Piccirillo
Cyndi "Hyper-Hypo Bear" Pinkus' big was Andy Beswick
Nate "Share Bear" Rees' big was Gretchen Cuthbert
Colleen "Rebel Bear" Rosin's big was Kali Jankovich
Trisha "Gummy Bear" Shafer's big was Nicole Turner
Welcome to the family!

This spring the house saw three members graduate:
Colin "Cooooo!!!! WHIP!" Rafferty: Business Administration & Economics

Roxanne "Wonder Woo" Ross: Classical Language & Archaeology

Nicole "Doc Pride" Turner: Biology

Congrats and welcome to full membership in the Alumni Association!

Andy Beswick (06) has been nominated to the German Honor Society, Psi Chi (the Psychology Honor Society) and the Laurel Society (for achievement in academic areas). Good work, Andy!

Shira (Kira Herder, 92) Wadro lives in Madison, WI, with her husband, Leon. They have a son, Gavriel (3 years old), and a daughter, Aviva (15 months old). Shira works for Fiskars doing import customs compliance work. In April of 2004 she passed the US Customs Broker's Exam. She is thinking about going to UW-Madison to earn a law degree in International Trade Law.

Lt. Matt Woodard (03) is still serving with the US Army in Iraq. He was thrilled to return from a mission to find a Tau care package awaiting him. He says "I laughed more that I have in a long time and would like to thank you all so much for remembering me and taking the time to make this tired soul smile." Matt expects to be returning to the states in February and getting a month of leave that starts sometime in early March.

Alumni Site News

Updates have been infrequent lately because the content manager has been busily completing his dissertation work (not to mention herding a small ape-like creature that resulted from an indiscretion he and his wife were intimately involved in). Updates will resume greater frequency very soon since the dissertation is nearly complete.

The Forums that were hosted through Bravenet are gone. Apparently, if no one posts to a forum for three months, they are deleted. It's a shame, but they were never used, anyway. People seem much happier to use the Alumni Exploder as a forum for chatting, making announcements, and the like.

Jason Padron (01) set up a "Tau Trivia Tournament" page at funtrivia.com. Registered users (no cost, no junk mail) can participate in daily and monthly trivia tournaments against other Taus. The trivia questions are on a range of real world topics that have been popular in the house in various generations. Jason will be choosing themes for each month's tournament. The theme for July is US History in honor of Independence Day.

Letters from the Front

"Lily, your parents should not be sweating to the oldies.'

'There's only one oldie I sweat to..."
- Emily Dillon (0?) &
Viola (Martin) Lenz (02)

George Johnson III (00) is serving his country at the Forward Operating Base Salerno in Afghanistan. And so we revive the "Letters from the Front" section of the newsletter, posting emails from George about his life and experiences in far away lands.

Date: Sun, 05 Jun 2005 09:31:21 +0000

We are settling into our battle rhythm now so I can speak to what life is like day to day here. I work the night shift as usual. Which is good in that there is a lower density of high ranking officers in the Tactical Operations Center (TOC, pronounced "tock") and interesting in that most of the crazy stuff happens at night. My function is as the night Battle Captain. I am the senior officer in the TOC at night and I help coordinate with our higher headquarters to get resources for our subordinate units. When there is a MEDical EVACuation request, myself and my minions process it and make sure higher approves it. When there are Troops In Contact (what we call a TIC "tick") we push them attack helicopters and Close Air Support (CAS "cass"). In situations where it is ugly we call on the Quick Reaction Force (QRF, pronounced as three letters this time) to fly in and put more boots on the ground. It can be an exciting job, but it can also be trying.

The TOC looks like a low budget version of NASA mission control. Tables with laptops centered in front of "The wall of knowledge" which is a collection of giant plasma screen televisions that display various map data, feeds from UAVs and other sensors and the ever important real time commo displays that we use to communicate in Afghanistan. The distances are so great that FM radios are only a small part of our commo set-up. From BN on up or primary means of communications is through a program that is like a souped up version of AOL Instant Messenger. You can send text, talk and post information in the "Filing Cabinet". It makes commo much more reliable. If a unit sends you a grid location (a map coordinate), you can't hear them wrong or your dyslexia can't mess up the grid. If they type it correctly you have it. If you don't write it down and you need it later, you just scroll up until you find it. All messages have a time date stamp on it so you can gather the facts and sequences very fast. When you send information to higher you don't have to play the telephone game any more, you just copy/paste the information and send it up.

It has its ups and downs. You are exhilarated when your forces are smiting the enemy and you can hand them assets like A-10s and AC-130s. You feel great when you get a MEDEVAC in to save a local national who was injured by an old Soviet landmine. But there is also the crushing feeling of helplessness when a soldier is killed. You have all these assets at your fingertips, you can call on assets that will pull a guy out who is hanging on to life by a thread, but all the technology in the world can't help the guy who is already dead. It's a shitty feeling. But you learn to deal with it.

It is dark as hell at night in Afghanistan. I grew up in a city, so I always associated overcast nights with bright nights as the city lights bounced off the overcast. The darkest kind of night is an overcast one. FOB Salerno is blacked out at night and the nearby towns don't have electricity so it is dark as all get out.

"There are three things in life which need good beatings to keep them in line: actors, fat children, and puppies."

-Davan from
Something Positive
www.somethingpositive.net

"Aw, Davan, don't worry. If Eva ever leaves you, I promise to be a shoulder to cry on and a vagina to penetrate."

-Claire from
Something Positive
www.somethingpositive.net

"Just remember one thing when you're kissing her. Those same lips pressing against yours were once quite merrily wrapped around my penis."

-Davan from
Something Positive

Letters from the Front (continued)

Date: Thurs, 09 Jun 2005 17:31:21 +0000

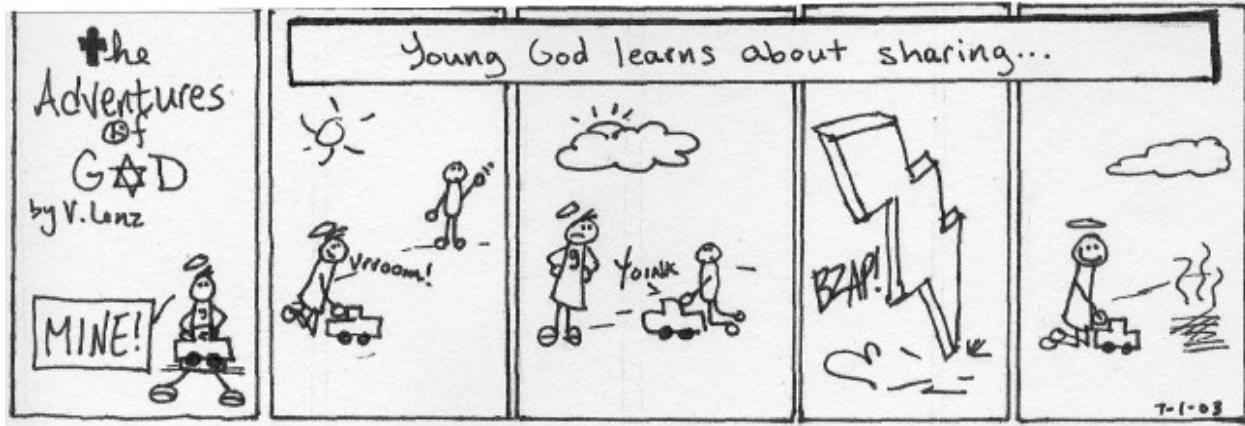
I got to go with the COL three days ago when he visited one of the other FOBs. It was nice to get out of the TOC and get a reminder that Afghanistan doesn't look like an electronic map display or a Predator feed. We flew to Orgun-E and Sharana in the Paktika province. The countryside is amazing; every square foot of tillable land is being used for farming. The valley floors are covered with signs of human influence. Everything is irrigated. Then the mountains are completely untouched.

The people of Afghanistan live in walled compounds with the main building built into the walls. It makes everything look like a fortress. When they are not actually fortresses. We flew over a castle built by the forces of Alexander The Great. There are also large areas of flat land where nomadic herders tend to

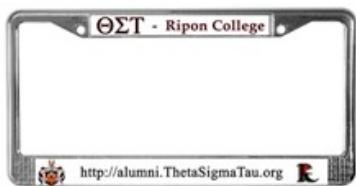
flocks of goats. The nomads live in tents, often brightly colored. An Air Force transport crew mistook one of these tents for the IP and code letter for this CDS drop we were doing. A CDS drop is when we take a bunch of supplies, strap a parachute to it and push it out the back of the plane. We recovered all the supplies but still...stupid air force.

I was surprised at the closeness I observed between the American infantry and their Afghan National Army counterparts. All ranks socialized and played volleyball together. The officers I talked to expressed genuine respect for the ANA. While not the most intellectual soldiers, their bravery is unquestioned. Nearly all of our operations are joint ops with the ANA. There are also German, French, New Zealand and British forces over here. All in all I am doing well and look forward to seeing everyone again.

The Adventures of God by Viola Martin Lenz (02)



These and more available at the Alumni Association Store, see page 8.



Taus in the news

Chris Boydston (87) recently forwarded information on a news article about an alumnus of the house, Chaz Franzke (87). Chaz's business venture in Ava, MO, a clothing optional campground for gay men was highlighted in a recent issue of the Springfield's News-Leader. We include the text and an image from the website version of the article, as well as a link to the article itself.

'Unique little dream' blossoms in Douglas County:

Despite disapproval from some, men plan to create permanent community.

AVA — Chaz Franzke and Jim Thideman expected the vandalism and the vulgar gestures.

They didn't expect their clothing-optional, gay men's campground to grow so big so fast.

But since its first season in 1999, Cactus Canyon has ballooned from \$3,000 in earnings to six figures last year. From 160 visitors to more than 1,200 so far this year. From 165 acres to 720.

Given that success — and despite some community disapproval — Franzke and Thideman want to offer more options to meet an unexpectedly high demand from outdoorsy gay men — a group that defies the stereotype.

Within the next two years, they plan to create a men's residential community with views of Bryant Creek and Douglas County's valleys. They'll build a community center, a swimming pool and a private gate accessible only through the campground. They want to offer trail rides and horse stables.

"It's kind of a unique little dream," Franzke says, as he stands atop a ridge on their land. "But people have been amazed at how well it's gone."

Not that Cactus Canyon is necessarily



Chaz Franzke

popular with the surrounding community.

"What I hear about it, I don't like," says Donald Potter, Douglas County's presiding commissioner. "I mean, all men? What does that tell you? ... If they're expecting me to give them a hearty welcome, they're wrong. I'll pray for 'em. I'll do that."

Tanis Schertzinger, who owns 41 acres close to Cactus Canyon, has the opposite reaction.

"They're really all wonderful people," she says. "If ever I have a problem, they'll come over and help. I'd call them very good people and very good neighbors."

And the campers contribute to the local economy, she adds. She notices a small impact at Jean's Healthway, a health food store in Ava, where she works.

Either way, Franzke and Thideman wonder if most people notice the campers.

"Gay men aren't only the flamboyant disco types," Franzke says. "We don't have that very classical type (coming here). That's why when the guys go into town, I don't think it's as obvious to the locals what's going on."

"We've had those (stereotypical guys) visit," Thideman adds, with a laugh. "They were funny."

"They were funny to watch," Franzke agrees.

UNEXPECTED DEMAND

Campgrounds aimed at homosexuals dot the nation. The site www.gaycampers.com lists dozens, including three in Missouri.

But Cactus Canyon is the biggest in terms of acreage. "Cactus Canyon. The largest men's resort in the USA" proclaims the sign at the end of the gravel driveway.

Terry Michael, 62, and Arthur Clark, 60, first visited three years ago.

The following year the couple rented a seasonal site, parked their 36-foot Prairie Schooner and drove down from their Springfield, Ill., home as often as they could.

Why Cactus Canyon instead of the local KOA?

"That's simple," says Michael, who has been with Clark for 38 years — 39 years in September.

"We can be ourselves. We don't have to be afraid of offending anybody when we call each other 'Honey.'"

Clark and Michael, who are both retired from the Illinois Department of Corrections, grill at the campground. They built a deck by their RV. They installed a fountain and planted flowers.

Most people probably think it's just endless sex parties, the men say. And that makes them laugh.

"See how crazy it is?" Clark asks as he cleans up after Speckles, his Dalmatian.

Clark and Michael return every year, in part, because Cactus Canyon keeps improving its facilities.

A sauna. A swimming pool. A gazebo. A dormitory.

Clark heard about the residential community last year. "I'm already bugging them about how much it would cost," he says.

Franzke and Thideman are not far enough along in their plans to answer such questions yet. What they know is that the development will cover about 60 acres, with lots ranging from a half-acre to an acre and a half. Residents would lease the land, but own their homes.

They hope to establish the community within two years.

Continued on next page

Taus in the news, continued

GROWING PAINS

Over the years, Cactus Canyon has been egged. Profanity has been spray-painted on the campground sign. Trash has been thrown in the driveway. Franzke and Thideman have received anonymous death threats.

This spring, the campground's sign was shot at with what they believe to be a high-powered rifle. A few days later, people stood on the property line and threw rocks at guests, they say.

In six years, Franzke thinks they've filed between 30 and 50 police reports.

"They file a few," agreed Gary Koop, Douglas County's sheriff. He recalled vandalism calls but did not remember the details of complaints filed this spring. He knows of no complaints filed by other citizens against the campground.

Even with the vandalism at Cactus Canyon, the campground is not the county's hot spot, Koop adds.

"I get more calls at some residences than at Cactus Canyon. I get more calls at some businesses than at Cactus Canyon," he says.

And, he says, vandalism is hard to investigate, especially with only five deputies to patrol the county's 810 square miles and 15,000 residents.

"You know, it's very inadequate personnel," Koop said. "... There's problems all over the county. We're handling it all as best we can."

Thideman and Franzke faced another business difficulty.

The two started the campground as a couple. In 2003, their relationship ended after six years together.

At that point, they could have sold the business.

They chose to keep it open.

"I think we make really good business partners," Thideman said. "There was some adjusting at first."

STAYING POWER

They also chose to stay at the campground because theirs is a multimillion dollar business.

They stay because the hills of Douglas County remind them of the Wisconsin hills where they both grew up. They stay despite problems with some community members.

"I'm not gonna fold to anybody," Franzke says. "... We are who we are. We don't hide anything."

But Franzke and Thideman don't seek to antagonize the community — not through their actions or the campground's name.

When they first opened Cactus Canyon, they joked they would name it "Big Gay Jim's Big Gay Campground." Instead, they named it for the prickly pear cacti that grow in the valley.

They also joked they would name their subdivision "Homo Heights," but quickly emphasized that it was only a joke.

And in the end, despite some problems, more people have been more welcoming than antagonistic. Soon after they opened, a couple pulled up at the campground gate and welcomed Franzke and Thideman to the neighborhood. Around the same time, a group of locals suddenly invited them to a potluck.

"That all counters somebody vandalizing our sign," Franzke says. "... And there's so much growth (at the campground) I don't have time to think about that kind of stuff. Why waste the energy?"

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The article can be found online at:

<http://www.news-leader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050624/NEWS01/1>

The Adventures of God by Viola Martin Lenz (02)



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*"He got a free
hummer when he
bought some
batteries."
- Sara H Hoffman
re: her boyfriend,
Matt.*

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.ThetaSigmaTau.org

Theta Sigma Tau Store at Café Press

We will be making some changes to the way the store works. The current set up of the store is somewhat haphazard since free stores through Café Press only allow one style for each item available. What we'd like is something where a style could be chosen and then applied to any style of item the person wants.

But... they don't restrict the number of free stores we can have. So, by the time you see this there will be at least three stores that you can peruse.

One store will have a pretty standard selection of shirts and other items that bear the crest on the front and the house letters on the back (when that is an option).

A second store will be specifically set up to offer variations on some of the first store's styles (letters in the front, other stuff in back) for part of the year, but

during pledging periods it will have a selection of items available that are specifically designed for that semester's pledge class.

A third store will also have variations on some themes, will be used for customizing items for specific people, and will have seasonal types of items available from time to time. In the summer there will be items for Conclave, in the spring there will be items for formal, perhaps Halloween and Christmas specials, too.

Custom products (such as items with pledge names, family lines, quotes or quips) are always available upon request, of course.

Remember, the meager proceeds from all stores go to defray the costs of maintaining the websites and the exploder.

Check them out starting with the main store: www.cafepress.com/thetasigmatau

About the Guestbook...

The Guestbook for the alumni site appears to be getting occasionally inundated with spam. Most of it is either for porn or poker websites. Apparently automated spammer programs have found the guestbook and hit it with all manner of garbage. Why anyone thinks this will generate business rather than ire I have no idea. We will try to clear the crap out on a timely basis now that we know that it's happening, but we can't promise to catch it as soon as it shows up. *sigh*

