



ETA SURVEY

Eta Chapter of Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity | University of Illinois | www.kdrillinois.org | Spring 2021

A Letter from the Alumni President



Brothers:

I hope each of you along with your family continues to be safe and in good health. The COVID-19 situation continues to be unprecedented, but with each passing day and the administration of vaccines, I hope we will soon begin to return to a more normal life.

The alumni board has been busy since our last report to you in the fall. I will break down the updates as succinctly as possible.

THE HOUSE: As you all know, the chapter is not currently operating, and the house is vacant. We have it listed for lease with Coldwell Banker. While there have been inquiries, the level of interest is limited because of the unknowns on campus due to COVID-19.

THE FINANCES: Since my report in the fall, the board worked with our lender to extend our loan for six months interest to give us some breathing room as we worked out our next steps. We engaged our fundraising and communication firm, Elevate, to undertake an electronic-focused feasibility study determining alumni interest in supporting a capital drive to secure our position and reduce debt, and the response was very positive.

THE CAMPAIGN: We are in the process of getting organized to move forward with a capital drive to do three things: 1) Cover our operating expenses in the next three years, 2) Provide the resources necessary to recolonize the chapter, and 3) Reduce or eliminate the mortgage. If done right, over the next several years we have an opportunity to truly secure our position for the next century. If you have an interest in helping as a volunteer, please let our project manager, Dorothy Wysocki, know at dwysocki@elevateims.com or by phone at 607-533-9200 ext. 20224.

THE CHAPTER: As of now we are discussing a plan with the KDR national staff to put staff members on-site this coming fall to begin the recolonization process. We understand the process may take a year or two to gather momentum and develop a core group of 40-60 men to re-establish the chapter. As you might imagine, the timing of plans is fluid at this writing as we continue to monitor the outcome of the COVID-19 vaccination programs.

THE CENTENNIAL: I would be remiss if I didn't say thank you to our Centennial

President (continued on page 3)

Alumni Spotlight:

Jose Velez '84



Jose at Texas Motor Speedway inside track with his Lamborghini Gallardo.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For this edition of the newsletter we're shining the Spotlight on Brother Jose Velez '84. Originally from Chicago, Jose graduated from UI with a BA in economics and an MBA in management information systems. As an active chapter member, he served as Little Sister chair and philanthropy chair. He is currently working as an advisor and is a Past Master with the San Gabriel Masonic Lodge. Jose and his wife Tina have been married for 32 years and they have a son, Vincent. Jose enjoys polo and amateur car racing – just last year he won both the state and national polo championship! Additionally, Jose has worked as a stand-in photo double for actor Antonio Banderas. Read on to find out more about Jose!

How do you stay in touch with your fellow Etas today?

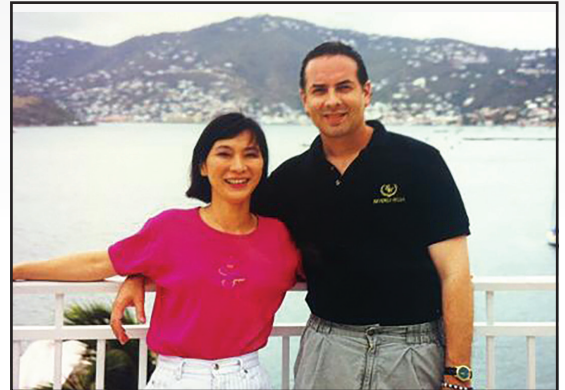
I stay in touch mostly by e-mail, LinkedIn professional networking, and the *Eta Survey* newsletter. It's important to stay in touch with your brothers to maintain the tie that binds us to the fraternity.

When did you discover a talent for analytics?

I first discovered a talent for analytics when I became a statistician at the Texas Department of Health. My talents evolved from crunching numbers and doing descriptive statistics to doing data analysis, data visualizations, and eventually data governance. Currently, I am a Data Management Strategy and Governance Advisor for Evernorth, formerly Cigna. I work for ThreeBridge Solutions, a management consulting firm based out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. You have to be a good storyteller as well, in my opinion, if you want to make money in analytics.

When did you get into the movie business?

I had done commercials and been on a calendar as a side gig. I think I was Mr. March, but don't remember exactly. I gradually got into movies as an extra, featured extra, and eventually as a stand-in and photo double for Antonio Banderas. I never joined the Screen Actors Guild, so I have no screen credits to my name. At one point in time, I read for a starring role in a Disney movie, "The Alamo." Needless to say, I didn't get the part. That's ok with me because



Jose with his wife Tina.



Jose (left) pictured with Antonio Banderas on the set of "Once Upon a Time in Mexico."

Velez '84 (continued on page 4)



ETA CENTENNIAL SUCCESS

By Zach Gooding '09, Centennial Committee Chair



Thursday, February 18 was the 100th anniversary of the Eta Chapter's charter. While we've delayed our in-person celebration due to COVID-19, the silver lining is that we were able to hold a virtual event via Zoom on our centennial date that could be attended by brothers across the country, and it was a great success.

The turnout was outstanding, with 59 total brothers participating. The evening began with a welcome and opening remarks by **KDR National President Scott Bradley, Zeta Beta '99**, and Eta Alumni Association President **Michael Kolberg '03**. **Don Russell '70** gave an informative presentation on the 100-year history of chapter, and everybody in attendance learned a lot about Eta.

Breakout rooms were provided to let alumni reconnect with brothers from their era, and it was great reconnecting with so many brothers, many of whom I hadn't seen in years. Special guests included former longtime faculty advisor **Guy Davis** and immediate past **National President Gene Spencer, Iota '76**.

Thank you to everyone who participated, and to the Centennial Committee for their hard work preparing for the event: **BJ Jacobson '09**, **David Hurter '95**, **Paul LoPresti '84**, **Bill Paris '87**, and **Don Russell '70**, with a special thanks to Don for researching and preparing the history presentation and Bill for event registration and publicity.



As we look forward to rebuilding the undergraduate chapter, it's wonderful to see that we have an engaged alumni base committed to KDR. The event was a reminder of the friendships that KDR gave us all in our college days that have persisted long beyond them. In the future, as we are safely able to do so, be on the lookout for information about gathering to celebrate 100 years of Eta in person.

KAPPA DELTA RHO LAUNCHES BROTHERS' KEEPER CAMPAIGN

By Bill Paris '87

I am pleased and honored to be serving as co-chairman of the KDR Brothers' Keeper Campaign. The idea for the program arose a couple of years ago when the headquarters staff realized that KDR had experienced an average of one suicide per year for the last ten years. This launched conversations



about whether this was a societal issue or if it was on colleges and universities to have better programming for students.

I am pleased to say all of the conversations came back to the fact that we hold ourselves to be a fraternal family. We are the men who give speeches in weddings; attend games, homecomings, and travel together; and the survivors who attend funerals. Ultimately, KDR is what we make it., but we are, in fact, a fraternal family.

We knew we could raise some money and put together a response for a year or two and feel good about that. However, we could also take the longer-term approach and raise money to endow a program for the future. Will this

be an issue 20 years from now? Of course, we don't know, and we would all hope not. But it's guaranteed there will be a crisis of the day, and we want to support future KDR brothers.

I encourage you to check out a short video on the program at www.kdr.com/foundation/. The goal is to raise \$2.5 million to endow the program. *I think it's the most important thing KDR has ever done.* Together, we can save lives. If you're motivated, join me in a five-year pledge to support the campaign.

If you have questions or just want to discuss the program please contact me at bparris@elevateims.com or 404-441-9630.

Alumni Life:

Steven Pelczarski '18



EDITOR'S NOTE: From the hometown of Bartlett, IL, recent graduate **Steven Pelczarski '18** has already begun a career in actuarial science. He's also enjoying life as a newlywed: Steven and his bride Emma were married in September of last year. As an active chapter member, he served as Senior Tribune, risk chair, and computer chair. Steven continues to dedicate some of his free time to Eta and is our current secretary on the alumni board.



Steven and his wife Emma.

How do you stay in touch with your fellow Eta brothers today?

During school, Facebook was the go-to method of contacting people, but these days it seems more natural to text or call and hope their cell number hasn't changed. Most of the time I'm reaching out to **Jason Hakiewicz '20** or **Justin Cabrera '18** to get their opinions on new music releases.

Why do you feel it's important to remain involved as an alumnus?

Being a member of KDR afforded me social growth and leadership opportunities I wasn't able to find anywhere else on campus; I don't know where I would be without the fraternity. It's important to me that future students get to have the same opportunities I had. That's why I ran for and currently hold a position on the alumni board and remain as involved as I can be with the organization.

What would you like to do with your degree?

I'm currently working in the health insurance industry as an actuarial analyst using the mathematics, statistics, and insurance knowledge that my actuarial science degree provided me. Part of becoming a fully credentialed actuary is a long series of exams that usually aren't finished until after you've attained a bachelor's degree, similar to other professional designations like a CPA. I'm steadily working my way through the process and hope to be credentialed very soon.

How is life as a newlywed?

I'm enjoying it very much so far! Emma and I got married in a small ceremony at a family member's house in Evanston, IL, and just recently moved back to the Chicago area. We like to joke that we ended up planning two weddings! By March 2020 we had already booked

our venue, caterer, musicians, officiant, and so on. As shutdowns started to occur, we made the call to keep the wedding date but scale back to having a short outdoor ceremony inviting only our immediate families, with to-go boxes of cake and champagne in lieu of a dinner. It wasn't what we originally planned, but it was a fantastic day. We've put off our honeymoon until travel restrictions lighten but are hoping to take some time off to explore Edinburgh, Scotland when that's possible.

As everyone knows, the chapter house is currently vacant. The House Corporation has a plan and recently completed a feasibility study to determine if the brotherhood would support what we need to do. Our needs are simple: Fund the next three years of basic operations (\$250,000); fund an on-site recolonization effort to rebuild the chapter in partnership with the National Fraternity (\$100,000); reduce or eliminate our mortgage to change our operating model to a lower break-even (\$600,000).

The feedback from the recently completed feasibility study showcased the interest and

dedication among our brotherhood. Yes, we have got work to do! We are in the process of building the steering committee. The quiet phase of the campaign has begun. We are talking with brothers, answering questions, and asking for support.

We know there is work ahead over the next year or two. But we are confident that we will come out of the effort in a much stronger position. We know student and campus life are evolving. Most likely, we will see a lower house occupancy in the future. We anticipate more single rooms along with professional

management and maintenance. We know we have a chapter home to be proud of. It is on us to maintain it and plan for the future.

If you are willing to help out as a class volunteer, please let our project account manager Dorothy Wsocki know by email at dwsocki@elevateims.com or by phone at 607-533-9200 ext. 20224. Otherwise, when you're contacted, take the time to speak to our consultants or volunteers. By working together, we have the opportunity to transform our chapter for the next generation.

President

(continued from page 1)

Committee and the 59 brothers who joined the Centennial Zoom reunion event. I know we had some technical glitches that made it difficult for a few to get in; my apologies for that. All in all it was a successful event and it was nice to see all the eras represented.

Thank you again for your interest, dedication, and support. If you have questions, don't hesitate to reach out to me at michael.kolberg@gmail.com.

Fraternally,

Michael Kolberg
Mike Kolberg '03
President

Eta Building Association of Kappa Delta Rho

CHAPTER ETERNAL

Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of the following Eta brothers:

- Adam J. Pientka '51
- Sammy J. Rebecca '52
- Donald G. Pyles '53
- Wayne E. Conery '55
- Walter W. Stein '56
- Lawrence D. Muller '64
- Walter A. Jiles Jr. '64
- William L. Moody '71



Brother Don Pyles

"Our dad always fond of KDR - a true gem in my dad's life. Thank you for your years of brotherhood. We have all of his frat memorabilia should you like to have it."

- Robert & David Pyles, sons of **Brother Donald Pyles '53**

LEAVE A LEGACY

Consider a lasting gift that will support Kappa Delta Rho long after you are gone. By including Eta in your estate plans, you ensure the long-term health and success of our fraternity. Here's what you and/or your advisor might need to know: Most common ways to include Eta are through your will or life insurance. Sample language: I leave the sum of (\$xxxxxx.xx or xx% of my estate) to: Eta Building Association of Kappa Delta Rho tax id # (37-6048873) c/o the National fraternity of Kappa Delta Rho, P.O. Box 777, Latrobe, PA 15650, for their general purposes.*

*This information is not presented as legal or tax advice. Always consult your advisors for questions you may have.

Velez '84

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I didn't want to live in "Hollyweird" anyway.

What kind of fun have you had on set?

I've been to many different sets: Some movies I have been involved with are "Spy Kids," "Once Upon a Time in Mexico," "Texas Justice," "For the Love of Zachary," "The Alamo," etc. I had fun talking to actors and actresses when they are not in character. It was really important for actors to remain focused on their craft on set and I respected those boundaries. When we had lunch or dinner on sets, you would hear a lot of inside industry information. That was fun to listen to.



Jose with Brother Greg Lynn '85 at Homecoming.

What other hobbies do you enjoy?

Regarding hobbies, it's mostly playing polo. My trainer is from Argentina. Argentina produces some of the best polo players in the world, so I wanted to learn from the best. To their credit, I won a state and a national polo championship last year. As for car racing, I might resume amateur race car driving now that Lamborghini has its own racing series in the Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, TX this year. I won a Lamborghini trophy at the Laguna Seca racetrack several years ago. I would love to add more trophies to my collection.

Can you share any polo and racing tips?

The only polo and racing tips I can give anyone is that you should save your money towards retirement rather than invest in either sport. Both sports are expensive, involve high speeds, and are extremely dangerous to participate in. People get hurt and killed in both sports all the time. My excuse is that I am mentally twelve eggs short of a dozen. That explains a lot. I'll steer you straight and that's no bull!

How has the pandemic affected your life?

The pandemic has affected my life in many ways. I am less likely to do a handshake and



Jose Earning The Teddy Roosevelt Cup

more likely to wink or nod. I had planned to travel to the Far East and Europe. Now I don't plan to travel out of state for at least another year. I work from home, so I have gained a few pounds. Luckily for me, I have a rowing machine. Still, the refrigerator is not far from the dining room table that currently houses my computers. I take a daily cocktail of Zinc, Niacin, and Selenium to stave off COVID-19. Gee, that's fun!

What advice can you give the Alumni and actives about taking risks?

My advice is best summed up by a quote from Theodore Roosevelt:

"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great

devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause who at best, if he wins, knows the thrills of high achievement, and, if he fails, at least fails daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."



Jose (2nd from right) being awarded the Automobili Lamborghini Super Progresso Trophy at Laguna Seca Raceway in California.

UPDATE YOUR E-MAIL

We want you to be in the loop! Please confirm we have a good email for you. We periodically send updates, reminders, and good wishes at the holidays electronically. To check your information, go to www.kdrillinois.org, log in and you can view and update your contact information.

Have Alumni News?

We want to hear from you! Send your personal updates, accomplishments, adventures, and photos to our account manager Brian Bates at bbates@elevateims.com, or simply fill the enclosed news form and return it in the mail. We want to share it in the next issue of *The Eta Survey!*