



# ETA SURVEY

Eta Chapter of Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity | University of Illinois | [www.kdrillinois.org](http://www.kdrillinois.org) | Spring 2019

## A Letter from the Alumni President



Brothers:  
I have struggled with how to craft this letter and ultimately concluded the best thing to do is not sugarcoat our current situation. We have a problem, but we believe we have a plan coming together to address it. I hope you'll read on.

As the alumni board, we strive to be a consistent, supportive presence for the chapter, while at the same time allowing them autonomy to run the organization. Over the past couple of semesters, it became apparent that the chapter was struggling a bit on recruitment. With a large graduating class this spring, we return with 37 brothers in the fall. That is not nearly enough to fill the house, which puts us in a difficult spot financially. That's the bad news.

The good news is we believe we have a group of officers leading the chapter who understand that they need to buckle down and change up their program. They are young, sharp, and in need of education and guidance.

So here's the plan (and I will note that, as a board, we intend to be proactively engaged to make changes as we go forward):

- Board Treasurer Jack Umlauf '17 and I traveled to Champaign to meet with the entire chapter, to reinforce the importance of living in the house and the need for successful recruitment to grow the chapter, and to obtain their commitment to the game plan;
- We have made our national headquarters aware of the situation so that we might enlist their assistance;
- The chapter and board have committed to sending members of the executive board to this summer's leadership academy, at which the headquarters has committed to do a special breakout, working with the officers on their recruitment plan;
- We are working with the headquarters to bring the recruitment training to the entire chapter.

How can you help?

- If you have a son, grandson, nephew, or neighbor who will be coming to Illinois in

**Alumni President** (continued on page 3)

## Alumni Spotlight:

## Thomas E. Digan '81

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For this edition of the Eta Survey we're shining the spotlight on Brother **Tom Digan '81**. From the hometown of Palatine, Tom graduated from UI with a BS in biology and was commissioned an ensign in the United States Navy. Shortly thereafter, Tom was designated a naval aviator. Tom served in a number of helicopter squadrons, amassing over 2,200 flight hours and conducting two rescues while on active duty. His last assignment before leaving active duty was as the assistant air officer for the USS Nassau (LHA 4). Aboard the Nassau, he deployed to the Mediterranean and also to the Persian Gulf for service in operations Desert Shield/Storm. Tom continued his education at Troy State University and earned his MS in international relations. He then completed his JD at The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law. Today, Tom is working with the Navy Region Legal Service Office Midwest as legal assistance department head. He is admitted to the bar in Maryland, the District of Columbia, Illinois, and Florida, and serves on the Illinois State Bar Association Standing Committee on Military Affairs. Tom was honored with the Meritorious Civilian Service Award, the second highest award granted by the secretary of the Navy or a major Navy commander. He and his wife, Amalia, proudly share two UI children: Isabel '19 and Gabrielle '21.



Tom Digan aboard a boat in Milford Sound, New Zealand.

### What did you enjoy most as an active chapter member?

I most enjoyed the camaraderie. At a large school like Illinois, it is easy to get lost and be one of the crowd. At Eta Chapter, I had friends with whom I shared more than accommodations.

Although from different parts of the state and a variety of rural/suburban/city backgrounds, we had a good time together. Without KΔP, I might never have met most of them, and my college days would have been the lesser for that.

**Thomas E. Digan '81** (continued on page 4)

## Illinithon 2019: For the Kids!

This year for Illinithon, the Eta Chapter fundraising team was captained by Zack Goldberg '19 and attended by brothers Sean Tobin '19, Jeremy Gumila '20, Daniel Jacobson '21, Jacob Kerkstra '22, and Daniel Caulfield '22. Illinithon is a dance marathon event held to celebrate the children at St. John's Children's Hospital in Springfield, Illinois. At the event, teams are encouraged to get to know the families attending, write letters to children that couldn't attend, and raise as much money as possible for the hospital. This money goes toward funding new equipment for the hospital, advanced therapy for the children, and toys for the kids. Everything about Illinithon is FTK ("for the kids").

Our chapter was moved by the volunteers of Illinithon who came to the house to help spread the word of this cause. Raising money for children in need is a staple of our philanthropy events, so we could not ignore this call to action. With the leadership of senior Zack Goldberg, all Eta members registered a KΔP team for Illinithon. We



**Illinithon 2019** (continued on page 3)



# Chapter News



## From the Consul

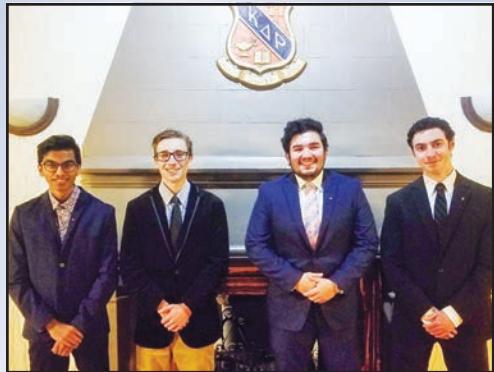
Dear Alumni:

I am very excited to have been elected as the new consul for Eta. As an elementary education major, I spend a lot of time in different classrooms in a few local schools. When not required for my major, I spend even more time volunteering for different programs that tutor underprivileged kids in areas that they might need.

Kappa Delta Rho has been an incredible experience for me. Throughout the initiation process, we work to include the new members in all of our brotherhood activities so that they will not only grow closer to their pledge class but to the established active members. The Eta men see brotherhood as a core value of our fraternity.

I am proud to share that our annual fall philanthropy, Car Bash, managed to raise over \$900 for the Andrew McDonough B+ Foundation. Through the hard work of our philanthropy chair and his committee, as well as many other involved brothers, we managed to make this event a great success. We hope to close out the spring semester with continued progress and leadership.

*Joel Alva*  
Joel Alva



Our spring 2019 pledge class (L-R): Dev Kumar, Michael Hultberg, Anthony Pulido, and Cody Baker. Not pictured: Kyle Burns and Arihant Jain.

Group photo after our induction ceremony.



## Chapter Spotlight: Gary Braznichenko '21

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Representing the chapter in the spotlight is **Gary Braznichenko**. He currently serves as our pontifex, previously served as our risk manager, and has been just and reliable as the head of advisory. All the brothers in the house feel comfortable going to him with issues or simply to talk. He is also studying computer science and has already had two different internships as a sophomore. From the hometown of Vernon Hills, Illinois, Gary is working toward his BS in computer science and his BS in statistics. Current part-time work includes a an internship at Capital One as a software engineer and an upcoming internship as a software engineer intern at IMC for summer of 2019. A member of the club tennis team, he also enjoys skiing and ultimate.



### What led you to join the chapter?

Coming into UIUC as a freshman, I knew that academics were my priority, and I had yet to find a fraternity that I enjoyed. I received a text from Bobby McAuliff, the consul at the time, about coming around the house to meet some of the guys that were currently in the fraternity that my brother was a member of, KΔP. I instantly saw a different atmosphere than I had before. Everyone was outgoing, and it felt as though I was being included in fun, not interviewed. This cohesive and fun environment led me to join KΔP.



Brothers Matthew Kinsella and Gary Braznichenko hold up sledge hammers for our fall philanthropy, Car Bash.

### What have you enjoyed most as a member of Eta?

I think that being able to branch out to meet new people and to experience new things is an opportunity that I wouldn't have been able to have without Eta. After joining the fraternity, I met so many people that I consider some of my closest friends now. Everyone I have met has contributed to my learning, my social life, or other aspects of my time at college in some regard.

### How would you like to apply your degree after graduation?

I am not entirely set on what it is I would like to do after college yet. Majoring in both computer science and statistics opens a lot of doors for me, whether I choose to go into data science, technology, or finance. My goal right now is to make

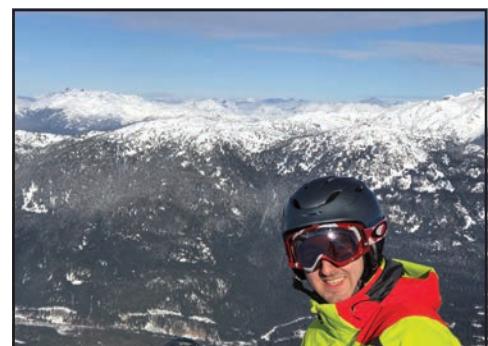
sure that I can experience as many of these potential careers as possible through internships. After working as a software engineer intern at both a hedge fund and a bank, I understand that I enjoy financial concepts, but perhaps UI/UX design is not something that I am interested in.

### When did you develop such a knack for counseling?

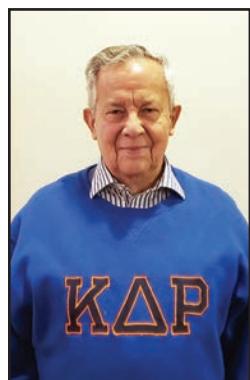
I wouldn't describe it so much as a "knack for counseling" but as a genuine concern for the well-being of those whom I can call my brothers. I want everyone I know in the house and those joining the house to know that there are people that they can talk to if they need anything and resources that can help them in almost any facet of college. Being there to listen and help my friends is something that I feel is really important to the heart of a fraternity and to myself.

### Outside of school, what do you do for fun?

I love playing sports of all kinds. While I didn't play much of it growing up, it's always fun to play basketball with the guys in the house. I am also a member of the university's club tennis team and Eta Chapter's intramural ultimate team. Beyond just sports, my hobbies include working out, skiing, and working on fun side projects in computer science. Over last spring break, I worked on a challenge to predict expected values of March Madness teams this year. I ended up doing well, and it was a great learning experience.



Gary skiing in the mountains of Whistler, BC, Canada.



**Jorge Esguerra Jr. '56:** Being a member of the Kappa Delta Rho fraternity is one the greatest gifts I have received in life. When I came to the University of Illinois, I left my home in Colombia and my parents and eight siblings for the first time in my life. We were a very loving and united family, and knowing that I was not

going to be able to see them for a long time was very difficult. I missed them badly, but becoming a KAP gave me 55 new brothers who welcomed me very warmly and lovingly. The Eta Chapter became a great family and taught me to love the United States so much that it created in me the dream to make it my new country. That dream became a reality some 20 years later, when I was sent back here as president of the Colombian Airlines for the USA, Canada, and the Orient, with my office in New York.

I keep great memories of my life as a KAP. The Eta house gave me some wonderful friends whom I keep in the bottom of my heart, although several of them have already passed away: **Gale Shillington '57, Joe Gruber '56, Bob Groeneveld '57, Bob Jacobson '56**, and others.

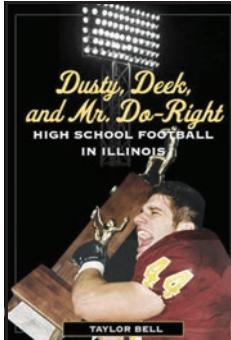
As far as anecdotes of my life in the house, this just came to my mind; when I was there at the Eta house, we had a dog, a big dog. Cesar was

a big Great Dane who liked to follow me though the campus whenever he was able to sneak out. He once appeared at the door of my thermodynamics class, and my teacher was so scared that he sent me home on the spot. He also snuck into the kitchen of the house the Sunday we had our sweetheart dinner and ate half of the steaks and spoiled the rest. We had to run to a burger place and fed hamburgers to the girls instead of steaks. But the worst was when he followed me to one of the spring concerts we had in front of the auditorium. There were more than 4,000 students on the lawn. I sat with my date rather in the back, and all of the sudden, Cesar appeared in front of us. I was able to keep him still for a while, until the orchestra started playing Tchaikovsky Overture "1812"; when the drums started sounding real high, Cesar went crazy. He took off toward the drummer, jumping over the students and barking as loud as he could. Four or five girls fainted. The drummer took off with Cesar after him. Then Cesar started coming back to me. The MC was asking for the owner of the dog to take him away. My date and I tried to ignore him, but Cesar got to me and started licking my neck. We left among the shouting and booing of all the students attending the concert.

#### Taylor H. Bell

**'62:** In my retirement, after 33 years as a sportswriter for the *Chicago Sun Times*, I have written four books on high-school football and basketball and have been a prolific contributor to Trip Advisor, with 4.6 million readers since 2012.

In *Dusty, Deek, and Mr. Do-Right*, longtime fan and sportswriter Taylor Bell shares the stories of the greatest players, toughest coaches, most memorable games, and fiercest rivalries in Illinois history.



## Alumni President (continued from page 1)

the fall or who is perhaps at Illinois now, send his name and contact info to **Daniel Caufield** by email at [dac4@illinois.edu](mailto:dac4@illinois.edu);

- Support the annual fund at the best level you can. Money will be extremely tight this year, while at the same time, we are investing to intervene and provide training to the chapter.

We have often said our alumni engagement and support is what keeps our chapter strong. We're at a point where we have to back up the talk. I hope we can count on you! I look forward to providing you an update report this fall.

Fraternally,

Mike Kolberg '03  
President, Eta Building Association

## 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](http://www.kdrillinois.org) and log in.



**Bill Paris '87 (right):** Met up with and hosted **Scott Runyon '11 (left)** and his wife, Heather, for a few days of skiing in Park City, Utah.

#### Travis Jaynes

**'08:** Welcomed the birth of my twins, Jerico and Gemma Jaynes.

Congrats on your new bundles of joy, Travis!



**Bob McCormick '79, Bruce Mullins '79** and his eldest son Paul, and **Doug Jackson '78** made the spring training trip to Arizona for six days this year. They saw four games at the home stadiums of the Cubs, Reds, Royals, and Milwaukee. Also toured the Diamondback's major league stadium. Had some time to do a little hiking and to walk around Old Scottsdale and visit an air museum. Always a fun time. Next year it is back to Florida.



Left to right: Bruce Mullins '79, Bob McCormick '79, and Doug Jackson '78.

## Illinithon 2019

### (continued from page 1)

were challenged to raise \$1,000 for St. John's Children's Hospital, and I'm happy to say that, by the end of the event, our chapter raised \$1,574.58. I would like to especially recognize the brothers, along with myself, who raised \$125 and above: Zack Goldberg '19, Evan Gilbert '19, Peter Ralston '19, Sean Tobin '19, Rafal Zdanowicz '20, Jeremy Gumila '20, and Daniel Jacobson '21.

These dance marathons were founded by the Children's Miracle Network with the goal of raise money for children's hospitals. The marathons are organized across the country to levy the expenses of over 170 hospitals. It's an event that has changed the lives of so many children and their families. I'm so happy that our Eta Chapter was able to contribute to such an incredible organization, and I look forward to dancing with my brothers for the kids in 2020.



# Thomas E. Digan '81

## How did you become involved on the house corporation board?

This past year, I stopped by the house the night before Homecoming, and fortunately, one of the active members was able to give me a flyer about the Homecoming activities. I went to the meeting the next day and saw **Steve Maske '83** for the first time since the early 1980s, when we were both in the Navy. During the alumni meeting, Steve encouraged me to volunteer for the open board position. This was a chance to payback some of what I had gained from being part of the house. It also didn't hurt that I had two children at Illinois, so I would be periodically visiting the campus anyway.

## After graduation, what inspired you to pursue aviation in the Navy?

I had wanted to be a naval aviator since I was about six years old. My father had served in the Army for a while, but I grew up reading about and watching movies on World War II and the carrier war in the Pacific. We also had a Naval air station at Glenview, where reserve units used to fly and where one of my neighbors flew A-4 Skyhawks. I attended the University of Illinois on a Navy Reserve Officers Training Corps scholarship, and after graduating and gaining a commission, I was finally selected to attend flight training.

## Which achievements are you most proud of?

I was winged as a naval aviator and assigned to fly the SH-3 Sea King helicopter aboard the *USS Midway* during the cold war. While on



Tom around 1986, when he was stationed in Japan flying the SH3 Sea King.

board, our missions were antisubmarine warfare, logistics, and search and rescue. We did everything from tracking Soviet submarines to carrying passengers, mail, and cargo to the smaller ships from the carrier.

One night on search and rescue duty stands out more than most; it was "dark and darker" out, and I was part of the four-person crew. We

had been having some trouble with our aircraft and were planning to bring it back and change aircraft after the fix-wing aircraft had completed their landings. Unfortunately, an E-2 Hawkeye early warning radar plane didn't catch the arresting-gear wire but had already reduced power when they touched down, so they continued off the end of the deck and crashed into the water. We immediately proceeded to the scene of the crash to begin the search for survivors. As the aircraft commander, I directed the other pilot as he struggled to maintain a stable hover while we

lowered our swimmer into the water. We were able to rescue one of the pilots and assist with some other members of the Hawkeye crew. But unfortunately, that night, two naval aviators paid the ultimate price for freedom.

Years have passed, and I still remember that night. The *Midway* is now a museum in San Diego, California. Amazingly enough, if you visit and take the tour, you might see a picture of 26-year-old me in the helicopter ready room along with my name on the posted flight schedule. That, along with seeing my name in a museum exhibit at the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, came as a complete surprise to me when I happened upon them. I guess being an exhibit in two museums makes me old.

## When your service wrapped with Desert Storm, why did you choose to go into law?

I served aboard the *USS Nassau* (LHA 4) on my last active duty tour in the Navy. I joined the ship at the beginning of a six-month Mediterranean deployment about a week after getting married. I was deployed to support President Bush just off the coast of Columbia when he attended a drug summit there and then deployed for over eight months for operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. We were gone a lot. Additionally, the military was beginning its post-Cold War drawdown. It was time to go. I had an undergraduate degree in biology and a master's degree in international relations, and with my wife remaining on active

duty, becoming a commercial helicopter pilot didn't seem feasible. Although I had never really planned to go into law, while at Illinois, I had been a member of the Interfraternity Council judicial board and, later, served as the legal officer for one of my squadrons, so it seemed like something I could do with my wife working in the Washington, DC, area. After law school, I joined a large firm and was actually able to use my undergraduate biology degree as part of the firm's food, drug, and medical-device practice section.

Because my wife was still on active duty, we were not able to stay in Washington, because the Navy needed her elsewhere. Fortunately, I was able to return to Illinois, because she was assigned to the naval hospital in Great Lakes, Illinois. But I was not able to continue working in the food and drug practice area, because at the time, it was highly Washington centric. Thankfully, a position opened up at the naval legal-service office, providing legal assistance to military members, retirees, and their family members. I like to say that I am still in the search-and-rescue business. I just do it from behind a desk, trying to help people solve their legal problems.

## Were you surprised to have been awarded the Meritorious Civilian Service Award?

Yes. I was extremely surprised. I never saw it coming. My focus had always been helping people, not on awards. I am grateful to my then commanding officer for putting me in for the award.

## What advice can you give the actives and alumni about dedication and bravery?

If you are doing something you believe in and enjoy, the dedication comes naturally. I always wanted to fly and to be able to help people. After leaving the military, flying helicopters became cost prohibitive, so I focus on helping people. There are many types of bravery, not just those that you see in the military. Standing up and doing what's right and making good decisions, even when not popular, is also an important form of bravery. *Honor Super Omnia* shouldn't be just words.



Isabel, Gabrielle, and Tom Digan at an Illinois game.

## Leave A Legacy

**C**ONSIDER 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: the 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 number 37-6048873, % to the National Fraternity of Kappa Delta Rho, PO Box 777, Latrobe, PA 15650, for their general purposes.

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