



# ETA SURVEY

Eta Chapter of Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity | University of Illinois | [www.kdrillinois.org](http://www.kdrillinois.org) | Fall 2020

## A Letter from the Alumni President



Brothers:

I hope each of you, along with your family and loved ones, are continuing to remain healthy and managing through the COVID-19 pandemic as best you can.

For those of you who receive our e-communications, some of my comments will not be new information. If you do not receive our e-communications, please take a moment to send us your e-mail address on the enclosed response form. You can also update your information online at [www.kdrillinois.org](http://www.kdrillinois.org).

The alumni board has been busy over the past several months. I will break down the updates as succinctly as possible.

**THE HOUSE:** By the end of the spring semester, it was clear that we would not have enough undergraduate chapter members to live in the house. Coupling that with the COVID-19 situation, the board made the difficult but practical decision over the summer to close the house for the current academic year.

**THE CHAPTER:** A number of brothers have asked about the chapter. Initially the chapter leadership indicated that they intended to continue operating in an out-of-house situation. COVID-19 has made a difficult situation even more difficult. We are not anticipating any significant progress with the chapter until we get past the pandemic. We have been in active conversation with the National Fraternity and, when the time is right, will look to bring in the necessary support/growth staff to repopulate the chapter.

**WHAT DOES IT COST TO SIT VACANT?**  
A number of brothers have asked what it costs to sit vacant. The expenses are roughly: taxes (\$30,000); insurance (\$15,000); basic utilities, management, and misc. (\$25,000). The mortgage balance is just under \$600,000, and payments have been deferred until January. Payments are about \$6,000 per month when they resume. The board has liquid reserves to last about a year.

**WE ARE EXPLORING OPTIONS TO RENT:**  
I heard from several of you, expressing opinions as to whether we can avoid renting the house. The board appreciates the feedback and realizes that the concern was for security deposit and damage. To be prudent, we have

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

## Alumni Spotlight: Taylor Bell '62



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For this edition of the newsletter, we're shining the spotlight on Brother **Taylor Bell '62**. From Blue Island, Illinois, Taylor graduated from UI with a bachelor's degree in English. In addition to his work as sports editor of *The Daily Illini* during his junior and senior years, he served as Eta's vice-president. After graduation, Taylor went on to become a sportswriter for the *Champaign-Urbana Courier*, and then high-school sports editor for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. He joined the *Chicago Daily News* as the high-school sports editor in 1968 before transitioning long-term to the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Taylor's career in the newspaper profession spanned for 40 years, and he has received several prestigious awards for his work in print. Taylor and his wife, Gail, have been married for 44 years. Together, they support 40 charities and organizations annually. Retirement has not slowed Taylor down; he has since authored four books on high-school football and basketball. He is also enormously successful as a contributor to *TripAdvisor* and has had over 6,400 reviews published and has attracted over 7.4 million readers.

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

It has been 60 years since I lived in the KΔP chapter house at the University of Illinois, but the memories are as fresh as if it were yesterday: house dances, pledge walkouts, walking Caesar to class, sleeping in the dorm during the winter, meals prepared by a professional cook, cramming for final exams, Mother's Day weekend, eating burgers at Root's at two in the morning during exam week, undergrad/pledge football game, wake-up at 6:00 a.m., Homecoming. What I enjoyed most was the camaraderie and brotherhood, experiencing a family atmosphere, getting to know young men and young women from other parts of Illinois and elsewhere, working together, organizing events, planning projects, and learning to establish relationships and lifetime friendships.

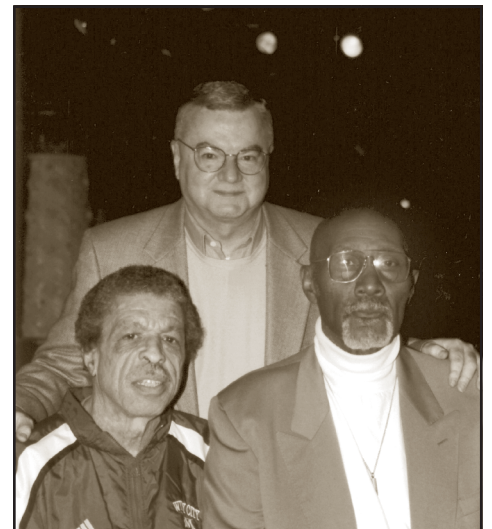
### After graduation, how did you get your first writing gig?

As sports editor of the *Daily Illini* as a junior and senior, I had established relationships with the two newspapers in Champaign-Urbana and other newspapers in Illinois and the Midwest that covered University of Illinois football and basketball. I mailed hand-written applications to 50 newspapers from Los Angeles to New York City. I received several requests for interviews, including the *Chicago Tribune* and *The New York Times*, but I wanted to stay in Champaign-Urbana and gain as much experience as I could by covering high-school and college sports. I chose the *Champaign-Urbana Courier*. In four years, I learned a great deal from sports editor Bert Bertine.

### What did you enjoy about covering sports?

Meeting coaches and athletes. Everybody has a story to tell. As a writer, you want to tell it to your readership. Some stories are more interesting than others. Sometimes they are reluctant to express themselves. The challenge for a writer is to get into a person's head, to gain their confidence, to establish a positive relationship, and to persuade them to divulge details of a life experience that they have declined to reveal to others in the past. Today, in the wide ranging media business, it's more than the traditional and conventional "who, what, where, when,

**Taylor Bell '62** (continued on page 3)



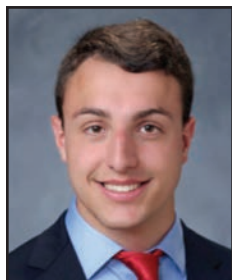
Taylor Bell with two all-time high-school basketball stars from the Chicago Public League: Sweet Charlie Brown (left) of Du Sable and Abe Booker of Wells.





## Chapter Spotlight:

## Alec John Christian Thomas



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Representing the chapter in the spotlight is sophomore and pontifex, Alec Thomas. Alec is a shining light at the house, even with the world pandemic going on; he's an extremely positive individual who always tries to push for increased brotherhood and compassion for one another. He represents a strong man for Eta, no matter what happens in the future, and we are proud to call him brother. From the hometown of Chicago, Alec is working toward a degree in urban and regional planning, with minors in Spanish and Latino/Latina studies.

### What has your experience at school been like this year?

My experience this school year thus far has been unique, to say the least. Since we were sent home the previous semester, this time around, I am trying to get whatever semblance of "the college experience" I can get, while maintaining the necessary precautions. I am also living near our chapter house, so it is always nice to walk past it when I am running errands. Sometimes we do hang out (distanced and masked, of course) near the house or in other parts of Champaign-Urbana. I'm so glad we are all staying in touch with one another during this time.

### How are you coping with the changes?

This "new normal" has taken some getting used to for me, as I am sure it has for all of us. However, as I grow more accustomed to the changes, they don't feel that different to me anymore, and I remind myself that I am taking these steps (wearing a mask, doing online learning, social distancing, and the like) to keep myself and others safe, which is the most important

thing. It's unfortunate that I don't get to see my friends as often, but I am grateful for social media and the major role it has played in helping me stay in touch with friends and family as well. Being a major extrovert, my main goal is trying to not drive myself completely stir crazy with the decrease in social interaction and sitting in front of a computer for longer than the usual period of time I sit in front of it!

### How are you preparing for your career?

I interned for Empowerment through Education and Exposure, a Chicago-based company with programs educating youth and local communities on social justice issues and topics, as well as providing enrichment opportunities for Chicago youth. I have also worked as a summer camp counselor for the Chicago Children's Theatre.

### What are you doing for fun?

So many things have changed, but so many things have remained the same for me. I still enjoy drawing, reading, playing videogames, playing the piano, and looking for cool restaurants in Chicago and Champaign-Urbana. Being able to keep in contact with my friends and especially my Eta brothers has been fantastic, and I look forward to seeing what we will be able to do this year.



## ALUMNI BOARD LAUNCHES IMPORTANT SURVEY

The alumni board recently partnered with Elevate IMS (our communication provider) to undertake an important survey of our brotherhood to determine whether our brotherhood would support undertaking a capital fundraising effort to eliminate our debt and to plan for revitalization of the chapter, as well as to plan for necessary operations and expenses that will come up with the house in the next few years.

It is easy for us to take the house for granted. It has always been there. But if we don't plan for our longevity that might not be the case.

In the days since we listed the house for rent, we have already had multiple organizations that sold or lost their housing offering to buy our property. They are looking for their "forever" homes.

Things you might not know: on our own block, the former TEΠ house has been purchased by Phi Mu Sorority, and they are building a big beautiful new house. At the end of our

block, many of you might remember the old Delta Sigma Phi house. That was purchased by Kappa Delta, and they have built a big beautiful new house. Behind us, Lambda Chi Alpha built a huge new house, and they had too much debt. They had to sell their property.

This is where **you** come in! As a board, we **do not** want our future to be one where people point at a house and say, "that's where the old KΔP house used to be." Dramatic? **Yes!** A real possibility? **Yes, if we don't act.**

We are asking you to think about your experience in KΔP: the friendships, the hard work, the fun. We each grew as men, as leaders, as scholars. That is what we seek to preserve for the young men of the future.

**You may complete the survey here:**  
[TinyURL.com/Eta-KDR-Survey](https://TinyURL.com/Eta-KDR-Survey).



## 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, c/o 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.*



## Save the Date: February 18, 2021

The Eta Chapter will be celebrating its centennial on February 18, 2021. With the COVID-19 pandemic, our in-person celebration will have to be postponed until we are again able to hold a large event. The silver lining is that we can hold a virtual event near our actual anniversary date. We want to give everybody an opportunity to catch up with brothers from their era and share a century of Eta history. More information will be sent out as we finalize the details.

In the meantime, every one of us has a piece of chapter history, and we'd like to gather as much of that as possible (memories, photos, etc.) that tell the story of KΔP and U of I during your college years. Anything you'd like to share can be sent to me at [zgooding@gmail.com](mailto:zgooding@gmail.com). I'd love to have stories and memories of your time in KΔP, photos of the house, chapter, and campus, and even photos of your memorabilia, so pull out your old KΔP shirts, paddles, shingles, badges, and glassware. We will incorporate this into a presentation on the first 100 years of Eta for our virtual celebration, and we hope to make it all available digitally for brothers to view online.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope to see you virtually in February!

Zach Gooding '09  
Centennial Committee Chair

### THANK YOU FROM THE CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE!

Thanks to all the brothers who responded to the recent survey (by mail and electronically) regarding ideas for Eta's upcoming centennial celebration in 2021. The information provided was great, and we are working to finalize plans. We will have more forthcoming this fall so stay tuned!

# KΔP

## Annual Meeting Goes Virtual!

November 7, 10:00 a.m. CT

The annual meeting of the Eta Building Association will take place in a Zoom format this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **SAVE THE DATE of Saturday, November 7, at 10:00 a.m. CT.** We welcome all brothers to participate and get an update on the house corporation and our next steps going forward for the coming year. The Zoom link for the meeting is [bit.ly/34sLfNA](https://bit.ly/34sLfNA). Please contact Board President Mike Kolberg by phone or text at 312-238-0232 or email: [michael.kolberg@gmail.com](mailto:michael.kolberg@gmail.com).

David L. Rathgeb '74 shares that "2020 is my last year of farming (45 years); retirement looks good. My wife, Deb, and I have no kids, so no grandkids. Just dogs. Saturday morning house cleaning: KΔP was good to me! Seriously shy farm boy goes to U of I and meets... guys from all aspects and diverse backgrounds to form life-time brotherhood!"

Brother John Klein '96 was honored for his work with the ABC Morning News Chicago with a 2020 Emmy! Congratulations John! John has been a news producer with ABC7 Chicago since 2015. He also works with WLS-TV as a news producer. We know that his friends and family are proud, including fellow KΔP and brother Robert Klein '01.



### HAVE ALUMNI NEWS?

We want to hear from you! Send your personal updates, accomplishments, adventures, and photos to our account manager, Kasey Breedlove, at [kbreedlove@elevateims.com](mailto:kbreedlove@elevateims.com), or simply fill out the enclosed news form, and return it in the mail. We want to share it in the next issue of *The Eta Survey*!

## Taylor Bell '62 (continued from page 1)

and how" of a story. It's also about why and why not, about making a personality walk and talk and demonstrate what makes him or her tick.

### What type of schedule did you have to work over the years?

The newspaper business isn't a 9-to-5 job. If you think so, you're in the wrong profession. I wanted to learn something every time I stepped into a newspaper office or went on an assignment. I spent every waking hour at the *Daily Illini*, learning all facets of journalism, which is why I was a so-so student academically. At the *Courier*, an afternoon paper, I arrived at the office at 5:00 a.m. At the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, a morning paper, I worked the 4:00-to-midnight shift. At the afternoon *Chicago Daily News*, I arrived at the office at 6:00 a.m., then covered events in the

afternoon and evening. At the morning *Chicago Sun-Times*, I arrived at the office at 8:00 a.m. to organize coverage for the day, then covered events in the afternoon and evening.

### How were you and Gail reintroduced after high school?

Curiously, in high school, Gail dated my best friend. After high school, we dated briefly. I got married, had two children, daughters Anne and Kimberley (deceased), and then got divorced. After two years in St. Louis, in September 1968, I was hired to be high-school sports editor of the *Chicago Daily News*. Gail didn't attend college. Instead, she went to work as a secretary in Chicago, moved to New York City, then returned to Chicago



Gail and Taylor Bell. "We have been married for 44 years."

Taylor Bell '62  
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## Alumni President

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retained Coldwell Banker/Devonshire Realty to explore our options.

**AN IMPORTANT SURVEY IS COMING:** We have partnered with our communication firm, Elevate IMS, to send out an important survey. It will arrive in the latter part of October. We need your response. The board strongly feels that, for our long-term survival, we need to eliminate the debt and to set aside reserves for the return of the chapter, as well as to address upcoming projects. We are asking you to complete the survey.

We have weathered the Great Depression, World War II, societal change in the late '60s and '70s, and other hiccups in our history. We will get through this situation, and our goal, as a board, is that we come out stronger.

Fraternally,

Mike Kolberg '03  
President

Eta Building Association of Kappa Delta Rho



## Taylor Bell '62 (continued from previous page)

in 1974 to work at Field Enterprises, owner of the *Daily News* and *Chicago Sun-Times*. One day, she noticed my picture in the paper and called to renew old acquaintances. We began dating and married in 1976. In 44 years, she has never prepared a bad meal. Look it up. It's in *The Guinness Book of Records*.



Taylor Bell and Chicago television sportscaster Jim Rose (left) interviewing Glenn "Doc" Rivers, former Proviso East basketball star and recently named coach of the Philadelphia 76ers, at a high-school all-star game.

### When did you start working on your first book?

When I retired from the *Chicago Sun-Times* in 2001, completing nearly 40 years in the newspaper profession, my wife, several colleagues, and a few high-school coaches suggested that I should write a book about my experiences. I gave it some serious thought and came up with five ideas. As it turned out, four of them were published. Two things I learned about the book business: (1) don't self-publish; find a publisher, and (2) you'll never get rich unless your name is Hemingway or Clancy or Rowling. The joy comes from seeing your name on a book cover and knowing your book is in the Library of Congress. In 2002, I decided to write a book on the history of high-school basketball in Illinois, the great teams, the great coaches, the great players, the great games, from 1940 to 2000. I called it *Sweet Charlie, Dike, Cazzie, and Bobby Joe: High School Basketball in Illinois*, a reference to four of the all-time great players. Fortunately, University of Illinois Press liked my idea and agreed to publish the book in 2004. Along the way, I spent eight weeks on the road, visiting towns and gyms from Cairo and Cobden to Moline and Hebron and interviewing 350 former players and coaches. It was the most satisfying experience of my life.

### What advice can you give about the writing process?

Probably the best advice I have ever received—and the briefest—came from John

Justin Smith, who hired me as high-school sports editor of the *Chicago Daily News* in 1968. "Make them walk and talk," he said. He wanted to put an emphasis on high-school sports as never before, and he wanted me to write stories about high-school athletes that had never been written before. Who are these kids? What makes them tick? What are they thinking? What influences them? Who do they idolize and why? We did things that never had been done before: long feature stories on the area's best football player, large pictures, box scores, game-of-the-week coverage, top-10 rankings, college-recruiting stories, statistics, coach's analysis. It set a standard for others to follow.

### How has the COVID-19 isolation era impacted your life?

First of all, my wife and I had to cancel three summer vacations, one of them twice. I had to curtail my work for TripAdvisor. Since 2012, I have submitted more than 6,400 reviews of hotels, restaurants, and attractions and accumulated more than 7.4 million readers. I only recently resumed writing after taking a six-month hiatus because of the virus. The good news is I have increased my reading. I have two libraries in my home, all non-fiction: one for Civil War books and the other for my other interests—World War II, sports, Hollywood, ancient history, biography, and Old West. I read four books at a time, all different subjects, and try to consume one or two chapters daily.

### What do you do for fun?

I disagree with people who say retirement is boring. Retirement is fun. No stress, no phone calls, no deadlines. I am a voracious reader. I love books, especially history. I have an extensive collection of rare and first-edition books, but our pride and joy is our Civil War collection, said to be one of the most extensive in the country. No, we don't have an original copy of the Gettysburg Address or Robert E. Lee's farewell to his troops, but we have autographs of anybody who was anybody in the Civil War, memorabilia, manuscripts, documents, original oil paintings, rare books, and first editions. Perhaps the most valuable item in the collection is a first-edition two-volume copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin with a hand-written letter by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

### Why do you feel it's important to support KΔP?

As much as my experience at the *Daily Illini* helped to establish my 40-year career as a journalist, my experience at Kappa Delta Rho helped to cultivate my growth as an adult human being,

to build a distinguishable character, to teach principles, to provide a solid foundation for life after college. Every day, even in retirement, I relate to valuable lessons I learned during my four years on campus. That is why I donate annually to KΔP (Eta and National), the *Daily Illini*, the University of Illinois Alumni Association, the College of Liberal Arts and Science, and the UI Library. I feel it is my duty—and a privilege—to support them as they have supported me. I have also served on the Eta board of directors and encourage you to do so as well.

### Just a few Honors...Taylor Bell

- 1971 Charter class Illinois Basketball Coaches Association's Hall of Fame
- 1972 IBCA's Buzzy O'Connor Award for contributions to high-school basketball
- 1979 Illinois Sportswriter of the Year by United Press International
- 1980 Notre Dame Club of Chicago's Warren Brown/Arch Ward Award for excellence in sports journalism
- 1982 Jacob Scher Award for the best investigative reporting of the year in Chicago in any media
- 1983 National Federation of Interscholastic Coaches Association's Distinguished Service Award
- 1986 Notre Dame Club of Chicago's Red Smith Award for excellence in sports journalism
- 2001 Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame, first high-school sports reporter to be inducted
- 2002 Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame
- 2005 Ring Lardner Award for Excellence in Print Journalism
- 2006 Illini Media Hall of Fame Inaugural Class

## 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), log in and you can view and update your contact information.