

The Link

April 2018

Periodic Bulletin of Rhode Island Beta alumni, Phi Kappa Psi

by Rick Booth, 206

Cue music: Elton John, *The Bitch is Back!*

If you're a Fossil (proper noun) like most of us, you're already up to speed. If you're still in short pants, i.e. an undergrad, you haven't a clue. Google should bring you up to speed on Elton John and his smash hit. But *The Link* might need some explaining.

In days of yore—back when newsletters were on *paper*, with a licked stamp—I did a publication, so named because its aim is to link all of us Rhode Island Betans together. I ran it in two iterations, and Carl “Meat” DiSanto did it for awhile, too (remember those excellent “Meat’s Trimmings?”).

Long form short, I had not attended Founders Day for 10 years or so, but

heard rumors of ill health among some friends. “O’Booth,” sayeth this kid to self, “we ain’t getting any younger. Better git off the dime.”

Now, I don’t drive so well at night, and as it happened my 15-year-old Chevy Blazer blew up a couple of days before Founders. The dinner was 6 April in Spirito’s Restaurant, on the third deck of the Italo-American Club on Federal Hill in Providence. Providentially, the brotherhood provided.

I live—for the moment, anyway—in Norwood, MA, and my Westwood neighbor, Andy “Monk” Marcoux, agreed to pick me up and we’d attend Founders together.

I promised my wife I’d make no commitments (she knows me too well), but I’m semi-retired now, only teach three

days a week, and always need something to keep busy. What better than Phi Psi?

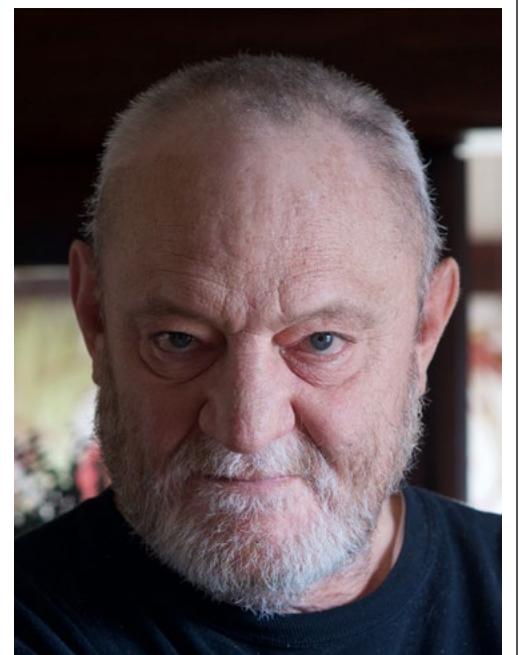
So here I sit, keys in hand. Technology has marched on (and on!) and these days we can mass mail a PDF file for free. Not only that, but I have front-line software and digital cameras (remember my old film Nikons?). So it looks like I’ll be dusting off old skills.

But not without you, I won’t! Keep me updated, if you want to keep seeing issues like this:

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Gmail is preferred, and norwoodlight may soon die if I move.



Willingness to Respond

by Rick Booth, 206

From what I saw and heard April 6 at Founders Day 2018, the news was generally good, but attendance numbers were not. If memory serves, only about 30 alumni, and for sure four undergraduates, attended to hear iron man Chris Conti, president of the Alumni House Corporation, run the SITREP (situation report). More to the point were the observations by UGs Austin Shission and Zach Lenahan.

As you read further, bear some things in mind. Chris Conti’s consecutive number is 400. In that room at the Italo Club, I was told the very next highest number was Rob Valenti, who is well into the 1,000 club—and he was alone, right below the undergrads. Translation? From 400 to 1,100 was a desert. Zilch. *That’s a six hundred man gap!*

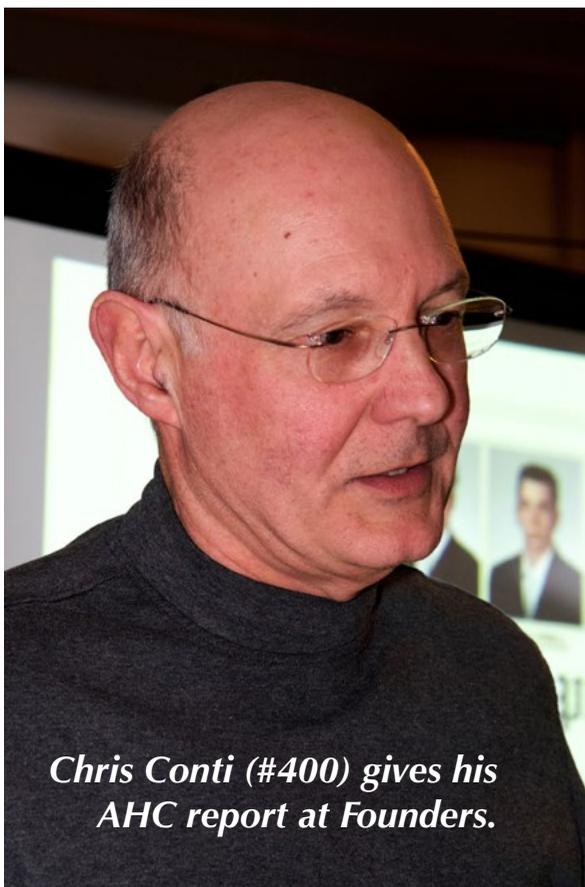
Next, I’m reminded of the undergraduate treasurer’s reply to the president’s question during the Ritual. I was never treasurer, but those words impressed me (remember them?). Hint: read the headline on this story. My wife admonished me before I left for the meeting. “Don’t give them any money.” Fact is, from what I heard, we don’t need money. We *got* money (more on which anon). What we need is something more valuable: we need guys willing to show up, at alum events *and at the house!* (At this writing, there is no house; again, more further down).

Conti has ramrodded the AHC for something like 20 years, and he won’t like it, but I heard it said *sotto voce* more than once he’d like a relief. But he’s not about to run away when he’s needed—and as always, he is. He was reelected, along with members Joe Hart, Vin Practico, Walt Augustyn, Pat Rossoni, John Spagnolo, Glen Stratton, Bruce Tavares, and Rob Valenti. Lee Arnold, Bill Bowers and Jim Norman are honorary members, as always.

Arguably as critical is the need for bodies on the Alum Advisory panel under Bruce “The Beast” Tavares. Indianapolis has decreed that panel a requirement for charter, and Beast is at the moment flailing the bushes for bodies (no election necessary). I volunteered for that, and had a constructive, brief discussion with the UGs present.

The short version of the house situation includes that—in case you’ve been on an inter-planetary trip for a few years—ours was sold to then-tenants ZTA, aka “Zeta” or “Zee Tee.” They paid fair market, and the AHC is sitting on roughly \$1.5 million. They’re negotiating with URI for a lot near the old house—which one is under contention—and plan to build a more modest affair, with 20 single rooms and a study area(s). Outlay on the new house being bandied Friday was \$1.2 million.

Let’s not be coy: there would be a common room, doubtless commandeered for social events. But with



Chris Conti (#400) gives his AHC report at Founders.

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The long and the short of it: highest and lowest consecutive numbers at Founders on April 6. From left Lee Arnold (#22), Dave Altschul (1154), Chad Chelo (#1146), and Gerry Miller (#22). Gerry was lowest of the night, an honor often accorded to Bill Bowers (#15), with whom our fond thoughts resided, among others, including Glen "Dutch" Stratton. (#206)

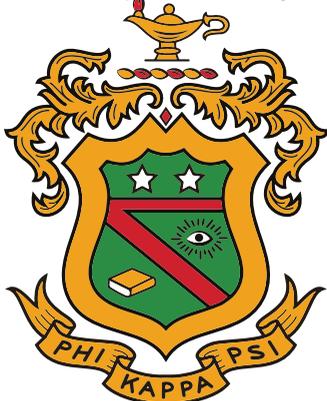
Founders Day Roster only 30 Brothers

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the university using satellite surveillance, drones, and Apache gunships to enforce its anti-drinking rules, that had better be a secondary function.

Austin Shission is incumbent undergraduate Archon for District One, and made no bones about the alcohol policy, either at Rhody or in Indianapolis. If you've had an eye on our national magazine, *The Shield*, you're aware of monumental changes. One is alcohol policy, another is cutting pledging to ten days, to reduce the window for hazing, a stubborn nemesis.

Alumni Social
Sponsored by the Undergrads!



Sunday, April 29, Rainville Ballroom
Memorial Union, URI, noon-4 p.m., FREE!



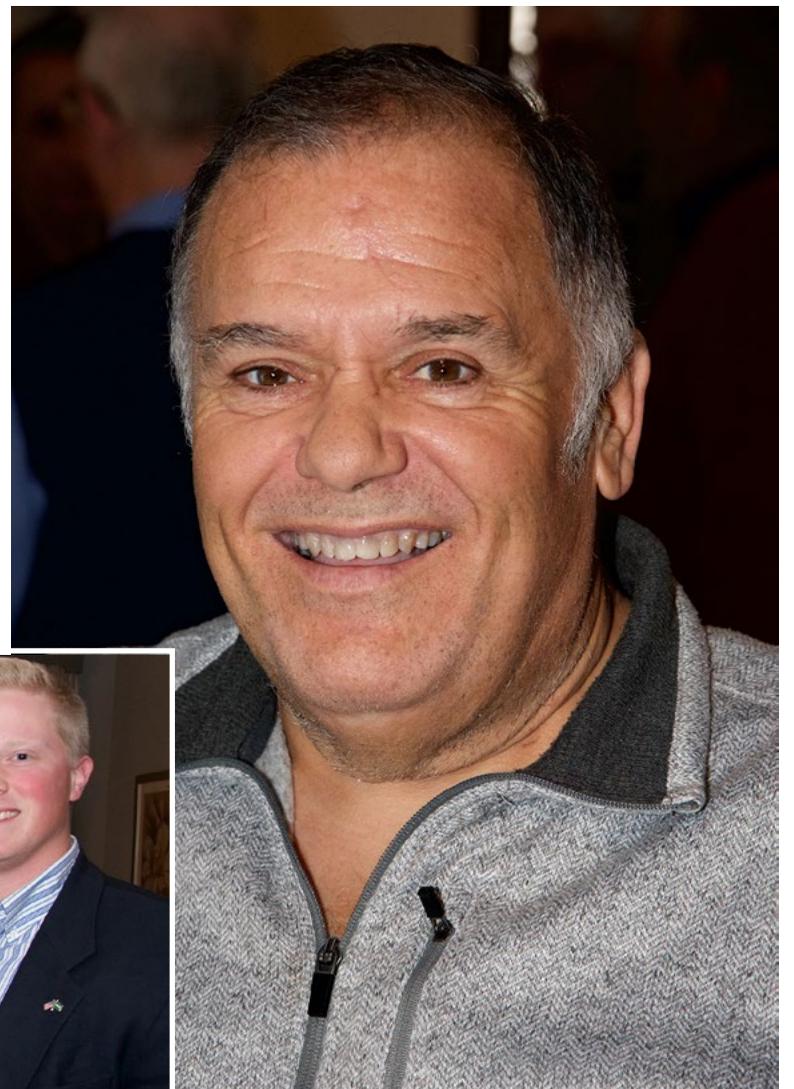
Quick, name these Fossils! It took your correspondent a spluttering minute or two, but I eventually realized I was facing none other than Mark "Farkle" Fortier, left, and Don "Stumpy" Dupuis, right. I remember Farkle's entrepreneurial streak, and Stumpy's astonishing wit. Time hasn't dimmed either one. (#206)



Above: District One Archon Austin Shission holds forth for the assembled brothers at Founders. His news was mostly good, together with GP Zach Lenahan, who described a hard-working and generally righteous undergraduate group doing what they should. The year was not, however, with incident—as the boys wisely acknowledged. Below: the assembled UGs. (#206)



Above and below, Tom Linhares and Bruce the ubiquitous “Beast” Tavares. Iron men both, Tom from years and years in the hard jobs on the AHC, and Bruce (who lives in Wood River Junction, near campus) as the go-to guy for our Alumni Adviser. Both have the heart-felt gratitude of our association (common noun), and our Association. (#206)



FUNNY...AND NOT

Anecdotes from ‘the front.’ We need more—and better—to resurrect ‘Meat’s Trimmings.’

It’s fascinating what you pick up at Founders, which is all the more reason to go, and the reason I could kick myself for not doing so these recent years. But one anecdote from that night, and another—at home—the next day are worth revealing.

The reason *The Link* is so named is because it’s designed to keep us in touch with the rest of the brotherhood. Analyzing our present situation, and a lot of analyzing goes on at Founders Day, we discovered that 600-man gap between Chris Conti and our undergraduate contingent (recognizing, again, young Rob Valenti as the lone exception, and an active one). I think that gap exists because, for *very* good reasons, no connection has existed.

In other words, a weak link has parted, and we’ve crippled the one thing we need most: continuity. Those kids have not clue one who we are, or what we did.

I see this gap, this age thing, every day, teaching seventh graders. Rocky and Bullwinkle? Never heard of them. Cowboys and indians—oops, I mean “indigenous peoples”? Ditto. Black and white video? I’m not watching that!

This phenomenon has consequences: “Why do you criticize us? *You did everything we do!*”

Not by a long shot, youngster. And how do you know? You weren’t born yet! We have *socks* older than you!

But back to the story. Across the years, we hear things. We lose good friends and brothers. But for once, we heard wrong!

People have said for years that Steve “No Mind” Ames was dead. *He’s not!* Stumpy stumbled on him, living and well in Richmond, Virginia. When Don told me that, face-to-face, I could have kissed him.

So, welcome back, Steve! Get in touch!

And Now This

My younger son works, like his undergraduate pub father, as a doorman (or bouncer) at a South Boston night club. And he works with a 30-something woman who graduated from URI.

She is a Phi Sigma Sigma alumna—and lived there during the Gory (*sic*) Years that got us closed down the last time. According to gossip at Founders, that group wants “nothing to do with RI Beta.” Just as well, according to Randall Booth.

“Dad,” he told me the day after Founders, “when I told her you were a Phi Psi she rolled her eyes, and said ‘those guys weren’t college students. They were commercial criminals.’”

REALITY CHECK

As I said elsewhere in this issue, I had a short, productive (and admittedly Boothian) chat with the undergraduates at Founders. I make it my business to do so, on the sadly rare occasions I attend. “You should come down and talk to the pledges!” they all said. And I will, I volunteered to help Beast on his Alumni Advisory Board.

This newsletter is for we alums. But I suspect the UGs will see it, and that’s why I’m investing this space to say things alumni—especially those of us with low numbers, as at Founders—know already. Pardon me for doing so, my contemporaries.

“Let me tell you two things to do,” I advised the children. “Don’t do stupid...stuff. And before you do anything, examine it for stupidity.” As in, not what you *expect* to happen, but what *might* happen. What *could*—and, in obvious order of seriousness, humiliate and degrade, maim, or even kill.

But wait, boys. There’s more. It’s true: that which does not kill us makes us stronger. And we have lived longer, so we’ve seen more road. By the very virtue of not being killed already, we’ve lived through things. both at Rhody and elsewhere, that *have* killed. Just before I hit campus in 1970, Sigma Pi burned down, with loss of life. They had tinderbox palm fronds as decoration for a luau-themed party, and they lit. Everyone was wasted, it was an old, Upper College Road house, and it went up like a torch.

Closer to home, Your Editor once drank boilermakers, alone, in the chapter room, watching TV. When John Duhaime found me, I was barely breathing, sliding probably into alcohol poisoning. He got help, and they dragged me, fully clothed, into the showers, where I struggled to consciousness. John Duhaime (now Doctor Duhaime, max-

My Turn by Rick Booth



illofacial surgeon) saved my life. John was a force of nature: driven, pre-med (dental, it turned out), and possessed of sound anatomical knowledge and a cool judgment that made him command respect.

We were blessed with leaders then, it was our Golden Age. We kept it going as long as we could, and it was hell of a long way. But time and distance were against us, and keeping that standard is hard.

You boys have been given a new start—thanks, and don’t you ever forget it, to those very men of so long ago.

Actions have always had consequences, it’s the nature of life. But life in 2018 has fraternities squarely in the hairs of society’s scope, and nobody cares how much you do for charity. Not usually at all, but *especially* if somebody’s son or daughter gets hurt or killed.

So think first: What’s the worst that could happen? You don’t ever want to find out. Because it is *way* worse than you know.

O’Booth...



Longtime AHC Treasurer Joe Hart looks like he’s about 35 years old. How does he do it? Clean living? (#206)