



# ouRPI

Pi Chapter of Zeta Psi  
SPRING/SUMMER

TROY, NEW YORK

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
2021

*This issue covers Pi Chapter news from the 2020/21 school year. While on-campus news has been light this past year with the shutdown, we are happy to share several memorable moments from our Elders in this edition.*

## **Tom Moberg – Elder Phi**

*Tom Moberg '71*

Greetings Brothers of the Pi Chapter!

To the many of you who do not know me, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Tom Moberg, class of 71, and I was recently elected president of New York State Capital District Association of Zeta Psi aka your elder chapter. I am humbled to have received this honor and hope that I can serve you as a most worthy Phi. First, I would like to express my sincere thanks to our outgoing Phi, Josh McWilliam, who served admirably in this position for several years during some trying times. He brought the active brotherhood from a low point to the height of the thriving and honorable brotherhood that it is today and maintained a healthy elder chapter.

I have been active in the elder chapter for a few decades and have served on the board of directors for about 10 years. One of my main objectives as elder Phi is to solicit more support from the many Pi brothers who have joined our brotherhood over the past 70 years. I am asking for your time and interest in preserving the long-held traditions, memorable history, and ongoing growth of the Pi chapter.

In this age of bad press for fraternities due to the atrocious behavior of many Greek organizations and disregard for the high ground of morality and true brotherhood, I want you to know that Zeta Psi is dedicated to education and building men who will become future leaders in society and

improve the quality of life for all people. We condemn hazing and promote safe and sane practices in our procedures and how we indoctrinate new members into the Circle.

That said, I am asking that you consider participating in our continued growth at whatever level is possible in your current life situation. The COVID pandemic created obstacles for us as an organization forcing cancellation of Alumni Weekend in both 2020 and 2021, however, it also allowed us to expand our communication through the technology of virtual meetings. Our annual meeting both last year and this past April 24 were successfully held via Zoom. The minutes of this meeting are available for anyone interested.

There were 15 Pi Zetes at the annual meeting. The somewhat alarming fact is the age spread of those attendees. Four attending brothers are under 30 (including 3 actives), ten are 60 and over and only one, then current Phi, Josh, is between 30 and 60. That's 30 years of Pi Zetes (well over 400 brothers) who are not active in the elder association or were not able to attend the meeting. We need your support. For too many years, the responsibility of maintaining our organizations, both active and elder chapters, as well as our beautiful chapter house on Belle Avenue, has fallen on a few dedicated brothers. I understand the time constraints of those in the midst of career and family obligations but don't forget that your life successes had roots in your fraternal brotherhood. Please contact me if you would like to help. We have openings on the

board of directors and encourage attendance at meetings.

We were exploring the possibility of an Alumni Weekend this fall on the same weekend as RPI's reunion, October 8-10. Unfortunately, RPI's event was changed to a virtual gathering again this year. We are planning to have a normal gathering in the Spring of 2022, so stay tuned for updates.

Comments, suggestions, and criticisms are always welcome.

All the best.

In Tau Kappa Phi, Tom  
Email: [tmoberg@frontiernet.net](mailto:tmoberg@frontiernet.net)  
Cell for text messages: 845 943-0509

## **RPI – Return to Campus-Based Operations**

The fall 2021 semester should bring a “near-normal” experience for students on campus. This includes opening of Greek Housing and other venues. All students are required to be vaccinated (with some exemptions, upon approval) and follow a handful of risk mitigation measures while inside buildings on campus.

The following is an excerpt from the RPI “Plan to Return to Campus-Based Operations”. Our hope is that the actives will be able to have the undergraduate experience they deserve this year and beyond.

*“We intend to have full on-campus operations, including instruction and research activities, during the 2022 academic year. Residence halls, dining facilities, and campus transportation will return with increased capacity and density. New York State has authorized higher education institutions to continue face-to-face instruction, and the following plan will constitute our framework for return-to-normal*

*operations. The plan outlines how the Institute will monitor the health and wellness of the community, restart and safely reopen buildings, continue academic and research programs, and manage residential operations, including student support services, dining services and transportation, NCAA athletics, recreation, intramural, and club sports, campus-wide administrative operations, and events.”*

## **June 2021 Update from the Class of 1965**

Times were good when we pledged Zeta Psi. The House was full and we had great parties. The drinking age was 18 and many of us freshman started a little early. The cocktail parties in the living room were highlighted with Dick Linn playing the piano. Several of the raunchier songs we first learned late night worked their way into cocktail time repertoire.

We still had Big Weekends like Homecoming and Saturnalia, but the semi-formal dances gave way to concerts. Bo Diddley and Dave Brubeck were memorable. After playing in the Armory with the audience on blankets on the floor, Brubeck said he would never come back. There were late night breakfasts at Thornies and once or twice soap suds in the front fountain. Everyone took a literature course from Brother and Professor P. A. Smith, making sure to let him know we were Zetes.

The best parties were when we brought in JR & the Impressions, an R&B band. They usually played at Kettles in Albany. Hiring them was an experience in itself. It was one of our several adventures that the movie “Animal House” portrayed. The annual Beach Party was also a hit. We put down 2-3 inches of beach sand on the floor of the basement party room along with appropriate decorations. We quickly learned we had to wet down the sand to keep the dust under control. Clean up continued for a couple of weeks.

We remember when Mel Gumpert had a problem with a leaky gas tank on his old Jaguar. He got the tank out of the car and attempted to solder the leak. Unfortunately, he missed some of the precautions and the tank blew up. He managed to hammer it back shape and got some advice. Sadly, his second try produced the same results. The story has a happy ending because Mel retired from a successful career in petrochemical plant engineering. Another memorable car story was brought to us by Joe Stocco '63. As Joe's graduation approached, the weather got warmer, and Joe decided he wanted a convertible. He took his hardtop coupe to a gas station and had the top cut off. It was fun while it lasted but that ended after a heavy rainstorm. But the best car story is the Cadillac hearse that was bought as a rushing attraction. Mattresses replaced the coffin and the window curtains were still in good shape. It did the trick for a successful rush and livened many conversations and adventures.

Forty years after graduation we got back together for three annual meet ups in Atlantic City, NJ.

Each time we tried to do something memorable. One year we hired a stretch limo for transportation to a local restaurant. Another year we went to a "legends" show and tipped our way into prime seats. Shirley Gumpert was thrilled to get a scarf from the Elvis impersonator. This year we have been doing monthly Zoom calls and that is where we reminisced these memories that we have now shared with you.

*Steve Strungis  
Mel Gumpert  
Dick Linn  
Ed Smolinski  
Nick Kolak  
Jay Stolzenhaler  
Rich Schlumpf  
Carl Cangelo*



## **Journey of Rudy Runko '60**

As a proud brother of Zeta Psi I graduated from RPI with the class of 1960. The following year I earned the Degree of Master of Civil Engineering from New York University. Some fifty-six years later, I reluctantly concluded my professional working days while living in Cairo Egypt, and Cathy and I retired to our home in Albany, NY. Our life journey during those 5+ decades could never have been planned or anticipated and yet exceeded even our most fanciful expectations. Through good fortune or dumb luck, my career path took us through an exciting, adventurous experience that had us working and living in three different nations for 20 years and travelling to twenty additional countries on official business or as tourists.

My work as a conventional civil engineer was relatively brief. My first job was with the former New York Central Railroad (now Amtrak) as an engineering/management trainee. Six months into this position I was drafted into the US Army during the 1961 call-up. Cathy and I married while I was in basic training at Fort Dix and she accompanied me to my official post at the US Army Corps of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg Mississippi where I worked on defense-related research. Our son James was born while we were living there.

Upon discharge from the service at the Redstone Missile Arsenal, the three of us drove west on Route 66 heading to California in search of a job. After several interviews and offers, including one in Marin County California, we decided to head back east along the northern tier to our roots in Manhattan. JFK was assassinated during this time accelerating our travel home. The Railroad would have taken me back as an employee, but their outlook did not seem too promising, so I took a civil service position with the New York City Highway Department as a construction engineer working in the field; most notably on repair and reconstruction of the old Westside Highway and the East River Drive. During this period, my boss passed away and his duties were

assigned to me. The NYC civil service structure could not get me a promotion despite the greater responsibility, so I decided to leave. By this time, I was licensed as a Professional Engineer by the State of NY and passed a civil service exam for Senior Civil Engineer in Albany.

Nelson Rockefeller was the New York Governor at that time (prior to his appointment as Vice-President) and he undertook a massive building and infrastructure program in the State including among others the State University system, environmental cleanup facilities, narcotic treatment centers, *et al.* To help plan and finance this work, the Governor's budget office established a unit comprised of architects and engineers to oversee the justifications and the economic and programmatic viability of the various projects being proposed. I accepted a position in this unit and started a 28-year career; under four successive Governors, culminating with appointment as State Budget Director by Governor Mario Cuomo during his final term. In this position I headed an agency of 400 employees tasked with developing the State's \$60+ billion annual budget. Highlights of my career with the State included (i) damage assessment and emergency planning on the day after the retaking of Attica Prison in September 1971 following the worst prison riot in US history; (ii) serving as the State representative on the Federal task force established to remediate one of the most toxic environmental disasters in the nation at Love Canal in Niagara Falls; and (iii) extensive work on preventing the potential bankruptcy of New York City in the 1970s.

When Governor Cuomo lost his bid for a fourth term in 1994 (through no fault of his Budget Director I might add), I could have resumed my former civil service position but that would have been step backward that we chose not to take. After some brief consultant gigs, including a fiscal review of the City of Troy for the Municipal Bond Insurance Agency, Cathy and I embarked on an overseas venture that initially was to be a 14-month posting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan as budget advisor to this nascent

Republic, which emerged following the breakup of the former Soviet Union in 1991. We never could have imagined that this assignment would morph into a 20-year second career. Cathy also landed a parttime job running the commissary at the US Embassy there. Among other things I helped the Uzbek Government prepare and adopt their first Budget Law. The post was not without risks as an American woman friend of ours was murdered in her home, probably by her Uzbek business partner; and all the windows in my third-floor office were blown out by a car bomb in the street below. Nevertheless, at the request of the US Ambassador, we extended our assignment there to a full four years. Our efforts in Uzbekistan and all subsequent contracts were funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Over the next seven years, I managed two successful USAID contracts in Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH) following the Dayton peace negotiations which ended the brutal Bosnian war in 1995. As previously in Uzbekistan and subsequently in our final post in Egypt (approximately 10 additional years) Cathy was fully engaged in several humanitarian efforts to support orphanages and other needy institutions. In BiH, our USAID projects resulted in modern, automated public sector fiscal systems; a result publicly lauded in reports from the World Bank. In addition, we improved government services and facilities at the local level with participation from the Swedish Government. In recognition, I was declared an honorary citizen of Živinice, one of the larger municipalities in the Republic.

In Egypt, my first office was on the top floor of a thirteen-story building not far from downtown Cairo, overlooking the Nile and the three iconic Pyramids at Giza. It was an inspiring view which greeted and motivated me every morning. Cathy and I were evacuated twice during the nationwide revolutions which overthrew President Mubarak (after some 30 years in office) and later his successor, President Morsi. Nevertheless, the projects I managed were ultimately highly successful in improving

services for citizens and providing an important framework within the Egyptian Constitution to empower local authorities.

Notably, the three nations in which we lived and worked during these two decades were majority Muslim population and our interactions with the Muslim Brotherhood Parliament during Morsi's tenure could not have been more professional and cordial.

Cathy and I were blessed with the choices we had made; hopefully passing on some of our good fortune to the people we touched in New York and our overseas work for USAID.

### **Pi Chapter Road trips in the Late 60's and early 70's**

*Tom Moberg '71*

*The following is a collection of entertaining events and stories from Brother Moberg – enjoy!*

#### The Acquisition of the Zeta Psi Hearse, Circa 1968

While I wasn't on this trip my recollection is that the Cadillac hearse was purchased in Ohio and a few brothers drove out to retrieve it. Because the hearse was not registered or insured, they had to tow it back. Unfortunately, the vehicle they drove out in was a VW bug or beetle and it wasn't up to the task of towing a multi-ton Cadillac hearse for several hundred miles on the interstate. Fortunately, the hearse ran fine so they decided to drive the hearse while appearing as if the tow rope tied to the bumper of the VW was the actual method of propulsion. I think they were stopped by the police but talked their way out of it.

#### Trip to Epsilon Chapter at Brown

Four Pi brothers; Ted Curtis, Rick Case, Bill Grossman and Tom Moberg, set out one weekend to visit our sister chapter at Brown. It was Saturday night and there was a house party of sorts. Most of the brothers were out by midnight. We were bored. We stayed up until

early morning. In the living room was a huge moose head on the wall. I'm not sure whose idea it was (but probably Bill Grossman) to "borrow" the moose thereby forcing the Epsilon brothers to visit the Pi to retrieve it. We set to work prying the giant antlered moose off the wall with a crowbar. We also made off with a large brass bell possibly from an old locomotive. Case thinks the bell was from a ship that had something to do with the chapter. It must have weighed over 150 pounds. 2 guys could barely carry it. Somewhere along the way as we were trying to sneak it out of the house, the towel fell off the clapper, resulting in a huge "booonnnnnng".

None of the brotherhood awoke through this escapade and we made a lot of noise. Next thing I remember was riding with Curtis driving his Corvair convertible with the top down so we could fit the moose head. I was stuck in the backseat and remember freezing my butt off and wondering why no State Troopers pulled us over on the Mass Pike.

#### Trip to the Mohawk River

Another mini-road trip included several brothers piled into Kasold's Opel Cadet, quarter keg in the trunk, for a jaunt to a drinking spot on the Mohawk River somewhere near Schenectady. Following behind Kasold was brother Bruce "Zooman" Wilczewski on his motorcycle with brother Moberg riding on the back. As we sped through north Troy, a police car put his flashing lights on behind us. Zooman tells me to hold on and immediately cuts down a side street to outrun the police. In maybe the fastest response in Troy police history, a hot pursuit ensued with several police cars finally cornering us. Once they discovered Zooman had an expired Connecticut license, an expired Massachusetts registration, and an expired Vermont plate on the bike, not to mention the speeding and fleeing charges, they decided to book him and threw him in jail. I was let go since I was wearing the legal helmet and didn't break any laws except those of common sense. The rest of us went back to the house, roused the gamma, and secured the

needed cash to bail Zooman out. We then proceeded to go to the Mohawk River. As an aside, I don't remember what became of Zooman's case, but I do remember that Tricky Rick Kasold and Walt Turansky frequented a little bar called Margie's that was right where Pawling comes into Congress. If any brothers got a ticket, they brought it to Margie who apparently had a good enough relationship with Troy police that the ticket got fixed. Which reminds me of another notable landmark, the Dick Store. This little store had just about anything you wanted and situated at the same place on Congress where Pawling intersects. I don't recall why or how it got its name, but we all knew it as the Dick Store.

#### The William G Grossman Memorial Ecology Raft Adventure

This adventure lasted several days at least and consisted of various brothers building a raft in the parking lot and hauling it to the Hudson River and setting off down the river. I recall that that Grossman, Zooman and maybe John Winn were on the raft with others. They floated down the Hudson day and night (no lights of course) and nearly got killed by boat/barge traffic. During the day they would float a couple miles down the river, then the tide would come in and they would float a mile back up the river. They had a keg for fuel. Tom Szabo and Kasold picked them up in Catskill, about 40 miles downriver from Troy.

#### Pig Roasts at Charlie Silvera's Farm

Most of the active brothers attended these events. Charlie supplied the roasting pig and the adventure included hayrides. Many females attended as well. These were always a lot of fun.

All the fun, road trips and parties aside, living at 25 Bell Ave during my formative years was a life enriching experience that has served me well for over 50 years hence. The brothers I lived with taught me much about life; how to get along in the face of divisiveness, tolerance, camaraderie, leading, following, responsibility, sharing a laugh, shedding a tear, singing a song, downing a



beer, honesty in all things. I learned it is sometimes better to beg for forgiveness after the fact than ask for permission before. I became brothers with a diverse group of young men many of whom have become long lasting and enduring friends for decades after. The spirit of Tau Kappa Phi is never far from my thoughts and beliefs. Thank you Zeta Psi.

**Henry M. Elliott, Jr. Eta 1945  
Phi Alpha 1969-1970**

*The following is a recently posted excerpt from the Zeta Psi IHQ Phi Alpha Bios page. The full article can be found here:*

<https://zetapsi.org/phi-alpha-bios/henry-m-elliott-jr/>

*Be sure to visit ZetaPsi.org for more interesting news, history, and events.*



*Our print edition has limited space – so please be sure to “LIKE” our Facebook page (The Pi Chapter of Zeta Psi) and visit our website: <http://www.pizetes.org> for more news about YOUR Pi chapter!*

Henry Elliot, Eta, 1945, fondly known as “Uncle Henry” to generations of Zetes, was devoted to Zeta Psi and was a long-term benefactor of both the Eta chapter at Yale and the Pi chapter at RPI.

He graduated from Yale, in 1945, and served in the US Navy during World War II. After the war, he moved to Loudonville, NY to work in the insurance industry. He soon became an executive with the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States and was a stalwart with Equitable for forty years. He was for many years a director of the Albany Savings Bank and served on the Boards of the Portsmouth Abbey and Doane-Stuart Schools. He was also a knight of the American Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Henry became the Treasurer of the New York State Capital District Association of Zeta Psi (the House corporation and Elder Chapter of the Pi), becoming an elder leader of his adopted chapter for decades. He was instrumental in two reactivations of the Pi chapter, first in 1951 and again in 1979. As a Pi brother who knew him well observed, “Henry exuded that quiet, corporate confidence that telegraphed he saw the big picture in full and could see several moves into the future as well. His advice was sterling, and his fellowship was gold.”

Henry is memorialized with a bronze plaque fixed in the dining room in the Pi house for his endless contributions, including the personal underwriting of a major capital project.

## The Legacy Society

The Pi Chapter has established a Legacy Society for those who are naming the Pi Chapter as a beneficiary in their wills. This is a valuable resource for the Chapter and is one strong leg in the effort to establish an endowment to help assure financial stability while providing good facilities for the active Brothers. For now, it is Jim Peta who has been collecting our money for many years. Jim's address is: **15 Blueberry La, New Hartford, CT, 06057** The bequest should be to the New York State Capital District Association of Zeta Psi, Inc. at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and currently located at 25 Belle Ave., Troy, NY 12180.

There may be inheritance tax reasons to make bequests to our non-profit fund at the IHQ. Such donations would be made to:

Zeta Psi Educational Foundation, Pi Fund, 15 S. Henry St., Pearl River, NY 10965

We will begin to acknowledge Brothers who are making this provision. Please so advise Jim Peta (jipeta@charter.net), Jim Ljunglin (ljunglin@yahoo.com) or Jay Webb (jayjwebb@comcast.net).

### 2021-2022 DUES AND CONTRIBUTION FORM

**Please clip and mail, or simply include the information below with your check.**

**You may also donate on-line at <http://www.pizetes.org>**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class Year \_\_\_\_\_

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Regular dues @ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ Email my receipt!

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*Go Green! Please check above if you would like a Donation  
Acknowledgement via Email instead of US Mail (provide email above)*

Please complete the above information and mail directly to:  
**Jim Peta, 15 Blueberry Lane, New Hartford, CT, 06057**

Note that regular dues will be acknowledged only in the Fall Financial ouRPI. Any donations above the \$50 dues will be acknowledged with a Thank You card / email as well as listing in the Financial ouRPI. Anyone who would still like an acknowledgement for regular dues may request it when sending in this form and Jim will be happy to send you an e-mail or regular mail "Thank You", whichever you prefer.

Thank you for supporting the Pi Chapter!

*This contribution to the NYSCDA of Zeta Psi  
is not tax deductible under IRS regulations.*