



Beta Sigma Psi

Alpha Alumni Newsletter

2026 Homecoming



October 3, 2026

Illini vs. Purdue



Alpha Chapter Update – Progress! *(report written by Dan Ross)*

Greetings, Brothers! I hope everyone is having a fantastic summer and enjoying the warm weather while we can! It has been quite a while since I put an update into the newsletter. When I first took this role three years ago, if I am being completely honest, I wondered if I was going to be the one to oversee the closure of the chapter house. We were still reeling from the effects of Covid, as was the majority of the Greek system at UIUC with several houses closing due to low numbers. There were just a handful of men living in the house, and the alumni chapter was in dire financial straits with virtually no payments being made from the actives to the alumni chapter for several years. Since that time, I have witnessed a turnaround that I truly could never have imagined thanks to so many brothers who stepped up to keep something alive that played, and continues to play, such a vital role for so many men! Here is just a brief recap of some of the amazing things that are happening:



Dan Ross
Alpha Alumni President

- **THE HOUSE IS FULL!** It is my sincere pleasure to report that every room at the chapter house is full for next fall to the point where multiple actives have volunteered to double up so that we can increase capacity to fill the need! We currently have a fall pledge class of 10, with 7 of them committed to being in-house. That brings the total members in-house to 22 with an overall membership of 28! And with on-campus rush in the fall, they have potential to grow to over 30 members!
- **THE HOUSE LOOKS AMAZING!** There are too many updates to list them all, but the house looks better than it has in years. We've talked a lot about the moat rebuild, which turned out fantastic, but there have been and continue to be a litany of other projects that have made the house a more inviting place to live, including the addition of new bathroom partitions (WITH DOORS) on the second floor, a complete refreshing of the flooring in

the dining area, all new furniture for the lounge, multiple updated rooms, fresh paint in many areas, and on and on.

- **FINANCES ARE VASTLY IMPROVED!** While we have a journey to get to being debt free, the actives are making all their rent payments and have even made one additional payment to start to eat away at some of the unpaid balances of the past. The actives are able to cover all their bills with minimal assistance and we have been able to start to repay some of the money loaned to us by the National Housing Foundation.
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY...THE 3 S's ARE ALIVE AND WELL!** The men of the house are living out what Beta Sigma Psi is all about. The chapter is excelling academically by consistently finishing above both the all-campus and all-fraternity average GPAs. The men are active in their faith both inside and outside church walls, and they continue to enjoy their time on campus in a variety of ways.

So how did this turnaround happen? It started with the small group of active members that truly believed in Beta Sigma Psi and all it had to offer them and others on campus. They wholeheartedly committed to growing the house and making it the type of place that others would want to be a part of. That being said, they could never have done what they have done without an amazing group of alumni who have walked with them, starting with the men that join me on the board. This group has worked tirelessly to keep our fraternity alive from hours spent on the physical structure of the house, to keeping our finances going in the most difficult of times, to keeping you all informed and engaged through the newsletter and other communications, to creating memorable experiences for alumni to gather at Homecoming and other events, to running an amazing scholarship program that has led to so many new members and finally to serving as strong leaders and mentors for the active chapter.

But the board is only a small part of the amazing alumni support that has made this happen. There are too many other alumni to name that have stepped up in countless ways with their time, treasure and talents. If these alumni were not willing to come together, I honestly am not sure we would be around today to celebrate these accomplishments. There aren't enough words of gratitude for all that you have done.

Finally, the National Chapter has played an important role in our turnaround. The National Housing Foundation has provided vital funding on multiple occasions when we needed it most, offering flexible loans. The Education Foundation, supported by gifts from many of you, has been an incredible source of scholarships for active and prospective members, and the National leadership team has been a great asset to me personally as we have navigated this journey.

Our work will never be done, but each of you has a lot to be proud of, and you can breathe a little easier knowing that Beta Sigma Psi is heading in the right direction. I would encourage each of you to continue to look for ways to engage. For me, reconnecting with the house has been an important source of joy and support as I move through the various stages of my life, and I believe it can be for you as well.

Per Aspera Ad Astra

Dan Ross

Homecoming 2026! *(report written by Nick Schwingbeck)*

Booking your ticket to Homecoming 2026 is now open! We invite you to join us the weekend of October 2nd-4th in Urbana-Champaign. RSVP forms were sent out earlier this month and we are hoping we can get as many brothers back to campus to celebrate BSP and hopefully cheer the Illini onto victory. Similar to last year, we have a hotel room block at the Holiday Inn Express in town so if you're needing hotel accommodations, make sure you reserve your room ASAP. The **deadline to book your hotel is September 4th**. And as always, please continue to check the Alumni Facebook Group for updates.

We invite you to start the weekend with us on Friday October 2nd by returning to 706 W. Ohio for the annual Alumni/Active mixer. Following the meet & greet with the Actives, we will head down to the traditional Friday evening social gathering, allowing brothers and significant others to reconnect and catch up with each other. In between rounds of Jungle Pong, be sure to check out the renovations & enhancements taking place thanks to the generous donations! Over half of Alpha Chapter's history has taken place here, and we are proud of the work our brothers have undertaken to preserve the facility for the future! Doors open at 7:00 pm, snacks and drinks provided.

Saturday will begin with our traditional Alpha Alumni Chapter Fall Business meeting at the Chapter House. We anticipate starting the business meeting at 8:00 a.m. with our tailgate opening at the conclusion of the meeting. Tailgate location is undetermined at this time, but those that have attended homecoming tailgates in the past will know that we will have a spot reserved to enjoy food and beverage before and during the game along with yard games as well. We look forward experiencing the college gameday atmosphere! As of this writing, no game time has been announced. But given pre-season traction, I am anticipating an afternoon kickoff (though time will tell).



Saturday will conclude with the 2026 Homecoming Banquet. This year, the event will take place at CityView Banquet Center. Located on the top floor of Illinois Terminal, the venue is in the heart of downtown Champaign & has sweeping views of our beloved college town. Festivities will take place in the North Room, please join us before the banquet for a hospitality hour from 6:00 to 7:00. Dinner and programming to begin at 7:00. Based on feedback, the dress code for this year will again be business casual (though formal always welcome).

After dinner, all are invited to come unwind at Pour Bro's Craft Taproom across the street! They have a wide wall of brews on tap, as well as games like ski ball, darts, and pinball. As a continuing incentive to our recent graduates, we again offer the "Young Alumni" banquet ticket price for Brothers who have graduated in the last 2 years.

Please see the schedule and reservations page for specific dates, anticipated times, and additional event information. And **please continue to check the Facebook Group** for updates about the weekend! We look forward to welcoming back brothers from across the ages to celebrate this monumental milestone in our chapter's history!

Football Tickets purchased from the Alumni Chapter will be available for pick up at the Friday evening social event or the Saturday morning Business Meeting.

To reserve your place at Homecoming 2026, please return the Order Form on the next page (or fill out the online form) along with check payable to “Beta Sigma Psi” to:

Nick Schwingbeck, 725 N Aberdeen Unit #604, Chicago, IL 60642
(call or email with questions: 224-622-0328 or nschwingbeck@gmail.com)

OR

Please see the below for Online Ordering & Venmo Payment instructions:

This year we're expanding online ordering capabilities by accepting registrations via our alumni chapter website. Use the link below to navigate to the Alpha Chapter Alumni website to use the order form. Payment can be made via Venmo (instructions below & on the website) or a mailed check (instructions listed above). **We strongly encouraging the online order & payment option** (electronic ordering will ensure your order is processed more quickly & avoid any delays in the mail).

- Send payments to @Beta-Sigs-Illinois-Alumni
- Send a screenshot of the completed order form to nschwingbeck@gmail.com with a CC to gtreichler@ameritech.net to confirm the order.
- **Online Order Form**
 - https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdBMjj-FfxZ-eivoNkW_Jvba_aHHCgaYcJXoT8SgtCqmMrdjg/viewform?usp=dialog

We appreciate any feedback about ways we can improve engagement throughout the year (not just homecoming). We look forward to seeing everyone back in Champaign this year!

Hotel Blocks:

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Urbana-Champaign (\$449 for double room and \$449 For King Room if booked by 9/4)

- 1003 W Killarney St, Urbana, IL 61801
- Group Code: BET
- Booking Link: [Beta Sigma Psi Alpha Chapter Alumni](#)
- You may also call the hotel to make reservations by calling (217)-328-0328 and referencing the block name: **Beta Sigma Psi Alpha Chapter Alumni**



HOMECOMING 2026 ORDER FORM

DUES:

Existing Life Member	OR	\$ -0.00-
New Life Member (\$300)	OR	\$ _____
Annual Dues (\$30)		\$ _____

Dues must be paid (either by Life Membership or Annual Membership) to make Homecoming reservations, vote, and hold office.

TICKETS: (order must be purchased by September 4, 2026)

Full Homecoming Package _____ x \$150 = \$ _____

OR (Individual Tickets)

Regular Banquet fee	_____ x \$70 = \$ _____
“Young Alumni” Banquet (within 2 years of graduation date)	_____ x \$45 = \$ _____
Social/Tailgate	_____ x \$30 = \$ _____
Fighting Illini vs. Purdue Football Tickets	_____ x \$60 = \$ _____

OTHER: Limited Edition Beta Sigma Psi Tie _____ x \$25 = \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Graduation Year _____
Email _____

Who are you trying to bring back to the Homecoming celebration? Do you or your Pledge Brothers have an anniversary coming up?

What's Your Favorite Part of Beta Sigma Psi and Homecoming weekend?

Are there any new events that you would you like to see at future Homecoming weekends? Is there a venue you'd like us to explore? Do you have a place in the Champaign area you'd like to visit/re-visit?



Alumni News



Bill Keel

Brother **Bill Keel** passed away on July 11, 2026. Bill has a long history with Beta Sig. His college education started with a Bachelor of Science in Teaching of Chemistry from the University of Illinois where he participated in the reactivation of Beta Sigma Psi Lutheran Fraternity. He then earned a master's degree in education from Washington University, a Specialist Degree from Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville, and a PhD in Education from Saint Louis University. He also completed a Master of Divinity at Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis. Bill served in multiple capacities with Beta Sig as an alumnus. He had an accomplished career in education, amongst other pursuits, and as such, was one of the first recipients of Beta Sigma Psi's Governor Norbert T. Tiemann Award for distinguished professional achievement. (See 2003 Gold Rose snippet on page 21 of this newsletter for more details about his career.) Bill's wish was to spread the word of God through his actions; he wanted his legacy to be for everyone to know about Jesus. Those who knew him will agree he accomplished this goal during his long life. To read more about Bill's life, his full obituary can be found here: <https://rennerfh.secure.tributecenteronline.com/obituaries/William-Keel?obId=49001109>

Alumni Spotlight – Tim Norsen

Year Graduated: 1997

Undergrad Major: Biology

Post-Grad: N/A

Hometown: Rockford, IL

Current Location: Colorado Springs, CO

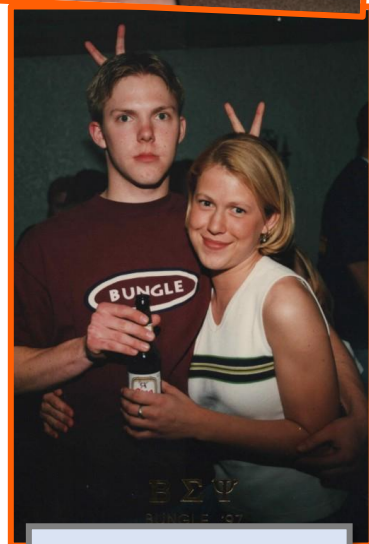
Current Employment: US Sales Manager for Angelcare. We make Angelcare, Diaper Genie, Litter Genie, and Pet Genie products. I've been working in sales in the pet industry for over 25 years.

Family: Married for 26 years to Diane, also a U of I graduate. We have two boys Carter (23) and Mitchell (21). The boys have been studying Taekwondo for over 12 years and are both top ranked nationally. My sister also went to the U of I and was a member of the Lutheran sorority for a time. Sadly she passed away a few years ago. My mom lives in St Joe and continues to cheer for the Orange and Blue despite being a Bearcat.

Church I'm Attending: First Lutheran Colorado Springs

Recently I've Been Into: Cooking is a lifelong passion, but a few years ago I started getting into homebrewing making beer and wine. We also golf regularly and have started to travel more now that the boys are older. In the past few years we've been to Spain, Italy, and several islands in the Caribbean.

One of our famous "stacks", where as many people as possible pile onto an unsuspecting victim.



Me and my sister Heidi at Bungle 1997.

Most fond memory of Beta Sig: There are too many to list honestly. The biggest takeaway for me was the brotherhood. I grew up with a sister, and then one day I had 30 brothers. It's an experience that not many have even in the fraternity world. There was always someone willing to help with classwork, go to the gym, go for a beer, or to just hang out. Most of us took it for granted and we shouldn't. We all supported and pushed each other and I'm very grateful. Today I'm still friends with many although life has done its best to make it difficult. But when we do see each other suddenly we are 20 years old again. I was proud to have served on multiple house officer positions including president, and was on the alumni board when we lived in IL. I'm very happy to see that BSP continues to thrive!

If you can recall, why did you join Beta Sig: Two friends of the family from my hometown were brothers, Dan Ross and Jon Link, and they met with us at our house during recruitment. Like me they went to Rockford Lutheran and are all around solid dudes. The rest is history.

Why should young men join Beta Sig: For the brotherhood, the discipline, and the support needed to succeed at the U of I.

Who is someone you'd like to reconnect with/who should we spotlight next: Mike "Chuck" Woolery

How can people reconnect with you: tim.norsen@gmail.com or by phone at 815-312-7915.

Alumni Spotlight – Kevin Smith

Year Graduated: 1976

Undergrad Major: Chemical Engineering

Post-Grad: Masters in Business Administration from Illinois State

Hometown: Fairbury, Illinois

Current Location: Oreana, Illinois

Current Employment: Land/Forest Management (I'm retired and live on 6 acres in the woods - it's like a full time job!)

Family: Kids, 3 boys - Avery (17 this Oct), Trevor (36 last April), Matthew (40 this Oct); Stepkids, Emma (22 this July), Bryan (46 last March); and last but not least, my wife Heather (she will have to tell you her age, I'm too polite)

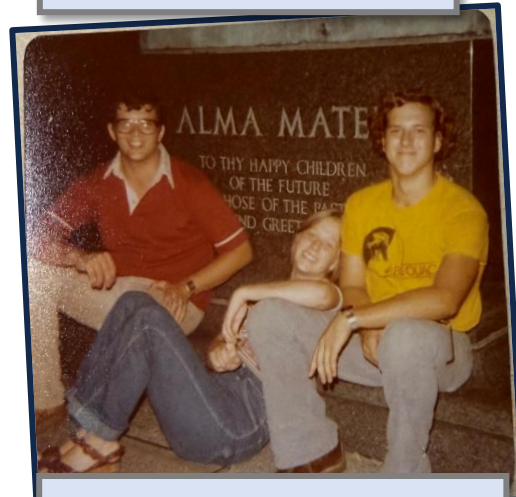
Church I'm Attending: St John's Lutheran in Decatur, Illinois

Recently I've Been Into: Road Construction - just had a length of asphalt installed to redo my lane through the woods, getting ready to trim the edges with some nice white rock.

Most fond memory of Beta Sig: I've got to think the times spent after finals week at Engel's cabin on Lake Tamarac in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan were some



Kevin, Heather, Emma, and Avery.



Me, Mark Helmke, and one of the Little Sisters, Linda Ebeling. Just hanging out with the Alma Mater. Circa 1978?

of the best times of my life. If I recall correctly, there were over 60 of us up there one of those years.

If you can recall, why did you join Beta Sig: It seemed liked a better option than the dorms for an incoming freshman

Why should young men join Beta Sig: It is good to have a faith based family around you when you are spending time in a new and exciting university environment

Who is someone you'd like to reconnect with/who should we spotlight next: I'd recommend Keith Larson - he's an interesting fellow!

How can people reconnect with you: Email me at kr54smith@yahoo.com or text me at 217-468-3101.



Me and Steve Engel. We were playing pool at the Hinsdale home of Jerry Nuernberger while a bunch of us were attending a holiday party over New Years there. As I recall, Engel and I dominated that table. We were playing well! Circa 1977?

“The Last Full Measure of Devotion” - Alpha Chapter’s Casualties of the Second World War *(report written by Nicholas Talley)*

When the Second World War arrived on America’s doorstep on December 7th, 1941, Alpha Chapter had approximately 208 alumni. At least 58 of our alumni, as of now recorded, raised their right hand and swore an oath of service. They represented every branch, in nearly every theatre, by air, by land, and by sea. After all, Beta Sigma Psi exists to build men of character, confidence, and conviction. Men of these qualities, Beta Sig men, live selflessly – even at the greatest cost.

Of the Alpha Chapter men who left their homes, schools, and families to serve our nation overseas during WWII, almost all of them returned home – and for this we can be thankful to God – but two of our brothers did not. They made the ultimate sacrifice, or as President Abraham Lincoln described it in his Gettysburg Address, they gave “the last full measure of devotion”. Our brothers; Irvin Vetesnik, a member of the Fall 1934 Pledge Class, and Roland Purkey, a member of the Fall 1938 Pledge Class, both gave their lives while serving during the Second World War.

Here are each of their stories.

Part I.

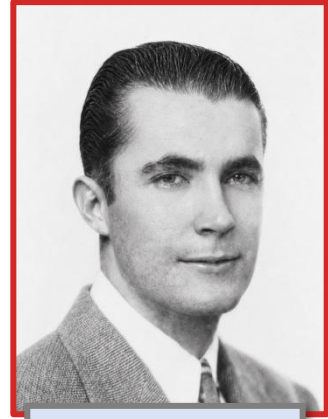
1LT Irvin A. Vetesnik (See May 2026 newsletter.)

Part II.

1LT Roland A. Purkey

Roland Alvin Purkey was born on January 3rd, 1919, to Joseph and Waneta. Roland was born as a third-generation farmer in McLean County. Roland’s grandfather, James Purkey, came to Heyworth, Illinois, from Tennessee in the 1870s, and the family had farmed there ever since. His parents were both well-known in Heyworth, committed members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Bloomington, and always seen around the community. Their February 1918 marriage at Trinity was well-attended. Roland was the first of their three children, and he would be joined by brother Elmond in 1921 and sister Nola Mae in 1927.

Roland's family had their work cut out for them, running a grain farm as the market sank and the Great Depression began to rise. The early years were especially difficult, but they were hardworking and faithful, bound to keep going. Roland and Elmond were still young boys when they were working in the fields with their father before school and until the sun set after. Slowly but surely, things steadily improved. New Deal legislation, such as the Agricultural Adjustment Act and the Commodity Credit Cooperation Act, both in 1933, provided aid to rural Illinois farm families like the Purkeys. These acts paid Illinois farmers subsidies to plow under portions of their crops, eliminating surplus, decreasing supply, and slowly driving prices back up. The Credir Cooperation Act provided government loans to farmers, using their stored surplus grain as collateral, which Joseph was able to utilize, one of the first to do so in McLean County.



Roland A. Purkey,
Class of 1941, pictured
in the 1941 Illio.

Roland's parents, who had each been well involved at Heyworth High and were social staples of the town, no doubt emphasized young Roland's extracurricular activities, despite the economic crisis. As a middle schooler, he was well involved with Trinity Lutheran Church and played baseball and basketball for Heyworth Middle School. Although Roland (known as "Purk" by his Heyworth classmates) was athletically gifted, going on to receive three varsity letters in baseball and one each in basketball and track in High School, the stage was his real calling. The star pupil of the Trinity Lutheran Drama league, in Spring 1929, at just 10 years old, Roland took home the gold medal in a children's public speaking contest at the Bloomington YMCA. Again in 1931, he won the competition with an oration of Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address - a prelude of his stage success to come.

Roland particularly eased into acting and speaking in his high school years. He was elected Class of 1937 President, President of the Ciceronian (debate) Club, a star member of the Heyworth High theatre troupe, and a standout member of the county literary competition team for all four years. He was the lead in three musicals and two plays, twice the county champion for the McLean County Literary Competition, and was generally infamous for his talent for captivating audiences with his thematic stories and tall tales. In an account that our downstate Beta Sigs will find humorous, in his junior year in 1936, Roland successfully argued in front of a full auditorium at Heyworth High the winning case in the affirmative for the debate question: "Should Cook County be made a Separate State?"



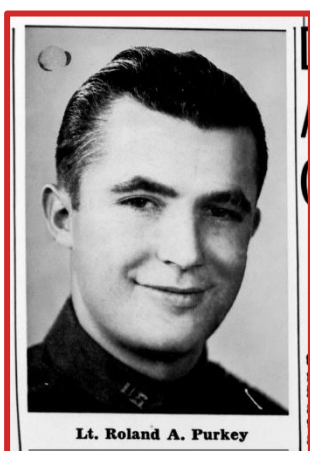
The Alpha Chapter of Beta Sigma Psi in the Spring of 1939, Roland's first semester as an active member. Roland stands in the middle row, third from left.

In August 1937, he arrived at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, pursuing a B.S. in Electrical Engineering. Roland joined the American Institute of Electrical Engineers in his freshman year at the University and began attending services at St. John's Lutheran Church in Champaign, where he met members of Beta Sigma Psi. He was evidently sold by their quality and character, and at the start of his sophomore year, Roland joined Beta Sigma Psi, and he was activated in January 1939. He took to Beta Sig immediately and was recalled in the Gold Rose as a favorite jokester and storyteller. Evidently, he didn't take quite as well to Engineering, and he switched his degree to a B.A. English in 1939. Unfortunately, Roland only was able to spend one year as an active member of the Alpha Chapter. In the summer of 1940, the Alpha Chapter house was foreclosed, and the chapter closed its doors for the last time for what would be 15 years. Despite this, Roland would remain friends with his fellow Alpha Chapter exiles, and - very fittingly - graduate in June 1941 with a B.A. in English with honors in Speech.

Roland graduated on June 9th, 1941. On July 12th, barely a month later, he raised his right hand and swore the oath of enlistment at a US Army recruiting station in Peoria, Illinois. While it's hard to say what motivated Roland to join the service, he certainly selected a role with great potential to see the world and experience adventure, unlike anything that could be found back in McLean County. When he enlisted, he made it clear he wanted one thing - to fly. He enlisted to become an Air Corps Cadet and left in August for Aviation Cadet training in Santa Maria, California.

The pre-war Air Corps was drastically unprepared for the war to come. With only 26,000 active personnel and roughly 800 aircraft in 1940, with many nonfunctional, it was called by Major General Frank Andrews a "fifth-rate fleet" incomparable to the German Luftwaffe and the Japanese Air Service. After completing his 10-week basic training in California, he was selected for training to become a navigator for multi-engine aircraft at the US Army Air Corps Navigation School in Miami, Florida.

Opened in November 1940, the Air Corps Navigation School was not even a year old when Roland arrived. As the underbudgeted and understaffed Air Corps did not have enough qualified professionals to teach flight basics, the school was managed under contract by Pan-American Airways in Coral Gables, Florida. While it would later become the home of the "90-day wonders", in reference to the graduates of the streamlined 12-week wartime training program, the pre-war school was an 18-week course capping off a total of 28 weeks.



Lt. Roland A. Purkey

2LT Roland A.
Purkey, US Army
Air Corps Navigator
School graduate,

This pre-war course featured 500 hours of classroom instruction and 100 hours of flying experience, focused on trans-oceanic environments. Once the war began, the combined training hours of new navigators dropped to just 200 in order to accommodate the volume necessary. These early-war American military aviators, with their advanced training experience, would become invaluable when the war began. On December 7th, 1941, Roland had only 6 weeks of training left when the news of the Pearl Harbor attack shook the world. The importance of Roland and his peers' training, and the role they held, all at once, became more important than ever before for these cadets, for their nation, and for the free world.

Roland graduated from Navigation school with his wings and was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the US Army Air Corps on January 17th, 1942. His commissioning could not have come at a more important time. The war was on, and Americans had a lot of ground to make up. But before he could begin the work of the nation, he had important loose ends, in fact, knots, to tie. On January 26th, 1942, Roland married his childhood sweetheart back at Trinity Lutheran Church in Bloomington. Miss LaVerne Sieg had known Roland since they were children. They had met as young church-goers at Trinity and members of the drama league during the Depression years, and began dating while Roland was attending classes at the University of Illinois. LaVerne graduated from Bloomington High School in 1939 and attended the University School of Beauty Culture. At the time of their marriage, LaVerne was an instructor at the school. Coming home from Miami, Roland was married and spent the weekend with his new bride in Heyworth on the farm before Roland left once again for California.

Roland had received his first assignment. He would be a navigator for the B-25 Mitchell with the 71st Bomb Squadron of the 38th Bomb Group, stationed at Fort McDowell on Angel Island. Ground elements of the 71st had already arrived in Australia, preparing the airfields, barracks, and logistics to facilitate the arrival of the air echelon. Roland had flown the new B-25 in training, and the medium bomber was increasingly becoming the first choice in the Pacific Theatre. While training with the B-25 in California, the aircraft would be made world famous with the success of the Doolittle Raid. In California, they



B-25-D bombers of the 71st Bomb Squadron fly over Papa New Guinea in 1942. 71st Flight Patch, as was worn on their leather flight jackets, is shown in the bottom left corner.

continued to train with the aircraft, in particular, the new B-25-D. The new D model became the standard moving forward, featuring improved defensive armor protecting key areas such as the fuselage, and was better designed for high altitudes. In April 1942, the 71st air echelon went by train from California to Dayton, Ohio, where they would receive more advanced combat training at Patterson Field. Roland's training continued through the summer of 1942 mostly without issue, although he narrowly escaped death in a July 1942 aircraft malfunction, which forced the crew to safely parachute out of their B-25 as the plane was hurled to the ground and to its destruction.



38th Bomb Group Headquarters. Breddan, Australia. November 1942.

Finally, Roland's training came to an end, and he and the 71st received their orders to fly to Australia and join their ground forces. Roland's parents, along with his wife, now 6 months pregnant with their child, came to visit him in Dayton for a weekend at the end of July, enjoying their time together before Roland left for service overseas. It would be the last time they ever saw Roland. On August 5th, 1942, the 71st left for Australia.

The 71st flew their first leg from Ohio back to California, their second from California to New Caledonia, and the final to Breddan, Australia. These B-25s were the first of the war flown to overseas bases for combat use. Roland's B-25, "Torrid Tessie the Terror," arrived in Australia on August 14th. The 38th was assigned to the newly created 5th Air Force and assigned the target of Japanese airfields, shipping, and ground forces in New Guinea. After taking a month to settle in, it was time for Roland and the men of the 38th Bomb Group to finally start their war. Colonel Fay Upthegrove, the commander of the 38th (later to become general), recorded the anticipation of his men. On September 14th, 1942, he wrote in his daily journal, "Since arrival... the combat crews have anxiously anticipated the news of the first mission against the enemy and finally that news has arrived. Today we received orders for twelve planes to fly to Port Moresby tomorrow, where they will refuel and proceed on that long-awaited first mission..." On September 15th, 1942, Roland was serving as navigator on that long-awaited first mission of the 38th. The mission was a successful attack, with no American casualties, on Japanese positions in Buna on the Northeast side of New Guinea. Upon their return, there was much celebration with the men of the 38th.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1942--

Today was the red letter day in squadron history for it was that all-important day of the first mission to be accomplished against an enemy. The first plane departed Horn Island at 0606 hrs (local time) and was followed in quick succession by the eleven other planes which will take part in the mission. (Six planes of the 71st and six of the 405th).

On arrival at Moresby the crews were informed that there were two distinct targets and that six planes would attack each target. The first target was the runway and dispersal bays at Buna, the second target was landing barges at Salamaua. Following are the planes and crews of the 71st which took part in these raids:

701--	702--	700--
P--Lt. T. J. Carey	P--Lt. E. Best	P--Lt. R. T. Sharp
CP--Lt. L. S. Meader	CP--Lt. E. Gorenflo	CP--Lt. D. C. Bryant, Jr.
N--Lt. P. E. Germain	N--Lt. S. J. Galzerano	N--Lt. F. W. Drees, Jr.
B--Lt. K. M. Caisse	B--Lt. R. M. Renneisen	B--Lt. R. F. Violet
RO--Sgt. P. D. McElroy	RO--Cpl. E. G. Knutson	RO--Pvt. E. M. Courtenay
G--Pfc. R. J. Conlon	G--Pfc. W. N. Robinson	G--Pfc. A. M. Daniels
E--Cpl. C. E. Shaw	E--Pvt. J. M. Woodruff	PH--M/Sgt. R. A. Salome
904--	692--	830--
P--Lt. W. T. Green	P--Lt. R. G. Mencher	P--Lt. H. M. Paquin
CP--Lt. J. J. Tuohy	CP--Lt. L. I. Savely	CP--Lt. C. S. Forbes
N--Lt. J. D. Mills	N--Lt. R. A. Purkey	B--Lt. M. P. Goodfellow
B--Lt. L. A. Powell	B--Lt. R. E. Hindman	RO--Cpl. R. O. Lewis
RO--Sgt. C. Evans	RO--Sgt. J. T. May	G--Cpl. N. Salinka
G--Cpl. J. A. Hamelkangas	G--Sgt. P. R. Dennis	E--Cpl. R. S. Williamson
E--Pvt. J. W. Knox		PH--Sgt. L. H. Campbell

(Plane 701 developed engine trouble at Port Moresby and did not participate in the actual raid).

Daily Log, September 15th, 1942. Journal of Col. Fay Upthegrove, Commander, 38th Bomb Group, January 1942 - November 1942.

The successful bombing run on September 15th was something of a tease for the men of the 71st, who were eager to get in the fight. For the next several weeks, the unit was strictly relegated to reconnaissance and logistical missions, without any combat occurring. On October 5th, the unit finally received another combat mission, but the excitement of the mission would soon sober, as the 71st faced their first casualties of the war. During a bombing run on a collection of Japanese Destroyers, the 38th was ambushed by six Japanese Zero fighter planes. B-25 "Battlin' Biffy" went down over the Pacific, with none of her crew managing to bail out. All six were killed in the crash.

Through to the end of November, the mission load for Roland was uneventful. He had flown just 2 combat missions and 3 rescue missions in his 3 months in Australia with "Torrid Tessie". On November 28th, the crew of Torrid Tessie was not slated to fly. But, 1LT Jack Reiber, navigator of B-25 "The Sun-Setters Son", was out sick, and a replacement was needed. Roland, eager to jump in, his first combat mission since October 5th, volunteered to fill in for the crew. Roland went to chat with the crew, where an incredible coincidence was discovered. 1LT Roy E. Hindman, the bombardier, was a lifelong resident of Decatur, Illinois, and a graduate of Millikin University. The two men had been serving alongside each other and had not known they were both Central Illinois natives.



Roland's first warbird, B-25-D "Torrid Tessie The Terror", pictured in 1943.

The crew took off on a night attack at 1:45 AM, November 29th, loaded with 20 lb. fragmentation bombs. Their target was a Japanese airfield at Lae, recently restocked with new pursuit fighters and bombers. The mission recorded mixed success – virtually none of the crews had yet flown a combat mission under darkness, and most had not flown at night at all since their training. The next day, while the crew of Torrid Tessie continued to enjoy their time off, Roland was once again asked if he could serve as navigator for the crew of "Sun-Setters". Their next mission was set for December 1st, and 1LT Reiber was still out sick. Roland volunteered his services, not knowing it would be his last mission.



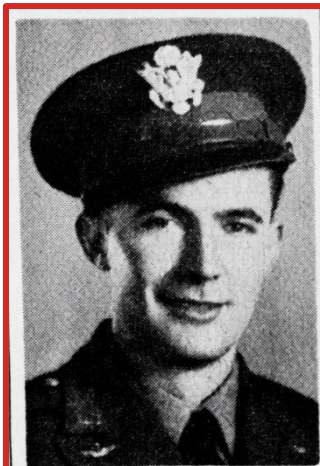
The Crew of B-25, "The Sun-Setters Son", pictured in Australia in October 1942. 1LT Jack Reiber, whom Roland substituted, stands second to the right. All 5 other men in the photo, along with Roland, would be killed when shot down on December 1st, 1942.

American Intelligence reported that off the coast of New Guinea, a convoy of 4 Japanese destroyers had entered the area. The 38th was given the mission to make a bombing run and hopefully dispose of the enemy convoy. The planes left at 4:05 PM and approached the convoy at 5:30 PM. Much to the surprise of the crew of “Sun-Setters” and their formation, the convoy was not just 4 destroyers – unreported, a fully armed Japanese aircraft carrier was traveling with them. The B-25s, including the “Sun-Setters,” flew down into range and dropped their first bombs on the lead destroyer, which was damaged. The convoy turned a sharp 90 degrees to the left, hoping to throw the attackers, while the aircraft carrier dispatched a flight of 10-12 Zeroes in defense. Roland’s B-25 was making the turn after their run over the destroyer when they were suddenly strafed by 2 of the zeroes coming at them from their rear. The attack tore through the left wing and center of the B-25, throwing the plane into flames, as it began to dive. As the plane began to go down, two parachutes were observed bailing from the plane before it hit the water. The Plane crashed into the sea in flames roughly 92 miles north of Buna, at about 6:35 PM.

On the evening of Wednesday, December 30th, 1942, a Western Union bicyclist delivered a telegram to the home of LaVerne Purkey. LaVerne was home with their baby boy, 2-month-old Ronald, when she read those awful words, “The Secretary of War desires me to express his deep regret that your husband, 1LT Roland A. Purkey, has been reported missing in action in the Pacific Theatre”. The news was reported on January 3rd, 1943, in the Bloomington Pantagraph. LaVerne, their son, and their family spent almost 3 years praying and hoping for good news from the Pacific, but it never came. On December 20th, 1945, the War Department reported 1LT Roland Purkey as killed in action.

None of the 6 crew members of “The Sun-Setters Son” were ever accounted for, and were likewise marked as killed in action on December 20th, 1945. Jack Reiber would survive the war, flying combat missions until 1944, and returning to the United States to be an instructor at the Air Corps Navigator School. He left the service as a Major in 1947, returned home to Pennsylvania, and passed away in 1995. The crew of Torrid Tessie the Terror, with some roster changes, continued to fly until a fateful mission on May 22nd, 1944. While on a routine administrative flight, the crew was caught in a fierce thunderstorm and never arrived at their destination. They were marked missing in action until Lutheran missionaries discovered the wreckage deep in the Jungle of Lae in 1959. All of their bodies were recovered and buried back home in the United States. LaVerne Purkey never remarried, mourning for the love of her life, taken from her so early. She raised Ronald, stayed in Bloomington, and was a loyal member of Trinity Lutheran Church until her 2019 death.

Roland A. Purkey is remembered at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, in the Philippines. 16,859 Americans are buried there, and 36,286 missing Americans are memorialized there. Our brother Roland can be found there, his name inscribed on the Tablet of the Missing. Irvin was posthumously honored with the Purple Heart Medal and the Air Medal. In those timeless words Abraham Lincoln spoke at the Gettysburg Address, we are reminded “that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain”.



Lt. Purkey

**Lt. Purkey,
Missing 3 Years,
Declared Dead**

The Pantagraph,
January 7th, 1946.

PUNSALAN AMADO	PVT	26	CAV REGT (PS)	PHILIPPINES
PUNSALANG JESUS F	PVT	57	INF REGT (PS)	PHILIPPINES
PURDY JAMES G	2 LT	65	BOMB SQ 43 BOMB GP (H)	OREGON
PURDY WILDER G	1 LT	72	BOMB SQ 5 BOMB GP (H)	MAINE
PURKEY HORACE J	CPL	35	INF 25 DIV	MARYLAND
PURKEY ROLAND A	1 LT	71	BOMB SQ 38 BOMB GP (M)	ILLINOIS

Memorial for Roland Purkey inscribed on the Tablet of the Missing in Manila American Cemetery, where he is joined by brother Irvin Vetesnik (PC Fall '34) (see May 2026 Alumni newsletter).

Summer 2026 House Improvements *(report written by Andrew Elders)*



The June 6 crew, L to R: Jarrod Gaither, Avery Clark, Josh Baggett, Logan Rice, Tyler Sass, Dave Wu, Andrew Elders, Joe Whetzel, Steve Geske, and Brian Garkie (Nathaniel Stoll not pictured, as he insisted on being photographer).

It was a busy summer at 706 W. Ohio! I logged 4 weekend trips to the house since the beginning of May with the goal of delivering two fully rehabilitated rooms in anticipation of every room being occupied for the Fall 2026 semester. With the help of a small group of dedicated alumni volunteers, we got a lot of work done and had some great fellowship while we did it. Rooms 1b (1a? northeast corner of the first floor never seems to have a consistent room number) and 14 got the full makeover: removal of old paneling, ceiling tiles, and flooring, and the installation of all new drywall, historically appropriate trim, carpet, and the popular “fandelier”, a fan-light fixture combo that offers multiple colors of light and effects that the guys are loving. We managed to make both rooms BIGGER through the removal of old furred-out wall surfaces. As much as I would like to recess the outlets in rooms, I’ve found that the walls are built with the studs installed so that the gap between walls is only 2” rather than the expected 4”, thus the raceway wiring remains. Multiple other rooms saw fandeliers installed and miscellaneous repairs. Room 15 got all-new trim as well as new carpet. Carpets were shampooed, and room 19 got a new coat of paint. There’s still some work to be done by the actives during I-week before school starts.

There was an interesting discovery in room 1b: the paneling was installed on nailers, and many of those nailers were historic baseboard. The room's historic baseboard was partially intact behind the paneling as well. The historic baseboard has been saved and stored for use as needed in public areas so that trim will be consistent. It was very satisfying to find as a historic preservationist!

Also new for fall are 15 sets of dressers and desks, purchased from 4-H House down the street. With more guys living-in and a lot of worn-out furniture, it seemed prudent to pick up some new-to-us furnishings. We got it all for the bargain price of \$600, so it's money well-spent. A big thanks goes out to Active President Logan Rice and incoming pledge Nico Micele (and his father!) for helping to choose which pieces we wanted to take!

On to the official "Elders Honor Roll" of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers who selflessly offered their time and talents, truly "Brothers For All Time" (*italics denote actives/pledges*):

June 6

Josh Baggett, Fall '10
Avery Clark, Spring '16
Jarrod Gaither, Fall '97
Brian Garkie, Spring '97
Steve Geske, Spring '80
Nathaniel Stoll, Fall '15
Dave Wu, Spring '22
Logan Rice
Tyler Sass
Joe Whetzel (pledge)

July 18

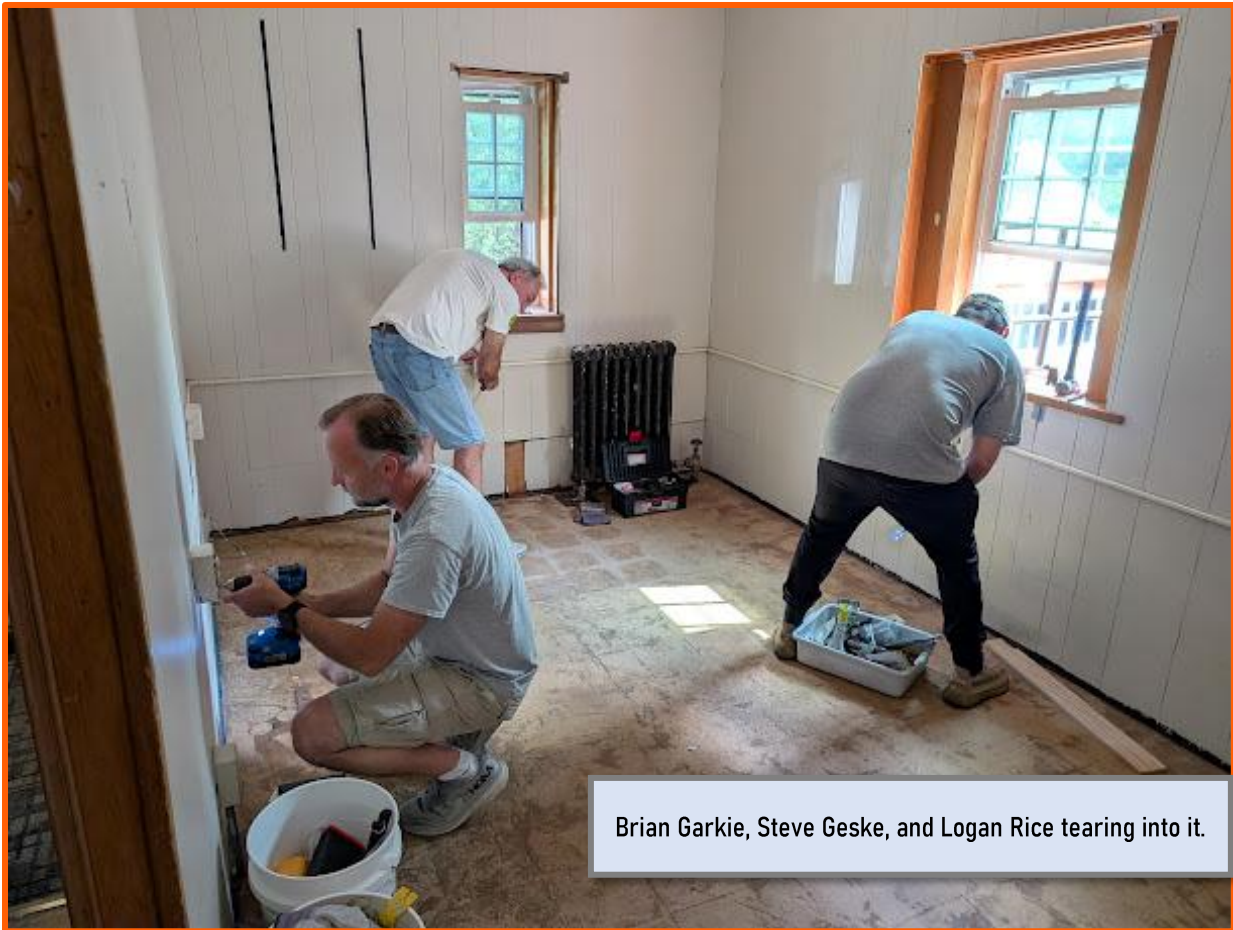
Joe Baldwin, Fall '14
Jarrod Gaither (2nd!)
Steve Geske (2nd!)
Steve Meyer, Fall '97
Logan Rice (2nd!)
Matt Cole

August 1

Avery Clark (2nd!)
Steve Meyer (2nd!)
Logan Rice (3rd!)
Matt Cole (2nd!)
Joe Whetzel (2nd!)
Raiden Daichendt
Carter Puracchio
Josiah Rutledge
Elijah Searle

ROOM
1B
REHAB

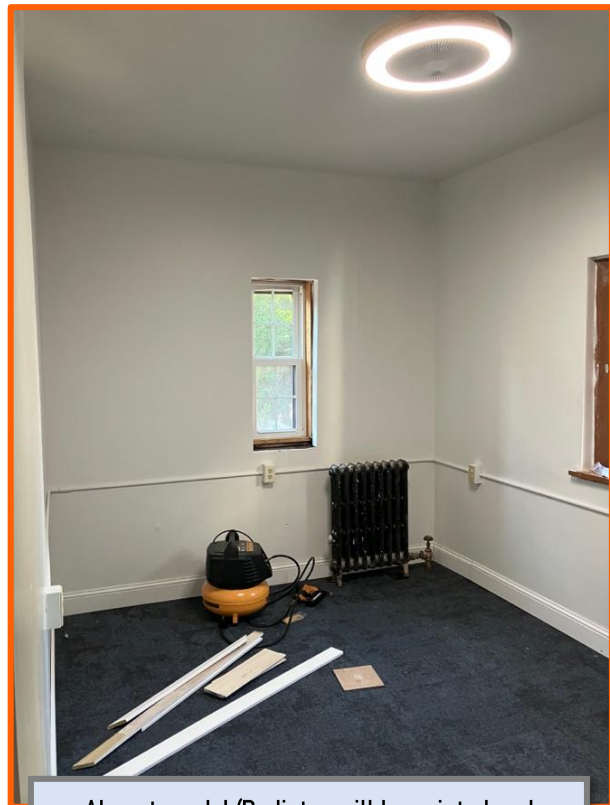




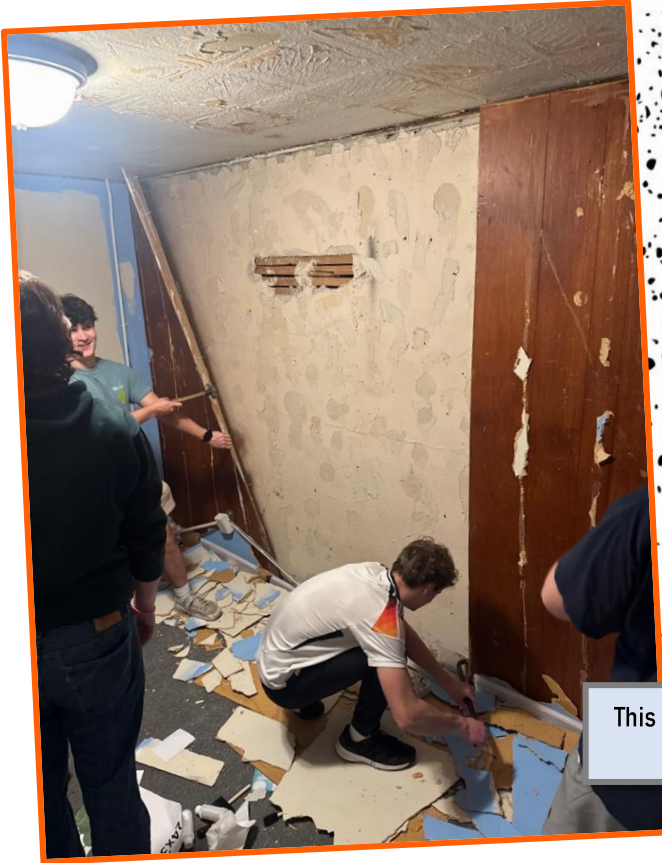
Brian Garkie, Steve Geske, and Logan Rice tearing into it.



Oh, the messes we make (and uncover).



Almost ready! (Radiator will be painted and windowsills will be adjusted.)



ROOM 14 REHAB

This redo was prompted by some over-eager
actives!



Stoll and J-rod doing some wall prep (and my 2002 graffiti on the floor).



It got pretty scuzzy.



Ready for the finishing touches (window trim particularly).



The new trim scheme of door casing and baseboards mimics existing original examples in the closet – as close to the room's 1928 appearance as it's been in years.

**THANKS TO
ALL ALUMNI
AND ACTIVES
FOR THEIR
HELP WITH
THESE ROOM
RENOVATIONS!**



Baggett and Avery prepped furniture for new occupants.



Tyler and Wu doing some cleaning in Room 17.

(Bill Keel Addendum. Gold Rose Archive. 2003 Tiemann Award.)

www.betasigmapi.org

Bill Keel named as 2003 Tiemann Award Recipient

By Rod Thompson, Member, National Awards Committee

William R. Keel, Ph.D., an alumnus from Alpha Chapter, was named as the 2003 Tiemann Award recipient. The Governor Norbert T. Tiemann Award is presented to alumni who have distinguished themselves in their chosen profession over a lifetime of achievement. Letters of congratulations should be sent to Bill at 1813 McClintock, Belleville, IL 62221.

Bill graduated from the University of Illinois - Champaign in 1958, with a Bachelors degree in Chemistry. During his college days he served as secretary of Alpha Chapter. Contemporaries included Bill Bunte, Del Karmeier, Merle Aukamp, and Eldon Ahner. In 1996, Bill was named as Alpha Chapter's Distinguished Alumnus.

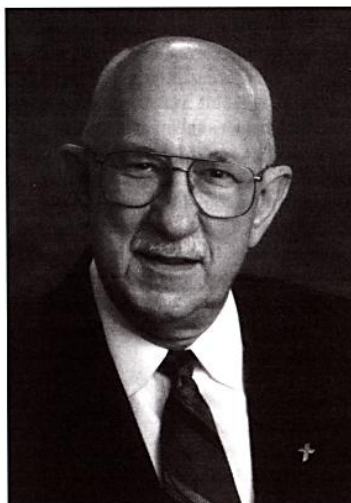
William R. Keel was born June 30, 1936 to Maurice and Olga (Niebruegge) Keel, Collinsville, IL. He was baptized and confirmed at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Collinsville, IL. Bill graduated from Holy Cross Lutheran Grade School and Collinsville High School in 1954. Bill married Bonnie Schmidt on June 7, 1958 at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Waterloo, Illinois. Three of their children are Beta Sigs - Mark and Steven are alumni from Alpha Chapter and Thomas is an alumnus from Iota Chapter. Service to the church has been central to Bill's volunteer activities, and Bill has served as President, Vice President, Elder, Treasurer, Sunday School Superintendent, Bible Class Teacher, and other duties at the Lutheran congregations the Keel family has been active members of throughout the years.

Bill's educational accomplishments are numerous. He received his Master of Arts in Education from Washington University, St. Louis in 1961. He was presented with a Certificate of Specialist (EdS) from Southern Illinois University in 1972. Bill was presented with a Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Education from Saint Louis University in 1975. In 1985, Bill graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

Bill's professional resume is as follows:

Bill's first job was at Lutheran High School - Central as a Chemistry teacher and tennis coach from 1958-1960.

Chemistry Teacher, Belleville Area College 1961-1970. Assistant to President, Belleville Area College, 1970-1974. President, Belleville Area College 1974-1980. President, St. Paul's Junior College & College High School, Concordia, MO 1981-1986. CEO, Southwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging, Fairview Heights, IL 1986-1988. CEO, Mid-East Area Agency on Aging, Manchester, MO 1988-2002 Adjunct Professor, Webster University, 1992-2000 Substitute Teacher at Belleville High School East and West, 2002-present



Bill Keel (Alpha) was honored as the 2003 Tiemann Award recipient. The award was in recognition for his outstanding record and lifetime commitment in the field of education.

Bill concluded his active professional career by serving senior citizens of St. Louis County and 3 surrounding counties as Executive Director of Mid-East Area Agency on Aging for 14 years. June 28,



2002 was proclaimed as William R. Keel Day by Buzz Westfall, County Executive from St. Louis County. Bill made countless important and innovative contributions to the cause of independent living for older adults. He expanded services provided to senior citizens from 800,000 to over 1,000,000 meals provided. Bill established Gateway Elder Services, a foundation created in 1998 to obtain funding to support senior citizens. He is considered an expert on the Older Americans Act, and he authored chapter 15 on "Home and Community based services" for the Missouri Bar Association's Elder Law. The agency he headed was the largest such agency in Missouri. In addition, Bill served as President of the Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

We congratulate Bill on his educational achievements, his successful professional career, a family tradition with Beta Sigma Psi National Lutheran Fraternity, and now the recipient of the Tiemann Award. Please join Alpha Chapter alumni at the University of Illinois's homecoming this year with the presentation of the Tiemann Award to honor Bill Keel.



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For past editions of the Alpha Alumni newsletter, please see our alumni website:

<https://alpha.alumni.betasigmapi.org/newsletters.php>

Distinguished Alumnus Award

The Distinguished Alumnus Award is chosen each year at the Spring Business Meeting. The Executive Board is always interested in obtaining names of alumni worthy of the title of "Distinguished Alumnus." Please read through the criteria below and think of someone who falls into one or more of the categories listed. Nominees may have done something recently or in the past that sets them apart from their peers.

Distinguished Alumnus Judging Criteria:

1. Activity in Beta Sigma Psi as an active or alumnus
2. Activity in the Community (school, clubs, volunteer, etc.)
3. Activity in Church (offices, committee, etc.)
4. Awards (professional, civic, etc.)
5. Outstanding personal achievement
6. Any other characteristic qualifying nominee as a Distinguished Alumnus

Distinguished Alumnus Nomination Form

Name of Nominee _____

Person Nominating _____

Address _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

Describe why the person you are nominating deserves this award.
(Attach additional sheet if necessary)

Return Form To (or fill out via Google Form; see link: <https://forms.gle/SaywS3J3yvc6Qwx48>):

Dan Ross

1742 Oxford Street

Rockford, IL 61103



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