



THETA HOUSE CORPORATION

BETA THETA PI FRATERNITY

OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

May, 1983

Dear Brothers:

By now all of you have received a letter from the University outlining its decision to withdraw recognition of Beta Theta Pi's charter at OWU. We, the Theta Chapter House Corporation, have delayed in our response to you because of our continuing efforts to convince the University to reverse its decision. We perceive the chain of events which led to that decision to be groundless and quite inadequate to warrant such a precipitous action. Our purpose at this time is to elaborate for you those events and to solicit your help by writing President Wenzlau requesting a reversal of the decision. While reduced contributions would apply pressure on the Administration, restricted gifts designated for Beta Theta Pi's use only would also help, since the Beta House must be reconditioned. Prior pledges may also be restricted in such a manner.

We will begin in 1979. (The University usually starts there as well.) At that time there was a problem within Theta Chapter, but it was a problem that was not just limited to us. Troublesome attitudes and actions were prevalent throughout the campus. Beta, as the University often mentioned, just typified those attitudes and so used Beta as a whipping boy for a situation it created.

Rules during that period were being relaxed as well as academic standards to maintain enrollment. Drinking was permitted everywhere, visiting hours in dorms expanded, class schedules changed, and more parties permitted. Students from the lowest two quintiles of graduating high school classes with a SAT scores of 600-650 were permitted to enter. The result was chaos on campus. Since Beta at that time had approximately 10% of the male population, it was not unlikely there would be problems in our House.

When the suspension was implemented, alumni from the Columbus area along with representatives from the General Fraternity of Beta Theta Pi met with the Administration to correct "our" problem. At that time, we evaluated all members of the Chapter and under the auspices of the General Fraternity put seventeen Brothers on alumni status. The active undergraduate Chapter was reduced to about 40. In the process, known trouble makers were eliminated from the Chapter, but not from OWU. We were asked to houseclean for the University who saw fit to say after accepting them for enrollment that they were okay for school, but not for Beta Theta Pi. Under duress we accomplished their request.

The Chapter remained on suspension, and later on probation, until Spring 1982. During this time the Chapter's activities were redirected to fraternity life. Parties were limited, spending curtailed, and Beta lore reemphasized. Community activities were stressed, at least as much as in any other fraternity. While problems still existed, they were more controlled, even more so than other fraternities. One other fraternity during this period had two drinking related deaths. Academics were also emphasized and from being last for fraternities in 1979, Beta was third of 12 Chapters by the fall of 1982. (If Winter 1982-83 is calculated and released, they will probably be 2nd or 1st). So it is with astonishment that in the fall of 1982, we were again contacted about problems within Theta Chapter.

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The alumni cannot go without blame for part of the problem, because alumni involvement was reduced during this period. However, you all know that the Theta Chapter House Corporation does not own or control the Beta House. It is owned by the University. While some alumni support is always available, the alumni rarely attend meetings since there is no business for us. Brother Rick Vince '75, as President of the house corporation and Chapter Advisor, maintained the constant contact necessary until recently when Brother Jeff Davis '81 took over as advisor. During their time of service, no University complaints were given to either of them.

In the Fall 1982 the undergraduates had to notify the advisor and the General Fraternity that Beta was again on the watch list with two other fraternities. The University, as before, failed to notify the alumni of any problem. Discussions took place in the fall and winter between the Administration and Brothers Pete Barnhart, Miami '66, a Vice President of the General Fraternity of Beta Theta Pi; Rick Schwieterman, Ohio State '72, a District Chief of Beta Theta Pi; and Stan Van Buren, OWU '52. The result of those discussions was an understanding between the participants that to save Theta Chapter, the undergraduates and alumni had to show progress towards compliance with OWU's Fraternity Experience Guidelines program. While much of the program consisted of what we might refer to as "fluff and puff" having no real substantive way to evaluate the program, the alumni and undergraduates attempted to comply with the FEG program.

The undergraduates were asked to answer questions on their planned actions to improve their academics, discipline, and overall attitude of fraternity life. The alumni were asked for the first time to agree to manage the Beta House under OWU's Real Estate Management Agreement (RMA). Many fraternities at OWU have had this opportunity for eight years. This request was related to us as the major priority for compliance with the FEG program. At a January '83 meeting, twelve alumni and Brothers Barnhart and Schwieterman agreed to rejuvenate the Theta Chapter House Corporation and to take the responsibility for the house's use and maintenance. At that meeting a letter of intent to implement such an agreement was executed and delivered to the University. (The University was reviewing their current RMA Agreement and we were unable to sign the actual document). The step was not taken lightly as we requested the authority to regulate who lived in the house and to assess a damage fee (something the University does for dorms, but has never done for the fraternity houses it owns). That authority was granted by Dean Smeaton. In addition, we requested the University to allow us to place a Beta graduate student in the Beta House to act as the resident counselor. This request was also granted and the General Fraternity secured such a person for us. Notification was given by the officers of the house corporation to the undergraduates that any violations of the rules established by the alumni, and we, the house corporation, would request the General Fraternity to pull the charter. The undergraduates accepted our rules at a chapter meeting and agreed to establish and maintain a \$10,000 damage deposit.

The House at that time was in terrible physical condition. Major repairs needed to be made which we felt was the University's responsibility since they managed the House. We requested that the University make all necessary repairs to bring the House up to standard. It turned out that they had already had an architectural study completed (for what purpose we were not told) and provided us with the data. In February '83 five alumni toured the entire house with University officials and requested that several more items be added to the list. All inferences by University officials up to that time indicated that Beta Theta Pi was progressing in all ways toward compliance with its FEG program.

The undergraduates during this time attended all meetings and responded to all questions and reports required by the University. In addition, they took upon themselves the responsibility to improve Beta lore with the new pledges. At the Mid-West Leader-

ship Workshop of 33 chapters of Beta Theta Pi at Ohio State University on March 5, 1983, those pledges were initiated into Beta Theta Pi. During the Pledge training program preceding the initiation, Beta was not cited for any hazing violations while five other fraternities were cited for such abuses. One of the criteria of the Fraternity Experience Guidelines program was to improve Pledge Education and ties to the General Fraternity.

While all of this activity was progressing, deadlines were being met by both alumni and the undergraduates. Correspondence with the Administration had established dates by which certain events were to take place. All were met. We were told that all the deadlines would lead to a major decision on Beta Theta Pi by May 1, 1983. As indicated above, everything that was done and everything that was said to us led us to believe that the undergraduates were making progress and would make it; and that the alumni would assume the responsibility for the Chapter House by the third term. We even have correspondence in writing to that effect.

Thus, it was with disbelief that on March 9, 1983, the undergraduates were told, in person, by Dr. Thomas Wenzlau that they were off campus until 1986. In making that decision, neither the alumni nor the General Fraternity were permitted to participate in the discussions or asked for help in shutting down the House to avoid trouble once the decision was made. In fact, no notification was given to either party as to the imminent decision. The Administration, after having made many bad decisions relating to fraternities over the past years, made its biggest. The eruption which took place by some 300 students, and not just the 53 OWU Betas, captured national attention. The effect on enrollment in the future has yet to be seen. We do know, however, that Beta Theta Pi was given an undeserved bad name.

Since that time, we have met with President Thomas Wenzlau, Dean Violet Meeks, and Dean John Smeaton to formally request a review of this situation. As has been the case in the past, they have not even had the courtesy to respond to our request or correspondence.

Many long hours have been spent by Beta alumni both from OWU and the General Fraternity. We feel betrayed and firmly believe that Theta Chapter had made progress and that with control of the Chapter House, we could have improved the Chapter further. When we requested reasons for the action, nothing specifically could be cited again. Rules violations were probably most heavily weighed. Even then, Dr. Wenzlau's staff could only cite two unregistered parties and seven noise violations. (As any of you that have lived in the Beta House know, by existing beside the dorms we have always had that problem. It is even more difficult today, as the University, in its great wisdom, has made two of the dorms coed.)

Therefore, we are appealing to you to rekindle your interest in Beta. We do not believe it is too late for Theta Chapter (the fourth oldest chapter of Beta Theta Pi in continuous existence with 130 years and almost as old as OWU itself with 141 years) to take its place on campus in the fall of 1983. We hope you will take the time to contact President Wenzlau directly and possibly attend Alumni Weekend (June 17, 18, 19). If we can get a big enough response, the Administration might even see fit to meet with us. We would like to have a response from you if you plan on attending. Even if your attendance is not possible, your continued support and time will be needed in the future. We will continue to keep you informed of all developments and actions taken by the house corporation. The attached pages outline in more detail our recent actions.

Yours in
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The Theta Chapter House Corporation

BY William Rowland '68
on behalf of

Robert Mauch '48, President
Stan Van Buren '52, Vice President
Richard A. Greg '47, Secretary
William L. Rowland '47, Treasurer
Christopher Brown '73
Jeff Davis '81

Unlin Harris '58
Henry Hubbard '49
Mark Lee '74
Rick Vince '75
Peter Barnhart, Miami '66
Rick Schwieterman, Ohio State '72

P.S. Send Alumni Weekend responses to Theta House Corporation, % William Rowland,
3976 Three Rivers Lane, Groveport, Ohio 43215.