

TEXAS FIJI

The Longhorn Fiji – The University of Texas at Austin
Established 1883

Spring 2025



The pledge class of 2000 celebrates their 25-year reunion.

Brotherhood Beyond Buen Retiro

REFLECTIONS FROM A 25-YEAR REUNION

Back in November, standing shoulder to shoulder with my pledge class at our 25-year reunion, something clicked. It wasn't new information—my head had always known it—but in that moment, my heart finally caught up: brotherhood doesn't end at graduation. In many ways, that's when it truly begins.

As I listened to my pledge brothers laugh, reminisce, and reflect, I was struck by how this bond has deepened over the years. Over the past quarter-century, these men have built businesses together, carried one another through seasons of loss, and remained a consistent source of strength and joy. The connection we formed at Buen Retiro has continued to shape who we are—and outside of family or faith, these may be the most enduring relationships of our lives.

But what moved me most wasn't just the friendships within our own class. It was the stories of brothers reaching across generations—mentoring younger Fijis they never overlapped with at UT, offering career advice, internships, and the kind of hard-earned wisdom you only get from someone who's walked the road ahead. Just this week, I got a text from a brother who was a pledge when I was a senior. Today, we're in a bourbon-and-books group—a multi-generational fellowship that's still growing, still sharpening each other decades later.

The older I get, the clearer it becomes: nearly every lesson I've learned about leadership, character, and community had its roots in my Fiji years. My pledge semester taught me persistence, accountability, service—and the quiet but powerful act of simply showing up for your brothers.

And maybe the most important leadership lesson of all: *Give back. Pay it forward.*

So, I invite you to take a moment. Reflect on what the Tau Deuteron Chapter and Buen Retiro have meant to you. Then ask yourself—how can you invest in its future? Whether through financial support, mentoring, or opening a door for a younger brother, your contribution matters.

This place helped shape who we are. And if we stay connected, it will keep shaping those who come after us—teaching them, as we were taught, to become men of courage, responsibility, scholarship, and character.

GTBO,
The Rev. John Newton '00
Head of the BCA
jwnewt@gmail.com



Alumni with Longhorn football legend Vince Young (center left). From left: Jason Downie '88, Brian McCabe '88, Mike Grigsby '88, Joe Knauth '88, and Curtis Hutcheson '88.

BCA MEMBERS

John Newton '00

Mark Winter '79

John C. Shepherd '85

Patrick McNamara '08

Rogan Giles '00

Will Fawcett '00



Making Worthwhile Memories

The past year has been full of remarkable Texas Fiji achievements and growth. Our members demonstrated their dedication to service, academics, and brotherhood in countless ways.

Fiji Leads and Serves

Philanthropy remained a top priority with brothers logging over 700 service hours and raising an impressive \$33,000 for charitable causes. Of that, \$28,000 was donated to the Spence Sarcoma Fund to support TumorGlow, a cause close to the hearts of many in the Chapter. The additional \$5,000 went to the B+ Foundation, helping families affected by childhood cancer.

On the academic front, Texas Fiji once again proved its commitment to excellence, with a Chapter-wide GPA of 3.56—well above the men's campus average. Brothers continue to uphold high standards in the classroom, contributing to a culture of scholarship that complements our other values.

Class Trips

The pledge class of 2022 enjoyed a magical voyage on the Rio Grande River in Big Bend National Park during the annual canoe trip, while the graduating seniors celebrated their accomplishments in Las Vegas on the annual mom's trip last spring. Our exquisite chef, Josh White, and the seniors also spent a day reminiscing at Franklin's Barbecue, another Fiji tradition.

Our involvement across campus and in the Austin community continues to flourish. Members are active in student government, academic organizations, and volunteer programs that benefit local schools and nonprofits. These connections help us expand our impact and reinforce our role as leaders on campus.

Pig Dinner Scholarships

Thank you to everyone who attended our 2025 Pig Dinner! I am excited to share this year's scholarship recipients:

- Best New Member:
Teeg Crumley '24
- Chapter Philanthropy Award:
Will Swanson '23
- Scott Austin Turner Scholarship:
Will Anderson '23, Brady Dautrive '23, and Jack True '23
- Chapter Leadership Award:
George Eubank '22
- Jake Ellinger Scholarship:
Whit Thompson '23
and **Gardner Watson '23**

The Road Ahead

We are in a strong position with the Texas IFC and national organization, which allows us to preserve the traditions and values that shape Texas Fiji. Anticipation and excitement are abundant within the Chapter heading into the 2025 football season, hoping to win the National Championship. As we look to the future, we remain committed to the values that have guided us for generations—service, excellence, and brotherhood. With strong momentum and a shared vision, Texas Fiji is poised for another incredible year.

GTBO,
George Eubank '22
Outgoing Chapter President



Members of the 2022 pledge class enjoy the traditional Fiji canoe trip in Big Bend National Park.



The outgoing cabinet enjoys a nice dinner to celebrate finishing the year strong.



Fiji spring break in Cabo San Lucas! Left: The 2024 pledge class enjoys an evening out. Below: Members of the 2023 pledge class enjoy brunch.





Excellence in Service and Friendship

GENE SHEPHERD '78 BELIEVES IN FAMILY AND FIJI

Having transferred to UT as a sophomore, **Gene Shepherd '78** wanted to find the right fit in his new community. He knew little about Fiji before that transfer, but the diversity of membership from across Texas, combined with the humble but high-quality brothers who became his pledge class, made it the right choice.

Gene focused intensely on his engineering studies (playing catch-up after his freshman year at a liberal arts college), which did not leave a lot of free time beyond the classroom. He made the most of that time with his Texas Fiji brothers, becoming president of his pledge class and eventually of the whole Chapter.

“Many of my deepest friendships are from Phi Gamma Delta, which has served as a cornerstone for my personal and professional life,” he said. “From our pledge class there is still a core group of 25 men who communicate and see one another regularly. From my point of view, this is unique aspect of a college experience that few people benefit from.”

Currently, Gene is the CEO (and a founder) of VTX Energy Partners—the fourth energy-focused, private equity backed company he has started and grown with a core group of co-founders. However, his biggest joy and pride is raising his three sons with his wife, Robin (“although, she gets much of the early credit here!”). Their youngest, **Ben '19**, became a



*Ben '19 and Gene Shepherd '78
at Ben's UT graduation.*

“Many of my deepest friendships are from Phi Gamma Delta, which has served as a cornerstone for my personal and professional life.”

**You can connect with Gene at
gshepherd@vtxep.com**

Texas Fiji too, and all three live and work in Austin, where Gene and Robin still reside.

Philanthropy has always been a pillar of the Shepherd family. While living in Houston, Robin, Gene and their three boys regularly volunteered at a food pantry, and in Austin they have supported (through time and treasure) a number of organizations focused on homelessness, affordable housing, and education. All three sons are Eagle Scouts, so Gene has been heavily involved with the local scouting chapter. At UT, he serves on two boards and is a 2017 recipient of the Cockrell School of Engineering’s Distinguished Engineering Graduate Award.

“Serving our community has been hugely beneficial to our family, and we have received much more than we have given.” Gene sees philanthropy as a crucial Texas Fiji value too, allowing the Chapter to introduce new members, while helping brothers embrace and accommodate societal changes through generations.

Gene is grateful to Fiji for opening new doors in life and relationship building, and he hopes future brothers will embrace the same opportunities and have the courage to take on new risks in life. Outside of his family and professional endeavors, he enjoys spending time with his wife and boys and keeping active outdoors.

Alumni News



*Brothers on an alumni hunting trip (from left):
Thomas Duncan '11, John Duncan '08,
James Duncan '14, David Duncan '13,
Patrick McNamara '08, and Chance Moore '06.*

Ted C. Hager '53 and his wife, Louise, will celebrate 69 years of marriage in June. They live in Dallas, Texas, and are blessed with three children, eight grandchildren, and soon-to-be 11 great-grandchildren.

Larry L. Loyd '54 retired from Ernst & Young and lives at a retirement community in Houston, Texas. He is an active volunteer with his Methodist church. Larry has two daughters (one married a Texas Tech Fiji), four grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Email: larmarloyd@aol.com

J. Scott Susong '64 is retired and serving as a volunteer pastor at Tulsa Bible Church. Scott and his wife, Judy, are enjoying life together in Tulsa, Okla. Email: ssusong1@att.net

William E. Pelham '68 is the author of *Burke and Damaret: The Wit and Wisdom of Golf's Most Colorful Duo*, published in 2017. He lives in Houston, Texas. Email: bill.pelham@comcast.net

Kevin E. Hunter '91 lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife, Lindsay, and their two sons, Holt and Caine. When they aren't watching their boys

play sports, the family loves to watch UT games and surf/wakeboard on Lake Austin. Lindsay is a practicing architect, and Kevin is a commercial real estate developer. They also volunteer with Wonders and Worries and the Great Hills food pantry. Email: khunter@cswdevelopment.com

Bobby Holland '99 is a football coach living in Dallas, Texas, with his wife, Lorraine, daughter, Birdie, and sons, Robert and Benjamin. Email: bholland825@yahoo.com

Peter Kaldis '02 is married to Leslie Frels and has a daughter named Katherine. Peter works for Baylor College of Medicine as a hospitalist in St Luke's. He and Leslie split their time between Houston and Victoria, Texas. Email: pkaldis@gmail.com

Jack T. Gannon Jr. '05 practiced law at a Dallas firm for 11 years and is currently on a personal sabbatical. Over the past few months, Jack has summited Denali (Mt. McKinley) and fielded the John Muir Trail—each of which took approximately three weeks. Jack lives in Hillsboro, Texas. Email: jacktgannon@gmail.com

SUPPORT FIJI TODAY!

TEXAS FIJI



Frataternities thrive when alumni lend a hand, and Texas Fiji is no exception. By donating to the recruitment fund, you'll invest in our Chapter's continued success as we build an even greater brotherhood.

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Chapter Officers

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Lewis Montgomery '23

Treasurer
Gardner Watson '23

Recording Secretary
Paul Ray '23

Corresponding Secretary
Roark Holman '23

Historian
Jake Watts '23

House Managers
Sam Sherman '23
Chris Taubenfeld '23

Head Rush Captain
Jake Watts '23
jakewatts323@gmail.com
(469) 401-5212

SEND YOUR
REFERRALS
TO ME!

Rush Chairmen
Andrew Alexander '23
Brooks Benton '23
Thomas Dorbrandt '23
Clayton Murphy '23
Paul Ray '23

Assistant Rush Chairmen
Teeg Crumley '24
Cooper Cutler '24
Heid Manning '24
Ford Montgomery '24
Charlie Rives '24
Shepard Simons '24

In our most recent bio update mailing, we asked alumni if they had any Fraternity-related memorabilia.

Doug Wiley '65 sent these pictures of two Fiji wooden plaques in his possession.

Thank you for sharing, Doug!



Chapter Goals



More Alumni
New Inside!