

## **A Friend from the Heart Forever**

For pre-2000 graduates, the Delta Chi DKE honor roll included names like Clifton Beckworth Brown, Cesar A. Grasselli and President Theodore Roosevelt (well, his trees anyway) to name a few. For post-2000 graduates, Thomas C. Borthwick '51 joined this list of familiar names.

Armed with archival photographs of the Clifton Beckworth Brown Library and computerized floor plans sketched by the actives, Tom began to build at a frenzied pace. From 2000 to 2003, "Tom researched, designed and hand-crafted furniture that restored the DKE house's Victorian essence," Brad Webster '04, former house manager, recalled. "Functional, comfortable and DKE-proof."

Tom should be celebrating his 70<sup>th</sup> Cornell and DKE reunion this Spring. However, the enduring life of the party, peacefully took his last breath on January 31, 2021, just shy of his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

Legend has it that Tom, a U.S. captain in the Korean War who returned unscathed, lost the tip of a finger during his labor of love for DKE. *What drove Tom, I wondered? Where are the fruits of his labor now?*

### **Enthusiastic DKE supporter**

Matt Hyland '01, former chapter president, reflected. "His projects brought together two of his passions in life, the DKE brotherhood and high-level cabinetmaking."

Josephine ("Jo"), Tom's wife of 62 years, had a bird's eye view to both. "After Tom's short stint in sales at Owens Corning and then a successful career as an investment advisor, he returned full-time to his love of woodwork." She paused, "He began with simple rabbit hutches and bird feeders as a teenager and later furnished our entire house with exquisite Queen Anne and Chippendale reproductions."

Many roads in Jo's and Tom's life travelled through the DKE *house*. "Tom not only kept in touch with DKEs in his class but got to know and love DKEs from many other classes." Jo seemed more appreciative of Tom and his life than sad when we spoke. "We would often travel with DKE friends. And, they were with him to the end."

Cappy Innes, wife of Donn Innes '51, Tom's former roommate and best friend who passed eight years ago, shared a similar sentiment about the brotherhood. "Tom and Donn remained awfully close and would spend hours upon hours talking about life and the stock market, where Donn was a novice."

Feeling the draw of the DKE house herself when she returned to campus two years ago for a Cornell Council meeting, Cappy paid a visit "to drop off a DKE tie, figuring a brother might like one." When she told me that, my ears perked up, *maybe she knew about the state of the furniture?* "Unfortunately, the house was boarded up," she replied, then kindly asked, "May I send the tie to you?"

Dan Bley '03, also a former chapter president, guessed, "I would be surprised if any of Tom's furnishings lasted during the recent ups and downs at the on-campus DKE house." Still, Dan remembers that Tom's

hard work made a difference, especially for new-member rush. "It meant so much than an alumnus would take the time and effort to give back to the house in this way."

Tom's precise way demanded: a standing table inlaid with the DKE pin in rare woods; coffee tables engraved with the brother's scroll and DKE letters; an elegant gaming table; side tables, end tables and lamps; and, a custom frame for the portraits of the five DKE U.S. presidents.

Tom's efforts expanded beyond the living room, which has since been dedicated *The Borthwick Room*.

"Tom is at it again!" Brad wrote in a DKE newsletter. "Not satisfied with the remarkable suite of furniture he bestowed to us, Tom set his sights on the dining room. He hand-crafted four solid oak tables and teamed with the brothers to restore the matching panels to their former glory."

Matt recounted, "Tom phoned the house late one night asking for the measurements of the bar door. He had started to build a gathering table and didn't want to include fold-away legs that might break easily." Benches, bar stools and pool chairs soon followed. To top it all, Tom made a sign welcoming brothers and guests to the "DKE Pub." Tom's DKE trifecta, now complete.

### **An eternal sophomore**

Pam Bass '84, one of Tom's three children (and mother to three of his four grandchildren) grinned as she sat by her Mom's side on the other end of our video call. "Dad was irreverent with a penchant for singing naughty songs." Jo, also grinning, added, "Tom was an outgoing, party-loving person, congenial and talkative." Not surprisingly, Tom made his own wine and champagne "labelled so intricately with the DKE house image that later in life he chose to preserve rather than drink the bottles."

Jo's Dad took credit for Tom joining the family. Amid a major snowstorm outside of Philadelphia, not unlike the ones this winter, "Tom and I got our signals mixed," Jo remembered. "While I walked a mile in the deep snow to visit a friend, Tom walked a mile to see me. Dad looked through the door's small window glass inquisitively, *Is that Jo's date?* and invited Tom in for a drink." The rest is history.

Tom's appeal transcended time and generations. Cappy spoke to Tom a few weeks ago. Although she could not share a *Tom story* fit to print, she laughed and said simply, "Tom was Tom to the end. Whatever he said, he said with a smile." Matt got to know Tom quite well and added, "even if there were several decades between us, I felt very comfortable around him in a casual and cordial way."

But even with all that charisma, Tom did not always get his way. As Jo informed me, shaking her head, "Tom shrewdly offered our grandson Angus '17 a sports car if he agreed to join the DKE house." Independent-minded Angus had other plans. "Tom loved him still the same."

### **The DKE door and looking glass**

"Where's the furniture?" Matt repeated my question. "Oh, we locked it up in the library in 2014 prior to our hiatus from campus." *Great*, I thought.

Tom, when recognized as a *Decem Vir*, as one of the Chapter's strongest lifelong supporters, remarked, "Supporting DKE is a no-brainer. We all gained a lot from our experiences at DKE, and it is more than appropriate to pay back our lodge and the dedicated actives who are the stewards of our traditions."

That got me thinking and to stop searching for the furnishings. *Does it really matter?* The furniture served its purpose and is likely worn or gone, but our memories of yesterday and continuing relationships today, endure. No one can take that away from us.

"The door!" Matt recalled. "You know, the back one that opens to the court?" I had not seen it in any of the restoration pictures. "One day, Tom looked at it and said, *I can make that better*, and took it on as a final project."

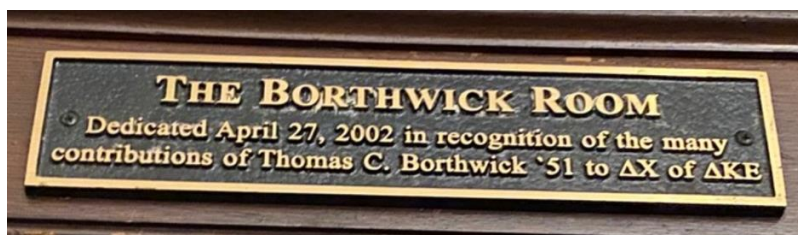
I like to think that Tom built the door, and its colorful DKE looking glass, with a *wink*. He knew it would *always* be there. The passageway that we traveled through countless times. With each trek, getting wiser. Gaining experience. Learning about ourselves. The door and looking glass from our adolescence to adulthood.

Or, better yet, as Tom lived his life, the journey from our youth to the grown-up version of our DKE-sophomore selves.

R.I.P., Thomas C. Borthwick.

In the bonds,  
Joe Marraccino '91  
March 2021

*Post-Script: An inventory of Tom's furnishings is underway! I understand that most has likely survived. You, and I, will have to visit the DKE house soon to see it all first-hand!*

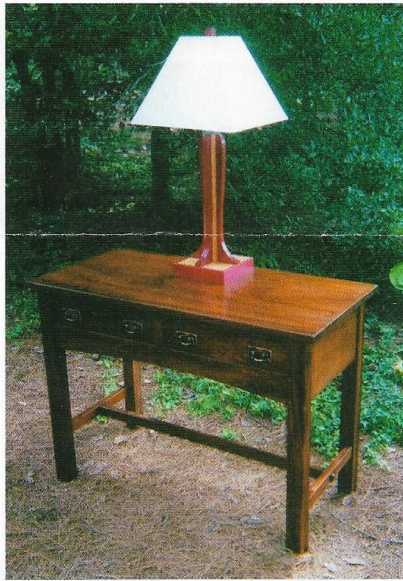




## The Borthwick Collection at ΔKE



Tom Borthwick '51 exemplifies the best in ΔKE traditions: seeing that the Lodge was much in need of a furniture upgrade, he researched the original furniture of the Lodge and went straight to work to design, build and and donate an entire suite of mission pieces for the first floor and an entire contemporary suite for the Bar. The photographs below display only some of the great items Tom has crafted to make the ΔKE Lodge look better than ever, and which have helped attract one of the largest pledge classes in decades!



Stickley Console Table c.1908  
Purpleheart/Oak Stickley Table Lamp



Stickley Library Table c.1912



Gaming Table with Stickley Side Chairs



Stickley Library Table c.1912  
Stickley Table Lamp

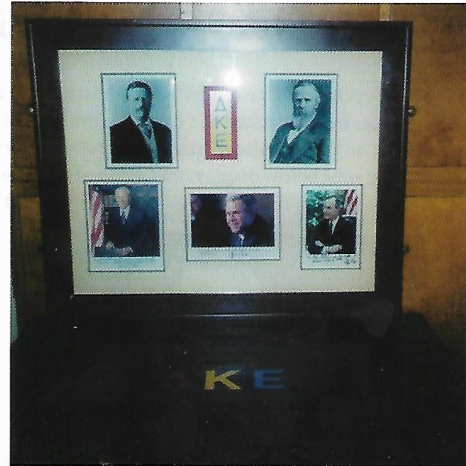


Stickley-Style Table by Oscar Onken c.1906  
with inlaid ΔKE Pin





Pub-style tables for the ΔKE Bar



"Mt. Dekemore" with presidential portraits of Brothers Ford, Bush (41) and Bush (43) with original congratulations to the men of ΔX of ΔKE for their achievements



Cafe tables and stools for the billiard room



A rampant lion to adorn the great claw table



ΔKE Flag Cover for the billiard table