

ATΩ palm

THE MAGAZINE OF ALPHA TAU OMEGA FRATERNITY • FALL 2004



Background photo by Darrell Blakely

Taus Together In Tragedy
Ole Miss Taus, You're In Our Prayers

There are never enough seats in the church for the funeral of a 19-year-old.

Nothing fits when someone so young dies. Too many people mourning, too much grief for families to bear, too many questions with no answers. It is unnatural.

But everything for ATOs in Oxford, Mississippi during the last days of August was unnatural. The overwhelming shock and grief juxtaposed against the overwhelming love and support produced a sense of suspended reality. As the week progressed, it all began sinking in as brothers in dark suits filed in to three funerals and a campus-memorial service. By the final service, there were few tears left to cry...the prayers and scripture readings typical for mourners had almost become routine. National Chaplain Comforted Keen, whose name set expectations, did not disappoint as he officiated the campus memorial service. "Lives changed, not ended." That's what Comforted said about Will, Howard and Jordan as he reminded all of us that along side the terrible grief there is hope in the promises of Jesus.

Hope was also present in the form of thousands of people sending notes of sympathy, donating incredible amounts of clothing, supplies, food, and offering scholarships in memory of Howard and Will and Jordan. At one point during the week, I was standing outside what had become the central gathering point for ATOs when two students walked up and offered to help out however they could. The two were random students; their offer of help had become the norm.

Throughout the week I was routinely asked how the "guys in the chapter" were doing. The only way I could begin to quantify so many emotions was to talk about the strength in being part of a brotherhood, knowing that they had each other to lean on through very difficult circumstances. Young men who never would have chosen such hard lessons now have a first-hand understanding of what really matters.



Wynn R. Smiley
Chief Executive Officer



ATO palm

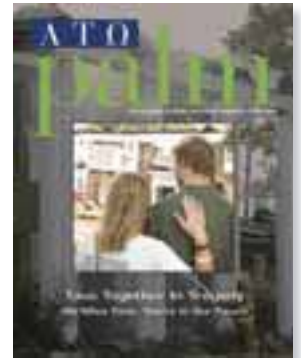
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An Ole Miss Tau is comforted following the tragic fire that killed three brothers. Photo Courtesy of *The Commercial Appeal*.

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A day like no other

Ole Miss tragedy proves worst in ATO history

Tyler Bier opened the door of his room in the Ole Miss ATO house and stepped into a hall filled with thick white smoke.

It was 4:30 a.m. on Aug. 27, he was disoriented and he could hear Will Townsend yelling “fire” from the floor below.

He quickly gained his wits as he went out to the porch overlooking the back deck and ran into Wheeler Penick dialing 9-1-1 on his cell phone. In an instant he saw massive orange flames rising high over the roof on the other side of the house and he ran back inside. “I went back in to bang on doors and make sure guys were getting out,” he said. “I started feeling faint from the smoke so I made my way back to the deck and around the house.”

Gathered outside of the house, brothers quickly divided up into their respective floors and took a head count, and discovered that three were missing. By then firefighters had arrived at the house and brothers had rushed to help unravel the fire hose. “Everything was in slow motion as we watched the fire jump from one spot to another,” said Bier.

Bier and his chapter mates watched in shock and disbelief from the Beta Theta Pi lawn as more than 50 firefighters battled the blaze that was consuming the house. But a chilling fact remained—three brothers were still missing. Bier and his chapter mates began wondering where Townsend, Jordan Williams and Howard Stone were.

Their fears escalated as it slowly unfolded that Townsend had been seen going back into the house to get Williams and Stone. “We got more and more worried about them,” said Bier. “The worst part of the whole thing was just waiting to see if our guys could be found.”

Somewhere amidst the clouds of smoke and chaos, it was revealed that the chapter’s worst fears had come true—William Moore Townsend, Jordan Lowell Williams and Howard Hillhouse Stone were dead.

“The tears flowed for a long time,” said Bier.

continued



Photo by J.D. Johnson
Background photo by Darrell Blakely

For Bier August 26, 2004 was just another Thursday.

Everyone in the chapter was off doing their own thing, some people were out on dates, some were studying, some—like Bier—went to bed early because they had 8 a.m. classes. Even the 4:30 a.m. knock on Bier's door wasn't out of the ordinary. "Everybody is always instructed to come and wake me up if anything major happens," he said. "I just thought the music was turned up too loud or something."

But the early morning knock on Bier's door will be etched in his memory forever. That morning, Friday, August 27, 2004, Alpha Tau Omega experienced the most tragic event in its nearly 140 year history. For the families of the fallen brothers, the Ole Miss community, the Taus at Ole Miss and the entire ATO Brotherhood, August 27, 2004 was a day like no other.

Twenty others made it out of the house alive and physically uninjured, but the reality of attending three funerals of three friends in four days is difficult to swallow. "I went to more funerals in a week than just about my whole life," said Bier. "I keep thinking they're just going to walk through that door. It's been like losing three real brothers."

In the face of tragedy and darkness there is always hope and light. Within hours of the fire, the outpouring of support coming from the University, the community, and the ATO Brotherhood was overwhelming.

"We've seen the young people on this campus pull together," said Ole Miss Chancellor Robert Khayat. "Other students, faculty, staff and alumni have rallied around the students who are members of ATO Fraternity to support them."

"The community outpouring was most appreciated," said Chief Executive Officer **Wynn Smiley, Illinois '83—Purdue '99**. "This hasn't been a typical reaction for a college campus when tragedy strikes. This is something very special."

Special is an understatement. Nike USA contacted Dean of Students Sparky Reardon to get shoe and clothing sizes of the members, Cellular South offered free phones, Dillard's sent new clothes, the Ole Miss bookstore prepared individual packages for those who lost textbooks—

and that's just the tip of the iceberg of generosity that's poured in.

Restaurants, businesses, churches, university employees and fellow students donated everything from food to toiletries to hair dryers. Not to mention that local families opened their homes to house the 19 fraternity brothers that were displaced by the fire and an apartment complex offered open apartments to house some of the brothers.

And while the outpouring from the campus community was intense, the support that came from the ATO Brotherhood was equally as impressive.

Hundreds of calls came in to the National Headquarters from alumni, current undergraduates and non-affiliated individuals. The ATO.org Web site hit record highs in hits and sessions and saw more than 250 guestbook postings in the few days following the fire. "The first week it happened, I got on ATO.org and read a lot of the guestbook postings," said Bier. "I just sat there and cried it was all so amazing."



Photo by J.D. Johnson

Taus sit on the curb and watch in disbelief as firefighters contain the fire that consumed the chapter house.



Flowers mark the beginnings of a makeshift memorial for Will Townsend, Howard Stone and Jordan Williams.



Volunteers help organize the countless donations that came in following the tragic fire.

We shall draw from the heart of suffering itself the means of inspiration and survival.

– Sir Winston Churchill

While Ole Miss Taus were in Atlanta for the funeral of Stone, the Georgia Tech chapter hosted a lunch to show their support for their mourning brothers.

"We just went ahead and had a lunch at the house for the guys," said Chapter President **Vladik Rikhter, Georgia Tech '01**. "We just did regular brother stuff—talked, played pool—anything we could do to let them know we were there for them. Knowing that we are related by that common bond of being ATOs made us want to help that much more."

ATO chapters have even been donating money. Take the Zeta Rho chapter at Memphis for example. The chapter raised more than \$2,000 and presented Bier with a check just prior to the Memphis vs. Ole Miss football game on Sept. 4.

Or how about the chapter at Rhodes who presented the Ole Miss chapter treasurer with a check after raising \$1,400 in one hour?

"It's just amazing. I know we're all brothers and supposed to help each other out but having a group of guys that you've never even met present you with a check, that's just nuts," said Bier. "I think it's just God's way of working in all of us and letting us know that we're brothers and we need to take care of each other."

The support that the ATO Brotherhood has offered is leagues deeper than a physical or monetary donation. It is living proof that ATOs stand together in the face of tragedy, willing to do whatever it takes to support and help brothers.

It is proof that ATO is more than a passing hobby—it's a lifetime bond between men.

It is proof of the tremendous power of the ATO Brotherhood to bring men together and unite them following even the most devastating tragedies.

But ultimately, it is proof that true merit is infinitely more than an award given to chapters—it's an ideal lived by each and every brother of ATO. ▼

Composites, trophies and other miscellaneous recovered items line the front lawn of the Ole Miss chapter house.



Tennessee ATOs show their support for the Taus at Ole Miss.



Photo by Catherine Robbins

Two Ole Miss students keep their candles from blowing out as they attend the candlelight vigil held for Townsend, Stone and Williams.

*What lies behind us and
what lies before us are
small matters compared
to what lies within us.*

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

ATO palm

Photo by Mike Patro

LOST but not forgotten

Ole Miss fire victims remembered



Will Townsend

Will Townsend was the kind of guy that walked into a room and carried a presence. Just ask those that attended LeaderShape with him this summer. "Will was a great guy," said **Ryan Patten, Central Florida '03**. "Any time he entered a room you knew it was going to be a good time." Townsend was among the first to wake up, evacuate the house, take a headcount and enter the blaze to save Stone and Williams.

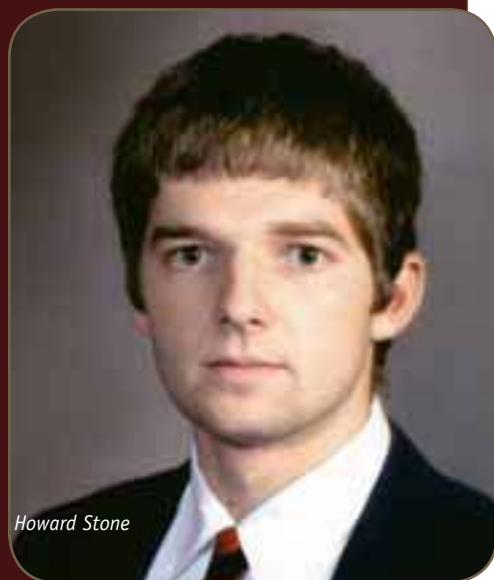
Townsend, an Eagle Scout, accountancy scholar and avid Ole Miss fan, went back into the house after finding out his brothers were missing. "That was Will," said his godfather Ed Peacock III of Clarksdale, Miss. "He was full of life and potential to excel."

"Will running back in to save his brothers was everything I would have expected," said Patten. "He wouldn't have left a brother behind for anything."

His friendship was generous, up until his death, said **Tim Conkin, Ole Miss '01**, who helped initiate Townsend, Stone and Williams.

"He was very passionate about his friendships," Conkin said. "He's the kind of person that I don't feel like I earned it from him. He just gave it to me."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." JOHN 15:13 (KJV)



Howard Stone

As much as Townsend commanded a friendly presence, Howard Stone commanded a deep respect. Stone was the person that would always come through in a pinch and would never require any kind of credit. He helped for the sake of helping.

Chapter mates said Stone was one of those all-around dependable guys. "Someone you could always count on," said Conkin. He was a shoe-in for pick-up games of basketball. He fell back on high school skills honed in Virginia where he played hoops and soccer all four years, supporting a group victory rather than drawing attention to himself. "If you needed something done, he was the kind of guy who got it done and didn't take any credit," Conkin said.

Professor Chuck Smith remembers Stone as a serious student with one of the highest grades he's seen in 22 semesters of teaching Political Science 101.

Possessed by a quiet demeanor, Stone, a political science major from Martinsville, Va., kept his mind focused on studying. Smith taught Stone and about 170 students political science in fall 2003, and said the 19-year-old stands out in his memory as a driven student who discussed the 1948 presidential election with intensity.

"He was just a political junkie. (He was) a really, really, really good kid who would have gone far in life," Smith said.

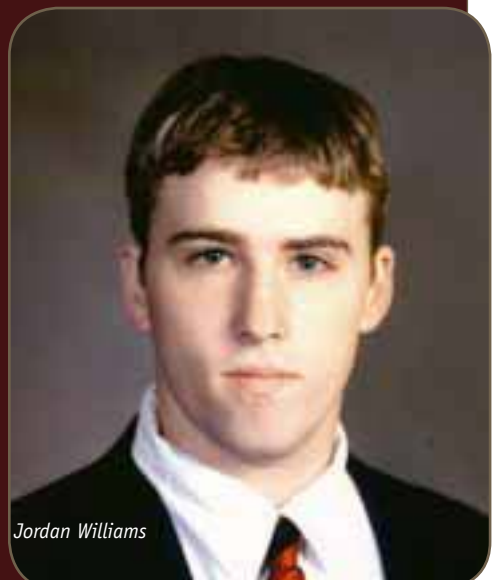
As much as Stone consumed politics, Jordan Williams absorbed music, his friend and fraternity brother, **Jonathon Rickert, Ole Miss '04**, said.

He could be quiet, talkative and almost always sarcastic, Rickert said. Phish and the Grateful Dead filled Williams' music collection, and he echoed their music and influences on his guitar.

Williams, 20, had a sly sense of humor, making under-the-breath comments during lunch at the house that not everyone caught, Conkin said.

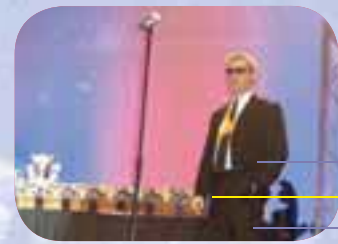
Williams and Rickert, both of Atlanta, had gone on the road this summer, following Phish. They had already made plans to go to another concert together, speaking the night before the fire.

"I can't put my finger on anything in particular," he said. "I miss everything."



Jordan Williams

True Merit revealed



Nineteen years is a long time.

Long enough to have four different presidents of the United States.

Long enough to see four different Olympic Games.

Long enough to see the conflict with Iraq begin, end, and begin again.

Long enough to see a newborn son of an ATO follow in his father's footsteps and become an ATO himself.

But, you don't have to explain how long 19 years is to the Taus at Simpson, because that's precisely how long it had been since the chapter had captured the elusive True Merit bowl.

Thirty-one chapters garnered the award this year, which would naturally make some wonder how the True Merit bowl can be deemed elusive, but consider the fact that 53 of the 136 current chapters and colonies has never won a True Merit bowl, and it becomes quite clear.

It's always been a little confusing as to what it really takes to win True Merit and what True Merit really is. So, in this edition of the *ATO Palm*, we'll explain.

With a record number of True Merit chapters this year, something must be going right. Actually, a lot of things must be going right. Awarding an increasing number of silver bowls is the dream of ATO but lowering standards to do so isn't in the cards. So how did so many chapters win the coveted bowl this year? Some would say that the answer is simple, others would say it is quite complex. One thing is for sure, getting to that level is never easy.

So what exactly do True Merit chapters have in common? "A pretty good common denominator is organization and leadership," said Senior Leadership Consultant **Kirby Neumann, Cincinnati '00**. "At minimum a handful of guys know what needs to be done and they utilize their skills and resources do it."

Neumann also said that True Merit starts with recruitment and membership education. "Obviously if you are not recruiting the right people and effectively teaching them what they need to know, you are not going to get results." With a retention rate of 80 percent and an average of 25 new members per chapter, the True Merit winners were accountable for over 30 percent of recruitment for the 2003-2004 school year.

A True Merit chapter must be organized, must have good leadership, must recruit well and be able to effectively educate its membership. But that's just the beginning. Each year annual reports are meticulously assessed in every area of chapter operations by a panel of judges comprised of ATO alumni, university administrators and other select individuals.

So what else must a True Merit chapter do? "Showing a sense of pride in your community and giving back through philanthropy is definitely important," said Eric Wanless, Illinois State '02. This year alone, True Merit chapters raised \$419,410.55 and combined for over half of ATO's total number of community service hours with 116,204—an average of 3,748.5 per True Merit chapter.

So, for a chapter to be True Merit, they must be organized with good leadership, recruit and retain quality members, educate them, and hold service and giving back to their community in high regard. That doesn't seem so hard. That's because it's just the tip of the iceberg.



"I don't think it's [True Merit] anything that can be faked. You just have to do everything at a high level, and you will be rewarded and recognized for that."

DAN SAAR, SIMPSON '02



continued

In addition to everything else, a chapter must never forget to communicate with its host institution and the National Fraternity—a point well defined by looking at the winners of this year's communication awards. Every one of them was also a recipient of a silver bowl. "If a chapter isn't proficient in communicating with us and the university there's no way they'll win True Merit; we simply won't know about all of the good things the chapter is doing," said Senior Leadership Consultant **Adam Winterberg, Kentucky '99**.

Director of Alumni Programming **Tim Carder, UC-Riverside '98**, makes it a point to note that alumni relations and support plays a big part in the success of a chapter. "BOTs and other alumni serve as a sounding board for the undergraduates. They help them see the big picture." True Merit chapters definitely saw the value in alumni relations this year. Every chapter president made some mention of the BOT, chapter advisor, or other alumni for their support throughout the year while accepting their bowl at Congress.

One thing that never seems to be overlooked by True Merit chapters is the importance of academics. With an average GPA of 3.02, True Merit chapters stood well above the ATO average GPA of 2.84. "Receiving an education is your first priority in college," said Wanless. "We try to make sure that every member of the chapter understands that."

Perhaps the final remedial test for a True Merit chapter comes in the form of involvement outside of ATO. "As an organization we feel that we recruit leaders, and we hope that our undergraduates showcase their leadership abilities in many other ways outside of the chapter," said Director of Member Services **Matt Arnold, Southern Illinois '95**. "Being involved outside the chapter can provide some of the greatest benefits to our members."

Finally, as if there's not enough to think about, to be worthy of True Merit a chapter must prove that it has not forgotten the basic principles of our founding. "If you have a strong group of guys who believe in the Ritual and really buy in to being brothers by deliberate choice, one of the biggest hurdles to receiving True Merit has already been crossed," said **Dan Saar, Simpson '02**.

So in the end what does it take to be True Merit? The long answer—a chapter that is organized and has good leadership, recruits well and educates its membership. It must be community oriented and always be willing to give back. The chapter must communicate well with the host institution and the National Fraternity to let everyone know what and how it is doing. That same chapter must promote good alumni relations and have strong alumni support. It must have a strong brotherhood that practices the Ritual and principles that the Fraternity teaches. Its members must be involved on campus and strive to do the right thing. Finally and most importantly, its members must remember to find time to study, have fun and learn all the things that they are supposed to learn in college.

The short answer, "True Merit is something that comes as a by-product of greatness," said Saar. "I don't think it's anything that can be faked, you just have to do everything at a high level and you will be rewarded and recognized for that."

What do the 31 True Merit chapters have in common? Everything and nothing all at the same time.



Nick Prillaman

Beta Delta Chapter University of Alabama

- 3.233 GPA
- Excellence in Scholarship winner
- Heavy focus on recruitment by recruiting early and effectively, which has increased their pledge classes every year
- Only substance-free fraternity in the Greek community
- All brothers are involved in other organizations outside ATO



Luke Green

Theta Pi Chapter University of Alabama – Huntsville

- 3.028 GPA
- Excellence in one or more specific areas of chapter communications
- Involved within the campus to publicize ATO
- Establish leadership and credibility early with new members encouraging them to participate and impact chapter immediately
- Exemplary donations to the community and received Erskine Mayo Ross Impact Award Honorable Mention

"If a chapter isn't proficient in communicating with us and the university there's no way they'll win True Merit; we simply won't know about all of the good things the chapter is doing," SENIOR LEADERSHIP CONSULTANT ADAM WINTERBERG, KENTUCKY '99



Adam Bailey

Epsilon Theta Chapter Baldwin-Wallace College

- 3.042 GPA
- Smallest fraternity on campus, yet holds four of the eight highest executive positions on IFC: President, Vice President, Secretary and Risk Management
- The past four IFC Presidents have been members of ATO
- The only fraternity on campus to send three members to the Distinguished Leaders Conference, the elite leadership development conference put on by the college



Matt Wright

Iota Phi Chapter Belmont University

- 3.115 GPA
- Concentrate on personal development and focusing attention on what will make better men, not just better brothers
- Recruitment is another specialty for this chapter
- Capitalizes on community service and philanthropy and these men are always trying to make the chapter stronger by never settling with the status quo



Eric Tomchik

Delta Lambda Chapter **University of Cincinnati**

- Outgoing officers hold a weekend long, off-site transition retreat to bring future officers up to speed and set goals for the fraternity
- BOT mentoring program where alumni serve as direct advisors for the top chapter officers
- Annual community dinner with the university administration, police department, and campus and community leaders to discuss important issues, improve relations and positively portray the whole Greek community, not just ATO.
- Grades above the All Men's Average



Rodney Chakan

Theta Gamma Chapter **Duquesne University**

- Chapter received the President's Cup for Overall Chapter Excellence, Duquesne's most prestigious award
- Chapter received the top recruitment and scholarship awards at Duquesne
- Chapter has grown from an 18 member colony three years ago to the largest fraternity on Duquesne's campus
- Duquesne continuously beats the All Men's Average in academics



Cory Edwards

Alpha Theta Chapter **Emory University**

- Top Scholarship Award with a 3.402 GPA
- Recruitment is always increasing with this chapter, they are always seeking out new members year round
- Board of Trustees Finalist because Emory Taus utilize alumni to better both the chapter and themselves
- Stringent membership status —must have a 3.0 GPA to be a member



Steven Will

Alpha Omega Chapter **University of Florida**

- 3.062 GPA
- Coordinate an annual fishing tournament- that raised over \$12,000 last year for charity and the Gainesville community
- Chapter has recruited 300 men in the last five years, averaging 60 per year
- Consistent operations make this chapter run smoothly year after year



Jeff Eversden

Gamma Zeta Chapter **University of Illinois**

- Re-vamped new member scholarship program that included reserved library space and pre-scheduled tutors, all of which resulted in a 3.5 GPA for the new member class
- 88 man hours per member of social service
- \$11,130 raised for philanthropy and charities
- Remains the largest fraternity within the largest Greek system in the country



Eric Wanless

Theta Theta Chapter **Illinois State University**

- 3.005 GPA
- Two time winner of the Michael D. Schermer Top Brotherhood Award given to a single Greek chapter
- Collected over 2,200 canned goods for the Bloomington Area Food pantry
- Won the Illinois State University President's Award for Outstanding Chapter Operations
- Participated in 38 different philanthropy activities last year and had 100 percent of the chapter participate in their social service program



Brian King

Delta Theta Chapter **Kansas State University**

- 3.089 GPA
- Top Chapter in the nation five of the last seven years
- Strength of chapter comes from holding brothers accountable with programs like their Designated Driver Program
- Membership education program which allows brothers to get involved and maintain the desire to contribute to the fraternity
- Long-standing Chapter Advisor, **William Muir, Kansas State '67**, who donates endless hours to the operations of the chapter
- Overall chapter operations run very smoothly with well-documented action plans and consistent execution



Chris Huziak

Zeta Zeta Chapter **Kent State University**

- Was awarded for outstanding performance in community service week
- Received the Four Column Award, presented to the outstanding student organization at Kent State
- The 22 man chapter raised \$50,000 for Relay for Life
- Maintains a GPA higher than the All Men's Average



Justin Coulombe

Epsilon Gamma Chapter **University of Maryland**

- 3.010 GPA
- Awarded the prestigious President's Cup for the second straight year
- IFC Golden Chapter Award which is given to the best chapter on campus
- Their Virgin Party drew over 1,000 people to the chapter house and raised over \$8,000 for the HERO Campaign against drunk driving



John Miller

Alpha Zeta Chapter
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

- 3.396 GPA
- The chapter developed a 1st year leadership forum to be incorporated with Student Orientation. Its focus is getting freshman students involved with MIT
- Chapter was granted approval for the creation and implementation of a recycling program to benefit all living communities- the first of its kind at MIT
- Members are captains of the baseball, football, basketball, soccer, swimming, and crew teams



Kyle Collins

Zeta Rho Chapter
University of Memphis

- Recruited 33 new pledges this year which is the largest on campus
- Raised \$48,000 for charity almost doubling last year's amount, and provided 14,244 hours of social service
- The chapter has 100 percent campus involvement and two IFC executive board officers
- Maintains a GPA higher than the All Men's Average



Corbin Boekhaus

Alpha Zeta Chapter
Mercer University

- 3.230 GPA and has the highest GPA for the last three years
- Raised over \$5,000 for the Georgia Sheriff's Youth Homes charity by hosting their first annual golf tournament
- In-depth membership education program focusing on developing into better men for all brothers, not just the new members
- Brothers coordinate weekly presentations on personal development and professionalism



Greg Hawver

Gamma Rho Chapter
University of Missouri

- Just launched a new professionally designed chapter Web site
- Provides a \$1,000 scholarship to any new member with a 3.5 GPA or higher
- Raised \$9,000 towards the set up of an endowment fund in the name of young alumnus Tom Morgan who passed away in January. The fund will provide an annual scholarship to be given in his name
- Chapter total philanthropic efforts raised \$21,300
- Chapter recruited 36 new members and remains the largest on the campus



Todd Spohn

Gamma Theta Chapter
University of Nebraska

- 3.100 GPA
- Successfully transitioned chapter house this year into a substance-free environment
- Offered 31 scholarships for brothers based on financial need, chapter contributions, leadership and other criteria totaling \$22,500 in total money offered
- Raised over \$11,000 and participated in 46 different philanthropy events
- Started the "Shave your Head for Shirley" philanthropy event where brothers shaved their heads to raise money for their house mother of 23 years who had recently been diagnosed with cancer



Brett Trapp

Theta Eta Chapter
University of North Alabama

- 3.035 GPA
- 2002-2003 Top Chapter in ATO
- Chapter is 65 brothers strong and fosters participation and communication between members with two planning retreats
- Recipient of the North American Interfraternity Conference Award of Distinction for being one of the top undergraduate Greek chapters in the nation
- Chapter has received True Merit four consecutive years
- Only substance-free fraternity on the campus



Mark Pederson

Alpha Delta Chapter
North Carolina

- 1,893 hours of service to the Chapel Hill community
- Raised over \$7,000 for charities
- Chapter awards \$7,000-\$10,000 per year in scholarships
- Very organized Executive Board and Committee system, both of which spread responsibility to entire chapter, creating a strong sense of ownership

"At minimum a handful of guys know what needs to be done and they utilize their skills and resources do it." SENIOR LEADERSHIP CONSULTANT KIRBY NEUMANN, CINCINNATI '99



Derek Johnson

Epsilon Delta Chapter North Dakota State University

- 3.006 GPA
- Complex committee system develops leadership and professional skills and includes every brother on at least one committee there benefiting the whole chapter
- Won university's prestigious President's Chapter Excellence Award and the Best Chapter Service Award
- With an average of 75 social service man hours per member, this chapter raised \$10,500 in philanthropy in their community service program



Jeff Iker

Theta Omega Chapter Northern Kentucky University

- Only fraternity to be recognized at the Student Life Office annual awards ceremony as they won their University's Outstanding Risk Management Program and Outstanding Campus Visibility awards
- Won campus' Order of Omega awards for Risk Management and Brotherhood
- Shared chapter commitment to leadership development as the brotherhood was involved in seven different leadership institutes and programs
- Chapter GPA remains above the All Men's Average



Anthony Dukes

Epsilon Omicron Theta Chapter Oklahoma State University

- Raised over \$2,000 and did 3,250 service hours for the community
- Jump for life, 11 sororities participated and the philanthropy which raises money by jumping on a trampoline
- Developed a new written Membership Education Program
- Intense year-round recruitment, had already signed 18 pledges over the summer
- Continues to keep grades at or above the All Men's Average



John Hertig

Gamma Omicron Chapter Purdue University

- 100 percent of brotherhood is involved in at least one other campus organization
- Chapter places a strong emphasis on brotherhood as they held 28 brotherhood events this year
- Second largest substance-free chapter in ATO
- Annual "Supermarket Spree" philanthropy event raised \$3,200 for Lafayette Urban Ministry

"If you have a strong group of guys who believe in the Ritual and really buy in to being brothers by deliberate choice, one of the biggest hurdles to receiving True Merit has already been crossed."

DAN SAAR, SIMPSON '02



Dan Saar

Beta Alpha Chapter Simpson College

- 3.004 GPA
- Excellent chapter communications; first place in Blue Region race, electronic undergraduate newsletter, The Gavel
- Offer more than \$8,000 in chapter scholarships
- Won their campus' President's Award for Fraternal Excellence, as well as campus excellence in Risk Management, Public Relations and Alumni Relations



Erich Neutze

Zeta Beta Chapter University of Southern California

- 3.025 GPA
- Chapter has established an Alumni Mentor Program where each active is matched with an alumnus who works in the field of study the active brother is pursuing
- Raised \$5,075 through parent/alumni casino night and annual Midnight Rodeo event. Midnight Rodeo has become one of the biggest philanthropic events on campus
- In conjunction with the university billing services, the chapter boasts 100 percent collection of chapter dues



Jeremy Walz

Epsilon Upsilon Chapter University of Southern Mississippi

- Coordinate the two biggest philanthropy events on the campus
- Hosted their 19th Annual Crawfish Boil which raises \$35,000 for charity every spring and hosted a Haunted House in the fall
- True Merit chapter for the last five years
- Winner of the Good Samaritan Community Awareness National Award for fostering a spirit of service through a near perfect social service program
- National winner of the Board of Trustees of the Year Award for exceptional leadership and service to chapter



Matt Ragan

Zeta Pi Chapter **University of Tennessee-Martin**

- Chapter gains recognition on campus through strong participation in all Greek and philanthropic activities
- Donated \$95,000 to the St. Jude's Hospital and started a St. Jude's Baseball Classic Tournament for fund-raising and philanthropy
- Zeta Pi has received 14 True Merit bowls in the chapter's 40-year history
- The Erskine Mayo Ross Impact Award National Winner for chapter's outstanding charitable giving in the community and beyond
- The most stand out chapter on campus because of their participation in all Greek and philanthropy activities



Will Smith

Epsilon Tau Chapter **University of Utah**

- 3.050 GPA
- First chapter on campus to be entrusted with university housing
- Received the University of Utah's "Dean's Award of Excellence," the highest honor a chapter at Utah may receive
- Through their annual "Philanthropy Week" they raised \$2,510 and donated 1,440 hours of social service and have begun incorporating social service in with their recruitment schedule
- All brothers are involved in other student organizations, most holding leadership roles outside of the fraternity



Matt Monahan

Gamma Chi Chapter **Washington State University**

- Raised \$21,800 in philanthropy
- Largest new member class for three years making it the largest fraternity at Washington State University
- Consistent and strong involvement with community through clean-ups, beautification projects and holiday decorating
- Established the "Gunnar Opera Students with Cancer Fund" in honor of their brother who died of cancer



Chris Hamman

Gamma Sigma Chapter **Worcester Polytechnic Institute**

- 3.057 GPA
- Raised \$3,715 for philanthropy efforts
- Every member participates in at least two other campus organizations
- 28 of 30 varsity soccer players are members and as well as eight varsity baseball players are members
- Won the intramural cup with an unprecedented 98 percent of the active chapter participating

A PLEASANT SURPRISE

Maryland Taus excited to receive runner-up honors



Taus from Maryland never thought they'd be taking home a Top Chapter Runner-Up trophy. "We were in our room before the final banquet trying to figure out what we could win, and we honestly didn't think Top Chapter Runner-Up was one of our awards," said Chapter President **Justin Coulombe, Maryland '03**.

But, Taus from Maryland should expect this kind of award or better for many years to come. The chapter has all the key components for a successful chapter. "We have a great brotherhood where guys always want to hang out with one another and help each other as much as possible," said Coulombe.

Maryland ATOs are constantly trying to top their success. "We don't get comfortable where we are, we are always setting goals, we are always looking forward, and we constantly strive to become better," said Coulombe.

There are two major reasons for Maryland's success. "One of the reasons for our success is our recruitment. We recruit great leaders who we know will benefit and push ATO forward," said Coulombe. "Secondly, our philanthropy really separates us from other chapters. We support all organizations and we really take pride in donating both time and money to the community."

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Awarded the prestigious President's Cup for the second straight year. This achievement rarely repeats back to back (only happened once before on campus)
- IFC Golden Chapter Award which is given to the best chapter on campus
- Virgin Party drew over 1,000 people to the chapter house and raised over \$8,000 for the HERO Campaign against drunk driving
- 3.010 GPA



Pursuing True Merit

By National President **Cory Ciklin**, *Florida State '77*

Otis Allan Glazebrook's call to recognize "true merit wherever found" is as powerful a command today as it was in 1880. Of course, of equal importance to the recognition of true merit is its pursuit. Each of us as members of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity have the eternal responsibility of not only identifying and recognizing true merit but harnessing it as well.

What is True Merit and how do we attain it?

For an ATO chapter, it is a handsome silver bowl mounted on a beautiful wood base; a crowning symbol of chapter achievement. For undergraduate members of our Fraternity, it is Indianapolis' acknowledgment of the success of a chapter's plan to excel in all aspects of chapter operations.

True merit, though, is more. True merit, as urged by Brother Glazebrook, is a long-term mission. The aspiration of achieving true merit is a continuing personal odyssey influenced by those who touch our lives and tempered by the unique challenges which each of us has no choice but to squarely face.

In the 1998 Steven Spielberg-directed blockbuster, *Saving Private Ryan*, an elderly veteran visits the grave of the hero who saved his life during World War II. Suffering from survivor's guilt, the veteran turns to his wife with tears streaking down his cheeks and asks beseechingly, "Am I a good man? Tell me that I have been a good man."

From the very first moment we are able to make independent decisions, our personal scorecard begins to be tallied. As we chart our life and navigate through its joys and heartaches, our individual character is being forged, fashioned and ultimately measured.

What does your personal self-assessment reveal? What's your uniquely devised plan to promote a positive difference in your life or someone else's? What specific decisions do you intend to make in the pursuit of true merit?

Whatever these decisions may be and whatever they may affect—whether it be your health, your career, your relationships, your Fraternity or your life,

take action to empower yourself. Become emboldened by deciding on a contribution you want to make or a goal you want to achieve. Adopt an inspiration that ignites your passion.

"The aspiration of achieving true merit is a continuing personal odyssey influenced by those who touch our lives and tempered by the unique challenges which each of us has no choice but to squarely face."

NATIONAL PRESIDENT CORY CIKLIN

National President
The Honorable Cory J. Ciklin
Florida State 1977

National Vice-President
Walter J. Hughes,
Alabama 1960

National Chaplain
Rev. Comforted Keen
Central Florida 1968

Board of Directors Member
Richard E. Bauer
Muhlenberg 1963

Board of Directors Member
Kevin R. Petschow
Illinois State-Culver Stockton 1978

Board of Directors Member
Jeffrey G. (Jeff) Busch
Washington State 1976

Board of Directors Member
Howe Q. Wallace Jr.
Florida 1974

Board of Directors Member
The Honorable Dennis W. Hays
Florida 1972

Board of Directors Member
The Honorable Avery B. Wilkerson, Jr.
Newberry 1975

Board of Directors Member
Miles L. McCall
Stephen F. Austin 1980

Board of Directors Member
M. Tyson Brown (Undergraduate)
Marietta 2002

Board of Directors Member
Nicholas A. Prillaman (Undergraduate)
Alabama 2002



In his book, "Giant Steps," author Anthony Robbins reminds us that Rosa Parks made a decision in 1955 to challenge a law that discriminated against her on the basis of race. Her refusal to give up that seat on the Cleveland Avenue bus route in Montgomery, Alabama on the morning of Dec. 5, had consequences far beyond those she may have been aware of at the moment.

Parks searched her soul and made a devout commitment. Even in the face of government sanctioned discrimination, she stood her ground and stood the test. With unrelenting bigotry that was actually codified by state law, this one person claimed and used her personal power to achieve what, up until that point, had been inconceivable.

As Robbins ponders, who would have thought that the conviction of a quiet, unassuming man—a lawyer by trade and a passivist by principal—would have the power to topple a vast empire? Yet Mahatma Gandhi's decision, his belief in non-violence as a means to helping India's people regain control of their country, set in motion an unexpected chain of events.

Decide upon your own course of true merit and take advantage of our formidable human spirit. Make a decision to achieve one of your own aspirations. Decide to do something which is good, noble and manly...and act upon it. Discover the sheer exhilaration of achieving true merit.