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THE MAGAZINE OF ALPHA TAU OMEGA FRATERNITY • SPRING 2005



DETHRONED

Taus and the Fight for Freedom

It is virtually impossible to drive anywhere without being encouraged to "Support Our Troops" by way of a small magnetic ribbon affixed to a car. The Iraq war has brought new life to what has become an American tradition.

Where the tradition of yellow ribbons started is somewhat of a mystery. According to the Library of Congress, a popular notion that the Civil War was the birthplace of yellow ribbons is an urban legend based, in part, on a Civil War era movie starring John Wayne entitled *Round Her Neck She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*. In reality, using ribbons as a symbol of hope started as an oral folk tale detailing the return trip of a recently released prison inmate. As the story goes, the newly freed man had written his family instructing them to tie a big white ribbon on their apple tree next to the railroad track if they would have him back. As the train he was riding on neared his home he couldn't bear to look. His traveling companion looked out the window to watch for the apple tree. In a minute he put a hand on his companion's arm. "There it is," he cried. "It's all right! The whole tree is white with ribbons."

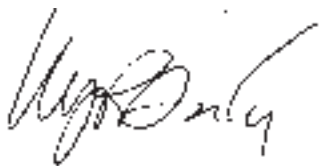
The story of the prison and white ribbon first appears in print in 1959 as part of a book on prison reform. It reappeared in the *New York Post* in 1971. Readers Digest reprinted it in 1972 and the same year ABC television aired the screenplay. In 1973 the song "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree," made famous by Tony Orlando sold one million records in three weeks.

Yellow ribbons broke into the mainstream as a result of the 1979 Iranian Hostage Crisis. An association of hostage families used a yellow ribbon lapel pin as a symbol of America's outrage at the hostage situation. In a stroke of marketing genius, the lapel pins were sent to local television weathermen across the country. The yellow ribbon (and eventually all colors of ribbons) became an American symbol of hope and homecoming.

ATO first embraced the yellow ribbon as the 1991 Gulf War began and hundreds of ATO alumni and undergraduates were called into action. The 10-foot tall wooden ribbon was proudly displayed under the ATO letters at then National Headquarters in Champaign.

This issue of the *Palm* is dedicated to the ATOs serving around the world to protect our freedoms and help developing countries get a foothold. Somewhat amazingly, the old gold and blue ATO flag appears at different places in Iraq (including one of Saddam's palace thrones) and demonstrates the truth in the Creed of having "no narrower limits within which to work together for the elevation of man than the outlines of the world."

Love and Respect to all of our military brothers past and present.



Wynn R. Smiley
Chief Executive Officer



ATO palm

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Chris Spidle, Iowa '70, drapes an ATO flag over Saddam Hussein's former throne. (Background) Army 2nd Lt. Peter Gustafson, North Dakota State '95, stands watch as the sun sets in the Middle East.

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Standing behind the flag

Taus
take on
strategic
roles in
War on
Terror

"If I would have shot him—he still would have blown up," said Chris Spidle, who had just survived a suicide bomber in Iraq.

Spidle, Iowa '70, was manning his black Tahoe gun truck when his entire convoy was stopped by a suicide bomber. Spidle raised his gun—only eight feet away from the terrorist—but before he could shoot, the terrorist exploded.

Miraculously, Spidle came away with only minor injuries—shrapnel wounds to his face and a perforated right ear drum that will heal with time. His black Tahoe was destroyed.

Spidle isn't in the military. He's a civilian working to help rebuild the infrastructure of Iraq. He installs fire safety and security systems for electric generating stations. But, he also provides secure transportation for others involved in the rebuilding effort.

Like all people serving in the military and working to rebuild Iraq, Spidle risks his life fighting for basic principles and ideals that he believes in. They fight for democracy. They fight for freedom. They fight to give people a better life.

According to the United States Department of Defense, more than 148,000 American soldiers are currently serving in Iraq, with an even larger number serving overseas. Scores of ATOs are part of the forces that continue to sacrifice so that other people can share the same freedoms we experience in America every day.

"The schools didn't have flushing toilets or running water, a lot of them had no power. For us to be able to go over and really help a community, that was rewarding," said **Army Capt. James Blain, Virginia '96**. "Seeing how a little American money and a little American effort can change an entire community is really amazing."

Blain commanded a company of combat engineers in Iraq but said he quickly discovered that soldiers there do a lot of different jobs. "You do it all while you're there," he said. "Convoy patrols, raids, civil affairs work. You use what you learned in training and college and use your interactions with people and you just do what you have to do to get the job done."

"You use what you learned in training and college and use your interactions with people and you just do what you have to do to get the job done." ARMY CAPT. JAMES BLAIN, VIRGINIA '96

come before you and previous generations have fought and won every major war against huge and fanatical countries," he said.

"Knowing I was a company commander in charge of 95 soldiers I wanted to make sure I made the right decisions to keep them safe and alive and complete the mission. With the support of my subordinate leaders, the great soldiers in my formation and my peers like Jimmy Blain, I was able to do that."



Chris Spidle, Iowa '70, shown immediately following his run-in with a suicide bomber.

Not far from Blain was fellow Virginia Tau **Army Capt. Paul Hicks, Virginia '96**. In fact, the two served as company commanders together in Tikrit for the first year of the war. Preparing to head to combat, one of Hicks' main concerns was simply completing the mission. "You measure yourself against those that

continued



Army Capt. James Blain, Virginia '96, looks up from Saddam Hussein's "spider hole."



Army 2nd Lt. Pete Gustafson takes time to pose with Iraqi children while on patrol.

"You go from getting used to getting fired at to trying to study for a test."

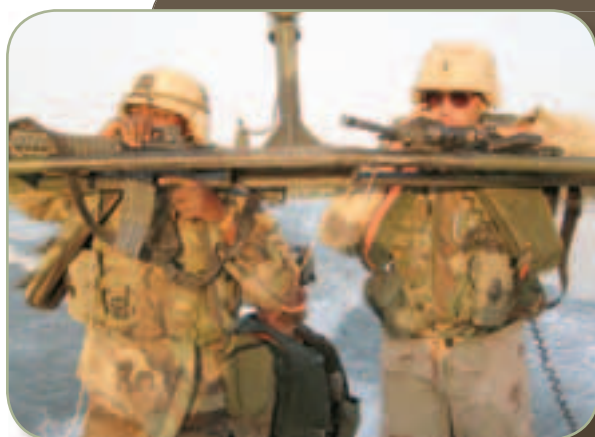
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SGT.
JEREMY SIADE

It's always easier to go into a difficult situation knowing you have the support of a brother. Blain and Hicks are a prime example. "With two brothers in the same unit, both in company command positions at the same time we had each other to lean on," said Blain. "We'd spent the years together in the chapter and in the military and that close bond was very significant and made it easier to go through."

Central Missouri State Chapter President Josh Hall wasn't fortunate enough to serve with any other ATOs but that didn't keep him from experiencing the camaraderie of the military. "You have to get really close to the people around you because there isn't much else to hang on to," he said. "The experience makes you grow up fast."

Hall, Central Missouri State '01, was a young 20 when he left for the war as a field medic, having signed up as a way to earn money for college. But he got a lot more

than he ever thought he would out of his experience. "I know what I'm capable of and that I have to be a leader by example," he said. "I had the rare opportunity to leave ATO and learn the kind of impact I could have been having on ATO and then go back and do it. Aside from my experiences as a field medic and my time in ATO, when am I ever going to have the chance to have such a positive impact on so many people?"



Two soldiers in Army Capt. James Blain's command stand watch.

The positive impact is exactly what **Army 2nd Lt. Pete Gustafson, North Dakota State '95**, has always looked for during his involvement in the war. "It's difficult to be over here, and see the news because all you really ever get is the negative side of the war," he said. "Bad things happen—it's a combat zone—but there are so many more great things happening here."

Gustafson, part of the Military Police platoon for the Brigade Headquarters Company, finds his inspiration in knowing that he's making a difference in the lives of the people there. "The greatest thing is being able to make a kid smile just by giving him something," he said. "They have so little, and by us showing a little American generosity we're making a lasting impact on the future of Iraq. Winning the hearts and minds of the people is the only way to end the violence."

Army Col. Samuel Holloway, Arkansas State '77, takes pride in knowing they are having a positive impact as well. "The Iraqi people are very appreciative of all that we are trying to do," he said.

One of the civic missions for Holloway's unit was the re-establishment of a Youth Sports Program for the Ninevah Province. The unit established sports councils, bought and provided equipment, rebuilt pools, soccer fields and sports complexes, sponsored



tournaments and even competed in events with local sports teams. "I had great pride in my soldiers and their work in support of rebuilding the local communities in Iraq," said Holloway.

His pride came with good reason. By the time his unit left, the program was running with 34 sports clubs, two major multi-sports complexes, an Olympic pool complex and over 178 soccer teams.

Army National Guard Sgt. Jeremy Siade poses under a special ATO flag. Until the chapter sent it to Siade, the flag hadn't left the Albion chapter house since the rechartering in 1991.

Army Capt. James Blain and his company move leftover Iraqi missiles. Blain's company was responsible for removing and disabling weapons caches and munitions so insurgents wouldn't be able to use them against American soldiers.



"The only thing that matters when you die is how many people you affected positively."

Field Medic Josh Hall



Chris Spidle, Iowa '70, poses near an Iraq flag. Spidle installed fire safety and security systems as a civilian contractor and provided secure transportation for other contractors.

"Both ATO and the Military are comprised of men eager to better themselves and their brothers around them through selfless service and sacrifice."

U.S. Marine Capt. Scott Murphy

But before there was rebuilding, there was the liberating, and brother **Scott Murphy, Sam Houston State '95**, was there when it happened. Four months prior to the beginning of the war, U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Murphy received his orders to Bahrain. "I was very happy to be able to contribute to something greater than myself and be a part of a historical undertaking," he said. "During and after the invasion it was very exciting to wave and talk to newly liberated Iraqis."

Murphy's desire to contribute to the greater good isn't purely based on his military experience. He points to his undergraduate experience in ATO as having a great impact. "Volunteering with my brothers solidified the personal satisfaction I receive when helping others," he said. "The principles ATO was founded on truly inspired me to be the best brother I could and becoming a Marine Corps Officer was the next step in continuing to practice those core values."

Murphy isn't the only Tau serving that draws parallels between his ATO

CHAPTERS SUPPORT TROOPS IN IRAQ

For the past three years Americans have been guaranteed to see at least one headline pertaining to the war in Iraq every day. Some stories draw much controversy and others great sorrow, but through the war one thing has remained unchanged, America's undying support and gratitude for the troops who are fighting for their country in Iraq and around the globe.

For these same three years ATO chapters across the nation have been doing whatever they can to help in the effort to support America's armed services. Tactics ranging from raising money to writing letters have been employed to help our troops succeed and let them know that their country is behind them.

Taus at Albion College helped the cause by teaming with the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority to participate in a program called Adopt-a-Platoon Soldier Support. For six days in October the groups raised money on campus to go toward purchasing Christmas care packages for 90 different soldiers who did not have families to expect Christmas gifts from. The packages included DVDs, CDs, microwave popcorn, magazines, batteries and personalized greetings cards. "The whole house was excited about it. I think that everyone just seems to know someone that is overseas, and

so they take a personal interest in it," said **Matt Brown, Albion '02**. The program received such a positive response on the Albion campus that plans are in the works to help another platoon this spring.

Recognizing that troops overseas lack many of the things we take for granted in our daily life, the Delta Theta chapter at Kansas State sponsored Operation Appreciation in the fall of 2004 hoping to bring troops a "taste of home." Taus manned donation stations throughout the Manhattan community collecting things like snack foods, playing cards, calling cards and other novelty items. They also encouraged donors to write a letter of support to the troops.

In all, the philanthropy collected over 900 items, \$400 and 800 letters of support, which were all sent to various locations in Iraq. "The event was a way for all of us to boost their [the troops] morale and say 'thank you' for their



experience and his military experience. **U.S. Navy Reserve Capt. Mike Turner, Tulane '76**, relates it well. Turner is operations officer and commander of Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force Forward HQ at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait. "Being in command is much like being in the chapter. You're working together to accomplish something," he said. "You're thinking as one and moving in the same direction. It's the same thing with the military."

Gustafson agrees. "As a chapter president, it's like being a platoon leader. You are the go to guy for your group and deal with personnel issues, you're responsible for planning and mission success, you have a number of audiences to answer to and you are responsible for a large amount of property," he said. "Of course, it's a little different since the soldier is obligated to carry out your orders or go to jail."



U.S. Marine Capt. Scott Murphy lays out a plan of action for his men.



efforts," said **Larry Long, Kansas State '02**. "It is important that we as Americans support our service members, no matter where they are."

Union University Taus took a spiritual approach to showing their support. Understanding that not every soldier has the appropriate materials to continually practice their religion while deployed, the brothers partnered with Campus Crusade for Christ's Military Ministry to raise money

for Rapid Deployment Kits (RDKs). The RDK includes a camouflage pocket-sized New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs, a daily devotional booklet and an evangelistic pamphlet.

The chapter's mission was to collect enough money to send 584 RDKs to soldiers in Iraq. The Taus collected

donations until Dec. 5 and raised nearly \$1000, putting them well within the reach of their goal. "When we told them [Campus Crusade] what we wanted to do the lady was just like, 'You want to do what for us?' They were floored by what we wanted to do and that we wanted to help them out," said philanthropy chairman **Derek Jones, Union '02**.

These are just three examples of the dozens of ways our ATO chapters are showing their support for America's troops serving in Iraq and in other operations. The time and effort these brothers are putting toward these events does not go unnoticed and as long as troops continue to serve our country, ATOs will continue to serve our troops.



"Pay attention to all the countries in the Middle East that do not treat people equally and fairly no matter what race, religion or creed...it will all change in the next 10 years."

ARMY CAPT. PAUL HICKS



Army 2nd Lt. Pete Gustafson takes time to pose with Iraqi children while on patrol.

"Never miss an opportunity to thank a soldier for what he or she does. They are the defenders of all the principles we hold so dear and the freedom we all enjoy as Americans."

ARMY COL. SAM HOLLOWAY

But while parallels are easy to draw, going back to the role of chapter president, or any normal civilian activity, isn't necessarily easy. For **Michigan Army National Guard Sgt. Jeremy Siade**, going back to being chapter president and taking classes is just different. "They are just very different stresses," he said. "You go from getting used to getting fired at to trying to study for a test. They just don't really compare."

Hall agreed. "It's different there—there's really no typical day or routine," he said. "You're either not really doing much—sitting around reading, lifting weights, playing video games—or you're in action mode and you flip the switch and you're just on."

Blain said that "if you weren't afraid going over, there's something wrong with you." But that the fear goes away as soon as you touch down. "Going over, you get this kind of apprehension about just how much control you have over your destiny and have all these scenarios running through your head," he said. "But that's all over once you get there. You realize you have a task—a job—to make sure people aren't getting killed and you are just in go mode."

In between his job setting up communication posts and worrying about being fired at, Siade, **Adrian '00**, received a comforting package from his chapter. In the Adrian chapter house there is an ATO flag that was placed on the wall when the chapter

was re-chartered in 1991. That flag had never been taken down. But when chapter president Siade opened a package from the chapter, he unfolded the azure and gold of that same ATO flag that hadn't left the chapter house wall since 1991. "I saw that and it got me a little bit," he said. "It was a pretty amazing gesture for the guys to do that for me."

It's the small gestures that are the most amazing. Just ask any of the Taus who've returned home. Maybe it's taking a hot shower until the water runs out. Maybe it's getting in your car and driving wherever you want. Maybe it's coming home to rain that doesn't just stir up more dust.

Maybe it's a simple thank you. "Never miss an opportunity to thank a soldier for what he or she does," said Holloway. "They are the defenders of all the principles we hold so dear and the freedom we all enjoy as Americans."



Show your support!

The Nevada Benefits Foundation would like you to join us in honoring the men and women that are defending our freedom everyday. What better way to show your support than by wearing one of our Defending Freedom wristbands or a set of dog tags?

To date, the Nevada Benefits Foundation has raised over \$50,000 in Defending Freedom wristband sales and during Operation Holiday Cheer. We hope to raise an additional \$1 million over the next year. All proceeds go to military and veteran charities via monthly donations to the Armed Forces Relief Trust at www.afrrtrust.org. The foundation has also donated to the Semper Fi Fund and the USO Wounded Warrior.

We'd like to ask you consider a donation to our foundation. Visit our Web site to participate in our "Adopt a Reservist Family" program. Make all checks or money orders payable to the Nevada Benefits Foundation, or you can use your credit card to make a donation using PayPal on our Web site.

Dogtags \$5
Wristbands \$3



www.defendingfreedom.net



Out of the shadows, into the light

Hazing revealed

It's Help Week at the ATO House in North Dakota. The scene is bizarre—Alice in Wonderland bizarre—and the truly disturbing part isn't that the pledges are getting yelled at and pushed around by drunken brothers, clothes covered in food from their rampage through the kitchen. No, what makes the scene so distressing... perhaps sad is a more appropriate word... is that the mayhem is the work of older chapter alumni who are upset that their hazing traditions have been eliminated by the chapter's undergraduate leadership. The Mad Hatter would be proud.

Moments before falling down the rabbit hole, chapter president Leif Mattson was with his brothers and the pledges talking about what ATO means to them and to their lives. True Brotherhood. "It was absolutely amazing the way guys were opening up and talking about the things that you typically don't talk

about," said Mattson. He remembers thinking at the time how well everything was going. He was particularly relieved because this was the chapter's first Help Week that did not include some form of hazing. Enter alumni.

Mattson was the first target. For a moment he was spared physical assault thanks to his pledge class brother Ikaika Pestana, who grabs the alumnus and shoves him down the hallway. "You don't touch Lief," Pestana remembers yelling. "You don't touch the president, the guy with the most respected position in the house." It became immediately apparent the alumni didn't agree.

In the meantime, other alumni are shoving undergrads and berating them for ruining the chapter. They are shouting "there is no Delta Nu without 'actee'."

continued

The pledges look on in wonder—is this a set up—all a mind game to make them think something bad is happening when it's really not? What is "actee"?

As the melee picks up steam, Mattson is shoved against a third story window so hard he is surprised the glass didn't shatter. After escaping a headlock from another drunken alumnus, Mattson calls police.

He knew it would be difficult to rid the chapter of its hazing, "actee" traditions but he had no idea that a handful of local alumni who had been out of the chapter several years would be so ignorant and so physical. "Getting rid of hazing is the toughest thing I've ever had to do," said Mattson. "Even the chapter advisor at the time told me we shouldn't try to reform."

The False Hope

Hazing is to group dynamics what quicksand is to stability. Hazing can be described as the lowest common denominator in organizational behavior. It is always tempting, especially for students, masquerading as a quick way to build team cohesion. Maybe that's why hazing is not a new problem. In fact, hazing isn't even relevantly new nor is it uniquely American.

"Fagging," or long-term personal servitude, was the norm in European higher education during much of the 18th century. In the United States, hazing was considered a rite of passage among young intellectuals. Different than fagging, which had fallen out of favor in Europe by the 19th Century, American hazing initially centered more on pranks and intense practical jokes. It wasn't until GIs came home from the battlefields of World War II that physical hazing —calisthenics, obstacle courses, paddling and forced line-ups—became popular in fraternities. In the eyes

of men hardened by war, the pranks and practical jokes popular before the war were nothing more than juvenile attempts at humiliation. There was an obvious connection between the surge of men enrolling in

college thanks to the GI Bill and a dramatic increase in fraternity membership. Equally obvious was the connection some GIs made between what they may have experienced in boot camp and what their new pledges should experience as part of "earning" their fraternity membership.

As state legislatures, national fraternities and campus organizations began cracking down on hazing activities much of the overt physical hazing turned to mental hazing. Fewer pledges suffered the physical abuse of a paddling but more were subjected to destructive mind games and meaningless tasks. Ironically, a variation of the 18th Century fagging resurfaced with pledges being required to wait on their initiated brothers.

"The mind games are much worse than the physical hazing in many instances," said Dr. Susan Lipkins, a psychologist specializing in high school and college hazing. "The bruises go away, but the mental effects can stay with you for life."

A Bigger Problem

Hazing has never been a problem exclusive to greek letter organizations. In fact, results from a recent study by Alfred University suggest that hazing is much more than a greek issue.

According to the study, more than 48 percent of high school students have experienced hazing activities. That's approximately 1.5 million students each year.

High school hazing activities are also becoming increasingly violent. For example, a football team at Mepham High School



players with broom sticks, pine cones and golf balls. The season was canceled, the coaching staff was fired and four players were tried and convicted. The reason for the increased violence is, in essence, revenge. "One of the things we find is that the teammates who perpetrate the hazing are the ones who suffered it the year before they and they want to make it that much more dangerous to validate their experience," said Norman Pollard, Alfred University's director of counseling/student development.

According to Lipkins, it's all part of the vicious cycle of hazing. "You have victims, bystanders and perpetrators," she said. "The victims become bystanders the following year and eventually become perpetrators. For example, a freshman football player is hazed making him the victim, the following year he will be the bystander and as a senior he is a perpetrator. It's a cycle that is difficult to break."

Even more difficult to break when people are becoming victims at a younger age. "Students are learning a blue print of how to haze in high school," said Lipkins. "At the end of their four years of high school, they've gone from victim, to bystander to perpetrator and have a thorough understanding of how to haze."

With such a large number of students being hazed during high school, today's college student is becoming increasingly calloused to the culture of hazing and is less likely to report incidents. "Many of the hazing incidents go unreported because they don't require medical attention," said

"Getting rid of hazing is the toughest thing I've ever had to do. Even the chapter advisor at the time told me we shouldn't try to reform." LEIF MATTSON

Lipkins. "A lot of times there are serious hazing incidents occurring, but until someone gets hurt they go unnoticed."

The Alfred University study found that only 12 percent of NCAA athletes said they had been hazed while 80 percent said they were required to participate in dangerous or humiliating activities that fit the description of hazing.

A follow up study conducted by Alfred University's Dr. Nadine C. Hoover, suggested half of all college athletes are involved in

Myth: Hazing is an effective way to teach respect and develop discipline.

Fact: Respect is earned—not taught. Victims of hazing rarely report having respect for those who have hazed them. Just like other forms of victimization, hazing breeds mistrust, apathy and alienation.

Myth: Hazing is no more than foolish pranks that sometimes go awry.

Fact: Hazing is an act of power and control over others — it is victimization. Hazing is pre-meditated and not accidental. Hazing is abusive, degrading and often life-threatening.

Myth: As long as there's no malicious intent, a little hazing should be OK

Fact: Even if there's no malicious "intent" safety may still be a factor in traditional hazing activities that are considered to be "all in good fun." For example, serious accidents have occurred during scavenger hunts and kidnapping trips. Besides, what purpose do such activities serve in promoting the growth and development of group team members?

Myth: Hazing brings us together as a group and helps to create bonds.

Fact: Hazing divides the group and creates animosity between the hazers and the hazed.

Myth: Hazing is a problem for fraternities and sororities primarily.

Fact: Hazing is a societal problem. Hazing incidents have been frequently documented in the military, athletic teams, marching bands, religious cults, professional schools and other types of clubs and/or organizations. Reports of hazing activities in high schools are on the rise.

**Information taken from www.stophazing.org*

alcohol-related hazing incidents, while one in five are involved in potentially illegal hazing incidents. Only another one in five was involved in what Hoover described as positive initiation events, such as taking team trips or running obstacle courses.

"Athletes most at risk for any kind of hazing for college sports were men; non-greek members; and either swimmers, divers soccer players or lacrosse players. The campuses where hazing was most likely to occur were primarily in eastern or southern states with no anti-hazing laws. The campuses were rural, residential and had greek

and women, many who are exceptionally talented, allow themselves to be hazed? According to Lipkins, it's a combination of things. "They agree to participate in some tradition in order to become a member of the group because they don't expect to be significantly harmed, either physically or psychologically," she said. "They are also adolescents needing to separate from their families and they want to recreate that feeling of family. In fraternities and sororities there is a plan to re-create the family, as we see in the language that is used like fraternity brother, sorority sister, big brother and little sister."

In many cases, the hazing begins as a lie that the organization's tradition dictates the activities. Typically, hazing begins slowly and builds up in intensity as time passes. "Children are taught to take the pain, to numb themselves, to think as a team not as an individual. That's why athletes will play when hurt—like a football player I saw playing with his wrist in a cast," said Lipkins. "Under some conditions, such as in fraternity hazing, where the intent is to create obedience, the individual may not exercise any judgment—they just follow blindly."

Another reason that individuals being hazed don't quit is because there is no easy

continued

systems," wrote Hoover.

The Alfred University study also found that the number of students hazed to join a church group is greater than the number of students hazed to join vocational groups, cheerleading squads or fraternities.

The Tough Questions

Perhaps the most difficult question is why hazing persists despite its negative effects. Why do intelligent young men

way out. "Once the more serious hazing occurs, the victims don't see an easy way out of the process," said Lipkins. "They know that if they quit now, they'll be, at minimum, ostracized by their 'friends' and worse, they fear they could be in physical danger."

Having identified with the group, students are willing to go through hazing because they feel a sense of belonging that they find very attractive. "Often you have

extremely polarized organization made up of a majority of members who are extremely apathetic, just look for the groups that are hazing."

Hazing proponents would also argue that there is no way to hold members accountable if they are not hazed. Examples of how to hold people accountable are readily available in every day life. If a college student is not meeting grade requirements from his or her institution, they are placed

Mattson's fraternity brother, Pestana knows first hand how inaccurate hazing proponents' logic is. "Seeing the animosity that some of these guys still hold for us because we wanted to get rid of hazing just strengthens our belief that we made the right decision," he said. "These guys were supposed to be our brothers, bonded by our fraternity. Now, they won't even look us in the eyes."

"It's kind of a bait and switch. When you're recruited to join a group

it's all about trying to create a familial environment," Lipkins said. "But then, the hazing process begins and it's anything but familial. How can you trust someone who has been playing mind games and has caused you pain and humiliation?"

"Hazing is a cheap, very skewed form of entertainment for the people directing the hazing," said Smiley. "Most hazers think it's funny or even fun to watch others do degrading activities. Coming up with new ways to haze is certainly easy too. Of course,

hazers would never admit this—they try to wrap themselves in the argument that it is good for their organization—unity and bonding and all of those lies. The excuses may make them feel better about what they're doing, but they know what they're saying is not true."

Moving Forward

Joe Tocco, Missouri '97, was chapter president at Missouri when the chapter faced hazing problems. Since eliminating hazing from the chapter in 1999, Missouri has won three True Merit bowls. "The fact that we've won True Merit so many years in a row really tells me an enormous amount about the chapter," said Tocco, who now serves on the chapter's board of trustees. "It's indicative of members working together and doing what they should be doing. It's hard to make the argument that



the victims of a hazing incident becoming very close with one another," said Lipkins. "But at the same time, the victims despise the hazers. It's a lot like when children are abused in a home—the siblings become very close trying to protect one another but they harbor intense animosity toward the abusive parent."

"Why?" is a much easier question when directed at those who haze. Proponents say that there is nothing wrong with hazing. They say it brings people together. They say it bonds those being hazed because they have accomplished something difficult. They say it teaches them how to work in a team and demonstrates what they're really capable of.

"Despite what the proponents of hazing say—that it strengthens the organization, the facts just do not support the claims," said ATO Chief Executive Officer Wynn Smiley. "If you are looking for a dysfunctional,

on probation and if the grades do not improve they are removed. If an employee's performance is not in line with expectations, a series of remedial steps are taken to ensure that expectations are understood and met and if there is no improvement, they are let go. Likewise, if a pledge is not up to par academically, isn't meeting fiduciary responsibilities, or isn't fulfilling his oath to the Fraternity, the deficiencies should be addressed in a constructive manner. If no progress is made, the pledge should be removed.

North Dakota's Mattson struggles to find validity in a hazer's argument. "If it brings us so close together and makes us so strong, then why do we lose so many guys every year?" he asked. "Why can't we have a high GPA? Why can't we have a great philanthropy? Why can't we recruit? We couldn't do anything right."

you need hazing when you see a chapter doing so many successful things without it."

According to Lipkins, the most effective way to combat hazing is to empower the bystanders—the people who aren't necessarily committing the hazing, but aren't stopping it either.

Alpha Tau Omega aims to do just that, by focusing on spiritual and character development programs. With programs like LeaderShape and Noah's Ark, and publications like *The ATO Devotional*, *The Relevance Series*, and *The Brotherhood Book*, ATO is working to empower its members with a firm foundation on which to make decisions. All of the aforementioned initiatives focus on leading with integrity, character and a strong sense of what it means to be a brother. "The aim is that these programs will develop the moral character of our members and enable them to make better decisions," said Director of Spiritual Programs Drew Lawes. "It's important that we give our members all of the tools necessary to be able to stand up and do what is right."

Several groups have taken measures to shorten, or eliminate, the pledge process as a way to combat hazing. Most recently, the North American Interfraternity

Conference issued standards stating that all NIC member organizations with pledge programs must limit programs to 12 weeks in length. As the NIC worked to develop its standards, ATO was developing a new pledge program for members. With the recent release of *The Positive Experience Guide*, chapters have a 10 week membership education program to follow.

"When the hazing stops, members are always amazed at how much better the overall brotherhood is," said Smiley.

ATO's position on hazing is long standing and well known. From the first National Fraternity's communication to pledges it is obvious that pledges and hazing do not go together. In addition, the ATO Risk Management Manual, officer training, Regional Leadership Conferences, stories in the *ATO Leader* and Leadership Consultant visits all warn against hazing. "No ATO has an excuse that they just didn't know they weren't supposed to haze," said Smiley.

As for the North Dakota chapter, things are a lot less Alice in Wonderland these days. "Things are so much better," said Mattson. "The most recent pledges went through strictly by the ritual book and it's making a huge difference. I've never seen

a group of new guys so dedicated to the house."

And the University is seeing the chapter through an entirely different looking glass. "I've been so impressed with the work the ATOs have done in the past months," said Cassie Gerhardt, coordinator of greek life at North Dakota. "Their hard work is paying off in that the negative stereotype that had been associated with ATO here is changing. Changing a culture is very difficult and the chapter is doing just that."

Hazing Alternatives

Joe Tocco, Missouri '97, was chapter president when the chapter got rid of hazing traditions. For him, the most important component of ridding the chapter of hazing is getting buy in.

"You have to have a core group of guys in leadership positions willing to make the change," he said. "You can't have just a couple of guys trying to implement the change without making sure the rest of the leadership has bought in, otherwise you'll lose credibility."

But to get buy in, you need to have something to sell. Here are activities, alternative to hazing, that will still make the pledge process challenging, but rewarding in a positive way. Remember, if an activity is something you wouldn't do in front of the National Fraternity, university officials, or your mother, it's hazing.

- 1. FOSTER UNITY:** Have the members of your group/organization work together on a community service project. Visit a ropes course to work on group cohesiveness, communication and leadership skills. In fraternities and sororities with chapter houses, the group might work together on a chapter room improvement project. Another option for fostering unity without hazing is for the members to work together to plan a social or athletic event with another group.
- 2. DEVELOP PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITIES:** Have pledges discuss chapter weaknesses such as poor rush, apathy, and poor scholarship, and plan solutions that the active chapter might then adopt.
- 3. DEVELOP LEADERSHIP SKILLS:** Encourage participation in school/campus activities outside of the organization. Encourage new members to get involved in organizational committees and/or leadership roles. Develop

a peer mentor program within your group for leadership roles. Invite school/community/business leaders into the organization to share their experiences.

4. INSTILL A SENSE OF MEMBERSHIP: Plan special events when the entire chapter gets together to attend a movie, play, or church service. Get actives and pledges together and participate in a service in which each person has a chance to express what membership means to them.

5. PROMOTE SCHOLARSHIP: Take advantage of your school/college/university academic and tutoring services. Designate study hours for members of your organization. Invite college/university or community experts to discuss test-taking skills, study methods, time management etc.

6. BUILD AWARENESS OF CHAPTER HISTORY: Invite an older member to talk about the chapter's early days, its founding, special chapter traditions, and prominent former members.

7. KNOWLEDGE OF THE GREEK SYSTEM: Invite leaders of IFC, Panhellenic, PanHellenic, and/or Advisers to speak on greek governance including their goals and expectations of the greek system.

8. AID CAREER GOALS: Use college resources for seminars on resume writing, job interview skills; various careers.

9. INVOLVE PLEDGES IN THE COMMUNITY: Get involved with campus and community service projects. Plan fund-raisers for local charitable organizations.

10. IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH OTHER GREEKS: Encourage new members to plan social or service projects with other pledge classes; work together to plan joint social or service activities.

Alternatives adapted from www.stophazing.org