



The Omichronicle

An Alumni Publication of the Omicron Chapter of Phi Kappa Tau Fraternity at the Pennsylvania State University

UPCOMING EVENTS

Homecoming 2013
October 12
vs. Michigan

ANNUAL FUND

Amount Raised Year to Date: \$24,834
Goal: \$30,000

Ways to Give

- Online at www.pktomicron.com
- Check made payable to Omicron Association, Inc. and mailed to the return address on this newsletter
- Or mail to PO Box 905, State College PA 16804

Ways to Get Involved

- Join either the Board of Directors (BoD) or the Board of Governance (BoG)
- Alumni Work Weekends
- Volunteer for a special project

Contact **Scott Szathmary '98** at scott_szathmary@yahoo.com for more information

IN MEMORIAM

Omicron Chapter was recently notified about the passing of these Phi Kappa Tau brothers:

Kenneth Stead '34
Dr. Ralph Pilgram '42
Leonhart Jensen '48
Robert Loucks '49
John Naylor '53
Caryl Ritchey '54

Read more about them at www.pktomicron.com.

ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT

Celebrating 80 Years as a Phi Tau Ray Walker '35 Recognized by Omicron Chapter for His Milestone Anniversary

On February 26, 1933 **Ray S. Walker '35** became the 179th person to be initiated into the Omicron Chapter of the Phi Kappa Tau Fraternity. Since then, over 1,100 men have followed him into Omicron. To celebrate Brother Walker's 80th anniversary as a brother, several brothers visited him on March 15, 2013 to present him with a special certificate from our National Office and a copy of the chapter's current composite. During this visit, Brother Walker shared many stories about his experience in our fraternity and had a keen interest in what was happening now in the chapter.

Brother Walker was born on March 13, 1912 in Bigler, Pa., a small community about 35 miles west of State College. He entered the Pennsylvania State College during the depths of the Great Depression. Even though annual tuition was only \$300 and the cost to live in the chapter house was \$50 a month, his family could not afford these costs, so he worked his way through school. During the school year, he would return to Bigler to purchase chickens, potatoes and coal from local farmers and mines and then sell these items to the fraternities at Penn State. During the summer, he would lease our chapter house from the alumni and run it as a boarding house for teachers and others who attended summer sessions. During this time, he was active in many campus activities including playing violin as concert maestro in the Penn State Philharmonic Orchestra in 1933. After graduating in 1935, he returned to Bigler and started the Bradford Coal Company, which would grow to employ over 700 persons at its height. In 1940, he married Louise Sapp and they shared 66 years together until her death in 2006. Together, they raised four children,

and from the earliest days of their marriage were strong supporters of many charitable and community efforts, including Scouting, Little League, the Y.M.C.A., Penn State and Phi Kappa Tau.

Even at the age of 101, Brother Walker continues to be active in many ways in his community and continues to look to the future with anticipation as to what will be the next 'adventure.' At his 100th birthday celebration, the program listed several of his "Life Philosophies." These included Ralph



Front row: Ray S. Walker '35 and Undergraduate Vice President Andrew Rider '15; Back Row: Robert Kaiser '77 and David Lapinski '77.

Waldo Emerson's "Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." and from Mavis Leyrer "Life's journey is not to arrive at the grave safely, in a well preserved body, but rather to skid sideways, totally worn out, shouting "holy crap, what a ride!"

Brother Walker continues to live by these mottos today, and may he have many more days ahead to do so.

CHAPTER NEWS

Phi Tau Grows Brotherhood, Recruiting Second Largest Class on Campus Brothers Raise Awareness and Money for Community Service and Philanthropy Organizations, Contribute \$108K to THON 2013

By Jordan Szpara '14

Brothers are pleased to report that Omicron Chapter was the recipient of the 2012 National Maxwell Recruitment Award for having the most 2011-2012 recruits. Continuing this momentum, Phi Tau had the second largest pledge class this spring on campus, with 14 new members. In the fall, 13 new brothers, two of whom are legacy members, also became brothers. We are happy that Phi Tau continues to grow in both quality and quantity.

Phi Tau has participated in a variety of different philanthropies this academic year. Aside from raising \$108,773 dollars for Penn State's Dance Marathon, Phi Tau has taken part in many other Greek organizations' philanthropies and raised money for their own Serious Fun Camps philanthropy. Omicron hosted Casino Night in April with Alpha Chi Omega, and participated in Sigma Kappa's Ice Follies as well as Zeta Tau Alpha's Think Pink events in March. Brothers contributed a total of 1,995 community service and philanthropy hours this year, and a total of \$1,257.50 (excluding THON).

The brotherhood has continued to keep its overall GPA above a 3.0 for the fall semester, remaining competitive among Penn State Greek life for house academics with a cumulative GPA of 3.16. Seven brothers were named to the Dean's list, and 20 achieved a GPA of 3.0 or higher. To reward brothers for good academics, scholarship checks have been provided for those earning a 3.0 or higher. Additionally, points allowing brothers the



chance to have early room picks encourages good academic scores in their studies.

Exciting additions to the house are currently in the process of becoming a reality. A beautiful new porch design has been proposed, with construction starting as soon as this summer. The porch would boast the Omicron "O" below the bright yellow letters making it an attractive addition for brothers and alumni to enjoy. Also, the chapter is offering the option for brothers to buy bricks on which their names will be permanently displayed. Lastly, a new sound system that would equip all floors of the house is being explored for enjoyment during social functions and easier house communication.

Over the past years, Omicron brothers have stressed the importance of getting involved in

the campus and local community. Currently, 90% of brothers are active in clubs or academic groups outside Phi Tau. Within these organizations, most hold high-ranking positions. Two brothers are representatives in off-campus groups. We also have great participation from brothers in THON organizations: one brother previously held the prestigious position of captain, while others serve on THON committees. Brothers also are active on committees for Greek Week, Homecoming and Greek Sing. Lastly, for the past three years Phi Tau brothers have accepted vice-president positions on the board of the Interfraternity Council. The quality and expectations of the brotherhood have increased over the years, and will continue to grow as we move forward into the upcoming years ahead.

UNDERGRADUATE SPOTLIGHT



Kyle Kramer '14, shown here at THON 2013, is also this year's Mr. Think Pink

Kyle Kramer '14 Crowned Mr. Think Pink 2013

***Brother Struts and Sings his Way to the Crown—
All for a Good Cause, Of Course***

Kyle Kramer '14 participated in the Mr. Think Pink beauty pageant on March 20, an event that helped raise money to fight breast cancer. The all-male contestants light-heartedly participated in categories like Formal Wear, a Talent Showcase, a Q/A Session, and even Swimwear. Kramer sang "I'll Make a Man out of You" from Disney's

hit children's movie *Mulan*. The judges apparently decided it was enough to make a winner out of the Phi Tau contestant... shortly after he was given a purple slash and declared this year's Mr. Think Pink.

Kyle is a junior majoring in criminal law and justice.

ALUMNI UPDATES

Bill Lindley '56

(546 Lone Pine Road, Washington, PA 15301-7114; bill@greenspringsfarm.com)

On February 13, 2013, I underwent double knee surgery in Canonsburg Hospital at the Mutschler Institute for Orthopedic Surgery. I had been limping around on damaged knees for some time. Both knees were successfully replaced and I'm slowly on my way to what looks like a complete recovery. Having both knees replaced at the same time was no fun, but this approach is better than having one knee surgery that is followed closely by another. I'm looking forward to seeing "Old Phi Taus" at Penn State later in the year.

Capt. Earl Riffle USN '60

(109 Peterson Lane, Brunswick, ME 04011-3506) My favorite memory looking back was when my fraternity brothers all filed down to the Hibbs Hall to serenade my Alpha Chi Omega Sweetheart. We had just been pinned. They sang "My Phi Tau Pin"! Louise loved it! On another note, I met up with Brother **Bob Navarra '58** and his wife, Carol, in Wiscasset, Maine for dinner and drinks this past September, 2012.

Ron Werts '61

(1102 Canadian Cir., Grand Prairie, TX 75050-7050; randdwertz@earthlink.net) After graduation, I went into the Air Force for what I intended to be three years, but I ended up spending 26 years there. Dawn and I were married the year I graduated (1961) and had three children. They traveled with me most of the time as I was assigned to eight US locations as well as Japan, Vietnam and Germany. I retired as the Director of Maintenance and Engineering for Air Force Tactical Aircraft after having 22 other jobs throughout my career. I had a hard time keeping a job! I then worked for Lockheed Martin in Arlington, Texas as the vice president of Field Services for 12 years providing logistics support for the military and other government services throughout the world. Since retirement in 1999, we stayed in Texas, but are traveling considerably, enjoying the US and other parts of the world.

Bob Oakes '72

(3150 Lee Hwy, #102, Weyers Cave, VA 24486-2209; warriorwomenbooks@yahoo.com) My second fantasy novel, *Black Scarlet*, was recently published. See the back-cover synopsis at www.blackscarletsaga.com. *Black Crystal* and *Black Scarlet* are the first two novels in a nine-book series. My novels all feature women as the key protagonists. If you took all the male leadership out of *Lord of the Rings* and put women in their places, you'd pretty much have the Black Scarlet Saga. What's neat about my book series is that we've had favorable reviews from readers between the ages of 19 to 87 years old, and they've all been highly laudable. So, my publisher Dawn Rogers of Blue Ridge Publishing and I are very encouraged.



When home, I stay busy with gardening and woodworking. Our children have given us seven super grandkids that now range from 16 to 26.

Ed Kabala '64

(705 Copeland St Apt 4, Pittsburgh, PA 15232-2275; ekabala@yahoo.com) I am still working while many of my classmates are on the beach somewhere. I was named Pittsburgh Health Care Lawyer of the Year by Best Lawyers and have been in Best Lawyers and Martindale Hubbell for 30+ years and a Super lawyer for as long as that designation has existed, about 10 years I think. Gail and I still get to most of the Penn State football games and a few Rugby events.

Gary A. McKown '76

(10501 Oakdell Drive, Richmond, VA 23237-3997; gary.mckown@us.army.mil) I retired from my position as a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt for the Department of Defense on March 31, 2013 after 36 years of combined military and federal service. My wife Tracy I are planning to travel extensively in our motorhome, including several trips to Penn State.

Christopher Rothe '92

(115 Hilltop Drive, Downingtown, PA 19335-1405; carothe@ratnerprestia.com) I am a patent attorney practicing in Berwyn, Pa, where I have been for the last eight years. I

am a shareholder and part owner of the firm, which has about 40 attorneys. My wife Laine (PSU '92) is a learning support teacher at Valley Forge Middle School. We enjoy skiing, traveling and spending summers at our house in Ocean City, NJ with our daughter Emily, 11, and son Justin, 8. If any brothers are visiting the Jersey shore this summer, drop me a line.

William Rogers '05

(4020 Murphy Canyon Road, San Diego, CA 92123; wtnrogers@yahoo.com) I just finished my first season as an assistant athletic trainer for the Chicago Bears. Previously, I had worked for four seasons as an assistant athletic trainer for the San Diego Chargers. My fiancé Kristin Ludden and I are getting married this summer in Chicago. There will be a handful of Penn State Phi Tau members in attendance.

Matt Miller '12

(mbm5098@gmail.com) I currently live in Chicago, where I work for a company called Coyote Logistics. I am a New Business Representative and work in customer sales. I have reached out to other Penn State grads and joined the Chicago chapter of the Alumni Association.

Find many more updates on our website, www.pktomicron.com, and share your own! Some of these submissions had to be edited to fit in these pages, so you can read the full versions on our website as well.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Membership in Phi Tau leads to a lifetime of memories. We love hearing the stories and seeing the pictures from brothers who experienced all different eras of life at Omicron Chapter.

This picture is from the 1979 *La Vie*. Can anyone share a story from this year in the house?

Visit www.pktomicron.com to view and share archived photos and relive your best memories.

IN YOUR WORDS

What Do You Miss Most about Living in State College?

As Penn State students, we benefitted from living in a small town with a big-city feel. As Penn State alumni, we are lucky to have that place as a mecca to return to long after graduation. With the football, the attractions and the food, Happy Valley is a unique place that will continue to bond Penn Staters together for a lifetime. A few Phi Tau alumni share what they miss most about living in Happy Valley.

Andrew Fisher '11: I miss a truly unique community that is difficult if not impossible to find elsewhere. While some may find State College's location somewhat as a negative, I believe the more isolated nature of the community coupled with a huge student population leads to endless opportunity. The majority of the organizations, philanthropies, and extracurricular activities are built, centered and run by students. Of all the

colleges I've had the pleasure of visiting since graduating, this is simply not the case. In State College, the Penn State students can do and be what they want to be and have the resources to accomplish this.

Dave Bonney '10: I miss everything about living in State College. There was always so much energy and excitement everywhere I went in town.

Pat Shore '09: What I miss most about living in State College is the sense of community. Everyone is in this town together. You lose that feel in a big city.

What do you miss most about living in State College? Share your story at www.pktomicron.com.

In this issue of Omicronicle...
 - Alum Celebrates 80 Years of Being a Phi Tau
 - Omicron Brother Voted as Penn State's Mr. Think Pink
 - Rising Author Sees Success with Black Scarlet Saga

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