

Theta Alpha TALON

THE NEWSLETTER OF PI KAPPA PHI FRATERNITY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

SPRING 2009



THETA ALPHA'S 10th ANNIVERSARY



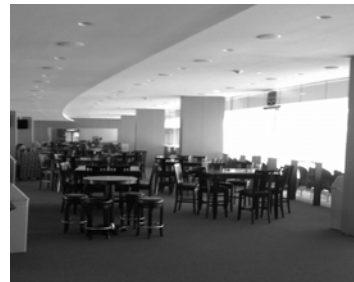
Photo above taken from the second story of M.M. Roberts Stadium's *Touchdown Club*, site of the banquet.

Come join your chapter brothers, friends and families for the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Theta Alpha Chapter! Anniversary festivities will begin Friday evening, April 24 and continue all day Saturday April 25.

Planning for the event began at the annual Alumni Chapter Homecoming meeting back in November. A

small committee led by Alumni Chapter President Jason Skrmetti has had regular conference calls to ensure the success of this historic event and celebration.

Students will register themselves and their guests through Dylan Pair, the undergraduate member of the planning committee. Alumni and their guests are encouraged to



register via reply card or by visiting www.pikapp.org/anniversary/thetaalpha/. Anyone else wanting to attend, including friends of the fraternity, should register by contacting Jason Skrmetti directly.

All events are a la carte: you only register and pay for what you want to attend.

Friday, April 24

7:00 p.m. – **Anniversary Social**
The Bottling Company
Downtown Hattiesburg
Casual attire

Saturday, April 25

8:00 a.m. – **Pi Alpha Event**
Pi Kappa Phi House
Comfortable/appropriate clothing
12:00 p.m. – **Meet and Greet Lunch** (\$4)
Pi Kappa Phi House
Catered by Strick's Barbecue
Casual attire, families welcome
6:00 p.m. – **Anniversary Banquet** (\$15)
Touchdown Club
Second Floor
M.M. Roberts Stadium
Semi-Formal attire (coat and tie for men, equivalent for women)
10:00 p.m. – **Anniversary Celebration**

ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT: JARED HOPKINS

Q: What brought you to USM?

A: I went to West Point my freshman year and chose to leave mid-way through the summer of 1996. I spent the next academic year at Hinds Community College as a Civil Engineering Major. In 1997 I received a Leadership Scholarship to Southern Miss, switched my major to Radio, Television and Film, and then spent my first semester in London, England.

Q: Who led you to Pi Kappa Phi?

A: Kevin Ross and I were actually considering joining ATO, because a lot of our high school friends were there. I went by the Hub one day where the leadership consultants Larry Keller, Delta Chi (Kansas State), and Jon Jordan, Alpha Sigma

(Tennessee), had a Pi Kappa Phi table set up. I thought it was an academic fraternity or something; Larry told me about his experience on the Journey of Hope and the about the opportunity to become a founding father. Kevin and I decided this was the experience we were looking for. As we worked our way through *The White Diamond* and learned about the values and goals of our fraternity, I knew I had made the right decision.

Q: Tell us about your experience as a brother.

A: I was elected archon at our initial retreat, and from then on it became the most challenging and intense learning experience of my life. At the same time, it provided the most fun and rewarding experi-

ences of my life. Because we were starting from scratch, we had to teach ourselves about brotherhood and chapter operations, all while being associates and learning the basics of Pi Kappa Phi. Needless to say, there was a lot of trial and error.

Q: What does it mean to lead?

A: Everything I know about being an effective archon, I learned from all of the other founding fathers. They taught me that leading doesn't mean doing all of the work and dominating the vision. Leading means fostering every member's passion to contribute to the collective goals of the chapter, and sharing ownership in the victories and the defeats.



Jared Hopkins, '99

“Leading means fostering every member's passion to contribute to the collective goals of the chapter, and sharing ownership in the victories and the defeats.”

(Continued on page 3)

Theta Alpha TALON

❖ PI KAPPA PHI FRATERNITY

The *Theta Alpha Talon* is a collaboration between Alumni of Theta Alpha and the national staff of Pi Kappa Phi.

Printing and mailing costs associated with the *Theta Alpha Talon* have been provided by the national office for the first issue of this publication. If you are interested in earmarking additional funds for the *Theta Alpha Talon* please contact Stephen Dietz at sjdietz01@yahoo.com.

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NOTES

NAMES:

The number after each name in this newsletter represents the year of initiation.

UNDERGRADUATE CHAPTER:

Keep up to date with the successes of the undergraduate chapter by visiting their Web site, www.southernmisspikapps.com.

THE NEXT ISSUE:

The next issue of the *Theta Alpha Talon* will feature a recap of the 10th Anniversary Celebration as well as an important announcement about Theta Alpha giving opportunities.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT:
www.pikappalum.com

FROM THE ARCHON: JERRY URSIN



The men of Theta Alpha Chapter have been working hard this semester to bring our chapter *To The Top!*

In January the newly elected executive council attended Mid Year Leadership Conference in St. Louis, Mo., where we planned out our goals for the upcoming year. Each executive council member plus the risk manager and Push America chairman attended the conference. With a new Greek Life assessment program (similar to the old Five Star program) going into effect in the fall of 2009, we have been planning and preparing strategic objectives to ensure the chapter excels with each of the new requirements.

This spring semester brought a brand new pledge class, Tau class. This group is made up of seven new associates. These seven men, now bring our total chapter membership to 63, making Pi Kappa Phi the largest fraternity on Southern Mississippi's campus!

With the summer quickly approaching, we are looking forward to Pi Kapp College; it is the 50th anniversary of Pi Kapp College and fittingly it will be held in Charleston, S.C. Three executive council members will attend; the archon, chaplain, and standards board chief justice, as this is the first time the standards board track will be offered at a national conference.

Also happening this summer,

Theta Alpha is excited to have three brothers cycling on the Journey of Hope and another participating in Build America. Taylor Goodie '08, Jonathan Robinson '08, and Ben Jones '08 will be on JOH teams. Eddie Tarkany '09 will be the second Theta Alpha member to participate on a Build America team. Learn more about these four brothers and how you can help them by visiting their individual team member pages at www.pushamerica.org.

We are excited about the things this summer will bring us, and we are excited about moving our chapter *To The Top!*

In the Star and Lamp,
~ Jerry Ursin '08

ACADEMIC DINNER A HUGE SUCCESS

Last summer a small group of committed Theta Alpha alumni wanted to do something for our students who attained academic excellence. After some brainstorming and a few phone calls, it was decided to have alums sponsor a dinner for those students achieving a 3.0 or better grade point average (GPA).

These anonymous alums wanted to encourage students to strive for academic excellence and reward those who had attained it. Scholarship is one of the five tenets of C.L.A.S.S. and a pillar of the Theta Alpha chapter. It is our chapter that has dominated the Aubrey K. Lucas Award for highest fraternity GPA for the past decade. Those students doing their share to keep Theta Alpha at the top deserve to be recognized.

On October 21, 2008, nearly one-third of the chapter, 19 brothers in all, were recognized and treated to a fantastic dinner at Brownstone's for their outstanding academic achievement. They were joined by Faculty Advisor Gary Kimble, Asst. Dean of Students for Greek Life Trey Skaggs, and Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Joe Paul.

At the dinner almost every student was enrolled in *The Order of the Lamp*, an academic honor society within Pi Kappa Phi for students achieving a 3.25 GPA or higher. Qualifying students filled

out their applications, and Gary mailed them to the headquarters in Charlotte. Each member of *The Order of the Lamp* receives a membership certificate and an exclusive seal, appropriate to affix on his membership shingle.

At the dinner each person, student and alumni, who helped make the dinner possible by sponsoring meals or making the grade was given a token of appreciation; a Theta Alpha Chapter challenge coin. (shown here)



On the front face you, see the gold university dome logo with the words *The University of Southern Mississippi* and *Theta Alpha Chapter*.

On the back face, you see the words: *Scholarship, Leadership, and Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity*. Surrounding a blue Starshield. This coin reminds the holder that scholarship is one form of leadership; that the two go hand in hand.

These generous alums recognize the value in promoting academic achievement within the chapter and have committed to sponsoring this dinner each fall semester.

If you are interested in sponsoring a portion of the next Academic Dinner, please contact Gary Kimble, faculty advisor, at (601) 467-9100 or Gary.Kimble@usm.edu.

A big thank you goes out to our sponsors and alumni for stepping up and celebrating the success of our students. You know who you are, you are one of the few with a Theta Alpha challenge coin!

Congratulations to the following students!

- Blake Barnes
- Andrew Brown
- Chad Byrd
- David Curtis
- Mark Hamrick
- Brennan Hancock
- Brett Haro
- Nathan Jones
- Stuart Lovinggood
- Marks McWhorter
- Jake Meek
- Sam Muller
- Kevin Nezat
- Brad Nicholson
- Kirk Oldenburg
- Zach Popovich
- Luke Smitherman
- Jerry Ursin
- Sam Zeanah



ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT: JARED HOPKINS

(Continued from page 1)

Q: How did you view and/or take on the role of founding archon?

A: The thought of being the "founding archon" never really affected me until after I graduated and the chapter kept growing and operating at such a high level. Of course I thought it was cool at the time, but it wouldn't be worth anything if it weren't for the hard work and achievements of all the archons and chapter members that came after us. Truly knowing that they have continued our quest to become the *ideal chapter* has really made me proud to have the honor of being the founding archon of Theta Alpha.

Q: What was challenging about being the founding archon?

A: At the time I viewed it simply as being the chapter archon (which is hard enough). Setting and creating goals, a chapter calendar, philanthropy events, recruitment, intramurals, theme parties, formals, budgets, going to IFC and most importantly, member education. I didn't know any more than anybody else when we first started; we had to figure it out together. We always felt that our job as founding fathers was to create a solid foundation for the future of our chapter. So we focused on becoming the top fraternity at Southern Miss instead of solely on the chartering

requirements from the national headquarters. We knew that if we could make strides towards that goal of becoming the best, chartering would take care of itself.

Q: What do you do for a living?

A: I have two careers. First I'm a member of the Director's Guild of America; I'm a second assistant director on Movies and Television programs <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2542082/>. Second, I'm a producer/writer/editor for my own production company, Hopkins Production Co. www.iranagainstus.com.

Q: How did your fraternity experience prepare you for your job?

A: I feel that my entire Pi Kapp experience, from founding father to archon to JOH team member to leadership consultant, has provided the best possible training ground for my life and career. I dare say that I learned more from my fraternity experience than I did from class.

Q: What valuable skills did the fraternity teach you?

A: (a) Do what you say you will do. Simple, yet effective.

(b) Be willing to start with nothing. You're not going to get it right the first time even if you think you know what you're doing. The lessons you learn from the mistakes

you make are the most valuable lessons of all.

(c) Success equals sacrifice. Anything that is quick and easy is less rewarding and less eventful. The ability to stick with long term goals until the end, even when it looks like you aren't going to get there. The long range goals are the most rewarding, because of all the short term goals you have to achieve to get there.

(d) How to work "with" people and not lead by force – by understanding and caring that everyone has different motives and expectations, you can become a member of the team, not just an elected leader or boss. Your product as a leader is always a feeling of accomplishment and pride from your members. If your members feel connected to the fraternity, then your chapter will succeed. Same goes with real life; deep down no one wants to do a bad job, or be a part of a losing team. It doesn't mean that if you lose you stop, because you are going to lose. For every loss you learn what you need to do become a success.

Q: What value does "fraternity" hold for a brother?

A: It can be as valuable as you want it to be; you just have to care about it and put in the effort. Michael Jordan didn't become the best by

skipping practice.

Q: What advice do you have for future brothers of the chapter?

A: (a) Set your goals high and chase after them. That way you only see what's right in front of you instead of how far you have to go.

(b) Some of my best friends in the chapter were people that I voted not to give bids to (I'll never tell); you can learn something from everyone.

(c) For the executive council: you work for the membership. So, only focus on the members that show up. By focusing on those brothers that are not upholding their duties you're squelching the passion of those brothers that are ready to move forward.

(d) When I was an undergraduate member, Pi Kappa Phi had the motto "Strong Enough to Care." I repeat that motto inside my head almost daily. To me, that motto means it's easy to be apathetic and only point out what other people are doing wrong, it takes true strength to care enough to offer up your time and energy and make something better.

ALUMNI UPDATES

Stephen Dietz '99 and his wife, Cheryl, welcomed the arrival of their daughter, Catherine Elizabeth Dietz. She was born on December 25, 2006, weighing 7 lbs. 4 oz. The couple resides in Biloxi, Miss. (right)



Matt Binion '02 and Lindsey Mayhall were married on October 19, 2007, in Mobile, Ala. The couple now resides in Jackson, Miss. (right)



Alan Cripps '05 and Kimberly Helton were married on May 19, 2007, in Mobile, Ala. The couple now resides in Birmingham, Ala.



Joe Clark '99 and his wife, Karmen, announce the birth of their daughter, Macey Athaline Clark. She was born on January 20, 2009 at 10:34 p.m. weighing 7 lbs. and 12 oz. The couple resides in Ocean Springs, Miss. (left)

Share the milestones in your life with other Theta Alpha Alums, friends and families. To be a part of this section of the *Theta Alpha Talon* send your announcements and photos to Brandon Belote at soundman84@gmail.com

Andy Ratcliffe '00 and his wife announce the birth of their daughter. The couple resides in Gulfport, Miss. (right)



Daniel Barton '01 and his wife, Jenna, welcomed the arrival of their son, Riley Scott Barton. He was born on January 26, 2008, weighing 8 lbs. The couple resides in Hattiesburg, Miss.


THETA ALPHA TRIVIA

As the 10th Anniversary Celebration approaches on April 24, 2009, here are a few questions to test your knowledge of Theta Alpha history.

1. Who were the two Installing Officers at the chartering?
2. Who was the first appointed Chapter Advisor?
3. On what date was Theta Alpha colonized? (not to be confused with charter)
4. What is the chapter's motto?
5. Who is the administrator given credit for finding Theta Alpha a house?

PI KAPPA PHI WILL REDEFINE
FRATERNITY AS A LIFELONG
BROTHERHOOD OF LEADERS.

The Theta Alpha Alumni Chapter was established in 2005 to reconnect Theta Alpha alumni members and allow graduating members to continue their affiliation with the local and national chapters of Pi Kappa Phi. The purpose of the Theta Alpha Alumni Chapter is to promulgate and exemplify the ideals and goals of the Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity set forth in its Ritual, Constitution and Supreme Laws.


The Alpha TALON
PI KAPPA PHI FRATERNITY
P.O. Box 240526
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FROM THE ARCHIVES: FALL 1999



Photo from the first Hook-a-Brother-Up date party at Pep's Point Water Park