



## **A Word From Editor**

The Crossed Swords is the chapter newsletter dedicated to recognizing major changes and events in the lives of the brothers at Alpha Tau. With the current roster number approaching a plateau of twenty-five brothers, the brotherhood at Stevens Institute of Technology has a group of gentlemen that look to carry the message of Alpha Sigma Phi throughout the local campus, and wherever we go. The Alpha Tau chapter is full of brothers and pledges of different interests, hobbies, and origins, yet with the same common outlook on their responsibility due to Alpha Sigma Phi. The Crossed Swords is set forth to chronicle the hobbies and events that make the brothers of Alpha Tau so uniquely different, yet still so similar. In reading this newsletter, please note that it has been written and edited purely for the informative and entertainment purposes for the reader, and in no way means to offend anyone. So please take lightly to the writing, and enjoy this account of the lives of the brothers at Alpha Tau.



Special thanks go out to the following brothers for their contributions to this issue of the Crossed Swords: Wei Tsang, Timothy Rashkin, Mike Krause, Erik Green, Richard Schweizer, & Ellis Farmer.

Editor: Pranay Khurana

## Alpha Tau Donates 83% to Phoenix Campaign

This January at the National Academy of Leadership, a new campaign was forged by the Alpha Sigma Phi Educational Foundation. Known as the Phoenix Campaign, its primary purpose was to promote academic excellence through the betterment of educational programming and the creation of new national merit scholarships. By donating to the cause, chapters across the country could have benefited depending upon the percentage of brothers participating. With over 80% of the brotherhood donating \$20 each to the campaign, Alpha Tau raised more than \$400 for the campaign and can be proud of this accomplishment. After receiving the donation, several representatives at the National Headquarters, such as Kip Roberts and John Wejman, were quick to congratulate and thank Alpha Tau for a job well done. Due to our heavy involvement, we receive a number of benefits through National. With 50% donation, aside from being inducted into the Phoenix Society, we will be cordially invited to attend a breakfast at the 2002 National Leadership Conference in our honor. We will also receive special recognition during the Awards Ceremony at NLC and all of our names will be printed on a plaque in Alpha Sigma Phi's new headquarters and in the Tomahawk. With 80% participation, or 83% specifically in our case, our chapter will be featured in an article in the upcoming Tomahawk, and a scholarship of \$150 will be rewarded to a member of our choice.

Finally, our National representatives would like to thank the individuals in Alpha Tau who helped us reach and surpass the 80% plateau. Without these people, this accomplishment would not have been possible: Ryan Bender, Ellis Farmer, Erik Green, George Grzyb, Wu C. Hsu, Pranay Khurana, Michael Komitee, Michael Krause, Philip Merola, Jay Moiron, Jeremy Mikola, Erik Mooney, Nicholas Muir, Tinh Pham, Brian Quinn, Timothy Rashkin, Richard Schweizer, Wei Tsang, Christian Tsu-Raun, Alex Wan, and Garrett White.



An Image of the Egyptian Phoenix

## What is The Phoenix Really About?

The Phoenix is perhaps the most outstanding insignia of Alpha Sigma Phi. While it is known to most brothers that it is a mythological bird that arises from its own ashes, not much else is taught to the members of Alpha Sigma Phi about the history behind this majestic bird. Here is a little history lesson on the bird that is the emblem of our fraternity.

The phoenix has been cited by many civilizations in the past. The Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Indians, and others believed in the existence of a magical bird that reproduced itself. The Romans believed that it lived for 500 years. At the completion of this time period, it nested itself in the branches of an oak tree, or on the top of a palm tree. It then spent its last breath, and died. From the body of the dead bird would arise a new phoenix, which would carry itself into the temple of the sun. And thus the cycle of the Roman phoenix would continue.

The Greeks gave the name phoenix to a bird offered in sacrifice to the sun God, Ra. The bird was similar to an eagle, and its golden-red feathers made it look like it was up in flames, much like the Alpha Sigma Phi symbol. Inhabiting in Arabia, the phoenix lived for 500 years, and died in its own flames. It then was reborn from its own ashes, and the cycle was repeated again. Many intellectuals in ancient Greek society believed that the life of the phoenix mirrored that of the universe. They believed that the world and the universe would

once be destroyed, and be remade, given all the necessary conditions of planetary influence.

Chinese mythology describes the phoenix as the symbol of grace, power, and prosperity. Thought to be a gently creature, it ate only dew-drops, and never behaved violently. It was a representation of the Chinese empress, and its symbol was worn only by those who were thought to have high moral values. The Chinese phoenix was believed to have a large bill, the neck of a snake, the back of a tortoise, and the tail of a fish.

Knowing that the symbol of Alpha Sigma Phi is a character that represents virtues such as solidarity, resistance, and immortality provides pure satisfaction. Furthermore, the fact that the symbol is a mythological character recognized by ancient civilizations throughout the world only adds to the lore present within the insignias of Alpha Sigma Phi.

## **Alpha Tau Improving In Every Way**

The past two years have been a period of tremendous growth for the Alpha Tau chapter of Alpha Sigma Phi, located at Stevens Institute of Technology. In the spring semester of 2001, the brotherhood of Alpha Tau had dwindled to only five undergraduate members. Although Alpha Tau appeared to be in serious jeopardy during the time, the dedication of the brothers during that semester, and the support of encouraging alumni brought in a pledge class of sixteen new men into the Mystic Circle. That obstacle having been surpassed a year ago, the character and outlook of the chapter was revitalized. Now, as the spring 2002 semester comes to a close, another eight pledges await their journey into the brotherhood. This fall, not only will we be 25 brothers strong, but our house will be completely filled, a situation that has not occurred in almost a decade. If we continue to grow with this trend, there will be over 40 active brothers in Alpha Tau by the time the spring 2001 pledge class graduates!

Academically, Alpha Tau has been growing stronger with each new pledge class. The house GPA has consistently risen each

semester for the past three semesters and we expect more of the same in the coming future. Currently, almost 50% of the brotherhood is eligible to be on the Dean's List is, up from no one a year ago, and more than half of the current pledges anticipate being on the honor as well. We also expect our average GPA of 2.69 from the fall, 2001 semester ago to rise as well, perhaps even approaching the 3.0 barrier.

As always, the brothers of Alpha Tau strive to participate in as many National events as possible. In the past year, we have participated in brotherhood ceremonies at colleges throughout the eastern United States, such as Yale, Hartford and CW Post. We look forward to participating in Albright College's chartering this April and to the day when we can officially call our CW Post brothers as well. Gaining friendships and meeting new people are common goals we live for in our chapter, and thus our doors are always open to fellow brothers from other chapters.

As a chapter, we continue to participate in more service events than all of the other fraternities on our campus, combined. Every year we regularly contribute and partake in the Relay for Life, MS Walk, the American Cancer Society, AIDS Walk, Hoboken Ambulance Corps, Hoboken Homeless Shelter, March of Dimes, the Boys & Girls Club, Operation Santa, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the "Jersey Cares" Community Food Bank Drive, the Jones' Beach Cleanup (with CW Post), and of course many neighborly activities. We are also very proud to say that over 80% of our chapter donated to the Phoenix Campaign in order to help Better the Man. The combination of these steps over the course of a year just gives a slight flavor of the rising success building at the Alpha Tau chapter at Alpha Sigma Phi.

## **What I Really Learn At SIT**

In some recent conversations I've had with a few brothers, pledges and friends, I've come to the conclusion that although branded the average tech school, SIT is anything but. While one can go to places like RPI, MIT, and CMU to obtain vast amounts of technical knowl-

edge and come out knowing the ins and outs of the information technology industry, the students at Stevens often graduate with a different social structure.

Every college has its hell brand of professors and quirks about the administration. But at no tech school have I yet noticed students that take almost every verbal action of a certain professor to heart. Aphorisms such as "gaz" and the ever-popular "pink giraffe" are known to all throughout the Stevens community, as students often wait during lectures for a professor to use certain words just so we may keep a running tally. Not only have I noticed that SIT students ravenously attack the habitual verbal addictions of our professors, but we are also prone to imitating the physical actions of our professors as well. Although some of us have gotten quite resourceful at these practices, I personally just think that imitating our professors is one way of subconsciously paying attention to them, even though we pretend to avoid them and their obnoxious mentions of "enthalpy" at all costs.

Aside from the professors that we leave at the end of the semester with a grade and the memory of a single phrase such as "I've had a cell phone for n years, as n approaches infinity," some of us are fortunate enough to have professors that could broadcast some useful knowledge to us in an interesting manner. Whoever these professors are, they impress in our brains for a lifetime the true standard for what a real calculus, humanities, computer science, or engineering course should be.

It is the common aphorisms, the useful courses with the familiar professors, and the day to day activities such as anime, sports, and brotherhood events that one is likely to remember after leaving the Stevens community upon graduation. It is a phenomenon unmarked at other tech schools, as students complete their years acquiring the technical aspects of their trade, and nothing more. Whether learning "gaz" as compared to CAD is more useful, we may not really know. One point however, is clear; SIT does give us a taste of the deliria involved in the real world, whether it means to do so through the engineering design courses and the bad administration... or not.



Brother Wei's Comic Review of Campus Life

## Brothers Help Out At Local Shelter

On March 21st, 2002, the Alpha Tau chapter of Alpha Sigma Phi began a new tradition in public service. Brothers Timothy Rashkin, Michael Krause, and Erik Green spent a Thursday night at the local Homeless Shelter getting to know many of the less fortunate residents of Hoboken. Along with other caring volunteers, the brothers interviewed many of these individuals so that the services and assistance that they needed would be reported to the federal government. Without such knowledge, the government has the right to cut funding for the homeless in our area without any questioning. While many of the people at the shelter were uncomfortable with the questions asked, everyone knew that in the long run these surveys are what keep the Hoboken Homeless Shelter running. All three brothers were amazed at the amount of dedication the people volunteering at the shelter had. Filled with satisfaction after helping their fellow local residents, the brothers are sure that this was only the beginning of a history of Alpha Tau volunteering at the Hoboken Homeless Shelter.



A View of Beautiful Utah

## An Adventure To Remember

It is the annual Viking Spring break, each year to new and exotic places. This time, in the year of Odin 2002, I travel to Utah and Las Vegas in search of beautiful girls. And oh what a trip! Allow me to offer you a little scene from one of my many adventures.

Professor 'W', overcome by a sudden urge to water the desert, somehow managed to misplace his Walkie Talkie In one of the latrines. Low and behold it was happily enjoying a ride on a floating mass of a white sponge-like substance in a pond composed of human urine.

Immediately he called for backup (the old fashion way, due to the lack of Technogenesis devices). Heeding the call for reinforcements from the out house, I was on the scene in two shakes of a tail. Realizing that no other help would be coming, I relayed to Professor 'W' the sad news, "We're on our own from here on"

*For those of you not familiar with toilets located in the middle of the desert, they are hollow cans with a large reservoir under them. They have thin wooden walls, and a plastic roof. According to our primitive calculations, the depth of this hole is 4 ft. To determine this number we used the speed of gravity and the time it took for... to hit bottom.*

Our first attempt to rescue the equipment was with the long chopstick maneuver. This proved to be futile and in the end fatal to one of the sticks, which we lost to the fetal mass. But with the other stick we held the floating island steadfast, preventing its attempt to escape the

light from atop the porta-potty. Recalling the Anglo-Saxon so-called super lasso power, that had been demonstrated when I had lassoed pretty girls at an earlier portion of the trip, Ed threw me a rope, and said, "Lets save that beauty."

Finally catching on, I tied a quick bowline, turning it into a slipknot, and then lowering the rope down the hole focused on the 'damsel in distress.' Suddenly the Door swung open to the latrine. A boy and his father pilgrimaging to Utah to make a donation to this poor barren station stood awe stricken- as if seeing a professor and a college student with their arms in a toilet was out of the ordinary. As if hypnotized they stood there neither entering nor leaving. They were awoken from their stare by a voice from inside the toilet, "Help me, I can almost reach! Help!" The man and his son departed the scene and jumped in their car, never to be seen by our group again. It was a clever trick that Dan, a fellow student (one of the 3 Male students on the trip, the other 6 were girls) had pulled on us, but we took it lightly, laughed and finished the operation without a hitch to save our water-logged friend- singing joyful songs as we pulled him to freedom.



Brother Erik G. & Professor 'W' in Utah

## Leadership Conference Provides Important Message

From January 16 to 18, 2002, brother Mike Krause took part in the academy leadership forum at St. Charles, Illinois. The conference was an opportunity for representatives from chapters all around the nation to gather to discuss the status of their houses, and formulate

ideas on how to improve their houses in order to better represent Alpha Sigma Phi. Packed with teamwork exercises and leadership workshops, the leadership conference started early and ended late each day, giving the representatives all they could handle.

Brother Mike's favorite workshop was one specifically labeled "marooned." This exercise placed three brothers on a deserted island, and each of them had to list what they felt were the most important things that were needed to be achieved. After completing the exercise alone, the team of three compared their results with each other and with a rubric to determine how social each team member was in comparison to the rest. According to brother Mike, this exercise was a "good gauge of a person's social character and displayed if one was a good team player."

During his three day tenure, Mike made several observations about the Alpha Tau chapter in comparison to others around the country, during his conversations with brothers during the convention. Mike noticed that Alpha Tau was in a far better state as compared to other chapters throughout the nation. Unlike some unfortunate chapters, the Alpha Tau chapter is blessed with a house, a steady flow of income, a strong brotherhood, supportive alumni, and a lack of hazing problems and the like. Through the meetings and workshops held by brothers represented by National, and through general discussions at the dinner table, the representatives at the forum looked for ways to improve the situation for chapters around the nation.

At the end of the three-day forum, each representative was sent home with a message to their chapter, as was brother Mike. This message, although simple, is sometimes forgotten by many brothers in the midst of other obligations. The leadership conference was setup to relight the ritualistic fire within each brother, starting with the representatives of every chapter at the conference, and to let each chapter know that the brothers hold in their hands the future of their respective chapters of Alpha Sigma Phi. It is up to each individual brother to listen to this message and live up to the expectations placed before him.

## A Trip To The Viking Homeland

On Martin Luther King day weekend, eight Alpha Sigs embarked upon an excursion to the winter wonderland we know as the Viking Homeland. Located in southern New Hampshire, the Viking Homeland consists of his father's lake-side cabin. After a long five hour journey, the eight weary travelers, namely Phil, Brian, Alex, Nirav, Tim, Viking, Tim, Tinh and Rich enjoyed the blood and guts warfare of Braveheart.

The next day began with a journey to the local grocery store and a big breakfast. Afterwards, all journeyed out onto the scenic frozen lake in search of castle ruins – supposedly located on an island in the lake. The pioneering spirit was strong as the group meandered aimlessly under the guidance of Viking and Nirav. After a long hike the remains of an ancient wall were discovered, but the castle remained lost. Many miles later, after circling the island, circumnavigating the lake, and braving thin ice, the group finally made it back to the cabin.

Dinner was perceived in the form of quality China Buffet. The night was spent watching movies and enjoying the fire (from the nifty pellet stove) and ice (the blizzard which happened to level several inches of snow that night).

The next day all woke up, ate and left. On the way back Tim, Nirav and Rich accompanied Viking on a side trip to the Viking Mom – and were treated to chips and the viewing of a football game. All returned safely back to the house later that evening, ending the tenure to the Viking Homeland.

