



# THE DRAGON'S TALE

FALL 2021

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NEBRASKA CHAPTER, THE ALPHA TAU OF BETA THETA PI

## A TRIBUTE TO DR. MICHAEL J. WORTMAN '67

*Editor's note: Neil P. Moseman '80 was a representative at our August General Convention. Neil is a current member of our Alumni Advisory Board (working with Scholarship) and reports on Mike Wortman's accomplishments for Beta.*

*"The first mark of a Beta will be his Beta Spirit."  
—Willis O. Robb, Ohio Wesleyan 1879*

Alpha Tau's **Dr. Mike Wortman '67**—displaying his own remarkable Beta Spirit—concluded his last meeting as a member of the Beta Theta Pi Board of Trustees and as a General Fraternity Vice President during the 182nd General Convention, held at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, in August 2021.

Brother Wortman's journey serving Beta's broad domain began on August 8, 2015, at the 176th General Convention in Orlando, Florida. This August, Mike received well-deserved recognition for his dedicated leadership, having served two consecutive terms on the Board of Trustees—a unique distinction for Alpha Tau's chapter counselor of 25 years.

A Trustee monitors all Beta chapters and the fraternity's leadership development programs; develops ways to expand the General Fraternity; helps volunteers support local chapters; makes strategic plans; and grows the fraternity's resource base, among other duties. A key priority, however, is advancing the Men of Principle initiative—a program Mike knows extremely well.

*"From Alpha Tau chapter counselor to Board of Trustees vice president, there has been one among very few constants in Beta's Men of Principle renaissance the last 25 years: Mike Wortman. A Beta for the ages, indeed." —Beta Theta Pi General Secretary  
S. Wayne Kay, Virginia Tech '73*

### Beta Milestones during Wortman Trustee Era

- 2015 – 200,000th Beta initiated, **Warren Nitz, UC San Diego '15** (Zeta Omega Chapter)
- 2016 – Beta surpasses 10,000 undergrads; Beta Foundation achieves \$20 million
- 2017 – Penn State Beta pledge **Tim Piazza '19** dies after a hazing incident that included alcohol
- 2018 – Board of Trustees and 179th Convention enact Substance-Free Housing Policy
- 2018 – Undergraduate Commissioners added to Board of Trustees for expanded voice
- 2018 – General Fraternity House Corporation established to aid all North American chapters
- 2020 – Pandemic shuts campuses across North America, forcing closure of all Beta chapter houses for the first time since World War II (1943-45)
- 2020 – Beta creates New Commission on Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Equity. **Bill Lowry, Kenyon '56**, the first Black NIC initiate, named Commissioner

During Mike's Trustee tenure, the academic universe evolved—and so did our fraternity world. In recent years, Mike and the General Fraternity faced a worldwide pandemic, academic strife, campus alcohol fatalities, social media growth, undergrad sexual misconduct claims, and the call for wider diversification of fraternity membership.



*However, Mike Wortman has been up to the challenge!*

Brother Wortman's greatest impact has been leading the Stakeholder Engagement Committee as chairman for the past year during the pandemic. This critical committee reaches out to a variety of collegiate stakeholders and then provides feedback to the Board of Trustees and staff. As chairman, Mike ensured awareness among diverse audiences regarding Beta policy and provided direction for future decisions about national policies and programs.

Finally, Mike was one of two Board members who were also active chapter counselors. This distinction gave Mike "hands on" knowledge of day-to-day life in chapter houses—giving Trustee decisions greater connection to Beta undergraduates across North America. Mike's leadership as chapter counselor in 2017—as Alpha Tau received the North American Interfraternity Council (NIC) Chapter of Distinction Award—provides more evidence of his impact as a great Beta leader.

*"Mike is the rare talent that simply makes organizations and individuals better. He is passionate about the positive development of others and well known for his service, mentorship, and teaching. The Nebraska chapter would not have witnessed the success it has the past 25 years if not for Mike's involvement. I am very proud to call him a Beta and a friend." —Todd Mattox '99, President, The Experience Company*

*Mike Wortman's Beta Spirit has left a permanent mark.*

Our General Fraternity's leadership has recognized Mike's professional education background as a teacher, administrator, and eventually principal of Lincoln High School for 22 years as unique among national Beta leaders. His retirement from the Board of Trustees prompted shared recollections and admiration from many individuals at the General Convention in Oxford.

Brother Wortman's dedication to hundreds of young men in Nebraska over 25 years—and to thousands of students in North America over the last six years—reaffirms the belief that our fraternity represents the great principles of fraternal bonds, scholarship, leadership, fellowship, and service to others.

*"While the Nebraska chapter is blessed with many willing supporters, it's doubtful any one man has contributed more to the chapter's last several decades of success than long-time chapter counselor Mike Wortman. Mike is the standard for an exceptional chapter counselor—from mentoring presidents, to attending Monday night formal dinners and chapter meetings, to working with new members on their Gallup Strengths, his love for Beta seemingly knows no end. I am proud to be able to call him a brother!" —Mark Antonson '04, District Chief, 2013-21*

Alpha Tau's future success and our chapter's record of accomplishments are entwined forever with Mike Wortman's service to our fraternity and his commitment to our founding principles.

*Thank God Mike Wortman is a Beta! Brother Willis O. Robb would certainly agree.*

# CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It's with great joy that I write you from a campus and Beta house that has mostly returned to normalcy after the great disruption that was the 2020-21 school year. Aside from the mask mandate still in place, the Betas have returned to their typical activities, such as being great participants in Homecoming Week, pushing themselves in campus recreational facilities, being seen walking in big groups around campus, and exhibiting leadership roles in their respective campus activities.

**A couple of housekeeping notes to get us started:** Our chef, Scott Thorson, returned for his fifth year with our house. Scott can always be found with a smile in the kitchen and is always interested in engaging with our members. We appreciate Scott's work, especially his commitment to rotating breakfast for lunch and boneless chicken wings every other Friday.

It's been a great first semester with our new house director, Mister Clemmones. Mister is a spring 2021 graduate of the University of Mississippi, where he majored in psychology while picking up a minor in Chinese. Mister came to Nebraska after being accepted into the UNL graduate program for Student Affairs. It's been a pleasure for our members to get to know him, and we are excited to have him at the Beta house going forward. Mister replaced **Gage Mruz '16**, who moved to Portland, Oregon, for his employer. (See Alumni News for more information on Gage.)

## HOUSE UPDATES

This summer, the exterior of the chapter house (it will be 100 years old in just seven years) underwent multiple improvement projects. The



*A scene from our annual Burger Bash that was held October 7.*



*Here is one of Alpha Tau's intramural teams*

steps and walls of the patio on the east side of the house were torn out and either replaced or restored. Additionally, all of the exterior limestone components of the house were repaired, cleaned, and sealed with all joints caulked. As for the inside of the house, with the generous help of our UNL Beta Parent Alliance, we purchased a new sectional that is now in our front living room. The sectional will get great use on NFL Sundays, on pledge class movie nights, and for mid-day hangout sessions when brothers stop by the house.

We raised just over \$6,000 at our annual Homecoming Parents Auction on October 3. Thank you to all who donated! I want to take this moment to personally thank the Krull and Kaslon families for their work running the Parent Alliance the last four years. With **Seth Krull '19** and **Trevor Kaslon '19** set to graduate this year, we are looking for new parents to fill this role. Lisa Kaslon and Karen Krull have been fantastic support for our house, and I'm sure they will do a wonderful job helping transition our next set of parents into this important role.

## INTERESTING START TO THE SEMESTER

It was an emotional first week of school for the Betas and other houses as R Street was filled with almost 1,000 protesters for four nights

after a reported sexual assault on our campus. There was a great deal of tension on our campus and important conversations that needed to take place; the Betas were active participants in these discussions. A week after this report, we hosted representatives from 12 different sororities on our campus at Monday night formal dinner to talk about sexual assault and what our members can do to both proactively combat it, and to educate themselves on the topic. It was an impactful conversation; the women did a phenomenal job of sharing their perspective with our members.

**A parting note to the members of the executive team:** I want to thank each of you for the contribution you have made to the house as well as the times you have had my back over the past year. I hope each of you feel that you have experienced the same amount of growth that I have from this opportunity. The ways in which our relationships have deepened as members of this team is something for which I am so grateful. I admire you as young men, and I'm thrilled to continue sharing in your successes as we move through life together.



Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**DJ Pfeifer '20**  
[president@nebraskabeta.com](mailto:president@nebraskabeta.com)



# Chapter Counselor Report

Academic classes for the 2021-22 school year at UNL began on August 23. Thirty-one new members were recruited over the summer and joined 85 returning members for a total of 116 Betas for the Alpha Tau chapter. In early August, the General Fraternity held its annual convention in Oxford, Ohio, in a scaled-back version. The 2020 convention was held in a virtual format, and the 2021 convention was a day shorter than normal and had a smaller group of Betas in attendance. At the convention, Nebraska was presented with Knox and Sisson awards from 2020, since we were not able to receive those awards at the 2020 virtual convention. Nebraska has now been awarded a total of 18 Knox awards over the years, the most of any of the 141 Beta chapters and colonies across North America. Alpha Tau has also been awarded 23 Sisson awards, the second most of Beta chapters. Both awards are given for overall chapter excellence.

The 11 members of this year's executive team have had to navigate through some situations not normally experienced by prior officers. The return to in-person classes after almost three semesters of some sort of hybrid or virtual classes because of COVID-19 has had an impact on the university and fraternity experience. The value of the Greek experience

is being questioned by some on the UNL campus and other university settings across the country because of reports of sexual assaults and other issues in Greek houses. In response, our chapter leaders invited 12 sorority leaders to a Monday night dinner at the Beta house for a discussion about what Betas and other Greek men can do to help make a university campus a safe place for women. The chapter leaders also hired a new house director, Mister Clemmones, a graduate student from Mississippi.

Each member of the executive team has an advisor to serve as a mentor and sounding board as they move through their term of office. With the support of the House Corporation, the UNL Beta Parent Alliance, the UNL Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, leaders with the Beta Theta Pi fraternity, and many other groups, the executive team works to keep the Beta experience alive at 1515 R Street as they work to provide positive experiences as we continue to demonstrate we are Men of Principle.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Mike Wortman '67**

## NEW DISTRICT CHIEF

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Creighton University (Omaha), and the University of South Dakota (Vermillion) are the chapters in District 24 of Beta Theta Pi. Our area has a new District Chief, and he is a USD alumnus.

"Meet" **Michael J. Breske**, who is Gamma Alpha roll number 905. "Mick" was born and raised in the Webster/Waubay (northeastern) area of South Dakota. He pledged our Gamma Alpha chapter in the fall of 1969 and graduated from USD in 1973. Mick has had experience in law enforcement and insurance. He served as a Deputy Sheriff of Day County (SD) for one year, and then from the fall of 1974 to his retirement in July 1988, Mick was a trooper with the South Dakota Highway Patrol. After his retirement, Mick took over an American Family Insurance Agency in Vermillion and ran his agency for 28 successful years.

He became a chapter advisor for the Gamma Alpha in 1989 and served his chapter for 10 years. After a break, Mick resumed that role from 2010

to this year. He was appointed as Assistant District Chief for our district in October 2020, and then became District Chief this past August. Mick said that his "career in law enforcement, insurance and chapter advisor fields have given me an appreciation of people from all walks of life. The value that one must place on each individual and what each group can be. I have seen members of Beta come in as aspiring young men in their freshman year and leave as solid, mature men. Those men have become extremely successful in life and are now seeing their sons become members of the *Son of the Stars*. I want to see each member of each chapter reach their goals, both as individuals and as a chapter as a whole. I am very proud to be a Beta."

The Alpha Tau chapter is proud that you're a Beta too, Mick. Welcome aboard, and we look forward to working with you.

## SOCIAL REPORT

This semester, the members of Beta have been able to resume social events, such as formal dances, sorority mixers and introductions, and game day events that occurred before the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the unfortunate situation and event that happened at the Phi Delta Gamma (FIJI) house in August, we suspended mixers, introductions, and game day events with sororities until members of each fraternity and sorority felt comfortable and safe in the Greek community. We have taken the necessary and proper steps to make certain we as a house, and our new members, are educated and aware about how to conduct themselves in all social settings.

This year, the social committee team has finally been able to plan and execute formal dances in public venue spaces. This is a new social experience for not only our freshman, but also sophomores. We have been able to resume some great Beta formal dance traditions, such as

"Fratolina Wine Mixer" (for those of legal age), "Riverboat," "Dynamo," and "Winter Formal," just to name a few. We had our annual "Rock 'n' Roll" formal and a new "'80s in Aspen" themed formal in September and October. Every member of the house is excited that we can continue these formal dances in bigger group settings with other sororities and fraternities.

The social team of the Alpha Tau Chapter is offering the members of the house a unique, fun, and safe social experience for everyone involved in Beta events this semester, and we are committed to do this for the upcoming semesters this fall and spring.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Jampe Gergen '20**

# RECRUITMENT REPORT

On behalf of the recruitment team, we want to thank our generous alumni and active chapter for their assistance toward this past recruitment summer. We welcomed 31 new pledges to the Alpha Tau chapter.

This summer would not have been possible without the assistance of **Ian Kubik '21** and **Luke Spethman '21**, who both provided invaluable insight and charisma into the recruiting process. I am excited to see what this new member class accomplishes as they develop into young men by their experience in the Alpha Tau chapter. They are a group of 31 outstanding individuals, and I am confident that they will continue to improve upon this house. As a group, they had an average ACT score of 27.5 and a GPA of 3.83 in high school. The group of 31 comes from four different states and a variety of different backgrounds that will contribute to our chapter diversity.

Serving as recruitment chairman allowed me to give back to Beta, but to also gain valuable experience and make connections that will remain after my term expires. Thanks again to the active chapter for putting faith in me as their recruitment chairman, and to the alumni for providing constant support throughout my term. Having been on the recruitment team the past two summers, I can confidently say that they have been the best summers of my life, and I will never forget the experience.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Samuel Rice '20**  
[recruitment@nebraskabeta.com](mailto:recruitment@nebraskabeta.com)

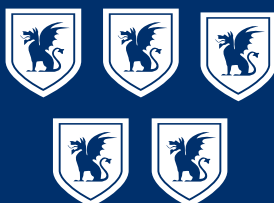
## Welcome, New Members

<b>Lucio Bergo*</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln Southeast	<b>Michael Endacott*</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln Pius X	<b>Nate Hirt</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln Southeast	<b>Jack McKittrick</b> <i>Papillion, NE</i> Papillion South	<b>Josh Swanson</b> <i>Kansas City, KS</i> Shawnee Mission West
<b>Rhett Berstler</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln East	<b>Jackson Gaulke</b> <i>Woodbury, MN</i>	<b>Burke Keane</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Omaha Skutt	<b>Jackson Merkel</b> <i>Norfolk, NE</i> Norfolk High School	<b>Trent Ulrick</b> <i>Littleton, CO</i> Columbine
<b>Braeden Bestmann</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln Southwest	<b>Grey Gergen*</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln Southeast	<b>Caleb Liable</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Elkhorn South	<b>Barrett Mooney</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Omaha Westside	<b>Jack Weston</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln Southeast
<b>Ethan Buso</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Omaha Creighton Prep	<b>Connor Gokie</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln Pius X	<b>Ryan Lewis</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Elkhorn South	<b>Sam Nodes</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Omaha Central	<b>Evan Wilson</b> <i>Denver, CO</i> Cherry Creek
<b>Alex Castillo</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Omaha Central	<b>Will Henningsen*</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Omaha Westside	<b>Charlie Lorkovic</b> <i>Papillion, NE</i> Papillion	<b>Junior Rojas</b> <i>Norfolk, NE</i> Norfolk Lutheran	<b>Eli Wirth</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln East
<b>Nolan Connor</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Omaha Skutt	<b>Drake Heywood</b> <i>Lincoln, NE</i> Lincoln East	<b>Will Manhart</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Omaha Creighton Prep	<b>Miles Schmidt*</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Elkhorn South	*Legacy
		<b>Ben McElhose</b> <i>Omaha, NE</i> Elkhorn	<b>Robbie Stephens</b> <i>Pequot Lakes, MN</i> Pequot Lakes High School	

## NEW MEMBERS FAST FACTS



**31**  
MEMBERS



**5**  
LEGACIES

WHERE  
NEW MEMBERS  
COME FROM  
OUT OF STATE: 5

OMAHA METRO: 14  
LINCOLN: 10  
REST OF NEBRASKA: 2



**27.4**  
AVERAGE  
ACT SCORE



**3.82**  
AVERAGE  
GPA



# The Experience Company Report

On behalf of The Experience Company (TEC), we hope everyone enjoyed this past summer and are excited for all the fun traditions that fall and winter bring. For those unfamiliar with TEC (or to those just needing a refresher), let us bring you up to speed:

The Experience Company is a leadership development initiative that was pioneered by Alpha Tau's incredible alumni. This initiative takes the form of a non-profit organization run by undergraduate members of the Alpha Tau chapter and is overseen by an alumni Board of Directors. The purpose of this initiative is to aid the development of Alpha Tau's undergraduate members into high-character leaders motivated to make a positive impact in their respective communities, companies, industries, and beyond.

To accomplish this purpose, multiple core functions of TEC have been established, such as our internship program, mentorship program, and Gallup StrengthsFinder initiative. The internship program utilizes our expansive network of Alpha Tau parents and alumni to source internship opportunities for undergraduates, helping them gain real-world experience and bolster their resumes. The mentorship program connects alumni of all ages and backgrounds with undergraduate members in the chapter to provide support for both personal and professional development throughout their collegiate career. In addition to these two offerings, every undergraduate Beta takes the Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment and then works with our Gallup-certified Strengths Coach, **Mike Wortman '67**, on their unique Gallup Strengths makeup. The core tenant of TEC is that it is a collective effort; all undergraduate members, alumni members, and parents have a stake in TEC and contribute to its success.

We have had the pleasure of supporting TEC for many years now across various facets of the program, both during our time as undergraduates and now as alumni. During our time as undergraduate members in the chapter, we helped to support the initial development of the internship program, placing dozens of students into professional positions. Additionally, we focused on enhancing TEC's operational efficiencies and building out the undergraduate team as well as substantially increasing parent involvement in the program. More recently, this past summer we had the opportunity to work alongside **Bruce**

**McKeag '65** and **Bill Dana '76** in managing the seventh round of mentor pairings. This was the seventh year that Bruce and Bill volunteered their time to pair alumni mentors with sophomore students in the chapter. As the newest members of the team, we focused on bringing new groups of mentors into the fold. To accomplish this, we reached out to many young alumni as well as alumni in other states who had not been in touch with the chapter for some time. These efforts, paired with the extensive work of Bruce and Bill, lead to a diverse group of mentors spanning many industries, strengths, passions, experiences, and geographies. We are excited to see the impact these outstanding Betas will make in the lives of the young men in the house. In future years, we hope to continue connecting with more of the vast alumni network that has yet to be reconnected with the chapter.

While much of what we have discussed here highlights the contributions that we have made personally, we want to be clear the Beta chapter (and in-turn TEC) have provided us with more benefits than we could ever hope to repay. Through Beta, we have received mentorship, professional opportunities, and lifetime friendships. TEC is an unprecedented leadership development initiative in which we have had the pleasure of being contributors, and we hope to continue to grow the legacy that this organization will leave behind. We know that countless individuals have been positively impacted to date, and with the support of our many undergrads, alumni, and parents, many more lives will be changed in the future.

*(Editor's note: where Alpha Tau has a current email address on file, TEC has emailed alums about "Experience Company Success Stories." Past stories are located on the chapter website.)*

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Drew Spadaro '17**  
[drewspadaro4@gmail.com](mailto:drewspadaro4@gmail.com)

**Cole Wellman '17**  
[colewellman96@gmail.com](mailto:colewellman96@gmail.com)

*If you have interest in volunteering your time as an alumni mentor, or in participating in any other facet of The Experience Company, please do not hesitate to reach out to Drew, Cole, or Bruce.*

## DAVE KARNES '68 UPDATE

In the last two issues of *The Dragon's Tale*, we have honored **Dave Karnes '68**. The spring issue mentioned a campaign to recognize Dave's leadership skills; we are happy to report that The Experience Company has raised over \$43,000 in Dave's memory. A committee has been formed to award undergraduate(s) financial support. At press time, this committee of alumni and chapter representatives is working on specifics and will keep Nebraska Betas updated on our chapter website.

If anyone would like to support this cause, contributions can still be made. Checks should be payable to The Experience Company, and include in the Memo Line "Dave Karnes." Checks can be mailed to our alumni address: P. O. Box 22251, Lincoln, NE 68542. Thanks for your ongoing support of Dave's legacy.

## PHILANTHROPY REPORT

Beta philanthropy jumped back onto the campus scene this year following previous bouts with COVID-19 restrictions. We hit the ground running with our second-ever Beta Theta Pi Polo philanthropy fundraiser, selling over 75 shirts and raising a substantial amount of money for Lighthouse, an after-school program for disadvantaged youth. (Lighthouse is a Lincoln-based organization founded by **Pete Allman '76**, his wife, and another Lincolnite. Its purpose is to provide a safe place for teens.) Following our philanthropic start to the year, the Cancer Kickoff event was introduced, and with the help of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, we raised \$10,000 for Children's Mercy Cancer Center in Kansas City.

Burger Bash on October 7 was up next, where we cooked burgers and fries to again support Lighthouse. An event is also being planned to raise awareness of sexual assault in light of the recent events on campus. Beta Theta Pi is taking a firm stance on the side of treating others with respect and how we would like to be treated. In addition to these larger events, brothers are strengthening our community impact through weekly volunteering at places, such as Lighthouse, our participation in other Greek Life philanthropy events, and helping those who are not as fortunate as we are.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Max Seibolt '20**

## SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

**B**eta Theta Pi finished fourth academically among UNL fraternities and second on city campus last semester (spring 2021), with an improved all-chapter GPA of 3.51. Last semester, we had 15 total 4.0s. That group consisted of an even breakdown of four seniors, four juniors, four sophomores, and three freshmen. Conversely, we had nine members, including since-initiated freshmen, who did not make grades. If a member gets below a 2.6 in a semester or below a 2.9 two out of three semesters, he is placed on an academic assistance plan. This is intended to give needed structure to members who fail to make grades and consists of meeting with the scholarship chairman regularly throughout the semester. If they fail to make grades during the semester on academic assistance, they will receive a "Trial by Chapter," in which members vote whether or not to keep the member in the house. Five of these nine members are on academic assistance plans; the others were seniors or first-time offenders but still above the 2.6 threshold.

We had one of three second-semester new members initiate this fall by reaching a 2.9 GPA for a semester. Congratulations to **John F. McLeay IV '21**. (*Editor's note: John's grandfather was an Alpha Tau Beta; see his obit in the fall 2020 issue.*) Freshmen and new members have a second semester to try to reach that academic standard if they do not make grades during their pledge semester. This fall, UNL was fortunate to return to almost entirely in-person classes. We're enjoying an academic experience that is continuing to return to normal. We were also able to reinstate freshman study hours at a location outside of the chapter house on Monday through Wednesday evenings at Jorgensen Hall. Additionally, we brought back the Men of Principle Scholarship, allocating it as a larger financial award to the best freshman application and interview — and a smaller amount for the runner-up. We continued to give out the one-time \$1,000 scholarship for all 4.0 recipients along with the Princeton dinner as a celebration of academic excellence. The members of this house continue to uphold the high standards of this great academic fraternity and assist 31 new pledges in doing the same.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Gavin Struve '20**

## New Member Education Report

**T**he 2021 Alpha Tau new member class (formerly known as "pledges") is off to a great start. With restrictions from COVID being more relaxed for the first time since the 2020 pledge semester, this year's new members are getting the full experience. The men have been adjusting well in terms of relationships, academics, and independence. Each day, they are becoming more confident in their abilities in the classroom and on campus and adopting the young Men of Principle attitude the active chapter fosters. I see their **Trust** and **Mutual Assistance** in their everyday relationships; **Responsible Conduct** and **Integrity** in their actions in the Beta house and beyond; and **Intellectual Growth** in their studies.

This new member class is extremely motivated to perform to the best of their capabilities in all aspects. All of the active chapter are looking forward to helping them utilize their passions and strengths beyond the house. In organizations around campus, like Freshmen Campus Leadership Associates, Big Red Investment, and Young Life, our new members are making their presence and impact known. Expectations are high for the new members, and as they continue to try to meet or exceed these expectations, I will be there to help them along the way. Our new members have also been given ample opportunity to involve themselves in philanthropy; see our philanthropy report from **Max Seibolt '20** on page 5.

The importance of philanthropy is not lost on these young men. In conversations about Lighthouse and fundraisers we've held, they've found the reward in giving. The new member semester is a time of personal growth through school, philanthropy, and Beta. These young men have had a great start and will continue to strive for their best effort in everything they do. I personally cannot wait to see what these young men achieve, and the rest of the active chapter is excited to see their destinations. If you have any questions about this year's class, feel free to reach out to me or arrange for a visit to our chapter house.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Michael Smilko '20**

## COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

**A**lumni presence is back at our chapter house. Now that everyone is returning to the normal pace of life, Zoom meetings are again being replaced by face-to-face interactions. The chapter and its proceedings have settled back into the normal pace of things, and the physical presence of our alumni at the chapter house is felt as our chapter reaps the benefits.

We have successfully reinstated all traditional physical events. On October 1, and in collaboration with the UNL Beta Parent Alliance, we successfully hosted the annual Alpha Tau celebration at our chapter house. We had a fantastic turnout of parents and alumni. The following day we held our annual Alumni and Dad's golf tournament. 108 players participated, and the team of **Davis Sibbersen '19** and **Brooks Douglass '19** stood above the field, finishing an impressive 11 strokes under par. We wanted to hold our annual Alumni Trap Shoot in November, but supply chain shortages in shotgun shells changed our plans. Next year.

We are currently compiling a database to store and update alumni contact information. We feel that it is immensely important for the active chapter to have a means of contacting our vast network of alumni. We















are currently testing different databases, but the goal is to make it easily accessible and updatable. Once established, it should be mostly hands-off aside from the occasional updating of information that can be done on a case-by-case basis. Our goal is to have this completed by the end of the year. You will be able to track this news on the chapter website of [nebraskabeta.com](http://nebraskabeta.com).

Our door at 1515 R Street is always open. Whether you are just passing through town or currently live in Lincoln, we encourage you to stop by the chapter house for a formal dinner at 5:30 p.m. each Monday followed by our chapter meeting at 6:15 p.m. If interested, please contact me at least one week in advance of attending so that I may notify the chapter and make the necessary arrangements and to ensure there are no conflicts such as a pinning, special event, etc. Alumni can also look for emails or visit [nebraskabeta.com/alumni](http://nebraskabeta.com/alumni) to stay up-to-date with chapter news and events. We hope to hear from you soon.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Jack Patzner '20**  
[alumni@nebraskabeta.com](mailto:alumni@nebraskabeta.com)



If you have news to share for a future edition of *The Dragon's Tale*, send an email to [updates@nebraskabeta.com](mailto:updates@nebraskabeta.com).

 **Mark Antonson '04** and son Rowan;  
 **Patrick Sullivan '09** and son Conor;  
 **Ben Theye '09** and son Jack;  
 **Nate Neuberger '09** and daughter Nelle;  
 **Tyler Brown '09** and son Collin;  
 **Jake Hedgecock '10** and son Asher;  
 **Cheney Neesen '10** and daughter Addison;  
 **Tyler Carpenter '11** and daughter Mae;  
 **Jason Barker '11** and daughter Ada;  
 **Kurt Siebert '11** and son Harrison;  
 **Pat Lusk '11** and son Levi;  
 **Matt Moore '11** and son Maddox;  
 **Joel Vrana '12** and son Brooks;  
 **Adam Aldana '12** and son Jude.

**Barry Johnston '62**—and at an age where most people are retired—continues to follow his passion for teaching. Barry has been working with at-risk youth for a long time and is employed at Keith Lutz Horizon High School in Omaha (the Millard School District). Horizon High is an alternative high school working with youth who have been kicked out of their regular schools. Barry said, “I love them all and am thrilled when I see them graduate.” Barry’s devotion to his students has been apparent for many years. Barry is active in Alpha Tau’s mentor program. Send Barry a note of encouragement at [barryapple@me.com](mailto:barryapple@me.com).

**John S. McCollister '67** is a Nebraska State Senator from Omaha. “The Bloc,” a Lincoln-based philanthropic non-profit organization, recently honored 50 high-achieving Nebraskans ages 50 and over who have made a difference in the areas of nonprofit, innovation, community service, business, and health care. There were over 1,100 nominations, and John was one of the 50 that were recognized for their service. Congratulations! “Stokes” has also been active in Alpha Tau’s mentor program. He may be contacted at [mccollister.john@gmail.com](mailto:mccollister.john@gmail.com).

**Bryan Tuma '74** has retired for the second time from the State of Nebraska. Bryan, who was Alpha Tau president in 1976-77, spent 32 years with the Nebraska State Patrol. When he retired in 2011, Bryan held the patrol’s top leadership position: superintendent of law enforcement and public safety. He then went to work in the private sector but missed his role in public service. In 2014, Bryan became the assistant director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). Major General Daryl Bohac, the head of NEMA, said, “Bryan was clearly the right person at the right time to lead NEMA. His calm and caring demeanor set the bar high and was just what this state needed. During his seven years with the agency, we stood shoulder to shoulder to serve Nebraskans. He provided tremendous leadership for the day-to-day operations of an agency that was integral to the response to Nebraska’s largest disaster—the 2019 floods. But it would be a mistake to let his tenure as the assistant director be defined by the 2019 floods alone. His vision

for stakeholder engagement, reorganizing the staff aimed at improving customer service, and finding ways to leverage innovative methods in order to serve the citizens of Nebraska all are hallmarks of his leadership of the agency.” When he’s not riding his BMW motorcycle, Bryan can be reached at [bjt422@gmail.com](mailto:bjt422@gmail.com). Congratulations, Bryan!

**Preston Mesick '03** is employed by DISCO, a software technology firm in Austin, Texas. He has recently been promoted to Senior Product Manager. Preston may be reached at [pmesick@gmail.com](mailto:pmesick@gmail.com).

**Cheney Neesen '10**, upon his graduation from UNL with an accounting degree, started to work for BKD, a national accounting firm with an office in Lincoln. After seven years, Cheney was promoted to manager and transferred to BKD’s Denver office in April 2020. He provides audit and assurance work for Colorado and the Western United States markets. He noted with “business deadlines and a five-month-old daughter, life comes at you fast.” Cheney has also been active in Alpha Tau’s mentoring program and may be reached at [cneesen@BKD.com](mailto:cneesen@BKD.com).

**Sam Brower '15** was recently admitted to the Nebraska Bar after graduating from the University of Minnesota Law School. Sam is incredibly excited to be back home in Nebraska and has started his job with Legal Aid of Nebraska. He is a staff attorney in the Omaha office, and his team is the Housing Justice Project working with housing issues faced by their clients. Sam was chapter president his senior year and is involved in Alpha Tau’s mentor program. He may be reached at [samjbrower@gmail.com](mailto:samjbrower@gmail.com).

**Mike Franken '15** also graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School. Mike was admitted to the Nebraska Bar and moved to Omaha. He is now working for Nebraska’s Fourth Judicial District Court as a judicial clerk. His job involves helping the district court judges with legal research and writing orders. He is happy to be back in Nebraska and to start his legal career. As an Alpha Tau undergraduate, Mike was chapter vice president and is now involved in our mentor program. He can be reached at [michaeltfranken@gmail.com](mailto:michaeltfranken@gmail.com).

**Tanner Haas '16** is a Fluid Catalytic Cracking (FCC) Process Contact Engineer for the ExxonMobil plant in Baytown, Texas. He is responsible for the monitoring of the daily operations to maintain reliability and to implement economic optimizations to ExxonMobil’s refinery. The FCC function is to convert the unwanted portions of crude oil

into desired molecules that act as feedstocks for gasoline, diesel, and chemical production.

As an undergraduate at UNL, Tanner was the recruitment chairman for Alpha Tau. He’s still out there “recruiting,” and said he would “highly recommend this type of career for anybody that is motivated by troubleshooting and is passionate to make a real-world impact in the production of essential goods.” To find out more about FCCs or refineries in general, he would highly recommend their Wikipedia articles. Tanner continues his involvement in Alpha Tau’s mentor program and can be contacted at [tannerhaas7@gmail.com](mailto:tannerhaas7@gmail.com).

**Gage Mruz '16** proudly served as the chapter house director for the past year. Gage founded Greenstain, an eco-friendly clothing company in Lincoln, during his senior year at the Beta House in 2019. He continues those responsibilities while moving to Portland, Oregon, to work as a Field Marketing Manager with Archrival, a youth culture agency. Gage remains on Alpha Tau’s Alumni Advisory Board and continues his work with our mentor program. Gage can be reached at [gagemruz@gmail.com](mailto:gagemruz@gmail.com).

**Ben Krull '17** is now employed in the Omaha office of Deloitte, one of the “Big Four” accounting organizations in the world. Ben is a risk and financial advisory analyst and brings prior experience from Northwestern Mutual Financial Services and West Gate Bank. Ben can be contacted at [benkrull98@gmail.com](mailto:benkrull98@gmail.com).

**Drew Spadaro '17** has passed two actuarial exams this year and just took his third exam in October. Those results are not known at press time. Drew is working towards his Associate of the Society of Actuaries (ASA) designation. In the spring issue of *The Dragon's Tale* ([nebraskabeta.com/dragons-tale](http://nebraskabeta.com/dragons-tale)) we made reference to several Betas taking actuarial exams on page 10. One of Drew’s pledge brothers is Jack Erikson '17 and Jack is also working on his actuarial exams. Drew is active in our mentor program, and may be reached at [drewspadaro4@gmail.com](mailto:drewspadaro4@gmail.com).

**Blake Tooley '17** is a field engineer for the Keller Group, a worldwide geotechnical specialties company headquartered in London, England. Blake works in the Dallas office after relocating from Omaha. He said he imagines that Dallas will be “a new and enjoyable experience.” Blake can be reached at [blooley5@gmail.com](mailto:blooley5@gmail.com).

**Trevor Mumford '18** is now employed by D.A. Davidson, a full-service investment banking firm headquartered in Great Falls, Montana. Trevor works in their Seattle office and is a financial advisor apprentice working to obtain all the required licenses. Trevor shared he “is helping advisors model their client financial plans and preparing for a partnership with a senior advisor in the firm.” Trevor may be contacted at [mumford.trevor@gmail.com](mailto:mumford.trevor@gmail.com).

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## IN OUR MYSTIC SHRINE

**If you have Alumni News or information about the death of an Alpha Tau Beta for a future edition of The Dragon's Tale, send an email to [updates@nebraskabeta.com](mailto:updates@nebraskabeta.com).**

**John Landis '34** entered Our Mystic Shrine on June 24, 2000. He was AT 573. *The Dragon's Tale* just became aware of his death, and we have no other information.

**Robert L. Gangel '50** entered Our Mystic Shrine on April 25, 2021. Bob was AT 835. When Bob attended the University of Nebraska, he was involved in the ROTC program. Following his graduation, Bob was a communications officer for the U.S. Air Force and stationed in Tokyo, Japan. After his military service concluded, Bob and his wife moved to Columbus, Nebraska, where he was employed by Becton Dickinson, a medical technology company. He eventually became the manager of BD's Columbus plant. Bob later became an employee of the Nebraska Public Power District and was NPPD's acting CEO before his 1996 retirement.

Bob was very active in the Columbus community and served on several boards during

and after his retirement. "Columbus Days" in the Columbus community is four days of celebration, and during the 1986 event, Bob was named "King Ferdinand" in recognition of his community involvement and service.

Two of Bob's daughters survive him, as well as other relatives.

**Robert J. "Jim" Olmsted '55** entered Our Mystic Shrine on August 13, 2019. Jim was AT 939. Jim and his wife lived in Surprise, Arizona. He was born in Des Moines, Iowa, graduated from Benson High School in Omaha, and was a graduate of the University of Nebraska with a Business degree. He passed away due to complications of renal cell cancer. His wife, Bonnie, is among his survivors.

**Two members of the 1970-71 pledge class passed away last year.**

**Tim Romanic '71** entered Our Mystic Shrine on August 30, 2020. Tim was AT 1351. He was born to a military family and graduated from Ralston (NE) High School in 1970 when his father was stationed in the Omaha area. His family had 10 moves in five states over the years. Tim was a star athlete in both football

and baseball, and following high school was drafted by the Kansas City Royals. After a discussion with his high school coach and with his father, it was decided college was a better choice. He attended the University of Nebraska from 1970-72, and then moved to Stayton, Oregon, to be closer to his family. He worked for the Stayton Canning Company for 42 years. He passed away due to heart failure and other long-standing medical issues. Survivors include four brothers.

**Steve Hanich '71** entered Our Mystic Shrine on December 18, 2020. Steve was AT 1353. He was a mechanical engineering graduate of the University of Nebraska and first moved to Iowa following his graduation. A few years later Steve and his wife, Robyn, moved to Olathe, Kansas, where Steve worked for Black & Veatch, an engineering and construction company. He was employed by Blank & Veatch for 38 years. He enjoyed golf and travel with family and friends, and "had an intense love of Husker football," attending many games over the years. Steve is survived by Robyn, their two sons, and other relatives including his brother, **Mike Hanich, M.D. '67** (AT 1194).