



THE DRAGON'S TALE

SPRING 2022

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

beta.org
updates@nebraskabeta.com

For the past two years, and even earlier during our 2011-12 capital campaign for the chapter house renovation, we have spent a lot of time, energy, and effort improving our communications.

When the capital campaign started, we realized the incomplete contact information we had for some of our alumni. The databases were not updated, and we needed to improve our content to share information on the campaign. Pennington & Company, a Lawrence, KS, based company, helped administer some of the complexities of the campaign and were instrumental in bringing our records to a “better” state. But as alumni move more frequently, change phone numbers, disconnect landlines, and change the way they do business—your Beta information needs to be current. Both the General Fraternity (GF) and our chapter still publish articles that are mailed by the post office. Both the GF and our chapter use email, websites, social media, and other means to stay connected in a digital world.

HELP US HELP YOU!

If you have any changes in your contact information, let the GF know by using the beta.org website. If you do not have a profile on the website—**start one**. All contact info is secure, and the GF and our chapter do not sell our lists to outside entities.

Any changes should also be communicated to the Alpha Tau chapter. Our website is nebraskabeta.com. If you are not receiving copies of

The Dragon's Tale or periodic emails from the chapter, or you're in doubt about your contact information—let our chapter know. If you have a change in your contact info, send an email to updates@nebraskabeta.com. For those not using a computer, you can “snail mail” us a note at:

The Beta Theta Pi Alumni Association of Nebraska
P.O. Box 22251
Lincoln, NE 68542

For our mailed copies of *The Dragon's Tale*, we ask the post office to return undelivered copies. Note the *Address Service Requested* in the mailing section of our issues. This helps, but it often takes time to obtain updated information. Please be proactive in letting us know of changes.



We also now can accept credit cards as payments to The Experience Company. Smartphone technology can be used with the “QR Code” to the left or go to nebraskabeta.com/tec-donate. General Fund donations are always welcome, or you can designate your gift to help fund *The Dragon's Tale*, the Dave Karnes Leadership Fund, or the Roger Myer's Scholarship Fund. (See info about Dave Karnes in the fall 2021 issue, and see below for an article on Roger.)

Our sincere *thanks* for staying connected to your chapter.

J. ROGER MYERS – IN OUR MYSTIC SHRINE

Editor's note: For those of us working on The Dragon's Tale, our efforts usually represent good news. For the third time in less than two years, however, we share the sad news about the death of a former president of our chapter.

John Roger Myers, J.D. '60 entered Our Mystic Shrine on January 18, 2022. He was AT 1019. Roger was elected president of the chapter in 1961-62, his junior year, and was the pledge trainer his senior year at UNL.

Roger was a supporter of our capital campaign and renewed many friendships with those near his age during Tuesday morning Zoom calls that were started after COVID came into play just over two years ago. (See the fall 2020 issue of *The Dragon's Tale*.) He was born in San Diego but moved several times as a youth and considered Grand Island, NE, as his hometown. He won the high school state championship in the 100-yard dash. Roger came to UNL and played on “both sides of the ball” on the Cornhusker football team. In addition to his Beta involvement, Roger was active in the U.S. Navy ROTC program at UNL.

After his graduation, Roger served a tour with the U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam and rose to the rank of captain. He then attended law school at the

University of California Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. He moved to Ventura, CA, in 1969, and worked for the Ventura County District Attorney's Office. In 1971, Roger was the founding partner of the law firm in Ventura which still bears his name, Myers, Widders, Gibson, Jones & Finegold, LLP, and continued to practice law until his death.

Several Zoom attendees discussed Roger's time in the chapter on the Tuesday following his passing. One remarked that, as pledge trainer, he oversaw the positive changes in how pledges were treated so hazing was no longer tolerated. He also implemented other changes to the brotherhood to strengthen the chapter. One of Roger's pledges when he was the pledge trainer said, “Pledgeship under Roger was a very nice experience. No hazing, positive ‘line-ups,’ and mandatory study hours.” Another alumnus said, “His death is terrible news. Roger was one of the stalwarts of the Beta house when we joined, and I always admired him for his calm, relaxed demeanor.”

Roger was a hero, a patriot, and a true “Man of Principle.”

(Continued on page 2)

J. ROGER MYERS

(Continued from page 1)

Active in many California organizations over the years, Roger was also a business entrepreneur having founded two successful, Ventura-based banks. He helped provide services to homeless veterans and their families and served his city and county in many other capacities. In 2007, Roger was awarded the Ben Nordman Award for Community Service, the highest honor of Ventura County's Bar Association.

Among his survivors are son David, daughter Katherine "Katie" Carruthers, stepchildren Brian Stone and Julianna Stone de Melo, and grandchildren and step-grandchildren.

Roger's legacy with Alpha Tau and Beta is not going away. His immediate family and his law firm are supporting an endowment in his name to fund the **J. Roger Myers Scholarship Fund** for Alpha Tau Betas. Details are still being discussed, but we assume it will be something like the award being given in honor of Dave Karnes. Contributions in his memory from Betas or other interested parties are

being accepted by The Experience Company. Checks payable to The Experience Company, a 501(c)(3) entity, can be mailed to:

The Beta Theta Pi Alumni Association of Nebraska
P.O. Box 22251
Lincoln, NE 68542

Donors can also go online (see the article on page 1 of this issue) to donate by credit card.

We thank his family, and our prayers and thoughts remain for Roger and former chapter presidents **John Lonnquist '62** and **Dave Karnes '68**. If you have questions about Roger's fund, please direct these to **Larry Dlugosh '63** or **Todd Mattox '99**. Larry can be reached at larrydlugosh@gmail.com and Todd at TMattox1@yahoo.com.

Additional entries for *Our Mystic Shrine* are located on page 7 of this issue.

Chapter Counselor Report

In January, the chapter initiated 24 new members who are now active members with AT numbers ranging from 2583 to 2606. Before Initiation Week, the new members were asked to do some reflective writing about their Beta experience since August 2021. Here are a few of the comments from these men to show what they are thinking and saying about Beta.

- "I remember upperclassmen trying to explain to me how close I would become with my pledge class. It's not that I didn't believe them, but I didn't necessarily understand what they meant because I hadn't experienced it. Now that the first semester has come to a close, it's hard to believe that these men were strangers to me just months ago. I trust my brothers more than I trust many of my lifelong childhood friends."
- "I feel Beta has pushed me to focus on my academics and maintain the grades that I have achieved. I have been way more involved on campus and in the community through philanthropy and intramurals. I have also grown to love and respect the ones I now call my brothers, and they have pushed me to be my best self."
- "A home is somewhere that you feel like you belong, and it is somewhere that you are happy to be. I have considered the Beta

house a home since the moment I left the car and moved into that small room with three other pledge brothers I once considered strangers."

- "Both the college students and adults who have knowledge of fraternity life at UNL that I've talked to regard Beta very highly. This shows the high character and hard work of the men who came before me and established such a reputation."
- "Beta is a fine example of a great fraternity that is changing the perception and molding men into leaders. Beta members are challenged to change the common perception by being responsible and properly conducting themselves. We are all called as Betas to be Men of Principle."

I think you can see from these quotes that this is not just an ordinary group of young college men, but a group of outstanding individuals who are now an active part of our chapter.

I'm glad I'm a Beta ... and I'm glad they are all Beta Brothers now too!

Yours in __kai__,
Mike Wortman '67



Dominic J. "DJ" Pfeifer '20

SENIOR HONORARIES

For the first time in two years, Alpha Tau has members of the Black Masque chapter of Mortar Board, one of two senior honoraries on the Husker campus. (The other honorary is the Innocent's Society.) Mortar Board is a national honor society that recognizes college seniors for their achievements in scholarship, leadership, and service. Selected this year are juniors (and seniors-to-be) **Dominic J. "DJ" Pfeifer '20** and **Samuel W. Rice '20**. Both men have served our chapter; DJ is the immediate past president of Alpha Tau, and Sam was recruitment chairman last year and continues his service on the executive team as communications chairman. Of note: DJ's brother, **John Pfeifer '16**, was also a chapter president and a Mortar Board member four years ago.



Samuel W. Rice '20

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The Executive Team. Back row: Luke Dempsey '21, Sam Rice '20, James Eshleman '21, Sam Thomas '21, and Grant Auman '21. Front row: Reis Jensen '21, Ethan Mustard '21, Josh Mikus '21, Benjamin Pick '21, and Tate Kiehn '21. Seated: Kyle Auman '21.

I am honored and excited to have been elected chapter president of a house that has produced so many successful men through its history. I look forward to working closely with my executive team, Chapter Counselor **Mike Wortman '67**, and all the other amazing alumni I get the opportunity to work with during my tenure as president.

I am currently a sophomore studying computer science from Omaha, NE, where I attended Creighton Preparatory High School. While becoming the president as a sophomore isn't necessarily conventional, observing the work of last year's executive team, made up entirely of sophomores, has given me a great model of what it takes to lead the house. I want to thank **Dominic Pfeifer '20** in particular for leading by example this past year and showing me what it takes to be a valuable leader in the house. Next, I'd like to thank my Experience Company mentor and former chapter president, **Russ Peterson '76**, for all the advice he has given me on how to lead an executive team as well as the opportunity to bounce ideas off someone as well-spoken and accomplished as himself.

This semester, I was able to attend the Chapter Presidents Leadership Academy in Cincinnati, OH. I learned about what it takes to be an effective leader, how to improve diversity within the house, and how to ensure the chapter house is an inclusive environment. I was also made aware of our incredible advisors, alumni, and campus support systems in place that make Alpha Tau a stronger chapter. The trip was an unforgettable, educational experience that will certainly guide my leadership throughout our term. I was grateful for the opportunity to attend.

Our executive team is committed to continuing the long tradition of excellence of the Alpha Tau chapter. The team is made up of one returning member and ten new sophomores who began their terms at the start of the calendar year. I have the utmost confidence in our team's ability to strengthen this house. With the current issues revolving around Greek life, especially here on UNL's campus, we will strive to improve upon Beta's strong reputation and campus and community involvement.

I'd like to take the time to thank all the people that have contributed to making Alpha Tau the well-respected chapter it is today. In the short time I've held this position, I've gained a new understanding and appreciation of everything that goes into making this chapter one of the best in the nation, and I couldn't be more proud to call myself a Beta.



Yours in __kai__,
Kyle Auman '21
Chapter President
president@nebraskabeta.com

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

The Alpha Tau chapter is grateful to have such an involved alumni network, supporting not only the chapter house, but also the individual active members within it. I can say this with confidence: our alumni involvement and engagement separate Alpha Tau chapter from other houses on campus.

The mentor program The Experience Company provides for our members is second to none when it comes to preparing our undergraduate members for life after college, both personally and professionally. As a chapter, we are all grateful for the support. This year, we are excited to begin integrating The Experience Company as a part of our new member program, with the hope of continuing its growth and effectiveness for the active chapter. Some alumni may not be aware of what The Experience Company is and how it benefits not only our members, but also our alumni relationships. The executive team is planning to have a "leadership report" toward the end of the semester by having a Zoom meeting, open to all alumni, that will explain the functionality and purpose behind The Experience Company while encouraging alumni to actively get involved. Watch for an email from the chapter on specifics. (Issues of *The Dragon's Tale* for the past seven years are another resource available for interested alumni—nebraskabeta.com/dragons-tale)

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic peak is behind us, we want to extend the invitation to alumni to attend formal dinners and/or chapter meetings. Formal dinners are held at 5:30 p.m. every Monday with the chapter meeting following at 6:15 p.m. Alumni are welcome to join us for a good meal and conversation with our active members. If interested in attending a formal dinner or chapter meeting, please email me a week in advance so that we can make the proper arrangements.

We also recognize that we could communicate more effectively on the status of the house and the members within it. To improve our communications, the executive team will be holding a leadership report (insiders report) via Zoom to provide an update on the current state of the house. This will be an opportunity for interested Betas to obtain a feel of where the house is currently. There will also be time for a Q&A period for the current executive team on how we are proceeding as a leadership team. We will send notifications via email, and these Zoom events will be posted on the chapter website at nebraskabeta.com.

On a personal note, I am thrilled to again be serving on our executive team for the second consecutive year.

Yours in __kai__,
Sam Rice '20
alumni@nebraskabeta.com

RECRUITMENT REPORT

I am truly honored and thrilled to serve as the recruitment chairman for the Alpha Tau chapter of Beta Theta Pi for the 2022 recruitment season. I am a soon-to-be junior, majoring in construction management, minoring in business administration, and was born and raised in Lincoln, NE.

The Alpha Tau chapter has built and will continue to build a reputation of recruiting the top men attending the University of Nebraska while continuing Beta's tradition of being a top house on the UNL campus. Acknowledging the importance of the recruitment process, the active chapter recently elected **Nolan Connor '22** and **Will Henningsen '22** as assistant recruitment chairmen.

Our chapter will seek individuals devoted to success, passionate for involvement, and driven for higher education. With the assistance and support from the active chapter members and dedicated alumni, recruitment affairs will be conducted professionally to select young men to uphold Beta Theta Pi's Men of Principle values. As a team, we understand the significance of our alumni and encourage alumni to send in their recommendations for potential new members (PNMs) as soon as possible. **Please send your recommendations no later than June 15, 2022.** My email address is below, and a form for recommending someone is on page 6 of this issue.

The **June 15 date** ensures our recruitment team will have plenty of time to engage and connect with PNMs during recruitment season. Although bid cards are not guaranteed, every alumni recommendation for a PNM



will be guaranteed a recruitment dinner and taken into consideration by the recruitment team. Alpha Tau members are excited to begin the 2022 recruitment season and eager to hear their recommendations from the alumni.

Following a similar schedule for the past several years, we expect the majority of our recruitment processes **will be completed by mid-July**. Beta Theta Pi plans to host barbecue recruitment events at the chapter house every Thursday night during May, June, and July. We will also host recruitment lake and pool events on Saturdays at various locations surrounding the Lincoln and Omaha areas. As we construct our schedules, please check the recruitment section of the chapter website for specific times and locations of events at nebraskabeta.com/recruitment. Our main focus will be engaging in relationships with the best candidates for Beta Theta Pi during recruitment events. We will offer bid cards to the recruits whom the recruitment team, active chapter, and alumni are positive will continue the legacy and success of Beta Theta Pi.

Finally, I want to recognize the active members and thank them for the roles they take and their help in the recruitment process. I also want to thank our dedicated alumni network for staying involved and upholding Beta Theta Pi's lifelong values.

Yours in __kai__,
Ethan Mustard '21
recruitment@nebraskabeta.com

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Report

In January, the Alpha Tau chapter of Beta Theta Pi installed a new position: the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chairman (DEI). This was created from the feedback regarding issues that were detailed in the November 2020 issue of *The Beta Theta Pi*. issuu.com/betathetapiio/docs/beta_magazine_-_fall_2020_final/32

I stepped into the role with guidance from Chapter President **Kyle Auman '21** and Chapter Counselor **Mike Wortman '67** and am passionate and committed to delivering the ideas of DEI to the chapter. I attended the Keystone Conference in February to be trained in DEI concepts and practices to communicate to the chapter. The Keystone presenters advised chapters that lacked diversity to focus on being inclusive and equitable to everyone first, hopefully attracting more diversity to the chapters. The position is focused on raising awareness about social justice, promoting inclusivity for Beta chapters, and educating how chapters, as a majority group, can support

underrepresented groups. For Alpha Tau, weekly discussions are held in chapter meetings about the importance of equity and inclusion on campus. In the fraternity setting, we emphasize that—no matter where someone comes from—they are a brother in the Beta Theta Pi house. Alpha Tau is a group of mostly white men from the Midwest. With the DEI Chairman leading the chapter to be a more inclusive and equitable organization, we hope to continue to build our chapter with members from more diverse backgrounds.

If any alumni know of possible recruits that could help us reach our goals, please contact a member of the recruitment team. See page 6 of this issue for contact information.

Yours in __kai__,
Will Kelley '21

SOCIAL REPORT

This semester, the members of Beta Theta Pi have been busy with academics, community involvement, and social events. COVID-19 restrictions on campus have died down quite a bit, and we have been able to continue participating in formal dances in public venue spaces.

On February 18, we took part in our annual "Crush" spring formal. This was a single house formal, and the members of the chapter were excited to see all the members of the house in the same place. We had three other formals this semester, including a new semi-formal, themed "March Madness." This event occurred on March 26, and the chapter enjoyed partaking in a social event in their favorite basketball jerseys.

Although the members of the house are excited about the new semi-formal, we haven't forgotten about tradition. We hosted our annual semi-formal, "Fratilina Wine Mixer" (for those of legal age) and "Riverboat"

in Omaha on April 23. This is a chapter favorite and is a classic send-off to celebrate the end of a great academic year. All members of Beta Theta Pi were very excited and thankful that we had the opportunity to continue participating in these social events with other fraternities and sororities.

Two freshmen were recently nominated and elected as assistant social chairmen. **Connor Gokie '22** and **Will Henningsen '22** will help provide the Alpha Tau chapter with safe and fun events that expand our social scene and strengthen the bond between our members. These experiences mean a lot to the entire chapter, and we facilitated these events for this spring semester and plan on the same approach for the following semesters.

Yours in __kai__,
Ben Pick '21

SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

This year, Beta Theta Pi had 16 members show their commitment to academic excellence by earning a 4.0 GPA and 42 members make the Dean's List for their college.

Overall, Beta Theta Pi finished with a GPA of 3.281. Seniors led the way with a class high GPA of 3.388, followed by the sophomores with an average of 3.333, juniors with a 3.308, and the freshman class with a 3.016.

The freshman class GPA includes five new members who were depledged after falling drastically short of the 2.9 mark needed to be initiated. Furthermore, two more new members did not make the 2.9 mark, but showed promise and will be looking to achieve this in the spring semester.

It was clear that many freshmen struggled to adapt to college classes after spending their last two years of high school in a much less rigorous online format. Learning from this, we will be more diligent in instilling the necessary skills in next year's class to achieve academic success in college. This spring semester, the scholarship team has been holding weekly meetings with the new members who did not initiate to identify obstacles, connect them to resources, and find strategies to improve their school performance.

Eleven members will be put on our academic assistance plans outside of the freshman class after falling below a 2.9 GPA for two out of the last three semesters or below a 2.6 for one semester.

It stings that our GPA has dipped from past semesters. We can see plenty of members, however, that are still performing at elite academic levels by tying our highest count of 4.0s in several years and having 42 members make the Dean's List. After a challenging couple of years caused by the pandemic that has created different challenges for everyone, it is more important than ever that we provide a support system and brotherhood to those struggling academically and allow them the opportunity to succeed.

As we advance, the members of Alpha Tau look to uphold academic excellence, and as Scholarship Chairman, I look forward to playing an integral role in that process.

Yours in __kai__,
James Eshleman '21

New Member Educator Report

I am honored and excited to serve as the new member educator for Alpha Tau chapter during the next year. I am currently a sophomore pursuing majors in Economics and Political Science and minors in Spanish and National Security. I am yet another Alpha Tau Beta from Overland Park, KS, which is part of the Kansas City metropolitan area.

In January, Alpha Tau chapter welcomed 24 new brothers at our annual initiation banquet. The active chapter, new initiates, and their families came together to share a meal and listen to some reflections over their pledging process from members of their class, upperclassmen, and alumni. This new class of initiates combines great minds, hard workers, and free spirits. I cannot wait to see what they continue to add to this house in the coming years. We also currently have two second-semester pledges who are working hard to meet initiation requirements before the start of next fall.

Our pledge program can always use some tweaks and adjustments, which I will be working on over the coming months with the help of my supportive advisor, **Pete Allman '76**. Together, we will look for ways to continue to push the pledges to grow in ways that push them out of their comfort zone, teach hard work and humility, and push involvement within the house and on campus at large.

On a final note, I cannot wait to work with the upcoming pledge class, which I know will be filled with bright and hard-working young men. I have full faith in my brother **Ethan Mustard '21** and his leadership of the recruitment process this coming summer. I look forward to reporting back on that upcoming class!

Yours in __kai__,
Grant Auman '21

PHILANTHROPY REPORT

I am happy to report that Beta is back into the full swing of having our philanthropic events. We have a full schedule for the 2022 spring semester, with four scheduled events. First on the agenda is new to us: a 3-on-3 basketball tournament with FarmHouse and Sigma Phi Epsilon. This event benefits the Malone Center in Lincoln, which helps the youth excel in academics, sports, and any other interests they may have. This semester, we also raised money for Lighthouse by way of a March Madness bracket pool. Lighthouse was founded by **Pete Allman '76** in 1976 and focuses on helping disadvantaged youth in Lincoln. As Betas, we volunteer weekly at Lighthouse by helping the kids with schoolwork or simply playing games and making conversation.

One of our largest events, *Backpack in Black*, returned in April. We are teaming up with Phi Delta Theta, Sigma Phi Epsilon, and Pi Kappa Alpha to put together a battle of the bands, with one band representing each house. It took place at the Royal Grove concert venue in Lincoln. (Full information of chapter events is posted on the chapter website.) *Festa Italiana* returned as well, partnering with Delta Delta Delta sorority to put together a pasta feed at the Tri Delt house. The recipient(s) of the funds for both events will be enhancing the Lincoln community through our efforts.

We are thrilled to be returning to near normalcy on campus and eager to positively impact the Lincoln community in person.

Yours in __kai__,
Sam Thomas '21

NEW INITIATES

Barrett Mooney, AT 2583
Nolan Connor, AT 2584
Connor Gokie, AT 2585
Eli Wirth, AT 2586
Charlie Lorkovic, AT 2587
Burke Keane, AT 2588

Evan Wilson, AT 2589
Robbie Stephens, AT 2590
Josh Swanson, AT 2591
Will Henningsen, AT 2592
Ryan Lewis, AT 2593
Sam Nodes, AT 2594

Will Manhart, AT 2595
Jackson Gaulke, AT 2596
Caleb Liable, AT 2597
Ben McElhose, AT 2598
Braeden Bestmann, AT 2599
Grey Gergen, AT 2600

Jack McKittrick, AT 2601
Trent Ulrick, AT 2602
Ethan Buso, AT 2603
Miles Schmidt, AT 2604
Jackson Merkel, AT 2605
Michael Endacott, AT 2606



Back row, from left: Michael Endacott, Nolan Connor, Ethan Buso, Will Manhart, Jackson Merkel, Jack McKittrick, and Charlie Lorkovic. Middle row: Ben McElhose, Evan Wilson, Sam Nodes, Will Henningsen, Ryan Lewis, Caleb Liable, and Jackson Gaulke. Front row: Josh Swanson, Connor Gokie, Eli Wirth, Barrett Mooney (Honor Pledge), Burke Keane, Miles Schmidt, Trent Ulrick, and Grey Gergen. Not Pictured: Robbie Stephens and Braeden Bestmann.

RECRUITMENT RECOMMENDATIONS NEEDED!

Alumni, we value your input on membership selection. If you know someone who would be an asset to the chapter, please send the information below to Recruitment Chairman **Ethan Mustard '21** at recruitment@nebraskabeta.com. Ideally, we would like recommendations by May 15, but absolutely no later than June 15.

Prospect's name: _____

Prospect's cell phone, if available: _____

Prospect's email: _____

Home address: _____

High school attended: _____

Intended major: _____

Activities: _____

Parent/guardian phone: _____

Email: _____

Is prospect a Beta legacy? If yes, provide full details: _____

Reference submitted by: _____

OUR MYSTIC SHRINE

If you have 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.

Rex D. Andrews '49 entered Our Mystic Shrine on March 24, 2021. He was AT 805. Rex was born in Colorado but grew up in Lincoln. When at UNL, he was a member of the Navy ROTC program. Following his graduation, he earned his MBA from the University of Michigan. He was a lieutenant commander and served aboard a ship during the Korean conflict. He also flew a P2V patrol plane and continued his flying with the Naval Reserve.

Rex's professional career was with Wells Fargo Bank in California. He retired as a vice president of Wells Fargo's National Division and became an administrator for an organization working for academic achievement for youth. He was a longtime resident of Orinda, CA, and survivors include his wife of 52 years, Nanette, three children, and other relatives.

Melvin C. Thornton '54 entered Our Mystic Shrine on May 30, 2020. He was AT 893. Mel attended UNL on a Navy scholarship where he majored in mathematics and met his future wife, Rosemary. After his graduation, he spent two years in the U.S. Navy, serving as a lieutenant (j.g.) on a troop transport ship. Mel and Rosemary married during his Navy career. The couple later moved to Champaign, IL, where Mel earned his Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Illinois. Mel and Rosemary had three boys born to them when he taught at Illinois. He then taught at the University of Wisconsin before returning to Lincoln and joining the UNL faculty.

Dr. Thornton flourished at UNL, and his passion for mathematics inspired learning. He was involved in many math scholar's programs, and in 1993-94, UNL selected him for the Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Activity Award. Mel was recognized by the Carnegie Foundation in 1994 as Nebraska Professor of the Year. In 1995, he was inducted into the Academy of Distinguished Teachers.

Mel retired in 2000, and he and Rosemary spent 20 years living between Lincoln and a log cabin near Valentine, NE. He is survived by his wife, their three sons, and other relatives.

Mike Milroy '59 entered Our Mystic Shrine on March 1, 2021. He was AT 1003. Mike was born in North Platte, NE, and grew up on the ranch of his parents and tending to horses, cattle, and chickens. He received his degree in economics from UNL and traded the rain and corn of Nebraska for the sun and cacti of Arizona. He

graduated from the James E. Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona.

After five years with a Phoenix law firm, he joined Snell & Wilmer in 1980. At that time, their only office was in Phoenix, but they opened a Tucson office in 1989, and Mike and his family moved to Tucson.

Mike never forgot his ranching background, however, and his passion for raising cattle continued along with his law practice. He had a ranch near Cherry, AZ, and when he moved to Tucson, he bought a 5,000-acre ranch north of Sonoita to raise cattle. He lived on the ranch and drove to work every day. After 42 years as a lawyer, Mike retired to the ranch—but bought more land near North Platte. He spent time at both locations and never really left his roots. He was as passionate about raising cattle as he was about the law. He was a chairman of the Arizona Cattle Growers Association, the chairman of the Arizona Beef Council, and a regional vice president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

James Michael Burdic '67 entered Our Mystic Shrine on January 24. He was AT 1226. Mike (or "Granny" as he was known to those in the chapter), played football for the Nebraska Cornhuskers. After college, he was a respected welding instructor at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. He was twice awarded the Wekesser Outstanding Teacher award. Many years ago, Granny learned to play the blues harp harmonica from the best teachers, including Charlie Musselwhite. He also developed lifelong friendships with many of Nebraska's favorite blues musicians. He was an avid bow-hunter and outdoorsman and was fond of flint knapping, sculpting, carvings, drawing, soldering beads for jewelry, and reading and writing. At this time of his death, he was working on *Three Rails to Nowhere*, a semi-autobiographical novel about his youthful adventures.

Survivors include his wife, Donna; a son; brothers, including **Steve '66, AT 1163**, and Jeff Burdic. When informed of his passing, one pledge brother said, "Some really fun memories with Granny. A gentle giant." Another pledge brother said, "I had a great time talking and joking with him at our [50th] pledge class reunion. He was such a 'bigger than life' guy. I was really impressed with what a dedicated teacher and creative person he was. I never knew that side. Wish I'd had more time to learn

more about his craft. John Belushi in *Animal House* reminded me of Granny. Such a funny, funny guy."

Joseph W. Sloan, M.D. '73 entered Our Mystic Shrine on June 28, 2021. He was AT 1395. He was born in Birmingham, AL, and his family moved to Omaha in 1967. He obtained his medical degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 1979. While he was in his General Surgery Residency, he met his future wife, Nancy, as she was finishing Pharmacy School at the Med Center. The couple moved to Alabama where Joe finished his Urology Residency at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He continued his urology training at Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York City and MD Anderson in Houston. Joe then returned to Nebraska and practiced urology in Beatrice. He later changed subspecialties and trained in anesthesia in Iowa City and Birmingham.

The family resided in Kearney and Scottsbluff, NE, before retiring to Lincoln. He was a big Alabama football fan, an avid golfer, and enjoyed most sports. He was passionate about his commitment to Jesus Christ, studying the Bible, and rescuing the souls of children by supporting a ranch for boys and girls in Alabama. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Nancy, and other relatives.

NEW HOUSE DIRECTOR

Jamil Funnah is our new House Director following the resignation of Mister Clemmons. (Mister returned to Mississippi for family reasons.) Jamil was recommended to us by Mister and started his new position in January. Jamil, like Mister, is enrolled in the UNL graduate program for Student Affairs.

Alumni News

If you have Alumni News to share for a future edition of *The Dragon's Tale*, send an email to updates@nebraskabeta.com

Dan Wherry, J.D., AT 1060, and his wife, Sharon, have moved from Lincoln after 40-plus years. After spending all but three years of his life in Nebraska, and with both being very involved in decades of community service, they moved to Michigan to be closer to their daughter, their son, and six grandchildren. Both Dan and Sharon hosted many Beta events at their Lincoln residence over the years—including some from pledge classes that were not even in the chapter when Dan was! Sharon has taken on the “administrative efforts” for the Tuesday morning Zoom calls for the “more mature” Betas. Their new residence is in Richland, MI. Both Dan (a retired attorney) and Sharon (she retired in 2014 as president of the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools) remain involved in Zoom calls; see the fall 2020 issue of *The Dragon's Tale*. Dan can be reached at daniel.wherry@gmail.com.

Past issues of *The Dragon's Tale* have talked about Zoom calls by at least two separate groups. They're a great way to renew acquaintances, and in February, four members of the “mature group” coordinated by Dan and Sharon (see above) and **Jim Rembolt, AT 1065**, got together in Phoenix for dinner. **Tom Chambers, AT 1081**, **Bill Bullock, AT 1096**, **Bob Keim, AT 1144**, and **Bruce McKeag, AT 1149** have built on their renewal of friendships and brotherhood because of these Zoom calls. Tom and Bill were both seniors in the chapter when Bob and Bruce were pledges. These four, and their wives, had a dinner conversation that lasted over 3.5 hours. Thanks to Zoom for this renewal of the Beta spirit.

Robert T. Trotter II, Ph.D., AT 1139, has “mostly” retired from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff after 38 years of service. At one time, he was the chairman of the anthropology department and has also been involved in research administration for the University. Bob will continue several externally funded health equities research projects for NAU—but he and his wife will also do some traveling, visiting, and general recreation. Bob can be reached at rtt2rtt3rtt4@gmail.com.

Bob Keim, J.D., AT 1144, **Tom Formanack, D.D.S., AT 1145**, **Dave Keim, AT 1211**, and **Jim VanHousen, AT 1254** were all members of the undefeated Syracuse (NE) High School football team in 1963. They were selected for the Syracuse Football Hall of Fame and inducted on February 12. Tom was also a member of the Class B All-State team. Bob's email address is keimfinance@gmail.com; Tom can be reached at tjformanack@gmail.com; and Dave's email address is free2focus@comcast.net.



THE DRAGON'S TALE

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Beta Theta Pi,
Alpha Tau
chapter

Michael McGahan, M.D., AT 1369, Chapter President in 1974-75, has retired from the Grand Island (NE) Medical Center. Mike spent many years as the head of the Emergency Department at St. Francis Hospital in Grand Island and was instrumental in forming the ER at Grand Island's newest hospital. (See “Alumni News” in the fall 2020 issue.) Mike and his wife have moved to La Vista, NE, to be closer to their Omaha family. Mike can be reached at hosek@msn.com.

Bill Buntain, AT 1614 (see “Alumni News” in the fall 2020 issue of *The Dragon's Tale*) has completed his return to Lincoln. Bill moved into his residence in February but continues to be a Tour Manager for both P!NK and Cher. Since much of his time is on the road, Bill will maintain other residences with his primary residence in Key West, FL. He thinks his Lincoln home will be a great place to relax and enjoy some peace and quiet when not touring. Bill can be emailed at billbuntain@mac.com.

Chris Stokes, AT 1803, has retired from the U.S. Air Force Reserve after 34 years of service. Thanks for your military service! Chris will not, however, be hanging up his pilot's license. He remains a pilot for United Airlines and flies the Boeing 787 Dreamliner to destinations all over the world. He has also flown the Boeing 777. Chris recently sold his Valvoline Oil franchises

and stated he's only flying about 14 hours a month with United—and is looking at real estate and development opportunities. Chris and his family reside in Lincoln, and when he is not in the air, he can be reached at cbstokes1@gmail.com.

Andy Ngo, AT 2398, is a customer success manager for Procore Technologies. (*Editor's note:* Procore is a construction management software company with headquarters in Carpinteria, CA. *Thanks, Google.*) Andy's team is in Austin, TX, and he moved from Lincoln in February to join them. Andy can be reached at andymngo@gmail.com.

Tyler Groth, AT 2427, was recently promoted to senior account executive on the high-velocity sales team at DroneDeploy. (*Editor's note:* DroneDeploy is a San Francisco-based software company allowing users to pre-program an automated flight path for their drone, and then turn the images captured from the flight into a high-resolution 2D map and 3D model. *Thanks again, Google.*) In this position, Tyler will consult with business owners, engineers, project managers, agronomists, etc., on launching/expanding their drone programs to save time and increase efficiencies while reducing liability. If you have questions or an interest in the rapidly growing tech sales world, Tyler can be reached at itylerg45@hotmail.com.