The Dragon's Tale

Fall 2026

Official Newsletter of the Nebraska Chapter, the Alpha Tau of Beta Theta Pi





ALPHA TAU CELEBRATES

100 YEARS AT 1515 R STREET

The Alpha Tau chapter celebrated an exciting milestone November 13-14 as generations of Nebraska Betas returned to Lincoln to commemorate 100 years at 1515 R Street. Exactly a century after the chapter house was dedicated on November 13, 1926, brothers from across the decades gathered to reconnect, hang out, and celebrate the friendships and traditions that made 1515 R Street home to generations of Alpha Tau members. The weekend included an alumni happy hour and house tours, providing plenty of opportunities for alumni and active members to spend time together.

The celebration culminated Saturday evening with casino night at the Country Club of Lincoln, featuring food, casino games, and a brief program. More than simply marking the 100th anniversary of a building, the weekend celebrated the generations of brothers whose friendships, experiences, and memories have shaped Alpha Tau over the past century. Thank you to everyone who returned to Lincoln and helped make the 100-year celebration a memorable weekend—and another special chapter in Alpha Tau's history.

(Editor's Note: With printing deadlines, it was too late to submit any pictures; look for our spring issue to include these memories.)

Yours in __kai__,
Jeff Beavers '00 and **Ted Stuckey '08**

CHAPTER PRESIDENT REPORT

This fall has been one of the busiest and most rewarding semesters of my undergraduate years. With the semester in full swing, the chapter has already had the opportunity to do some really cool things, with even more to come.

In August, **Ryan Beavers '24** and I attended the 187th General Convention at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. This was my first time in Oxford and my second General Fraternity event, and it did not disappoint. I spent the first two days exploring campus and catching up with chapter presidents from other universities. On Saturday, I voted on several pieces of General Fraternity legislation and then toured the Alpha chapter house. At the end of the night, our chapter was once again awarded some big trophies. The first was the **Francis H. Sisson Award** for chapter excellence, followed by the chapter's 20th **John Reily Knox Award**. The Knox Award is the Fraternity's highest chapter award, and the Nebraska chapter has earned more of them than any other Beta chapter in the country. (Our chapter is #2 in the number of Sisson awards.) I am so proud of my brothers' hard work and dedication, and I am glad that such a prestigious award has become an expectation for this group.

That was not the last award of the night. Our Chapter Counselor, **Mike Wortman '67**, received the **Francis W. Shepardson Award**, which recognizes brothers who embody Brother Shepardson's spirit and dedication. ***(Editor's Note: See separate story on page 3.)*** It is Beta's highest honor for service to the Fraternity. I am so proud of Mike and his commitment to our chapter, and I can say with certainty that we would not be the organization we are without him. Mike has been an incredible mentor to me, and the chapter and I appreciate everything he does.

In late September, the chapter traveled to Michigan State University for our annual chapter sneak. We were fortunate to spend the whole weekend with the Michigan State Betas and learn more about their chapter and members. Most of the men also went to the football game, where we got to witness a great Nebraska road win firsthand. Huge thanks to our vice president, **Kaden Bachman '25**, for organizing the trip. In early November, the chapter traveled to Oklahoma City and Austin for our formal weekend.

The first weekend in October was a busy one at the chapter house. For Homecoming, the chapter hosted members of Alpha Xi Delta and Alpha Omega Epsilon for the week's festivities, including the dance competition (called *Showtime at the Coliseum*), which the chapter won for the third year in a row.



With the theme of *Cosmic Cornhuskers*, the three houses also built a beautiful outer space design that won the lawn display competition among Greek organizations. This commitment to high expectations says more about our members' character than anything else, and I hope the chapter continues to take pride in representing our organization on campus.

As I wrap up my final report, I want to thank everyone who has helped keep our shared legacy alive. I cannot thank you enough for your support and dedication, which have made Alpha Tau home for my entire collegiate career. I don't even want to think about where I would be if I had not taken the leap of faith to join the house, and I hope we continue to bring in Men of Principle who will make the most of this opportunity as I did. I'll end with one lesson this role has taught me: good leaders make decisions. That may sound obvious, but in our organizations, our jobs, and our families, hard decisions come up all the time, and the easiest choice is often no choice at all. It is tempting to keep doing the same thing and hope that it will be enough or that nothing will go wrong. I have learned that it is better to commit to a decision and risk being wrong than to avoid making one. As president, our exec team and I have tried to face hard decisions head-on and choose a course so that, at the end of the day, I know we acted. It is a lesson I will carry with me long after I leave this house.



I am so proud to be a Beta, and I thank God for all the blessings I have received within this chapter. The future of Nebraska Beta is in good hands.

Yours in __kai__,
Aiden Makovicka '24
president@nebraskabeta.com

Chapter Counselor Report

When Betas and non-Betas speak about the Nebraska chapter of Beta Theta Pi, they are often referring to the approximately 120 collegiates on the chapter roll. In reality, Nebraska Beta is much more than just the men currently attending college. Our Nebraska chapter has been on the campus of the University of Nebraska since 1888, and we are nearing 3,000 members in our history. We have a mailing list of almost 1,500 members who are receiving this newsletter. We are all Nebraska Betas.

The General Fraternity has recently placed more of an emphasis on providing services for Betas who are no longer collegians. A full-time staff member has been added to help support the engagement of Beta alumni all over North America. With more than 140 chapters, there are now thousands of Betas (collegian and alumni) worldwide.

When we look at the engagement of the Nebraska Betas, it is a pretty impressive list. There are several groups that meet regularly, in person or virtually, to stay connected and to keep up to date with happenings at the chapter house. Every Tuesday morning, there is a Zoom call for a group of Betas who were in the house in the 1950s-60s. Monthly, there is another Zoom call for a group from the late 60s-early 70s, and once a month, there is a group of Omaha Betas (also from the late 60s-early 70s) who enjoy coffee together. In addition, many pledge classes have regular (or random) gatherings. The pledge class of 1975 has most of their pledge class members get together somewhere around the country (often California) every year. For many years, some pledge brothers from the 60s have lived near each other for part of the year in Arizona. Other Betas meet from time to time at organized tailgates on football Saturdays.

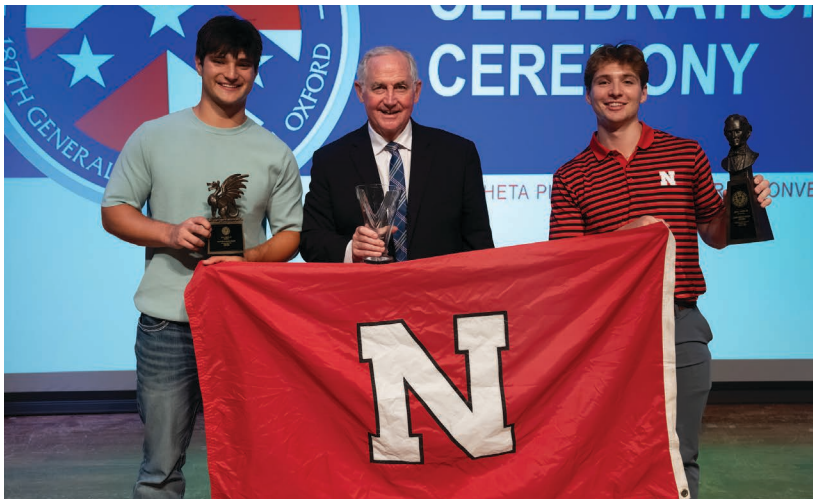
We are fortunate to have many Nebraska Beta alumni who are engaged and regularly provide support for our Alpha Tau chapter. The Alumni Advisory Board has 12 members, the Beta House Corporation has seven members, and more than 250 alumni have served as a mentor for Betas, some more than once. Each year, about 20 alumni host new members and their pledge fathers for dinner during Initiation Week. On most game days, Betas can be seen touring the Beta chapter house with their own kids and/or spouse, proudly showing where they lived as a collegian. We've had many alumni join the chapter for Monday night dinner to share their Beta and career journey. And Nebraska Betas have been generous over the years with donations to the capital campaign, to The Experience Company, and to scholarship funds.

When I am meeting someone, and we are talking about college days, sometimes I'm asked, "Were you a Beta?" My normal response is "NO, I AM a Beta." Since the time we each pledged, we still share the Beta values of Mutual Assistance, Intellectual Growth, Trust, Responsible Conduct, and Integrity.

So, you can see, there are lots of Nebraska Betas, not just those currently attending classes at UNL. I'm glad I'm a Beta … and I'm glad that you ARE a Beta too.

Yours in __kai__,
Mike Wortman '67

Ryan Beavers '24, Mike Wortman '67, and Aiden Makovicka '24



Dr. Mike Wortman '67
Earns Francis W. Shepardson Award

The Board of Trustees of Beta Theta Pi established the **Francis W. Shepardson Award** in 2001 to recognize brothers who embody Brother Shepardson's spirit and dedication to the General Fraternity. Often referred to as "Mr. Beta Theta Pi," Francis W. Shepardson, Denison 1882/Brown 1883, served as General Secretary for 10 years and then as General Fraternity President for 20 years. While president, he also edited *The Beta Theta Pi* for 13 years. Shepardson was a dominant force in the Fraternity from 1910 until he died in 1937. He is one of the two most prolific Beta writers with at least five books.

This year, at the General Fraternity Convention, two honorees were recognized: John Hillhouse from the University of Missouri, and our own **Dr. Michael J. Wortman '67**. Embodying Beta's principle of devotion to the cultivation of the intellect, Mike earned his bachelor's, master's, and doctorate from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln before spending his life as a teacher and principal. This made him a natural fit when, in 1996, his home chapter was seeking a new counselor to coach its newly reorganized chapter. Mike's calm, encouraging demeanor greatly influenced the Fraternity's decision to pilot the Men of Principle initiative at Alpha Tau in 1998, setting the stage for what has become a nearly unparalleled chapter success story over the last 30 years. He was named **Dr. Edward B. Taylor Chapter Counselor of the Year** in 2024 and serves on his chapter's House Corporation Board and as chairman of our Alumni Advisory Board. At the General Fraternity level, he has facilitated multiple sessions of the Wooden Institute, served with distinction on the Board of Trustees (2015-21), and currently serves as Beta's Scholarship Commissioner.

Under Mike's leadership, Alpha Tau has consistently been recognized for chapter excellence by winning Knox and Sisson awards (see article on page 2) as well as the **Chapter Award of Distinction** as given by the North American Interfraternity Council in both 2005 and 2017. We have also been recognized by other GF awards during his time as Chapter Counselor: nebraskabeta.com/sites/betathetapi/files/Dragon%27s%20Tale%20-%202017%20Fall.pdf

Mike is the second Alpha Tau Beta to win the Shepardson Award, following long-time General Secretary, **Burton W. Folsom '43**. Burt was honored in August 2002.



Secretary Burton W. Folsom '43

Recruitment Report

I want to thank **Tug Dahlhauser '25** and **Val Sewell '25**, both from Omaha, for their support during this past summer's recruitment efforts. We traveled thousands of miles to develop a new member class that upholds the standards of the Alpha Tau chapter of Beta Theta Pi.

The recruitment cycle started in early May, and we completed the new member class by late June. Right off the bat, we hit it hard; coupled with increased interest in recruitment, we had a very successful summer. We targeted 33-36 new members and achieved that goal, finishing with 33 new members. We filled all live-in spots, and the remaining four live on campus in university housing.

Academically, we recruited a class that reflects Alpha Tau's values, with a GPA of 3.87 and an average ACT of 25. We awarded all nine of our recruiting scholarships, which proves to be a valuable tool for us every summer. We handed these out at our annual Parents' Weekend Banquet on October 9. ***(See the separate article on page 8.)***

In recent summers, we have seen increased out-of-state interest, and this summer was no exception. We secured eight out-of-state new members from Minnesota, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Nevada. We also had six legacies in this new member class—recruits with a direct family member who is a Beta.

Overall, recruitment remains a top priority at Alpha Tau. Alumni and active members alike helped tremendously by sending recommendations and supporting chapter events. The recruitment team couldn't be happier with the class selected, and we can't wait to see the men they become as they complete the new member education process and work to uphold what it means to be a Beta.

Yours in __kai__,
Braden Leach '25
recruitment@nebraskabeta.com

New Member Education Report

The Alpha Tau chapter welcomed another outstanding class this fall. Thank you to our great recruitment team for all their hard work this summer to bring this exceptional group of men into the house. This year's class has already stood out for their commitment to scholarship, teambuilding, and personal growth. We have a wide range of young leaders who are excited to help our chapter in the years ahead.

As they transition to college, our new member class has made many adjustments and discoveries. Many of our new members are living away from home for the first time, managing a new schedule, and learning how to balance academics, involvement, and brotherhood. This class has already shown great commitment, and we look forward to what they can accomplish for the rest of the semester. I'd also like to thank the Assistant New Member Educators, **Cael Verzani '26** and **Joe Simon '26**. These two sophomores have shown great interest in helping our new member class grow this semester. They have worked diligently to strengthen the bonds between the new members and actives. Our team has worked with the scholarship team to create a structured program for the new members. This includes academic support, weekly grade checks, study hours, and pairing each new member with a sophomore pledge father. This class is off to a strong academic start, earning strong grades and showing great commitment to Beta's values.

The Alpha Tau chapter is grateful to have our new members take ALEC 102 for the fourth fall in a row. (See previous issues of *The Dragon's Tale*.) We are lucky to have **Pete Allman '76** back to teach this semester. Each week, Pete keeps the new members engaged in discussions on identity, communication, goal setting, conflict resolution, and other leadership skills that align with Beta's principles. This program lets new members earn college credit while learning leadership skills they can apply in their future Beta careers.

Beyond the classroom, our new members have already been immersed in some of our strong Beta traditions. They have taken part in the new member campout and the chapter sneak to Michigan State. We enjoyed the Dynamo campout in October and our out-of-state formals to Oklahoma City and Austin in early November. Their enthusiasm has set a positive tone for the semester, and we look forward to seeing them grow closer as a class. The chapter is grateful to everyone who contributes to the success of the new member education process. This group has shown strong commitment to Beta's principles, and we are excited to help guide our new members through their transition to college.

Yours in __kai__,
Luke Hamilton '25

Social Report

I am currently a senior in the chapter and am serving my second term as Social Chairman. This past semester has been a great experience serving our chapter, and the fall semester has already started strong. We kicked off the semester with a brand-new Whiskey Formal featuring just Beta. We held it at Sideshow Spirits in Lincoln, and it was a great opportunity to try something new. We also have several other formals and events coming up before we wrap up the fall semester. In late October, we continued our longstanding Dynamo tradition, featuring the active Beta band. It is always one of the most anticipated events of the semester, and everyone is looking forward to another great night. For the first time ever, November 5-8, the chapter headed to Oklahoma City for a Thursday night before traveling farther south to Austin for the weekend. We are excited to experience new out-of-town destinations. Finally, we will finish out the semester with our annual Rock N Roll Formal and Winter Formal. We cannot thank our Parents Alliance enough for providing such a great dinner and hospitality for Winter Formal each year. We truly appreciate everything they do for the chapter and the continued support they provide. Alpha Tau is looking forward to another great semester, both in the classroom and socially!

Yours in __kai__,
Oscar Parizek '24

WOODEN INSTITUTE REPORT

This past summer, **Joe Simon '26**, **Tomas Thielen '26**, and I attended the John and Nellie Wooden Institute for Men of Principle in Oxford, Ohio. It was an incredible opportunity for initiated members, focusing on Beta Theta Pi's rituals and becoming a better leader. The Wooden Institute allows Betas to interact with brothers and friends of Beta from across North America. Participants share ideas, dissect the Fraternity ritual, take part in challenging activities focused on leadership skills, learn more about the history of Beta Theta Pi, and reflect on the Fraternity's heritage.

Our time at the Wooden Institute will always stand out as a pivotal experience for us as Betas. As new members, we spent so much time learning Beta's history, lore, songs, and traditions, but Wooden let us see what we learned back home come to life. It made us realize that we are responsible for continuing Beta's history and legacy.

We were incredibly proud throughout Wooden to see how well Alpha Tau had prepared us to represent our chapter. The strength of our new member education became clear through our knowledge of Beta's songs, lore, history, and traditions. Carrying that knowledge and sharing it with Betas from across the country gave us an even deeper appreciation for our chapter and all the men who came before us, whose example taught us what it truly means to be a Beta.

One moment that stuck with all of us was walking along the brick pathway outside Beta's Administrative Office. The bricks contain the names of alumni who helped make its construction possible, and Alpha Tau had more bricks than almost any other chapter. What meant even more was how many of those names we actually knew. In our short time as Betas, we had already built relationships with many of the alumni whose names are permanently placed there.

The most meaningful moment came at the end of Wooden. Our final instruction was to call an alumnus who helped fund our trip and thank him. We were each given an alumnus we knew personally, which set us apart from the other chapters. I was given the name of **Bruce McKeag '65**. I did not even need the phone number they provided because Bruce was already in my contacts from my time in Beta. The call was supposed to be a quick thank-you, but it took nearly seven minutes before I even got to the point, because we were simply catching up and talking like brothers. During that call, I was looking at the Alpha chapter house, a symbol of where Beta began. It captured what the entire experience had taught us. Generations may separate us from our alumni, and nearly two centuries may separate us from our founders, but the brotherhood they created still connects us today. We believe this is exactly what our founders hoped to create: a brotherhood built on principle that would connect generations of men. After our experience at Wooden, we feel strongly that Alpha Tau is the blueprint for the brotherhood our founders dreamed of building in Oxford nearly 200 years ago.

At the end of the week, we all agreed that we had never been so proud to let everyone know that we were Betas from Nebraska.

Yours in __kai__,
Nick Phelan '26

Philanthropy Report

It's great to be back at 1515 R Street, and the men of Beta Theta Pi are getting straight to work. Our 2026 new member class has already taken the initiative to begin fulfilling their 20 required community service hours with our longstanding philanthropic partner, the Lighthouse of Lincoln.

We kicked off our fall events with the annual Beta Burger Bash at the chapter house on October 30. Although the rainy weather required us to move the usual yard games indoors, it fostered a fantastic opportunity for the chapter to spend quality time playing games and interacting with the kids from Lighthouse. Thanks to the dedication of our active members, Greek House Chefs, and continued support of our alumni, we successfully raised close to $2,000 for Lighthouse. We have plenty more in store for the rest of the semester. We are proud to support Muster Point, an organization on campus that bridges the gap between military and civilian life through fitness programs, social events, and career development opportunities. To support their mission, Beta headed to the Student Union on October 21 for the Fallen Hero's Run to raise awareness and honor our fallen heroes. Additionally, this December, we will be hosting a gingerbread house-building philanthropy event to finish off the semester before winter break!

The goal right now is to keep the momentum we built last spring with Backpack in Black. Seeing the chapter successfully execute a massive event like that shows what we can do, and we want to carry that energy into the remaining philanthropy events this year.

Yours in __kai__,
Jack Hessel '25

Intramural Report

Year after year, intramurals are a great way for brothers to bond and represent the house beyond academics and philanthropy. Beta brothers are having a busy fall semester, with teams registered in volleyball, softball, soccer, flag football, and basketball.

Involvement from freshmen to seniors continues to build camaraderie and strengthen Beta's dominant athletic reputation on campus. A new basketball league, the Greek Basketball Association, has arrived on campus, and eight fraternities are competing for the campus championship, which can then qualify for the national tournament. The national tournament will be in Las Vegas this year and will host 192 fraternities from schools across the nation. The Beta brothers are 2-2 in the GBA and continue to play weekly. Looking ahead, the brothers are excited for the all-house indoor soccer season that started on October 21. With strong engagement across all sports, Beta's intramural program is off to a promising start this fall and looks to continue its dominance on the court, pitch, and field!

Yours in __kai__,
Tug Dahlhauser '25

SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

Academic excellence remains a cornerstone of Beta Theta Pi, and spring 2026 was no exception. The chapter posted a strong all-house GPA of 3.61, ranking third among all IFC fraternities and fifth across campus. (FarmHouse's GPA was 3.68, and the SigEps had a 3.66.) Putting this accomplishment into perspective, our house average outpaced both the All-Fraternity and Sorority Life male average of 3.38 and the All-UNL male average of 3.23. We achieved this through a strong house mindset focused on academics and future professional success. These grades are not only a beacon of academic success, but also a preview of the impact Beta Theta Pi men will have on the world after graduation. Many brothers focus not only on academics, but also on immersive student involvement through organizations such as NHRI, Mortar Board, Wall Street Scholars, Husker Venture Fund, Associated General Contractors, and many others. Individual academic performance really helped the Beta chapter, with 33 brothers earning 4.0s. As we entered the fall 2026 semester, we remained strongly committed to academic support. The scholarship team, including Assistant Scholarship Chairmen **Tomas Thielen '26** and **Colin McCammon '26**, holds weekly study hours for the chapter. This offers a great environment for our new freshmen to understand the importance of time management, especially as they adjust to college life.

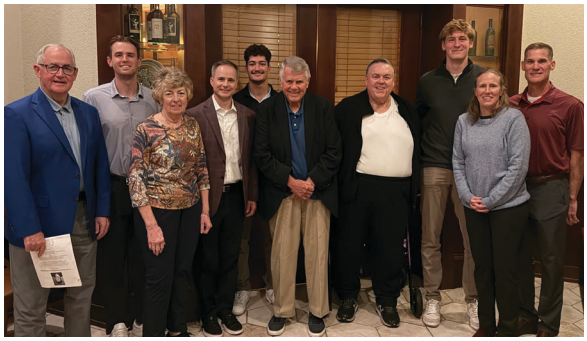
Thanks to the House Corporation and Beta Parent Alliance, our brand-new paint job in the basement study area gives us a great place to work. The computers provided last semester have also been used frequently and are a great addition to the house. Going forward, we hope to keep increasing our house GPA by focusing on giving new members a strong start to their undergraduate careers. With various speakers coming to study hours to discuss professional development or campus involvement, we feel confident the house is moving in the right direction.

Yours in ___kai___,
Theo Schmidt '25

DAVE KARNES LEADERSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

The **David K. Karnes Leadership and Scholarship Award** was created following the death of **Dave Karnes '68** in 2020. It is presented annually to an undergraduate member of the Alpha Tau chapter who, like Dave, has demonstrated high character and strong leadership qualities, including:

- The ability to influence, motivate, and lead people to achieve goals.
- The ability to assemble an accountable and high-performing team.
- The ability to collaborate with others, including those with diverse thinking and backgrounds.
- Integrity.
- Vision.
- Being known by peers, family, and friends for strength of purpose, strong work ethic, and selfless commitment to others.



From left: Mike Wortman '67, Kyle Auman '21, Lynn McKeag, Todd Mattox '99, Nolan Connor '22, Bruce McKeag '65, Bill Dana '76, Jack Healey '24, Erin Healey, and Andrew (Skip) Healey.

Jack Healey '24, the most recent recipient of the Karnes Award, is the son of Andrew and Erin Healey of Omaha. He is studying biochemistry and is the former Scholarship Chairman of our chapter, as well as a mentor and former co-chair for NHRI leadership mentoring. Jack is also a former teaching assistant in biochemistry and physiology labs, a Regents Scholar, and a member of the UNL Honors Program.

Jack said, "I am honored to be named the fifth Karnes scholar. The example set by the recipients who have come before me has been an amazing guide and motivator for my time in Beta, and I am looking forward to a strong finish of my time as an undergraduate Beta."

Dave served as a White House Fellow, and this scholarship award draws inspiration from the White House Fellows model, centering on a selection process that identifies individuals of exceptional character, leadership potential, and a deep commitment to service. Candidates are evaluated not just for what they've achieved, but for how they lead—and their ability to bring people together to accomplish meaningful goals. We seek those who have demonstrated the capacity to inspire, the resilience to lead through challenge, and the drive to serve something greater than themselves.

Charlie Packard '68, one of Dave's closest friends throughout their time in the Beta house, provided his perspective on the award: "Dave and I were best friends throughout high school and as Betas. I remember him as a person with incredible leadership, as demonstrated when he served as our Chapter President. The scholarship focuses on leadership, which I know Dave would have enthusiastically endorsed."

As the number of recipients continues to grow, the selection board is transitioning to being composed almost entirely of past honorees—leaders who understand firsthand the values and impact this award represents. This model ensures continuity of standards while fostering a powerful network of alumni who are actively shaping their communities and industries. Our vision is to build more than a scholarship; we aim to cultivate a lifelong fellowship of service-minded leaders who challenge and support one another to do good, do well, and do it together.

One of the group's favorite traditions is gathering for a special dinner celebration. On September 24, we gathered at an Omaha restaurant to honor Dave's legacy and Jack's accomplishments. Surrounded by past recipients, close friends, and Jack's parents, the evening was a heartfelt reflection on the values that define this scholarship. It was a moving tribute to Dave's enduring impact and a celebration of the future leaders who carry his spirit forward.

For the group of past award winners, and in __kai__,
Jarod Fox '20

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

We make a sincere effort to keep you informed with chapter and alumni news. *The Dragon's Tale (TDT)* is just part of our communications effort, and we mail it twice a year (spring and fall). Every month, **if we have a valid email address**, we also send the *Alpha Tau Update*. Some of their news will be repeated in *TDT*, but we want to have news in your hands when it is still "fresh." If you receive *TDT* but are ***not*** receiving the *AT Update*, please send your email address to updates@nebraskabeta.com. (Your contact information is not sold.) We also send periodic mailings to alumni two or three times a year.

During my time as Communications Chairman, I have loved getting the opportunity to bring our members' families into the chapter and give them a better look at the friendships and brotherhood their sons experience every day. This fall, Dads' Day and Parents' Weekend gave us two great opportunities to do that. We held Dads' Day on September 19, before Nebraska's game against North Dakota. Members and their dads spent the afternoon together at a tailgate before heading to Memorial Stadium, where Nebraska won 34-7. Dads' Day has always been a favorite event because it is simple, but it means a lot. It gives everyone a chance to meet each other's dads, put faces to the stories we hear throughout the year, and spend a day together outside the normal chapter routine.

We changed things up a little for Parents' Weekend this year by spreading the celebration across two days. On Friday, October 9, we hosted our Parents' Weekend Banquet at the Courtyard by Marriott Lincoln Downtown. The banquet gave members and their families a chance to spend time together, meet other Beta families, and enjoy the Parent Alliance-organized silent auction. The weekend continued Saturday, October 10, with a tailgate before Nebraska hosted Indiana at Memorial Stadium. (A tough loss for the Husker football team.) Spreading Parents' Weekend across two days allowed families to fully enjoy both events without trying to fit everything into one packed day. It also gave members and their families more time to spend together and connect with others throughout the chapter.

Events like these remind us that Beta extends beyond the men living at 1515 R Street. Our parents and families provide incredible support throughout our college experience, and I am glad we could give them a couple weekends to be a bigger part of the chapter. Thank you to everyone who helped make both events possible and to all the families who made the trip to Lincoln.

Yours in __kai__,
Charlie Deats '25
alumni@nebraskabeta.com

TWO ALPHA TAU BROTHERS JOIN THE MORTAR BOARD

Mortar Board is a national honor society that recognizes college seniors for exemplary scholarship, leadership, and service. Mortar Board is represented on 236 college campuses and has existed for more than 100 years. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, another senior honor society is the Innocents Society. Alpha Tau has had representatives in both societies in the past. In April, it was announced that two rising junior Betas (and seniors-to-be) would continue that tradition through the Black Masque chapter of the Mortar Board. Congratulations to **Tyler Castle '24** and **Ryan Beavers '24**. Both men have served our chapter. The article about the Jack Craft Award on page 16 contains information about Ryan; Tyler is an economics and finance double major and is the initiation chair for Mortar Board. He previously served as our Chapter Secretary and is a former Project Co-chair and current Mentor, Staff Advisor, and Recruiter/Interviewer for NHRI Leadership Mentoring. Tyler is also an Associate for the Husker Venture Fund and was involved in the Investors with Purpose Program through the College of Business. In the picture, Ryan is on the left side, and Tyler is on the right. In the middle is Mortar Board **Owen Crone '24**. Owen was selected last year and is currently in law school at the University of Virginia. Owen's selection as a Mortar Board member in 2025 was noted in the spring issue of last year.

nebraskabeta.com/sites/betathetapi/files/Dragon%27s%20Tale%20-%202025%20Spring.pdf



Ryan Beavers '24, Owen Crone '24, and Tyler Castle '24

The Experience Company Report

Scholarship Program

Three years ago, The Experience Company (TEC) created recruiting scholarships as a resource for the recruitment team to attract high-performing new members. These scholarships also act to honor or memorialize Alpha Tau alumni. This program has been a tremendous success because of generous contributions and support of both alumni and parents.

The Alpha Tau chapter has achieved academic excellence among our new member classes over the last two years, largely due to its ability to attract the highest quality talent. We believe that these recruiting scholarships will continue to position Alpha Tau to lead the campus in talent.

Below are the names of 2026 recipients of recruiting scholarships, announced at the fall Parents' Weekend event:

- Grant Gregory Honorary Recruiting Scholarship – **Carter Strnad**
- Bruce McKeag Honorary Recruiting Scholarship – **Will Naujokaitis**
- Mike Wortman Honorary Recruiting Scholarship – **Cooper Wills**
- John Dean Memorial Recruiting Scholarship – **Cade Wills**
- Tom Beyer Memorial Recruiting Scholarship – **Patrick Demman**
- Bill Duven Memorial Recruiting Scholarship – **Grayson Cline**
- Jim Farhart Memorial Recruiting Scholarship – **Kaden Perry**
- TJ Kinnick Memorial Recruiting Scholarship – **A.J. Hoyle**
- Tom Jacob Pre-law Scholarship – **Theo Schmidt**

Organizational Update

As an organization that is run by the undergraduates within the Alpha Tau chapter as well as alumni as active volunteers, TEC would significantly benefit from the stability and oversight of a formal Executive Director position. The individual will focus in large part on adding infrastructure and reporting around key TEC programs, including mentorship and employment. Adding and professionalizing processes, project management, Key Performance Indicators, and reporting will enable TEC to take each of these programs to the next level.

The leadership team is currently in the process of organizing a search for candidates for this position, and input is welcome and appreciated. We will continue to provide updates to stakeholders as this process moves forward. As always, we greatly appreciate your consideration and support.

How to Support TEC

Contributions to The Experience Company can be made online at nebraskabeta.com/support-tec, or mail a check payable to The Experience Company:

The Experience Company
P.O. Box 22251
Lincoln, NE 68542

Scan me to give!

Yours in __kai__,
The Experience Company Executive Team

Parent Alliance Report

The Beta Theta Pi Parent Alliance is a volunteer group that supports Beta Theta Pi's young men. We work closely with the alumni members, the House Corporation, and chapter officers. We strive to provide members with a "home away from home" while helping parents stay connected and involved in Beta events.

We have had another great start to the 2026-27 school year. We started the year by meeting the first-year students and their parents during orientation weekend. It was wonderful to welcome them and meet so many parents.

During Parents' Weekend, we held our annual silent auction on Friday, October 9. The money raised through this auction goes directly toward supporting the men of the Beta house. Generous contributions from last year's silent auction allowed the Parent Alliance to purchase much-needed items for the study room, including a whiteboard, three docking stations, one Apple computer, and two Dell computers, along with the appropriate hardware and software.

Another benefit of the silent auction is the opportunity to spend time with the Beta chapter and their families. It is a great time to socialize and network, which can potentially open doors for these young men and their futures through internships, shadowing opportunities, and jobs.
In addition to purchasing items for the Beta house, funds raised through the silent auction, along with first-year student dues, allow us to provide the gentlemen and their dates with a Winter Formal. This year's formal is scheduled for Friday, November 20. It is an opportunity for the men to enjoy fellowship, a wonderful meal, and an evening in a formal setting. Parent volunteers play an important role in helping create a great atmosphere for this special event.

The remaining Parent Alliance events for this semester are (were) as follows:



- Christmas Decorating – Sunday, November 15
- Winter Formal – Friday, November 20
- Dead Week Snacks – Sunday, December 6

Lastly, it is time to transition to new leadership. This will be the final year for Julie Feist and Lisa Thompson, as their sons graduate. We are incredibly grateful for the time, energy, and dedication. Please join us in welcoming Erin Hamilton and Holly Leach, who will step into leadership roles and carry the torch forward. I will also remain involved, as I have both a senior and a first-year student at Beta. Together, we look forward to continuing to support the Parent Alliance and helping make this transition smooth. Our contact information is parent.alliance@nebraskabeta.com.

Respectfully,
Holly Beavers

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Charlie Addy
Omaha, NE
Creighton Prep

Peter Amys (L)
Des Moines, IA
Des Moines Christian

Carson Beavers (L)
Belleville, KS
Republic County

Eli Buso (L)
Omaha, NE
Creighton Prep

Briar Cerny
North Bend, NE
North Bend Central

Leim Cerny
North Bend, NE
North Bend Central

Grayson Cline
Beatrice, NE
Beatrice

Patrick Demman
Omaha, NE
Gross Catholic

George Fong
Las Vegas, NV
Faith Lutheran

Miles Godwin
Kearney, NE
Kearney

AJ Hoyle
Lincoln, NE
Lincoln East

Creighton Keeling
Auburn, NE
Auburn

Rocky Kersey
Omaha, NE
Gross Catholic

Brody Lee
Overland Park, KS
Blue Valley SW

Henry Ligon
Omaha, NE
Papio South

Cian Lynch
Omaha, NE
Creighton Prep

Callen Marshall
Norfolk, NE
Norfolk Catholic

Ryder Mausbach
Omaha, NE
Creighton Prep

Cameron Meyer
Omaha, NE
Papillion

Charlie Morrow
Lincoln, NE
Pius X

Will Naujokaitis (L)
Overland Park, KS
Olathe East

Nolan O'Neill
Lincoln, NE
Lincoln East

Griff Pechar (L)
Omaha, NE
Gross Catholic

Kaden Perry
Oconomowoc, WI
Oconomowoc

Cole Redding
Hastings, NE
Adams Central

Louie Schmidt (L)
Omaha, NE
Creighton Prep

Easton Scott
Lincoln, NE
Lincoln Southeast

Carter Strnad
Overland Park, KS
Blue Valley

Drew Streich
Norfolk, NE
Norfolk

Ian Van Dyke
Lakeville, MN
Rosemount

Cade Wills
Papillion, NE
Papillion

Cooper Wills
Papillion, NE
Papillion

Zander Zuniga
Lincoln, NE
Lincoln East

NOTE: (L) is a Beta legacy.

NEW MEMBER FAST FACTS

33 MEMBERS

6 LEGACIES

WHERE NEW MEMBERS COME FROM

LINCOLN AREA:	5
OUT OF STATE:	8
OUT-STATE NEBRASKA:	8
OMAHA AREA:	12

ALUMNI PHOTOGRAPHY

Bill Origer '66 and **Bill Wiley '68** were two years apart in the chapter, but both share an intense interest in photography—and both are darn good at it.

Bill O. became interested in photography as an undergraduate and had a freelance photo business at UNL. He completed medical school in Omaha and his residency at the University of Utah. His career in family medicine in Albany, Oregon, spanned 48 years. Bill has traveled to 37 countries in his pursuit of photography and stated that, "I can see the beauty in the world and share it with my images. I have been blessed with opportunities to travel to unusual places and capture the infinite magic of nature and human cultures." He exhibits his work at Gallery Calapooia in Albany, Oregon. Bill O. does not have a website.

Bill W. had an extensive career as a marketing communications/planning director for several large hospital chains in Nebraska, Alaska, and Oregon. His pictures have been published in magazines such as *National Wildlife Federation*, *Alaska Magazine*, *Wildlife Art*, *Alaska Medicine*, and others. In addition to his passion for nature and wildlife photography, Bill is an active conservationist who advocates for the wildlife welfare and the preservation of America's national parks and resources. Bill is active in our mentor program. His website is www.wmwiley.com.

Samples of their work are on the next two pages. Bill O's contact information is boriger47@comcast.net, and Bill W's contact information is bill@wmwiley.com.

FLIP OVER TO SEE THEIR AMAZING PHOTOS!

Bill Origer '66



Moonset, Belknap Crater. There is no Photoshop manipulation of this image. It really did look like this. The magical lighting occurs briefly when the full moon sets within five to 10 minutes after sunrise in a perfectly clear sky. This happens once or twice a year. It took me a decade to get this photo. Oregon Cascades. 5:35 a.m., May 25, 2013.



Silah, eagle hunter. Nomadic herders in the Altai Mountains of western Mongolia capture immature golden eagles and hand raise them. In winter, they hunt wolves and foxes (both are abundant) for meat and fur. When the eagle reaches maturity at age 8-10, it is released. Silah has raised eagles for 50 years. We spent a week in a gir (yurt) on the high steppe where his family raise cattle, sheep, and horses. Bayan-Ölgii Province, Mongolia. July 2022.



Calf roping. It's a simple task—lasso a running 300-pound calf from horseback, dismount, grab the calf, lay him on his side and tie three legs together, and do it in less than nine seconds. Tricounty Fair, Winnemucca, Nevada, August 2013.



Grizzly mom and cub fishing. Alaskan brown bears (aka grizzlies) congregate along the lowland coastal rivers of the Alaska Peninsula during the summer salmon runs. Moms and cubs feast and fatten for the winter. We were flown in bush planes to remote lakes and spent the day in hip waders hiking the rivers with the bears. During this brief period, they are so concentrated on fishing that they seem to ignore humans. July 2017.



Leopard in the brush. This is a young adult female leopard who had killed an impala the night before and placed it in a tree to keep it away from hyenas. We were waiting for her to reclaim her meal. These animals are accustomed to humans in jeeps. We were about 20 feet away. She peered out, concluded that we were harmless, and curled up for a nap. Mara North Preserve, Kenya, January 2024.

Bill Wiley '68



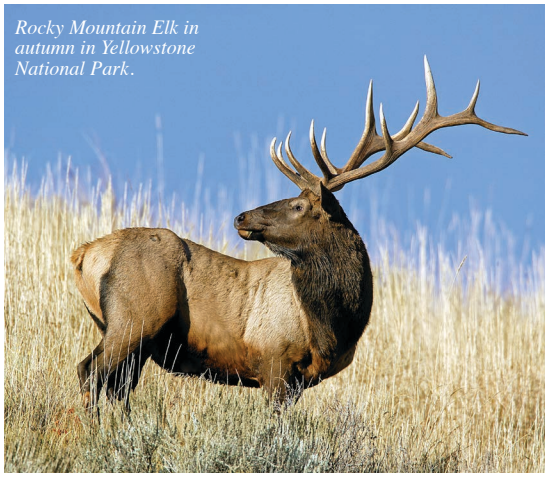
Tricolored Heron in the Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge in South Carolina.



The Panther Lacewing Butterfly, considered to be one of the most beautiful butterflies in the world.



Bighorn Sheep ram in fall foliage in Yellowstone National Park.



Rocky Mountain Elk in autumn in Yellowstone National Park.



Brown bears fight for salmon at McNeil River on the Alaska Peninsula.



Red Fox kits pose cautiously on a wood pile in southeast Nebraska.

Alumni News

Clark Smaha '51 is AT 852.

(Editor's Note: Laura Lednik, who has worked for Beta Theta Pi for 33 years and oversees the Fraternal 25, 50, and 75 milestone recognition programs, contacted Mike Wortman about Alpha Tau alumnus Clark Smaha '51. Laura said Clark wanted to thank her for his Fraternal 75 pin, but also said, "He wanted to talk to someone about the newsletter." Laura correctly "figured you (Mike) might also enjoy talking to him, so I gave him your contact information."

Fraternal pins are only given to an alumnus who has been a Beta for 75 years. The General Fraternity recognizes Betas initiated 25 and 50 years ago with a certificate and silver or gold seal.

Mike told me he had a great conversation with Clark. Since Clark had questions about our newsletter, I also talked to him. He lives in Glenview, IL. We discussed our chapter in a 30-minute phone call—and many other things about his time in school, his professional career, and his desire not to have a computer. From my notes:)

"Clark is a native of Illinois, and his mother and father were both students at UNL. His father played basketball at UNL, and that was Clark's initial tie to the University."

"Clark also played basketball for UNL his freshman and sophomore years. He joined Beta even though three of his high school friends attending UNL joined Alpha Tau Omega. While living in the chapter house, Clark said he was a hasher. After his graduation, Clark worked in the insurance industry for many years. He remains married and was proud of his recognition for his years as a Beta. At age 94, he does not have a computer and has no desire to learn how to use one. **His mailing address is 1811 Camden Drive, Glenview, IL 60025-7617. If anyone wishes to send snail mail to Clark, I'm certain he would appreciate hearing from you.**"

This year, about 300 Betas received their Fraternal 75 pins; Clark was the only Alpha Tau Beta on the list. Congratulations to Brother Smaha for his years of membership in Beta Theta Pi."



The Beta Theta Pi Fraternal 75 pin.

(Editor's note: On page 15 is the Our Mystic Shrine entry for Larry Dlugosh. Part of his funeral worship folder contained comments about Larry's philosophy on life. These are shared with the permission of Janee Dlugosh.)

Lessons Learned – *by Larry Dlugosh*

Many lessons are learned throughout a person's lifespan—there seems to be an unlimited supply of lessons waiting to be learned!

First, never underestimate the power of a smile and a kind word. In some cases, the one who speaks the kind word or sends a smile may never have knowledge of the benefits to the recipient—but send them anyway!

Next, build your reputation on trust and honesty. What you say may be important, but what you do tells the real story. One of my favorite books is *Fierce Conversations* by Susan Scott. It is about the notion that our lives succeed or fail one conversation at a time. Be intentional about the words you use in every conversation because the life of the receiver may be changed positively or negatively because of what you say and how you say it. The 'doing' part of reputation building is the canvas upon which your life story is painted, one good deed or bad deed at a time. Be certain your good deeds are far more numerous than your bad deeds.

Read. Read all you can to satisfy your curiosity.

Travel. The world is not all that big and it is important to leave the comfort of your surroundings and experience other cultures. People are pretty much the same all over the world. They want to be safe and have an adequate source of food, to take care of their families, and to experience joy. Janee and I started traveling abroad in 1990. That trip helped us understand that the United States is young; the rest of the world has history and traditions of which we were unaware. Now, 35 years later, we have been on all seven continents and more than 40 countries. We have loved every minute of the mind-broadening experiences of travel!

Be generous. There are students who need scholarships, people who need food, areas that need to recover from disaster, and charities that provide hope to people. Give a little or a lot when you can. I think the people of America are among the most generous people in the world.

Ask more questions. When I was a young student, I was afraid to ask questions because I did not want to reveal my lack of understanding. Big mistake! Ask as many questions as it takes to gain clarity.



Chris and his Cessna A-37 Dragonfly.

Chris Stokes '89 has been featured in several stories in *The Dragon's Tale*. Chris and his family live in Lincoln, and he is a current member of the Lincoln Airport Authority. He supplies us with updates: "In 2022, after retiring from 34 years in the Air Force Reserve, I purchased a derelict (but complete) historic Vietnam-era fighter jet (a Cessna A-37 Dragonfly) to restore as a project. The Air Force wouldn't let me fly their fighters anymore, and I looked at this as quite a journey of time and dollars. It was well worth it after the first time I took off from Lincoln Airport and flew it upside-down (like I used to be paid to do during my career). With the help of volunteers, both local and retired Colombian Air Force mechanics, we did a 'frame-up' aircraft restoration on the jet, which spanned three years. It culminated in September with its first flight in over 50 years. The Dragonfly was a close air support and counter-insurgency workhorse for both the USAF and the Vietnamese Air Force during the conflict. The Dragonfly is an advanced version of the famous Air Force trainer, the T-37, which many Betas flew in basic pilot training, including my father, **Don Stokes '59**, **Jim Rembolt '62**, and **me**). The A-37 was upgraded with bigger engines, wings, landing gear, and a mini-gun (the same one Arnold Schwarzenegger used in the famous *Predator* movies). My plan is to fly it as a personal 'sports car' (I only have cheap cars so I can support my flying habits) and use it to go to airshows in the summer. I love taking friends and veterans on rides, so please reach out if you are interested! I also have a WWII Boeing Stearman biplane, which is a blast to fly with an open cockpit. For work, I fly the Boeing 787 Dreamliner for United Airlines out of Chicago, mostly to Europe, Asia, and South America, which, for me, is the best job in the world, as United Airlines pays me to do what I love."

Chris is involved in our mentor program and can be reached (when he's not flying) at cbstokes1@gmail.com.

If you have alumni news or information of an Alpha Tau Beta for a future edition of **The Dragon's Tale**, *email updates@nebraskabeta.com.*

Grant Fehr '11 has provided an update on his personal and professional life. He now works for the Greater Omaha Fellowship of Christian Athletes as a Development Ambassador. "I am excited to be working in a challenging role and contributing to a cause I am very passionate about. After surviving a horrible struggle with the Epstein-Barr virus that nearly took my life, I am so grateful God gave me a second chance at life. These opportunities wouldn't have been possible without my time in the Beta house and the brothers who have supported me throughout my life. I even got to golf in an FCA golf event this summer with brother **Patrick Lusk '11**. I am so grateful God placed me on the doorsteps of 1515 R Street." Grant can be reached at grantfehr@hotmail.com.

JR Bloom '11 graduated from UNL in 2014 with a degree in economics and minors in political science and history. He worked for local, state, and federal election campaigns throughout college. He stayed in Lincoln for law school and clerked for the Bruning Law Group under former Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning. JR earned his Juris Doctor in 2017.

He joined Las Vegas Sands Corporation's government relations department, helping manage federal, state, and local government affairs, community development, and expansion projects. In mid-2022, he moved to Austin to lead the company's Texas expansion. In late 2025, JR founded Stenger Strategies LLC, an Austin-based government affairs firm focused on lobbying and legislative advocacy, political strategy and campaign consulting, and strategic communications. He represents clients in gaming, healthcare, rural health access, economic development, and other diverse issues. His strategic development work reaches beyond Texas, focusing on rural economic development through federal stimulus and development programs.

JR added, "The lessons, values, and friendships made in our house mean everything to me, and I owe much to our brotherhood. After reconnecting with fellow alumni and reading about the chapter's recent successes in *The Dragon's Tale*, I am surer than ever that our fraternity is a force for good, refining brothers into Men of Principle and character who lead and better their communities." JR is active in Alpha Tau's mentor program and can be reached at jr@stengerstrategies.com.

Matt Moore '11 is a social studies teacher at Westview High School in Bennington, NE. The University of Nebraska-Omaha recently recognized Matt as "Student Choice Outstanding Dual Enrollment Instructor of the Year." Students nominated him for "his ability to bring world history alive and create genuine connections with his students." Matt has been a teacher for 12 years and can be reached at moorematthew@icloud.com.

Shaun Edgecombe '19 built a strong foundation in corporate strategy and has now transitioned into corporate development for Charles Schwab. He stated he now has greater exposure to the decisions and transactions that shape long-term growth. In his new role, he is applying skills more directly across mergers and acquisition and strategic investments, and supporting every aspect of executing transactions. Shaun's new duties also broadened his perspective on how strategic opportunities are evaluated and executed. He has gained exposure to the full lifecycle of growth, from identifying and assessing opportunities to value creation. Shaun is active in our mentor program and can be reached at sedgecombe25@gmail.com.

Sam Rice '20 has taken the next step in his career with Nebraska Athletics, recently being named Assistant Athletic Director of Social Strategy and Creative Media at UNL. Sam previously served as an Associate Director within Nebraska Athletics' creative media department. In his new role, he will oversee UNL's social media and digital creative strategy across all 25 Nebraska varsity sports, helping lead the department's efforts to tell the stories of Husker student-athletes, coaches, and programs across digital platforms.

Since joining Nebraska Athletics, Sam has played a key role in growing and leading the department's creative and social efforts, working across a wide range of sports and major athletic moments. His work combines social strategy, video production, creative storytelling, and digital content to connect Nebraska Athletics with fans nationwide.

Before beginning his professional career in athletics, Sam was an active member of the Alpha Tau chapter and served as the chapter's Communications and Recruitment Chairmen. Sam is active in Alpha Tau's mentoring program and can be reached at samwrice22@gmail.com.

Tate Kiehn '21 recently moved from Phoenix to Washington, DC. He now works as an Investment Banking Analyst at Blitzer, Clancy & Company. After graduating from UNL (where he was the Technology Chairman and Vice President of the chapter), he graduated from the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame. Now that he has moved to DC, he has been able to spend time with his pledge brother, **Grant Auman**. (See the next story about Grant.) Tate can be reached at tate@kiehn.net.

Grant Auman '21 is a former Chapter President and has been featured in past issues of *The Dragon's Tale*. Grant wears two hats: he works for the U.S. Congress as a Legislative Assistant on the House Ways and Means Committee during the day and attends Georgetown Law at night. Many assistants work in Congress during the day and attend law school in the evening. The Committee on Ways and Means is the oldest committee in Congress (since 1789) and is the chief tax-writing committee in the House of Representatives. The U.S. Constitution declares that all Bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives.

Grant describes his days: "The first thing after arriving at the Longworth House Office Building adjacent to the Capitol is to prepare a report of the latest federal tax policy news, distributed to the chairman of the committee as well as other staff and colleagues. Each day looks different: some are filled with meetings to discuss policy priorities with other members of Congress or their staff; I may also meet with companies, industry groups, and lobbyists. Other days involve planning and executing committee hearings and legislative markups. My role also includes aiding in technical drafting, preparing topics and speaking remarks for committee members, and vetting witnesses set to testify before the committee. In the late afternoon, I leave the office and drive to Georgetown University Law Center to attend class, which may end as late as 10 p.m. depending on the day. I squeeze in reading, running, and meal prepping where I can (usually on the weekends), while still making time to watch the Huskers and the Kansas City Chiefs (I'm a native of Overland Park, KS), and spend time with friends, including pledge brother **Tate Kiehn** and a few other Nebraska graduates. Even with a busy schedule, my time in the Beta house prepared me for it.

(Continued on page 14)

Alumni News

(Continued from page 13)

Whether I was at executive meetings, new member meetings, chapter meetings, doing homework, or stealing some break time with my brothers, the Beta house taught me to juggle many priorities while still making time for leisure. I credit my early post-graduate life to the strong habits and lasting connections it instilled in me."

Grant's law school academic interests are in international law, regulatory frameworks, and public governance, and he can be reached at grantauman@gmail.com.

Sam Thomas '21 graduated in 2024. A rotational program moved him to the Atlanta metro area, where he worked on the quality assurance team for a supply chain program at both manufacturing and warehouse facilities. After nearly a year and a half in the role, a major restructuring of the rotational program left him wondering if this was the right career. He leaned on pledge brothers for their support and made a major change, moving into a new role with Insight Global Consulting in Atlanta. Sam now works in tech, helping build a new team focused on transforming existing service contracts by incorporating artificial intelligence. Sam is active in Alpha Tau's mentor program and can be reached at same30thomas@gmail.com.

Tyler Schur '23 graduated from UNL in May with his degree in psychological sciences and a minor in Business. Tyler has spent the past five years working for the Fallbrook YMCA in Lincoln. He has served as both a Behavior Specialist and Site Supervisor, working with children and families and leading large group programs. He was recently promoted to Youth, Teen, and Family Director at the Northeast YMCA of Lincoln. Tyler is pursuing his master's degree and will continue working in the counseling and mental health field. Tyler can be reached at tylerschur@yahoo.com.

IN OUR MYSTIC SHRINE



Thomas "Doc" Burton '45 entered Our Mystic Shrine on November 17, 2024. He was AT 719 and a lifelong resident of Falls City, NE. While his obituary did not mention UNL (it discussed only Westminster College in Missouri and Kansas State University, where he graduated as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1957), *The Dragon's Tale* is confident of his UNL connection and his initiation into our chapter.

Doc served 18 months in the United States Army, and the General Fraternity and *TDT* only recently learned of his passing. After graduating from K-State, Doc returned to Falls City, where he was a trusted veterinarian. Tom was also active in his community, serving on the city council and the school board for several years. His wife passed away in 2012, and he is survived by five children, including a son also named **Thomas '79**, and other relatives.

Jack Craft '59 entered Our Mystic Shrine on December 2, 2025. For more information about Jack, please see the separate article on page 16 of this issue.

Ward Holdrege '61 entered Our Mystic Shrine on July 5, 2025. *The Dragon's Tale* learned of his passing only recently. He was AT 1056, and the General Fraternity has now been notified of his death.

While he had deep roots in Omaha (having attended Omaha Westside High School), he spent his later years residing in Manhattan Beach, CA. Chapter members remembered Ward for giving frequent rides to other Betas in his 1947 Plymouth. There is a family connection to Holdrege, Nebraska, but details are lacking. Ward had a six-year struggle with constant balance issues stemming from a traumatic brain injury. He spent his final years in assisted living and hospice care. Because of this long journey, Barbara, his surviving wife, chose not to publish a formal public obituary.

Thomas Findley '62 entered Our Mystic Shrine on March 18, 2026. He was AT 1076. Tom was born in Wichita, KS, and spent his early years in smaller Midwest towns, eventually ending up in Lincoln. He earned his undergraduate degree in architecture and obtained his master's degree in architecture at the University of Illinois. He met his wife while at UNL, and the couple eventually settled in Omaha, where they raised their family.

Tom was passionate about architecture. He worked for the Leo A. Daly firm for 42 years, serving as Vice President of Design. He traveled the nation and the world, leading teams to design many types of buildings including schools, libraries, hospitals, casinos, residential homes, and more. Notable projects include SAC Air and Space Museum between Omaha and Lincoln, First National Bank Tower in Omaha, Yanbu Industrial City (Saudi Arabia), and Our Lady of Angels Cathedral in Los Angeles. In 1979, Tom, together with five other architects, designed the Treehouse, a community space near 60th Street and Lafayette Ave. in Omaha. The project included 11 uniquely designed townhomes where he and his family lived for 50 years. Among the recent projects Tom was working on was the new 44-story Mutual of Omaha headquarters in downtown Omaha.

In a feature story in the *Lincoln Journal Star* newspaper, Tom's son (referring to Treehouse) said, "There's an old home on that property that was owned by (former Omaha mayor) A.V. Sorensen, and it was otherwise all woods, and we lived there," Mike Findley said. "I remember watching my dad work with his architectural friends to come up with this concept of the Treehouse Association. I really think that that Treehouse project is what launched my dad into an entirely new level." Living in the Treehouse project made the Findley children the envy of all their friends. "People were really envious of us living in such a unique and, in some ways, magical kind of little environment there because there was nothing like it in Omaha," Mike said. "It was way ahead of its time, I think, in a lot of ways here in Omaha."

Among many honors and awards he received throughout his career, Tom received the Harry S. Cunningham Gold Medal in 2018. This is the highest honor American Institute of Architects Nebraska bestows on an architect.

Tom was preceded in death by his daughter, Ann Findley Welsh. In addition to his wife, Marlene, and oldest son Mike, he is survived by sons Paul and John of Omaha, daughter Lyn Kummer of Lincoln, brothers **Jim '63** of Omaha, **Bob '66** of Lincoln, Scott of Denver and Rick of Kansas City, sisters Patricia Twomey, Pamela Kidwell and Theresa Findley, all of Lincoln, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

If you have alumni news or information about the death of an Alpha Tau Beta for a future edition of **The Dragon's Tale**, *email updates@nebraskabeta.com.*



Thomas Poggemeyer '62, known affectionately as "Pogge," entered Our Mystic Shrine on March 18, 2026. He was AT 1078. His obituary described him as a "charismatic and spirited individual who lived his life to the fullest. His adventurous nature led him to a life full of extraordinary experiences."

Pogge was a native of Nebraska City and, along with his twin brother **Jim '62**, joined our chapter after high school graduation. After graduating from UNL, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Germany. Tom served with distinction, achieving the rank of Captain, showing the leadership and courage that defined his life. Following his military service, Tom channeled his adventurous spirit into a successful career in finance. In his personal life, Pogge was a devoted son, brother, father, and grandfather. He was a man of great compassion, whose presence touched every life around him. His family will remember him for his remarkable charisma and adventurous spirit. He is survived by his daughter, Anne Roe, son Jim, and other relatives, including "his former wife and dear friend, Marian Fisher." He was preceded in death by brother Jim, who passed away in Vietnam in 1967.

The family requests that any memorials or donations be made to the James R. Poggemeyer Memorial Fund at the University of Nebraska Foundation. Tom established the fund following his brother Jim's passing in 1967. The fund provides scholarships to students enrolled in the Nebraska College of Business who are members of Beta Theta Pi, with a preference given to finance majors.

Larry Dlugosh '63 entered Our Mystic Shrine on April 17, 2026, after a one-year battle with cancer. He was AT 1087.

A native of Ord, NE, he entered UNL and became a member of our chapter. He was the Recruitment Chairman in the summer of 1964. The following summer, Larry married Janee Benda, and they moved to Omaha.

Larry was a lifelong advocate for public education. He obtained his Doctorate in Education and served as a high school science teacher before being selected as a high school principal in Bennington (Nebraska) Public Schools. He then moved to Elkhorn (Nebraska) Public Schools, where he served as high school principal and later as Associate Superintendent. He served as Superintendent of Schools in Springfield-Platteview (Nebraska) and Grand Island (Nebraska) Public Schools. In 1990, he became a professor of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He retired as department chair in 2011.

Larry volunteered for and served on the boards of many community organizations throughout his lifetime. He served on the St. Francis (Grand Island) Hospital Board, chaired the board of Bryan College of Health Sciences (Lincoln), was a longtime member of the Heartland Center for Leadership Development, and led the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Emeriti and Retirees Association.

He was named the outstanding young educator for the Nebraska Jaycees in 1989. The Nebraska Council for School Administrators recognized Larry with the Distinguished Service Award in 1997. He was recently given the Wisherd Award for Outstanding Community Service from the UNL Emeriti and Retirees Association.

Larry and Janee prioritized traveling the world. They visited more than 40 countries and all seven continents. They took each of their grandchildren on a trip after eighth grade to a destination of their choosing, including Italy, the Swiss Alps and Dolomites, and an African safari. There were numerous trips with family and friends, both domestic and international.

Larry was an engaging individual whose quick wit and easy smile made him someone that people enjoyed. He worked in many different roles in many different cities, but his personality allowed him to connect with people from all walks of life. With his commitment to learning about the world, he supported many international students by providing housing, inviting them to dinner, and extending his friendship. Through Larry's gift for telling stories and making people laugh, he maintained lifelong connections with so many people.

In his later years, he served as Alpha Tau's Chapter Counselor for several years. ***(Editor's note: Larry was the Chapter Counselor immediately before Mike Wortman. Mike started his term in 1996.)*** Larry continued his involvement with our chapter and was in the first group of mentors in our mentor program. He mentored three undergraduates over a 12-year period. Thanks, Larry, for continuing to educate people.

Larry is survived by his wife, Janee, his daughter, Jadi Miller of Elkhorn, his son, **Jason Dlugosh '92** of Lincoln, and three grandchildren.



John Abel '63 entered Our Mystic Shrine on April 22, 2026. He was AT 1101.

John was raised in Lincoln and attended high school in both Lincoln and Faribault, Minnesota. John attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and was the starting guard for the freshman football team in 1962. He then transferred and graduated from the University of Arizona and was a member of Beta Theta Pi at both schools.

He received his Army commission through ROTC and served as a company commander in Korea, then as an instructor at the Army Engineer School, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. After his military service, John started working at Kerford Limestone in Weeping Water, Nebraska. The company is Nebraska's largest limestone company, and he served as chairman for many years.

Survivors include his son, Phil Abel, his brother Jim, and other relatives.

Steve Gerhard '73 entered Our Mystic Shrine on September 26 at his residence in Surfside Beach, SC. He was AT 1401. Steve was born in San Diego and raised in Scottsbluff, NE, where he was an all-sport athlete and earned conference and state honors. As an Alpha Tau Beta, he was our chapter's Social Chairman.

Steve's obituary also said he was a member of the Alpha Zeta Beta chapter at the University of Denver, though the General Fraternity's records do not reflect this. He worked in commercial real estate appraisal before retiring to South Carolina in 2023. His survivors include his mother, Betty, his wife, Nancy, and five children.

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Page 7: *Communications Report Two Alpha Tau Brothers Join the Mortar Board*

Page 8: *The Experience Company Report Parent Alliance Report*

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The Dragon's Tale

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THE JACK CRAFT MEMORIAL AWARD



Jack Craft '59 was a prominent Kansas City attorney who passed away almost a year ago. Here is a link to his obit:
www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/kansascity/name/jack-craft-obituary?id=60219609

Jack was the Alpha Tau Chapter President in 1960-61 and was named Beta of the Year by the Kansas City Alumni Association in 2018. See page 5 of this link:
nebraskabeta.com/sites/betathetapi/files/Dragon%27s%20Tale%20-%202018%20Spring.pdf

Jack was AT 989, and **Bud Walling '59** was one of Jack's pledge brothers. In Jack's honor, Bud has funded an award in Jack's memory: $1,000 to be given to a senior elected by the chapter who best represents Jack's campus involvement. Bud's gift will carry on for at least 10 years. The first honoree is **Ryan Beavers '24**, a senior from Belleville, Kansas, who is majoring in mechanical engineering. He has served as Risk Manager for two years and was selected as a Mortar Board member earlier this year. Other campus activities include serving as the outreach officer for the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Engineers Without Borders, Interfraternity Council Judicial Board, and intramural wrestling. (See separate story on page 7.) The award was presented to Ryan at the Parents' Weekend gathering on October 9-10. Thanks to Bud for his continued support of Beta and Alpha Tau, and congratulations to our first winner, Ryan Beavers.

If any other alumni wish to support the award, please send checks payable to **Beta Theta Pi** to the **Beta Theta Pi Alumni Association of Nebraska, P.O. Box 22251, Lincoln, NE 68542**. Note that the check is for the Jack Craft Memorial Award. Contributions are NOT tax-deductible.

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