

## 2006 National Convention Inaugural Speech

I am honored and humbled to stand before you as the 23<sup>rd</sup> President of Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity. As I look around the room, I am excited at the opportunities before all of us.

Change is never easy. But, it is often the catalyst for growth. Thanks to those who came before us, we have a solid foundation upon which to build. Building is a collaborative process and you can only reach for the stars when you have confidence in the ground on which you stand.

We are fortunate to have many of the architects of our modern Fraternity still actively involved on the Board. As we move forward, we will continue to depend on their vast experience. Every generation of Alpha Phi Omega builds on what came before. It is our obligation and privilege to be stewards for what we were given and for what we will pass on. We learn from the past as we strive to create a better world in which to make a living and a life.

We are also fortunate to have many new additions to the Board, some in new roles and some joining us for the first time. The excitement and fresh perspective they bring will invigorate our programs and expand our possibilities.

As we reach for the stars, we must remember that the journey is every bit as important as the destination. Alpha Phi Omega is known for its service – that is what brought most of us in. But our good works are more than just an end; they are also a means. Through service, we develop leadership skills in today's college students.

We often talk about Alpha Phi Omega members as tomorrows' leaders but that is not entirely accurate. Certainly, you, the pledge and active Brothers in chapters now, are destined to do great things after you leave college. But we should not underestimate the impact you are having in your communities today. The father who is able to play with his kids due to a life-saving blood donation, the senior citizen whose day is brightened by a visit and the homeless person who will not go hungry this night, show that our Brothers are having a great impact on the world around us every day.

In addition to the great value of that service to those we serve, there is an added benefit. Alpha Phi Omega goes beyond traditional teaching, providing experiential learning, ensuring you know how to plan and implement projects, develop relationships, manage conflict and many other skills we all need in the dreaded real world. Being told or even shown how to do something can be educational. But nothing replaces actually doing it yourself.

As alumni volunteers, it can be tempting to take the easy route and just do things ourselves, relying on our experience to provide short-cuts. But, in doing so, we rob the students of their chance to gain that valuable experience. Encouraging them to try, even if it means failing, is perhaps the greatest service we can do for our pledges and actives.

As we encourage our students to stretch themselves, we must do the same as alumni. We must all be willing to try new things even if they are uncomfortable or scary. Be it taking on a new assignment or working with someone with whom you have conflicts, moving outside our comfort zone provides a wonderful opportunity for growth and sharing. Together, through collaboration, we can enhance any idea or enterprise creating synergy. At its best, Alpha Phi Omega makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

A lot has changed during the 81 years since Alpha Phi Omega was founded. Frank Reed Horton would probably not recognize the Fraternity he founded, let alone the world around it. Yet much has remained the same and we know that things eternal are of value. Today, as we stand ready to embark on another year, we have the opportunity to write a new chapter for the Fraternity, building on the foundation of Leadership, Friendship and Service. We have the chance to work together, outside our comfort zone if necessary, to build something, collaboratively, that we could not create alone.

We have a standard that has withstood the test of time. We have a strategic plan that maps the path we are taking. We have the talented and dedicated alumni and student Brothers to bring that plan to fruition. Together we have it all.

Thank you all for being here to make the 2006 National Convention such an amazing experience. I am awed by the spirit of love and Brotherhood I have seen this week. Surrounded by my APO family, I have never been more proud to be a Brother of Alpha Phi Omega.

Maggie Katz