

“TIME TO BRAG”

Secrets are fun. We all enjoy knowing something that not everyone else knows. It makes us feel special. And there are some good reasons to keep secrets – a surprise for a friend, respecting someone’s privacy, wanting to share something special with someone special. What I do not understand is why Alpha Phi Omega remains such a well-kept secret.

Occasionally, I run into people who are familiar with Alpha Phi Omega but it is the exception, not the rule. We have 361 active chapters, more than 17,000 student members and over 360,000 alumni members – how come more people don’t know about APO?

One reason is overload. The average college campus has hundreds of student organizations so Alpha Phi Omega gets lost in the shuffle. In the community, there are countless corporations and non-profit organizations vying for attention as well. Since many of those groups are spending money to advertise their existence, they have a higher profile than we do.

Another reason is our unwillingness to boast. There seems to be a fear that telling people about our good works will detract from the nobility of the effort. The Boy Scout ethos that a good deed is worth more if you do not get credit for it, runs counter to our need to get the word out about the Fraternity.

So, what do we do? Talk. Tell all your friends about what you do in Alpha Phi Omega. Sprinkle references to the Fraternity throughout your conversation. My hope is that it is a sufficiently large part of your life that this happens automatically. Do not be shy about mentioning APO to people you encounter.

Wear your service pin. When I was in college, I wore mine daily. Now, I wear my service pin whenever traveling on APO business – not just at the conference but on the plane as well. Wear an APO shirt regularly. My work does not allow for such informal clothing but I wear my conference t-shirts around the neighborhood and to exercise. Use APO in class examples and presentations. When I attend networking events for work, I look for contacts that relate to APO as well as to my paid efforts.

Every person I have ever worked with knows at least a little something about APO. A few have steered their children toward a chapter when they went to college. Even if they do not remember many details, I believe they would all be familiar with the name Alpha Phi Omega. Just talk.

The easiest way to talk about Alpha Phi Omega is to prepare an elevator speech. If you are on an elevator with someone and want to tell them about APO in the 15 seconds between floors 1 and 8, could you do it? Would you be able to tell them what you think is critical to understanding APO? Would you be able to tell them enough to make them think positively about APO or want to know more?

Think about the stories you usually tell about APO. Think about the stories that usually get the best reaction from your friends and colleagues. Think about the stories that still make you emotional. Think about why you still care about Alpha Phi Omega. These are your foundation.

Once you have the stories, practice them. You want them to come naturally when you are talking with others. You should not need to contrive opportunities to share information about the Fraternity; they should crop up naturally because APO is that important in your life.

Alpha Phi Omega makes the world a better place to be each and every day. We need to stop being so modest and shout it from the rooftops. The only secrets I want are for my surprise party.