50 years of making better men

Alpha Gamma Rho
Alpha Upsilon chapter celebrates time at UTM

By Jesi Ogg

Alpha Upsilon began as 20 young men with a common goal; today, with 991 initiates and 50 years of excellence, the UTM chapter continues to build a lasting legacy for young men in agriculture.

“The goal was to have an organization for agriculture students that could give an avenue for developing and growing our talents above and beyond anything campus offered,” said Dr. Bob Duck of the idea to start an agriculture men’s fraternity at UTM.

This idea started in the fall of 1959. The group of young men, which included three veterans, looked at Alpha Gamma Rho and Farmhouse national fraternities. After learning about both, the decided AGR would best fit their goal and the UTM campus.

In the summer of 1960, there were recognized as a colony and elected their first officers that winter. In order to petition national AGR for a chapter, the group needed to fulfill two requirements: obtain a house of their own, and have a house mother.

Dr. Duck describes the men as “some of the most level-headed, down to earth, responsible men on campus at the time.” Only half of them owned cars. They came from background where money was not at their disposal. This dedicated group knew the hard work and perseverance needed to achieve their goal.

In the winter of 1961, a local house, known as the Smith house, became available for sale. Through the help of loans from the AGR National Fraternity and the Martin Bank, and taking out a second mortgage on the house, the young men were able to buy a house for their fraternity.

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What fraternity means to member

By Clinton Beard

Here at 225 University Street we strive not only for high academic standards, but we create lifelong fraternal bonds with our members. All of our members are Agriculture majors; therefore we all share a common interest. Our chapter, Alpha Upsilon, was chartered in 1963. We are the only professional agricultural fraternity on the campus of University of Tennessee at Martin.

AGR is also like other social fraternities in that it has a strong, close-knit group of members. But AGR is more than just one of those strictly social fraternities. It is also a professional fraternity in that all the members of AGR have related career interests.

AGR is for young men pursuing any career related to agriculture, food, or fiber industries. One more difference: at AGR there’s no pledging. You can join as an equal member. AGR does a careful review of all potential members in advance, so there’s no need for a “weeding out” process.

Leadership is an important skill you’ll learn or develop in Alpha Gamma Rho. Our members recognize the need to develop leadership skills and take an active part in fraternity and university activities.

Fraternity officer positions give you real leadership experience; you will use these skills to get involved in campus clubs, organizations or student government. If all of these sounds like a lot of serious work, don’t worry.

AGR knows how to have a lot of fun, too. Intramurals are a great way to show our AGR competitiveness in a variety of both team and individual sports.

From softball and basketball, to flag football, intramurals are lots of fun, and they provide a chance for AGRs to have a great time together. Plus, AGR usually has a full calendar of social events each term, including responsible parties, formals, and joint sorority functions. These social events let you balance the professional and social aspects of the AGR fraternity experience.

“I tell the boys all the time that they are continuously earning their letters. Once you become an AGR, your job is not over. It’s never really over.”

Dr. Bob Duck
Pulling rope strengthens brotherhood

By Trey Knight

Rope pull, a homecoming competition here at the campus of UTM, means a lot more than just taking home a trophy to us at the Alpha Gamma Rho house.

It's a way of bringing us together and makes us strive to be the best. It shows how far we are willing to push our limits. It's painful on our backs and sides, but the scars from the rope show victory.

Pulling rope isn't easy, but I don't mind the challenge because it means a lot to be a part of such a long-standing tradition that has been bringing us closer together ever since the competition started years ago.

From the start of the pull to the end, it’s a rush of emotions knowing you have to give all you’ve got not only for yourself but also for this brotherhood.

Inch by inch, we pull together and that’s what it’s all about. There is no better feeling than knowing the tape is on your side when the gun sounds the fight is over.

Needless to say, rope pull has been a way of life. It’s a constant reminder to do your best in everything and in the end you will make yourself a better man.

Get Rope.

AGR has a long standing tradition of rope pull championships.

Knight is a junior majoring in Agriculture Business.

AGR, from front page

After many months of repair work and construction to make it livable for 20 people, the group was able to move in and start serving meals in the fall of 1962. They also hired their first house mother. With a house and a house mother, the UTM colony was able to officially file a petition to the national fraternity.

On April 20, 1962, 51 young men were initiated into Alpha Upsilon, the 44th chapter of Alpha Gamma Rho.

After four long years of perseverance, the hard work of obtaining a house and a house mother, petitioning the national fraternity, and waiting on votes from every established AGR chapter, the original 20 could finally see their vision as a reality.

“This fraternity has continued to serve individuals of common interests and make them better than they could have been otherwise,” said Duck.

Although he graduated before a chapter was established, Duck is an initiated member of Alpha Upsilon. When he returned to UTM as a faculty member in 1966, the chapter asked him if he would like to be initiated and he agreed. Duck signed the charter as number 52.

“I tell the boys all the time that they are continuously earning their letters. Once you become an AGR, your job is not over, it’s never really over,” said Duck. He continues, “Associating with those other 19 individuals developed me into a better person than I would have been otherwise.”

Duck believes it was the “down to earth, level headed, and responsible” founding 20 that laid such a firm foundation for Alpha Upsilon.
Schedule of Events

April 19th

6:30 pm Cookout at UTM Farm
Bring your family and enjoy some casual fellowship and meal at the sale barn on the UT-Martin Farm.

April 20th

8-10 am Reception at AGR House
Stop by to visit and tour the house and enjoy some refreshments.

11-1:30 pm Era/Decade Parties
We all know that when Brothers get together, stories start flowing. Come spend some time reminiscing with brothers from your era. Five Era Parties will be hosted in and around Martin for Brothers of the 1960s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and 2000s. If you were there in-between decades, pick one to attend or bounce between them. Locations are still being finalized and will be posted online, distributed via email, and available at the Chapter House. Bring a guest and have a blast!

3-4:30 pm Chapter Meeting
Initiation of honorary brothers
How long has it been since you participated in our meeting ritual? What about an initiation ritual? We'll be conducting both, and we'll be initiating two very special Honorary Brothers. Joe Carmack was a member of the Founding 20, but graduated before the chapter was installed and was never initiated. Finally, 50 years later, we'll change that! Also, long-time UTM professor and friend of Alpha Upsilon, Dr. Bob Hathcock, has accepted our invitation to become one of us. Join us in welcoming both of these men into our ranks.

5-6 pm Reception for UTM faculty staff and relatives
Our agricultural heritage is a defining characteristic of AGR. Because of that, we enjoy a special relationship with the UTM Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources. At the invitation of the College, come catch up with current and retired professors and other staff. Also, you'll have a chance to tour the newly-renovated Brehm Hall, including the Foyer dedicated to AGR-Alpha Upsilon.

6:30 pm Banquet
Our weekend culminates at our banquet to remember times past, celebrate our present, and dream about our future. We'll have a fantastic meal on campus (exact location to be determined, based on attendance), see pictures of olden times, remember our deceased Brothers, and hear a few special presentations. This will be a night not to be missed and we hope you and your guest will be there!