

The Origin of O PHI O

According to Mundy, "In the beginning, we were all freshmen. This meant wearing beanies, singing in front of Ogden Hall and generally, staying out of the way of any upper classmen. There had been a couple of events where some of the brothers had forgotten their places and a delegation of upperclassmen visited James Hall to set the freshmen straight. There were reports of freshmen arriving at parties, the best way that they could, only to be refused admission. The ladies were allowed to enter, while the brothers were turned away. Throughout James Hall, discontent was brewing. Now, I am not going to act like our class was unique, but Hampton Institute assembled some of the best minds (for anything) that I have ever had the privilege to be a part of and many of us thought alike. It was out of that common struggle for equity that Ogre Phi Ogre was born."

Mundy added, "I may be wrong, but I remember it was a late night in James Hall. I had just settled in bed. My room faced the stairwell on the second floor, right across from the phone. As I drifted off to sleep, I seem to recall how you could always hear someone talking in James Hall. As I was about to count that last sheep, a loud knock came at the door. 'Who is it?' I asked. 'Dino', came the reply. "As I put my robe on, I kept asking myself, Dino? When I opened the door, he started right in on me. 'We need you up on the fourth floor, right away," he said. 'What's going on?' I asked. 'We need you to settle an argument.' I closed the door and followed the brother upstairs, but before we got near the room, I could hear the shouting. Wherever I was going, it was serious. There must have been 10 to 12 guys in the room, but I remember Tonard Tims and Tumbleweed from New York; Sears and Doc Smith from Pennsylvania; Rap Brown from New Jersey; Dino and RoRo from DC; and Sandy, Charles Harris, and I were the Virginians. "Somebody said, 'Go ahead, and ask him.' DJ said, 'Can a Wildebeest beat an Ogre?' You must understand, I went through a summer program with these brothers, but it was after 12 midnight and besides I did not know the definition of an Ogre or a Wildebeest. I was quickly verbally assaulted, and Dino went into an explanation. An Ogre was the toughest thing on earth with only one weakness, a Wildebeest. Hey, these brothers were serious. Someone countered, but no one could out shout DJ (David Jones from Snow Hill, NC).

One thing led to another, and we started talking about the struggle of the Blackman and our struggle as freshmen. Someone, (I think it was Dino), compared our spirit to that of an Ogre. I wish I could recall the comment made by Tonard from the Boulevard because you know he was so colorful and funny. Tumbleweed put in two cents, Rap gave change, Sandy and Charlie both cited instances, and the consensus was - things had to change. We decided to form our own organization with one qualification: you did not care about status, who had what or who knew what. It was truly all for one. Everyone thought this was a great concept. Now, we had to sell it to our brothers! How could we assemble the class? Could we get a scheduled meeting? Little Dino, as he was affectionately known behind his back, asked, 'Are we Ogres, or not? We need to get the brothers together tonight and talk about this.' It was also during this time that a freshman had been arrested for being at the ROTC building with a bow and arrow. Now it was obvious to us what the brother was doing, but the school did not buy it. Recreating events of the American legacy was a part of Hampton's early history, but the brother was being detained by Hampton's finest. Remember, Vietnam was still raging. The next events will have to go nameless. (I hope the statute of limitations is in effect). Someone asked, "How are we going to get the entire freshman class together tonight?" One of the brothers said in case of fire, we all have to assemble in Bemis Hall until Dean Campbell can

account for everyone. Then someone said that pulling the fire alarm would send everyone to Bemis. Someone also said that tampering with a fire alarm was a federal offense. Before the word offense was out of his mouth, the alarm was ringing, and the dorm was alive. There was already a bounty out for the phantom screamer. Now people were filing out of James Hall in all kinds of sleep attire and using an assortment of language to express their discontent.”

“I really felt badly for Dean Campbell. You see, the Dean had to check each floor to ensure that everyone was out. All I could hear him say was, ‘This is a grave situation.’ As the boys filed into Bemis, Dino went to work explaining the Ogre concept of no dues, no constitution, no meetings - just the proper attitude. Looking back on it now, what was expressed was a lot more colorful when equated to be yourself now. It was in watching Dino that night that I saw some real meaning to the principles of natural leadership and the power of persuasion. Because of that night and later events, he earned the title, King of the Ogres. Anyway, the concept of O Phi O was well received and to show support for the idea, we all went over to President Cotton’s house and knocked on his door. We wanted to know what was going to be done about our brother in bondage. Once satisfied with the President’s reply, we ended the evening’s events with a toilet paper trashing of Harkness Hall. We marched around campus chanting, Ogre Phi Ogre. When we approached the women’s side of campus – you-see, in those days the women lived on one side and the men on the other – the freshmen women joined in the march and the entire class marched around campus chanting, Ogre Phi Ogre-rette. Thus, Ogre Phi Ogre was born! That evening started the tradition that each of us has carried throughout our four years and to the present day – more than 40 years later. An Ogre t-shirt was a part of the freshman wardrobe. It was the common thread. There is a classic picture in the 1973 yearbook of O Phi O. It was everybody. I was approached one Homecoming by students who were sincerely interested in the story of O Phi O. I could not believe it. In riding around campus, I was surprised to see banners proclaiming O Phi O; the spirit lives. There is even an Ogre Phi Ogre Homecoming float, advancing pride, respect, honor, and the principles of OUR legacy. Those values live on in the hearts and minds of those of us who continue to fight for equality, fairness, and self-determination.”

As the story continues to unfold over time, this is the history according to our infamous historian, S. “Mundy” Ricks, who in his spare time, coined another phenomenal adage - 'Who Knew?'