



VIKING

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF EPSILON SIGMA CHAPTER OF ALPHA TAU OMEGA AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY - FALL 2024

How Can You Help Florida Epsilon Sigma?

JOIN ONE OF OUR COMMITTEES!

As we shared in our last issue of the *Viking*, the alumni house corporation is looking for volunteers to begin charting the future of Alpha Tau Omega at Florida State University and support Florida Epsilon Sigma when it begins the process of returning to campus in 2025.

The house corporation will formally appoint committee chairmen to one-year terms. Committee chairmen are asked to make quarterly, written updates to the house corporation and overall alumni membership.

If you're interested in getting involved, here are a few ways you can help:

Support recolonization by working with ATΩ National Headquarters and FSU to plan the return of the chapter in 2025. This committee will also help support and advise new members as they begin rebuilding the chapter.

Join the house corporation board of directors, which will manage the corporation's funds for a future house and plan for the eventual renting, acquisition, and/or construction of a new house when the chapter returns in 2025.

Improve the quality of our alumni records by conducting online research and reaching out to other alumni to update contact information.

Develop and implement a social media strategy using LinkedIn, Facebook, and other avenues to increase communication and engagement with ATΩ FSU alumni.

With alumni support over the next year, we can get our fraternity to the point it needs to be to successfully return to campus. Thank you for your consideration in joining us!

Fraternally,
Fred Maglione '93, House Corporation President
fredmaglione@yahoo.com

Research Conducted by the North-American Interfraternity Conference Proves the Fraternity Experience Is More Relevant to Today's College Students than Ever Before



Fraternities empower students and provide a strong support system.



Members are more academically engaged than their peers.



Members experience greater gains in learning and graduate at higher rates than their peers.



When members seek help, they are twice as likely to turn to a brother than anyone else.



Brothers are more connected to their local communities, and they spend more time volunteering than nonaffiliated students.



83% of members say their confidence in their leadership skills increased because of their membership.

Source: nicfraternity.org/research



THE ATΩ WHO GREW WINGS

MAJOR JAMES BARLOW '92 TALKS SERVICE, FAMILY, AND CHANGING THE WORLD

Major James Barlow '92 is a first-generation college graduate. "I started working at 13 to save money for tuition," he shared. "I knew nothing about the Greek system, but my friends were doing something called rush. I joined in, and while we received a couple of offers, we really liked ATΩ. On the last night, I accepted a bid and found my place with the men who became my dearest friends during college and throughout the rest of my life."

ATΩ was James' first introduction to the bond of brotherhood; he had essentially been on his own since high school. **"I had never known that kind of relationship where people truly care about you.** That was a new experience that carried me into my Air Force career."

James pursued his childhood dream of being a fighter pilot by joining the ROTC while at Florida State. His first assignment after graduation was in Alaska, but he returned to the ATΩ chapter house during his breaks. "I remember sitting on the back porch and crying after losing 26 members of my squadron in a crash," he recalled. **"Jeff Hartley '92** came out, hugged me, and said 'It's going to be alright. This is what you signed up for. You're going to be fine. We're here for you.' I'll never forget that."

After getting some much-needed rest with brothers, James returned, serving as a fighter pilot in Afghanistan and as an instructor at various Air Force bases. While in combat, James noticed a significant gap—there weren't enough air strike controllers (JTACs). After 18 months of research, he discovered a bottleneck in training due to a lack of air support was limiting fielding qualified JTACs and resulting in the loss of American lives. He proposed a solution.

"I asked the Air Force to advertise a service contract and outsource the training," James explained. "I brought it up to headquarters, but they couldn't risk the budget, so I incorporated the company myself." James procured civilian airplanes and planned to install live weapons and military radios—necessary modifications that turned out to be illegal at the time. He worked with the FAA, got the highest arms license available, and continued building the company for the next six years, all while on active duty.

James retired from the Air Force in 2014 and six weeks later received the first-ever contract in an industry that didn't exist until he invented it. "I went on to buy more aircraft, hire teams of people, and changed the way the free world trains Air Strike controllers."

In 2020, Blue Air Training won a \$6.4 billion multi-award contract and merged with a Canadian company called Top Aces in 2022. "Together we have a total of 143 fighter jets, and if our private company was a country, we'd rank 18 in the top 141 air forces of the world." **Today, Blue Air Training has trained nearly every JTAC in the U.S., Canada, Germany, the UK, and Australia and has saved taxpayers over \$1 billion.**

In January 2018, James was thrown a life-altering curve ball when he was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer and told he had eight months to live. "Two days later, I bought tickets and flew down to Tampa to spend time with **Damien Burdick '92** and **Jason Clark '92**." James underwent treatment and continued to live with his diagnosis through his retirement in January 2024.

In February 2024, James received the incredible news that his cancer was undetectable. "I'm still here! And I've sold



"I had never known that kind of relationship where people truly care about you. That was a new experience that carried me into my Air Force career."

the company, giving away \$5 million to key employees in the process."

James remains one of Florida State's most successful and prestigious alumni. He was awarded the Seminole 100 Business award five times and took the No. 1 spot twice in a row. He will have a classroom named after him in the new business school and will be inducted into the FSU College of Business Alumni Hall of Fame this October. He has served on the Board of Governors since 2018.

James is married to Gretchen and has two sons, Ben and Trent, who also served in the Air Force. He lives in Tampa and spends his time shooting or competing in fishing tournaments across Florida on his sport fishing yacht. (He frequently welcomes his ATΩ brothers on the boat.)

If you want to hear more about James' fascinating life story, check out his biography, *The Boy Who Grew Wings*, which reached No. 2 on The Wall Street Journal bestseller list.

If you'd like to get in touch, you can send him an email at chefandgretch@gmail.com.



ALUMNI UPDATES

AND PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS

FROM THE ARCHIVES



*The White Tea Rose
Formal in 1994.*



Valhalla 2014.

We Want to Hear About You!

Tell us what you're up to!

How have you lent a hand in your community lately? Do you have any career highlights or family updates you'd like to share with your ATΩ brothers? Do you get together with fellow alumni regularly?

Share your story, and it may appear in a future issue of *Viking!* Submissions can be sent to our communications coordinator

at kunderdown@penningtonco.com with "ATO FSU Alumni Update" in the subject line.

Now more than ever, it's important to stay connected to our Florida Epsilon Sigma brothers.



ALPHA TAU OMEGA
Florida State University
P.O. Box 442100
Lawrence, KS 66044-2100

Address Service Requested

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MAILED FROM
ZIP CODE 66044
PERMIT #570

Connect with Your Brothers on Facebook

There are 935 brothers interacting through our private alumni Facebook page, "I was an ATO at FSU." Ask to join by visiting facebook.com/groups/21437119042.



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Scott Flexch '89, James Savino '89, Mike Peart '89, and Chris Spears '92 joined Scott Osteen '90 at the Daytona 500 in February 2024.

There's also opportunities to help Florida Epsilon Sigma as we return to campus in 2025 and a spotlight on **Major James Barlow '92**. Don't wait; start reading *Viking* now!



Visit atofsu.com, our new and improved Epsilon Sigma alumni website, to:

- Read the latest updates from our house corporation.
- Learn how you can help by reviewing our volunteer positions.
- Update your mailing address, phone number, and email by clicking the "Update Your Information" button.
- View the latest edition of the *Viking*!