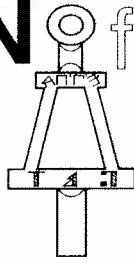


# The BULLETIN of Tau Beta Pi

to provide information to the collegiate chapters

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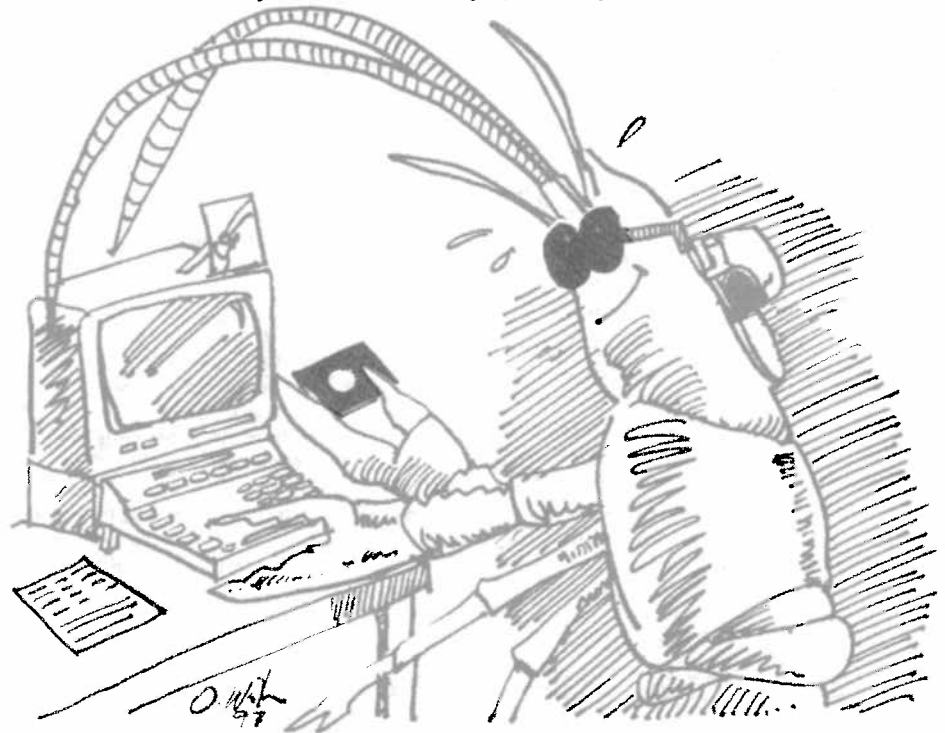
## Tau Beta Pi Arrives in Cajun Country

by David C. Mays, Pennsylvania Delta '95, E.I.T.

"Morning!" Third hour begins with a drill written on the markerboard, a roll call, and some announcements from Mr. Mays. "OK, folks, let's GET ON TASK!" I gesture towards the supply room, where 10 teams of two will check out materials to work on the technology modules. Eventually, the students ramble from their seats to their 486s.

Teach for America provided me with a change of scenery, a change of pace, and a fantastic paradigm shift. South Louisiana is flat Catholic country, producing rice and crawfish (in the same ponds), sugar cane, petroleum and French-speaking teenagers. The country roads to St. Martinville Senior High are idyllic, but make no mistake, this is definitely part of the United States. Some of my students knew zydeco, but more of them listened to White Zombie. Starter jackets and Nike sneakers defined students; sport-utility vehicles with cellular phones defined parents. After interstates and oil booms, Cajun Country (or, more properly, Acadiana) is a European enclave no longer. The pace of life is more leisurely than at Penn, but this is hardly evidence of cultural lethargy. The exponential growth of traffic in Lafayette points to a technology-driven small city of the 21st century, leaving to history the small Southern town, sultry in the summer heat.

The largest program under the AmeriCORPS umbrella, Teach for America, was founded in 1990, the fruit of Wendy Kopp's undergraduate thesis at Princeton. Teach for America recruits nationwide to create a 500-member teacher corps, comprised of enthusiastic college graduates with solid GPAs, distinguished community-service records, and a sense of hope. Corps members work in under-resourced schools, from New York to Los Angeles, from the



Mississippi Delta to the Rio Grande Valley.

I did my pre-institute observations at Philadelphia's University City High during senior week. Then came a five-week summer institute in Houston, a one-week South Louisiana regional induction in Baton Rouge, and two weeks of nervous waiting in a beautiful antebellum home on Bayou Teche. Then, two days before my duties began, I landed an assignment as technology instructor in St. Martinville.

My position, teaching two hours of drafting and three hours of modular technology lab, seemed ideal for a corps member with an engineering degree, one of just eight in the 1995 teacher corps. At least one person in Room 504 learned a lot in the first few weeks: I learned how vulnerable IBM-compatibles are to computer-literate mischief. I learned

which parents could effectively manage their teenagers' behavior. I learned that the level of comprehension in the class is directly proportional to the number of questions asked. "Mr. Mays, what's for lunch?" does not count. A complete lack of questions indicated that I had slipped into engineering jargon again. Indeed, I realized that understanding all the applicable linear differential equations does not mean one can explain how this valve is used on an oil rig. So, after an imperfect start, I enjoyed a modestly positive gradient.

By January, I began to get some feedback from the clients: "Mr. Mays' general tech class has finally gotten on track. After a confusing start, Mr. Mays is finally starting to understand the way things work at St. Martinville Senior High. But now that the class is moving,

we are learning things that will help us to decide what we will be likely to succeed at when we graduate." (Jason & Kevin). And at least once, I knew somebody was listening after Brownell asked, "Why St. Martinville, of all places?" Ryan writes: "Mr. Mays . . . has attended many years of college learning about . . . new and improving technologies. He feels as though he should contribute what he has learned to the students he teaches here. And hopefully the students [will] keep on learning. . . and make the future a brighter place."

The paradigm shift is that academic achievement, a fundamental element of Penn culture, is a negligible *n*th-order effect in St. Martin Parish. This is not bad necessarily, but it does make the local economy precariously dependent on the international textile market. (Fruit-of-the-Loom is the local dominant employer.) The change in culture is not necessarily bad; it is certainly different.

Teach for America drove home one other truth. In growing up, one progresses to new levels of maturity and responsibility: The driver's license. The first job. Graduation. Ordinarily, there is no discrete point to delineate between childhood and adulthood; one meets plenty of middle-aged professionals who profess childlike enthusiasm. In my case, a discrete point came on 21 August 1995 when I could no longer identify with the students sitting in four rows of six. I had become Mr. Mays, and this, in the end, was the real challenge.

## Tennessee Beta 50th

Tennessee Beta Chapter students and alumni and other Tau Bates gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the chapter at Vanderbilt University. The celebration was marked in conjunction with the December 4, 1996, initiation of 28 new members in the Engineering Building.

Banquet speaker and **Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus Robert H. Nagel**, *New York Delta '39*, had also been present in 1946 at the installation of Tennessee Beta into the Tau Beta Pi family when he was editor of THE BENT.

Fifty years ago on December 7, 1946, **Robert H. Fesmire**, **Bartlett Johnston**, **A. Scobey Rogers Jr.**, and **William T. Sumner** were among the 25 charter Tennessee Beta initiates. All four men were present at the golden anniversary celebration at the University Club and were honored as founding members.

Dr. Lloyd Massengill was also honored at the banquet as the outstanding teacher of 1995-96.

**David C. Mays**, *Pennsylvania Delta '95*, E.I.T., graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.S. degree in engineering (civil engineering systems) in May 1995. The university, located in Philadelphia, was founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1740. After the 1995-96 school year, he returned to New Mexico to begin working towards his engineering license. To learn more about Teach for America, call 1-800/832-1230.

## TBPI Rhodes Scholars

Two Tau Bates have been named Rhodes scholars for 1997 — **Jessika E. Trancik**, *NY Δ '97*, and **Dean J. Sauer**, *NC Γ '97*. They are among 32 in America chosen to attend Oxford University in England this year. To date, 64 members of Tau Beta Pi have been so honored.

Jessika is a materials science and engineering major at Cornell University in Ithaca. She has had undergraduate research experiences in 1995-96 under the GE foundation faculty for the future program. A member of Sigma Xi and chapter president of Alpha Sigma Mu materials science honor society, she received the Materials Society presidential scholar award, was a 1996 Barry M. Goldwater national scholar, and was selected by *USA Today* for the 1996 all-USA college academic team. A dual citizen of the USA and Sweden, she is fluent in Swedish and English and proficient in Spanish, Italian, and German, as well as numerous computer languages. With expertise in thin ceramic-metal films, she has co-authored nine papers and authored two of her own, which she presented to the 1995 and 1996 national conferences on undergraduate research. She is listed on two patent applications.

Dean, of St. Louis, MO, has been studying engineering and philosophy at Duke University in North Carolina.



## Spring Checklist of Chapter Reports & Fees

Report/Fee	Mailed to Chapters	Send to Headquarters	Reference
1. Report of Eligibility	January	As soon as eligibility list is available (within first 5 weeks of term)	Bylaw VI, 6.04(a) B. VIII, 8.01(c)
2. Report of Election (Must be received/approved by Secretary-Treasurer before initiation.)	January	As soon as electees accept (2 weeks before initiation)	B. VI, 6.04(b) B. VIII, 8.01(d)
3. Catalog cards (Orders keys/certificates; allow 4 weeks before initiation to receive keys/certificates.)	January	With Report of Election (write legibly & accurately)	B. VI, 6.04(b) B. VIII, 8.01(d)
4. Report of Final Action & Roll Book signatures		One day after initiation	B. VI, 6.04(c) B. VII, 7.07
5. Initiation Fees/Convention Assessments (\$27/\$3 per initiate)	N/A (Statement to chapter treasurer will follow)	10 days after initiation	B. V, 5.03(e) B. I, 1.05
6. Officer Election Report	March	2 weeks after election	B. V, 5.01 B. VIII, 8.01(b)
7. Convention Delegate Credentials	March	2 weeks after election	B. V, 5.03(d)(5) B. VIII, 8.01(f)
8. Financial Report	April	May 30	Convention Action
9. Chapter Survey	March	June 1	B. V, 5.03(d)(8)

The above list of required chapter reports is a guide for chapter officers. Reports are mailed to the president at the times specified. If you need more reports or any assistance, call the headquarters staff.