

The History of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity

by Founder, Bishop Edgar Amos Love



As I make the recording for the fraternity, it gives me great pleasure to do it. Omega Psi Phi Fraternity was born out of a dream; that three young men, who were freshman at Howard University, were drawn together, and an abiding friendship developed. There was already on the campus at Howard University a fraternity, which was born not on the campus itself, but was a part of a fraternity that came into Howard. We had watched it for two years, but it did not represent what we thought a fraternity ought to represent. It seemed to us, the three young men, that they were a bigoted group, who were status conscience; that only men who had money to spend, or who had great family backings, or even color conscience; so that we were not interested in becoming a part of it at that time. Early in our college career, we begin thinking in terms of establishing a fraternity that would be a fraternity in reality, as well as in name. But when we began to get ourselves in position to request recognition of the university, we were opposed by the administration. Time after time we asked for a hearing before the faculty committee indicating what was our objective, and each time we were rebuffed. The Dean of our college, Kelly Miller, a gray-haired character, a man whom I admired greatly; as a matter of fact,

came to Howard University because Kelly Miller was one of its professors. He asked us, why don't you join the fraternity that's already here; we're not responsible at Howard University for its being, but this fraternity you project will be spawned on our campus and we will be the mother chapter and we will be more or less responsible for what it may become. This also was voiced by Dean George Cook; both of whom were members of the fore-said fraternity. Seeing that we were making no headway with the administration after the three of us had formed our organization and had brought into being, fourteen other men as members of the Alpha Chapter, original members. One evening we struck upon a bold move that we would make in order to get ourselves recognized. So that there were printed many number of flyers and placards with the names of the seventeen Omega Men attached declaring our presence on the campus of Howard University. That very day at Chapel, the president of the university, Dr. Thirkeil very angrily declared that there is no such organization on the campus of Howard University and that "I want all those young men whose names are attached to the announcement on the campus and on our trees to come into my office, immediately, at the close of the Chapel."; and so we went to present ourselves in the presidents office. He told us that we had made ourselves liable not only to suspension but possible expulsion, because of the high-handed way in which we had announced our existence when no such organization had been recognized by the university; but we did not feel that he would expel or even suspend these seventeen young men who stood high in the scholastic record of the university and were members of its debating teams and heads of its several auxiliary organizations. Finally he declared that he would give us a hearing but that we must take down all the placards and cards that were attached to trees on the campus, which we agreed to do. Then he agreed to give us a hearing before the faculty committee. When we were brought before this committee which Dean Kelly Miller was the chairman, he talked about the spawning of a new fraternity on the campus of Howard University. He said there is a great deal of opposition to fraternities on college campus' and, how do we know that this fraternity will

continue to be the kind of fraternity that you men represent here; you are gentlemen, he said. He gave us that distinction. Well, we answered, we can only guarantee that as we have, the Founders, selected fourteen other men who were like-minded to ourselves, with the same ideals and aspirations and with the same scholarship, that they in turn would select other men like themselves; then whenever the fraternity might be established that would be the order and men of high ideals and scholastic standing would be selected ad infinitum - So that we were accepted on the campus but only with the understanding that for the time being we would be a local fraternity. We had already three young men, Oscar J. Cooper, Frank Coleman and myself, together with Associate Professor Ernest Everett Just established what would be our motto and our name. The motto chosen was *Philia Ophelema Psukis*, Greek words meaning "Friendship is Essential to the Soul" and we translate the "soul" freely to say "life"; "Friendship is Essential to Life", and the letters of our fraternity are the first ones taken from this motto. But basically, the fraternity was established on the friendship of these three young men and this Associate Professor, Dr. Ernest Everett Just; and we believe that friendship is the strongest attachment that can exist between individuals or groups of individuals. We oft times hear and, people say that, blood is stronger than water. It may or may not be true because we know that blood brothers often are antagonistic to each other and the Bible even records where one brother who ascended a throne had all his other brothers put to death that they might not contest his right to the throne. The same Bible also records the existence of a friend who gave up his right to the throne in order that his friend might succeed his father as King of Israel. Jonathan protected the life of David when he knew that it would mean that he himself would never be King. So that, friendship, you see, is really a stronger tie than blood relationships might be. Then we adopted our Cardinal Principles, Manhood, and Scholarship, Perseverance and Uplift. To us Manhood means character; one who dares to do all that doth become a man, and who does more is none. We put Manhood first because we think that character is more essential as we look for prospects in

Omega than any other one thing. Secondly we put Scholarship, there is a place for mediocrity in our society but, not in Omega. We want men whose minds are at least above the average, that they can make a contribution to the life of an institution and to the world. Then Perseverance; we want men who will realize that they have a responsibility to stand by any project that they may begin and see it through. And finally, Uplift; which puts man in connection with the community in which he lives and lets him realize that he has a responsibility to those who are less fortunate than himself; that he must also do what he does with the idea of service to the community and to the nation. Bring all these together, we have the true Omega Man. Omega doesn't want men simply because they are popular on a campus. Omega doesn't want men simply because they have money to spend. Omega doesn't want men simply because they have a splendid family background. All this is good, if they have at the same time, sterling character and the scholarship that will make them leaders among men rather than followers. Omega men in every community, as I have gone around our world, and in 48 of the 50 states of the Union, stand out in every community; and the roll call of men in our graduate chapters sounds like, Who's Who in the Negro Community in that particular chapter. I'm not going to elucidate on these to any great extent, but let me say that the first two men to receive the Spingarn Medal were Negroes; were Omega Men. That the 'perfector' of blood plasma was an Omega Man; Dr., Brother Charles Drew, and I can go on, name the present situation in our American life, but you know that as well perhaps as I. Omega Psi Phi Fraternity is not a status club, but a fraternity; a brotherhood of high minded, serious thinking, noble living men. Leaders not followers, makers of policy and molders of opinion. Let us never forget that we're developed out of the friendship of three young men and a young college professor. That friendship is essential to life; pick no man for Omega unless you know that he is a friendly man. For he who would have a friend, must be one. We do not want men who live within themselves but men who are outgoing so that they can express themselves in terms of friendship. I said before in this recording that friendship is the strongest

tie that binds men together. You have to accept your relatives, blood relatives, whether you want them or not; they're wished upon you. But you choose your friends and friendship is always motivated by love; and love always thinks not in terms of itself but in terms of those whom the individual may love. So let me say in concluding, that let's keep the ideals high. It's easy to go along with the crowd but the man or the woman who carries civilization afar is the individuals who take leadership and go against the public opinion if it is not in harmony with the highest ideals of the individual. Prove yourself to be a man. Prove yourself to be a true Omega Man.

Let me also say a word regarding the Founders, each one of whom went to the top of his profession. Dr. Ernest Everett Just was one of the greatest Biologist that America has ever produced, Dr Frank Coleman retired as the head of the Department of Physics at Howard University, Dr. Oscar J. Cooper is an eminent and successful Physician in Philadelphia, and your speaker is a Bishop in the Methodist church, the highest office within the gift of the church. Let me also say just a word regarding my hopes for the future. I want Omega to be a shining light among all the fraternities among us. I want that we shall not lose the ideals; and a man ought always have his ideals so high; for a man's reach ought to exceed his grasp, for what's ahead of him. The idea is to lift us, as we look towards them and try to make them real in our community. I don't want Omega to lose the ideals established by the Founders and carried on through more than 50 years to date.