



ATO group photo, 1970 *Chestnut Burr*, December 1969 (Mike Finnen, front row, holding #47)

Alpha Tau Omega 50th Reunion



ATO group photo, 50th Reunion, September 2021 (Mike Finnen, front row, wearing a purple shirt)

Mike Finnen, BA '72, Jacksonville, FL, wrote: "The first draft lottery [since 1942] was held on Dec. 1, 1969. For men ages 18–26, this event determined the order of call into service for 1970. Student deferments expired at graduation, and every guy on every campus across the country awaited his fate.

"Since the lottery was nationally televised, it seemed like the right occasion to party. At Kent State dorms, apartments and fraternity houses, beer flowed as the numbers rolled. The atmosphere was charged, like the feeling before a big game. At the Alpha Tau Omega party, we tacked a white bedsheet to the wall, ready to list the top 10 brothers whose birthdays were called.

"But the excitement was short-lived. As the birthdays were announced, we took multiple early hits. Two No. 2s, a 10, a 23, a 30, two 35s (twins), a 47, a 59 and so on. And then it was over—and with it the uncertainty of life after Kent.

"A few weeks later, it was time to have our fraternity photo taken for the 1970 *Chestnut Burr*. Since it was just weeks before Christmas, one of our brothers suggested we hold our draft lottery numbers in front of the Peace on Earth sign on Front Campus.

"Little did we know that five months later school would close due to the May 4 shootings. And many years later, when the May 4 Visitors

Center was built [dedicated in 2013], we were surprised to learn that our 1970 yearbook photo was among the artifacts on exhibit.

"During a golf outing in 2016, several of us visited the center and realized that in four years it would be the 50th anniversary. We planned an ATO reunion for the May 4 weekend in 2020, but COVID-19 forced numerous postponements.

"Finally, our fourth attempt was a charm. From across the country, more than 50 brothers, wives and girlfriends descended on Kent on Sept. 17, 2021.

"We kicked off the weekend activities with a 5 o'clock happy hour at Ray's Place. Kent's annual 'Round Town Music Fest also was happening that Friday evening. We were treated

to outdoor music, while inside Ray's our ATO brothers had a hug fest as we greeted each other for the first time in decades.

"Saturday morning, we had a private tour of the May 4 Visitors Center. We posed for photos in front of our lottery number photo and watched the 13-minute film about the events that culminated on Monday, May 4, 1970.

"Then we headed downtown for our luncheon at the Kent State University Hotel. We showed photos from our scrapbook on big screens at the front of the ballroom, sang dirty limericks, toasted the brothers we had lost since graduation and held an open mic for storytelling.

"One of our brothers owns Woody's Music downtown, so in the early evening we were entertained there as the trio Bandit played a variety of songs from our era. We spent Saturday night drinking at the bars we'd frequented when we were students.

"After breakfast on Sunday morning, several of us toured the Kent Campus and observed what you'd expect: Some things were unchanged and others were very different.

"During the weekend, one thing stood out for us all—once we reconnected, it was like time had never passed. We just picked up where we left off. And when it was all over, everyone agreed that 50 years was too long between reunions and we should cut it to 25."