

Pete Petit, Mr. Pi Kappa Phi 2014



EACH YEAR, PI KAPPA PHI HONORS one alumnus with the Mr. Pi Kappa Phi award, the fraternity's highest and most prestigious honor. Although the recipients come from different backgrounds and professions, they all have one thing in common: a profound love of and dedication to their fraternity.

Parker "Pete" Petit, Iota (Georgia Tech), is no different. After receiving both bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering from Georgia Tech, Pete worked as an engineer before ultimately entering the world of health care. In 1971, Petit founded what would eventually become Healthdyne, an international healthcare company that manufactured high technology healthcare devices, provided healthcare information systems and technology, and provided healthcare services and disease management.

While an undergrad, Petit served as the archon of the Iota Chapter at Georgia Tech, and was also a graduate of the very first Pi Kapp College in 1959. During that experience, Petit met Durward W. Owen, which helped spur a lifelong commitment to Pi Kappa Phi.

Since his undergraduate career came to a close, Pete has continued to support the Iota Chapter in numerous ways, including major renovations to the chapter house in Atlanta. In addition, Pete served for several years on the Pi Kappa Phi Foundation Board of Trustees, including time on the investment committee, and acted as the regular host of meetings at his Atlanta headquarters. Petit has been a faithful donor to the fraternity for many, many years, including support for Pi Kappa Phi's new national headquarters, where he made a lead gift.



Petit remains active, both professionally and philanthropically, in the Atlanta area. In 2011, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for *Atlanta Business Chronicle's* 2011 Health-Care Heroes Awards.

Recently, the STAR & LAMP was able to sit down with Pete to ask him about his Pi Kappa Phi experience, leadership and more.

If you had the opportunity to start your collegiate career over again from scratch, is there anything you'd do differently? If so, why?

I do not believe there is anything I would have done differently or could have done differently. I was fortunate to be able to attend Georgia Tech on the cooperative program where I went to school a quarter and worked a quarter. If I had not had my co-op job, I could not have attended college.

It was a rapidly maturing phase of my life because of the disciplines I had to learn quickly both with study habits and work habits.

I had to save \$550 in my work quarter in order to get through my next school quarter. That required extreme financial discipline, but it became a practical routine.

At Georgia Tech, I had to put in long hours studying so I had to learn time management. I learned to multi-task and not waste time on frivolous matters. I had a reasonably active social life although it was much more limited than what students have today.

As an alumnus, you've clearly been a leader for Pi Kappa Phi. How has the concept of leadership changed for you over the years?

I believe that leadership is a component of management. I learned decades ago to characterize management as having two components. There is the leadership component and the administrative component. Often, strong abilities with both are not found in the same person. However, an organization needs both components to be effectively managed. An effective manager either has both abilities or must surround themselves with people that will fill in with one of the other abilities that they are missing.

I have always defined leadership as making good things happen." I have

defined administrative skills as "keeping bad things from happening." As I mentioned, both of those functions are needed in a well-managed organization.

I think I have been blessed with being reasonably balanced with both leadership and administrative skills. I believe that administrative skills can be taught, but leadership skills are generally a personality trait that is in a person's DNA.

As I started my first business, I had already been managing projects in the aerospace industry so I had some basis for understanding these principles. However, as I became an entrepreneur, it became quite evident that my leadership skills had to be perfected. As my organization grew, then the administrative skills became as important.

At my current point in life, I understand clearly the importance of management and the leadership and administrative components in getting almost anything done in an organizational environment.

What are some of the most important pieces of advice you've received in your life?

As I recall, my father continually emphasized to me to "seek advice." Over the years, I have learned to ask many questions to experienced individuals. For making any important decisions, I have always sought counsel. However, I am a decisive person and it does not take me long to make a decision and act on it. However, I think the key is to understand that there are always people who have experiences that you do not have, and it is important to draw on them.

What have been two or three of your most meaningful Pi Kappa Phi experiences?

My first and most meaningful experience at Pi Kappa Phi was when I met Durward Owen for the first time. He came to the Iota Chapter house at Georgia Tech for a brief meeting in December of 1959. He had just been appointed as the Executive Director, and he was visiting many of the chapters. We had a problem because our house had just been condemned by the city of Atlanta as being unfit for human occupancy. Durward's leadership came through that afternoon, and when he left the house, we all felt much better about our future.

My second most meaningful experience

occurred as I made three attempts to run for archon. I finally was elected on the third try as a senior. In that process, I learned a little bit about politics.

Finally, in my later years, the most meaningful experience was when Mark Timmes and Durward Owen recently came to visit me to tell me that I had been selected as Mr. Pi Kappa Phi. This caught me by total surprise, and I am extremely grateful and flattered by the award.

Between all of the undergraduate and alumni members of Pi Kappa Phi, there are brothers that span so many different "ages and stages" of life. What have you learned about brotherhood, and also leadership, that could apply to all of those men, no matter their stage of life?

What I have learned about brotherhood and leadership can be summarized in one word: "integrity." When you become my age, you have had an opportunity to see many instances of integrity versus dishonesty. That has come through numerous individuals and situations in your life. The conclusion is that real success through leadership comes to those with integrity. These are individuals who can be honest with themselves and everyone else. They take honesty and integrity very seriously in their lives.

Unfortunately, I believe our country has become accustomed to misinformation and lack of integrity coming from people in positions of power. I have seen too many instances over the last number of years where individuals feel that if people in power can behave in that way, it must be a new standard for America. This is very unfortunate.

I remember posters in my grammar schools of George Washington cutting down a cherry tree and saying "I cannot tell a lie. I cut down the cherry tree." Some of our politicians today grew up in a later period, and they didn't get that message about the importance of integrity. *

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