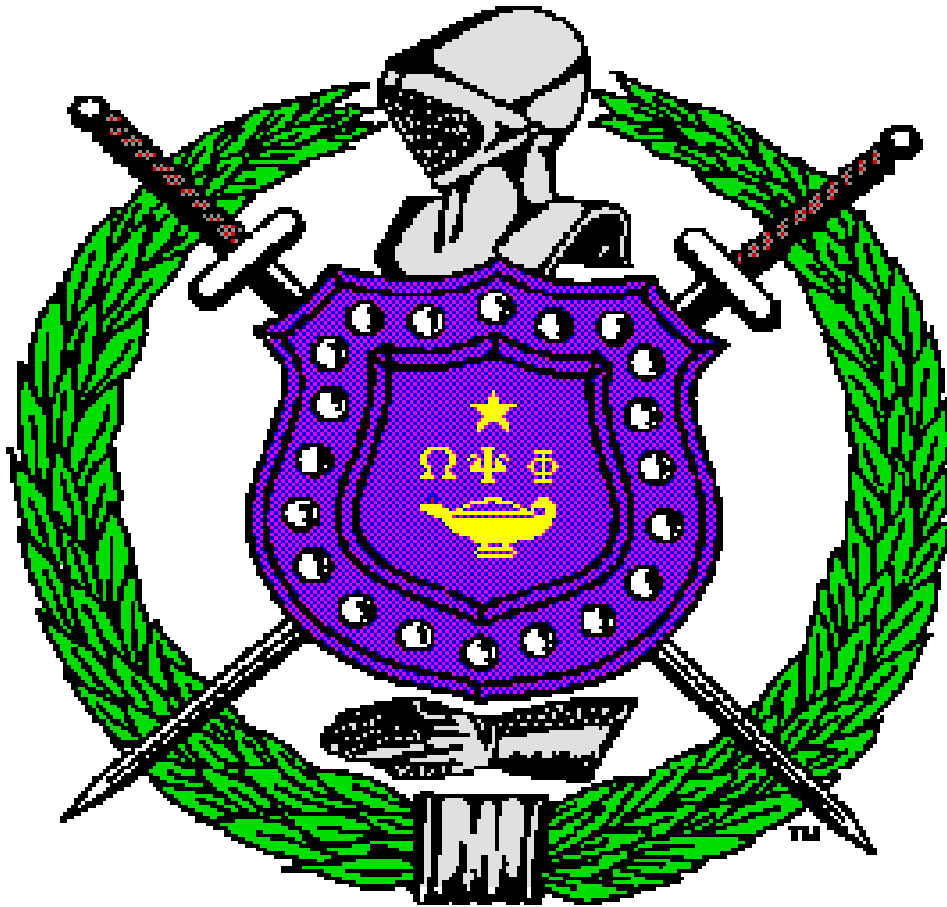


# Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.



## International Talent Hunt History

Revised January, 2016

## HISTORY

The Talent Hunt program of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. is one of several national programs designed to identify and support the youth of our nation and the world. The original idea was created by the 9<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus, Brother J. Austin Atkins of Winston Salem, North Carolina, and Brother Dewey Duckett of Rock Hill, South Carolina. While the idea was conceived in 1945, the first District Talent Hunt program was held in the Sixth District in Charlotte, North Carolina, on April 19, 1946. The need for such a program was born out of the unequal opportunity afforded to some American youth to develop and give full expression to their talents.

The original statement of the Talent Hunt idea included this expression: "Creative and outstanding capacities in any honorable activity should be eligible for consideration." During public presentations, all original displays were limited to the field of music. Since that time, the Talent Hunt program has been expanded to include other forms of the expressive arts.

In 1953, Brother J. Austin Atkins, assisted by Brother Dewey Duckett, chaired the first National Talent Hunt Committee and presented the first National Talent Hunt program as an integral part of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Grand Conclave held in Cincinnati, Ohio. The next chairman of the Talent Hunt Committee was Brother George Meares of Brooklyn, New York, Second District. The consultant during his tenure was Brother J. Austin Atkins. Bro. Meares' period of service began in 1958; he directed the activities for the 1961 Grand Conclave. The next chairman to be appointed was Brother Zoel Hargrave of Charlotte, North Carolina located in the Sixth District. His appointment was in 1968, and he chaired the committee that presented the Talent Hunt at the Grand Conclave in Charlotte, North Carolina.

It is significant to note that prior to 1969, all participants in the Talent Hunt program were required to be high school seniors. The year 1969 appears on documents indicating a revision in the guidelines for the operation of Talent Hunt programs on every level. The revision expanded the level of participation to grades 9 through 12.

Brother Alphonso Patterson of Hartsdale, New York, Second District was next in the service of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity as national chairman. His tenure lasted until 1973 when Brother Charles Johnson of Detroit, Michigan, Tenth District, was appointed as national chairman. Brother Willis H. Pettis of Richmond, Virginia, Third District, assisted him. Brother Johnson was leader when the Grand Conclave of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity was held in Atlanta, Georgia in 1976.

Brother Willis H. Pettis of Richmond, Virginia, Third District succeeded Brother Johnson in 1977 and served through 1979 as national chairman of the Talent Hunt Committee. It is significant to

note that prior to 1979, the Talent Hunt program had been a demonstration. It was in Denver, Colorado that the National Talent Hunt became a competitive event with money being awarded to the first, second, and third-place winners. The first winner in national competition was Adrain Walker, a violinist from Jackson, Mississippi representing the Seventh District.

The era of the eighties starts with Grand Basileus Burnel E. Coulon appointing Brother Edgar Burnett of Saint Louis, Missouri, Eighth District, as Chairman of the National Talent Hunt Committee. He was succeeded by the appointment of Grand Basileus, Benjamin Livingston, who appointed the former Seventh District Chairman Brother Jimmie James of Jackson, Mississippi.

In 1985, Grand Basileus Moses C. Norman, Sr. appointed Brother Alfred D. Wyatt, Sr. of Atlanta, Georgia, Seventh District, to serve as National Chairman of the Talent Hunt Committee. It was during this time that the need to revise the existing guidelines was examined. To meet the needs of the growing numbers of talented youth that we were discovering as a result of this revision, Brother Wyatt was given permission to write a proposal that would address and bring into focus the future goals of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

The following committee was appointed to address those needs: Brother Emerson E. Brown, Savannah, Georgia, 7<sup>th</sup> District; Brother Berryman Foster, Lexington, Kentucky, 5<sup>th</sup> District; Brother Johnny Walker, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 6<sup>th</sup> District; Brother James M. Williams, Boston, Massachusetts, 1<sup>st</sup> District; Brother Jimmie James, Jr., Jackson, Mississippi, 7<sup>th</sup> District (Special Consultant); Brother Alfred D. Wyatt, Sr., Atlanta, Georgia, 7<sup>th</sup> District (Chairman); Brother John Epps, NES, and Brother C. Tyrone Gilmore, First Vice Grand Basileus – Advisors. This committee addressed the validity of present operational procedures in light of the fact that much of the existing talent was outstanding and the awards that were being given on a national level were being equaled in local chapters and districts around the country. The discovery was made that many chapters and districts were operating on guidelines that in some cases were not compatible with existing guidelines of the fraternity. Permission was given to the committee to proceed with the writing and compilation of a handbook that would provide guidelines that all chapters and districts would be mandated to follow. The first proposal and draft was presented to the Supreme Council in February of 1987, in Detroit, Michigan. The proposed handbook was presented during the Leadership Development Seminar held in New Orleans, Louisiana, in July of 1987.

Brother Johnny Walker of Spartanburg, South Carolina, Sixth District was appointed as Chairman of the National Talent Hunt Committee in 1988 and Brother Alfred D. Wyatt, Sr., Atlanta, Georgia, Seventh District, was appointed as consultant. Brother Walker served as the leader of the first non-competitive Omega Talent Hunt since 1979. While the guidelines were revised in 1987, the process

of distribution took place in 1990 when the Grand Conclave once again presented the participants to the public as a demonstration.

In 1991, Brother Jimmie James of Jackson, Mississippi was appointed as the chairman of the International Talent Hunt Committee. He presented Talent Hunt Demonstration for the 67<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave in Atlanta, GA and the 68<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave in Cleveland, OH. Bro. James was able to secure scholarships from Jackson State University for some of the Talent Hunt Demonstration Participants.

Bro. Robert Crisp, Jr., Ph.D. served as the International Talent Hunt Chairman for the following Grand Conclaves: the 69<sup>th</sup> in Los Angeles, CA, the 70<sup>th</sup> in New Orleans, LA, the 71<sup>st</sup> in Indianapolis, IN, and the 72<sup>nd</sup> in Charlotte, NC.

Bro. Lewis Sears from Alaska served as the chairman for the Talent Hunt Demonstration held during the 73<sup>rd</sup> Grand Conclave in St. Louis, MO.

In January of 2005, Brother Larry C. Pough of Rochester, NY, Second District was appointed as Chairman of the International Talent Hunt Committee (ITHC). Bro. Ernest R. Goode, Sr. of Mesquite, TX, Ninth District was appointed as the co-chairman.

The first task addressed by the ITHC was the revision of the 1987 Guidelines. This was accomplished with input from each District Talent Hunt Chairman via monthly conference calls. Following the review and compilation of all districts' guidelines, the revised guidelines were completed in January of 2006.

In March of 2006, the first ITHC Retreat was held at the International Headquarters in Decatur, GA. Thirteen of the fourteen committee members were in attendance. The committee, in addition to reviewing the proposed guidelines in detail, had an opportunity to discuss best practices being utilized throughout the fraternity. In preparation for the 2006 Talent Hunt Demonstration, two members of the ITHC conducted an on-site visit to Little Rock, AR, the location of the 2006 Conclave.

In 2006, during the 74<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave in Little Rock, AR the Talent Hunt Demonstration was held on July 24, at the Robinson Center Music Hall. All twelve districts were represented at the Talent Hunt Demonstration. Following the Talent Hunt Demonstration, which was videotaped for the first time, the participants were invited to a reception held at the "President William Jefferson Clinton Library."

Leading up to the 75<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave planned for Birmingham, AL, the Talent Hunt Guidelines were made available on the fraternity's website. This allowed each chapter access to the most current

guidelines. The availability of the guidelines via the fraternity's website moved us closer to utilization of the same guidelines throughout the fraternity.

The 2008 Talent Hunt Demonstration was held in Birmingham, AL at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Center Concert Hall on July 13<sup>th</sup>. Each of the 12 districts was represented. Prior to the performance, the International Chairman was interviewed on the local news. Following the performances, Bro. Jimmie James from Jackson State University offered a musical scholarship to each of the participants.

The international headquarters arranged for the professionally taping of the Talent Hunt Demonstration. Copies of the DVD were made available on the international website.

In 2009, working with the International Informational Technology Committee, the ITHC established an "oppf" email account for each of the District Talent Hunt Chairmen. This not only improved the communication process within the committee but it also provided an archive for the storage of talent hunt information within each district. During the transfer of Talent Hunt leadership roles, information from prior years is now available to the new committee leaders and members. In the months leading up to the 2010 International Talent Hunt Demonstration the committee, working with the IT Committee, transferred all talent hunt forms into an electronic pdf format. This allowed chapters and districts to fill out the documents on line and submit them electronically.

The 76<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave was held in Raleigh, NC in July, 2010. This was a return to the area where the Talent Hunt Idea was first conceived in 1945 as a chapter program under the leadership of Past Grand Basileus J. Alston Atkins. During the 76<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave a recommendation was submitted by the International Talent Hunt Committee to provide cash awards to the 12 District Talent Hunt winners during a non Conclave year. This was another effort by the committee to provide equity to the Talent Hunt process. The recommendation was voted on and approved by the conclave.

The 2010 International Talent Hunt Demonstration was held at the Progress Energy Center, Meymandi Concert Hall on July 25<sup>th</sup>. A highlight of the Talent Hunt Demonstration was the presentation of the "Trail Blazer" award to Ms Gwendolyn Delores Friende-Green who was a contestant in the very first Talent Hunt Program which was held in 1946 in Charlotte, NC. The committee is indebted to the 6<sup>th</sup> District Talent Hunt Chair, Bro. Galvin Crisp, Jr. who was able to locate Ms Friende-Green and pay her the recognition she deserves.

During the 76<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave, Brother Dr. Andrew A. Ray was elected as the 39<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus. Brother Dr. Ray reappointed Brother Larry C. Pough and Brother Ernest R. Goode, Jr. as chair and vice-chair of the International Talent Hunt Committee, respectively.

The year 2011 marked not only the fraternity's Centennial Celebration and the 77<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave of the fraternity but also the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Talent Hunt program, the fraternity's second oldest internationally-mandated program. The Centennial Committee had chosen not to include the Talent Hunt as a part of the Centennial Celebration. The Talent Hunt Committee, however, persevered.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> District Conference in May of 2011, the committee obtained final approval, from Grand Basileus Andrew Ray and Former Grand Basileus Dorsey Miller, to host the Centennial Talent Hunt. With less than 90 days remaining and the help of Brother Steven G. Johnson, Assistant VP for Protocol Events at Howard University, the committee was able to obtain the resources and support required to produce an exceptional Centennial Talent Hunt Program. The Centennial Talent Hunt celebration was held on the campus of Howard University, Washington, DC, at the historic Cramton Auditorium on July 30, 2011. Cramton Auditorium was also the location of the International Talent Hunt Demonstration in 1961, during the fraternity's Golden Anniversary.

The 78<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave was held in the city of Minneapolis, MN at the Minneapolis Convention Center Auditorium. This was by far one of the largest venues to host the International Talent Hunt Demonstration with seating for over 3,000 people.

In 2012, the 66<sup>th</sup> International Talent Hunt Demonstration was held. This marked the first time the fraternity hosted International Talent Hunt Demonstrations for three consecutive years (2010, 2011 and 2012). This demonstrated the fraternity's ability to host an International Talent Hunt Demonstration during a non conclave year, provided we have: (1) the financial support from the districts and (2) time available on the agenda during the Leadership Conference.

In January 2013, the International Talent Hunt Committee was informed the grant request to provide a cash award to each of the 12 District winners was approved by the Life Membership Foundation. The year 2013 marked the first year District Winners received cash awards on the International level during a non conclave year, thus proving more equity to the Talent Hunt process from year to year. The committee vowed to keep working toward hosting a Talent Hunt Demonstration during the Leadership Conference.

The 79<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave was hosted in the city of Philadelphia, PA in July of 2014. This marked the 67<sup>th</sup> International Talent Hunt Demonstration which was held at the University of the Arts Gershman Hall in the Elaine C. Levitt Auditorium. This marked the first time an honorary Co-Chairman, Mr. Kenneth Gamble of the "Gamble and Huff" songwriting duo was selected to work with the International Talent Hunt Committee. Mr. Gamble and Mr. Huff were often referred to as the creators of the "Sound of Philadelphia."

History was made in Jacksonville , FL in 2015 when the 68<sup>th</sup> International Talent Hunt Demonstration became the first talent hunt demonstration to be held during an International Leadership Conference. The decision to host an International Talent Hunt Demonstration was recommended, voted on and approved during the 70<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave in New Orleans. The talent hunt committee had pushed for this over the years in an effort to bring parity to the Talent Hunt demonstration during a non Conclave year. Now the students receive not only the same monetary award but also the same experience of traveling and performing at an event of this magnitude.

The Talent Hunt Program of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity has touched thousands of students, many of whom have gone on to make outstanding contributions to their communities and our world. Many have earned scholarships, awards, and recognition through exposure from this program. It is our quest as Omega men of substance to continue to grow in our unyielding commitment to support our youth.