

Ogre Phi Ogre II

Hampton University '76



History

In the beginning there was Ogre Phi Ogre...

When the Hampton University graduating Class of 1973 hears the word “Ogre,” they’re not referring to the big green ogre in the movie Shrek. Instead, the word makes 1973 HU alumni reminisce about their freshman year at HU and how their rebelliousness led to a now treasured HU tradition of class names. They were the first Ogre Phi Ogre class.

But how in the world did they come up with Ogre Phi Ogre? And how has it been able to last this long?

It all began in the fall of 1969, when HU freshmen were considered to be at the bottom of the food chain and the upperclassmen ruled the campus. Upperclassmen (sophomores, juniors, and seniors) were able to participate in many organizations, more so than freshmen were. According to Dr. Pollie Murphy ('73) “at that time upperclassmen were able to pledge social organizations during the fall semester and Greek organizations during the spring semester and we couldn't participate as freshmen.”

“The school was much smaller so you knew just about everyone,” said Hilary Jones ('73). “Freshman men lived in James Hall and everyone knew everyone.” According to Jones, one night a group of the freshman guys were hanging out in James Hall and came up with the name Ogre Phi Ogre. “There was no grand plan,” he said, “we were just a very close-knit class that did everything together. Everyone picked up on it and we were cool; we were just Ogres.”

But who would ever think of Ogre Phi Ogre as a class name?

According to Sidney Ricks ('73), he and “a couple of us guys were always sitting around James Hall arguing about something, and this time we were arguing about what was strong enough to kill a wildebeest.” David Jones matter-of-factly stated “an Ogre!” According to Ricks, the heated debate led to the discussion of how the freshmen were treated poorly on campus. “We would go to off-campus parties with freshman women and they would be allowed in but the freshman guys would be excluded,” said Ricks. Someone decided that as freshmen, we would start our own organization - Ogre Phi Ogre.

They named their class Ogre Phi Ogre, but they needed to spread the word. “We pulled the fire alarm in James Hall so everyone had to assemble on Bemis field,” Ricks said. “Dean Campbell had to check every room before they were able to release us, so while he was doing that we were spreading the word that we were Ogres, and Bernard Thompson, also known as 'Lil' Dino,' was granted the official title, King of the Ogres.”

In order to spread the word to the female freshmen, Ricks said they picked a topic and arranged a “seminar” in the lobby of Harkness Hall. “The real plan was to get the group together, put on some music, and get to know each other,” he said. “Hey, it worked. The next thing I know the guys were chanting Ogre Phi Ogre and the ladies were chanting Ogre Phi Ogrettes, and the rest is history.”

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Just because the groovy Class of 1973 was graduating didn't mean that Ogre Phi Ogre had to die. They decided to continue their legacy and pass the name on to the freshman class, the Class of 1976. The Class of '73, Ogre Phi Ogres, were the first students to organize as activists thereby galvanizing a movement that led to the naming of subsequent classes, refusing to remain silent about the things that really mattered, and engaged others in creating change.

And then there was us – Ogre Phi Ogre II...

In the fall of 1972, class members of Ogre Phi Ogre were charged with orientating, and teaching the history, traditions, songs, and cheers to the incoming freshmen class.

For four straight days, all freshmen class members had to report to the steps of Ogden Hall at 6:00 PM sharp. Here, the class members of Ogre Phi Ogre, not only taught us the history and traditions, but they preached *at* us ad nauseam, declaring their importance as a class, a class that will never be forgotten. They sought and gained obedience by making us play games. One popular game was the 'Shadow Game' where the goal of the person who is IT is to tag the other players' shadows. We were forced to play "Guide/Big Brother/Big Sister" and let your imagination fill in the blanks for this game! We had made it to college only to be reminded of our entry-level status.

It was on day four, after standing in the hot sun, the new initiates (members of the freshmen class) decided that they had had enough! And in a collective act of defiance, we yelled loudly an expletive and in triumph, walked off the steps.

The class members of Ogre Phi Ogre response was "so you all think you're bad?" The soon to be Ogre Phi Ogre II's resounding response was "**Yes, we're bad!**"



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From that day forth, we knew we had to maintain that “Yes we’re bad!” attitude. Eventually, we decided that we were going to take their class name. We had t-shirts made with Ogre Phi Ogre II which we proudly wore around campus.

It wasn’t until the end of the school, the graduating members of Ogre Phi Ogre (Class of 1973) decided that they would “officially” give us their name. But only after performing several activities in violation of traditional campus rules. We were forced to take over “The Grill,” the main eatery in the middle of the campus, by refusing to leave at closing time and partying on the tables.

We had to wear freaky clothing to classes.



After completing our assigned activities, we were instructed to report to the field in front of James Hall. We didn’t know what was in store for us next, and much to our surprise, the class members of Ogre Phi Ogre were throwing a block party for us... our very own “cross-over” event. It was then that they officially gave us our name - Ogre Phi Ogre II – to carry on what they had begun.

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Ogre Phi Ogre II's Act and Traditions Stand...

The activist spirit that spurred the first “Ogres” to establish and set aside their class, also burned deep within Ogre Phi Ogre II class members.

In the fall of 1975, then President Roy D. Hudson declared that our class would graduate “in mass” similar to the big Ivy League institutions like Yale and Harvard. He wanted to rid Hampton of what he felt was the “carnival atmosphere” of past graduation ceremonies.

Our parents came prepared with questions and concerns regarding this proposed change and questioned President Hudson during Parents' Weekend. Perhaps it was the tone, or the questions themselves, or that activist spirit, that infuriated President Hudson to the point that he refused discuss his decision, said something in French and walked out on our parents.

Being the change agents that we are, class members of Ogre Phi Ogre II and our parents successfully appealed to the trustees. The result is that we graduated in the traditional way. Our families, who came from all across the Country for our graduation ceremonies, heard our names called, saw us walk across the stage and receive our degree certificates. It didn't matter much to us that President Hudson refused to shake our hands, because Congresswomen Barbara Jordan did. Notably, this meant more to us because she is the first African-American as well as the first woman to deliver a keynote address at the 1976 Democratic National Convention. As for President Hudson - well, his tenure ended with our graduation.

Ogre Phi Ogre II' Carry On...

In the spirit of the original Ogres, the class name continues to be adopted by subsequent classes every four years later. The “Ogre Phi Ogre” name is the longest running class name of any class in the history of Hampton (Institute) University. As of this writing, the graduating class of 2021 is Ogre Phi Ogre XVII.

We the Class of 1976, **Ogre Phi Ogre II**, continue to be the change in our careers, in our communities, in our country, and in the world. We are “Ogre” strong and our lives do the singing!

Thank You to the Contributors to Ogre Phi Ogre's History:

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