

AZ Alum Remains Connected From Hawaii: Meet **Dr. Richard Criley '62**

Over the years, Dr. Richard Criley '62 has been a driving force of continuing communications with several of his Alpha Zeta brothers. Since his time in the house, Criley has compiled and sent an annual newsletter to the class of 1962. The mailing list has also grown to include a few other graduates from the 1961 and 1963 classes.

"I always took good notes in class, especially when it came time to study," Criley says. "So starting the newsletter was a good fit. I've kept it going for 50 years."

Criley relied on updates from his fellow brothers, having as many as 17 or 18 people contribute to it throughout the decades.

"We had bits of news from the brotherhood," he says. "First we had announcements of children and now have grandchildren and great-children arrivals. I think it's great, and I really hope other classes will start to do it."

In addition to his communication efforts, Criley has been a generous supporter of the annual fund and capital campaigns.

Fellow '62 classmate Frank Madden commented, "Dick Criley was one of the top academic graduates in our class and continued that path of excellence for the past 50 years plus."

Criley graduated from Elizabethtown High School in Lancaster County, Pa. He held a part-time job with a local florist, which is what led him to study horticulture at Penn State. He served as both secretary and president for Penn State's Horticulture Club and led the club's annual show. After receiving both a bachelor's degree and master's degree at Penn State, he accepted an assistantship at University of California, Los Angeles, where he earned a Ph.D. In 1968, he became a professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He retired in 2012 from his first and only job. Though technically his status is professor emeritus, Criley says, "I haven't really found retirement yet."

He remains active in the International Society for Horticulture Science, having served as the chair of the Ornamentals Section and chair of the Executive Committee. In 2002, he was presented the Alex Laurie Award for Floricultural Research by the Society of American Florists. He was named a Fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Science in 1992. He says he also still teaches an occasional course, and he is involved in setting up a symposium at the International Horticultural Congress in Brisbane, Australia this August.

Memories from Alpha Zeta

Criley traces much of his career success to a good foundation in education and classmates who pushed him to succeed. He says his fellow Alpha Zeta brothers were very supportive of his role in the horticulture clubs and often used his expertise for plant-related displays at house functions.

One particularly fond memory for him was a cross-country road trip he took with Glen Zepp '60 and Dave Horne. The trio traveled to Seattle World's Fair for a Horticulture Society event.

"We camped out at a bunch of places along the way," Criley says. "It was such a great experience and it was a lot of fun to experience it with my brothers."

The tradition of throwing an engaged brother into Whipple Dam was alive and well back then too, Criley says. Another tradition was that if a brother had made it through to his senior year without becoming pinned or engaged, he got taken in anyway.

Criley was thrown into Spring Creek instead, where he unfortunately lost his class ring.

“I remember Bob Gilmore was taken, and it took eight or nine people just to get him out of the house!” Criley laughs.

Pursuing a Passion for Gymnastics

Criley’s close proximity to Rec Hall during his time at Alpha Zeta allowed him to continue to pursue another of his passions in life – gymnastics.

“It was really great to be able to walk out of the back door to Rec Hall, practice and then run back to the house and get back to studying,” he says.

Some of the other brothers became involved, as well, serving as team managers and making money by selling concessions during meets.

Criley competed throughout his time at Penn State and then became involved with the gymnastics team at UCLA. He assisted Coach Art Shurlock in running competitions and helping with athlete training. Combining his love of the sport with writing, Criley began contributing to the Modern Gymnast magazine, for which he covered the 1972, 1976 and 1984 Olympics and several World Championships as well as numerous NCAA championships.

After he accepted the job in Hawaii, he became the gymnastics coach in 1973 and served the team until it was discontinued at the university in 1976. In the 1980s, he began a lengthy career of judging sports acrobatics, including many national and world championships.

His knowledge and professionalism for the sport led him to serve on the board of directors of the United States Sports Acrobatics Federation for 25 years. The organization was founded in 1975, and Criley helped develop its initial constitution and served in various officerships. The name changed in the 1990s to the United States Sports Acrobatics. He also became an international judge and chair of the International Technical Committee.

Criley traveled back to State College in April 2013 to honor Gene Wettstone, a Penn State coach who was a crucial part of his gymnastics career. Wettstone passed away a few weeks later in July 2013, shortly after turning 100 years old.

While on campus, he was stopped in to see Dear Old Alpha Zeta and visit with the current actives.

Advice for the Actives

When asked about advice he has for current students, Criley emphasized the importance of making and keeping connections.

“Network as much as you can before graduating,” he says. “Get to know the people in your career who can help lead you to a good job. And keep in touch with your fellow classmates.”

Criley can be reached at criley@hawaii.edu.