

THREE DAYS

IN THE LIFE OF A CHAPTER

It's 11 pm on Wednesday, November 12, 2008, and all of the screaming has ended. The check presentation is over. The brothers and contestants have gone home. Yet Taylor Johnson, the chairman of the Theta Chi Chapter's 2008 Miss Sorority Row (MSR) philanthropic event, is still gathering up the last of his belongings and thinking back about the event. It went off without a hitch, and after a year of planning, he and the rest of the chapter deserve to take a break for a little while (until the planning for next year's event needs to start)!

For two days leading up to MSR 2008, *The Carnation* was in Athens, Georgia following Taylor and the other brothers as they prepared for the largest Greek philanthropic event on the University of Georgia's campus – while also doing the business of the fraternity and attending class.

EVENT OVERVIEW

The 2008 Miss Sorority Row event was the fifth annual event for the Theta Chi Chapter. First held in 2003, MSR raises money for The American Red Cross, and is a typical beauty pageant – much like Miss America – with a twist. The categories within the larger event include a banner competition where sororities create banners with the theme of MSR (this year, Dance Fever) in support of their candidate. In addition, there are Gameday Wear, Talent, Evening Wear, and Q&A categories, with fun performances from campus groups between each.



Briana Jewett, Miss Sorority Row 2008, with the Brothers of the Theta Chi Chapter at the University of Georgia.

The 2008 event included representatives of 17 campus sororities, and was judged by five people, including Theta Chi Chapter Advisor Art Richard, *Tulane '59*. Richard has been a judge for all five events, and loves to give his time to this great cause. The other judges included two former Miss Georgia pageant contestants and a Delta Sig Founding Father, Chris Freedman, *Georgia '03*. The event is a full chapter production, with all brothers being involved in some form or another throughout the yearlong process leading up to it.

In years past, the Theta Chi Chapter has held the event in the on campus orchestra hall, which really was not conducive to the size and scope of what the event was – a professionally directed pageant directed by Freedman's mother, Lynn. For the 2008 event, they moved to the 1,500

seat Classic Center, the largest venue in Athens, and sold around 1,300 tickets filling the majority of the seats.

Miss Sorority Row, Inc. is an incorporated non-profit in the state of Georgia, and is led by an eight-person board of directors – all Delta Sigs. This year's co-chairmen, Taylor Johnson and Nick Walther, put in hours and hours throughout the lead up to the event. And in the three days immediately preceding the event, they, and all of the other brothers, were going non-stop as you'll see in the coming pages.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2008

6:30 pm Brothers and new members come together for the chapter's weekly meeting – the chapter's elections. Brothers running for each office give speeches, take



Taylor Johnson on the headset with the sound and lighting professionals at the dress rehearsal the day before Miss Sorority Row.

questions, and a hearty debate for each elected position is had (*Editor's Note: the debate on the president lasted nearly an hour by itself*). By the time all is said and done at 10:15 pm, the president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and sergeant at arms have been elected to lead the Theta Chi Chapter for the remainder of the 2008-09 academic year and into 2009-10.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2008

9:00 am A breakfast meeting is held at the local IHOP with MSR Co-Chairs Taylor Johnson and Nick Walther, as well as chapter president Will Linthicum. At the meeting, discussions revolve around the event's schedule, the lighting and sound for the event, plans for the day, the walk through later in the day, and how ticket sales are going. All is well on the MSR front just less than 48 hours from the beginning of the event.

10:15 am After breakfast, Johnson begins a trip to shop for last minute supplies and things that will be needed for the event, while Walther heads to class and Linthicum heads back to the chapter house before his next class. While MSR is an important event for the chapter, the brothers still have class and other obligations to take care of throughout the three days leading up to it.

11:45 am Johnson returns to the chapter house after his shopping trip only for a few minutes, and then heads back out to a lunch meeting with MSR Director, Lynn Freedman, her assistant Betty Panick, and event emcee, chapter member Mark Meredith, Georgia '05.

Noon Lunch kicks off at the Texas Roadhouse and the discussion begins on how the planning is coming along, the timing of contestant and brother arrivals, the plans for the day's run through, the ticket set up, and all of the lighting and sound details. Freedman is the creative vision behind Miss Sorority Row, and has been planning for tomorrow's event for nearly ten months with the contestants and chapter members. She also has worked tirelessly on the music and choreography for the between-category intermissions.

3:45 pm After Johnson returns to the venue from another shopping trip, one of the first performers arrives and a discussion is had with Johnson and Freedman about some problems with the venue that have been encountered throughout the day. These problems include the difficulty in getting the 17 contestants from the dressing rooms to the stage in an appropriate amount of time to keep the show moving, and an issue with the music CD that was created for the event. Johnson has decided that he will be backstage during the event talking to the sound and lighting people to cue them on when certain things must happen – something he wasn't planning on doing.

4:05 pm Some stress for the organizers due to only one contestant having arrived for the dress rehearsal. They were supposed to all have arrived by 3:30 pm. The planning that went into the process has helped with this though, as they built in some flex time due to this exact situation.

5:00 pm Catastrophe (almost)! One of the brothers heavily involved in the between-category choreographed dance numbers decides he is going to a concert in Atlanta as opposed to the run through/dress rehearsal of the show. After a tense conversation with Johnson, the brother agrees to attend the event as opposed to the concert.

By this time, all of the newest members of the Fraternity have arrived as well, as they will be taking part in one of the dance numbers between the categories of the show. They are excited to be involved, and are ready to take part in the tradition of the event.

7:35 pm About ¼ of the way through the dress rehearsal, all of the contestants and brothers in attendance stop and head out to grab some pizzas at a local restaurant. The chapter takes care of this for everyone involved as a thank you for their efforts.

11:11 pm Johnson closes up shop for the night after the full event run through that took much longer than they had expected. A long day for the men of the Theta Chi Chapter will only lead to a longer Wednesday – the day of the event.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2008

Morning The brothers are all in class ensuring that they are doing what they are supposed to do while at school – getting an education. At the same time, Wes Fugate, IFC Advisor, told *The Carnation* that the university is excited about the impact the Theta Chi Chapter is having on campus. "They have certainly met my expectations of what outstanding service to the Greek community would be," he said.

2:45 pm A meeting is held at the Classic Center venue with Director Freedman, Johnson, and others surrounding last minute changes

or details that need to be discussed. They talk about where in the program the emcees may need to fill time, and where they think the parts that will be the most well received are. Freedman mentions, "The event is just very entertaining, and the women in the audience are going to like it because it's so fun! We don't want the contestants to feel the cut-throat competition, so we try to make it as fun as possible."

3:15 pm The judges begin to arrive, and Johnson is dealing with the need for more parking passes for contestants, judges, and other VIPs who will be in attendance. As this is going on, other brothers who have arrived are hanging the sororities' banners in the theater, preparing the signs to designate where each sorority will sit in the theater, and preparing the lobby with programs and ticket booths.

4:45 pm Johnson is in the dressing room backstage making notes in the script for last minute changes that are occurring so he can call the information out to the sound and lighting folks. The judges have gone to dinner, and Johnson is preparing to change into his tux. He is also making notes for his acknowledgement speech that he will give at the beginning of the program.

Brothers are arriving and Lo Isidro, one of the MSR Board members and head usher for the evening, is preparing them for their duties in getting people to the correct seats as they arrive. There will be 33 brothers ushering in the theater. He is also working with Ben Zhang, another Board member, to hang the last of the banners in the theater as they arrive with the contestants.

5:15 pm The venue's sound guys let Johnson know about a problem with the CDs that have been made, and that they may not work in the CD player that the venue has. Johnson troubleshoots and a new CD is made by a brother who is not yet at the event.



Contestants of Miss Sorority Row 2008 at the dress rehearsal the day before the event.

5:35 pm Last year's winner, Lauren Kelley, a member of Sigma Kappa, arrives and begins going through the questions that will be asked in the Q&A session. She will be the person asking the questions to this year's contestants, and talks a bit about her thoughts on the event. "I think it's pretty impressive what the guys do to make the event what it is. A lot of work goes into this that I'm sure a lot of people don't understand. It's put on like a real pageant, and you can tell how much time they spend getting ready for it. They do a great job."

5:53 pm Mark Meredith, the event emcee, makes an announcement for participants in the opening dance number to "come to the stage. Don't worry about your clothes... Well, wear some clothes, but just come to the stage," getting a large laugh from the contestants and brothers in attendance. This definitely helped lighten the mood from a very hectic day for all involved.

6:00 pm A final run through of the opening dance number and presentation of the contestants happens before they open the doors to attendees of the event.

6:15 pm The doors open for the event, the music is pumping, and the first attendees begin piling into the theater.

6:45 pm The chapter has really come together to make the event an outstanding representation of the Fraternity. A lot of very positive comments are being thrown around in the audience, and the brothers are all coming together with words of encouragement and positive thoughts as the beginning of the event nears.

7:05 pm As the event is about to begin, one of the contestants has decided to change her talent at the last second. She was doing a singing piece, and has changed it to better suit her talent. Johnson and the other organizers have rolled with the punches well and have made the change in the scripts and music selection.

7:15 pm The event begins, the crowd roars as the contestants are being announced, and MSR 2008 goes off without a hitch.

11:00 pm A year of planning has come together in an amazing testament to the hard work and dedication of the brothers of the Theta Chi Chapter, and their hard working director Lynn Freedman. The winner is announced as Briana Jewett from Kappa Delta Sorority and she will wear the crown of Miss Sorority Row until next year's event comes together to crown the 2009 winner.



Newly initiated brothers of the Theta Chi Chapter in costume for their between-category dance number.