

Eulogy for Matthew P. Omans, by Alex Aidun, with thanks to the brothers of the Lambda Chi Alpha Cornell Chapter for their assistance with composition and editing.

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In the fall of 2006 I met a Cornell Freshman by the name of Mathew Omans and we quickly developed a friendship that I always expected to last a lifetime. I began to know Matt as an incredibly unique individual, confident and driven yet humble and respectful toward those around him. Still, as a young man Matt needed direction and it became clear to me that not only would he benefit from being a part of the Fraternity that I had recently joined, he would be one of those people who would give back many times over. I can honestly say that at the time I never knew the type of relationship we would develop nor the impact he would ultimately have on Lambda Chi Alpha and those who knew him at Cornell.

Matt was capable of developing friendships with all kinds of people due to his diverse interests, experiences and infectious personality. A very strong athlete, Matt was never one to turn down a game of basketball with a group of brothers. His intellect allowed him to engage intelligently in conversation on a number of topics, enabling him to connect with brothers and those around him and appreciate or even assist in their work at Cornell. As a true gamer you could always count on Matt to share a game of Madden or Fifa, and be a positive sport about the experience. In addition to the above Matt was also a comedian and an entertainer, able to make you smile with little more than a goofy face and a silly sound. Of course, his antics didn't stop there and he could often be found freestyling to himself about irrelevant topics. Every time you would find yourself

following along and wanting to be part of the fun. It was this attitude that made you want to be around Matt – whether serious or goofy, whatever Matt was doing at the time he put 110% into it and made you as well.

While Matt had a “nothing will faze me” attitude and would often skirt around serious topics in an effort to make light of difficult situations, at the core of Matt’s lifestyle was compassion for those around him. He would often speak about his family, his love for them and his desire to make sure they were always taken care of. He spoke about how his father was his hero and his mother his rock, his older brothers, Chris and Jesse, his mentors and idols and his sister Kate his best friend. Matt exuded love and affection, and he made you want to as well. When it came time to have serious conversations, if you needed a brother to lean on or help you sort out your problems, Matt was always there. Matt’s door was always open and so were his arms. This duality existed throughout his Cornell career and beyond and as he became a man it ultimately shaped him.

A few months ago I was travelling for work when Matt called me. He was frustrated by his job at AT&T, feeling selfish and like his talents were being spent on selfish tasks. We spent over an hour talking about how he was going to start a company dedicated to helping people; he wanted to figure out a way to make the lives of small business owners easier. Throughout our conversation he continually repeated that the only phrase he would focus on was “how may I help you.” He wanted that mantra to be the driving force behind his daily life, living for others and helping to build foundations for friendships and relationships. Matt believed that he could build a career, a life, an ideology based on that simple phrase. It didn’t stop there; Matt saw the world as one big service project, always eager to help people and trying to improve the lives of

those around him. He believed that he could create a single company that could reach out to people in need with that simple question and do whatever it took to improve their lives. We can only imagine what Matt could have accomplished given his internal fire and intelligence, and we should make it a point carry on that vision. I challenge each of you to make that practice and approach to life a part of yours in his honor.

When I was asked to explain what brought me and Matt so close I was overwhelmed trying to comprehend it myself. We connected on so many levels because Matt was so many things. We would spend hours philosophizing about life and our goals, what was our purpose and how do we achieve it. The front steps of the fraternity became our perch and we could be found there at any hour of the day reflecting on past conversations or creating new memories. Matt's inner artist produced unique solutions to problems and approaches to difficult situations, always able to understand me in a manner that allowed me to be completely open with him. We were able to be ourselves, together nothing could break us and nothing could hold us back, we were completely alive. Our combined energy was remarkable, and Matt's never ending ideas resulted in many amazing experiences. We were always on the same page. Matt was incredibly supportive and I felt his love early in our friendship, whatever I was doing was exactly what he wanted to be doing as well. It wasn't long before we spent most of our time together. Out of college Matt would visit me while I travelled or vice versa. I could always count on Matt to be there when the weeks on the road became lonely and repetitive. Matt inspired me to be a better friend and person.

Matt was a master of, as Jesse phrased it, inventive contractions. If you are a brother of Lambda Chi Alpha you may know this concept better as wombo, or word combo. I can guarantee that

every brother who knew Matt has found themselves taking advantage of this word play at some point during or after their Cornell career. Now I'm not sure if everyone here today has had the privilege of sitting down with Matt and listening to Hyphy music and his explanation for what is going on. Frankly, no one is really sure. The Hyphy movement is centered in the Bay Area of California; at its foundation it is an expression of individualism through music and dance. It became common place in Lambda Chi, embedding itself in one of our favorite past times – the Hyphy Run or Hun. On a regular basis some combination of brothers would gather together and listen to Hyphy music in an effort to energize ourselves for what would always be an impossibly difficult run that none of us could finish. Our loop took us along Stewart Avenue, up an incredibly steep hill, over the suspension bridge at Cornell and then up another flight of seemingly endless stairs. Once the climb was completed we would queue up and jog across the arts quad hoping to find the strength to finish the run. Every time we approached Ho Plaza, an area flanked by two libraries and frequented by tours, Matt would pick up speed. By the time Matt arrived at Ho Plaza he was sprinting, arms in the air weaving through students, teachers and visitors screaming “Hyphy” and “Thizz” (a phrase associated with the Hyphy Movement). This energy was infectious and soon we would find ourselves doing the same thing racing each other to get home. To this day I still have a “Hun” playlist and I've listened to it every time I have run since Matt's passing. You know you've been touched by Matt Omans If you've ever had your arms wrapped around another brother chanting a wombo; if you've ever run through Lambda Chi Alpha chanting thizz; if you've ever listened to music and had no idea what was being said; if you've ever walked in a room and been blindsided by a bear hug.

In the last week I have communicated with upwards of 100 people about Matt's passing, and there is no easy way to talk about it. Looking back I can't imagine my Cornell experience and

the years since without Matt by my side and looking forward I can't imagine what it will be like to grow old without him. What happened is tragic and mind boggling, and we have all tried to rationalize it in different ways. I'm not sure Matt ever understood the impact he had on the brothers and people around him, and it is a terrible shame he never will. Each of you being here today is a testament to his ability to touch those around him with a simple smile and a few nice words. If he were here today and could see us all here, Matt would walk around the room, giving each of you a hug and describing what makes you an awesome person. Therefore, on behalf of Matt I would like to express our combined love for you all, you are incredible people for being here today and helping carry on Matt's legacy.