

# The Owl's Nest



## A Tribute to Geoff Darling

Tragedy has a way of bringing people together. Only a few years ago we were faced with the sudden passing of our Brother Jeff Kace '05 in August of 2006. Other Brothers have been lost over the years, too, and now we are all saddened by the sudden passing of Brother Geoff Darling '88.

As with the death of Brother Kace, our brotherhood rallied and a great many things have resulted from his death. Though none of us would ever wish to lose a brother, it happens, and it won't be the last time. It maybe painful now, but in time, Brothers Kace and Darling can and will live in our hearts, just like many of the other brothers who are gone. We just need to continue to carry their torch.

Now is the time to reconnect with Phi Gamma Delta.. I challenge each of you to reach out to brothers with whom you have lost touch. Find them! Get them involved! Gather again and share in those fraternal bonds because "friendship is the sweetest influence."

A recolonization effort is underway; an effort that Geoff Darling believed in. In the coming weeks, be prepared for a recap of the 2010 Pig Dinner when plans were unveiled for the recolonization of Alpha Omega. In the meantime, I ask that you do your part to reconnect and then stay connected. Visit our website at [www.oufiji.com](http://www.oufiji.com).

Don't miss out on what's happening with your fraternity; Please update your profiles, including your email address, on the website. To update, click on your name in the top right corner of the page after logging into the site, and any part of your profile can be updated. It is that easy!

We also have a huge presence online with Facebook, and it is a great way to stay in touch. You'll find a wonderful site under the title of OU Fiji Alpha Omega Graduate Brothers.

Also, did you know that there is a wonderful gathering of Brothers in the Columbus, Ohio area each summer for an event called "GFUAB"? (Ask Tiger Thiel, he'll tell you all about the conclusion of last year's event.)

Reconnect and stay connected, but in the meantime, let's mourn the loss of Geoff Darling, and those who have gone Ad Astra before him. We miss all of them!

**The news of Geoff Darling's passing arrived via a quiet and lonely posting by Rob Dale Ellis '86 on Facebook at 10:20 AM EST on Memorial Day. Quickly word began to spread and simply put, all of us were stunned. Many of us were speechless and in disbelief...**

- *FIJI Brothers - yesterday we lost one of our brothers - Geoff Darling passed away from a heart attack. Cherish every day and the ones you love. Geoff, your laugh will be missed; So many good times and memories. You were too young to leave us.—Rob Dale Ellis '86*
- *OMG!!! I am shocked to hear the news.—Ken Slon '86*
- *My roomie? Gone? - John Giegel '88*
- *Geoff! God rest your soul. You were too young, much too young.—Mike O'Shaughnessy '87*
- *Unbelievable, very sad... - Ken Brenneman '90*
- *This is ghastly. I liked Geoff so much. What happened? This is horrible news.—John Cassese '76*
- *Hi, I'm getting on a plane and I saw your email. Is this for real? - Jeff Fortney '91*
- *Shocker, what on earth happened? - Jason Phillips '95*
- *Way too young and way too good of guy for this to happen—Rob Agnew '89*
- *Sad to hear! Geoff was such a great guy.—Dave Raterman '92*
- *What a loss! - John Gibson OSU '75*
- *This is just awful and really hits close to home.—Otis Hess '90*
- *I'm crushed...I just don't know what to say.—Tiger Thiel '85*



### ALPHA OMEGA GRADUATE ASSOCIATION

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**The outpouring of words over the loss of Geoff Darling was immediate. There was an immediate reaction by email and on Facebook. Edited reactions from many brother's are posted here...**

*Geoff: I struggle with finding words that adequately express what I'm feeling... You simply were one of the reasons I pledged our Fraternity. I clearly remember times where your influence steered this lost freshman and know-it-all sophomore with some rational guidance. I'm a better person (and probably still alive) from it -- thank you. Sweet Knees, you will be greatly missed.—Chip Eschenfelder '90*

*Damn it, Sweet Knees: Pin number! It wasn't anything close to your turn yet...Thanks ever, Geoff, for your friendship and brotherhood, your kindness and your patience, your knowing look which often communicated more meaning and encouraged more thought from your working in the wings than what many offered from taking the stage.—John McCoy '87*

*Geoff—You were a great guy with a wonderful sense of humor. I am so very sad as I am sure we all are. How we will all miss the sound of your voice, your incredible laughter and your love of the Fraternity. Brother "Sweet Knees" we remember you with love and friendship. We remember your devotion to Phi Gamma Delta. And we look to the heavens and see a new white star shining in the night sky. Rest among the stars Brother Darling. We remain your Brothers always.—John Cassese '76*

*Geoff - I hope & pray that I can live my life at least half as well as your example of dedication to family & friendship. God guide you on the rest of your journey and comfort your loved ones with all the happy memories of life with you. On this day:*



*Speak your love. Speak it again. Speak it still again. Speak it still once again.-All my Fiji Brothers: I love each of you. Fratres qui fuerunt, sed nunc Ad Astra. Then he saw only darkly but now sees face to face. God speed "Sweet Knees", my dear Brother.—Tim Adams '88*

*Geoff: As I read of your passing today, I simply stared at the message in disbelief. You were such a great influence on so many lives including my own. You will be missed by more people than you ever knew. Thank you for touching my life. It was an honor to have known you. You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers and will be forever. Rest in peace my friend. Rest in peace.—Jay Blumberg '89*

*Geoff - I am sorry I didn't drop by your office last week to deliver the gift that is still sitting in my foyer - I would have truly enjoyed hearing your laugh one last time. It is odd to think that when we met in the 80's you were already "middle aged" in your life. I guess that may explain your premature maturity and wisdom. RIP.—Dan Hall '89*

*Geoff: I know you will be missed. I know that so many are in pain... but there is comfort in knowing a man's worth - a brother's accomplishments - are not weighed in the words of his printed obituary. They are weighed in the hearts and minds of those he loved and those who loved him. I'm a better brother, a better friend, for having known you. I lost a fraternity brother this weekend. It makes your heart heavy... At the same time, I am grateful for having known you and have so much respect for a man who knows friendship really IS life's sweetest influence. Geoff, rest peaceful in the hands of the Almighty.... Godspeed.—Matt Brock '89*

*Geoff: you were a shining example of brotherhood to all of us. It was hard to add your name and picture to the Ad Astra page of oufiji website tonight..... rest peacefully brother among the purple clouds! - Rob Valloric '88*

*I met Geoff for the first time at this past Pig Dinner. We had some funny interactions prior to the weekend in trying to find a pig for the dinner. After numerous emails, and suggestions, Geoff found a suitable pig for the annual fest. When we eventually met in Athens, we had a great laugh on how he finally found a pig and it was like we were old friends. What a terrific guy and giver to our fraternity. I am proud to call him my brother and friend. Rest in peace Geoff and may his family, friends and all of my brothers stay strong under these tragic circumstances.—Rick McCarroll '80*

*RIP Geoff, my brother and friend.—Chris Beckerman '91*

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*I lost dear friend and Fraternity Brother on Sunday. Geoff Darling lit a world full of darkness. He spread laughter and joy to so many. I lit a candle this evening in his honor. Thanks for being a great friend and Brother to so many of us. You were a great mentor and friend to all. Thank you for all of the true friendship! We have all lost a true friend and brother. You had such a big heart, great laugh and put life into every day. Angie and I will keep your family in our thoughts and prayers.—Chris Ferguson '89*

*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Rev 21:4 -- Geoff RIP—Gary Staley '89*

*Geoff, I spent the day trying to make sense of your passing, but it makes no sense. I thought back to how you always added class and dignity to every event, time and time again you made FIJI special. You were FIJI for me. You were the example of a gentleman. Of course, we never missed a chance to share a laugh in the corner at an AOGA meeting or at Pig Dinner. The world is a duller place tonight. Perge' - Kevin McGraw '90*



*Geoff: I am devastated! You have always been there with your big smile, your big laugh and your big welcoming bear hug. As a brother, friend and my former roommate I am now feeling a terrible sense of loss. I texted you yesterday at 4:01 pm to share my excitement over watching a driver (Conway) that Tricia and I both met two weeks ago was leading the Indy 500 near the end of the race. You would always text back, but yesterday you didn't text back. Goodness, you will be missed! - Mike Hennessy '89*

*Geoff, you always had the special talent of putting smiles on anyone's face. You brightened my life so many times, and will be in my prayers. For those that know... Perge' - Jeff Lepore '89*

*Wow, that's incredible, so young. What a great guy! - Marty Minor '85*

*I'm so sad to report news of Geoff Darling's passing, yesterday, May 30, at age 44. I have been in touch with several Brothers and we are gathering information as appropriate. Please hang in there patiently as details pending services become available, and join me in praying for Geoff and his family.—John Sweney '88*

*"Sweet Knees" Darling, God must have needed you to brighten heaven with your laugh. Rest in Peace Brother—Jeff Keller '90*

*I will miss "Sweet Knees." My thoughts go out to his family. Sad news indeed! I am glad that I was able to see him when I was back for the last Pig Dinner in April. This is one reason why PIG is so important. We do not know what tomorrow will bring. I will miss you my friend and brother. My thoughts go out to Geoff Darling's family today (Ohio Fiji '88).—Ken "The Bear" Slon '86*

*Geoff - you will be missed my Brother. My deepest sympathy to your family. I'm calmed in the knowledge that we will be together some day, laughing and making more memories. God Speed! - Brett Britton '85*

*Godspeed my man, Godspeed! I have missed you all these years and now that you are gone I won't ever have the chance to talk with you again. Thanks for being a great brother and friend. Thanks for caring about everyone you ever met, as you never met a stranger. I enjoyed the time we had together. My thoughts of you will always be fond. You will always be remembered as a great man. Very very sad to hear this. To all my FIJI Bretheren, I have much love for all of you! Perge! - David "Doc" Kalil '90*

*I got a chance to see Diane and Jenn. I gave them big hugs from all Fiji's and friends. They know what the brotherhood meant to Geoff.—Bret Mayne '85*

*Words need not be spoken at this time...Still in shock...Thanks for being a true friend....RIP—Jason Phillips '95*

*Sorry to hear this news. Best wishes to his family...he was much too young.—Jeffrey Jones '89*

*Ad Astra—Unknown*

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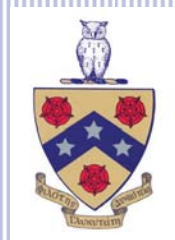
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*I have known Geoff since '93 and have kept in touch on a regular basis - I just spoke with him a couple of weeks ago. He was only 44 - very sad for his family—Ken*

*He was way too young, way too soon. Our brother in the stars - carry on, purple knight. Perge' - Onefijiframe*

*I am devastated to hear this news. I can't believe it. Geoff was a very good man, a gentle soul and an extraordinarily dedicated Fiji. He was way too young.—Dave Slater '67*

*My deepest sympathy to Geoff's family during this time of mourning. The sudden loss of a FIJI Brother touches the heart s of all who knew him and called him Brother. God Bless.—John Kemper '84*

*I wish I could make it (to the funeral).—Dave Pruni '88*

*I had not checked my home email or Facebook in several days and did not know of Geoff's passing until I read it in the Columbus newspaper this morning. What a shock and what a loss for his family and for the fraternity. As you may recall, I had the pleasure of working with Geoff when he was the undergraduate treasurer. Then and now I had and have the highest respect for his positive approach to life and for his character. If he said he would do something, not only would he do it, but he would do it with excellence and with a smile and a laugh.—Ken Sechler '71*

*I met Geoff at the last function I attended and realized at that time that he was the son (???? or other relative) of Walt, who was in the fraternity the same time I was.*

*I am saddened by your loss and pray for the best for both of you.—John Petrone '67*



I have weathered a few storms in my life, including two tornadoes, one of which I stared right in the face. Certainly you have faced your own storms in life, too. In my mind, though, none of these storms can compare to the tragedy of losing someone close to you; someone like Geoff Darling.

The death of a loved one is a storm that none of us wants to face, yet it continually happens to all of us. When it happens, somehow we cannot escape it, but we can choose how we'll handle it.

When I received the phone call about Geoff from fellow Fiji brother, John Sweney, I was devastated—Geoff Darling had died! My reaction was similar to many of my brothers; complete and utter shock and a total sense of loss. This was a storm that I never expected; not this Memorial Day – not ever.



Sunday May 30<sup>th</sup> marked the four year anniversary of a storm I still struggle with today: The passing of my mother. While I was grieving her loss on that day, I found some excitement to take my mind off of things, Indianapolis 500.

At 4:01 PM, I texted a few people, including Geoff, about how the race was unfolding. You see, I was excited that Mike Conway, a 26-year-old British Driver, was leading the race. My wife and I had met him nearly two weeks before at the track; her picture was taken with him. Yet, Geoff Darling did not text back. Geoff almost always texted back, but not this past Sunday, and I consciously thought this was strange.

It is my understanding that on Sunday Geoff stepped into a boat that he would never step out of; at least not in the way we would imagine it. In a cruel twist of fate, Mike Conway faced a storm of his own, but somehow he survived. In the last lap of the race his car flipped over in a horrific accident, but unlike Geoff, someday Mike will walk away.

My close fraternal friendship with Geoff dates back to Athens, Ohio, and our days spent as undergraduate brothers in Phi Gamma Delta on the campus of Ohio University. When I recall those days,

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Geoff was always there; smiling and laughing. Eventually we became officers on the same cabinet for the undergraduate chapter. I was the note taker – the Recording Secretary, while as Treasurer, Geoff was our second in command.

Our fraternity brother John McCoy said it best about Geoff, when he wrote on Facebook this week...

*"Thanks ever, Geoff, for your friendship and brotherhood, your kindness and your patience, your knowing look which often communicated more meaning and encouraged more thought from your working in the wings than what many offered from taking the stage."*

During our meetings, when I would look up from my notepad, Geoff was right there. Later on, we would become roommates while living in our fraternity house on 20 S. College Street. We weren't the best of roommates, and we didn't even make it through the entire year together, but it was an experience as much of college is.



After school, people have a tendency to drift apart. It is a natural progression in life: new jobs – new cities – family. Though I was never on Geoff's Christmas card list, I would always look forward to seeing Geoff. As the year's advanced, when I would return with my wife for our fraternity's annual Pig Dinner gathering, Geoff often would be there. He would always greet us both with big welcoming bear hugs, a huge smile and that laugh.

There was always a special bond there, as Geoff could identify with my wife. Not many people have had the pleasure of being Crandall's roommate. Nor have many people had the pleasure of being roommates with Geoff, or as he was commonly referred to, "Sweet Knees."

During the past 14 months I went with my heart, and chose to throw myself back into the Fraternity and lend my support as an active graduate brother. Not for college days alone! In my first meeting as a newly committed brother, I journeyed to the chapter house on the campus of Ohio State, and sure enough, Geoff Darling was there.

Last November, at our Pig Dinner in Columbus I accepted an award for distinguished service with my graduate chapter, and who was there to present me with this award? Geoff Darling.

When I stood before my brothers as the Symposiarch for Pig Dinner this past April, who was there to coach me on my role, support me, enabling me to be successful? Geoff Darling. At that same Pig Dinner, Geoff was recognized for spreading his wings as a Silver Owl for 25 years of service as a brother in Phi Gamma Delta.

When Geoff died on Sunday, he was honorably serving in a role at which he was quite good. As Vice President of our graduate association, Geoff was always lending stability and support with our efforts. He was someone we could always trust and someone we believed in. In all of these years, I never came across one person who could say a bad word about Geoff. He really was a "darling."

On Monday I didn't anticipate that my role as Director of Communications (yep, I still have that notepad) for our graduate association would lead me to craft a brief email for distribution to our 800+ graduate brothers. I had the unfortunate task of announcing the worst of news, my brother and dear friend, Geoff Darling had died. Yet, Geoff is still here. I can see that big smile. I can hear his big laugh and I can feel that big welcoming bear hug.

As I have lost people who are close to me, I have begun to take on the difficult role of delivering tributes. Though it is hard, God placed me on this earth for a reason, and He granted me the gift of communication. But as some of you might agree, He has never helped me with my ability to be long winded. So why am I sharing these words with you now? It is simple: Geoff Darling is family. And as his brother, it is my duty to honor him.

Geoff has now taken his place among the stars...pure and white he will continue to shine bright and I know that one day, when it is my time, I know one person who will greet me at the gates of heaven with a big smile, a big laugh and a big welcoming bear hug, Geoff Darling.

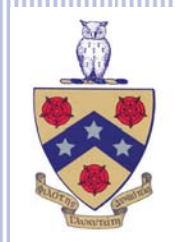
Geoff, you have weathered the storm, in a very purple kind of way. I'm mighty proud to have called you my brother. Rest in peace, Geoff! A round of "clicks" for Geoff Darling.

Faternally,

Michael Crandall Hennessy '89 (Director of Communications)

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## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Brothers,

I know that we collectively continue to be in shock and grieve over Geoff's untimely passing. I very much share the emotional upset at this time and strive to find something appropriate to say to help relieve our sorrow, but I am completely speechless.

I did want you to know that I received very kind and thoughtful email messages from Bill Martin and Justin Burns [2010 Pig Dinner Keynote Speaker] overnight; both asked me to convey their deep sympathies to all of you and to let you know how highly Geoff was regarded by our Brothers in Lexington. I also spoke with Dave Slater last evening, who is equally devastated by Geoff's passing.

We continue to pray for Geoff and for his family at this very difficult time.

Ron Sages '73  
Perge!



*Dear FIJI brothers: There are never the appropriate words to say/write at a time like this, however here goes:*

*"...we are all travelers in this world,  
from the sweet grass to the packing house,  
from birth to death  
we travel between these two eternities,  
another friend among us is traveling on"  
author - unknown/anonymous-John Andrews ' 69*

## **Geoffrey "Geoff" Randolph Darling**

LONDON: Geoffrey "Geoff" Randolph Darling, age 44, passed away unexpectedly Sunday, May 30, 2010.

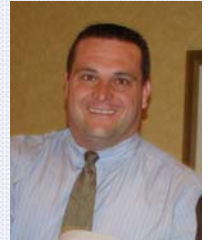
He was born on January 7, 1966 in Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Geoff was a 1984 graduate of Dublin High School and a 1988 graduate of Ohio University. Geoff was very active with the Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity (FIJI) and continued his participation as an Alumni Advisor. For many years he worked at Ameriprise Financial as a Certified Financial Advisor. Geoff loved spending time attending his daughter Jenn's activities at London Middle School as well making his daily trips to the YMCA. He also enjoyed home improvement projects.

Survivors include his wife, Diane Darling; daughter, Jennifer Lynn Darling; parents, Roger (Kathleen) Darling and Carolyn (William) Moehl; brother, Kevin Darling; step-brother, Scott Moehl; and stepsister, Nicole (Matt) Young.

Family and friends may call Friday, June 4, 2010 from 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. at SCHOEDINGER MIDTOWN CHAPEL, 229 East State Street, Columbus, where funeral service will be held Saturday, June 5, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. Pastor Gordon Johnson officiating. A graveside service will follow at 12:00 p.m. at Maple Grove Cemetery in Lancaster, Ohio.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in Geoff's honor may be made to his daughter Jenn's scholarship fund through your local PNC Bank branch or a charity of your choice.

<http://www.schoedinger.com/>



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