

# **The History of the Society of Orion:**

**By: William A. Matthews Jr.**

*The Society of Orion has been around since June of 1999. No one is really quite sure of the exact start date of the Society of Orion but we generally celebrate our anniversary on the first Thursday in June. Most of what we know about the history of the Society of Orion is passed down through story telling. This is the first attempt by anyone to actually record some of our history.*

## **Society of Orion Version One: The Early Days**

June of 1999: Two young gentlemen, Chris Tweit and William Matthews frequently spent time together after their Monday night Boy Scout meetings. On occasions a very colorful individual joined them by the name of Nick Pikar. The young men knew each other from a local Boy Scout troop stationed in South Saint Paul. Bill, the oldest of the three had been with the Scouting movement for almost 15 years at the time. In his time in the Scouting movement he had watched the organization degrade to nothing more than a “revolving door for Eagle Scouts”. Troubled by this he often approached the subject with the two young men. They decided that they would create an “after Scouts” program for after their meetings. They decided to give the name of their organization, “The Mississippi River Gang”, because they met at Harriet Island, which was on the Mississippi River. Before the course of the meeting Bill and Chris made up an “initiation ceremony” to put new members through. Nick was soon the first person to go through the new induction process. After the next meeting the Mississippi River Gang once again headed down to Harriet Island. They brought along a new member named Mike Kollars, also a member of the same Boy Scout Troop. During the meeting they decided that The Mississippi River Gang wasn’t really the name they wanted for their group. After looking into the night sky and seeing the constellation Orion Bill suggested calling the group the Orion Syndicate. That night Mike Kollars was initiated into the Orion Syndicate. Also during this month Bill began to develop the very first rank and structure system for the new group. Bill was the very first elected president of the Orion Syndicate. Chris was elected vice president. Nick became chairman of inductions and Mike became the secretary of membership. Though a lot of things have changed since those days (especially with our induction process) a few traditions have carried on into our program today. One of these traditions is the use of Society names. Every person when inducted is given a name. Bill became Billy Dean, Chris became Udo von Popen, Mike became A.P.H., and Nick’s name was unique in the fact that it changed just slightly every meeting.

Summer of 1999: During the course of the summer Collin Gohl (Mega-Dog), Erik Michalsen (Sentinel), Ken Thurstin (WWJD), and Doug Salstrom (Kovorkian) joined the ranks of the Orion Syndicate. The rank and structure of the group was still being developed and at this time the group still had no purpose other than meeting together and just hanging out at Harriet Island.

Fall to winter of 1999: As the weather grew colder the Orion Syndicate needed to start meeting indoors. They began meeting at Subway/Java Planet in South Saint Paul. Also at this time Bill began keeping a notebook of all the rules in the Orion Syndicate. The members began collecting dues at this time. The first virtues were beginning to emerge. Honesty, Honor, and Humor became the first three virtues. Later through the beginning of the winter months the other nine virtues have been added to the list.

Early 2000: The group was still meeting on a regular basis after the Monday night Boy Scout meetings. Also at this time a new member Sean Malloy (Alpha) joined our ranks. To this date Sean is the only person in the Society of Orion who did not go through his initial induction. He would later go through the normal induction a few months later when the snow cleared at Harriet Island. It was also decided that they needed a full meeting night for themselves. Thursday night became the new meeting night. The Orion Syndicate also put on their very first show for the Boy Scouts of troop 95. The production crew of the show called the M.O.O.O. (the meaning of what M.O.O.O. stands for was lost in obscurity) Crew became the “actor’s guild” of the Society of

Orion. The show consisted of several skits, a game show and an awards ceremony for the Boy Scouts. It was a big success for both the Boy Scouts and the Orion Syndicate and began the forward thrust into the program of what is now called the Society of Orion.

### **The Society of Orion Version Two:**

Spring to Summer of 2000: To get a more family friendly name the Orion Syndicate decided to change their name to the Society of Orion. Nick and Chris slowly faded into the background as their family obligations increased and other members started to become more prominent. Collin was elected to Secretary, Mike Kollars became the Vice President and Bill was again elected as the President of the organization. Also at this time Erik and Bill began investing in "Laser Challenge" gear. We began playing laser tag through out the summer months. Also during this time the Society of Orion adopted a point system structure for rank advancement. This complex system was set up and written down creating a way for the members to advance in rank and show progress. Also at this time Knowledge Awards on various topics and Skill Badges were adopted. Members could create these awards on a certain topic and then administer them to other members. It was a system that was designed so that everyone could be a teacher and a student within the Society.

Fall to winter of 2000: Three very important things happened at this time in the Society of Orion's history. The first was the induction of Joel Pokorny (Primus). Then a shy and awkward person, Joel later developed into one of the most prominent figures in the Society of Orion's history. The second was my introduction to Mr. Jeff Maltby. Though he was a bit skeptical of our organization at first he helped push our organization in the right direction to bring about the changes into what we are today. The third important event was our first "service project" to the community. Just before Christmas a radio station asked for the public's help to make and send Christmas cards to units stationed overseas. Some of these brave men and women would receive no other seasons greeting and the Society of Orion wanted to make sure to help out. We sent in over 30 Christmas cards that year.

2001: New members came and went through out the year of 2001. The year was for the most part uneventful other than further development on rank advancement. The M.O.O.O. crew once again put on a show for troop 95. This time it was a huge production. It was a game show with prizes, and even commercials. It was a lot of work and a lot of fun for both the troop and the Society of Orion. After the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> the Society of Orion raised over three hundred dollars and sent it to a fire department in New York hoping that it would help replace some of the lost equipment needed by them. Also during the fall of 2001 the Society of Orion went to the Maltby nature preserve and put on their very first service project with the nature preserve. We picked wild flower seeds to help preserve them for the next year. Also Bill's mom took the very first pictures of the Society of Orion using her digital camera. The very first developments of our web site began to take shape around the end of the 2001-year. New members joining during this time also were treated to our new induction. No longer called an initiation, this softer, kinder approach was developed to help eliminate hazing that might have occurred with the old process. At the end of the year we had begun to realize we were out growing our favorite meeting spot. So we packed up and moved across the street to the Burger King in South Saint Paul. In an enclosed area in the back we were able to hold our meeting. The staff welcomed us with open arms.

2002: This year became a year of traveling for the Society of Orion. We took several trips including one to Austin, MN to see the SPAM capitol of the world. We also were involved in yet another M.O.O.O. crew production. This year we hosted a murder mystery for the Boy Scout troop. Unfortunately due to the degradation of the troop this became the last M.O.O.O. crew production the Society of Orion did for that troop. We also traveled to the Bass Lake Cheese factory on several occasions through out the year. Two more Maltby service projects were set up during the year. One held during the spring building trails, and the second in the fall picking seeds and staking out trees. During this second project we presented Mr. Maltby with a check. This check was money we raised and collected selling green ribbons to friends and family. We raised the money to help the developing nature preserve with its fledgling program. The Society of Orion was involved in

their first major fundraiser. Cub Foods Woodbury lets organizations run a hot dog stand to raise funds for their organization. With our ties to the store the Society of Orion was given their first opportunity to raise funds for their organization. Also this marked the year of the biggest road trip in the history of the Society of Orion. Bill had discovered this road trip years ago and went on this trip annually. This year he included the Society of Orion. The two-day journey to Missouri became a legendary pilgrimage to everyone involved. Four members, Bill (Billy Dean), Sean (Alpha), Joel (Primus), and Nathan Mitchell (Kid Cider) journeyed to Missouri. We stopped in Blue Earth, MN to get our picture taken with the Jolly Green Giant, LeMars, IA to visit the ice cream capitol of the world, and several other stops. It was a great bonding experience for all the members participating. Also during the course of this year Frisbee became the outdoor activity of choice during the summer months.

### **The Society of Orion Version 3.0**

2003: Despite the fact that we are not even halfway through 2003 the Society of Orion is already having an exceptional year. We are actually developing a serious program of studying nature and the economy in a positive and fun way for all members. In February of this year Bill called all the active members of the Society of Orion together after having a chat with Mr. Maltby about where the organization was going. Sitting together they decided to refocus the purpose and make it clearer on what they needed to do. The old dysfunctional program was disassembled and a new one was put into place. The Society of Orion ordered their first uniforms. A system of beads was added to the Society of Orion to help the members show their accomplishments in the organization. Several trips and activities were planned and the Society of Orion inducted their first female member, Angela Filler (Mocha). All in all it was a great renaissance for the Society of Orion. So far this year the Society of Orion participated in two spring service projects at the Maltby Nature preserve. The first project was helping the preserve to build their tree nursery. We planted almost 300 trees in six hours. The next weekend the group returned to help build trails throughout the preserve. The Society of Orion sponsored the very first "Great Minnesota Chase". The fun and exciting event sent the members scurrying across the Minnesota solving clues and riddles that Bill hid throughout the twin cities area. Bill was found by the two participating teams at Como Zoo. The Society of Orion started up a bird watching group and has taken several small day trips out looking for new birds, capturing them on film when they can. During one of these trips the Society of Orion observed two parent Eagles on the St. Croix River feeding their young eagle fish. The Society of Orion took a trip to Banning State Park where they hiked the trails of the state park. Also on this trip the Society of Orion took the opportunity to study three small grocery stores. Perhaps the biggest highlight of this trip was visiting the Midwest Country Theater and attending a tribute concert to Johnny Cash that starred Johnny's younger brother Tommy Cash. The concert was great and we got to meet Tommy afterwards, shake his hand, get autographs, and our picture taken with this legend in his own right. The Society of Orion was approached by Troop 107 (Bill's original troop) and asked if they could use our group laser tag gear for a meeting. Bill stepped up the offer and supplied the Society of Orion as well. It was a great time for both groups and we hope they will invite us back to do other activities with them. This year also marked big organizational change in the Society of Orion history. Approval of program no longer is part of the President's job. Instead this now falls into the job description of the Chief Director. It is the Chief Director's job to approve new Certificates of Knowledge as well as design the program for the meeting. The Chief Director and his directors then take their ideas and give them to the president to implement into the program. Also the dues are no longer collected at the beginning of each meeting; instead members pay a one time fee for the year. It should be also noted that for a brief time in the summer of 2003 a brief rift was created in the membership of the Society of Orion. Due to quick thinking on the leadership's part this rift was quickly sealed with out the loss of any members. The Society of Orion was also permitted to work the hot dog stand at Cub Foods Woodbury again; this time they were given two weekend dates. The Society of Orion decided to donate a portion (\$111) of their proceeds to the Maltby Nature preserve. August 23<sup>rd</sup> the Society of Orion hosted its annual Potluck dinner to celebrate accomplishments and to bring our families together before we go on our Missouri Road Trip. We had a really good turn out and it was really fun all together. August 24<sup>th</sup> to August 26<sup>th</sup> the Society of Orion embarked on their annual road trip. Among the stops were the Birthplace of John Wayne, the Hogback Bridge, several grocery stores, the firework warehouses in Missouri, and a tour thru the

Cub Foods in Ames, IA. Special thanks go to Angela Filler who taped a lot of the road trip and gave copies to all the members. On September 12<sup>th</sup> thru the 14<sup>th</sup> the Society of Orion returned to the Maltby Nature preserve to help out with an event called the Chautauqua. We got to drive golf carts around the nature preserves ferrying gear, customers, and staff around the preserve. On September, 18<sup>th</sup>, William A. Matthews was awarded the Bronze Ecology Award; he is the first member to complete all three Bronze Awards. The fall of 2003 also brought us the first Star Officer Induction. Collin and Joel were selected to participate in the challenging and secret induction to earn a star for their uniform. Both passed with flying colors. During the Christmas party held on 12/18/03 it was announced that the Society of Orion would be joining with the Maltby Nature Preserve to develop a youth oriented program. The leadership structure in the Society of Orion was shuffled around to accommodate the new plan shortly after.

### **The Society of Orion and the Maltby Nature Preserve (Version 3.5):**

After much discussion and reorganization the Society of Orion has decided to partner up with the Maltby Nature Preserve. The program of the Society of Orion is now being geared for younger children and young adults from ages 8 to 21. After holding a large dinner on January 31<sup>st</sup> Jeff Maltby has given the Society of Orion approval to move forward with our new ideas.

2004 was a very turbulent year for the Society of Orion due in part to member Collin Gohl. Shortly after the first of the year, Collin was kicked out of the Society of Orion for various reasons, including lying and for several accounts of insubordination. During this whole mess Sean and Mike booth decided to take a hiatus from the group for various reasons. In the spring of 2004, The Society of Orion began it's restructuring of its base meetings. We had successful meetings that centered on nature themes including birds, geology, and several uses of campfires. We also had some very successful road trips. One trip to Grantsburg was very successful in the fact that we got to visit a nature sanctuary at Crex's Meadows in Grantsburg, WI. We saw several new types of birds, and a wonderful array of habitats. We also visited the Grantsburg City museum. It was a wonderful little museum that went into great detail about the cities origins and history. Overall this was one of our more successful trips. We also had a trip into Staples, MN where we did some bird watching, and did some city walking. The MO RT went to the east side of Iowa this year and the Society of Orion broke a record by visiting 19 grocery stores during the three day trip. Stops included Ottumwa, IA and Maquoketa, IA. During this trip we visited the Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque, IA which went into great detail about life, history, and wildlife on the great river. Overall, it was a very great trip. The last trip we went on before winter set in was a trip to Green Bay, WI. We visited a cheese factory in Colby, WI as well as visited historic Lambeau Field. Also during this year the Society of Orion is seeing the first and emerging newsletter for our organization. During the Star Officer Induction Joel was invited to go thru a new induction to earn his second star for the uniform. Mike was also invited to join the ranks of the Star Officers. Congratulations to the both of you. Towards the end of the year we saw two new members join our ranks. Daniel Pokorny became the first relative of another member to join our ranks and Rebecca Robbins became our second female member as well as our first member that lives out of state. Rebecca and Bill met online playing an online role playing game and they became fast friends. Rebecca created a new logo for the Society of Orion and helped, along with Joel, reignite our website. At the end of the year we also saw our very first newsletter sent out to our members.

Winter 2005: Many new changes have come to the Society of Orion. The SO has decided once again to go off and try to become an organization on its own. Bill began to establish the very first Board of Directors with the Society of Orion and we began to write our Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. The SO also took a trip to the Science Museum of MN to see the Chinasaurs exhibit. Also the Society of Orion awarded its first ever Grocer of the Year Award to the Hy-Vee in Ottumwa, IA. The Society of Orion online project neared completion at the end of March with our new website at [www.societyoforion.org](http://www.societyoforion.org). Complete with our own email address. The Society of Orion also offers its first Handbook for Awards and Recognition which allows members and non-members alike a variety of awards that can be earned through the Society of Orion program. The Society of Orion on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2005 had its first informal meeting of the Board of Directors. Those in attendance were Don Dvorak, William Matthews, Joel Pokorny, Angela Filler, and Michael Dietz. On July 31<sup>st</sup>

the SO had its very first Board of Directors meeting. We tweaked the bylaws and articles of incorporation, as well as set up a few committees. It was a great step towards the future of the SO.

### **Honorary Members:**

Throughout the years the Society of Orion has elected one person from the community to become an Honorary Member of the Society of Orion. This has been given out to individuals who have helped out in their communities and/or the Society of Orion. Here is a list of Honorary Members:

1999: James Rupert: For outstanding service to the Boy Scouts of America.

2000: William Matthews Sr.: For outstanding Service to the Boy Scouts of America/The Society of Orion.

2001: Jeff Maltby: For outstanding service to the Society of Orion and the Boy Scouts of America.

2002: Mike Kenow: For outstanding service to the Society of Orion and the community at large and outstanding performance in the Grocery Business

2003: Dennis Mitchell: For outstanding service to the Boy Scouts of America.

### **Member of the Year:**

The member of the year is given to the member in the Society of Orion who has shown the most improvement and/or dedication to the Society of Orion movement. Only one of these is given out per year and it is one of the highest honors the Society of Orion can bestow upon a member:

2003: Joel Pokorny (Primus)

### **History of Leadership:**

President (This position was retired in 2003 and was replaced by the Program Director):

William A. Matthews Jr. 1999 – 2003

Vice President (This position was retired in 2003):

Chris Tweit 1999 – 2000

Mike Kollars 2000 – 2001

Sean Malloy 2001 – 2003

Joel Pokorny 2003 – 2003

Secretary (This position was retired in 2003):

Collin Gohl 2000 – 2003

Chairman (The Chairman position was changed to Chief Director in 2003):

Joel Pokorny 2001

Nathan Mitchell 2002 – 2003

Chief Director (Replaced the Chairman position in 2003, this position was retired in 2003):

Sean Malloy 2003 – 2003

Program Director:

William A. Matthews Jr. 2004 – Present

Asst. Program Directors:

Joel Pokorny 2004 – Present

Angela Filler (Administration): 2004 - 2005

Sean Malloy 2004

Michael Dietz 2004- Present

### **Board of Directors:**

Chair Person:

William Matthews Jr. June 2005 – Present

Vice Chair:

Joel Pokorny June 2005 – Present

Treasurer:

Kathy Unruh June 2005 – Present

Logistics:

Don Dvorak June 2005 - Present

### **Members Past and Present:**

\*\* = Retired

William A. Matthews Jr. (Billy Dean) 1999

\*\*Chris Tweit (Udo von Popen) 1999

\*\*Nick Pikar (?) 1999

\*\*Mike Kollars (A.P.H.) 1999

Collin Gohl (Mega-Dog) 1999

\*\*Erik Michalsen (Sentinel) 1999

Doug Salstrom (Kovorkian) 1999

\*\*Ken Thurstin (WWJD) 1999

\*\*Sean Malloy (Alpha) 2000

\*\*Jeffery Fischbach Jr. (Bean) 2000

\*\*Joe Parnell (Tribbles) 2000

\*\*Anthony Bets (Twinkletoes) 2000

\*\*Tim Potasek (SoBe) 2000

\*\*Brad Sargent (Shard) 2000

Joel Pokorny (Primus) 2000

\*\*Matt Dalin (Chunk) 2001

\*\*Tony Berge (Burnsie) 2001

\*\*JJ Williams (Fog) 2001

\*\*Nathan Mitchell (Kid Cider) 2001

\*\*Michael Dietz (Darth Heel) 2001

\*\*Raphael Racine (Silent Jay) 2001

\*\*Angela Filler (Mocha) 2003

\*\*Daniel Pokorny (Junior Member) 11/25/2004

Rebecca Robbins 12/10/2004

**Star Officers:**

3rd Star Officers:

William Matthews Jr. (2003)

2<sup>nd</sup> Star Officers:

Joel Pokorny (1<sup>st</sup> Star 2003, 2<sup>nd</sup> Star 04)

1<sup>st</sup> Star Officers:

Mike Dietz (2004)

Collin Gohl (2003)

**Administrative Staff:**

Administrative Staff are members of the community who wish to help out in the Society of Orion but either does not wish to be full members or cannot become full members of the Society of Orion. Administrative Staff members usually take on a specific job or some form of advisory position.

Steven P. Toombs (Editor: Picayune and [www.societyoforion.com](http://www.societyoforion.com)): 2005 – Present