

John goes before the Bench

John's matter came before the Bench early in December. Instead of charges being dropped and the case dismissed, as I both hoped and expected would happen, the Judge convicted him on four counts. The convictions were not for things John did, but for actions he allegedly did not take as the responsible adult, such as shutting down the party immediately upon learning that underage attendees were drinking. On a positive note, charges of theft were dismissed for lack of evidence against John.

If I understand John correctly, as adviser to the fraternity he can give advice; however, despite the court's ruling to the contrary, he is not endowed with the power to act as or be held as the fraternity's authority figure who dictates policy.

Such misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the law led to the filing of an appeal, and to my decision as Editor and Contest Administrator to produce this special addendum to the December Edition of The Diplomat to try and rally poetic support for John.

Who is the real John W. Crawford?



John W. Crawford is the landlord of the house rented by the fraternity. Part of the court ruling is the order that John cannot come within 100 yards of the house for the next year. It appears he is being punished for circumstances over which he has no control. According to John, the fraternity governs its own activities and conduct, and the responsibility for abiding by the rules and law reside in the actual representatives of the fraternity, among whom were adults over the age of 21 the night of the sting—so responsible parties are his renters!

While more than 100 people were present at the party that started the controversy in September, John W. Crawford was the only person arrested, charged, and tried by judge, and footing a bill in excess of the \$500 he won as his Senior Poet Laureate stipend. His lawyer has petitioned for John's conviction to be reviewed by the Circuit Court. Such facts led me to conclude John was an apparent scapegoat who deserves to be cleared.

Will John's Senior Poet Laureate title be stripped? I conferred with several other state winners of Senior Poets Laureate awards and they agreed unanimously with my decision: Definitely not!! That is, John earned his titles and will remain both 2012 Arkansas Senior Poet Laureate and 2012 National Senior Poet Laureate. This is the least we can do because 2012 was a banner year for awards and recognition of John W. Crawford, not an iota of which was mentioned in the stories that villainized him in his hometown newspaper.

Who is the real John W. Crawford? The same summer news of his arrest was published, John received two awards for volunteer work (playing and singing) at six rest homes. He told me, "My greatest honor was awarded by the Arkansas State Senate for all my volunteer work of 30 years, including my years of service to HSU and to the Phi Sigma Epsilon and Phi Sigma Kappa fraternities on campus, both of which merged in 1985." These facts made it seem to me like someone had a sour grapes attitude toward John, or the fraternity renting his house.