

# **Calhoun Ludlow Harper Howard, S'54**

February 9, 1934 – August 12, 2008



Cal Howard was born on February 9, 1934 in Orange, NJ. His parents lived in New York City but at that time it was common for people to go to the new hospital in Orange to have their children. Because of his parentage, he had dual citizenship in the US and Ireland, and his Irish heritage and brogue would go on become the source of many great laughs in social gatherings throughout his life.

He did not attend elementary school until sixth grade. Instead, on a 25 cent daily allowance, he would learn early independence and self reliance on the streets and in the movie theaters of New York City, reading Classics Comics, and eating at Horn and Hardart automats, (he fondly recalled their specialties of fried cornmeal mush, baked beans and creamed spinach). He lived with his father after his parents' divorce, and learned how to converse with adults at parties and other gatherings in Greenwich Village. This unusual early education was sufficient for him to rank first in the state of New Jersey according to a statewide test of entering sixth-graders when he finally entered public school in Summit, NJ

"The streets of New York were different then," Cal said. "We played stick ball, the street gangs, such as they were, kept things clean and safe. We opened hydrants, but there was no crime. We lived next to Little Italy, and there was no crime there at all. It was very safe. We did not see many drunks, no homeless people, or roving bands of rapists or muggers. Greenwich Village was a great place to live then."

An early interest in guns was developed when Cal was 9 years old, when he and his dad went shooting in upstate New York. Later, when Cal found an old Colt revolver at a site where street crews were excavating for a sewer line, his mechanical skills began to develop. He got the revolver working, and managed to make some black powder--this when he was 11-12 years old. When he was in graduate school, a master mechanic taught him how to use milling machines and lathes so he could do more sophisticated gun repair work. In 1960, he became a federally licensed gunsmith. He owned an extensive collection of firearms, many quite rare, and was a

practicing gunsmith until his final days.

Stricken with polio at age 14, Cal was paralyzed. "I was six feet tall and weighed 98 pounds," he recalled. The polio was not as serious as it could have been, but after it was over, he needed to build himself up. He was an admitted loner, and preferred those activities where he could participate on his own, such as track, gymnastics, and a bit of football. He managed to be second in the state as a high-hurdler.

When the Korean War broke out in 1950, Howard, then 16 and just out of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, signed up for the Marine Corps using an altered birth certificate. The Marines discovered his age and threw him out. Later, in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade he joined the Naval Reserves. After high school graduation, he went on active duty but he, along with four others in his company, were put on ready reserve and allowed to go to college. He enjoyed the pride of being a part of the Navy from 1951 - 1959. "They taught discipline and honor, both of which appealed to me," he said.

His higher education began at the University of Virginia where he received a BA in geology in 1956. In the middle of his college career Cal married Dorothy A. Johnson, affectionately known at "Dot", on June 19, 1954. She was a high school classmate and was going to Bucknell University. The Howards have three children, Craig, Cal and Susan, and eight grandchildren.

The University of Virginia had a huge effect on Cal. "Here was an entire community living up to a code of conduct where 'a university gentleman neither lies, cheats or steals'", Cal said. "Unfortunately, life is not usually like this, but attending classes there and signing a pledge of honor at the end of every exam was a real character-builder." The lessons stayed with him his whole life.

It was at the university that Cal became less of a loner and more of a leader. Howard was initiated into the Serpentine Club a local fraternity, in the last such class at the University of Virginia in 1953. In 1954, the Serpentine Club, joined the Sigma Phi Society, and so did Cal. As an only child, for the first time in his life, he was surrounded by brothers. Because the Serps were new to Sigma Phi, there were no older Virginia Sigs to serve as mentors. Instead, Cal met Sigs from all the other chapters who visited the Alpha of Virginia. "I never distinguished between chapters. All Sigma Phi chapters mean the same to me," he said. Sigma Phi became his family.

Upon his graduation in 1956, Cal moved to New York to begin work as a technical salesman for National Metals in New York and began graduate study Columbia University at night where he received his Masters in Mineralogy in 1958. He then became a Research Fellow at the Atomic Energy Commission. He earned a Ph.D. from Columbia in Geology and Chemistry in 1963 and went to work as a consultant for McKinsey & Co.

His work career also included roles as Director of Planning and Commercial Development along with other high-level staff and line jobs at Phillip Morris. He served as a Vice President of H.J. Heinz Co. in Pittsburgh, PA. and in 1983 retired at the age of 48 as Corporate Vice President, Scientific, Environmental and Medical Research for the Mobay division of Bayer, A.G.

At the same time as he was beginning his professional career, in 1956, Cal joined the Sigma Phi Standing and Advisory committee as the Virginia delegate. Simultaneously, and as a brand new graduate, he became the president of the Sigma Phi alumni association of Virginia, a position he held for the next 10 years. He attended the annual Sigma Phi conventions every year until 1968, when he missed the Wisconsin convention. Aertsen Keasbey, then chairman of the Society, and John Hughes approached him before the convention to talk to him about the upcoming election. Keasbey wanted to step down as Sig chairman, and in absentia, at 34 years of age, 12 years out of college, with a wife and three children, Cal was elected national chairman of Sigma Phi. "That's why I never missed another convention," Cal said.

"In those early days, by definition to be on the S&A committee, one had to live in New York City," he said. "Most of the members were in their 50s, 60s or 70s." Since he was the only Virginia Sig in New York, he was the youngest man by far on the S & A. "There wasn't much to do back then," he said. "Wink Mayer ran the meetings and took care of the publications. The meetings took only an hour. I had a chance to observe much older Sigs, many of whom were out of touch with the chapters, and I was different. I was younger, an alumni president, much closer in age to the undergraduates, and was much more engaged with what was happening back at my chapter.

In 1975, after moving to Pittsburgh with H.J. Heinz, Cal kept returning to New York to attend monthly S & A meetings, and thought, "if he could do it, why not recruit other S & A delegates who don't live in New York, and why shouldn't alumni presidents be the representatives to the S&A?" As a result, Cal introduced some changes of which he was particularly proud. "We changed the meeting frequency to twice a year, added new players from around the country and gradually lowered the age of the delegates." He also started separate meetings of alumni association presidents and included them in S & A meetings more often.

Seeing the need for a stronger national organization that could step in and help local chapters in times of need, in 1985 Cal helped establish the Sigma Phi Educational Foundation. Today that organization provides grants and loans to chapters, and along with the S&A and the Viele Scholarship Trust, offers financial assistance for the undergraduate leadership training seminars. In a similar effort to help local chapters Cal established a national liability insurance program that helped our chapters pool resources and risks to obtain lower premiums. Over the years our chapters have saved many thousands of dollars compared to purchasing such insurance individually.

In addition to making significant changes to the S & A organization, Cal was especially proud of getting the Viele Scholarship Trust under the control of the Society. Originally a California educational trust, the Viele might well have gone to other causes. After an eleven-year effort, many meetings, calls, and trips to California, Cal's perseverance paid off and the trust was transferred to New York in 1997, a first for a California educational trust. The corpus of \$2.7 million was put into the hands of the S & A to administer permanently for our Society. Since 1978, over 875 scholarships have been awarded to 500 Sigs, for a total of over \$2.8 million over 30 years.

At the same time as he was leading the Society, Cal also used his energies and management expertise to run and serve on the boards of many volunteer organizations on Martha's Vineyard, where he and Dot made their home after his retirement. Positions included: Chairman of the Board of the Vineyard Open Land Foundation and Chairman of the Board of the Martha's Vineyard Hospital Foundation.

Cal and Dorothy's home on the Vineyard, overlooking Oak Bluffs harbor, was the site of many Sigma Phi executive committee and annual Viele selection committee meetings. Sig Sister Dot was a full partner in Cal's Sigma Phi chairmanship and knows and cares about our Society as much as any brother. In 1997, the Howards established a permanent residence in Jupiter, Florida, which soon became the Alpha of Jupiter, and site of the winter meetings of Sigma Phi alumni association presidents.

After 31 years, Cal stepped down as chairman in October 1999 at the national convention at Union College, but his influence and dedication continued. He served on the Chairman's Advisory Council for his three successors, continued to serve on the Viele Selection Committee until 2007, and in 2007, with his good friend and Sig Brother Grey Perry, C'56 embarked on an extensive research project to document the life of Francis S. Viele, G'1885 and the scholarship trust he left for the Society. The 468 page tome is a testament to the dedication of a man who gave endlessly to the Society for the vast majority of his entire adult life.

And so it is that Cal Howard influenced and guided our Society for 40 years - with honor, integrity, enthusiasm, intelligence and laughter. His influence will continue long into the future. He has preserved that which we all love so much. He kept the faith during trying times. He kept the flame burning brightly for us and for generations of Sigs yet unborn.

We owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude. As we remember him now it is perhaps appropriate to slightly modify a phrase from our initiation ritual to say, "*...so long as that pulse shall continue to beat - and even long after it shall cease, so long shall our friendship and love for you, our brother Cal, remain firm and inviolate.*"

Never forget the brother.

*Written by L. Grey Perry, C'56*