

Sigma Phi

flame

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Time for Sigma Phi:

- *March 4 in Chapel Hill* (pp 6)
- *Connecting by phone* (pp 8)
- *Looming Madison Convention* (pp 18)

Vulnerability: Unexpected Source of Sig Connection

by Christy Lambden, T'11, 2027 Committee Chair | lambdenc@gmail.com



The alumni of the Alpha of North Carolina have developed a new tradition in the recent past.

That practice allows each alumnus an opportunity to share a life update with all of the alumni of the T chapter twice a year. This practice, started by Brandon Wong, T'13, offers alumni an opportunity to reconnect.

The emails and the direction they have taken have far exceeded my expectations. They have provided opportunities for Sig participants to share the struggles, challenges, and successes they have faced since graduation. In sharing good news and bad, our emails have provided opportunities for brothers to be candid and vulnerable with each other from a distance, further fostering a healthy culture that grew when we were undergrads in Chapel Hill.

While vulnerability isn't specifically enumerated in the values of Sigma Phi, it strikes me that it underpins all three of our enumerated values. Without a willingness to be vulnerable, we can't expect to find areas of meaningful similarity with our brothers. We can't expect to truly know them, and we run the risk of being unable to help our brothers when they truly need us. It's my view that we can't truly live out the Society's values of without vulnerability.

However, vulnerability is not an easy thing to manifest, and even harder to achieve via email. That so many Chapel Hill brothers readily

embraced a new space which allows them to be vulnerable and to offer support to one another demonstrates anew the bonds that were built during college's undergraduate years in Sigma Phi.

I've drawn these conclusions from my participation in this still-young Tarheel email initiative:

1. While college may be great at preparing us academically, there is still a lot to learn about independence and life in general after graduation.
2. The "human need" alluded to so eloquently by Elihu Root, H'1860, in his landmark 1935 letter - for connection, for friendship and for brotherhood - extends beyond graduation, and can be addressed by Sigma Phi.

At our recent 4th March business meetings, the Standing and Advisory committee discussed the idea of creating a groundbreaking new program entitled "Life 101" where Sigma Phi offer undergraduates and young alumni the opportunities to connect with older alumni to benefit from real world advice about real world needs. The hope behind such an idea is that we can find experts in particular fields to put themselves on video providing suggestions about such real world essentials as: how to network; how to land a job; how health insurance works; the importance of actively investing for the future; the value of credit scores; etc. Interested young Sigs brothers

would be able to watch the videos, and - should they desire - reach out to participating alumni with queries. Such things aren't taught in college and likely would provide real opportunity for our Society to add value to the lives of young Sig adults.

Could Sigma Phi perhaps meet even more of "the human need" that Brother Root described so well? We know that there are more demands on undergraduates than ever before, and more demand for a meaningful social network once active graduate from college. How can we expand to meet this growing human need? How can stretch ourselves to be our best...and to expand our impact?

- Through vulnerability.
- Through connections.
- Through brotherhood.

My significant hope is that - as brothers in Sigma Phi - we'll continue to permit ourselves to be vulnerable and we'll continue to build connections. At the same time, I earnestly hope that the national organization can increasingly become a facilitator in those important and ongoing life processes.

(If you have recommendations for the kinds of real world wisdom which should be included with the proposed "Life 101" curriculum, please e-mail Christy with your suggestions. - Ed)



SPEF Joins the Fix-it-Up Housing Craze: Well... OK, Not Exactly

by Jack Romaine L'90, President, Sigma Phi Educational Foundation (SPEF) jeromai1@yahoo.com

Residential real estate shows are everywhere on cable now. Turn on the radio and there is a commercial for someone to train you to make a fortune in residential real estate using other people's money. Residential real estate is back. Well, SPEF has embarked on a program our original formation documents foresaw: investing in residential real estate within Sigma Phi.

One of the questions we are often asked is "What does the national do for local chapters?" SPEF is helping the Alpha of California and Alpha of North Carolina with housing. More specifically, SPEF is providing a tax-deductible means for the Alpha of California to raise funds for its Thorsen House renovations. It is likewise investing in a mortgage for the Alpha of North Carolina that helped our Tarheel Sigs purchase their first house.

ALPHA OF CALIFORNIA

Back in 1998, and working in conjunction with the Alpha of California, SPEF achieved a landmark ruling from IRS allowing our member Sigs to qualify for income tax contribution deductions for their donations to restore and maintain

One of the questions we are often asked is "What does the national do for local chapters?"

California's historic Thorsen House. Under this ruling, when a strict conditions are met, our fraternity-related Foundation may accept tax deductible donations for the restoration of a Sigma Phi Society fraternity residence. The Sigma Phi Educational Foundation was the first fraternity related organization to achieve such IRS approval. My understanding is that the Sigma Phi

ruling is now used by many other fraternity foundations to raise funds for their chapter houses.

The partnership between SPEF and the Alpha of California has been a tremendous success. Since 2016, over \$250,000 has flowed to the Thorsen House restoration project from California Sig alumni and other interested parties. That represents at least \$62,500 in personal tax deductions those Sigs received! Brothers wishing to contribute to the Thorsen House restorations make a one time or recurring donation to SPEF with a Thorsen House earmark. Those funds are kept separate from other SPEF monies. The total of those earmarked funds is updated at least monthly and then shared with the Berkeley Sigs' Alumni Association. SPEF works closely with the Alumni Association to make sure projects fall in the acceptable bounds of the IRS ruling. We disperse funds to California as certain milestones are reached.

(continued on page 4)

In 2017, the focus at Thorsen was on the Timber Bridge Project. The total cost of demolition and reconstruction of the timber bridge connecting the Sigma Phi Place and its garage was \$226,000, of which SPEF reimbursed \$30,000 in 2017, and \$37,581.31 in 2018.

Joel Shumaker, I'80, the President of the Alpha of California Alumni Association and Dan McNear, I'78, the Alpha's Treasurer, serve as the interface with SPEF as we work on projects. Jerry Barclay, I'71, acted as the project lead on the most recent effort with Tom Saxby, I'79, providing architectural support, and Tim Moran, I'76, as the lead contractor for the Timber Bridge project. Thanks to these Brothers and those that came before them for helping make this collaboration such a great success!

ALPHA OF NORTH CAROLINA

SPEF's help for the Alpha of North Carolina was more straightforward. Following the guidance of our corporate charter, SPEF provided a \$60,000 mortgage to the Sigs at UNC to purchase a house at 3 Cobb Terrace in Chapel Hill. SPEF is allowed to invest a limited portion of its total portfolio into mortgage securities. We anticipate the loan will be repaid in less than 15 years. The S&A joined SPEF in offering a mortgage to the UNC Sigs and R.J. Lackey, S'85, loaned personal funds to make this house purchase possible.

WHO'S NEXT?

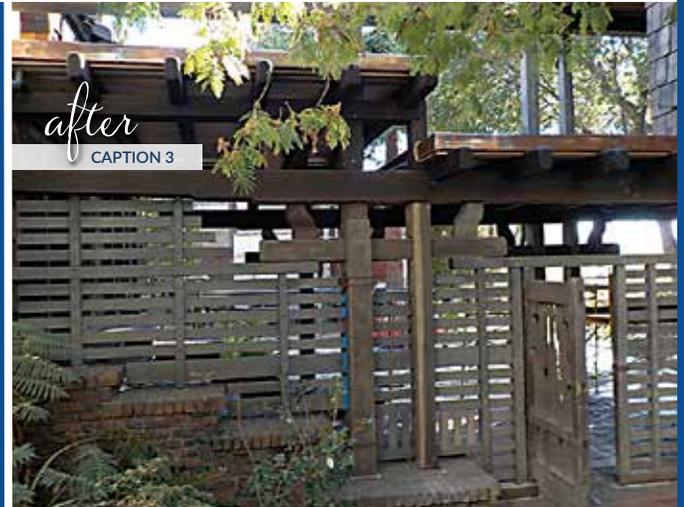
Can SPEF help your chapter in some way? As you can see from the Berkley and Chapel Hill examples, SPEF is able to provide more than just educational funds. We started preliminary discussions with the Alpha of Virginia about some needed house restorations anticipated in the 2nd half of 2018. The IRS criteria are strict and the path is not easy, but it can be very rewarding. Please contact me if you would like to explore ways SPEF can help!



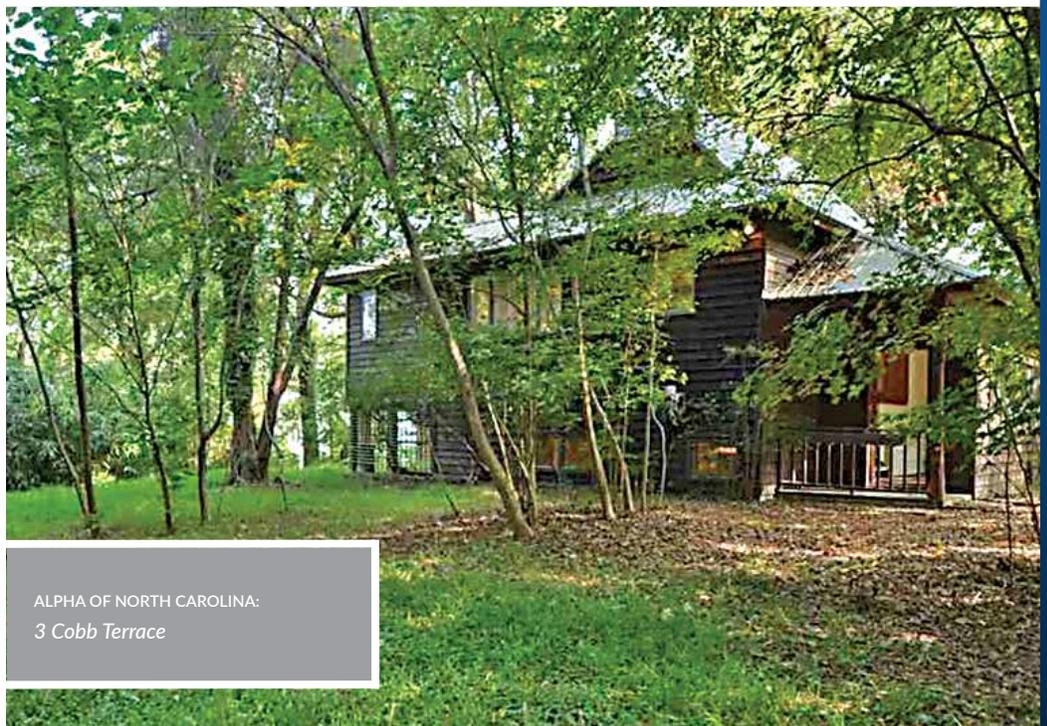
CAPTION 1:
Detail showing extensive rot underneath (October 2014), with temporary supports.



CAPTION 2:
Restoration in progress, August 2016. The entire structure between house and garage removed and new beams in place.



CAPTION 3:
New Structure nearing completion, October 2016.



ALPHA OF NORTH CAROLINA:
3 Cobb Terrace

2017 SIGMA PHI EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION ANNUAL CAMPAIGN DONOR RECOGNITION LIST

Appearing here is the list of donors to the Foundation's 2017 Annual Campaign.
Giving by these brothers is the cornerstone of our success. Donors are shown by giving category.



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Ralph L. Macdonald W'60
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Hugh L. Singrey I'43
Joshua Blomberg F'98
Ronald R. Randall V'55



Flagship Event

IN CHAPEL HILL



"The jolly Sigs are stirring..."



Saturday, March 3, dawned bright and mild in Chapel Hill. That day, brothers from across the country came together at the University of North Carolina to celebrate two different occasions: the 191 anniversary of the Sigma Phi Society and the founding of the Alpha of North Carolina one decade ago. The Society's 2018 flagship event also offered opportunities for Sig alumni to visit the newly-purchased Tarheel chapter house at 3 Cobb Terrace.

While the S&A and Foundation business meetings of course took place during the day on Saturday, the weekend's highlight was the banquet.

On Saturday evening, brothers gathered at the elegant Carolina Club on campus. Hands were shaken, appetizers were served and drinks were poured. It was encouraging to see so many undergrads from the UNC and Virginia chapters on hand. It was great fun to discover that the senior Sigs in attendance - Bill Poarch of Virginia and Stan Orr of Cornell - were both initiated in 1954! It was noteworthy that former

Head-of-House Paul Erby, T'14, made the trip to Chapel Hill all the way from his home in Los Angeles. And it was heartwarming to meet Tim Souhan, U'89, who brought his son, Doug, to the banquet. Doug, a first year student at nearby North Carolina State, was interested in learning more about the fraternity which had inspired his father, with an eye to possible future colonization.

Marshall Solem, F'79, Chairman Emeritus of the Standing & Advisory Committee, and a key leadership figure in the founding of our UNC chapter, keynoted the banquet. Marshall shared

firsthand recollections of the young chapter's founding in 2008. As he spoke about those early days in particular, Marshall was delighted to recognize and salute Sean List, T'08 - the very first initiated Tarheel Sig - who was on hand in the ballroom. As Marshall spoke, all of us were reminded of the energy and the sense of renewed purpose which is enjoyed Society-wide when a new chapter is founded.



S&A leaders deliberate in Chapel Hill.

Our Chairman Emeritus was part delighted and part thunderstruck at how much the Alpha of North Carolina has developed, grown and earned a leadership role on campus at UNC.

In addition to two different anniversary celebrations, the weekend also provided an opportunity to stage the Society's second annual Day of Giving. Ten undergrads from the North Carolina Alpha spent the day calling and connecting with alumni from across the country. Many comfortable, authentic connections were forged throughout the day between brothers young and old. Those connections underscored a core Society membership truth: that the bonds of brotherhood extend across distance, time and even generations.

All of the weekend's events reminded participants of the importance of the Society's commitment to formal, traveling March Fourth flagship events. Such annual fraternal occasions remind all who take part of a very special brotherhood which resonates across generations, comfortably inviting...and connecting... the members of the Thrice Illustrious Sigma Phi.

"Among so few"
SIGMA PHI SOCIETY · 1827-2018

'DAY OF GIVING', 2018: TWO-PART SIG SUCCESS

The Society's second Day of Giving exceeded all expectations, and not just from a financial perspective. Conducted on Saturday, March 3 - the day of our flagship Fourth March celebration in Chapel Hill - over \$12,000 was committed by Sigma Phi alumni.

Funds raised that day to support Sigma Phi's operations and educational programs were noteworthy. For starters, over 50 Sig alumni either made immediate donations or committed to making near term contributions. More noteworthy and rewarding still were the connections made between alumni and undergraduate callers. (See related article by participant Brian Vaughn, T'15.)

In a five hour span, eleven undergraduate members of our North Carolina chapter dialed over 300 Sig alumni across the country from a

conference room in the UNC Student Union. While numerous Saturday calls of course resulted in messages merely being left on answering machines, there were many successful connections, as well. How might 'successful' be defined? Countless laughs, updates, and stories were shared during that day's calls, and - more impressive than the monies raised - those calls created new bonds and rekindled strong feeling for the Thrice Illustrious, for alumni and actives, alike.

Day of Giving 2018 was much more than just a method for raising funds to support Sigma Phi. More philosophically...and much more importantly...it served to blur the lines of age, to underscore the reality of our brotherhood's common currency, and to once again magnify the bonds of Friendship, Love, and Truth.



Tarheel actives man the phones on March 3.

“When a Brother Calls....”

by Brian Vaughn, T'15 brianv.dth@gmail.com

“When A Brother Calls, You Answer.” The older Sigs I look up to in our North Carolina Chapter repeat this mantra and live it well. When I call them for advice, to check in, or to invite them to see me, they always answer or get back to me quickly. This is a reflection of the bond of brotherhood we share and of our commitment to living the values of Friendship, Love, & Truth every day.



The brothers in my chapter are full of talents, quirks, and idiosyncrasies, and I'll remember all of them many years from now! All of these attributes were on auditory

display on March 4 at the University of North Carolina's Student Union, where the national organization structured a phone-a-thon fundraiser for our Society's 2018 Day of Giving.

Collectively, 11 active UNC Sigs called more than 300 alumni, raising about \$12,000. True neophytes in this area, we nonetheless fundraised with vigor and finesse! Among the benevolent solicitors in the room were an incoming software salesman for a Fortune 500 company, a future naval officer, and Whit Denton, T'17, perhaps the most voracious young brother our decade-old chapter has ever

seen. We allotted all of our New Jersey bound calls to that Verona native, and hilarity ensued as Whit enthusiastically connected with his Sig brethren in the Garden State.

Unexpectedly, these fundraising calls were delightful. Throughout the day, I chatted with brothers in every corner of the country, connecting despite our difference in age and physical distance. I left a message for a Sig who is a clergyman in the diocese where I was baptized in East Tennessee. I chatted with a Sig psychiatrist in Boston who very generously donated. I also connected with the wife of a recently deceased Sig (unbeknownst to me when I called, of course) who warmly answered my call and was patient with my shocked stutters of consolation.

The highlight of my day was chatting with Scott McCrae, V'82, a Sig leader who played a crucial role in founding the Chapter in North Carolina. He recounted

the efforts he and others made to lay the foundation for the edifice of brotherhood that has flourished in this Southernmost outpost of Sigma Phi. I realized that it is thanks to Scott's efforts, among others, that I had the privilege to join and to learn our Society's unique priority for FLT in my life.

The Day of Giving phone-a-thon serves an important purpose: to raise funds for our Society's philanthropic efforts and business operations. More personally for me and other UNC Sig participants who called more than 300 brothers that day, it made the bonds of Sigma Phi brotherhood across time and physical distance tangible.

Brother Brian Allen Vaughn, T'15 is Risk Chair and PR & Alumni Chair emeriti of the Alpha of North Carolina. Brian graduated with a BA in Environmental Studies in May, and will move on to an opportunity with a start-up company with the Venture for America Fellowship.



MCCURDY HOTEL: Leadership Lessons from Another Time?

Is it possible that Society Chairman Brendan McCurdy, H'80, comes by his native graciousness, bonhomie and ability to engage other Sigs well via a career in another life? This circa-1892 advertising cover suggests that the answer may well be 'yes.' If our Chairman once really did own and operate a successful inn in Clifton Forge, Virginia, it's no wonder that he handles Society matters large and small with aplomb!



Keynote Remarks: FLAGSHIP BANQUET IN CHAPEL HILL

by Marshall Solem, F'79 marshall.solem@zs.com

I was thrilled when I was asked to serve as keynote speaker this evening. It's not that I'm an eager orator. Instead, it dawned on me that - since we don't have a recent Sigma Phi Catalogue with a Tarheel chapter historical sketch - you might enjoy me spending a few minutes sharing a bit about how the Society's newest chapter came about.

Would you believe that the first overtures about expansion in Chapel Hill actually started 160 years ago (!) - in 1858 - at a time when UNC had only 450 students. In fact, a group of UNC students petitioned Sigma Phi at Union to establish a chapter of Sigma Phi in Chapel Hill. Our archives don't record what happened in those discussions beyond likely conclusions that UNC was a great distance from Schenectady, and that without many local alumni, success was far from assured.

Over the course of years, Sigma Phi has periodically been approached by a

number of schools interested in expanding their Greek systems. There were at least a couple challenges associated with most of these overtures. Many of those schools failed to meet the top tier academic criteria we strive for. On campuses that did meet our criteria, the schools typically opened a slot for a single expansion chapter and put out a multi-page RFP to several Greek organizations listing their requirements. This meant that expansion would be on their terms, not ours.

Knowing in these cases that we didn't have the infrastructure nor expansion

experience, and frankly weren't organized in a way that could compete with the large, "franchised" national fraternities, we declined most of these opportunities. In my time as a Sig leader, only Northwestern and Tulane earned overtures from Sigma Phi.

An opportunity to expand more on our terms arose in 2003 when the Beta house at UNC had a falling out with their national organization and sought to affiliate with another national. It wasn't the school seeking expansion, but rather an existing group looking for a new affiliation. This was a game we knew how to play based on similar

(continued on page 10)

experiences with the LaJunta Club at California (circa-1912) and The Serpentine Club at UVA (circa-1953).

As we hadn't seriously attempted expansion for 50 years, we decided to make our best efforts...and learn along the way. So, several Sigs in national leadership positions assembled a response to Beta's RFP, and came down to Chapel Hill to meet with the men. In the early going, it seemed very much like a good and mutual fit. But as we started planning for formal assimilation of the group, the Beta national, facing loss of a strong chapter (both actives and alumni) at such a prestigious school, came back to the UNC chapter and "kissed and made up."

Drat! The taste of possible expansion was still fresh. That taste, coupled with our loss of the Lehigh chapter in 1997 and with the Delta suffering in Geneva, convinced us we had to get more serious about expansion. So, in 2005 the S&A approved a formal expansion initiative and budget of \$25K to use in researching what it would take to start a new chapter, even if we had to do so from square one: an attempt we hadn't made since Wisconsin's founding almost 100 years earlier.

Scott McCrae, V'82, the Society's (then) General Secretary, and Donald Beeson, a well-connected Chi Psi from our administrative services provider, worked with the National Interfraternity Conference to identify schools meeting our academic criteria with open expansion policies. It quickly became clear that southern schools were going to be a better fit: far better than those in the Northeast, which seem to continuously rail against Greek systems. The state of North Carolina became an early candidate with strong schools like UNC, Duke, NC State, Wake Forest and Elon, a decent-sized group of alumni in the Raleigh area and close proximity to our altar in Charlottesville.

In February of 2006, Scott, Donald, Jesse Beardsworth, V'98, and I toured the first four of those campuses. In our meeting with Jay Anhorne, UNC's Greek Advisor, we were advised that most new

fraternities fail in years 3-5. Finding the first group of alumni would be easier than developing on-going alumni support, which is critical. In response, we personally reached out and held conference calls with every Sig within an hour's drive of the tri-cities area to evaluate overcoming this challenge.

About 20 alumni - mostly Virginia Sigs - showed interest. We reasoned that this was enough to provide at least a few rotations of alumni leadership to sustain a new chapter in its early years. A subset of those 20 would obviously be critical to any start-up effort. Once we had a group of interested alumni, we started planning our approach.

On April 2, 2007 we returned to UNC to meet with the IFC president and have our first formal meeting with interested Sig alumni. The next day we met with several campus groups, various faculty, and numerous department deans to identify suitable target groups from which we might ultimately recruit interested men.

We held a social hour that evening at the Carolina Inn to meet with possible recruits to whom we had sent postcards, describing our expansion ambitions. Out of the hundreds of invitations we sent out, one man, Sean List, evolved from that meeting as our spark to light the Sig flame at UNC. We kept in touch with Sean over the summer of 2007 to plan recruiting efforts and events. Scott worked with the local alumni to devise rush activities over four weekends leading up to our 2007 Convention. Sean invited a few of his friends to attend the UNC/UVA football game, followed by a BBQ at the home of Steve Wright, S'93. The next weekend we took rushees out for golf, basketball, paintball and BBQ.

Sean joined us for Convention in Charlottesville with a report. He had found 7 men to join him and form the nexus of our first pledge class. This expansion was going to happen! Ultimately, six of those men would pledge Sigma Phi. They would meet with Steve Wright, S'93, and other alumni weekly and travel to Charlottesville many times that fall as part of their

process of learning about Sigma Phi.

While Sean had been recruiting and he and the new pledges were learning their lessons, we S&A members were busy trying to reacquaint ourselves with administrative and logistical procedures for creating a new chapter:

What did we need to do to establish ourselves legitimately with the university?

•

What were the requirements for proper notice to alumni and voting to actually charter the chapter?

•

Who would the founders be?

•

Who had the proper wording for a charter? (Moreover, does anyone still *make pigskin parchment* suitable for a properly-worded charter?)

From that initial class of six, four (Sean, Javier Herrera, Jake Chung & Mike Puchley) were ultimately initiated into the Society on April 5, 2008, in Charlottesville. What an occasion it was! Actives and alumni from every chapter were present to greet our new brothers and celebrate the chapter's founding.

Some may say this is hyperbole, but - for those who have children - that experience was akin to that of the birth of a new baby. It was a truly momentous weekend for Sigma Phi.

But then, as Jay Anhorne had foretold, 2009 and early 2010 turned out to be really tough. With only one new pledge, and the initial 4 approaching graduation, the nascent Society flame at UNC was on the brink of blowing out.

With our new baby in intensive care, at Convention 2010 in Vermont, we decided to bring in professional help, retaining Phired Up, a fraternity recruiting and turnaround consulting compa-

ny, to help us. From Feb 15 - March 1, 2011, PhiredUp poured kerosene on the flickering Sig flame. We worked through Donald to provide a list of 200 student names who had expressed interest in the Greek system, but not yet pledged another house. And they met with sororities to describe the Society's goals and the type of men we were looking for to get names of other men to call. (If you're not doing this, actives, you should be! The women know where the good men are...)

Ultimately, PhiredUp recruited 17 men to be the Renaissance of the chapter. It was a veritable United Nations of new Sigs and half of them were UNC's top scholars with full ride scholarships. Rather than go back to Charlottesville to initiate this group, we decided to give the new class an experience unique to Carolina, focusing on positive experiences associated with friendship, love and truth. Initiation activities for the new class included pledges, actives and alumni participating together, through a low and high ropes course at UNC's outdoor education center. Steve Wright had worked with the course instructors to tailor our experience to emphasize Sigma Phi values. The course taught teamwork, trust and communication. What an awesome - and fun - experience they created. The most terrifying part involved climbing up a telephone pole, standing on the top of it, and jumping out to ring a bell that was dangling from a wire overhead about 10 feet in front of you. We were tethered, of course - but loosely - so you still felt quite at risk. It was very cool to see everyone encourage one other to conquer their unavoidable fears. In a dramatic way, the experience served to help bond the group together, setting the course for the chapter's success ever since.

The initiation service for the new class was held April 16, 2011 in the dark, dank basement of a Chapel Hill night club. Little did we know our choice of venue would serendipitously protect us from the tornados that tore through Raleigh during the ceremony. When we emerged from our subterranean conclave to go to the initiation banquet, the sky was clear and the sun was shiningjust like the

radiant Sig flame that had just been ignited in our new brothers! The elegant celebration was attended by Sigs as well as the new bothers' dates. For me it was truly a "pump you up" celebration. It was clear we had turned the corner with this outstanding group of men.

We'd be remiss tonight if we didn't recognize the contribution of several other individuals who played huge roles in this journey. Without their commitment of significant time and energy, this wouldn't have happened. So snaps to Scott McCrae, V'82; Donald Beeson; Steve Wright, S'93; Matt Graham, S'94; Dave Aylor, S'93; Jesse Wetzel, S'04; Dennis Pike, S'94; & Mark Holland S'86, among other stellar contributors.

It's been great to watch and hear about all the successes the Carolina chapter has had over the past 7 years. It has grown from literally nothing to one of the brightest star in our constellation. The Alpha of North Carolina truly represents the very best of what fraternities across the country should be: A diverse group of very bright men...assembled together for the purposes of developing a shared bond of brotherhood...where we grow, learn from and support each other...and where we reach out beyond ourselves to improve the broader community

Tonight, as we come together to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Tarheel chapter, I'm absolutely beaming with pride as I look at how this 'baby' has grown up.....and all it has accomplished in its first decade.

At the same time, I'm very proud to keynote a celebration of the 191 years that our Society has been creating and fostering the brotherhood experience I've so enjoyed describing tonight.

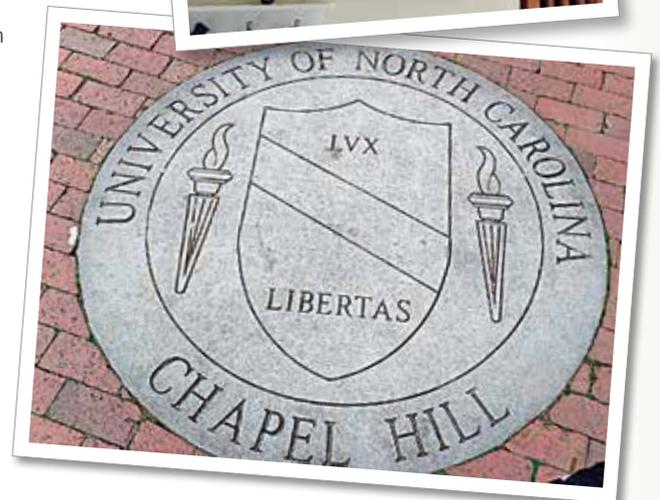
We've all heard dozens of times that no institution lives long unless it meets a human need. Our success at UNC is proof positive that there IS a need for friendship, love and truth among men on college campuses today. I am convinced that, nearly

200 years after its founding, Sigma Phi continues to meet that need better than any other Greek letter organization.

**Happy anniversary, Tarheel Sigs.
Happy Anniversary, Sigma Phi.
*Esto Perpetua!***



Keynote Speaker Marshall Solem, F'79



Incorporating the Society into your Life

by John Bergner, S'03 jon.bergner@gmail.com



Briana Bergner, Jon Bergner, S'03 and Alberto Rosales, I'06

As a secret society, we are constantly encouraging our newly initiated brethren that discretion in all things Sigma Phi is the better part of valor. To be sure, there are many important reasons we do not reveal the mysteries of our order to the world's people. However, if brothers keep the Society completely isolated from everything else in our lives, we run the risk of letting it become overshadowed by everything else - especially when we become increasingly busy with our everyday demands. Instead, if you find ways to incorporate other aspects of your life with your involvement with Sigma Phi, both those outside life aspects and participation with the Society will be enriched.

Here's a powerful and pointed example from my own life. When my wife, Brianna, and I were dating, the first

out-of-town trip that we took together was to Philadelphia for the 2015 Fourth of March flagship banquet. I was taking a big risk, for Brianna hadn't met many of my friends at that point. I would be throwing her into the deep end as Sigs certainly know their way around being social! But we made the journey north from D.C., had a wonderful time at the Philadelphia Raquet Club, and made many memories we still talk about to this day.

The next year was even more special. The flagship banquet was in New York City in 2016 so we planned to spend the weekend in the Big Apple. Because I had a work trip that week I planned to meet Brianna there. Unbeknownst to her, I made a brief stop off in Detroit on the way to ask her father for her hand in marriage.

Fortunately, that gentleman said 'yes!' With his approval secured, I was ready to propose. It was March in Detroit, however; my flight was delayed for hours! I was late for the Friday evening banquet, but my fearless wife-to-be went anyway and was well taken care of by the brothers until I arrived. The following day, I executed my plan and proposed in Central Park. We celebrated our engagement that night at Manhattan's famed Delmonico's Restaurant with a small group of Sigs. We couldn't have been happier.

We were married on the grounds of the University of Virginia the next year and our guest list was well stocked with good Sigs and true. In fact, our great friend R.J. Lackey, S'85, married us! Our ceremony was both beautiful and memorable. Despite my own father's misgivings about having a "frat brother" marry us, he could not have been more complimentary afterwards.

As the 2018 Fourth of March approached, life was getting busy. The flagship banquet venue in Chapel Hill seemed a great distance away. Worse, it was one more thing for which I worried I didn't have the time. However, when I even suggested we could skip the trip, Brianna looked at me askance and protested "But this would be the first one we've missed since we've been together..." Her logic was spot on - as was my joy in being reminded that she enjoyed the Sig journey so much - and we made the trip to Chapel Hill, where we had another marvelous time.

Most readers will agree that being a brother is its own reward. But I've found that incorporating Sigma Phi into other aspects of my life pays added dividends, creates added joy... and even adds to my enthusiastic involvement!

Remembering Mrs. Bush

by Lars Nordin, S'88 lnordin@gmail.com

Readers will remember that former First Lady Barbara Bush passed away in April. That event reminded Charlottesville Sigs from the late eighties Sigs of a hasty, unexpected and effervescent meeting which took place with Mrs. Bush on campus. Lars Nordin, S'88, tells the tale below.

Spirits were high that early afternoon at 163 Rugby Road. Several of us were gathered at the Sigma Phi Place, located adjacent to Bayly Art Museum. We knew that something important was going on inside the Bayly because there were many mean-looking people in sunglasses and suits with curly wired earpieces milling about. There were also armed police officers of the S.W.A.T. variety on the rooftops surrounding us.

All of a sudden, a woman emerged from the Bayly that we all recognized as the First Lady. We called out to her respectfully..."Mrs. Bush! First Lady!"... but our calls went unanswered. Emboldened by the day's loveliness and this unexpected opportunity, our calls changed to hollers: "Yo, Barbara! Babs, over here!" Somehow, this caught the graceful First Lady's attention. She came over to the small steps leading directly from the parking lot to Sigma Phi.

"Well, what do we have here?" the First Lady asked with a warm smile. We answered, "This is Sigma Phi, ma'am, and we are brothers here." She looked at us, smiled and said, "Well I have to have a picture with these nice young men of Sigma Phi," and motioned to the accompanying photographer who jumped into action. I am certain that the nerves of the Secret Service and SWAT teams personnel posted above twitched big time, seeing the First Lady suddenly and deliberately immersed in a crowd of reveling Sigma Phi brothers. The picture was taken and the First Lady instructed the photographer to make sure that Sigma Phi received the picture. The photographer dutifully wrote down our address. We talked a few more minutes with Mrs. Bush before she was ushered on to her next engagement, clearly delayed but pleased by her encounter with us.

We never got our own copy of that photo, but the *Cavalier Daily* ran that photo the next day....and the moment was "immortalized!"

John Hollis, S'87, Roger Muckenfuss, S'88, and Lars Nordin, S'88, are in the foreground. Chris Blum, S'88, may be the one who is partially obscured behind Roger.



It's All Relative

Society stakeholders know that the Francis S. Viele Scholarship awards more than \$100,000 in scholarships to deserving young Sigs each year. Many understand that this impressive, modern day scholarship generator resulted from a behest by the late Francis Viele, G'1885.

It came as a shock to your editor to learn that there may be a bit more to this 'good news' story. I spied this old advertising envelope (above) online recently. The Viele name is so unusual that this vintage ephemera immediately got my attention. I went to our Catalogue to check to see if Francis perhaps had a Sig relative. Much to my surprise, that gentleman **did**. In fact, Maurice Viele became a Sig in Geneva 3 years earlier than his younger brother, in 1882.

If I am permitted to extrapolate from this circa-1892 cover, the senior Viele brother earned his degree from Hobart, migrated to New York's capitol, and ultimately made a career in Albany selling metal goods of iron, tin and copper.





Restoration of the Badge

by George Snyder, S'86 snyder.gn@gmail.com

In the last Flame, you read about a very special dog named Hercules. Hercules had a terrific Sig pedigree: owned by the Alpha of Pennsylvania in 1920, brought to the Snyder home by a Sig grandfather I never knew, and living happily on in family lore to this day.

That grandfather - Baird Snyder, C'19 - figures in another Sig story: one that began three years ago when I received a brand new Sigma Phi badge in the mail. That piece had been ordered for a new brother of the Alpha of Virginia, David Bartha, S'14.

I had already owned two badges: one belonging to my grandfather and then - once I passed that jewelry on to my own brother, Baird Snyder V, S'80 - I purchased a new badge for myself. These two badges - made 61 years apart - are identical. You'd expect that of Sig badges over time, right?

David's badge, however, did not look like either one. The pearls were not round and were not the correct size to properly stand for the Thrice Illustrious and the luminaries we all know. In addition, the detail of the jeweled area of the Sigma had disappeared. I was confused.

So I called up the jewelry manufacturer: Herff-Jones Company of Indianapolis. I learned that Herff-Jones is the third maker of our badge since 1980, and that the previous maker had lost the original steel dies. As a result, Sig badges for the last few years have been cast directly from a sample badge rather than from purpose-built jewelry dies. Such a '2nd generation' manufacturing process is less precise. It invariably results in less detail and occasion surface pitting.

Brother Bartoz looked at this badge and decided he wanted better.

Respecting what the Society's badge should mean, I wanted very much to help. I sent Herff-Jones my 1980 badge to copy.

The manufacturer responded well. Herff-Jones agreed to cut new steel dies, use better pearls and pay new and close attention to the setting areas.

This spring, just before Charlottesville's Swing, eight new badges arrived. The pearls were round and lustrous, of the correct size and set in a beautifully detailed Sigma, atop a smoothly finished Phi. It all looked very familiar....and the quality was sky high. It looked for all the world like a badge I would want to own: a badge just like my grandfather's!

The result? Brothers at the Alpha of Virginia - and throughout our Society - are once again wearing Sigma Phi badges close to their hearts. *Esto Perpetua.*

(Brother Snyder's ability to manage this renaissance in badge quality is no accident. He has made a successful career as a jeweler in the Charlottesville area since 1992. - Ed.)

Vermont Ascendant

by John Britten III, V'02 jb.britten@gmail.com

Have you heard? Exciting things are happening at the Alpha of Vermont! Over the past few years, the “Singing Sigs” of the Green Mountain State have embarked on a revitalization campaign. This effort is led by our Vermont Corporation and our tax-exempt 501(c)3, the Sigma Phi of Vermont Educational Foundation.

In support of our educational mission, the active chapter now plans and executes two contests for academic prizes. The “Sigma Phi Essay Competition for Scholars” is open to any full-time student at the University of Vermont. Last year’s essay prompt was to pick a “UVM tradition...and comment on how it has impacted the University of Vermont, the community centered around it, and society today.” First prize was \$500 in scholarship money. Essayists were invited to read their compositions at a reception held at the Sigma Phi house. A second academic contest revives a speech competition held at 420 College Street in the mid-2000s and will be called the “Benedict Oratorical Prize.” Both the essay competition and the oratorical contest will be annual events for the Alpha of Vermont.

To ensure the perpetuation of Sigma Phi in Burlington, we have taken a more strategic view of rush. Our new recruitment system, designed and led by former Society General Secretary Scott McCrae, V'82, searches for those men who have Friendship, Love and Truth in their hearts and helps teach our actives that everything they do on campus should naturally be a part of rush. Written rules and expectations are circulated to prospective members and the process will soon include a welcome packet for parents as well. This thoughtful, disciplined recruitment program is delivering favorable results; we currently recognize 38 active

brothers as members of Sigma Phi at Vermont.

To protect our home for the future, we recently completed two major home improvement projects at the Sig Home on the Hill. First, we have finished a complete renovation of our three main bathrooms, including the addition of new shower stalls and marble floors throughout. The \$50,000 cost for the project was paid in full out of our operating funds. Second, we installed a brick walkway in the front of the house to replace our crumbling concrete walk. An important addition to the walkway was the final brick, a large granite paving stone dedicated to memorialize Dan Tomassetti, V'73, an involved, beloved alumnus who passed away in January of 2017.

With our physical plant in order, our attention has increasingly turned to the long-term financial health of our chapter. This financial effort has three major components: restructuring the management of revenue from chapter dues and rent; a capital campaign to increase alumni donations; and a major donor program overseen by our team at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management. These efforts are yielding positive results; despite our many capital improvements, the chapter is on course to realize a fifth straight year of profitable operation! Our goal is to build a permanent endowment sufficient to operate the property

and the chapter while increasing scholarship on campus and contributing to the welfare of our brothers, their families and our community. Other exciting projects are on our horizon, such as a plan to acquire conservation land in partnership with the State of Vermont.

None of these developments would be possible without the support of our alumni body and our active chapter. No mere plan delivers results. In the Alpha’s renaissance, our chapter has benefited from the consistent involvement of a growing number of Vermont Sigs who have generously given time, money, friendship, and love to our deathless band. *Esto!*



“Best Sig Love”

by Jason Landau, M'86 JasonLandau99@gmail.com

As the NCAA Basketball Tournament recedes into memory, I smile. I love March Madness for all the usual reasons, but there is something else that really makes tourney time special for me. As my University of Michigan advanced this year (as your team likely did in other years), Alpha of Michigan brethren communicated more and more through the various technologies available to us. That's the true gift of tourney time for me. I am approaching 30 years since my college graduation and - as the years increase - so does the value to me of those memories and connections. The tourney brings us all together again and - as is the case with all enduring friendships - time apart simply melts away.

Another thing that occurs to me anew at such times are the three letters that bind us all - BSL: Best Sig Love.

What does BSL really mean? How does Sig Love differ from any other love one may know? Why does BSL supersede all other closing salutations when I finish my communication with another brother?

Beyond the literal words, I believe BSL stands for the shared experience all Sigs have had: “the Sigma Phi experience.” Our individual Sigma Phi circumstances - campus location; housing arrangement; roommate situation; etc. - differ greatly, but we nonetheless all share the Sigma

Phi experience. It is why when one meets a brother for the first time who hails from another university

There are
three letters that
bind us all:
BSL – Best Sig Love.

with a different chapter designation, it doesn't matter that little is known about this 'stranger.' Instead, you and I are instantly connected in the unique way that only someone else who has pledged himself to the Thrice Illustrious can understand.

They say you learn more at college outside of class than inside. I agree. I had so little idea of who I really was when I started my college experience. College helped in my formation. Further, I know that such shaping would have been quite different had I not joined Sigma Phi. I will be forever grateful for my time shared with so many incredible people. You are ALL incredible. I mean it. With age comes wisdom from experience. Having now experienced so many more people in the world than I knew as a teenager, I can say with absolute certainty you are ALL incredible. To

those with whom I didn't share a specific campus experience, but with whom I share the Sigma Phi experience, YOU are incredible. I know. We are connected, you see, by Best Sig Love.

In our youth, fitting in was important and finding people just like you was safe. There was no “type” at the Alpha of Michigan from 1986-1990. Nor at any other Sig chapter, I suspect. I loved that back in the day and I am even more respectful and impressed by it now.

Esto Perpetua...and Best Sig Love, of course.

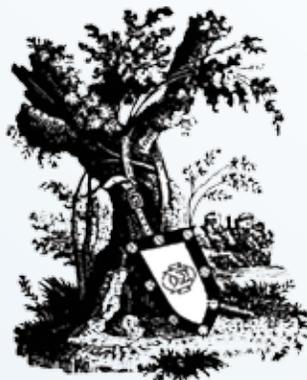


Jason Landau, M'86 and his wife, Chaunine

Never Forget These Brothers

These deaths have been reported to the Society since publication of the December 2017 'Flame'

Allaben, Robert D. M'50	3/15/2018
Beattie, Alexander D. L'42	3/3/2013
Bleezarde, Ronald F. H'58	2/3/2017
Bonne, Hans I. C'54.....	date uncertain
Briski, Richard J. M'76	12/14/2008
Campbell, John L. Jr. G'52.....	2/12/2017
Davis, John G. V'59.....	11/11/2017
Larrieu, Barry J. I'53.....	11/8/2017
Leshner, Jason A. L'94	1/20/2018
MacLraith, Donald N. C'42.....	5/4/2017
MacSherry, Richard R. L'38.....	10/12/2017
Mullin, Bernard W. V'34.....	10/30/2007
Olson, Harry J. L'52.....	3/16/2018
Power, Daniel Henry I'51.....	2/1/2018
Shaffer, Richard W. L'52.....	1/15/18
Soper, James P. H'41	2/16/2017
Spotswood, J. Brooke II S'66	1/30/2018
Thompson, Clinton H. V'52	7/5/2012
VanDeusen, Charles H. M'50.....	2/15/2017
Volkman, Alvin U'45.....	4/11/2018
Woodhouse, Milton K. F'38.....	1/20/2018



KUDOS & THANKS

...to the following Sigs for their articles, information or encouragement supporting this issue of the 'Flame': Jon Bergner, S'03; J.B. Britten, V'02; Christy Lambden, T'11; Jason Landau, M'86; Lars Nordin, S'88; Jack Romaine, L'90; George Snyder, S'78; Marshall Solem, F'79 & Brian Vaughn, T'17. Special thanks must certainly go to Scott Hekel, F'97, for his tireless camera work.

Every written contribution as well as every recommendation for a story from any Sig is warmly welcomed. Each adds immeasurably to any issue of our 'Flame'. There is no substitute for hearing the voices of Sigs on the pages of Sig periodicals. **Thank you!**

When the time comes that you have feedback, suggestions, photographs and/or Sig stories to share, please contact editor Mike Imirie, M'69 (mimirie@aol.com).



The 'Sigma Phi Flame' is published twice yearly by the Sigma Phi Society. Please direct all inquiries, suggestions, photos and changes of address to the Sigma Phi National Headquarters, P.O. Box 57417, Tucson, AZ 85732-7417.

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Sigma Phi Home Page:
www.sigmaphi.org

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SIGMA PHI ANNUAL



SIGMA PHI 2018 ANNUAL CONVENTION

Alpha of Wisconsin | Madison, WI
September 28-30, 2018

Registration details now available on the
Society's website at www.sigmaphi.org

PHI 2018 AL CONVENTION

Convention 2018 will be hosted by the Alpha of Wisconsin over the weekend September 28-30. In addition to serving as the Society's annual leadership conclave and homecoming, that weekend will also mark the 110th anniversary of Sigma Phi at UW-Madison. For both reasons, it promises to be a very special Sig gathering.

Agenda

FRIDAY, SEPT 28

- Business Meetings, 9 AM – 4 PM

EVENING

- BBQ dinner at the house
- Hicks Oratorical Contest
- Conclave

SATURDAY, SEPT 29

MORNING

- Farmers Market on the Capitol Square
- Annual Meeting of the Members
- Lunch at the house

AFTERNOON – Leisure Activities

- Sailing on Lake Mendota
- Golf at University Ridge
- State Capitol tour
- Arboretum tour
- Campus architecture tour

EVENING

- Convention banquet at Discovery Building Atrium

SUNDAY, SEPT 30

MORNING

- Continental breakfast & goodbyes at the Alpha

Questions?

Contact Convention co-Chairmen Marshall Solem, F'79 at 847-414-4691 or Brendan Provo, F'16 at 414-897-1635

Hotels & Sig Phi Rates

InnTowner @ \$130.....(866) 925-8648

Hampton Inn & Suites @ \$169 (855) 238-1591

OTHER HOTEL OPTIONS:

Fluno Center @ \$179(877) 773-5866

Union South @ \$167.....(608) 890-3000

We're celebrating the 110th Anniversary
of Sigma Phi Society at UW-Madison

Friday, Sept. 28 - Sunday, Sept. 30, 2018.

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Society's website at www.sigmmaphi.org

Join us!





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Encouraging You About Dues

by Bob Guthrie, S'86, Society Treasurer bguts123@sbcglobal.net

As reported during the 2017 General Convention at the Alpha of Virginia in Charlottesville, the Society's finances are holding steady this year. However, we still need annual dues payments from our undergraduates and alumni to solidify the Society's financial status as we move ahead into 2018. We have many initiatives to implement next year, and we need a strong financial base before we can begin. Thanks in advance for your continued support!

As 2018 draws to a close, some facets of our remarkable Society remain constant. **Brotherhood. Sharing. Expanded horizons.** A profound and thankful awareness for the remarkable fraternal vision given birth by Brothers Bowie, Bowie, Cromwell and Witherspoon 189 years ago. And - oh, yes - an ongoing need for... your personal support.

Your dues each year enable the Society's publishing, training, and expansion efforts. Without active support from Sig alumni, there's no progress in those 'lifeblood' areas, just as there would have been no Sigma Phi at all had the Brothers Bowie, Witherspoon and Cromwell not put a brave fraternal stake in the ground in Schenectady in 1827.

If you haven't yet responded to your dues letter from Society Chairman Brendan McCurdy, H'80, please do so now.

Impossible (Yet Sigly) Captions

This vintage image (below) probably has **nothing** to do with Sigma Phi. When your editor spotted it online, however, it dawned on him that it might be fun for Sigs to be asked to caption the photo as if it did. David Farmer, H'89 (farmer_ostbahn@hotmail.com), and Dave Dallas, S'79 (ddallas@williamsmul-len.com), responded nobly to the challenge, offering the following gleeful captions. They are shared, dear reader, "for your lofty approbation."



"You talkin' to me?"

"Yes, you can take the damn picture!"

"Charles Thorn Cromwell (center) and his crew (surrounding) think he should be named first."

"This team will make the Dekes, Celts, and Alpha Delts seek dens that gave them birth"

"Union poses with his younger siblings, Hamilton, Williams, NYU, Hobart..."

Now, once more, this time with feeling: "The Beta comes next/ all you glorious boys/ vive le Sigma Phi!"

"If we pose here long enough, do you think they'll let us have our house back?"

(re: recent NCAA tournament) "This UVA team is ranked first! No way a 16-seed will beat us!!!"



**SIGMA PHI SOCIETY
ANNUAL DUES**

Make checks payable to the Sigma Phi Society.
You may also pay online at www.SigmaPhi.org

\$500 \$250 \$100 other \$ _____

Base-level dues: \$75 (initiated 2006 and earlier) \$50 (initiated 2007 and later)

Sigma Phi Permanent Endowment

My additional gift of \$ _____ in support of the Sigma Phi Society Permanent Endowment is enclosed.

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work: _____ Mobile: _____

Mail your dues check payable to Sigma Phi Society to: c/o Sigma Phi; P. O. Box 57417; Tucson, AZ 85732-7417. Or, as always, feel free to make your dues payment online at: www.sigmaphi.org

Esto!