

# “SIGMA PHI and the Pursuit of Happiness”

Sigma Phi  
*Flame*

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## MESSAGE FROM THE THE CHAIRMAN

by *Brendan McCurdy, H'80* ofelixculpa@aol.com



Those brothers for whom the Society has email addresses received news in April that Alumni leaders at the Alpha of California had to

face head on actions taken by their active brothers regarding the proposed initiation of a female into the bonds of the Sigma Phi. In their role as directors of the Alpha, the good graduate brothers put a halt to that swing, but not without much consternation. An intense few days in Berkeley saw actives and alumni engage in the hard work and honest discussion necessary to arrive at a reconciliation that now abides at our chapter on the Bay. I can't help thinking it is somehow fitting that Brother Chief Justice Earl Warren called the Alpha his home. Oh, that his wise counsel were available to us today!

The California actives are not alone in their thoughts with regard to membership criteria. Actives from the Beta of New York and the Alpha of Michigan have made known to their respective alumni boards (and the Beta also to the 2016 General Convention in Schenectady) that they believe the time has come for the Sigma Phi to become "all-inclusive." Some amongst us would understand this term to mean co-ed and they would be partially correct. A lesser discussion has to do with gender identity beyond mere biological markers. And where does the time honored tradition of swinging Sig Sisters belong?

It has become apparent to me as your Chairman that a full and open discussion on this matter is necessary and in keeping with the tenets and precepts of our Society. Accordingly, at the 2017 General Convention hosted by the Alpha of Virginia in September, all brothers are encouraged to participate in this necessary dialogue. A preliminary schedule of activities over the

course of the weekend can be found in this Flame; the General Convention's Annual Meeting of the Members will take place on Saturday morning, September 23rd.

The precipitous events in California brought to light many things that have been left unnoticed for so long that it makes sense for us to revisit what our founding documents propounded and how they intersect with today's realities. The reflections that follow are my own. Although I serve as Chairman, they should not be taken as *ex cathedra*.

The ability to amend or change the Restated By-laws and Constitution (RB&C) of the Society is entrusted to the General Convention. Primarily the General Convention is called upon to grant or revoke a charter. The Standing & Advisory Committee shall be the governing body of the Society in the intervals between the General Convention and shall be empowered to act in the name of and on behalf of the Society in such intervals, except on such matters as reserved by the RB&C. The Executive Committee of the S&A may act on behalf of the S&A, but its actions shall be subject to ratification at the next S&A Committee meeting.

Proper notice must be given to the brotherhood to initiate an amendment to the RB&C at the General Convention. The voting protocol acknowledges that Sigma Phi's continuation depends upon the ongoing initiation of new members. If the Society were to make changes that were not viewed favorably by its undergraduate brothers, they might well not bring new members into the bonds. In time, all of our members would be alumni brothers. And, I'm sorry to observe, alumni brothers have but a finite time on this planet. Eventually the last member of the Sigma Phi would be laid to rest and - with him - so, too, the Society.

What the RB&C doesn't address and what became apparent in the California sit-

uation, is the point where the intersection between the National RB&C and each local alumni corporation's articles of incorporation and by-laws exists. Our active chapters are located in different states, and each has its own particular founding documents. What may be entirely proper and legitimate on the local level can run afoul of the RB&C. Dare I say few of our chapters, if any, can place their hands on the document we refer to as "the charter." This short-coming needs to be rectified.

A more sobering realization has come to light as we ponder our current state of affairs in connection with the world live in: more specifically, the absence of the National's ability to immediately address egregious actions that could occur at any of our active chapters. I refer you to the horrific events at Penn State's Beta Theta Pi house this past February. Heaven forbid that Sigma Phi would ever be faced with such depravity. How would the National respond to such an event when the RB&C limits the actions we could take? Or consider a hypothetical wherein a chapter decided that Friendship, Love and Truth were to be replaced with Anarchy, Discord and Devil Worship. Farfetched? Yes, but think of the position your Chairman would be in if reporters were to arrive at his door!

All of these concerns occur to this brother as we look towards the celebration of our 200th anniversary in 2027. As Sigs, we treasure our traditions, including embracing the openness of thought and feeling between brothers. I look forward to the convention and the discussion that will ensue. As Sigs, due regard will be given to each brother's words. No matter the passion invoked, decorum will be the order of the day. I will expect that whatever the outcome, all members will respect and adhere to the decisions that come forth from

*Continued on back cover.*



# WHY SIGMA PHI?

by Christy Lambden, T'11, 2027 Committee Chair [lambenc@gmail.com](mailto:lambenc@gmail.com)

I have recently traversed 'the pond' and returned to my home in England for the summer. As I talk with my friends and family, there is always the question: "So, what is a fraternity?" The little knowledge that Brits have of fraternities is generally not positive; they work off stereotypes from Hollywood movies and the bad press that fraternities earn when their activities go wrong.

How do you explain a fraternity? More importantly how do you explain Sigma Phi and why it is special by comparison? And perhaps most importantly, from my perspective, how do you explain why alumni from across America continue to support and dedicate time to something that is often limited to undergraduate years? Why is all this important?

Webster might offer this: Fraternities – "Organizations primarily designed to provide support, friendship, and a family during undergraduate days."

**Sigma Phi** – an organization that focuses on providing that support, friendship and brotherhood to undergraduates, but doesn't stop there. Instead Sigma Phi is an organization that prides itself on being a fraternity for life. She forges bonds that last well beyond our 4 (5 or 6) years in college and which allow us to contin-

ue to derive friendship, comfort, and support from our continued engagement and contact with friends.

**Engagement** – I believe that you can never have enough support, friends, or people we count as family. I continue to remain engaged in Sigma Phi for largely selfish reasons; every time I meet new Sig brothers my circle of friends grows, my family grows, and I have more and more people that I can call on to solicit advice, to offer consoling words, and to celebrate with.

**Connection** – Finally, I have an awful lot of fun! Sigma Phi offers the opportunity for individuals from different backgrounds with different opinions to join together under the banner of three shared values: friendship, love and truth. That connection - that ability to bring multiple parts of society (*small 's'*) together, to look after each other,

*"So why is  
Sigma Phi important?  
Why Sigma Phi?"*

**CONNECTION."**

to have the feeling that people in your university, city, state, country and even world have your back and will look after you - that is rare!

Sigma Phi is one of the purest examples. As we face a world that is more and more divisive, connection becomes more and more important. Sigma Phi transcends divisiveness. It reflects brotherhood in its truest form: Friendship. Love. Truth.

***And that is worth supporting!***

# NEIGHBOR - FACULTY TEA:

## Smash Success in Madison

by Jeff Kunz, F'68 [jrmkunz@aol.com](mailto:jrmkunz@aol.com)

On April 30, some elegant magic returned to the Sigma Phi Place in Madison. About 4 dozen neighbors and UW-Madison faculty were treated to coffee, tea, and delicious Badger bakery bites at the renewed Neighbor-Faculty Tea, hosted by a resurgent Alpha of Wisconsin chapter.

Judging by the warm compliments and expressed delight of so many guests on this rainy recent spring Sunday, this Neighbor-Faculty Tea tradition should be continued annually as in decades past. If our enthusiastic actives have their way, it will!

The actives had the chapter house gleaming and were gracious hosts, proudly touring their guests through their National Landmark House and first designated landmark in Madison. The libraries bulged with Sig restoration accolades. The house looked and smelled spectacular from flowers artistically placed and donated by Sig Sisters.

Among the honored guests were UW Chancellor (and across-the-street neighbor!) Becky Blank and her husband, famous fellow economist Hans Kuttner. They traded enjoyable stories with actives and alumni alike about our two renowned residences: Olin & Bradley-Sigma Phi. Our animated discussions reminded both groups of the obvious



*The ambassadorial young men of the Alpha of Wisconsin*

love of place and grace so evident in our collective hearts and minds.

While we are a small fraternity, the generosity of the Sigma Phi alumni at Wisconsin has not gone unnoticed among members of UW's faculty and administration. More than any other house or group, the chairs and centers of excellence endowed by UW Sig alumni (Nielsen, Bolz, Reed, Laun, Carrier, Kohler, Condon) have supported their alma mater's faculty and young post docs

in important ways not lost upon the UW.

When the faculty members were led past the chapter's wall of scholarship plaques with a master pianist playing in the background, one could see the misperceived bubble of Sigma Phi as "just another fraternity" happily burst. As in the past, one suspects it won't be long for sons of faculty to pledge the "Gentlemen on the Hill."



# NEW HOME

## for North Carolina Sigs

by Christy Lambden, T'11, UNC Alumni President [lambenc@gmail.com](mailto:lambenc@gmail.com)

Since its formation in 2008, brothers at the youngest chapter of Sigma Phi have been planning, dreaming and attempting to find a permanent home at the University of North Carolina. While the lack of a physical property has never stopped the chapter from flourishing, or stymied the remarkable achievements recorded by UNC Sigs, it has remained on the minds of every brother who has passed through our chapter in its eight year history.

This year, with significant help, the Tarheel Sigs finally have a place to call 'home'!

Our new home is found at 3 Cobb Terrace in Chapel Hill. This circa-1981, 4 bedroom property, in the heart of Chapel Hill and less than a 5-minute walk from campus, will begin housing brothers in August. The property includes nearly 2 acres worth of land.

Support from the Standing & Advisory Committee and the Sigma Phi Educational Foundation were es-

sential to finalizing the purchase of the new home. Generous financial and/or professional contributions were made by others; RJ Lackey S'85, Roy Park C'12, Mark Holland S'86, Steve Wright S'93 and George Mercer M'68 were especially essential in making this new Sigma Phi Place a wonderful, well thought out reality.

Having a for real home represents a new and formative period for the North Carolina brothers. Shortly after the good news of a successful house purchase, those men earned university

awards for Greek Chapter of the Year as well as Highest GPA.

We look forward to welcoming brothers from far and wide to our new home and take great satisfaction in knowing that 3 Cobb Terrace is the latest Sigma Phi Place address needing to be learned in pledge lessons by brothers-in-training throughout this Society.

# Vintage “VIKING JEWELRY” SPARKS INTEREST IN MADISON

Ebay is remarkable marketplace. Whether you need stamps, music, clothing, cars or anything in between, Ebay has it....week after week!

Not long ago, Ebay advertised something hinting at a mysterious bit of Sig history. That item proved irresistible to alumni members of our Wisconsin chapter. The item which sparked such interest was this one....



.....a piece of vintage, gold-tone cloisonné (enamel?) jewelry about ½” wide by ¾” long. There are stand-alone prongs (but no clasp) on the back, suggesting that it was once permanently attached to something other than clothing. While the piece carries no engraving, it clearly shows the Greek letters Sigma and Phi integrated into the sail on what appears to be a Viking craft of old

The reason that it got attention in Madison is because the Madison Sigs have long had a Viking Scholar program, by which Scandinavian students who matriculate to U-W via exchange programs are consciously sought out and invited to learn about Sigma Phi. Could this piece have been commissioned long ago as a very early representation of that time-honored Sig recruitment effort?

Ultimately, the Ebay auction was won by Sam Moore, F’70, one of Madison’s staunchest Sig stalwarts. Sam’s preliminary research has drawn no conclusion save that this piece did *not* have a connection to the Viking Scholar program. Sam conjectures that it might have represented a local Greek society somewhere in our country which chose the ‘voyager’ aspect of Viking sailing craft as its motif.

Does any reader want to add to our collective conjecture? Does anyone have an inkling of the true identity of this remarkably Sig-centric piece? If so, please contact Sam Moore, F’70, at this e-mail address: [moore1827@gmail.com](mailto:moore1827@gmail.com) In the meantime, Sam hopes to recruit a Madison area goldsmith to turn the piece into a one-of-a-kind jewelry item suitable for showing and sharing at future Sig celebrations.

# AWOL SIG JEWELRY: RETURN TO OWNER



Another jewelry story, this one from long ago, was recently shared by a very observant Jeff Kunz, F'68 (jrmkunz@aol.com). Jeff was recently thumbing through some very old Greek archive material when he spied this squib from a vintage Theta Upsilon Omega periodical:

"An article in the Theta Upsilon Omega OMEGAN from May 1933, told of a Sigma Phi, H. W. Hawley, (G'1895, *by the way*. - **Ed.**) who in addition to his job in the research department of the Cunard Line, had a hobby of trying to return fraternity pins to their respective owners. In the 18 years he had been pursuing it, about 50 pins and owners were reunited. He had two Manhattan shops "which seem, somehow, to be headquarters for fraternity pins: J. B. Koplik & Company on Park Row, and the United Pledge Society, 843 Eighth Avenue."

After Hawley identified and wrote to the original jewelry owners, he said that replies fell into three categories:

- 'Hurrah, send it to me; here's the money,'
- 'Don't bother me; I have too many troubles already,' &
- 'I think you're some kind of a crook and will tell the police if you pester me!'

The first type of letter comes in more frequently if the national secretary (*at that time*, William C. 'Wink' Mayer, L'1910 - **Ed.**), who naturally knows Mr. Hawley, has written and the owner knows all is well. In defense of the skeptical frat brothers it may be said that most have lost their pins through theft and are therefore suspicious."

*(Thanks, Jeff, for sharing this with the 'Flame.')*

## A Sigma Phi First!

For the very first time, selected Sigma Phi undergraduate brothers will be working with the national organization this summer to further the national's strategic plan and vision.

This inaugural independent study initiative provides Sigma Phi undergraduate brothers with opportunities to be exposed to all aspects of the national organization, providing support to national leaders while leading a number of their own projects.

This new Society initiative will provide professional development to undergraduate brothers at the same time that it allows the national organization to further its programming by working with an intelligent, motivated group of young Sig leaders.

For 2017, three undergraduate students - John Edmonds T'16, Carson Cutright T'16 and Levent Cankatan S'16 - will focus on connecting with alumni, designing and implementing our evolving Careers & Mentoring program, and planning networking events for alumni and undergraduate members.

We hope that our independent study undergraduates are able to connect with as many alumni as possible this summer. You may well receive a call from a stellar, young Sig in the near future! If and when that call comes, please encourage and support these aspiring young brothers.



# “Damn, We are Lucky...”

by Peter Ernst, C'17 [pke7@cornell.edu](mailto:pke7@cornell.edu)

Arriving at One Forest Park Lane, it is impossible to miss the brick fronted, ivy covered house that stands looking over the city of Ithaca and Cayuga Lake. This is the home of the Sigma Phi Society, an institution that has not only ingrained itself into the fabric of the Cornell community, but ingrains friendship, brotherhood and truth into each brother who becomes a part of it. The unique and natural beauty of the Epsilon's property cannot be denied. Neither can the beauty of the brotherhood that lasts a lifetime, generation after generation.

When one first walks up to the red brick house and passes into the foyer, he is immediately reminded of the history of our Society. Three stained glass panels lie directly ahead; they carry the insignias of Hamilton College, Cornell University and Union College. It is a reminder of both our scale and history; generations of predecessors at One Forest Park Lane have all seen these and thought of the Epsilon Sigs before them, and those Sigs they are connected to at other universities. Every day these artifacts serve as reminders that brotherhood is not only in the present, but reaches both to the past and future, and will do so for generations to come. Subtlety and art notwithstanding, the stained glass reminds each Epsilon Sig that we are part of something bigger than just ourselves and our immediate surroundings in Ithaca.

Passing through the foyer and into the living room, there are reminders of this same message: this same connectedness. The insignia of seven more universities on which Sig chapters are represented line the other side of the wall.

Turning around, the back porch of the Sigma Phi Place comes into view. The sun rises here and the



*The Epsilon*

porch is often casually populated by current Epsilon Sigs. Looking over Cayuga Lake, and watching the sun set over the hills of upstate New York, active brothers relax and enjoy themselves, free of the stressors of the outside world, insulated by Sigma Phi. Here, a group of young men who at one point had no idea who their current brothers are...

go from being mere acquaintances to forming lifelong connections. No pretense or facades are in place: just unrefined thoughts, feelings and emotions. And these are shared matter-of-factly in a setting which is at once comfortable and intimate. No matter where he hails from, no brother feels without a home. No brother lacks for those who care for him. Whether he has something to celebrate or needs help being lifted out of a bad place, this is where he'll be able to connect with those who are eager to relate and share. Like so many other accommodating corners of the Sigma Phi Place, this is where friendship, love and truth live.

All of these factors – 1) the history and significance of the house and those who came before us; 2) the knowledge that those around us are here for us; & 3) the understanding that brotherhood lasts forever - perfectly encapsulate what it is like to be a member of the Sigma Phi Society.

The appreciation of this is hard to put succinctly, but one recent remark from a brother of mine distills it pretty well: “Damn! Aren't we lucky to be a couple of Sigs?”



En garde! Sean Patrick, G'99 & Bob Day, C'53



Assembled in the hallowed halls



Army Navy Club venue

# 190 YEAR Celebration in the District of Columbia

There are so many ways to celebrate Sigma Phi. You can lift up the Thrice Illustrious on the campus where you first came to membership, as you read your copy of the latest *'Flame'*, in the company of dear pledge brothers over the years, or in countless other ways.

In her 190th year, Sigma Phi celebrated March 4 in a venue that a certain luminary we all know would very likely describe as "propitious." The Society's 2017 flagship March Fourth Banquet was held on March 4 - yes, *March 4!* - in Washington DC. The venue was the 2nd floor ballroom at the elegant, time-honored Army-Navy Club on Farragut Square. About ninety brothers and guests representing eleven chapters were on hand in that singular, circa-1912 place to toast a milestone anniversary for the Thrice Illustrious.

A 6 PM cocktail hour was followed by a plated dinner delivered via liveried servers. Brothers, wives and guests sat at tables of eight to enjoy three courses: salad; chicken Napoleon and an elegant chocolate mousse dessert cake.

The evening's formal program began as dessert was served. Toastmaster Christy Lambden, T'11, began our celebration by asking us to join him in a toast to the Society's remarkable, 19-decade posterity. Next, Christy extended the thanks of a grateful Society to Bill Poarch, S'54, who hosted our

celebration at the Army Navy Club. Specific, traditional banquet salutes followed: to the senior Sig in attendance (Bob Day, C'53), the brother who had traveled farthest to be on hand (David Cortez, M'93 @ Taos, New Mexico), the best dressed Sig (Irishman Sean Michael Patrick, G'99, handsome in kilts!) and the chapter which was best represented (the Alpha of Pennsylvania). All of these recognitions led up to a poignant anniversary address by Dave Dallas, S'79, an eminent attorney in Charlottesville and a long time Sig stakeholder and leader. (See Dave's heartfelt keynote address elsewhere in this *'Flame.'*)

On this 190th anniversary occasion, songs were sung, handshakes were exchanged and stories were told. Brothers from many different stages of life enjoyed one another's company, having gathered in hopes of being reminded how satisfying membership in Sigma Phi could be.

None walked away from the Army Navy Club disappointed.

# “SIGMA PHI and the Pursuit of Happiness”

by David L. Dallas, Jr. S'79 [ddallas@williamsmullen.com](mailto:ddallas@williamsmullen.com)

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As most will recall, a famous Virginian - one of my home boys from Charlottesville - coined the phrase “pursuit of happiness” when writing the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America. I refrain from saying “of our country” because, to our great fortune, we have quite a few brothers in our organization...particularly at Virginia...who are citizens of other countries.

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As most will recall, a famous Virginian - one of my home boys from Charlottesville - coined the phrase "pursuit of happiness" when writing the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America. I refrain from saying "of our country" because, to our great fortune, we have quite a few brothers in our organization...particularly at Virginia... who are citizens of other countries.

The well-known phrase "pursuit of happiness" is included in a segment of what many think is the greatest justification for self-government ever written. The familiar segment goes like this: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

**LIFE. LIBERTY. THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.** Three big, powerful ideas. "Self Evident Truths" per Jefferson. Unalienable Rights. Exactly what the Sage of Monticello himself included within these terms is unknown to me, but I suspect it makes good reading.

We could talk about all three for hours, but this address is about Pursuing Happiness, so let's take the other two off the table quickly.

**LIFE:** For me, the Right to "Life" is about living in a healthy manner of one's own choosing unimpeded by

government. One might include basic needs - food, shelter, clothing, education, healthcare and transportation - as part of the right. I suspect that everyone in this room has and will have the basic needs covered for the remainder of their lives, given that we were blessed with sufficient intellect to gain admission to the great institutions with which our  $\Sigma\Phi$  chapters are affiliated. But never forget that without the basic needs covered, the pursuit of happiness is exponentially more challenging.

**LIBERTY:** For me, the right of liberty is about being free to speak, act and travel as I want, without fear, as long as I'm not injuring another or unfairly burdening another's unalienable rights. It's about the right to marry, procreate and worship when and where one chooses, without government hassle. By the way, the word "unalienable" to Jefferson meant something on the order of "incapable of being transferred by the holder." Think about that notion for a moment...

Detention or incarceration without "due process" was a big concern of Jefferson's day, and I respectfully suggest to all that it should remain a significant concern today. Maybe we should reconsider whether the often maligned American Civil Liberties Union is worthy of support, since defending the Bill of Rights and protecting personal liberty is its mission.

**HAPPINESS:** The Pursuit of Happiness. Now, that's an ethereal notion: exquisite, elegant, and more difficult to tease out than one might think. Those of you who know me well, know how passionate I am about the sport of fishing. So, you may beg to differ and assert that my happiness is not complicated at all. I'm a simple man. Put a fishing rod in my hand and - voila! - unbridled happiness.

To a degree, that's true; fishing is part of my personal equation. I'd hate to lose that particular liberty, even though I rarely keep more than a picture of what I catch. But I'm not talking about a personal passion.

This is territory where the wisdom of age and life experience kicks in. And it is certainly where the genius of the founders of  $\Sigma\Phi$  manifests. Somewhere inside, you all know what I'm about to say... *Friendship... Love... and Truth.* FLT - The big 3. They are the keys to true happiness.

And how lucky for you and me to be exposed to an organization that recognizes, acknowledges and celebrates these hallmarks of happiness at a transformational time in our lives as young men, when raging hormones and the challenges of transitioning into manhood are ever-present.

And how lucky for us to be reminded of their importance whenever we are together - whether in large number, like tonight, or 1-on-1 with a fellow brother...and from any

other chapter ....notwithstanding any difference in age ...because Friendship, Love and Truth are foundational for all initiates of Sigma Phi.

I'd like to make 5 observations about happiness. They will come from a vantage point of 57 years, 37 ½ of which have found me to be a Brother of the Thrice Illustrious.

#### **OBSERVATION NO. 1**

*When it comes to happiness, it's really all about your relationship with your family, your friends and at some level, yourself.* I hope you work with friends, because we spend a lot of time working. Even if you do, however, I bet you remember little of what you did at work 2 years ago. Instead, what you remember most is time outside of work: holidays and vacations with family or friends. The good times. The happy times. And certainly times with your Sigma Phi Brothers.

#### **OBSERVATION NO. 2**

*In the happiest of worlds, you love all your family, a whole lot of friends and yourself - with all your flaws and all their flaws.* Sounds a bit like unconditional love, doesn't it?

Practically all of us experience friendship, unconditional love and some sort of truth from our parents shortly after birth, but that's at a time when we don't have other points of reference, or any particular consciousness.

If you grew up with siblings, you might not describe their love as always unconditional. At a base level, however, "blood matters." It is very strong bonding material. If your relationship with blood family is poor, your happiness will be challenged. Fix it.

If you had a dog for a pet, then you definitely had a taste of unconditional friendship and love. (You may have also stepped in some truth along the way!)

If you enjoyed some well-adjusted family and friends growing up, you probably saw friendship, love and truth in practice without realizing it. I suggest that those are the people you now count as teachers or maybe even role models or mentors. But the reality is that few new high school grads have figured these things out, particularly in our "stuff is status," consumer-oriented world. Personally, I'm still figuring them out, but I know the journey has been expedited by my initiation into, and continuing affiliation with, Sigma Phi.

#### **OBSERVATION NO. 3**

*Money Can't Buy Happiness.* It's old but it's true. Money takes care of food, shelter, clothing and transportation - important life stuff, to be sure. It can also buy time which is a very precious commodity - through hiring others to handle some of life's chores. But money is nowhere near as important to happiness as good relationships with family and friends - and FLT.

In my work as a lawyer, I watch this play out again and again, to the point, where I now confidently feel blessed not to have been born into a particularly wealthy family. I now feel like the road to happiness for the very wealthy is more difficult. It's filled with deeper potholes, if you will, and more challenges to navigate in the pursuit of truth. For the wealthy:

- Achieving feelings of self-worth and accomplishment is more challenging. Knowing true friends is more difficult.
- Maintaining good relationships with family members may be more challenging too, particularly when large assets will be distributed.
- I could go on, but I need not. Be careful for what you wish, and thank Sigma Phi for mitigating a few of those challenges.

#### **OBSERVATION NO. 4**

*There are ways for money to promote happiness, of course.* Among them:

- Spend money traveling with a partner. My wife, Susan, and I love to travel and just returned from a week in Campeche, Mexico, a 500 year old coastal town in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico inhabited by delightfully short people, mostly of Mayan ancestry. We've never felt so tall (!)...or so appreciated as tourists. Susan and I have also traveled this great country widely and - with our kids - have visited most of its National Parks. (Ken Burns calls them "the Crown Jewels of America.") We found much happiness for our family there. Trust me. Go see the jewels!
- Spend money traveling some more with friends and family. My early travel was mostly with ΣΦs. Vermont to ski; spring breaks in Florida. And a life-expanding trip to the Bahamas with Bahamian Brother Christopher Lightbourn, S'78. Upon graduation, broth-

ers Shelly Smithson, S'79, Rob Marshall, S'78, and I did the Eurail and backpack program across Europe for 6 memory-filled weeks. We still laugh about things that happened.

- Use money and your time to help others cover life's basic needs if that is a challenge for them. Do it for them, but do it for yourself, too. Helping others gives you a comparison base and increases your own happiness. This is Happiness 101.
- Finally, use money...lots of money... to celebrate Friendship, Love and Truth with others, just as we are doing tonight!

*Experiences, not stuff, make a happy life.* Of this, I am absolutely certain.

#### OBSERVATION NO. 5

##### *Live life with one or more partners!*

From what I have observed in others, just about all of us are happier when life is lived with one or more partners. You don't have to have sex with your partner to achieve the benefit, although will grant you that sex can heighten happiness.... to extreme levels... for short periods of time. (Ideally, of course, not too short...)

Humans are simply social creatures wired to emote and receive feelings with others: in other words, to interact. Solitary confinement is a harsh punishment.

Living alone is a big challenge because humans tend to talk to themselves too much without a trusted friend to validate (or challenge) the thinking behind the self-talk. That breeds doubt... uncertainty, ...

maybe indecision,... and eventually, designation as Crazy Uncle Bob, or Eccentric Aunt Betty.

### ***Don't be crazy Uncle Bob!***

Susan and I are now witnessing this in older adults we know, but I suggest it's true for most everyone. As I reflect on it, I think every first year college student should be required to have a roommate - and I mean in the room - so they can talk about stuff they are trying to figure out when falling asleep at night... and also catch hell when the smell of dirty laundry simply becomes inhumane.

I also suggest to you that this is why all our chapters should have a dwelling house at which brothers can gather, live together, laugh together and dine together. It is reason for older Sigs to maintain close relationships with Sig brothers. Thus are strengthened the bonds of the Thrice Illustrious and thus is happiness increased.

Given my life experiences, I can only conclude that Sigma Phi's foundational precepts, our initiation process and the brotherhood which follows jump start us greatly on the road to true happiness. If you doubt it, go read and reflect on the letter of Elihu Root, H'1860, at the front of our Catalog and the words of our initiation ceremony. Then think about who you trust and why...and know that "So long as that pulse shall continue to beat, so long shall our love for you my brother, remain firm and inviolate."

In closing, I'll confide that:

- I remain in awe of the genius of Thomas Jefferson.

- Half of my BFFs are members of Sigma Phi.
- I am absolutely certain that association with the Society has enriched my life immensely and made me a better man. ...and
- As a result of my association, I have lived an incredibly blessed life, full of family, friends, love, happiness and experiences. For this, I thank all of you...and our Society...and very much hope that you share and enjoy the same good fortune.

Finally, I'll leave you with an old and worthy thought I recently rediscovered in a copy of a 1953 letter to the members of the Serpentine Club who were to become the first Virginia Sigs. It was penned by Vermont Sig Matthew Buckham, V'1848, who served as President of the University of Vermont for 40 years. He wrote:

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*"A gentleman is one who thinks more of other people's feelings than his own rights, and more of other people's rights than his own feelings."*

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Wise words, indeed, my brothers, on this excellent occasion of March 4 and at all other times!



# The Man in the Bowler\*\*

by Braden Tempas, L'90 [Braden@tempas.com](mailto:Braden@tempas.com)

A privileged man, indeed, was my great, great grandfather, Robert Bowman. Who else would take his two children and wife on a trip around the world leaving Chicago via train in 1908, visiting nearly twenty countries over eight months? Even more privileged would he have been to realize that - a hundred years later - his great-great grandson would embark on that very same adventure as a single man.

You see, I decided to “retire” from my work as a defense contractor in my thirties and retrace this historic trip my ancestor undertook. A most earnest wandering bird ever since my first days in the halls of Bethlehem’s Thrice Illustrious, my fascination was put to the test in 2008, when Robert Bowman’s travel journal made its way to me upon my grandmother’s passing. I was captivated! A century later, I was drawn to recreating his odyssey. And so I flew from my D.C. home to Chicago, found my westbound train at Union Station, and embarked on the adventure of a lifetime...

234 days later.

This 2008 journey provided the opportunity to see and compare many cultures across the planet and how changes have moved over 100 years. Traveling by train, freighter, ferry, car, and eventually plane (as strange a travel mode for my great great grandfather as space travel is to us), I was able to stop at every landmark cited in his journal, finding seven hotels still in business, and enjoying many

traditions that seemed unchanged from 1908. Even with all the progress we have witnessed over the last century - air conditioning, air travel, microwave dinners, etc. - we are still a community that needs food and shelter in our pursuit of happiness.

I visited the wonders of the world from Robert Bowman’s time: places like the pyramids of Giza, the Taj Mahal, and the carved rock city of Petra. I visited newer landmarks such as ground zero at Nagasaki, Hiroshima and in Manhattan, where the former World Trade Center towers once stood. For me, all were breathtaking.

I lived countless history lessons as I visited countries like Israel, Jordan and Lebanon, which did not even exist in 1908 when my ancestor made his epic journey. The British gave independence to the exotic countries of India and Hong Kong in the last century, yet I was able to benefit from British influence by traveling comfortably in those countries without many language issues because of the prevalence of English.

Of course, I had to adapt and be flexible in order to manage the

unexpected during this global journey. The new friends (and old!) I met along the way reminded me of the best Sigma Phi brought out in me at Lehigh and every day since. I was able to share my experiences with friends and family, as well as feeling life’s joys and pains in faraway places. Examples? Hunger in Calcutta, poverty in Damascus, awe at China’s Great Wall and marvel at the bazaars of Istanbul. These represented serious consciousness-expanding experiences for any wandering bird!

On day 221 of my voyage I was in London. I stumbled across an art gallery that happened to have the same name as my great-great grandfather: Robert Bowman. The coincidence value was too high; I couldn’t resist introducing myself to the owner and telling him my story. Later that evening, I exchanged information with a lovely young lady whose accent I mistook for French. (It turned out that she was from Brazil.) We kept in enthusiastic touch for a time afterwards....and have now been married for seven years. Talk about the best kind of trip memento....





# Hobart Reunion in Florida

## 60 YEARS LATER, SAME FOUR GUYS!

by Jack Nostrand, G'54 jhnsuper7@gmail.com

*One of our Sig songs leads with the lyric "Swift the Happy Hours Are Flying." The following reunion story bears that out but insinuates that the passage of time doesn't really matter....*

Four Delta Sigs became dear friends in Geneva 60 years ago. While we four have seen very little of each other over the past 60 years, save a 2-day reunion in Orlando 10 years ago, we have kept in touch via email. Since we are in our 80's and have a few health issues, it made sense to get together again sooner rather than later. We made reunion plans!

Ray Polley, G'54, lives in Boynton Beach (FL), Buzz Kolodny, G'54, lives in Baltimore, John Shannon, G'54, lives in Clearwater (FL) and I live in Satellite Beach (FL). All of us are married to wonderful wives and have never divorced.

We chose to meet at my home in Satellite beach since I am on dialysis and have travel limitations. We spent November 9 &10 reminiscing about our college days and sharing our life experiences and careers. Perhaps the most fun was looking at some old Hobart College yearbooks I had saved. Those pictures gave us multiple opportunities to laugh at ourselves and - at the same time - promoted some sadness as we thought of some of those who have passed before us.

The four of us pledged Sigma Phi in 1954 and were close friends throughout our college years. John and I were roommates; Buzz and Ray also roomed together. Those days at the Delta of New York were some of the best days of our lives. We will never forget them. We learned values there that we might not have elsewhere.

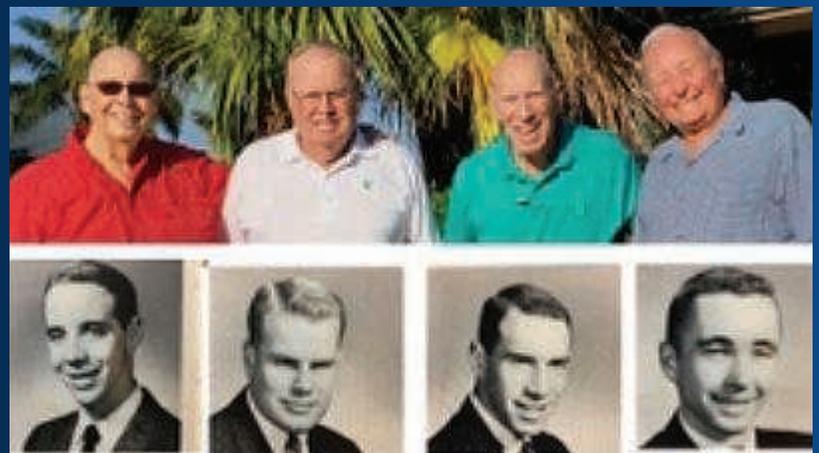
But the most remarkable thing is that, although we have changed physically in the many years since, our personalities have not changed. We really are the same four guys that we were 60 years ago.

The takeaway for me? I would urge every Sig to stay in touch with his brothers. Friendships formed in the realm of the Thrice Illustrious are everlasting.

We all go through the rollercoaster of life together; it is the only way we can survive. We all contribute what we can at opportune moments and this fourth generation Sig appreciates those who have taken the time to read this and/or have shared in my journeys over the years. Within Sigma Phi, we all share in joy when a brother is able to share his life with a loved one, just as we share in tragedy when a Sig loses someone dear. Through this Society, we are connected in a special way. Our brotherhood allows us to enjoy the delights, help in the sorrows and move forward, never to forget the situations where words need not be spoken.

My global trek reminded me anew that three snaps, a firm grasp and a hug forever speak volumes.

*\*\* Braden's reference to the elegance of turn-of-the-century travel*



Jack Nostrand

Ray Polley

Buzz Kolodny

John Shannon

# Friendship, Love & Truth in a Hospital Hallway

by Laurent LeBien, S'81 w8n4gdx@gmail.com

When Mike Imirie, M'69, suggested I pen something tying the life lessons I've taken from Sigma Phi to my work world, I happily consented. I have some fear that the necessary 'Flame' constraints on an article such as this may not do justice, but I'll give it a shot.

These days, I work as Hospital Intensive Care Unit Chaplain. And let me get one thing out of the way from the get-go. Too many of my friends have asked: "Laurent, do you suppose your extracurricular activities in youth have facilitated an ability to relate to patients, families, and caregivers experiencing the spectrum of physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual issues; crises, trauma, and pain?" The answer is an unequivocal 'yes!' As I suppose it would have to be coming from one of the two founding members of the Space Base at the noble Serpentine Club.

I was fortunate to be a Virginia Sig in the early '80s, a time when a lot of things flew that wouldn't fly now. I was lucky enough to live with Cal Sigs at the Greene & Greene House in the mid-80s, a wondrous period when brothers from Virginia, Lehigh, Hobart, Michigan, and Hamilton all called that spectacular place home. I have more dear lifelong Sigma Phi friends than I can count (and sometimes remember). I was a Comparative Religious Studies major at UVA and graduated from seminary in Berkeley.

Perhaps some of you are familiar

with the role of military chaplains, prison chaplains, hospice chaplains, youth chaplains, even corporate chaplains. The position of an Intensive Care Unit Chaplain is singularly unique. Each day, I form deeply meaningful relationships with persons who are dying or suffering from critical illness/injury from which they may not recover.

Many patients find comfort in religions: their individual faith traditions. It is useful for me to be well versed in the tenets of multiple religions (and their many denominations) and most customary prayers.

**"I would contend, however, that the real work of a hospital chaplain is spiritual – human, really – and not religious. I meet anyone and everyone where they are. Atheists are wonderful. I'll rap sports, or gardening, or, if you want to go there, politics. You're a Wiccan? Groovy, let's talk about it. In short, I strike to connect."**

What is of import is following the patient, if only as supportive presence. Far better to be able to engage on the patient's (or patient family's) "weltanschauung" grounding (i.e., philosophy),

whatever that may be. It's important for me to serve as a supportive, compassionate or empathetic, loving human being during extremely difficult circumstances.

Sigma Phi brothers have shown incredible patience with me over the course of my life. Often love was and is freely given, perhaps when undeserved. The fact that so many Cal and Virginia Sigs remain incredibly close friends speaks for itself. At baseline, I acknowledge that reality and community are greater than my "self." And I try to adhere to treating others as I would wish to be treated. These are fundamental brotherhood values, of course, and I learned them in the halls of Sigma Phi.

And if you happen to be one of those hardcore sciences, tech, or math guys who finds his way to my hospital... it'll be my pleasure to go down the roads of M-theory, Hartle-Hawking wave function of the universe, or Participatory Anthropic Principle with you!

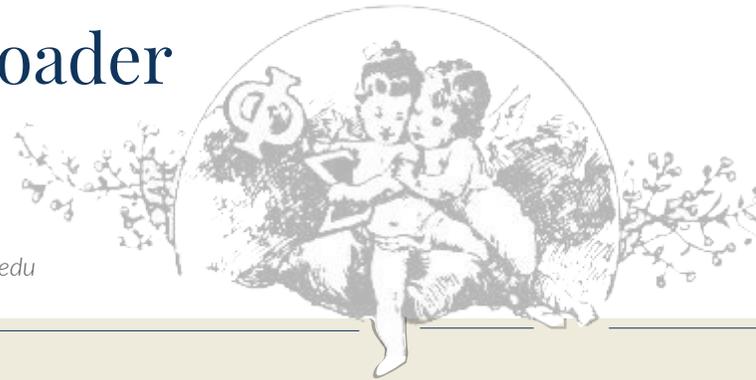


*Brother LeBien is an Intensive Care Unit Chaplain in the Greater New Orleans area. If you wish, you may follow him @LaurentLeBien - Ed*

OP-ED:

# “Towards a Broader Sigma Phi”

by Dan Horgan, H'15 and  
Zac Gelfand, M'16 [zgelfand@umich.edu](mailto:zgelfand@umich.edu)



The Sigma Phi has been an all-male space for 190 years. Within the Society, young men have been able to flourish and grow in the bonds of brotherhood. Sig historically attracts and invites the best and brightest boys. The members of today and those from five, 50, or 150 years ago are bound by qualities we believe are shared among all. They are smart, driven, curious, passionate, dedicated to friendship and leaders in their communities. They possess a remarkable capacity to love others. Sigs also have a character that escapes such general descriptors: we describe this as a sense of vivacity, panache, mettle and poise. This kind of character and these qualities have long been foundational to Sigma Phi. They have contributed to our Society's long life.

The enduring value of such character ensures that the Society and its members will always adapt and thrive. Sigma Phi has long fulfilled a need, giving men a space to live, support one another, find acceptance, and grow. But that need has evolved. Institutions which host our actives chapters are now - and have been for some time - home to so many who display Sig character, but are not male. In the Society's current structure, non-males are at best regarded as friends of the

house or “Sig Sisters.” As such, many respected individuals, deeply loved by chapter members and possessing all the attributes of Sigs, are still excluded from full acceptance into active chapter families. Such exclusion keeps non-males on the periphery; it often pushes them away. Were Sig chapters able to make membership available to all with qualifying character, regardless of gender, the Society would stand to benefit greatly by welcoming additional strong leaders and sharp minds.

In the recent past, Sisters at some chapters - notably Michigan, Hamilton and California - have become some of the most passionate and esteemed individuals within the Society, despite not being recognized as members. The Sisters of the Sigma Phi have participated and contributed beside Brothers with a passion demonstrating Brothers and Sisters as veritable peers. Sisters have shown a capacity to maintain a character that is the equal of any man in our Society.

Additionally, there are those Sisters and Brothers of the Sigma Phi who may not identify with the gender assigned at birth. The gendered language surrounding membership has made it very hard in past for some Sigs to be comfortable or fully recognized, feeling as though their identity somehow breaks a rule. This goes for those

Brothers who have been allowed membership despite living as women and those Sisters or friends of the House who are female and not considered for membership, despite living as men. Such identity intricacies vastly complicate borders for Society inclusion. As such, and following many years of only peripheral inclusion, we believe it is imperative for Sigma Phi to become a home to all those meant to be a part of it, regardless of gender. In our view, such a step would certainly contribute to Sigma Phi's prosperity for another 190 years.

Complementary to this letter, a full and thoughtful proposal has been drafted. Collaborated upon by actives from the Alphas of MI, CA and the Beta of New York, it address some of the questions that may arise, including a brief history of the issue, an address of potential difficulties in living conditions and the membership process, intentionality regarding openness with alumni, boards, and the national, as well as information on the practical legality of such a change. To see the full proposal, please contact [sigmaphi-genderinc@gmail.com](mailto:sigmaphi-genderinc@gmail.com).

**(Note: The views expressed in this op-ed piece are the views of the writer. They are not endorsed by the S&A and have been neither entertained nor discussed in formal Society leadership circles. - Ed)**



  
**CHAPTERS**  
**2017**  
**CONVENTION**  
*in*  
**Charlottesville**

**SIGMA PHI 2017  
 ANNUAL CONVENTION**  
  
 Alpha of Virginia  
 Charlottesville, VA  
 September 21-23, 2017

*More information is available  
 from Convention Chair  
 Jon Bergner, S'03  
[jon.bergner@gmail.com](mailto:jon.bergner@gmail.com)*



Come join us in historic Charlottesville. Visit the homes of our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> presidents. Visit the Rotunda - a World Heritage site - and walk the Lawn of "Mr. Jefferson's academical village." Visit the local wineries or breweries or play a round of golf at the University's own Birdwood golf course. Charlottesville in the fall is a fantastic place. See the purple shadows and the blue and orange sunsets.

Come join your Brothers for an amazing time, great food and better company.

*Here is our tentative convention schedule:*

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21**

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.....Casual Cocktail Party for Early Arrivals

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22**

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.....Standing & Advisory Committee Meeting

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.....Undergraduate Workshops

12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. ....Lunch (S&A and Undergraduate Workshops)

1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.....Sigma Phi Educational Foundation Meeting

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.....Hicks Oratorical Competition

7:30 p.m. ....Pig Roast and Oysters at Sigma Phi Place

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23**

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. ....Sigma Phi General Convention Meeting

12:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. ....Free Afternoon

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. ....Banquet

# Never Forget These Brothers

*These deaths have been reported to the Society since publication of the Dec. 2016, 'Flame'*

Thomas F. Aigler 'M'38 ..... November 19, 2014  
 William K. Aigler 'M'35 ..... August 13, 2015  
 Bradford Allen 'U'53 ..... September 14, 2006  
 James E. Armstrong III 'S'66 ..... 2014  
 John K. Ballantine 'I'42 ..... February 5, 2017  
 Charles A. Barth Jr. 'L'50 ..... October 14, 2014  
 Mark E. Bowers Jr. 'L'54 ..... November 14, 2016  
 Tim Brady 'M'79 ..... February 23, 2017  
 Wheaton Byers 'W'47 ..... April 21, 2017  
 John D. Clark 'V'51 ..... June 30, 2012  
 Richard Cody Jr. 'F'51 ..... May 13, 2017  
 Edwin H. Conger 'M'51 ..... August 11, 2015  
 Lawrence Elliott 'F'53 ..... May 11, 2017  
 Benjamin E. Ewing Jr. 'G'47 ..... October 3, 2016  
 Thomas M. Gopsill Jr. 'G'50 ..... September 30, 2015  
 John R. "Guy" 'F'46 ..... April 16, 2015  
 Douglas Hayes 'M'36 ..... February 28, 2011  
 Philip Henderson 'F'55 ..... November 18, 2016  
 Robert Hunold 'F'59 ..... January 1, 2013  
 Arnold Jackson Jr. 'F'42 ..... April 19, 2017  
 Paul Larsen 'I'44 ..... October 2016  
 Lawrence Lattomus II 'C'52 ..... January 29, 2017  
 Charles Lobeck Jr. 'G'43 ..... July 20, 2012  
 Arthur P. Loring Jr. 'I'53 ..... December 21, 2016  
 Robert M. Lynch 'L'40 ..... May 2, 2009  
 John E. Mann 'U'42 ..... April 16, 2014  
 John Martin 'I'62 ..... April 5, 2013  
 John P. McCrory 'F'51 ..... January 17, 2017  
 Bruce W. Medbery 'M'59 ..... May 14, 2014  
 George D. Mercer 'M'68 ..... July 19, 2017  
 Charles A. Mower 'I'44 ..... December 30, 2016  
 George S. Murphy 'F'53 ..... August 29, 2009

A. G. Davis Philip 'U'48 ..... March 28, 2016  
 Robert D. Pierson 'L'54 ..... February 14, 2017  
 Clark Ransome 'I'61 ..... November 24, 2016  
 Donald P. Ridge 'M'54 ..... February 12, 2015  
 John M. Robb 'V'57 ..... February 21, 2017  
 William D. Ross 'M'54 ..... January 27, 2017  
 Robert Sanderson 'G'50 ..... March, 2015  
 Francis Bowes Sayre Jr. 'W'34 ..... October 3, 2008  
 Henry L. Schmidt 'Jr. M'41 ..... June 10, 2016  
 Thomas Stanwood 'U'58 ..... March 15, 2016  
 Frederick L. Stone Jr. 49 ..... December 15, 2016  
 Benjamin G. Taylor 'I'36 ..... July 12, 2017  
 Frederick W. Thomas 'M'64 ..... February 29, 2016  
 James C. Wentz 'G'47 ..... November 26, 2016  
 H. Ward Wettlaufer 'H'56 ..... March 31, 2016  
 John L. Wiese 'M'41 ..... May 8, 2014  
 Peter C. Williams 'S'67 ..... February 13, 2014  
 Wilbur L. Woods 'C'56 ..... May 22, 2017  
 Anthony L. Wotkyns 'I'57 ..... December 7, 2013  
 Charles C. Yager 'F'60 ..... January 1, 2017



## KUDOS & THANKS

...to the following Sigs for their articles, information or encouragement supporting this issue of the 'Flame': Dave Dallas, S'79, Peter Ernst, C'17, Zac Gelfand, M'15, Dan Horgan, H'15, Jeff Kunz, F'68, Christy Lambden, T'11, Laurent LeBien, S'81, Brendan McCurdy, H'80, Sam Moore, F'70, Jack Nostrand, G'54, & Braden Tempas, L'90

Every written contribution or suggestion for coverage from any Sig is warmly welcomed. Each adds immediately and 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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[www.sigmaphi.org](http://www.sigmaphi.org)



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## 2017 DUES NOTICE

# 2017

As 2016 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.

**Mail your dues check payable to Sigma Phi Society:**

**Suggested - \$75 before 2007; \$50 for those initiated later**



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](http://www.sigmaphi.org)

**Esto!**

*Continued from page 2.*

the deliberations of the General Convention. Indeed, as Chair, I will not recognize anyone from the floor who does not acknowledge the primacy of Convention rulings. The Restated By-laws and Constitution very clearly affirm that the General Convention shall be the Society's exclusive judge.

My own thoughts on membership criteria were expressed in the last issue of the *Flame*. I believe that there is an inherent value to a single sex society. I pointed out that, in our country today, membership in fraternities and sororities continues to grow. I referenced our own youngest chapter - the Tarheels (Ts) at UNC - whose members exhibit qualities of leadership that would make Brothers Bowie, Witherspoon, Bowie and Cromwell proud. The Alpha of Virginia this year swung the largest class in its 64 year history. I believe that the continued existence of an all-male society does not denigrate or seek to marginalize members of the opposite sex; it acknowledges that there is a difference between the sexes. That difference is to be appreciated for all the qualities, both subtle and overt, present therein. Undergraduate males have a freedom of choice on their respective campuses. No one is forced to join the all-male Sigma Phi. If an undergraduate were to believe that a single sex organization is antithetical to his epistemology, then good luck, God bless you and go on your way.

Sigma Phi has a different belief: one borne out by 190 unbroken years of brotherhood.

***Esto Perpetua***