

Flame

NUMBER 135 • DECEMBER 2021

Convention 2021 in New York:

Stellar Sig Gathering in Ithaca

pages 12-18

Screen House

G. W. SERGENT.

Savannah, Ga., July 28th 1882
My good Sig Brothers

It is with the
deepest regret, that impetuous
absence, will prevent my attend-
-dance at the coming Sig. con-
-vention. Give my love to the
Sig boys - and take my heart
felt desire, that ~~the~~ acts and
doings may be promotive, if
the progress, and happy success
of the splendid Brother hood
I shall be with you in spirit
and on that evening shall take
a styrop cup to the health and
prosperity & happiness of each one
respectively and of all in the
band of Brotherhood

Yours Grandpops
in the bond
Ch B. Brownell

“A Proposition of Enduring Worth”

by Bob Daly, U'68, SPEF Treasurer bobdaly77@gmail.com



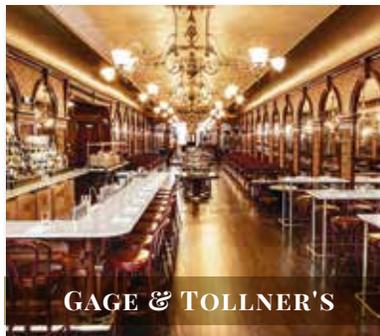
I recently saw an article in the *New York Times* announcing the reopening of Gage &

Tollner's Restaurant on Fulton Street in Brooklyn. It brought back good memories and spurred some thoughts about the success of good ideas over time.

The restaurant was a favorite of Wink Mayer, L'10: **1910**, that is. He hosted me there a number of times when I visited New York as an undergraduate and just after college. He was finishing 28 years as the General Secretary of Sigma Phi. Additionally, he had personally initiated hundreds of brothers – including me – traveling from chapter to chapter and building the foundation of Sig brotherhood that benefitted so many.

He had a wealth of stories about Sigma Phi, its history, and the rich traditions of its brotherhood. I enjoyed hearing all of them. Gage & Tollner's was a great venue for that. On selected nights, the staff would turn off the electric lights and illuminate the mirrored dining room with the gas lights that were installed in Sigma Phi's first century and which still functioned admirably. You could

have expected Cromwell, the Bowies and Witherspoon to come in at any time to take a table! But the service and the meals were top form for the New York of a century later. It was a good idea standing the test of time.



Outside, the '70s were roaring. It was the time of Viet Nam, Watergate, and unrest on the campuses of America. Fraternities were being challenged from many directions. It seemed like the challenges were unprecedented, but this was really not new. Our Society had faced wars, at least one pandemic, economic distress, and countless social changes. Wink and I talked about all of this, and we marveled – with pride – at the success of Sigma Phi through all of the turbulent times it had seen. Sigma Phi had carried on and prospered. Lifetime friendships were

formed. Brothers were initiated. New chapters were launched. The concept of a national fraternity became a reality. Great personalities joined our band. Sigma Phi had been a good idea at its founding, and we could see that it still was.

Sigma Phi provides unique interpersonal value to its members. It is a shared experience and a shared set of values which somehow go beyond the immediate contact with contemporaries. It was – and is – a connection across generations. It is a good idea.

Now, as we complete the Society's second century, we certainly face no shortage of challenges. We will master them by applying the ideals that our founders entrusted to us. Our efforts will see us entering our third century successfully and providing value to our members – present and future. This, too, will be the success of a good idea over time.

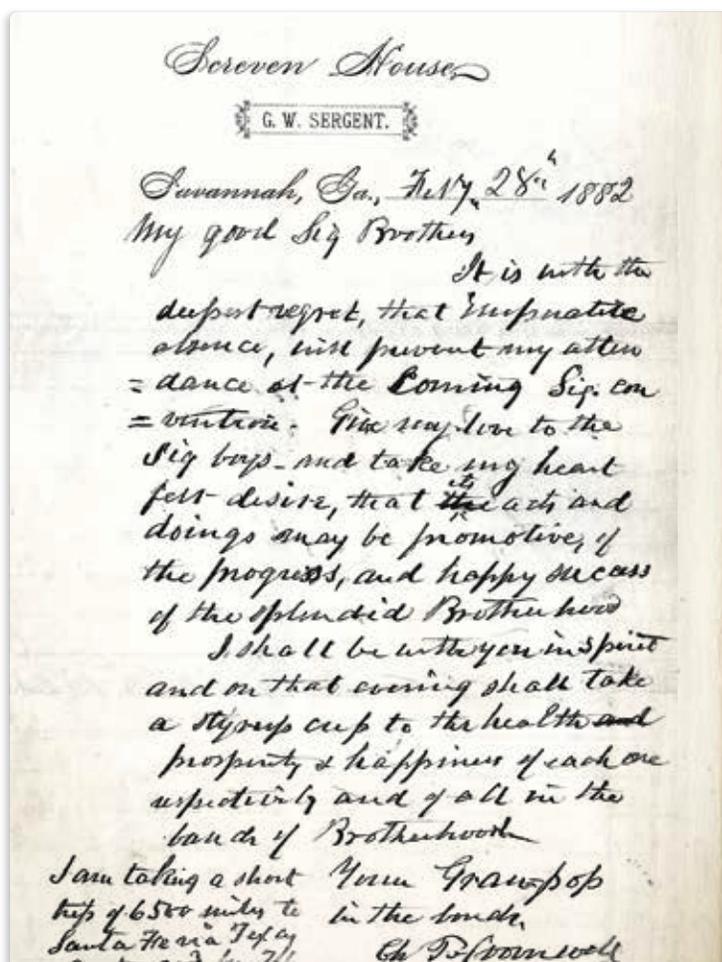
I am anxious to enjoy its benefits. It is a proposition of enduring worth.

Esto Perpetua!



A Founder Sends His Regrets

Charles Thorn Cromwell was one of the four founding members of the Sigma Phi Society. He enjoyed a successful career in law and was a prominent New York City real estate attorney for decades. Cromwell was our longest-lived founder, passing away in 1893 at age 85. In all of those years, the flame of Sigma Phi burned brightly in the man. He had occasion to correspond with the Alpha of New York in 1882 to express his regrets at missing a looming convention. The language that Brother Cromwell employed underscored his ongoing passion and hopes for the Thrice Illustrious, fully 55 years later.



My good Sig Brothers:

It is with the deepest regret that imperative absence will prevent my attendance at the coming Sig convention. Give Sig love to the Sig boys and take my heartfelt desire that its acts and doings may be promotive of the progress and happy success of the splendid Brotherhood.

I shall be with you in spirit and on that evening shall take a styrup (sic: stirrup) cup (i.e., traditional drink served after a foxhunt) to the health, prosperity and happiness of each one respectively and all in the bonds of Brotherhood.

Your grandpop in the bonds,

Charles Thorn Cromwell





Immune to COVID-19

by John Hollis, S'87 jdhollis@hotmail.com

It was a little after 5 p.m. on July 22, 2020, when I received the phone call of a lifetime.



On the other end of the line was Dr. Lance Liotta, the George Mason University researcher and former deputy director of the

National Institutes of Health (NIH). He was calling to not only tell me that I had unknowingly contracted COVID-19 a few months earlier, but that I possessed extremely rare “super” antibodies in my blood that had killed the virus and rendered me permanently immune to the dreaded killer of more than a half million Americans.

These “super” antibodies were potent enough to kill 90 percent of the virus even after diluting my blood 10,000 times. They remain highly concentrated in my blood now, long after the virus has been completely eradicated.

How’s that for suddenly drinking from the fire hose?

The rest of humanity was gripped with a palpable sense of fear and panic over a murderous pandemic that was spreading unchecked across the globe like a runaway locomotive, destroying lives and the entire global economy.

And I’d just been told that I was an outlier of epic proportions and completely impervious to it. “So let me make sure I got this straight,” I finally mustered after asking Liotta to repeat himself on several occasions. “You’re telling me I’m immune to a virus that is now killing thousands of Americans per

day. Is that what I’m hearing you say?”

Liotta, the co-director and the co-founder of Mason’s Center for Applied Proteomics and Molecular Medicine, confirmed the news.

I was too stunned to say much of consequence at that moment and began trying the best I could to somehow absorb what I’d just been told. I suddenly had a million questions racing through my head.

How certain was this information? How and when could I have contracted the virus? Could I have contracted the virus while traveling in Europe with my teenage son in March? Had he been exposed as well while in London and Paris?

Not sure what I expected when I volunteered a few days earlier to contribute to Dr. Liotta’s antibody study. But this wasn’t it.

My surreal story began months earlier after becoming heavily congested to start the last week of March. I had NO other symptoms, and simply attributed my minor discomfort to pollen typical for that time of year. I was feeling 100 percent by week’s end and never even considered COVID-19 as the culprit.

Things took a more ominous turn when my housemate became very ill

with the virus to start the month of April. I was so certain that a similar fate or worse awaited me that I even penned a letter to my teenage son, just in case.

I remained healthy, but called Kevin Tydings, S’87, my former roommate at both UVA and in boarding school at Woodberry Forest, to let him know of my precarious situation. He called almost every evening for the next two weeks to essentially make sure I was still alive.

My housemate eventually recovered and I never got sick, leaving me to believe that I’d somehow dodged a bullet.

As George Mason’s Communications Manager, I received word in mid-July that Dr. Liotta and his team had positive initial results from their antibody study that had begun in April.

We’d just finished discussing those findings in his office when I casually mentioned having gone unscathed after my housemate contracted the virus. I saw no harm in asking Dr. Liotta if I could join the several hundred volunteers already in the study.

George Mason maintains one of only 13 NIH-sponsored Biosafety Level 3 Biomedical Research Laboratories equipped to handle live COVID-19 samples from which scientists could directly test participant samples.

Analysis of my blood revealed not only that I had contracted an American strain of the virus, but how and where the “super” antibodies had entirely neutralized the virus in my body. My blood has since proven effective in

Sigma Phi: Emerging from COVID Times

by Eddie Avila, I'92 eavila415@aol.com



Active Eddie Avila, I'92, is happily hammer-locked at center in this circa-1993 photo at 2307 Piedmont Avenue

For all Sigs, the annual tradition of gathering on March 4th to celebrate the Sigma Phi necessarily went largely unrecognized this year. Although many of us no doubt toasted our hallowed and Thrice Illustrious Bonds, we did so quietly and separately.

During this past COVID-shaped year, I have looked back often and with a profound appreciation at the 2020 March 4th observance at the Alpha of California. The excitement of being with so many old friends whom I had not seen enough of in years past has remained ever-present in my mind. When I reflect on the things the pandemic has deprived Sigs of, I have no regret for good times spent with Brothers.

Now after a long flood, we hope that the virus which has disrupted us from coming together in fellowship will soon ebb. While Sigs eagerly await that time when we can resume our traditions and return to our hallowed halls, some may wonder: *When will that tide recede and what will be revealed in its wake?*

At the Alpha of California, plans are underway for a March 4th style event to take place later this fall. The agenda will be subject to the conditions at that time, of course, but we can be assured that our Sigma Phi will endure beyond the current crisis. I look forward to our reunion in late 2021 with a deeper appreciation for connection.

We hope to be reunited with long absent Brothers, and to toast in remembrance of those Brothers who have passed. We also anticipate welcoming newly-initiated Brothers who have had the unique experience of joining our ranks during this time of undeniable social and Societal (yes: capital 'S') deprivation.

In Berkley, our stalwart Brothers have maintained our Society throughout these quite unique circumstances. *(At your chapter, too,*

I presume...) And they have managed to do so despite the necessary absence of alumni or our Society at large. I look forward to thanking them for carrying on for us. They have maintained the continuity of Friendship, Love, and Truth in our absence. We alumni will welcome them and - in turn - will be welcomed with handshakes in which each of us serves as both finger and pulse.

In 2027 we will celebrate the Bicentennial of the Thrice Illustrious. We will mark 200 years that will serve as testament to what is essential to the Sigma Phi: the bonds between Brothers. We each carry our love of the Society within ourselves. COVID reminds us anew that that love was forged through shared traditions and rituals, a commonality of experiences, and generous fellowship during our collegiate years.

(continued from previous page)

killing every different strain of the virus, including the latest variants. I can't even be a carrier for the virus.

It's roughly the medical equivalent of finding The Holy Grail.

The revelation has been overwhelming

at times, drawing significant national and international headlines. I'm thankful to my Sigma Phi brothers KT, Rich Gable and RJ Lackey for the laughs I needed from the outset to stay sane.

Scientists will soon mass reproduce my antibodies and those of others to

create a COVID-19 treatment, as well as a more effective vaccine.

I remain stunned by it all.

I've long preached that we all share a responsibility to make the world a better place. Only never in a million years could I have envisioned *this* being how I might do just that.

A Long-Missing Hobart Badge, Discovered Too Late

by Bob Shages, U'69 rshages@gmail.com

So, what is this? And this? And this? And why would I ever save *this*?

These questions came to my mind when I “discovered” a sagging box packed many years ago but just rediscovered during a fit of basement cleanup. Did I really need to save a professor’s typewritten, prototype work on *Mechanics, Statics and Dynamics*? (We would-be engineers never knew if he got it published or just sold xeroxed copies to his classes!)

When I left Union in 1975 after finishing graduate school, I emptied my desk drawers into a box of books, class notes, and assorted office supplies - most would call it a junk drawer - with a plan to sort it out later. ‘Later’ turned into almost 50 years, paced by three household moves.

Mixed in with the statistics and economic management books was a container of “drawer collectibles” - pens, broken pencils, paper clips, gum wrappers and dried white-out. Unexpectedly, I also found a Sigma Phi Badge belonging to one Sean Smith Butler, G’62.

I have no idea how it got there. It must have been lost in my room during a swing at Union when we hosted brothers from many chapters and everyone slept (those who did sleep, that is....) in any open bed at the Sigma Phi Place. My first thought was “I have to get this back to Sean.” Even if he didn’t remember how he lost it, the badge would surely be important to him and bring back some memories of his Union visit. The search was on!

The 1977 *Sigma Phi Catalogue* had a pretty long bio for Sean, but I couldn’t find any of the listed companies or clubs.

Next, I discovered he was listed but not registered on the Member Search from Sigma Phi’s website. It did mention Hartford, CT, so I was off to a Spokeo web search for central Connecticut. It showed that Sean had lived in Geneva, NY, and in Hartford up until 2017, but gave no additional address or email information. My call to the listed phone number was met with news that that number was disconnected.

Finally, I contacted the Alumni Office at Hobart William Smith College. While my contact was reluctant to immediately give anything out, I received an email a couple days later advising that Sean passed away in February, 2018. The Alumni Office only knew this from having done its own search via alumni contact organizations. I couldn’t find any confirming obituary on line.

It dawned on me that I had missed. I missed an opportunity to get this badge back to its owner and, at the same time, I missed an opportunity to meet anew a Sig whose path I must have crossed 50 years ago at a Swing and maybe even a New York City Fourth of March dinner. I couldn’t shake this ‘opportunity lost’ feeling and I couldn’t let it go. I resolved to track down a few of Sean’s contemporaries from the Delta of New York to find out who Sean Butler really was.

It turns out Sean was an outgoing, socially engaging brother. Harry Rust, G’64, shared that Sean was known as

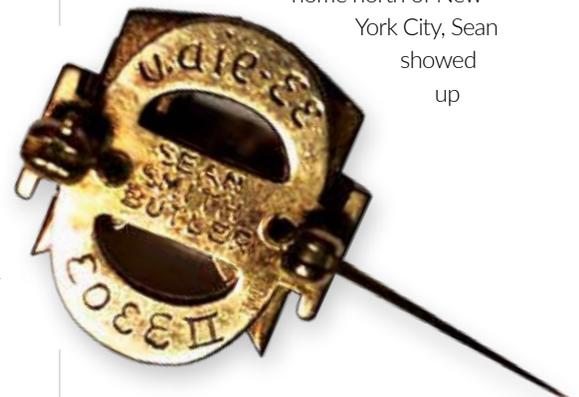
“Benny” around the Sig House and on Hobart’s campus. And Benny was sure that Elton was singing directly to him with “B-B-Benny and the Jets.” He used to hold court in “The Heaven” (others knew it as the attic) atop the Sigma Phi Place in Geneva whenever it was time for a beer or two, and he held in high esteem those who brought the beer.

“Benny” is also accused by Harry as the prime organizer of a pre-finals, all-nighter, stress reducer activity of moving Harry’s VW Beetle up on the Sig House front porch. It looks like he knew how to get a team together when there was “work” to be done. (Harry never did say how he got his VW off that porch....)

He mentioned that Sean’s father worked at Trinity College in Hartford and a search of those records led me to Trinity’s November 1970 college newspaper noting the passing of Sean’s father, John Butler, a Trinity grad and Trinity’s Director of Placement and Career Counseling for 23 years. We could have all used his advice! So, it looks like Sean grew up in a college before going to college. I am sure there were some interesting teenage years for Sean on the Trinity campus. I grew up in West Hartford and had some myself at Trinity before going on to Union.

Robert Buddensee, G’62, remembers Sean as having a wonderful, engaging personality and a good sense of humor.

When Robert held a costume party at his home north of New York City, Sean showed up



with a Barnard coed, both in business attire which I assume was quite proper when dating a Barnard woman in the 70's.

When Sean and his date needed to get back to Barnard, Robert, still in his full bishop ceremonial costume, gave them a ride. Driving the wrong direction on a one-way street in Harlem got them stopped by the police. The policeman saw the clerical robes and asked the "father" if he knew it was a one-way street. Sean took over and, with the engaging wit known only to a Sigma Phi, quickly explained that they were returning from a function at Fordham and the "father" was kind enough to give them a ride back to Columbia and Barnard. Quick directions from the cop sent them on their way! It was yet another situation crafted to success by Sean's personality.

So, what I have now is a collage of who Sean/Benny was: some bits and

pieces of memories of the kind which would probably define all of us in the eyes of others. But what I miss is not *knowing* Sean other than quarantining his badge for 50 years. Most of us realize the Sigma Phi experience in college is only the beginning. Sharing common experiences and bonds of brotherhood formulated in Sigma Phi should lead us to get to know one another better, long after our college days are over.

Who knows? Perhaps my dusty box experience is a clarion call to reset connections made long ago and not miss an opportunity to rekindle the Sigma Phi spirit with other Sigs whose paths we have crossed.



A Sig Sister Reflects

I found this wonderful picture from my parents' 1948 wedding and thought you Sigs would enjoy seeing so many Brothers celebrating together. I spent many, many fall Saturdays at 2307 Piedmont beginning around 1955, I'm guessing, when I'd go with my dad (Heber Smith, I'44 – the handsome groom in the middle) to football games and Sigma Phi. Dad was a timer for the team, so we were down on the field. When he was busy timing, he asked the pompom girls to keep an eye on me. And after every game, we were back at the house for a couple of beers for him and a Coke for me. Really special memories

Little did I know that years later I would meet my wonderful future husband - Roger Graham, I'68 - in that very same spot. (We've now been married fifty years.) Back then, the Sigs in this picture and others were the men we knew as Uncle Dave, Uncle Don, and Uncle Ted, along with my real Uncle Ned, who was a Sig at Wisconsin. The only non-Sig pictured above was my dad's cousin – a tremendous guy in his own right, who no doubt would have been a worthy Sig if given the chance.

Shelley Smith Graham, ISS'69



Sig Badges: Ways & Means

In an effort to make badges more widely and easily available to Sigs, George Snyder S'78, has been appointed by the S&A as the Society's new Badge Administrator.

The Society's badge is available in three different metals: 10k gold (@ \$605); gold-filled (@ \$335) and gold electroplated (@ \$150). Engraving and shipping are included at these prices. The lead time for badge fulfillment (i.e. production and shipping) is about six weeks.

To order, send your check to George at 1941 Lewis Mountain Rd., Charlottesville, Va. 22903. Include your full name, the letters to represent your conclave name and professorship and the year of your initiation into the Society. Each conclave name and professorship can be represented by up to four letters. On the gold-filled and electroplated badges, engraving is lightly done by machine. On a solid 10k gold badge, hand engraving is recommended, which will be at an additional cost.

Engraving information may be sent by email to George at: snyder.gn@gmail.com. Larger orders - those representing more than one brother - should be tendered in a spreadsheet format.

If you have any questions, feel free to call George at 434-242-9229 between 9 AM and 7 PM, EST.



HOPEFULLY, YOU ARE ALL AWARE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE SIGMA PHI EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, OR SPEF. MANY OF OUR ALUMNI ARE AWARE THROUGH OUR FUND DRIVES THAT SPEF OFFERS A TAX DEDUCTIBLE WAY TO DONATE TO SIGMA PHI BECAUSE IT IS DESIGNATED BY THE IRS AS A 501C3 CHARITABLE NON-PROFIT. BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT SPEF DOES AND HOW WE HELP SUPPORT OUR UNDERGRADUATE BROTHERS?

LISTEN UP, ACTIVES!

SPEF IS HERE FOR YOU.

by Jack Romaine, L'90, SPEF President jeromai1@yahoo.com

Come and get your money!

First, we want to encourage strong academic performance. You are at college to learn, right? Fun and games are great, but we want you to keep your eye on the ball and do well in school. Each year, SPEF offers a \$1000 award for the best Chapter GPA and a \$1000 award for the most improved Chapter GPA. All you have to do is...apply!

Have you been invited to join an academic honor society like Phi Beta Kappa or Tau Beta Pi? Congratulations! We salute your excellence and will happily pay for your "key" as a reward.

Want to get in good with the faculty? Professors are people, too, and you can learn a lot from them, even outside the classroom. Host your professor for dinner and we will buy her meal!

What is your learning environment like at the Sigma Phi Place? Do you have sufficient WiFi coverage? Is there something you need to complete assignments? SPEF provides funds for educational upgrades.

I am most excited about this initiative (following) because we are working on improving it now. The Foundation has helped support speakers on campus in the past, but the program was not well defined or publicized. We encourage your Sigma Phi chapter to sponsor a notable speaker for your entire campus. There are so many benefits here. The opportunity for learning something topical outside your major is obvious. But this also contributes to the undergrad experience for your college peers outside of Sigma Phi at the same time that it benefits the host institution. It will raise Sigma Phi's profile on campus; those brothers who help plan and promote it will gain career skills that just aren't

taught in school. More details to come as this key initiative develops within SPEF.

Lastly, the Foundation bestows annual awards for best alumni newsletter, best undergrad newsletter, the Hicks Oratorical Contest and our David S. Brown and Elihu Root Service Awards for distinguished alumni.

But wait, there's more...

I know I already said 'lastly', but there is one other thing SPEF does having a MAJOR impact on the undergrad experience. It is a little different than everything I just talked about. We invest a small portion of our portfolio in our Chapter houses. Via a loan, for example, we helped the Alpha of North Carolina purchase its first house. Similarly, we have helped the Alpha of California restore the Thorsen House in Berkley. Several of our chapters are without dedicated housing right now and we hope one day to help them find a "home."

What now?

So, actives! We want you to do well and we want to reward you. Dan Neumann, F'71, is in charge of awards and can be reached at dca120@sbcglobal.net. Dan tries to contact heads-of-house each year in the fall semester in connection with GPA awards, so please make sure your contact info is up to date with Dan and with the national organization.

So, alumni! We couldn't do any of this without your support and generous contributions. You can contribute to SPEF at <https://www.sigmaphi.org/foundation-1>

Tarheel Travails

by Jacob Morse, T'11
morsejacobm@gmail.com

In the final months of 2019, our Society engaged in a period of discussions surrounding its traditional all-male membership standard. These discussions culminated on a national scale that fall at the Sigma Phi national convention in Burlington with an affirmation of traditional membership.



Such formal deliberations were mirrored by local deliberations about membership at individual Sig chapters. This was certainly evident among the members of the Society's youngest chapter at the Alpha of North Carolina. Many active brothers on Chapel Hill's campus - and like-minded graduate brothers of the Chapter, as well - expressed their desire to modify the membership criteria of the chapter to allow for the admission of women as those eligible to pledge and ultimately become brothers. Many candid discussions and thoughtful deliberations took place throughout the year.

When it became clear that the Society and the Tar Heel Chapter would each remain all-male groups, 40 members of the Alpha of North Carolina publicly disaffiliated with Sigma Phi. Eighteen were undergraduates; 22 were recent alumni.

This action, coupled with the unforgiving circumstances which have accompanied the Coronavirus pandemic, has left the Alpha of North Carolina without an active brotherhood for the first time since its founding in 2008. This truth was especially difficult to confront in light of the chapter's continued ownership of a home in the vicinity of the University of North Carolina campus. The Alumni Corporation continues to owe monthly to the mortgages issued at the home's purchase in early 2017, including those held by the national Society and the Sigma Phi Educational Foundation. Without relief from these financial commitments, the Tar Heel Alumni Board has focused its efforts on living up to its mortgage promises, albeit on a threadbare basis. As it currently stands, the home which once housed the local chapter is listed for sale so that the mortgages can be satisfied, and the alumni corporation can turn its attention to prolonging the Alpha's existence. (Note: The sale was, in fact, consummated this past August.)

It is not yet fully known how or when the Board will move forward with sustaining the youngest chapter of the Sigma Phi. To the extent that those brothers from any Sig chapter reading this sad update have the desire or resources to be of assistance, please feel free to reach out and offer a helping hand.

(The young men who were introduced to Sigma Phi in Chapel Hill have been exceptional. We owe it to the youngest sister of our band...and to ourselves... to find a way to give that chapter new life one day. - Ed)

Unlikely Insight via 'Hot Tub Time Machine'

by Mike Imirie, M'69 mimirie@aol.com

Not long ago, I giggled my way through a movie with no socially-redeeming value

Called 'Hot Tub Time Machine', it was a circa-2010 comedy (John Cusack/Rob Cordry) about three middle-age college friends leading middling adult lives and longing to recapture their youth. A magical time machine at a once-cool ski resort permits them to do this, with unexpected results.

At one point in the movie, Cusack makes a morose speech about their youth, and some of its elements were so pithy that I stopped the movie, rewound it and copied down the actor's words verbatim. While those words were his, what they captured about coming of age resonated with me...and caused me to think back to my own mindset so many years ago as an upperclassman in the hallowed halls of Sigma Phi.

Here's how that actor reflected on collegiate youth shared with great friends.

"We were young. We had momentum. We were winning. We were best friends. Everyone cared more. Everything seemed to matter more back then."

What the script said about deep friendships, youthful, high-energy priorities, and caring deeply was spot on. I was surprised by how dialogue from such a goofy movie had the power to touch me as it did. Additionally, I was gobsmacked by how aptly Cusack's lament reminded me of the affirming environment afforded all of us by the Thrice Illustrious, and I could not resist sharing these sentiments with *Flame* readers.



Society Website: Advancing Our Digital Strategy

by Webmaster Kurt Haigis, V'73 khaigis@together.net

October is always a special time for Vermonters. It is smack dab in the middle of our favorite season, autumn: that colorful time when we start thinking of winter. In October of 2020, I was thinking about what I would do during the looming winter months. After all, most of my outdoor group activities had been curtailed by COVID and all my indoor activities had been canceled until further notice.

Since I'd been away for a while, I decided to offer my assistance to Sigma Phi. I wrote a note volunteering my services to Christy Lambden, T'11, then the Administrative Director of Sigma Phi's Standing & Advisory Committee. At that time, I was serving as Vermont's Alternate Delegate to the S&A. Vermont's Delegate, John W. Britten, V'06, had things well in hand helping manage challenges at the national and local levels.

That December, Christy asked if I could assist in moving the main domain name for Sigma Phi Society. He was in the final stages of creating a new platform for the Society and wanted to have the main domain point to the new website. Since I had been involved in the original digital strategy for Sigma Phi in 2007-08, my name and contact information were still associated with the domain and only I could make changes to the technical and administrative detail used by the Domain Name System (DNS) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_Name_System) to ensure that any requests for sigmaphi.org were properly guided

across the Internet to the correct Internet Protocol address.

Before I provide any more links to technical explanations, I have a confession to make. After spending more than 25 years working on the technical side of Internet and Mobility security, I know very well that - sooner rather than later - all technical explanations become like the facsimile of Charlie Brown's mother talking to him in audio but never forming any words (i.e., wah-wah-wah!).

To make a long story short, I agreed to help the Society and Foundation with this long-anticipated web transition. I started with an investigation into the recent past. It was apparent that the Society's digital communications strategy was not up to speed with technical changes from the last decade. Applying those changes to the existing platform would be neither efficient nor effective. Christy had made the decision to make the switch to a new platform (WIX) and recruited Josh Davis, T'19, to ensure that data migration from one platform to the other took place. Josh and Christy had

been working on the migration for at least 2 months and needed to hand off the results of their efforts.

From December to the present, I was able to re-introduce myself to Society associate Peter Parker (*No! Not the Spiderman character!*) from Fraternity Management Group. We agreed to first canvass the two Sig organizations using Internet technology for communication and fund-raising. In doing so, we started to un-weave the expectations and assumptions that had been made about what was needed, what was wanted, and what was possible.

*In strategic management,
I find it's better to start with
a strategy and then flesh out
the tactical plan to meet
the strategy.*

The concept of need-want-possible is a good way to organize the otherwise unorganized and break down the

"No human institution
lives long unless
it fulfills a human need."
- Elihu Root, H'1860



SIGMA PHI SOCIETY: THE NATION'S OLDEST NATIONAL FRATERNITY

Sample page from
www.sigmaphi.org

strategy into smaller tasks supporting the goals. Did you notice that there are three main concepts necessary for success here? (*The number three pops all over the place in real life as well as in Sigma Phi!*) Start with the strategy, identify tactics for success and develop goals and timelines (tasks) to ensure that you accomplish your goals. The important part of strategic management is realizing that most things are fluid and can change as soon as they are documented. In the digital realm, this concept is accelerated in space and time. Flexibility is key to successful operations.

Pete Parker and I have been meeting each week, first to clean up activities and past requests. FMG has been a great partner in this initial digital transformation phase. We have been working on a warm launch by using the structure that Christy and Josh created and re-directing requests for updates from the old platform to the new.

There are over 2,700 contact profiles in the CRM section of the new site, many from the last 90 days

of additions and changes. It will be our platform for communication and for community moving forward. We have added new financial capability to the platform for donations and dues. We hope to bring Sigma Phi's digital community into the present...and to plan for the future. We are guided by a key axiom from the digital community: update or die!

Sounds a lot like our Society's axiom: **"When She ceases to be first, then may She die."** The Benedict toast was created many years ago and is there to remind us that we have accepted responsibility and need to act upon it with vigor.

Esto perpetua!

(Webmaster Kurt Haigis, V'73, graduated from Vermont after earning two different degrees. After teaching for a short time, he spent decades working in both aerospace and telecommunications, retiring from AT&T as the firm's Subject Matter Expert for Mobility & Internet Security. Kurt makes his home in Ferrisburgh, Vermont.)

WEBSITE FACELIFT

Sigma Phi's home on the internet has received a facelift. Visit www.SigmaPhi.org to see the new functionality and simple navigation.

Alumni visiting the website will see that it's more visually appealing. More important, it's now easier for members to update profiles, make donations, and RSVP for events. You'll be able to find links to chapters, information from the Educational Foundation, and 'how to' instructions regarding Society scholarships.

All Sig alumni are encouraged to verify their profiles by clicking "Log In" and completing the simple "Sign Up" form. The site's administrator will verify your membership, giving you access to the entire website. You'll be able to connect with fellow alumni, add a photo, update contact details and provide additional information.

The new website is a great way to keep current on Society news, re-connect with fellow alumni, and deepen your involvement.

Visit www.SigmaPhi.org today!



CONVENTION 2021 IN ITHACA



The weekend of October 14-17 was the best kind of Sig weekend. The Epsilon of New York hosted the Society's 2021 Convention, and it was a warm and welcoming event. Because COVID effectively put any 2020 convention hopes on hold, this year's gathering brought wandering birds and Society leadership together for the first time in two long years.

Undergraduate workshops were presented Friday morning (*ritual*) and afternoon (*responsible brotherhood & legal liability*). Later that day, Cornell faculty member Vanessa Bohn presented an additional session open to actives and alumni alike called "You Have More Influence Than You Know." It was all about the power of making important appeals in person, and how such 'asks' are far more demonstrative and compelling than mere phone calls or emails.

Wandering birds relished such convention staples as the Hicks Oratorical Contest, the Annual Meeting of the Members, and Saturday's excellent banquet at Willard Straight Hall, at which 77 actives, alumni, wives and guests were on hand to feast and to enjoy. Ample time was built in to enjoy the singular beauty of upstate New York, "where the Cascadilla streams and Cayuga's waters gleam."

Other Highlights?

- Registering at the Epsilon without paper via a QR code!
- Being mightily challenged by Cornell's countless campus hills as we walked from venue to venue.
- Admiring the excellent maroon ('chestnut') 1980 Rolls Royce Silver Shadow II in which Rusty George, C'82, motored from his New Jersey home.
- Sitting in on a campus-wide symposium in which Jay Walker, C'74, encouraged listeners about successful entrepreneurship.
- Cheering as the Big Red team beat Colgate's football team, 34-20.
- Enjoying Collegetown's multi-option night life on balmy fall evenings.
- Taking part in a well-attended, late night conclave on Saturday replete with hilarity and mirth of the most Sigly kind.





Special thanks are due to convention organizers, active and alumni alike, among them Dan Mansoor, C'76, Glen George, C'82, and Head of House Ricky Ettinger, C'20. Stephen MacGuffie, C'92, worked tirelessly to ready the Epsilon's physical plant for the event.

When the Society's 185th convention came to a close with Sunday's farewell brunch at the Epsilon, all participants were grateful and glad to have once again convened in the name of Sigma Phi. It was excellent to shake hands with old friends. At the same time, it was heartwarming to meet Sig new stakeholders for the first time. The ever-important building of chapter relationships, on both grad and undergrad levels, took place in Ithaca anew.

As early as the calendar said it was, Convention '21 nonetheless galvanized participants to make earnest promises and enthusiastic plans regarding the Society's 2022 Convention in Charlottesville.



CONVENTION 2021

Convention '21: Host's View

by Bryan Wilcenski, C'21 bew67@cornell.edu

Sigma Phi's most recent convention, hosted by the Epsilon of New York, was truly a unique experience. As an active brother, I will admit that I was less than pleased when I learned that we were hosting the convention. The way I saw it, the house that I call home was to be filled with an endless stream of guests who would likely pay no regard to my living space, local noise ordinances, and most importantly, the hidden stash of CLIF bars which I had been accruing in the kitchen! Much to my surprise, none of my fears materialized. Better still, I had the privilege of participating in an event that would change my views of the Sigma Phi Society forever.

For those who didn't have the opportunity to attend, this year's convention consisted of assorted speaker events, meals, cocktail hours, workshops, and receptions over the course of a weekend. The active brothers made constant efforts to go out and meet alumni at these events, and - in so doing - gained insight into what membership entails for members of the other chapters as well as what it was like to be a Sig in years prior. I gave quite a few tours of the house at 1 Forest Park Lane and was able to meet many enthusiastic alumni.

Hosting the convention involved a decent amount of work for the brothers. The convention fell just in the midst of preliminary exams, so making time not only to attend events, but also to help set them up and break them down was challenging. David Aaron

Miller, C'21, our chapter's current steward, was up before the sun each morning securing food and drinks for the day ahead. Many others pitched in during setups as well, transporting everything from rented folding chairs to beer (two staples of any convention, I understand) wherever they were needed. The work we put in was easily worth it, though, as it allowed the convention to move smoothly and facilitated some very valuable conversations between actives and alumni.

Prior to the convention, my personal views towards the institution of Sigma Phi were largely shaped by the environment in which I joined the house. It was the peak of the global Covid-19 pandemic, and Cornell was on lockdown.

Social gatherings were strictly prohibited, clubs were not in session, and I'm fairly certain that the death punishment would be invoked had I allowed more than one person into my freshman dorm room. With these limiting conditions in place, I found it difficult to meet people on campus. I hadn't found a group of true peers. I decided that rushing a fraternity was the best way to rectify this issue.

For me, Sigma Phi was just another Zoom link on Cornell's virtual rush homepage, and I was

lucky enough to click on it. A few months later, I was an initiated member. But my experience joining the Society was not one which properly framed Sigma Phi as the thriving social institution that it is. For me, it was just a "frat" that I joined through a Zoom link so that I could find some close friends while the world was in shambles. My connection was to the active members, not the Sigma Phi Society at large. The 2021 convention changed my perspective.

The presence of alumni from each chapter highlighted the deep connection that graduates feel to Sigma Phi as a national institution, and that alone was a shock for me. It was the national convention meeting, however, that was most impactful. To see alumni from all over the United States subject themselves to a seemingly endless meeting full of motions, proposals, and amendments purely because they care about the trajectory of Sigma Phi in the coming years was powerful. Many of these people, as I had learned in the few days prior, were successful, busy individuals who spent a weekend of their life visiting a chapter with which they have no personal affiliation, purely because they hold their experience in Sigma Phi to be sacred and worthy of protection.

In a world where organizations like ours are under increased scrutiny, I am grateful that there are well-connected, motivated alumni who are dedicated to ensuring the sustained existence of the Society that I have learned to love.

Convention '21: A Short Letter

by Emmett Dreyer, I'20 edreyer@berkeley.edu



I often wonder what my brothers from other chapters think of the California delegation. What did the three of us Berkeley Sigs huddled in the corner of the Epsilon's living room look like?

To my right was my pledge brother, Rohith Moolakatt, I'20, and to my left was our Alumni Board President, Eddie Avila, I'92. Had I realized I would be sitting in on intensely regulated parliamentary procedure (*the Society's Annual Meeting of the Members*), perhaps I would have worn something other than flannel. Perhaps I would have remembered to brush my hair. Eddie, of course, was perfectly kept and in a 3-piece suit. Together, he and I represented the majority of long-haired people in the room. In that moment, did we really stick out as much as I felt we did?

With the California chapter being so isolated on the West Coast, the greatest sense we get of the timelessness of our Society is through the stories of our alumni from the '60s and '70s. However, as one may deduce, the memorable activities of Berkeley students during that time don't quite line up with images of an ancient and esteemed society.

For me, the temporality of Sigma Phi is imbued in objects within the halls

of 2307 Piedmont: scraps of paper; old pictures; and other oddities all containing a kind of magical essence which lured me to Sigma Phi in the first place. That weekend at Convention in Ithaca, the sense of age and mystery of surrounding objects staggered me. Instead of relics that fit in the palm of your hand, I was surrounded by the castles of the Cornell campus, and - within the walls of the Sigma Phi Place - elegant paintings, furniture and books.

All of these reminded me that I was in the realm of the progenitor: the daunting East Coast, where everything is bigger and older!

For a moment, I felt small in the corner of that room. While I sensed the strength of the bond between the two brothers beside me, I saw only strangers in front of me. That thought, however, was me again falling victim to the great illusion of Sigma Phi: that illusion being the one we cast upon the rest of the world, which is that we are merely the jolly young students in the song.

What lies beneath this simplification, however, is an authentic bond transcending time and space. I had this same realization that day in Ithaca as I did one special night in Berkeley in 2020. Perhaps I was underdressed for the occasion, and perhaps I should have remembered to brush my hair. But my appearance...or my insecurities...or any other worldly denominator in that room of spirited debate, mean very little in the sacred realm of Sigma Phi.

That weekend I was told that, at another chapter, if a brother or prospective brother was heard referring to himself as "I", he would be firmly reminded that "I" is not, in fact, a brother. Rather, it is the Alpha of California. That practice - that mindset - deeply warmed my heart. It reminded me that, despite being so far away, California brothers remain in the minds of Sigs across our country. That insight...and other learnings and emotions inherent the 2021 Convention at the Epsilon - made it possible for me to return to Berkeley at peace. I returned, confident that, for all time, I could always return and be welcomed, so long as I extend that same warmth to others in the bonds.

Convention Snapshots





First Time Convention Reflections

by Zeke Zanicello, T'16 zeke.janicello@cyware.com

Hustle and bustle. Lectures from professors. Rampant nostalgia. Historical buildings and manicured quads. Ivy League pride. Welcome optimism and encouragement. An overall sense of a built-up desire for fun. Cornell University was a refreshing place to be.

Hustle and bustle. Lectures from professors. Rampant nostalgia. Historical buildings and manicured quads. Ivy League pride. Welcome optimism and encouragement. An overall sense of a built-up desire for fun. Cornell University was a refreshing place to be.

The perspective of recent times brought extra excitement around attending the Sigma Phi National Convention in person. As a recent Carolina graduate, I am figuring out what my relationship will be with the Society as an alumnus. With the recent relinquishment of the Alpha of North Carolina's charter, I suspect some Tarheel alumni are teetering on leaving Sigly days in the past, while others want to build on their active experiences to make them persistent forces for future growth. My travels to Ithaca were a vote of confidence towards the latter and



Zeke Zanicello, T'16



the Convention affirmed my long-term commitment to Friendship, Love, and Truth.

All brothers would be astonished if they were able to experience the hospitality and planning demonstrated by the host Cornell Sigs. One Forest Park Lane welcomed everyone with thought, intention, and purpose. Consummate alumni and motivated actives eagerly connected with their fellow brothers separated by time and location. Even during elevated disagreements, brothers were courteous enough to listen to each other with respect. I never bumped shoulders with any of these men at UNC and their candor made me proud to call them brothers.

The past nineteen months have been unsettling for brothers in all

societies. Items, ideals, and desires that felt permanent and consistent reared themselves as flaky and unclear. Personally, I moved to five different cities, walked away from a long-term career, and met the girl of my dreams. Even with the abundant changes around, I encourage all brothers not to lose sight of the importance of connecting with others in Sigma Phi. Elihu Root once said: *"There is so much good in human nature that men grow to like each other upon better acquaintance, and this points to another way in which we may strive to promote peace of the world."*

Root was right. Sigma Phi is more essential than ever.

Winning Hicks Oration

by Sam Collins, F'18 srollins@wisc.edu

(A highlight of each Society Convention is the opportunity for undergrads to formally reflect on the many meanings of Sigma Phi. This year's convention was no exception, and it's a pleasure to share the winning Hicks speech on the pages of this 'Flame'.)



With a topic so broad for this speech, I was thinking of how I could put my own spin on it, how I could talk about what Sigma Phi means to me, and how I could give insight to my younger brothers about what Sigma Phi has in store for them.

So, I began to think of Sigma Phi, and of the words and phrases that define our Society: *Friendship, Love, and Truth. Best Sig Love. Esto Perpetua.*

Certainly, all these words are important, meaningful, and treasured by our Society, but to me there is one word that encapsulates them all: *maturity.*

To illustrate, I'm going to tell three meaningful, personal anecdotes about how my time in Sigma Phi has helped me learn, grow, and mature as a young man.

First, Sigma Phi has been the perfect training ground for me to grow as a leader. Leadership presents itself in many forms. I have had the privilege of being a pledge father, for example. This experience was gratifying; it taught me about how to be a friend and role model to a younger brother, how to steadily instill our values in a newcomer, and how to reassure someone when there are challenges and uncertainty. As a younger sibling to my brother by birth, I was good at being a younger brother. But being an older sibling to my younger Sig brothers was a whole new experience: one I never would have had had I not joined Sigma Phi.

I've also had the privilege of holding an elected position every single semester as an active. Being a leader is not easy. It's a step into the unknown. It can

be messy and confusing, and it comes naturally to very few. I have practiced and learned skills such as planning, organizing, and decision-making which I had only infrequently practiced before. I have made good decisions which I'm proud of...and poor decisions from which I've learned and altered my leadership strategy. I have faced conflict - which is something I have struggled with - but I've improved and grown comfortable with handling it appropriately.

My time in Sigma Phi has often placed me into situations which feel uncomfortable and were new. I've felt supported by my brothers, learned and matured through them all, and become a better and more capable person.

Just a few weeks ago I made a mistake that embarrassed me, destroyed relationships, and left me in emotional despair. I felt guilty and confused, so I consulted others about my mistakes. Some people accosted and abandoned me. Had I listened to them I may have felt doomed and unable to recover from my mistakes. Some friends said I did nothing wrong, that it wasn't that bad, and that I had nothing to worry about. Had I listened to these people I would've gone on - vindicated - believing I had done no wrong, and I would have never improved as a person. But, it was my brothers in Sigma Phi who

confronted me about my actions, put me in my place, and helped me learn from my mistakes and move forward. They were the only people who gave me any real criticism and advice. They forgave me and told me they knew that I was better. They helped me learn an important lesson: accept your flaws; learn from your mistake; never make them twice; forgive yourself, and then mature.

My final story concerns a truly sobering and momentous event in my life and the lives of many of my brothers. The story is personal for me, but its impact extends to our Society as a whole.

On April 1, 2019, I traveled up to the Sigma Phi Place in Madison for our traditional formal Monday night chapter dinner. Attending our dinner around our grand table that evening were myself, most of my active brothers, and one alumnus, Jeff Kunz, F'68. Jeff was a frequent guest, and - time after time - we were grateful for his wisdom, advice, and brotherhood. This night, Jeff had been dropped off by his wife and he brought with him a box of ties emblazoned with our badge as a gift to the active chapter. Barely had he sat down for dinner before he was sizing up my brothers for their correct size of tie!

Just after sitting back down to eat after the ties had been set aside, Jeff collapsed at our table. He passed away that night in a place he loved dearly, surrounded by men he loved and who loved him as a brother.

Winning Hicks Oration

(continued from page 17)



We mourned together that night and tried to make sense of what happened. Here are some of my lessons and memories. I think of holding back tears - and of crying - with the brothers who experienced this with me. I think of my brother who insisted on giving us freshmen rides back to our dorms, not wanting any of us to go home alone after what we experienced. I think of the courage that my brothers showed doing CPR before help arrived. I think of Jeff coming home to a place he loved and to which he contributed so much. I think of this tie, and the fact that in his last moments he was giving to those he cared about. That night, Jeff showed us the better part of human nature. Most of all, I note how, despite the darkness that death pervades life with, the light of Sigma Phi and

the love of my brothers led me through that. Despite the tragic nature of that night, I am thankful for what I've been able to learn from the experience and how this experience has made me a more mature young man.

Certainly there have been a lot of carefree, happy moments as well as plenty of immature moments in my time as a Sig. I've treasured these moments. But, ultimately, to quote our Catalogue, our Society is not "merely a short-lived group of happy young fellows but a society dedicated to friendship for a lifetime."

Sigma Phi is a place where young men can fail and then learn and grow and mature. Sometimes, when life gets messy, it's easy to want to go back to an easier time or avoid your problems. But, this is what makes life exciting: its challenges and struggles. When things are

dark, I promise you that Sigma Phi will be a guiding light that will help you mature through, understand and enjoy the more difficult moments.

As I conclude I'll revisit a quote you all know: "No institution lives long unless it fulfills a human need." I believe the need that Elihu Root, H'1860, wrote about so long ago is maturity. In his timeless Fourth of March letter, Brother Root wrote about many of the same things I've spoken about. About the need for young men to not just develop intellectual capabilities but also their character as men. About human nature and its tendency towards mistakes. And - most of all - about Sigma Phi being a guiding light that as a collective body is "an expression of the better part [of] human nature."

Thank you and Esto Perpetua.

Convention Snapshots



The Alpha of Alphas: Leading to Our Bicentennial

by *Ridgely Harrison, U'2000* ridgelyiv@gmail.com
& *Reed MacNaughton, U'2001* reed@macbuilds.com



Taking over as Alumni Body President for the Alpha of New York was eye-opening. It made me realize how deeply I care about Sigma Phi. It starkly contrasted what our Society looks like with and without generational knowledge and experience. And, I have been amazed how quickly tides can change with a defined and purpose-driven mission.

In 2019, it was challenging to see the path forward at Union. We owned an off campus “frat house” in Schenectady with a break even financial plan, had semi-annual outreach to our alumni, and received dismally poor feedback from Wandering Birds who dared set foot in 10 Union Ave. Such indications troubled me. They made me realize my experience with Sigma Phi ran much deeper than just the text chain of my aptly-named “Illustrious”pledge class group.

The Sigma Phi network has been an underlying and subtle constant in my life since my initiation in May of 2000. Influential conversations with alumni shepherded me through Union, through career changes, through the birth of my children, and through the death of my father. At every stage of my life since 2000, Sigma Phi alumni have had an important presence.

Taking the reins as President, I found that network frayed and barely in touch with our newly initiated Brothers of 2020. There was no established bridge from the generations of Union Sig alumni to our undergraduate brothers. In order for us to live long into our third century, we have to rebuild this bridge - this human need - central to the bonds of Sigma Phi.

As we recruited for this purpose, our Alumni Board grew to nine members.

Those nine Sigs knew different professional experiences, had four decades of institutional Sigly knowledge, and demonstrated passion for the success of the Society. With newfound enthusiasm and expertise, we identified addressing these needs in order to arrive at our bicentennial with a proud Alpha Chapter:

- We needed to reconnect with our alumni and undergraduates.
- We needed to be a guiding force on campus and with the administration.
- We needed to raise the profile of 10U - our off-campus home - both in capital improvements and in the eyes of the undergraduates.

To this point, all we had was a mishmash of goals and objectives with no cohesive strategy to accomplish any. Standing at the base, we could see the top. We needed to build our path to success from scratch.

Early in 2021, Reed MacNaughton, U'2001, led a 4-hour Virtual Board Boot Camp focused on breaking down our purpose to its core. Based on a model used by Big Brothers/Big Sisters, we molded some “business school” philosophies to the success of a fraternal organization. The exercise was the first of many, and it has created a foundation

for our continuing program of 1) setting strategies, 2) assigning accountability to individual board members, 3) measuring the progress of these initiatives and 4) reviewing and resetting the plans semi-annually.

Looking at our aspirations through the lens of our core values has forced us to consider how Union's Sigma Phi is unique on campus. What can our alumni do to help the Alpha's undergraduates grow in their independence? How can our unique resources help to better Union College? What aspects of Friendship, Love, and Truth does our Union Chapter - the Alpha of all Alphas - bring to the DNA of our Sigma Phi Society as a whole?

While these conversations have begun anew at the Alpha, they are moving forward with experience, accountability, and passion. I have not felt this much enthusiasm for the prospects of the Alpha Chapter of Sigma Phi since the Little Fairy first ‘let there be light’ in my life back in 2000.

Long live the Alpha! When she ceases to Lead, let her Die.

To the next 4000 years...



Reluctant Stop: Unexpected Reward

by Ricky Ettinger, C'20 ricky.ettinger@gmail.com

It was April 2021 during my sophomore year at Cornell. Many of my brothers at the Epsilon were planning a spring break trip to Miami Beach. After a cold year of the COVID-19 pandemic and a restricted college experience, the Sigs were excited to get away, feel some sun, and take a much needed break from Cornell's rigors.



Kyle Miskovich, C'19, came to me with a different idea: a road trip up along the coast of the Northeast, living

nomadically and enjoying hiking/camping destinations. The allure of this experience quickly had me on board, so I recruited a close friend with whom I had shared many adventures, Ashton Lance Kozlik, C'20, and Bryan Wilcenski, C'21, a newly initiated Sig experienced in hiking...but inexperienced in spending time with us! Together, we plotted to send ourselves to Acadia National Park in Maine for an extended weekend of hiking, camping, and figuring it out as we went.

We drove from Ithaca to the outskirts of Acadia the first day and found a camping spot to call home. Miles away from the rest of the world, we spent our nights cooking over campfires, sharing stories and conversation, and plotting our days in the park. The days that followed were high energy and busy, from sunrise to sunset. By the end of day three, we had explored nearly every corner of Mount Desert Island. With two days of adventuring left before classes resumed at Cornell, we decided it was time to begin our westward return.

We began the drive across New Hampshire through the White Mountains, considering a stay in the area near

Franconia. We continued towards Vermont, with no particular plan. Ashton suddenly suggested an option. What if we reached out to the Sigs of Burlington and asked for a place to crash for the night?

After multiple days of solitude and camping, I was feeling far from social. In my grimy state, I was opposed to the idea of socializing, and quickly offered a few other obscure options of forests to camp in and mountains to climb. When it came down to it, however, Kyle and Ashton convinced me that theirs was a better option. I conceded, and after a warm phone encouragement from Vermont President Ben Sylvester, V'19, we made our way to Burlington, arriving in the early evening.

Immediately upon walking into Vermont's chapter house on College Street, my spirits were raised. The Burlington Sigs greeted us as warmly as their own brothers, offered us a place to stay, and gave us recommendations for places to eat downtown. After a nice meal and a much-needed shower, we chatted with the Vermont Sigs until the wee hours, enjoying a tour of the Conclave and experiencing a night with brothers we never knew we had.

I had been so concerned about having to be social, and yet - after arriving - I felt as at home as I do at the Epsilon. Sharing stories of our experiences skiing and hiking and enjoying the beautiful areas around us made it incredibly easy

to relate. We woke up the next morning feeling at home, getting a full tour of the house, exchanging phone numbers and making plans to meet at the 2021 National Convention. That night we slept in our own beds at 1 Forest Park Lane, knowing that our brotherhood was much larger and closer than we had thought.

Our unplanned stop in Vermont entirely changed the way I view the Society. Sigma Phi is not simply a collective of closer friends at school whom I trust and view as my brothers. Instead, I have true brothers - my age as well as 50 years older - across the country whom I had yet to meet, and a plethora of chapter houses to call home. I suddenly found myself excited to be hosting a National Convention nearly 6 months away and curious about all of the Sigs I would meet. I felt a new sense of 'home' within Sigma Phi, one that will transcend my college experience and persist throughout my life. This feeling inspired me to run for chapter President the next month, a responsibility that I now hold with the goal of inspiring the love of Sigma Phi in each of my brothers and encouraging all to reach out beyond the walls of their own chapter.

At first, I had no interest in stopping in Burlington that April evening. Today I could not recommend that journey - or a trip to any Sig chapter - any more wholeheartedly. It's clear to me now that such a visit represents an invitation to any Sig wishing to experience the unaffected, effortless brotherhood that is our Society.



RIP: Remembering A Formative Friend

by Rob Gonzalez, M'85 rob@robertaustingonzalez.com

Kurt Damshroder, M'83, died this past January in a skiing accident. Over decades, he and Rob Gonzalez, M'85, formed an unbreakable bond. The attached reflection lifts up that relationship at the same time that it suggests countless other dynamic, fulfilling connections created and enjoyed throughout the Thrice Illustrious Sigma Phi.

I met Kurt in 1985 at the Sigma Phi Society at the University of Michigan. He was a junior and I was a freshman. At the time his best buddies were all upperclassmen: Chas Jones, M'84; Bill Mostovoy & Mike Roth, M'83; and the Askew brothers Tim (M'84) and Dave (M'83). We smoked clove cigarettes, drank Cutty Sark and rode bmx bikes around campus in a pack like a bunch of 8 year olds. Too many hours we played pool in the basement. Losers bought winners long neck Coronas for \$1 from our repurposed pop machine! We played Michigan's epic 'wall-ball' out front and hoops in the back parking lot. All of this under the flat roof of a mid-century modern frat house and the bonds of brotherhood.

His senior year, Kurt invited me to be his roommate on Senior Wing. This was a big deal; I wasn't a senior. That year we had sleeping contests, listened to ska music, kept our place really neat and clean, tried to stay clear of silliness and developed a bond that would last forever.

He tacked some of his product design drawings to our walls. These drawings and his passion for industrial design probably led me to leave engineering for a different discipline. While I loved mechanical drawing and architectural classes in high school, Michigan's Engineering School just wasn't the right fit. I was confused; Kurt was not.

He was solid and made moves deliberately, like a grandpa from

television. So assured in his way and with his choices. Quiet and unfazed by the turbulent world around us. To me, a giant who moved like giants do. He was steady and, because of his steadiness, seemed without emotions at times...unless they reflected boyish excitement!

When snow fell in Ann Arbor, Kurt and I grabbed our skinny sticks and hit the golf course. First we had to break trail and set a nice mile or so loop. We are both rather meticulous, so this was done with art and purpose. We skied that loop until the snow melted... always too quickly.

Kurt would graduate, fill his pickup truck with Chas Jones, pull out of the circular driveway on Lincoln Ave, and drive off into the sunset...to Utah. He and I had gone to Utah together one spring break. We partied at night and skied all day. I think this experience was all it took; Kurt knew what he wanted and where he wanted it. I visited him the next two spring breaks during my final years at Michigan. He seemed to be bigger, stronger and faster each time. He switched to Telemark skiing....and then, of course, so did I! I struggled to keep up, following wherever he went on the mountain. That never changed over the years. This sea level boy was always trying to keep up...to be his equal.

The tale from here is filled with new friendships, Kurt creating a life for himself in the old mining town and the passing of the years. The rest of the story? Waiting

tables, painting, tradeshow booth design, business owner, Porsches, Audis, BMWs - all 4 wheel drives, of course - and making coffee with a precise scale, one excellent cup at a time.

We kept our bond, sharing design ideas and materials throughout the years and across the miles. Asking advice and giving it. Kurt never missed a chance to let me know how deep Utah's powder was on a particular day. And once he got a camera on his phone, fresh snowfalls were images I had to endure again and again and again.

I would make yearly trips out to stay and ski with Kurt. At first, on my own but, as time moved on, my wife joined in and then the kids, too. He always picked us up at the airport. It was easy - and joyful - to recognize that mountain of a man as I came down the escalator.

Fast forward to Kurt's January funeral.... This kind of loss takes its toll. I flew from my home in Scarsdale, New York, to attend Kurt's memorial and was privileged to share personal recollections with family and friends. The fact that Chas Jones, M'84, Tom King, M'85, and Joe Jerome, M'85, were also on hand in Park City paying their respects reminded me (*as if I needed reminding*) of the richness and the enduring quality of friendships which are shaped in the halls of the Sigma Phi.

BSL. This is how brothers say 'goodbye.'

Viele Scholarship: Generous Sig Resource



by Glenn R. George, Ph.D., C'82, Chairman, Viele Committee ggeorge001@yahoo.com

The Francis S. Viele Scholarship is one of the largest fraternal scholarship programs in the world. It represents and embodies Sigma Phi's deep and abiding commitment to the pursuit of Truth through scholarly endeavor.

The **Francis S. Viele Scholarship** is one of the largest fraternal scholarship programs in the world. It represents and embodies Sigma Phi's deep and abiding commitment to the pursuit of Truth through scholarly endeavor.

Viele applications are reviewed and awards are made by a Selection Committee composed of members of the Standing & Advisory Committee and other graduate members of the Society. Selection Committee membership changes over time as various brothers express interest in participating. Typically five or six serve on the committee, representing as many chapters of the Society.

The Viele Selection Committee receives scholarship applications each spring. Every application is reviewed independently and in detail by each Committee member. We meet in June or July to review and discuss each application. Through a vigorous give-and-take, award consensus is reached. Notifications are sent out by e-mail in July or August. Overall, the process is open, fair, reasonable, thorough, rigorous, and non-discriminatory.

Some degree of balance is desired in the distribution of awards among chapters,

initiation years, majors, active versus graduate members, and other factors. Such hopes do not trump the Committee's careful, studied, collective judgment regarding the merit of each individual application, however. Remarkably, approximately 50% of applicants have received Viele awards over the years (!), although this fraction varies over time.

The criteria on which applications are judged fall broadly into the following three areas:

Scholarship - Both the achievement of scholarly excellence and the demonstration of academic aptitude and career potential

Service - Attitude toward, and demonstrated commitment and service to the community and Sigma Phi Society, including its ideals, chapters, members, facilities and activities

Need - Individual and family financial need as demonstrated by the cost of the applicant's academic program and ability to pay as shown on a College Board Financial Aid Profile. *(From time to time, the Selection Committee receives a "merit-only" application, i.e., one containing*

no information on the applicant's ability to pay, explicitly indicated as such. The Committee may, under extraordinary circumstances and in its sole discretion, consider such applications for an award.)

While most successful applicants will demonstrate strength along all three dimensions, such balance is not required. Because the Committee reviews and judges written applications for the Viele Scholarship, applicants should not assume any familiarity with them, their activities, their merits, or any other information not reflected in the application itself. Indeed, as a means of ensuring fair and equitable distribution of awards, the Committee generally eschews consideration of factors not included in written submissions.

For academic year 2021-22, the Selection Committee reviewed 25 applications and made 23 awards, totaling \$64,500. The average award that year? Just over \$2,800....

More information about the Francis S. Viele Scholarship can be found at this URL: <https://www.sigmaphi.org/scholarships>

KUDOS & THANKS

...to the following Sigs and Sig Sisters for their articles, information or suggestions supporting this issue of the 'Flame': Eddie Avila, I'92, Sam Collins, F'18, Rich Conklin, H'80, Bob Daly, U'68, Emmett Dreyer, I'20, Ricky Ettinger, C'20, Glenn George, C'82, Bob Guthrie, S'86, Rob Gonzalez, M'85, Shelley Graham, ISS'69, Kurt Haigis, V'73, Ridgely Harrison, U'00, Scott Hekel, F'97, John Hollis, S'87, Zeke Janicello, T'16, Doug Kari, I'75, Jacob Morse, T'11, Jack Romaine, L'90, Bob Shages, U'69 & Bryan Wilcenski, C'21.

Issue after issue, Sig stories, perspectives and feedback are solicited. Every time a reader circles back, it improves the next Society magazine. Contact Editor Mike Imirie, M'69 (mimirie@aol.com) with your feedback and your suggestions. They are always welcome.



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.

Editor: **Mike Imirie, M'69**, mimirie@aol.com

Sigma Phi Home Page: www.sigmaphi.org

Never Forget These Brothers

News of the passing of these brothers has been received since publication of the August, 2020 issue of the Sigma Phi Flame:

Willard C. Agee S'58.....4/11/2021
 D. Anthony Alworth U'58..... 4/2/2020
 Russell H. Baller Jr. U'51.....4/27/2021
 Henry Lerner Baum U'53.....8/28/2004
 Robert Vaughn Behr W'52 3/14/2021
 Harold R. Bell V'59..... 4/2/2020
 John Howard Boardman L'51 10/17/2020
 Patrick John Brill S'53.....6/16/2021
 William Carlin Brunsell F'40.....2/14/2017
 John E. Burchfield, L'79.....8/21
 George W. Burgess Jr. U'592/21/2021
 Sean Smith Butler G'62.....2/2018
 Paul M. Cantwell Jr. U'60 5/10/2021
 Stanley Gordon Carey V'47..... 11/21/2020
 Peter Nicholas Carter U'47 11/21/2009
 Julian P. Ceike U'65..... 9/1/2019
 Graham D.V. Chloupek I'69 5/18/2019
 David Monteith Close H'42.....9/14/2019
 Ronald Hastings Curry C'58.....9/24/2020
 Kurt T. Damshroder M'83..... 1/30/2021
 Richard C. Dargusch U'543/11/2016
 Paul A. Dicke V'39..... 5/6/2010
 Robert O. Dorse U'508/15/2019
 Donald Carl Durbeck U'58..... 1/8/2021
 Henry Ferguson U'478/17/2019
 Robert F. (Randy) Fields H'815/13/2021
 Edward Charles Frick Jr. U'58.....9/12/2021
 Richard E. Glenn Jr. I'49..... 4/8/2021
 Jackson Goddard U'54.....3/22/2021
 Stephen G. Graves I'556/19/2020
 Frederick C. Haab C'56..... 4/2/2017
 Joseph G. Hall G'38..... 1/23/2016
 Horace Havemeyer III G'62.....3/19/2014
 Jackson R. Horton F'49..... 1/27/2020
 Andrew D. Hospodor, L'78 6/19/2021
 Paul Henry Hunt V'473/23/1987
 Carroll B. Huntress Jr. G'40..... 11/28/2007
 Harold Anthony Hyde I'42 10/12/2020

James A. Hynes M'38.....3/22/2014
 Arnold R. Klappas U'577/20/2020
 Clifton B. Kroeber I'42 8/8/2019
 Theodore C. Kroeber I'41.....2/26/2019
 Martin J. Logan U'938/24/2010
 Brian David Loper U'76.....6/15/2019
 Paul Revere Low Jr. V'52..... 11/25/2020
 W. David MacGillivray U'54..... 1/15/2020
 Richard Christopher Moore S'08 7/19/2020
 Glen C. Mueller C'69..... 3/4/2021
 Douglas E. Murphy U'60 1/28/2018
 Garrett W. Murphy U'50..... 11/26/2018
 David D. Nolan I'58 9/7/2020
 Casper Y. Offutt Jr. M'47 9/14/2020
 Jack A. Palmer I'42 6/6/2016
 Theodore Peters Jr. L'413/19/2020
 Timothy Prout G'42 1/5/2009
 Richard Valentine Reiss F'44 11/20/2009
 Sigurd Anderson Rishovd F'40 10/21/1998
 Kenneth E. Roberts U'664/12/2017
 Philip Edwin Robinson V'42 1/12/2006
 William Ross Jr. I'434/12/2015
 Jon Christian Ruehle I'69..... 10/17/2020
 Edmund Rossiter Sawtelle Jr. U'49....3/18/2021
 James M. Scala H'48 1/29/2021
 Lawrence A. Schneider, M'76 10/2021
 James B. Schryver C'42 1/11/2017
 Gordon D. Seward S'58 5/7/2021
 Roland A. Smith F'51 11/18/2020
 Randall Martin Snow M'64.....4/20/2020
 John H. Staub III S'71..... 1/22/2020
 William Henry Stearns U'60.....4/15/2018
 Samuel U. Vail V'422/12/2000
 John M. Walker U'72..... 11/5/2019
 David Jewett Waller IV W'42..... 1/14/1985
 Lyman Ware Warfield C'40 6/7/2018
 Willard C. Wiggins C'69..... 12/13/2019
 Thomas A. Winkel F'53 4/17/2021



Randy Fields, H'81

One of the brothers whose passing is reported in this issue's Necrology is Randy Fields, H'81, who passed away on May 13 of this year. Randy was a remarkable Sig: a true and tireless hero of the Beta of New York for generations of young men.

"Our Randy"

by Rich Conklin, H'80
 relliott.conklin@gmail.com

Randy arrived at the Beta in September of 1980 from New York City, coming to us initially as the house cook through the good graces of Brother Rand Carter, H'74. Randy's impact on our Society was immediate. It went far beyond creating order out of chaos in the Beta's kitchen or preparing excellent meals. A Southern gentleman at heart and a master of southern cooking in his soul, Randy reinstated coat-and-tie Thursday dinners in the Long Room that served to reignite the Sigma Phi flame for all to see. In a rare membership move given he was neither a student nor faculty, Randy was initiated into the Sigma Phi in 1981. For the next 20 years, he demonstrated for class after class of Hamilton Sigs how to live the credo of Friendship, Love and Truth.

On June 18, no less than 63 Beta brothers and sisters assembled in Manhattan to celebrate Randy's life.



Sigma Phi **FLAME**

P.O. Box 54717
Tucson, AZ 85732-7417

Prsrt Std
US Postage
PAID
Tucson, AZ
Permit #2216

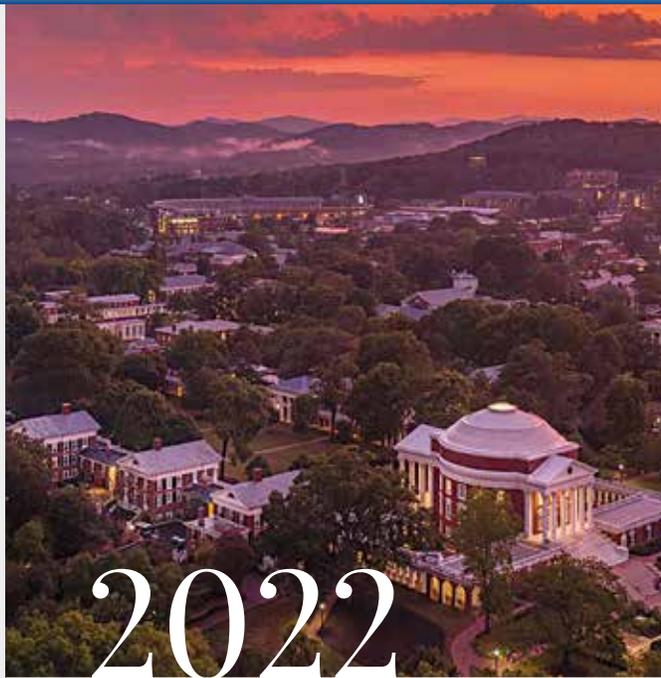
Your Dues Generosity: Indispensable!

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

The Sigma Phi alumni dues program provides a vital source of operational funding. Our ability to keep alumni informed and engaged and, at the same time, maintain strong relations with undergraduate chapters, depends upon alumni dues contributions.

The funds contributed to the Sigma Phi Society, a 501c7 non-profit organization, cover costs associated with managing the SigmaPhi.org website, producing and distributing *The Sigma Phi Flame* and other Society correspondence, and funding the national organization's oversight of undergraduate chapters. Those dues likewise permit Society planning for special events, including annual conventions and flagship Fourth of March Banquets, as well as the business meetings which take place at both gatherings.

Whether you cut and mail this coupon (below) or go online (<https://sigma-phi-society.revv.co/alumnidues>), your participation and generosity in the Society's dues program are indispensable. Approaching our 200th birthday, they drive our Society's progress.



Convention in Charlottesville!



SIGMA PHI SOCIETY
ANNUAL DUES

Make checks payable to the Sigma Phi Society.

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

Base-level dues: \$75 (initiated 2005 and earlier) \$50 (initiated 2006 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:
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!



The final order of any convention's business is the charge for the following year's convention. At Convention '21 in Ithaca, that charge was accepted by Virginia's Head of House Nick Fisher, S'20 (naf8uyr@virginia.edu).

While the date has yet to be set, you and I have every reason to eagerly anticipate a Blue Ridge Mountain Sig homecoming in the fall of 2022.