

# FINDING SIGMA PHI VIA THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

PAGES 2-7

## Sigma Phi *flame*

NUMBER 137 • DECEMBER 2022

Convention '22  
*pages 12-19*

Michigan Discipline  
*pages 20-23*

Improved Dues Path  
*page 24*



**John Addy, S'17**  
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"Before I rushed, I had a few friends who were in Sigma Kappa. When rush came around, I went to go find their house, but walked into Kappa Sigma, instead. I soon realized my mistake, but decided to check out the other two houses on the Quad while I was around. One of those houses was Sigma Phi, and the rest is history."

**Ridgely Harrison, U'00**  
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"I joined the Union College swim team as a walk on my freshman year, in all honesty because I was chasing a girl I liked at the time. While swimming may not seem the most social sport, the connections I made most closely were with members of the Sigma Phi. I had intentions of "going Greek" at the outset of freshman year and found myself at Sigma Phi events throughout my first term. When rush arrived, it seemed obvious that this was a logical place to start. Twenty-two years later, I am a part of this amazing brotherhood, with friends across the country, thanks to that freshman impulse to spend more time with a cutie who introduced me to great, like-minded and involved gentlemen. I'll let you guess which relationship has stood the test of time."

# Finding Sigma Phi via The Road Less Traveled

Many of us made our way to Sigma Phi in predictable ways. We took part in formal rush, we had recommendations from alumni from back home, or we had older brothers who had already joined. Some Sigs, however, came to Sigma Phi in the most unconventional ways. You might say that some “took the road less traveled.” Some excellent ‘Road Less Traveled’ anecdotes follow.

**Ross Blaufarb, I'80**  
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“How did I get to Sigma Phi? There must have been something in the water!” I first heard about the Society from my brother, Jon, I'77, who was recruited by Gregor Nelson, I'76. Jon, Gregor, and I are from Los Altos, California. Other brothers - William “Tex” Currie, I'72, Barney Doyle, I'72, Mike Giachino, I'72, Scott Burlingame, I'77, my pledge brother Greg Stefanek, Peter Clark, I'65, and Don Hofele, I'71 - also hail from this San Francisco Bay Area town on the Peninsula. Yep. It's obvious. There **is** something in that Los Altos water....”



(continued from previous page)

**Doug Kari, I'75**

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"In spring 1974, Jim Cope, Glenn Smith and I resided in a typical UC dormitory. Finding cool people to live with was our mission! Although the Berkeley campus was filled with interesting, edgy people, we soon learned that none of them lived in dorms! In fall 1974, we three long-haired guys took part in Rush Week. Thankfully, someone sized us up and pointed towards Sigma Phi. The chapter house, with its clinker bricks and stained glass, looked like a haunted mansion. Scott Sinclair, I'74, emerged to greet us. Scott led us upstairs to meet Darrell Hirashima, I'72, an esteemed older brother who lived in a room with Tibetan rugs and a view of San Francisco Bay. The three of us were mesmerized. Afterwards, back on the sidewalk, we looked at each other and agreed, 'This is the place!' The question we were afraid to ask was...Would Sigma Phi want us?"

**Rich Conklin, H'80**

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"I wasn't supposed to be a Sig. My father is a Hamilton grad, but an Alpha Delta Phi. It was assumed that I would join AD. So how did I get into Sigma Phi? The answer is... Mike Mecklenberg, H'77. The very first weekend I was on campus I met Mike through an old family friend. I was soon introduced into his circle of friends. I was able to see in these older Sigs the 'end game' of the path I was only just starting down. Each was anxious wto put his Liberal Arts education and experience as a Sig into productive, post-graduate lives. I was simply anxious to begin my journey on 'The Hill.' Sig had no formal rush, or rush parties, but Mike kept putting my name forward, and eventually I received a bid. Accepting it was easy. The only hard part was having to tell my father that I'd decided to pledge Sigma Phi! When Mike was tragically

killed a few years ago, memories of the friendship we formed in my earliest days on campus flooded back to me. It struck me how I owe everything that Sigma Phi has given me over the years to the kindness and generosity of Mike Mecklenberg. NEVER FORGET."

**Bill Ackerbauer, U'92**

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"I became aware of Sigma Phi almost immediately upon arrival at Union College in 1991. After moving into my room at West College, I went out to explore the campus with some new acquaintances, and we met the exuberant Sig duo of Peder Maarbjerg, U'91, and Alex Namzoff, U'90. The specific behavior that precipitated this encounter was too colorful for this esteemed publication, but I can report that it led several of us to The Sig Place at 1 Library Lane, where we were well represented among the Alpha's initiation classes of 1992 and 1993. If memory serves, my West College associates who became Sig brothers included Craig Prunier U'92, Matt Graubard U'92, Matt Liebman U'92, Chris Yousey U'93, Justin Pechar U'93 and Cole Timmerman U'93."

**Hans Henkes, C'91**

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"In January 1991, I had completed 2 semesters at Cornell. I had a single in Founders Hall on West Campus, and some dorm mates had me join on their rush week tour. I didn't identify with any of the fraternities we visited, including my uncle's fraternity, Chi Psi. Rush week was almost at a close and I had all but resigned from the prospect of joining a house until Jonathan Rauchway, another freshman in Founders, told me that his brother, Eric, was president of a "different" house - a society - that defied stereotypes of parties or sports hangouts and embodied more of a tight knit group of gentlemen. I purposely use the word "gentlemen" since I found out there were sit-down meals at which brothers wore

collared shirts; social events had themes; and they had an intriguing guest speaker program called the Oliphant Fellowship. So there I was, late in the game, and about to quit the game. The brothers were a diverse group - in nationality, in area of study, in extracurriculars - yet all clearly displayed a bond and a level of gentlemanly sophistication. I identified with Sigma Phi. As it turned out, two other Founders guys also received bids: Jonathan Gelston & Christopher Kete. Later, I learned that the brothers where most impressed with my ability to rattle off the names of the 15+ brothers I had met earlier in the day. And why not? Even then, I retained those brothers' names because I felt so at ease and enthused."

**Rick Bingham, V'87**

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"It was the fall of 1986, the beginning of my sophomore year. I found UVM more than a bit daunting after graduating from a small, conservative all-boys school outside of Philadelphia. I spent most of my time as a freshman getting acclimated to the ways & wiles of campus, but several of my female friends agreed that I should take a serious look at Sigma Phi. Not one to be left at the hitching post and so dependent on others, I took the bold step of walking up the brick walk one day after classes, climbed those blinding white marble steps past looming Corinthian columns, closed my eyes and rang the doorbell with absolutely no earthly idea what to expect. After being led graciously in, I unknowingly laid my backpack on the *Grad Bench* (quite a serious breach of Vermont Sig etiquette, as I would learn later) and was given a house tour on the spot. The welcome was warm and courteous; after about 5 minutes meeting current actives Bill Lawrence, V'86; Frank

Conley, V'86; Stuart Maloney, V'85) and taking in what was the grandest house on campus, I was hooked. The rest, as they say, is history..."

**Jim Pollock, M'76**

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Sitting around the room in my South Quad dorm with some guys, Jerome John Schulte Jr. (future pledge brother, M'76) mentioned that he was going to rush. I had no idea about fraternity life but was curious to see what options there might be for non-dorm living. J.J. knew a couple of guys from high school who were Sigs, so I decided to go with. We visited 907 Lincoln to investigate Greek life. The first person I met upon entering the House was Dave Crippen, M'75. The two of us grew up as Scouts and playing youth baseball together. Touring the house and hearing some of the history of Sigma Phi piqued this young freshman's interest. The guys I met on that first visit (Jim Smith, M'74, Ang Tocco, M'74, John Harsh, M'74, Kerry Kaysserian, M'73, among others) were engaging and very friendly. This was a place I could call home! The next thing I know, I pledged Sigma Phi, initiating in the fall of 1976 during the National Convention in Ann Arbor and beginning a lifelong association with so many who remain great friends to this day.

**Braden Tempas, L'90**

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"I never imagined myself as a fraternity guy because I was not a drinker, didn't smoke and saw 'Animal House' so didn't picture myself in that stereotype. I went to some rush events because of my hall mates and my roommate. At Sigma Phi, I met Brian Patterson, L'89, and a couple of other guys and quickly realized my stereotype was just that. These men were folks I could share anything with and no judgements. *I pledged!* The challenges through pledging tested my patience but made the friendships even stronger. These days, I feel that most of us have lived

unique lives with the integrity we share and the courage to step out of our comfort zones and be ourselves."

**Timothy Starr, G'05**

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"I came to Sigma Phi by accident, having no intention to join a fraternity. Nor at that time was Hobart's fraternity system a particular selling point. Only sophomores and upperclassmen are eligible to join fraternal organizations, and - as I was busy rowing my freshman year - I didn't give it much thought. It wasn't until I was invited with a group of friends to a barbeque at 624 South Main Street that I first became acquainted with Sigma Phi. I was immediately struck by the beauty of the house, but also the group of brothers I met. They weren't what I expected, and I immediately became friends with a fellow Philadelphian Mike Stakias, G'03. I liked what I saw, but I still wasn't sure if I wanted to pledge. Days later, all the fraternities were giving bids to prospective pledges. As the day went along, I hadn't been contacted, and I assumed I didn't make the cut. I was walking down South Main Street in the early evening when a car slowly drove up beside me. It was "Stak"; who rolled down the window and told me to be in the courtyard of 624 South Main Street at 6:00pm sharp, dressed for dinner in a jacket and tie. Little did I know that the orders he barked would change my life. To this day, I don't think there's a day that goes by that I don't speak to one of the 9 other men that I met in the courtyard that night."

**Mike Twigg, M'80**

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"I had no intention of joining the Greek system when I went off to college in 1982. I grew up in a small town in upstate Michigan, where the Greek system had a bad reputation, likely fueled by 'Animal House' and 'Revenge of the Nerds.' One night, however, a few of the guys on my hall were talking about how we could go

from house to house, get fed hot dogs, pizza and beer for free and all we had to do was pretend to be interested in joining! Off we went from house to house, trying to grin & bear it through torturous interviews that seemed far more about my upbringing and what my parents did than about me and what I could offer. We were about to call it a night when we walked into the Sigma Phi Place at 907 Lincoln. The brotherhood wasn't hovering at the door to greet us and begin that painful interview process. We passed someone in the foyer who said, "Hey, guys, make yourself at home. There's food and drinks in the kitchen and feel free to roam the house." Intrigued by the casualness of it all, we started walking the halls and knocking on doors that were ajar. "Come on in" was the constant reply, and we'd go in and enjoy great conversations about life, school and ambitions. I don't recall anyone asking what my parents did. It felt comfortable right away, and we came back again the next two nights. The membership offer which came was a welcome surprise and I immediately said 'yes.' Before I knew it, I had a new family. Sigma Phi turned out to be the best part of my collegiate experience, by far."

**David Williams, W'61**

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"Back in the 1960s, Williams College was doing its best to hobble the fraternity system. This proved a difficult effort because the 15 fraternities at this 1200 student college housed and/or fed 90% of student body. The administration came up with a strange process prohibiting freshman rush. In fact, it prohibited fraternity members even talking about their houses with freshmen! However, during the 10 day period before the beginning of fall classes, each fraternity had to interview all sophomores indicating membership interest. And the rules required every rushee to attend interviews at each fraternity. Once

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the interviews were completed, both fraternities and rushees submitted preferential lists of their respective choices. All of this data was entered into a computer and eventually every rushee received one bid. If the rushee didn't like the bid, he would have to wait one year before trying to peddle himself to a preferred fraternity. My bid was from Sigma Phi. At that time, I can tell you that Sigma Phi wanted me more than I wanted Sigma Phi. However, the thought of waiting around for a year as a "non-affiliate" was socially terrifying. So, I joined.

**Jake Savage, S'77**  
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"When rush started in the fall of 1977, Sigma Phi was already on my radar. As a first year at UVA, rush offered another chance to meet new friends and to party. One of my best friends from the Eastern Shore was a brother, as was my cousin. So I knew of Sigma Phi right out of the rush gate. My Dad was an SAE, so I did go to that house and was a bit shocked at its deplorable state, but they did have beer on tap! (Just to be clear, this was 1976, so at 18 I was able to drink legally...) At Sigma Phi, I met a diverse group of men from all over the East Coast. Little did I know then that most of these guys would be lifelong friends. I pledged Sigma Phi and never looked back. My time at the house was outstanding; friendships grew stronger over the next three years, sometimes through great experiences and other times via trial and tribulation. I lived at the Alpha two years, 2nd year as a neophyte brother and 4th year when I was elected chapter president. In the 45 years since, my brothers at Sigma Phi have had lasting, positive influences on my life. I fully expect that to continue!"

**Jimmy Decker, T'11**  
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"One weeknight night during spring semester 2011 my roommate asked if I wanted to go to something

called 'an interest meeting' for a new, but historical fraternity. As a freshman who had nothing better to do, I tagged along. We met in UNC's student union with a group of excited young men from across the campus. Some Sig alumni and some professional recruiters explained an incredible opportunity to join something called the Sigma Phi Society, dating all the way back to 1827 and determined to establish a chapter at the University of North Carolina. I was sold nearly from the beginning - and so was my roommate, Christy Lambden, T'11- and it has been a great journey ever since."

**Dan Mansoor, C'76**  
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"After futile visits to a number of bland, beer-soaked Cornell fraternities fall of my freshman year, I returned to my home in Madison WI for the holiday break - a bit homesick, a lot overworked, and plenty listless. Dad took me to his Wednesday Rotary Club meeting, where (in the definition of "by chance") I sat next to a minister from the other side of town. After hearing I was attending Cornell, he asked if I knew senior Jim Rutherford, C'73. I did not know Jim, but his brother who was a star basketball player for the rival high school. Two weeks later, Jim called me and asked if I wanted to share the 819-mile ride back to Ithaca with him. I thought I'd save a few bucks, so we left at some un-godly hour in what I am certain was the oldest, still-operating Saab in the Western Hemisphere. Twenty hours, one Indiana snowstorm, and a late-night Westfield, NY, repair later, we pulled into Sigma Phi at midnight the day before the dorms reopened and formal rush began. After meeting a bunch of clever, interesting, and engaging young men, I crashed on the One Forest Park Lane living room couch. Turns out Jim was the rush chairman of Sigma Phi, and after helping him (he insisted) wash and gas the Saab, the next morning,

I shyly mentioned that I'd love the chance to get to know better the brothers and the house. That Friday, I was handed a bid - for life."

**Mark Patterson, I'74**  
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"By the time I got to Cal to start freshman year, the dorms were full and I was without housing. At my mom's suggestion, I began to check out the various houses. I went by a half dozen or so, had a beer at each, and was fairly wiped out from drinking and walking around Berkeley all day when I found myself passing the Sigma Phi Place. It definitely caught my eye, not looking like any of the soulless houses I'd visited so far. At the top of the front stairs was a guy with a ponytail half way down his back, in overalls, playing scales on an unplugged Stratocaster. I shouted up, 'Hey, mister, is that a fraternity?' He nodded yes, and kept practicing. I shouted, 'Are you guys looking for pledges?' He nodded yes again and motioned for me to follow him. I made my way upstairs, Jerry Barclay, I'71, handed me a beer, I pledged, and was initiated the following spring. Later that year, I discovered that we had a house band that was amazing. Great musicians all, but no lead singer. I worked up my courage one day to ask if they would consider adding a singer. I was regarded suspiciously and was asked what kind of material I knew. I answered, 'Well, I know the words to all of the Stones' songs.' The answer came back immediately. 'OK, you're in.' I sang 'Honky Tonk Women' the next Friday night and have been hanging onto my spot on the Short Notice® roster ever since. So, not only did I make friendships that have lasted nearly 50 years, but I got 50 years of great musical collaboration - both live and in the studio - to go with. I call that a *bargain*."

# The Road Less Traveled: Unexpected Journey to the Celestial Heights

by Bill Cohen, F'90    wjcohen.43@gmail.com



Bill Cohen, F'90

It was the fall of 1989, and the portents were grim. On the way to graduate school at UW-Madison, sight unseen, I had already

totaled my bike, damaged my car, and driven through the most extraordinary thunder and hail storms ever experienced. Surely, the Midwest was testing me, the Californian, and a recent emigree from Vermont. I turned north somewhere in Iowa and considered that perhaps I should keep heading all the way to Canada to find a new ski patrol job and do the one thing I really enjoyed. But that didn't pay the bills nor deeply satisfy my intellect, so I kept a steady pace all the way to Madison, Wisconsin. Without a place to live and little knowledge of the campus, it was a daunting task to find my bearings. But I must be attracted to such challenges... perhaps the trials and tribulations of finding one's way without a clear path appeals to my sensibilities.

As school started with a full load in Engineering Psychology and the encumbrance of two jobs - TA and research assistant - it quickly became an unappealing grind. The thought of quitting was frequently on my mind. Yet something about

the people and places of UW Madison and the exuberance of autumn caught me unawares. In mid-September, with fall foliage in full swing, I explored the great Memorial Union Terrace on Lake Mendota with a borrowed bike and sense of profound loneliness that drove me to seek new connections. It happened that it was "Clubs and Organizations Day" and tables and displays were everywhere. I poked around a bit before starting to leave when I caught a glimpse of the "Fraternities" section. I barely paused. But I stopped at the edge of the Union and turned back for that ineffable 'something' that had made me pause. I was 24 and certainly too old and mature for such a thing. ("Fraternity? Yeah, right.") As an undergraduate at UC San Diego, fraternities were more like social clubs and not something I had ever considered. During that short walk back to the fraternity section, every anti-frat bias I held was churning in my mind.

A few guys I met seemed friendly and ordinary, but none of the conversations were intriguing, and I just figured I was too old to relate. Lastly, I found myself speaking with four Sigma Phis. They were engaging and interested, sounded mature and curious, and invited me for dinner. This was a surprise. We exchanged contact details and...that was the last I heard from them. I didn't take it personally, but called them and

was again invited to the house at 106 North Prospect. I went to dinner on the appointed evening, and, although no one answered the door for quite a while (*those portents yet again!*), I somehow felt there was something special afoot. Not long after that, I was offered a bid to pledge Sigma Phi.

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*I've learned in life  
that no one cares all  
that much until they do;  
make yourself available,  
be open, and persist!*

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Fast forward to 2022.... Today, my best friends are members of Sigma Phi, and many of their kids think of me as their uncle. We speak all the time, vacation together, and look out for and support each other. Sigma Phi gave back more than I put into it tenfold, but it would never have happened if I didn't persist, ignore the portents, and manage my future.

While I was worried that I might be too old for the fraternity experience, I needed exactly what the fraternity offered - peerless friendship. Graduate school was challenging from start to finish, but Sigma Phi gave me the social support I needed and launched me to 25 years of adventures and friendships worldwide.

## DILAPIDATED POOL TABLE SPAWNS EPIC

# 'OPERATION 8 BALL'

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

At Sigma Phi,  
it's a very sad thing  
when an old pool  
table gives up  
the ghost.

Some years ago, that's exactly what happened at the Alpha of California. The old billiard unit reportedly died in about 2015, and this past summer a decision was made to investigate finding a replacement. Spearheaded by Alumni President John Vollmar, l'82, research was begun. What the Berkeley boys learned about costs made their blood run cold. Replacement units – new or old – were very expensive. Installation and re-felting added to the sticker shock. It was a budget-busting conundrum!

But serious Sigs know that the Little Fairy works in strange and

mysterious ways. An email appeal was made to the Alpha's alumni, and serendipity soon set in. The mother of Todd Havener, l'88, had a wonderful, old pool table in storage with no plan to use same. Should the Alpha so desire, it could be made available at no charge. *Shazam!*

There was a small catch. The table – once reportedly in use at Seattle's elegant Arctic Club - was in pieces in storage in Bangor, Maine, where Mrs. Havener lives. It was about as far from the Bay area as could be! What to do?

Ever resourceful, the alumni corporation in Berkeley decided to first solicit...and then fund... two alumni who might be willing to fly to Bangor, rent a U-Haul, and make the 3300 mile drive back to the Alpha, with Mrs. Havener's table in tow. Who among the heroes of the Left Coast altar of Sigma Phi could accept such an arduous, long distance challenge?

Fearless resolution was not long in coming. Two young alumni, Jackson Gray l'17 and Leor Bases l'17, rose to the







*Dynamic Duo: Brothers Bases and Jackson behind the wheel*



*Grabbing sleep in the back: "My pool table is my bed!"*



*Road fuel!*



*Solid Penske Road Warrior*



*Safe arrival at destination*

challenge. They committed to flying to Maine and driving the replacement table back to the house. Their journey began on November 1 and the table was to be delivered to the house just as soon as possible. A professional installer would promptly assemble the pool table, re-felt it, and do all that was necessary to have it ready for a big time active-alumni tournament at 2307 Piedmont on December 3!

Delta Airlines jetted the intrepid duo safely across the continent, and the odyssey began. Scott Sinclair, I'74, met the boys at the airport. Together, the threesome carefully loaded the wooden crates into the rental truck, being reminded all over again...the hard way...how heavy slate could be.

Operation 8 Ball was on! Across many westward miles, Jackson and Leor enjoyed effusive (outrageous?) hospitality and fellowship from Todd Havener, I'88, Jim Carrick, I'76, and Will Brinkerhoff, I'18. All the while, the two intrepid drivers shared wry transcontinental email updates and supporting photos with their increasingly-anticipative California brethren.

#### Examples of 'road pearls' from Jackson and Leor?

*10:55 am, 11/2: Arrival in Bangor, Maine. Met at the gate by the legend, Scott Sinclair, I'74. No cardboard sign reading "bases and gray", but a look on his face to indicate that we were in the presence of a fellow Sig.*

*"We made it Chicago, and met with our brother and promising Econ doctoral candidate, Tyler Jacobson, I'16. Nothing can cure a sick stomachs like some of south Chicago's greasiest deep dish!"*

*"Harsh black ice, falling snow, soup filled bellies, exhaustion. Unkind conditions resulted in a 100 car pile up on I-70. Bobbing and weaving, we pierced through like Tim Moran's eyes pierce through any fast-talking pledge who steps his way."*

*"We have now reached Los Angeles. We decided to bring the pool table to the Gamble House. They made us a far better offer."*

*And finally, on delivery day, November 6: "In spite of impressive efforts by Jim Carrick's wine collection, our own unreliable bodies, the US highway system, and the people of Bangor, Maine, the various*

*parts of the pool table have found their home in piles and stacks at 2307 Piedmont. And the keys to our tired rental truck have been left in the possession of a 20 year old Home Depot employee in El Cerrito."*

Operation 8 Ball had succeeded ... and wildly! 103 hours after leaving Bangor, Jackson, Leor and a hard-working Penske van had delivered the bacon. The Alpha would have its new pool table – and be able to tell astounding tales of FLT-driven derring-do – for years to come.

A final Sig serendipity? The former Havener table appears to date back to 1909 - the very year the Thorsen House was built!



## Euro-Origin of the Sig Pledge Pin?

by Marshall Solem, F'79 [marshall.solem@zs.com](mailto:marshall.solem@zs.com)

On a recent excursion through Switzerland, Zurich was my last stop before Patti and I headed home. As we were walking around admiring the sights of the city, a beautiful church steeple across the Limmat River caught my attention. As I admired that steeple, my eyes drifted towards the flagpole at the apex. Wait! Was I seeing what I thought I was? Was that really a flag in the design of Sig pledge pin flying over that beautiful Swiss city? The distance to the spire was considerable, so I got out my iPhone and zoomed in to confirm. Indeed, it was! As we continued our walking tour of the city, I started noticing the flag in more places, many much more obvious than the tiny flag I saw atop the church.

I began wondering...What was that flag? What was its origin? Could there be a Sig connection?

With a little web research, I discovered the flag was that of the city of Zurich. That made me further wonder... Did a Sig artisan immigrate to Switzerland many years ago and design the flag? No, that couldn't be true. The city of Zurich predates Sigma Phi by over 600 years!

So, now I wonder if one day many years ago a Swiss national came to the US to study, joined Sigma Phi and used Zurich's flag as inspiration for our pledge pin. I think that hypothesis is feasible.

Researching the symbolism of the flag, blue is said to denote Lake Zurich, and white the snow-capped mountains

around it. Historically however, white signified the water, while blue represented the sky. This historic symbolism is not far from what our pledge pin symbolizes: blue for the sky, the height of our aspirations & white for the purity of our intentions. I see a connection!

That said, regardless of any direct linkage between the Society and that Swiss city's flag, I found it satisfying to see reminders of my enduring Sig ties...

and my earliest days as a would-be Sig - 4,500 mile away from home.



## Union's Directed Donations: Avenue for You, Too?

by Bob Shages, U'69 [rshages@gmail.com](mailto:rshages@gmail.com)

When donating to Sigma Phi chapters, especially for capital improvements, furniture, chapter sponsored educational events, etc., you have not been able to take a tax deduction on the donation. (Note: For gifts the Sigma Phi Educational Foundation, of course, you can.)

At Union, however, there's a helpful giving accommodation. The College's Fraternity and Sorority Life Office maintains accounts for each organization that are funded by alumni donations. Our several fraternity and sorority chapters are allowed to withdraw from these accounts for approved chapter needs

(other than alcohol and gift cards). At Union, such monies have been used for special communal meals, furniture purchases and building materials for house renovations.

Tax deductible donations made directly to the College can be directed to Sigma Phi via the Fraternity and Sorority Life Office just as they could to any department or organization on campus, or even split between one or more organizations (e.g., 50% to Chemistry Department Research, 25% to WRUC, 25% to Sigma Phi).

While the arrangement I describe is

germane to Union, please check with your College/University's Alumni Gifts office to see if such directed giving is possible.

Older Sigs needing to make Required Minimum Distributions from IRA accounts can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution to their college as part of their RMD and not pay income tax on the withdrawn amount. And I've learned that, in the Union case, anyway, such a donation in whole or part, can be directed to Sigma Phi use.

As always, please contact your tax advisor for specific information on this or any deductions.

# LEGENDS ABSENT THERE

by Mark Patterson, I'74    map@dmarksmusic.com

Rhyming verse is an art form. What follows is an eloquent, artful tribute by Mark Patterson, I'74, to those departed alumni who influenced him in his earliest days. While some references may be unique to the Alpha of California, this poem suggests thoughtful, universal responses for all who continue to hold Sigma Phi in their hearts. - Ed



## "Legends Absent There"

*At the roots of that fine vintage, in the time when spirits soared  
Mythic were the paths we carved with sharply singing swords  
Side by side within teak walls illumined was our fate  
By rays of light through colored panes shot forth from golden gates  
I call upon the slumbering souls that celebrated there  
Though time and tide conspire to find us whittled down and pared  
Rejoin your brethren on the path that saints and saviors dared  
And cast our voices through the halls with the legends absent there*

*At the roots of that fine vintage, in the time when spirits soared  
Boundless were the prospects of our righteous joyful horde  
The vision loses luster though, and muses steal away  
Supplanted by the scripted roles we struggle to portray  
I was never swift enough to catch the ones that fell  
Or too far down some ancient path to hear the tolling bell  
Returning to the heart and soul sourced in our sacred lair  
Silently we call the roll of legends absent there*

*At the roots of that fine vintage, in the time when spirits soared  
When music of the spheres flowed forth in waves of hallowed chords  
Are the bonds we forged forever then undone by time and tears?  
Or does the circle warm us still as numbers thin with years  
I learn to shoulder every loss of those back on the wheel  
And rest my faith in ties that bind of never-rusting steel  
Gone ahead now on their quest for the uppermost of chairs  
We toast their names among the rest of the legends absent there*



# CONVENTION '22: ACTIVE PERSPECTIVE FROM VIRGINIA

by Jack Forys, S'21 jcf3kn@virginia.edu



Jack Forys, S'21

**About one year ago, myself and brothers Nick Fischer, S'20, and Kayvon Samadani, S'20, made the trek up to Convention 2021 in Ithaca, New York. In all truth, I had to be convinced to go; I was worried about missing class and other superficial things which now seem almost funny. What I experienced there was unlike anything I had yet seen, when I announced the Alpha of Virginia's recent recruiting successes, this great gathering of brothers I had never met before roared... earnestly and genuinely! Our triumphs were theirs. Indeed, by meeting the brothers of the broader Sigma Phi, both active and alumni, I came to appreciate more fully the institution into which I had been initiated.**

The highlight of the many great moments the three of us Virginia Sigs enjoyed where Cayuga's waters gleam was the news that Convention 2022 would be in Charlottesville. We excitedly brought this news back south with us, as well as reinvigorated spirits for all things Sigma Phi. The period from Convention 2021 to Convention 2022 was an exceptionally Sigly time for the Alpha of Virginia. As we swung 18 trembling neophytes into our mystical order in spring 2022, Brothers Nick Fischer and George Snyder, S'78, were already hard at work pulling together a

weekend to remember.

By the time the weekend of Convention arrived, we had been preparing ourselves for months. Even so, what took place was beyond what we could have expected. I would like to thank the countless Virginia alums who made the long journey home; Brothers Bill Poarch, S'54, Bob Bradshaw, S'63, and Bill Bradley, S'60, especially shone as a testament to the dedication of Sigma Phi's second most recently added chapter. It was also a great pleasure to see Serps who have graduated in just the past few years. We enjoyed a Sig Sister ceremony – my first, ever - in an exceptionally moving display.

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*The turnout from Sigma Phi nationwide was equally impressive. From distant California to alumni members from North Carolina, our order was well represented by all of its extant active and/or alumni chapters.*

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Each event at Convention served a purpose. Many Virginia actives were excited to attend Brother Mike Imirie's workshop on ritual in the stately Jefferson Hall, where we learned lessons from the initiation service about what it

means to be a Sigma Phi: lessons we will strive to uphold in our life both on and off the Grounds of Mr. Jefferson's University. The Hicks Oratorical Competition saw strong participation and equally strong rhetorical prowess. I would greatly encourage any actives reading this to take part in the oratory at the Alpha of California next year. I had a great time sharing my thoughts on the meaning of our Brotherhood with the other participants and the audience.

The formal deliberations of the Convention speak to the unique nature of our order as well. We are not governed by a far-away professional executive who throws his dictates at us; instead we enjoy a Standing and Advisory Committee which follows the decisions made by the brotherhood assembled in annual convention, with equal weight given to every chapter. While the most significant decision made at our gathering was not the happiest of choices to make, it was the decision of nearly every single brother in attendance. Hearing briefly from the brothers working to grow Sigma Phi into new schools was encouraging, and I believe the brightest days of America's oldest national fraternity are yet ahead.

We concluded our time together with a banquet held at UVA's premier landmark, the

Rotunda. Above our gathering was a projection of the constellations in the night sky proximate to our founding on the Fourth of March, 1827. This was a very special reunion, which saw remarks from a variety of Sigs both from Virginia and around the country. Serp alum Lonnie Howell, S'72, brought down the house with a speech that included profound commentary, hilarious anecdotes, and a reference to revered Alpha of Virginia alum "Doctor Funk." Brother Bob Bradshaw, S'63, was recognized for his years of tireless service to our chapter.

One of the most important undercurrents of this great gathering were deeply troubled times for the Alpha of Virginia a few short years ago. At the 2021 Convention, Brother Jim Hansen V'80, had mentioned that fraternities experience both nadirs and zeniths in cycles. Recently, Virginia was at its nadir. We were glad to demonstrate this year that we are very close to another zenith. That is why it was imperative to end the Convention Banquet by recognizing a Sig alumnus who has given countless hours of time, sweat, and effort to getting us back to that zenith with such haste, Alumni President George Snyder, S'78. A number of Virginia alums surprised him with a formal commendation for his work over these past few years, and that commendation now hangs proudly in the Alpha of Virginia.

The Virginia Sigs had a blast hosting everyone this October and we are looking forward to next year's Convention out west. We thank all the wandering birds who made the long trip to Charlottesville's Sigma Phi Place, and we are looking forward with pride and confidence to the third century of a brotherhood unlike any other.



# CONVENTION 2022

## Convention '22: Perspective from Union

by Sebastian Graber-Adamsons, U'21 [graberas@union.edu](mailto:graberas@union.edu)



Sebastian Graber-Adamsons, U'21

In the early hours of October 14, three sleepy Union Sigs stumbled into the Serpentine house at 163 Rugby Road, having forgone all worldly obligations in order to drive from Schenectady in time for the beginning of Convention '22. Despite our late arrival, we were overjoyed to learn that a great number of Sigs stayed up waiting for us, welcoming us with open arms into their home on the hill.

After what felt like only a couple minutes of rest on surprisingly comfortable couches, Ryan Christopher Dagan, U'22, Joseph Jacobs Maier, U'22, and I, Sebastián Graber-Adamsons, U'22, were graced by the ever-so-sweet sound of Ridgely Webster Harrison, U'2000, ringing our phones to make sure we woke up in time for the day's first workshop: Ritual and History, led by Mike Imirie, M'69.

The workshop, entitled "Practicing at the Top of Your License," was a fantastic experience. It unpacked the essence of the membership promises all brothers make upon initiating. For Union Sigs, it was particularly germane, providing added tools for us to use at Union's our (then) looming Swing

on October 29. Beyond familiarizing us anew with our initiation promises, this workshop helped us to understand the similarities and differences between the rituals and traditions of each and every chapter. For instance, while the same ritual words may be spoken, the same people present, the same charges instilled, each chapter has its own unique traditions and Place.

After this meeting, we moved to a nearby garden on the grounds of Mr. Jefferson's University to enjoy pizza and visited with brothers from chapters all across the country.

Following lunch, Ryan and I attended a meeting regarding leadership and responsibilities led by Jim Hansen, V'80. First, we covered leading by example, which has been proven by many years of Sigs to be the most effective method of motivating others to get things done. After that, we covered the topics of insurance and risk management. While this topic typically is seen as a bore, Brother Hansen kept the topic interesting, making sure every delegate was engaged and actively contributing to the discussion. During this meeting we reviewed the "do's" and "don'ts" of our local fraternal activities and went over risk mitigation techniques to avoid particularly difficult situations.

Next up was supper, where we got the chance to unwind with a fantastic barbecue buffet provided by the host Virginia Sigs. After this, we made our way to the Hicks Oratorical Contest, where four brothers shared well-chosen words of wisdom, explaining what Sigma Phi means to them.

The next day, we were awakened early to bagels and coffee, after which every member met for our annual Convention meeting. Following the Annual Meeting of the Members, we went to a downtown neighborhood called the Corner to get to know our brothers from far and near. Our weekend culminated with a banquet at the University of Virginia's Rotunda; we were served a delicious meal while alumni shared tales of their lives in the Sigma Phi.

Beyond all the lavishness and grandeur of our 195th National Convention, what really stuck out to me were the little things, the things most people would overlook. My best memories surrounding convention were those of the eight hours of conversation Ryan, Jake, and I had on the drive down. We spoke about everything from the cars we drive to our deepest fears and secrets. My best memories weren't the food and wine served at the banquet, but the fantastic stories of brotherhood that were shared while we ate. My best memories were the bonds of Friendship, Love, and Truth created and reinforced with each and every brother I spoke with over the weekend of Convention.

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*My brothers and I returned from Convention bleeding blue and white, knowing that despite any differences, there is one thing that will forever hold us together....our love for the Thrice Illustrious Sigma Phi.*

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# Charlottesville Highlights, Convention '22

by Mike Imirie, M'69 [mimirie@aol.com](mailto:mimirie@aol.com)

In Charlottesville, Convention '22 dawned clear and warm on the weekend of October 14. The Serp house at 163 Rugby Road was buzzing with Sig activity and anticipation. Elsewhere on campus that Friday, undergraduate workshops were taking place. The morning session unpacked some of the meanings and obligations of Sig ritual, while the afternoon session addressed modern chapter operating responsibilities. Attendance at this year's workshops was heartwarming, with 15 young men representing 7 active chapters on hand. The young men were articulate and engaged. They represented their chapters and our Society very well.

Adding to the workshop's sense of purpose was the remarkable venue the Alpha had arranged: Jefferson Hall, home of the Jefferson Literary & Debating Society since 1835. It was a privilege and a thrill to gather on veritable 'holy ground' at Mr. Jefferson's Academical Village.



Jefferson Hall

After a barbecue dinner at the Sigma Phi Place, the Hicks Oratorical Contest was held at the nearby Architecture School. This year's contest featured four undergrad orators – Kyle Scheik, U'19, Jack Forsys, S'21, Kayvon Samadani, S'20, and Peter Hollevik, I'22 – each of whom had well chosen, thought-provoking

things to say about the essence and the meanings of Sigma Phi. (*You'll find the winning oration elsewhere in this issue.*)

Saturday began with the Society's Annual Meeting of the Members. Customary business was transacted, chapter reports were presented, formal voting took place on the status of the Michigan chapter, and the convention charge for 2023 was presented to the Alpha of California. (*See detailed coverage elsewhere.*)

In late afternoon, another highlight involved three Sig Sisterings.

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*A Sig Sistering is an anomaly at a Convention, and it is a delightful one!*

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The first Sistering was a stand-alone ceremony presided over by Alumni Corporation President George Snyder, S'78, in which Declan Watson, S'20, made Genevieve Dwyer a Sig Sister. A short time later, a dual ceremony took place in the Main Hall presided over by Ethan Sullivan, S'18, and his Sig Sister, Kathryn Renneker, SSS'21. In that special event, Bill Poarch, S'54, made his wife, Liz, a Sister, as did Kayvon Samadani, S'20, who honored Carmen Petras with this special Society accolade. The Main Hall at the Sigma Phi Place was filled with convention goers, who joined in the singing of 'Pax et Oscula' - the Sig Sister Song - after the two women had been swung. It was a heartwarming occasion: for the new Sisters; for the men who love them; and for many who gathered at 163 Rugby Road to celebrate this always-touching occasion.

The Banquet which followed took place at UVA's hallowed Rotunda. The Rotunda was filled to its 104 person

capacity. Food and beverage were excellent. The order of banquet events was both formal and inclusive, and UVA senior Nick Fischer, S'20, did a magnificent job as master of ceremonies. The evening's highlights included Bob Bradshaw, S'63, being presented with the Society's David Brown Lifetime Service Award and Alumni Corporation President George Snyder, S'78, being presented with a plaque and proclamation honoring his many years of selfless, hands-on service. The evening's keynote address was provided by Lonnie Howell, S'72, who frequently had his audience in stitches as he shared wry details of Sigma Phi exploits from back in the day.

The softly illuminated Rotunda ceiling was adorned with constellations on that Saturday night. While lovely, those digital images were certainly outshone by the bright stars who gathered in person in that special space to celebrate 195 years of the Thrice Illustrious Sigma Phi.



Fine dining in the Rotunda

# Bob Bradshaw, S'63, Earns Brown Service Award

by George Snyder, S'78    [snyder.gn@gmail.com](mailto:snyder.gn@gmail.com)

"Hi, I'm Bob Bradshaw." This warm introduction, in a southside Virginia voice, has been heard countless times in the Halls of the Alpha of Virginia. The confidence, integrity and love behind those words has immediately given generations of recipients comfort and ease.

But don't let that ease fool you. Soon after, that one time house manager is inquiring about the physical needs of the House. Before you know it, he has picked up a tool and, with your help, gone to work. This has always been the Bob Bradshaw hallmark: interest in you as a person, followed by interest in the House and the Society.

In 1962, Bob entered the University of Virginia and pledged Sigma Phi. He has always been grateful that our brotherhood of worldly Sigs took an interest in a young man from the small town of Crew, Virginia. By his fourth year, he had also been elected House Treasurer, an office which would presage his future career as a bank trust officer in Durham, North Carolina and Roanoke, Virginia, where he is now retired. Along the way, he and Christine raised three daughters and purchased a sailboat.

For older Virginia Sigs, Bob is best known as the Virginia Alumni treasurer for many of the years that the late James Louis Jenkins, S'58, led the Alpha. Almost any time Jim was at the house, so was Bob. They were a team. When Jim went off the alumni board in about

1985, so did Bob.

Enter 2014. The Alpha of Virginia had fallen on hard times. At a spring meeting of the Virginia Alumni Board, the plan was to make the remaining actives alumni, rent the house to another organization for a year, and then use the bulk of our endowment to hire a recruiting firm to attract new members. Several brothers from 1963 to 1966 attended, including the late Julian Bryant, S'63, and the late Brooke Spotswood, S'66. Bob was there, too.

Much discussion ensued. After a hard fought rush, only three first years had returned bids. With attrition and disinterest, this was not enough. Magically, ten more first years had turned up at the house that very day, asking to pledge. The board was understandably skeptical. Finances were poor. A group of S'78 Sigs asked to take over the financial and physical maintenance of the house, and mentor the actives and potential pledges. But they were unknown to the board, members of which were still skeptical. The S'78s turned to Bob, who said: "Hi, I'm Bob Bradshaw."

The weight of Bob's history of faithfulness to the Sigma Phi



Chairman Brendan Mc Curdy, H'80, presents David Brown Lifetime Service Award to Bob Bradshaw, S'63

swayed the board and saved the House. We went from perhaps 5 active Sigs and 3 pledges to 9 actives and 13 pledges that spring, and 51 active brothers today. It is remarkable that Bob gave so much of his time as an active house manager and treasurer, as Jim Jenkins' treasurer and right hand man during the seventies and eighties, and now as treasurer of the Virginia Alumni board again in the 2020s. He remains an active participant in the financial and physical upkeep of the house today.

For all of these reasons, at the Sigma Phi's 2022 Convention in Charlottesville, the Society bestowed its David S. Brown Distinguished Service Award to a most deserving and appreciated Robert Lee Bradshaw, Jr., S'63.



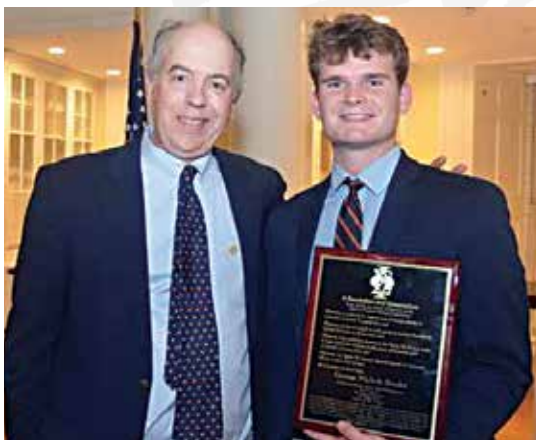


# Convention '22: Serp Epiphany Behind the Lens

by Scott Enoch, S'78 shenoch1@comcast.net

It's hard to believe that I've lived long enough to have a weighty perspective on events. I'm also skeptical that my actions, or those of my friends, can have a real impact on individuals, much less institutions. There seem to be no defining moments. Instead, we usually find ourselves leading our busy lives from one inconsequential moment to the next; business meeting ... *check*; family event ...*check*; social event ... *check*. You get the picture.

When the Alpha of Virginia board began planning for the recent convention, everything started to follow the same script as before. Check marks were placed by each weekend segment that had to be planned, reserved, paid for, and cleaned up after. This was fitting into the same haze as the rest of our lives. At one point, we decided to step out of the predictable script and honor a very special individual, Alumni Corporation President George Snyder, S'78, who almost single-handedly had saved our fraternity. We would commission and present a special award and memorialize the event. I knew what



George Snyder, S'78, is presented with a stellar service plaque by HoH Davis Kampschorr, S'21

that meant: pictures. Photography has been hobby of mine since I can remember. I would bring my trusty Nikon and snap, snap, *snap!*

At this moment I remembered something I had done in the past which was perhaps indelicate. In about 2016, our beloved chapter in Charlottesville was moments away from extinction. We were down to about 10 actives. Virtually no one was living the house. The board on which I served met on the main floor for our annual meeting to determine how on earth we were going to run the house for the next year.

There was a sobering item on the day's agenda: the dissolution of Sigma Phi at the University of Virginia. *Are you kidding me?!? Have we really come to this point?* Surreptitiously, I took out my iPhone and snapped a picture of the meeting. If this is it, I wanted to remember the last moment we were a functioning entity. Should I have done that in such a private, downcast environment? *Hmmm...*

It was a very depressing photo of a handful of young men looking up at a handful of older men realizing that this might be "it". At that moment, the decision was made ...*"NO! We are not going to end this thing. Not here. Not now."* But the question remained...how are we actually going to continue? I started looking through older pictures of Sigma Phi parties, sporting events, and off-grounds functions, and the idea washed over me again and again that we just have to go back to where we started. We have to recruit young men that fit the criteria that we at Sigma Phi hold inviolate: Friendship, Love, and Truth. The

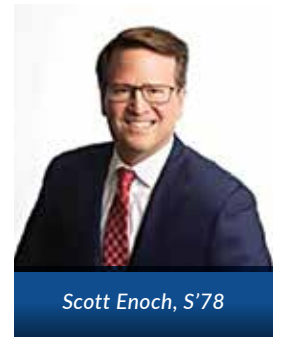
pledges have to want what we have

and so we have to actively seek them. We can do it; those old photos proved that we had done it before. In fact, we've been successful for *generations* of young men at UVA. How in the world could we let that slip away? The Alpha's vintage photos begged that question...and loudly.

*Fast forward to 2022 ...* What a difference a few years makes. If you believe in something and are willing to work hard to make it happen, focus-minded men can accomplish almost anything. As I made my rounds at the Convention banquet in Charlottesville, with my old school Nikon D7100 camera held to my eye, I gasped when I realized that we were in the Rotunda, the most hallowed ground at the University of Virginia. I couldn't help but be amazed at the pictures I was taking. Here were hundreds of people, comprised of multiple generations of men gathering and celebrating the 2022 National Convention of the Sigma Phi. Old men (me included), young men, spouses, girlfriends, and boyfriends, all gathered to celebrate the 195-year longevity of this Society. Wandering birds had traveled halfway around the world to be here and speak of the virtues of our organization.

It was exciting. It caused me to think grateful thoughts. Our local chapter roster is full. The rooms at 163 Rugby Road are full. And on this special Convention evening in Charlottesville, even Mr. Jefferson's Rotunda was full ... with celebrating Sigs.

We had done it. The Alpha of Virginia is thriving again... and I have the pictures to prove it!



Scott Enoch, S'78

# Winning Hicks Oration: “The Sigma Phi as an Institution of Flow”

by Peter Hollevik, I'22    hollevik@berkeley.edu

*This year's Hicks Oratorical Contest featured four speakers. Jack Forsys, S'21, Kayvon Samadani, S'20, Kyle Scheik, U'19, and Peter Hollevik, I'22, represented this annual oratory extremely well. The three alumni judges certainly had their work cut out for them as they evaluated the orations on the basis of content, originality, preparation and delivery. This year's winning oration took the road less traveled, describing the Thrice Illustrious as an 'institution of flow.' Intrigued? Read on... - Ed.*

As humans, I believe we're both blessed and doomed in our nature to seek the meaning of life. I have yet to find such meaning. And had I, I would have not liked to impose the answer upon my fellow Sigs. The chase itself may be of great enjoyment, but I'd deem my answer highly irrelevant in its subjectivity. This evening, I would instead like to direct our attention to a far more concrete subject: the search for meaning *in* life. I ask: What, if anything, creates meaning *in* life?

To help answer such a question, I borrow a concept from the science of optimal experiences: **the feeling of 'flow'**. Flow takes

a multitude of forms. Some find it playing chess or writing poetry, others through volunteering or writing code. I find it climbing the mountains of my home in Norway or being completely immersed in a speech at a National Convention in the lovely State of Virginia.

Common to all such optimal experiences is that they create a feeling of being 'in the moment', of losing track of one's time, and even one's own sense of self and self-consciousness. Similarly pure is the experience of *Flow*.

I claim that meaning *in* life is closely tied to the density of flow experiences we pursue each day.

The more flow, the more *meaningful* our lives are. The more complex our beings become, we arise as a people more resilient to outside distractions and internal chaos. In this way, flow makes us more robust and reflective members of society as a whole.

**Now, how does the experience of flow relate to the Sigma Phi?**

Ever since stepping into the West-Coast realm of the Little Fairy in the Alpha of California's Thorsen House, I assure you I've been in Flow. I can say with a hand on my heart that the Sigma Phi is not only the finest *fraternity* there is, but also the finest *institution* of Flow I've thus far encountered. How could this be? Let us return to our core values of Friendship, Love, and Truth.

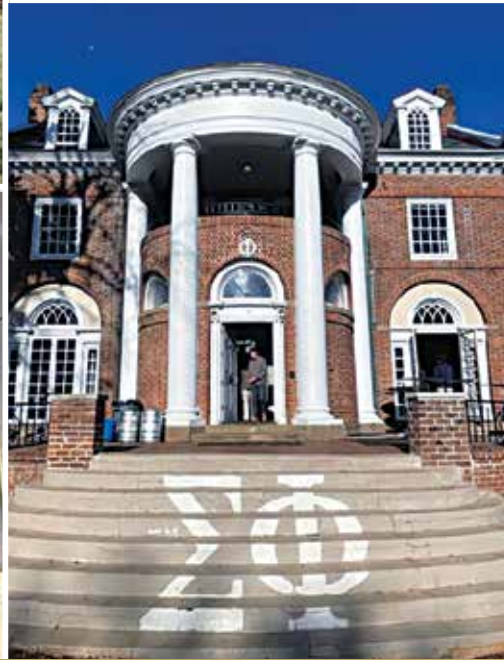
**The flow of friendship** is evident among members of the Society. Find me a more close-knit community on campus and I'll take you to Berkeley's finest pizzeria! Or, we'll make dinner ourselves. In Berkeley, we put pride into hosting our weekly Monday-night dinners, expanding the flow of friendship to our local community. Fellow students from all corners of the world are not only left impressed by our walls of Burmese teak, but the immense sense of belonging and great 'vibes' that can fit into our wonderful dining room. For many active members over the years, the Monday night dinner was their first step towards accessing the flow the Sigma Phi friendship yields.

**The flow from love** takes as many forms as there are members, both active and alumni:



Peter Hollevik, I'22

## 2022 CONVENTION SNAPSHOTS



Some find their love for the *peculiarities of our house itself* the greatest source of flow: They often find themselves absolutely immersed in the craftsmanship and playful creativity in the design of the Thorsen House. They are the first ones signing up for one of our several house-tours or spending hours fixing a broken pipe or a leak!

For others, the love of *building a prosperous and long-lasting society* is their greatest source of flow. They bridge the gap between alumni and actives, and are always on the lookout for new members to fill our future ranks. These are the people who thrive as community-builders; they create community agreements, arrange alumni luncheons, and bring out the best of all us through their mere presence!

As a H.O.E. or 'Horticultural Outdoor Expert', my love for the garden brings a great share of my flow. Here's an example: Just the other day, we trimmed down one of our 20 feet tall rosebushes for several hours. It felt as just a couple minutes had passed when our workday ended and I couldn't stop until it was all

done. Aren't we lucky college students who get to spend our Saturday mornings trimming roses?

**Lastly, the flow of truth** takes precedence. In my opinion, this is also the hardest but most powerful of them all.

In a world where truth is dependent upon your point of reference, we have the possibility to share such a point: a *common ground* where generations of Sigs can learn and thrive off each other. That's when the flow from truth takes its purest form.

However, the flow of truth is spoiled if we do not stay true to ourselves (*i.e., me, the individual*) along the path. The question then becomes: how do we merge and balance the truths we bring in and the ones that already exist in our Society?

I believe the answer lies in honesty: Honesty of intention when imposing one's truth upon other members of our Society. This holds for chapter to chapter, and chapter to nationals as well.

At the Alpha of California, we have seen this work in practice, returning to a Society in which the truth yields flow

and not internal chaos. A Society where actives and alumni are honest of their intentions, and speak their minds. That makes for a Society fit to create optimal experience and meaning – and you'll feel it.

This evening, we've seen how our Society supplies an immense amount of opportunities for flow through its core values of Friendship, Love, and Truth. Because of this, it builds meaning *in* the lives of so many members: actives, alumni, and the ones yet to cross over.

Acknowledging the transformative power of our Society and honest in my intentions, I beg to ask you, my fellow Sigs: How can we, staying true to our core values, ensure that everyone who so desires, has equal access to pursue the search for meaning *in life* in our fine Society?



# Profound Sadness & A Way Forward: Michigan's Active Chapter Charter Revoked

by Jim Hansen, V'80, Vice Chairman on behalf of the S&A | jimhansenww@gmail.com

*For those just joining the conversation on the "gender inclusive" movement spearheaded by Michigan, and the resulting question of "Should Sigma Phi be Co-Ed?," background information is available about the many germane 2016-2019 events by reading the article in the December 2019 Flame "Convention 2019: Crossroad Discussions" at [www.sigmaphi.org/flame](http://www.sigmaphi.org/flame). In addition, the "Chairman's Message" in the August 2020 Flame sheds excellent additional light on this matter. - Ed.*

I'd like to begin this message by asking a question: Why is it that the simplest questions can be the hardest to answer? Examples? *Who am I? Is there a God? What is the most-just government: democracy, theocracy, or fascism?* Over time, the actives at the Alpha of Michigan have forced the Society to confront similar heavyweight questions rephrased as: *What is Sigma Phi? Are men and women designed to be different? Should a minority faction force its will on the majority?*

Perhaps these simple questions are hard to answer because there is no right answer. Just a choice. "Just" a decision to make. At its 2019 Convention, the Sigma Phi Society formally voted to reaffirm its long-standing membership choice as male-only. Michigan participated in that Burlington event, and understood the outcome. Unrepentant, however, Michigan's active chapter chose to continue its contrary membership practices.

But choices have consequences.

The Michigan chapter's demise is both simple and **complex**. Complex for many reasons: the temporally amorphous nature of any active chapter: a local alumni chapter governance crisis; a national organization defined as an "... Advisory Committee" (see *Sidebar "What is the National S&A Committee?"*);

our Society's Constitution and Bylaws; moral arguments of inclusion which erroneously conflate discrimination with differentiation; and federal and state laws applying to the whole mess.

**Simple** because, in the end, the Michigan chapter's transgressions boiled down to initial deceit; continuing deceit; and choices that signal no remorse, no regret, and no intention to correct the deceit. Ostensibly under the name of "Metal Frat", the Ann Arbor chapter continues choosing to function as a co-ed organization. Consequently, the Society voted to take the precedent-setting historic action at Convention 2022 of revoking an active chapter's charter as a result of the failure of the Michigan chapter to tell the truth as well as its ongoing defiance of its brothers (see *Sidebar "Application to the General Convention"*).

During the Friday S&A business meeting, Michigan's S&A Delegate was the single vote against submitting the Application for Charter Revocation to the Convention on Saturday. The Michigan active chapter was not represented at the formal Annual Meeting of the

Members the next day when the final vote – a 7 to 1 decision - was taken. Why no one from Michigan showed up for the meeting is unclear. A reasonable presumption is that Michigan's actives, along with a vocal population of mostly 21st-century Michigan alumni, had achieved their goal of creating a gender-inclusive, non-binary, co-ed organization. Presumably, they got what they wanted - control of the chapter house at 907 Lincoln, control of the house's trust fund, an Alumni Board that supports their omni/no-gender philosophies, and their chosen way of life. On the other hand, Sigma Phi Society got what the 2019 Convention voted for - a male-only member Society seeking to operate on the basis of Friendship, Love, and



*The former Ann Arbor Sigma Phi Place at 907 Lincoln*

Truth with a mission to serve the needs of collegiate post-adolescent males becoming exceptional adult males. Only time will tell if either outcome represents a Pyrrhic victory.

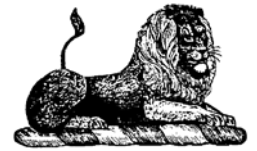
My heart is heavy to see the former Michigan active chapter leave the orbit of Sigma Phi. But the chapters are *for* the actives and primarily *by* the actives. The actives have made their choices. Their choices created a difference between Michigan and the Society's other chapters that became reconcilable only by going our separate ways.

Borrowing President Lincoln's words "With malice toward none, with charity for all" we wish the former chapter at 907 Lincoln in Ann Arbor well as an organization independent of the Sigma Phi Society. We truly hope that that non-gender/trans-gender/co-ed organization succeeds in its mission to serve the needs of college students needing non cis and/or co-ed environments. Likewise, we expect them to respect the cis-male world's desire to support the needs and maturation process of young men choosing a cis-male environment.

Importantly, the Convention in Charlottesville did not revoke the Michigan *Alumni* Chapter charter. This means that the situation going forward for Ann Arbor Sig alumni who continue to care is akin to the dormant active chapters at Williams and at Lehigh. Alumni from those two Sig altars continue to actively participate in Society activities and to serve authorized chapters in elected and volunteer roles. Season after season, the Society *needs* their energies and their hearts, and invites loyal Michigan alumni to continue to care, as well.

<sup>1</sup> in the science, sociology, and politics of gender today, "cis male" is a person born with XY chromosomes resulting in having male sex organs at birth while also presenting themselves to the world as a stereotypical male gender. Additional information can be found at <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/what-does-cisgender-mean>

## APPLICATION TO THE GENERAL CONVENTION



***Society bylaws prescribe that any movement to remove a chapter's charter must be supported by a matter-of-fact, written document. That document, referred to as an Application to the General Convention, must come from either a chapter or the S&A Committee, be circulated to all chapters 60 days in advance and formally presented to the Society at the Convention's Annual Meeting of the Members. What follows is the Application presented to and voted on at the Convention in Charlottesville. – Ed***

The Standing and Advisory Committee of Sigma Phi Society presents this application to the General Convention of the Society to revoke the charter of the undergraduate chapter of the Alpha of Michigan based on a multi-year pattern of behavior inconsistent with the Society's tenet of "Truth" and repeated contravention of the Society's Restated Constitution and Bylaws as ratified multiple times by the Society's General Convention.

- Commencing in 2016, the Alpha of Michigan knowingly and willfully engaged in behaviors contrary to the longstanding tenets of the Society together with its Restated Constitution and Bylaws. What is especially egregious is the duplicitous and deceitful activities commencing in 2016 with the admission of women while falsely maintaining to their own alumni and the Society that they had not done so, continuing with the deception up to the Spring of 2019.
- Since October 2019, the chapter has been openly defying the General Convention's dictates and has contravened the Society's Restated Constitution and Bylaws, despite their commitment to live by them.
- The chapter has repeatedly rejected reasonable offers to resolve the matter.
- The chapter has caused the Society to expend countless hours of time and tens of thousands of dollars to protect our traditions, ideals, trademarks and intellectual property, diverting these resources from pursuits more in keeping with their intended purpose.
- While the actives and alumni supporters in Michigan say they want to be Sigs, their actions have repeatedly demonstrated they are doing everything possible not to be Sigs and not to uphold their inviolable obligations, as stated in the First Charge of our initiation rite, "to submit...the subject of difference...to the judgment of your brothers and be bound by their decision."

The S&A has therefore rightfully but regrettably concluded that revocation of the chapter's charter is in the best interest of the Society.

**October 15, 2022** Charlottesville, Virginia

(continued from previous page)

## “WHAT IS THE NATIONAL S&A COMMITTEE?”

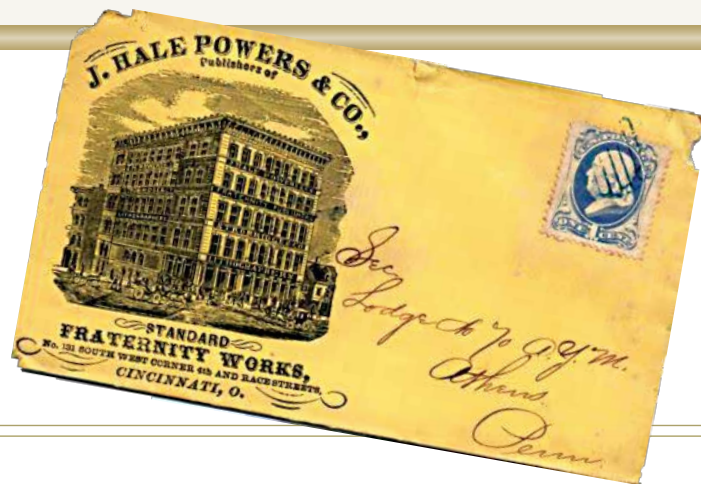
Our Society's governance is defined in our Restated Constitution and Bylaws as governance primarily by the Active Chapters, both locally within their Chapter and by voting at Annual Conventions when a local matter rises to affect other Chapters. Each undergraduate Active Chapter elects a delegate to speak and vote for the Chapter throughout the year on matters between the chapters. This group of delegates serves as a governance body called the Standing and Advisory Committee. In addition to the Delegates, our Constitution specifies four officers to be elected to three-year terms to lead the S&A Committee and make decisions to run the Society between S&A Committee and Convention meetings. The four officers are:

The four officers are:                      1. Chairman                      2. Vice Chairman                      3. Treasurer                      4. Secretary

The officers may only make significant decisions and take material actions if at least two officers agree and most decisions and actions must be ratified by either the S&A Committee, a Convention vote, or both. So, when people refer to “the National Sigma Phi” they’re really referring to the collective decision-making by the undergraduate Actives at Conventions and through their elected Delegates’ votes at S&A meetings. The officers and delegates of the S&A Committee have a fiduciary responsibility to act in accordance with those votes in “running” the Society throughout the year(s).

## Fraternity Works?

This circa-1873 envelope was spied online at eBay not long ago. It advertises a 19th century enterprise in Cincinnati with an unusual focus: fraternity fine art, publishing and lithography. According to online sources, J. Hale Powers & Co. had particular business successes with such well known fraternal organizations of the times as the Masons, the Grange, the Oddfellows and the Knights of Pythias.



*We'd like to get the history updating process started in earnest early in 2023, so - please - reach out to Jim or Kurt soon!*

## Calling all Wikipedia Administrators & Moderators!

As we prepare to celebrate the Society's 200th anniversary in 2027, we will be crowd-sourcing updates to our 1977 Catalogue chapter histories. We will do this using a Wiki platform.

**Are you a Wiki Administrator or Moderator - or would you like to be one?**

We need a couple of volunteers to help manage the Wiki technology and process for curating the chapter history updates. Don't worry; you would not be responsible for writing the updates...unless you have an interest in helping with that, too.

If you are interested in helping with this important effort, or have questions about how you can support it, **please reach out to Society Vice Chairman Jim Hansen, V'80, at [jimhansenww@gmail.com](mailto:jimhansenww@gmail.com) or to Digital Services Director Kurt Haigis, V'73, at [sigmaphiHQ@gmail.com](mailto:sigmaphiHQ@gmail.com).**

# Never Forget These Brothers

*News of the passing of these brothers has been received since publication of the December, 2021 issue of the Sigma Phi Flame:*

Leonard Dawson Adkins Jr. W'49 ..... 2/3/2019  
 Jan VanEtten Austell W'52 ..... 11/3/2017  
 Robert Rhett Austell Jr. W'46 ..... 8/15/2021  
 George A. Ball II W'50 ..... 11/5/2020  
 George Hodges Bartlett W'49 ..... 3/1/2021  
 Daniel Lewis Berman W'53 ..... 12/18/2016  
 Spencer J. Berry W'52 ..... 11/21/2005  
 Seth Macy Bidwell W'46 ..... 11/6/2019  
 Peter B. Bloom C'55 ..... 9/10/2022  
 Peter C. Blum L'69 ..... 10/4/2021  
 Robert G. Brayton W'51 ..... 3/8/2016  
 William Liam Brewster C'47 ..... 2/21/2022  
 Robert W. Carey W'52 ..... 2/17/2015  
 Thomas Carl Clair, M'69 ..... 11/24/22  
 Alexander M. Clement Jr. W'47 ..... 9/23/2019  
 James Franklin Conlan W'56 ..... 12/26/2020  
 Cullom Edward Connely W'46 ..... 4/17/2013  
 John Howe Crocker W'53 ..... 8/9/2012  
 William Watson Dunlap W'48 ..... 5/6/2022  
 Randal Don Evans C'72 ..... 5/30/2022  
 John Spangler Fiddymont I'43 ..... 1/14/2012  
 William J. Gehron W'47 ..... 5/24/2020  
 Frederick William Grumman Jr. C'47 ..... 5/24/2021  
 E. Channing Headley W'54 ..... 12/27/2020  
 Richard Roy Hemsey F'73 ..... 7/4/2021  
 Paul Alan Hulleberg H'75 ..... 2/21/2022  
 Leonard S. Jacob Jr. W'48 ..... 7/21/2021  
 Bernard M. Kelley W'56 ..... 3/28/2014  
 Perry A. Kingman W'60 ..... 12/15/2017  
 Julius O. Kopplin Jr. F'46 ..... 8/28/2020

Jonathan Gould Krass W'57 ..... 10/29/2021  
 Michael L. Laughlin S'63 ..... 5/26/2022  
 Per Albin Madsen W'48 ..... 4/4/2018  
 Thomas Northrup Maytham W'51 ..... 10/17/2019  
 David K. McKown W'56 ..... 6/4/2021  
 Joseph W. Mechem G'61 ..... 5/18/2021  
 George R. Merrill G'54 ..... 4/17/2022  
 Michael Patrick Micinowski G'73 ..... 5/30/2021  
 Richard Otto Mueller F'57 ..... 7/3/2022  
 Walter D. O'Hearn Jr. W'54 ..... 7/5/2016  
 Nevitt Danforth Oates W'50 ..... 12/14/2017  
 Richard Leeds Payne W'51 ..... 3/12/2020  
 David Charles Phillips W'56 ..... 8/28/2019  
 Howard Ewen Potter W'50 ..... 10/1/2018  
 Thomas R. Schwarz W'56 ..... 5/11/2021  
 Hubbard William Shawhan L'41 ..... 1/25/2007  
 David A. Tenney W'58 ..... 6/1/2022  
 William Gray Warden III W'51 ..... 3/18/2015  
 Richard Warren Wheeler W'52 ..... 4/20/2020  
 Norman Bruce Williamson W'51 ..... 10/31/2016  
 J. Dwight Wilson Jr I'46 ..... 6/24/2020



## KUDOS & THANKS

...to the following Sigs for their articles, information or suggestions supporting this issue of the 'Flame': Bill Cohen, F'90, Scott Enoch, S'78, Jack Forys, S'21, Sebastian Graber-Adamsons, U'21, Jim Hansen, V'80, Scott Hekel, F'97, Peter Hollevik, I'22, Mark Patterson, I'74, Bob Shages, U'69, George Snyder, S'78 & Marshall Solem, F'79.

Issue after issue, we actively solicit Sig stories, perspectives and feedback. Why? Every time a reader circles back, it improves the Society's next publication. Contact Editor Mike Imirie, M'69 (mimirie@aol.com) with your feedback and 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.

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## Annual Dues: Giving Made Easier

by Bob Guthrie, S'86, Society Treasurer [bguts123@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bguts123@sbcglobal.net)

**Member dues are lifelines for non-profit organizations.** At both chapter and national levels, member contributions pay the bills. While there are often other sources of income, dues remain the financial foundation for any non-profit.

You know that dues are used for Society administration, leadership training materials, event and ceremony planning, website enhancement, active chapter outreach and publication of the *Sigma Phi Flame*, among other key deliverables. Very simply, member dues add value for our organization, making it possible for us to keep alumni informed and engaged.

Your support is key. As inflation skyrockets, your dues payments have never been more important. In order to make it easier for alumni to give, we've created another avenue for members to use to pay dues: QR codes for both annual dues and donations to the Sigma Phi Educational Foundation.

Just scan the beneficiary you choose using the QR reader on your phone, and you'll promptly move to a secure site where your donation can be made...effortlessly.



## Berkeley to Host 2023 Convention

The Society's 2023 Convention will take place at the Alpha of California. At the recently-concluded Charlottesville convention, California HoH Emmett Dreyer, I'21, accepted the convention charge on behalf of his chapter. While dates have yet to be established, what's *clearly* established is the fact that enjoying Sigma Phi on the Left Coast is a wonderful experience for local alumni and wandering birds, alike. Look for more information about the Society's 2023 annual conclave online ([www.sigmaphi.org](http://www.sigmaphi.org)) in the weeks ahead.



### 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: \_\_\_\_\_