



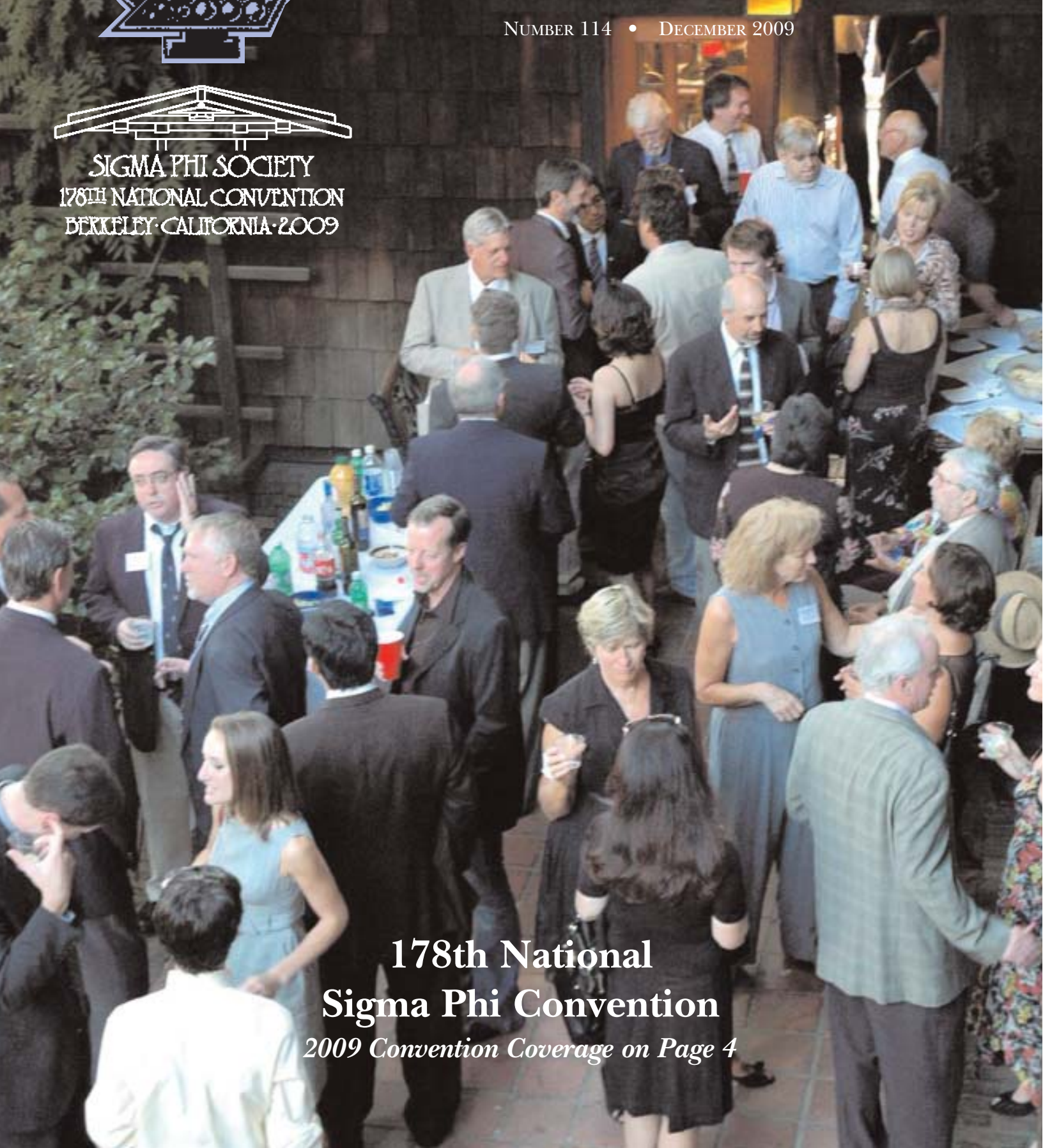
Sigma Phi

# FLAME

NUMBER 114 • DECEMBER 2009



SIGMA PHI SOCIETY  
178TH NATIONAL CONVENTION  
BERKELEY · CALIFORNIA · 2009



178th National  
Sigma Phi Convention

*2009 Convention Coverage on Page 4*

## The Chairman's Message: "Camp Sigma Phi"

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

Over the Thanksgiving break, my wife Patti and I signed our two daughters up for YMCA camp this coming summer. Interestingly, we found out about this camp through the persistent efforts of a good Sig brother, Chuck Heisinger, F'76. Chuck had encouraged us for several years to attend the camp's family weekend on Memorial Day or Labor Day.

Last year (finally!) our holiday weekend plans aligned and we joined Chuck and his wife, Chris, at Camp Echo for Memorial Day 2009. We had a great weekend, testing our limits on a high ropes course, teaching our kids to water ski and participating in the many other activities and enjoying the wholesome environment one would typically associate with a YMCA camp. The weekend was so enjoyable that our girls decided on the way home that they wanted to return to Camp Echo for their first "away from home" summer camp experience. They'll go back to Echo this coming July.

After reading through the camp registration materials, I began to draw some parallels between the camp experience and Sigma Phi. As many of you who have sent kids to camp know well, part of the experience is teaching independence to kids at the same time that it teaches parents to "let go;" at Camp Echo there is no communication between parents and children except through snail mail – no electronic gadgets allowed. (Boy, what I'd give to un-tether myself from my computer and Blackberry for two weeks!) At the same time, camp provides kids with a chance to learn what it's like to live, learn and play in a communal setting.

Somehow, my reverie about my daughters brought Sigma Phi to mind. As I thought about it, the college experience and Sigma Phi struck me as having much in common with Camp Echo. The stakes are just higher. There is a new level of independence with no formal counselors to guide the student. The communal living situation is

similar, with the Sigma Phi Place providing a place to live, learn and play – just at a different level of engagement.

Further consideration of the parallels made me think about how well we are doing at Sigma Phi to make sure that the living, learning and play environment is healthy, vibrant and relevant to the needs of today's students. Are the skills and "arts and crafts" that brothers learn at Sigma Phi preparing them to succeed in today's



dynamic and competitive market place? Is Sigma Phi's high ropes course challenging our brothers in the right way with an appropriate safety net, or is it merely a test of bravado and machismo that creates unnecessary risk? For all Sig stakeholders, these are key questions. They need to be regularly asked, and we must challenge ourselves to get the right answers.

As we continue on the path of the Sigma Phi Renaissance program, we need your active engagement and support to help ensure that Sigma Phi continues to adapt to our changing environment. The very best way to help, in my view, is to get back (or stay) involved in the affairs of your local chapter. The good news? There



Marshall Solem, F'79

are many ways to plug in that are not onerous. Perhaps you can offer the brothers career insights based on the field in which you make/made your living. Maybe you have a particular talent you can share that would help either the brothers or the physical plant. You could coach qualifying undergrads about writing clear, impactful Viele Scholarship essays. Or perhaps, due to time or distance, financial support is how you can make your best impact. There are many avenues – and no wrong answers – when it comes to your continuing involvement.

At the same time it role models "membership for life," your positive participation will help ensure that Camp Sigma Phi continues to adapt and thrive for the next generation.

You have my very best wishes, brothers, for a prosperous 2010!

**Sigma Phi**

The *Sigma Phi Flame* is published twice yearly by the Sigma Phi Society. Please direct all inquiries, suggestions, photos and changes of address to Sigma Phi National Headquarters, Post Office Box 4633, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27515-4633.

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



## From the Secretary: The Relevancy of Relevance:

by Scott McCrae, V'82 [scottmccrae@comcast.net](mailto:scottmccrae@comcast.net)

**T**imes they are a changing, although I am sure that is not news to anyone reading this column. Probably the biggest change I have seen in my time as Secretary since 2003 are the needs and wants of our chapters' stakeholders. There is a huge push for chapters to be more "relevant" on their college campuses. The old social fraternity model for many Greek organizations is quickly becoming a dinosaur; fraternities which are proactive and listen to their stakeholders are quickly changing their ways ... for the better!

When I speak of our Society's stakeholders, I am talking about a hefty and important cross section. Our stakeholders include 1) undergraduates members, 2) their parents, 3) the host universities, 4) our insurance carrier, 5) Sig alumni, 6) the national organization and 7) the communities in which our chapters reside. Each has a different agenda concerning the Thrice Illustrious. Our members want a career development network; their parents do, too - along with a safe living environment. Insurance carriers and the schools want an increase in risk management education to avoid liability exposure. Our alumni want our chapter houses kept safe and clean to avoid damage to the physical plant.

What do these stakeholders demands mean to us? How can we keep up with this demand?

Like any other organization or

enterprise, Sigma Phi needs to continually address change in order to stay in the marketplace. The rate of change has increased over the last ten years, making it necessary to adjust to the various changes at a quicker pace. In order to remain relevant on our campuses, we need to improve the quality of the Sigma Phi experience ... at the same time we continue to offer more. This doesn't mean throwing tradition out the door. It does mean combining new elements of what we offer our young men - like a career development component - with the old. Such



grafting can help actives and alumni from all chapters network in the all-important area of 'jobs.' It can also give our undergraduates something positive and powerful to use in attracting the finest new recruits into the Society.

It is by embracing change and



Scott McCrae, V'82

doing it well that we will be able to survive into the future and still remain the very best, just as we purport to be in our historic 'Benedict Toast.'

Just as peer fraternities have put measures in place which deal with this increased rate of change, so must we. If we don't maintain and continue to increase the relevancy of Sigma Phi, we will continue to fall behind the pack. Sigma Phi's evolving Renaissance program will contribute greatly to the relevance of our organization at the same time that it increases safety, efficiency, graduate/undergraduate interaction and value (dare I say 'prestige?') in the eyes of our stakeholders.

My high school ski coach always used to say, "If you are not going to run with the big dogs, then stay on the porch." I refuse to accept that Sigma Phi is ready for the porch. I am also certain that we can continue to adapt to and embrace the myriad demands of change, just as we have done since 1827. However, it will take a combined, concerted effort of alumni, undergraduate and financial backing to make our success a reality.

It is essential for us to increase our relevancy and to improve our Society so that we can continue to build a prosperous future. It is only by making this effort that we will be able to pass Sigma Phi's illustrious, unique legacy on to future generations of Sigs. While changes are coming "fast and furious," such rapid change mustn't be our excuse for not improving how we structure Sigma Phi and - indeed - become more relevant to all.

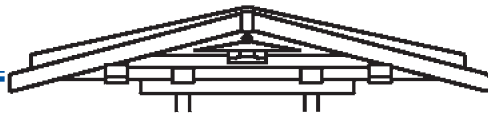
### Kudos & Thanks ...

...to these Sigs for their articles, information or suggestions supporting this issue of the *Flame*: Bill Buhles, I'64, Sam Gay, S'09, Glenn George, C'82, Riley Keenan, S'09, Scott McCrae, V'82, Andrew McKay, H'97, Dan Neumann, F'71, Tom Quigley, I'74, Bill Rhett, H'50, Josh Taxson, I'95 and David Williams, W'61.

Issue after issue, we solicit Sig perspectives from real Sigs in all walks of life. Each shared viewpoint improves the quality and readability of the periodical in which it appears. Each one is a genuine gift to Sig readers, coast to coast: a personal testimonial about brotherhood and this Society's ongoing impact.

Contact editor Mike Imirie, M'69 ([mimirie@aol.com](mailto:mimirie@aol.com)) to share your feedback, suggestions, photographs and - of course! - Sig stories.





## Convention '09: My Take

by Bill Buhles, F'64 [wbuhles@msn.com](mailto:wbuhles@msn.com)

**A**s I approached the Alpha of California on that Friday, the weather in Berkeley was perfect, the house was pristine, and the first floor was packed with Sigs. The 2009 Sigma Phi Annual Convention was underway at 2307 Piedmont Avenue. A California Sig from the '60s, I hoped I could live up to the Berkeley reputation and adequately represent my class. I soon discovered that I was the oldest Sig present at that moment. I still think I am 25, so this came as a shock to my ego. Didn't I look the same age as these young alumni?

It's not hard to make friends in a group of Sigs you don't know. Soon I met Brothers who had traveled from Wisconsin and Michigan, then from Virginia, New York, Vermont, and North Carolina, all of the chapters, to visit "our" house. In fact the house belongs to all of us, and I sensed that the wandering birds from afar felt right at home.

We California Sigs are justifiably proud of our abode. The Sig House is 100 years old this year, but one would not know it from appearances. Over the past few decades, the actives and local alums have worked tirelessly to restore and maintain the structure and the interior of this beautiful work of architecture. I never tire of the leaded art glass in the front door or the teak walls of the front hall.

It wasn't long before the conversation turned to the history of the Alpha of California. I knew that 2307 Piedmont Avenue was not the first home of Sigma Phi in Berkeley. In fact, our Catalogue tells us that the first Sigma Phi Place at 2732 Bancroft was acquired in 1922. In 1943, when the Thorsen House was purchased, it was sold to the University and moved. Off I headed with Mike Imirie, M'69, and Dan Neumann, F'71, to locate the old Sig House. I didn't know where it was, but there was rumor that the Sigma Phi crest yet adorned the fireplace mantle in the old house ... and we were out to find it! While I wandered unhelpfully in circles trying to decide

which house was the correct one, Brother Imirie strode confidently up the walk of the first building we came to (housing the University's Legal Studies offices at 2240 Piedmont) and opened the door. We went in, announced ourselves to a staffer at the front door, and almost immediately spotted the fireplace and the crest, formed in plaster. (The crest screamed 'restoration', but we dare not ... for it was an integral part of the fireplace.) I was quietly impressed. In this house is where the traditions of the Alpha,

which I so value, got their start.

Sufficient warmth was in the air to allow us to dine outside in the backyard Friday night, and good Sig cheer and much golden amber flowed. Sitting at dinner, I marveled at our unique brotherhood. Here were men from afar who had also experienced the swing into our Society, who had heard the rhythmic cadence of our mystic poetry, who knew the Sig songs by heart, who understood how a group of 20 men could change your life. I felt blessed.



(L to R) Dan Neumann, F'71, Mike Imirie, M'69 & Bill Buhles, F'64 at the old Sig House, across the street and just five houses down from 2307 Piedmont Avenue



Doug Reaber, F'78, Dell Hutchinson, F'71 & Bob Mersereau, M'74





Dinner was followed by the Hick's Oratorical Contest at which eight stalwart actives shared their well-chosen words with the Brothers. How interesting to hear interpretations of the Society from men who only recent-

ly entered the sylvan dell. I could tell that each had a strong connection to Sigma Phi, the same connection that formed in me in 1964. Looking back at my own association with Sigma Phi, I have come to understand that my

experience in the house was a unique one – neither before nor since have I known a society of men with such a shared fraternal love.

Weary of the world, it was time to slip the icy bonds of earth. Time for conclave. We ventured into the green smoke below. The chief luminary was, shall we say, "exceedingly mirthful," but we did manage to get through a successful roll call before the libations got the upper hand and conclave decorum disintegrated into song. Everyone was just having too much fun. The Sigs from afar appeared thrilled with the Alpha's commodious goat room.

Meetings followed on Saturday morning, where the worldly business of the Society was conducted. But it was not long before doors were opened and Sigs arrived with their companions. Many in the crowd were Sig Sisters, who seemed to me to carry the same opinion of Sigma Phi as the Brothers. I was delighted to see Eric Johnson, I'67, who was in the house at the same time as I was. I met yet more Sigs from near and far, including – at last! – Brothers with more time under their belts.

I loved the Convention Banquet. I was seated between Dell Hutchinson, I'71, and his wife Sandy and Brendan McCurdy, H'80, from New York. Ted Bosley, I'73, who has done so much to preserve the Sig House, shared with the audience his thoughts on Sig love. Privately, I was soaking up the experience. 'Never Forget' was sung with wet eyes for the recently-departed Darrel Hirashima, I'72. Jonathan Blaufarb, I'77, spontaneously began starting songs. The twelve chapters had come together as one.

When old Doctor Knott reigned at Union, and the founders were writing our sacred verse, the first Sigs could not know – although they could hope! – that a like-hearted congregation of Sigs would be so gathered, 181 years hence. In my eyes, Convention '09 represented the gathering of a group still deeply and personally committed to Friendship, Love, and Truth.

To this day, I remain most grateful that I pledged Sigma Phi and glad that I joined my Brothers at the '09 Convention.



*'Wandering Birds' from Wisconsin*



*Banquet merriment, part one*



*Banquet merriment, part two*





## Reflections on Convention 2009

by Riley Keenan, S'09 [rileykeenan@virginia.edu](mailto:rileykeenan@virginia.edu)

**O**n the train ride in to Berkeley, impressions of sunny California dominated my thoughts. As a lifetime resident of the East Coast, my senses were bombarded by first impressions of the Golden State: sand dunes, palm trees, villa-style architecture, and clear San Francisco skies. I was so determined to lap up as much west-coast culture as I could in my short stay with the Alpha of California that I wasn't too concerned with the 2009 Sigma Phi Convention, the real reason for my visit. My worldly priority would quickly change, however. Conventions, I would learn, provide profound Sig experiences. They have the power to transform the way that I and – I suspect – many others view Sigma Phi.

It's this transformation that I want to relay here. I'm a fairly new brother, having just been initiated this past August. This was accordingly my first convention and my eyes were wide open! The first current of this Sig experience that I felt deeply was the national aspect of our gathering. Bonding over unseen ties and unlikely commonalities with Sigs from across the country had a profound effect on my Sig perceptions. Since this was my first convention and the only other chapter I'd visited so far was the Alpha of Michigan as a pledge, my Sig identity to that point was necessarily very SERP-oriented. I had few connections

outside of the Alpha of Virginia and other chapters seemed little more than pages in our Catalogue. Seeing these pages come to life, however, as real men from diverse backgrounds, tied together by something both secret and profound, generated a sense of the presence and significance of our truly national Society. This connection crystallized as it became clear to me that Sigs from all chapters are filled with a pure and simple eagerness to connect with their brothers from all over the country.

Although this national interconnectedness was something I thoroughly enjoyed, it wasn't something I immediately understood. What was this connection and why did it bind us so tightly? The obvious answer is "brotherhood." But we can't really explain what that word "brotherhood" means. We know it literally, of course; it is membership in an organization. For Sigs, it doesn't stop there. We use other phrases like "dedicated friendship" "common values," and "mystical connections" to elaborate. When we do, however, we aren't really clarifying anything; we're just substituting one term that we can't dissect ... for another. The connections that drew brothers together this weekend can't be explained with empty words, but were certainly obvious. Every brother knows the warm feeling of grasping another Sig's hand. It was this warmth – which we



Riley Keenan, S'09

celebrate rather than try to describe – that filled the air in Berkeley that weekend, and that drew our diasporic national crowd into an intimate Sig gathering. This contact with the national organization engendered something within me besides inexplicable belonging, however, which I identify as the second significant strand of convention experience. The recognition of the accomplishments of other Sigs – both personal accomplishments and the accomplishments of other chapters – resonated deeply with me, and in many ways pushed me to examine my own personal drives. The exposure to the excellence pursued by some of the Sigs I met in Berkeley (I use the word excellence here very deliberately, for some of the brothers I met truly had done excellent things) inspired me to



Convention '09 Undergrad Ritual Workshop, Friday morning





pursue excellence in my own chapter and my own life. Among the particularly potent examples was the presentation on Sig ritual given by Mike Imirie, M'69 – his personal commitment to give a meaningful perspective and thoughtful discussion of our Society's rituals forty years after his own initiation was a tribute to his own character and that of his chapter, as well as an inspiration to myself and other workshop participants. I drew a second source of inspiration from entire chapter when I learned that the Alpha of New York had helped raise \$115,000 for a Schenectady charity. What an epiphany about Sigs making a difference within a community! My brushes with the successes of other Sigs encouraged me to personally strive towards self-betterment and dedication to the Alpha of Virginia.

The third essential strand was contact with older Sigs. This was not only important in terms of the inspirational aspect discussed above, but in a more fundamental and perhaps even extra-fraternal sense. I spoke with men far older than I without the condescension that often marks exchanges between the young and their elders. Brief snapshots of real interaction, like watching Sig convention-goers relating to the ladies in attendance, embracing college buddies from years ago, or even moving awkward social situations towards success, gave an emphatically human character to these brothers so many years my senior. Age barriers disintegrated as I engaged these men, many of whom I now have the distinct privilege to call "friend." Through our sharing, I began to understand the continuity in the transition between college-age and adulthood. I drew a comparison with the transition from high school to college, in which I was surprised not by what aspects of my personality had changed, but more so by what had stayed the same. Likewise, seeing the surprisingly numerous traits my new friends seemed to have retained from their youth created a valuable perspective for me ... on the process of growing up.

I enjoyed gathering from older Sigs how their various perspectives on our Society had been shaped over the years.



*Saturday's Convention banquet at the International House*

Many shared the reflective viewpoint of Elihu Root, who even in old age was sure he could not perfectly define Sigma Phi. For them and for the esteemed Root, Sigma Phi wasn't merely a college experience to look fondly back on, but rather a profound and cumulative experience that continued to evolve into their professional years and beyond.

How did Convention '09 shape my Sig experience?

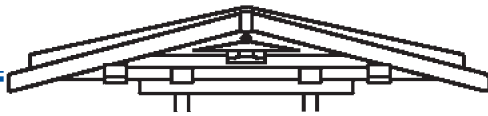
In a powerful way! The things I've cited so far – national identity, inspiration to self-betterment, and awareness of the dynamism of the Sig experience – amounted to a redefinition of my Sig relationship. I now see the Sigma Phi, succinctly, as a transcendent force of both 'push' and 'pull'. In leading by illustrious example, she pushes each brother to be the best he can be; the success of each brother adds to the spiritual momentum of our Society and incites others to carry the flame even further. But just as importantly, the Society also pulls brothers into its intimate network of mutual support and mutual involvement. This means that when a brother meets with success, the Sigma Phi greets him with genuine congratulations instead of disinterest or envy. By the same token, when a brother meets with hard times, the Sigma Phi pulls him into herself and, without condescension or chastisement, acts as his caretaker.

This is the two-fold nature of the

Sigma Phi Society that I experienced directly at this year's national convention in Berkeley. It is the most valuable interpretation of our organization that I have been able to construct since my initiation.

Although I've effectually laid out a way to describe what we call the Spirit of Sigma Phi, I use the word "spirit" in a strictly humanist sense; there is no supernatural "spirit" mentioned anywhere above. The Spirit is transcendent, but in the sense that it represents a collective Sig consciousness – nothing more esoteric. To me, this makes the Spirit of our Sigma Phi even more precious. The fact that something capable of exerting such momentous force is generated by the collective love and dedication of somewhat like-minded but nonetheless diverse men speaks deeply to the power of human volition. It also means, however, that it's up to us as brothers to keep the Spirit alive: to carry the flame.

I hope that sharing my muddled amalgam of great convention takeaways has accomplished my original goal: to relate to some brothers and to provide perspective to others. Because really what such sharing does is strengthen our connections, brother to brother. I've learned that the Spirit thrives on such connections as were so obvious and so abundant at Convention '09. They add to the intense drive and the warm inclusiveness that Sigma Phi gives to you and me ... every day.



## Convention Musings: Future Road Map

by Tom Quigley, F'74    [Tom.Quigley@L-3com.com](mailto:Tom.Quigley@L-3com.com)

**T**his year's convention was, as always, a very worthwhile weekend to re-establish brotherly bonds.

OK, so what did I just say? Brotherly bonds ...  
*Hmmmm.* What are those?

Well, we all may have different ways of expressing our feelings in response to that question, but to me it's the never ending, never fading love for my "brothers."

The Sig Brothers I lived with during my formative years in the house are very special to me, but it's more than that. In fact, *all* my Sig Brothers from all the chapters and all of the initiation years are special to me.

Why? Because we were all very blessed to have been chosen to experience and share in the openness and acceptance of each other and our differences. The Sigma Phi experience works because it is simple in its concepts of "Friendship, Love and Truth." That's right: be a good friend, offer your unconditional love, and be honest about your feelings.

I could go on and on about the foundations of our Society, but we have all heard many different, wonderful versions of the same magic - especially via this year's remarkable "Hicks Oratorical Contest"! Instead, the message I want to leave with every reader is the importance of continuing the growth and vibrancy of our special slice of fraternal life.

Brothers all, we must continue to have and encourage healthy chapter houses of at least 20 members (five or six per class,) so that the traditions, foundations, and precepts of Sigma Phi can be transitioned from the older actives to the newly awakened and then nurtured and passed along,



*That distinguished Quigley couple, Chris & Tom*

year after year. This vital, balanced process is extremely difficult to achieve with a small house, or a chapter without the diversity of the various classes.

So my post-convention message to one and all - and especially to this Society's actives - is a hopeful encouragement for a prosperous future. Protect our Thrice Illustrious values and foundation, gentlemen, beginning with a strong and vibrant chapter....and segueing into memory-making participation just like what we enjoyed this fall in Berkeley.

## Vermont and Wisconsin Accorded 2009 Newsletter Awards

**T**he Society conferred its 2008-2009 annual Newsletter Awards at the National Convention in Berkeley. The winner of the undergraduate competition was the Alpha of Wisconsin, publishers of *The Alpha Architect*.

*The Cat's Tale*, published by the Alpha of Vermont, took top honors in the competition involving newsletters published by alumni organizations.

The two separate awards recognize both the frequency and quality of overall communications efforts by Sigma Phi's local chapters and their associated alumni.

The chapters' award-winning

newsletters are posted and available for reading on Sigma Phi's national website ([www.sigmaphi.org](http://www.sigmaphi.org)). We applaud these chapters for their efforts in communicating with their graduates to nurture the flame shared by all initiates.

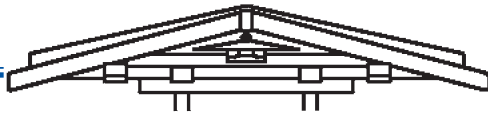
*The Cat's Tale* earned Vermont its first national Newsletter Award since the recognition program's inception in 1990 while the Wisconsin active chapter's award is its sixth.

The Society's Standing & Advisory Committee, in collaboration with the Sigma Phi Educational Foundation, encourages all chapters to communicate regularly with their members.

Chapters are also asked to provide a copy of their electronic publications to Newsletter Recognition Chairman Dan Neumann, F'71 ([dneumann@orgdynamics.com](mailto:dneumann@orgdynamics.com)), for posting on Sigma Phi's national website and automatic entry into the competition.

All chapters and alumni organizations are also encouraged to enter their printed publications in the competition by placing Dan's name and address (120 Campbell Road, Trumbull, Connecticut 06611) on their mailing list three times, thereby automatically providing sufficient copies to meet the judges' needs.





## In the Spirit

by William Rhett, H'50 [williamrhett@aol.com](mailto:williamrhett@aol.com)

**T**he 182 year endurance of Sigma Phi is no accident. Endurance, you see, has melted into tradition. Once the momentum of the Thrice Illustrious was firmly rooted during the Society's early years, it's been strengthened and enriched over the decades by the Spirit of Sigma Phi. And when I say 'Sig Spirit,' I'm not just talking about the Little Fairy who once brightened the dim conclave of my own Sig home, that fine Tudor bastion known as the Beta of New York.

Instead, the Sig Spirit to which I refer is very much alive today. It was ever-present, for example during the recent 178th Convention at Berkeley. It was especially evidenced by the very spirited efforts of the chapter's actives and alumni who worked extremely hard to host this event. It was clear as well in their generous contributions to bring their fascinating and architecturally important Thorsen House to its

like-new, charming state. While at Convention '09, I learned that the Sigma Phi Place is the subject of tours for architecture students and practitioners as well as parents and house party dates. With excellent reason, it is the bricks-and-mortar envy of other clubs on the U-C campus.


And such Spirit during Convention weekend was enhanced by the numerous Brothers who traveled from far away – and somehow managed to survive the travails of today's air travel experience! – to enliven and enrich our celebrations and ceremony. And that time-honored Spirit is growing with the recent addition of the Alpha of North Carolina, just as it will with future expansion successes.

This Spirit is not self sustaining, however. It isn't guaranteed by this Society's remarkable posterity. Its continuation and strength are fully dependent on the commitment and the involvement of each member of



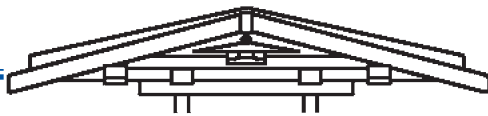
*William Rhett, H'50*

this Society. With these qualities, it becomes a 'value added' increment to our lives ... and to the endurance and the worth of Sigma Phi.

The Spirit lives with us, Brothers, and is 100 proof! Let all of us, from the eldest to the very youngest, drink of it very wisely. 



*Mystical View: the view down Bancroft Avenue at dusk, with Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge in the distance*



# Hicks Oratory

by Samuel T. Gay, S'09 [sam41990@yahoo.com](mailto:sam41990@yahoo.com)

*The Hicks Oratorical Contest is a unique brotherhood highlight for each convention. In this year's Hicks in Berkeley, eight different undergrads representing six chapters took part, regaling their large and Sigly audience on Friday evening with poignant, personal viewpoints about this Society. This year's winner was sophomore Sam Gay, S'09, of Stuart, Florida.*

**T**onight, Brothers, I would like to talk to you about an important distinction that I have come to make during my experience with Greek life at UVA. That distinction is the difference between a frat boy and a fraternity man.

When I arrived at the University of Virginia, I had no real sense of what Greek life was and what it entailed. In my first semester of college, I attended various frat parties and became anti-Greek for a number of reasons. All the brothers I met seemed superficial and a bit full of themselves at times. I didn't like the idea of forced drinking, hazing, and inter-fraternal rivalries that would often get out of hand. It seemed that Greek life couldn't offer me much more than a house to party in.

My best friend from first year, Vinny, felt the same way. I had a heart-to-heart conversation with him late one night not long ago. He had been asking me how SERP was like and what fraternities were like in general. As a first year, he had a girlfriend from back home so he had no real interest in rushing a fraternity. He told me that he was pretty unhappy about college life first year, and he thought things would change second year, but they didn't. For him, his day-to-day college life continued to be going to class, doing homework, and going to the occasional frat party that he simply didn't enjoy. I told him that I felt exactly the same way about college ... with the exception of Sigma Phi. I said that he and I were very similar and he would enjoy SERP as much as I have.

Vinny said his main concern with joining a fraternity was that another first year friend had changed once he joined a fraternity. During that first year, he also had a girlfriend from back home he so didn't feel like he wanted to join a fraternity, either. As a first year, Vinny's friend was a cool guy that always wanted to hang out and play sports. Once he became single



Samuel T. Gay, S'09

and joined a fraternity, he changed: he had a different hair style, wore different clothes, and it was almost like he was too good to hang out with his old friends anymore.

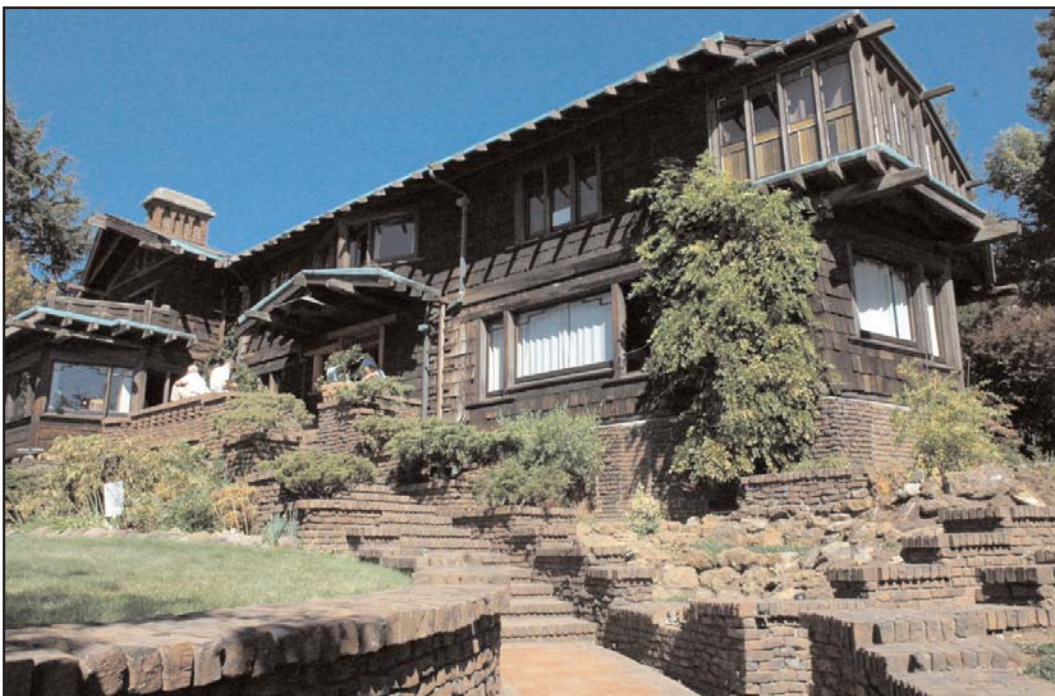
I told Vinny that his friend was probably just trying to fit into the fraternity that he joined. I told him that most fraternities are full of men who end up conforming to that fraternity's pre-established social identity, whereas SERP was a place where personalities melded together and created something unique.

At the Alpha of Virginia, I felt that my personality wasn't being forced to change but rather encouraged to grow.

I told my friend the great truth about SERP: that so many people from so many backgrounds with so many perspectives on life could care so much about one another.

My Greek experience has ultimately taught me the value of maturity ... the maturity required to uphold our lofty values of Friendship, Love, and Truth and not tarnish the name of our illustrious Society. To me, this is the profound challenge of the Greek experience today: do you take the easy road and fall into the stereotype of being a mere frat boy or can you muster up the courage and have what it takes to be a real fraternity man?

Esto Perpetua!



The Sigma Phi Place at 2307 Piedmont Avenue in Berkeley



# Viele Scholarship Update

**T**he Francis S. Viele Scholarship Trust awarded \$67,000 for the 2009-2010 academic year to 28 very accomplished and academically promising Sigs. The total dollar amount awarded this year was down significantly from recent years due to the financial market downturn, which had reduced the corpus of the Viele Trust to slightly less than \$2 million at the time of the selection process.

The average grant size (approximately \$2,400) was down 17 percent from last year and around 50 percent from academic years prior to that. The proportion of applicants receiving an award – approximately 47 percent – was roughly in line with the long-term average of around 50 percent.

The significant distribution of scholarship funds in the face of major financial pressure demonstrates the Society's unwavering commitment to the pursuit of Truth through scholarly endeavor.

The applicant pool was down from recent years, with 60 Sigs applying (versus 83 applicants last year and 66 the year before). "We continue to be impressed with the overall strength of the applicant pool," said Viele Scholarship Selection Committee Chairman Glenn "Rusty" George, C'82, a five-time Viele recipient. "Yet we wish both that we had greater participation and that applicants would take

greater care to ensure their applications are complete, signed, and of high quality. We need to emphasize both the quantity and quality of applications."

We are delighted that three brothers from the Alpha of North Carolina were among this year's winners. The Alpha of Michigan had a very strong showing overall, while the Alpha of California performed well at the graduate level. The Alpha and Beta of New York did better than in recent years, while the Delta of New York had no applicants at all.

The Viele remains the largest scholarship program of any fraternity or sorority in the country. Since its inception in academic year 1978-79, just over \$3 million nominal dollars in Viele Scholarship funds, worth well over \$4 million in current dollars, have been disbursed to well over 500 Sigs.

Applications for 2010-2011 scholarships will be posted on the Sigma Phi Web site ([www.sigmaphi.org](http://www.sigmaphi.org)) in January and will be due by 1 April 2010. Sigs with questions about the Viele program can contact Glenn at [ggeorge001@yahoo.com](mailto:ggeorge001@yahoo.com). He asks Sigma Phi alumni to encourage any Sigs they know who are pursuing degrees to apply for a Viele.

## Number of Awards

Chapter	Grad	Active	Total
Cornell	2		2
Wisconsin		1	1
Hobart			
Hamilton	2	1	3
California	4		4
Michigan	1	5	6
Virginia		3	3
North Carolina	1	2	3
Union	1	3	4
Vermont		2	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>

## Scholarship Dollars

Chapter	Grad	Active	Total
Cornell	\$5,000		\$5,000
Wisconsin		\$4,000	\$4,000
Hobart			
Hamilton	\$8,000	\$1,000	\$9,000
California	\$7,000		\$7,000
Michigan	\$4,000	\$8,000	\$12,000
Virginia		\$6,000	\$6,000
North Carolina	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$9,000
Union	\$1,000	\$9,000	\$10,000
Vermont		\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$29,000</b>	<b>\$38,000</b>	<b>\$67,000</b>



# Sig Point of View: Why Renaissance?

by David Williams, W'61 [bylot@vtusa.net](mailto:bylot@vtusa.net)

*"Suicide Victim Found in Fraternity Basement"*

*"Fraternity Pledge Dies From Fall, Alcohol Implicated"*

*"Recently Reinstated Fraternity Suspended for Five More Years for Continuing Violations"*

*"Fraternity Unrecognized by University Disciplined for Rushing Violations"*

**T**hese headlines have been all too familiar in college newspapers in recent years. Do you recognize any of them from your alma matter? Would it surprise you to know that these headlines actually relate to incidents at various Sigma Phi chapters over the past 15 years?

Incidents like these embarrass Sigma Phi. We cannot ignore them. We must not delude ourselves that we are above the rest of the Greek fraternity system: not subject to the same risks which these unfortunate behaviors create for other Greek organizations.

Our Society frequently celebrates itself and its members in 19th century hyperbole: "Best of brotherhoods is Sigma Phi"; "She leads, or may she die"; "Friendship, love and truth." This style of address makes it very hard to reconcile the headlines with the song lines. When the cognitive dissonance has become too great, it has been tempting to ascribe events giving rise to the embarrassing headlines to "bad luck" or "unfair enforcement of rules" by some college official rather than to our own acts and omissions which have led to predictable, and thus preventable, incidents.

At the national level, and to various degrees at the local level, we have made some headway progress in improving chapter conduct over recent years. Much of that headway, however, has been made as the result of the non-negotiable demands of our local college administrations, liability insurers, and or Interfraternity Conference (IFC) organizations. It has not come from a broad based internalization of ethical precepts on the part of some of our members. Our progress in recent years is accordingly not nearly adequate.

We need to make additional headway for several reasons. The first and

best reason is that chapters that follow the rules – all of the rules – are doing the right thing. They are doing the things which the members' parents taught them to do. They are doing the things which members (in their own consciences) know they ought to be doing. This is not to say that "youthful indiscretions" will not take place, but such indiscretions should be notoriously exceptional – not commonplace. Leadership responses to them should be swift, honest, constructive and meaningful.

Another reason for doing the right thing is that life is safer, more certain and more fulfilling for every member when all members "toe the mark." and hold each other accountable for doing so. Academic achievement is enhanced by living in a clean and orderly environment. Distractions such as having to go to disciplinary hearings – or to court or jail – are avoided by the rule followers. Smart, law abiding members beget more smart, law abiding members. They Sigs who will make our chapters attractive to new recruits do not want to live in squalor. They want their houses to be clean and inviting. They want to eat regular meals, served at regular hours from clean health department compliant kitchens.

If the truth be told, every member of Sigma Phi wants all of the things I have described. "Doing the right thing" is neither optional nor regional. General cultural expectations, basic ethics and the modern legal environment impel fraternities to play by the rules ... or to perish. If that reality offends some undergraduates and alumni, so be it. It then falls to the rest of us to act responsibly to protect our members and to perpetuate the Society.

And, of course, there are econom-

ic reasons to straighten up and fly right. I have alluded to the recruiting benefits of clean, modern and efficient housing and board arrangements. Of greater significance to the future of Sigma Phi is our understanding of the relationships between college students and their parents. When I attended undergraduate school, the less my parents knew about my whereabouts and doings, the better! I saw to it that they knew little.

However, as the husband of a college president for the last 20 years, I have seen a very clear sea change in the parent/student relationship. Parents now want to know what their child/student is doing minute to minute; and that's just fine with most students. That means that when we are recruiting a student, chances are, we are recruiting his parents at the same time. If we try to recruit pledges with the promise of activities we know that prospect's parents wouldn't approve of, we're on a fool's errand.

Today, both parents and students demand value for money, safety, and the assurance that time spent at Sigma Phi will enhance grades, offer other educational fulfillment and contribute to career networking and advancement. If such attributes cannot be found at Sigma Phi, they can and will be found elsewhere. We should prepare for every recruitment prospect as if we knew he was bringing his mother parents with him to every meeting. Figuratively, at least, that is exactly what is happening.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines "renaissance" as "enthusiastic and vigorous activity along literary, artistic and cultural lines **distinguished by a revival of interest in the past.** [emphasis added] ... by increased pursuit of learning and by imaginative responses to broader




horizons." What better prescription could we write for ourselves? – A push for new, forward looking thinking and action built upon the foundation of our honorable and storied past seems to fits the bill quite nicely ... The Sigma Phi Renaissance Plan developed

by Society Secretary Scott McCrae, V'82, attempts to address every challenge I have written about and, further, the steps we all have to make to pay for the upgrade we need. We need to put aside the uncertainty, mistrust and temerity which plague any

organization facing change requiring innovation, risk, daring and sacrifice. We must embrace and enthusiastically support the Renaissance Plan.

Thank you Scott for your hard work and vision.

"She leads . . . or may she die." 



**Convention Heads-Up!**

*While we're a bit late to attend the circa-1887 Sig event described in glowing detail at the left, there's lots of time for you and me to make plans for the Society's 2010 Convention. Hosted by the Alpha of Vermont, it will be celebrated on the shores of Lake Champlain over the weekend of September 17-19 in the fall.*

*Details will be forthcoming in the midyear 'Flame.' In the meantime, you can learn more by contacting perennial Convention stalwart Kurt Haigis, V'73, at this e-mail address: [khaigis@together.net](mailto:khaigis@together.net)*

## Sigs Producing Documentary Film To Honor Fallen Brother: “To Them That's Gone” Tells the Story of Run for the Fallen

**W**hen 1st Lieutenant Michael J. Cleary, H'00, was killed in Iraq on 20 December 2005, it was a devastating blow for his family, friends, and brothers. In response to Mike's death, Jon Bellona, H'00 – one of Mike's closest friends – founded Run for the Fallen. Jon put together a small team of runners, comprised of Mike's fiancée, sister, and other friends, including several Hamilton Sigs. In the summer of 2008, the team ran from California to Washington, D.C., one mile for every service member killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom. From the outset, the team declared that the Run would have an apolitical philosophy.

It would neither support nor condemn the war; rather it would be an act of remembrance. The 72-day Run received national media attention, but a few Sigs documented the whole story, and are now in post-production on the documentary, “To Them That's Gone.” In honor of Mike, the title derives from a Cleary family toast.

In spring 2008, while finalizing plans for Run for the Fallen, Jon Bellona discussed the idea of a documentary with some friends and fellow Beta Sigs. Almost immediately, Andrew McKay H'97, John McKay H'00, and William Gardiner H'01, decided to



*Run for the Fallen team members gather at the mile dedicated to Michael Cleary, H'00, at Cambridge, Kansas (summer 2008).*

make a film about the Run. Andrew was working at Miramax Films; Will was a professional film and television editor; and John, a paralegal by day, was an aspiring writer who had recently won first prize in the Hamilton College Alumni writing contest, for a short story inspired by Cleary's death, co-written with Bellona. The McKay brothers and Gardiner founded a production company, Film for the Fallen, and through the generosity of family and friends, were able to raise just enough funding to hire a professional cinematographer and get their small crew across the country.

Just over a year later, the budding filmmakers are in the thick of post-production, editing in their spare time, with hopes of completing the film by the end of 2010.

For more information on the documentary, including work-in-progress videos, media clips, and details on how you can help support the completion of the project, please visit the film's website: [www.tothemthatsgone.com](http://www.tothemthatsgone.com).

Never Forget!



*For additional information, contact:  
[andrew@filmforthefallen.com](mailto:andrew@filmforthefallen.com)*







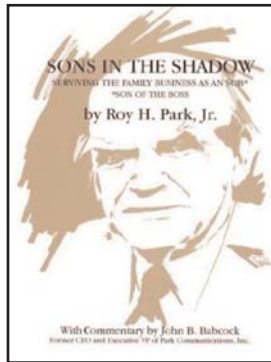
# News of INTEREST

**Roy H. Park Jr., Cornell '57**, writes: "After pledging Sigma Phi at Cornell, busting out and transferring to UNC in 1958, and returning to Cornell for an MBA in 1961, I have gone on to enjoy several careers and recently published a book which contains significant mention of our fraternal society, *Sons in the Shadow: Surviving in a Family Business as an SOB (Son of the Boss)*. I have been in touch with some of my fraternity brothers at Cornell and Hamilton College. Having spent three great years in Chapel Hill, it was good to see our Sigma Phi Society headquarters located there, and to learn that UNC now has a Sigma Phi Chapter."

Brother Park is a

member of the board of advisors of the UNC School of Journalism and Mass Communication and 2005 recipient of the Distinguished Alumnus Award. After college, he joined the world's largest advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson, spending the next seven years in creative, research, management, and accounting positions with the agency in New York and Miami. In 1970, he joined Kincaid Advertising, a subsidiary of First Union (now Wachovia) in Charlotte, NC, as VP of marketing and account management. He moved on to his father's multi-media empire as GM, VP, and CEO.

The book explores the dynamics of family relationships in businesses both large and small, about which relatively little has been written. Park describes what it's like to work for a self-made Forbes 400 entrepreneur father whose Park Communications media empire of radio, television, newspaper, and outdoor billboards in 23 states reached 25 percent of the American public before his death in 1993. The book describes the way the elder Park built his empire



and dealt with those who worked for him – or got in his way. "Any son or daughter of the founder or boss working in a family business enterprise should be able to relate and profit from the frank discussion of the bare-souled relationships in the book."

Roy Park can be reached at 11 Ascot Place, PO Box 3680, Ithaca, NY 14852, roy.park@parkoutdoor.com

## Never Forget These Brothers

Since the publication of the July 2009 edition of the *Flame*, we have learned of the deaths of the following Sig brothers:

- Baldwin, Chester C., L'37 . . . . . 5 May 06
- Baumann, John S., F'50 . . . . . 15 August 09
- Bohlke, Russell A., I'48 . . . . . 9 August 09
- Bristol, William M. III, H'40 . . . . . 18 August 09
- Brown, Frank L., V'58 . . . . .
- Ecclesine, Joseph F., V'57 . . . . .
- Fredrich Richard J., F'57 . . . . .
- Gallup, Alden W. Jr., C'37 . . . . . 4 April 05
- Kelley, Frank E., V'49 . . . . .
- McReynolds, James Rood, M'49 . . . . . 26 Dec 07
- Moran, James B., M'49 . . . . . 21 April 09
- Pollard, Robert N. III, S'77 . . . . . 2 August 09
- Sabin, Frederic H., W'53 . . . . . 1 February 09
- Sikes, R. Stockton, G'41 . . . . . 20 August 03
- Strader, Thomas E., U'55 . . . . . 1/23/09
- Strong, Henry, W'42 . . . . .
- Towart, Sanford K., G'39 . . . . . 4 July 09
- Wanner, Richard L., C'42 . . . . . 31 October 08
- Widder, John M., F'71 . . . . . 17 September 09
- Will, A. Roland, U'41 . . . . . 20 February 09
- Yates, David S., S'53 . . . . . 31 October 08

## Death Greatly Exaggerated: Jim Moran Obituary Retraction

News of the death of Jim Moran, L'64, which ran in the July issue of the Sigma Phi Flame was greatly exaggerated. In fact, it was James B. Moran, M'49, a retired appellate judge in Chicago, who died on that day. The obituary news was gathered by the Society's database service, but the service failed to distinguish between that James B. Moran and our very robust Lehigh Brother.

Here's how the still-very-much-alive Jim Moran, L'64, responded to the surprising news: "No problem. I worry that my wife was celebrating! Ken Adams, L'63, called and asked to speak with her so he could send his condolences. When Ken realized he was talking to me, it was as if he were hearing a ghost! If possible, could you get word out that I am alive and well and still practicing law? I occasionally still get referrals from Sigs, you see, and I'd so much like for that to continue. Thanks. BSL, Jim"

Jim continues to practice law with Hoagland Longo Moran Dunst & Doukas in New Brunswick, New Jersey. You are free to send condolences - or accuse Jim of unspeakable things, for that matter - at this e-mail address: [NBFLASH@aol.com](mailto:NBFLASH@aol.com).



## Sigma Phi FLAME

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# 2010 Dues Notice

As a new year dawns, Brothers, some facets of our remarkable Society remain constant. Brotherhood. Sharing. Expanded horizons. A profound and thankful awareness for the remarkable fraternal vision to which Sig pioneers Bowie, Bowie, Cromwell and Witherspoon gave birth 183 years ago.

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

In this very new year, gentlemen - as you consider all the organizations which will benefit from your participation and support - please make the Thrice Illustrious a personal priority. Mail your dues check (\$50 before 2005; \$30 for those initiated after), payable to Sigma Phi Society, to Sigma Phi, P. O. Box 4633, Chapel Hill, NC, 27515-4633.

