

## Social Fraternity?

By Gary E. Griffith, Texas-Austin '70, Grand President 1995-1997

During the 1960s, while I was an undergraduate, the term "social" was being redefined. The country was in chaos while the Vietnam War flared and Civil Rights efforts marched forward.

Our Founders understood "social" to mean fellowship. The term was characteristic of upper-class culture. Leaders and intellectuals bonded together for the purpose of improving the *society* in which they lived. Virtue, Diligence, and Brotherly Love—SigEp's cardinal principles—were the means by which this service was to be accomplished. Sigma Phi Epsilon was a way of life.

In the '60s and '70s, the age of anti-establishment changed "social" to mean something different. Traditional values were abandoned in many parts of society. Being social rather than acting socially became the norm for many Greeks, Sigma Phi Epsilon included. Alcohol and partying became synonymous with the new definition of the word.

The '80s saw that new meaning pushed to the limits. Huge keg parties, hazing, and liability nightmares raged. People died. Some were our brothers. Universities, parents, law enforcement and communities at large raged back.

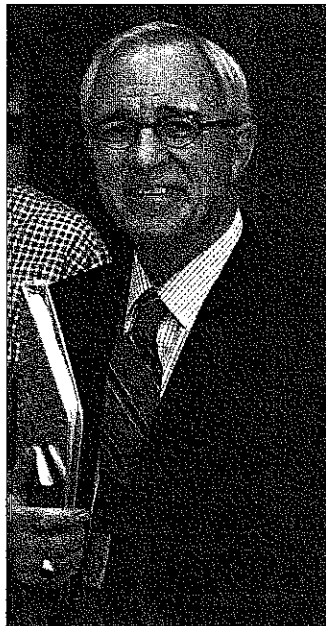
Look at many chapters today, and you can still see evidence of why people's impression of a "fraternity" is "Animal House" or "Old School."

Ask yourself this: are your chapter's grades above the all-campus average? Do you have development programming for upperclassmen? Who's your faculty advisor or faculty fellow? Are alumni and volunteers involved? How long since the last newsletter or news release? Have you had a non-alcoholic event this month? How about this year? Do you sing as a chapter? How many members are involved on campus? Do members know the chapter's standards? Is the social scene only a secondary reason men want to join?

In the late 80s under the directive of undergraduates, Sigma Phi Epsilon began to search for its roots. Sigma Phi Epsilon is currently leading the Greek

world in reclaiming our past, our values, and our traditions through initiatives like the Balanced Man Program, Residential Learning Communities, and the strategic plan.

Sigma Phi Epsilon will become a way of life again, if it is not already. That's for sure. As we build balanced men who are servant leaders, we will be the *societal* fraternity our Founders meant us to be. The ideal SigEp chapter is just that.



Gary E. Griffith, Texas-Austin '70, at the 2011 Carlson Leadership Academy in Dallas, Texas.