

Beginnings on the Pacific Coast

Founding of Beta Chi Chapter at Leland Stanford Jr. University

By CARL LANE CLEMANS

Founder Chi, Beta Chi, Beta Psi, and Gamma Chi Chapters

TWENTY-FIVE years ago I decided that it was necessary for me to attend some large university where I might drink in erudition. A week or so before I was ready to start, a friend suggested that Leland Stanford, Junior, University, which was about to open its doors, with its many millions of backing, was the proper place for an impecunious student. I was duly impressed with those millions of backing and decided to go to Stanford. I had no idea of mixing up in the fraternity game there. In fact I supposed that my fellow students would all be so intent upon the quest of learning that they would have no time for pursuits customary to members of a Greek Letter society.

On my way to the coast, I stopped at Hiawatha, Kans., and visited with that sterling old expansionist of Sigma Nu's early history, Grant W. Harrington. Grant urged a new Chapter at the Golden Gate. On the balance of the trip I fell in with James Fyffe Wilson, who was also on his way to enter Stanford. Finding Wilson fraternally unattached and a pleasant companion, I began to cast about in my mind as to whether it might not be possible to tear myself away from my studies long enough to organize a Chapter of Sigma Nu.

When we arrived at San Francisco we found conditions very different than we had expected. Instead of thirty or forty zealous and ascetic students living in cloistered simplicity in a mountain valley, which their imagination had pictured, there were five or six hundred of the liveliest, most active young Americans ever brought together on a university campus. A large number of the students had been at work for three or four years and never would have gone to college but for the advertisement and attraction of the new university.

Phi Kappa Psi had imported a Chapter from the University of the Pacific bodily. Zeta Psi had an organization all ready for the opening day of the university. Phi Delta Theta had numerous members and an organization and Phi Gamma Delta was

on the ground with a colony ready to organize. The game was interesting. I broached the matter to Jeff Wilson and we began to look around. Tom, Will and George Crothers struck us as the most promising material. They suggested Will Webster, a senior from the University of the Pacific, who became the first president of the Associated Students of Stanford University. George Crothers was a freshman and proposed a young fellow from Fresno, Lew Smith by name, and Lew brought in an old Illinois friend in the person of Frank J. Jack.

The petition was forwarded by telegraph and on the installation ceremonies were held at the library on old Frenchman's place near Mayfield. Immediately after the installation those vigorous young leaders of Stanford's pioneer class, Max Rosenfeld, John F. Sheehan, Jr., and Scott Calhoun were brought into the fold, and shortly thereafter Walter Rose, the distinguished law book author, and Henry M. Cory, both now deceased, were initiated. A little later Paul Downing and W. H. Herelson of football fame and R. E. Maynard, later track captain, were added to the roll.

The personnel of the new Chapter was vigorous and it soon became a factor in the university. The freshman election of that year was an instance of its vigor and ability. George Crothers, now a San Francisco superior judge, was our candidate. He was opposed by a popular member of the class, now professor of journalism in an old Eastern college. Nightly meetings were held. The voters were polled. Treaties were made with rival fraternities, the women's vote attached, the barbs conciliated and rallied against the "ring." On the day of the election, the Crothers Clan were gathered early. The opposition candidate arrived with the crowd unnoted and unheralded. Not so the candidate of the people, and incidentally of Beta Chi. Just as the meeting was called to order, accompanied by his most distinguished suppor-

ters, the judge appeared at the entrance of the hall nearest the stage and took his seat in the midst of a burst of tremendous and spontaneous applause.

Charles Kendall Field, poet laureate of Stanford, now editor of the "Sunset," was booked to make the nomination of the "ring," that is to say the opposition candidate. What was Charlie's disgust and dismay when a bright capable young fellow, who was suspected of being a supporter of Crothers, and has since made good as an author but who was then very slightly known, arose to address the chair. And, being duly recognized, said, "I nominate Mr. Blank," and sat down and that was all the nomination Blank got. While that patriotic, capable, well qualified representative of the plain people, Judge George Crothers, was nominated and seconded and triumphantly elected.

In the second year of the university, a House became an imperative necessity. It was decided that the House must be on the campus as no university property could be purchased. The chapter could not put up the money and it became necessary to borrow with a lease as a basis for security. Other fraternities dispaired, but Beta Chi got busy. It worked with the local bank, a building and loan association, and a contractor. It took up the matter of a lease with Senator Stanford and secured the lease. This lease was for many years, if not today, the model for all of the leases at the University, and the Chapter succeeded in building a House which was at the time the best at the university on or off the campus."

The following data was collected by me from various sources of information obtained by interviewing various Alumni members of Beta Chi Chapter:

This House had fourteen rooms and a large attic and was admirably laid out for the needs of the Chapter at that time. The three principle rooms on the first floor could be thrown into one, furnishing a dancing surface sufficient to accommodate fifty couples. Eight sleeping rooms for the use of the members and three for the culinary department, all well equipped and furnished, as things went during those pioneer days, gave Beta Chi the first Chapter house on the Stanford campus, and one that remained for many years a tribute to its founders.

The Chapter House was located a short distance due west of the old cinder track and an equal distance south of the original gymnasium. This location was a splendid one as it gave us privacy from the prying eyes of "Faculty Row," proximity to the Quad and nearness to Encina Hall, the Athletic Field, and the running track.

Many happy days were spent by the Old Guard in the House as then located, and where we remained until the summer of 1898, when, at the request of Mrs. Stanford, we moved the house to the southwest corner of Lassuen and Salvatierra Streets. It is interesting to note that while we were making a short cross country pilgrimage of some two hundred yards or more, the Chapter House of the Phi Kappa Psi was moved from the upper part of College Terrace in Mayfield to the banks of the San Francisquito Creek near Menlo Park. Needless to say our House reached its destination in much better condition than did that of our Greek friends after its journey of several miles across fields and ditches.

It was with many feelings of regret and misgivings that we returned to our old home in its new dress and location for the opening semester in 1898, but when the lawn had been put in, trees and flowers planted and a tennis court constructed on the rear of the lot, we soon felt reconciled to the change. Our next door neighbor was Professor Richardson of the Chemistry Department; across the street on the opposite corner we had Professor Griffin of the German Department; and well back of us was the home of the "bachelor profs," Allardyce, Campbell and Kellogg. With these three liberal-minded neighbors our lot was not a hampered one, although at times perhaps a little more decorous than when we had no neighbors but the distant Row and the lights of Encina.

Along in 1905 and 1906 some of the other Greek Letter fraternities at Stanford University began building new houses, and it was then that the members of Beta Chi Chapter, realizing that the old home was not in keeping with the new fraternity houses, which were being built, concluded to formulate plans regarding the building of a new fraternity house for the Chapter. Several years later, arrangements were finally made for the building of a new home for Beta Chi Chapter, and our Chap-

ter House today is one of the finest built by any of the Greek Letter societies on the Coast.

The old House is still on the corner of Lassuen and Salvatierra Streets, and is occupied by one of the more recent of the Greek Letter societies.

In the year 1917, the entire Chapter, comprising twenty-two men, was called to the colors, leaving Beta Chi Chapter without an active member. Since that time the Chapter House has been leased to the Acacia Club, a local Masonic fraternity, but recent reports lead us to believe that quite a few of the twenty-two active members will return to Stanford this coming

semester. I know of no other fraternity on the coast which can boast of a better service record than Beta Chi Chapter. We are indeed very proud of each and every one of those twenty-two active service stars."

For your further information, Inspector Otto K. Grau adds, I will state that T. G. Crothers is now a very prominent attorney practicing in San Francisco, George E. Crothers is Superior Judge in San Francisco, John F. Sheehan, Jr., in the advertising business in San Francisco, Scott Calhoun is a corporation Counsel in Seattle, Paul Downing is one of the engineers of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company of San Francisco.

One of Sigma Nu's Most Loyal Friends

Rex

Rex, also known as Bully, is a true friend of Sigma Nu in every sense of the word. He was born in a Sigma Nu House at Minneapolis, Minn., on November 4, 1909, and his home has been in the Sigma Nu House at Rolla, Mo., ever since. He has attended school with many of the boys and specialized in freshman chemistry, calculus, and surveying. He has a better record for attending chapter meetings than anyone, and has witnessed all initiations for the last nine years. He is more valuable than any thing we own, and is always welcome in any part of the house and on any Brother's bed. He had the misfortune to have his leg broken in 1913, but after a short stay in a hospital in St. Louis he was able to return home and take up his duties of entertaining all comers, which duty he never shirks. He has never failed to make friends with anyone; but likes to ignore the freshmen and give them to understand that he has been here much longer than they have and for them to respect his seniority.

JOHN M. MORRIS, Gamma Xi.



Rex Bully
Gamma Xi

Every Sigma Nu Should Go To St. Louis
Fiftieth Anniversary
Convention