

*Would you tell me how our early chapters added new members?* It's always interesting, and fun, to look back to the early days of our Fraternity. At that time, adding new members was vital if the Fraternity was to survive and grow. In 1988, Fraternity History Chairman Gini Anding La Charite', *William and Mary*, wrote the following article, "The Strenuous Life of Rushing," for the spring issue of *The Key*. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

"One hundred years ago, rush (Recruitment) was very much in its infancy. It was strictly a chapter means for adding new members, quota being determined by each group. There were no rules at all. Greek groups were openly "rivals," and deplorable traditions, such as "lifting" and "double membership," were practiced ("lifting" meant that the member of one sorority could be initiated by another, the pin of one group being "lifted" and replaced by the badge of another!). It is little wonder that the typical "society lady" (Greek woman) of 1888 found rush to be arduous, fiercely competitive, confusing, and at times "downright under-handed."

Rush began in 1888 with the opening of school, lasted about two weeks and culminated in Initiation. Under a chapter "recruiting officer," actives "rushed about" in a "campaign" characterized by competitive "bidding" against each other in order "to spike" new members. Success was publicly measured by the visible practice of "spiking," what we know today as ribboning, giving a new member a blue and blue ribbon. Pinning on the colors and walking new "spikes" around the campus was how the acceptance of an invitation to join (bid) was announced and how rival groups were informed of their "loss."

The "rushing campaign" consisted of three steps. The first was "calling" or the making of formal visits to "prospectives." "Prospectives were those women who had matriculated in a given college and so could be invited to join – joining meant being initiated immediately. By contrast, "pledglings" were preparatory or high school students who promised to become members as soon as they finished high school and enrolled in the university as full-time students.

After "calling" came "the festivities," what we term rush parties. These special social activities consisted of teas, receptions, luncheons, even opera parties and they varied greatly in cost and elaborateness from campus to campus, depending on the number of "rival groups" engaged in rush. Following "the festivities," the final step in the process took place, written invitations to join were extended and "spiking" occurred. Each sorority determined its own "rushing campaign," including dates, times, parties, budget and bid day. Invitations to join were extended only when the date of Initiation had been set because there was no formal pledging and no pledge period or program.

The complete lack of rush rules and inter-sorority cooperation led to some rather covert and undignified rush practices. Kappa chapters deplored having to "keep watch" on which desirable freshman women were visited by which "fraternity girls" during the "calling period – being "watched" in turn! The problems of rush occupied the entire Greek world, yet not for another 20 years would sororities unite to address "the strenuous life of rushing" and negative aspects of "rushing campaigns," the establishment of a standard pledge day and agreement on ethical standards of conduct during rush – all the Panhellenic safeguards which we take for granted today.

Despite the problems of "rushing campaigns," Kappa's fledgling chapter still managed to come up with a philosophy of rush which reflected her high ideals and which anticipated by two decades the true fraternity spirit of the first National Panhellenic Compact issued in 1904. To those who are familiar with Kappa's tradition of farsightedness and quest for excellence in all things, it will come as no surprise to learn that Kappa rush policies proposed 100 years ago still serve as a guide to us today:

1. No assaults upon other fraternities. Let everything be done squarely and honestly. Admit facts. Fairness necessarily carries great weight.
2. Speak of what the chapter life has always been, what honors have been won, what a strong place in college life fraternity has held.
3. Then our fraternity itself. And here no one can deny we are invulnerable. Kappa Kappa Gamma is respected throughout the country – its chapter roll speaks for itself. It is a fraternity of which we may well be proud.
4. Finally and especially, urge what Kappa has been to its members. A word of personal testimony may move where all else failed."

.After reading this article, I think you'll agree, "We've come a long way, baby" but the same rush philosophy holds true today. As we continue to move to a "No Frills" Recruitment, let's all remember the "Strenuous Life of Rushing" 100 years ago and be thankful that type recruitment is a thing of the past.