

Greeks and pledges: emerging from haze



by Dennis Onnen

Unity. Pride. Responsibility. These are some of the attributes which UNL fraternities work to instill in their pledges through training programs. If they are successful, the pledges supposedly become good actives.

"The pledge program helps you adjust to the changes of going to college," said Tom Camp of FarmHouse. During his pledge training, there were "sessions to talk over what's going on in college life."

Jim Yanney of Alpha Tau Omega said the purpose of his pledge program was to "learn what the chapter expects of us, learn what the chapter is about, instill pride, create a close brotherhood and build character."

Although each house is free to develop its own program, they all have basically these same purposes.

"Progressive" pledge training programs are being instituted with "very little structure", according to Dave McBride, Interfraternity Council (IFC) president. According to Lynn McHugh of Delta Sigma Phi, pledges there were consulted as to how they wanted their training program ran.

Pat McGuffey of Sigma Chi said the program "makes us more responsible academically and socially. It's a small analogy to life, coping with situations and coping with people."

During training, most pledges study fraternity history and do work around the house. Some houses have mandatory study hours until pledges make their grades (2.0 by most fraternity standards) or until downslips come out.

Many fraternities have community service projects. For example, Alpha Tau Omega gave blood for the Red Cross and Theta Chi sold honey on Honey Sunday last fall.

Pledge classes also have many entertaining activities. Included among these are "pledge sneaks" to other campuses and Friday Afternoon Clubs (FAC) with sororities.

Only one of 50 persons contacted was disappointed with pledge training.

"I didn't get much out of it. I didn't care about the history," he said.

At the end of nearly every pledge's training period is an event now referred to as Help Week. Its purpose is "to draw together all the things you've been trying to teach through the semester," McBride said. "Pledges have reached a peak emotionally."

In the past, Help Week was often referred to as Hell Week, and it was associated with physical abuses, collectively called hazing.

"The only disadvantage of Help Week is the concept people still have about it. We have done away with the real physical ordeal," McBride said.

Talking to new actives, this seems to be the case.

The five-member IFC Judicial Board

hears all complaints of hazing and sets penalties if a house is found guilty. Hazing is prohibited by the IFC by-laws. However, no complaints have been received this year.

FarmHouse's Help Week consists mainly of "intensified house maintenance to build pride in the house," Camp said. Most houses have some sort of house improvement during their Help Weeks, including repairs, painting, and general cleanup. Some houses have speakers while most fraternities conclude the week with pledge tests concerning fraternity history.

Terry Wostrel of Tau Kappa Epsilon reported that their Help Week consisted of "stuff that was fun." They had bridge, pitch, and ping pong tournaments. Unlike most houses, Tau Kappa Epsilon is one of three or four which have their Help Week and initiation in the first semester.

"It was Hell Week, not Help Week," said one new active. He said his pledge class got only about four or five hours of sleep each night, and that by the end of the week, "you were pretty damn tired." They also had a "lineup" in which pledges were placed in a line and yelled at.

"I didn't like it at all. If they ever did it again, I'd walk out of there. It created deep resentment," he said.



A few other new actives reported instances of lack of sleep and lineups in their houses during Help Week.

Greg Spady of Phi Kappa Psi said the pledges were required to eat a "square meal." It consisted of a mixture of ingredients, including lasagna, a raw egg, mustard and catsup. A drink of warm salt water was also provided. "It didn't taste that bad," he said.

Other tasks were required of pledges during their Help Weeks. For example, Wes Nieveen of Theta Chi said that he had to carry change for a quarter and matches at all times. Many houses required pledges to dress up for class.

Although some of the "fun and games" and other activities may be considered physical or mental hazing, in only one instance did anyone depledge because of the activities.

Sororities are on their own in planning pledge programs, according to Debbie Danberg, president of the Panhellenic Association. She stressed constructiveness, saying, "there is nothing negative about a sorority pledge program."

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