

## Pinning tradition changes, survives

# Badge of honor

By Anne Steyer  
Senior Reporter

*Flickering candles, passing of pins, house songs: Times may change and houses may have different ceremonies, but the basics of a greek pinning remain the same.*

Jayne Wade Anderson, director of Greek Affairs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said there had been pinnings going on as long as she had been at UNL.

Pinning is a ceremony that takes place when a fraternity member presents his fraternity pin to a woman in a sorority. It is, Anderson said, usually a commitment to commit.

Anderson, a UNL alumna, said that on some campuses, the first step for the relationship, traditionally, was pearling, then pinning, with the final step being engagement.

The standard ritual, she said, has the women passing a lit candle around the table after dinner. Following it is a small basket of candy. When the candle comes to the sorority sister who is getting pinned, she blows it out.

Following the announcement, fraternity members come to the sorority house, and the members of the houses serenade each other with house songs. Then the actual ceremony takes place, and the man pins his fraternity pin on the woman.

Secrecy is an important part of the ritual, and the woman getting pinned usually only tells the house president or social chairperson.

"It's a real secret," Anderson said. "But the house mother usually knows."

Anderson said she thought the fraternity men passed out cigars, perhaps, or just made an announcement after dinner. From there, she said, the fraternity members go to the sorority house.

"There was a period of time in the late '60s, early '70s where it was not 'mod' to get pinned," Anderson said.

"It was just a sign of the times," Anderson said other things had changed over the years as well. When she was a UNL student in the late '40s and early '50s, pinnings were much simpler than they are today.

"There was not any planned function, there were no parties," she said. "It was strictly an announcement and was done in about 15 minutes."

"Now it becomes a big social function."

Anderson said many couples getting pinned now planned large parties and had invitations printed.

Although some things have changed over the years, pinning is still considered a big step in the lives of those making the commitment, she said.

And a commitment it is.

"When I was in school we all looked at it like a couple was going steady, like they were pre-committing," Anderson said.

Scott Bunz, president of the Interfraternity Council and a senior agribusiness major, said pinnings now gave couples more of a chance to celebrate.

"I think technically it is an engagement to be engaged," he said.

Most pinnings occur on Monday evenings, Bunz said, because that's meeting night for UNL fraternities and sororities. Generally all members are dressed up for chapter meetings, which lends itself to the formality of the occasion, he said.

Bunz said his fraternity, Alpha Gamma Sigma, celebrated the pinning before dinner, but they also passed a candle.

The man about to be pinned informs the chapter president and the house mother, who lights the candle before handing it off to the president.

"If it goes around once, it's a pinning," he said. "Twice if it's an engagement."

Bunz got pinned last spring to Chi Omega member Danielle Winscot. The two had dated for about a year before getting pinned.

"We discussed it," he said, "and I kind of asked her."

Winscot, a junior elementary education major, said a pinning could be as serious as the couple chose to make it.

Pinnings are a good reason to have a party, she said, but the significance of the fraternity pin is not one to take lightly.

"I just think a fraternity pin means a lot to them," Winscot said. "It's a lot for them to give it up."

The pinning, she said, allowed her to share the importance of what Bunz' pin meant to him.

Bunz and Winscot shared their pinning celebration with a couple from the same pledge class as themselves.

"It seemed like a good idea to

plan the celebration together," he said.

That idea allowed the two couples to split the cost of a party — a bash they threw at the Cornhusker Hotel, complete with engraved invitations, a dance floor, music, food and drinks.

Bunz said throwing a pinning party took a great deal of planning, and Winscot agreed.

"It's a big deal," she said. "It takes an enormous amount of money."

"The party is as elaborate as you want to make it," Winscot said. "Some do it in the house, some don't. We wanted to accommodate everyone. We wanted to have food. It's as much a party for friends

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as it is for the couple, she said, and a pinning puts everyone in a festive mood.

Bunz said the invitations were sent out to people not in the two houses and were delivered on Monday so as to be a surprise.

"We just had a good time," he said.

Matt Goeller and Tiffany Norris also had a double pinning, but theirs was a bit different: The couple was engaged just before school started, and only became pinned at the beginning of Novem-

ber.

Goeller, a junior engineering major and a member of Acacia, said that the normal order was to get pinned first, then engaged.

"It was just the perfect time for him to ask," Norris, a member of Phi Beta Chi sorority and a sophomore biology major, said, "but we still wanted to do the pinning thing, so we did."

Goeller said his fraternity didn't have an announcement ritual, but instead made a simple announcement after dinner.

That simplicity doesn't detract from the event's significance though, he said.

"I think it's really neat, and for the person directly involved it's kind of a serious deal," Goeller said.

"It really makes you feel good to have your brothers there supporting you," he said.

"It's a real formal occasion. When someone gets pinned, it's usually a good indication they're going to get engaged soon after. It's a pretty big commitment."

Norris and Goeller also celebrated a double pinning, and for them, money was also an issue.

Norris said having another couple to share party expenses was helpful. Having help in the planning was a relief, too, she said.

"It took about two weeks to plan," Norris said. "But it was fun and it turned out really well."

The significance of Goeller's fraternity pin meant a great deal to her, Norris said.

"Their pin was a symbol of how special that part of their lives



were to them and they were giving them to us because we were special to them," she said.

Goeller sang a song about the meaning of the fraternity pin before pinning it close to Norris' heart.

"I almost cried," she said.

"It's really special, because when you pledge a house, you pledge a lot to the house," Norris said. "When someone gives you their pin, it's like a really big part of their life."

Winscot said how much that importance carried over was debatable. She said she was unsure about how many pinnings truly ended up in engagements.

Anderson agreed. "In my era it certainly did, but I'm not sure I have any way of knowing now for sure," she said. "I guess I think that (engagements) might be the case."

Bunz said many do end up in engagements, and eventually marriages.

"Generally, pinnings are successful," he said.

In his four years at the university and as part of a fraternity, Bunz said perhaps two, maybe three pinnings had not ended up in a higher commitment.



Garth Lineman, a member of Sigma Nu fraternity, and Jennifer Schmidt, a member of Kappa Delta sorority, celebrate their pinning at the Kappa Delta house on Nov. 29. Schmidt and Lineman began dating in April.