

Can't buy brotherhood

Fraternity bonds made with time, sacrifice and support



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I buy my friends.

I don't have much money so they aren't good friends. Just kidding, fellas.

That's the reason I joined a fraternity. I figured I wouldn't make any friends on my own so I'd better buy them. I pay for the privilege of friendship.

What I can't figure out is why my room and board at the fraternity was only \$3,240 for the school year. Dorm rates next year are \$3,640. Our double occupancy rooms are bigger than the dorms. Our room rates also include extended cable. If I'm paying for my friends, why am I not paying as much as a person living in a dorm?

It is a commonly held stereotype that members of the greek system buy their friends.

There are social, pledge and initiation fees the first year that push your total living expenses as a freshman over that of someone living in the dorms. There are also in-house scholarships, paid offices and payment plans that reduce that cost back below that of living in the dorms.

I didn't join a fraternity because I feared I wouldn't fit in. I joined because I thought the guys there would be loyal friends for life. On March 27, I received a reminder of that fact.

It was the last day of spring break. I was sitting around with five friends in our Panama City Beach (Fla.) hotel room. We were sitting around

talking, waiting to go out for the evening. We were supposed to be talking about the week, women, the trip home or what club we would be going to.

Instead we were talking about another friend of ours who was back in Nebraska.

In March 1996, a brother in my fraternity came up to me at 8 a.m. the Thursday before spring break. I had heard his little sister had passed away the night before. He walked into my room and told me when the funeral was so I could spread the word among the fraternity members.

I asked him how he was holding up, and he broke down crying. I hugged him for 10 minutes, not knowing what to say. I told him how sorry I was and that I would see him at the funeral.

I didn't know his sister; I didn't even know he had a sister before that

morning. But I felt an instant connection to the pain he was going through, and I felt devastated. The funeral was on Saturday. My fraternity brothers took off work, delayed spring break trips, put off going home and even came back from out of town to be there in support.

When we arrived, the church was packed. There were five seats reserved in the pews for myself and four of the other officers. The other 30 or 40 of my brothers watched the funeral on a television in another build-

ing, without sound.

We weren't there to hear the funeral service. We weren't there to speak. We were there to support our brother. That support came in the form of simply being there for him.

We saw our friend for a total of only 30 seconds that day. In those 30 seconds, he walked out of the church, looked over at all of us standing in the grass and said to his mother, "That's my fraternity."

That brother had a difficult time with the death of his sister. The next time we saw our friend he made it obvious how much our support that day meant to him. When I think of that day I think of tragedy and pain, but most of all, I think of support.

Brotherhood and the fraternity experience are concepts without definition. When someone comes up to me and asks me to explain what brotherhood is, I can't. It is something different to all members.

Friendships are formed and tightened in every aspect of our lives. A simple conversation over dinner can make a friendship stronger. Fraternities and sororities add another dimension to a friendship.

Members of the greek system are there for a common purpose — to add their abilities and skills to the organization. This common purpose and the shared experiences bond members together tighter than in a normal situation. You work and live with these same members, and it only increases the bonds that you feel.

Just two weeks ago the women of Gamma Phi Beta Sorority buried a sister and friend, Laura Cockson. These women have been each other's support for the last two weeks.

Not only have they given a shoulder to each other but also to the Cockson family.

The grief that all of these family members feel is eased ever so slightly by the knowledge that so many people knew and loved their daughter.

The goal of this article is not to convert all members of this campus to greeks. The truth is that being greek is not for everyone. It takes a lot of time, dedication, personal sacrifice and selflessness. The unity and friendship that results from this conscious time sacrifice has been enormous.

I could not imagine surviving and excelling the way I have over the last five years without my fraternity brothers. People in the dorms may have friendships that match or even exceed the ones I have described above.

If you believe that greeks pay for their friends, I won't disagree with you.

We pay with time, sacrifice and ourselves.



AMY MARTIN/DN

Doing the job

Clinton has given Starr more than enough to investigate



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Who will defend the prosecutor?

Thanks to the always-brilliant Clinton propaganda machine, special prosecutor Kenneth Starr's popularity level has recently plunged to Newt Gingrich- and Saddam Hussein-like standing.

Listening to Clinton's loyal attack dogs, one gets the impression that Kenneth Starr is no less than Beelzebub himself.

The president's spinsters would have the electorate believe that Starr is indeed a very bad man: a wholly partisan, vindictive and "scuzzy" prosecutor who pursues the president with a Captain Ahab-like vengeance.

Clinton and his team have once again been able to masterfully spin and distort the truth. In the process, they have duped a large part of the nation and assassinated the character of a good man who is guilty only of doing his assigned job.

People shouldn't dislike Ken Starr. He's simply doing his job, and he's doing it well. If

you think you have a problem with Starr, your real problem probably lies in the ill-conceived independent counsel statute.

It's amusing for many conservatives to hear liberals complain about the broad powers that Starr now possesses as special prosecutor.

You see, the independent counsel statute is the cherished creation of Democrats. The statute was established in 1978 during the Carter administration and was embraced by liberals during the Reagan and Bush eras.

But now that the tables have turned, Democrats have found that their beloved creation doesn't always play nice.

While many liberals delighted in the statute, most conservatives have consistently opposed it. They rightly foresaw the problems that could come with such a powerful independent counsel.

They said its broad and unlimited powers were unconstitutional. Joseph DiGenova, a GOP lawyer and former independent counsel, has called the statute a "monstrosity." Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia also has repeatedly aired his grievances with the statute.

Indeed, the independent counsel is not circumscribed by the normal considerations of money or efficiency. The budget is unlimited and deadlines are nonexistent. In fact, part of former independent counsel Lawrence Walsh's investigation into the Iran-Contra affair is still going on.

Liberals incessantly whine about the length of Starr's 3½-year investigation and the \$26 million of taxpayer money he has spent in the process.

However, what they fail to mention or consider is that Bill Clinton is the ultimate source

of the things being investigated. If the president and his friends weren't so prone to scandal and weren't so skilled in the art of subterfuge, Starr would be back in Malibu, Calif., right now.

But our president has given the special prosecutor so much to investigate.

Starr's original job was to investigate Whitewater, but then came the death of Vince Foster, the travel office firings, the "misplaced" FBI files and finally Lewinsky and Willey. It's not as if Starr is on some mad goose hunt searching for dirt on the president. It comes to him, and he has gotten authorization from Attorney General Janet Reno to look into each and every one of these matters.

In reference to criticisms that Starr has cost taxpayers too much money, people should remember that the Whitewater fiasco itself cost federal taxpayers more than \$60 million. Also, it's important to note that Clinton's public legal defense team has consumed millions of taxpayer dollars so far in his scandal-ridden presidency.

While people who know virtually nothing about investigative law are busy undermining Starr, most legal experts, regardless of their political affiliation, agree that Starr is doing a fine job.

New York University Law Professor Stephen Gillers, a liberal who was opposed to Starr being chosen as special prosecutor in 1994, admits that since Starr has been on the job he has followed "standard operating procedure by prosecutors — every time, every place, every day."

One Justice Department official said in a Washington Post report, "Starr really has not done anything to abuse the kind of latitude that

the system grants him."

Another official noted, "We are talking about a guy who wanted to hang it up and move to Malibu after all," referring to Starr's aborted career switch to become the dean of Pepperdine Law School.

Starr bashers also should remember that claims that Starr's investigation has produced nothing are completely unwarranted.

In fact, the counsel can boast of several major convictions — of former Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker, Clinton's Whitewater business partners Jim and Susan McDougal and former associate attorney general Web Hubbell. The counsel also has secured 10 guilty pleas from other banking figures in Arkansas.

The last person who should be criticizing Starr is Clinton himself.

After all, the big guy authorized the independent counsel statute in 1994 and, in effect, made it easier than ever for a special prosecutor to take down a president.

What was he thinking? Is he so full of himself that he believes he can get away with anything without ever being called on it? His spin doctors are good, but are they good enough to save a presidency that, despite its facade of high poll numbers, grows weaker with every new scandal?

How much does Starr really have on the president, and is it enough to bring impeachment? No one really knows.

In my opinion, he's got more than people think he does. Will it be enough to rid our nation's highest office of the most deceptive president of modern times?

Only time will tell.