

EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITY  
12 SMITH STREET  
EAST STROUDSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

## THE HISTORY OF SIGMA PI

Dr. John Connelly 1968 (jrconne@aol.com)

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In compiling the information contained in this historical document several people were interviewed and many documents reviewed. Special thanks to Dr. John Gantz, John “Goody” Godikunst, Erich Koch, Marlin Evans, Jack Savage, Allie Urban, George Bennyhoff, Doc Moyer, and Zach Kaytes for contributing valuable anecdotal and historical information for this project.

Every effort was made to synthesize historical information that was available in hopes of educating current and future Sigma Pi brothers about our past experiences so that mistakes can be avoided and successes might be emulated. A great deal of the information cited here is very interesting but much of it is also very sobering with respect to shortcomings of various active members.

It should be noted that some information gaps do exist in terms of anecdotal information that covers the late 1960’s, 1970’s and some other years as well. This was a challenging project to acquire information that covered different aspects of the lives of approximately 900 brothers over a period of fifty-five years. However, the overall narrative does give the reader a real good idea of how the fraternity was formed and the many twists and turns that it has had over the years.

While this document is a bit lengthy it is well worth reading.

### **THE BEGINNING - DR. JOHN GANTZ**

When I arrived at East Stroudsburg State Teachers College as a transfer student in 1959 there were about 1,200 students. I was surprised my first weekend when I found the campus was almost deserted – no lines in the cafeteria, the bookstore wasn’t open, nothing happening on campus. I soon found out that most, probably 75 – 90% of the students, went home for the weekend leaving on Friday and coming back on Sunday night of early Monday morning. Social events were few and far between. Not surprising when the little red Student Handbook provided dictates regarding such actions as “dancing”. I quote from page 69 - *“In dancing, students shall consider both the comfort of their partners and that of*

*the other people on the floor. Students shall conduct themselves in accordance with accepted and correct social procedures”*

I believe I attended one dance that year, but fortunately I did find Rudy’s Tavern.

The next year I moved off campus with three other guys to an apartment above a local restaurant called Albino’s, just down the street from Rudy’s near the Stroudsburg, East Stroudsburg bridge. Since they gave meal discounts to students, we ate there often. Albino’s was a popular restaurant with the staff and faculty of EAST STROUDSBURG STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE (ESSTC) and we eventually got to know Mr. Sumner Bossler and his family. Mr. Bossler was the Business Manager of the college. As we sat there complaining about the lack of activity on campus he eventually raised the point, “why don’t you do something about it, like start a social fraternity”. Apparently that had been attempted a year or two before but was beaten down by the college administration because of concerns that it would lead to nothing but a decline of social values among students and who knows what would happen at dances – bodies might even touch right there on the dance floor. He offered to provide guidance and suggestions that may be helpful in establishing a social fraternity on campus.

Mr. Bossler suggested that we get another 6 or 8 guys to meet and start planning for establishment of a fraternity. We found six other guys and met with Mr. Bossler in his office for an initial discussion. Since this effort was really going against the “grain” of college administration, Mr. Bossler dubbed us “The Unholy Ten”:

- Tony Messenlehner
- Karl Dickl
- John Fallan
- Frank DiSimoni
- Chuck Gillum
- Ned Partridge
- Barry Fleischmann
- Joe Warne
- Dick Millar
- John Gantz

He laid out some specific parameters: this effort should be one which would help:

- promote greater school spirit,
- improve the social life on campus,

- promote scholarship,
- increase participation in college activities,
- encourage a more active role in student government,
- contribute to the community through participation in charity events
- and possibly even change dance regulations

Mr. Bossler instilled in us the importance of assuring that whatever we come up with would contribute to a better student life and would add to the appeal of the college for current and future students. He wanted to make sure that a social fraternity (system) at East Stroudsburg would be a positive and not a negative for the college. Otherwise, we would never win over the naysayers within the administration – and most, especially the Dean of Men (Puffer Martin) and Dean of Women (Ruth Jones).

We kicked off our effort in October 1960. We started our search for a national social fraternity, contacting several, among them Mr. Bossler's old fraternity Sigma Nu. A local doctor, Dr. Viglioni, graduated from Penn State and was a Brother of Theta Chapter of Sigma Pi. He attended one of our meetings and encouraged us to consider requesting colonization with Sigma Pi – and I doubt that without his help and influence we would have been able to move so rapidly in working with Sigma Pi national. In January of '61 we meet with a representative from National and after some hours of discussion, he told us we would most likely receive favorable consideration as a colony if we made application. Of course the decision among the ten of us was unanimous. We were then tasked to start recruiting a pledge class and by March 1961 we had a total of 33 men. We sought out student leaders like John Dulavey, Bob Doran, guys in student government like Bing McNulty and Jim Cebula, varsity sportsmen like John Gudikunst, Duke Demko, Warner Graf, and of course a few campus characters like Terry Kacik and Carmon Pantuso.

In April 1961, we brought in an additional 25 or so members to the pledge class and submitted a petition to National for a charter. We went through a pledge period during the early part of the Fall semester of 1961 and were initiated into Sigma Pi as Beta Psi Chapter and received our Charter on 18 November 1961. A total of 46 were initiated at ceremonies at the Fraternal Order of Eagles – which at the time was located on Washington St in East Stroudsburg.

Mr. Bossler played another significant role in the development of Sigma Pi, and that involves our Fraternity House on 12 Smith Street. The house became available in the Spring of 1962 when the owner Mr. Victor Mione decided he

could no longer take care of the place. The house had been divided into four apartments. It could not have been a more perfect location and structure for a fraternity house. Mr. Bossler immediately stepped forward and suggested we purchase the place and offered to co-sign for a mortgage. Again it was Mr. Bossler's support and guidance that enabled us to not only establish a social fraternity at then East Stroudsburg State College, but to have a place we could call the Sigma Pi House.

It took a great deal of effort to refurbish the house that summer and have it ready to go by the start of the Fall term. Our house at 12 Smith Street, I believe, was the physical evidence which showed the pride we had in establishing a social fraternity at ESSC and helping to promote school spirit and involvement in college activities. It is hoped that our new Brothers will continue to uphold the traditions Beta Psi Chapter to promote school spirit, encourage scholastic achievement, contribute to all school activities in sports, student government, theater, as well as support local charities.

On behalf of the all the original 46 Brothers of Beta Psi Chapter and those who followed, congratulations to all of our New Brothers, and thank you, in advance, for carrying on the traditions of OUR fraternity.

## **ERIC KOCH – “LESSONS LEARNED” 1980 TO 2007**

### **A Reflection of twenty-seven years of challenges and successes (both small and large) and how history repeats itself!**

Spring 1980 There is a back bathroom on the second floor as well as a front bathroom on the second floor. The front bathroom gets frozen pipes nearly every winter because the bathroom is over the front porch. The bathroom in the glass room is non-functional. The front porch roof is in fair to poor shape. The house is in need of painting or siding. The barn is still standing, but has no windows or doors.

January 1981 the furnace breaks, and we go about a week with no heat. Water in pipes freezes on the third floor. Jack O'Donnell convinces a plumber to install a furnace and we'll pay him in 90 days. We hold a raffle for a semester's tuition to raise funds but brothers are lax in selling tickets. Jack "convinces" each brother to sell \$50 worth of tickets or get their ass kicked. Sales go well enough and the furnace is paid off and brother Mike Brophy wins the semesters tuition. We have lots of parties and pay off national.

By spring 1982 we are on good terms with national, but the community is not pleased with our party lifestyle. We get put on double secret probation and can't take pledges. We of course don't listen and take "undercover pledges."

\*Spring 1982 national informs us that there will no longer be "Little Sister Organizations" Little sisters no longer pledge and their existence fades. This is probably the downfall of the organization. Those women were the ones who let us know when we were too boorish, offensive, piggish etc. After they were gone the fraternity became dirtier and less orderly.

Spring semester 1984, active brother Ed Shubert tears out and rebuilds the basement steps and installs a small landing at the bottom. Ed also blasts out the ceiling in Margie's room and builds a loft. He also installs closets in the wall of Margies room.

Spring 1984, the front bathroom which was located in what is now the alumni office has frozen pipe issues for the last time and the bathroom is shut down making it into a bedroom called "the cave"

Summer 1985 Todd Majors is the active president.

Spring 1985 storm windows are installed on the house and some electrical work is done in the basement.

Summer 1985 the front porch is in bad shape and leaking through the roof. Rob Dow, Allie Urban, Bob Boileau and Eric Koch tear off the old porch. Newly graduated brother Jim Huffsmith builds the current porch for just the cost of the materials. We never hear from Jim again. Four years later in 1989 the steps leading up to the porch are replaced by Ron Noonan.

Summer 1985, the large bathroom at the top of the back steps is built and another two seater bathroom is built on the first floor by sacrificing part of the kitchen where the current sink is located. At the time the sink was at the back windows of the kitchen. With the installation of these two bathrooms the small single bathroom at the top of the back steps is converted into a bedroom called the "rat room.

Summer of 1985 brother Jim McMahaon and Denny Deardorf buy Jakes tavern and rename it McDorfs.

Spring 1986 The Sigma Pi house is painted.

Spring 1986 Sigma Pi wins the IFC trophy.

Spring 1986 Beta Psi is again in financial straits because the fall 1985 tenants did not all pay their rent. Alumni Bob Gallinot, Mark Smith, Glenn Gottshalk, Jack

Tinman, Scott Simons, Gary Neupert, Bruce Leib and Bob Boileau bail us out and the alumni look into selling the house.

In the summer of 1986 Actives Kevin McDonald and Sumner Bossler attend the Sigma Pi leadership conference in Washington and things start to turn around.

In the fall of 1986 Kevin McDonald is the active president and things are turning around. Homecoming starts with a morning golf outing in which Kevin , Mark Evans and Eric Koch take 1, 2, 3 respectively.

In fall 1986, Eric Koch becomes alumni President to Allie Urban's relief. John Gudikunst provides Eric with an alumni directory of 61-66 alumni. The little sisters give Eric a list of brothers from 1980. Sandy Burkart (1966) sent me a list of 10 brothers from 1965 & 66. Eric uses an ESU alumni directory, a Sigma Pi alumni directory and the "big boards to compile a list of brothers with addresses for 1961 – 1983

Spring 1987, Kevin McDonald and Eric work well together and get several delinquent brothers to pay up or move out. All manage to come up with the money, even though several had hard luck stories.

Spring 1987, Eric Koch goes all out to get our alumni association together. He mails out 317 letters for Founders Day. We again have our luncheon at the Blue Note restaurant in Delaware Water Gap after 2 years of no luncheon on founders day.

June 1987, Grand Sage Don Cox and CFO Mark Briscoe decide to revoke the charter and shut us down. The chapter is \$8000 in arrears. A meeting took place between Eric Koch, Don Cox, and Dan Sonnon (chapter pres at the time). Eric explained to Mr. Cox that there was no way the chapter could pay it's back bills to national at this time. The Beta Psi housing Assoc. asks national to put the chapter on minimum standards for the coming year. Minimum standard is a requirement to remain financially up to date and attend leadership conferences and send regular reports to national monthly. About \$6000 in back dues was erased as part of the agreement, because those responsible were no longer active. Don Cox went back to national and put in an executive override and allowed us to stay open and try to get on our feet.

June 1987, Eric Koch puts out an appeal to save the house . Donations are strong and the fraternity is financially solvent again.

July 1987, housing contracts and security deposits are imposed for the first time for the Fall semester.

Fall 1987, housing contracts were instituted along with a \$50 security deposit.

Homecoming 1987, There are 34 alumni in attendance. Aa good turnout of alumni at homecoming, but donations are way down. I guess they are tapped out.

Fall 1987, things are back on track at Beta Psi.

Spring 1988, the house is still running fine and the chapter is in good standing with national. Alumni treasurer Joe Devlin is only paying interest on the mortgage and is not paying principal. There is a balloon payment coming in 10 years. The actives are not happy being micro managed by the alumni and ask to again take control of the house monthly bills for utilities. An agreement is come to whereas the actives will pay the alumni a lump sum for Mortgage, taxes and insurance and the active will take care of utilities and garbage. Founders day luncheon again takes place at the Blue Note.

Spring 1988, The house has vinyl siding installed by F&S aluminum and siding.

Fall 1988, Eric Koch resigns as alumni president and Allie Urban again assumes the duties. 33 alumni pay dues for a total of \$1215

Fall 1989 or Spring 1990 the barn is torn down because the town says it is an attractive nuisance because there are no windows or doors.

Summer 1989 Eric Koch moves to CT. I think Darren White replaces me as Alumni president.

Founders Day 1990, Luncheon is at McDorf's. Turnout is huge and we eat every bit of food Jimmy has.

Spring 1991, The Beta Psi chapter is put on probation for 2 years after there is a incident at a party. Joe Devlin gets cut in the hand and the brotherhood goes bonkers on the assailant, breaking his eye socket and beating him severely.

Spring 1991, The chapter is put on probation for 2 years as a result of the fight and incident involving a knife at the house. Dr. Ortenzi states the problems have been ongoing for three years and he is tired of it. We are to have no pledges for two years.

Spring 1991, The upstairs big bathroom is leaking into the kitchen downstairs. It is repaired with new tile at a cost of \$2000 which is paid by the alumni assoc.

Spring 1991, Alumni brothers Chris Smith and Frank Disimoni pass away.

Homecoming 1991, Darren White becomes alumni president.

Spring 1993, Water is leaking into the red room on the third floor and the roof needs repair. Active president Kevin Carroll is killed in an auto accident. Kevin has been a good leader the past year and the fraternity is on an upswing. The fraternity regains active status on campus.

Fall 1993, homecoming turnout is strong.

Winter 1994, a water pipe at the bottom of the outside steps freezes and breaks and needs to be repaired. There is little damage because the break is in the basement. The kitchen sink is replaced. The house is full with 18 active brothers living there.

Spring 1994, our dog Pookie dies.

Fall 1994, There are now 16 brothers living in the house but they are failing to pay their dues to national. Some don't pay their rent and at the end of the semester owe the alumni \$1400 toward the mortgage, interest and insurance.

Spring 1994, The actives are still not paying their bills. By the end of the semester they owe the alumni association \$4000.

Spring 1995, Dave Bechtel is the active president and the actives are not paying rent. They pay almost nothing. Alumni donate only \$950 at founders day.

Summer 1995, the house is condemned. The gas has been shut off for non-payment. The building inspector identifies 32 violations which will need to be corrected in order to procure an occupancy permit for the fall. Eric Koch again appeals to the alumni to bail us out and once again they come through. We make the repairs which include new carpeting downstairs, drop ceilings, drywall and vinyl windows.

Fall 1995, There are just 9 brothers living in the house. The chapters debt to national is now up to \$11,000 and we need \$4800 to pay the mortgage, insurance and taxes. The actives are on a payment plan with the gas company and have to pay \$600/month. Homecoming is well attended, donations are large and once again we manage to avoid closure.

Spring 1996, The house has no trash service due to non-payment of bills (\$800) to Grand Central Sanitation of Pen Argyle. Eric Koch manages to get Hopkins refuse to service the house trash disposal needs. The bank notifies us that we have a balloon payment of \$50,000 coming due in 1998 and they have no intention of financing us again.

1997 NO Records Available



February 1998, John Martin takes over as alumni president at founders day. The situation is dire. The roof is leaking again and must be repaired again. The active need to stay off of the F'n roof! We are scrambling to find a bank who will give us a mortgage for \$75,000. \$50,000 for the balloon payment on the current mortgage and \$25,000 for some much needed repairs to the roof, downstairs floors and leaking bathrooms.

April 1998, The hot water heater broke and cost \$1500 to replace it. Repairman tells us the furnace is in rough shape too. It is now 17 years old. It was replaced in 1981 for \$4000.

Summer 1998 We are broke. We have a \$50,000 balloon payment coming due. We owe National \$\$\$\$  
And need another \$25,000 for repairs. We need a mortgage ASAP!.

Summer 1998 The house is a s---hole. Several deadbeats live here, but pay no rent. They throw parties and pocket the money. There is not a functioning faucet in the house except for one shower head. The house is condemned and loses it's occupancy permit.

June, 1998 Eric sends out an appeal again for money to keep the house going by making the needed repairs so we can get an occupancy permit. We need to repair the roof. The roof of the house is leaking so badly that it pours into the V staircase whenever it rains. The copper channels are corroded away and they form funnels of rain pouring into the house. We need about an immediate \$10,000 Estimates are \$7000 to replace the roof and \$3000 for other repairs. (bathrooms and kitchen.

Financial returns from Ben Manes, Stephen Repinec, John Procopio, Bruce Brennan, Dave Davidson, Hugh Donnelly, Steve Strobel, Andy Moran, Derek Wendell, Brad Yoder, Ken Davis, Todd Majors and his wife Eve, Tucker Triolo, Frank Salerno, Joe Fiamingo, Pat Forlenza, Joe Buckshon, Tom "72", Tom Limozinere, Donald Giffin, Ron Mishkin, Jeff Bruno, Mike Burkholder, Ed Stepanchuck, Jack Sovak, Tim Watkins, Stephen Stuhltrager, Jack Wisler, Jimmy DeAngelo, Michael Singer, Lary Moyer, gives us enough money to make the necessary repairs.

August of 1998 Alumni Pres. Darren White, VP John Martin, and Treasurer Joe Devlin are trying to arrange a mortgage refinance of an additional \$25,000 to be added to the current balance of \$50,000. Also looking into getting a \$15,000 line of credit.

Homecoming 1998, The roof is now leaking horribly and water is pouring in whenever it rains. The valleys are rotted away. The floors in the house are sagging badly and the kitchen floor is badly rotted.

October of 1998, George Lobb Roofing & Siding, 732 Jack Town Rd., Bangor fixed the roof . He replaced all copper ridges and valleys and replaced about 50 broken slates with slate removed from the barn or outhouse. Cost was around \$1500. George said the roof should be good for another 50 years. This saved us \$5500 instead of replacing the roof.

November 1998, We get a loan!

January 1999 the furnace breaks during a vicious cold spell and we can't get a plumber to come out and look at it for three days. During that time numerous pipes freeze and 4 radiators freeze and break causing extensive damage to the fireplace room. Fixed by John Vincent of Universal plumbing. Cost \$7400

Founders day 1999, Alumni have a work party to fix the walls from the plumbing repairs. John Martin, Bob Zerbe, and Tim Watkins did drywall and spackling repairs. Kevin McDonald fixed the back door and steps and the basement door. Eric Koch replaced some electrical boxes in the basement, Dave Bechtol installs emergency lighting, and Rob Dow replaces vanities in the first and second floor bathrooms. Mark Wachter fixes the leaking shower

April 25, 1999 Eric Koch, Don Cox and Dan Sonnon meet with Grand Sage Don Cox who has come to revoke the charter. The actives are far in arrears and the neighbors and the college are not happy with the Beta Psi chapter.

May 7, 1999 Alumni meet to discuss the status of the house. There are 6-8 people living here, but they don't pay their rent or bills. The kitchen stove is broken. Eric resigns as alumni secretary.

May 22, 1999 the day of reckoning for the deadbeats. Eric Koch disposes of the belongings of deadbeats who refuse to move out or pay their bills. The actives call the police who come and tell Eric that he cannot do it this way. Eric's response is, "Have them sue me.", and continues with the eviction. We never hear from these deadbeats again.

Fall 1999 – Summer 2006 Eric Koch has moved to Connecticut and is much less involved.

Summer 2006, The front porch of the house is falling down on the driveway side. Eric Koch pours a concrete footer and he and Dave Zettlemyer and a few actives lift the roof and install a new corner post and some joists and flooring.

December 18, 2006 We get an e-mail from Dave Bechtel informing us that National has revoked the charter.

Spring 2007, Eric Koch again sends out an alumni appeal. The house is closed and there are many outstanding bills. His appeal is urgent and he makes phone

calls to his friends from 1975-85. There is great reluctance to go down this road again, but he convinces some of them to dig in again. We are Sigma Pi until the day we die!

Spring 2007, Marlin Evans finds out the house is slated to be sold for back taxes unless we come up with a payment of \$600 immediately to postpone the tax sale. Eric informs Marlin that his pledge brother George Buck has just sent a check for \$650 in response to his plea. We are not out yet!!! George's donation is immediately used to put off the tax sale and the Beta Psi Alumni once again come to the rescue.

June 2, 2007, There is a meeting of alumni at the house to discuss the situation. Not one of the current officers of the Beta Psi Housing Assoc. or of the Active chapter attend the meeting. It is a coup of sorts.

A board of directors is elected to take the place of the absent officers. John Gudikunst, Bob Boileau, Jeff Bruno, Marlin Evans and Joe Devlin are charged with assessing the situation and devising a response plan, and a budget to determine feasibility of continuing as a fraternity.

Ben Manes, Jack Savage and Eric Koch have bricks in the brotherhood walk at national.

The above represents a lot of information I've gathered over the years. I hope it helps to fill in the gaps in our storied history. "By the way, I had no idea I begged money so many times over the years, until I checked my files." Best wishes.

Eric

\*Author's Note: Bring back the Little Sister's Organization into this chapter. These women will keep the guys in line. Learn from the past.

**PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES, AND A NEW BEGINNING - LARRY "DOC" MOYER (Comments by Doc" Larry Moyer, 1964, stated in a Pocono Record article about our chapter.)**

As stated by Dr. John Gantz, in 1961 Sigma Pi/Beta Psi became the first nationally recognized Greek organization at East Stroudsburg University. We were dominant in many aspects on campus academics, sports, community service, social events (established homecoming at ESU), philanthropy just to name a few. We were pioneers. We were well received. All the visible leaders in the sports on campus were part of the fraternity," I served as president of the local chapter from 1963-64, when the fraternity was in its heyday. The fraternity has been part of ESU since 1961, and was the first to come to campus. The 12 Smith Street house is owned by the fraternity's alumni members.

In 2006 our charter was revoked for poor public relations and poor behavior.

The Sigma Pi fraternity was denounced by East Stroudsburg University and its' own national chapter in December 2006 when then-members were found to have violated policies on alcohol consumption, poor behavior, and hazing. At that time, Sigma Pi had fallen behind on its bills, on its mortgage, on its taxes, water bill and electricity bill.

Shortly after the group's charter was revoked, founding members, led by Marlin Evans and John Goddy Godikunst, returned to the house to find it in ruins.

Misguided young men took out the walls. They took out the coveted fireplace mantle which was found in the woods. They removed the plumbing, the electrical wiring, the bathroom fixtures and every piece of furniture," according to Moyer and according to several senior alumni brothers who visited the house. Clearly these young brothers lost their way and ignored the fraternity's expectations of good conduct and good character.

### **SIGMA PI BANNED**

On December 18, 2006, East Stroudsburg University officials banned the Sigma Pi group from receiving another charter for five years, a term that expired in 2010, just in time to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Beta Psi . Nine ESU students moved into the house, started learning about the history of Sigma Pi and later in December of 2010 a total of 28 young men were initiated as the new generation of founding fathers of the Beta Psi colony.

One year later, with the guidance of several alumni brothers, these young brothers received the charter to the Beta Psi chapter.

### **ALUMNI BROTHERS PROVIDE FINANCIAL IMPETUS FOR HOUSE AND DEBT RESTORATION**

In 2006 our alumni brothers began the process of investing many thousands of dollars and many, many hundreds of hours of hard labor to restore the chapter house to its original glory.

Critical phase one loans were made by (John Gantz, Rick Vroman, Dave Martin, Bucky Spears, Bob Boleau, Mike Weber) , "These 6 generous alumni Brothers" volunteered to supply seed money/ upstart money of \$50,000. These were interest free loans to begin the important job demolition & renovation."

Phase II loan total was \$19,500.00. The purpose of these loans were to complete the punch list of items to obtain our Certificate of Occupancy. Lenders were as follows: Ed Curvey, Tom Barrow, Larry Moyer, Bill Horvath, John

Gudikunst, Don Scheuer, Kenny Davis, John Gantz, Rick Vroman, Marlin Evans, Lou Ryan Zajicek, William (Bing) Mc Nulty.

Everyone was paid back in full after we re-mortgaged the house in 2015. (\$69,500). Additionally there were bills paid along the way to full restoration (we assumed \$16,000 of back tax debt not paid), Taxes averaging \$9000 per year, Water, Sewer , Internet, Lawn maintenance, Telephone & Internet, Garbage (we paid over \$10,000 in dumpster fees), Fire Suppression System \$40,000, new state of the art Gas Heater and Furnace \$10,000.

Total house renovations included a new 200 amp electric service, switches and duplexes throughout the house, all new sheetrock, all new flooring, blown in insulation for entire house, mostly all new windows, added bathroom to the third floor, reconstruction of front steps; addition small annex on back by rear door, painting, and so forth.

Not to be forgotten are the many brothers along the way who made extremely significant labor and financial contributions. One brother sent the fraternity \$5000 on his own and he was one who had also given the alumni fraternity a significant interest free loan.

John Goody Gudikunst stated, "Bob Doran '62 was always handing him cash to apply towards our work at the house, even when he was near death." "A lot of us kicked in \$100 or \$200 or more on numerous occasions, back in the beginning., Tom Barrow '62, Art Schisler '62, John Connelly, '68, Kenny Davis '68." There were many, many more. Jack Savage '63 funded the stained glass project and made numerous other donations in the thousands of dollars. An anonymous donor from 63 funded the front doors that were fabricated by Steve Williams '66, a master woodworker.

It should be noted, as mentioned above, that many alumni brothers stepped up and gave of their time in our time of need to attend and participate in work parties, especially the guys from the 1960's ,1970's and early 1980's. Often times alumni worked in an unheated house in gutting and restoring the house.

Buddy Cole spearheaded our annual raffle sales to amass a grand total of \$20,000.00 to support our operational budget. Guys like Rick Vroman, John Connelly, and Bugsy Horvath donated money and time in an "adopt-a- room" activity where brothers or a single brother would accept the financial responsibility for refurbishing a given room in the house.

Others not mentioned here contributed as well to the adopt-a-room project. Unfortunately we did not keep accurate records of exactly who donated monies and who donated their labor to our restoratin project.

All of the above brothers made financial and labor sacrifices at a time when the fraternity and indeed the house was in grave danger of extinction. These men are the true heroes in this historical story of Sigma Pi and they serve as positive role models for future generations of brothers to keep the dream of brotherhood alive.

## **ALUMNI BOARD MEMBERS**

It should be noted that members of our Alumni Board of Directors were especially involved in the revitalization of the house.

Alumni Board Members: Alumni President Marlin Evans, Finance Board Member Jeff Bruno, Work Party Leader Dr. William Buggy Horvath, Dan Spengler, Board Member and Emeritus Board Member John (Goody) Godikunst (who never missed a work day in eight years). Monthly meetings, daily maintenance of fraternity related work, constant monitoring of the fraternity affairs and its' members and weekend work parties occupied many, many, many hours of the boards time.

## **SIGMA PI CLASSES HAVE, AND ALWAYS WILL HAVE, DISTINCT PERSONALITIES**

It is understandable that the level of commitment to the Sigma Pi standards of conduct and participation would be variable due to the dynamics of leadership and the make up of each class at any one particular time. Believe it or not Sigma Pi classes do have distinct personalities and they have individual strengths and individual weaknesses. Many of our Sigma Pi classes were of the highest calibre and some were less so. The Alumni brothers are proud to say that this fraternity survived a tremendous amount of adversity and hardship over the years to emerge as a strong and dynamic organization.

**NOTE OF CAUTION TO ALL CURRENT AND FUTURE SIGMA PI BROTHERS** We are one major violation away from becoming a defunct fraternity because of the misguided actions and behaviors of previous young brothers. Don't make the same mistakes of previous brothers. PLEASE PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THIS NOTE OF CAUTION.

## **CORE VALUES**

In working with many of the older alumni brothers over the last eight years I discovered a common thread of core values that should serve as a guide for younger Sigma Pi brothers. Basically, there are four core values that should define true Sigma Pi brothers and they are commitment, loyalty, integrity, and a world view predicated on the belief that having a good time is a good thing. If every young brother would follow these core values as a guide in their daily lives then we are in real good shape as a social fraternity.

## **THE TRUE HEROES OF THE SIGMA PI RECOVERY**

While some mention was made of certain alumni brothers who contributed beyond the call of duty in breathing life back into our fraternity it was difficult to mention all of the alumni who helped with the restoration of the Sigma Pi house and membership. My SINCEREST APOLOGIES for not mentioning your names if you gave of your time and resources in bringing the fraternity back to life. You have been the true heroes and role models in this story and you deserve all the credit for keeping the Sigma Pi dream alive. AMIGOS PARA SIEMPRE (Friends for Life)

## **IMPORTANT HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS**

### **JOHN "GOODY" GUDIKUNST**

Our brothers from the late 1960's and early 1970's used shovels and picks to dig out the dirt floor in the basement and lowered it two feet. All this work was done via pick and shovel. Stone and concrete were poured under the direction of Brother Ron "Chubby" Kucharczuk, who had his own concrete business. Because it was a dry house we couldn't even enjoy a cold beer after the all day work session.....but we did manage to make it to Rudy's Tavern to wash down the dust!

There was a small barn in the back of the property. Two stories of it's demise come to mind: 1. The borough of East Stroudsburg made the fraternity take it down because of its unstable condition, and 2. The wood and timbers (chestnut) were sold to help bolster a shaky treasury.

The first few years of the fraternity we had all 3 Sigma Pi individual class presidents (no freshmen) and Sigma Pi brothers were captains of most of the athletic teams. We literally had the "cream of the crop." Those that couldn't get into Sigma Pi opted to join Phi Sigma Kappa.

How ironic that the formation of Sigma Pi began in a bar....Albinos. Many national fraternities were investigated before selecting Sigma Pi. Some did not allow Jews and some did not permit blacks. We would have liked to go with Mr. Bossler's fraternity, but that didn't work out. I didn't have enough money to go through initiation, so Mr. Bossler's loaned me the money.

As mentioned earlier, the house was purchased by Mr. Bossler in July of 1962. A couple of brothers lived there that summer. Mr. Bossler sold it to us after one year. We held an open house in October. Dr. Koehler (President of ESSC) and his wife were in attendance.....she wanted to know where the bar was! Rudy and Hap were there along with a few neighbors. Remember Hap's red face and how he would spin your dime change on the bar?

In August we began removing walls that impeded movement from room to room. Who ever heard of a load bearing wall? Coming in the front door would take you up the front stairs.....there was a wall on the right to keep you from entering the living room. There was a full bath IN the living room. The doorway from the dining room was the entrance to the bathroom.....a tub, sink, and toilet. We ripped the bathroom out along with the drywall that hid the beautiful wood paneling on the staircase. When entering the back kitchen door you had to go into the dining room.....there was a wall to prevent you from getting to the V staircase. There was a shared bathroom between the front bedroom and the Pink Floyd room.

The window room (Presidential Suite) had a full bath. What is now the full bathroom was a single bedroom. To enter the kitchen bedroom you had to enter a back door.....now an outdoor closet. The only stairs to the basement were in the kitchen room. The existing stairs were added years later.....it was a pay phone closet. We were a "dry house" the first few years.....don't know when that changed. We had 14 brothers living in the house (along with one ghost.) Three more brothers lived in the "shack" out back, which had its own heat and a small kitchen and bath. The shack burned down in the 1970's. One brother lived in the "shanty" up next to the outhouse with no heat. None of the bedrooms had closets.....we built those in during renovations.

We got brand new furniture in September. Bunk beds. Who remembers the story of the snake bite that summer? Someone was bitten in the basement and they took him to the emergency room over at Pocono Hospital. When the group was queried if the snake was poisonous or not.....Chuck Keys pulled the snake out of his pocket causing a bit of chaos with the attending nurses!

The house was divided into four apartments when Bossler bought it. That's why it had four kitchens and four bathrooms. Victor, the prior owner lived there with us that summer while we tore down partitions. There was no furniture so we slept on cots and sleeping bags.



A few years ago at a Homecoming celebration, Dr. John Gantz , Ed Curvey, and Goody were sitting in the corner booth at Rudy's Institute of Higher Learning. The discussion focused on the fact that all of the Beta Psi brothers made a good life for themselves. Goody assembled the information below that reflects a group of value driven men who lived successful lives. This information is only from the first 12 years.....'61-73

- 1 University President
- 12 PhD's
- 12 College professors
- 11 Principals and school superintendents
- Most of the brothers went into the teaching profession while many coached including a few on the college level. At least 4 brothers coached PIAA championship teams.
- Some went into private business.
- A few joined the federal government
- 2 FBI Special Agents
- 1 Secret Service Agent
- 2 Newspaper publishers
- 3 CPAs
- 1 Porsche collector
- 1 off Broadway actor
- 2 major college athletic directors
- 3 career military officers
- 3 morticians
- 1 Pa. State Senator
- 5 physical therapists
- 2 brothers are still virgins
- 1 attorney (one of the virgins)
- There are a lot more millionaires than you think!
- 2 owned bars
- Our oldest brother is 78
- 24 Beta Psi brothers are deceased.....cancer was the biggest culprit

Note: Only 2 members of the Unholy 10 are living.

## **JACK SAVAGE**

Mr. Sumner Bossler, ESSC FINANCE OFFICER, was the life-blood of original efforts to begin the first fraternity of our college. Without him it is likely that there would have been no Beta Psi/Sigma Pi at East Burg. He was always there for us - with parties at his home on Bossler's Island: water skiing, motor and sail boating, beer and unending food, He was the doctor who delivered Beta Ps into

the world. He handled the purchase of the House on Smith Street and much, much more.

Mr. Atwell, Psychology teacher and first hands-on advisor, should not be overlooked. Mr. Atwell was A GREAT, fun-loving guy who oversaw the first House renovations and guided us through the first, live-in House rules.

My name in those days was John Winkler. I changed it legally in 1983 to Jack Savage.

Joined the Army instead of going directly into teaching. Retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and did a second career as an English teacher in Atlantic City following administrative positions at the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science and Villanova University.

### **THE LIVE GOLD FISH AND THE RAW ONION – FACT OR FICTION**

When I pledged in the 1965 we (certain pledge classes) might have had some interactions with onions and goldfish. (John C.). I asked Jack about this “tradition” and he shared the following with me:

“Oh, Yeah, the gold fish.” Another beer blast at the point of "mellowness"

Lee B., Mr. B’s son, was into swallowing live gold fish. He demonstrated this talent while standing on a table above the fray. Not to be outdone, others followed suit. Among them was one of the tastiest looking coeds of all times. I believe Ed C. was dating her at the time. (Don't recall the name - but she was hot by universal opinion.) As she stood on the table, dropping the squiggly little critter into her mouth having just scooped it out of its fish bowl, she began chewing instead of swallowing. Some sporadic gestures of barfing followed - maybe some barfing wasn't just gesture. Don't recall the time and place. I think her name was B. something?

### **GEORGE BENNYHOFF '65**

#### **MARGIE’S ROOM**

During the school-year of 1963-1964 I lived in Margie’s room on the third floor of the Sigma Pi, Beta Psi, house at 12 Smith Street. Dan Stankoski and Terry Steinly were my roommates.

At the time, that was the only room on the third floor; the remainder of the third floor was just open space – attic space for storage. The room had “bay windows”

which hung out over the front of the building. You could step out into the small area of the bay windows but it didn't seem safe so we usually refrained from doing so. A long, steep, staircase led to the third floor with a door at its entrance from the second floor. I remember it had a new lock on the door which was unused at this time.

I also remember that when that when we went out at night (usually to the Town Tavern or Rudy's) the light in our room would be ON when we returned. Oh yeah, it was daylight when we left and we didn't leave any lights on!

This third floor room was Margie's room. When we purchased the house, the "story" was that the previous owner kept the ashes of his deceased wife, Margie, in that third floor room –sort of a shrine. And even after our brothers moved into the house, Mr. Meehan (I believe that was his name) kept that third floor door locked for several months, barring the brothers from accessing the third floor.

Was it Margie's ghost keeping that light burning? – we all thought so!

Jevo Brothers, George Bennyhoff '65

**Allie Urban**

### **"Margie, the Sigma Pi Ghost"**

I never really believed the ghost stories and used to tease the guys that did. But, once I was staying at the House over Christmas break and there was only one or two other guys around.

I went to sleep in the cubby-hole room on 3rd floor. My dream (I assume it was a dream) was I heard wind howling and people screaming and running out of the House. I tried to get up but I felt a pressure holding my body down. When I finally was able to move I went down the steps and the other guys were in the TV room watching late night movies and they said I was white. I told them the deal and they laughed but we stayed up until the sun came up watching old movies.

Maybe it was Margie?

Allie

**Zach Kaytes - September 30, 2016**  
**Sigma Pi - My Personal Experiences -**

I know that these anecdotal comments are longer and more detailed than a few paragraphs that I was asked to submit here by Dr. Connelly but I feel my experiences cannot be told without more elaboration. Those few

years that I was an active Sigma Pi member are such a big part of the history of the fraternity and many things happened that a lot of different people played a hand in.

It should be noted here that I feel I grew up in the house. When I moved in I was a boy. When I moved out (for the second time), I was a man.

In the beginning I spoke with Dave Zehor, a senior Sigma Pi alumni, over the phone in November of 2009. I told him I needed a place to live for next semester and the conversation lead to him telling me about the availability of [12 Smith Street](#). I then assembled a group of guys to potentially move into the house and went to an interview at the house performed by the Beta Psi Housing Authority on December 1, 2009. I and eight other East Stroudsburg University Undergraduates signed leases on December 12, 2010.

On January 1, 2010 the official leasing period began for nine East Stroudsburg University Undergraduates at [12 Smith Street](#). The BPHA informed Sigma Pi Headquarters of their hard work and commitment to their brotherhood was brought to the attention of [Chris Brown](#), Grand Second Counselor. On 2/20/10, Founders Day, [Chris Brown](#), the Grand Second Counselor of Sigma Pi Fraternity International traveled to East Stroudsburg. On Founders Day, approximately thirty Beta Psi Alumni gathered in the Meeting Room at [12 Smith Street](#). The tenants were not invited to the [1pm](#) meeting. Following the meeting, Chris made the Tenants an offer they could not refuse; the opportunity to become the New Founding Fathers of the Beta-Psi Chapter of Sigma Pi Fraternity international. The first step was to start an interest group of at least twenty-five eligible students and then gain the approval from the university to bring back the fraternity.

The BPHA was working on getting a meeting with the University and I believed the “interest group” would need to do something prove we were worthy of colonizing Sigma Pi. We organized *Whitehouse Park Opening Day Wiffleball Tournament to benefit the American Heart Association* as a way to prove to the Alumni, University, Community, and International Office that we were in fact the right group of guys to Colonize Sigma Pi. The wiffleball tournament was on 5/1/10 and proved to be a great event for our families, friends, community members, and ESU faculty to enjoy the beautiful [12 Smith Street](#) property. Many pictures and details from the event were incorporated into the presentation to the ESU Administration on the morning of 5/5/10. We received the go ahead in early June.

We spent a lot of time communicating with Sigma Pi International and the University that summer. We talked about the colonization process with the director of expansion, Will Wojcik. After numerous phone calls and discussions, Will finally planned colonization 11/18/10.

In November of 2010, Will Wojcik, spent a week with our interest group to train the officers and establish the structure we would use as a colony. On November 18, 2010, twenty-eight young men officially colonized Beta-Psi Colony. President, Zachery Kaytes, Vice President Michael Petrillo, Treasurer, Jim Mershon, Secretary, Rocco Romano, Sergeant at Arms, Frank Bricker, Historian, Zak Tupper.

The spring semester of 2011 was what we considered to be our first semester as a fully functioning organization. We began the semester with twenty-eight men set on reestablishing the Beta-Psi Chapter at East Stroudsburg University. Michael Ayalon, the Sigma Pi Province Archon for our region, came to visit our colony [on Saturday January 22<sup>nd</sup>](#). He spoke to our chapter about fundraising, recruitment and structure. Mark Brisco, the Executive Director of Sigma Pi Fraternity, made a trip to East Stroudsburg to check up on the progress of our colony. He met with the Executive Board during the day and met with our entire colony and some alumni that evening. This guidance set the tone for what was to be a very productive semester.

For rush week we set up informational meetings on campus and organized several rush events. We customized rush t-shirts with our slogan "An Offer You Can't Refuse.". We had over fifty eligible students come out for rush and brought in 19 new members. There was no shortage of community service for Sigma Pi. We were awarded with a plaque for our outstanding achievement and hard work with Big Brothers Big Sisters Bowl for Kids'. Colony members also spent many hours at the Pocono Lutheran Village retirement home interacting and spending time with the elderly. We also had our second annual White House Park Opening Day Tournament to Benefit the American Heart Association. We organized a fashion show with the sisters of Alpha Omicron Pi with clothing donations from the ESU Bookstore. Right before Easter break we hosted the first Annual Easter Egg Hunt and hid eggs all over our property.

In the fall 2011 semester, we began with one goal in mind; find our true founding fathers that were dedicated to earning back the Beta-Psi Charter. Throughout the time of being a colony, we had come a long way in earning back the Charter in December of 2011. None of it would have been possible without the sweat equity and guidance from the Beta-Psi Alumni. On the morning of December 3, 2011 38 young men were inducted into Sigma Pi and took part in the rituals that made us Members and forever enshrined us as Brothers. We hosted our chartering Banquet at Shawnee Inn and Gold Resort. Over two hundred people were in attendance including Beta-Psi alumni and original founders. It was truly a beautiful event. We came a long way from being the "Unholy Tenants" to becoming Brothers of the Beta Psi Chapter of Sigma Pi.

Beta-Psi will forever have to strive for excellence in every aspect of the fraternity. The efforts to revitalize the once prestigious reputation must continue. To keep the Beta-Psi Chapter alive forever, the alumni, university, community, and international office must continue to challenge the Beta-Psi brothers to hold themselves to a high standard. The work is and never will be done.

Jevo