



SIGMA CHI FRATERNITY

Delta Delta Chapter

Leadership, Scholarship, Brotherhood

PURDUE UNIVERSITY



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"I will endeavor to retain
the spirit of youth"
~Sigma Chi Creed, George
Ade ΔΔ 1887

The Quest of the Sigma Chi Crest -- A 39 Year Journey

(This is the third of the trilogy of stories that centered on the Great Hall Fire of 1961. See [Great Hall Fire of 1961](#) and [The Great Piano Drop](#). It is a remarkable story that was told by Nick Fritsch '64 as he presented the restored Sigma Chi crest to the chapter at Delta Delta's 125th Anniversary Celebration banquet held in June 2000.)

And so the journey begins...

This is a story about a journey. A journey that took 39 years to complete, one that covered 2370 miles by car, truck and air. A journey paved with good intentions. A journey that represented in its own way the ongoing quest of one man to find the White Cross and fulfill a promise he made to the chapter 39 years earlier.

Sigma Chi Crest Damaged

Following the Blue Formal dance in 1961, a fire started in the decorations on the balcony and swept to the "blue sky" adornments above the Great Hall. The Great Hall, Game Room and Library were moderately damaged. Many items of chapter memorabilia were scorched, including the Sigma Chi crest which had been mounted above the Great Hall fireplace mantel.

As the restoration of the chapter house neared completion, Nick promised chapter advisor, Cordy Hall, that he would repair the crest's broken and blistered wood over the summer of 1962. Summer ended with Nick earning enough money to return to Purdue and the crest untouched. He had realized that he, not only did not have the tools to do a first class job, he did not have the woodworking skills. The summers rolled on, and three weeks after graduation, Nick was on active duty.

"Just the right shade of blue."

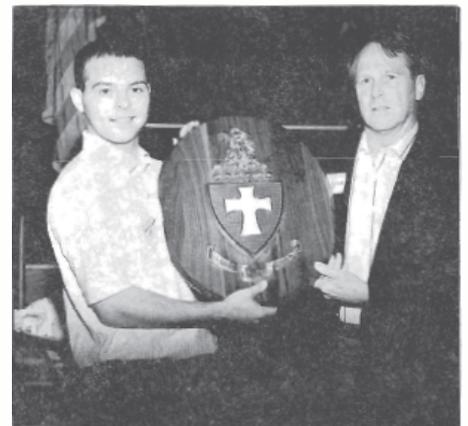
Life continued for Nick after the Army – starting a career, wedding, children and more Army in the Reserves. Upon retirement in 1998 and the 125th Anniversary Celebration looming, Nick stated he was "out of excuses". On a Christmas holiday visit to Indianapolis, Nick finally found a lumberyard that could do the necessary millwork. He had them create a new walnut backboard for the crest.

Now he had to restore the brass, scroll, Norman Shield and the eagle from 39 years of tarnish, corrosion and rust. Nick spent dozens of hours using sandpaper, crocus cloth and brass refurbisher. At the end of most days, Nick would have to stop for a day to give his fingertips time to heal. Four coats of white paint, mixed with just the "right" shade of blue, four coats of satin finish applied to the wood base, and very carefully mounting the crest to the base, eventually yielded the first class results that he had envisioned 39 years ago.

Crest Presented to Chapter

At the 125th Anniversary banquet Nick presented the chapter with the refurbished crest. In his comments he related how the journey of the crest reminded him of a quest that he had taken 39 years ago prior to his initiation into Sigma Chi. As he held the crest high above his head, the applause was thunderous. His commitment as a pledge 39 years earlier had been fulfilled. His journey and quest complete.

The restored crest was returned to its original place of honor and is mounted above the mantel of the Great Hall fireplace.



Nick Fritsch '64 (R) presents Travis Bonnell '01 chapter president with the 1960 restored Sigma Chi crest.



www.sigmachi.org

