



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 Story of the Rolling Peanut Pub

The Rolling Peanut Pub served as the center for brotherhood activities for 32 years in varying capacities. Operated for its first 10-15 years as a going business concern, it sold everything from beer to mixed drinks to Tombstone pizzas, and provided its industrious owners with a little spending money. For the latter half of its life, the Rolling Peanut Pub was used primarily during house social functions.



The room that served as the Sigma Chi bar has had many uses over the years. It was the original chapter room before being deemed too small for this function. Since then it has been a study/bedroom, a "date lounge", and today it is the Eldridge Room which is used as a study/meeting room and houses displays of some of Delta Delta's unique history.

How Did The Bar Get Started?

It is often asked how did the bar get started in the chapter house and how did it obtain its distinctive name? Steve Sturman '77, who was one of the Rolling Peanut Pub's founders, took the time to chronicle the early days of what has become a part of Delta Delta lore.

Looking For A Business Opportunity

Timothy Richard Byrnes '76 and I, Stephen W. Sturman '77, both pledged Sigma Chi in the fall of 1973. Tim was from Greenwood, IN and I was from Indianapolis. The following school year of 1974-1975, Tim and I were looking for a business opportunity. 202 Littleton had a room just off the Game Room that we called the Bum Room.



Steve Sturman '77 Circa 1975

Up until the late '60's female guests were not permitted to go the study rooms or sleeping rooms and the Bum Room was used as a "date lounge". By the early '70's with changing house rules allowing women upstairs, there was no longer a practical use for a date lounge. The Bum Room had fallen into disarray from infrequent use. It had little in it except some old couches that were used by the pledges when they spent the night in order to pull wake in the morning.

Chapter Ratifies Idea for the Bar

At some point, Tim and I decided it would make a fabulous in-house bar. We sketched out a design and approached the Chapter with our plan. We would use our own money to renovate the Bum Room and in return, we would operate a bar with the stipulation that it be open only after study hours, which ran from 7 pm to 11 pm Sunday through Thursday. With this vote of confidence, Tim and I set out to create a place for brothers to hang out, and for us to make a little money.



Tim Byrnes '76 Circa 1975

Tim Byrnes was a handy friend to have. I had no skills, but had access to my Dad's tools. Tim had skills and his family had owned a bar in Greenwood. I think I am being honest when I say, Tim taught me carpentry and I have been grateful ever since. Looking back, the bar was my education during my sophomore year.

Bar Takes Shape

The bar was "L" shaped and in the northwest corner of the room. We matched the pine paneling and built a padded bar rail. Brother Gary Ubeloher, who was a senior, worked for the local beer distributor. Gary offered to provide a tapper system at no charge, if we bought all our beer from him. We located a used refrigerator, drilled a hole into the door and mounted the tap system. It was big enough for one keg.

The top of the bar was a thing of beauty! We used a blow torch to darken the wood and built a lip. We then glued photos of prominent brothers and sweethearts on to the surface. At the time, you could buy a two part clear plastic resin. We bought gallons, mixed it in a bucket and poured a clear bar top over the photos. The fumes from the resin were horrible and it generated a lot of heat during the curing, but we survived and it worked.

In the center of the bar, we modestly had a picture of Tim and me on each side of a half-dollar coin with the founding year of the bar. The coin survived for several years prior to an industrious brother finally digging it out.

We came across a number of football "game skins" in the Goat Room. I cannot mention the location, as it is secret to this very day. The bar was decorated with vintage skins, old trophies, and a large photograph of Sigma Chi's "houseboy" from the 1930's and 1940's, Roy C. Slavens.

The Next Critical Pieces

We were close to being finished with construction and we had opened a bank account under the name, B & S Construction Company. We needed two more critical pieces of this puzzle, booze and a name for the bar.

I am not sure what Tim and I were thinking. Neither of us was 21 yet. That really did not figure into our planning. We were going to run a bar, serving underage drinkers, and do it at discount prices. We had a source for beer and I determined that I could buy liquor in Illinois with the help of a fake ID. This was before photo IDs and I crafted a lovely Canadian driver's license on the back of a check with Presstype. It was also before computers, so it was a clever piece of artwork. I grabbed the last of our cash and bought cases of booze in Champagne and the bar was set.

The Winning Entry

The bar name is the result of a naming contest. I can't remember who won, but the prize was free drinks. The "Rolling Peanut Pub" was named for George Ade's, 1905 Oldsmobile which he had given the moniker, the Rolling Peanut. Ade described the car as a "one cylinder Juggernaut, with a curved dash and a steering helm and a crank on the side like a hand organ."



Fabulous Smell of Beer, Whiskey and Cigarette Smoke

The bar opened in late fall and was an instant success. We initially served beer for 25 cents and mixed drinks for 50 cents. I recall the opening night the bar was rocking until late into the night. We were using a paper grocery bag as our cash register. At the end of the night, Tim and I locked the door, cleaned and mopped the bar area, and then with that fabulous smell of beer, whiskey, and cigarette smoke, we took turns dumping a bag full of money over each other's head.

Serving the Brothers and Their Guests

The Rolling Peanut Pub, although entirely illegal, served a very important place in the world of brotherhood. Rather than being in cars, heading to bars with fake IDs, the brothers could drink in the house, entertain guests there, and simply walk upstairs to their rooms. The bar was for the brothers and their invited guests. These guests were primarily women, but in its time the bar hosted the Dean of Krannert, the Dean of Student Life, Grand Consul Craig Nason, and many of the guests of the Old Masters program.



The bar continued to be a seven day a week social express train. Tim and I were exhausted. We started to hire some added bar tenders to help with the schedule. Finally, as my grade average went from a high B to a low D, it became obvious that Tim and I needed to get out of the bar business. Negotiations ensued with Phil Steele '77, Tim White '76 and Greg Volland '78 to transfer the bar's ownership to them for an undisclosed amount of money.

An Ongoing Magnet for Brotherhood

The Rolling Peanut Pub remained a huge success and a magnet for brotherhood during the balance of the 1970s and into the early 1980s. My final time in the bar was during Eta Beta in 1977. Eta Beta (as many of you are aware) is a time at the end of one's Senior Year when the senior brothers shed their house responsibilities and were toasted at a farewell dinner. Our pledge class, a historically mild-mannered group, on this occasion was not particularly well behaved. The Eta Beta dinner descended into a massive food fight. Our class left the Dining Room singing and headed to the Rolling Peanut Pub. There was some serious drinking and we were later joined by a dancer from a local strip club. I remember drinking and dancing and the next morning, our cook, Maggie, found me on the floor of the kitchen, peacefully sleeping without a stitch of clothing covering my 6'3" frame.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen W. Sturman, Delta Delta 1977

