

Jim's Sigma Chi Journey

Jim writes, "I joined Sigma Chi as an undergrad at Central Michigan University, but not until my junior year because I was busy developing my communications career the first two years. But along the way, I became friends with several Sigs and decided that their values and attitudes matched mine.

Becoming a Sigma Chi was one of the most important decisions of my life. While I enjoyed the social life, the leadership and spiritual aspects of the fraternity were more important to me. Once I got into it, I couldn't get enough of it and have really enjoyed the entire experience, including utilizing my academic skills for the chapter. I was selected Chapter Editor and, with the help of several 'contributing' brothers, Zeta Rho won Sigma Chi's Ross Award for creating the top undergraduate publications program in the country."



Jim Vrugink ZP '71

Continuing the Sigma Chi journey as an alumnus:

"My connections to Sigma Chi remained strong after graduation, becoming a Life Loyal Sig in 1972, and led to my first two full-time jobs in intercollegiate athletics as I was hired by Brother Will Perry to be his assistant sports information director at the University of Michigan in 1974 and by Brother John Pont to be SID at Northwestern University in 1978. I like to think that I earned those positions because of my communications skills, but the common bond of Sigma Chi certainly didn't hurt. I even lived in the Sig House at NU for my first three weeks on the job before moving into my apartment in Evanston."

"As a young bachelor in those jobs, I devoted some of my free time to having a great experience with the Theta Theta Chapter at Michigan, serving as chapter advisor and house corporation president, and then serving on two national committees (Publications and Public Relations) for Sigma Chi International Headquarters, which was located just three blocks from my condo in Evanston."

"By the time I arrived at Purdue, I was married and soon had a young family, so my 'free time' dwindled, but I very much enjoyed meeting many Delta Delta Sigs who were athletes, student assistants and members of organizations where I served as an advisor. I was impressed by how quickly and sincerely they encouraged me, a Sig from another chapter, to become part of their activities."

"Intertwining Purdue sports with Delta Delta connections was particularly fun ... as we created the Cradle of Quarterbacks (selected by fan vote to honor the top 12 Purdue QBs) and it ended up featuring five Sigs (Bob DeMoss, Bob Griesse, Mark Herrmann, Jim Everett and Drew Brees), all of whom I count among my friends."

“Serving as Delta Delta’s Faculty Advisor for 13 years allowed me to get to know the undergraduates and understand the challenges some of them faced academically. I also sat in on House Corporation meetings and became well acquainted with the inner workings of the chapter which I truly enjoyed.”

Staying Connected

Although Jim has made significant contributions to Delta Delta, he has still stayed in touch with his CMU Zeta Rho brothers. Jim noted, "I've maintained contact with many of my brothers from my CMU chapter, especially members of my Fall 1968 Pledge Class. Several members of that class (along with a few 'interlopers' from pledge classes before and after) gather on the second weekend of March every year in Toledo, Ohio, to keep in contact and share some of the same old stories and lots of laughs over and over again.”

This tradition started in connection with the Mid-American Conference Basketball Tournament, which was held for a few years in Toledo, but by the time the tourney shifted to Cleveland, the Sigs had established their traditions (same hotel, same restaurants, same beverage stores, same jokes and same exaggerated stories) so they continued in Toledo after the tournament went elsewhere.

“I've attended as many times as possible in recent years. This past March marked the 35th consecutive year of this gathering. It has changed a bit over the years, because now it's just a group of old men sitting around, having a couple of drinks and going to bed earlier and earlier each year, but ... what a blast!”



Jim’s family (L-R) Jaime, Jim, Kim and Marion

Kicked Out by Bo

On Nov. 6, 1976, after No. 1-ranked Michigan lost to Purdue 16-14, Jim made national news when he was kicked out of the Wolverine locker room by fiery head coach Bo Schembechler. Jim was an assistant SID at Michigan from 1974 to 1978.

“I was in the wrong place at the wrong time when he thought I was standing outside the coaches’ locker room with a horde of media members before he had a chance to cool down,” Jim says. “My mistake was telling the media that Bo had kicked me out. That became their story. But Bo was great about it, telling me a few days later that, with a name like mine, I needed something like that to boost my career. It is ironic that I ended up back at Purdue full-time less than six years later and remained there for 37 years. I have been very fortunate and blessed.”