

Sensing Brotherhood

It was a question that deserved an answer. More than that, it demanded one. How could he express what this undefinable word had meant to him? One- word substitutes came to mind. Friendship. Chivalry. Service. Bridgebuilder. Fraternalism. Belonging. Home. Family.

“What is brotherhood?” the new guy asked him. “Can you see it?”

The brother began to reply, “No.” But then he realized that you could see it. He had seen it in a midnight drive to pick up a brother from the airport. He had seen it in an inter- fraternity basketball game where the brothers were a sea of red and buff, proudly wearing their letters as badges of courage and pride. He had seen it in a wave, a pitcher of beer being poured. He had seen it... and the list went on and on, forever it seemed.

“Can you taste it?”

Again the answer “No” came to the brother’s mind. How could you taste a feeling? Then, he realized that you could taste it. You can taste it in a late night pizza shared with toppings of girls, sports and school. In a pitcher of beer that holds stories and fears of the same, in a barbecue that says, “Oh, I just love days like this!”

“Well, can you smell it?”

Upon this question, the brother immediately thought of Monday night dinners; food eaten by an entire fraternity united one. The smell of sweat that represents good, hard, physical work. The front yard after it has been mowed. The basement. The unmistakable smell of stale beer the morning after a party; a party that says, “We don’t care about what our problems are, tonight we are having a good time.”

“Can you hear it?”

The brother smiled. He had heard brotherhood every day since his own initiation. “I need a favor.” How often had he been on both sides of this that plea? a plea that said two things at the same time: “I need you” and “I’m here for you” He’s also heard “Are you going out tonight?” oh, so often. Just being with a fraternity brother for a few hours seemed to alleviate the everyday problems and pressures. More simply, a loud shout from across campus that says, “Hey, I feel lost in this place, too. You are a familiar face and it’s good to see you.”

“Can you feel brotherhood?” the new guy asked, still not quite sure of the meaning of the word.

Again the brother smiled because again he knew that he had felt brotherhood in one form or another, during his fraternity life. In a warm, vibrant handshake during rush. In a High-Five during a basketball game. In a hug that says, “you are my brother and you will always be apart of me;” a hug that is given after a long absence or upon entering a new one. Then his smile broke wider.

He thought about the past few years and the tremendous changes he had gone through. He was unbelievably happy and had a warm feeling inside. Yet, he also felt insecure. Insecure because someday, someday soon, everything that had come and gone would be a memory. This chapter of his life would soon come to a close, but it would be a memory. This chapter of his life would soon come to a close, but it would be reread, relived and remembered for many, many years.

“What is brotherhood?” the new guy finally quizzed the brother.

The brother looked into the new guy’s eyes that were eager and innocent. It was in these eyes that the brother saw a reflection. Indeed that brotherhood would not die within him. Indeed, it is eternal.

“You’ll learn.” The brother’s smile grew even bigger.