

Anti-Hazing

I need to begin by saying that many chapters don't haze. They believe that fraternity does stand for friendship, honor and trust. I applaud those chapters for holding true to the principles of Delta Chi. I suggest that these chapters go public with their values. During rush, hand out a copy of your associate member program. At the bottom have a place for the "A" to sign and a place for the potential member as well. Above the signatures type an agreement that nothing will occur that is not in writing or all fees paid will automatically be refunded. You might even go so far as to require in your chapter's by-laws that the refund come from the members who perpetrated the unsanctioned activity. The associate can either leave or stay; it's his choice. The rest of this article will be addressed to those chapters that, in varying degrees, haze. While some kinds of hazing are worse than other kinds, any hazing is wrong and, therefore, absolutely cannot be tolerated.

I don't believe it is necessary or even desirable to push people down so that the next level looks "up" in comparison. Instead of establishing a period of second-class citizenship, I believe we should elevate being a member. Initiation should not signal the end of responsibilities but their beginning. The system many chapters use puts the burden on the most naive and unprepared at a time when what they really need is our support. Most of our associates are trying to adjust to college life in their first year away from their families. We should be assisting them in such life skills as acquiring good study habits and time management techniques instead of wasting their time and energy on mindless games; memorizing information that, just as the members before them did, they will forget before graduation; or activities simply designed to entertain the members.

I have heard members say that they are afraid of it being too easy to become a Delta Chi. I'm afraid too. But I'm afraid that it is too easy to remain a Delta Chi. If the behavior of our members were graded on the same scale as that of our associates, it would be the members who would fail. And badly. I heard a speech

by Doug Lange when he was Greek advisor at Iowa State in the 1970s. I'd like to quote from that speech:

"There are two ways to motivate human beings, you know that, the positive and the negative. The positive would require us to build a fantastic organization so achieving, so beneficial, so meritorious that any mature, intelligent adult would want to be a part of it. We'd have to beat them off with a stick. But that's work and that takes guts. So, we've slipped into the business of using the negative. We have made pledge training so unbearable that there is nothing a pledge wants more than to get out of it. He is therefore loyal, respectful, obedient, smiling, memorizing, walking in step, and you think what great enthusiasm he shows and what a fine active he will be. In fact, you write to all us alumni and say "We've just pledged the greatest pledge class in the history of the chapter." Then

you initiate him and nothing happens, and you can't understand it. What we don't understand we label, and we label it "Sophomoreitis." Then he gets to be a junior, doing some rushing, and he almost believes the stuff he

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is now telling the freshmen. But when he gets to be a senior, he hears the drumbeats of culture and philosophy, fairness and human concern, and real intelligence. What does he do? He moves out, doesn't he? We can't understand it. What we don't understand we label and call it 'Senioritis.' We fail to realize that no one ever wanted in, just out of pledgeship."

"We need to realize that respect and loyalty are earned commodities. If a chapter has trouble and calls me saying, 'Our pledges have become disinterested and disloyal, please come and pump them up.' I go, but I don't look at the pledges, I look at the chapter because I know that if that chapter were engaged in doing things so completely worthwhile, if their programs were so fantastically important to the mature, intelligent adult; you wouldn't have to pass laws requiring respect. If the pledges aren't interested in the chapter, if they are not loyal to it, the chances are there's no reason why they should be."

So, as the crutch for the unimaginative and lazy, we lean on hazing to do our work for us. And we rationalize. "It was 'meaningful.'" "You can't just give Delta Chi away!" And when several of the associate class disaffiliate due to the way they were treated: "They weren't 'Delta Chi material.'"

Why do so many who disagree with hazing not speak out? Many are afraid of the hazers. Many do but are ridiculed by the hazers as wimps trying to destroy the "meaning" of fraternity while others sit in silence rather than incur the wrath of the hazers. They stick around not because of the hazing but in spite of it, hoping that the next time will be better. If it continues, as it usually does, they become disenchanted and go inactive or simply graduate and not come back. There's an old saying that seems especially appropriate here. "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." (Edmund Burke, 1729-1797). If you are opposed to hazing, then join with others of a like mind in your chapter and fight it. In most chapters I think you'll find that the hazers are in a clear minority. Their strength in vocalizing their support of hazing hides their true weakness in numbers.

What about those who are going through it? Well, first off we never tell them that they are in for a hazing experience. I've always wondered, if the hazers believe that it is such a great an experience, why we don't tell those we are rushing what type of "great" activities are in store for them? Because we know that if they knew the truth beforehand they wouldn't join. Instead we tell them about Delta Chi's historic stance against hazing. Admittedly, some individuals claim they expect, even want, to be hazed. But they are the exceptions. I suppose there is a bit of masochism involved here or simply a daredevil attitude. But that doesn't make it right; especially for the rest of the class. At the beginning of the program we start with small things and, as the associates develop an emotional attachment to Delta Chi and have invested time and effort, we ratchet up the hazing. As they go through the program some of the lesser hazing is actually funny. Often, it gets out of control and goes too far, but who wants to appear to be a "wimp"? The culmination is I-Week where the most intense hazing usually takes place. So close to initiation and after investing so much, they put up with it, often promising themselves that, once they are initiated, they will put a stop to hazing.

After years of such "promises" it still continues. Why? Well, cognitive dissonance may explain part of it. If they don't believe others should go through it then why did they? Were they stupid? Surely not. Then it had to be "meaningful." The "Dark Side of the Force" may also be involved. Some individuals are motivated by strong basal instincts. They enjoy dominating others. They believe in the 'rites of passage' mentality: "You have to earn being a Delta Chi." "He wasn't 'man' enough to get in." It is unclear to me whether this is a genetic trait or a learned behavior. There is evidence that individuals who were abused by their parents turn out to be abusers themselves. Individuals motivated by the "Dark Side" are convinced that any effort to remove hazing from the fraternity is going to tear it down. "You just can't give it to them!" The Founders of Delta Chi and the Founders of their local chapter somehow seem to be exempted from this logic. Despite their never having been hazed, they are usually revered by all. Others respond by saying that they aren't hazing their associates half as much as once was done at their chapter. At that I can't help picturing a guy on trial for beating his wife telling a judge he can't understand why everyone is so upset, he isn't beating his wife half as much as he used to. Does he expect an award? A "Keep up the good work!"??

Am I saying that all hazing is life threatening? Hardly. Much of it is simply silly, but, while it is not dangerous, it is still wrong. Often it is "only" demeaning or simply a waste of time. A good question to ask is whether the initiated members continued doing the same activities, or, once initiated, did they immediately stop? If they stopped it was either a waste of time or hazing or both.

Am I saying that hazing doesn't work? No, unfortunately it often does. But it also has negative side effects. Good men have quit because of it. People can get hurt. Parents don't allow their sons to join out of fear of what may happen. Considering most of our associate member class GPAs they have a right to be concerned. Many colleges have banned fraternities from accepting entering freshmen to protect them from us. Some have even banned us from accepting any freshmen at all. Whole Greek systems can be, and have been, banned because of it. There are all sorts of undesirable side effects that we need to consider. Time and time again, I've heard statements like: "But

we didn't think . . ." or "It never got out of control before," after tragedy has struck. Why do we have to wait until it is too late? And then, after our memory of the tragedy fades, go back to hazing again? It is easy to see why several international fraternities have banned pledgship and some universities are considering it.

Well, what are we calling "hazing" then? Many members claim that they were never told what was hazing (please see pp. 75-77 of the Cornerstone) but they always seem to know exactly what to hide when outsiders come around. Here are some of the usual tests to determine if an activity is hazing: If you have to ask, it probably is. Would you be willing to do it in front of (pick one) your parents, a judge, the Founders, the University president? Would you want the press to cover it? Does it promote individual as well as group dignity?

There are different types of hazing and various degrees of each one. The one that comes quickly to mind is physical: calisthenics, paddling, deprivation of sleep or normal amounts of food and water. Next is mental: calling the associates derogatory names, interrogations, memorization of unimportant information, etc. Another class of hazing is what I would call situational such as drop-offs or treasure hunts. In January of this year, two pledges in another fraternity were taken to a different state, dropped off and told to find their own way back. As they were walking down the road, four occupants from a passing car chased them, trapped them and stabbed one of them in the back with an eleven-inch knife. A few years ago at a college in the Midwest, a pledge was dropped off on an interstate a couple of miles from campus and told to walk back to the chapter house. He was supposed to think about his commitment to the chapter. He was found severely beaten and in a coma. An untold number of drop-offs have taken place without such severe consequences but, because of the potential for harm, they must be stopped. At a Delta Chi Chapter not that long ago, a member was grabbed by a group of associates who were going to throw him into the shower because he had just become lavaliered. In his efforts to resist he tore a muscle and when they accidentally dropped him, he hit his head on the water cooler in the hallway and suffered a concussion. Of course, the individuals involved said, "We never intended . . ." I use this to illustrate that hazing is not always done to associates.

Mental hazing may be more insidious because the

harm that it can do is less apparent. Whether it is physical, mental or situational what right do we have to do such things to another human being? How do we know that the next young man we put under physical stress doesn't have a heart murmur? How do we know that the next young man that we put under emotional stress doesn't have a hidden vulnerability? How do we know that the next young man we abandon on a county road isn't going to come to harm? Delta Chi's Cardinal Principle is "Justice to Our Fellow Man." Are we living up to that when we choose to haze someone? Where is the justice? It seems especially antithetical to the values of "fraternity" when we purposefully deceive those who have shown us the ultimate trust of placing their well-being in our hands. Any fraternity that bases its "brotherhood" on deceit is fundamentally flawed. I have been told that deception, when handled correctly, can provide a positive, uplifting experience. I firmly disagree and feel that it runs counter to everything for which we claim to stand.

Simply put, there is no right way to do a wrong thing.