

“This isn’t a business; it’s a Fraternity!”

Does that mean that chapter members should not be charged a fair, market rent or adequate monthly dues? Does that mean that “brothers” should be allowed to run up a large debt to their chapter and then leave while bills go unpaid and normal maintenance goes undone? Does that mean that no money is set aside to help pay that year’s fair share of the new roof (or whatever) that will soon be needed? And does that mean that next year’s members are left to pick up the pieces? That is a strange kind of brotherhood!

It is our responsibility to pass on to the next generation of brothers a Delta Chi better than the one we inherited. Just because there may not be a mortgage to be paid doesn’t mean that a fair rent shouldn’t be collected and a maintenance reserve started. Where the rent has been lowered after a debt retirement there has been a grave injustice done to the future brothers of that chapter. The next few years will be using up the asset, its roof, its furnace, its wiring, etc., and not paying for it. The men involved will be in effect walking away with pieces of that building. Years from now, when a particular renovation might cost, let’s say, \$100,000 and there is no money set aside to help pay for it, will all those alumni give back those pieces they took? Unfortunately not. Who then will pick up the tab for the cheap ride that was had in the past? The new *brothers* will. Let’s not call that brotherhood.

The same effect occurs when a “brother” is allowed to build up a debt to his chapter and then leaves without paying. When the “D” tries to make him pay, others in the chapter say it isn’t “brotherly.” The next time that happens, have the “D” add a fair share of the delinquency to the monthly dues of those individuals and ask them to carry their “brother” until he decides to pay them back. Now who isn’t being “brotherly?” What would he have done if he had lived in an apartment or a dormitory? I’d hazard a guess that he would have paid his bill. If I’m right then why can’t we expect him to pay Delta Chi as well? What values are we teaching when we allow this sort of thing to take place? Are we guilty of tempting our own brothers to abuse Delta Chi by painting themselves into a hole from which they cannot get out? Meanwhile, the rest of the brothers suffer from an insufficient food budget and a house in disrepair. That’s not brotherhood. We must not only have expectations, but enforcement as well.

How many empty beds are in the chapter house? How many “brothers” don’t want to rush anyone because they might have to give up their privacy when the new man moves in to what should be a double? Why not double everyone up and lock all the empty rooms? Unlock the rooms as men move into the house. How much revenue is the chapter losing from all those empty beds? And some

then have the nerve to say that the alumni aren’t sending enough money. Is that brotherhood?

Once in a while there will be a house corporation that is doing its job and either the undergraduates and/or other alumni decide that it is “ripping off” the chapter. “Where is all that money going?” “The mortgage isn’t that big!” Doubt as to the integrity of the house corporation officers grows. Accusations are even made. Shouting matches break out and often the house corporation officers quit in disgust. Sometimes their positions are filled, sometimes they aren’t. A couple of years after one of these incidents where the positions remained empty and the chapter “D”s “took care of things” the chapter was shocked to see its house listed for auction for failure to pay the property taxes. Apparently, the house corporation officers did need the money for something. Needless to say the rent had been lowered and what little was available had been spent elsewhere.

Why doesn’t the house corporation board just show everyone the books? A simple accounting of revenues and expenditures could suffice. Maybe an internal audit, or better yet a real audit by an independent accounting firm should be considered. Often, the existing revenue doesn’t begin to cover the basic necessities like mortgage payments, property taxes, property and liability insurance and utilities. Let alone maintenance or major renovations. In the all-too-rare situation where there is something left over after the

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basics are covered, many house corporations are afraid that the undergraduates will want the “extra” money back instead of establishing the proper reserves. Inflation alone should cause the realization that just standing still is actually falling backwards. Finally, if the good years are allowed to only break even, how are we going to cover the lean years? Delta Chi’s dead chapter list can answer that one. In the name of “brotherhood” and with the cry of “This isn’t a business; it’s a Fraternity!” some of our own members have been guilty of damage beyond measure. Not out of any malicious intent but simply out of a lack of understanding of what it really takes to keep a fraternity chapter operating. That’s where mature, alumni involvement is essential.

When the chapter starts operating as a business, when brothers live up to their responsibilities and obligations, when there is sufficient money to keep the house in good repair and looking nice, when there is an adequate budget for food and social activities, I think you will be amazed at how strong the brotherhood will become. Brotherhood doesn’t stop at the pocketbook — it starts there. If you wish to enjoy its benefits, you must first live up to its obligations. It’s a two-way street.