leadership professionalism service fraternalism in architecture & the allied arts

THE ARCHI

OF

ALPHA RHO CHI

WINTER 2009-2010
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Our deepest sympathy goes out to the family and friends of Brother Vincent Clarkson, whose untimely death this fall has deeply affected the Anthemios Chapter of Alpha Rho Chi.

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Last year Alpha Rho Chi lost an exemplary brother: Ralph Rapson, FAIA, creator of the Greenbelt House (Case Study House No. 4), the original Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, numerous US government buildings abroad, and the “Rapson Rapid Rocker.”
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I remember being somewhat surprised, as a fledgling member of APX, by periodic references to “the Supreme Architect of the Universe” in the various rites and rituals of pledging and initiation. I’d certainly never thought of APX as a religious organization—our brotherhood includes members who adhere to a wide variety of religious doctrines, as well as agnostics and atheists. Whatever Leo Bauer, Chandler Cohagen, and the other founding brothers intended when they first coined that phrase in 1914, it’s certainly open to interpretation today.

But however you may feel about the notion of a “Supreme Architect,” there’s no denying that our lives sometimes take turns we don’t expect. In fact, that seems to be an overarching theme of this year’s Archi. Many of this year’s submissions, whether reflecting on the past or looking to the future, deal with somewhat startling changes in direction. There’s the rather naïve freshman who thought he was merely going to lunch but who was actually embarking on a lifelong journey of brotherhood and friendship. There’s the licensed architect turned stay-at-home dad who’s now contemplating a wholly new path for his life and career. There’s the young husband and father who answered a call to pack up his family and head to Ecuador. And there’s the fraternity itself—founded by men and for men—which broke with decades of tradition by opening its doors to women.

Most of these changes have been for the best (albeit sometimes daunting at the outset). But not all change is welcome. Just days before sitting down to prepare this issue, I received some very sad news from Anthemios, my alma mater: one of the active members, a young man much loved by his fellow students, died unexpectedly this fall. As we extend our heartfelt condolences to those mourning his loss, may we be reminded to live our own lives always to the fullest—whatever unexpected directions they may take.

Fidelitas, Amor et Artes.

Karen L. Marker
Archi Editor
A LITTLE STORY ABOUT APX

by Bill Livingstone, Andronicus Alumnus
(University of Southern California, Los Angeles)

“Hi, my name’s Al Guchy, how you doin’?”
“Uh, OK, how do you do?”
“I see you’re registering for the College of Architecture.”
“Yes, I am.”
The tall, good-looking fellow asked, “What’s your name?”
“Bill Livingstone.”
“Well, Bill, how about joining me for lunch with a few of my friends?”

I had no idea what was going on that September morning in 1942. I’d graduated from high school in June and was registering to enter the University of Southern California, College of Architecture. Several hundred freshmen crowded the big second-story gymnasium, signing up for the fall semester classes.

I said, “OK, where are we going?”
“Out to Carl’s restaurant, a new place—Crenshaw at Angeles Vista. You can ride with me.”

I was too naive to know Guchy was a fraternity guy who was rushing me to pledge his house. At lunch, with two or three other freshmen and half a dozen fraternity guys, I finally realized what was happening.

Al Guchy said, “I’m the president of Alpha Rho Chi fraternity—we call it ‘APX’ for short. We’re looking for architecture students to pledge APX this semester. We’re looking you guys over, and in a few days we’ll contact those of you we want to pledge our house. Meanwhile, tell us about yourselves.”

I told them I was a graduate of Dorsey High School there in Los Angeles, had
worked as an apprentice carpenter on the construction of the Basic Magnesium Plant in Henderson, Nevada, that summer, and was living with my parents.

“APX is a social fraternity, but with professional aspects,” Al explained. He said that it was made up of architecture and fine arts students only. Naturally, I felt flattered that a fraternity would be interested in me even before classes started.

The very next day someone from the fraternity invited me to come have lunch at their house at 710 West 28th Street—just north of the USC campus.

When I arrived at the house on Fraternity Row, I was a little disappointed to find a very old, two-story Victorian, not nearly as big or modern as the SAE house next door. But I parked my car and went up the front steps. Al Guchy saw me coming and came out to greet me with a handshake and a big, “Welcome to the Alpha Rho Chi house, Bill. Come on in.”

The place looked older on the inside than it did on the outside—dark wood paneling in the two-story entry hall with a balustraded stairway to the second floor gave it a turn-of-the-century elegance. Al said lunch would be ready in a few minutes and invited me and a couple of other freshmen, who had arrived before me, to accompany him on a tour of the place. The ground floor had a large paneled living room, a dining room for about twenty-five diners, a “music room,” a small library, and a large kitchen. The second floor was entirely for sleeping.

After Al showed us around, we potential pledges were separated and asked if we would like to pledge Alpha Rho Chi. I liked these guys and said yes. The “actives” never invited pledges to the weekly business meetings, but we enjoyed all the parties and shared our questions about school and classes.

I well remember one of my pledge events. One night four of the actives blindfolded the four pledges—Bob Myers, Hector Rodriquez, Bud Koch, and me—put us in the backseats of two cars, and drove us out of town. It took at least two hours and we had no idea where we were going.

About midnight the cars came to a stop we got out, still blindfolded. The actives walked us for about three minutes, leaving the cars behind. Then one of the actives said, “If any one of you removes your blindfold before fifteen minutes passes, you’re blackballed, out of the fraternity.”

We stood there, heard them walk away, the cars leave. We wondered if anyone was still there beside us. In about five minutes, Bob Myers said, “I’m taking my blindfold off.”

Bud said, “You better not—we have to wait fifteen minutes.”

Bob laughed and said, “Anyone looking at their watch? Time’s up as far as I’m concerned.” In a moment he said, “Just as I thought—there’s no one here, the coast is clear.”
We all pulled off our blindfolds and, in the almost zero light, I realized we stood in the middle of a grove of what appeared to be oak trees.

Man, was it dark—no stars, no lights, no nothing but trees. Someone said, "Let's walk this way"—it was as good as any direction. "I think this is the direction the sound of the cars came from." So we stumbled on through the dark and in about three minutes we came to a two-lane paved road. It was still black as the proverbial ace of spades, and with the overcast we couldn't even see the stars.

"Now which way?" Bob asked.

Something came to my mind. A few years before, my mom and dad had a cabin in San Dimas Canyon in the San Gabriel Mountains. Los Angeles County maintained a park located at the entry to the canyon. Somehow, I knew where we were. None of the other guys had ever been there.

I said, "OK, I think I know where we are, follow me." I knew the park was on the north side of the road and we had to walk west to get back to the little town of San Dimas. We walked with the park on our right and sure enough, after about three minutes we came to the park entry sign. In the dim light it read, "San Dimas Park—Los Angeles County."

"All we have to do is follow this road and we'll eventually come to the town of San Dimas, where we can phone for help."

We walked the road toward the little town of San Dimas and at that time of night, out in the boonies, we never saw a car or even a light in a window. But after about an hour we arrived in San Dimas—and the only light we saw came from the County Sheriff's substation window.

We opened the door and saw a deputy sheriff sitting behind his desk reading the newspaper. He looked up, somewhat surprised to see four college kids coming in out of the dark at two in the morning.

"What can I do for you boys?" he asked.

I explained the situation and asked if I could call home for help. After he stopped laughing at our predicament, he pushed his phone across the desk and said, "Sure, go ahead."

I called home and my dad answered the phone. He laughed, too, when I explained our quandary, but said, "OK, I'll send Rich (my high school brother) out for you."

We sat on the Sheriff's hard bench for about three hours, and it was sun-up by the time Rich showed up. He'd messed up Dad's directions and was lost for an hour. But all's well that ends well—we got back to school in time for classes—tired and chagrined, but happy to have that part of the pledge "instruction" behind us.

Before I could be formally inducted into APX, the Army decided they need me more than the fraternity. So, two years and ten months later, I pledged Alpha Rho Chi again. This time it went a little smoother and...
WHY JOIN ALPHA RHO CHI?

Alpha Rho Chi is a national, coed, professional-social fraternity for architecture and the allied arts.

APX is about

- academic excellence
- leadership
- lifelong friendships
- mentoring
- networking
- professionalism
- scholarships & awards

Discover what Alpha Rho Chi has to offer you! Contact your local chapter or the national fraternity through our web site at www.alpharhochi.org.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THE ARCHI of Alpha Rho Chi

LEADERSHIP • PROFESSIONALISM • SERVICE • FRATERNALISM

Share your thoughts!

It's not too early to start thinking about your submissions for the next issue of THE ARCHI!

We're looking for articles that have something meaningful to say about the issues that affect you most. You can write about projects, research, ideas, or whatever topic is on your mind. Submissions should appeal to a broad audience of readers in architecture and the allied arts, and should be written from a personal perspective.

We're especially interested in submissions that bring into play one or more of our four key tenets: leadership, professionalism, service, and fraternalism.

Send your submissions (text and image files on zip or CD) to
Karen L. Marker
Archi Editor
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or by email to archi@alpharhochi.org
by June 15, 2010.
I became a full-fledged "brother" in February, 1946. Because I married a few months later, I never lived at the fraternity house, but I participated in most of their activities.

I remember a Halloween party in about 1949. We had to enter the house through the cellar and come up the darkened stairway—all intended to be very spooky. In addition to major Halloween decorations, there was a particular punch with vodka. The big bowl emptied after an hour and more had to be made out in the kitchen. While several guys were adding the grapefruit juice and vodka, I found an empty vodka bottle and while no one was looking, I filled it with water at the kitchen sink. I took it over to the punch bowl, said, "how about another bottle?" and started pouring it in like it was vodka. Some guys said, "No, no, no more," and others said, "Yes, yes, just what we need."

When we left about midnight, the faculty chap
erone was asleep on the ping pong table out on the front porch.

Most APX parties were much more sober. One installation party was held at the Beverley Glen Hotel in Beverly Hills—very posh. One of the actives—I don’t remember his name anymore—was dating a Hollywood starlet by the name of Diana Lynn. OMG! Was she ever beautiful in that strapless dress. Mostly because of her, it was a very memorable evening. Even my wife, Theresa, was impressed.

During my years at USC and Alpha Rho Chi in the late 1940s, I made many friends, but over the years two have remained particularly close: Ken Norwood and Ken Hohmann. Maybe the reason is, after graduation they became urban planners just like me.

I first met Ken Norwood in Stalag Luft IV in November, 1944, near the little town of Kiefheide, East Prussia, Germany. He had suffered severe wounds to his face and a bro-
ken leg when his B-24 was shot down in April of 1944. My B-17 had been shot down on November 2nd of that year.

After the war, when I was back at USC, I met him one day; he was a freshman in the College of Architecture and I was a sophomore. Ken joined APX also, and, like me, married while still in college. Because of our earlier acquaintance in Germany, we became quite close. But upon graduation, we inevitably separated—he went back to his hometown of Fresno, and Theresa and I moved to Riverside.

One day in about 1965 I ran into Ken at a planners’ conference. From that day we have communicated and have been together many times. Ken has lived in Berkeley for many years, and we keep in touch by mail and e-mail. He is the author of a fine book on community living.

Ken Hohmann was in my class at USC and has been a chum all these years since graduation in 1950. This Ken suffered frostbite during the Battle of the Bulge while in the infantry during WWII. Because he worked for many years with the Fresno City Planning Department, he got to know my son-in-law, Ken Koch, who worked for the city after he received his master’s degree in city planning from Fresno State. In college, Ken and his lovely wife, Doris, and Theresa and I went out many times to celebrate life.

I’ve contacted other APX fraternity brothers from time to time over the years, but none have been as close as my two Kens.

I recently Googled APX to see what was going on. To my amazement I found the old Victorian APX house at 710 West 28th Street had been torn down and the active members now live in a new “old house.” The Andronicus chapter house is currently a recognized historical structure by the County of Los Angeles, and is awaiting placement on the Federal Register of Historic Structures.

But most impressive to me, of the twenty-five current students on the active roster, fifteen are women and only ten men—and the women are referred to as “brothers.” Boy, have things changed since my days at APX.

The website described the many fraternity activities—architectural retreats, books for the Pierre Koenig Library (Pierre was a year behind me at USC), fundraising for scholarships, and Founder’s Day events. The social calendar even included an “ugly sweater” party, so it isn’t all work and study. An ugly sweater party is something we never thought about 60 years ago—but then, by today’s standards, everyone’s sweaters then were ugly.

How and when did women become a part of APX, anyway?

See page 20 for the full story.

Bill Livingstone is a retired urban planner living in Santa Barbara. He’d love to hear from any of his old APX brothers; you can reach him at blivingstone@cox.net.
Steve and I met as freshmen at the University of Illinois. We were both architecture majors. Together we weathered the rigors of the curriculum, and we were both committed to becoming professional architects. While we started out on this track at the same time, Steve got done first. I took a couple of years off between undergraduate and graduate schools while Steve went straight through. By the time I was in graduate school, Steve had already been interning at a couple of firms in the Chicago area. He also got a head start on the licensing exams. So by the time I got around to the internship process, Steve had already attained the goal, the precious credential, the Holy Grail—the license to call himself a professional architect. If memory serves, he was about 26 years old, and through hard work, perseverance, and determination, he had reached the dream he had set out for himself years before.

What happened next is a matter of some speculation on my part, and the historical truth of it is more complicated than I may recall. But essentially, Steve, at 26, looked around and said, “Now What?”

In his book, Just Work, Harvard political theorist Russell Muirhead points out how our identity is formed by our work. He writes: "Along with family and religion, work remains one of the central activities constituting everyday life. Work is instrumental (we work to earn and spend), but work is rarely only that: it is also formative. Devoting the bulk of our waking hours to a particular activity over many years has an effect on who we are, whether we like it or not... What we do all day habituates and orients us in profound ways that over time impress a pattern on our emotional and intellectual life. Work might make us more compassionate or more stern, more decisive or more resentful, more deft or more argumentative. The
The way we spend the bulk of our waking energy can even come to inform our larger posture toward the world, depending on whether the work prods us to experience the world as hostile or alien, compliant or beneficent. This is why for many work cannot be merely another of life’s routines but is rather a key source of their identity. (26–29)

For me it took some time, but the role of stay-at-home dad did finally form at least enough of my identity that if today you were to ask me what I “do” I wouldn’t even mention architecture. I am a stay-at-home dad.

But even as that identity has formed, I have been sitting in a Now What? moment of my own for a couple of years. I’ve realized that as much as I enjoyed my previous vocation/identity as an architect, the job itself wasn’t exactly hard to give up. Nor has it been calling me back. The realization that I might not return to architecture is disconcerting, and yet it has opened up a new line of inquiry.

Further, my current job as a stay-at-home dad has a limited timeframe, given the propensity of children to grow up. So as I stand here wondering Now What? I have begun to consider who it is I really want to be in this world, the difference I want to make. Beyond what sort of work I could do in exchange for money, what sort of work could I do that engages my soul, my very being in this world? If my job, my vocation, is to form the key source of my identity, what do I want that identity to be? If I get the chance, right now, to determine who I want to be in the world, how do I go about figuring it out?

Jeanne DuPrau’s novel The City of Ember presents one possibility of choosing one’s vocation and ultimately one’s identity. In the story, DuPrau describes a small city that was constructed underground and is lit entirely by an aging electrical system. No one knows what lies beyond the edges of their town, other than total and complete darkness. The citizens of Ember have lived there so long that their arrival in Ember—their true history—is unknown to them; they do not even know that they are “underground.” Not knowing what they do not know, they live out their lives just as they assume the citizens of Ember have always lived. The children are educated in school until the age of 12. Their last day of school is called Assignment Day. On this day, with great ceremony and aplomb, they each draw a slip of paper out of a bag of faded green cloth. Upon that slip of paper is their assigned job. The jobs include messenger, pipeworks laborer, electrician, or supply depot clerk; the choices in the bag are entirely based on the current need of the city. Each student will hold their randomly chosen job for at least three years, after which they will be evaluated. If they are good at their assigned job, they will keep it. If not, or there is a greater need elsewhere, they will be reassigned.

When I first read the story of Ember I thought, how strange that one’s job, ostensibly how each citizen of Ember would live out his or her life,
would be so randomly determined. Where is the consideration of one’s talents and dreams? Where is the introspection? Where is the freedom of choosing for one’s self? It occurs (at least for me) that if I am to find meaningful work, work that is both instrumental and formative, randomly choosing a job out of a sack probably won’t get me there.

A book titled *Leading Lives That Matter*, edited by Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass, provides some direction to the question of how one may discern a formative vocation. The book is a collection of essays, poetry, and stories from sources that vary from Aristotle to Ben Affleck. The collection addresses the questions that arise when we have these vocational Now What? moments. Questions such as:

- Are some lives more significant than others?
- Must my job be the primary source of my identity?
- Is a balanced life possible and preferable to a life focused primarily on work?
- Should I follow my talents as I decide what to do to earn a living?
- Can I control what I shall do and become?
- To whom shall I listen?

These are the weighty questions that I grapple with. I read a bit, ponder the question for myself, then read a bit more. This is where I am comfortable. Thinking about the questions. Pondering the possible answers. Going deeper and deeper into my head. Somehow I have convinced myself that this process of finding vocation, of contemplating my current and possible future identity can best and only be done in isolation. Read. Study. Ponder. Think. Certainly I can come up with the answer.

And yet, neither the questions, nor any of the possible answers, nor any of my internal conversations have brought me that much closer to an answer as to what I should “do.” So if deep introspective contemplation doesn’t get me there—what else is there?

There is a story related by William Campbell in “Vocation as Grace.” In the story, a circus performer is asked why he chooses to make his living as a high-wire artist. His first response relates to the romance of the circus: the adrenaline rush of hurtling through the air to be caught by his partner’s hands; the amazement and appreciation of the audience; the adventure of travel. But then he confesses that the real reason he does these dangerous stunts night after night is because his family—his sister, his wife, and his father—are all part of the act. Each of them has problems which could spell disaster if he weren’t there to support them. As he begins to leave, the narrator then asks why his family stays. Campbell relates:

> He looked like he didn’t want to answer, wasn’t going to answer. But then he did. Turning from the door,... he looked me up and down and then,... as he disappeared, blurted it out: “Because I drink too much!”

In this story about a high-wire artist we discover that the real reason he chooses his work is not the romance of the job, but rather the opportunity to help and protect and be present for those we love; in spite of, even because of, their imperfections. He is there because that is where he sees himself most needed. Further, as he reluctantly admits, they are there to help and protect and be present for him in the same way. In this simple story, Will Campbell shows us that a vocational calling is not simply an internal, personal matter. Instead, as Schwehn and Bass note, “our [vocational] callings are best negotiated in community with others, through a
process that leads us to discern not only our own gifts but also our own needs and weaknesses, not only the rich potentials of the world, but also its poverty” (113).

What this teaches me is that I cannot discern my vocation entirely from within. What is necessary is to seek out a community. A community that can help me discern not only my gifts, but also my needs and weaknesses. A community that can help me to envision all the rich potentials of the world as well as its poverty.

I have been fortunate in my life to be a part of two such communities.

The first is Alpha Rho Chi. Alpha Rho Chi continues to be a rich, ever-renewing source of community, of family in the broadest sense of the word. I have found that the enduring support and unceasing encouragement given to me by our brothers has provided me the will and ability, and quite frankly, the practice of being in community with others. As I have struggled with my place in this world, our brothers have never erred in providing me with advice, council, and most importantly an open heart.

I found the second such community when we moved to Iowa, where we became members of the local Unitarian Universalist congregation. I began to volunteer for the church. I led committees. I helped manage a significant building renovation project. On a couple of occasions, I was offered the opportunity to speak from the pulpit. As I became more engaged with this community, people started asking me a seemingly simple question: “Greg, have you ever considered being a minister?” Now, the first few times, I was dismissive. I considered it a compliment, but not a serious inquiry. “Me? A minister? I can’t be a minister—I don’t really like people that much!”

Then I would be asked again, in different circumstances, by different people, in different contexts, in different ways. I think I was so stuck in my head—in my Now What? moment—that I could not really hear their question.

Then, one day—I heard it. I mean, I really heard it. I heard the possibility of my community helping me to envision all the rich potentials of the world, as well as its poverty. I heard the possibility of my community discerning my gifts, my needs, and maybe even my weaknesses. This was unexpected, disconcerting, and confusing. My first impulse was to run away from the very idea as quickly as I could.

However, once you discover those that are part of your larger family, those that love you and protect you despite your imperfections; once you finally hear what they are asking of you; once you hear the invitation to engage in a conversation about who you are to be in the world—well, I’m not sure that you can just run away. At least, I couldn’t.

So, over the last year or so, I have been exploring the question of whether being a Unitarian Universalist minister is what I am called to do. I am engaged in conversations with several active and retired ministers. I am talking with friends and family. I am talking with my brothers, too. I am visiting seminaries.
I have also spent time alone. I am reading a lot. I meditate a little. When I get too much in my head, too lost in what Quaker author and educator Parker Palmer describes as "the labyrinth of the inner life," I go back out into my communities and actively seek out those conversations that help me to discern.

You see, I have learned that it isn’t one or the other—deep introspection or conversation in community. If I am to truly find the answers to my vocational questions, if I am to truly discern work that is not only instrumental but formative as well, I must seek those answers both within myself AND in the communities of which I am a part.

Now, as for Steve—remember Steve? Some of you may be wondering what ever happened to him. While he may not say it in this way, in his questioning "Now What?" he too discovered that as much as he enjoyed practicing architecture, it was not fulfilling his vocational calling. And so he found himself engaged in similar conversations—both within himself and in his community—that ultimately led him to pursue a different vocation. So he left architectural practice, returned to school, earned a law degree, and is now an attorney in Chicago—a vocation that seems to fit, to make sense, and in some ways seems to be the obvious choice for him.

As for me, I am in this now. The narrative of this story is ongoing. Admittedly, the narrative is a bit of a roller coaster. Some days I am excited about the possibility of ministry as a vocational calling. For reasons I have a difficult time articulating, this seems to fit, to make sense, and in some ways seems to be the obvious choice. On other days... well, the feeling is more akin to absolute terror. I remember when our first daughter was born, I had plenty of doubts about being a father. Those doubts pale in comparison to the doubts I have now, as I consider ministry.

Notwithstanding those doubts, I have decided to follow this route to wherever it leads. To that end, I intend to enroll in seminary about one year from now. Furthermore, between now and then, I hope to engage in as many conversations as you all can stand to together discern our gifts and our needs and weaknesses—and to envision the rich potentials of our world, and its poverties. For it is within these conversations that we may all discover, or rediscover, our callings.

Notwithstanding his doubts, Brother Pelley has decided to follow this route wherever it leads.

Sources


In 1931, the Grand Council established the Alpha Rho Chi Medal to "encourage professional leadership by rewarding student accomplishment; [to] promote the ideals of professional service by acknowledging distinctive individual contributions to social life; and [to] stimulate professional merit by commending qualities in the student not necessarily pertaining to scholarship." Each year the Alpha Rho Chi Medal is offered to more than 100 schools of architecture, whose faculty select the graduating seniors they feel best exemplify these qualities.

The following students were awarded the Alpha Rho Chi Medal in 2009:

Andrews University
Arizona State University
Auburn University
Ball State University
Boston Architectural College
California College of the Arts
California Polytechnic State University
California State Polytechnic University
Carleton University
Carnegie Mellon University
Catholic University of America
City College of New York
Clemson University
Columbia University
The Cooper Union
Cornell University
Dalhousie University
Drexel University
Drury University
Florida A&M University
Florida International University
Howard University
Iowa State University
Judson University
Louisiana State University
Louisiana Tech University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Miami University
Mississippi State University
Montana State University
New York Institute of Technology
New School of Architecture
North Carolina State University
North Dakota State University
Norwich University
Oklahoma State University
Parsons School of Design
Pennsylvania State University
Pratt Institute
Princeton University
Rhode Island School of Design
Rice University
Roger Williams University
Savannah College of Art & Design
Syracuse University
Texas A&M University
Texas Tech University
Tulane University
Tufts University
Tyler School of Art
University at Buffalo
University Illinois at Chicago
University of Arizona
University of Arkansas
University of British Columbia
University of Calgary
University of California at Berkeley
University of California at Los Angeles
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado at Denver
University of Detroit Mercy
University of Hawaii at Manoa
University of Houston
University of Idaho
University of Illinois at Chicago
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Kansas
University of Kentucky
University of Manitoba
University of Maryland
University of Massachusetts at Amherst
University of Memphis
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota
University of Nebraska at Lincoln
University of New Mexico
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
University of Pennsylvania
University of South Florida
University of Southern California
University of Tennessee
University of Texas at Arlington
University of Texas at Austin
University of Texas at San Antonio
University of Toronto
University of Utah
University of Virginia
University of Washington
University of Waterloo
Virginia Tech
Washington State University
Washington University in St. Louis
Weston Institute of Technology
Woodbury University
Yale University

APX Medal 2009

Winners of the APX Medal 2009

• University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Amanda Wajrowski
• University of Illinois at Chicago Darya Minosvants
• University of Idaho Nicholas R. Hubof
• University of Houston Scott Frank Liang
• University of Iowa Keihly L. Moore
• University of Kansas Brian Lemmerman
• University of Kentucky R. Praing
• University of Kentucky Myra E. Shuffett
• University of Kentucky Jocelyn Tanner
• University of Kentucky Louis Peter Sorakup
• University of Kentucky Matthew E. Enumb
• University of Kentucky K. Zyginska
• University of Kentucky Sarah Wolbert
• University of Kentucky James C. McConnell
• University of Kentucky Elizabeth Richardson
• University of Kentucky Je’nen Chastain
• University of Kentucky Alex Gabriel Muller
• University of Kentucky Hannah Sebastian
• University of Kentucky Emily Kemper
• University of Kentucky Jessica Drake
• University of Kentucky Charles Dastre
• University of Kentucky Sunga Alamoudi
• University of Kentucky Kevin Hadwell Moore
• University of Kentucky Samira Ahmadi
• University of Kentucky Dennis Kirkhoff
• University of Kentucky Bradson Matthew Britton
• University of Kentucky Leslie A. McDonald
• University of Kentucky Jacob LaBarre
• University of Kentucky Sheila Mathies
• University of Kentucky Allison Leigh Ramsom
• University of Kentucky John Lee Grandbouche
• University of Kentucky Carmen Cervantes
• University of Kentucky Keith Stewart Lagroze
• University of Kentucky Evan Klingler
• University of Kentucky Mwange Gatunji
My personal "faith walk" assumes that there must be God to have created an earth as marvelous as the one we enjoy. My experiences, including those at Demetrios as a young student, confirmed that this God continues to be good and trustworthy and knows well the needs of his creation. He especially wants us humans to seek ways to make this creation a "safe place" where all can grow and thrive to their full potential. Our part in this process is sometimes revealed by revelation, but more often it is communicated by others who speak words that give us courage to do what we should. I've found that these "words of Truth" generally come from friends who trust God as I do.

So it was a surprise, but not completely crazy for me, when a friend from our church called on a Sunday afternoon in the autumn of 1965 and told me that he knew where I needed to go and what I needed to be doing in the near future. He explained that there was a project in Ecuador that needed all the skills he knew I had. He had been recruited for the task himself, but after three hours of discussion he had told the mission director that the person the director really needed was probably lying on a couch enjoying a football game. My friend and I had been working together to get a new church built in sunny Los Angeles, and he knew from our ongoing journey that I had capacities for getting projects like the one he'd just heard about done. And so, I got the call.

In brief, the need was the following. A school for missionary children had been started seven years earlier in Cuenca, Ecuador. Cuenca was an old and proud city situated in a beautiful valley high (9,000 feet) in the Andes mountains. Its people and culture were in many ways still entrenched in eighteenth-century living. The first teacher who came had great vision and saw opportunities to expand the school to others in the community. These included the children of upper middle class families, who knew that learning English well was an essential tool for success in good foreign universities. Love mandated that opportunities also be given to the children of the maids who served the missionaries and to other poor children in the neighborhood whose parents were willing to entrust their children to these new foreigners.

Even though attending this school carried the penalty of excommunication, the school was flourishing. It had grown from a small kindergarten to a full elementary school with almost 200 students. It was being directed by a gifted master teacher from the States and by a number of missionaries who had not been trained as teachers but whose major contribution was English. They, together with a small staff of Ecuadorian teachers, were operating the school.

The big decision was whether to continue to add new levels and to provide a high school
education. If this direction was chosen, they would need someone with proper experience and training for the challenges of high school administration. Expanding the school would also require more specialized buildings if the high quality of the education was to be maintained. At the time, a large traditional house had been modified to accommodate the school. With the current enrollment it was stretched to its limit, and class sizes were growing. Before moving forward the mission directors knew they needed someone who could both guide the construction of a new building and organize the new high school. It was a challenging opportunity to say the least.

Back in California, my wife, Jeanette, and I had just purchased a new home and I was trying to finish a master’s in school administration at USC. I was president of our church congregation and had taken a leadership role in getting a beautiful modern church built. We also had two young girls, aged two and four. While the timing didn’t seem to make sense for our careers, after six months of struggling over whether this was our opportunity to serve and thus be a blessing, Jeanette and I finally decided we should go.

In September of 1966 our family arrived in Cuenca. The need for teachers was so desperate that we were asked to go without first learning Spanish. When we began working on the project we soon discovered that the funding would be much more complicated than we’d thought. A German governmental agency was the likely donor, and the two pages of drawings of the project, with no site yet determined, were clearly not going to be adequate to secure financing for such a large endeavor. The need for an international bank and an architect who spoke English sent me off to the bigger city of Guayaquil. While seeing the banker, I asked him to recommend an architect. He was quick to respond that a good friend of his was a graduate of the architecture programs both at Princeton and at a university in Brazil, and he believed this friend would fill our need well.

What a gift he was. I first realized this when he proposed using six-sided classrooms for the elementary school and explained how he had come up with this idea. The needs list
he had reviewed had stressed the need for low maintenance and my desire for the students to be as close to the teachers as possible. When he visited his children’s classroom, he realized that the four corners of a normal classroom were the farthest points away. This, he said, led him to think about using a hexagon. Cheap labor made building the roofs in the shape of hyperbolic parabolas an economic possibility. This design opened up the windows around the top of the building so that they could capture the early morning sun and provide great light. The design also eliminated the dreaded flat roofs. Over and over the architect came up with creative solutions that met the educational and physical specifications that I had laid out and, most important, that created a special educational environment that could model openness to new thinking.

With a skilled young Indian worker, some old carpentry equipment sent from the States by my parents, and skills learned during my college years building homes, we were able to complement this great design with accents of furniture and walls covered with brightly colored formica. The color gave life to the poured-in-place concrete structure and natural brick walls, both of which were firsts in this old town. Outside we designed play equipment, including two geodesic domes, which were sprinkled throughout the joyful open spaces.

I had stipulated that the school break from the traditional boxed-in design which put classrooms around an open play area in the middle. One day, after construction was nearly finished, I saw a man standing for a long time outside the main student entrance. I approached him to see what he was doing. He said that he was a tourist from Canada and that he was just admiring this special school environment he had unexpectedly come upon. At that moment I knew that our architect had succeeded in meeting the goals we had laid out.

We also made the decision to include one room for special needs children, and to place this room in the center of the elementary school. This school was the first of its kind in Cuenca; when we announced that we were ready to accept new students, more than fifty applications were received. Most of the children came from behind closed doors, seldom exposed to life outside their families. When classes began we included these special kids at normal playtimes and sent them into regular classrooms at times. Back
then, “mainstreaming” was a progressive concept even for first world countries. We were way ahead of our time, but this endeavor, like the design itself, reinforced our message of openness and our ideas about how we should treat “even the least of these.” I have come to believe that my major calling was to create this new school, and that the regular school and building project were just the job I happened to be doing when this opportunity came.

Finally, after six years, the school was ready to dedicate. (We’d expected it to be a two-year project.) We were surprised to receive a call from the mayor of Cuenca, who wanted to know if we would consider participating in the town’s annual celebration, in a program that would also include the president of Ecuador. This was clearly a new day for our mission. The community was telling us how proud they were to have our school as a new resource. We were so pleased that we had answered the “call” and were able to be a part of this exciting project.

My wife and I have been returning regularly, alone and with groups, to visit with the Ecuadorian people whom we dearly love, and we have been told often that this project helped to open up a closed city.

To be able to use the gifts and skills I had learned in my first twenty-eight years of life was a wonderful blessing. Many of the attributes had been acquired with the encouragement of my Demetrios brothers. Even after I left the study of architecture in my third year, they continued to provide for a safe and productive place for me to develop during my college years. I am so grateful to them for allowing me to be part of the Alpha Rho Chi community.

Get in touch with your alumni association!

- Andronicus Alumni Association
  President: Alberto Lopez
  Tel: 522.252.7315

- Anthemios Alumni Association
  President: Danielle Likvan
  Tel: 847.612.8816

- Apollodorus Alumni Association
  President: Manuel Perez
  Tel: 352.275.4007

- Cleisthenes Alumni Association
  President: Adriana Equivel
  aegisquit@yahoo.com

- Cossutius Alumni Association
  President: Zek Methany
  Tel: 408.605.8632

- Daedalus Alumni Association
  President: Kristen Borg
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- Demetrios Alumni Association
  President: Eric Gilbe
  Tel: 443.850.0435

- Iktinos Alumni Association
  President: Linda Lilly
  Tel: 734.222.6069

- Metagenes Alumni Association
  President: Michele LeTourneur
  Tel: 753.554.2790

- Mnseicles Alumni Association
  President: Lauren E. Wold
  Tel: 763.744.1430

- Pythod Alumni Association
  President: Erin Froschheiser
  Tel: 402.550.6650

- Rabirius Alumni Association
  President: Jason Kasparek
  Tel: 240.605.8115

- Rhoecus Alumni Association
  President: Jennifer Haworth
  Tel: 521.225.1647

- Satyros Alumni Association
  President: Christina Caputo
  Tel: 480.540.4190

- Seshait Alumni Association
  President: Shawn Vann
  Tel: 854.802.6653

- Vitruvius Alumni Association
  President: Jeffrey D. Chambers
  Tel: 717.627.2375

- Xenocles Alumni Association
  President: Richard Boothman
  Tel: 817.455.4228
“The brothers of the active chapter of Alpha Rho Chi cordially extend the opportunity to pledge Alpha Rho Chi.”

Rush and the passing out of bids are a crucial part of active chapter activities. Without these activities, we would fail a central purpose of Alpha Rho Chi: to grow. With every rush, actives and alumni renew the promises of allegiances not only to the fraternity but also to the fraternity’s future. Every new pledge represents the potential to pass on tradition and introduce new ideas. And each pledge is promising a lifelong commitment to both the active chapter and the national organization. But, with pledges and actives still getting to know one another, extending such a bid is a risky venture. Will the pledge and the chapter be a good fit?

Such was the chance that the active chapter of Iktinos took in 1967 when they extended a bid to Linda Cain—an unlikely choice for a house of men. Members of a fraternity built by men.

And Linda had her own apprehensions. Why would any Greek fraternity want a woman? What were they playing?

"I wasn’t one hundred percent sure initially, but I pledged. I liked the guys—they were fun to be with. I thought that the professional fraternity would look good on my resume," Linda remembers.

Certainly, it was not uncommon to see women at rush events at the time. At any of the chapters, some of the men’s girlfriends were always around, and housemothers helped with many activities, including keeping the common areas clean. Len Marvin of Anthemios also remembers pledge mothers, women who worked with the pledges and were a part of the fraternity.

And a few of the chapters of Alpha Rho Chi had a “little sister” affiliation, like many social fraternities. The Athemios, Demetrios, Iktinos, and Xenocles Chapters all had, at one time, a little sister affiliation. Little sisters
were thought to “boost moral and social status on campus.” Their duties varied; according to a report from Anthemios in the Archi published in the fall of 1975, “One of several events put on by the Little Sisters was our Christmas Tree Trim. This always helps to put everyone in the right spirit just before semester exams…”

In a letter to the Archi in 1956, the Worthy Grand Lecturer actually noted that his own daughter was a boarder in the Anthemios chapter house—a footnote in history, but perhaps a bit of premonition on his part. “Nothing irregular, dear reader,” he writes. “The Anthemios boys were living with the Sigma Pi’s while their house was used as a coed living center. Shall we have a distaff side, coed co-chapters?”

But until Linda Lilly held the bid from the brothers of the Iktinos Chapter, no one had ever actually offered a bid to a woman.

Alpha Rho Chi was not the only house Linda was rushing. She participated in the sorority rush as well. In the end, she decided that Alpha Rho Chi would suit her best.

Linda completed pledging with six other pledge brothers—but she didn’t automatically receive her badge at the end. First, the Iktinos Chapter had to answer to the Grand Council at the National Convention. Eventually, the badge was awarded, and Linda became the first full-fledged female brother of Alpha Rho Chi.

But although the topic was broached in 1968, the all-male tradition was slow to give way. Even the new chapters—Metagenes, Xenocrates, and Dinocrates—were not coed in their initial pledge classes. The Metagenes Chapter, however, did soon begin admitting women. As Hunter Bristow recalls:

> Her name was Beverly Brandon. We did [admit her], only somewhat seditiously in that we did not say that Beverly (boy’s or girl’s name) was really a woman. Demetrios brothers were down for the initiation and when they found out that Beverly was a woman, there were very surprised reactions and questions of the “legality” of it. We quoted them chapter and verse from the national bylaws that stated membership should be drawn from students of

**Timeline**

1961
- President Kennedy establishes a Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt

1963
- Women protest the Miss America Pageant of 1968, which they decry as sexist and racist

1964
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is established; in its first five years, 50,000 complaints of gender discrimination are received

1965
- Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique is published, becomes a best-seller, and lays the groundwork for the feminist movement

1966
- Senator Eugene McCarthy introduces the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the US Senate

1968
- Members of New York Radical Women protest the Miss America Pageant of 1968, which they decry as sexist and racist

1969
- The radical organization Redstockings organizes and popularizes slogans such as “Sisterhood is Powerful” and “The Personal is Political”

1970
- In Schultz v. Wheaton Glass Co., a US Court of Appeals rules that employers may not change the job titles of women workers in order to pay them less than men
Bella Abzug (famous for declaring that “A woman’s place is in the House”) introduces a joint resolution of Congress designating August 26 as Women’s Equality Day.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 forbids gender discrimination in any educational program receiving Federal financial assistance.

Bobby Riggs declares that men are superior to women and calls Billie Jean King to a Battle of the Sexes tennis match—in which King easily defeats Riggs.

First Lady Betty Ford moves to the front of the feminist movement as she talks candidly about her pro-choice views and feminist stances.

The United States Military opens its academies to women.

ERA America is launched to promote the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

First Lady Rosalynn Smith Carter takes an active role in government, heading policy proposals and sitting in on cabinet meetings.

For the first time in the history of the United States, more women than men enter college.

The ERA fails to be ratified, with only three more states needed; the ERA campaign continues to this day.

Less than two years after questioning the “legality” of Beverly Brandon’s initiation at Metagenes, the Demetrios Chapter had begun adding women to its roster as well.

By the following year, six of the chapter’s twenty-four members were women.

Architecture and the allied arts, no gender being mentioned. Beverly initiated on April 15, 1972.

The brothers from Demetrios, for their part, must have found Metagenes’ arguments convincing; they soon began initiating women as well.

Over the coming years, the issue would resurface again and again at the national level. Conversations about how to increase membership had long been a mainstay of Alpha Rho Chi. Many factors, including war, had caused fluctuations in membership across all the chapters. Some years, chapters would be on the verge of closing, with the minimum number of actives in residence; other years, there would be so many members there wouldn’t be enough room for everyone in the chapter house. The
debate about membership went beyond the efforts to maintain the existing chapters as the fraternity began to weigh opportunities for expansion.

In the midst of this debate, in 1972 Title IX was passed, stating that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” The only groups exempted from this law were social fraternities and sororities and the Boy and Girl Scouts. Sport groups were the most impacted, but so was Alpha Rho Chi. Anthemician Len Marvin recalls that Title IX was a contributing factor that helped Anthemios embrace the notion of going coed.

The actual motion to amend the fraternity’s constitution came in 1970 and was accepted in the 1980s. But not without controversy: some alumni returned their badges or refused to participate in fraternity events after women were admitted.

Forty years after her own initiation, Linda (Cain) Lilly has had the chance to watch the changes not only in the world, but also in our own fraternity. More women are pursuing architecture, and within Alpha Rho Chi, women are serving on all levels, up to and including Worthy Grand Architect. Linda herself is president of the Iktinos Alumni Association.

But for all the debates and changes that occurred to allow women to become a part of Alpha Rho Chi, when I asked Linda what she cherishes the most about her involvement as a brother, her reply was very similar to those given by all the men I had interviewed before: “The friendships you make at that age are great. Some guys you haven’t seen in ages, and you can still pick up the conversation thirty, thirty-five years later.”

It seems gender has no bearing at all on the benefits of being a member of Alpha Rho Chi.

This article could not have been completed without the help of Rick Jenkins, Laura Schmidt, Len Marvin, Jay Mock, and Linda Lilly.
This past spring, at the 62nd National Convention of Alpha Rho Chi, delegates voted to establish the Kenneth Kohlen National Faculty Advisor Award to recognize those advisors who best exemplify the principles he embodied: devotion to the fraternity and its members; passion for furthering the careers and lives of students; enthusiasm as an educator; motivational example; and commitment to providing valuable advice and encouragement to students.

What follows is an introduction to the caring mentor for whom the award is named, written by one of the many Daedalus alumni whose lives he touched.

Ken Kohlen was an enthusiastic teacher, a great motivator, and a caring mentor. His achievements cannot be measured by a listing of awards and publications; his effect on architecture occurred at a personal level with students.

At Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, we have a motto: "Learn by Doing." Ken exemplified this; he was practical and hands-on and encouraged those around him to do the same.

As a student at Cal Poly, Ken’s senior thesis, in collaboration with two other students, involved building out the interior of a student-built experimental structure in Poly Canyon known as the “Shell House.” For quite some time the Shell House had provided for the accommodation of a Poly Canyon caretaker, a College of Architecture and Environmental Design (CAED) student who, in exchange for housing, maintains the student-built structures that have been constructed in the Canyon. Years later, one of the first encounters students would have with Ken would typically be the tour he gave of the Canyon. During this tour he would discuss the history of the Canyon and the opportunity each of us had to build something there. Many of us left that tour thinking, “How amazing would that be?” Work in Poly Canyon was straight “learn by doing,” and Ken was its strongest supporter.

Upon graduating Cal Poly, Ken joined the U.S. Peace Corp. As a volunteer in Barinas, Venezuela, he filled the role of City Architect and was responsible for a variety of city buildings, parks, and low-cost housing. He spent two years with the Peace Corp before returning to California.

Ken was a professor for 26 years, and many of us
found that his love of the subject matter was surpassed only by his excitement to pass his knowledge of it along to his students. Ken followed his students’ education closely, especially brothers of the Daedalus Chapter, and was known to nominate worthy students for awards, both recognizing and encouraging their success.

As an architect working for himself outside of the CAED, Ken realized numerous housing projects, primarily custom homes and some additions and remodels. He also consulted on manufactured housing jobs and forensic architecture. He acted as expert witness on numerous cases and conducted building inspections. Being a professor who also worked outside of the university, Ken was able to permeate his classes with real experience. Ever improving his knowledge of the built world, he attended numerous professional conferences and workshops throughout his career, always excited to share what he had learned with his students and colleagues.

Ken took on numerous advisory roles throughout his time at Cal Poly, including mentoring students going on study abroad in Copenhagen, serving as advisor to the students at the Washington Alexandria Architectural Consortium, and of course serving as faculty advisor for the Daedalus Chapter, a cherished part of his life.

Ken’s open and approachable nature, sense of responsibility, and architectural knowledge all combined to show the caring qualities and skills that were so much a part of his success in teaching and motivating students. His unwavering support of Alpha Rho Chi was an example of his true passion for motivating students toward greater understanding of all things architecture. He was truly the complete package when it came to supporting students in building their architectural AND life skills.

Dick Zweifel, Associate Dean
College of Architecture and Environmental Design
California Polytechnic State University

I was halfway through architecture school and struggling with my two career interests, architecture and law enforcement, when I approached Ken for guidance. He suggested I look into crime prevention through environmental design consulting. It was at this time that I discovered that Ken was truly a master of many things, not just one, and he encouraged me to pursue both my interests in such a way that they could complement each other. It was his mastery and his ability to provide or search out multiple solutions that led me, as his big brother, to give him the nickname “Renaissance Man” upon his initiation into the fraternity as a faculty member.

Daedalus Brother Wade MacAdam

To me, Ken embodied everything that was great about being an educator, an architect, and a citizen of the world. He took on new challenges with the bright eyes of a child.

Daedalus Brother Jeremy Steinmeier

As faculty advisor to the Daedalus Chapter, Ken was always there. He was there for late-night chapter meetings on campus; he was there in the Support Shop during hot afternoons; and he was there sharing a glass of wine and discussing his travels and love of art. He was as comfortable at an art gallery opening as he was covered in sawdust and wood glue. His home and heart were open for his friends and his students anytime. He always had a smile and a laugh, but you knew that he was always concerned. He was full of life and he was a tough teacher, but he taught us so much more than just construction techniques and materials. He taught us how to live life, with conviction and love for your family and friends. That was Ken; he was a teacher in the greatest sense of the word. Those of us whom he touched will remember him forever, and I think that we can all agree that in the time he had available he made our world a better place to be.

Daedalus Brother Andy Houghtelin

I remember that he greatly loved working with Alpha Rho Chi, and I think you guys helped keep him young. He loved your energy and enthusiasm towards architecture and I’m sure would be very honored if he were still alive. Alpha Rho Chi was one of his favorite things about teaching at Cal Poly, and I am glad you allowed him to be a part of it.

Corrine Kohlen (daughter of Kenneth Kohlen)
Ken had always been a strong advocate for extracurricular experience to supplement formal classroom education. As such, he provided a guiding voice to the Daedalus Chapter long before his formal appointment as faculty advisor. He even graciously offered the use of his home for the Daedalus Chapter’s highly attended annual student/faculty social, as he believed in bringing students and faculty together outside of the classroom to discuss art, wine, life, and all the other things that influence architecture.

It was his dedication to the students at Cal Poly that led us to approach Ken to take on the faculty advisor position. He informed us that he was thrilled and honored to take on the role. He made a point of attending weekly chapter meetings, participating in discussions when appropriate, but mostly allowing our chapter to sort through things and “learn by doing.” His knowledge and passion for art led him to assist our chapter in our efforts to preserve our collection of Vern Swansen paintings. He further assisted us in organizing guest lectures and interaction between students and professionals. We were always impressed with his willingness to be involved with our chapter in such a personal way.

In recognition of his dedication to Daedalus, we asked Ken to become a faculty member of Alpha Rho Chi. He went through the rites of initiation and was installed with our 21st pledge class, “Rigid Frame Thrust,” in 1998. I’ll never forget the quiet smile he had throughout the process, or how honored we felt to be initiating such a worthy candidate.

Unfortunately, in October of 2006 Ken passed away at the early age of 63 after a long and courageous battle with Myelodysplastic Syndrome. It was not until he was gone that many of us realized what an impact he had on our lives. He is dearly missed, and it saddens us that he will not be able to influence the lives of our younger brothers in the same way he has positively influenced ours.

Ken had unlimited energy to help others and share his wealth of knowledge about buildings and construction. He loved life, enjoyed wine, and was crazy about art. Although he was a tough teacher, he had the ability to inspire the students at Cal Poly and provide encouragement long past graduation.

Vincent James Clarkson 1988–2009
The Alpha Rho Chi Foundation is a NON-PROFIT philanthropic organization dedicated to funding the professional growth and vitality of Alpha Rho Chi and to expanding our presence in architectural education and research. The Foundation:

- Awards scholarships to members of Alpha Rho Chi
- Sponsors professional programs and publications
- Underwrites the Alpha Rho Chi Bronze Medal program
- Promotes new and innovative educational opportunities

Our board of directors consists of independent, unpaid volunteers, with the WGA and WGE participating as nonvoting, ex-officio members. Professional advisors are available to ensure that donors’ wishes are fulfilled.

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- Promotes professional achievement and research
- Underwrites the Alpha Rho Chi Medal program
- Supports research and dissemination of knowledge through professional papers and articles

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For more information, visit www.alpharhochi.org.
RALPH RAPSON REMEMBERED

by Karen L. Marker, Anthemios Alumna
(University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

Last year Alpha Rho Chi lost a noted brother: Ralph Rapson, FAIA, creator of the Greenbelt House (Case Study House No. 4), the original Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, numerous American embassies and government buildings abroad, and, not least, the “Rapson Rapid Rocker,” an ingenious piece of modern furniture.

Rapson initiated into the Iktinos Chapter of Alpha Rho Chi in 1938 while studying architecture at the University of Michigan. After graduation, he went on to study under Eliel Saarinen at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. As Iktinos’ Frank White reported in the Archi the following spring, “we can’t help getting a vicarious wallop from the fact that Ralph Rapson and Fred James, who both were affiliated with this chapter last year, were party with Eero Saarinen [Eliel’s son] in winning the recently announced William and Mary Theatre competition.” Their prize-winning design was praised in Time and The New Yorker.

While at Cranbook Rapson began designing modern furniture. His first piece, a “streamlined yet whimsical bentwood rocking chair” originally retailed for just under $100, according to the New York Times. (Frank Lloyd Wright reportedly bought two.) The Times reports that vintage Rapson Rapid Rockers now fetch as much as $8,000.

Like Pierre Koenig, another Alpha Rho Chi alum, Rapson was commissioned by Arts & Architecture magazine in 1945 to design a Case Study House as part of the magazine’s project to showcase Modernist housing designs. Rapson’s design, Case Study House No. 4, featured an interior garden courtyard, or greenbelt, separating the public and private spaces of the home. The “Greenbelt House,” as it was known, was published that fall but not realized for more than 40 years; finally, in 1989, it was constructed as part of an exhibition sponsored by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.
Post-Cranbrook, Rapson spent four years as the head of the department of architecture at the Institute of Design (now the Illinois Institute of Technology) in Chicago, maintaining a private practice all the while. In 1946 he began teaching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, while continuing to maintain a private practice and opening a store for contemporary furniture, fabrics, and lighting. Between 1951 and 1953 Rapson executed numerous designs for the United States Government in Europe, including embassy office buildings in Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Athens; a new consulate in Le Havre; and an embassy staff housing project in Paris (Nelson 3).

In 1954 Rapson accepted a position as dean of the University of Minnesota’s School of Architecture. There, two members of the Mnesicles Chapter of Alpha Rho Chi, Carl Nelson and Norman Day, interviewed him for an article published first in “The Minnesota Technolog” and later in the Archi. “What are Mr. Rapson’s philosophies on the total picture of architecture?” they ask, and go on to report:

The Rapson Rapid Rocker originally retailed for just under $100; today, vintage Rapid Rockers fetch as much as $8,000.

THE ARCHI NAMES PROJECT
by Laura Schmidt, Anthemios Alumna
(University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)
Worthy Grand Associate Architect Emerita

Over the past year, Worthy Grand Scribe Emeritus Rick Jenkins has been posting scanned copies of our fraternity’s newsletter and magazine, offering, for the first time, all the primary source information in our fraternity’s history—in one place—so it could be read from start to finish.

And one day, that’s what I started to do. Starting from the beginning, I began to read each issue. As I’ve been reading, I have been making sometimes noteworthy, sometimes interesting, and sometimes shocking observations. I’ve created a blog to share a narrative of these observations as I go along.

You can peruse the archives yourself at http://www.alpharhochi.org/archi/backissues/, or you follow along with me as I read at http://archinamesproject.blogspot.com/2009_07_01_archive.html.

I love this fraternity, I love our alumni, and I love our history. I’m going to love every second of this project.
When asked that question, he paused and began, "It must be spiritual. By that I mean, that, to be meaningful and remembered, architecture must have an intangible spiritual significance above and beyond the solution of the structural and functional aspects of the design. Good architecture must solve all the fundamental social, economic, environmental, functional, and structural problems, and evolve from a creatively inspired person to be beautiful.

Throughout his tenure at the university—in fact, until the day before his death, in April of 2008—Rapson continued his private practice, designing private residences, churches, performing arts centers, and other many other widely acclaimed buildings. It is truly an honor to say he was a brother.
Mark your calendar now for March 25 through 28, and make plans to attend the 63rd National Convention of Alpha Rho Chi in Richmond, Virginia!

This year’s host hotel, the Omni, is located in the heart of Richmond’s Shockoe Slip historic district. Just steps outside the door, gas lamps line cobblestone streets with more than 25 fine restaurants and entertainment venues. Nearby you’ll find the stunning state capitol, the rolling rapids of the James River, and numerous other historic, cultural, and leisure attractions.

This year’s Convention will provide the usual array of opportunities for professional development and fraternal bonding, from the welcome reception and Robert’s Rules of Order Boot Camp to the business sessions and guided tours—tentatively slated to include the recently renovated state capitol, designed by Thomas Jefferson, and the Virginia Center for Architecture. The closing awards banquet will be held Saturday at 6 p.m. at the Omni Richmond.

Details will soon be forthcoming, so please keep an eye on your mailbox and on the web site, www.alpharhochi.org/convention.
Head to Richmond, Capital of the South, for the 63rd National Convention!

March 25–28, 2010
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The Archi Alpha Rho Chi
PO Box 3131
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SERVICE
REQUESTED

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