

In the Life of Theta Chi

Editor's Note: Reading about some of the unexpected, personal, and positive ways that Theta Chi Fraternity touches lives can be enjoyable, interesting, affirming, and an unexpected source of inspiration. This regular feature, reflecting selected correspondence and emails received by the editor of The Rattle, or by the Staff of the Fraternity's International Headquarters, continues to help us enjoy the impact of the Brotherhood of Theta Chi around the world.

Even "The Dance" is a Small World

By Brian Fedje (Phi/North Dakota State)

I was a team host for the NCAA tournament in Indianapolis this week (March 18–20). My co-host was Mary Ellen Gillespie, former Greek Advisor at Iowa and then-NIC Director of Fraternity Advancement. We had never met but realized we know a lot of the same people, including many members of Theta Chi.

The team we were assigned was the University of Nevada Wolfpack, who was in town to play the Fighting Illini of Illinois. Our role was to assist the team with any needs they had while they were in Indianapolis. Our primary contact was the U of N's Associate Athletic Director, Keith Hackett.

Keith and I realized shortly after the team arrived that we were Fraternity brothers. Keith attended Tarkio College in Missouri, and graduated in 1976. His career included coaching and athletic administration at several schools throughout Oklahoma and Kansas. He eventually became an academic administrator before returning to athletics at Northern Illinois. He followed the athletic director to Nevada last Fall.

While the Wolfpack lost their second round game, 59 to 71, we walked away from the experience grateful for the unexpected, and definitely enjoyable, connection with a Brother in Theta Chi, and the power of our Interfraternal experience.



Keith Hackett (middle), Mary Ellen Gillespie, and Brian Fedje enjoy a pre-game pep rally for the University of Nevada basketball team and their fans.

ER... In Real Life

By Rick Gimbel, MD
Rho/University of Illinois

My experience in Theta Chi will always be regarded as one of the most important aspects of my journey into adulthood. I still remember listening to Dave Westol speak in Dallas... I believe it was early in the Nineties. He was attempting to present his arguments as to why it was so important for Theta Chi to move into a 'keg-free' era. His explanations prompted raised eyebrows and anger to some. I myself felt he was overstepping his bounds in telling the undergraduates how to live in a fraternity. He spoke of responsibility, liability, and potential collapse of the Fraternity if changed were not made in how we socialized. 'How dare he tell that to us,' I thought. After all, he was a trial lawyer in a past life. His fancy words sounded good on the surface, but few of us took his raving to heart.

Well, as I became chapter Vice President and then President, I began to understand some of the pressures that he as Executive Director might have felt. Parties became less and less

fun as I wondered what would happen to our Fraternity (and to me) if someone got hurt or killed while in our home. As a senior, after my leadership roles, I became the 'brother in the back of the room' who warned of danger, with words such as responsibility and liability. Interestingly, it took a couple of years before I looked back on those Fraternity years as the best years of my life. As the pressures of adulthood increased, I appreciated that I learned the skills of social responsibility, human communication, and careful planning while in Theta Chi.

Now, I have a new form of leadership. As an emergency physician, I run from room to room, offering my knowledge, experience, and humanism to those in need. The stakes are somewhat higher now than when I was President, but the feeling is no different. I am convinced that Theta Chi played a significant role in my decision to help others as a career. I am also convinced that Dave Westol helped mold me as an individual, to accept and embrace the concepts of liability, responsibility, and integrity.

Interestingly, I still have to listen to the advice of a trial lawyer, as I married one!