



“There is a destiny that makes us brothers . . .”

Dan Fleetham, Jr., initiated at Convention

By Kyle Weaver, Zeta Sigma/U. of Wisconsin-River Falls '04

The scene of a new member taking his final initiation oath was probably not altogether a new experience for the gathered brothers. Yet when Dan Fleetham Jr. took his oath at the Sesquicentennial Convention last summer, it was clear that something truly remarkable and unique had occurred.

As he completed speaking the oath, the gathered brothers applauded—at first politely, then with growing appreciation. When he was escorted to his seat among the brothers and hugged his father, Dan Fleetham Sr., a 1932 initiate of Alpha Chapter, the applause grew still further. “It was something I hadn’t the slightest idea would ever come true,” the elder Fleetham said.

But, indeed, it had.

The initiation—both a demonstration of the oldest known copy of our Ritual and a ceremonial activity of the Convention that made all

brothers in attendance honorary Alpha Chapter members—was Dan Jr.’s first experience with our Ritual, but it was far from being his first experience with Theta Chi.

Dan Jr., a 1969 Norwich University graduate, had always taken an interest in the Fraternity. “I discovered the Rattle as a little boy,” the younger Fleetham said. “I was always inquisitive about Norwich and Theta Chi.” As a young man, Dan Jr. had even attended Theta Chi alumni events with his father and he had grown to understand and appreciate the brotherhood and values of the organization. But, until last July, he had never been able to join. The younger Fleetham first arrived at Norwich in 1965, five years after the school had abolished its fraternity system.

Not joining the Fraternity, however, dissuaded neither father nor son from their passion for Theta Chi. Their combined energy pours over



Dan Fleetham, Jr. joined the ranks of Theta Chi Chapter following in the footsteps of father Dan Fleetham, Sr. (Alpha '34)

into many other aspects of life. The two Fleethams have a relationship that is nothing short of amazing, and they have quite a history of doing things together. Both father and son have served in the military. Dan Sr. served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Navy and was in charge of training Naval gunners to shoot down planes during World War II. During his service, Dan Jr. served in the Army in multiple capaci-

LEFT (L-R): W. Russell Todd, Alpha '50; Daniel W. Fleetham, Alpha '34; Dan Kenney, Alpha '58; Nick Collins, Alpha '55; Ray Hendrickson, Alpha '59; and Daniel Fleetham, Theta Chi '06.

ties across the United States, eventually earning the rank of Reserve Lieutenant Colonel before retiring in 1997. Military service is truly a Fleetham family tradition, as Theresa Fleetham, wife to Dan Sr. and mother to Dan Jr., also served. She was in the Women's Army Corps, one of the first non-nursing military posts available to women.

Both Dan Sr. and Dan Jr. are members of the Masons, and both are members of the Boy Scouts of America. Between them, they have almost 100 years of service in the Scouts. "They keep me young," the elder Fleetham said of the Scouts.

They even share a passion for extending a Helping Hand. In the truest spirit of Theta Chi, the Fleethams spend time together during the Vermont winters, making deliveries for Meals On Wheels. At 94, Dan Sr. does the driving, while the younger Dan walks the meals to the doors. "It's a crime that some people can't take an hour to help bring a meal to someone who really needs it or can't get it," the elder Fleetham said. "I enjoy doing it."

So when Dan Jr. was offered the opportunity to become an initiate at the Convention, there was likely very little discussion. It was just another moment of following-in-Dad's-footsteps.

The younger Fleetham said being initiated at the Convention made him feel young at heart. "I was like a 19-year-old again," Dan Jr. said.

Though Dan Jr.'s initiation was clearly the highlight, both Fleethams said they enjoyed the entire Convention. They stayed on campus together, in Alumni Hall, on the same floor where Dan Sr. actually stayed as a freshman in 1932. Dan Sr. said he felt right at home during the Convention and he appreciated people wanting to meet him and shake hands, even if he felt a bit camera shy. "We should have charged \$5 a picture and turned it into the Foundation," Dan Sr. said jokingly. "They would have made a fortune."

Now that the Convention is over, and Dan Jr. is an initiated brother, the two Fleethams will go on doing things together. In fact, Dan Jr. has another ceremonial promotion coming up.

"Are you going to stay around long enough to see me become lodge master?" Dan Jr. asked.

Dan Sr. simply nodded and said, "I suppose so." ■



Fathers and sons at Convention.



Golden Guard of the Silver Legion Awards (L-R) Charles Ray, Delta Kappa/Ball State '55; Charles Perenick, Alpha/Norwich '56; John Shallcross, Beta Theta/Drexel '42; David DeVol, Gamma Theta/San Diego State '59



Dr. Richard W. Schneider, President, Norwich University

"... None goes his way alone. All that we send into the lives of others will come back into our own.

—E. Markham