



## 150 YEARS OF FIJIDOM

### ALPHA GRADUATE CHAPTER OF THE FRATERNITY OF PHI GAMMA DELTA LAFAYETTE, INDIANA

1868 – 2018

by

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(Purdue 1951)

What did eight young men talk about in Lafayette, Indiana in 1868? The Civil War, their jobs and careers, girlfriends and perhaps families, horses and buggies, meetings at the Lahr House, Spring Brewery or one of the many local taverns? Surely most of these, but certainly their thoughts and conversations often centered on Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity.

Eight young men from the Alpha Chapter (Jefferson) and the Lambda Chapter (DePauw) were wise beyond their years. The oldest was perhaps 30, the youngest 23 or 24 years old. Four saw action in the Civil War. Three served as major officers in the Grand Chapter of Phi Gamma Delta and attended the annual conventions. In particular, Eugene J. Ball (Washington and Jefferson 1868) was born in Lafayette, Indiana and became president of the Grand Chapter in 1867 at age 23!

Eight young Fijis saw the need for an organized fraternal activity for graduate brothers in Phi Gamma Delta; they petitioned the Grand Chapter on March 12, 1868 to establish a “Graduate Chapter” in Lafayette, Indiana. The petition itself consisted of one brief paragraph, 120 words, handwritten in beautiful cursive of the day. Every word, every phrase focused on need “...a closer union...to strengthen and perpetuate the bonds... to increase the influence of and contribute to the general interest of the Fraternity.” The Grand Chapter was convinced: Petition was granted on April 7, 1868 for the Alpha Graduate Chapter in Lafayette, Indiana.

There is an interesting subplot to this tale. Indianapolis Fijis petitioned the Grand Chapter for a “Graduate Chapter” on February 21, 1868; action was “delayed” and their petition was granted on June

2, 1868. Imagine the consternation of the Indianapolis Fijis when they became the Beta Graduate Chapter. Perhaps the Lafayette body politic simply outfoxed them...

There are no known records of the Alpha Graduate Chapter between 1868 and 1912. No attic or basement has produced a dusty carton of handwritten minutes, photographs, programs or other memorabilia. Not surprising! Young Fijis were using nib pens and India ink; typewriters and Kodak cameras were in their infancy. Fiji graduate brothers of the day were focused on a social agenda, and there was little to record or to report.

Of note, the Lambda Iota Chapter of Phi Gamma Delta at Purdue University was chartered on May 30, 1902. This event gave the Alpha Graduate Chapter a new beginning.

Early history of the Lambda Iota Chapter first was recorded in

several membership directories. The earliest section was written by Burr S. Swezey (1913): *Early History of Lambda Iota, Phi Gamma Delta—Purdue*. This was followed by *Years of Growth*, Charlie Sargeant (1926); *Recent History*, George Aschauer (1938); *War and Reconstruction*, Ned MacDonald (1951) with an Addendum (author unknown) to 1959; *Lambda Iota @ 100*, Dick Grace (1951) to mark the 100th anniversary of the Lambda Iota Chapter at Purdue University in 2002.

A comprehensive history, *Purdue Fijis Observe Semi-Centennial*, was authored by Norman H. Shortridge, Jr. (1949) and published in The Phi Gamma Delta magazine in September 1952.

## Early Days

The Alpha Graduate Chapter is first mentioned by Charlie Sargeant in *Years of Growth*. This graduate chapter may have played a quiet role in the lease of early Fiji properties for the Lambda Iota Chapter. The three locations: NE corner of Sheetz and Wood Streets, West Lafayette (1901); 417 Waldron Street, West Lafayette (1902-03); and 1217 Main Street, Lafayette (1903-16).

On May 20, 1912 eleven members of the Alpha Graduate Chapter filed Articles of Association with the State of Indiana. By September 17, 1912 the Alpha Graduate Chapter was incorporated and a charter

granted by the State of Indiana. These eleven stalwart brothers had both vision and common sense to understand future needs of the undergraduate chapter. In part, the original Articles read "...to acquire by gift, purchase, or devise such real estate as may be needed...by the Lambda Iota Chapter..."

The newly chartered Alpha Graduate Chapter quickly went into action. The first property purchased was a lot on North River Road in



640 Russell Street: 1926 and now...

West Lafayette, ca. 1912, close to the present location of the Sigma Chi house. Finances and building plans apparently sputtered and the lot was sold. The "Murdock House" at 1114 State Street, Lafayette was purchased on June 15, 1916 for about \$13,500 with a 90% mortgage. The chapter lived there for 10 years. At Pig Dinner in 1922-23 the Board of Directors approved the purchase of four building lots in West Lafayette at the corner of 7th Street (Stadium Avenue) and Russell Street. Baldy Reed and Burr Swezey purchased these lots for the Alpha Graduate Chapter on April 13, 1923. (Lore has it that these 50 foot lots cost \$500 each, a princely sum for 1923.) The current chapter house at 640 Russell Street was

completed and occupied by 36 men on May 1, 1926 at a cost of \$48,000 with a mortgage of about \$40,000.

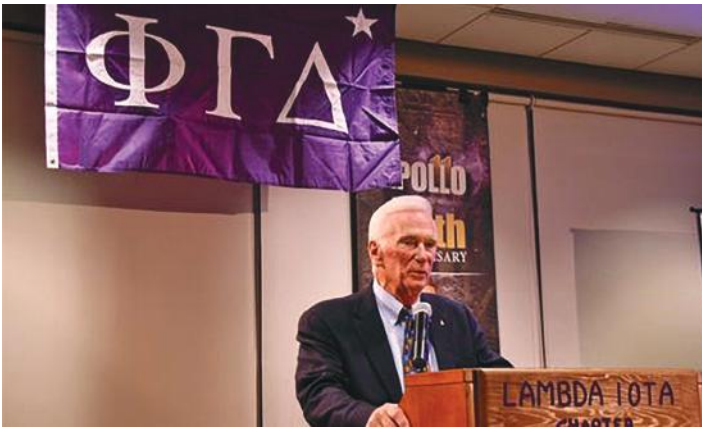
The dual roles of the Alpha Graduate Chapter became defined: 1) to serve as property owner and to advise on all matters of undergraduate life and 2) to further band together Fiji graduate brothers who have left the chapter house.

Times changed: The Great Depression, World War II, the US Navy V-12 program taking over



the Chapter House, construction of a Quonset Hut in the side yard for returning GI's, and Lambda Iota winning the Cheney Cup in 1949 for operations in 1947-48. Around 1950 \$16,500 was spent to modernize bathrooms, hallways, living room and kitchen. Glory Days!

During 1952-55 the Alpha Graduate Chapter completed the first major addition to the chapter house. Located to the east of the living room, a three-story addition provided a new chapter room, library on the first floor, and study rooms and cold-air dormitories on the second and third floors at a cost of \$60,000. Approximately 53-55 men could be housed under roof.



**Gene Cernan, Pig Dinner, 2012**



**Fijis at Mitch Daniels' initiation, 2013**

Bricks and mortar pale by comparison to the leadership, generosity and devotion of many graduate brothers who served the Alpha Graduate Chapter for decades. With all the risks of omission, and with apologies to others *ad astra*, these few have given extraordinary measures of leadership and service: Heinie Merkel (1904), Dutch Riebel (1904), Art Brockenbrough (1906), Kent Blacklidge (1906), Frazz Jennings (1906), Rosier Levering (1907), Harry Reed (1911), Hugh Woolverton (1912), Burr Swezey (1913), Poss Johnson (1914), Shine Geupel (1923), Jack Bixler (1924), Charlie Sargeant (1926), Paul Jones (1927), Richard Crowder (DePauw 1931), Bill Covert (1934), John Bradshaw (1935), Lucien Jones (1936), Sid Fenstermaker (1939), Henry Ryder (1948), Bill Currise (1949), and Norm Shortridge (1949).

### The New Corporations

Times changed again, this time by the Indiana General Assembly. The Masons had successfully lobbied to exempt their lodges from possible state taxation. Henry Ryder advised to reorganize the

Alpha Graduate Chapter into a new corporation under The Indiana General Not For Profit Corporation Act of 1935: Alpha Graduate Corporation of The Fraternity of Phi Gamma Delta at Purdue University. This was executed by Richard E. Grace, President and Roger G. Gay, Secretary and duly notarized by Henry C. Ryder on March 29, 1958.

A separate corporation was formed under Chapter 279 of the General Assembly of Indiana as approved on March 14, 1953. This exempts property of fraternal organizations from taxation. Lambda Iota Graduate Corporation documents were executed by Richard E. Grace and Larry Lane on March 29, 1958. Both corporations were filed with the Secretary of State of Indiana on April 14, 1958, and R. Joseph Rudolph was named Resident Agent.

Since 1958 the Alpha Graduate Chapter has enjoyed a new symbiotic relationship with the Lambda Iota Graduate Corporation or "House Corporation." These organizations maintain separate presidents with shared corporate officers, board of directors and board of chapter advisors. The

Purple Legionnaire continues to be pivotal in maintaining close liaison with the Lambda Iota Chapter.

Monthly "First Friday" luncheon meetings of the Alpha Graduate Chapter are held at local watering holes; Fiji graduates from all chapters are encouraged to attend. Pig Dinner continues to be the principal joint meeting of the Alpha Graduate Chapter, the House Corporation and the Lambda Iota Chapter. Awards are given by the Alpha Graduate Chapter at Pig Dinner to undergraduate brothers for scholarship and leadership. Graduate brothers meet with new initiates to outline the purposes of the Alpha Graduate Chapter and the House Corporation. Leadership dinners are held with newly-elected undergraduate officers, and at a farewell dinner, graduating seniors are given membership cards and inducted into lifelong membership in the Alpha Graduate Chapter and the House Corporation. Summer graduate picnics with our spouses often generate stories which only get better with each passing year.

Recent decades have produced new heroes within our graduate chapter. Astronaut Gene Cernan

(1956) was Commander of Apollo XVII and left man's last footprints on the moon on December 19, 1972. Art Hansen (1946) and Mitch Daniels (2013) have served as President of Purdue University, and Jim Stukel (1959) was President of the University of Illinois. Three Purdue University buildings have been named for Purdue Fijis: Hansen Hall, Art Hansen (1946); Bill and Sally Hanley Hall, Bill Hanley (1960); and Spurgeon Golf Training Center, Tom Spurgeon (1961). Bill Miller (Zeta 1962, GA Lambda Iota 1996) was elected International President of Phi Gamma Delta, and Bill Miller, Dutch Riebel (1904), Steve Prifogle (1999) and Ben Deschner (2009) have served as Archons; Doc Crowder (DePauw 1931) served as National Historian.

Seventeen members of the Alpha Graduate Chapter have been named Distinguished Fijis by the Archons: Burr Swezey (1913), Charlie Sargeant (1926), Doc Crowder (DePauw 1931), Bill Smith (1939), Art Hansen (1946), Joe Rudolph (1948), Dick Grace (1951), Ed Ogden (1952), Gene Cernan (1956), Tom Spurgeon (1961), Tim McGinley (1962), Bill Miller (Zeta 1962, GA Lambda Iota 1996), Chuck Armstrong (1964), Brian Lamb (1964), John Edwardson (1971), Morgan Burke (1973), and Mitch Daniels (2013).

In 1996 Bill Miller, then Purple Legionnaire, proposed a new service recognition known as Legends of Lambda Iota for those who have given extraordinary leadership and service over many years to the Alpha

Graduate Chapter, the Lambda Iota Graduate Corporation and/or the Lambda Iota Chapter. Over the last twenty years few formalities have evolved. Legends see each other often, and new Legends are added by consensus and voice vote. A framed certificate signed by the undergraduate Chapter President is presented at a Purdue Fiji event, such as Homecoming, Pig Dinner or Pledge Class Reunion. The Legend roster to date: Joe Rudolph (1948), Larry Lane (1950), Dick Grace (1951), Jack Coffin (1959), Carl Horner (1978), Kent Upton (1978), Bill Miller (Zeta 1962, GA Lambda Iota 1996), Jeff Cooke (1967), John Sorensen (Alpha Deuteron 1968, Zeta 1968).

### **Lambda Iota Graduate Corporation**

This unique organization became responsible for the chapter house in 1958. Beyond fiscal management, annual maintenance and improvements have been scheduled regularly. In 1974 new study rooms were added above the kitchen to bring the live-ins to 60-62. Between 1982 and 1994, bathrooms were remodeled, windows and interior doors to study rooms were replaced, and a new hot water boiler was installed. A modern sprinkler system was added for fire protection throughout study rooms, dormitories, kitchen and public areas.

By 2013 the physical condition of the chapter house needed attention to remain competitive within the Greek system at Purdue University. An architectural

firm, Rowland and Associates, Indianapolis, was engaged; they recommended both major upgrades and additional space. A project team of Chris Burke (1977), President of the House Corporation, Bob Swinehart (1965), John Barbee (1998), and Bill Miller (Purple Legionnaire) was authorized to negotiate the necessary agreements with Purdue University and the Purdue Research Foundation. In 2015 the House Corporation Board leased 15 parking spaces to the immediate west of the Kappa Alpha Theta chapter house. In 2017 the Board purchased two 50 foot lots to the south on Russell Street, thus insuring our ability to maintain and expand our presence on Russell Street. (The University retained ownership of the corner lot of the old Ludy property at 6th and Russell Streets.)

The goal: to retain and upgrade our historic chapter house and to increase capacity from 60 to 74. A planned addition also would expand the dining room and provide improved areas for study as well as social activities.

Major remodeling inside the chapter house was completed in 2017. The old hot water heating system was replaced with a new HVAC system throughout; bathrooms were gutted and modernized, including the ladies powder room; all plumbing was replaced and structural deficiencies were corrected. As of fall 2018, \$4.2 million had been expended and fund raising covered \$3.2 million. Fund raising will continue and new construction will occur when

sufficient funds have been collected to cover the majority of the cost.

## Reflections @ 150

This brief history of the Alpha Graduate Chapter has focused on brothers, events, corporations, bricks and mortar, all coupled in service to The Fraternity of Phi Gamma Delta. What's missing are the lifelong triumphs and sorrows of the 2,200 Fijis initiated into the Lambda Iota Chapter and countless

other Fijis who have contributed to our rich history since 1868. What is here is a solid testament to fraternal life—undergraduate, graduate and the many intersections with Purdue University, the International Fraternity and Fijis world-wide. In one way or another, at one time or another, every brother has participated in our upward march. Phi Gamma Delta is not for college days alone!

To all, we say thank you; to many, we add special thanks for

your extraordinary leadership, generosity and service; and to the Fijis of today and tomorrow, we charge you: Perge!

I am very glad to be a Fiji!

**Ace Grace (1951)**

October 18, 2018



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Note: The complete text of this article may be found in The Archives of Phi Gamma Delta.



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## SAVE THE DATE!

### Pig Dinner 2019

Please join the Lambda Iota Chapter of Phi Gamma Delta for the Annual Norris Pig Dinner.

**Saturday, February 2nd, 2019**

#### Keynote Speaker

##### **Mike Dilts**

Lambda Iota Class of 1981, President/CEO Shiel Sexton Company, Inc.

Please RSVP by January 20, 2019

Visit [www.purduefiji.org](http://www.purduefiji.org) for more details