

## II. Alpha Sigma Phi History – 15 Minutes

*Below is a description of the Fraternity's history you can share at this time. It covers the Mergers, Ralph F. Burns, the New Millennium, and the Golden Era. Be sure to review this in advance of presenting. Additional history information can be found in the to Better the Man book.*

*This section can be presented in a number of ways. You are encouraged to make it as interactive as possible. Consider one of the following suggestions:*

- *Rather than presenting the information in lecture format, break the new member class into small groups. Assign each small group a portion of the history (Mergers, Ralph F. Burns, the New Millennium, and the Golden Era). They should review the applicable section of to Better the Man and develop a timeline to use to present their section to the group.*
- *You could assign the applicable readings from to Better the Man in advance of this meeting. Then, during the meeting you could provide the new member class with a list of facts that they must place in chronological order.*
- *Ask an alumnus of the Fraternity to attend and share the story of the Fraternity's history.*

### **Mergers – pg. 214 – 222 of to Better the Man**

- The Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the resulting Great Depression brought on the first troubles Alpha Sigma Phi had seen since its Second Founding. Many chapters began to cease operations and the future seemed bleak.
- Alpha Sigma Phi was far from the only national fraternity facing concerns about its continued existence. Phi Pi Phi Fraternity was hit especially hard by the Great Depression. Discussions began between Alpha Sigma Phi and Phi Pi Phi and a merger was announced in 1938. Phi Pi Phi, founded in 1915, brought seven active chapters into Alpha Sigma Phi's operations, and all members of Phi Pi Phi were initiated into Alpha Sigma Phi.
- World War II soon replaced the Great Depression as the greatest threat to Fraternity operations. By the end of the war, only 17 of Alpha Sigma Phi's 39 chapters resumed operations. Alpha Kappa Pi Fraternity was placed in an even worse predicament. Alpha Kappa Pi also had 17 of its 36 chapters resume post-war operations, but they had no funds, no experience to operate a national office, and no staff to rebuild.
  - The merger was announced in 1946. All chapters and members of Alpha Kappa Pi were absorbed into Alpha Sigma Phi giving the Old Gal 34 active groups and giving it the resources to strongly recover from post-war setbacks.
  - As our most prominent merger, Alpha Kappa Pi's absorption brought changes to the ritual and insignia. Many aspects of Alpha Kappa Pi's initiation ceremony became what we now know as Alpha Sigma Phi's Pledge Ceremony, and Alpha Kappa Pi's membership badge became Alpha Sigma Phi's Pledge Pin.
- Alpha Sigma Phi's final merger with Alpha Gamma Upsilon Fraternity was a quiet affair. In 1965, Alpha Sigma Phi gained five chapters by absorbing a still-small fraternity founded in 1922 called Alpha Gamma Upsilon. Unlike the two mergers prior, our merger with Alpha Gamma Upsilon did not include blanket invitations for AGU alumni to be initiated; there were also several chapters of AGU that were not included in the merger, and rather chose to dissolve or affiliate with other national fraternities.

## **Ralph F. Burns – pg. 124 – 131 of *to Better the Man***

- In 1936, Ralph F. Burns, Ohio Wesleyan '32 became Executive Secretary (the primary executive and administrative position); it was just what the Fraternity needed.
- In his first year in office, a conference occurred that overhauled the Constitution and Bylaws and called for annual chapter visits by the Executive Secretary, in addition to the creation of a Recruitment Manual and a Pledge Manual (which would later become the *to Better the Man* Manual).
  - New awards were created to honor alumni and keep them engaged with the Old Gal; the Grand Senior President's Award was created to recognize the top Chapter of the Year.
- Serving as the primary Fraternity executive for over 40 years from 1936 to 1976, Burns presided over the fraternity during the Great Depression, World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts. Ralph Burns was instrumental in all three of Alpha Sigma Phi's mergers and sacrificed for the Fraternity when few others were willing to.
- He spent much of his time communicating with alumni and making personal visits to chapters across the country. His dedication to and impact on the Old Gal affectionately earned him the nickname "Mr. Alpha Sig."
- Eventually passing into the Omega Chapter in 1993, Ralph Burns' influence on the Fraternity is felt every day by her members. His leadership helped Alpha Sigma Phi bridge the gap from being just another struggling Fraternity in the 1930s to a prominent force in the modern Fraternity community.
- Between 1976 and 1995, as new men began to take up the work once helmed by Burns, the Fraternity began to rapidly adapt to a quickly changing world. The myriad of social changes that characterize those decades results in a new Fraternity that is primed for a 21st Century.

## **The New Millennium – pg. 228 of *to Better the Man***

- Since 2000, the Fraternity has overhauled many of its structures and programs to better fit into the modern world. A huge amount of new leadership programming was also developed.
  - Our Fraternity today looks vastly different than it did at the time of our Founders. The needs of college men have changed with the times, so our organization continuously adapts to remain relevant in the lives of our members.
- At the 2006 Grand Chapter, our Fraternity was fundamentally changed. Recognizing that—throughout our history—our Five Values were so shrouded in secrecy that few brothers could define or apply them to daily life, the 2006 Grand Chapter adopted a new vision for the Fraternity that included a public unveiling of our Five Values.
  - We made public what so many other fraternal organizations choose to keep private, so that everyone may know who we are and what we believe in as a brotherhood.

## **The Golden Era – pg. 228 of *to Better the Man***

- In 2009, Gordy Heminger, Bowling Green '96 was chosen as the 15th President and CEO of the Fraternity.
- Under his direction, Alpha Sigma Phi quickly became (and remains) the fastest growing Fraternity in the nation, expanding at record-setting levels every year.

- After a 10 year absence, the National Leadership Conference returned and was retitled “Elevate.” Elevate is now the International Leadership Conference with the Fraternity’s additions of chapters/provisional chapters in Canada and Scotland. New programs have been developed to train Prudential Board officers annually. Additionally, alumni involvement has been widely broadened in advising and support of undergraduate groups like never before. Today, more young men across the world are experiencing the benefits of membership in Alpha Sigma Phi than ever before. Our history continues to be written every day. You and I are now a part of this history as we shape the organization with so rich a history that has given us so much.