

(This is the acceptance talk which I made at the Kappa Sigma Awards Luncheon in Tucson on November 15, 1996, (Homecoming) when I was honored as the Gamma-Rho Chapter's Man of the Year.)

Thank you very much. I am honored to receive this award and have my name placed alongside those of previous honorees, great Kappa Sigs like Louie Slonaker, Harold Schwalen, Tom Chandler, Pat Murphy, Tom Keating, et al.

I'd like for you to know the members of my family who are here this morning: my wife, Alice, a graduate of the U of A and a Kappa Kappa Gamma; my son, Loren, Jr., who is also a graduate of the U of A. He is not a Kappa Sig, however; he joined the Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity. Nobody's perfect.

For some time, I have had the uneasy feeling that our actives and pledges do not know any of the old fraternity songs which we used to sing. So last May while I was in Tucson to attend a reunion of my old bomb squadron at DMAFB, I asked Matt Noble to get some of the guys together for about an hour and let me try to teach them those old songs. He arranged for me to meet with about 20 or 25 pledges and we went over the songs. It got me to thinking about the differences between the current generation of Kappa Sigs and the generation I was in some 60 years ago. Without being judgmental, here are some of the differences which I have sensed in interacting with the current bunch:

a. Music. Their tastes in music are far different from ours. We used to sing "Come Gather" two or three times a week after our evening meal. And by the way, in those days we always wore a coat and tie to dinner. Those old songs had a bonding effect and our current crop is missing something great by not knowing the old Kappa Sig ballads. Whereas we thought "Kappa Sigma Dream Girl" was a beautiful romantic song, these guys wouldn't be caught dead even humming that tune. Nor were they interested in "Come Gather" or "Pretty as a Picture," a love song that we used to serenade the sorority house when one of our guys pinned a girl. They were polite and went through the motions, but it was easy to tell that their hearts weren't in those tender old numbers. But when I introduced them to "The Beebe Song," they responded. While I was trying to get them to sing something else, someone would always pipe up with "Can we sing the Beebe Song again?"

b. Hazing. When I was in the house, hazing was a way of life. Nowadays, hazing is prohibited and that is certainly a step in the right direction. I can't tell you all the things they did to us but I recall that I was told to go out to A Mountain and build a fire which would be visible from the house at 2:00 a. m. I walked out there from 1701 East Speedway, built the dumb fire, and walked back. There are other things to which we were subjected but I can't talk about them to a mixed audience.

c. Smoking. In our day, with very few exceptions, everyone in the house smoked and nobody thought a thing about it. Today I sense that very few of the guys smoke. And that is another step in the right direction.

d. Drinking. I sense that the current group does not imbibe as much as we did. I am positive that we drank too much, and we played too much.

e. Athletes. In our day, we had three or four guys on the football team, the baseball team, the basketball team, and the track team. And the polo team was almost exclusively Kappa Sigs. I don't believe our present group has

any varsity athletes with the exception of our soccer player. We won the intramural banner for athletics many times and when we didn't win it, we were a distinct threat.

f. Dress. In our day, if a guy came in the house with shoulder-length hair, he would have been hooted out of the place. And if a guy wandered in wearing an earring, he would have been escorted out the back door and shot. But let's be fair. Wearing an earring is not illegal, it is not immoral, it is not unethical--it is just unusual to us old guys. We didn't do things that were unusual. We just packed 25 guys into a Ford coupe. And swallowed live goldfish.

g. Study. I believe that the current generation is much more concerned about grades than we were. Today's group is more scholarly, more focused on what they want to do with their lives, more stable. We weren't nearly as serious about grades, but we sure had more fun. I can remember how we would sneak quietly into a sorority or fraternity house late at night and steal all their phonograph records--two or three hundred, perhaps. A few days later, somebody would come into our house and steal all of them from us. It was a round-robin kind of thing. But we overdid it one time when we went into the Kappa house late one night and stole their living room rug. We rolled it up and hid it in our attic for a few days until someone leaked the information that we had it so we had to take it back. I look back on those days and realize that we had more fun than the law would allow.

And speaking of fun, how would you like to be a college student and never have any homework, no exams, or any classes to attend? My roommate was one of those people. He would come to Tucson in September, register, and flunk out by Thanksgiving. But would he go home with his head bowed? Not on your life. He stayed in the house and had fun. I remember once he spent a whole day making little paper airplanes. Then he got up on top of the house and threw them off. He spent the next day picking them up for reruns. In January, he would register again and would flunk out in the spring. After they made him, they destroyed the mold. There was never another one like him. He and I and Dick Doyle went to all the football games that Arizona played one year--Los Angeles for the Loyola game, Salt Lake City for the Utah game, Phoenix for the ASU game, and El Paso for the Texas Mines game. My roomie and I were walking from Juarez back to El Paso one night when we passed a collection of kiosks which were selling little curios and souvenirs. One of them featured huge sombreros. These were not the sombrero that anyone would wear; they were huge things, more like a tent. Burton put one on and walked away without paying for it. We were about halfway across the Rio Grande bridge when a Mexican policeman stopped us and said to Burton, "Where did you get that hat?" I will never forget his reply as he looked that cop right in the eye and said, "What hat?" He spent four or five years at the University and might have made it to the sophomore level, I'm not sure. But just before I graduated in June 1941, all the seniors were told to have their portraits made for the annual. He went with me to have the picture made. After they photographed me, he asked to borrow the coat and tie I was wearing. I gave them to him, he put them on, and walked into the studio and had his picture taken. If you look carefully at the graduation class of 1941 in the "Desert," you'll see his picture there with the graduating seniors. I don't know for sure, but I'll bet he convinced his folks that he graduated. In those days we were a little bit on the "Eat, drink, and be merry" side because war clouds were gathering in Europe and there was a mad man named Hitler on the loose. In our subconscious was the stark realization that we could be looking

the grim reaper right in the eye before long. Since Burton was not in school, he was vulnerable for the draft which had recently been instituted by President Roosevelt. He had a low number and was called up on March 11, 1941, before the attack on Pearl Harbor. I went to the railroad station to see him off and in his last handshake, he gave me the Kappa Sigma ring, engraved "BLB-IEJ 3-11-41," which I am still wearing. When Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941, I was anxious to get into the service, as were all the guys my age. I passed all the tests to become an aviation cadet but had to go to Phoenix to take the physical. There were about 20 of us in the room. The examining physician told us to take off all our clothes. Wearing nothing but big smiles, he put us through some mild calisthenics. "Touch the ground without bending your knees, extend your arms with your palms down, turn your palms up." I cannot turn my left palm up because of a motorcycle accident which I had had some five years earlier. The doctor told me to fall out and went on with his examination of the troops. When he finished, he said, "Okay, you guys go down the hall to room 22 and get your eyes checked." Then, turning to us three or four rejects, he took me by the right hand and said, "What's wrong with this hand?"

"Well," I said, "There's nothing wrong with this hand; it's my left hand that won't turn palm up." He noticed my ring and said, "Hey, where were you a Kappa Sig?"

"At the University of Arizona," I replied.

"Well, how about that?" he said. "I was a Kappa Sig at the University of Arkansas. Hurry down that hall to room 22 and get your eyes checked."

This little incident changed my whole life. I have tried to find that doctor but was never able to locate him. I'm not sure whether I want to thank him for what he did that day or punch him in the mouth. Coincidentally, I entered the service exactly one year later, March 11, 1942. From what I have told you about Burton, you may have surmised that he was not real bright. This is not the case at all. He was as smart as anyone, but he just didn't care to attend classes which convened before noon. He didn't flunk out of school because he was stupid. He just didn't care to attend. He just wanted to have fun, and he was a master at it.

And speaking of stupidity, I'm sure all of you know what stupidity is. Some legislator recently tried to enact some legislation which would require people with IQs under 75 to wear a sign around their necks which said, "I am stupid." He pointed out that this would save time. For example, you are in a strange town and tap a gent on the shoulder and say, "Excuse me, but could you tell me where the postoffice is?" At that point you notice the guy's "stupid" sign, so you just say, "Never mind," and go on your way. Of course, this legislation didn't have a chance of passing, but the guy has a point. Most of the warning labels which we see are caused by stupid people. For example, I had a cup of coffee in Denny's the other day. The cup was so hot I could barely hold it, but across the lip of the cup appeared these words, "Caution! Contents may be hot." And on a tube of Preparation H are these words; "Do not take by mouth." That warning was created because some dummy took it by mouth and then wrote this irate letter to the company: "Dear Preparation H: I swallowed a tube of your product and it did not do a thing for my hemorrhoids. It just shriveled my mouth up so I couldn't open wide enough to eat a jelly bean. But boy could I whistle!" I have three little examples which will clear up any misconceptions you may have about stupidity:

a. The foreman of a railroad gang had two workers who were absolutely worthless. He couldn't get a day's work out of either of them; they were totally unproductive so, planning to get them out of his hair for one day, he took the two of them to a long, straight stretch of railroad track and, pointing down the track, said, "Look down there, you guys. See where the tracks come together? When the train gets there, it can't go on because the tracks are too close together. I want you to take these pry-bars down there and pry the tracks apart so the train can get through." So the two guys started walking down the track, lugging 75 pound pry-bars. They walked for about four hot, sweaty hours and one of them said, "Boy, we ought to be getting pretty close. I wonder how far we have come." The other one looked behind him and exclaimed. "Oh, hell, we passed it."

b. Two stupid men approached each other. One of them had a sack slung over his shoulder. Said the first one, "What have you got in that sack?"

"Pigs," the other replied.

"If I can guess how many pigs you got in that sack will you give me one?" said #1.

"If you can guess how many pigs I got in this sack, I'll give you BOTH of them," said the second.

"Five," said the first.

c. Two guys were strolling along the beach when a giant seagull flew over and made a large deposit on the head of one of them. The other said, "Oh, man; that's terrible. It's just awful. I'll go get some toilet paper."

Replied the victim, "You dumbbell. By the time you get back here with some toilet paper that seagull will be five miles away."

There you have it. Three perfect examples of stupidity. But there is something else we must factor in--carelessness. There is a fine line between carelessness and stupidity. When the drive for funds to build the new fraternity house began, I was asked to write a number of letters to alums across the country, asking them for pledges. Most of those alums responded with generous pledges, but one response broke my heart. It was from one of my good friends who wrote, "My enthusiasm for Kappa Sigma has waned considerably because of an experience I had recently. I walked into the Kappa Sig house there in Tucson not long ago and two guys were sitting at a table playing checkers. One of them turned around, looked up and said, "Hi." The other one did nothing. I stood there, kind of awkwardly, not knowing quite what to do next. I decided that I would stand there for five minutes and if nothing happened I would walk out of the house. I looked at my watch. Five minutes is an eternity when you are timing yourself. When the five minutes passed, I walked out of the house. Because it is you, I am enclosing a check for \$50 but I just can't make a pledge because of this unpleasant experience." There you have it. Your generation has to pay for something a previous generation did. It isn't fair but that's how it is. Were these two guys stupid or just careless? They wouldn't be Kappa Sigs if they were stupid, so we must conclude that they were simply careless. But what's the difference? The end result is the same--an alumnus has been alienated. To those of you who are in the house now, don't be stupid. Don't be



careless. When some old geezer wanders in to the house, greet him, shake his hand. Ask him where he is from. (He may not remember, but be civil to him.) Ask him what it was like in the house when he was in school. Where was the house then? When was he initiated? Just treat him like you hope the guys will treat you when you're an old geezer. Stupidity and/or carelessness just won't hack it. Remember that the alumni are the ones who made it possible for you to have that nice new house. Be nice to them. I am not suggesting that you must butter them up or bow and scrape to them; just be civil, acknowledge their presence. You owe it to them. You might even thank them for their help.

I have made a number of copies of some of the old Kappa Sigma songs that we used to sing. I'm going to pass them out, as far as they will go--probably one to each table and we're going to sing "The Beebe Song." And we did.

Last month I turned 80. That's kind of scary. But I'd rather be over the hill than under it. Thanks again, everybody. It was great being here.

## "THE BEEBEE SONG"

1

The Beebees had three husky sons:  
Buster, Bill, and Bee;  
And Buster was the best one  
In the Beebee family.  
He led his class in scholarship,  
Was captain of football,  
And when it came to track team  
Why, he led them one and all.

2

He wandered down to old Tucson  
And thought he'd join a frat.  
He wandered all around the town  
To see where they were at.  
And just because he was the best  
The town had ever seen, why  
The colors that he wore next day  
Were scarlet, white, and green.

5

He wandered down to Hades  
Just to see the poor lost souls;  
The Alphas and the Betas  
They were roasting on the coals.  
The SAEs and Sigma Chis  
To sizzle had begun,  
But the Kappa Sigs on velvet seats,  
Were watching all the fun.

6

The Phi Delta Thetas they were  
Hanging by their ears,  
And off their cheeks and down their  
Chins ran briny drops of tears.  
Our hero's heart within him yearned,  
He said, "Well, I'll be durned;  
We'll have to hang 'em up  
And dry 'em out  
They're too durn green to burn."

3

He wandered up to heaven,  
Just to see the fellows there.  
And all the boys were loitering  
Around the golden stair;  
Some were smoking cigarettes  
And some were dancing jigs,  
But they all were loyal friends of his  
They all were Kappa Sigs.

4

He looked up Brother Noah  
And he interviewed St. Paul;  
He met the wives of Solomon  
And kissed them one and all.  
And when they all lined up for  
Drinks around the heavenly bar,  
Why each angel on his shirt front  
Wore the crescent and the star.

7

The Sigma Nus and Zeta Delts  
Were tacked up on the shelf,  
When in came old Beelzebub,  
The king of hell himself;  
He gave our friend the old time grip  
For he could not renege,  
'Cause he was a charter member  
And a damn good Kappa Sig.

8

Oh, he rambled, he rambled  
He rambled all around  
In and out of town;  
Oh, he rambled, he rambled  
He rambled 'til they  
Put the colors on. Bang! Bang!