



An article in English

Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan. What do they have in common? You are right to think that they all were presidents of USA. But there is another interesting fact about them. They were members of student brotherhoods, the so called fraternities.

Fraternity (from the Latin word "frater", meaning "brother") is social organization for undergraduate students, present in universities and colleges. Students' unions are run by students and for students, being independent of the educational facility. The purposes of these organizations are to solve students' problems that can either be related to academic life or have a general political and social nature, to organize and support numerous activities such as intellectual debates, demonstrations, conferences, cultural events and so on. Fraternities are also responsible for providing a variety of services to students. Students can get involved in its management through different committees, councils and general meetings, or become one of its elected officers. The names of such organizations generally consist of two or three Greek letters, often the initials of a Greek motto (a short statement expressing a principle or aim).

The history of students' unions dates back to the 18th century. Several active students, who had decided that existing literary society was no longer a serious institution, organized a Greek-letter student brotherhood. The Phi Beta Kappa Society was founded on December 5 1776 at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Members of the society gathered in the Raleigh Tavern to discuss

non-academic topics, politics, or to deliver their own poem and do literary exercises.

As centuries have been passing, new fraternities appeared and the range of purposes and aims became wider. There are different religious ones, women unions called sororities and even some gay fraternity. Nowadays' societies are different from that of in the 18th century.

Why would anyone want to join a fraternity? On the one hand, there's the promise of parties, living college life to the fullest, meeting pretty sorority girls and indulging in wild adventures. On the other hand, there's the chance to become a leader and embody the values and ideals of a fraternity.

To become a member of a fraternity you have to go through different trials. First, you are forced to learn everything about the society and its members. Also they made you do whatever they want you to do. After that you become a pledge (smb who will be taken to the fraternity after a pledging period). Unfortunately, sometimes the pledge process can get out of control and turn into **hazing**. Not letting new comers take



pens. The rationale is that a pledge should prove he is loyal and worthy to be a brother. The stereotypical idea of a frat boy is a shaggy-haired drunk fellow in a pink Polo shirt. To be sure, there are plenty of fraternity men who follow this stereotype. But the ideal fraternity man, according to fraternities' goals, is a gentleman - a leader in the community who is an example in studying and earns the respect of his brothers. Fraternity members are often campus leaders, involved in student government, honor societies and other organizations.



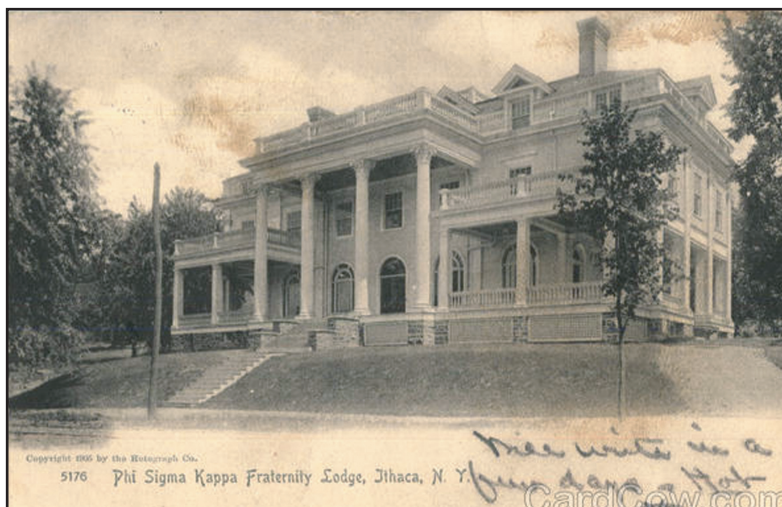
showers, depriving them of sleep, and forcing pledges to perform degrading skits would all be examples of harassment hazing. The week before initiation is called Hell Week. Sometimes it turns to be so cruel and merciless, that a pledge refuses to go on. There were even cases of suicide. Every national fraternity and every university prohibits hazing, but in many societies, it still hap-

Another perk of being a fraternity member is the chance to network. Fraternity connections can be very beneficial in the business world. Forbes magazine even put out a list of the best fraternities for future CEOs.

Many alumni stay active and involved with their fraternities, returning for football games, initiation and other events. Some continue to donate money for house repairs and other fraternity needs.

Henry Ford 2, Malcolm Forbes, Neil Armstrong, Harrison Ford, Kurt Vonnegut, Michael Jordan used to be fraternity members. They are in good company of 17 presidents of the USA. So the conclusion is simple being a frat helps in your future and pays.

Светлана Баканова



Copyright 1995 by the Photograph Co.

5176 Phi Sigma Kappa Fraternity Lodge, Ithaca, N. Y.