

SKETCH OF ALPHA PI CHAPTER'S EARLY DECADES

Delta Sigma Phi Fraternity

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The roots of Alpha Pi Chapter at Michigan State go deep. The first vestiges of the chapter were grounded in 1905 by the Aureorean Literary Society. The State Board of Agriculture prohibited social fraternities, and nine students sought more ties of brotherhood than they could find in the classrooms or their living quarters. One of the founders was a student named George A. Brown. The men met in Room 6 of Williams Hall on September 30, 1905 to consider the possibilities. As at other colleges and universities, they realized the administration would probably not object to a literary society. By its name, a literary society was expected to engage in intellectual endeavors. They could debate good literature, philosophy, and current public events. Members often wrote scholarly papers and read them at a meeting of their society.

Since 1872, Michigan State had several national fraternities, but the school abolished them in 1896 and prohibited more from forming. This led to several literary clubs and societies. A few national sororities existed.

Literary societies used the word "literary" in their titles only because fraternities were banned. Then as now, students wanted to be members of a social group that provided a sense of a close community that offered brotherhood and mutual support, qualities that could not be found elsewhere at their campus. Most of the literary societies were local fraternities in disguise.

A week after their first discussion, the nine students met President Jonathan L. Synder and asked his permission to form a literary society. They named it Aureorean Literary Society. He agreed, and he assigned them a room in Williams Hall for their meetings. President Snyder was a strict disciplinarian. The men were allowed to have dignified receptions in the room, but no more than formal gatherings.

After several meetings, the nine students decided to change the name of the society to better reflect their ambitions. They changed the name to Sylvan Literary Society. The literal meaning of sylvan was too much for President Synder. It implied a secluded grove in the woods where people could relax. If they were not committed academics, the students might even study the pleasures of life during their meetings rather than the rigorous topics of their books. Denied, the men returned the name to Aureorean Literary Society on February 10, 1906.

The society met in their assigned room until 1914. At that time, they acquired a former family residence that they made their home. The United States participated in World War I from early 1917 to the end of 1918, and college life was disrupted. Ex-service men began to return to college in 1919. Not all the members returned to college, and the Auroreans absorbed the Athenium Literary Society, which was founded in 1909. The combined group moved into the Athenium house, but it took the name of the Auroreans.

By 1920, the Aurorean society had grown strong with over three dozen student members, a chapter house and over a hundred alumni members. [“The Michigan Agricultural College,” *Car*, 19:4, Mar. 1923, 293-295.]

Michigan State lifted its ban on national fraternities in 1921, and national fraternities flocked to the school to adopt a literary society. The local organizations were all to glad to cast off their former titles, adopted a set of Greek letters, and openly declare themselves social fraternities. [Musgrave, 5-6, 15-16.] Members of the Delta Sig chapter at the University of Michigan traveled to the campus and recruited the Aurorean Literary Society for Delta Sigma Phi.

Almost immediately after Michigan State lifted its ban on fraternities, members of the University of Michigan chapter traveled to the campus and recruited the Aurorean Literary Society for Delta Sigma Phi. [Ds: Alpha Theta. *Car*, 19:4, Mar. 1923, 345.] They turned the formalities of installing the club as a chapter to District Deputy R.B. Kilgore. He and two undergraduates from the Chicago chapter arrived in Lansing on Saturday, January 12, 1923. During the day, the Delta Sigs initiated 31 Michigan State students and 15 of its young alumni. The oldest initiate was George A. Brown. By then he was a professor at Michigan State. [Murdock, Keith. “Alpha Pi Founders’ Day Banquet.” *Car*, 33:2, Jan. 1937, 75-76 at 76.]

The leaders of the national fraternity understood that other social fraternities were not the enemy. They were allies in the goal of helping college men make the best of their undergraduate lives and future careers. Before the charter date, the national fraternity sent invitations to the other fraternities on campus: “A cordial invitation is extended to you to visit and co-operate with our new brothers in furthering the aims, purposes, and ideals of college fraternities.” The president of National Interfraternity Conference was impressed. He wrote, “I do not remember having ever received (an announcement) which carries with it the spirit which is found in the Interfraternity Conference as does the one from Delta Sigma Phi. . . . It is not so long ago that the installation of a new chapter of another fraternity was the signal for a fight between the existing chapters at the college and the new fraternity.” [Editor’s Viewpoint. *Car*, 19:4, Mar. 1923.]

During the day of the initiations, a shower of telegrams and pennants poured into town from other chapters. The formal banquet was a festive event that evening at the Downey Hotel. Many speeches flowed from the 35 Delta Sigs visitors who gathered for the occasion. They came from the chapters at Chicago, Thiel, Hillsdale, Albion, Michigan, Ohio Northern, and Ohio State. With over 80 men dressed in tuxedos, the national officers designated the new group Alpha Pi Chapter. National Vice President LeRoy Sloan and District Deputy George Proctor added their remarks to

Kilgore's as the charter was delivered that evening to the president of the student group. The installation ceremonies climaxed amid a round of celebratory toasts. [Henshaw, F.W. "The Coming of the Stork at Michigan Agricultural College." *Car*, 19:4, Mar. 1923, 293-295.]

The charter was dated January 13, 1923 because the national fraternity had to order the elaborate document from an engraving company well in advance of the installation weekend. Usually, Delta Sigma Phi conducted the first initiations on one day, and then held the chartering banquet on the next day. The charter was always dated according to the date scheduled for the installation banquet. In this case, the University of Michigan men apparently decided to travel home on Sunday, and they completed the initiation and delivered the charter on Saturday, January 12. Because the charter has the January 13 date, the national fraternity lists the charter date as January 13, 1923.

One of the alumni members initiated on January 12 was Leslie H. Belknap. He graduated from Michigan State in 1909 with a degree in civil engineering. A brilliant and hardworking person, he starting working after graduating from the eighth grade. He skipped high school entirely and entered Michigan State in 1904 at age 18. He was short and muscular. He won both the state and national intercollegiate wrestling titles that year. He was named captain of the school's wrestling team for four years, and he was the Michigan State wrestling coach. He played varsity baseball, and during his last two years, he was manager of all interclass athletics.

A strong leader, even at a young age, Belknap organized all the independents who were not members of a local fraternity, which the school did tolerate. He led them "to such an extent," another student observed, "that the local fraternities did not have a chance in (campus) politics." As a result, Les Belknap was the top choice of all the local societies. He finally choose the Aurorean Society.

After the Aurorean Society affiliated with Delta Sigma Phi, Belknap had more scope for his remarkable leadership abilities. In order, he founded and led the local alumni board in 1928, took a seat on the national board of governors in 1935, and led the national fraternity as national president from 1940 to 1947. He continued to serve on the national board until 1961. His span of 26 years as a board member makes him one of the longest serving national officers.

When Belknap graduated from college, he worked first as a construction manager for the railroad, and then for a power company. He then worked his way up the ladder of the state highway department, becoming its chief engineer. He was soon selected as commissioner of all state highway construction in Michigan, commanding hundreds of rough workers. Belknap left the state job, started his own company and became one of the foremost road contractors in the state.

After incorporating the alumni organization in 1927, Leslie Belknap led the alumni to purchase a building lot near the Red Cedar River. The alumni corporation purchased a building lot next to the Red Cedar River. [Ds: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 24:4, May 1928, 357. The purchase was made when Belknap first joined the ACB as an active worker. "The New Board Of Governors." *Car*, 37:1, Oct. 1940, 2.] Plans to build a chapter

house had been underway since 1923, and they were still hazy until Belknap made the idea a priority in his life. [Miller, C.A.. "Leslie H. Belknap, Alpha Pi Chapter Adviser." *Car*, 30:3, Mar. 1934, 129; *Convention Minutes*, DSP 1957, 249.] He made construction of a chapter house the priority of his life. By 1930, Les Belknap was a leader of the chapter's alumni corporation board [Ds: *Alpha Pi. Car*, 26:3, Mar. 1930, 252.] and driving plans for construction of a large and solid house on the chapter's lot. [McMillan, H.D. "From McGill on South." *Car*, 27:3, Mar. 1931, 241.]

Belknap wanted financial support for the building project from the national fraternity. The next national convention was about to open in Atlanta, and by the time he arrived in December for the meetings, construction had begun under his supervision. [*Alpha Pi in New Home.* *Car*, 28:2, Jan. 1932, 128.] When he presented his plans to the Board of Governors and asked for a loan, the board members were more than skeptical. According to Dr. Hugh J. Ryan, they "frankly told him in Atlanta that he could not possibly finance and build the pretentious home he had in mind for Alpha Pi. But Belknap had been in the contracting business in Michigan in a big way and he knew what he was talking about." ["Five Men Awarded Certificates of Appreciation." *Car*, 30:3, Mar. 1934, 127.] The board granted his request for a loan from the operating account to help with construction, and he personally guaranteed the fraternity would recover its loan of \$2,000. [*Minutes of Board of Governors*. Dec. 27, 28, 29, 30, 1931, *Sphinx*, 7:2, Mar. 1931, 14.]

The Great Depression had begun in 1929, and the economic calamity sapped the financial strength of the country and its citizens. It continued for more than a decade. Money was scarce, and \$2,000 was a large sum. Belknap had the construction plans completed, and he personally guaranteed a local bank's construction loan. It was a much large amount.

Leslie Belknap supervised the construction, and in the winter of 1932 the finest fraternity house on the Michigan State campus opened. Constructed of fieldstone walls, it had granite cornices and stone chimneys at opposite ends of the building. The front lawn was spacious enough for athletic field events. The large back lawn overlooked the Red Cedar River. To the pride of the student members, their home was grand, imposing and comfortable. It accommodated 40 students.

Construction companies can be highly profitable, and Belknap sold his business and retired in 1932. He was 46. His free time allowed him to serve as Alpha Pi's chapter adviser. Not one to be idle, he increased his presence as the chapter's father figure. He occupied a small room in the basement as his office for volunteer work as chapter adviser.

Les Belknap devoted himself full-time to Alpha Pi as its chapter advisor. He spent every weekday in his command post in the chapter house. He counseled the student officers, kept the books, enforced collection of house bills, and insisted the chapter recruit vigorously and maintain a large chapter size. His strict supervision made the chapter one of the most outstanding on its campus and throughout the national fraternity. He was the chapter's "father figure," highly respected by the students. Alpha Pi usually had the largest membership among the national fraternity's chapters.

Students had little money and by 1933, the Alpha Pi men were unable to pay all their bills. The bank started to foreclose on the mortgage for the house. Undaunted, Belknap undertook great personal risk and paid the mortgage. The cash flow was only adequate to repay his slowly, and he managed to collect his loan over many years. He preserved during the economic crisis, saved the chapter home and the very existence of Alpha Pi.

The enthusiasm of the Alpha Pi undergraduates garnered an unusually large pledge class of 23 in 1932. One of them was a sophomore engineering student named Harold A. Balbach. [Ds: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 28:2, Jan. 1932, 164-165.] After studying in his hometown at Grand Rapids Junior College, he took a job for two years during the Great Depression to save money so he could study at Michigan State. [Melville, Stuart L. "New Great Lakes Deputy Is a Live Wire." *Car*, 31:4, May 1935, 212. He was born Aug. 17, 1908 in Detroit and raised in Grand Rapids.] Balbach was initiated in the winter of 1932 as a 24-year old. [Men Recently Initiated. *Car*, 28:4, May 1932, 302.] and promptly elected secretary of the chapter. [Fraternity Directory. *Car*, 28:4, May 1932, 336.] His diligence earned him election the next year as first vice president in charging of recruiting and appointment as house manager. Both offices were especially critical during the depression, and Balbach was key to Belknap's efforts to keep the chapter strong.

Alpha Pi expected 30 men to return for the fall semester in 1933, but it was the worst year of the Great Depression. Only 13 members and four pledges did, and that number was soon reduced to 15. Balbach organized a drive that netted 20 recruits in 60 days, and all 35 men lived in the chapter house. A year later, Alpha Pi had the largest chapter in Delta Sigma Phi with 64 members and pledges. [Belknap, Leslie F. "Loyalty and Willingness to Work Bring Success." *Car*, 31:2, Jan. 1935, 58.]

When Balbach graduated with a civil engineering degree in 1934, Belknap helped him get a job designing bridges for the state highway department. As the new district deputy in 1935, Balbach took time to organize alumni in the Lansing area and also in Grand Rapids where he worked. [Melville, Stuart L. "New Great Lakes Deputy Is a Live Wire." *Car*, 31:4, May 1935, 212.]

As the Board of Governors recognized, Belknap was the "indispensable chapter adviser and friend of the boys." [Dickerson, A. Ford. "Tales of the Trail." *Car*, 29:2, Jan. 1933, 139-140.] The board issued a certificate of appreciation to him in 1934.

With Brother Belknap at their heels the boys year in and year out turn in an almost unbelievable record of accomplishment. And now this year they have copped first honors in scholarship on the State campus.

All of which proves the old contention—that just one interested alumnus working with any chapter can see it through to achievement without end. . . . He is Alpha Pi's guardian angel. ["Five Men Awarded Certificates of Appreciation." *Car*, 30:3, Mar. 1934, 127.]

Les Belknap went hunting with other Alpha Pi alumni each fall. They stayed at his hunting lodge in the woods, and the huntsmen brought steaks to the chapter house for a venison dinner each year. [Ds: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 29:2, Jan. 1933, 161.] For their fall parties, the students sometimes decorated

the chapter house as a hunting lodge, with “deer heads, guns, skins, swords and all the rest.” [Ds: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 35:2, Jan. 1939, 113.] One of the students remarked of their mentor, “He has a great many stories of his hunting experiences that are really typical. The strange thing is that they are all true.” [Miller, C.A. “Leslie H. Belknap, Alpha Pi Chapter Adviser.” *Car*, 30:3, Mar. 1934, 130.] Belknap was devoted to his chapter at Michigan State, and its members called him the “guiding genius” of Alpha Pi. [Alpha Pi in New Home.” *Car*, 282, Jan. 1932, 128. He was born May 1, 1886 and died Aug. 1962. See photograph, *Car*, 30:3, Mar. 1934, 130.]

The national officers were awed by the accomplishments of Les Belknap. Earlier they had tried to discourage him from building Alpha Pi’s large house at Michigan State, but they had to concede he knew what he was doing. “He figured his overhead, his depreciation, his requirements in money and man-power. . . and succeeded in a big way.” [“Four Chapters In Notable Comebacks.” *Car*, 31:2, Jan. 1935, 57-58.] He had calculated everything but the effects of the Great Depression, and he overcame that disaster by his personal dedication to the chapter.

Belknap regularly attended conventions of the national fraternity, and his reputation for commitment and effectiveness preceded him. At the 1935 convention, he was elected to the board of governors of the national fraternity for the first time. In his practical and effective way, he promoted improvements in scholarship. He was chair of the national fraternity’s scholarship program for several years.

At the convention, the national fraternity’s highest award at the time, the Harvey Hebert Medal, was presented directly to Leslie F. Belknap. He was introduced as the “father of Alpha Pi” at Michigan State and the enthusiast of the other Michigan chapters. Alpha Pi was the strongest chapter within the fraternity, with 42 men living in the grand chapter house Belknap had built. [“Our Own ‘Believe It or Not’ Department.” *Car*, 32:2, Jan. 1935, 99.] He accepted the award with gratitude and a plea that others follow his example of assisting students in the chapters. He professed the satisfaction of seeing student members develop their potential was ample reward in itself. [“Business Dominated Convention.” *Car*, 32:1, Oct. 1935, 11.]

In 1938, Belknap returned to an active business career. This time, he started an earth moving company in East Lansing. His new business specialized in dirt moving and landscaping for schools and other large projects. [Leslie H. Belknap letter to A.W. Defenderfer, May 7, 1939.]

In 1940, Belknap won election as national president of the fraternity. It was suffering mightily from the deprivations of the Great Depression, and he knew a strong hand was necessary to return it to a stronger footing. Acting decisively, he changed its course for the better. He was a strong leader. He was sort and compact; he had been wrestling champion during his college days at Michigan State; and during his career he commanded tough road building crews and thousands of factory workers. “He looked a bit like a bulldog,” a leading Delta Sig remembered, “and in general he was not a good person to cross swords with.” [Harris, *Recollections of A Delta Sig*, 122-123.]

But World War II intervened in the life of the people of the United States at the end of 1941 with the attack on the country at Pearl Harbor. ROTC students could expect to remain in college long enough to complete their military training. Eight members of the Michigan State chapter were close to graduating and gaining commissions through ROTC. Among other members of the chapter, five of its seniors, one junior, and two sophomores had received draft numbers. They were on edge, waiting to be called and sent to military training camps. Nine recent graduates of the chapter were already in military service. Most of them were in the Army, a few were with the Army Air Corps, and the others went to the Navy or the Marines. [Ds: *Alpha Pi, Car*, 37:4, May 1941, 202.]

Promptly at the beginning of 1942, the federal government dragooned Belknap into managing the Nash Kelvinator automobile factory in Lansing. He managed 10,000 workers as they converted it to war production and made hundreds of airplane propellers and engines to help win the war. He was on duty at the factory seven days a week and responsible for its 24-hours a day of operations. He had to lay aside his leadership of the national fraternity, and the chapter as well. All but a few students of Alpha Pi went to war, fighting on the front lines or serving to support the men who fought and died there.

Harold Balbach had relocated to East Lansing to work with Jarvis Steel Company, and Belknap persuaded him to take responsibility for their chapter. He kept the chapter alive during the war years from 1940 to 1945.

The Michigan State chapter had more guidance than the national fraternity. Under Balbach's constant encouragement, the chapter was doing well. Its 41 actives added 36 pledges in the fall of 1940. It entered the competition for the fraternity sing. With so many singers from which to choose, the chapter's double sextet won the contest. It was a complete victory; the 12 men "won 299 out of 300 points to bring home the singing cup." [Ds: *Alpha Pi, Car*, 37:2, Jan. 1941, 116.] For the second year in a row, the chapter instituted a big brother system. It also had its first steak and mush scholarship dinner. With the help of other Delta Sig chapters, Alpha Pi won a new radio by collecting more Philip Morris cigarette wrappers than any other contestant.

Before the last undergraduates of Alpha Pi at Michigan State were ordered into the armed forces, Harold Balbach led them in a drive to revitalize the chapter in the fall of 1943. The chapter recruited a dozen juniors from the ROTC program. Balbach was pleased; ROTC students remained in college until they completed their military training, earned officer commissions, and were called to active duty. [Editor's Mailbag. *Car*, 40:2, Jan. 1944, 31.]

Balbach rented the chapter house to the Army. Whenever he examined it, Balbach was impressed by how clean the military kept its barracks. He expected the Army's monthly payments to end with the war, and he was not disappointed by the chapter's men in the service. They longed to come back to the chapter house when they were discharged, and they mailed checks to pay their building fund notes and create a reserve fund.

Under Balbach's guidance, the new underclassmen continued to pledge freshmen. The dozen remnants of Alpha Pi met in the student union every other week. Finding time for that meeting

was difficult for the ROTC students. To complete their final two years of college and military classes in 18 months, they were required to earn 22 hours of course credits each semester. They had to be ready for reveille at 7:00 o'clock and in their own barracks classrooms at 8:00. With only six hours each night for sleep, they hardly appreciated having to stand for their meals "in a half-mile chow line at the Union," but it was part of their acclimation to life in the military. [**Deputy Harold Balbach Writes Newsy Letter About Alpha Pi. *Car*, 40:2, Jan. 1944, 53-57.**]

The men of the Michigan State chapter had learned the first duty of all Delta Sigs from Les Belknap's example. From around the world, Alpha Pi members mailed payments on their building fund notes to Balbach. The service men whose studies had been cut short by the war assured him they intended to return to the campus. Until they could, they wanted to be sure the fraternity and the chapter house would be waiting for them. [**Editor's Mailbag. *Car*, 41:3, Mar. 1945, 117.**]

Some of the Alpha Pi pledges who had responded to the call of their country as early as 1941 returned to Michigan State when they were in the U.S. on furlough. The chapter initiated them while it had the opportunity. One of them, Robert S. Burns, was a pledge from the 1941-1942 year. He took leave in 1944 from the Merchant Marines in New York City and traveled to East Lansing to be formally initiated. "I had a lot of time to think about what a swell gang there was in Delta Sigma Phi while I was sailing the seven seas," he told Harold Balbach. "I wanted to complete that unfinished business . . . and become a brother in the bond." [**Editor's Mailbag. *Car*, 41:3, Mar. 1945, 117.**]

World War II raged around the world, and many men of Alpha Pi were at the front lines. When the Italians invaded British-held Egypt, American forces came to the aid of the British in June 1942. Lieutenant Wyman Anderson, initiated at Alpha Pi in 1939, conducted 78 fighting missions in the North Africa campaign, downing at least three German planes. When he returned for leave and visited his chapter at Michigan State, he had just received the coveted Distinguished Flying Cross with several Oak Leaf Clusters and Silver Star. [**"Flash—Wins Distinguished Flying Cross." *Car*, 40:1, Oct. 1943, 32.**]

The Michigan State chapter expected Les Belknap's son, "Hobbie," would pledge Alpha Pi in the fall of 1944. Based on his father's capabilities, expectations for young Belknap's leadership were high. [**DS: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 41:2, Jan. 1945, 81-83.**] Instead, the high school graduate turned 18 and had to enter the armed forces. Before long he was in a hospital in London. When he regained his health, he reunited with the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, headed toward Germany. [**"Word From Prexy Belknap." *Car*, 41:4, May 1945, 132. He became a member after the war.**]

Harold Balbach preserved Alpha Pi's chapter house by renting it to a different type of tenant. In 1944, sororities at Michigan State were doing so well that their membership outgrew their sorority houses. When the U.S. Army's lease of Alpha Pi's chapter house expired in July 1944, Chi Omega took a one-year lease and moved in. The women had the rooms painted rose beige, but Balbach realized new paint would fix the problem later.

Alpha Pi's men knew Hobbie Belknap very well. Les Belknap had brought his son to the chapter house many times. But when Leslie H. Belknap, Jr. graduated from high school in the

spring of 1944, he had to enlist and join the great war in Europe. Everyone in the country was doing all they could to save democracy, and much of the burden depended upon the men on the front lines. He was wounded in Germany and hospitalized in London. When he recovered, he returned to the battles in Germany as the Allies were closing in on Hitler's Nazi army and bringing the most horrific war in history to a close.

Alpha Pi's men gave their devoted duty to the war effort. The chapter sent more men to the war than most chapters, and they all fought heroically for their country and democracy. More young men of the chapter died in battle than nearly any other Delta Sig chapter.

Major Carl Fred Siglin was a 1934 initiate who was with the regular army. He was killed in action in Africa early in the war. [*Gold Star Delta Sigs. Car*, 41:3, Mar. 1945, 98; Photograph at *Car*, 41:4, May 1945, 170.]

Ensign Frederick B. Lorne, was initiated in 1941 before he joined the U.S. Navy Air Corps. He was killed in airplane crash over the Pacific. [*Gold Star Delta Sigs. Car*, 42:1, October 1945, 2]

Lieutenant Junior Grade Hubert E. Gluski was a 1942 initiate. His submarine was attacked, and he was listed as missing in action on October 27, 1943. [*Car*, 41:2, Jan. 1945, 82-83]

First Lieutenant Stanley J. Leitheiser, a 1938 initiate, enlisted in the U.S. Infantry. He was killed in the U.S. invasion of France on July 5, 1944. [*Gold Star Delta Sigs. Car*, 42:1, October 1945, 2]

Lieutenant Richard C. Quayle, initiated in 1941, was injured in action on Mindanao Island in the Philippines. He died of his injuries on July 8, 1945. [*Car*, 42:1, October 1945, 7.]

When the worldwide conflict ground to an end, Les Belknap started to demobilize the Nash plant. Until it was converted to make consumer merchandise in 1946, he had little capacity for fraternity work. He called upon Hal Balbach to revitalize their hometown chapter at Michigan State. With the chapter house leased to Chi Omega Sorority, Alpha Pi rented a smaller house for the fall semester to house its 22 student Delta Sigs. [*"Like Birds at Dawn, Sleeping Chapters Beginning to Come to Life."* *Car*, 42:1, Oct. 1945, 15-16.] In the spring of 1946, it already had 33 student members and 21 candidates for membership. [Ds: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 42:3, Mar. 1946, 108; *Car*, 42:4, May 1946, 147.] The Michigan State chapter was one of the strongest in the fraternity, and its students were interested in helping other chapters.

No Delta Sigs remained at the Alpha Tau Chapter at Albion, but members of the Michigan State chapter knew a former candidate of Alpha Tau who was returning to classes at Albion. They "initiated him for Alpha Tau" and saw him off to his college. He determined to reopen the chapter on his own. [*"Like Birds at Dawn, Sleeping Chapters Beginning to Come to Life."* *Car*, 42:1, Oct. 1945, 15-16.]

Alpha Pi repossessed its own home at Michigan State in August 1946. After the members performed extensive remodeling, 48 men moved in. [*"Alpha Pi is Happy to Be Back in Own Home at Michigan State."* *Car*, 43:1, Oct. 1946, 37.] Before the end of the year, the total chapter size grew to over 100. [*"Latest Round-up of the Chapters."* *Car*, 42:1, Oct. 1946, 21.]

In the fall of 1946, Leslie H. Belknap, Jr. was discharged from military service, along with several million other GIs. He enrolled at Michigan State as a freshman, and Alpha Pi chapter

initiated him in November of 1946. [Ds: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 43:2, Jan. 1947, 104-105.] Another veteran, Jim Kennedy, emcee of stage shows for the troops, returned to finish his college courses. He applied the drama skills he acquired during the war to stage a grand “Gay Nineties” party at the chapter house. [Ds: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 44:3, Feb. 1948, 124-125. The party was based on the Victorian style of the Gilded Nineties era.]

At the end of the war, Les Belknap saw that the reliable Balbach was selected as the second executive secretary of the national fraternity. Balbach began the rebuilding process of the fraternity in 1946 and continued until the beginning of 1947.

Belknap’s time as national president ended at the 1947 national convention. A stoic and taciturn man, he did not explain his absence from leadership of the fraternity during the war. He never received the appreciation he deserved. But some of the national officers supported him, and they kept him serving on the national board. He was a member of the executive committee and he remained on the board until 1961.

In the spring after the 1947 convention, the students of Belknap’s chapter at Michigan State gave a testimonial dinner for him. They called him a “tough taskmaster,” according to Frank Boyle, an undergraduate member of Alpha Pi during Belknap’s time. Belknap always said, “There are two kinds of Delta Sigs—those who work hard for Delta Sigma Phi during their college years, and those who work hard for Delta Sigma Phi during their lifetimes.” [Frank Boyle. Interview by L. Mall, Washington, D.C., Nov. 25, 1989.] His contributions to the chapter were legendary among the men of Alpha Pi, and the students wanted to show their appreciation for their chapter advisor. They presented him what must have been the most expensive honor ever bestowed within the fraternity—a solid gold engraved wrist watch. [“To Wind Up the College Year.” *Car*, 43:4, May 1947, 158. The other possibilities were the bronze bust of Arthur W. Defenderfer, presented to him at the 1935 national convention by Don Burt and Ray Spitler, and the gold watch gifted to R. Guy Smith, longtime general counsel, upon his retirement at the 1937 convention. Burt died Apr. 19, 1969. *Car*, 66:1, Fall 1969, 29.]

Past President Les Belknap was focused on enlarging Delta Sigma Phi, internally if not through a merger, and he concentrated on adding chapters in his own state. He set a goal for himself of having “ten strong chapters” in Michigan. [“State of Michigan Busy.” *Car*, 44:2, Dec. 1947, 63.] In the manner Belknap had long since mastered, he put the members of his chapter at Michigan State to work on the expansion projects he developed.

Many veterans had completed their college work at Michigan State in 1947 and early 1948, as elsewhere in the U.S. and Canada, and they left their schools and chapters. Their absence was soon filled with entering freshmen and more GIs who were newly discharged from their military service. [E.g., Ds: Alpha Pi. *Car*, 44:3, Feb. 1948, 124-125.] Like many Delta Sig chapters, Alpha Pi Chapter was still growing during 1948. Under the guidance of Hal Balbach, it had the manpower and skills to help new chapters emerge in Michigan.

In the midst of its other work, Alpha Pi demonstrated its mastery of organization. To celebrate its first 25 years in January 1948, the chapter decided to invite the students of Michigan State, faculty members and guests, to a great celebration at their home. They prepared an all-

college ice carnival, with intramural contests and many other forms of entertainment. Some 2,000 guests came between early afternoon and midnight. They entered Alpha Pi's grounds around an ice skating rink in the front yard and found an ice hockey rink on the Red Cedar River that flows behind the house. The Delta Sig letters were painted into the layers of each ice plot. The campus Greeks formed a team to compete against independent students in hockey while other guests slid down the river banks on iced cardboard boxes. The weather hovered near zero all day while light snow fell. Inside the house, guests warmed themselves, chatted and played bridge. The chapter served 2,500 cups of coffee and 200 dozen doughnuts during the day. After the independents won the hockey game, the school's head football coach moved to the ice rink and crowned the queen of the carnival. She was selected by the Detroit Red Wing hockey team. When the coronation was complete, several Alpha Pi men and coeds gave an ice skating performance, including waltz numbers and a square dance on blades.

In the evening, the crowd gathered on the river and watched what the Michigan State students believed was the first basketball game ever played on ice. The score was 18 to 8. The guests then crossed the river and roasted hot dogs provided by the Delta Sigs. Later in the evening, the chapter's combo played for dancing, and challenged students to a pie eating contest. The Alpha Pi new member candidates won by several bites. Jim Kennedy, the chapter's social chairman, had a large part in organizing the extravaganza. All the scenes glowed under colored lights, and fireworks and searchlights penetrated the night sky to end the party. [Burns, Bob. "Alpha Pi's Twenty-Fifth Birthday." *Car*, 44:4, May 1948, 158-160. The size of the crowd matched the number that came to the installation dance of the University of Tennessee chapter in 1931.]

For two decades starting in 1947, Les Belknap undertook to add Delta Sig chapters in Michigan. He did establish most of them. To train the students, he held chapter training conclaves each year at the Alpha Pi chapter house. He considered himself the primo domo in the state, and he maintained his prerogatives as the founder of most of the Michigan chapters. Nine of them flourished under his leadership.

After the end of World War II, Belknap decided not to continue in business for himself. Leslie H. Belknap only limited his fraternity work in the 1950s when his wife became ill and he had to care for her at home. He sold his company, which was engaged in heavy landscaping, and he took a job as city engineer of Grand Ledge, Michigan in 1952. He was preparing to go to work on August 30, 1962 when he had a massive heart attack and died.

Leslie Belknap made Alpha Pi an outstanding chapter and a chapter with one of the proudest histories in Delta Sigma Phi. Under his supervision, Alpha Pi chapter has never closed. This is a distinction that only two other Delta Sig chapters older than it have earned.

Les Belknap was one of the most committed and effective leaders of the national fraternity, a man who took charge in the bleak year of 1940 and changed its course when it needed firm direction to remain viable. His most immediate legacy is Alpha Pi Chapter, which even now has initiated more members than any other Delta Sig chapter.