



GHQ 100

Celebrating a century of General Headquarters operations

Did you know that in 2023, Phi Delta Theta will celebrate year 175 since the six Founders met the night of December 26, 1848, to establish our great brotherhood? As we approach this special milestone, the Fraternity celebrated another important milestone in 2021, the 100th anniversary of a centralized office and dedicated staff.

From 1848 until 1921, operations of the Fraternity existed only through the General Council and various other volunteers working around the continent. The General Council managed the Fraternity for nearly seventy-five years with no main headquarters. A M A Z I N G.

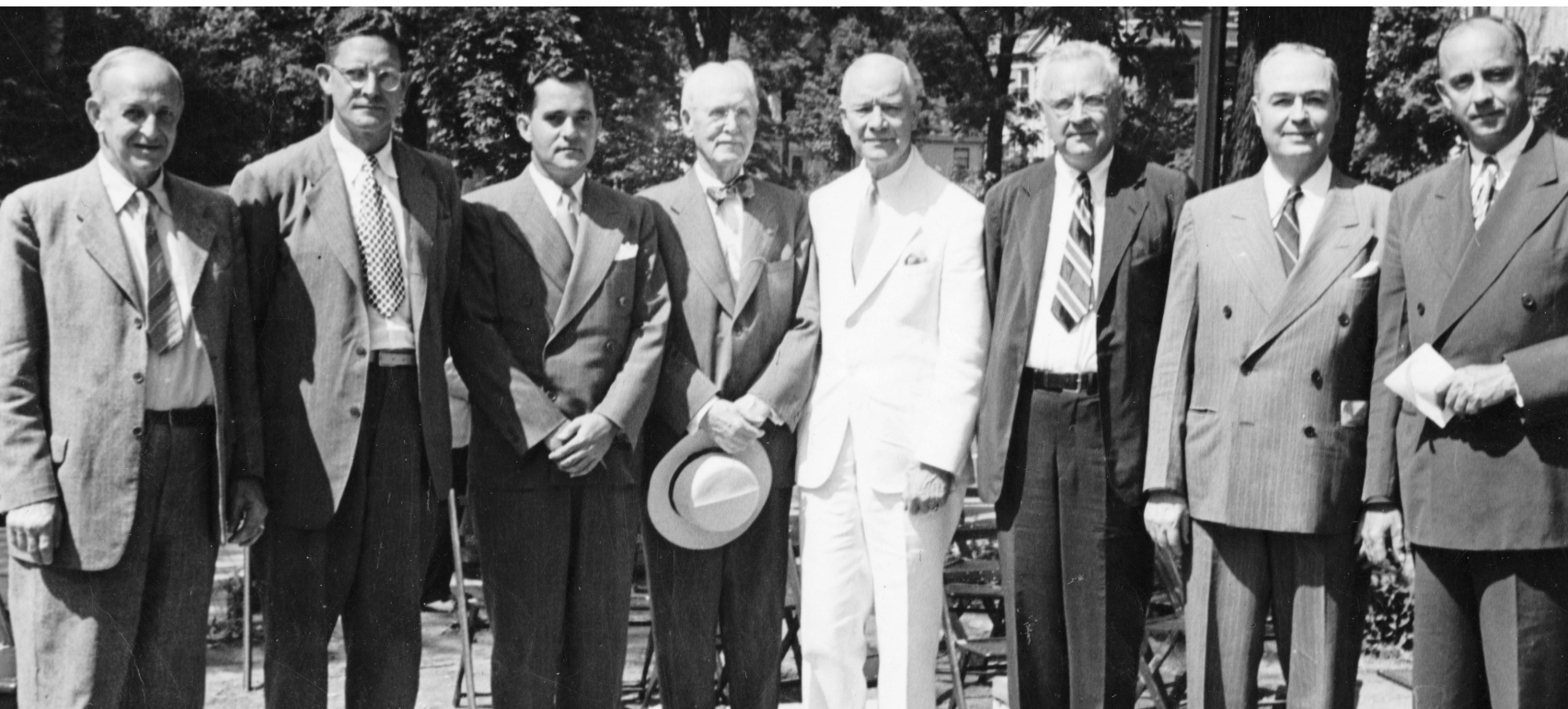
As early as 1915, it was clear that Phi Delta Theta's continued growth and progress would soon require a central organization that would direct the Fraternity's development.

From Six at First describes the central office, "The Atlanta

Convention, in 1920, made provision for a proper office. Opened October 4, 1921, in the Peoples Bank Building on East Market Street in Indianapolis, it contained a friendly reception room, a workroom, and a comfortable corner office for the secretary. In 1926, the General Council voted to move the central office back to Miami University and Oxford, Ohio. In 1927, a bronze plate designating the 'General Headquarters of Phi Delta Theta' was placed over the doorway of a hundred-year-old mansion of 208 East High Street."

Twenty-one years later, the Fraternity moved across the street to 2 South Campus Avenue. At the centennial convention, the General Council, Paul Beam, Robert J. Miller, and Lovell Elliot (the first-ever the earliest traveling secretary/consultant who is still alive and contributed his thoughts to this milestone) laid the cornerstone of the new General Headquarters.





With the foundation of a centralized office, the staff became the robust support structure of Phi Delta Theta and are the primary mechanism to accomplish the Fraternity's initiatives.

By our records, more than 250 staff members have served in various roles through the last one hundred years.

In preparation for this feature, GHQ polled staff members, past and present,

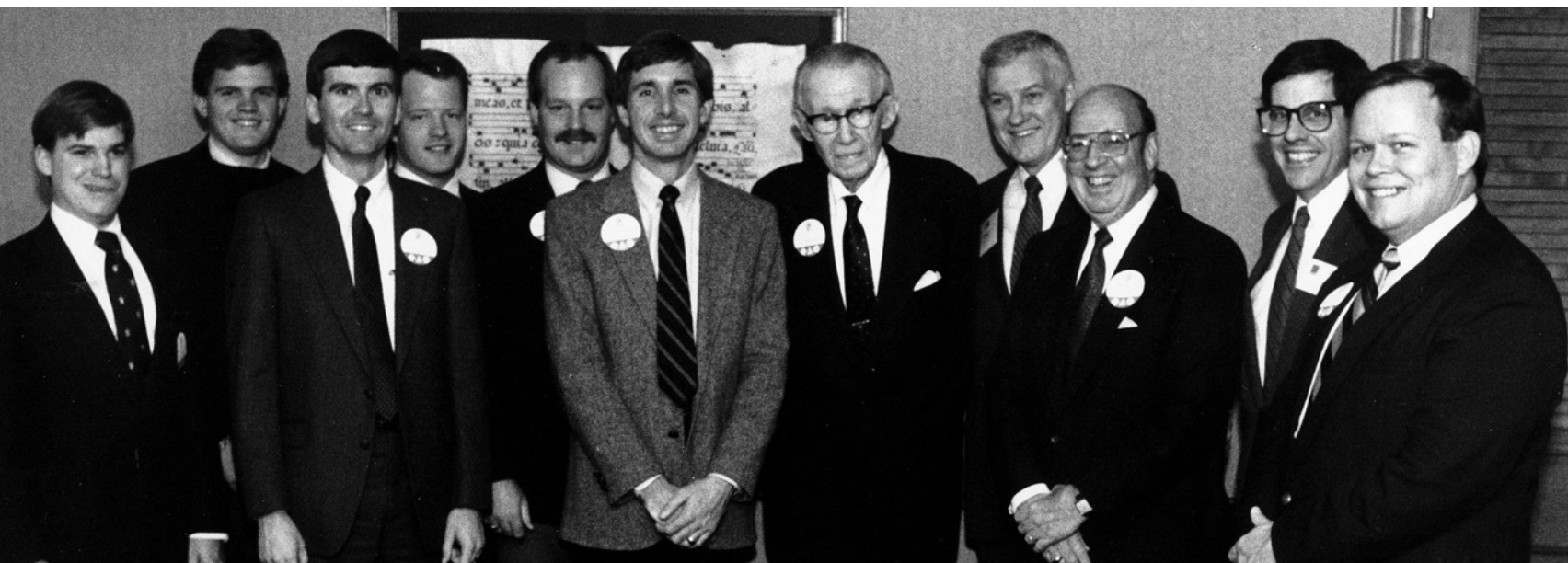
and nearly one hundred of those who have called GHQ their work home shared what it meant to them and how a dedicated staff has been instrumental in the growth and stability of Phi Delta Theta.

The current GHQ staff indicates the broad scope of duties the modern general fraternity workforce performs. There are executive vice presidents, senior vice

presidents, and directors. Included are the roles of accounts payable and receivable, a social media coordinator, a graphic designer, an editor, and several writers. A dedicated mail manager distributes important mail and makes sure it goes out as efficiently. A sophisticated and expert Foundation staff (created in the 1950s) raises money to complement the income

from membership dues, all combined to provide scholarships, educational initiatives, and run the greater Fraternity business. Finally, an events coordinator manages the plethora of events hosted by the Fraternity.

For the day-to-day operations of the 190 plus Phi Delt chapters and emerging chapters around the US and Canada, a staff member supports member development



and growth through chapter support coordinators, directors of chapter and volunteer support, education, and growth who manages dedicated recruitment specialists.

The current We Are Phi Delt initiative is a perfect backdrop for how a central office and its General Headquarters staff have impacted the trajectory of Phi Delta Theta.

WE ARE INITIATORS

Far and above, the one initiative mentioned most by current and former staff was implementing the Alcohol-Free Housing (AFH) policy. As

complex and intentional as the introduction was, it had its more challenging side. Learning how to re-direct, persuade, explain, and manage conflict was part of the daily task for anyone working in those years, from consultants who worked with chapters to implement the policy to the directors who had to create educational plans using projectors, manuals, and staff facilitators.

Many staff members reflect that the time and effort put forth to live by this policy during the last twenty-one years consequentially set the Fraternity up for its present and

principled success.

The other historical memory by staff from the 1950s and 1960s era was the eradication of the membership exclusionary clause. As with the AFH move, this change demonstrated that through open and thoughtful discussion and debate, decisions made for the greater good, considering long-term benefit, are possible and important.

As an intern in the early 1990s, Jay Bernhardt says he “learned that our Fraternity is made better through the unique contributions of diverse brothers, bringing their histories and perspectives to the table.”

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—Jay Bernhardt



Another former staffer expressed appreciation for the Fraternity's continued open-mindedness and inclusiveness strides and is proud of the nomenclature changing from colony to emerging chapter because of its historical prejudice.

The creation and ongoing refinement of the awards process was a highlight to several past staffers. They felt that the standards were set too low and that if we hold our chapters to a higher standard, they'll likely hit the mark. An example of this was when the Housser Trophy (Canadian

top chapter award) had a Silver Star chapter operations requirement, and the consultant said the condition should be Gold Star. Since that increased criterion, the award has always been given, and chapters' performance levels increased.

The use of leadership tools, like performance by objective, SMART goals, and strategic plans have made chapters and staffers better.

From the operational perspective, many simple technology innovations in the last fifty years are staggering on their impact on the

efficiency of our hardworking staff. Before many technological developments and the advent of the internet, assistants transcribed mostly dictation of chapter supports via typewriter. Administrative staff typed membership role cards on index cards that fill almost half of an entire vault at GHQ. Currently, that same data is stored inside a database with thousands of more bits of data to analyze, systemize, and predict.

Traveling secretaries became chapter consultants who then became leadership consultants. What used to be a two-year

gig for groups of four to ten post-graduate college men has now evolved into four permanent staff roles who support the chapters based on geographic location. Modern technology has powered many changes in the staff structure over the years

Rob McInnes, *Dalhousie '85*, a former chapter consultant from 1986–88, tells how he used to mail his chapter visit reports via both the US and Canadian postal systems, which tended to cause a delay of receipt by two or three weeks. He built a strong case for purchasing



a fax machine to improve efficiency, which proved quite the feat. He mounted a campaign to “raise funds from several Canadian alumni to purchase a fax machine.”

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE LEADERS

Since just 1921, there has been the Fraternity’s centennial and sesquicentennial General Conventions, and we’re preparing for our demisemiseptcentennial (175!). Many staff members reflect on the relationships made through the hard work of organizing and preparing for the General Convention, Leadership College, and the Presidents Leadership

Conference, the intense effort and teamwork required, and the importance of the alumni volunteer network. Texas Epsilon Phis Tio Kleberg and Mickey McKenzie endowed these two conferences due to the successful relationship building and advancement work by the Foundation advancement team.

Conferences reinforce the concept that Phi Delta extends well beyond a singular chapter, and the staff is the foundation that keeps the Fraternity advancing. The names have evolved to reflect the target audience better. Originally, GHQ named the volunteer conference the Chapter Officers and Chapter

Advisers conference, but now it’s called General Officers Conference (GOC). In addition, staff build and host house corporation summits, live-in adviser boot camps, recruitment workshops, and province retreats. Educating the chapters and volunteers is always on the staff calendar at GHQ. Much of what is accomplished is marked and measured by the events on the calendar.

WE ARE CAMPUS AMBASSADORS

Time and again, former consultants/secretaries mentioned the immense satisfaction of working with a startup group from the

very beginning through the installation of a chapter. Each of these expansion efforts is like starting a small business. You must get all the right people in the right positions, work toward common goals, create shared rules to live by or mission statements, discipline those that stray from principled living, manage big budgets, and promote the chapter. Working with university administration is a more significant part of this early effort. It is an excellent experience for the staff and founders alike to understand their role in the larger picture of the university or college.

“There’s something special about bringing something you



love to others' lives and seeing them grasp onto it and thrive. I was able to do that every day on expansion projects, all while adding value to a college campus and (re)engaging alumni with our great Fraternity. An amazing and memorable experience," John Talcott, *South Dakota '06*.

WE ARE STUDENTS

Former consultants remembered their onboarding/new staff orientation that included weekend retreats, shared training with other Greek headquarter staff, trips to Michigan Delta for early mock chapter visits (because of their year-round academic calendar).

"Bob Biggs (BB) gave us etiquette lessons before we

went to Robert J. Miller's home for dinner," Jeff Dillon, *Nebraska at Kearney '87*, former chapter consultant and current province president.

"We also had regular sessions with a local etiquette expert, making sure we understood and practiced the extra 'half percents' of social behavior," Robert Turning, *Akron '96*

And, with every new group of consultants, one recalled Brother Biggs' specific instruction when taking photographs in a line. "Keep your hands at your side (and out of your pockets) during a GHQ photo. It's not like we are lining up for a soccer kick!" remembered by Michael Wahba, *La Verne '14*, former director of chapter services.

Repeatedly it was remembered that the GHQ staff experience is a never-ending lesson on relationship building across staff departments, with partners, school administrators, vendors, volunteers, and even adversaries. You had to become students of the Fraternity, its inner workings, history, and future. And then become a teacher to those with whom you interacted.

WE ARE FAMILY

The mention of 'family' was second only to the alcohol-free housing policy. The unexpected discovery of joining GHQ staff was that it wasn't just a place to work but becoming part of a distinct and memorable family.

"Phi Delta Theta feels more

“There's something special about bringing something you love to others' lives and seeing them grasp onto it and thrive.”

—John Talcott



like family than work and getting the opportunity to have fun with my family has been amazing!" Myra Duritsch, director of volunteer support.

"Sometimes, it was easy to forget that working for Phi Delta Theta was my job. The regular act of kindness by co-workers showed that the GHQ staff was really a family like no other," Greg Rush, *UNC Charlotte '18*, former leadership consultant.

"I've learned that working together as a family is the best way to get something accomplished and to ask for help

when I've needed it," said Paula Seger, chapter records clerk.

Several former staff members met their life partners while working for Phi Delta Theta. Either at Miami University, in the office, or among the many other Greek interactions with other peer staff. Many staff from as far back as Lothar Vasholz met their significant other because of Phi Delta Theta's employment.

The Dale Family Home (lovingly called the DERF), and previously known as the Arthur R. Priest (ARP) home,

and the poorly insulated third floor of GHQ were homes away from home for many. Living together under one roof bonded consultant classes much like the new member education experience.

A laugh-out-loud comment shared by Editor Emeritus Bill Dean was that he often visited the church next door to the current GHQ to pray that the very inadequate heat and air conditioning in that third-floor dormitory be remedied.

“ Bob Biggs (BB) gave us etiquette lessons before we went to Robert J. Miller's home for dinner. ”

—Jeff Dillon



FAMILY IN THE FORM OF CANADIAN HOSPITALITY

Several respondents shared the fantastic hospitality of the Canadian chapters and alumni, their deep commitment to the Fraternity, and their loyalty to *The Bond*. Getting to travel the vast distances of the US and Canadian landscapes was also mentioned, and the massive mileage put on cars through the years.

WE ARE PHILANTHROPISTS

Many expressed great pride with the successful financial fundraising efforts by the Foundation through the years, from Building on the Bond to *Campaign 2030*. Being part of the advancement team that helps tell the Phi Delt story and find Phi supporters that ultimately help fund the ongoing work is critical to the future of Phi Delta Theta.

And the giving doesn't occur just at the alumni experience.

There is a strong sense of giving back, evidenced by the success of the Knights of Pallas student giving initiatives at the undergraduate conferences and the Iron Phi and LiveLikeLou endeavors by Phis to raise money toward family care and research for a cure of ALS.

RECRUITING PHIS OF INFLUENCE

Several boasted of the part they might have played in recruiting the likes of Bob Biggs and Moe Stephens to join the staff.

“I've learned that working together as a family is the best way to get something accomplished and to ask for help when I've needed it.”

—Paula Seger



Others remembered the privilege of meeting and assisting a Famous Phi at various events. Namely astronauts and brothers Neil Armstrong, Story Musgrave, and Jon McBride. Also mentioned were Admiral Wat Tyler Cluverius and Milton Eisenhower. And GHQ staff, without the vast alumni volunteer network in the trenches, is nothing.

CONCLUSION

The role of a GHQ staff member requires one to be constantly nimble. Never is one

position responsible for the job title on one's business card. Running the operation on a modest budget requires that people pick up all kinds of tasks along the way.

The GHQ staff is an ever-changing workplace of who does what, when, where, and how. It's a work in progress. But one that most would not trade for the world if given a chance.

In early 2020, the staff of General Headquarters defined the mission statement of the Phi Delta Theta General Headquarters staff.

"Together, we provide our members a transformational experience in the pursuit of greatness."

This mission statement represents every staff member's work at the General Headquarters, past, present, and future. And the team, together, looks forward to continuing its work to help each member, undergraduate, and alumnus alike, to pursue the greatest version of himself.

