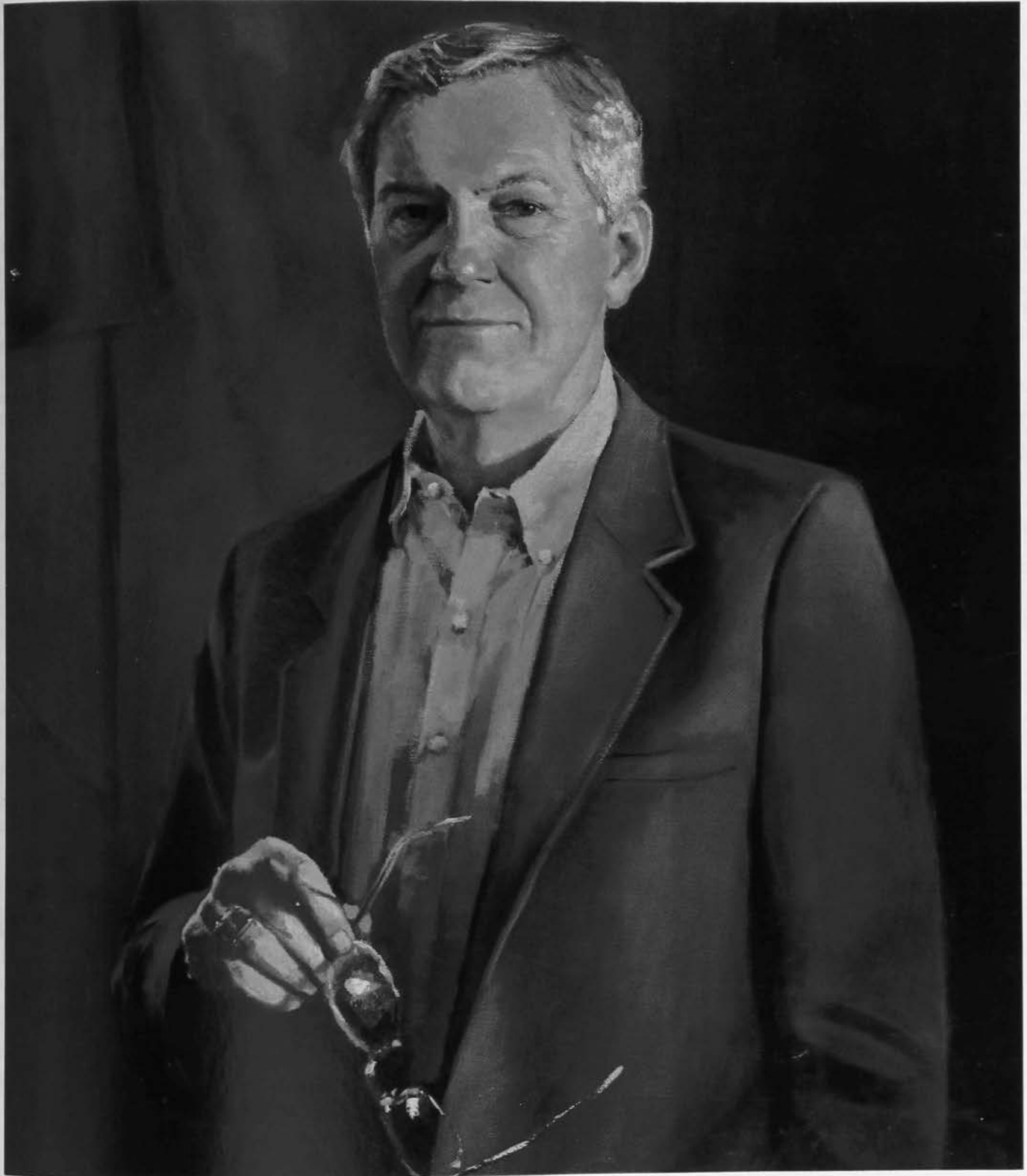


the scroll

OF PHI DELTA THETA

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PORTRAIT OF ROBERT J. MILLER BY BILL ATKINS

Bob Miller — Two Turned Into Forty

Robert J. Miller joined Phi Delta Theta as an aide to Paul C. Beam in June of 1951 for a two-year tour of duty. Those two years turned into 40. Miller shares some of his memories as his last official act as Executive Vice President.

BY ROBERT J. MILLER
Executive Vice President

My immediate predecessor, Executive Secretary Paul C. Beam, (Indiana-Illinois '25) did triple duty in Albuquerque on March 15, 1951. He participated in the dedication of the brand new adobe style chapter house for the four-year-old chapter at the University of New Mexico, he spoke at the alumni club sponsored Founders Day banquet that evening and somewhere in between he squeezed in an interview with me. Quite frankly, I had forgotten about his presence at the house dedication until I looked into some historical records but I certainly remember the other two events.

Paul had held the Fraternity together during the several years of World War II. Many chapters had closed, some had become quite small and others survived on the initiation of servicemen who were enrolled in college via various government programs. Following the war, Paul had as many as two assistant secretaries but, when he arrived in Albuquerque, he had only one aide and that one had been with him only since the beginning of the Fall term. The adviser of my chapter, Harold K. Pride (Knox '29), (later province president and still later a member of the Survey Commission) had written a letter of recommendation to Paul on my behalf without telling me that he had done so. Later, when he learned that Brother Beam had expressed interest, he advised me of what he had done and Brother Beam's trip to the southwest was arranged. My memory of the discussions I had with Paul is a bit hazy but the meeting could not have been a dismal failure because in April, I received a telegram (that's a communication we used to send by wire back in those days) inviting me to become a member of the Headquarter's staff.

In June of that year, I arrived in Oxford, Ohio for a two-year tour of duty. That two years turned into 40. It is a little known fact that I was hired as the Executive Secretary Designate, provided the General Council was satisfied with my work and I, in turn, felt that I wanted to continue in association management. Even so, my initial commitment was for only two years and as happy as I was to have this opportunity to work for the Fraternity, down deep I felt that I wanted to return to the dry climate of New Mexico to establish a permanent residence.

Originally, the apprenticeship for which I was hired should have lasted 14 years until Paul C. Beam's retirement at age 65. Brother Beam died unexpectedly on July 6, 1955 at age 55, four years after I joined the staff. After a process of interviews, the General Council decided to take a chance on the "new kid" who had been around such a short

time and I became Executive Secretary at age 29, the youngest in the business at that time.

When I came to work for the Fraternity, the eminent Queen's Counsel George E. Houser (McGill '06) was president of the General Council. He was succeeded by a Washington, D.C. attorney specializing in international law, George S. Ward, (Illinois '10). John H. Wilterding (Lawrence '23), an officer of the Banta Publishing Company, was president of the Council at the time of my appointment to the position of Executive Secretary. It was my good fortune to have, early in my career, Dr. Paul Hawley (Indiana '12) as my first full-term President. He had an impact on my management style which has served me well in the intervening years.

"Ram," as he was known to his friends, was educated as a medical doctor. He devoted his life to a military career, serving as Surgeon General of the European Theater of Operations during World War II. He frequently held Phi gatherings in Europe inviting brothers, regardless of military rank, to participate. Following his discharge from the service with the rank of Major General, he became the first Chief Medical Director of the Veterans Administration, then Executive Director of the American College of Surgeons, an office he held while he served as President of the General Council, 1956-58. His leadership quality, displayed so well in the service of his country, carried over into his work with Phi Delta Theta. He was a firm believer that it was the responsibility of the Governing Board to set policy and it was the responsibility of the staff to handle the administrative details. He conducted a very efficient Council meeting. He started all meetings on time. He would not allow anything on the agenda that was already covered by policy or that could be financed with funds which were al-



PAUL C. BEAM



1952-54 GC: The 1952-54 General Council left to right: Frank S. Wright, Barrett Herrick, President George S. Ward, Ray L. Gardner and John H. Wilterding served as President during the 1954-56 biennium when Robert J. Miller was named Executive Secretary (now Executive Vice President).

ready appropriated.

I remember quite well a Council meeting late one evening when a delinquent chapter had been under discussion for quite some time. Everyone was a bit irritated because, quite frankly, this chapter made a habit of being on the agenda. One Council member said "Let's just tell the members of this chapter that if they don't handle this situation in 30 days, we'll suspend their charter." Ram looked at his brothers on the board with a twinkle in his eye and said "Now, just a minute. If you vote for this motion, it means we must suspend the chapter's charter in 30 days, if the members do not make good on our ultimatum. Are you prepared to suspend this chapter's charter? If not, don't vote for the motion be-

cause we are not going to use a meaningless threat to try to get the chapter to comply." Never again, during Brother Hawley's term of office, did I hear anyone say "We're gonna do this if you don't do that" unless, of course, the person intended to make good on the statement. This Council became very popular and its decisions were respected by the members.

During my tenure, I attended 168 council meetings. It was my duty to write the minutes for 158 of those meetings for a grand total of 4,607 individual items of business. The meetings were held from Boston to San Francisco and from Montreal to Miami with Freeport, Grand Bahama thrown in for good measure. The span included 21 Presidents plus an additional 15 Council members.

For many years it was my responsibility to attend and record the minutes of Survey Commission meetings. During those 28 years, I attended 49 meetings but a perfect

record was marred by my absence from one meeting due to an uncompromising flu bug. It has been my pleasure to work with over 300 province presidents but I cannot begin to guess the number of chapter advisers who have served the Fraternity during the past 40 years. As an undergraduate, I traveled to Oxford, Ohio, for Phi Delta Theta's Centennial Convention held during the first week of September in 1948. My initiation occurred only seven months earlier. Following graduation, the Albuquerque Alumni Club elected me as delegate to the 1950 Convention in Chicago. By 1952, I was on the staff so I began learning about managing conventions from Paul Beam during the 49th meeting in French Lick, Indiana. Two years later, we journeyed to Mackinac Island for the Fraternity's third meeting in the beautiful Grand Hotel. (We had met there in 1934 and 1946). My predecessor was ill throughout this meeting so I learned even more



WORLD WAR II PHI DELT DINNERS: Seated front row center is Dr. Paul R. Hawley (Indiana '12) at one of his Phi Delta Theta dinners held in England (probably Cheltenham) in 1943. Can our readers identify the other Phis in the picture?

about the pitfalls of convention planning by running between Paul's room and the Hotel Convention Manager's office or the banquet hall or the registration desk or the bell captain and on and on.

Although Paul Beam had booked the 1956 Convention in Boulder, Colorado, his untimely death a year earlier placed me in the role of a full-fledged convention manager for the first time. The baptism of fire would have been bad enough in a full service American plan hotel but the problems were multiplied by the campus location at the University of Colorado. They tell me it was "a good Convention" but the whole thing is a blur in my memory. When the meeting was over, my wife and I checked into the nearest hotel and slept for the better

part of 24 hours. The job became easier during the next 16 Conventions but the biennial task of trying to make each meeting better than the previous one continued to challenge the talents of all staff members.

In 1955 we began conducting the General Officers Conference, a meeting to which all General Officers were invited. The first five meetings were held in Oxford; the first 11 were held in odd numbered years. Two such assemblies were held in 1975 (one in January; the other in September) to begin a new policy of annual meetings to be held in February. That comes to a total of 26 meetings during the past 35 years. The staff, of course, was responsible for all the details including travel, meals and housing arrangements.

The birth of a new chapter is always an invigorating experience and I have been blessed with the opportunity to participate in the installation of 48 chapters, begin-

ning with Texas Epsilon at Texas Tech in 1953, and the reinstatement of five others whose charters had been suspended. Over the years, fate has enabled me to become acquainted with 37 of the 53 Past Presidents of the General Council beginning with Hilton U. Brown (Butler 1880), who was the only two-term President serving from 1882-1886. Of the 100 brothers who have served as a member of the headquarters professional staff, I have worked with 81 and I am acquainted with all but three. This figure does not include *Scroll* editors, most of whom have served the Fraternity from their home bases. Since my arrival in Oxford 110,000 Brothers of Phi Delta Theta's membership of 185,000 have been initiated representing almost 60% of our total. My, how the Fraternity has grown.

In my spare time, I have managed to edit 17 editions of *Phikeia*, *The Manual of Phi Delta Theta* and up until 1980, I had visited every

chapter of the Fraternity at least once.

So, with these few words of explanation, maybe you can better appreciate what your employee has been doing these 40 years. If I have ever looked good in any of my work, it is due to the staff and volunteer workers, I assure you. From the chapter adviser to the president of the general council; from the newest clerk typist to our office manager of 29 years, Imogene Rumpler, each played a role in the efficient execution of Fraternity

operations.

Often overlooked is the fact that my wife of 39 years has been at my side throughout my Phi Delta Theta work. Early in my career, she remarked to friends "I didn't know I was marrying the whole Fraternity." She began her apprenticeship at the 1952 Convention, climbing a ladder to hang chapter banners, flags and other decorations in the meeting hall. Soon she was in charge of the ladies program at all meetings where wives of Fraternity members were involved.

Jerri and I stand together to bring down the curtain on the two-year job that turned into four decades of occasional frustration, frequent challenges and many rewards. We raised two children in the process and they, too, did their share of convention hall decorating over the years.

We both extend heartfelt appreciation to our many friends who have supported us and to each we extend sincere best wishes for good health and happiness. ■



BOB AND JERRI MILLER, 1962



BOB AND JERRI MILLER, 1988