

A Farewell to LAE

I can't believe how much time has passed since I first saw the SAE house at 12 Myrtle Avenue. I had heard from one of my freshmen dorm buddies that his older brother thought SAE was one of the best national fraternities so we thought we'd scope it out before rush. I was a naïve freshman who had his car illegally on campus in January 1964 and we drove out to find this colonial estate which looked even more beautiful covered with snow. As they say, the rest is history.

My first pledge term didn't go well. I didn't get initiated with my class primarily because I didn't take it very seriously. I spent more time playing bridge with the Brothers than I did working on our pledge project or studying for that matter. When I took a leave of absence from RPI I was officially de-pledged. Returning the following January to repeat my second freshmen semester I was surprised to find out that I was not going to be automatically pledged again. In fact, there were a few Brothers who thought I should not be brought back. I really want to thank my big Brother, Jim Brown as well as George Sherwood for championing my cause. I vowed at that time that I would show I was worthy of being an SAE. I spent many hours working on our pledge project and was initiated with the class of 1968.

Although I didn't make it through my sophomore year at the Tute (I flunked out the first semester), I was allowed to live in the House. This took a House vote which was very close and once again my big Brother came to my rescue. Although I wasn't a student and therefore had no official standing, I continued to serve as Social Chairman. I must have done an honorable job because I was elected for a third term in the fall even though I was living in an apartment on Pawling Avenue. I attended Russell Sage Evening Division and started taking accounting classes. After joining the Navy Reserve and completing about 30+ hours I transferred to Syracuse University in February 1968.

I met my future wife, Ann Tenbrook, while SAE was caroling her sorority at SUNY Albany on December 16, 1965 just prior to Christmas break. We were lavaliered, pinned and engaged on December 16, 1966, 1967 and 1968, respectively (I have this thing for numbers). We were married in August of 1969 and I graduated Syracuse the following June.

When I attended Alumni Weekend in 1970, I decided to run for the LAE Board of Directors. I was voted in and served on the Board for three years as a non-officer. In 1973 the Treasurer, Dave Haviland, said he did not wish to serve in that role any more. Since I had passed the CPA exam that year, it seemed like a logical thing for me to take on. After 35 years it is now time for me to pass the baton.

Looking back on all these years, there are a few incidents that I would like to forget but there are many more wonderful memories I pray I will never forget. I am proud to be a Brother of SAE at New York Epsilon. One of the things I feel most proud about is that we overcame the bigotry that was prevalent in the sixties by eliminating the automatic blackball that was habitually given to any rushee that was Jewish, Asian or Black. I want to thank Alan Berrick, Michael Quan and Frank Ashley for showing everyone that religion, ethnicity or race is not what is important. It's what's inside a person that counts. I think the House is a far better place today because of this.

In summary, I have enjoyed the many years and experiences we have had together. I want to thank all of you for making this possible and I hope that I have served you well on the Board.

Phi Alpha!!
Jim "Surf" Owens