

ENDEAVORING TO RETAIN THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH

Sigma Chi Remembers 48th Grand Consul Dr. Charles Thatcher '43

Editor's Note: This article was originally published in the spring issue of The Magazine of Sigma Chi and reprinted with their permission.

If you talk with enough Sigma Chis who have attended one of the Fraternity's leadership training workshops since the program began in 1947, you're likely to find thousands of men in various stages of life who recall fondly lessons they learned from the late 48th Grand Consul, Order of Constantine Sig and Significant Sig **Dr. Charles Thatcher '43** who entered the Chapter Eternal on Jan. 27, 2021, and credit him in some part with shaping the person they are today.

There's Thatcher's lesson on time management that has stuck with 59th Grand Consul **Dick Hester, Ball State '77**, and scores of others where Thatcher, an Army veteran and former professor of chemical engineering, shared advice on how to manage every minute of every day. Then, there's the analogy that springs to the mind of Order of Constantine Sig and Sigma Chi Foundation Senior Director of Development Sig **Frank Raymond, Penn State '71**, where he encouraged Sigs to be mindful of their interactions with others and compared those interactions to billiard balls colliding—whereby the trajectory of each person changes as a result of the energy transferred from another.

Despite how numerous and varied Thatcher's lessons were, each was sure to be filled with his trademark intellect and wit and to be delivered with the sort of compassion and empathy that made Thatcher so beloved by generations of Sigs and students.

THE GIFT OF LEARNING

Thatcher was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on April 4, 1922, and in 1929 moved to Escanaba, Michigan, with his parents, Oliver and Carrie. He then attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering. He was an editor of *The Michigan Daily* newspaper, cadet commander of Michigan's Army ROTC program, a member of the all-campus honor society, a member of the University of Michigan band and joined Sigma Chi thanks in part to encouragement from fellow band member **Roy Mattern Jr. '42**.

After graduating from Michigan and winning the 1943 International Balfour Award, Thatcher served from 1943 to 1946 as an ordinance officer in the U.S. Army. He then returned to the University of Michigan and began a lifelong career in education, working in the school's dean of students of office and as a faculty member of its chemical engineering department from 1947 to 1958.

Thatcher's career subsequently brought him to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, as professor from 1958 to 1965 and as dean of Pratt's school of engineering and science from 1965 to 1970. From 1970 to 1992, Thatcher was a distinguished professor of engineering at the University of Arkansas before retiring at age 70. He was so well remembered, however, that he was called back to teach in 2005 and 2006 and continued doing so unofficially until his passing. Along the



way, he authored three textbooks and in 1973 earned the American Society for Education Award for Excellence in Teaching, among other accolades.

AN ADVOCATE FOR UNDERGRADUATE

To say that Thatcher took seriously his lifelong commitment to the White Cross would be an understatement. Rather fittingly, his more than 70-year career of volunteerism and service in Sigma Chi began with an invitation to join the 1948 Leadership Training Workshop faculty.

"I probably would have never been seen again in Sigma Chi had it not been for the Balfour Award," he said in a 2017 interview with Sigma Chi. "That's the only way [Order of Constantine Sig **Fred Mitchell, Mississippi State** and **Michigan State 1913**,] who was looking for faculty at workshop, would've known about me. His invitation for me to be on the workshop faculty in 1948 was the beginning of my Sigma Chi career."

That career included service as a member of the Leadership Training Board from 1957 to 1973 and a stint as its chairman from 1971 to 1973; serving as alumnus member-at-large to the Executive Committee from 1964 to 1973; as Grand Pro Consul from 1973 to 1975; and as Grand Consul from 1977 to 1979. The Fraternity dedicated its 1974 workshop at Purdue University to him, and in 1979 he received the William H. Carlisle Jr. Outstanding Workshop Faculty Award.

A highlight of Thatcher's term as Grand Consul included his visiting all 172 active Chapters at the time — a feat that Thatcher completed by April of 1976, less than one year into his term. "Visiting 172 Chapters was an experience I would not have missed for anything. It was an experience I would not do again, even if my wife, Flo, would let me. But in doing so, I get a feeling of vitality that is exciting in most Chapters," he said at the end of his term.

It was during one of these visits that Hester, then the Consul of the Ball State Chapter, first met Thatcher, who planned to visit the Chapter and observe its initiation ceremonies. Hester recalls being nervous at the prospect of having a Grand Consul critique his Chapter's Ritual performance but felt reassured upon meeting Thatcher. "His immediate warmth, his reassurance and his encouragement just put me and the entire Ritual team immediately at ease. At that moment, I knew what type of brother he really was."

Years later when Hester, during his own term as Grand Consul from 1995 to 1997, sought advice on a new leadership program designed for sophomore members that became the Horizons Huntsman Leadership Summit, Thatcher was one the first calls he made asking for feedback on the program and to be part of the planning committee. Thatcher agreed. "Chuck immediately said 'Absolutely,'" Hester recalls.

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The Beat Rolls on at Theta Theta

Learn About the Many Ways You Can Remain Involved with the Chapter

For a little more than a year now, the House Corporation and the undergraduate Chapter have adapted to all the challenges presented by the pandemic. We went on with our meetings and the upkeep of the house and the brothers managed the Chapter affairs. Between preparing for and passing city code inspections and projects we take on for regular maintenance, the house is in good shape.

We have paid our mortgage debt down to under \$249,000 and our goal is to eliminate it all together. The debt service is running us over \$55,000 per year so freeing that money up would greatly improve our long-term financial standing. We still provide \$2,500 in scholarships each term to the undergraduates and still find ways to support Sigma Chi and Theta Theta as a great choice among Michigan's competitive Greek options.

Hopefully this fall will mark a return to a more normal campus experience. While some things might be up in the air, we are identifying ways to strengthen Theta Theta and providing more for our alumni and undergraduates. The pandemic did give us the opportunity to finetune our Zoom meeting skills, which creates additional opportunities for alumni who can contribute their time. While the House Corporation can always use additional help from brothers who can make the monthly trip to Ann Arbor for meetings, Zoom is a great option, regardless of where you live. Here are some projects/activities that would benefit our Chapter if you have the time to take on a leadership role or participate.

CAREER NIGHT

We have previously had local alumni come to the Chapter House to meet with the undergraduates and offer career guidance, make connections, discuss employment trends, and provide real world counseling. To make this happen, we would like to pair alumni who can gather a group of guys from a variety of fields with representatives from the Chapter who can coordinate Chapter attendance and prepare a list of questions they are most interested in getting answered.

REUNIONS

Over the years, several groups of classes of brothers have gotten together over football weekends. They always make for a great time and a celebration of many lifelong friendships. We'd like to help organize this as an annual event. Ideally, we would find brothers from landmark new member classes or graduation years that are due for their 10th, 20th, 25th, etc., reunions. We can help provide contact information from our records and help with planning events at the Chapter House over the weekend. We need one or two guys to take the lead on behalf of their respective reunion groups.

OFFICER MENTORS

The House Corporation works with a new set of Chapter officers each year. The transition from year to year isn't always smooth and keeping them on track for success in their roles can be a challenge. What would really be helpful is if we could find alumni who could take on a mentorship role with one of our most critical positions. If we could pair you with the Consul, Quaestor, Magister, House Manager, Ritual Chairman, or Alumni Relations Chairman and start a regular dialog on their role and keep

them on track for the goals they have set, the entire Chapter would benefit. This could easily be done by Zoom or phone.

ALUMNI EVENTS

While football games provide regular opportunities to get back to campus in the fall, we'd like to see if we could come up with additional opportunities for alumni and undergraduates to get to know each other. Some ideas include a golf outing, a canoe trip down the Huron River, a watch party for the Final Four (in our future, right?). There are plenty of options and we are looking for volunteers to take on the challenge.

INITIATION

Part of our initiation ceremony relies on alumni participation. We'd need you at the Chapter House for this, but I can tell you from experience that it is a rewarding role, even if it requires an early start on a Saturday. It is a chance for us to welcome our new initiates and explain to them firsthand our commitment and that the benefits of brotherhood can last a lifetime. Our undergraduates prepare for and provide an initiation experience that provides a lot of value to all who attend.

We appreciate all the support you have given to the Chapter over the years. We hope you will consider offering your time for projects like these that will benefit our alumni and undergraduate Chapter. To discuss any of these in more detail or to get looped into a Zoom meeting, please don't hesitate to contact me.

In Hoc,

Dan Page '87

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Thatcher also accepted invitations from Hester to join his discussion groups at the Fraternity's summer leadership training workshops, having done so most recently in 2017 at age 95.

"It was always amazing," Hester says. "He would just walk in the room, pick right up on the topics the group was talking about, [and] offer sage advice in his very calming and humorous way. It was always wonderful to see the way he'd interact with the undergraduates.

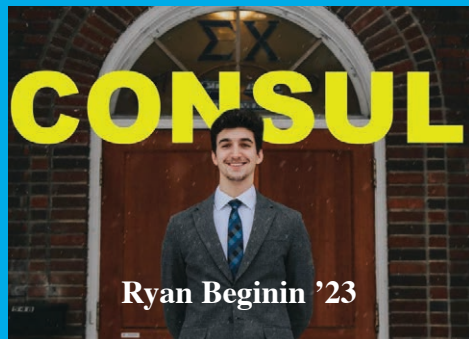
Every workshop, he knew I was going to invite him to stop by my discussion group and he always did."

The ease with which Thatcher connected with others will be part of his enduring legacy. "We all know the reality of entering the Chapter Eternal one day," Hester says, "but I was betting that if anyone could live forever it'd be Chuck. And in a way, he will. He will live forever in the many of us who were so impacted by his life."

A Winning Wolverine

Congratulations to **David R. Prybil '87**, who was the champion of this year's '80s NCAA tournament pool! Brothers **John Dumont '88** and **Bill Kline '87** rounded out the top three for a winter 1984 pledge class sweep of the podium.

Executive Board



Ryan Beginin '23



Eli Yarmy '23



Michael Carnavalla '23



Will McLaren '23



Morgan Witt '22

ALUMNI UPDATE

Chapter Eternal

Thomas E. Mott '64 entered Chapter Eternal on August 20, 2020. Tom played on the football team for two years at U of M. He worked for the family business, Mott Bros. Company, from 1968 to his retirement in 1996. Tom and his wife, Judy, had four children and four grandsons. He valued his many years in Rockford, Ill., growing up, working, and making many close friendships there.

Alumni News

C.J. Cavalaris '54 is retired as a professor emeritus of the Ohio State University College of Dentistry. His two sons are in Sigma Chi at Miami University. C.J. lives in Columbus, Ohio. Email: c2122212@aol.com

Lance Minor Jr. '55 lives in New Canaan, Conn., and shares that all is well. Email: lcmj27@optonline.net

John Schwarz '59 is a former state senator and member of Congress. He is also a retired physician and lecturer in the Ford School at U of M. John lives in Battle Creek, Mich. Email: joefmd@umich.edu

Robert Hohmeyer '60 is retired and lives in Del Mar, Calif. He volunteers at the San Diego Model Railroad Museum in Balboa Park on the La Mesa Club Tehachapi Pass exhibit. Email: hohmeyer@san.rr.com

Ronald Strauss '74 joined the 1855 Sigma Chi Founders Club at the Fairwinds Estate Winery in Napa Valley, Calif. He lives in Wyoming, Mich. Email: ronaldstrauss154@yahoo.com

Pat Birney '79 still lives in San Diego, working for Sempra Energy in their LNG business. Email: patrick.birney@gmail.com

Chris Tope '79 is past president of the Woehler Research Group. His wife, Pam, retired from Verizon Wireless in 2016. They have two children, Donna and Rob; Donna is married and lives in Tampa, and Rob is at Emory University in Atlanta finishing his MBA. Chris and Pam live in New Castle, Va. Email: cristope@frontier.com

Todd Hoffman '82 moved to Winston-Salem, N.C., in 2019 to become the digital lead for Krispy Kreme Doughnuts. His son, Trevor, is also a Sig (Carnegie Mellon) as are his two brothers (Syracuse and Penn). Todd and his wife, Cherie, are U.S. leads on a West African education project called Gambia Academy. Email: todd@tappingonglass.com

Tyrone Kline '89 relocated back to Michigan from North Carolina and is happy to be home. Email: mgoblu88@gmail.com

Eric Raynal '12 lives in Ann Arbor, Mich., and is starting a neonatology fellowship this year. Email: ericrayn@umich.edu

Adam Levine '14 has been married for one year; he met his wife in his senior year at Michigan. He recently earned his MBA at UC Berkeley and now works full-time in San Francisco. Email: adamlev@umich.edu

Jacob Lutt '16, Brian Koffler '16, and Mike Belt '16 have been happily working from home in their Upper East Side, N.Y., apartment in the sports media (Turner Sports) and sports tech (League-Apps) industries. Emails: jlutt@umich.edu, bkoffler@umich.edu, and mikebelt@umich.edu

Adam Eckburg '19 is in medical school at Northwestern University. Email: ajeckburg@gmail.com

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JOIN YOUR BROTHERS FOR HOMECOMING!

The Homecoming game is scheduled for September 25 against Rutgers. Please look for details in an announcement on our website, thetatheta.com, later this summer as we determine what type of celebration will be possible.

Happy Trails to a Landmark Tree

We lost the great tree from our yard this year, so there will be a new look to 548 S. State next time you are in town. The House Corporation is working on a replacement plan.



Wolverine Sig

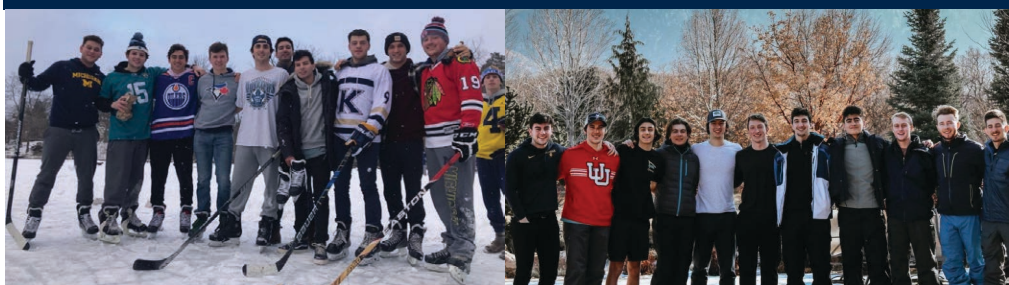


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Sigs Staying Active



Brothers take advantage of the cold Ann Arbor weather to play pond hockey.

Brothers in Salt Lake City, Utah, during winter break.

CONGRATULATIONS, 2021 GRADUATES!

