

So, what exactly are fraternities?

by Keith Burant

The fraternity system at American universities and colleges is much more publicized and advanced than in Canada. Reasons why the Greek system is stronger in the States are numerous. Though the reasons for this are numerous, the fact that students entering many US universities must either live in a fraternity house during their first year or in a residence. Anyone who has eaten the food in residence knows what an incentive this is to live elsewhere. Many fraternities in the States have also been established for a longer period than fraternities at the U of A and have grown considerably over the years. Several of the approximately 34 houses at Washington State have over 70 members.

So, what exactly are fraternities? Are they groups of people bound together for the sole purpose of drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, pursuing the opposite sex, or participating in foolish horseplay?

Not entirely. It isn't that I'm professing that these above mentioned antics don't occur, because they do happen on rare occasions. Surprisingly, fraternity activities do extend beyond the realm of the bottle and contribute to the benefit of the community, students, and the members themselves.

Perhaps some background on the fraternity system will help you understand their purpose.

Although most fraternities have been developed in North America, many have roots which extend back to medieval Europe, Greek and Roman mythology. These secret societies often formed to provide a form of mutual protection from bandits and thieves, then present in large numbers. Robbers often preyed upon students attending the great universities of Europe, since many of the students were on their own, and had few friends to call upon in time of need. Students found it advantageous to travel in small groups, which discouraged brigands from attacking them.

Kappa Sigma, which was formed for these reasons, originated in the city of Bologna, and was organized by a professor to protect foreign students from bandits, who were prosecuting students at the time. The society developed secret signs and messages, whereby the members could identify themselves as such or call for help when distressed.

The fraternity spread to five universities when members moved to attend school elsewhere.

In 1869, the fraternity came to North America and has since grown to be the fourth largest fraternity with 195 chapters in the US and Canada.

Other fraternities were formed in the likeness of either Greek or Roman mythology. Emulating the fabled Gods of Mount Olympus, the lost city of Atlantis, or other renowned historical figures. This historical base form the secret rituals and signs which make each fraternity unique.

The first male fraternities to appear on the U of A campus were Zeta Psi and Phi Delta Theta, in 1930. However, the Greek word sorority meaning sisterhood was not permitted by the University. So ladies sororities were obliged to use the English-Greek combination women's fraternity, meaning women's brotherhood.

The Greek system on campus grew rapidly in the 30's and 40's when over ten new fraternities sprang up on campus. However, in the late 50's, 60's, a few Greek

fraternities in Edmonton are international,

With the exception of Phi Kappa Pi, the with other chapters existing in the US and Canada. The existence of these chapters provides an excellent opportunity for fraternity members to vacation inexpensively in major areas of the continent. Fraternity brothers and sisters are almost always granted free room and board at any chapter house in the world, upon proving themselves members.

I have experienced the friendship extended to visiting brothers and the hospitality and warmth is genuine. Members from the fraternity I belong to generally make a yearly pilgrimage to the University of Moscow during Reading Week and stay at the Kappa Sigma house there.

Both the men's and women's fraternities on the U of A campus perform some community work by assisting the handicapped, senior citizens, unfortunate children, battered women's shelter, and various other charities in the Edmonton area. The degree of involvement fluctuates

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chapters closed down and others barely maintained a minimum membership.

Currently, there are approximately 500 people involved in the U of A fraternity system. There are three women's fraternities and 10 men's fraternities presently open:

Women

Delta Gamma
Kappa Alpha Theta
Pi Beta Phi

Phi Kappa Pi
Theta Chi
Zeta Psi

Men

Delta Kappa Epsilon
Delta Epsilon
Farmhouse
Kappa Sigma
Lambda Chi Alpha
Phi Delta Theta
Phi Gamma Delta

from frat to frat, however some noteworthy examples are the Delta Gamma's work with the blind, the Pi Beta Phi's assistance to WIN House, the Theta Chi's involvement with the Robin Hood school for the retarded, and the FIJI's Terry Fox run to Red Deer, raising money for the Alberta Children's Hospital Association.

Fraternities also provide entertainment for students on campus in several forms. The men's fraternities run a number of Dinwoodie cabarets, Delta Kappa Epsilon puts on Bear Country, the Freshman Introduction Week, beer gardens have been run wholly or jointly by fraternities and of course there is generally one or two open parties every weekend at one of the men's houses on campus.

Fraternities are also extremely active in intramural sports, with Zeta Psi and KΣ placing first and second respectively in the B division last year.

The Greek system also offers its members an opportunity to improve their leadership ability and gain valuable ex-

perience by becoming involved in running the operations of each fraternity. Since most fraternities own their chapter houses and organization is required to perform the many services offered, the executive members develop management skills.

The Greek system on the U of A campus is governed by two Executive bodies. The men's fraternities are governed by the Inter Fraternity Council (IFC), which consists of an elected executive and one voting rep from each men's fraternities.

The women's fraternities are governed by a similar board called the Pan Hellenic Council. The major purpose of these bodies is to act as a liaison between the University, community leagues and other organizations dealing with the Greek system. These councils also settle disputes between fraternities, plan major fraternity functions and interpret the IFC constitution.

On of the IFC's major functions is to plan, organize and run an effective Greek week. The purpose of Greek week is to arouse interest in the fraternity system and provide publicity for rush.

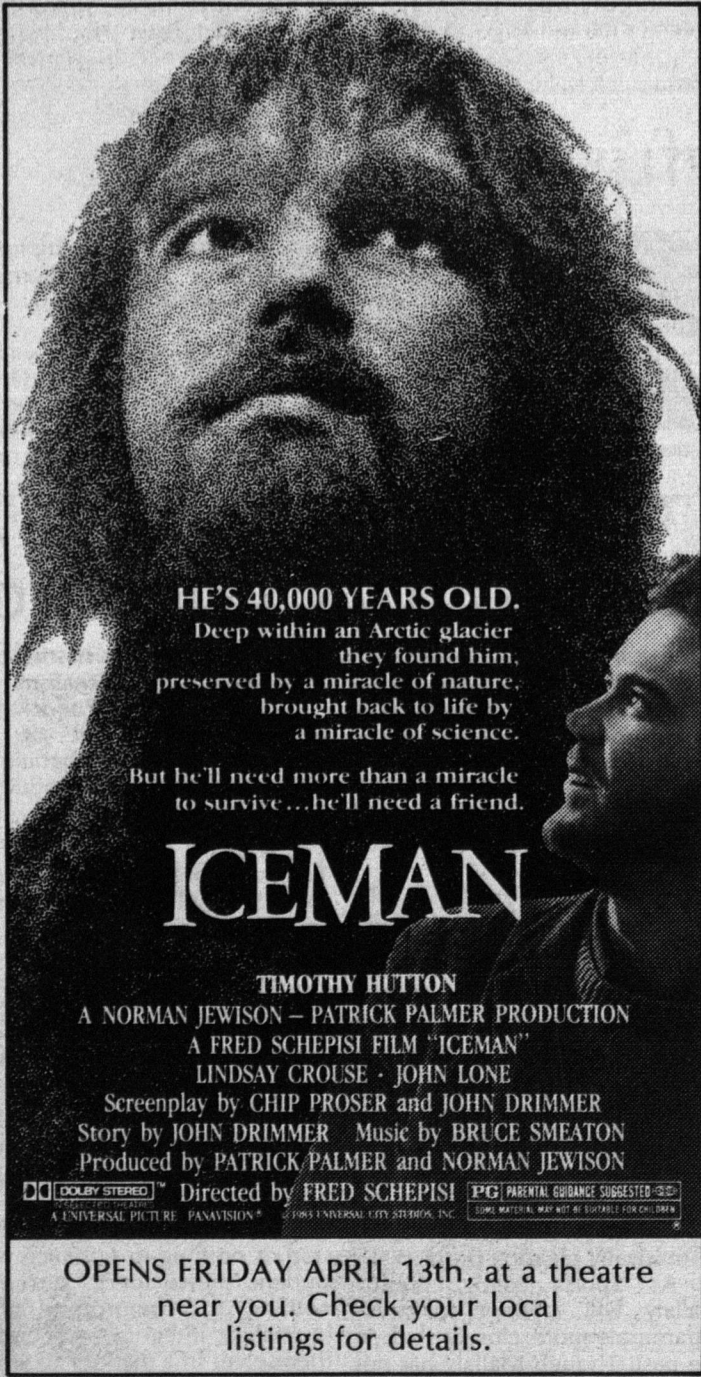
Rush is the term used to describe the period when fraternities are looking for interested students to pledge. Rush, for the men, occurs in the second week of University and again in January, and involves a series of activities put on by individual fraternities to display the benefits, attributes, and personalities of that chapter.

Rushes (potential pledges) are encouraged to attend as many events as possible at the fraternities of their choice. These fraternities will usually extend a bid letter to rushes they would like to pledge. The rushee must then decide what fraternity he or she wishes to join and communicates this decision by going to the fraternity of his choice on pledge Sunday. This is usually the last Sunday of the month and each fraternity puts on a small party where the women fraternities come by and meet the new pledge.

Pledge status usually lasts one semester and during that time a pledge is required to learn fraternity history, become acquainted with the present members, and maintain good academic standing.

Pledges who meet these criteria are usually asked to initiate and become members.

Anyone wanting to know more about fraternities or sororities should drop by Room 034 SUB.




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