

Once a Crow, Always a Crow

In my first congregation, I had a technologically-advanced member who taught me a basic computer skill: GIGO. I assumed that it meant something as important as CD-ROM or any of the other computer acronyms that had been bantered about. He was patient with me as he explained that GIGO meant “Garbage In, Garbage Out”. He explained that a computer, especially when processing a Word document, would only give you back what you put into it. If I, the user, put garbage into the system, the computer would be only too happy to spew garbage back to me.

What I think this all means is that if you are an undergraduate Brother of Alpha Chi Rho, and you feel that all we are offering you is garbage, that we can expect garbage in return after graduation. That garbage would take the form of ignoring requests from your Chapter for continued support, ignoring requests from the staff and officers of the National Fraternity, falling out of contact with your fellow Brothers of AXP, or any other myriad activities (or lack thereof) which would indicate that your Fraternity experience was something less than you expected.

It would also indicate that you saw your Fraternity experience as being a four-year only experience. That is where we, in the National office, feel a great loss. In my years of serving as the National Chaplain, I have gotten to meet some fascinating Brothers, men who have a vision for our Fraternity and are willing to invest their time in making that vision a reality. Something clicked with them when they were an undergraduate that caused them to want to continue to share their gifts with the larger Fraternity. I am not a financial wizard – but I have met several Brothers who are, and they help keep our finances in good shape. I am no legal expert – but I have met Brothers who are, and they sort out the legal minefield that living in the 21st century has become. I am no longer close to the age I was when I was in college – but many of our National officers are, so they keep me in tune with the way that college and university men think today.

If I had assumed that my Fraternity experience as an undergraduate was just for the four years I was at college, I would not have served on my Chapter's Building Corporation. I would not have used one of my Brothers as a speaker at a senior high assembly (back in the day when I was a teacher). I would not have taken the time to visit my Chapter house each Homecoming weekend. But the Landmarks of Alpha Chi Rho run deep and call all of us back to the ideals to which we pledged ourselves when we became Brothers in the Bond. We become better men and better citizens when we remember the Landmarks of Alpha Chi Rho and live by them.

So what does a Chapter have to do to guarantee that a Brother will remain in touch long after the ink on the diploma has dried? I think it comes back to the GIGO principle. If a Chapter has low expectations of itself and its Brothers, the Chapter will produce graduate Brothers with a low expectation of how they can stay involved. If a Chapter strives to be the best example of what living life as a Crow can be, then the Chapter will send men into the world who are ready to “Be Men” and make a difference in their world and in their Fraternity.

Those of us in the National office can set the bar high; we can list for you all of our expectations, but, ultimately, it will be up to each individual Chapter to decide what that Chapter wants to get out of the Fraternity experience. If you want your Fraternity membership to be just another thing listed on your resume, you can shape your Chapter into a mediocre expression of our Landmarks. But if you want your Alpha Chi Rho experience to be a life-changing one, one that will carry you through many situations, challenges and joys ahead, your college and university days are the time to start planning for that. Make “Once a Crow, Always a Crow” more than just a catchy phrase. Make it the reality of the rest of your life!

Pastor David Jost