

# The Epsilon Alpha



Welcome, alumni of the Epsilon Alpha chapter of Sigma Nu, to the first edition of the Epsilon Alphabet newsletter! As you all know, Sigma Nu is currently without an active chapter on campus. But, that can all change in the very near future! All we need is a few alumni to come forward and help get the process

off the ground. There is quite a bit to be done, but it is achievable with your help. So let's work together to bring back the legacy of Pop McKale, John "Button" Salmon, and the 1300+ alumni that helped make Sigma Nu a positive force at the U of A.

## RECOLONIZATION? Let's make it happen!

Brothers, as we all can attest, Sigma Nu has the richest history of any fraternity at the University of Arizona and deserves once again to take its place on campus. What we need to make recolonization happen, quite simply, is the dedication of Epsilon Alpha alumni. There is a need for all willing alumni to assist in the process, but the greatest need is for several men to step forward to take on leadership roles in a few key areas, such as event coordination, database management, housing, and public relations (website, Facebook page, etc.). The time needed to dedicate to these objectives is relatively small at only a few hours a month. However, all efforts, big and small, can enhance our ability to create a consistent alumni presence and propel us towards recolonizing the Epsilon Alpha Chapter. Some alumni from the Tucson area have already stepped forward, but we need more of you. Sigma Nu will not be able to return to campus without strong alumni support.

The pressure here is time. We still have a window of opportunity to start the recolonization process in the near future, but that time is fading. If we miss our chance, it may be years before we can try again. There are numerous other fraternities looking to restart their chapters at the U of A, and this process is being carefully managed by the administration. Missing our slot will put us back at the end of the line. And no one likes to be at the back of the line.

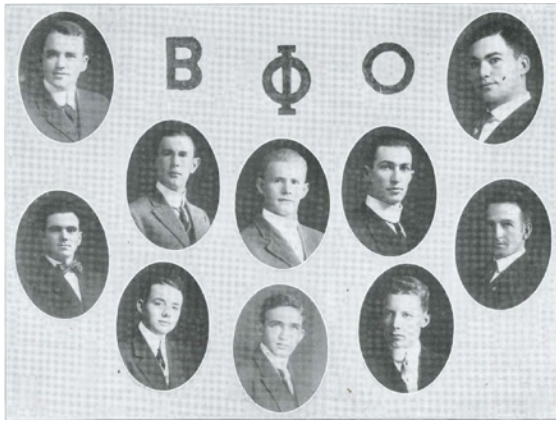
So the time to get involved is now. Please contact Josh Green (EA1344) via phone at 540-460-1515 or by email at [josh.green@sigmanu.org](mailto:josh.green@sigmanu.org) and let him know what you can do to help. We all look forward to the day the flag of Sigma Nu flies once again over the U of A campus. This will certainly be a journey, but one we can accomplish by taking one step at a time. With your help, we will get there.

## The early history of Epsilon Alpha chapter

In the beginning, as the story goes, there was Sigma Phi Beta. Organized by five charter members on October 15, 1911, as a local fraternity, the chapter joined two local sororities, Gamma Phi Sigma (which eventually affiliated with Kappa Alpha Theta) and Gamma Delta (which eventually affiliated with Pi Beta Phi), and three other local fraternities, X ?, Delta Phi, and Mooch Club, on the cactus-studded, wind swept campus of Arizona. Life on campus in 1911 was, as you can imagine, much different than today, especially in terms of student fashion. The men wore wool jackets, ties, and wide brimmed hats (minus the mining students, who looked like scraggly renegades in their unkept trousers and flop hats), while the women wore prim and proper dresses with large bows and their hair up in a bun. The total number of students enrolled in the college numbered about 150, with the football team looking to repeat its undefeated 1910-1911 season (they went a whopping 2-0), and the baseball team looking to improve on its previous record of 2-2, having split their series against both Tucson High School and the U. S. Indian School. (cont'd on Page 2)



Our forefathers, in a chapter photo from 1927. They are sitting on the stoop of their chapter house at the corner of Fourth Street and Third Avenue, the second chapter house for Epsilon Alpha. Most of these men were probably active in the chapter alongside John "Button" Salmon. Photo courtesy of Sigma Nu Fraternity archives, Lexington, VA.



The only known photograph of Beta Phi Omicron (formerly Sigma Phi Beta) at the U of A. Photo from the 1913 Desert yearbook.

(from Page 1) Unfortunately, the names of those men who first organized Sigma Phi Beta are still hiding in history, but we do know they were ambitious, for a year later they became the first chapter at Arizona to affiliate with a national fraternity. Yes, as the story is told, Kappa Sigma was the first national to arrive at Arizona, but in reality the men of Sigma Phi Beta brought the first one to campus in 1912. Only it wasn't Sigma Nu. Instead, Sigma Phi Beta joined forces with the local Sigma Beta Phi fraternity at the University of Wyoming in late 1912 to form a brand new national organization, Beta Phi Omicron. Known informally as "The Rocky Mountain fraternity", and supposedly the first national to organize west of the Mississippi River, Beta Phi Omicron seemed off to a good start with its two chapters. But, alas, it was not to be, for just a year later, Beta Phi Omicron was gone and the men were once again known as the local Sigma Phi Beta.

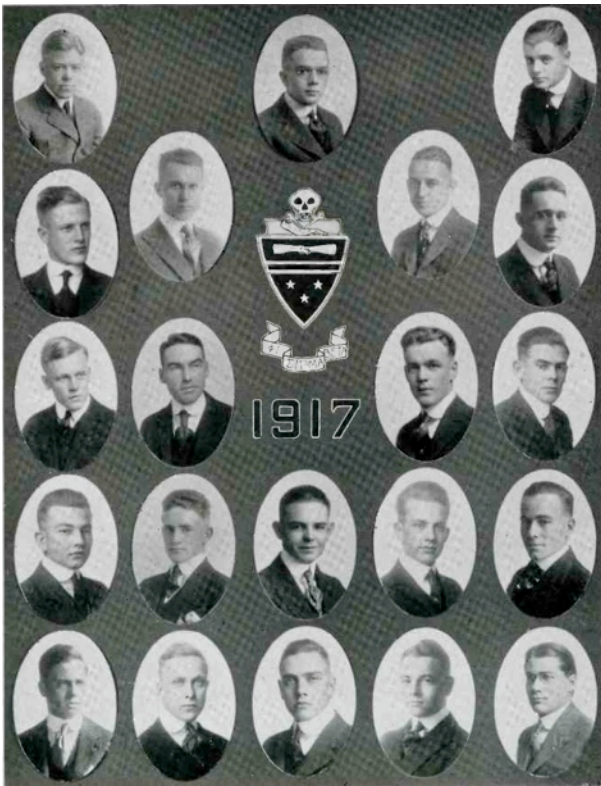
In 1914, Sigma Phi Beta made history yet again at Arizona when they opened up the first chapter house the campus had ever seen. The house, long since demolished, was located at 745 North Stone Avenue, not exactly on campus but close enough. Rent for the two-story brick structure was \$800 per year, quite manageable for the chapter which averaged between 20 and 25 men. Around this time, the University hired a young teacher from Tucson

High School to coach all of the sports teams, as athletics were in desperate need of someone to "right the ship". That man, of course, was Pop McKale, who had graduated just four years earlier from Albion College in Michigan. By the fall of 1916, he and other alumni of Sigma Nu in the Tucson area began working with Sigma Phi Beta, helping them to become a better chapter and preparing them to enter Sigma Nu. By all accounts, Pop McKale was impressed with the men of Sigma Phi Beta, and when their petition to Sigma Nu was filed in early 1918, McKale's endorsement, which was circulated to all chapter commanders, was front and center. "The conduct of the petitioning group has been excellent, not having a member expelled or suspended from the University for several years," he wrote in his letter of recommendation, along with, "Fourteen 'Sigs' from 8 different chapters have visited and inspected the petitioners... We do not



The first Sigma Phi Beta / Sigma Nu chapter house, 745 N. Stone Avenue. Photo from the 1916 Desert yearbook.

know of a single brother who has been unfavorable or neutral."



The last Sigma Phi Beta composite. Slightly less than half of these men would be initiated in 1918 as charter members of Epsilon Alpha. Photo from the 1917 Desert yearbook.

The telegram to Sigma Phi Beta announcing their petition had been accepted arrived on May 27, 1918, right when most of the men were taking their final exams. However, those not in exams could hardly contain their excitement, so they ran from room to room to announce the good news, much to the consternation of the professors whose exams they interrupted. First up was the pledging ceremony, which took place on Wednesday, May 29 at the chapter house. A few days later, on Sunday morning, Pop McKale quizzed the new pledges on their knowledge of Sigma Nu history, laws, and chapter names. Apparently they all passed the test, for the formal initiation came just a day later, on Monday June 3, when the ritual team "led the lambs to the slaughter" in Citizen's Hall (the chapter house had been deemed too small for the ceremony). Nineteen men in all were initiated that day, forming the newest chapter of Sigma Nu, our very own Epsilon Alpha.

One of those nineteen, Ralph B. Verfuth, then recorded probably the shortest amount of time as an active the chapter has ever seen. A banquet followed the initiation, and immediately afterwards, Mr. Danforth ran off and got married in what was termed a "Greta Green affair" – he eloped. Following the wedding, Mr. Verfuth moved to Bisbee, opened up a business, and never returned to the university. A few other brothers also had to leave campus that day, as they had to return to their Army posts. The war in Europe, raging for four years, would soon call a number of Epsilon Alpha men into the conflict.

And so begins the long and storied history of Epsilon Alpha.

## Update on Sigma Phi Beta Building Association and the McKale-Salmon Foundation Trust

(The following is paraphrased from a report submitted by Sigma Phi Beta to Epsilon Alpha alumni, October 2009, with some updates)

Since 1918, the Sigma Phi Beta Building Association has been the corporation in charge of securing and managing the housing needs for Epsilon Alpha. Even today, this core mission of Sigma Phi Beta has not changed, though obviously there is no physical chapter house at present to manage. Instead, Sigma Phi Beta has expanded its efforts to include charitable work through its McKale-Salmon foundation. Here's a look at how this came to be, and where it may go in the future.

In 1996, the directors of Sigma Phi Beta exercised a provision in the lease of 1402 N. Cherry St. and bought the land for \$83,000, using funds the corporation had earned selling the former chapter house on Tyndall Ave. With this purchase, Sigma Phi Beta now owned both the land and the house. Two years later, with the chapter in dormancy and with the house in poor condition, Sigma Phi Beta began considering its options for the future of 1402 N. Cherry. By zoning, the property could only be used for student housing or educational purposes, thus limiting its appeal for potential buyers. However, in the summer of 1998 the U of A came calling, looking to buy the property as part of an expansion of the medical school. Ultimately, Sigma Phi Beta negotiated a purchase price of \$700,000 for the land and structure. Here, though, Sigma Phi Beta ran into a problem. If they had simply accepted the money, they would have to relinquish about half in taxes, certainly not a desirable situation if the corporation wanted to purchase a new chapter house in the future. So the Board, in conjunction with the national office of Sigma Nu, created the McKale-Salmon Foundation Trust, a tax-exempt 509(a)(3) charitable organization, with Sigma Phi Beta as the settlor. The proceeds of the sale of 1402 N. Cherry were then transferred into the foundation and placed under the financial management of Miller-Russell and Associates in Phoenix.

Since 1998, the McKale-Salmon Foundation has paid out money to the Sigma Nu Educational Foundation as well as the U of A Foundation for merit scholars, in keeping with its mission of supporting educational purposes. According to the FY 2012 filings, the assets of the McKale-Salmon Foundation total approximately \$1M.

As for the future, Sigma Phi Beta remains ready to help secure and then manage a new chapter house for Epsilon Alpha, should the opportunity present itself.

## Homecoming 2013 - A rousing success!

The weekend of November 7-9, 2013, was a great time to be a Wildcat and a Sigma Nu. Starting off with a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration for the pledge class of 1963 at the Mountain Oyster Club, Homecoming 2013 was another example of the brotherhood Epsilon Alpha has built throughout the last 95 years. Approximately 60 alumni and their guests spent Friday evening catching up, sharing stories, and talking about the future of Sigma Nu at the U of A. Saturday was spent outside tailgating on a beautiful sunny day. Nearly 80 alumni and friends attended the party throughout the seven hours leading up to kick off, a wonderful opportunity for initiates spanning sixty years to interact with each other. Following the victory over the UCLA Bruins, there was a send-off brunch on Sunday morning at the home of Peter Backus (EA616). Our heartfelt thanks to the Backus family for hosting this event. Next year's Homecoming, the 100<sup>th</sup> for the U of A, promises to be an even bigger one for Sigma Nu.

Be on the lookout for information regarding Homecoming 2014, November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. You can find out the latest information at [www.arizonasigmanu.com](http://www.arizonasigmanu.com).



50th anniversary celebration of the 1963 pledge class



EA alumni, friends, and family enjoy tailgating before the game!

## A Wildcat Sendoff!

On **Saturday, March 8th**, come join other Epsilon Alpha alumni as we watch the U of A in their final regular season game of the 2013-2014 season. Here are the details:

March 8th, 2:00 PM, at Bootleggers ([www.bootleggersaz.com](http://www.bootleggersaz.com)),  
3375 Shea Blvd., Phoenix AZ

Please RSVP by February 21 to Cory Steinbicker (EA1345) at [csteinbicker@gmail.com](mailto:csteinbicker@gmail.com). We'll see you at the game!

# Alumni Echoes

Have a picture to share, maybe an old composite or party photo? Send it along! We're also looking for photos of the former chapter houses.



Members of the chapter outside of their house at 1023 Tyndall Avenue, taken in 1934. Photo courtesy of Sigma Nu Fraternity archives, Lexington, VA.



EA executive officers, 1978, perhaps looking over the list of prospective candidates, or maybe something else? Photo courtesy of Sigma Nu Fraternity archives, Lexington, VA. Anyone recognize these men?



Interior of the EA chapter house on Tyndall Avenue, date unknown but probably circa 1930s. Photo courtesy of Sigma Nu Fraternity archives, Lexington, VA.



The chapter poses for its yearbook picture outside the house at 1402 N. Cherry St., fall 1989. Photo courtesy of Sigma Nu Fraternity archives, Lexington, VA.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Initiate #: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Grad year: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Alumni news to share: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite memory to share of your time in EA? \_\_\_\_\_

Find Epsilon Alpha chapter on the web: <http://arizonasigmanu.com>

Please send all newsletter correspondence to:  
Charlie Trantanella (EA1196), 6 Daniel Dr., Westford, MA 01886; [tranti@comcast.net](mailto:tranti@comcast.net)