

# MGCA Connections

The Newsletter of the  
Mid-American Greek Council Association

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## From the Editor

Welcome back from winter break. I hope all of you are rested, rejuvenated, and ready to tackle the upcoming year.

This issue of the MGCA Newsletter focuses on the importance of ritual. Ritual occurs in all of our chapters. Some chapter members truly embrace their ritual and live the principles daily, while other members are not familiar with ritual or are in complete violation of the espoused values.

Fraternity and sorority rituals are the foundations of our organizations. They are what makes us unique compared to other campus organizations. Through our ritual, we

verbally commit our lives to excellence. It is important that we review our rituals on a regular basis. We must read, learn, know, live and love our ritual. If we do not believe in the values and principles in our chapters, we must leave. If we see our brothers or sisters not upholding their commitment, we must confront them and ask them to make an important decision: remain a member and uphold the principles or leave the organization. We, as leaders, must not tolerate mediocrity or blatant disregard and disrespect of our ritual. We, as leaders, must model the way for all to see. We, as leaders, must choose sister/brotherhood over friendship. As leaders, we are

asked to make difficult decisions. I challenge each of you to allow your ritual to be your guide. If you follow your ritual, the decisions may not be easy, but they will be right.

Included in this newsletter are two articles from experts in the field of Greek Life. Each author has extensive experience in researching, writing or presenting on the topic of ritual. Enjoy the reading, challenge yourself to be the best member you can be, and inspire others to follow your lead.

Genevieve Evans Taylor  
MGCA Editor

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## MGCA Conference—“The Great Devotion”

Mark your calendars for the MGCA Conference held February 20-23, 2003, in Chicago at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare. The MGCA Conference is an excellent opportunity to build a community within your own Greek system. Educational sessions are geared toward council officers and delegates, chapter presidents and officers,

and emerging leaders. There is a great deal of information available to leaders at all levels within your Greek community. Past participants have said the conference was a great way to interact with other council officers and people from various campuses. You will leave the conference with enthusiasm, excitement, and ideas for im-

proving your Greek community. There is no better way to promote change than by having representatives from the various chapters supporting that change. The conference also provides an opportunity to educate and motivate emerging leaders. Consider bringing your full delegation to this year's MGCA Conference!

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# From the Desk of the 2003 MGCA President—*Damian M. Thorkelson*

Hello once again! Let me re-introduce myself. My name is Damian M. Thorkelson, current President of the 2002-2003 MGCA conference. I am a member of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity and a soon to be senior at Bowling Green State University.

A lot has happened this semester, both nationally and at the collegiate level, and I bet you can agree with me on that. At this time in the country, we are facing issues that are new for a generation just coming out of college. Graduates face an economy that is just getting back on its feet, a scarce job market, and a new experience of total independence. Luckily for some graduates, they have had the opportunity to prepare themselves for such issues by being Greek. The Greek experience is one of ups and

downs, trials and tribulations. It is because of these experiences, educational opportunities, and leadership development techniques that make it possible for a graduating Greek, no matter the chapter, to be better prepared for the real world.

This experience is something that we as a Greek community must market more heavily to students that are just entering our universities. Recruitment has been on a steady down slope for years, with few national/international organizations increasing their national numbers. First year students do not see the benefits that exist within a fraternity/sorority system. Greek organizations and their advisors must constantly find interesting, innovative, and assertive ways to recruit the new audiences that enter our

college walls year after year. We need to break the 10/80/10 ideology (10% will go Greek, 10% will not, and the other 80% are in between) and make it a 90/10 reality (90% will go Greek, 10% will not).

Your area MGCA vice-presidents and I have the pleasure of meeting in Indianapolis this summer to assist in the planning of next year's annual MGCA conference in Chicago. With our new Executive Director, Barb Robel, and members of the new staff, we are going to prepare for you an even better conference experience than last year.

I look forward to seeing each of you in February of 2003 at the conference. Until then, prepare yourself for the experience you will all have at the next conference.

## Helping Fraternity and Sorority Members Understand Ritual—*Mari Ann Callais, Ph.D.*

### Fraternities/Sororities and Ritual

Rituals within the fraternity and sorority world are rites of passages through formalized ceremonies that were developed at a time when ceremonial transitions were a way of life (Callais, 2002). Ritual was intentionally developed to be a part of these organizations. Founders of fraternities and sororities recognized the need for ritual ceremonies that would mark transitions through one's growth in the organization.

The vision of founding members of fraternities and sororities was possibly far beyond their own understanding. The following excerpts, although from women's groups specifically, provide an excellent example of the intent of organizations' rituals:

*"The symbolism of Phi Mu is a heritage from our founders, and has been the source of inspiration to all succeeding initiates. It takes for granted allegiance to lofty ideals, it stimulates worthy and purposeful achievement, and in the personal equation, it challenges the best in all*

*of us" (Lamb, 1982, p. 222).*

One of the most effective descriptions of why and how rituals developed comes from the Alpha Delta Pi History Workshop One written by Hensil (1994) that states:

*"A strong foundation for the Alpha Delta Pi sisterhood was laid in the 1850's. Our motto, constitution and bylaws and ritual have withstood the test of time. There have been slight modifications to reflect change in terminology and social pressures of the day. The ritual has gone through slight revisions, becoming more elaborate in the 1880's. The secret societies, inspired by the Greeks, derived much of the essential elements of their rituals from Greece, Roman literature, and Greek Christian scriptures.*

*In the 1880's, the era of romantic preoccupation with the exotic, sorority rituals began to stress mystery and theatrics in presentation. When the exotic become passé, ritual again began to concentrate on the ideals of knowledge, love, loyalty and truth. The basic components of*

*Alpha Delta Pi ritual remain unchanged. The ideals remain unchanged" (p. 4).*

Driver (1991) states, "we need to give stability to our behaviors and to serve as vehicles of communication" (p. 23). He makes two specific points as it relates to ritual and behavior. He explains:

*"not only are rituals behaviors, since they are patterned and repetitive, they can be employed as signaling devices, an important enough point in itself. Equally if not more significant is that reutilizations can be used to store and transmit information, across time and across generations" (p. 26).*

If this is so, then rituals may be a key factor as to why fraternities and sororities have lasted through time. Driver's description of rituals also helps to put into perspec-



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# The Clock Doesn't Lie . . . *Scott Gillard*

...or so my high school track coach once told me. Up to that point, I had been almost exclusively participating in team sports (soccer, basketball, baseball, etc.). He and I were discussing the difference between team sports and an individual sport like track, where YOU run a certain *length* in a certain amount of *time*. Period. There is no shifting blame, no pointing fingers and no uncertainty about it. You ran this time. End of story. You had to learn to deal with your success or failure personally. That was a hard lesson to learn, but eventually, I did. ***The Clock Didn't Lie.***

So you may be wondering what this has to do with Greek Life. Well: Everything! The message I hope to get across to you is the one that is finally getting across to me. It is the same message I received from my track coach, and an important one in every area of life: ***The Clock Doesn't Lie.*** Let me explain.

You may be familiar with the message that is often identified as a remedy to our situation: 'We need to **do** what we **say**,' or 'We must **walk the walk** and not just talk the talk.' This is a great message and is totally true, but for many people it does not feel tangible. It doesn't have a clear meaning. Some respond by saying: "But we do good things and have good people; mistakes are going to happen," or "We aren't perfect, but we generally do well." We find ourselves filled with the same excuses you might hear in a team sport, where it is someone else's fault, where 'I did not play enough,' or 'The coach made a wrong call,' or 'I did all I could.' It is time we take a more responsible and personal approach. It is time

we push a little harder to get to the specifics of phrases like 'we generally do well' and 'walk the walk.' It is time we get out our watch and start judging ourselves by the clock. What we all have to realize is: ***The Clock Won't Lie.*** Here's how we find that out...

I propose this as both an individual and a group exercise, so get out your scorecard, mental scrap sheet, and, most importantly, your stopwatch.

Ready? GO! Log all the time you have spent in your life and all the time you spend from this point forward. Track what you spend

that time on, and how you spend it. So, "I spent X amount of time helping with recruitment," or "I spent X amount of time serving the community, working on my studies, partying, raising money for philanthropic organizations, at social events, involved in leadership activities, talking down at other people, participating in brotherhood events, participating in hazing, building community, looting other chapter houses, reflecting on and participating in ritual ceremonies, etc." Make sure you include Everything.

So...How did you do? How is your time spent? How about your whole chapter? Tally the scores of each individual member in your chapter, in your community. Every individual's every minute counts, whether alone or in group activity. Which things do you spend the most time doing or discussing? At chapter meetings? On the weekends? At meals? Late night? And remember, ***The Clock Doesn't Lie.***

**"If we are not spending our time doing things that represent our organizations' values, then they are not really our values."**

OK, so now we know what the clock tells us, what does this *really* mean? Let me introduce the idea that brings it all together, and don't miss it! It's the key point:

YOU = the time you spend  
How you spend that time = what is important to you = what you value = who you are

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## MGCA AWARDS

Does your council implement great programs? Would you like written and oral feedback from Greek Life experts regarding programming from your individual campus? Are you interested in evaluating your programs and services? If you answered yes to any of the above questions...you should apply for the MGCA Awards. This process is a great opportunity for your council to be recognized for outstanding programming as well as a method for attaining strategies on how to improve your council. Applications must be received by **12:00pm on January 22, 2003**. MGCA award packets are available on-line at <http://mgca.org/awards.htm>.



# IMPORTANT MGCA CONFERENCE INFORMATION

## CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

\$185 Undergraduates  
\$210 Professionals  
MGCA Federal Tax ID # 34-134846-3  
Registrations postmarked after January 24, 2003 will be charged a \$50 late fee.

## HOTEL RESERVATIONS

To reserve rooms please visit the Hyatt link at <http://ohare.hyatt.com/groupbooking/g-mgca> and follow the instructions on screen. Nightly room rate is \$142, plus tax. Rollaway beds are an additional \$20 and are not available in rooms with two double beds. If you experience any problems using the website to reserve rooms, please contact the Hyatt for assistance.  
Phone: 847-696-1234  
Fax at 847-384-3821

Hyatt Regency O'Hare  
9300 West Bryn Mawr Avenue  
Rosemont, Illinois 60018

## IMPORTANT DATES

Registration postmarked by January 24, 2003.  
Hotel registration online by February 7, 2003.

## 2003 PRESENTERS

**Will Keim**, Opening Session, Thursday  
**Tom DeLuca**, Hypnotist, Thursday Night Entertainment  
**Patrick Combs**, Robel Symposium, Friday  
**David Coleman**, General Session, Saturday  
**Curtis Zimmerman**, Closing Session, Sunday

## MINI DANCE MARATHON

Following the Awards Banquet on Saturday night, MGCA will sponsor a mini dance marathon. Proceeds will benefit the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. For details, check out the MGCA website at [www.MGCA.org](http://www.MGCA.org).



## GREEK EXPO

Who says Greeks don't get enough positive exposure? Strut your stuff at the Greek Expo and see the best of the best in the region. Conference attendees are encouraged to display brochures, photos, T-shirts, programs, and any other Greek paraphernalia that you may have created over the year. This is just one more opportunity to "borrow" ideas from other schools. If you are interested, just bring the items with you and check them in at the registration desk. If you have any questions call Emily Nemechek at 785-537-7510

## CHICAGO INFORMATION

Chicago websites with information on weather, places to go, and things to do!  
[www.chicago.il.org](http://www.chicago.il.org)  
[www.ci.chi.il.us/tourism](http://www.ci.chi.il.us/tourism).

## MGCA HEADQUARTERS

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Manhattan, KS 66502

## The Clock Doesn't Lie...continued

So, look at the results again. What's *really* important to you? What do you value? WHO ARE YOU? What about your chapter? Your community? All Greeks? Does it strike you as odd that we spend more time on T-shirts than we do on discussing what our ritual means? How about that we spend more time trying to convince people to join than developing them as members? How about the amount of time we spend on PR as opposed to the amount of time we spend doing things that are worthy of positive

press? If we are not spending our time doing things that represent our organizations' values, then they are not really our values.

Take a hard look. No espousing of values, reading of creeds, listing of excuses, or saying 'should,' 'want to' or 'try'. Just a hard look in the mirror. And at the clock. ***It's Not Lying.***

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*leadership development workshops, chapter services, and interactive sessions specifically designed for individual campus needs and inter/national fraternities. Scott can be reached at*  
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# Helping Fraternity and Sorority Members Understand Ritual—

*Continued*

ceremonies to fraternities and sororities as well as to the university.

Administrators, parents, other non-affiliated students and the public often question the value of membership in fraternity/sorority organization. Each year, institution across the United States and Canada question and evaluate the effectiveness of fraternities and sororities in assisting with the promotion of the college or university's mission and purpose—and some of those determine that fraternity/sorority organizations are not in line with the campus ideas. Recently, Santa Clara University has decided to end its fraternity and sorority system over the next two years (Kellogg, 2001) and Alfred University's Board of Trustees decided to eliminate the fraternity/sorority system on campus (Alfred University Press Release, May, 2002). Members of higher education listservs such as the Association of Fraternity Advisors (AFA), the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) receive articles that discuss campuses and the status of their fraternities and sororities on those campuses. In addressing these and other concerns, many leaders of inter/national fraternities and sororities have verbally commented that going back to the ritual is one way to educate our members as to the original intent and expectations of fraternities and sororities. The basic concept of "going back to our roots" is intended to bring men and women back to the concept that fraternities and sororities were established as an intellectual outlet and as an opportunity to share common feelings, ideas, and beliefs, thereby enriching the personal lives of their members while developing bonds of brotherhood, sisterhood, and friendship. Ford (1999) describes a back to basics philosophy that he believes to be taking hold and emerging as the forefront for the future mode of chapters present on campuses throughout the country. "In the highly litigious society of the '90's, the 'back to basic' concept will only be of benefit. Living the sum and substance of the ritual...will serve everybody well" (Ford, 1999, pp. 12-13). Ritual was designed to be shared and as an avenue for those

concepts to be passed on from generation to generation.

## Reflections From Undergraduates

Throughout the past several years, I have had students who have said that ritual is not performed correctly in their chapter and has no meaning in their chapter experience. In my study, conducted with NPC undergraduate women only, there were several comments expressed by the students that I feel were reflective of both the male and female students that I encounter. Some say that the ceremonies are "boring and long." Several of them indicated it might take all day to initiate some of the large groups of new members. The rituals were written at a time in the history of these organizations when the groups were much smaller in size than some of the chapters have become today. It may be that the inter/national organizations need to evaluate if the rituals written in the early days of the fraternities and sororities can apply to groups the size of some of the current chapters. The ways in which these ceremonies are taught to the chapters and how they are performed based upon the size of a particular chapter is a crucial aspect of the performance of ritual. Ritual should be explained and taught to the chapters possibly by a national officer or local alumnus or alumna. Fraternities and sororities cannot assume that ritual is understood to be an important part of an undergraduate chapter's experience. Many of the participants indicated that some members in their chapters do not even understand the ritual, much less apply it to their daily lives. They want it to be different but do not know how to achieve that.

## Suggested Activities to Discuss Ritual

1. As part of a chapter development or retreat, have students place their ritual equipment in the middle of the room, and discuss what those symbols mean in their everyday life.
2. Suggest that chapter officers

and/or advisors communicate to the chapter that anyone can read their ritual unless otherwise designated by the inter/national organization—many of the members do not know that they can read their ritual books—they believe that only the officers have access to their ceremonies.

3. Encourage them to have an advisor, alumnae/alumni to come in and discuss the meaning of the ritual ceremony and how they are living the ritual of their fraternity or sorority in their daily lives.
4. Suggest that when holding members accountable for their actions, that instead of telling them that they violated a rule or standard, place their promises in front of them and ask them which ones did they not live as they had promised.

*Mari Ann currently works at Mississippi State University as an Assistant Professor/Program coordinator for the Student Affairs Graduate Program in the Counselor Education/Educational Psychology Department. This article was taken from Mari Ann's article in the AFA Fall 2002 publication which was based on information from Mari Ann's dissertation entitled Sorority Ritual: Rites of Passage and Their Impact on Contemporary Sorority Women.*

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**The Newsletter of the  
Mid-American Greek Council Association**

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**Visit our website!  
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*MGCA PURPOSE*

*The purpose of MGCA is to stimulate the growth and development of college Greek Councils by promoting leadership and educational experiences for student leaders at colleges and universities within a 17-state region. The annual leadership conference, other area conferences, and other educational resources to member schools and the general public are the basis of the Association's educational services.*

*MGCA is an organization consisting of member Interfraternity, National Pan-Hellenic, Panhellenic, and Greek Councils, at both public and private institutions, within a region in middle America.*

## Who's Who of MGCA

### MGCA Professional Staff

**Executive Director**

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### MGCA 2002-2003 Officers

**President**

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**Central Area Vice President**

Kelli Belangee,  $\Sigma K$   
Southern Illinois University

**Eastern Area Vice President**

Jennifer Lee,  $K \Delta$   
Valparaiso University

**Northern Area Vice President**

Nathan Kyser,  $\Phi \Delta \Theta$   
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**Southern Area Vice President**

Rebecca Hensley,  $\Delta \Delta \Pi$   
Texas Christian University

**Western Area Vice President**

Sean Daly,  $\Sigma T T$   
Emporia State University

## In Search of Authors

Have you always dreamed of being published? Do you want to give your parents something extra special to hang on their refrigerator?

Here's your opportunity! Submit an article for publication in the MGCA newsletter and share your experiences and ideas with other Greek leaders from across the nation.

Below are the themes for the upcoming newsletters and the deadlines for submission. If you have another topic you'd like to share, please call (605-677-5334) or e-mail ([gevans@usd.edu](mailto:gevans@usd.edu)) me (Genevieve) with your idea.

- Leadership Opportunities, Feb. 1
- Community Service and Philanthropy, April 1

I look forward to hearing from you!

