

# Tribute to Bill Hindman

## Architect of SigEp Growth

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[Editor's Note] As a younger alumnus, I never knew the name of William W. "Bill" Hindman, nor did I know the pivotal role he played in helping shape Sigma Phi Epsilon into the Fraternity it is today. After publishing his obituary in the last issue of the Journal, I received phone calls and emails from alumni of the Virginia Beta Chapter at Virginia Commonwealth University. They knew Bill. He would spend afternoons with these Brothers while they were undergraduates. He told them of his history with the Fraternity. And after reading the latest issue of The Journal, these alumni contacted me and asked that a fitting tribute be published about a Brother who drove SigEp to greatness.

*"In 1942, Robert S. White,* President of Pennsylvania Delta declared that while scarcely three years had passed since Bill Hindman had graduated and left the house, he was already becoming a tradition with the chapter. Because of his unceasing interest in his Fraternity, the Pennsylvania boys thought, taken together with his timely and sage advice and genial personality, Bill would never be forgotten at Penn Delta. 'It is the feeling of the boys at the chapter,' wrote White, 'that just as he has become a tradition to them, so also will he become, before long, a tradition to Sigma Phi Epsilon as a national organization.'" Journal Editor **John Robson, Lawrence '28**, from the November, 1944, issue.

It was January, 1942, and the United States was one month into World War II. In Richmond, **Bill Hindman, Pennsylvania '39**, reported to the Central Office to begin work as a field secretary (today known as Regional Director). He replaced **Charles F. Pulley, Ohio Wesleyan '39**, who left for the Navy. Uncle Billy, our first Grand Secretary, was preparing to retire in September after 34 years in that position. He spent his entire professional career devoted to growing our Fraternity, and now it was time for retirement. The rolls stood at 68 chapters, 10th among fraternities. We were a young and excited Fraternity, one which stood on the cusp of greatness. **Herbert F. Heilig, Lawrence '21**, succeeded Uncle Billy as Grand Secretary, a short-lived term as it turns out.

*In addition to growing the Fraternity, Bill Hindman knew that service to the undergraduate chapter went hand-in-hand with sustained growth. Journal covers from the 1940s and 1950s show Bill visiting chapters new and old.*



*From the 1953 Journal, Grand Secretary Hindman reports to the Conclave on the state of the Fraternity.*

Brother Heilig would resign unexpectedly in 1944, setting the stage for Brother Hindman to step into the role and forever change the face of our Fraternity. He was 26 years old.

In retrospect, it was such a pivotal time. On the one hand, it marked the end of Uncle Billy's tenure on staff, a tenure marked with many successes. He was Sigma Phi Epsilon, and his mark will never be forgotten. On the other, we were in the midst of the Second World War. With thousands of men enlisting in the armed forces, Brother Hindman's first challenge was manpower. There was simply no one on campus to recruit. Would all of the work of Uncle Billy be undone?

### Sigma Phi Epsilon to the Forefront

In his inaugural report as Grand Secretary published in the November, 1944 *Journal*, Brother Hindman wrote, "The manpower situation for us is going to remain very poor for at least the next six months. At the present time, most of the Army college units have been called out. Nearly all student deferments have been cancelled and no large group remains on the campuses except the Navy V-12 students..." Some chapters had as few as two members; all were encouraged to recruit these V-12 students, as well as to stay open during the war.



*Fraternity Grand Officers in 1953. Left to right: Charles F. Stewart, Florida '29; J. Russell Pratt, Michigan '39; Brother Hindman; then Grand President Robert W. Kelly, NYU '29; and Edwin Buchanan, Ohio State 1911*

## Vision is the true creative rhythm.

— Robert Delaunay

This state of atrophy must have been torture to a man like Bill Hindman. His chapter Brothers lovingly described him as the best rushing chairman ever to come to campus. He had an ivy-league mind, and as a graduate of the prestigious Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, he had big ideas on how to streamline the operations of the Fraternity. He also had big ideas on how to grow the Fraternity. He did not just want to return to the good old days before the war, he wanted to transform the Fraternity from a good Fraternity to the greatness we are ascribed today. His slogan, “Sigma Phi Epsilon’s post-war plan is to rebuild now,” became a mantra for us during his service to the Fraternity. In those days, it was unknown how long the war would last, but the Fraternity held on in hopes of better times. And those, as it turns out, were soon to come.

Following the war, thousands of G.I.’s returned home and enrolled in college. Bill and **Frank J. Ruck, Michigan ’46**, then Assistant to the Grand Secretary, saw the opportunity to realize Bill’s vision. They pushed for aggressive growth by establishing new chapters on campuses overflowing in male enrollment. It was not common practice for fraternities to open chapters on these campuses. Many were teachers colleges before the outbreak of the war. The strategy paid off, as Sigma Phi Epsilon chartered 67 new chapters and revived seven dormant chapters in the 14 years of Bill’s tenure. Brother Ruck commented, “I wrote more [chartering] petitions in a hotel room at night than you can shake a stick at.”

Bill Hindman left the staff in January 1957, after 15 years of service. At that time Sigma Phi Epsilon stood at 142 chapters, more than twice its size in 1942. This period of expansion has not seen its equal. Months later, the position of Grand Secretary would be restructured at the 1957 Grand Chapter Conclave in St. Louis, resulting in the position of Executive Director.

Brother Hindman spent the next few decades living in the historic Fan District near the original location of Richmond College and the present home of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). He befriended the Brothers of the Virginia Beta Chapter and would spend afternoons with them in Monroe Park next to campus. In 1990, he moved to St. Petersburg, Florida. At the 1995 Grand Chapter Conclave in Orlando, Florida, Sigma Phi Epsilon presented him with a commemorative plaque in honor of the path he put our Fraternity on. Brother Hindman had the vision and helped engineer our greatest period of growth. And that helped make us who we are today. His legacy is one that benefited us all.

### Chapters Rechartered During Bill Hindman’s Tenure

SCHOOL OR COLLEGE	FOUNDING YEAR/ RECHARTERING YEAR	LIFETIME MEMBERS
1. U. of Pittsburgh	1903/1949	518
2. Arkansas	1907/1949	1727
3. Minnesota	1916/1949	927
4. North Carolina	1921/1947	1263
5. <i>Middlebury</i>	<i>1925/1949</i>	<i>639</i>
6. Washington U. in St. Louis	1929/1949	1109
7. Indiana	1931/1947	2003

*Italics denote chapter is currently dormant*

## 67 Chapters Chartered During Bill Hindman’s Tenure

SCHOOL OR COLLEGE	FOUNDING DATE	LIFETIME MEMBERS
1. Wyoming	5/1/1943	476
2. Rutgers	1/15/1944	1277
3. <i>U. of Tulsa</i>	<i>5/26/1946</i>	<i>220</i>
4. Oklahoma	6/1/1946	1768
5. Missouri-Rolla	5/10/1947	1131
6. U. of Louisville	5/17/1947	562
7. California-Santa Barbara	6/15/1947	1160
8. San Diego State	11/16/1947	1333
9. Marshall	12/6/1947	1270
10. Baldwin-Wallace	3/13/1948	1017
11. Illinois Institute of Technology	4/24/1948	966
12. Drake	5/9/1948	1158
13. Monmouth	5/22/1948	954
14. Maine	5/30/1948	992
15. Thiel	11/12/1948	854
16. Miami U. (Ohio)	12/4/1948	1773
17. Bradley	1/9/1949	1119
18. Stetson	2/12/1949	893
19. Davis & Elkins	3/19/1949	906
20. U. of Memphis	4/2/1949	940
21. Maryland-College Park	5/7/1949	932
22. Drury	5/14/1949	411
23. U. of Miami (FL)	5/21/1949	962
24. <i>Florida Southern</i>	<i>5/28/1949</i>	<i>506</i>
25. U. of Cincinnati	7/30/1949	1456
26. Utah	2/25/1950	739
27. Florida State	5/16/1950	1727
28. Vermont	5/27/1950	1015
29. U. of Toledo	9/30/1950	1320
30. <i>Boston U.</i>	<i>11/11/1950</i>	<i>646</i>
31. Bowling Green State	12/9/1950	1540
32. Washburn	2/3/1951	889
33. Emporia State	2/10/1951	1104
34. Nebraska-Omaha	2/17/1951	1122
35. <i>Indiana U. of Pennsylvania</i>	<i>1/5/1952</i>	<i>572</i>
36. Arizona State	2/16/1952	1450
37. MIT	2/22/1952	942
38. Culver Stockton	3/15/1952	522
39. <i>Oklahoma City</i>	<i>5/3/1952</i>	<i>159</i>
40. North Texas	5/10/1952	1270
41. Wisconsin-Stevens Point	12/6/1952	438
42. Northern Colorado	12/13/1952	654
43. Ball State	2/21/1953	1803
44. <i>High Point</i>	<i>3/21/1953</i>	<i>145</i>
45. Kent State	4/25/1953	689
46. <i>Lenoir Rhyne</i>	<i>5/9/1953</i>	<i>392</i>
47. Southern Mississippi	5/16/1953	707
48. U. of Tampa	5/23/1953	716
49. Southeast Missouri State	12/5/1953	1292
50. SUNY-Buffalo	4/10/1954	802
51. East Tennessee State	4/10/1954	964
52. Arizona	5/8/1954	1448
53. Henderson State	5/15/1954	761
54. Indiana State	5/15/1954	1233
55. Youngstown State	5/22/1954	812
56. <i>Morningside</i>	<i>5/22/1954</i>	<i>394</i>
57. Texas Christian	2/5/1955	629
58. <i>Arkansas State</i>	<i>2/26/1955</i>	<i>1092</i>
59. U. of Evansville	3/12/1955	1078
60. Georgia State	5/21/1955	392
61. Western Michigan	11/19/1955	1400
62. U. of Houston	2/4/1956	655
63. Central Michigan	3/17/1956	1229
64. U. of Detroit	4/21/1956	746
65. Valparaiso	5/5/1956	1245
66. <i>Parsons</i>	<i>5/5/1956</i>	<i>382</i>
67. Connecticut	12/8/1956	1061

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