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The Lion's Roar

www.dkeunc.com

Beta of DKE • Fall 2021

THE PERFECT WAY TO MEMORIALIZE LOST BROTHER

Steve Gehlmann, Basketball and That Game with Michael Jordan

The pledge class of 1984 has never had to work to get back in touch because they've never lost touch. Since their first days in the DKE House, the 19 brothers have bonded like glue. They share a group text where they regularly communicate and celebrate life's milestones: births, promotions, kids'

college acceptance letters. "Every life event, we're there for each other," says **Ran Randolph '84**. "A parent dies or a baby is born, and we're all reaching out. Our friendship with each other is the gift that keeps giving. We're very, very close friends. There's nothing I would not do for any of them."

So when they suffered their first loss of a pledge brother, **Steve Gehlmann '84**, the brothers knew that they wanted to memorialize him in a very special way. They knew that they wanted it to benefit the active brothers at the house, provide a tangible reminder of their memories of Steve... and commemorate a great story that involved both Steve and Michael Jordan. Yes, Michael Jordan.

Ran says that when he served as house president, Steve was both the house manager and pledge trainer. "That was pretty handy," he says with a laugh. "He had those pledges fixing pretty much everything that was broken at the house." He remembers Steve being a good athlete with a great sense of humor.

In his spare time, Steve, along with the rest of the pledge class and other brothers in the house, played basketball on the court beside the house. Michael Jordan would walk past on his



The DKE brothers finally persuaded Michael Jordan to play a game of pickup basketball before he went pro in 1984.

Steve Gehlmann is standing directly behind the basketball pole in this iconic shot.

way to class, and the brothers continually asked him to play a game of basketball with them. Michael pleaded off, saying that Coach Dean Smith wouldn't let him play pickup games during the season in case he injured himself. One day, the news spread that MJ

was going pro, and the brothers asked him one last time. He finally acquiesced, but had a few rules: he'd play anyone who wanted to play to a game of 1, and whoever made a basket first would win.

The brothers lined up and lost, one by one. "He swatted away all of our shots and dunked on us," Ran says. "The only exception was one brother who had the presence of mind to not dribble, but just shoot from half-court and it miraculously went in. When he did that, Michael just looked at him and said, 'Rematch.' You can imagine what happened next!"

Someone had the presence of mind to run up to the roof and memorialize that pickup game of young Michael Jordan, a handful of DKE brothers, and **Steve Gehlmann** grinning away behind the basket.

It was a stellar memory for the pledge class, one in a long list of memories that they'd carry into their lives. Over the next three decades, the 16 men became husbands and fathers. They went on to the top of their field in their respective careers. They held reunions every five years and kept in touch during all the ups and downs in the years in between. When Steve died,

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"THIS IS WHAT BROTHERHOOD IS ALL ABOUT"

Brothers from the Class of '68 Band Together to Give a Life-Changing Christmas Gift

Thanks to a group of his fraternity brothers, **Dickson Gribble** is still living his best life, even as the Army Military Intelligence veteran struggles with the effects of Parkinson's disease. This Christmas, his fellow alumni from the class of 1968 at Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill came together to purchase a specially-equipped van for Dickson and his wife. The gift—completely paid for in just two days—means mobility and freedom for their brother and friend, and honors a friendship that spans more than five decades.

During the spring of 1965, a group of young men pledged to the Beta Chapter of DKE fraternity together. From the get-go, they formed a bond that grew stronger over their four years of college. As they graduated and headed off into the world, these 32 brothers promised to maintain their close connection. And year after year, they did. In fact, for their 50th reunion, 27 of the 32 brothers made the trip to Chapel Hill to celebrate, reminisce and make new memories.

It was right around that time that **Bill Hollan '68** checked back in with his roommate. It was a phone call that would eventually lead to this year's life-changing Christmas gift.

"**Dickson Gribble '68** was my pledge roommate," says Bill, who has made his career in realty. "He was a basketball player—6'8"+ tall—and he had to bring a special bed to the



L.E. Sawyer '68 (Brother Flash Bulb) took these photos of Dickson Gribble during their time in the DKE house.



The Class of '68 at their 50th reunion. Dickson Gribble is seated in the lower right corner, with Tee Baur beside him in pink. Bill Hollan, who organized the project, is in the top row on the left end (wearing glasses), and Peter Grauer (Grunch) is in front of him in the white shirt.

"THIS IS WHAT BROTHERHOOD IS ALL ABOUT"



The class of '68 came together to buy this specially outfitted Chrysler Pacifica for Dickson Gribble '68 and his wife Susan.

DKE house because he was too tall for any of the beds we had."

"We've stayed loosely in touch over the years. Dickson spent his career in Army Military Intelligence, retiring as a full colonel, and he lived all over... in Thailand, Germany, England. Prior to our 50th reunion event a couple of years ago, I got back in touch with him and discovered that he was suffering from Parkinson's disease."

Around Thanksgiving of 2020, Dickson and Bill chatted again. Dickson talked about the retirement community he lived in and said that he depended on the facility's vehicle for transportation. He said that it made transportation difficult during Covid, especially due to his height. He and his wife, Susan, were working with the VA to apply for a grant to acquire a vehicle that would accommodate his motorized wheelchair. It would be a way to get to appointments, to see grandchildren, and to enjoy outings with his wife and friends.

Bill hung up the phone and sent a quick email to his pledge brothers. Of the original 32, only one, **Brooke Williams '68**, has passed away, and the surviving brothers keep in touch through email. Bill gave them all a quick update of Dickson's health and mentioned that Dickson and his wife were trying to procure a vehicle. **Peter Grauer '68**, president of the pledge class and current chairman of the board of Bloomberg L.P., sent back a one-line reply: "Can we help with the van?"

"Listen," Peter later said, "We're in the last half of the fourth quarter. We have to do all we can to help each other. Life is short. We've got to do something."

Peter and Bill had a conversation, and after



Susan and Dickson with their Christmas gift.

that, "Bill did all the heavy lifting," Peter says. Bill looked into the cost for a vehicle that would accommodate Dickson's height and allow him and his wife to comfortably travel: A specially-equipped Chrysler Pacifica. A second email went out to the brothers outlining the details.

What came next overwhelmed them both. "There was just an outpouring of people," Peter says. "That's what it's all about."

Within days, 27 brothers jumped in with pledges. Not only was the vehicle completely paid for, but it was ordered in time for Christmas.

"The DKE class of 1968 is already legendary within the UNC community, but I sincerely believe this has to be our proudest moment as a whole class," Bill said when he updated the group on December 4, 2020. "Because of your support, I was able to call the Mobility Works provider yesterday and tell her to put the wheels in motion to make a configured van available before Christmas, if at all possible.

When I explained where the funds were coming from, she said she had never seen such an act of generosity. I couldn't disagree."

"To me, that's what bonding and brotherhood are all about," **Tee Baur '68**, owner of Baur Properties, says. "We all feel close enough that when one of us has a concern or a problem, we have brothers who are there to help us out. To me, that speaks volumes about what brotherhood and fraternity life is all about."

Just after Christmas, Bill got a message that the whole pledge class had been waiting for. "This is one amazing van!" Dickson's wife, Susan, wrote. "We are absolutely thrilled and immensely grateful to you and all the guys for everything you have done. We're heading into 2021 full of hope and looking forward to the new freedom of movement for Dickson. Happy New Year to y'all!"

"This was a great ending to a very difficult year," Bill said. "Thanks, thanks, thanks."

"EXACTLY WHERE I WANTED TO BE"

Bill Schmidt '66 Looks Back at Five Decades of *Friends from the Heart, Forever*

Picture it. It's the fall of 1962 at the University of North Carolina. Amidst a decade of change, a new group of freshmen have landed on campus and are finding their way, finding where they fit.

It's Rush Week, and the new students have woken up to find invitations slid under their dorm room doors from SAE, Phi Delt, Zeta Psi, Sigma Nu, Sigma Chi, KA... But one incoming freshman has another fraternity in mind.

Bill Schmidt '66 had already heard good things about Delta Kappa Epsilon from a friend back home in Jacksonville, Florida. **Bryan Simpson '65** was a sophomore in the DKE House and he told Bill that he'd be a good fit there, too. It was a place for men who are equal parts "gentleman, scholar, and jolly good fellow." So even though he had eight rush invitations already slipped under his door, it was the DKE House where Bill was headed.

It was clear from the very first minute he stepped inside the front door that DKE was the place for Bill.

"I had a wonderful, warm feeling," he said about that first moment. "I knew that here was where I wanted to be." **Surry Roberts '62**, who had just graduated and was headed for UNC med school, spent time with Bill and told him what it means to be a Deke. Even though it was only the second night of rush, he made his final decision to "shake up" right away. And then, he started to help build a pledge class.



DKE Fall 1962 Pledge Class (23 pledges, missing Bill Tennille)

Quickly joining him were two friends who had gone to Robert E. Lee High School with him in Jacksonville— **Mike Hoyt '66** (who would receive the 1851 Award in 2008) and **Hap Stewart '66**. Next came **Joe Churchill '66**, **Alex Shuford '66**, **Tom Roberts '66** (2016 1851 Award recipient), **Bill Tennille '66**, **John Edgerton '66**, **Lyons Gray '66**, **Norton Willis '66**, **Cammie Harris '66**, **George Butler '66**, and **Max Chapman '66**. All told, 23 men pledged to DKE in 1962. And although they all knew they were meant to be Dekes, it's unlikely they had an inkling of how intertwined their lives would become, or that the DKE motto of "Friends from the Heart, Forever" would still be ringing true nearly 60 years later.

Early Leadership at the DKE house

Bill showed an affinity for leadership early on at the DKE House. Within a few weeks, he was already in charge of the fraternity freshman

"Bust Dook" float parade for the UNC-Duke football game and turning the DKE basement into the best place to party after a football game. "We toggled between gentlemen, scholars, and jolly good fellows as much as we could."

Weeknights were for studying, but on the weekends, memories were made. There were Thursday night sorority mixers with the Pi Phis, Chi Os, and Tri-Delts, Friday night jukebox parties in the DKE House basement, and Saturday Night combo parties with the Zetes and SAEs.

Over the next several years, DKE National recognized the Beta Chapter with the Lion Trophy, the crown jewel of DKE awards, which is given to the chapter which best exemplifies the core values of being a gentleman, a scholar, and a jolly good fellow in Chapter Improvement, Alumni Relations, Scholarship, and Community Service. They won three times in quick succession: in 1962, 1964, and 1966 (the chapter goes on to win a total of six times).

As a freshman, Bill was elected to the DKE representative of the Germans Club, founded in 1890 as an interfraternity social club. The club, which spanned thirteen separate fraternities, held two concerts each year, Fall Germans and Spring Germans. He booked entertainers in Memorial Hall: Louis Armstrong (a group of Germans Club officers and representatives had dinner with Louis and his band the night before the Saturday show

THE PERFECT WAY TO MEMORIALIZE LOST BROTHER

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they mourned and knew they wanted to honor him at the house.

Ran's son Christian ('22) is a legacy at Beta DKE, and through Christian and Beta DKE Alumni Association president, **Scott Smith '80**, Ran found out that they wanted to replace the old basketball court with an up-to-date sport court, and it prompted an idea. He immediately reached out to their pledge class along with the classes of '83, '85, '86 and '87, and suggested that they band together to raise money to pay for it.

"It seemed like a good way to do it," he says.

"We could support that project and honor Steve, who was out on that court all the time." And in a nod to that memorable day with Michael Jordan, Ran proposed putting the memorial plaque in the exact spot where Steve stood in the photo.

Today the group of alumni from '83-'87, with coordination from **Michael Paschall '86**, **Bo Mason '83**, **Tom Benjamin '83**, **Ellis Zaytoun '85** and **Brent Smith '86**, have raised around \$6,000 for the sport court, which is already in place at the house. They hope to raise more in the coming months to help fully fund the construction cost.

Ran says that the gift— and the memory it represents— is just one more thing that bonds the pledge brothers. "We were surrounded by pledge brothers who were smart, fun, well-rounded and very driven. I think when you have that, you tend to benchmark yourself by those around you. It helps you set a standard for yourself which leads you to strive to be a good husband, a good father, and a good friend, and to have a career of distinction... all of which leads to a fulfilled life. That's what we've given to each other, that huge amount of support."



First Blind Date, Mobile Mardi Gras, March 2, 1992

and Bill sang "Hello Dolly" with him); a young Woody Allen for \$1,750 for a 40-minute standup routine ("He was a weirdo," Bill remembers); Mary Wells; The Four Preps.

He became the DKE Brother Beta his senior year and president of the Germans Club. As the events got more popular, Bill got more creative with the venue. He and **Geoff Parker '66** (who was the Sigma Nu freshman representative with Bill, and now Germans Club vice-president) went to Durham and rent out Planter's Tobacco Warehouse for their Spring Germans event. They were smart about it: they procured liability insurance, contacted the Durham fire marshall, and met with and invited the UNC Campus Police Chief Beaumont in advance of the event. The event was a big hit: Lou Christie brought down the house with his hit song "Lightnin' Strikes," and The Toys sang their hit "Lover's Concerto."

"It was a wonderful education," Bill said about his four years at UNC. In addition to the classroom education that would advance his career in advertising and public relations, DKE taught him leadership, how to work with people, and the mechanics of government.

"It's no exaggeration to credit Bill for having rescued this place from ruin."

The years after graduation passed quickly. Bill married **Sandra** and they had two sons, Bill, Jr., and John. When Bill, Jr. got accepted to attend UNC in 1983, he decided to join Beta DKE as his father had done before him.



3 Gens: Three Generations of Dekes: John '89, Turner '20, and Bill '66

But, unfortunately for him, the house was a vastly different place than it had been in the heady '60s.

Mike Hoyt '66 remembers what the house looked like in 1983: "Our fraternity, like most back then, was teetering on extinction. The house was in terrible physical shape and had become a campus party center, complete with a front yard mudslide and a basement swimming pool. Breaking windows was an amateur sport."

Winburne King '68 (2018 1851 Award recipient), who had been in the same pledge class as **Tee Baur '68** (2011 1851 Award recipient), was serving as the alumni president of the house in the early '80s. He called Bill and asked if he would consider taking over as alumni president of the DKE House. "Bill, I know you love this place," Winburne said. It looked like a thankless job, but Bill didn't even think twice about the opportunity to bring the house back to the kind of place where he had spent formative years, a place of tradition and legacy. "It was a very easy 'YES' for me!" he said.

For the next two years, Bill undertook what **Mike Hoyt '66** calls "a one-man crusade to bring the Deke house back from the dark times of neglect and into a new era of pride and prosperity." With grit, hard work, and his trademark charm, Bill brought back the house he knew and loved for a whole new generation of DKEs. In 2012, his brothers honored him with the 1851 Award, stating, "It is not an exaggeration to credit Bill for having rescued this place from ruin."

All through the DKE connection

A few years after the DKE resurgence, Bill lost

his wife Sandra. It was his DKE brothers who mourned with him, **Bill Tennille '66** driving to show up on his doorstep the morning of her death. It was also through his DKE connections that he later met Mary Dudley, his "original Renaissance woman" to whom he has been married for the past 25 years. "I fell for her the first time I saw her," he says about their meeting on a blind date at Mobile Mardi Gras set up by Sigma Nu **Geoff Parker '66**, who served with him in the Germans Club, and his wife **Nancy McLean Parker '67**. "It's all been through that DKE connection."

While Bill invested so much in DKE, he also remained active with UNC-Chapel Hill, co-chairing the Class of 1966 reunion committee with **Jackie Smith Cooke '66**, organizing 25th, 40th, 45th, and 50th reunions.

After **Bill, Jr. '88** joined the house, his brother **John '89** also became a Beta DKE. On the weekends, the pair would make their way to Eddie Caldwell Drive to spend time with **Eddie Caldwell**, who had long since retired but had no intention of stopping his influence over generations of Beta DKEs.

A new generation of Dekes

It's been decades since the days when Bill, Jr., and John were in college. Today, their own sons are undergrads, and, naturally, they are choosing to continue their grandfather's legacy and join DKE. John's son **Turner '20** graduated this year as a Beta DKE and Bill, Jr.'s son **Magnus '23** is a sophomore at the Phi Alpha Chapter at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. If their grandfather's journey is any indication, this is just the beginning of a lifetime of "Friends from the Heart, Forever."

Bill Schmidt '66 Looks Back at Five Decades of *Friends from the Heart, Forever*

Beech Watson '71 replied to a recent survey and told us about his favorite place to go in Chapel Hill, his favorite college tradition, and where life since UNC has taken him. Here's what he had to say:

Where was your favorite place to go in Chapel Hill?

The Goodie Shop - knew the owner and it was a good place to get something to eat and drink a beer.

What was your favorite event to partake in during your college years?

The DKE House Christmas party - basement was covered in sawdust, cut trees were placed around the walls, **Eddie Caldwell** mixed up his famous DKE Punch and a rousing good time was had by Brothers and their dates before heading out for Christmas break.

What was the most valuable part of your DKE experience?

Friendships for life. Many of us keep in touch on a very regular basis. Our class has had a reunion every five years since we graduated in 1971 with attendance at every reunion at 85% or more.

Share an update of what's new in your life.

My wife just retired after running her own business for 33 years. I have been retired so it is nice having her join me. Now, if we can get past this damn virus we can travel and enjoy life more fully.

William Pender '58 wrote to tell us about where life has taken him since UNC.

"I have been blessed by a 54-year marriage, 4 children, and 9 grandchildren who have remained healthy despite the pandemic and appear to be grounded while pursuing their livelihood in ways that give me great joy and expectations. Following my graduation from law school in 1961 and admission to the NC Bar, I proudly and gratefully served in the Navy, attained the rank of lieutenant, and was later admitted to practice before the US Court of Military Appeals.

After military service, I returned to Charlotte and engaged in a general practice trying to be everything to all people. Before becoming an



Beech Watson '71 says: "The fellows in this photo are, in addition to me, **Scott Backus '71, Freddy Ball '71 (deceased), Bobby Vann '71, Vernon Glenn '72, Bernie Gray '72, and John Hine '72.** This was taken in the fall of 2018."



William Pender writes:

"The attached copy of a somewhat earlier photo of me appears to be my best profile."

inactive member of the NC Bar at the age of 81, I pursued mediation for a short while in Mecklenburg and Avery County where I live nearly 6 months of the year at "Dogpatch" (my wilderness home on Big Yellow Mountain, approximately 18 miles from Linville).

I currently enjoy book clubs, formerly a guest speaker respecting American history at Rotary Clubs, high schools, and once at Davidson College. I love landscaping at my mountain home where I also love receiving family and friends along with their dogs and children. I also masquerade as an artist and have a website, paintingsbypender.com.

I continue to think of so many of my DKE brothers that are still with us as well as those who have left us. As we age memories are constant companions. I will never forget that

evening during my freshman year when I was told that I had "passed the house" and accepted the pledge pin. I had also been accepted by the SAEs. Considering it to be the gentlemanly and manly thing to do, I walked next door to the SAE house and, in the midst of their ongoing rush activities, I thanked them for their consideration and friendship for which I am still grateful. I am still and always will be a Deke and so fortunate to have been associated with men who excelled scholastically, athletically, and socially- as well as those who did not. We were a diverse, fun group and I reaped great benefits."

Would you or a brother you know make a great alumni profile subject? Email us at alumninews@affinityconnection.com to let us know!

UNDERGRAD UPDATE

Alumni Donations Help with House Upgrades



The brothers at the Beta Chapter of DKE at UNC have had a fantastic fall in what has been a more normal semester as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. This fall we were pleased to welcome **21 new brothers** with over 50% coming from outside of the state of North Carolina as a result of a successful rush.

Thanks to recent alumni donations, we have made some key additions to the house to maintain its status as one of the best on campus. We repaved our basketball court, replaced the old basketball goal, and added a new sport performance court on top of the new pavement.