



# Is Greek Town on Main Street ?



**C**ollege life started early for 3500 students this year on the Columbia campus. These are the fraternity men and sorority women who rushed back for rush week, that period before classes when potential members, mostly freshmen, look over and are looked over by the 28 fraternities and 16 sororities chartered at MU.

The emotion generated by the frantic pace was released at the Columns when the new pledges proudly announced their affiliations to fellow-Greeks during the traditional "yell-ins." Meanwhile, back at the dorms, are the young men and women who choose not to pledge — or who are not asked.

Greek life is important at the University of Missouri-Columbia. About 25 per cent of all undergraduate men are fraternity members, a proportion which has remained relatively constant during the past 10 years. Fewer women belong. Last year 19 per cent of undergraduate women were members; the percentage has fallen consistently from a high of 42.5 per cent in 1952.

This year 352 of the 583 women registered for rush pledged. Approxi-



Greeks bearing their banners and wearing their pins come to "yell-ins" to see who pledged what house.

mately 600 men joined fraternities during the period. With their new pledge pins, the novices entered the Greek system, involving many study halls, hotly contested intramural clashes, pinning ceremonies, hours spent on decorations for homecoming and Christmas formals, and an active, organized social life.

Is this experience meaningful? Is it relevant to college life, and the world, today? The question is perhaps unanswerable, but it is one which has been asked many times.

On the Columbia campus, most of the student leaders are Greeks, although the president of the student body is an independent. Of this year's Alumni Association Board of Directors, 23 of the 41 were affiliated with a social fraternity or sorority during their college days. The readership survey conducted by the *Alumnus* last spring indicated that about 35 per cent of the Association's membership belonged to Greek organizations.

Scholastic achievement varies from semester to semester. But generally at Missouri sorority members' grades are somewhat higher than independents'. Fraternity men's grades are somewhat lower. In the spring 1968 semester, the all-sorority average and the all-women's average were the same: 2.7 (2.0 represents a C). The same semester the all-fraternity average was 2.4, and the all-men average was 2.5. Only 53 per cent of fraternity pledges averaged 2.0 or better.

One of the most articulate critics of the Greek system is Dr. John M. Kuhlman, a professor of economics and voted one of the top professors on campus last spring. Here are Kuhlman's comments, followed by those of others who feel differently:

"The fraternity movement has failed to perceive and keep up with the change in direction of the University which has occurred since the mid-1950's. In large part, it is simply out of the mainstream of contemporary campus activities. It is a shame that this is so. But, more important, it is a shame that the members of the Greek living groups aren't making more of an effort to keep the fraternity movement in the mainstream of campus life.

"A fraternity flies the Confederate flag knowing that many of the University community find

it to be offensive. A sorority member sings "for he is a fraternity man," indicating that a man's affiliations are more important than his accomplishments. A fraternity member tells me that he "came from a business, middle-class background and he is going to marry a girl from the same background and buy a house and live in a business, middle-class background." Another student argues that he doesn't want a language major in his house because he wants to live with fellows just like himself. In many Greek houses, but I am glad to say the number is steadily declining, one finds the pledges being coerced to get involved in stage productions. But you find only one house on our campus that has Negro members (outside of the Negro houses). Few if any houses have foreign students either as members or guests. Faculty visitation is minimal and even here, in some cases, it is a blatant effort to assist members with their grades.

"The only justification for their being organized living groups on the campus is the fact that they make a contribution to their members' educations. If education is to take place, much — if not most — of that education will take place within the living group itself rather than in the classroom or library. The final justification for either dormitories or Greek houses is the fact that they comprise an educational experience. But if the Greek houses are to be accepted by the rest of the University community — and this refers to, in large part, the faculty — the educational experience provided the members must be in harmony with the purposes of the total institution. Finding dates for new members, pointing out the easy professors and snap courses, and providing files of old exams will not qualify as an adequate educational experience.

"To visit a fraternity (or sorority) is quite an experience for a faculty member. You ask to see the library and there is none, or if there is a room called the library, it may well house trophies as well as a collection of old books which have no resale value. Few subscribe to any newspaper, much less to the *New York Times*. You won't find *Time* or *Newsweek*, much less the *Saturday Review*, the *New Yorker*, *Harpers*, *Atlantic*, or the *New Republic*. I sus-



During final rush dates, fraternity men put "pressure" on rushees to try to influence their decisions to pledge.



Costumes, skits, clapping and songs are not a part of fraternity rush. Rather, cigarettes, sodas, serious rushing and girl-watching dominate time during men's rush dates. Sorority women, on the other hand, present their side of the Greek system to rushees through skits depicting the Greek way of life.



pect that few could even produce a dictionary, let alone a set of encyclopedia. They will all have television sets, but few evidently have a collection of classical records. All will get their pledges out for fraternity activities, but few sponsor concert parties to make sure that the new pledge is exposed to the performing arts. All entertain their alumni, and a few entertain some of the faculty, but very few — if any — support outside speakers or any sort of a seminar program. Most accept members with similar or identical backgrounds and interests, but few try to provide the members with the widest possible exposure to people of different backgrounds and interests.

"And all of this is a shame. The Greek houses have the resources and the organization to make a tremendous contribution to the legitimate aims of the University. In an era when there is increasing demand that the nation's

institutions of higher education be relevant, the Greek houses are becoming increasingly irrelevant."

*Mary Pat McConnell, from Independence, Mo., is a PhD candidate and instructor of speech. During her undergraduate career, she served as president of her sorority, Chi Omega, president of the Association of Women Students, and she was elected to membership in Mortar Board, LSV women's honoraries and "Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities."*

*She wrote:*

"Call it friendship, call it interpersonal relationships, call it communicative ability, this vital part of the educated person's whole development is a necessary function of a university education; yet this function is not necessarily performed by the university as an institution. Since the original and continuing reason-for-being of sororities and fraternities is to build the found-



dation on which strong interpersonal relationships can be cultivated, Greek organizations have a rich advantage over the university as an institution and over other student groups. This advantage lies in the ability of sororities and fraternities, inherent in their purposes, to foster positive attitudes toward the university by making it a pleasant place in which to live, study, and relate to other people. A relatively simple function, yes, but one that is absolutely necessary if the mission of the university is to succeed and the whole person is to be developed."

*Brian Brice, is a sophomore pre-Journalism student from Peoria, Ill. A member of Sigma Nu fraternity, he was a radio announcer for WURL in Peoria:*

"Today's relevancy of the Greek system does not rest with its facilities and physical appearance. The true strength lies in that indefinable word, 'brotherhood.' This is something that the

casual passerby cannot see from the sidewalk. Indeed, many can't see it when they visit inside a Greek house. Brotherhood is an intangible entity that grows as members interact with each other on every level.

"And brotherhood is no longer being kept from minority groups because of century-old national by-laws. All fraternities on the Missouri campus have either eliminated these antique clauses in their national constitutions or obtained waivers of honor which exempt their specific chapters.

"As to the charge that rush is ruthless, it seems that 'selective' is a better word. Just as the rushee should ask, 'What can this house do for me?', the house must ask, 'If pledged, what can you do for us?' Being limited as to just how large a pledge class can be taken each year, Greek houses must, by necessity, only pledge the cream of the crop."



*Vicki Vaughn, a senior in Arts and Science from University City, was treasurer for the Association of Women Students and named to "Who's Who in Residence Halls":*

"Having been in a residence hall for three years, I have been witness to so many who pledge a particular house because of its 'image' and how it can help them. Many use their houses to hopefully enhance what they think their peers will think of them, instead of trying to develop their own personalities profitably. I think it is commonly agreed that this unconscious attitude of so many pledges is unhealthy. However, their houses are so important to them that they do attend the mandatory study halls, and participate in the activities required of them in order to obtain membership. Having been involved in such activities, I have seen these mandatory functions produce well-rounded, socially graced, responsible young adults.

"This same goal can be accomplished without the Greek system; however with much more difficulty. Within the residence halls, studying, maintaining a particular grade point, and 'keeping in the know' of what is happening on campus, etc., is not compulsory, although encouraged. Because initiative must be primarily self-realized, many potentially excellent leaders are lost — not having been 'encouraged' enough."

*Gene McHugh, a senior in Journalism from St. Louis, is past pledge trainer of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, and served as Greek Week Community Service Project chairman and Greek coordinator for a campus political party. He is a member of Pi Omicron Sigma, men's fraternity leadership honorary, and Alpha Delta Sigma, advertising honorary:*

"The Greek on campus has control. He has the power to do so much and yet, and this is what really disappoints me, he girdles himself to the petty antics of the pseudo-big-time politics of the campus. It does no service to the system by having campus politics develop its own style of 'smear campaign' which at times has been downright degrading. Intense involvement in the political structure of the campus, with equal involvement in petty disputes, stifles any attempts toward reconciliation and progress.

"I really do feel, however, that the Greek today is a sharp kid. A mature kid. He's a kid

with a good head on his shoulders. He wants to learn and he's proving this. He wants to feel at ease socially. He's also doing this. He wants to squeeze as much out of his college life as he can, and he's doing that, too. He sees opportunities and he takes them. Good for him. He's going to make it. I'm proud to be one of them."

*Mrs. Bob Haverfield is past president of the Columbia Panhellenic Association and chairman of the University Alumni Rush committee. She is also editor of the Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta, her national sorority magazine, and chairman of the National Panhellenic Editors Conference:*

"At this time when universities, because of their increased enrollments, are impersonal institutions and when universities are in full retreat from the doctrine of *in loco parentis*, fraternities and sororities are the only groups who offer guidelines for conduct to their undergraduate members. When the key privileges (no closing hours) are available to all except freshman women, sororities are the only living units to set standards of behavior that will hopefully see young women through their college years and through their entire lives. University and privately-owned dormitories have shown no interest in this aspect of student development. High moral and social standards among Greeks are basic to relevancy.

"Fraternities and sororities have one advantage that is particularly theirs — one which cannot be provided by parents, faculty or staff. It is peer group motivation. Fraternity chapters can, and do, provide the timely stimulus which encourages their members to develop their abilities and capacities in the classroom and on the campus.

"Fraternity and sorority members have long taken an active part in community affairs. While in college, most groups adopt a community philanthropy: aid to civic groups, underprivileged children, youth groups. During Greek Week a major philanthropy is adopted and executed by the combined efforts of all Greek organizations. This is an introduction to continued community participation.

"Some critics say that Greek groups are outmoded and irrelevant. I know of no group more

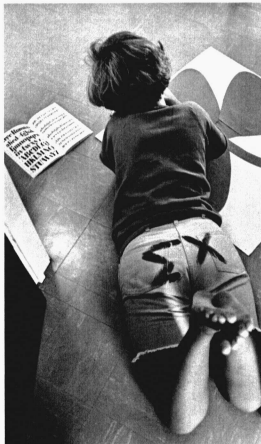
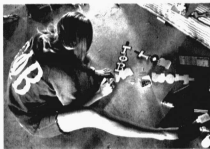
self-critical, more self-analytical than the Greeks. They are constantly re-evaluating themselves as individuals (part of pledge education); as living units (as individual Greek organizations) and as a system (the Panhellenic and Interfraternity groups). The fraternal groups have learned to 'roll with the punches,' adapting to the best of the present, while keeping their basic premise that real values remain changeless in a changing world."

*Dr. Jack Matthews is dean of students on the Columbia campus;*

"Society and all its institutions, including the University, are being challenged as to their relevancy. We all need to examine and to re-examine the goals and purposes of the organizations and institutions with which we are affiliated

and work for appropriate change and improvement.

The Greek organization is certainly one institution which obviously needs to take 'the hard look' at its program. For those of us who believe there is a place for these organizations on campus, we need to give such support and direction as we can to them, just the same as we give assistance and guidance in helping any individual student, or group of students, find a better way to improve his or their total environment with the end result that each individual student will be a better educated and more competent person when he leaves the campus. For this is the time that most young people later will describe as 'the happiest years of my life.' And they also can be most fruitful. □



"Work week" is a necessity for sorority girls who design name tags and learn various facts about the rushees before actually meeting them during the following week.