

## The 1960s: Growth and Development

"Between 1959 and 1962, Albany changed its name three times. In the Fall of 1959 it became the New York State University College of Education at Albany. Two years later the 'of education' was dropped, and in the Fall of 1962 the institution became the State University of New York at Albany." (Birr, 119.)

"In 1962 the college received national recognition in a lengthy article in The Saturday Review. Author David Boroff summed up his conclusion by observing that 'Albany State has a distinguished history. As liberal arts colleges go, it is a good one. As teachers' colleges go, it is superb.' The accolades were well-deserved. But they arrived just as the institution was facing its greatest challenge: transforming a 'superb' teacher's college into a public research university. The process was getting under way at the time Boroff summed up the achievements of the College for Teachers." (Birr, 105.) Along with SUNY at Binghamton, Buffalo, and Stony Brook, Albany became one of the anchor universities in a restructured New York State System of Higher Education created during the administration of Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Earl "Buzz" Walker '62 recalls that "the 'college' was going through the birth pangs of becoming a university but still retained the Teacher's College nomenclature." He further comments that "Those were interesting times, to say the least." Birth pangs, as we know, involve pain and stretching.

Concurrent with this transformation was the transformation of Albany's physical plant. A large new university campus, labeled the Uptown Campus, was constructed several miles north of the existing Albany State campus, now labeled the Downtown Campus. The architecture of the Uptown Campus was to generate almost as much controversy as the architecture of the gigantic downtown State Mall in Albany, also built during Nelson Rockefeller's years as Governor.

Kendall Birr, in his Sesquicentennial History, describes the building of the Uptown Campus vividly and dramatically. After a long and bitter legal fight, the state appropriated the Albany Country Club in 1961 and hired Edward Durrell Stone, an influential architect renowned for his formal structure, to design a new campus for a projected student body of 10,000. Rockefeller broke ground for the new campus on August 24, 1962, and site preparation took place in the Summer of 1963. Stone insisted on leveling the lovely old clubhouse and ripping up the large country club swimming pool, over the vigorous objections of college administrators, and designed an integrated formal quadrangle with residence halls at the four corners, academic buildings within the quadrangle, a large podium, and no parking. His intention was to create a calm, cloistered, neoclassical atmosphere for study and research. It was purportedly the largest single academic construction contract ever let. It was estimated that the construction used over 270,000 cubic yards of concrete and over fifty miles of copper tubing. Despite some major construction problems, the Uptown Campus was built quite rapidly, started to be occupied in the mid-1960s, and by 1970 was almost complete. Designed for a student body of 10,000, Albany's enrollment by 1970 had increased to more than 13,000, so crowding was inevitable. (Birr, 124-127.)

Although Stone was proud of and highly satisfied with the campus he had designed, most

students in the 1960s were not. The striking, repetitive formal architecture gave the University a distinct identity, but the buildings were cold, literally and figuratively. The integrated academic complex supposedly sheltered its users from bitter upstate New York weather, but it did not. Shivering students, faculty, staff, and administrators often retreated in the winter to the service tunnel that connected buildings in order to move about campus. Even more crucial, while Stone believed that his integrated design would facilitate the development of a sense of community, just the opposite occurred. "The massiveness of the buildings, the formal design with its lack of warm colors and textures, and the absence of natural and small group informal places on campus all contributed to a sense of individual isolation." (Birr, 128.)

In the early 1960s, the changes in Kappa Beta were modest. The pledge classes in 1960 and 1961 were good sized. The fraternity had established itself in a new house at 577 Washington Avenue. Donald Reinfurt '60 underlines the continuing emphasis on music that characterized Kappa Beta at this time. During his first two years at Albany he was deeply involved with activities at Sayles Hall, the Men's Glee Club, directed by Prof. Karl Peterson, and The Statesmen, a popular singing group. He didn't pledge Kappa Beta until his junior year but was attracted to KB because some of his friends had joined, and a good many of them as well as other fraternity brothers were interested in music. At that time, KB, unlike Potter Club, was not excessively devoted to sports and was not a huge partying fraternity. As a group, the members diverged somewhat from the stereotype of the Animal House fraternity. Although Don never lived in the frat house, he participated in many fraternity activities and enjoyed his friendships with KB brothers. KB had lots of members, and there was a good spirit within the fraternity. Don went on to graduate school, earned his doctorate, and then accepted a position in the Highway Research Safety Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a position that he never left until he retired. He also continued to pursue his musical interests, singing with the regional Choral Society of Durham, a group that performs several concerts a year and to which he still belongs.

Ron Coslick '62, president of Kappa Beta in his senior year, underlines the musical strength of Kappa Beta, recalling how the fraternity won the annual holiday sing in 1959 and how gratifying it was to have several of the fraternity brothers around who belonged to the premier male campus singing group, The Statesmen. Tim Brown '64 describes how closely attached he became to Kappa Beta, even though he was involved with the fraternity for only one year. He writes, "I left Albany early to accept a job opportunity with General Electric in Schenectady, so my official campus time with KB lasted from '60-'61. I did maintain close social contact until '63 (I married a Class of '63 Phi Delt). Three of our ushers were KB ('63, '64 & '65) with one APA ('64) friend joining the crew.... I return to Albany every 5 years for the class reunions and have maintained "Christmas Card" contact with some brothers for all of these last 40 years. My KB paddle and '61 membership photo still have a place on my workshop wall." The early 1960s sound like a good, settled time for Kappa Beta with warm fellowship the prevailing mode.

The early 1960s was also a period of dramatic growth for Kappa Beta. More than 45 students from the Class of 1962 pledged Kappa Beta, thus making KB a much larger fraternity than it had ever been. Although the college was expanding in size and in diversity of programs as it moved towards university status, most students were still enrolled in teacher education curricula. Two

fraternity members from the Class of 1962 who had distinguished careers in Education have fond memories of their years at Albany and their connections with Kappa Beta.

Chuck Pegan (B.A. '62, M.A. '63) lived in Sayles Hall, worked in the kitchen/dining room with several other KB guys and also sang in The Statesmen with them. He writes, "Great Memories. Also played on the KB basketball team in '59-'60. My Hell Father was Dave Brooker '62 who became a science teacher in Westfield or Mayville, I believe. In the summer he was a deputy sheriff on Chautauqua Lake....One of the funny memories about my induction into the fraternity has to do with the statue of the general on the horse in front of the Capitol Building....Dave made me climb up on the horse and shout 'Hi O Silver.' Of course, he was hiding in the bushes somewhere. The story doesn't end there, however. Our son, Jim, did a semester-long internship in the Senate while he was attending our local Jamestown Community College. He had heard the story about Dad climbing on the horse all of his life so when he had the chance, he tried it. Unfortunately, he was not as tall and lanky as his old man so he couldn't get his foot up on the horse's tail which was the path to the top." Chuck also reveals that his girlfriend in 1962, now his wife, helped him with his KB pledge paddle, painting a picture of a KB character as well as "Kappa Beta" on the paddle. It was considered one of the best. After graduation, Chuck taught social studies for eleven years at Fredonia Central School, then served as elementary principal and superintendent at Panama Central School, and later was appointed superintendent at Letchworth Central School in Wyoming, New York. In retirement, he has served as interim administrator at several schools and has taught at Fredonia College and at Jamestown Community College.

When Max Bassett (B.A. '62, M.S. '63) arrived in the Fall of 1958, he knew little about fraternities and sororities. He came from a rural area and a small school in the Adirodacks, west of Plattsburgh. Very few kids in the area went to college, and Max was the first in his family to go. Thus, there was no one around to tell him about college fraternity life. After his first semester on campus, Max developed some stereotypes about fraternities. Potter Club seemed to be for the athletes and Sigma Lamda Sigma for the partyers. Since Max was a quiet guy and not athletic, he warmed to the brothers in Kappa Beta, so when he was offered a bid to join KB, he thought it an excellent match and promptly accepted the bid. Because he was a Resident Assistant in Waterbury Hall from his sophomore through his graduate year, Max never lived in the KB house and therefore was unable to get as close to KB brothers as he would have liked, but he did participate in many activities. He remembers "Hell Night" vividly as seeming like a silly ritual, a weird experience, that he partly observed from a distance while doing all that was required. But after it was over, he and the other pledges felt that they had gone through a bonding experience together. Max became friendly with one of his fellow pledges, Tom Ellis '62, who happened to be black. Since Max had grown up in a part of the Adirondacks where the only black people he had ever seen were on TV screens, he was glad that as a country boy with limited cultural experience, he had an opportunity to share fraternity life with Tom. They both loved to play ping-pong and would spend hours batting the ball back and forth. Tom was very competitive and Max liked that, but Tom was always a good loser and a gentleman. Max, like others from this time period, remembers KB guys as talented in music and comprising a large portion of The Statesmen. He also remembers KB brothers as having the reputation for being high academic achievers, clean-cut, dependable, of average athletic ability, and fun-loving but

not hell raisers. After graduation, Max taught in Hudson Falls, New York, for three years and then went into higher education administration in New York, then in Florida, and finally for 30 years in Virginia until he retired in 2003. Since then, he has made strong efforts to re-connect with Kappa Beta brothers, some of whom he had not seen in more than 40 years. This re-connecting has been a joy and a most positive activity in his retirement. When he was sick and had to undergo surgery in the Summer of 2004, Max found that some of his greatest supporters during his illness and recovery were his KB brothers.

For Paul Michel (B.A. '67, M.A. '69), 1963-1969 were truly great years enhanced by his membership in Kappa Beta. He thoroughly enjoyed fraternity life, participated actively in it, had lots of fun, and became Brother in Charge of Hell Night. A high point for him was the one year that he lived in the KB fraternity house at 577 Washington Avenue, across the street from Brubaker Hall. When Paul's father couldn't understand why he would choose to move from a nice residence hall to a room painted red in a dingy house, Paul would point to the wonderful friendships he had made with brothers in KB--friendships that he keeps up to this day. On a more somber note, he found himself stressed and distressed after John F. Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, shortly after he started college. The camaraderie and interaction with Kappa Beta brothers, however, served as a calming influence in his early years at Albany, easing the stress and helping him through a difficult period. During Paul's years at Albany, Kappa Beta was highly competitive in intramural sports and had several members elected to Myskania. The academic programs in which the fraternity brothers enrolled mirrored the changing programs that were offered at Albany. An increasing number of KB brothers chose to enter pre-med, pre-dental, and pre-law programs; nevertheless, most still enrolled in traditional education curricula. Then about 1968, Kappa Beta lost its house. The fraternity owed money and needed to make repairs on its house, but instead of encouraging KB to try to straighten out its affairs, the University insisted that the fraternity move into a floor in a residence hall of the newly constructed Uptown Campus. The movement of undergraduate classes and residence life to the Uptown Campus that had started in 1965-'66 continued to accelerate. Paul didn't like the transition. He thought the University was growing too fast and moving to a cold, stark campus. He preferred the intimacy of the smaller campus and the pleasure of Kappa Beta living independently in its own house in its own way, but he knew that those days were gone forever. [Kendall Birr in his Sesquicentennial History confirms Paul's statement that in the 1960s the University forced all Greek organizations to give up their houses and move into residence halls. Birr also mentions that fraternities and sororities continued to flourish through 1969, at which time there were nine each, some newly organized. (Birr, 140.)]

Rich Jaffee (B.A. '69, M.A. '71) paints a particularly vivid picture of the changes that were occurring at Albany in its transition from college to university and the impact of these changes on Kappa Beta. When he arrived at Albany in the Fall of 1965, there was a clear feeling of transition on campus. Students were housed at both the old and the new campuses, and those students like Rich (who lived on the 17th floor of Stuyvesant Hall) had to commute by bus downtown to the old campus and take classes at the various halls and annexes around that part of Albany. Just as the entire school was evolving from a state college to a good-sized university, so too the local Greek organizations were evolving. By the late 1960s, the University had made all of the fraternities give up their houses, and KB had relocated to floors 18 and 19 of Stuyvesant

Hall, which is why Rich came into such close contact with his future fraternity brothers.

Rich thinks that many of the the Kappa Beta brothers would have been at home in any of the other fraternities. They were mostly guys who were interested in succeeding in school and at extracurricular activities. Some members got deeply involved in the local bar sport of dart shooting, so much so that about 1967 a dart board was hung in the recreation room of the fraternity. The main hangout after 1967 was The Municipal Golf Course Bar ("The Muni") which had a dart board that was constantly in use by KB guys. Kappa Beta brothers had many a wild time at The Muni, presided over by the head bartender--a great guy named Dewey. However, Kappa Beta could not be stereotyped as easily as the other fraternities. KB had greater ethnic and racial diversity among its membership than the other fraternities and also had a larger number of older students in its ranks, especially veterans. KB brothers also were somewhat different from members of other fraternities in that they maintained close friendships with students who were not members of Kappa Beta, typified by the induction of George Comptompasis, an Independent, and Mick Teeter, a member of Potter Club, into KB as honorary members.

One of the most appealing characteristics of Kappa Beta brothers in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Rich feels, was their capacity for developing warm, genuine friendships with each other. KB brothers enjoyed each others' wit and enjoyed being with one another, whether it was in their section of Stuyvesant Hall, out drinking in the bars, at beer parties, or on double dates. Some of the friendships of KB brothers continue to this day. Many of the brothers get together at the Saratoga Jazz Festival in late June each year, and some also go to the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival every April. The brothers from the late 1960s and early 1970s continue to exemplify Kappa Beta's motto, "Brothers for Life."

Two Kappa Beta brothers from the 1960s who achieved national prominence were Robert Peterkin '66 and Walter "Bud" Gates '68.

Robert had a varied, exciting career in Education. He focused on alternative forms of education, particularly in public schools and public school systems. Starting out as a Special Education teacher at the Albany Home for Children, Robert was recruited to become Director of the Albany Street Academy, an alternative school with about 200 students, all of them disaffected former school dropouts or potential dropouts. Here, he successfully created a democratic, positive atmosphere and promoted a great deal of interaction between students and faculty. As a result, most of the students thrived. At 29, Robert applied for and was hired to be Headmaster of the Boston English High School. He was appointed on the day the courts ordered Boston's public schools desegregated. Drawing on his alternative school background, Robert was able to prevent at Boston English High School much of the violence and turmoil that plagued other Boston schools following this desegregation order. He kept police out of the school, choosing instead to institute new programs that appealed to the newly integrated student population and got parents actively involved with the school. He spent ten years in the Boston public school system, rising to Deputy Superintendent of Boston Public Schools in 1984 and concurrently earning a doctorate in Education, Administration, and Urban Education from The University of Massachusetts. He was then recruited to serve as Superintendent of the Cambridge, Massachusetts public school

system where he established such an excellent system of school choice that the public schools were drawing students away from Cambridge's private schools. When it looked as if his job as change agent in Cambridge was almost done, he was offered and accepted the position of Superintendent of Milwaukee's public school system, the 10th largest system in the country, serving more than 100,000 students. Here, he attracted national attention by implementing, among other programs, magnet schools that focused on educating young black males. These schools emphasized contributions by Africans and African-Americans to American culture and civilization and provided mentoring, role modeling, and assistance in improving the self-esteem of students, most of whom were young black males. In 1991, Robert accepted a position as Director of the Urban Superintendent's Program and Francis Keppel Senior Lecturer on Education at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. (From an article written by Peggy L.S. Barmore in the Winter 1991 issue of UAlbany Magazine.)

Walter "Bud" Gates '68 graduated from SUNY at Albany with a degree in mathematics and physics and taught high school math for awhile before opting for a business career as marketing strategist extraordinaire. Bud, who says that while his Harvard Business School M.B.A. "legitimized" him in the eyes of the corporate world, it was what he learned in his father's 27-seat diner that set the stage for his success as a high-powered marketing executive with a knack for determining what sells in middle America. After Harvard, his career started with Wilson Sporting Goods, where he took the company's athletic footwear business from \$1 million in sales to \$35 million. Then came his tenure as senior Vice President of Marketing for Wichita-based Pizza Hut, where he headed up the team that developed the pan pizza, a product which totaled \$1 billion in sales its first year. In 1986, Bud joined Rent-A-Center, also based in Wichita, as Vice President and was promoted to CEO the next year when the company merged with the British company, Thorn. He retired from Rent-A-Center in February on his tenth anniversary with the firm because he'd achieved his goal of taking it to \$1 billion in sales and thought it was time to do other things he wanted to do. His personal holding company, Gates Enterprises, owns many Rent-A-Centers in New York State, an apartment complex in Reno, the largest sports bar in Wichita, nine Pizza Huts in the Glens Falls, New York region, and a real estate company in Telluride, Colorado.

(From an article written by Ginger Henry in the August 1996 issue of The Bolton Breeze.)

At a 2002 Reunion of Kappa Beta brothers from the 1960s and 1970s, it is interesting to note that on a matching quiz in which participants were asked to link professions with KB brothers, none listed were school teachers, reflecting the dramatic changes in curricula that had occurred as Albany became a multi-university with a wide variety of programs. Below is the answer sheet to the **Match the Brother with his Current Occupation** quiz which was part of the Reunion Edition of the Kappa Kronicle that served as the program for this gala event.

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| 1. Dick Gentilcore '66 | a. Director of the National Weather Service. |
| 2. Rick Matteo '67     | b. Professional Speaker.                     |
| 3. Carl Bender '68     | c. Tennis Instructor.                        |
| 4. Andy Davidson '68   | d. Antiques Dealer.                          |
| 5. Rick Shirkey '68    | e. Attorney.                                 |
| 6. Rick Martin '69     | f. VP of Lending Services.                   |

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| 7. Joe Amato '71       | g. Human Resources Manager. |
| 8. Gene Auciello '71   | h. Rocket Scientist.        |
| 9. Mike Hoff '71       | i. CFO.                     |
| 10. Joe Huray '71      | j. Doctor                   |
| 11. Warren Greshes '72 | k. Chiropractor.            |

As we know, the 1960s were turbulent, especially for young college and university students. The horror of Vietnam was reaching a peak in the late part of the decade, and young people were at the cutting edge of this tragedy. Racial tensions were extremely high, and young people were in the forefront of civil rights conflict. Not only the assassination of John F. Kennedy, which had such a depressing effect on Paul Michel and so many others, but the equally violent and senseless assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King left young and old mourning the destruction of Camelot in America. The counterculture, mostly the young, felt deeply alienated from mainstream culture, mostly the middle-aged and old. Many of these tensions reached their peak in 1968 when the United States and the world were rocked by disturbances and riots on college and university campuses. The local campus scene was stressful and unstable. New York College for Teachers at Albany was changing rapidly and dramatically to the State University of New York at Albany. It is a tribute to Kappa Beta that it held together so well, grew substantially larger, and helped establish a network of friends which supported many of the brothers during these difficult times. But the seeds for the demise of Kappa Beta had been sown.

# Kappa Beta Albany

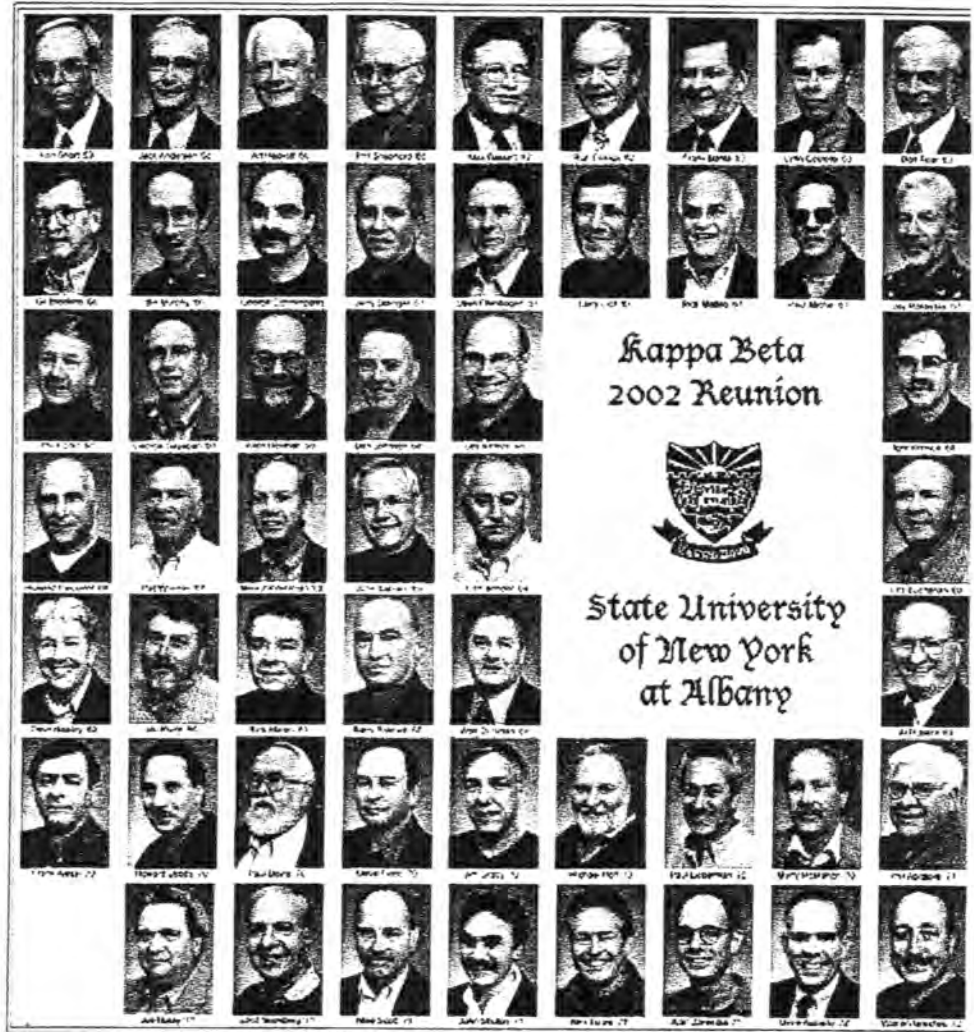
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KB Nostalgia

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Kappa Beta Composite Photo. Kappa Beta Reunion. October 2002.  
 (From the Kappa Beta Website: <http://www.kappabetasunyalbany.com/>)