

## Friends of Beta & Interfraternal History

### FRIENDS OF BETA

While the Fraternity has always operated as a private entity with esoteric elements, the involvement of parents, Sweethearts and other “friends of Beta” has always been encouraged. Dating back to the Civil War, female friends of the Fraternity helped safeguard chapter possessions during times of peril. From the origins of the Bridge Builder Poem to the official Beta flower, credit is due to non-members. Today, some of the most dedicated and trusted chapter advisors are not members of the society.

Historically, the phrase Friend of Beta (FOB) was created to label any non-member of the fraternity who provided some sort of volunteer support to the organization. It has become a part of the vernacular of the staff, Beta alumni, Beta undergraduates and the interfraternal community. Many of Beta Theta Pi’s chapters enjoy the contributions of male and female FOBs when geographical constraints limit local Beta advisors. Other chapters enjoy the council of interfraternal professionals who give them time at Beta programs, like The John and Nellie Wooden Institute for Men of Principle, to help our chapters.

Friends of Beta have won the Fraternity’s top award for chapter advising. Friends of Beta have won the Fraternity’s award for interfraternal contributions. Many Friends of Beta have given uncounted hours and unrecognized efforts to help Beta Theta Pi succeed. For this giving of self we must remain forever grateful.

### INTERFRATERNAL HISTORY

The history of Beta Theta Pi cannot be written without significant reference to the interfraternal movement and the Fraternity’s contributions. From her earliest days, Beta Theta Pi pioneered an open and collaborative spirit that, while preserving a role of leadership for Beta, helped all Greek organizations succeed. For example:

- The Convention of 1848 was held in Hudson, Ohio, the site of Western Reserve College. To generate interest and publicity in the papers the chapter invited the university president and the members of Alpha Delta Phi to attend the public exercises, which they did. This goes down in history as the first inter-fraternal event.
- William Raimond Baird, *Stevens* 1878/*Columbia* 1881, exhaustively researched all Greek organizations seeking a suitable partner to merge with his own Alpha Sigma Chi. Since no authoritative resource on the subject existed Baird published his research as Baird’s Manual of American College Fraternities. It was remarkable at the time given fraternities were *sub rosa* and it continues to be the definitive guide to date.
- Willis O. Robb, *Ohio Wesleyan* 1879, an early editor of The Beta Theta Pi magazine, stimulated interest through correspondence with fellow editors for an interfraternity meeting in 1883, leading to formation of what would become the College Fraternity Editors Association (CFEA.) The name of the organization has since changed to the Fraternal Communicators Association (FCA.)

- In 1909, Francis W. Shepardson, *Denison 1882/Brown 1883*, was among the first officers of the North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC), serving as its first secretary. Both he and Robb had played an integral part in the founding committee of the conference which acts much like the Interfraternity Council (IFC) for international organizations.

Beta Theta Pi has a rich history of members giving of their time and talents to the interfraternal movement. Many have been recognized for their contributions through election to office or awards. Here is a listing of a few:

- William Raimond Baird, *Stevens 1878/Columbia 1881* – author of Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities
- Willis O. Robb, *Ohio Wesleyan 1879* – founding committee of the NIC, helped found the College Fraternity Editors Association
- Francis W. Shepardson, *Denison 1882/Brown 1883* – founding committee of the NIC, president of College Fraternity Editors Association, secretary and president of NIC
- Ray Warnock, *Illinois 1905* – Recipient of the NIC Gold Medal, president of the NIC
- Harold J. Bailey, *Amherst 1908* – president of the NIC
- Bertram W. Bennett, *Knox '20* – president of the NIC
- Seth R. Brooks, *St. Lawrence '22* – Recipient of the NIC Gold Medal, consistent orator at fraternity and sorority national conventions
- G. Herbert Smith, *DePauw '27* – Recipient of the NIC Gold Medal
- John J. Rhodes, *Kansas State '38* – Recipient of the NIC Silver Medal, congressman from the state of Arizona, president of Beta Theta Pi
- Peter F. Greiner, *Minnesota '51* – Past president of the NIC
- Richard G. Lugar, *Denison '54* – Recipient of the NIC Silver Medal, spokesman for the Men of Principle initiative
- Ronald P. Helman, *Miami '55* – NIC board member
- Jonathan J. Brant, *Miami '75* – Recipient of the NIC Gold Medal, executive director of the NIC for 17 years, director of the Beta Theta Pi Foundation
- Thomas C. Olver, *Central Michigan '98* – Past president of College Fraternity Editors Association
- Judson Horras, *Iowa State '97* – President of the NIC