Much Work And Less Play . . .

Medical school is an intense psychological experience for the medical student, requiring four long years of vigorous study, physical exhaustion and emotional stress. Throughout its 100-year existence, the medical students of Creighton University have organized various extra-curricular organizations and activities to meet needs not addressed within the academic setting. These provided relaxation, fellowship, and just plain fun. A few were religious in nature and some expanded scholarship into areas of medical interest not possible within the general curriculum. One helped spouses of medical students to become involved in the milieu which so occupied their partners’ lives.

Some of the better known School of Medicine organizations are discussed below. Some may be omitted due to a lack of extant records.

Fraternities

Medical fraternities serve many needs. Dr. Alfred C. Andersen (M.D. 1941) indicated that, at least in the early years, the Creighton medical fraternities met basic, practical requirements—a place to live and eat cheaply in a communal fashion, with the bonus of free coaching and advice from upperclassmen. In a school where the majority of students hailed from out of town, this aspect was important. No doubt it was even more significant during the depression years.

Fraternities also encourage a spirit of camaraderie, a fellowship among students. Lifelong friendships develop, sometimes leading to professional ties. Dr. John J. Matoole (M.D. 1957) likened them to support groups for medical students. Social activities play a part in fraternity life, helping to relieve some of the stress of study and allowing hard-working students to unwind.

Throughout the years, there have been three dominant medical fraternities active at the Creighton School of Medicine. For brief periods of time others surfaced, but were short-lived and did not prosper long. The three main fraternal organizations were Phi Rho Sigma, Phi Beta Pi, and Phi Chi. Dr. John Matoole indicated that during his years at the school, the geographical background of members of each fraternity tended to be similar. Members of Phi Beta usually came from west of the Rocky Mountains, California being disproportionately represented. The Phi Chi fraternity attracted students whose home was in the East, especially the Coast. The majority of Phi Rho brothers had been Creighton undergraduates, many from the Midwest.
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Phi Rho Sigma

Phi Rho Sigma has the distinction of being the first medical fraternity at Creighton University. It was founded in 1899 by two students who had done premedical studies at the University of Nebraska and who, upon coming to Creighton, missed the fun and fellowship of fraternity life. The two were Jack Beachly, who apparently did not graduate, and Emery Wendells Foster (M.D. 1902).

The two formed a temporary organization called Gamma Sigma, while corresponding with a friend at Northwestern Medical School, who belonged to Phi Rho Sigma. After further correspondence with the Phi Rho national secretary and receiving recommendations from local Phi Rho physicians, a charter was granted to the Eta chapter of Phi Rho Sigma in 1899, the seventh active chapter nationally. It was formally installed on March 3, 1900, at a banquet at the Henshaw Hotel. There were twelve charter members.

In 1901 their first fraternity house was established at 29th & Leavenworth Streets, then moved in 1904 to a larger home at 35th & Harney. By this date the fraternity was going full steam ahead. An item under “College Events” in the March 1904 Creighton Medical College Bulletin states:

The Eta chapter of the Phi Rho Sigma is making rapid progress. New members are being pledged and keen interest is being displayed by both active and alumni members. . . . The Phi Rho Sigma is a Greek letter medical society established purely on fraternity and stands for nothing but advancement in the medical world. . . . Could its mysteries be interpreted we would find it similar to that which in England is called the Fellows of the Royal Society.

Judging by references to “interpreting the mysteries” secrecy must have played some part in even the earliest of fraternity rituals. When the official Laws of Phi Rho Sigma Fraternity was published in 1956, page 18 noted that “all initiation ceremonies shall be rigidly and strictly private.” The secrecy provision on page 25 noted that the divulging of fraternity secrets meant automatic expulsion.

A 1920 Creighton Courier article left the reader wondering. It noted: “This fraternity [Phi Rho] initiated a large class November 22 [1919] at the Loyal Hotel. Those who got what was coming to them were . . .” A 1956 Creightonian article gives a better clue to the pledging ceremony, however. It said, “when the freshman enters the Rho doors, he will be escorted by an active member to an upper room. In an individual candlelighted ceremony, the pledge will sign the traditional Rho Parchment.”

From a Phi Rho publication, we learn: that the fraternity colors were scarlet and old gold; Founders Day was celebrated on October 31; officers were required to live in the chapter house; and, to join the fraternity, an open ballot was held among the active membership. One “no” vote excluded the candidate from consideration.

The official motto of the organization was “Friendship, Application and Protection.”
By 1910, the Eta chapter had sufficient strength to host the national Phi Rho Sigma convention in Omaha December 28-30. The Rome Hotel acted as headquarters for convention visitors, who could attend special surgical clinics held for them at St. Joseph's Hospital. The convention closed with a reception and a festive banquet held at the chapter house "located on West Leavenworth Street," according to the 1910 Chronicle. Apparently by 1910 another move had taken place, this time to a house on Leavenworth Street, number unknown.

The next move took the fraternity to 3501 Harney Street in 1923, where it stayed until late 1930. Then they moved to 3723 Jones Street. The exact dates of occupancy of the Jones Street house are not known. References are found to events held at this location in December 1930 and October 1932. Sometime in the mid 30's, the fraternity relocated to a house on 39th & Dodge Streets. Again, the exact time frame is lost, but Dr. Arthur Gore, a 1940 medical graduate, wrote that as a Phi Rho Sigma, he resided at 39th & Dodge for four years while going to medical school. The Creightonian published an article in 1945 which indicated that the next move to 4016 Davenport was necessitated when the 39th & Dodge Street house was sold out from under the fraternity. We know this was 1940 because an October 9, 1940 Creightonian article is titled "Phi Rho's Buy New House; Initiate 4119 Davenport with Sunday Dinner." Why two addresses on Davenport? Either Phi Rho Sigma did, indeed, buy two houses on Davenport Street, 4119 Davenport in 1940 and 4016 Davenport sometime later, or the Creightonian misprinted the first address. Whatever the case, it is certain that from at least 1945 until the local demise of the fraternity in the 1970's, the Phi Rho Sigma fraternity house became somewhat of a landmark at 4016 Davenport. If Creightonian articles are a measure, that house at 4016 Davenport was almost continually being upgraded and remodeled. In January 1947 there was basement remodeling, the highlight of which was the installation of a dance floor. In summer 1953 the home was redecorated, with improvements made especially to the living room and recreation room. By September 1954 completed improvements included the purchase of new beds for all, new rugs for the officers' rooms (rank has its privileges), repainting.
ing of the sleeping quarters, and an increased record library. Summer 1955 brought "refinishing" (cleaning?) of the carpet and painting of the kitchen, hallways, officers' quarters and recreation room. In 1960 a "new look" to open the fall term was the approach taken by Phi Rho, and among the changes were rewiring, plumbing, interior decorating and a new roof. In 1964 the new Adolph Sachs Memorial Library was constructed, wood-paneled and available for 24-hours-a-day use. The initial funds for books had been donated by the late Professor of Medicine in whose honor the room was named. Dr. Sachs' widow later donated the funds for the actual refurbishing of the room.

Finally, the summer of 1966 saw a major effort, dubbed "Operation Remodeling" and costing roughly $1,800, a sizeable outlay in 1966. It included wall-to-wall carpeting, a new color TV, new cue sticks and pool table felt, repainting, new wallpaper and "green, brown and white simulated leather lounging furniture." A freshman fraternity member, Leonard Jarrott, with a tongue-in-cheek spirit of fun was quoted in regard to the changes:

The new atmosphere at the Phi Rho house is exceedingly conducive to elucidation of the subtleties of human expression necessary to the scientific endeavors of freshman medical students. Besides, it's groovy.

The Phi Rho Sigma fraternity, though no longer active at Creighton, has left behind an impressive record of fun social functions, sports triumphs and serious service activities. In April 1935 they challenged all comers to a tennis tournament. In 1952 Phi Rho tied for first place in that year's Interfraternity Basketball League and also won the November 1952 pre-season championship tournament.

Phi Rho social activities must have been great fun, and many of these events were on a grand scale. Besides the annual initiation ceremony and dinner held for members, guests, and alumni, there are records of many other activities of a social nature. In 1930 the True Voice reported a Christmas party and dance at the 38th & Jones chapter house. A Halloween party held at the same house in 1932 was attended by three hundred, who were entertained by an orchestra composed entirely of fraternity members. The fraternity's 35th anniversary was celebrated in May 1934 at what was termed the annual spring formal, held that year at the Birchwood. Two hundred couples were invited. The fun continued. In 1947 an informal buffet dinner and dance was held for freshmen, who were entertained by the Rev. Charles K. Hayden, Associate Professor of Physics and a magician. In October 1955 four hundred guests attended a "Navy" theme open house in which the chapter house was decorated as a landing deck, and a sixteen-foot ship was
built on the front lawn next to two fountains erected for the occasion.\textsuperscript{31} The annual Mardi Gras costume ball of 1957 confounded guests with conflicting signs eventually leading to a thirty-eight-foot maze of cardboard tunnels, through which guests had to crawl on hands and knees to obtain the only entrance to the affair.\textsuperscript{32}

Dr. Richert J. Taylor (M.D. 1957), a Phi Rho who lived in the Davenport fraternity house for several years, shared some reminiscences that give us a little of the flavor of fraternity life during the 1950's, when it flourished. He recalled the sleeping arrangements at Phi Rho, which consisted of one big unheated room with bunk beds. This resulted in members sleeping with their coats, hats and socks on during winter months. He remembered that most students didn't change sheets for an entire semester, if then.

Dr. Taylor also noted that Phi Rho was known for its great parties, and that when he and Perry Keitges (M.D. 1957) were responsible for recruiting freshmen members, more pledged Phi Rho than other medical fraternities put together. He spoke of a contraband bar in the basement, built with a lock and shutters so that when Jesuits came to visit, the signal was given and the bar was securely shut up out of sight. Although most members were of drinking age, liquor wasn't allowed at Creighton facilities. And although he said the Jesuits no doubt knew, this system kept them officially not knowing.

Dr. Taylor remembered the cook who was fired for buying twice as many groceries as the fraternity needed from her brother, the grocer, and then using the remainder in her own household. He told of running a hidden tape recorder in the women's bathroom during parties—the good times listening to some of the candid remarks made by dates, the not-so-good-time when the recorder was discovered by the girls during one of the parties. He reminisced about the fellowship of Phi Rho—of all members belonging to the Mickey Mouse Club and watching the TV show every afternoon before dinner, complete with ears; taking turns doing the dinner dishes every night; the serious business of playing bridge after dinner; and the even more serious business of getting down to studies after that. Dr. Taylor said that, although a great deal of fun was had, the students never forgot what it was really all about—the hard work of studying medicine.\textsuperscript{33}

On a serious side, Phi Rho Sigma conducted many activities of a service and professional nature. Weekly seminars on medical topics, open to all medical students, were held at the fraternity house from at least the late 1940's on. (In March 1950 the \textit{Cveightonian} noted that “Robert Haney [Heaney], M3 is in charge of these weekly seminars.”\textsuperscript{34}) In April 1958 the first Adolph Sachs Memorial Lecture was sponsored by Phi Rho to honor the late Doctor who had died in May 1955. It became an annual affair, open to the general public, and featured a speaker of note from the medical community.\textsuperscript{35}
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...fraternity also sponsored an annual Valentine’s Day party at the chapter house for
the children of St. James Orphanage.\textsuperscript{36}

Much of what the fraternity did aided incoming freshman students. Potential
medical applicants were invited to stay and eat at the frat house while in the
interviewing process. Once accepted to the School of Medicine, Phi Rho helped in
finding suitable housing, purchasing microscopes and other medical supplies, and
conducted practical seminars on study methods, orientation to Omaha, internships,
and more.\textsuperscript{37} In 1966 this type of aid was extended to include undergraduate students
when Phi Rho established a Pre-Med Club. The purpose of this organization was to
prepare undergraduates to be admitted and to be successful once in medical
school.\textsuperscript{38}

Other highlights of their long history at Creighton include the following:

- On April 1, 1949, The Creightonian reported:
The Phi Rho fraternity house went up in a blaze of spectacular
proportion last night. The cause of the fire was traced to the rumpus
room in the basement. It appears that one of the more ingenious of
the Phi Rho’s was working on an experiment, a new fire-proof
point. After cooking up his formula for days, the inventor proceeded
to paint the basement with the concoction. Since trust is one of the
traits of a Greek-letter-man, his proteges had complete confidence
in him. Result: they set fire to the basement in an effort to prove that
Phi Rho members are never wrong when they put their genius into
use.\textsuperscript{39}

The entire article was an April Fools’ joke, perpetrated by a Phi Rho member
with a sense of humor. It did cause several startled reactions from readers.
- In 1952, the Phi Rho candidate, Inez Flynn, a nursing student at St. Catherine’s,
was elected Queen Helen of Troy.\textsuperscript{40}

- In December 1953 the crest on the front of the Phi
Rho house was stolen. A member of another fraternity
told Phi Rho where to find the missing emblem, but the
fraternity offered a generous reward as find out who the
actual thief was.\textsuperscript{41}

- In 1955 preparations were made to organize the
Phi Rho Med Wives Club.\textsuperscript{42}

- The February 1956 issue of The Phi Rho Journal,
national fraternity publication, featured the Creighton
Eta chapter, which it highlighted as one of the most active
in the U.S.\textsuperscript{43}

- The first reunion of Eta chapter Phi Rho Sigma phi
alumni was held on October 27, 1956. At the time the
alumni chapter had 450 active members.\textsuperscript{44}

- In 1963 the Eta chapter became the largest Phi Rho Sigma chapter in the
nation. Statistics for the following year give a membership tally of 105 actives and
48 pledges. Thirteen freshmen lived at the house and 40 members took their meals
there.\textsuperscript{45}

- The annual Phi Rho champagne party in 1969 used a record 200 bottles of the
bubbly.\textsuperscript{46}
The last printed reference to Phi Rho Sigma at Creighton is found in a 1973 medical student yearbook, which showed a picture of the Davenport house as well. Although a date is not known for the fraternity's demise, it is known that the house at 4016 Davenport was sold sometime in the 1970's to the religious group known as the Moonies. Dr. William W. Tipton, Jr. (M.D. 1967) wrote that when he returned in 1977 for his ten-year reunion, he was quite surprised to learn that where there was once a bar, jukebox and dance floor in the basement of the house, there now stood a shrine to the cult's religious Leader.

The current owner of the home said that the Moonies were forced to sell the house after neighborhood agitation prompted city zoning action. According to him, the Moonies showed their displeasure by turning water faucets on full force all over the house, from the third floor down, and leaving. Even though there was another set of owners after the Moonies and prior to the current owners' purchase in 1986, when he took possession wall and floor damage was still unrepaired from this act of vandalism on the part of the religious cult.

Phi Beta Pi - Alpha Alpha Chapter

The next medical fraternity to charter a chapter on the Creighton campus was Phi Beta Pi, whose Alpha Alpha chapter was constituted on February 2, 1907. The charter members numbered a dozen. Some basic facts about the fraternity were gleaned from a 1952 copy of their Constitution and a 1955-56 copy of the By Laws, Phi Beta Pi Fraternity, Alpha Alpha Chapter. Phi Beta Pi Day is celebrated on March 10. The official colors of the fraternity are white and emerald green, while their flower is the white chrysanthemum. Their chief officer is called the Archon (sometimes the Worthy Archon), and their "secret organ," which contains the minutes of their general assembly, is named the Skull and Pelvis.

In the section on eligibility to membership, the 1955 By Laws of Phi Beta Pi provide an interesting insight into the pre-women's lib mentality. They state:

There shall not be discrimination on the specific basis of race, color or creed. Male medical students, practitioners of medicine, and allied scientists will be eligible for membership, provided they conform to professional standards and are socially acceptable in the various environs where Phi Beta Pi fraternity exists.

A January 1, 1920, Creighton Courier detailed the rites of passage by three freshmen initiates of Phi Beta Pi.

Three freshmen, Lyle Doran, Clifford Mullen and Lester Spinharney [all M.D. 1923], after displaying their natural talents to the public at Sixteenth and Farnam on Saturday afternoon, Oct. 13, by making little rocks out of big ones and building houses with blocks, were allowed to ride the goat into the fold of Phi Beta Pi. A dance in honor...
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of these new members and pledges and alumni was given at the Blackstone Thursday evening, Nov. 20. It was of the usual Phi Beta Pi quality.22

A latter-day member, Dr. John J. Matoole (M.D. 1957), indicated that although the fraternity had secret handshakes, signs, and the like, the Omaha chapter members were, for the most part, ignorant of these. He said that the house sometimes had visits from fraternity brothers from St. Louis, which had a huge Phi Beta chapter, and that they would bring up some of these secret rituals. This would trigger a spurt of interest, and the members would get out the one out-dated, tattered official manual the house possessed. After a brief time, interest would wane and official symbolism was once again relegated to insignificance.23

The Phi Betas seemed to have difficulties obtaining and keeping a fraternity house. It is not known where their first house or houses were located. The earliest address that could be found was 3866 Harney Street in 1916.24 The next reference to housing is given in a brief history of the chapter, published in a 1945 Creightonian:

In the latter half of the '20s, Alpha Alpha figured in a well-publicized legal case. The chapter had purchased a house on South 38th Street, and had no sooner occupied it than neighbors complained that the value of their property had thereby depreciated. They sought a court injunction to restrain the fraternity from continuing its occupancy.

The case eventually reached the State Supreme Court, where the decisions of lower courts were reversed in favor of the petitioners. The next home of the chapter was on Dodge Street.25

No other references could be found to the 38th Street house, but the 1928 Creighton Blue Jay gives the address of Phi Beta Pi that year as 3224 Dodge Street.26 The Creightonian article of 1945 continued:

From there [Dodge Street] the chapter moved to St. Mary's Avenue, where it remained for 12 years before being forced to move out because of an impending sale of the property. The chapter established itself at its present address, 115 So. 34th Street, three years ago, and owns the house it now occupies.
It seems the Creightonian was unaware of one other residence, which housed the Phi Betas sometime in 1929. This was 3521 Farnam Street, mentioned both in the 1929 Blue Jay and by a 1933 graduate, Dr. John Gatewood, who was active in fraternity affairs and served as Phi Beta Pi President in 1932. Arithmetic applied to the 1945 Creightonian article aids us in dating the Phi Beta houses. The 115 South 34th Street house had been the frat house for the three prior years—therefore as of 1942. The St. Mary’s house had been its location for 12 years prior to that. (Later social announcements confirm the exact address as 2204 St. Mary’s Avenue.)

There is a bewildering news article in the October 22, 1941, Creightonian entitled “Phi Beta Pi’s Ready to Move Into New House,” which said that the fraternity was moving to a house at 10th and Pine Street donated by a Creighton alumnus of the fraternity, Dr. G. V. Caughlin (M.D. 1913), of Council Bluffs. Yet the Creightonian history of 1945 indicated that the fraternity occupied the St. Mary’s house until moving to South 34th Street in 1942. Corroborating this was a May 13, 1942, Creightonian article reporting a dinner/card party held by the Phi Betas at the 2204 St. Mary’s Avenue chapter house.

Probably from the summer of 1942 until 1956, the fraternity’s home was 115 South 34th Street. Dr. John J. Matoole (M.D. 1957), who resided in the house, indicated that the move in 1956 was necessitated by the purchase of much of the block by Mutual of Omaha for expansion. (This expansion also eventually took the Phi Chi house, which had been next door to Phi Beta Pi.) Perhaps Mutual of Omaha had given the Phi Betas advanced warning, because a September 1953 Creightonian article stated, “The Phi Beta’s are still looking for a new frat house to replace the present one at 115 So. 34th Street. Although there is nothing definite on their new house, they expect to have it by December [1953].”

Not so. The move came in late summer 1956. But the apparent numbered days of the South 34th Street house did not stop the Phi Betas from sprucing it up regularly. An April 1954 article told of rigorous spring cleaning inside and out. During the summer of 1954, the house was completely renovated and a new lounge built in the basement. A September 1955 Creightonian article noted, “The Beta house was completed renovated through the summer months. They hope to enter their living room color scheme in the annual ‘House Beautiful’ contest and win an arug to match the walls.”

It is not known whether or not they won that rug. It is known that Mutual of Omaha did buy and then tear down the house on South 34th Street, and the Phi Betas moved to 1503 Park Wild Avenue, not far from St. Joseph’s Hospital. “Phi Beta Pi medical fraternity celebrated the opening of their new house at 1503 Park Wild with the annual faculty-student meeting,” said a September 1956 Creightonian.
In October of that year, the walls of the Phi Beta’s new recreation room were brightened by nine new murals depicting medical life. These were the donation of a commercial art company. The new recreation room was obviously the focal point of the Park Wild house.

Another article in the Creightononian boasted:

A new jukebox in the rec room is filled to capacity with music to please the romantic as well as the rock 'n roller. Ample room is allotted in the new basement game room for friends to stand and chat, sit and rest, ordnance and dream. Medical life murals, which were painted by a commercial artist, will supply the scenic background for an evening’s activities.

The celebration marking the 50th year of Alpha Alpha chapter took place the following March 1957 in the new Park Wild chapter house. The following 1957 Alumnius also tells us:

As for the new chapter house at 1503 Park Wild Avenue, its acquisition marked the end of a 5-year battle with real estate prices and zoning laws. Through the work of fraternity members the building has been cleaned and repainted inside and out, the furniture refinished, the basement rebuilt and the yard restored to give the chapter a home to which its members may look with pride.

The house on Park Wild became so crowded that in 1958, the fraternity rented the house next door, 1505 Park Wild Avenue, as an annex.

Dr. John Matolle spoke of the mechanics of ownership of fraternity houses, specifically the Phi Beta Pi house. He said that Alumni Boards were established, which provided the legal framework by which they were owned and operated. Student members in residence then paid a nominal monthly fee which covered rent, food, insurance, utilities, the house mother’s salary and other expenses. A student manager kept the books, and every so often a Certified Public Accountant audited them for accuracy.

Dr. Matolle vaguely recalled some mishap at the Park Wild house sometime between 1958 and 1960, in which a child was injured while swinging on the gate to the yard. Though not clear on the detail of the incident, he felt that this, along with crowded conditions, prompted the sale of the house by the Phi Beta Pi Alumni Board, and a final move, this time to 809 Pine Street in late 1960.

Phi Beta Pi obtained a new fraternity house within a short distance from St. Catherine’s and St. Joseph’s Hospitals. The picturesque new location has a historical association with the Hilltop. All members of the original household, the Val J. Peter family, attended Creighton. The small dormitory of the house now features double bunk rooms with desks including a library.
A November 1961 Creightonian mentioned a Phi Beta Pi pledge party held at the 809 Pine Street house. The 1962 Blue Jay still has an entry on Phi Beta Pi medical fraternity. Following these, there are no references in any University publications to Phi Beta Pi. The file on the fraternity in the Creighton Student Center indicated that as of 1962 there were no active members or pledges on campus, and no fraternity house. Dr. Julian Baumel, a Phi Beta moderator prior to its demise, felt that although he was not privy to inside operations, the fraternity had gotten into some sort of financial difficulties. Dr. Lee Bevilacqua (M.D. 1961) felt that there were too few live-in members to keep the organization viable, and it disbanded.

A 1953 Blue Jay entry on Phi Beta Pi indicated as its purpose "to provide an atmosphere beneficial to the medical student socially, scholastically and morally." It did provide a well-rounded group of activities to its members throughout its existence. In sports, for example, in 1941 the Phi Beta Pi basketball team won the all-University championship. A good year for the "Ibates" in intramural football was 1958, although it was announced in October 1958 (for reasons not explained) that the fraternity was on social probation until second semester. They could go on rushing pledges, but no parties were allowed.

The Phi Beta Pi's, like their counterparts, also performed service functions. They sponsored seminars and presentations open to all medical students throughout their history. They also gave an annual Christmas party for handicapped children, complete with gifts, a tree and Santa Claus.

Socially, the Phi Betas left a paper trail of a variety of fun activities. Besides the annual pledge party, alumni-student buffet dinner, and formal spring dinner (which did attract large numbers, — 175 persons attending in 1948), there are records of many diverse social functions. Among the more unusual were a Hawaiian singing quartet in 1951 and a skit entitled "The Anatomical Quarterback" performed by and for members in 1941. In 1942 Roland Zarleno (M.D. 1944), then a medical freshman, expressed a view typical of his fellow Phi Beta's: "I say there's nothing like it, and I wouldn't trade my berth at Phi Beta Pi for the best suite at the Blackstone."
One very special person who is remembered with fondness by all Phi Beta’s from the late 1920’s through the 1950’s is Mary Christensen, who served as Phi Beta Pi house mother during that time. Mary was born in Denmark and moved to Omaha in 1917. She married Henry Larson, had two children and then was widowed. She opened a boarding house at 25th & Dodge, where she first became acquainted with Creighton medical students.

The students told her that the Phi Beta Pi fraternity needed a cook. She took the job, and from that time in 1929 until shortly before her death, “Mother” or “Gert” as she was called, was at the fraternity house daily, from 6:30 A.M. until 7:00 P.M., nurturing “her boys.” She married a second time, to Louis Christensen, and had three more children but always kept room in her life for this extended family as well.

Mary’s culinary skills were legendary. Dr. John Matoole told of the students piling mounds of spaghetti on their plates, anticipating her special sauce, the recipe for which was a well-guarded secret: “She made, without a doubt, the world’s best spaghetti sauce,” said Dr. Matoole. “The boys begged her to serve spaghetti more often.”

But there was more to Mary than her cooking. She truly became another Mom to the students. She kept house, reminded, nagged, scolded, and listened, nursed the boys when sick, and counseled them when troubled.

Mary keeps the boys in line though. If one got a little too careless with his actions Mary has been known to march him up and stand by as he kneels and says a prayer for forgiveness. Oftentimes she prods the boys into group activities so that they won’t lose that fraternal spirit that so exemplifies the group.

Mary took part in fraternity parties and every year gave her boys a picnic. She made the Phi Beta Pi house a home.

In 1954, the occasion of her 25th anniversary with the Phi Betes, she was honored at a gala testimonial banquet at the American Legion Club. Letters and gifts poured in from her scattered “family,” and many alumni made a point of attending. Mary was given flowers, a sizeable check and the heartfelt thanks of hundreds of medical students whom she had mothered. Dr. William Rueve (M.D. 1955) spoke for the entire fraternity when he wrote,

For those of us in the house, Mary is the stabilizing influence, the voice of authority, and the correcting rod. She may counsel us in love, but actually – Mary Christensen is the only sweetheart that Alpha Alpha will ever have.

Mary became ill with breast cancer and in 1957 had surgery. Although there was a remission in the disease, it eventually claimed her life.

Other events of note in the Phi Beta Pi history:
- In 1916, Phi Beta Pi joined with two dental fraternities to organize the Tri-Fraternity Club, which gave a series of formal and informal parties.
- In December 1938 the Alpha chapter was host to the Central Province Assembly of the national fraternity. Clinics were held at St. Joseph’s Hospital, and the convention concluded with a dance.
- In November 1939 the fraternity house at 2204 St. Mary’s Avenue was burglarized in the dead of night. It was believed that prowlers gained entrance
through the unlocked front door. Stolen property, estimated at more than $500, included four typewriters, several electric razors, $15 cash, two baumonometers, jewelry and some clothing. Several pieces of clothing must not have been good enough, for "an overcoat and two suits were taken out of closets and thrown into the shower room."89

-A December 1945 Creightonian article noted: "Alpha Alpha prides itself on the fact that it has a greater alumni representation in Omaha, and on the faculty, than the other Creighton medical fraternities."90

-In 1951 the Alpha Alpha chapter was the largest in the country, with 105 members and 53 alumni members.91

-In 1952 the Phi Beta Pi candidate, Marilyn Wagner, a Saint Joseph's Nursing student, was elected Homecoming Queen.92

-In 1953 the Creighton University Diamond Anniversary Parade, the Phi Beta Pi float was judged the first place winner out of 23 entries. The float depicted 75 years of medical progress and compared a modern operating room with one of 75 years previous.93 With the monetary prize, the fraternity "floated" a picnic at Camp Brewster, complete with buffet supper and dance.94

-In March 1955 the Phi Beta Pi Wives Club was formed.95

-In 1956 auditions were held for the newly formed Phi Beta Pi Fine Music Forum, whose purpose was to "further the appreciation of fine music at Creighton. . . . Especially needed are masters in the musical saw, washboard and tootin' jug."96

-Pets, especially dogs, were a part of the Phi Beta Pi experience. Dr. John J. Matoole spoke of two cocker spaniels who were driven nuts by the medical students. They were Alfie (after the chapter name) and Hondo, for the popular John Wayne movie.97 In 1958 a golden boxer named Hiper, despite silly threats of cremation or medical experimentation, mostly slept away his life as fraternity mascot.98

Phi Chi – Chi Upsilon Chapter

The last to be founded of the three major medical fraternities once active at the School was Chi Upsilon chapter of Phi Chi fraternity. It also has the distinction of being the only medical fraternity still active here. Creighton’s Phi Chi chapter dates back to January 15, 1916,99 when its charter was granted from the executive trustees. The two men whose initiative was responsible for the founding of the chapter were Drs. Eben J. Carey and Jay Albert Key.

Dr. Key had been associated with the Creighton Department of Anatomy and went on to become a Clinical Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Missouri.100 Dr. Carey received his education at Creighton, earning a B.S. in 1917, an M.S. in 1918 and a Ph.D. in 1920. He was on the faculty in the Department of Anatomy from 1915-1920, and went on to earn an M.D. from the University of Chicago. He
joined the faculty of the Marquette University School of Medicine in 1920, becoming its Dean in 1933. He was the featured speaker at the Creighton University commencement of 1945, and at that time was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. At the time of his death, June 5, 1947, he was still Dean at Marquette, and had become Chairman of the Executive Trustees of the national Phi Chi and editor-in-chief of its national publication, *The Phi Chi Quarterly*.

Two separate initiations were held for the first 31 Phi Chi members, one for the three upper classes and a separate one for the freshmen. The Phi Chi's first secured the use of clubrooms in the downtown Lyric Building, but it was only a matter of weeks before a fraternity house on 25th & Capitol was obtained for use as a fraternity house. This was used for about six months, then a move was made to a brick building on the corner of 22nd & Davenport Streets. When World War I was declared in 1917, this house was closed. It is not known whether all fraternity activities were suspended during wartime, or if only the house itself was shut down.

*The Creighton Chronicle* of October 1921 announced that Phi Chi had reopened a house at 2203 Cass Street and that "the boys are very comfortably situated in their new home and extend a cordial invitation to all their fellow students to call on them." The *True Voice* of August 29, 1924 announced still another new home for Phi Chi, which it said was the largest fraternity at Creighton at the time. The house was located at 3514 Burt Street and had been obtained through the efforts of Dr. B.M. Kully (M.D. 1917).

In 1927 there was another move to 3635 Lafayette Avenue, which remained fraternity headquarters until 1936, at which time the chapter leased the Henry W. Yates home, "The Yates Castle" at 3120 Davenport Street. This was the home of Phi Chi for the next 8 years. The Castle must have been majestic, and certainly large. It was constructed by the original owner for just under a half million dollars (in those days a princely sum), and contained at least 30 rooms, not including a butler's pantry and many small alcoves. It was built entirely of blocks of gray granite and exhibited magnificent solid carved oak woodwork, doors and stairs. The outside was as magnificent as the inside, being located on two square blocks of landscaped grounds. Though it made an elegant home for the Phi Chi, continually rising maintenance costs led them to seek a new home in 1942.
Chapter XVII

The Yates Castle, 3120 Davenport, home of Phi Chi from 1934-1942.

Phi Chi house, 111 South 34th Street, 1951.

209 South 33rd Street, Phi Chi house.

Dr. Maurice C. Howard (M.D. 1919), Creighton Associate Professor of Medicine long active in fraternity affairs, came to the aid of Phi Chi by advancing them the capital with which to purchase their new home, 111 South 34th Street, in October 1942. After a fifteen-year monetary struggle, the house finally belonged to the Phi Chi’s free and clear in 1957. But after the battle with finances was won, the continued viability of the house came into question, primarily due to over-crowding.

Size had always been a problem with the South 34th Street location. A three-car garage behind the house had been converted into a bunkhouse containing 28 beds in a double-decker fashion. Dr. John Matoole, himself a Phi Beta Pi man, remembered the Phi Chi house next door with its separate bunkhouse connected to the main house via a covered accessway. During 1954, even this bunkhouse didn’t suffice to ease the space crunch. The September 17, 1954 Creightonian remarked, “Due to the crowded conditions of the house, several of the Phi Chi sophomores have moved into the new Phi Chi annex, located at the home of John Fischer, 315 South 37th Street.”

Another problem was maintenance of the old structure. The Phi Chi’s, like their brothers in other fraternities, seemed to spend a lot of time and take a great deal of pride in updating their residence. In the summer of 1952, for example, they painted the third and fourth floors, washed floors and walls, renovated the officers’ quarters, and hired skilled laborers to perform technical repairs. The 1953 Blue Jay entry on Phi Chi pointed to “the Phi Chi house resplendent with over-stuffed leather furniture... their real pride, the basement rec room.” Summer 1953 brought complete repainting, redecorating and other improvements. During the summer of 1954, the basement was remodeled, and the Wives Club renovated the entire house.

Yet all of this effort could not stave off the ravages of time. The Phi Chi’s were able to make do until 1962, when a fortunate set of circumstances allowed them to relocate without incurring financial ruin.

Mutual of Omaha, whose expansion had claimed the neighboring Phi Beta house in 1956, now wished to purchase the Phi Chi house for demolition and to use the space for a parking lot. Mutual also owned a hotel, which had been called The Whittingham Manor, located at 239 South 33rd Street. The Phi Chi’s were able to sell the South 34th Street house to Mutual and lease the former hotel on 33rd Street for a period of five years, with a five-year renewal option. They signed the lease on December 31, 1962.
The house at 209 South 33rd Street eased the overcrowding and provided a comfortable home for Phi Chi until 1968. It was a four-story building with 35 single sleeping rooms on 3 floors, plus a double in the basement, giving them a capacity of 37. Each room was a spacious 15 x 15, carpeted and containing a sink, two walk-in closets, study area with a desk and chair, and a sitting area, in addition to a bed. This was quite luxurious compared to a bunkbed dorm shared with 27 others. In addition, there was a communal living room, library, dining room, party room, TV room, kitchen, laundry room and ping pong room. The first and second floors were entirely air-conditioned.\(^\text{122}\)

By 1968 size was less important and the Phi Chi's purchased a new home, smaller but elegant and adequate for their changing needs. This was the former Francis Matthews home at 3920 Dewey Street. The house was dedicated by the Rev. James Quinn on December 7, 1968, to Dr. C.M. Hartman (M.D. 1935) and the library to Dr. Richard W. Booth, then Associate Professor of Medicine. It housed 26 students.

Despite problems in 1983 with repairs, the house was made to conform to city ordinances.\(^\text{122}\) It has continued its existence as the home of Phi Chi Fraternity to the present, though the differences between today's group and the fraternity of the past are marked.

According to a current member, there are presently 23 live-in members in the main house and the four-bedroom annex, which was converted from the garage. A sand volleyball court was constructed in the side yard in April 1991. Although some social functions are hosted by the organization, there are no structured meetings. The Phi Chi of 1991 more closely resembles a dormitory arrangement than the type of collegiate fraternity past graduates remember.

According to The Constitution and Statutes of Phi Chi, the fraternity's official colors are olive green and white, its flower is the lily of the valley with leaves, its chief officer is the Presiding Senior, and Founder's Day is celebrated on February 26.\(^\text{122}\) Several awards coveted by Phi Chi's have been the Winged Foot, awarded annually for outstanding athletic performance, and the Eben J. Carey Award, given to the member with the highest average in Anatomy.\(^\text{122}\)

The 1958 Blue Jay stated:

Because Phi Chi is interested in the preservation of the balanced personalities of the physicians during their training, its activities extend to the social and athletic spheres as well as the intellectual.\(^\text{122}\)

This is an accurate summation of the many activities which Phi Chi has sponsored in its history at Creighton. In the intellectual realm, from the early 40's onward, there were announcements of seminars, lectures, demonstrations, films and slide shows on medical topics hosted by Phi Chi. In 1951 Phi Chi joined Phi Rho Sigma in offering a correlated series of lectures open to all medical students.\(^\text{122}\) In 1947, shortly after his death, the fraternity sponsored the first Eben J. Carey Memorial Lecture, with a noted medical personality presenting a lecture of timely relevance to the Omaha medical community, in honor of the fraternity's founder. Becoming an annual event, this lecture was allowed to lapse in the 1960's, then enjoyed a rebirth in 1966.\(^\text{122}\)

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Sports have been a part of the Phi Chi experience, including intramural basketball and football teams for much of their existence. During the 1947-48 season, the interfraternity basketball championship was won by the Chi Upsilon team. And in 1948, they won the interfraternity football championship. During the 1960's they sponsored a bowling team in one of Omaha's leagues. Their official team name was The Malpractice Five, but they were also known as The Five Ataxics.

The social events of Phi Chi revolved around a mix of annual favorites and one-time festivities. Early in the school years, two rush parties, mixers, were the norm. Then came the first "date party" of the year, whose theme varied. In 1966, it was a "Dunk and Dance," a swimming and dance party held at a local hotel. The Halloween Party was an annual affair, with prizes, for best costume. In November came the annual Pledge Party, then the Christmas party. There was the Founder's Day Dinner in February. In 1953 this was a joint affair, held together with Osolín Nu, the University of Nebraska chapter, the annual champagne party in March, and the annual spring dinner dance. The latter was the most formal event of the year and was held outside the fraternity house.

There were other social events, large and small—hay rack ride, St. Patrick's Day parties, a Dog Patch costume party, wiener roasts, and others. All add up to a social life offering plenty to do and with good companions.

**Phi Chi Events of Note:**

- On March 1, 1937, the Omaha World Herald reported the quarantine of thirty-five Phi Chi students at the fraternity house after it was found that their maid had scarlet fever. For the seven-day quarantine, the Phi Chi's reported that they intended to alternate between doing housework and studying for midwinter exams.

- In November 1952 the wives of Phi Chi members formed the Chi Upsilon Wives Club. By 1966 this organization had forty-two members.

- In December 1953 Chi Upsilon and the University of Nebraska's Osolín Nu co-sponsored the 33rd Grand Chapter convention of Phi Chi International in Omaha. It included a cocktail party, steak at the Livestock Exchange Building, and a banquet at the Hotel Fontenelle. At this Phi Chi convention, Dr. Michael J. Carey, Instructor of Surgery at Creighton and a moderator of the Chi Upsilon chapter, was elevated to the highest Phi Chi national office. Dr. Carey died in 1959, after which the Phi Chi established the Michael J. Carey Service Award.
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In May 1954 Mrs. Henrietta Willar, the Phi Chi’s housemother for nine years, died in her sleep. The previous Christmas, the Phi Chi’s had presented her with a special gift “for her loyalty and hard work, which have helped to make this chapter house a home.”

In 1955 the Phi Chi formed a sports car club, a musical quartet, and a musical combo consisting of piano, sax, and bass.

In 1960 members of Phi Chi donated $50 to Father Vincent Decker to be used for the ciborium of St. Luke’s Chapel in the Medical School. The ciborium was given in memory of Michael La Mendola, a Phi Chi who had been killed in an auto accident just prior to his graduation. An M.D. degree was conferred posthumously.

In 1966 the 50th anniversary of the founding of Phi Chi at Creighton, the entire issue of the Fall 1966 Phi Chi Quarterly national magazine featured the Creighton chapter. It was written and edited entirely by Creighton Phi Chi students.

Other Medical Fraternities

The three largest and longest lasting fraternities on the campus were not the only ones that ever existed.

Alpha Kappa Kappa – Kappa Chi Chapter

In 1934 the local Kappa Chi applied to Alpha Kappa Kappa national medical fraternity for a charter. According to The Creightronian, it had been sanctioned by Dean Riley, the Regent, Father McInerny, and the moderator of fraternities at Creighton, Rev. William J. Corboy. Officers had been elected (President, Ben Miano, M.D. 1935), a dance was scheduled at the Fontenelle Hotel, and charter members numbered ten. Yet there is no further mention of the fraternity in the student newspaper, yearbooks, or interviews with graduates. It can be assumed that it functioned only briefly during 1934.

Lambda Phi Mu – Xi Chapter

Another medical fraternity, Xi chapter of Lambda Phi Mu, was chartered at Creighton in 1933 and functioned at least until the outbreak of World War II. Though operating for almost a year previously, it was formally installed on campus in February 1934. In that year, it had 17 members and 11 pledges. Elected the first Grand Master was Louis J. Parlangeli (M.D. 1934), who had been instrumental in organizing the new fraternity at Creighton and who went on to membership on its national Executive Council in the late 1930’s. Little is known of the activities of this fraternity. It sponsored monthly symposiums, the...
first of which in February 1934 was on Buerzer's Disease.\textsuperscript{19} By 1937 Lambda Phi Mu had twenty-four members and was moderated by Dr. Sam Carnazzo, of the Surgery Department.\textsuperscript{43} As of 1938 it had 29 members and was sponsoring monthly smokersons and symposiums for its members.\textsuperscript{44} The fraternity was still included in the 1941 yearbook, listing twenty members and two pledges.\textsuperscript{45} The yearbook suspended publication from the outbreak of World War II until the 1948-49 school year. At that time there is no mention of Lambda Phi Mu, nor is there any clue offered by other campus publications as to its fate.

\textbf{Phi Delta Epsilon - Alpha Chi Chapter}

A medical fraternity that prospered for a brief time at Creighton was Phi Delta Epsilon, Alpha Chi chapter. The 1927 \textit{Blue Jay} indicated that it was chartered here in 1925, but this yearbook is the first to mention it. In 1927 there were twenty-eight active members and six pledges, led by a Consul, the highest elective office of the group. The 1928 \textit{Blue Jay} called it "The Professional Jewish Medical Fraternity". The 1929 edition noted that in keeping with the promotion of scholarship, which was the organization's main thrust, one of its first official acts had been to donate $100 to the medical library. With pride, it also added that its membership had averaged 91 percent scholastically that year.\textsuperscript{147} The fraternity evidently had housing problems. Between 1930 and 1934, there are records of five fraternity houses. The 1930 \textit{Blue Jay} indicated that the house was at 3224 Dodge (this had been the Phi Beta Pi house until 1929.).\textsuperscript{48} In 1932 the "lodge" was 305 South 38th Street.\textsuperscript{149} In September 1933 Phi Delta Epsilon moved to a new house at 112 South 44th Street.\textsuperscript{150} In October 1934 The \textit{Creightonian} reported a smoker which officially opened another new house, 3866 Harney Street.\textsuperscript{151} (This house was home to the Phi Beta Pi fraternity in 1916). The 1934 \textit{Blue Jay} showed the address of Phi Delta Epsilon at still another location, 41 10 Davenport Street.\textsuperscript{152}

The main activities of Phi Delta Epsilon during the 1930's seem to have been of a more serious nature than other fraternities. Speakers and seminars, rather than social events, were their focus. Addresses were often on general cultural topics, rather than strictly medical or technical matters. Social functions of Phi Delta Epsilon for which we do have records were small scale, in-house smokers and the like or were conducted as appendages to the more educational activities. For example, in November 1932 a director of the Joslyn Museum spoke on "Newer and Modern Trends in Art," one of a bi-weekly forum series held by the group since 1931.\textsuperscript{153} In April 1933 the fraternity sponsored a symposium on rheumatic heart diseases, held at the Hotel Blackstone and followed by a banquet. The \textit{Creightonian} noted: "The symposium is the first [event] of such proportion to be held in the history of the Medical School."\textsuperscript{154} No further references after 1935 can be found to Phi Delta Epsilon until the resurrected \textit{Blue Jay} of 1949. The fraternity must have disbanded sometime after the 1935 school year ended (possibly due to housing problems) and then, according to the \textit{Blue Jay}, was reactivated in 1945. As an update in 1949, the yearbook stated that a symposium on growth had been sponsored by Phi Delta Epsilon in 1946 and a two-day lecture series in 1947.\textsuperscript{155} The February 7, 1947, \textit{Creightonian} announced a Phi Delta Epsilon medical symposium, open to all medical students, and an article from
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that newspaper in October of that year told of two lectures sponsored by the four fraternities of the Creighton Medical School. In 1949, although the yearbook did not mention a fraternity house, it did indicate that there were ten members and that a joint dinner dance had been held with the University of Nebraska chapter of Phi Delta Epsilon, Beta Rho. Following this, there is no mention of Phi Delta Epsilon in any campus publication. Why and when the fraternity was discontinued is not known.

Alpha Epsilon Iota – Alpha Zeta Chapter

One other "fraternal" organization which must be noted is Alpha Zeta chapter of Alpha Epsilon Iota, medical sorority. This Creighton chapter of the national group was officially installed on March 19, 1949, largely due to the efforts of a recent Creighton medical graduate, Dr. Alice Hickey (M.D. 1948). There were sixteen charter members, and the first moderator was Miss Pauline Cranny. (see chapter on special people)

Alpha Epsilon Iota remained active until the early 1960's. After the 1963 Blue Jay, no further references are found as to its existence. During this period, the group sponsored speakers, hosted a series of scientific films, held monthly Communion breakfasts, and held some small social functions such as picnics and dinners. In 1951 their main project was collecting medical supplies locally to help outfit a free clinic in Rome.

Though still pre-women's lib in 1961, a change in tone can be noted between the yearbook entry for that year, and one from just ten years previous, in 1951. The 1951 entry read:

Ten little Indians of med school – that's what the ten members of the Alpha Epsilon Iota sorority are. The women medical students organized themselves into this sorority to have a little pleasure and relaxation after their hours in classrooms and laboratories. Their schedules permit only two or three meetings a year, but these are strictly informal held at a member's home. The gals brag their knitting, talk, drink coffee and do not talk shop. That was forbidden.

By contrast, in 1961 the yearbook notes that, although one of the smallest groups on the Creighton campus, Alpha Zeta had accomplished its primary goal, which it identified as "providing a source for professional contacts for these future doctors." This is quite different from the image evoked by the 1951 article. Attitudes were changing. It is not known why or exactly when the group disbanded. The last mention of Alpha Epsilon Iota in any Creighton publication came in 1963.