

ON CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

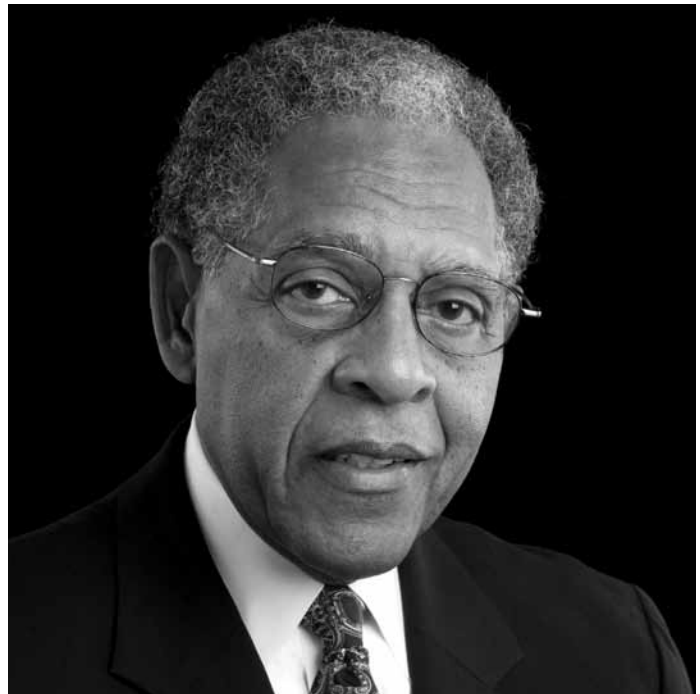
In 1919, during the initial business session of the sixth Grand Boulé in Philadelphia, Grand Sire Archon William C. McCard called on Archon A.L. Turner (Iota Boulé) “to deliver an eight-minute talk on his conception of the meaning of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity.” Three-minute talks were then delivered by Archons A.O. Reid (Gamma Boulé) and J.A. Cobb (Epsilon Boulé). At a later business session during that Grand Boulé, following a discussion on “how far our organization should publicly take part in civic matters,” every Archon in attendance was “given an opportunity to express himself on the subject of the spirit of Sigma Pi Phi.” Such was illustrative of the attention given during the formative years of our fraternity to reinforcing its purpose and the qualities it sought in its members. In addition to these discussions at Grand Boulés, Archons frequently discussed their perception of the meaning of the spirit of the Boulé at member boulé meetings.

In a broader sense these deliberations reflected understanding of what it meant to be an Archon. Invariably such discussions clarified and gave meaning to the preamble to the constitution of the Fraternity and in turn to its purpose. Other Archons have written about the meaning of the spirit of the Boulé with passion and keen insight. In a paper presented at a 1923 Beta Boulé meeting and later published in the April 1923 BOULÉ JOURNAL, Archon Charles E. Bentley opined that the spirit of the Boulé was “an intangible entity without form or substance, yet is the sum of all its attributes, material and spiritual, that translates itself into action, and what may be called personality ... [and it] must be ever present within the group.” He further believed that tolerance and candor among members were vital ingredients in creating and maintaining the spirit of the Boulé.

Archon Carrington L. Davis, who was Grand Grappter for twenty-five years and upon whom the titles Grappter Emeritus and Grand Historian were bestowed by vote of the Grand Boulé, provided us with the perceptive statement “The True Meaning of Brotherhood.” Writing in the February 1913 issue of THE BOULÉ JOURNAL, he stated that “genuine brotherhood is the avowed goal of our fraternity.” Moreover, he reasoned that the “indispensable elements of brotherhood, which every member of Sigma Pi Phi should strive to cultivate,” included congeniality, tolerance and the avoidance of those within our ranks who seek to use the Fraternity to perpetuate their own personal ambitions.

At the 1929 Grand Boulé in Philadelphia a discussion was held on the spirit of Sigma Pi Phi, led by Archons from Epsilon and Zeta boulés. Emphasized was the importance of what Grand Grappter Davis defined as brotherhood and the necessity of ensuring that the members of the Fraternity were men of like tastes and accomplishments, dedicated to serving their communities and imbued with that ever-important quality of congeniality. And for more than one hundred years these characteristics have been, and are, associated with the members of our beloved fraternity.

Throughout our history, there have emerged immutable characteristics associated with that intangible element referred to as the spirit of the Boulé. These have included congeniality, camaraderie, quiet dignity, honor, respect, tolerance, faith, leadership, gentlemanliness, unpretentiousness, discretion, professional achievement, excellence, familial orientation and inclusion, concern for others, community involvement and uplift, altruism, public service, fellowship, fidelity to a close sacred fraternal union, pride



Grand Sire Archon Rodney J. Reed

in the accomplishments of fellow Archons, aid to fellow Archons as needed and a commitment to getting to know the best of one another. What is abundantly clear is that Archons, by their existence and persona, have defined and continue to define the meaning and substance of the spirit of the Boulé. As we expand and induct new members, we must be determined to continue to manifest those qualities that have served us so well since our founding in 1904.

Maintaining those characteristics that have defined Archons and our fraternity means ensuring that the members we induct meet the high standards of fraternity membership. We must ensure that once new members are inducted, they become knowledgeable about our history and our constitution and bylaws. We must also ensure that they, as we, are familiar with and adhere to our fraternal procedures, protocols and rituals – the customs and traditions of Sigma Pi Phi. By uniformly subscribing to these attributes, the Boulé has not only endured as a prestigious fraternity, it has also enabled us to stand as a beacon whose light has shone brilliantly throughout the world.

I encourage all member boulés to regularly engage in discussions on the meaning of the spirit of the Boulé. How is this spirit exemplified within each member boulé and in our personal lives? How can it be strengthened? How is it manifested in the qualities we seek in new and existing members? How is it exemplified in our customs and traditions and our fraternal procedures, protocols and rituals? Perhaps an excellent time to engage in a discussion of such questions is when we consider new members for induction or preceding the orientation sessions of newly inducted Archons.

Let us continue to hold inviolate the spirit of the Boulé and ensure that it lives on in those who will replace us and those who will increase our membership. May we also seek to lay the foundation for our youths by affirming our biennial theme, “Cultivating and Celebrating Excellence,” so that they will be prepared to be competitive in the knowledge-based world in which we live and productive and contributing members of our communities and the society at large. 