

“And They Talked. Always They Talked” 215 Years of the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies

by

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Early organizations

On June 3, 1795—just one hundred and eleven days after Hinton James, the University of North Carolina's first student, stepped onto this very campus—thirty one young men gathered to launch the first student organization at the nation's first public university, the Debating Society. These young men hailed from Brunswick, Burke, Cabarrus, Edgecombe, Franklin, Granville, Greene, Halifax, Iredell, New Hanover, Orange, Rowan, and Tyrrell Counties. And they included one foreigner: Allen Green, from South Carolina.

On that illustrious Wednesday, these first sons of Carolina signed their names to a pledge, promising to support their new student organization by a proper obedience to the laws which was made for its regulations and by a due performance of all the regular exercises which would be required of them in a social capacity, and in so doing, they contracted friendships which would not be forgotten when they later met in the serious business of life. Hinton James signed that pledge.

James K. Polk would later sign that pledge. Louis Round Wilson, namesake of this building would, too. Vice President William R. King. Frank Porter Graham. Sam Ervin. Albert Coates. Paul Green. [Naming other members in room by name] have all signed that pledge. I signed that pledge in the fall of 1987. All of us "signers," members of what would become the Joint Senate of the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies, have been a part of one of the great traditions of university life in the United States, collegiate societies. Di Phi.

Some of the earliest collegiate societies in this country were established—if briefly—at Harvard in the late 1710s and early 1720s, (including the short-lived Spy Club and the Philomusarian). But it was not until the 1750s that these student organizations would take solid root in the nation's institutions of higher learning, beginning with The F.H.C. at William and Mary, (standing for "Fraternitas, Humanitas, et Cognitio") and better known as the "Flat Hat Club." This was Thomas Jefferson's society, founded in 1750, and so nick-named for what we now call

"mortarboards." Other collegiate societies of the day included the Critonian and Linonian at Yale (1750 and 1753, respectively), and the venerable American Whig and Cliosophic Societies at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton, both founded in 1765). The Whig-Clio is still in existence today.

Later influenced by Ben Franklin's Junto (a discussion and mutual-improvement club), the new nation's student groups came to be grounded in enlightenment ideals (dedicated to reason, individual improvement, and useful knowledge: *scientia*); and they were shaped by the Revolutionary age (imbued with a sense of public service and civic honor: *virtus*; and individual freedom: *libertas*).

As these organizations grew and developed across America's first century, becoming ubiquitous on college campuses, their members debated the issues of the day and of the ages. They ran for society office. They wrote histories, essays, poetry and even plays for their own enlightenment and enjoyment, and then published them in society organs. They debated. They sponsored lecture series, speeches, dramas, and musical entertainments. They debated. They threw dinners, balls, and quiet evening smokers. They debated. They played important roles in university ceremonial events (commencements and anniversaries). They debated. They discussed books and current events. They ran for society office. And they debated some more. Did I say that they debated?

While the specific activities of collegiate societies varied slightly depending upon the school and individual society, essentially, these student organizations provided the hands-on laboratory for the students to practice the skills required for leadership in their day (or any day): critical thinking, communication, organization—and even a bit of persuasion. Of course, this was also in the day when speech-making was both popular entertainment and high art. (De Tocqueville noted that in America "Debating clubs are, to a certain extent, a substitute for theatrical entertainments.") Speeches weren't just speeches, they were orations. Podia to command!

By the time the 31 students in Chapel Hill were signing their names to that pledge, there were approximately 12 active collegiate societies in the country, including two that would later evolve into different types of student organizations, William and Mary's Phi Beta Kappa and Harvard's Hasty Pudding Club.

Members and roles

But, back to Chapel Hill. (Always.) It is thought that Cabarrus County's Charles Wilson Harris, a math tutor who had recently graduated from Princeton where he had been a member of the American Whig Society, influenced the students to create Carolina's new organization. (His name can be found at the top of the list of those pledge signers.) Thus, it is no surprise that the original exercises of the Debating Society look a great deal like those of its sister institution to the north. For each Thursday night meeting, the society was divided into three classes with one class

reading aloud from a published author, another speaking (often declaiming a memorized passage), and the third reading from its own written work.

At the end of each evening, two members would debate a topic that had been decided upon during the previous week's meeting, and then the floor would be opened to allow others to discuss that topic. The first speech ever made before the Debating Society was James Mebane's argument in the affirmative to the query, "is the study of ancient authors useful?" Mebane, who was the first president of the Debating Society, bested Robert Smith, winning the debate and holding high the classics.

As an aside: In 1848, the Di invited James Mebane back for the opening of their new meeting space; the president of the Society then was student Kemp Plummer Battle who would one day be president of this university. Mebane brought back Society records at this time and deposited them with the Di. It is because of him that the Societies now possess the minutes of the earliest meetings of the organizations. Mebane's portrait usually rests upon the rear wall of the Di Chamber where he can watch the undertakings of his successors in office. If you look at the painting closely, you can see the minutes of that first Debating Society meeting on the table to Mebane's left.

In addition to the office of president, the Debating Society also established the office of corrector and then elected two of them. (They helped edit and prepare the essays for the regular weekly exercises.) Then there was the clerk who was admonished in the early days to "extinguish every candle, fasten the windows, and lock the door upon adjournment," the treasurer, and a *ensor morum*. Yes, a *ensor morum*.

Modeled after the censors of Rome, this officer was charged with inspecting "the conduct and morals of the members and report to the society those who preserve inattention to the studies of the University, in neglect of their duties as members, or in acting in such a manner as to reflect disgrace on their fellow-members." The Censor Morum was the duly elected, official tattletale. He kept an eye out for bad behavior and reported upon it during the weekly meetings where designated fines could be applied. Appropriately enough, the first Censor Morum was William Sims of Warren County who would go on to become a principal of a grammar school.

At the second meeting of the Debating Society, it was determined that no more members should be added to the society's number. With 31 members aching for the podium, I suspect that the first meeting had run a bit long even for those then accustomed to nearly day-long sermons. Adding more readers, declaimers, composers, and debaters wouldn't help that situation.

The Great Divide

At the next meeting, (the third for those of you keeping track) Maurice Moore moved that the Society be divided, and on July 2, 1795, the Concord Society was born. Some have suggested that the new society was created because of the members' disagreement with the role of the Debating Society's *ensor morum*—and who am I to argue with Kemp Plummer Battle? But I think the cause was the length of the meeting and the desire for more time at the podium. After all, the Concord Society would later establish the office of supervisor, which took on many of the responsibilities of the *ensor morum*.

Within a few weeks, the names of these two organizations had been changed to their more august sounding Greek equivalents, Dialectic and Philanthropic. (Spelled Philanthropic; pronounced—at least since the 1850s—as Phi-lanthropic, with the local pronunciation coming from the practice of shortening the society names to Di and Phi—not Di and Phil.) Soon these two bodies were competing in almost every aspect of campus life. Indeed, one of the distinguishing characteristics of collegiate societies throughout the nation was the (mostly good-natured) adversarial relationship found between two opposing student organizations on one campus: Euzelian and Philomathesian at Wake Forest, Eumenian and Philanthropic at Davidson, Columbian and Hesperian at that dark blue-tinted school, now located in Durham, just to name a few others in this state.

Soon the Di and Phi were competing in almost every aspect of campus life. They *especially* competed for members until it was decided that students from east of Raleigh would join the Phi, while those west of Raleigh (along with New Hanover and Cumberland Counties) would become Di's. (This seems to have been a practice at other universities, as well. At Franklin College, now the University of Georgia, Phi Kappas came from Savannah and the coast, Demosthenians from the west.)

Indeed, for most of the second half of the nineteenth century, Carolina's campus was divided between the Di half (Old West, New West and the south half of South Building) and the Phi half (Old East, New East, and the north half of South Building). I suppose the Old Well served as a de-societized zone. When future Civil War governor of North Carolina Zeb Vance was asked to join the society later attached to the eastern portion of the state, he is said to have proclaimed, "Phi! I'd rather Di!" The dividing line today is Orange County.

There will be order

As the years progressed, the list of fine-able expenses expanded. A member could be fined for neglecting his studies, cursing, urinating out windows, being absent from a meeting without permission, leaving a meeting and "staying out too long" before returning, drinking any "spiritous or fermented liquors without sufficient excuse," (a law made for a debating organization—"What do you mean, I have sufficient excuse!"), sitting in front of the fireplace, walking on "Forbidden Ground," (also known as McCorkle Place, an injunction still observed by the members), not wearing

a coat or gown during the sitting of Society, and not wearing your stockings to meetings, (not only should they be worn, they best be "put on decently"), and not showing respect to the president or showing him your back during a meeting.

Ensuring that the president was shown proper respect was important to each society, and as early as 1814 they instructed him to preside with cane and hat—later a tall-crowned beaver—which he was to remove when posing a question to the body. The president still presides with cane in hand. The beaver hat? Not so much. A member could even be fined for general idleness. The list of offenses changed over the years, but they rarely diminish in number. Most notoriously, a member could be fined for laughing during a meeting. It is said that Zebulon Vance, the future Civil War governor of North Carolina known for his storytelling abilities, once gave a speech so funny, that the Di's coffers were largely replenished thanks to his good words.

Fines kept the members in line, maintained the dignity of the assembly, ensured the honor of the organizations, and instilled awareness of gentlemanly behavior, even if they did not always manage to inspire its continuous adoption. The fines also provided quite a revenue stream for the organizations. Oooohhhh, Governor Perdue The way some of you people act, we could fix this budget problem . . .

As you can imagine, the "regular exercises," not to mention the business sessions required to keep an organization running, the reporting of bad behavior, the arguing about bad behavior, the application of fines for bad behavior, the appeal to the body for removal or reduction of fines for bad behavior, and the speechifying required to get into the chair so you could organize the business, tattle, or fine those responsible for the bad behavior (An ongoing activity because the president and treasurer initially only served for three weeks, the other officers, six) could all quickly fill an evening—especially an evening spent in the middle of nowhere, at a university that was then not much more than one building (now known as Old East) which was, in the 1790s, less than two-thirds its present size (only sixteen rooms in all). And that one building and those few boys all surrounded by a few stumps and not much else.

It goes without saying that you made your own entertainment. This was their entertainment. It also happened to be a fine education for public life. And as the years went by, the regular exercises expanded to include Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, with various committee meetings and socials being held during the week, not to mention the hours required to prepare debates, essays, and other presentations, or the time spent in society electioneering. I could quote from any of a number of alumni who have maintained that it was time well spent.

The purchase of books

The one area outside of debate in which the Di and Phi most ardently competed, was in the creation and expansion of their libraries. The first motion recorded by the

Debating Society was for the purchase of books. It passed unanimously. A little more than a year later, Hinton James, himself, made the Phi's first motion for a similar purchase—and the race was on. The university didn't have a library in the early days. It didn't have much of a library throughout the entire 19th century. The classical curriculum required mainly textbooks and "ponys," glosses on texts that students "rode" to recitation. While the students' classwork didn't require a full and well-selected library, their society work, not to mention their pleasure reading, did.

So the societies made their own, and they did so in grand fashion, creating over the decades not only what may have been the largest libraries in the antebellum American South, but also the most handsome rooms in which to house those books that could be found in the entire Tar Heel state. Later in the century, the societies would boast that "We now have an extensive library, believed to be the equal to any in the Southern states --a Hall of respectable dimensions--rich damask curtains, from the looms of France, are suspended from the window arches--the floor is spread with neat carpeting--from the walls hang portraits of various state worthies, like guardian Genii of the place, looking with complacency on the efforts of the young hope of the state."

The Di created the elected office of librarian in 1799, and as the years progressed both societies found themselves electing librarians, appointing sub-librarians, paying library assistants, arguing about periodical selection and expenses, and devoting more and more of their budgets to acquisitions. The librarian's duties became so intense, that in 1844, it was decided that no member would be compelled to serve as society librarian more than once. The individual society libraries moved as the societies moved, from various spaces in Old East and Old West, to opposite sides of South Building, and then to the top floors of New East and New West Halls. (The monitors on the roofs of those buildings and the one recently replaced on the top of Old East were put there to bring light to the society libraries located directly beneath.)

In the 1850s, when the university could claim about 4,000 books in its library, the Society libraries held more than three times that number and were much better qualitatively, as well. (According to Kemp Battle, when students checked books out of the university library, it was mainly to use them as deadfalls to kill mice in their dorm rooms.) Through the work of numerous society library committees and librarians, along with various faculty members, including George Tayloe Winston, Eben Alexander, and Louis Round Wilson, the Societies' libraries were gradually merged with the university's over a twenty-year period, the final agreement being signed in 1906. All of which leads to the official name of the present university library: "The Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Endowed by the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies," which is recognized on the library's bookplates.

The Acquisition of Portraits

Another area in which the societies competed was in the acquisition of portraits. The subject of the first portrait collected by either society was that of Phi alumnus Johnston Blakely, Commander of the U.S.S. Wasp in the War of 1812. Blakely was lost at sea after his final victory and, in death, became a national hero. The Phi voted to acquire his portrait in 1818, and a few months later this society also requested the portrait of University President Joseph Caldwell. By 1821, the acquisition of portraits had become Phi policy. And it was a policy to which the Di responded five years later in 1826 (the fiftieth anniversary of the new nation's independence), commissioning Charles Willson Peale to paint the likeness of William R. Davie, father of the University and Revolutionary War Hero. The Phi commissioned Benjamin Franklin's that same year. Again, the race was on!

Over time, the two societies memorialized in oil many of the state's leaders, sometimes commissioning a work, but more often requesting a portrait from the subject of their admiration. Can you imagine receiving a letter from your student organization telling you just how much they respect you and just how badly they would like for you to hire a painter and send the resulting portrait back to them? It worked. The Societies now own more than 100 portraits, most of them of their alumni, almost all with a relationship to the university, including Henry Inman's of minister and historian Francis Lister Hawks, Thomas Sully's portraits of two-time president of the Di and only one-time President of the United States James K. Polk, Eastman Johnson's of Congressman James C. Dobbin, and more than a few by the Sully of the South, William Garl Brown, including those of Generals Bryan Grimes and James Johnston Pettigrew (who led Pickett's charge at Gettysburg).

And here is my favorite Societies portrait story. Forgive me if you have heard this one:

When Thomas Wolfe entered the University as a sixteen-year-old freshman, the senior members played a trick on the incoming students. A sophomore stood up and gave a speech telling how great a man he was and why the Di should accept him for membership. The new students, having no idea what a petitioning speech should be and thinking that the sophomore was also a freshman, took this speech as a model. Buncombe County's gangly Thomas Wolfe was the speaker to follow this sophomore. (Now remember, at that time, the man considered by many to be the greatest North Carolinian ever was Civil War Governor Zebulon Baird Vance, also a native of Buncombe County. Vance's portrait hung prominently on one of the Di Chamber's walls, just as it does now.)

The petitioning freshman Wolfe, following the sophomore's example, explained his own many positive attributes and ended with these--at the time--hyperbolic words, "And one day the portrait of another Buncombe County man will hang on these walls." He, of course, meant himself. The members of the Di thought that was hilarious and practically laughed the lanky youth out of the Hall. Wolfe would later memorialize this in *Look Homeward, Angel*: ".. As he walked across campus he heard his name called mockingly from a dozen of the impartial windows, he heard the

hidden laughter, and he ground his teeth . . ." The Societies commissioned Frank Mason's portrait of Wolfe in 1979. It now hangs on the walls of Di Hall near Vance. (Another aside: there is a second portrait of Wolfe hidden inside the Mason work. It is smaller and upside down, and can be seen under black light.)

Now remember, it was essentially teenagers who collected, and for more than 200 years have maintained, this portrait collection, which includes not only historically important images of 19th and 20th century leaders but also more than a few artistically important works by some of the leading artists of their day.

Another aside: The Societies' portrait of William Miller by Jacob Marling, was probably painted while Miller was Governor of North Carolina because the background of this portrait includes an illustration of North Carolina's first state house as it looked in the 1810's. This image is one of three known likenesses of the building as it appeared before the renovations of 1820-25. This state capitol building burned in 1831. The State House can be seen just behind Governor Miller's right shoulder.

Turning out publications

While they were building libraries and collecting portraits and holding their weekly exercises, the Societies also turned out publications. Initially, the Societies published speeches made before the student body at their request. The best known of these addresses is undoubtedly that of William Gaston given in 1832. In this speech, the noted jurist predicted that the young gentlemen in the room would be called upon to answer the question of slavery. The subsequent pamphlet went into four editions.

Later, beginning in 1844, the Societies began what would become at its demise the longest running Southern periodical, the *University Magazine*, which brought to print a wide range of student-, alumni-, and faculty-produced essays, poetry, humor, history, and gossip. Like most student publications, it had an off and on run, and when two students attempted to revive it yet again in 1882, following the University's closure during Reconstruction, they carried their baby downtown, only to find that the printer's devil had the liquid stumbles. Another young man just happened by and volunteered to set the type. Those student editors? The Di editor was Edwin Alderman, later president of the University; the Phi was Horace Williams, the irascible and later legendary professor of Philosophy at UNC, and the replacement printer was Collier Cobb, later to be UNC's professor of Geology, and the man who would oversee the business portion of the magazine during its heyday.

In 1948, student pressure for a full-fledged humor publication led to a campus referendum on the venerable magazine's existence. The *University Magazine* lost to the humor mag *Tarnation* by four votes. During the twentieth century, student writers such as Josephus Daniels, Phillips Russell, Jonathon Daniels, Paul Green,

Thomas Wolfe, LeGette Blythe, Walker Percy, Joseph Mitchell, and Walter Spearman exhibited their work in the pages of the *University Magazine*.

Along with this periodical, the Societies also contributed the yearbook, *Yackety Yack*, to Carolina's publication pantheon, merged their newspaper, the *White and Blue*, with the athletic association's *Daily Tar Heel* (broadening that publication's coverage), and created a long list of short-lived titles that no doubt gave the students the same practice in publication and pleasure in seeing their names in print as *ourrevived White and Blue* gave to me in the 1980s.

Student self-governance

But it is probably their role in the creation of student self-governance, including the Honor Court system, where the Societies have made their greatest and most lasting contribution to Carolina life. Remember all of those fines described earlier? Remember all of that politicking for society office? The students were governing themselves. On more than one occasion, a student found guilty of some serious infraction by his society simply packed his bags and went home. (Just look up the story of future United States Senator Thomas Hart Benton.)

The amazing thing is, the University administration joined the students in recognizing the Di and Phi as a form of local government, and appealed to the societies and their officers to help maintain various university policies. The two most famous cases:

One: in 1850, the Dialectic Society tried one of its ball managers for misuse of funds, found him guilty, and expelled him from the Society, whereupon he was dismissed from the University. The man's family tried to have the student's ruling annulled, but the administration maintained that his was a matter between the students and that the University administration did not have jurisdiction.

Two: in August 1804, Hyder Ali Davie, the younger son of university founder William R. Davie, stepped on the toes of Henry Chambers while dancing at a university Ball. Words were exchanged. A brawl ensued. Chambers was a much larger man, and Davie sought to equalize the situation through the aid of a small blade, wounding his fellow dancer slightly. The trustees met about the situation and gave the two boys a slap on the wrist and pardoned them. The Di Society was not so forgiving. It impeached both Davie and Chambers. During the month-long trial, students alluded to other vices enjoyed by the younger Davie including, "mingling in the cock pit with the most abandoned wretches." By a vote of 28 to 1, the Society voted to expel the son of the university's founder—but not before this son had sent a preemptive letter resigning from the society. He later withdrew from the university. Some believe that this helped influence his father to leave North Carolina for retirement in South Carolina.

These cases act as, perhaps, the strongest precedence for student self-governance at the university. The Societies could act as student government and honor court for their members throughout the 19th century because, although membership in the societies was voluntary, almost the entire student body belonged to one of the two societies. And, probably to ensure that all students would continue to be covered by this form of government, on September 23, 1885 the Board of Trustees, at the urging of University President Kemp Battle, passed a resolution requiring all enrolled undergraduates to belong to one of the societies.

In 1889, this mandatory membership was extended to all students, including those in medicine and law. By 1895, however, the University had dropped the mandatory membership requirement; the course catalog published in that year states that "although membership in the societies is entirely optional, yet it is earnestly recommended by the faculty."

The rise of highly focused student groups

The Societies WERE student life at the University of North Carolina during the 1800s. But just as the university faculty, classroom, and laboratory were becoming more specialized at the turn of the 19th century, so too were the university's extracurricular activities. The big umbrella societies with their various committees, exercises, socials, publications, etc. found themselves competing with highly focused student groups that just published, that just socialized, that just performed. Students in those other organizations didn't have to wait through committee reports about activities they weren't interested in before being able to discuss what they were interested in. (And they got to skip hearing minutes read that included phrases such as, "Moved that the president create a committee to study the committee system.") Inevitably, various Society activities took on lives of their own.

Formal intercollegiate debating at Carolina came to be handled by the Debating Union, which had been supported by the Societies. The yearbook and other campus publications came to have only a tenuous relationship with the two societies, as student authors spent more time working on their publications than they did attending to society business. Student Council, which had been supported by the Di and Phi, acted as student government.

Campus social life came to revolve around music clubs, annual dances, banquets, and other events, a number of which had their roots in society activities. And then there were the Greek organizations and sports. Beginning in the 1890s, members start requesting time off from society activities to attend orchestra, baseball, and glee club practices or performances. Later, the Societies moved, then suspended, meetings to allow the entire membership to attend an important concert or game. (For example, this quotation from the Di minutes of 1916: "The vice president being away with the football team, no debate was held.") But debaters were still big men on campus.

The first few decades of the 20th century was the heyday of debating medals, debating lettermen, intersociety debates, intercollegiate debates, interstate debates, interclass debates, and if they could have figured out how, they probably would have held intergalactic debates! And while the societies could no longer claim nearly 100% of the student body, they were still large and important parts of campus life, providing training grounds for student speakers and political leaders.

World War I

Then, World War I changed things, giving the Di and Phi their greatest blow since the Civil War fifty years before. As one alumnus remembered the Confederate-era societies: "At one time there were not enough [members] to fill the offices without making use of Freshmen . . . The officers grew careless . . . the debates became towards the last little more than farces. The condition of things was deplorable, but certainly it could not be otherwise. All students who were old enough went to the front." Nearly the same could be said for World War I. Carolina students found themselves performing military drills in addition to coursework—and these drills took place during regularly scheduled society times.

On one night in October 1917, the societies were in full swing with future governor Luther Hodges of the Di speaking on the financial provisions for waging war, future NC Supreme Court Justice William H. Bobbitt holding forth about some topic or other—he was always speaking—to win best speaker of the evening, and a Mr. Shannone who was "leaving college in order to make the world safe for democracy" delivering a lengthy farewell address to the hall.

One year later, former president of the Di John Skally Terry was being called up to hold this same society together. On November 9, 1918, a meeting was held to decide whether the Di could continue during the lifetime of the local Student Army Training Corps. The few members present decided to change society procedures and soldier on. The treasurer resigned to spend more time in training. Thomas Wolfe nominated J.J. Rhyne for president, and then they all adjourned to Prof Koch's for dramatic renditions where "eats were in abundance." Two days later, the war ended, and the societies gradually rebounded but never quite recaptured their glory years.

Changes between the wars

In an attempt to differentiate themselves from other student organizations and to become more focused, in 1919, the Phi designated itself the "Philanthropic Assembly," and in 1924, the Di became the "Senate of the Dialectic Literary Society." By doing so, the Societies consciously modeled themselves after the legislature of the state, its rules and activities. They debated bills (actual bills being debated in Raleigh), sent items to committee, and at one time would send the bills to the other "house" for their input and votes, as well. While these names continued, along with a

few of the model legislature practices for the next thirty years, soon the societies had reverted back to some of their earlier practices, leading to an odd mix of legislature-like and old-style collegiate society activities. The most lasting artifact coming out of this 30-year experiment was the title of "Senator." No matter which society one belongs to now, he or she carries the title of "Senator of the Societies."

In 1927, New East and New West Halls were renovated, and the Societies lost most of their grand spaces, being moved from their odeions (or meeting rooms) onto the top floors of each building where their libraries once resided. Here their chambers remain to this day. Phi Hall is in New East. Di Hall is in New West.

Three years after the renovation, the societies took a very big step. On the night of April 29, 1930, by a vote of 19 to 8, the Phi elected the first female members to belong to either society, becoming one of the first co-ed groups on campus. The Di followed suit five years later, and in 1940, the Phi elected the first female leader of either organization, Marian Igo. (She was also a fencer, a member of Chi Omega, and Phi Beta Kappa. A social worker for most of her life, she passed away in 2007.)

World War II and postwar merger

World War II had an effect on the societies much like previous wars, except that this time, the Phi lost all of its members, and Robert Morrison, the editor of the *Daily Tar Heel*, brought it back to life largely by recruiting DTH staffers and by instituting highly-successful society dinners, which took place each Thursday evening at the Carolina Inn. At that time, the Di was considered a "liberal" body, and conservative members of the campus joined the Phi. This philosophical orientation for each Society has since been lost.

Morrison was elected Speaker of the Phi for three successive sessions. In 1947, he and the Phi's Speaker Pro Tem Chester Zum Brunnen of Salisbury decided to raise funds for their society by raffling off a Kaiser automobile. A controversy ensued. The State Attorney General and the University's Student Body President disapproved of this form of "gambling," and the fundraiser was cancelled after a good bit of statewide publicity. The Phi sustained a \$65 loss, which Zum Brunnen and Morrison repaid from their own pockets. It was the societies' post-war "scandal."

During the 1950s, each society could claim around twenty active members and a few others who came and went. These faithful few managed to renovate each of the halls. And, largely through the work of member Joel Fleischman, they outfitted the Di chamber with replicas of desks found in North Carolina's capitol. Now, how about another aside?

As a part of this furniture fund drive, the members agreed to mark each desk with the name of its donor or in memory or honor of someone designated by the donor. Wanting to help his society and hoping for such a memorial—but being a bit short

on funds—one senator at the time, Pebley Barrow, went above and beyond the call of Society fealty by actually giving blood on a regular basis for pay. He ultimately donated the proceeds to the furniture fund drive. The desk purchased with this "blood money" today carries his name etched on a brass plaque. For his show of loyalty, Barrow was named the "Di Man of the Year," the only time this award has ever been given. The "Barrow Blood Desk" now sits on the back row of the Di so that each senator must pass it on his way to his or her own desk, a reminder of a fellow senator's dedicated service.

Then, at 1:19 a.m. on May 13th (the meeting had started on May 12th), 1959, after a long debate in the Phi, the Di and Phi joined together in a Joint Senate. (A 1926 attempt to bring the two Societies together into one body had failed.) Following a fervent appeal from the Di President Gary Greer and Phi President John Brooks (Later Labor Commissioner of North Carolina), the new organization was formed by unanimous vote of the membership.

The chief reason put forth for the merger was, simply put, low membership. The members became known as Di-Phi's (BRIEFLY). Within a short time, however, the Joint Senate came to more closely resemble two organizations meeting together under a set of joint officers. And it remains so to this day. Two noted members from the "Di-Phi era" include Congressman David Price and UNC Professor of Economics Stanley Black.

Everything for which the societies stood

Four years after the merger, the societies took on the North Carolina General Assembly-declared speaker ban, which stated that the state's university campuses were officially off-limits to "known members of the Communist Party" or to anyone who had taken the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution. It made national news, and the university did all it feasibly could to oppose the new law.

The President of the Joint Senate John Greenbacker joined the Editor of the *Daily Tar Heel* and the President of the Student Body to overthrow this blatant attack on the First Amendment, Academic Freedom, and just about everything for which the Societies stood and still stand. In 1968, the courts found "Speaker Ban" to be unconstitutional. The Societies are proud of the role we played in the controversy.

And then, in 1969, the membership dwindled to a single person, Stanley Greenberg of Orange County, who was to graduate that June. Senator Greenberg didn't want to see these ancient institutions die on his hands, and went out to persuade other students to join him. Thirteen students agreed. Among the thirteen was George Templeton Blackburn II, who became President of the Joint Senate. He spent the following summer working full-time on various Society projects. He was soon joined by Roger Kirkman.

These two led the efforts to restore the Society Halls, portrait collections, and archival holdings. They also compiled a list of living Societies' alumni, began a concert series in the Phi Hall, restored the social activities and the weekly meetings, including an array of guest speakers ranging from Hari Krishnas to United States senators. They also commissioned works of art for the first time in nearly fifty years: four bronze busts, memorializing Paul Green (Phi), William H. Bobbitt (Di), Albert Coates (Phi), and Sam Ervin (Di); two portraits of Thomas Wolfe, and a wood cut of George Hatem (a Phi and Mao Tse Tung's personal physician). They and their friends recruited a wide range of "student types," from button-down conservatives to fringed hippies to carry on Carolina's oldest traditions. We in the Societies call this era "The Rejuvenation."

The Societies have benefitted greatly by the influence and mentoring of a handful of dedicated alumnus senator faculty advisors, among them (for decades) was John Sanders and now Bland Simpson. The Di and Phi owe them a huge debt of gratitude. Thank you.

Yes, over the years, the Societies have discussed and debated a wide range of issues from the sublime to the . . . wellllll, not-so-sublime. A few examples from the Di minutes ranging from 1914-1917:

- Resolved that we should establish a central national bank.
- Resolved that we should discourage immigration to the south.
- Resolved that reciprocity with Canada would cause the annexation of Canada to the United States.
- Resolved that the United States should consider the Monroe Doctrine obsolete.
- Resolved that the summer baseball rule of UNC should be abolished.
- Resolved that the merging of all the cotton mills in the south into one corporation would promote industrial development in the south.
- Resolved that the public school money of the state should be apportioned to each race according to amount of taxes paid.
- Resolved that the United States should give the Philippines their independence in the next five years.
- Resolved that farm tenancy should be discouraged by appropriate restriction of land ownership.
- Resolved that the valuation of real estate and corporation taxables for taxation should be made by a state tax commission.
- AND Resolved, that the federal government should provide a pension for superannuated civil service employees.

I am happy to say that the affirmative won that last one!

The societies gave Carolina its colors: Dialectic Blue and Philanthropic White.

We have our own burial plots in the village cemetery.

In 1796, the members practiced and performed one of the first, if not the first, student-produced plays in the nation. (And more than one hundred years later, they also provided the stage for Thomas Wolfe's first production, the "Streets of Durham.")

The Di created the office of "Keeper of the Archives" in 1825. Both societies elected members to this office (at one point, they even appointed members to a filing system committee!). At any rate, one of these student society archivists, R. D. W. Connor, became the founder of the National Archives and first archivist of the United States, creating the presidential library system along the way.

One alumnus member, George Denny, is generally credited with creating the modern political talk show with his *Town Meeting of the Air* radio program—which followed an awfully familiar pattern when first broadcast out of New York City in 1935. (Of course, the societies beat him to it, airing their first debate against a team from Mr. Jefferson's University in 1929; we won.)

The societies don't have pledges, they have petitioners.

The societies don't have semesters, they have sessions.

The Societies don't have intramural teams; they have committees—as in "the softball committee."

When you graduate from the university while a senator in good standing, you get a diploma from your society, as well as the university. I am awfully proud of my society diploma.

If it's a Monday night and classes are in session, then the Joint Senate of the Dialectic and Philanthropic Society, Carolina's oldest student organizations are meeting on the top floor of New West Hall. The President of the Joint Senate will preside with cane in hand. The Di's will sit on the president's left and the Phi's on the right. The Sergeant-at-Arms will call the roll, and the senators will respond by calling out their counties of origin. There will be a program, probably a debate, with two speakers for and two against. The floor will then be opened for comments, followed by a vote. There will be a business session that will probably go longer than anyone wants, and then PPMA (papers, petitions, memorials, and addresses) when the senators will hold forth on whatever might happen to be on their minds. The meeting might go a little while. Somebody might be fined. When it's over, those lucky students—I assure you—will have contracted friendships which will not be forgotten when later they meet in the serious business of life.

I took the title for this evening's presentation from a *Look Homeward Angel* quotation, which is read at the first Societies' meeting each year. It goes, in

part, like this: "And they talked--always they talked, under the trees, against the ivied walls, assembled in their rooms, they talked--in limp sprawls--incessant, charming, empty Southern talk; they talked with a large easy fluency about God, the Devil, and philosophy, the girls, politics, athletics, fraternities and the girls--My God! How they talked!"

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Kevin Cherry delivered this talk on April 7, 2011 in UNC's Wilson Library for the Gladys Hall Coates University History Lecture series.

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He holds a a BS (Biology, 1988), MA (History, 1993), MSLS (1995), and a PhD (2010), all from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. While an undergraduate at Carolina, he served as President of the Joint Senate of the Dialectic and Philanthropic societies. For service to his alma mater, he has been tapped into the Order of the Old Well, the Frank Porter Graham Graduate Honorary Society, and the Order of the Golden Fleece. He is a native of Denver, NC, and lives in Washington, DC.