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A SIGMA CHI FOUNDATION PUBLICATION



BUILDING LEADERS

The Home Depot's co-founder Significant Sig Ken Langone, **BUCKNELL 1957** (right) and President & CEO Significant Sig Ted Decker, **WILLIAM & MARY 1985** (left)



INSIDE: SIGMA CHI'S SIXTH MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT COL. RALPH PUCKETT, JR., **GEORGIA TECH 1946**, IS CELEBRATED BY MILITARY SIGS AT FORT BENNING, GA



ON THE COVER:

The Home Depot President & CEO Ted Decker, **WILLIAM & MARY 1985**, was surprised with a special Significant Sig award presentation in Atlanta, including company co-founder Significant Sig Ken Langone, **BUCKNELL 1957. PAGE 9**

And the Sigma Chi Foundation joined Military Sig leaders in a special Significant Sig presentation to Medal of Honor recipient Col. Ralph Puckett, Jr., **GEORGIA TECH 1946. PAGE 14**

(Cover images: Jay Ford, Puckett Family)

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A CONVERSATION WITH JEFF GILL

*The newly-elected Chairman of the Sigma Chi Foundation's Board of Governors, Significant Sig Jeff Gill, **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 1978**, discusses the Foundation's future in supporting our young brothers*

for the prior two years as Vice Chairman of the Sigma Chi Foundation's Board of Governors, Significant Sig Jeff Gill, **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 1978**, had a birds eye view of the challenges that faced both the Foundation and Fraternity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairman, President & CEO of Sypris Solutions, a manufacturing and engineering services company serving the defense, transportation, communications and energy industries, brother Gill worked closely with outgoing Past Chairman John Forst, **GEORGE WASHINGTON 1984**, the Foundation Board of Governors and Foundation staff, led by President & CEO Ashley Woods, **EAST TENNESSEE 2000**, to ensure the organization met each of its funding commitments and entered the 2021 to 2022 fiscal year full of promise.

Gill, who joined the Foundation board in 2015, brings extensive experience on public, private, civic, university and educational boards to his new role as Chairman of the Board of Governors.

After serving the past two years as Vice Chairman, seeing the Foundation push through the challenges of COVID-19, can you describe where you view the Foundation today?

Jeff Gill: You bet. The Foundation has never been



*Sigma Chi Foundation Chairman
and Significant Sig Jeff Gill,
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 1978*

stronger financially or in a better position to support the Fraternity and our young brothers. Over the past two years, the total assets of the Foundation have increased by more than 10 percent to over \$61 million. During this same two-year period, the Foundation provided \$9.2 million of funding for scholarships and programs, directly impacting 4,900 undergraduate and graduate brothers.

These figures include \$1 million in the form of academic scholarships for over 600 students, and \$8.2 million in

backing for Fraternity leadership development programs. The bottom line: as a direct result of the hard work and dedication of the Foundation staff, the Foundation is not only in a strong financial position but has also taken the next step to develop and implement a five-year plan to further increase its support for our brothers and the programs of the Fraternity.

What is your vision forward for our growth as Chairman?

JG: The Foundation Board is both optimistic and ambitious! Sigma Chi has an estimated 253,000 living alumni, a figure that exceeds the total number of living alumni for Dartmouth and Duke combined, yet we had but 4,400 individual donors last fiscal year, representing less than two-percent of our alumni base.

2022 to 2024 BOARD OF GOVERNORS LEADERSHIP



Jeff Muir, **GEORGIA 1971**

VICE CHAIRMAN

Brother Muir is co-founder and chairman of Fulcrum Equity Partners and its predecessor firm Fulcrum Ventures. He is also a co-founder of Chatham Capital. He is an Order of Constantine Sig and Significant Sig.

By comparison, 44 percent of Dartmouth alumni and 35 percent of Duke alumni contributed to their alma maters last year. If we can just increase our yield to five percent, we would add at least 8,250 new donors!

While the potential is significant, increasing the yield from our alumni base will take a lot of hard work and require many changes. It all starts with good planning. Last year we developed and adopted a comprehensive, detailed five-year plan to:

- Double the amount of funds available to underwrite academic scholarships, Fraternity programs and mission support to \$10.5 million annually;
- Raise an additional \$20 million in the form of planned gifts; and
- Increase the total assets of the Foundation.

We will achieve these goals by investing in the expansion of the organization, including adding development officers in key underrepresented regions of the U.S. We will invest in advanced technology to manage and communicate with our alumni base; we will take advantage of new, efficient channels for marketing and communication; and we will build out our back-office operations to support our growing enterprise.

We are already off to a great start! We are on track to meet and possibly exceed our objectives for the current fiscal year ending June 30, the first year of the five-year plan. It will be quite an exciting journey and when successful, we will have made a big difference for our young brothers and for the Fraternity!

If you were to meet a Sigma Chi today, a brother that was unaware of our efforts as a Foundation, and unaware of the leadership initiatives being offered our brothers today, how would you describe our mission and vision to this brother?

JG: Our *mission* is twofold. First, our duty is to support the needs of our young brothers. This support may take a variety of forms, such as providing scholarships, grants and financial aid for deserving students.

Second, we are committed to support the leadership development programs of the Fraternity, such as the Sigma Chi Leadership Institute, the Horizons Huntsman Leadership Summit, the Krach Transformational Leaders Workshop and the Officer Training Academy, among others.

Our *objective* is to help the Fraternity reach out and have a positive impact on as many young men as possible.

Our *vision* is to be the preeminent Greek-letter foundation serving the needs of undergraduate and graduate students in the U.S. and Canada.

According to Pennington and Company, our Sigma Chi Foundation has provided more total grant and program support than any other Greek-letter foundation in the U.S. over the last 15 years – and by a significant margin, I might add!

Can you describe your work with Brother Forst the last two years as Vice Chairman, and talk about his efforts as Chairman?

JG: John demonstrated incredible leadership during a very challenging time in our world. Universities and colleges terminated in-classroom operations, student housing closed, businesses went remote, and travel was limited to a few hearty souls.

John was one of those who braved the storm and carried the banner for the Foundation with his tireless and selfless dedication and incredible persistence. He worked days, nights and weekends, traveling the country whenever and wherever the need arose. John worked closely with Ashley (Woods), John (Price), Jay (Ford) and others to ensure that the Foundation not only survived but thrived. John clearly established a high bar and served as a wonderful example for all.

What inspired you to join the Foundation Board of Governors?

JG: That’s a great question. Several years ago, I had the opportunity to attend the Horizons Huntsman Leadership Summit in Snowbird, Utah as a guest of the Foundation. In preparation for the visit, I read about the program, its mission and the selection criteria for applicants. I planned to share some personal experiences with the hope that they would in some way complement the program. I was not prepared for what I learned.

Our young brothers were engaged, mature and focused. Their enthusiasm was contagious, as was their energy and desire to effect change. I found that Horizons had real substance and that all who were present were immersed in the program’s effort to have a positive impact on these young men. It became readily clear that we, as alumni, could and should do more to play an active, contributing role. When I was subsequently invited to join the Board, I jumped!

What excites you about serving Sigma Chi in this new role and giving back to our young brothers?

JG: Sigma Chi had a significant impact on my own growth and maturation as an undergraduate. I know of no other collegiate experience that provides the opportunity for a young person to take responsibility, to be held accountable for outcomes, and to learn how to work with and lead others. So, I’m a firm believer in the value of the Sigma Chi experience and the positive impact that it can have on young men.

Today, we have approximately 16,000 undergraduate brothers, the number of which far exceeds the student bodies of most elite universities. The programs and activities of Sigma Chi therefore increasingly reach and influence a large number of young people each year with a strong focus on leadership development, including the importance of community responsibility.

Our brothers have raised \$16.5 million since 2005 for the Huntsman Cancer Foundation in support of cancer research and are well on their way to achieving Sigma Chi’s total pledge of \$31 million, \$20 million of which will be dedicated specifically research for [cancers affecting] women. This same undergraduate body of brothers has averaged over 220,000 community service hours over each of the past five years. Talk about learning, growing and having an impact outside of the classroom.

Our Sigma Chi brothers can and already do have an amazing impact on our society. Our duty at the Foundation is to raise the resources that will enable these exceptional young men to accelerate and expand their intellectual development and increase their commitment to the world in which they live. Working closely with the Fraternity, we will build that bridge for future generations.

As you may imagine, it is exciting, challenging and quite rewarding to serve the Fraternity through our work on the Foundation. I strongly encourage all who have an interest to volunteer and join us on this amazing journey!

TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE

Launching July 1, Foundation's 1855 Society to honor volunteers who contribute to each facet of Sigma Chi

Whether it's the direct impact of undergraduate chapters through advisory or Praetorial roles, serving housing corporations or alumni chapters, or even as a program facilitator or committee volunteer, the efforts of alumni volunteers have long ensured Sigma Chi's position as the preeminent Greek-letter men's organization in the world.

And while every volunteer role is important in ensuring Sigma Chi's success, the leadership educational opportunities, academic scholarship and chapter support efforts afforded young brothers would not be possible without the crucial funding provided by alumni donors to the Sigma Chi Foundation.

The Sigma Chi Foundation will honor each of those brothers who contribute their time, talent and treasure in support of the Fraternity at a significant level.

Launching on July 1, the newly-established 1855 Society will recognize alumni who achieve two milestones, collectively, over three years:

- Service to the Fraternity in any type of volunteer or service role that benefits an undergraduate or alumni chapter, the International Fraternity or any Sigma Chi entity, including elected positions, committee and board service, program facilitator roles.
- Contributing a cumulative giving amount of \$1,855 or more (Approximately \$51.52 monthly over 36 months) in support of one or more of the Sigma Chi Foundation's many funding avenues,



such as a Donor-Scholarship, chapter fund, Thomas Cowan Bell Chapter Challenge campaign or one of the many leadership programs afforded to undergraduate members.

Members of the 1855 Society will be honored with an exclusive token of appreciation, currently under the development of longtime Sigma Chi jeweler Buddy Cote and Legacy Deuteron, annual recognition within the Sigma Chi Foundation's Annual Report and a special website honoring their service and monetary contributions.

The 1855 Society was engineered by a committee of longtime alumni volunteers and current members of the Foundation Board of Governors led by 69th Grand Consul Michael Ursillo, **BROWN 1978**; immediate past Grand Tribune Mark Quiner, **WYOMING 1978**; Christopher Walters, **ROANOKE 2000**; and Order of



Why I personally give back to the Sigma Chi Foundation

By 69th Grand Consul, Order of Constantine and Significant Sig
Mike Ursillo, **BROWN 1978**

"I have been blessed over the two-third's of my life in which I have been active with Sigma Chi. It was a transformational moment for me when I joined Sigma Chi and I have been a volunteer since the day I was initiated. I have to say the more I give to Sigma Chi, the more I get back. It sounds cliché but it's the reason all of us volunteers in Sigma Chi stay involved.

"I'm at a point in my life now that my children have grown, and I have grandchildren now, that I can actually spend my time and energy assisting the Foundation in raising funds in order to benefit undergraduates who like me were benefited with scholarships when they went to college.

"In addition, all of the programs that Sigma Chi offers to our undergraduate brothers have been amazingly successful, they've made an impact and the results are clear as day. We all, each of us, need to do our best in our own way to give back, pay it forward and make sure Sigma Chi continues to succeed and prosper over the next 166 years."

Constantine Sigs Mark Anderson, **ILLINOIS 1977**, and Loren Butler, **IDAHO 1963**.

"We joined the Sigma Chi Foundation Board of Governors because we believe in the work of the Foundation and have seen first-hand its support make a real difference," said Ursillo. "And, as longtime volunteers, we know the time, dedication and service that many of our alumni make to ensuring the success of our organization.

"The 1855 Society was conceived as a way to honor those brothers who contribute their time and talents to any facet of our Fraternity's work at a local or international level, yet offer their treasure to support the many needs funded by the Foundation such as scholarship aid, chapter support and the leadership continuum."

More information about the 1855 Society will be released later this summer through the Sigma Chi Foundation's website, email and social media channels.

FOUNDATION ALUMNI RECEPTIONS



Images from the Sigma Chi Foundation's May 2022 reception in San Francisco, CA: **TOP LEFT** – Foundation President & CEO Ashley Woods, *EAST TENNESSEE 2000*, speaks to attendees of the event at Presidio Golf Club. **TOP RIGHT:** Chris O'Neill, *WESTERN 1993*, and Jack Preston, *BRITISH COLUMBIA-SIMON FRASER 1996*, were each honored as recipients of the Significant Sig award. **BOTTOM LEFT:** 2008 Significant Sig Robert Zerbst, *MIAMI (OHIO) 1968*, is presented his award from Woods and Significant Sig Jeff Burnside, *WASHINGTON STATE 1980*. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Sweethearts in attendance were serenaded with the singing of "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi." (Photos by Jim Lawson, Jeff Burnside and Cora McDaniel)



A SIGNIFICANT SURPRISE

By Wes Holtsclaw
EAST TENNESSEE 2012

The Home Depot President & CEO Significant Sig Ted Decker, **WILLIAM & MARY 1985**, came to Atlanta's Whitley Hotel expecting a short meeting with company co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Significant Sig Ken Langone, **BUCKNELL 1957**. He arrived to a different handshake and a day he will never forget.

Sigma Chi Foundation Director of Development Jay Philbrick, **CENTRAL FLORIDA 1998**, was meeting with global business leader and Significant Sig Richard H. (Dick) Brown, **OHIO 1969**, when the topic of The Home Depot came up during their conversation.

Brown, who served on the company's board for several years, learned from Philbrick that its President & CEO Ted Decker, **WILLIAM & MARY 1985**, was among the newest members of Sigma Chi's 2022 Significant Sig award class, and there could be an opportunity to present the award during the Sigma Chi Foundation's Spring board meeting in Atlanta.

Shortly following the conversation, Brown reached out to a close friend and fellow Sigma Chi, who happened to be one of the co-founders of that very same company.

Not long after, Philbrick received a call from Brown who said, "Ken and I are in!"

Ken, as in renowned Significant Sig billionaire businessman, investor and philanthropist Ken Langone, **BUCKNELL 1957**.

Aware of the Significant Sig honor and wanting to keep the award a surprise from Decker, Langone privately reached out to The Home Depot leader inviting him to a meeting at The Whitley Hotel.

"It just appeared on my calendar that Ken's in town and he'd love me to stop by the hotel he's staying at to say hello," said Decker. "I hadn't seen him in the two years of COVID lockdown."

On April 21, Langone and Brown flew into Atlanta's Fulton County Executive Airport and made their way to The Whitley Hotel.

Neither Langone nor Decker had ever spoken about Sigma Chi. And Decker was completely unaware of Brown's presence, or anyone outside of Langone for that matter. It would be the surprise of all surprises.

"I've never talked to him about (Sigma Chi)," Langone said. "This is going to be a surprise and I (didn't) want to be the guy, the big mouth letting the cat out of the bag, so the safest thing to do was (to say) nothing to him."

Awaiting Decker was a room full of Sigma Chi Fraternity and Sigma Chi Foundation leaders and Significant Sigs.

It was dressed as a chapter meeting — a ritualistic occasion fit for three very special guests.

"To be here with Ken Langone is a tremendous honor, and to bestow on Ted a big surprise where he becomes a Significant Sig is a big deal," said Brown, a former chairman of Electronic Data Systems and director of DuPont.

"We're both very proud — I am, and Ken is — of Sigma Chi. I speak of Sigma Chi with great affection and pride. To become a Significant Sig, you're in rare company. It's a high honor and I think (Ted's) going to be humbled by it like I was, and others are who get it. It's going to be a fun surprise."

With the room set, the circle established, and the door closed, Langone awaited Decker outside the meeting space.

Upon arrival, Decker reached out to shake Langone's hand.

In their 22-year relationship, it was a grip he had never experienced prior.

"When I walked up and he stood outside the door and greeted me with the handshake — and we'd never had that sort of handshake before — and the knock and to walk into a chapter meeting, it was incredible."

Receiving his Significant Sig award in a chapter meeting setting brought back many memories for Decker.

In a short speech, he thanked Langone and Brown noting that he had not known either were Sigma Chis. He talked about the many memories from Sigma Chi, the friendships made and the pride he felt at receiving the significant alumni award.

"I've always had an incredible sense of pride and brotherhood with Sigma Chi," Decker said. "I appreciate how unique Sigma Chi is. We all like to feel when we're a part of something that what we're a part of is good. But, every once in a while, you get really fortunate that something you're a part of truly is special."



ABOVE — Significant Sig Ted Decker, **WILLIAM & MARY 1985**, is joined (L-R) by Significant Sig Ken Langone, **BUCKNELL 1957**; 72nd Grand Consul Tim Sanderson, **WESTERN 1985**; and Significant Sig Dick Brown, **OHIO 1969**.

RIGHT — Decker receives a special keepsake box from Past Foundation Chairman and Significant Sig John Forst, **GEORGE WASHINGTON 1984**. (Photos by Jay Ford)



“I think the Seven Founders with their literary background and the Ritual and the symbols and the White Cross and the values — I knew as an 18-year-old kid this was something really special.”

For Decker, many of those same values and principles were built into the core of The Home Depot where he began in 2000 as director of business valuation.

Over 22 years, he held several strategic positions across every aspect of the company from business

valuation and strategic business development to retail finance and chief merchant and executive vice president of merchandising.

In 2020, he was named president and chief operating officer at the height of COVID helping the company enhance its online and in-store capabilities to better serve customers. Earlier this year, he was named chief executive officer.

“For me lightning struck twice because The Home Depot is a very similar place as Sigma Chi — a special



TOP — Significant Sig Ted Decker, **WILLIAM & MARY 1985**, is presented a custom crate of In Hoc Napa Valley wines by Significant Sig Brandon Chaney, **INDIANA 1994**.

ABOVE — Chaney presents Significant Sig Ken Langone, **BUCKNELL 1957** (right) and Significant Sig Dick Brown, **OHIO 1969** (left) with their own In Hoc Napa Valley wines prior to their departure at Atlanta’s Fulton County Executive Airport.

(Photos by Jay Ford, Jay Philbrick)

place with special people, with special symbols that represent our values,” Decker said. “As in the White Cross and The Jordan Standard and the Badge and all of the things that’s so special about Sigma Chi, at The Home Depot we have our values wheel with our eight core values and an inverted pyramid which is a leadership structure that all ties back to servant leadership.”

For Langone, the opportunity to honor Decker alongside longtime friend Brown, through their fraternity meant a great deal.

To do it in the city where he helped Arthur Blank and Bernard Marcus found The Home Depot 44 years ago, and where Decker serves 2,300 stores, 500,000 associates and millions of customers made it much more special.

“This man has one of my babies,” Langone said of Decker. “Just think of The Home Depot and, now, 44 years later. We started it in ‘78 and opened up our first store in ‘79 here in Atlanta. This was three guys of no note, barely able to raise two million bucks to start a company.

“To our credit we always had this notion of a special culture. That culture is principally what we’re talking about here. Everybody matters. Ted now is the keeper of the grail. He’s going to be fabulous. We know that and we saw it with all of his earlier responsibilities within the company. Everything he’s done, he’s done well. He’s been high potential forever. Now that high potential has paid off.”

Langone joked that his future philanthropic efforts and estate was riding on Decker’s success.

“I know his values and I know he will embrace them. I know he knows our culture and he will enhance it and nature it. His accomplishments speak for themselves.

“How do I feel? I sleep like a baby at night knowing he’s taking over from Craig Menear, who took over from Frank Blake. We’ve had a succession of a third CEO who is a home run. I sleep well.”

VALUES SYSTEMS:

Leadership principles impacted Significant Sig Ted Decker, **WILLIAM & MARY 1985**, as an undergraduate Sig. Today a similar values-based approach guides him as President & CEO of The Home Depot



"One of the things that's so great about Sigma Chi, and is similar to The Home Depot, is they each are so based and ingrained on values systems – in leadership values systems and servant leadership.

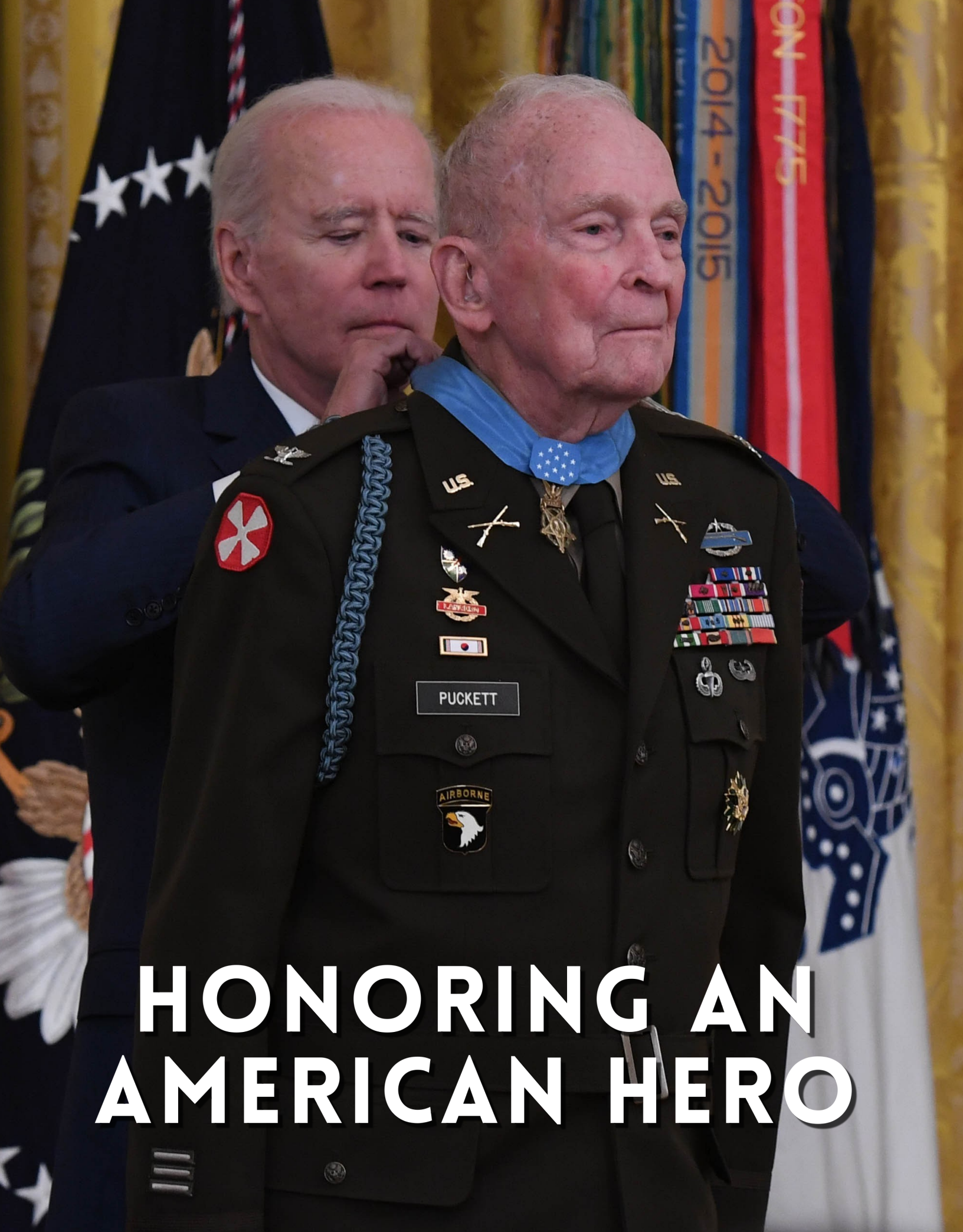
"We learned as brothers to be a good person, to be a good man, what that means and what that represents, and to be a true servant leader and a true friend of other people. When I got to The Home Depot, while they don't have the White Cross and The Jordan Standard, we have our values wheel and inverted pyramid.

"In most leadership pyramids, the CEO is at the top and everyone else is at the bottom. What The Home Depot does is invert that. The customers are on top, the front-line store associates and support teams follow, and at the very bottom is the CEO. That is to represent servant leadership. We are at the bottom of the pyramid and it is our responsibility to do whatever we can for our front-line associates so we can take care of our customers.

"That notion of servant leadership, it's not about you, it's not about what your personal motivations are, it's about the cause. For Sigma Chi, it's about the Fraternity, it's about brotherhood. Today, it's about The Home Depot, our associates, our customers. I've been just so blessed that at 18 I was introduced to such leadership principles at Sigma Chi, and now with 22 years at The Home Depot."

THE HOME DEPOT INVERTED PYRAMID & VALUES WHEEL





**HONORING AN
AMERICAN HERO**



*LEFT: Significant Sig Col. Ralph Puckett, Jr., **GEORGIA TECH 1946**, receives the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Joe Biden at The White House on May 21, 2021. ABOVE: Then 2nd Lt. Puckett receiving his second Distinguished Service Cross from President Lyndon B. Johnson. (Images courtesy of The White House and Puckett Family)*

On November 25, 1950, 23-year old then First Lieutenant Ralph Puckett, **GEORGIA TECH 1946**, commander of the Eighth Army Ranger Company, was leading the advance of the 25th Infantry Division when his heroic actions at Hill 205 in the vicinity of Unsan, Korea went above and beyond the call of duty.

During his action, Puckett led his small force of men through six assaults by hostile forces that outnumbered them ten to one. During the attacks, he was wounded multiple times by grenade and mortar fragments and refused evacuation.

When their position was in danger of being completely overrun, he ordered his men to leave him behind. They disobeyed the order and retrieved him while under fire. He was honored with a Distinguished Service Cross.

And although he was offered a medical discharge for his wounds, Puckett refused and served the United States for more than 50 years.

Along with the Korean War, he fought in Vietnam,

earning a second Distinguished Service Cross. Over his career, Col. Puckett also earned two Silver Stars, and five Purple Hearts among numerous military decorations. He was an inaugural inductee into the Ranger Hall of Fame in 1992 and spent 12 years as the 75th Ranger Regiment's honorary colonel.

On May 21, 2021, his Distinguished Service Cross from the Korean War was upgraded to the Medal of Honor with a special ceremony at The White House – making Puckett the sixth Sigma Chi to receive the nation's highest military honor.

President Joseph R. Biden said of Puckett: "He leads from the front. He leads by example. He leads with heart. He is a Ranger, and that's how Rangers lead – that's how you lead."

The Sigma Chi Foundation was proud to host Col. Puckett and distinguished Sigma Chi military leaders during a special event at the National Infantry Museum in Fort Benning, GA on April 23 to add the honor of Significant Sig to this American hero.



Col John Lubas, **WAKE FOREST 1997**, Deputy Commanding Officer for Operations for the 101st Airborne Division, meets with mentor and new Significant Sig Col. Ralph Puckett, Jr., **GEORGIA TECH 1946**, following an awards presentation in Puckett's honor at Fort Benning, GA on April 23, 2022.

THE COL. PUCKETT I KNOW

BY COL. JOHN LUBAS, WAKE FOREST 1997

**DEPUTY COMMANDING OFFICER FOR OPERATIONS
101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIR ASSAULT)**

Editor's Note: The following is the special introductory speech given prior to the Significant Sig award presentation to Col. Ralph Puckett, Jr. on April 23 at the National Infantry Museum in Ft. Benning, GA.

I can't tell you how honored I am to play a small part in (this Significant Sig) ceremony. Like many generations of Rangers and infantrymen, Col. Puckett directly impacted my life.

I first met Col. Puckett as a lieutenant, and I am grateful for our routine contact throughout my career as I served as a Ranger Company Commander

and Field Grade, and followed in his footsteps to command 2-502 Infantry, "Strike Force," and again as I served as Commander of the Regimental Troops Special Battalion in the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Some of you are familiar with Col. Puckett's life story and his truly phenomenal achievements. Most of you are aware that Col. Puckett served his country in and out of uniform for more than 50 years and you are aware of his valor during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, during which he was awarded five purple hearts, two silver stars and the distinguished cross for his actions in both Korea and Vietnam, one of



When I was invited to speak at this ceremony, I shared my excitement with the leadership of the 101st Airborne Division and then I reached out to the soldiers I served with in the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Every single soldier I spoke with shared a meaningful story of Col. Puckett. And it was really clear just how significant an impact he had made on each.

— Col. John Lubas, **WAKE FOREST 1997**



which was upgraded to the Medal of Honor in 2021.

Most of you know that Col. Puckett formed and commanded one of the first ranger units since the Rangers were disbanded following World War II.

It’s worth noting this occurred during a period when the Army was slowly integrating military units. Then Second Lieutenant Puckett selected a diverse group of men that was representative of our society later stating: “In my mind, race, ethnicity, religion or region never counted for much; what mattered was what they had behind their belt buckles and in between their ears. Did they have the guts and brains to be infantrymen and Rangers.”

Many of you know that Col. Puckett is considered the architect of the modern-day Ranger Regiment and are aware that he served as Honorary Colonel of the Ranger Regiment for a period 10 years. And most are aware that after he retired Col. Puckett continued his life of service and that multiple organizations that focused on developing leadership, teamwork and encouraging service to our nation.

Col. Puckett’s awards and achievements are many and well-known. But I’d like to share a few more personal memories.

When I was invited to speak at this ceremony, I shared my excitement with the leadership of the

101st Airborne Division and then I reached out to the officers and NCOs I served with in the Ranger Regiment.

Every soldier I spoke with shared a meaningful story of Col. Puckett. And it was really clear just how significant an impact he had made on each. Some recalled Col. Puckett’s comments on leadership and selfless service during the Infantry Officer Basic Course, others remembered his words of encouragement at a Ranger School PT test, others still hear his ‘Don’t quit Ranger’ at the turnaround of a 12-mile foot march.

Others remembered a change of command at Fort Lewis, when he moved his chair out from underneath the cover to sit in the pouring rain and share some hardship with his Rangers in formation.

Others were grateful for the lifeline he offered after they were too candid with the RASP (Ranger Assessment and Selection Program) board. And still others shared memories of Col. Puckett entering their TOC (Tactical Operations Center) in Afghanistan or Iraq on a dark or difficult night and his caring words that helped them deal with the loss of a friend.

To a man, every soldier I spoke with shared that the mere presence of Col. Puckett gave them the strength to move further, faster, fight harder, stand taller and

strive to be better. He also routinely reminded us to be proud but never satisfied.

Although I've admired Col. Puckett for my entire adult life, it wasn't until several years ago that I learned he was a Sigma Chi — and I wasn't at all surprised.

The similarities between the Ranger Creed and the Jordan Standard are striking, and the virtues demanded by both organizations are nearly identical. Both the Ranger Tab and the White Cross require more of the wearer than the world requires of other men. Like the Ranger Tab, those who wear the White Cross of Sigma Chi accept the responsibility to live by a higher standard.

The Fraternity's founding fathers declared that the White Cross will never be worn over any breast which does not beat with pure, generous and noble emotions, and by no man who is not a man of honor.

As I re-read The Jordan Standard last week, I couldn't help but think as if Isaac M. Jordan was referring to Col. Puckett when he defined the following standard for membership in Sigma Chi: "A man of good character, a student of fair ability, with ambitious purposes, a congenial disposition, possessed of good morals and having a high sense of honor and a deep sense of personal responsibility."

While in uniform, while serving as the Honorary Colonel of the 75th Regiment and in retirement, Col. Puckett has demonstrated to generations of soldiers, officers and Sigma Chis the standards to which we all should strive to achieve.

The close relationship between Sigma Chi and military service is well-known. Throughout our nation's history, Sigma Chis have been drawn to serving especially during times of conflicts. In fact, nearly 10,000 Sigma Chis served their country and wore the uniform during World War II, and 738 made the ultimate sacrifice.

Sigma Chis have served in every conflict since the Civil War, and to date 918 Sigma Chis have been killed in the service of their country.

I find it wholly appropriate that we meet here at the National Infantry Museum, a place that memorializes the soldiers who demonstrated our shared virtues and values to present this award to Col. Puckett.

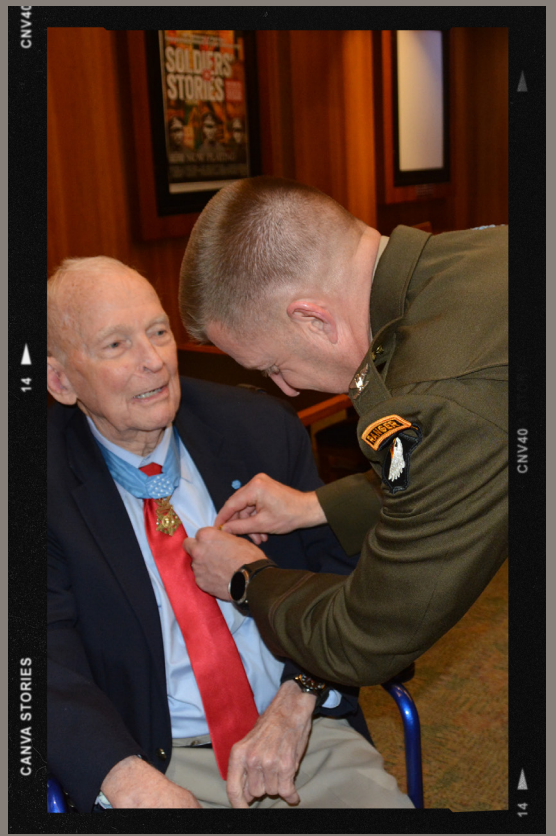
To the Puckett family, I again want to let you know how much Col. Puckett means to us and thank you for sharing him with us.

Our nation is blessed to have men like Col. Puckett, and it is truly remarkable how many lives he has touched.

Col. Puckett, thank you again for the lifeline you threw me at RASP. I certainly would not be here today without you. And, more importantly, thank you for the example you set, thank you for challenging us to be better in every aspect of our lives, and thank you for the positive influence you have been to thousands of soldiers, Sigma Chis and families. There is no doubt that the White Cross of Sigma Chi has gained new luster by your life.

Rangers Lead the Way! In Hoc Signo Vinces!

AT RIGHT: Pictures from the Significant Sig presentation to Medal of Honor recipient Col. Ralph Puckett, Jr., **GEORGIA TECH 1946**, on Saturday, April 23 at the National Infantry Museum in Fort Benning, GA. Among those in attendance were Col. Puckett and his wife, Jean; Sigma Chi military leaders Col. John Lubas, **WAKE FOREST 1997**; Col. Jimmy Hathaway, **OKLAHOMA 1991**; Cpt. Giovanni Tomasi, **GEORGE WASHINGTON 2012**; Cpt. Aaron Smith, **CALIFORNIA-DAVIS 2011**; Sigma Chi Foundation Past Chairman John Forst, **GEORGE WASHINGTON 1984**; Foundation Chief Marketing Officer Jay Ford, **EASTERN ILLINOIS 1985**; and In Hoc Napa Valley proprietor and Significant Sig Brandon Chaney, **INDIANA 1993**. (Images by Cora McDaniel, Beth Ford, Jay Ford)

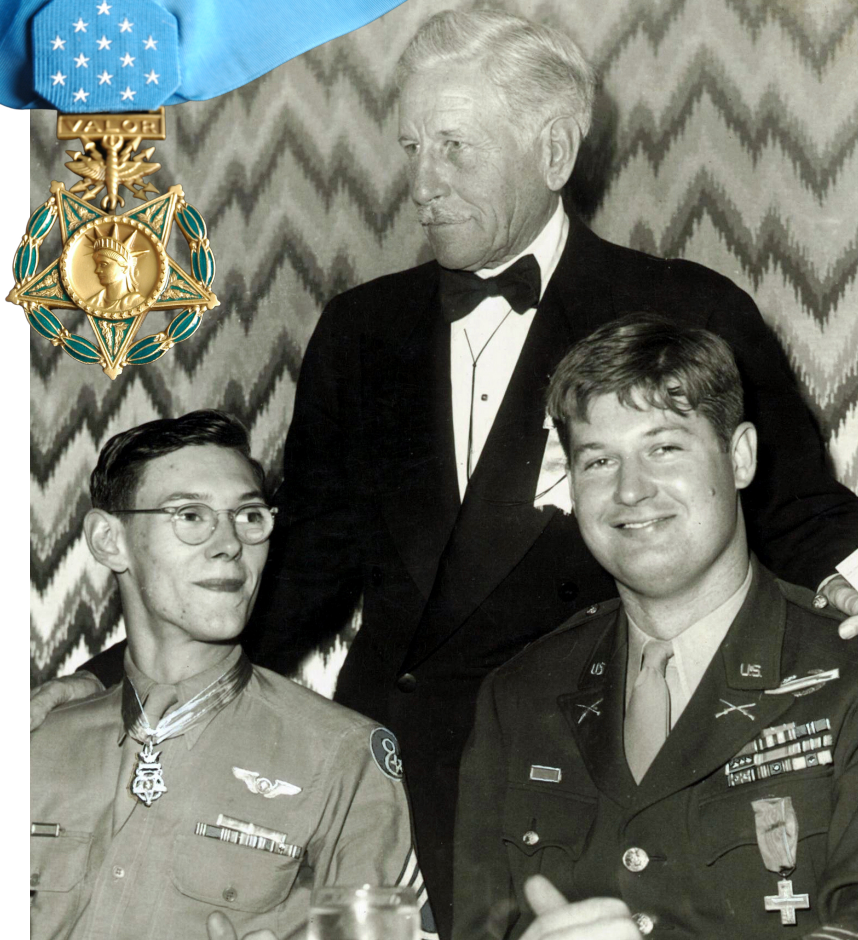


MEDAL OF HONOR SIGS

The Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Services of the United States.

Since the medal's inception on December 21, 1861, six members of our Fraternity are known to have received this honor including 2022 Significant Sig Col. Ralph Puckett, Jr., **GEORGIA TECH 1946**.

Here are the stories of the five other Sigma Chis whose heroism and personal sacrifice exemplified a deep love of country, further inspiring generations of Americans.



**Vosler (left) and Britt (right)
at 1945 Grand Chapter**

LT. CHARLES E. KILBOURNE OHIO STATE 1893

Within a few yards of enemy lines, while under enemy fire Kilbourne climbed a telegraph pole in full view of the enemy to repair a broken telegraph wire. His actions succeeded in reestablishing telegraphic communication to the front.

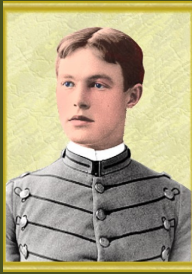
Lt. Kilbourne received the award on May 6, 1905 for "distinguished gallantry in action" during the Philippines Insurrection at Paco Bridge on the Philippine Islands on February 5, 1899.

After a distinguished career, Kilbourne retired from military service in 1936 to become the head of the Virginia Military Institute. He was also known as the author of a very successful series of children's books. He entered the Chapter Eternal on November 12, 1963.

SIGNIFICANT SIG LT. SAMUEL I. PARKER NORTH CAROLINA-CHAPEL HILL 1917

Under heavy enfilade fire from enemy machine guns, Parker, ordered his depleted platoon to follow him in an attack upon the strong point in order to close a gap in Allied lines. The company followed Parker to the crest of the hill and took the quarry by storm capturing 6 machineguns and about 40 prisoners. The next day the assault on enemy positions continued and Parker received a wound in the foot, but refused to be evacuated until his unit's objective was achieved. Despite his wound, and at times crawling on his hands and knees, Parker led his battalion through heavy enfilade fire and succeeded in finally closing the gap in the lines. He remained in command of his battalion until they consolidate the newly established line.

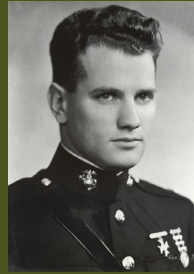
Lt. Parker received the medal on December 31, 1937 for "conspicuous gallantry and intredipity above and beyond the call of duty" during World War I near Soissons, France July 18 and 19, 1918.



Kilbourne



Parker



Cannon

Parker returned to active duty in World War II, but spent the rest of his life in the textile industry. He entered the Chapter Eternal on December 1, 1976.

LT. GEORGE HAM CANNON MICHIGAN 1941

While in command of the 6th Defense Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, U.S. Marine Corps, Cannon was wounded by enemy shellfire. He refused to be evacuated until the last of his men who had also received wounds during the bombing were evacuated, and directed the reorganization of his command post until forcibly removed. As a result of his utter disregard of his own condition he died from loss of blood.

Lt. Cannon, received the medal posthumously for "for distinguished conduct in the line of his profession, extraordinary courage and disregard of his own condition" during the Japanese bombing of Sand Island in the Midway Islands on December 7, 1941.

SIGNIFICANT SIG CAPT. MAURICE L. BRITT ARKANSAS 1941

Under heavy enemy fire, Britt, and a handful of his men repelled a counterattack by dozens of German infantry. During the intense fire fight, Britt received grenade wounds to his side; chest, face and hands. Despite his wounds, he refused to accept medical attention until ordered to do so by his battalion commander after the battle. His bold, aggressive leadership, utterly disregarding superior enemy numbers, resulted in capture of several enemy soldiers, and enabled a number of captured Americans to escape.

Captain Britt received the medal on March 24, 1944 for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty" during World War II north of Mignano, Italy on November 10, 1943.

Britt, who played one season of pro football with the Detroit Lions prior to World War II, went on to participate in the invasion of Africa, Sicily and Anzio Beach where he lost an arm and a foot. He also received the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver and Bronze stars and a purple heart. He served as the 11th Lieutenant Governor of Arkansas and entered Chapter Eternal on November 26, 1995.

SIGNIFICANT SIG SGT. FORREST T. VOSLER SYRACUSE 1948

While serving as a radio operator-air gunner on a mission over Bremen, Germany, Vosler's aircraft was severely damaged by anti-aircraft fire. Crippled, and forced out of formation, they immediately came under fire from enemy aircraft. During the attack, Vosler suffered severe wounds in the legs, thighs, chest, face, and both eyes. Enemy fire also severely wounded the tail gunner, rendering him unconscious. Declining to take first aid treatment, Vosler defended the tail of the aircraft by maintaining a steady stream of deadly fire despite the limitations of his impaired vision. Ultimately, the pilot had to ditch the aircraft and Vosler's last act before exiting was to repair a damaged radio and send a distress signal working entirely by touch. Lapsing into unconsciousness several times, Vosler was able to drag himself onto the wing of the ditched aircraft, and kept the wounded tail gunner afloat until other crew members could rescue them.

Sgt. Vosler received the medal on September 6, 1944 for "conspicuous gallantry in action against the enemy above and beyond the call of duty" during World War II over Bremen, Germany on December 20, 1943.

Following the war, Vosler served his fellow soldiers as a member of the United States Veterans Administration and entered Chapter Eternal on February 17, 1992.



ABOVE: Three of the nine recipients of the Sigma Chi Military Service Scholarship during the 2021 to 2022 academic year (from left) Capt. Taylor (Jeff) Lockwood, **SOUTH FLORIDA 2014**; SPC Ryker Rex, **UTAH STATE 2021**; Sgt. Benjamin Hanks, **WILLAMETTE 2018**.

PAYING IT FORWARD TO THOSE WHO SERVE

Established in 2012, the Sigma Chi Military Service Scholarship was created to provide support to Sigma Chi members who intend to continue their undergraduate or graduate education during or following military service.

The award was made possible through the lead donations of Significant Sigs Tim Michael, **OHIO STATE 1970**; John Berylson, **BROWN 1975**; and Dr. Dan Walsh, **SOUTHEAST MISSOURI 1971**, among others, and is available to brothers who are currently serving or have served in any branch of their country's military.

"Sigma Chi's values molded me during my undergraduate years and continue to serve me well today," said 2020 and 2021 recipient Capt. Taylor (Jeff) Lockwood, **SOUTH FLORIDA 2014**. "Whether under the canopy of a parachute somewhere in North Carolina or conducting combat operations across the

Middle East, I have relied on Sigma Chi's values every single day of my career. Being able to pursue my education through the generosity of the Foundation's donors has helped me not only further my career, but further the interests of the United States."

Since the 2013 to 2014 academic year, 79 scholarships totaling \$189,000 have been awarded to military Sigs.

"As a Sigma Chi, I have always strived to better my brothers, my national fraternity and myself," said 2021 recipient Sgt. Beau Andrea, **SOUTH FLORIDA 2022**. "This scholarship not only (had) an impact on my education, but my future as well."

To help further our support of our young Sigma Chi brothers in service, visit <https://donate.sigmachi.org/military> to contribute to the Military Service Scholarship Fund today.



// MEET THE FOUNDATION + SIGNIFICANT SIG JEFF BURNSIDE //

A long-time television reporter and independent journalist, Significant Sig Jeff Burnside, **WASHINGTON STATE 1980**, can add many titles to his storied resume: Author, 10-time Emmy-award winner, National Press Club honoree.

Today, as the Foundation's Director of Development he gives back to Sigma Chi working with alumni in Northern California, Pacific Northwest, Montana and Wyoming to support academic scholarships and leadership programming that impacts young brothers.

Among his television stops were roles as senior investigative reporter at KOMO-TV in Seattle and WTVJ (NBC 6) in Miami. He is a renowned leader in Environmental Journalism as a Scripps Fellow and through various major associations.

Burnside has worked with the Washington State undergraduate chapter for many years, serving as the chapter advisor and the fundraising coordinator for rebuilding the chapter house.

**SEVEN MEN IN A
TINY OHIO ROOM
CHANGED THE
WORLD.**

**YOU CAN HELP A
NEW GENERATION
DO THE SAME.**

With your help, we can reach our year-end goals and provide much-needed academic scholarship and leadership education to our undergraduate brothers.

Scan the QR code below to learn more and join us June 22 to 28 for our annual **Founders' Week of Giving.**

