

'Animal House' image haunts frats

By C.J. RISAK

"Toga! Toga! Toga! Toga!" That's the rallying cry of the Delta fraternity in the movie, "Animal House," when they discover their house is about to be closed because of their outrageous behavior and low grades.

The movie's setting is a college campus in the northeastern part of the country. "Toga" parties weren't the only things the Deltas did to keep themselves amused. Other "activities" included hazing pledges, attacking the neighboring fraternity, harassing the administration, peering in the sorority house's windows, starting food fights, shoplifting, stealing test papers—and drinking an incredible amount of beer and liquor along the way.

Who would ever argue with a life-style like that? Free to live out all of your fantasies, to do whatever you like without regard to the consequences. If fraternities are half as much fun as they seemed to be in the movie, it would be worth it to go back to college

just to join one. Of course, fraternities can't be the same as they are in "Animal House." That took place back in the early 1960s, and times have changed. So what are fraternities like nowadays? In Southfield, you don't have to go far to find out. There are fraternities here associated with Lawrence Institute of Technology, a private school on 18 Mile and Northwestern. LIT has three fraternities and a sorority. One of the fraternities—Phi Kappa Upsilon—is located on Nine Mile in a large, castle-like house surrounded by a cyclone fence. But there are no beer bottles on the lawn and nothing ever flies out the windows. In fact, the house looks well kept—not at all like the "Animal House."

Steve Shapiro, a member of Phi Kappa Upsilon and president of the LIT Interfraternity Council, says fraternities aren't all they're cracked up to be in the movie.

"WE REALLY TRY to change some of the misconceptions that people have about fraternities," Shapiro said.

"Most of the publicity we get is bad. Like that movie that came out last year—'The Hazing.'"

"It's not like that at all. We don't allow any physical hazing. In fact, it's against the law."

The law didn't bother the Deltas in "Animal House." No hazing? That's half the fun of a fraternity, at least in the movie. But what about all the other neat stuff?

"Lawrence Tech isn't very good for parties," Shapiro said. "We try to bring some kind of social activity to the campus. Our fraternity (Phi Kappa Upsilon) was founded by the founder of the institute, Russell Lawrence, because he felt the campus needed some social life."

So what kind of social life do the Phi Kappa Upsilon's have? What is their "Animal House" like?

At first glance, it doesn't appear to be much like the Delta's house. The inside is neat and clean.

"When the Institute moved here from Highland Park in 1956, we moved in here," Shapiro said. "We bought it from some gangsters. They needed the

money because they had been busted. "They built it in 1949 and we bought it in 1959," Shapiro explained. "They used to have all sorts of hidden rooms and hiding places. We've found most of them, but some are still around here."

The fence that surrounds the house was electrified by the former tenants to keep unwanted clientele away. Above the front door, there's a tower that used to be a lookout post. The upstairs is decorated in the cast house style of the era. And hidden drawers under the kitchen cabinets and cubbyholes inside the pillars are still there.

It's not hard to imagine why the Deltas could do with a place like that. Half the administration would be locked up in some hidden compartment. Their rival fraternity would be hanging on the electric fence.

But times have changed. Fraternities aren't like these seen in the movies.

"We have some great parties here," Shapiro said. "Last month, we had our own 'toga' party, and there were 180 people here."

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