

M E M O R I A L I S S U E

# "THE Results WELL Known"

**"God so loves Alpha Sigma Phi,  
he gave us Ralph Burns."**

Those words from Leonard Hultquist Alabama '60, began the tribute to Alpha Sigma Phi's Executive Secretary Emeritus, Ralph F. Burns.

And what a tribute it has been. From the fraternity world. From neighbors. From friends. And from the countless Alpha Sig Brothers whose lives he touched and enriched.

On September 25, 1993, Brother Ralph passed into the Omega Chapter. But the legacy he leaves us will remain as long as the Mystic Circle forms; as long as one man reaches out to another and calls him "brother."

It is said that every organization needs a conscience. In many ways Ralph Frank Burns was Alpha Sigma Phi's conscience. It's heart and it's soul.

Alpha Sigma Phi was Ralph Burns. And Ralph Burns was Alpha Sigma Phi.

For 61 years Brother Ralph pledged his life to the principles and ideals that bind us as a Fraternity. And his life exemplified what is good about the fraternity movement in our nation.

Every man who pledged our Seven Points and entered the Mystic Circle for the past six decades have been influenced by Ralph's guidance and unfailing commitment to an unparalleled experience of brotherhood.

His commitment to Alpha Sigma Phi was deep. His love of our Fraternity broad. And his belief in our credo complete. You could see it in his smile; feel it in his touch; and experience it — as thousands of undergraduates did at a score of conventions and leadership conferences — when Brother Ralph gave his unfailingly warm greeting and extended the Grip of our Brotherhood.



## I Am My Brother's Keeper

Ralph Frank Burns was born in New Castle, Pa., May 12, 1912 to the late James Andrew Burns and Louise Amanda Snyder Burns. He attended high school in Youngstown, Ohio and was graduated from Ohio Wesleyan in 1935. In 1932, Brother Burns was initi-

## INSIDE

*Remembrances from Past Presidents*

*A Photo Chronology of Ralph Burns*

*Events and Achievements: A Time Line of the Life of Ralph Burns*





Top: As he so often did, Ralph is found mingling among the undergraduates. Here he is in 1992 with the undergraduate hosts from UNCC at the National Leadership Conference. Right: Brother Burns drapes the Nittany Lion Shrine with the Alpha Sigma Phi flag at Penn State (1991).

ated into Alpha Sigma Phi and served Epsilon Chapter in various offices — including H.S.P.

After graduation, he spent a brief career with Ohio Edison before being selected to serve as Alpha Sigma Phi's sixth Executive Secretary in 1936.

For the next 40 years, Brother Burns kept the flame of brotherhood alive as he pulled, tugged, cajoled, soothed and shepherded Alpha Sigma Phi through good times and bad.

Some 29,000 men, more than one-half of all brothers initiated in our 148 year history, became members of Alpha Sigma Phi under Ralph's guidance. Additionally, three mergers (Pi Phi Pi, Alpha Kappa Pi and Alpha Gamma Upsilon) added to the rolls of Alpha Sigma Phi as did the addition of eight new chapters.

He guided Alpha Sigma Phi through the throes of the Great Depression, the

calamity of World War II, the uncertainty of the Korean Conflict and the upheavals of the Vietnam War.

All along the way, Brother Ralph appeared guided by a mission. A mission to share the ideals of our Brotherhood and give men an opportunity to share a foundation in honesty, decency and integrity.

So strong was this mission that even during the darkest hours of World War II, Ralph's sense of mission shined. As all college fraternities suffered the depletion of available men, chapters nationwide closed and revenues dried up. Brother Ralph took a day job and spent his evenings consoling alumni members and operat-



ing chapters to ensure men had a fraternity home when returning from war.

Ralph believed in the importance of

the undergraduate experience. To him, our charge to "foster college homes" meant more than merely providing a house in which to live. It meant providing a family-like atmosphere through which young men became gentlemen, scholars and patriots.

Writing in 1982, Brother Burns commented "Alpha Sigma Phi used to be a Brotherhood that added final polish to a man. Today's undergraduate doesn't have the benefit of value-setting and skills development that used to come from family, church, community and school. So now we must provide a lot more than polish. The challenge and need is great. But we know from over 136 years that



Ralph always greeted each brother with a warm, friendly grip.





*Ralph Burns always took part 100% in every Alpha Sig meeting.*

the program is sound, that it meets the ideals of our country."

In short, he saw the duty of fraternity to be our brothers keeper.

And that concept he shared and bolstered throughout the fraternity world.

Gale Wilkerson, president of the Delta Tau Delta Educational Foundation notes: "We could be an hour into serious [interfraternity] discussions and deliberations on fraternity budgets and Ralph would raise his hand and bring everyone back to reality by asking the question "What does this have to do with improving brotherhood in our chapters?"

Such was the legacy he left for others to share.

But Ralph's good works didn't stop at the Fraternity door.

Ralph took his deep religious beliefs and convictions about the goodness of mankind to the streets.

Brother Ralph served his community of Delaware, Ohio through numerous civic and charitable activities.

"I believe our community has lost a very wonderful man," said Everett P. Weber Jr., president of Delaware's Grady Memorial Hospital. "He was at every planning meeting of the city and played an integral part of trying to keep the city on track."

In Delaware, he served as president of the Delaware Rotary Club, vice president of Grady Memorial Hospital's board of trustees, president of the Hayes Athletic Boosters, chairman of the United Way campaign, and served his church as a board chairman for Asbury United Methodist Church.

He was also a regular volunteer at the

Delaware County Fair, where just this past year, he manned the gate collecting tickets.

And at 81 years of age, he led an activist movement to halt the destruction of city trees by placing himself in front of the bulldozers.

When Ralph believed in a cause, he believed.

#### **Mr. Alpha Sig**

From National Conventions, to chapter visits, to undergraduate sojourns to National Headquarters, Ralph could be seen spending time with Brothers.

Even after retirement, his presence at national gatherings provided a spiritual sense of the continuity of our Brotherhood. His

***Every Alpha Sig knew Ralph Burns. And, at times, it seemed that Ralph Burns knew every Alpha Sig.***

impish smile, his laugh and his genuine interest in everyone with whom he spoke were all Ralph Burns hallmarks.

Every Alpha Sig knew Ralph Burns. And, at times, it seemed that Ralph Burns knew every Alpha Sig.

"I remember Ralph for so many things, but particularly for his memory. I have been to hundreds of meetings with brothers of all ages in our Fraternity and Ralph could always remember names and your Chapter of initiation with ease," says Robert Cabello, Eastern Michigan '70. "I asked him [once] why this apparently meant so much to him to figure out who was who — and then announce it with much [enthusiasm]. He responded: 'because regardless of age, chapter origin or background, we all need to see the diversity and sharedness of our Brotherhood.'"

Ralph never lost focus on the undergraduate experience of brotherhood. His time, attention and unnerving memory left many lasting impressions on undergraduate members — including what it means to be a brother.

And when he met a Brother — no matter under what circumstances — he always greeted them with our Secret Handshake and a smile that gave hint to his kind and gracious soul.

"When I think of Ralph Burns, I smile", writes Alan Breedlove, Penn State '77, "He was that kind of guy. He had a gift of making everyone around him feel special. It was all the more special because Ralph was so blissfully unaware of his effect on people. He was the most humble man I have ever known."

Grand Historian Robert Kutz, California '67, remembers Ralph this way: "Despite the vast breadth of the body of colleagues, friends and Brothers with whom Ralph worked through the years, it was not uncommon for him to greet a Brother after a score of years



*Brother Ralph Burns poses for the last time with the Grand Council at the 1993 National Leadership Conference.*



without personal contact and to recall the office or offices the Brother held as an undergraduate, his chapter and initiation year."

And John L Blackburn Mo Valley '49, says "[Ralph] was the symbol of all the good qualities of the fraternal association. Ralph's grace and spirit lives on in each of the lives of those of us who shared a moment with him."

Brother Ralph received many

**"You call me Mr. Alpha Sig—and I'm not. You are."**

accolades from Alpha Sigma Phi during his life, including the Delta Beta Xi Award, the Distinguished Merit Award and the Distinguished Service Award.

But so entwined were Ralph Burns and our Fraternity, that he was often called "Mr. Alpha Sigma Phi," a title which may, at times, increased his humility.

At the 1993 National Leadership Conference in Somerset, New Jersey, he told an emotional group of alumni members:

"You call me Mr. Alpha Sig — and I'm not. You are. You and all the undergraduate members who make up our Fraternity. You are what makes it great — and I am so grateful to be a part of it."

And we, forever, are grateful to Ralph for being part of him.

## The Mystic Circle

His decades of uninterrupted service makes it perhaps fitting that Brother Burns passed away in the circle of brotherhood that marked his life.

"We were concluding a long joint meeting of the Grand Council and Educational Foundation Trustees

when we asked each member to tell what the Fraternity means to him," recalls John Chaney, Indiana '67. "Ralph was the last to speak. He gave a moving recitation of the Fraternity's history, our triumphs and adversities.

"He spoke of what the Fraternity meant to him and why he chose to remain involved. He expressed his pride that both his sons are Alpha Sigs and stated that though he was not a wealthy man, he was a millionaire. He said how happy he was that the Fraternity's Mission Statement drew on Christian faith and our Supreme Being. And he challenged us to be ever mindful of the reasons why our Brotherhood exists and thrives.

"He closed his remarks, as he so often did by reciting our open motto — Causa Latet Vis Est Notissima (The Cause is Hidden, the Results Well Known). The room fell silent, contemplating his message and the depths of its emotion. A few moments later, Ralph slumped in his chair. He had died."

It's hard to imagine his passage to the Omega Chapter beginning anywhere more appropriate than within the loving embrace of the

Mystic Circle. Only in the arms of his dear wife Joanna (Ann) and Alpha Sig sons Bruce and Jonathan would have been better.

And it's hard to imagine his passing without thinking about the huge Sig Bust that must be on-going in heaven.

A few weeks after Ralph's death, another famous Alpha Sig — Vincent Price, Yale '30, died as well. It's easy to picture Ralph Burns standing at the gates of heaven saying "Vinnie! Welcome. We've been waiting for you," as he will for all of us one day.

To have seen Ralph Burns was to see peace.

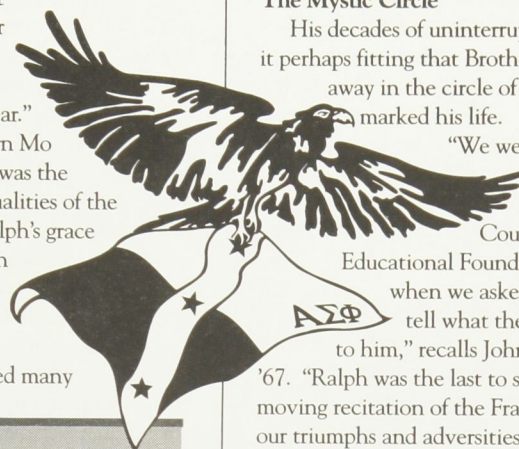
A peace that can only come from his total contentment to offering his life in service to his fellow man.

For that, Alpha Sigs, and all others who knew him are grateful.

The Cause Is Hidden, The Results Well Known?

Well-known indeed.

Thanks, Ralph.



## ALPHA SIGMA PHI AND RALPH F. BURNS

1930

1940

1950

February 21, 1932, Initiated Epsilon Chapter, Ohio Wesleyan University

December 1933, Elected HJP, Epsilon Chapter

Spring 1934, Elected HSP, Epsilon Chapter

September 14, 1936, Named Executive Secretary

1938, Delta Beta Xi Award established

1939, Phi Pi Phi merger

December 6, 1945, Centennial celebration, The Roosevelt Hotel, New York City; Alpha Sigma Phi Memorial Fund established

1946, National Headquarters moved to Delaware, Ohio

Summer 1946, Convention approved addition of Assistant Executive Secretary

September 6, 1946, Alpha Kappa Pi merger

1949, Province System created

Summer 1950, Convention approved addition of Alumni Secretary

1951, Headquarters moves to 24 West William Street

November 1952, elected chairman of the College Fraternity Secretaries Association

December 31, 1952, First Memorial Fund scholarship grants awarded

1953, Chaired Annual Meeting Committee for the NIC

June 1953, design of Fraternity ring adopted

1952-53 school year, 1,733 undergraduate members

1956, Five grants-in-aid awarded by Memorial Fund Trustees



## GRAND SENIOR PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Dear Brothers:*

*A great man has left us. A man who's unconditional love for Alpha Sigma Phi won him praise and admiration from generations of brothers. A constant presence in the lives of thousands, Ralph F. Burns will in many ways live on in who we are as individuals and as a fraternity.*

*I first met Ralph in 1975 when I applied for a chapter consultant position at the national headquarters. Ralph was the kind of guy you couldn't say no to. When I was having second thoughts about the job, he knew how to persuade me. He went right to my girlfriend, now spouse, Rosey. The two of them decided that it would be okay and my "graduate career" with Alpha Sigma Phi began. Now 18 years later and from my position as Grand Senior President, it's hard to believe that Ralph won't be making suggestions, recommendations, and giving me advice on what we should be doing as a national fraternity.*

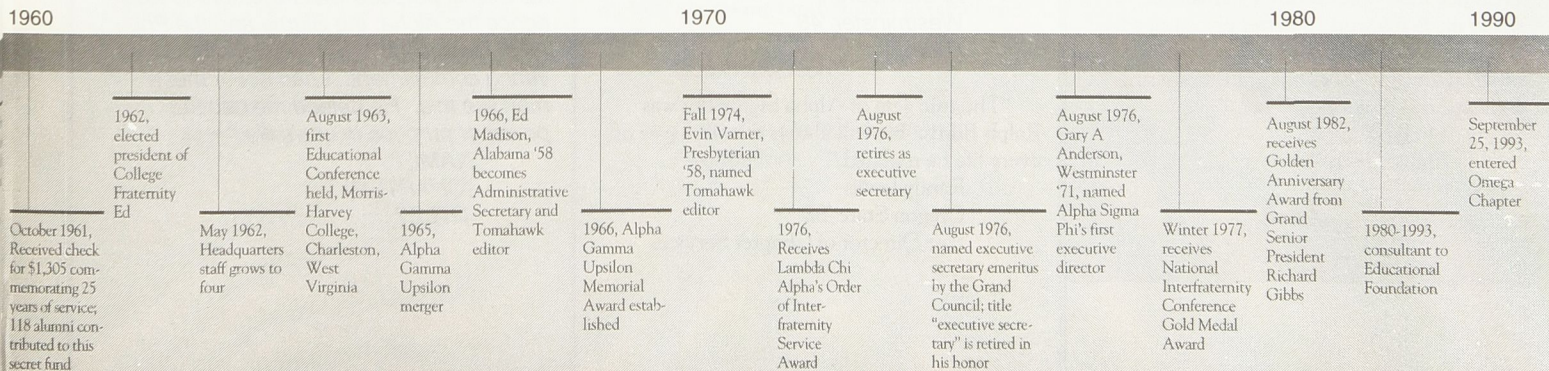
*Ralph's passing into Omega Chapter has left a void in our lives, but not in our future. As only Ralph could do, his last words were no less than a challenge to the Grand Council and Educational Foundation Trustees to carry on the heritage and brotherhood of Alpha Sigma Phi. He spoke of not being rich, but rather of being a millionaire because of being a member of our fraternity. While many of us at the round table that night thanked the fraternity for the positive influences she has made in our lives, Ralph thanked "The Old Gal" for giving him the gift of brotherhood; a gift that he believed transcended earthly possessions and human injustices.*

*As we mourn Ralph's passing, let us not forget his challenge. Alpha Sigma Phi will achieve Ralph's vision of sharing our brotherhood not only among ourselves, but with thousands of young men in future generations. By achieving this, we will truly pay tribute to Mr. Alpha Sig.*

*Goodbye brother and friend. We will miss you.*

*I remain,  
Fraternally yours,*

*Dennis R. Parks, Ed.D.  
Grand Senior President*





## Thoughts and Remembrances from the Grand Council, Staff, Volunteers and Chapters

Thoughts and Remembrances from the  
Grand Council, Staff, Volunteers and  
Chapters

"Ralph Burns represented, to me, the  
ideals of Alpha Sigma Phi Fraternity. I feel  
truly blessed to have known Ralph and to  
have been able to call him my brother."

Stan Thurston  
Iowa State '66  
Grand Junior President

*"Ralph and Joanna have taken a special  
hand at beautification projects and  
through their contacts we have mutual  
friends that have shared special Ralph  
stories with us. The effects of Ralph go  
far beyond the fraternal world and into the  
world of flowers; and on."*

Mark Williams  
Rio Grande '79  
National Scholarship Director

"He lived the ritual and more importantly,  
believed it. He knew the power in adhering  
to its precepts. He was a happy man."

Larry Philippi  
Bowling Green '76  
Grand Councilor

*"To Alpha Sigs, Ralph Burns was a  
giant. He is revered like a Founder, as  
well he should be! He could relate to  
undergraduates as easy as he could with  
any alumnus. He had the wisdom of  
Solomon, the patience of Job and a most  
incredible memory."*

John Chaney  
Indiana '67  
Executive Vice President 1990-94

"I have never known anyone who  
believed in our common cause and reason for  
existence more than Brother Burns. He  
singly made my world a better place to be in  
and enriched my life as well as of countless  
others with the virtues of kindness, sharing,  
dedication and sacrifice."

Michael Coccia  
Illinois Tech '42

*"Alpha Sigma Phi was Ralph Burns  
calling card. Today we are indebted to [it]  
for opening up the traditions in this great  
heritage that is our Alpha Sigma Phi. In  
spirit, Ralph was with the second  
founders."*

Frank J. Krebs  
Mount Union '29  
Grand Historian Emeritus

"One of Ralph's extraordinary talents was  
his ability to remember names. He knew the  
names and backgrounds of thousands of Alpha  
Sigma Phi brothers. His amazing memory was  
recalled for me during the final moments of  
his life . . . he proceeded to recall something  
about many of us in the room. He recalled my  
attendance at the 1950 convention in Niagara  
Falls and mentioned that I arrived with a plaid  
tam o'shanter cap (I did)."

Robert E. Miller, chairman  
Connecticut '49  
Educational-Foundation Trustees  
(Brother Miller was present at  
Ralph's death.)

*"God rest his soul — I am truly honored  
to have known Ralph for some 55 years in  
Alpha, Sigma and Phi."*

Jack M. Merrill  
Washington '39

"As Ralph repeatedly told [Fraternity lead-  
ers] when there arose a problem in under-  
standing the meaning of Truth, Wisdom and  
Brotherly Love, 'Turn to the ritual; all the  
answers are there.'"

Larry G. Spees  
Ohio Wesleyan '57  
Secretary

*"[Ralph Burns] was a man of commit-  
ment, of love and purposeful life goals."*

Al Sternbergh  
Westminster '48  
(Title)

"The true gem of Alpha Sigma Phi was  
Ralph Burns. He will always remain a part of  
every life he touched."

Randy Lewis  
Oregon State '82  
Past Director of Chapter Services

*"Yes, Ralph was a gentleman and a  
scholar with a heart beneath his vest.  
Ralph was a man of principle, compas-  
sion, patriotism and love. But most of all,  
Ralph was a man of God. That is why  
everyone respected him. That is why we  
loved him. God bless you Ralph."*

James R. Hammond  
Washington '66  
Past Staff Member

"I am a better person because of having  
known and loved Ralph. We were blessed to  
have Ralph Burns all those years! And Ralph  
would be the first to say he was blessed to  
have the Fraternity all those years!"

Bev Moody  
Vice President for Administration

*"A wonderful guy."*

Charles T. Akre  
Iowa '28  
Grand Senior President 1956-60

"My admiration of Ralph Burns is bound-  
less. Not only Alpha Sigma Phi, but the  
entire fraternity world has suffered a great  
loss."

Emmet Hayes  
Stanford '51  
Grand Senior President 1954-56

*"As a Field Secretary in 1963-64, I  
learned that what I was taught as a pledge  
was all true and that the source of  
[Ralph's] commitment, that his very being,  
his driving purpose was for others to expe-  
rience the Alpha, the Sigma and the Phi.  
All of his actions stemmed from this unwa-  
vering commitment. I had never met a  
man like this. He helped me see the  
power of purpose in one's life."*

NAME?  
(CHAPTER)  
TITLE?



## What The Fraternity World Had to Say

From FarmHouse, Alpha Epsilon Pi, Theta Chi, Alpha Tau Omega, Tau Epsilon Phi and many other fraternal societies touched by Ralph Burns, words of remembrance, of warmth and of kindness along with memorial gifts in his honor have flooded Alpha Sigma Phi's National Headquarters.

Ralph held a singularly unique position in the interfraternity world, being one of a few executives to serve his fraternity for so long.

And more often than not, Ralph is remembered for his warm smile, his dedication to serve others and his commitment to improving the quality of brotherhood.

Ralph was honored by his interfraternity brothers by being elected as president of the Fraternity Executives Association, president of the College Fraternity Editor's Association, and chairing numerous committees in the interfraternity world. He received the National Interfraternity Conference Gold Medal Award and was presented the Fraternity Executive Association's Distinguished Service Award in 1985.

Here are how a few of Ralph's peers remember him.

"Brother Burns will remain alive not only in the memories of his family and loved ones, but also in the minds of the countless lives that he touched in his affiliation with Alpha Sigma Phi, the entire North American Fraternity movement and through his career endeavors. Without a doubt, his countenance is now continuing to serve his fellow souls in the Hereafter."

*Donald M. Apel  
Executive/Foundation Director  
Theta Delta Chi*

"I held Ralph Burns in the highest regard both because of his lifelong professional contribution to the Greek community and his value as a warm and caring person who was a friend to us all."

*William P. Bernier  
Sigma Tau Gamma*

"Ralph was one of the great leaders of the fraternity movement in my time and he should be remembered as such along with the distinguished position he occupies in the annals of Alpha Sigma Phi."

*William E. Forester  
Executive Vice President  
Kappa Alpha Order*

"Alpha Sigma Phi has been blessed to have had the likes of Ralph Burns for these long years and while your loss is probably more keenly felt than by others, the interfraternity world has certainly been deprived of a magnificent man."

*William D. Jenkins, CFRE  
Executive Vice President  
The Phi Kappa Tau Foundation*

"It might be a good idea to stand back and really understand what "fraternity" meant to Ralph and what he meant, not only to Alpha Sigma Phi, but the fraternity system nationwide. He had a lot to offer if asked, and gave of himself 100% in any task he undertook."

*William S. Zerman  
Executive Director/Editor  
Omicron Delta Kappa Society*

"Ralph Burns was interested in others. He cared about people. That's how he lived his life. Rather than wasting away, he died with his boots on, a dignity he richly deserved."

*William P. Schwartz  
Sigma Alpha Mu*

"We could be an hour into serious [interfraternity] discussions and deliberations on fraternity budgets and Ralph would raise his hand and bring everyone back to reality by asking the question "What does this have to do with improving brotherhood in our chapters?"

*Gale Wilkerson  
President  
Delta Tau Delta Educational  
Foundation*

"Many of us in the professional ranks of fraternity management profited from the thoughtful concern and wise judgment passed along by our role model, Ralph F. Burns.

*Robert J. Miller  
President Phi Delta Theta  
Foundation*

"[Ralph] had the unique ability to inspire others to perform seemingly beyond their capabilities. We know that God will raise him up on eagle's wings; bear him on the breath of dawn; make him shine like the sun; and hold him in the palm of His hand. We are comforted by knowing that, at this very moment, Ralph is touching the face of God."

*George W. Spasyk  
Executive Vice President Emeritus  
Lambda Chi Alpha*

Alpha Sigma Phi's Headquarters issued a request for all chapters to honor Brother Burn's passing into Omega Chapter. The following is typical of the response:

- Mu Chapter, University of Washington, held a formal dinner and memorial service, Friday October 1, 1993. The Chapter also planted two Talisman Rose bushes in a special area on Fraternity grounds designated as the Ralph F. Burns Memorial Garden.
- Delta Nu Chapter, Lock Haven University, wore Fraternity badges over black cloth and held a Black Lantern Processional.
- Beta Chi Chapter, American University, held a memorial service, Sunday October 3, 1993, that concluded with a Black Lantern Processional to the Beta Chi Bell, where it was rung three times in Ralph's honor.





Joint Resolution  
of the  
Alpha Sigma Phi  
Grand Council  
and  
Educational Foundation Trustees

*Be it resolved:*

*That the leadership of Alpha Sigma Phi expresses its deep sense of loss and bereavement upon the passing of our beloved Brother Ralph F. Burns, Epsilon Chapter '32, Ohio Wesleyan University, and that our sympathy and prayers are to be shared with Brother Burns' widow Joanna at this time.*

*That we record Brother Burns's last thoughts spoken to us as our own and that in his honor and with our utmost respect, we recommit ourselves to proceed with all diligence in our future campaign as a way of memorializing his words, deeds and actions.*

*We pass these resolutions as an expression of our love for our Brother Ralph Frank Burns. It was an honor and privilege to have him labor among the Brothers of Alpha Sigma Phi for more than 61 years and for us to be with him as he entered the Omega Chapter. Brother Burns will live forevermore in Alpha Sigma Phi and her future will be brighter because of him.*

*September 26, 1993*