



Cal Delta Spotlight

USC House Corporation of Phi Delta Theta | Summer 2020 | University of Southern California

Alumni Office | P.O. Box 80828, Atlanta, Georgia 30366 | www.mygreekgift.org/caldelta

President's Corner Spring 2020



Brothers,
On May 30, we were supposed to have a group of fired up California Delta Alumni watching the Angels take on the

Yankees down in Anaheim. I guess life throws us curve balls sometimes, no pun intended. As I can imagine, the current pandemic must be adding feelings of stress, confusion, and unease to our current situation, but oddly I have also seen it add feelings of camaraderie, solidarity, and resiliency. If you haven't worked or hung out with me over the past years, you should know that I am an eternal optimist. I hope, from the bottom of my heart, that you and all of those you care about are doing well. I also hope that when we get through this, our communities, our companies, our friends, and our families will grow and become even stronger through this adversity.

As you can imagine, operating a rental property during this current pandemic, let alone a fraternity's live-in facility, is extremely difficult. I take my job as house corporation president extremely seriously and want to ensure the safety of all members of California Delta, especially current residents. I have been in constant contact with the university, USC's Fraternity & Sorority Leadership Development office, our general headquarters, our property management company, the current chapter officers, and of course our residents. In order to review what is happening at USC and California Delta due to COVID-19, we have written an article titled "COVID-19: Implications at USC and California Delta" on page four. I hope you find it informative.

During this uncertain time, I would

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Alumni Spotlight: Calvin H. Johnston '54



Editor's Note: For this edition of the newsletter, we're shining the spotlight on brother Cal Johnston '54. Cal has enjoyed a successful career as a real estate developer. Founder of The Johnson Group in 1959, he also serves on the national board of trustees of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Cal and his wife, Marjel, have been married for nearly 64 years and have two children, Jeff and Jan, and six grandchildren.

What was your college experience like?

I received a scholarship that covered tuition, so I needed to work for room and board. To raise money during my sophomore year, I started a publication called *The Ad-Ex*. It was composed of notebook dividers containing advertising above and below various school schedules, sports schedules, and fraternity and sorority phone numbers. I sold the advertising to make a profit but gave 3,000 indexes away to the students for free. Since this was successful, I launched it at UCLA as well. I was at the printer's all the time, so I didn't have much time to socialize. During my junior year, with help from a fellow brother, Rip Foster '52, we put it out at Northwestern and the University of Wisconsin. I developed two other publications that were also supported by advertising, which were also successful. I was also in the Air ROTC and, following graduation, I went into the Air Force.

When did you discover an interest in real estate development?

The Air Force was developing a new base and was selling off buildings at the old one. I bought five of the buildings, each containing four apartments. I learned that I'd need to remove the buildings from the base. I started a community called North Edwards and moved the buildings to that location. Over time, I end up buying land, building houses,

and creating a small shopping center. After my service ended, I moved to Los Angeles and formed Property Research Corp. We developed apartment projects, commercial and industrial parks, and planned communities. Through the Johnston Group, I developed and managed office buildings. **Why is your involvement with the Boys & Girls Club so special to you?**

My parents died when I was five years old and I was raised in a Masonic Home for Children with



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President's Message



Fellow Brothers,

It has been an interesting semester for us all, to say the least. We have all had to make tremendous adjustments and have seen a drastic change in the way we normally do

things. Here at California Delta, we began our spring semester with a successful rush. Thanks to our dedicated and hardworking rush chairs, **Stewart Kirkconnell** and **Sam Bennett**, we were able to secure 21 tremendous young men, forming the Alpha Epsilon Phikeia class. Before it was cut short, brothers got to enjoy a jam-packed semester of brotherhood, socializing, and philanthropy.

Unfortunately, our Spring Puppies Philanthropy, a fan favorite on the Row, was cancelled due to COVID-19. In addition, our philanthropy chairman, **Christian Labertew**, was spearheading the house adoption of an ALS family, helping to assist the family with any needs they may have. In regard to leadership and awards, the brothers of Cal Delta are proud to be shaping the future of Greek life. We currently have six brothers on IFC, making up a whopping 40% of the council.

Lastly, we are extremely proud to announce that we have the highest GPA among all fraternities, coming in at 3.47 for fall 2019. While this semester has been difficult for us all, we have enjoyed remaining in each other's company via Zoom where we have held elections, executive meetings, a senior night, and brotherhood get-togethers.

Although all brothers are currently separated by distance, we are excited for the day we can return to campus and be with each other again.

Yours in the Bond,

John Shepherd #1928
Chapter President



Fall 2019's pledge class, Alpha Delta initiation.

CONSIDER JOINING THE CHAPTER ADVISORY BOARD

The chapter and its alumni are looking for volunteers to join the Chapter Advisory Board (CAB) for California Delta! Chapter advisory boards are crucial to the success of fraternities across the nation, especially during recent times when adversity facing the Greek community is at an all-time high.

The Chapter Advisory Board is a board of alumni, usually local but sometimes distant, which works with the chapter to help them improve and grow. The Chapter Advisory Board provides advice, plays an active role in mentorship, and guides the

chapter through any circumstances they may be facing. The Chapter Advisory Board often pairs directly with elected chapter officers to help them with their respective positions, including the roles of financial advisor, recruitment advisor, academic advisor, alumni relations advisor, and facilities manager.

The house corporation had the great fortune of having many amazing volunteers over the course of its history. However, the role of the house corporation is distinct and different from that of a chapter advisory board. Therefore, we are looking for brothers to step-up and consider joining the Chapter Advisory Board for California Delta.

The time commitment as a chapter advisory board member would be roughly two to four hours per month during the academic year. Ideally, each member of the CAB would attend two meetings a semester, or other important chapter events that involve alumni (recruitment events, initiation, etc.).

If you are interested in learning more about the Chapter Advisory Board and potentially becoming involved, please reach out to our province president, **Bob Wolfley**, at bob.wolfley@gmail.com.



A virtual Executive Board Meeting.

Chapter Spotlight: Brian Femminella



Editor's Note: Representing the chapter as Spotlight is Brian Femminella. From the hometown of Long Island, New York, Brian joined the United States Army Reserves and Army ROTC at the age of 17. He is currently in his sophomore year and is on track to attend law school after graduation. He is pursuing a double major in political science and cyber intelligence/security. Brian has served the chapter on the new member education committee and previously as the philanthropy committee chair. In addition to his leadership, Brian was selected for this issue's spotlight because he is in the process of creating a non-profit application that uses music therapy to assist those with PTSD. He is also part of the CybOrg (Digital Forensics and Cyber Security) Group and is the Society 53 programming lead on campus. His internships include work at the office of the Majority Whip James E. Clyburn–Washington, D.C.; Game-Based Rehabilitation and Virtual Reality at USC Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT); and White Sands Missile Range, Cyber Security and Systems Defense.

(Left) Brian standing on the Speaker's Balcony in the United States Capitol. "This was taken after a meeting with members of Congress that I was able to attend and sit in on as an intern for the Office of the Majority Whip."

What led you to join the chapter?

I chose to join California Delta because I saw in them a group of people who were not only committed to social life but to each other. The brothers at Cal Delt represent what it means to be a family, guiding each other through our highest highs and lowest lows. I've always wanted to find a community outside of the military, and Phi Delt has provided me with a group of friends to share my most memorable college experiences with.

Where did your service in the Army take you?

The Army has given me the opportunity to travel and work with individuals from all different walks of life. I started my career stationed in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where I did my basic training.



Similarly, I have been to Fort Knox, Kentucky (to assist the commanding general), White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico (to work on cyber defense), and Fort Irwin, California (where I do a great deal of training with the battalion I am currently in at USC). Now, I am currently in the USC Army ROTC as a cadet, working to become an officer.

Which achievements are you most proud of?

I am most proud of my work with PTSD and music therapy that has now transformed into SoundMind Solutions. I started doing research in 2018, when I first came to USC, on how music therapy can help those suffering from PTSD, and now I have turned a research paper into an entire company to help those worldwide. Recently, I was invited to speak at Harvard University about my current work and research with DoD personnel as a plenary speaker. Similarly, I was asked to attend the West Point National Sexual Assault Conference to speak on how my work is being turned into an app that can not only help those suffering from trauma seen in combat, but also those who have experienced sexual violence. Currently, I have put together a team of over 15 scholars and researchers to create a mobile application with cutting edge technology that uses music therapy, artificial intelligence, and memory rehab software. For more information, please join our mission at www.soundmindsolutions.org.

How would you like to apply your degree after graduation?

After USC, I plan to use my cyber technology studies to attend law school for cyber law. I want to use my degree in order to succeed as a lawyer and continue my career in the Army as an officer in the JAG branch. Upon completion of my service, I want to consider working for the FBI in counterterrorism and later run for a public office.

Outside of school, what do you do for fun?

Outside of school, I am usually working on my research with PTSD or spending time exploring



Brian while speaking at Harvard University at the National Collegiate Research Conference about his work with PTSD.

California. I am working on obtaining my skydiving license, and even took our current chapter president, John Shepherd, skydiving! I love to travel when I have the opportunity, and exploring different parts of Southern California has given me the opportunity to appreciate where I am. I also attend SoulCycle classes twice a week to stay in shape, and during the winter I take weekend trips to Mammoth or Big Bear Mountain to ski with a few friends. Occasionally, I like to take pictures and shop where I can try out new styles and share my creative vision. I also do a great deal of public speaking across the country at a multitude of conferences and events.



Brian with the chapter on initiation night.

COVID-19: IMPLICATIONS AT USC AND CALIFORNIA DELTA

As you are likely experiencing, COVID-19 has had a profound impact in almost every facet of our lives. Not only is it impacting our personal lives, but it is also impacting the lives of college students across the nation. On March 16, during the middle of Spring Recess, the University of Southern California made the difficult decision to finish the academic year online and cancelled all in-person activities for the rest of the semester, including graduation. Our hearts go out to all the students who are adapting to the large and unforeseen change to their academic semester, especially our graduating seniors who will have a less traditional graduation this year.

As you may be aware, the government of California has modified eviction rules for housing facilities during this pandemic. Due to these new rules and regulations, the California Delta property must legally remain open if there are contractual obligations to provide shelter, as we cannot be certain that all residents have an alternative residence, albeit a safe alternative residence, to go back to. For these reasons, California Delta has remained open during these past months and will continue to remain open barring any extraordinary circumstances.

As of now, we currently know of no residents affected with COVID-19, and starting on March 17, the house corporation began taking precautions in order

to keep our current live-ins safe. Some of these measures include:

- Tripling the number of cleanings at the California Delta property
- Limiting visitors to the chapter facility
- Closing access to the back-patio gym
- Collaborating with chapter officers to ensure meals were being served in a sanitary manner (e.g., individual to-go boxes, proper kitchen sanitation)

Unfortunately, since the decision regarding shutting down campus was made during spring recess, many students were instructed not to come back to campus to retrieve their belongings if they were traveling internationally or were already at home with family. Due to this, we had 10 residents who were unable to move out properly by the end of their academic year contract. In order to help our fellow brothers, the house corporation partnered with Campus Storage, a local pack and store company, to professionally store their belongings at no cost to the residents.

We also would like you all to know that the University of Southern California is prorating rent for residents that left campus as they were instructed by the university to do so. Unlike the university, the California Delta house corporation never asked our residents to vacate the property, which has remained open and operational during the past months. We know of only a few students, less than two, who moved out of

the property early. However, given current cash flow, the house corporation cannot currently entertain prorated rent refunds. As you all know, rent is our primary source of income, and it is what provides us the ability to pay the mortgage, property taxes, maintenance costs, etc. Since we have not been able to entertain this idea, we have worked tirelessly to make sure the property is staying clean and well-maintained. We continue to aggressively pay down our mortgage, so in the future we can be increasingly generous with our residents during situations such as this.

We sincerely hope that we can get back to normal soon, yet the university does not currently know what will happen regarding the fall semester. Current options include returning to a slightly socially distanced campus environment; online classes; or a hybrid of online and on-campus classes. Unfortunately, if the fall semester is completely online again, the house corporation will have to think extremely creatively regarding the cash flow of the property. We aren't there yet, but these are the tough situations which are currently keeping the house corporation up at night.

If you would like to talk further about this subject, or have any ideas for us, please don't hesitate to email phidelhousecorp@gmail.com.

We hope everyone stays safe and healthy during this unprecedented time!



Have Alumni News? *We want to hear from you!*

Send your personal updates, accomplishments, adventures, and photos to our Account Manager Kasey Breedlove at kbreedlove@elevateims.com, or simply fill out the back of the enclosed gift form and return it in the mail. We want to share it in the next issue of the *Cal Delta Spotlight!*



John J. Gobbell reports: Great news—I have a new publisher, Severn River Publishing (SRP), which specializes in mysteries and thrillers. SRP will take over cover design and marketing for my backlist of books, including the entire Todd Ingram series. After decades of self-advertising and promotion, this seems like a match made in heaven for me.

My novels will get a new life and close attention never provided by their original publishers. Once again, they'll be featured on the national and international literary scene via directed advertising and marketing. Internally, SRP will work on other aspects such as cover design,

website review, and potential audiobook versions. Moreover, they have me committed to a new Todd Ingram novel, with the manuscript due in about a year. So, my feet are also to the fire. This is all good for me. I like my new home; we speak the same language and that's all very neat. I'm going to enjoy it here and I hope you do, too.

I'll also have a new mailing list with SRP. To continue getting my updates, please take a moment to sign up at: <https://severnriverpublishing.com/john-j-gobbell>.

Congrats John!

Chapter Grand

Bob Haggstrom

The Man Who Saved Our Chapter House

In 2001, after the chapter had been kicked off campus and closed down due to behavior problems, Bob visited our boarded-up chapter house. Completely with his own initiative, brother **Bob Haggstrom '72** checked and found that there was no fire insurance on the house. Acting on his own again, Bob took out a fire insurance policy on the house and paid the premiums at his own expense. Months later, a homeless man broke into the house on a cold night, built a fire in the main entry hall to warm himself, and ended up virtually burning the house to the ground. Thanks to the insurance that existed solely because of Bob, the house corporation received a payout of \$700,000 that served as the foundation for the capital campaign that rebuilt the house. You can see that without Brother Haggstrom, it's almost certain

that we would have lost the house.

Bob was also the sparkplug who recruited so many of the great Phis who worked on fundraising and construction while the house was being rebuilt. He organized a lunch at the Jonathan Club in downtown Los Angeles during the very early stage of rebuilding. He spoke to the Phis there with real emotion about how the Phi Delta House had given us some of the best days of our lives. Very memorable.

Bob also contributed hugely to Phi Delta Theta's return to USC by offering his palatial home and grounds in Malibu as the site of rush functions during the recolonization process, when the chapter was just getting started again.

Bob had moved to Thailand about a year ago and passed away just before Christmas, from complications following surgery. God's grace to you, Brother Haggstrom. Since the time of the Immortal Six, 172 years ago, precious few have done as much for Phi Delta Theta.



Bob's student days in the Phi Delta House. From right to left in the photo are Andy Hinshaw, Bob Haggstrom, and Bill Mitchell. Bob was Bill's Big Brother, and Bill was Andy's.

The Five-Year Plan: Cal Delta Success by Brenton Caldwell '14

We've had significant successes in all of the following categories, which I would like to highlight:

Increased chapter transparency and communication:

- Formalized the resident advisor role along with responsibilities and expectations
- A representative from the house corporation visits the chapter at least once a semester
- There is a continuous line of communication between the house corporation and the executive officers of the chapter
- Standardized quarterly house corporation meetings with chapter members invited

Stronger focus on alumni engagement:

- Refinished the main foyer donor board to

account for capital campaign I and II fulfilled donations

- Honored all "room naming" gifts by coordinating custom plaque creation and hanging
- Continued producing Cal Delta Spotlight (this newsletter) to keep our alumni up to date
- Planned and executed our inaugural alumni reunion to bring more alumni back to California Delta
- Supported ad-hoc alumni events such as: baseball games, alumni BBQ, etc.

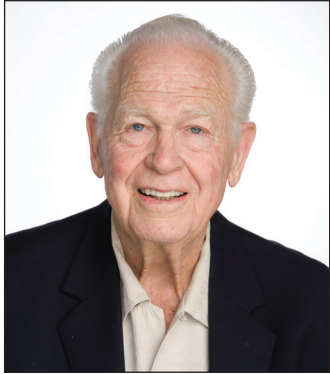
Renewed emphasis on proactive maintenance and capital investments:

- Refurbished all bedrooms, including providing new furniture

- Monthly maintenance technician visits to the property
- Aggregated and refinanced our loans to accelerate principal payments
- Painted all common areas and lightly refurbished Round Room moldings

We have collectively accomplished so much over the past three-and-a-half years, and I am extremely proud of not only the individuals from the house corporation who helped to coordinate all of these feats, but also of our alumni, whose continued support we rely on to make this all possible. A big thank you, from me to you!

Spotlight (continued from page 1)



my siblings. The Masonic Home helped me become self-sufficient. My job was taking care of the 300-plus chickens we raised and providing poultry for

the kitchen. The Masonic Home taught all of us that you have to take responsibility. When I got involved in the Boys & Girls Clubs, it was because I thought it was time that I started giving back from my experience with the Masonic Homes. I was recruited as a businessman by the Boys & Girls Club and to serve as a National Trustee. One of the biggest problems in our area is that the real estate is very expensive. I launched an effort to develop a Boys & Girls Club in our local community. I worked with the local school district to lease land on the school property for \$1 a year, and we were able to build nine clubs now serving over 4,000 children a year.

How did you meet your wife, Marje?

Marje and I met at Edwards Airforce Base—her parents were in charge of civilian housing. I first saw her in the swimming pool teaching about 20 kids how to swim. I thought she was beautiful and talented, so I arranged for an introduction. I was a lieutenant, and she was dating a captain. I encouraged her to visit her aunt in Los Angeles so I could get her away, and we went to the Hollywood Bowl to see Nat King Cole. She was impressed, and it gave me a leg up over the captain. We have been married

for almost 64 years now. We have two grown children and six grandchildren.

Which achievements are you most proud of?

I accomplished a lot in real estate and am probably most proud of my work with the Boys & Girls Club. The San Ramone Village is an approximately 4,000-acre development, and it encompasses a very successful planned community. I am also very proud of my work on Coto de Caza in Orange County, a 5,000-acre development. It was well-planned and it has an equestrian facility and tennis ranch.

How do you define success?

Being persistent and never giving up. I also think that being an innovator in various things is the basis for success. I've always tried to make improvements to get better results.

Outside of work, what do you do for fun?

I enjoy golf and fly-fishing. Marje and I love spending time with our grandkids, who are all out of college now. Our son is local and our daughter lives in Northern California. We enjoy getting together with the families for swimming and other activities.

How do you stay in touch with your alumni brothers today?

I've lost touch with many of my pledge brothers, but I have been in touch **Bob Imerman '53** and **Bob Curtis '54**. It's been a few years since I've been out to the chapter house. The renovation of the fraternity house was well done.

What advice can you give the actives and alumni about giving back to the community?

It's important to allow time for volunteering. It's a good policy to plan to give back however you chose to but make a conscience decision to do it. I can recommend the Boys & Girls Clubs as an excellent organization to get involved with. Allocating time with your family is number one, but also give of yourself to help others.



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like to reflect on the journey that we started in 2017 with our five-year plan. I find that grounding myself in the “bigger picture” when times are difficult brings me solace. When Bruce Buettell '82 and the house corporation elected me as the new president in 2017, we set our sights on three main objectives over the next five years:

1. Increased chapter transparency and communication
2. Stronger focus on alumni engagement
3. Renewed emphasis on proactive maintenance and capital investments

To read more about what we have accomplished already in our five-year plan refer to page five of this newsletter. You might now be asking why is this specifically a five-year plan? Well, when I took the position, I guaranteed to Bruce that I would serve in the role for five years, as that is how long I believe it would take to accomplish the items I envisioned for the chapter. So far, we have accomplished a lion's share of the original plans we laid out in our kick-off meeting back in 2017, but we still have a few more items left to go such as making sure that the alumni reunion happens (details pending with the current pandemic) and ensuring newly developed processes become firmly rooted in the chapter.

However, with a year-and-a-half left (and only three issues of the Cal Delta Spotlight after this one), I began thinking about succession planning. I know it seems early, but, as most of us know, without a succession plan and proper time to onboard, “passing the torch” can significantly slow our inertia and I don't want that to happen.

That being said, if you are interested in joining the house corporation and/or potentially interested in leading this board of amazing and dedicated individuals, please reach out to me directly at phidelt-housecorp@gmail.com. I will be staying on the board and I am excited to see what the future has in store for California Delta's house corporation.

Fight On!

Brenton J Caldwell

Brenton Caldwell '14

President

USC Phi Delt House Corporation

