

Phi Beta Kappa  
at St. Olaf College



*Agreeably to  
Our Invitation*

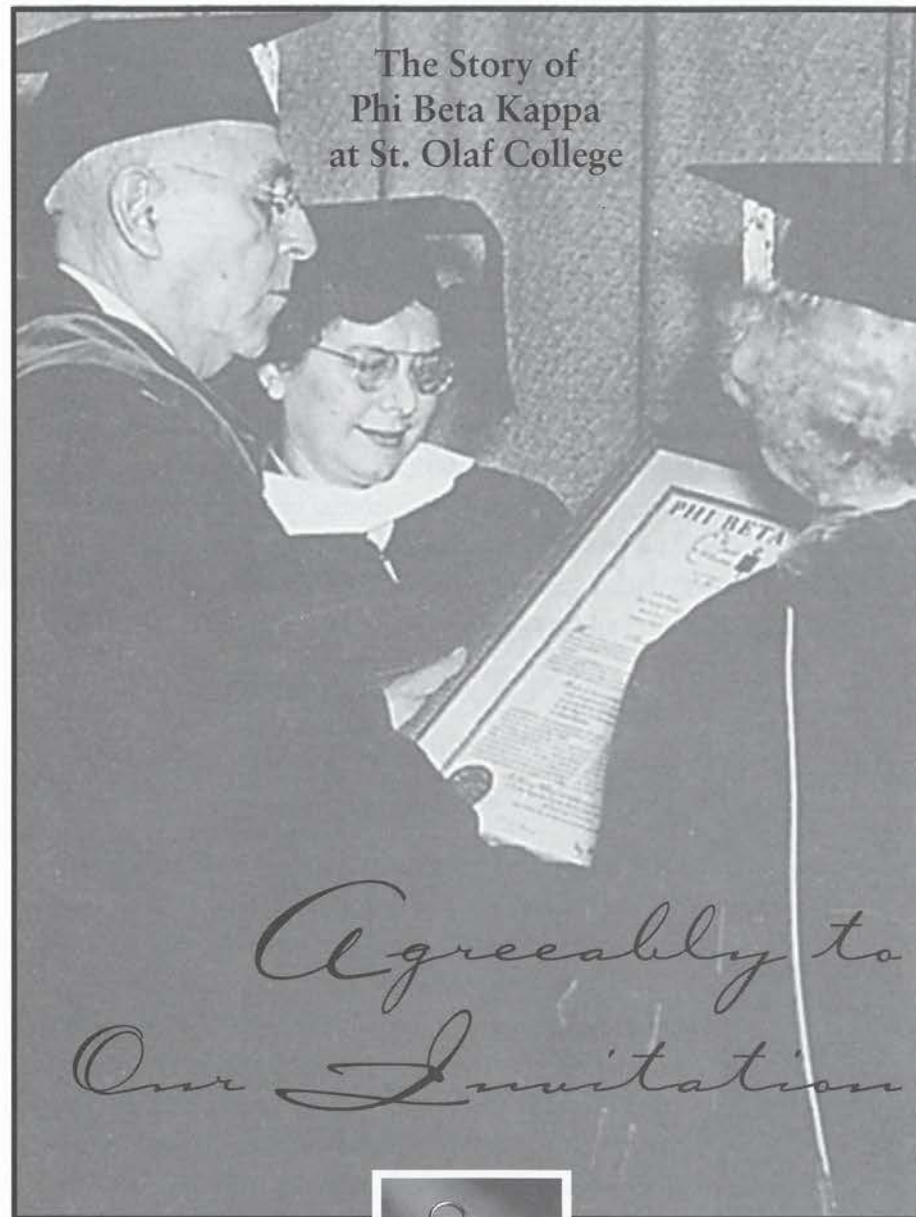


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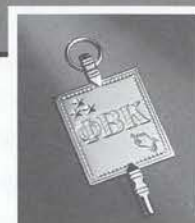


DELTA OF  
MINNESOTA

The Story of  
Phi Beta Kappa  
at St. Olaf College



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In 1921 a St. Olaf professor could address an important letter to New York, N. Y., without providing a street name and number, to say nothing of the zip code that became necessary decades later. On May 7, 1921, St. Olaf English professor George Weida Spohn sent a letter to Mr. Oscar M. Voorhees, secretary of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, addressed simply to “New York, N.Y.” At that time, the national offices of Phi Beta Kappa were in New York. Now they are in Washington, D.C.

Professor Spohn wrote as follows:

My dear Mr. Voorhees:

I have been named chairman of a faculty committee appointed to communicate with you in reference to the institution of a Phi Beta Kappa chapter at our college. Will you kindly send me all necessary information pertaining to the method of procedure in applying for a chapter? We should like to submit our application in time for action at the triennial conference in 1922. I might say that I am a member of the Princeton chapter.

Thanking you for a reply, I am

Very truly yours

(Signed) George Weida Spohn

In the reply Spohn learned that the national office had more applications than it could process, but St. Olaf should apply at some time in the future (Finholt, “History of Delta Chapter of Minnesota — Phi Beta Kappa,” 1988). With Spohn’s letter to Voorhees, St. Olaf College began a lengthy quest for a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa that reached its goal when Delta of Minnesota, the St. Olaf College chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, was established in November of 1949. We are indebted to Dr. Albert E. Finholt, a charter member of the St. Olaf chapter, for fascinating glimpses of the founding of the chapter and its early years. On two occasions, in 1988 and 1998, Dr. Finholt reviewed the history of the local chapter in addresses at the spring banquet. His insights have informed these pages at several points.



George Weida Spohn

4 St. Olaf's desire to secure a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa was bound to capture the interest of the vigorous and forward-looking Dr. Lars. W. Boe, president from 1918 to 1942. In September of 1925 President Boe wrote to the same Oscar M. Voorhees, now acknowledged as Rev. with a D.D. after his name, in response to a request for information about St. Olaf College. And Boe had a street address, 145 West 55th Street. With his letter Boe enclosed three pages of data and comments about the state of the institution, including equipment, endowment and income, teaching force, students, standards, and recent improvements.

Boe also reported on building plans. The College was just then moving into a new Administration and Science Building, later to be named Holland Hall, completed at the cost of about \$300,000. "Contract was let and building operations begun in July, 1925, for the erection of a new Music Hall, to cost with equipment, about \$100,000. A new Library Building is on the program of future construction." (Boe to Voorhees, Sept 4, 1925)

Nothing was more essential to St. Olaf's hopes for a Phi Beta Kappa chapter than a new library. Tiny Steensland Library, built in 1902, had been outgrown long before the 1920s arrived. As Dr. Finholt stated, "The principal problems St. Olaf had to overcome were low faculty salaries and inadequate library facilities." (Finholt, "The Good Old Days," 1998) The point was reinforced every time St. Olaf applied for a chapter during the thirties and into the early forties.

In a preliminary and informal way, one could say that St. Olaf first applied for a charter in 1925 when President Boe sent the information to Dr. Voorhees. A large number of colleges had received the same request for data. After the National Council had met, Voorhees could only inform Boe that "consideration was given to St. Olaf College by a conference of the delegates from the North Central District." At that time the Phi Beta Kappa headquarters was still developing standards for applying institutions.



Lars W. Boe

## Making application to Phi Beta Kappa

5 By the next decade, when St. Olaf College applied three times for a Phi Beta Kappa charter, a more formal and lengthy procedure had been put in place for an institution to follow. By gaining membership in the Association of American Universities in 1930, St. Olaf was eligible to apply to Phi Beta Kappa. It was also required that an institution have at least five members of Phi Beta Kappa "officially connected with the College," that is, in its faculty and administration. In St. Olaf's case, the Phi Beta Kappa members whose names were reported in 1931 to the secretary of the United Chapters were G. W. Spohn, P. G. Schmidt, Karen Larsen, Clarence Clausen, Julius Boraas, and George Berg. (Lorraine Carlson to Wm Shimer, Oct 13, 1931) Of these, all but Berg and Spohn became charter members when St. Olaf received a chapter in 1949. Berg died in 1935 and Spohn in 1943.

According to accepted procedures, the local Phi Beta Kappa members initiate correspondence between the institution and the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, since 1988 known as the Phi Beta Kappa Society. In that correspondence the institution learns the procedures for application, the major task of which is to assemble detailed and comprehensive information about the college, organize it into the General Report, and send it to the national office.

The key person at St. Olaf College who supervised the preparation of the General Report was the Registrar, Mr. John M. Bly. Bly joined the St. Olaf faculty in 1927. He taught Psychology for twelve years as well as courses in Norwegian, Education, and History. He is remembered chiefly for his administrative work, as Assistant Registrar from 1927 to 1935 and Registrar from 1935, succeeding George Berg. Bly served as Registrar until his death in 1947. He was also Dean of Academic Administration from 1946 to 1947. Most fittingly, one of the Phi Beta Kappa scholarships awarded each year by Delta of Minnesota is named for John M. Bly.



John M. Bly

St. Olaf's church connection and the issue of the teaching of evolution were discussed in an exchange between President Boe and Dr. William A. Shimer, secretary of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, in early 1933. St. Olaf had compiled and submitted the General Report to the

6 Committee on Qualifications the year before. Shimer wrote to John Bly asking for an explanation of certain parts of the Report, and Bly requested of President Boe that he answer some of the questions. Shimer had asked: "Is the rule requiring all your teachers to be members of the Lutheran Church actually enforced?" Boe replied, "Not literally." It is one of the rules for guidance, to be administered in a reasonable way. A few members of the faculty are not Lutheran. In the past there have been a greater number of non-Lutherans than at the present time, he added.

The next question was equally pointed. "To what extent is the college actually dominated by the Church, particularly with regard to the teaching allowed in religion, and the Bible, and the sciences — evolution, for instance?" In his response, Boe identified St. Olaf as a denominational, Lutheran college, citing the statement of purpose in the By-laws that the College is established to give young men and women "a higher education in harmony with the Christian Faith as taught in the Evangelical Lutheran Church." The Lutheran Church is conservative, he wrote, but clearly to be dissociated from "the legalistic spirit and tendency of the fundamentalist movement." The latter is "alien to its point of view."

On the touchy question of evolution, President Boe was forthright, although many scientists would be annoyed at his formulation. The Church and College did not accept evolution as an established fact, he wrote, but there had been no disposition at St. Olaf "to exclude the teaching of evolution as a scientific theory, which will have to stand or fall on its own merits." Boe stated that he had gone before the Minnesota legislature to oppose the enactment of a law against the teaching of evolution. In doing so, he felt that he was in accord with the Lutheran principle "that truth can not be established by majority vote." Boe went on to state that if "acceptance of evolution as a fact be regarded as a requisite, or allegiance to a definite church body a hindrance, for acceptance in Phi Beta Kappa, St. Olaf College would not be able to qualify." (Boe to Shimer, February 11, 1933)

The reply from Dr. Shimer, dated February 20, 1933, showed that Boe's answers were well received. Wrote Shimer: "I am grateful for your frank response to my inquiries. Of course I agree with your attitude toward the acceptance of evolution as a fact and the allegiance to a definite church body. And I am sure the Committee will feel the same. We

are interested simply in the freedom of instruction and scholarship." (Shimer to Boe, February 20, 1933)

7 At St. Olaf, strong interest in PBK continued. The College as a whole was eager to move forward toward "a greater St. Olaf." President Boe made clear to the faculty that every effort should be made to raise the level of academic life. Students asked for more honors courses and joined in the faculty's desire to have the College qualify for a PBK chapter. In 1933 faculty members who belonged to Phi Beta Kappa organized a local College Honors Society to honor outstanding students. Other names for this group have been the St. Olaf Honor Society and the Academic Honors Society.

But there was no let-up in John Bly's efforts to have things in readiness for the next application to Phi Beta Kappa. Once an institution is notified that it is being included for study by the Committee on Qualifications, the next step is the appointment by the national office of a representative to visit the campus. In 1936, the person designated for St. Olaf was Dean George A. Works of the University of Chicago. After his visit in the latter part of the year, Works wrote to President Boe in December, "I enjoyed my visit very much, and formed a very favorable impression of your institution." (Works to Boe, December 22, 1936)

Despite the good impression it made on Dean Works, however, St. Olaf was not invited to apply for a charter when the Committee on Qualifications met in December of 1936. Dr. Shimer wrote to Bly that while the Committee found a scholarly attitude among students and faculty, it believed that "more financial support is needed for the development of the College's program, for the improvement of the library, and for the raising of the salaries of the faculty." (Shimer to Bly, January 19, 1937)

But the indomitable John Bly refused to give up, and patiently nurtured his contacts with the Phi Beta Kappa office in New York. When word came that Dr. Shimer was planning to visit Carleton and St. Olaf in the spring of 1937, St. Olaf invited Shimer to give an address at the College and Bly offered to meet the visitor at Union Station in St. Paul and bring him to Northfield by automobile. To facilitate their finding one another at the station, Bly wrote: "I shall be wearing a black felt hat and a gray topcoat." (Bly to Shimer, April 28, 1937)

At that time William A. Shimer was the editor of *The American Scholar*, the PBK Quarterly, and the secretary of the PBK Foundation. His

Northfield visit in 1937 was part of a tour of several colleges, and not an official inspection of St. Olaf with regard to application for a chapter.

8 Nevertheless, his presence on campus must have been an indirect boost to St. Olaf's cause.

Shimer had encouragement for Bly and St. Olaf in February of 1938 when he wrote that the Committee on Qualifications had included St. Olaf among 19 institutions to be studied with a view to recommendations for new chapters to the Senate in December of 1939 and the triennial Council in September of 1940. It would only be necessary to bring up to date and supplement the information submitted the previous triennium. (Shimer to Bly, February 9, 1938)

Again, Dean George A. Works would be the inspecting visitor. Bly corresponded with Works in the spring of 1939 to work out a date for the visit. As things turned out, Works came to the campus and conducted his business with Bly on May 8th, the very day when St. Olaf was entertaining Crown Prince Olav and Crown Princess Martha of Norway. President Boe had suggested that Works bring along his academic gown and participate in the academic procession. Bly informed Works that he would meet his train in Red Wing. (Bly to Works, April 11, 17, 1939) The visit took place as scheduled and in due time Works made his report to the Committee on Qualifications.

In one of their conversations, Bly and Works had discussed the question whether pre-medical courses would be regarded by Phi Beta Kappa as a pre-vocational curriculum and as such not part of "an all-round liberal education." Dean Works had submitted the question to Dr. Shimer who favored calling such curricula pre-vocational, but letting the institution describe the courses and the spirit in which they are offered. For his part, Works agreed with the interpretation Bly had expressed to him, namely, that pre-medical courses should not be considered a pre-vocational curriculum. (Works to Bly, June 15, 1939)

### Disappointments and determination

**A**las, despite this encouragement from Works, the presence of Norwegian royalty during his May visit to St. Olaf, and written assurance from President Boe that the drive was underway for a new library, the Committee on Qualifications was not swayed to act favorably on St.

9 Olaf's application in late 1939. It was most disheartening for Bly to hear from Dr. Shimer: "I am sorry to be obliged to report that St. Olaf College is one of 29 institutions which our Committee on Qualifications found itself unable to recommend for a chapter at this time." Shimer tried to be consoling. "Nine institutions have been recommended, and this will make the competition less severe next triennium." (Shimer to Bly, December 15, 1939) George Works wrote to Bly: "You are no more disappointed than I am about the outcome of St. Olaf's application for membership in Phi Beta Kappa. I had hoped and expected you would get a chapter." (Works to Bly, March 9, 1940)

When an institution applying for a PBK charter is turned down, it is sent a brief notice at once followed by a letter of explanation at a later date. The letter giving the reasons arrived in late February of 1940. Faculty salaries were improving but the library "remains inadequate for the needs of the College." There was "considerable inbreeding in the faculty" and "less scholarly productivity than desirable." But an even more jarring note was this sentence, underlined by Bly: "St. Olaf College showed a relatively greater restriction on the free range of instruction and discussion in its courses than did the other institutions studied by the Committee." (Shimer to Bly, February 26, 1940)

The next sentence tried to soften the charge by saying that it was not a decisive consideration, but John Bly was troubled enough to write Dr. Shimer for a clarification, yet with his characteristic courtesy: "I shall appreciate it if you will kindly tell me very frankly just what you think is implied in the statement so that I may know how to explain it more fully to those who are concerned about it here at St. Olaf." (Bly to Shimer, February 28, 1940)

"You have asked me a hard question," began Shimer's reply. Perhaps he should not have included the sentence, he wrote, since it came from "very general and tenuous remarks" by members of the Committee as they discussed St. Olaf "and would have great difficulty in backing it up with concrete instances." He meant to imply "that the religious affiliations and purposes of St. Olaf College perhaps restrict a little too much the freedom of instruction and discussion on its campus." But he sought to assure Bly that "this is not a serious or decisive point." (Shimer to Bly, March 6, 1940)

In retrospect, at least two questions come to mind. Is it possible that St. Olaf did not give the free range of instruction and discussion in its courses that were expected at a liberal arts college? One cannot but recall stories of heavy-handed doctrinal pronouncements delivered in pre-World War II religion classes. Yet Shimer admitted that there was no documentation, only general remarks by the Committee when they discussed St. Olaf's religious affiliations and purposes. A second question might be addressed to the Phi Beta Kappa committee. Is it possible that some of its members made certain negative assumptions about St. Olaf simply because the College openly declared its church connection and clear religious purpose? President Boe, Mr. Bly, and others must have had some thoughtful conversations in the wake of the latest failure to secure a PBK charter.

With typical determination, Bly began at once to plan the next application, anticipating that "if we are favored by another investigation," the College would be requested to assemble an entirely new report. (Bly to Works, March 6, 1940) In January of 1941 Bly learned that St. Olaf in fact would be investigated again, one of 17 institutions to be studied. (Blair to Bly, January 28, 1941) So the gathering of data was taken up again. By the time the General Report was sent off to Phi Beta Kappa in December of 1941, it had reached the length of eight volumes.

The correspondence shows that the Committee on Qualifications appointed President Raymond Walters of the University of Cincinnati to inspect St. Olaf and that the visit took place in the spring of 1942. (Blair to Bly, February 20, 1942) But suddenly the reality of World War II interrupted the activities of Phi Beta Kappa. At a special meeting in June of 1942, the Committee on Qualifications decided to discontinue inspections of institutions applying for charters, which meant immediate suspension of its study of St. Olaf College. (Blair to Bly, July 14, 1942) To Bly, the announcement came as "an unpleasant disappointment." (Bly to Blair, July 19, 1942)

The death of President Lars Boe in December of 1942, the appointment of an interim president, the drastic drop in male enrollments during the war, the installation of U. S. Navy pre-flight training programs on the campus, and all the other traumas of World War II demanded first attention at St. Olaf. The securing of an honorary society would have to wait. But as soon as the war was over, the undaunted John Bly lost no time in

re-establishing his connections with Phi Beta Kappa. "Do you have any good news for me?" he wrote to the national PBK office on August 30, 1945.

In the fall of 1946 Bly was corresponding again with Dr. George A. Works who had become the national secretary for Phi Beta Kappa. Works informed Bly that St. Olaf was among the institutions to be investigated by the Committee on Qualifications. In reply, after congratulating Dr. Works on his new appointment, Bly stated his intention to prepare an entirely new report since five years had passed since the last one. "This will be the fourth one prepared under my supervision," he wrote. "I really enjoy making these summaries for the Phi Beta Kappa. It compels us to make a survey of the work of the institution which ought to be done periodically, but probably would not be done at all if we did not have to do it for the Phi Beta Kappa." (Bly to Works, October 4, 1946)

Registrar John Bly was in truth the real workhorse in St. Olaf's lengthy quest for a PBK chapter over the better part of two decades. In addition to his prodigious work in preparing successive reports, he served the cause of St. Olaf's standing with Phi Beta Kappa through an exemplary patience and unfailing good manners as he conducted the correspondence with the United Chapters. His dedication was soon to be rewarded, but John Bly himself did not live to see a St. Olaf chapter realized. He had been ill in December of 1941 and had recovered from a heart attack in the spring of 1942. Bly died on February 6, 1947, at the age of sixty-one.

#### St. Olaf is granted a charter

The favorable news St. Olaf had been hoping for was received during the administration of President Clemens M. Granskou and while the office of Dean of Academic Administration was filled by Norman Nordstrand. But just as there were several steps in the application process, so



Clemens Granskou

the actual implementation of a chapter of PBK did not happen all at once. In late December of 1947 St. Olaf learned that it was among the twenty-three institutions to be studied with a view toward being recommended for a chapter. (Billman to Granskou, December 29, 1947) This was the positive step Bly had in mind when he wrote to Works in 1946 regarding "the study that I hope you will be making of St. Olaf College."

After the death of John Bly, the task of directing the flow of necessary documents from St. Olaf College to the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa naturally fell to Norman Nordstrand, with invaluable assistance from the meticulous Inez Frayseth, whose title was Recorder and who was later named Registrar. President Granskou was also involved in the exchanges with Phi Beta Kappa. Early in 1948 Nordstrand and Frayseth had to work at a furious clip to prepare a completely new report in just two months, but they made the deadline. On February 19, 1948, Carl Billman, secretary of the United Chapters, wrote to Nordstrand to assure him that the St. Olaf materials had arrived and to thank him for his cooperation in making sure they had reached the Committee promptly. (Billman to Nordstrand, February 19, 1948) Another inspection of St. Olaf College took place in April of 1948.

Finally, after years of organizing information, preparing reports, writing letters, waiting and hoping, St. Olaf College received word in December 1948, in a letter from Carl Billman to Dean Nordstrand, that the St. Olaf members of Phi Beta Kappa were invited "to submit to the Council a formal application for the establishment of a chapter." (Billmann to Nordstrand, December 30, 1948) In reply, Nordstrand wrote, "I can't tell you how pleased we at St. Olaf are to have the opportunity to submit our application to Phi Beta Kappa, and it is our sincere hope that we may be fortunate enough in September to be voted in as a member." (Nordstrand to Billman, January 11, 1949)

In his letter Billman had asked for a typewritten list of the Phi Beta Kappa members who would be signing the application, where and when they became members, and each one's official relation with St. Olaf College. The list offers the interesting data that Julius Boraas, Professor of Education, had the earliest Phi Beta Kappa membership, joining the Alpha



Norman Nordstrand



Inez Frayseth



Julius Boraas



Paul Schmidt

Chapter at the University of Minnesota in 1894. He was followed closely by Paul Gerhard Schmidt, Manager of Music Organizations, who became a member of Alpha of Minnesota in 1896. The most recent member to be taken into Phi Beta Kappa was Helen Marie Luvaas, Instructor in Music, who had joined the Alpha of Oregon in 1945. The others on the list were Karen Larsen, Professor of History, Alpha at the University of Wisconsin, 1905, Agnes Mathilda Larson, Professor of History, Iota Chapter of Massachusetts, Radcliffe College, 1939, and Hildegard I. Stielow, Assistant Professor of German, Alpha Chapter at University of Iowa, 1932.

These six persons, convened by Paul G. Schmidt, signed the official application for a Phi Beta Kappa chapter at St. Olaf. In the language of the form sent by Carl Billman, the members "hereby respectfully make application to the Council of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa for a charter empowering us to institute a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa in the College of Liberal Arts of this institution." The application and the list of the faculty PBK members were mailed by Dean Nordstrand to Carl Billman on January 14, 1949. (Nordstrand to Billman, January 14, 1949)

The time for celebrating had not yet arrived. The vote to grant St. Olaf a charter still had to be taken. The triennial meeting of the Phi Beta Kappa Council met in Madison, Wisconsin on September 1-3, 1949. It was on September 2, 1949, that the exciting, definitive news reached the St. Olaf campus. Late in the afternoon Carl Billman sent the following telegram to Dean Norman Nordstrand:

Happy to report favorable action today by the Phi Beta Kappa Council on the petition of your Phi Beta Kappa faculty group to establish a chapter of the Society to be known as Delta of Minnesota at St. Olaf.



Karen Larsen



Hildegard Stielow



Agnes Larson



Helen Luvaas



At about the same time President Granskou received the good news by phone from Dr. Laurence Gould, president of Carleton College and a Phi Beta Kappa Senator who was at the Madison meeting. (Interview with CMG, October 3, 1972) After Nordstrand received a letter from Billman supplementing the telegram, the *Manitou Messenger* and the *St. Olaf Alumni Magazine* announced the authorization of a Phi Beta Kappa chapter to their constituencies. "Delta of Minnesota" would be the name of the St. Olaf chapter because it was the fourth chapter to be instituted in the state. Alpha Chapter, at the University of Minnesota, received its charter in 1892; Beta Chapter, at Carleton College, was founded in 1914; Gamma Chapter, at the College of St. Catherine, was established in 1938.

### Installation and initiations

Preparations had to be made fairly quickly if St. Olaf College wished to have its Phi Beta Kappa chapter installed during the Diamond Jubilee, the 75th anniversary of the founding of the College, to be observed in November of 1949. Dean Nordstrand appointed Paul G. Schmidt to plan the installation of the chapter. He worked with the other Phi Beta Kappa members who had signed the application and who became the charter members of Delta of Minnesota. Two Phi Beta Kappa members who joined the faculty in the fall of 1949 were added to the list of charter members. They were Clarence Clausen, Associate Professor of History, Gamma Chapter, University of Illinois, 1931, and Albert Finholt, Associate Professor of Chemistry, Delta Chapter of Illinois, Knox College, 1938.



Clarence Clausen



Albert Finholt

The formal installation of Delta of Minnesota took place on November 4, 1949, designated as "Liberal Arts Day" as part of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary that celebrated the founding of St. Olaf College on November 6, 1874. Carleton's president Dr. Gould, he of the prompt and neighborly phone call, presided at the impressive ceremony. Julius Boraas being too ill to attend, seven charter members of the new chapter presented themselves to Dr. Gould who handed the constitution of the Delta



Paul Schmidt, Hildegard Stielow and Agnes Larson examine the Delta of Minnesota charter.

Chapter to Paul G. Schmidt. The constitution and by-laws were read and adopted unanimously. The following officers were elected for the first year: President, Paul G. Schmidt; Vice-president, Karen Larsen; Secretary, Hildegard I. Stielow; Treasurer, Clarence Clausen. Dr. Gould charged the officers faithfully to perform their duties and commissioned the secretary to report the ceremony of induction to the national office of Phi Beta Kappa. The officers were then duly inducted. "Thereupon Dr. Gould presented to Paul Gerhard Schmidt the charter together with all the rights, privileges, and obligations thereunto pertaining."

By decision of the charter members, the initiation of new members into the Delta Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa took place on Thursday, May 4, 1950. Members in Course, that is, the undergraduate students elected to Phi Beta Kappa, rightly receive primary attention each year. Twenty-nine seniors were initiated in May and another five elected in June. Dr. Finholt recalled that the by-laws at that time stipulated no more than 8% of the senior class, but "we stretched that number" because it was a first year. In that era of stringent grading policies, only five of the 34 seniors elected had GPAs exceeding 3.70. Within the top 8% were students with GPAs of 3.25 and 3.26. In 1958, the chapter decided to permit election of 10% of the senior class. (Finholt, 1988)

As Charles Evans Hughes said in 1930, "The particular interest of Phi Beta Kappa is in liberal education." Three-fourths of a student's work must be in liberal courses. Mindful that not every college-level course necessarily qualifies as "liberal," chapter members have had recurring discussions regarding parts of the curriculum that might not be perceived as liberal studies. Department chairs have sometimes bristled at the suggestion that a certain course in their domain did not qualify as liberal. In 1972 the chapter arrived at a set of criteria for approving courses: 1) course must not be essentially professional or applied; 2) it must not have as its primary intention the teaching of skills; 3) it must not be sub-college or remedial; 4) it must be rather formally academic. (Finholt, 1998)

The highest responsibility of the chapter each spring is the determination of who should be elected to Phi Beta Kappa. At some institutions, the grade point average is the sole factor, but at St. Olaf, the GPA functions as an initial screening to identify those students who are to be considered. Other factors may enter in. According to the Constitution, the chapter may take into consideration honors work, comprehensive exams, "and also the opinions of teachers and staff concerning the character, scholarly achievements, and breadth of interest of each student under consideration" (III. 3). It has happened that the election of a student with the requisite grade point average has been challenged for his or her lack of scholarly breadth.

The members of the chapter who agree to serve on the Members in Course committee deserve recognition and fervent thanks for taking on a difficult and time-consuming task. They bring together the salient data needed by the chapter for electing new members each spring. In recent years this committee has had to examine the records and supporting documents of 150 to 200 students in preparing their recommendation. Each year a relatively small number of students is initiated in the fall. At some schools they would have been elected in the spring of their junior year. The largest number is elected and received into the society in April. Another smaller group, at one time including some Paracollege students, is initiated on Commencement Day.

At St. Olaf, the spring meeting of the chapter includes selection of the students who will receive the awards provided by three scholarships. The Henry H. and Anna Tosdal Scholarship awards are presented to the

top male student and the top female student in the senior class. Harry (St. Olaf '09) and Thora (St. Olaf '15) Tosdal created this scholarship to honor the memory of Harry's parents. The John M. Bly Scholarship goes to the top two students in the junior class. The Albert and Marion Finholt Scholarship provides awards for the top two students in the sophomore class.

A local chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, someone once wrote, "is a very strange sort of institution. It administers no property. It lobbies for no policies. It holds almost no meetings. For most of the year, it retreats into a profound dormancy. . . . It emerges in the spring of the year for its brief moment of intense and glorious life, devoted exclusively to the business of reproduction." (Ewart K. Lewis, Wisconsin 1929) Officers and committee members of Delta of Minnesota would appreciate the imagery but disagree that the chapter lies hidden through the long winter months. There is more activity than appears on the surface.

Some of the business of the chapter has already been reviewed, requiring a fall meeting of the chapter, the fall initiation, and the work of the Members-in-Course committee. Occasional meetings deal with such matters as changes in the By-Laws. In 1981 the president called a special meeting to review the criteria and procedures to be followed by the committee on Members in Course. There is always a goodly amount of correspondence carried on by the secretary and president. Much preparation is needed to get ready for the multiple spring activities, including such details as the time, menu, decorations and invitations for the spring banquet. As soon as seniors have been elected, the president of the chapter notifies each of them by letter; the treasurer has to order certificates and handle requests for keys, the symbol of the Society.

Not mentioned yet is the annual selection of a visiting Phi Beta Kappa scholar and the task of arranging for that person's appearance on the campus. Over the years the local chapter has hosted some distinguished visitors. The first visiting scholar was John Turkevich, Professor of Chemistry, Princeton University, who came in December of 1961. Among other Phi Beta Kappa scholars have been Oscar Handlin, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor from Harvard, Anna J. Harrison, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Chemistry from Mount Holyoke College, Anne Firor Scott, W. K. Boyd Professor of History from Duke University, and Douglass C. North, Luce Professor of Law and Liberty, in the Depart-

ment of Economics, from Washington University. Even this small sampling indicates the range of academic fields represented by the visiting scholars.

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Initiation ceremonies for new members have been held at various places on the St. Olaf campus. As noted above, the first group of student initiates was welcomed into Delta of Minnesota in the Agnes Mellby Hall Living Room in the spring of 1950. Other initiation sites have been the Faculty Lounge in the St. Olaf Center, the Hauge Room in Rølvaag Memorial Library and, most frequently in recent years, Urness Recital Hall in the Christiansen Hall of Music.

Each new member of Phi Beta Kappa has his or her own unique recollections of the events leading up to their initiation into the chapter and the impressions they received from the ceremony itself with its stately language. The Ceremony of Initiation that follows was authorized by the Delta of Minnesota chapter in 1967. Minor revisions in wording have been made over the years. Not all parts of the ceremony are used every year, but for the present purpose it seems fitting to reproduce the entire ritual.

#### CEREMONY OF INITIATION Phi Beta Kappa, Delta of Minnesota

*Arrangement: Table bearing the Roll Book. Behind the table, chairs for officers participating in the ceremony; facing the table, chairs for the initiates and for members of the Society in attendance. Everything being in readiness, the officers shall take their places. Then the President shall open the meeting and begin the ceremony of initiation as follows.*

#### PRESIDENT:

Fellow members of Phi Beta Kappa: We are assembled for the purpose of receiving into membership of our Society certain persons who, having been duly elected by this Chapter, desire to be admitted to its privileges and opportunities. The Treasurer will present the candidates.

#### TREASURER:

To the President and members of Phi Beta Kappa, I have the honor of presenting the following persons, who, agreeably to our invitation, here present themselves for initiation. Please rise as your name is called.

*The Treasurer shall then read the names of the candidates: first, the candidates for membership in course; then, the candidates for alumni or honorary membership, if any, with a citation of their attainments.*

#### PRESIDENT (*addressed to members in course*):

To you who have been elected to membership in course: In accordance with the rules of this Chapter and in consequence of our good opinion of your intellectual and moral character, supported by your record of high attainment in the College, you have been selected as worthy of becoming members of Phi Beta Kappa. Your names have been submitted to the scrutiny of the constitutional electors of the Chapter, and have met with their approval. You have been formally notified of your election, and by your presence here you signify your desire to be enrolled as members of this ancient and honorable Society.

#### PRESIDENT (*addressed to alumni members, if any*):

To you who have been elected to alumni membership: In accordance with the early practice of the Society, when Bushrod Washington was elected on the basis of attainments after graduation from the College of William and Mary, this honor is conferred upon you in recognition of your fruitful contributions to learning.

#### PRESIDENT (*addressed to honorary members, if any*):

To you who have been elected to honorary membership: In accordance with the early practice of the Society, when Elisha Parmele, John Marshall, and others, though not graduates of the College of William and Mary, were admitted to the privileges and responsibilities of membership, this honor is conferred upon you in recognition of your fruitful contributions to learning.

#### PRESIDENT (*addressed to all initiates*):

By the rules of this Chapter, initiates must personally pledge their allegiance to the Society and sign their name on the Roll Book. I am instructed to administer the following promise: "Do you solemnly promise that you will be true and faithful to this Society, that you will obey the laws thereof, and that in the election of members you will have paramount regard for moral character and scholarly attainment?" Please answer "Yes." (*The initiates respond in unison.*) The initiates will now be seated. A brief historical statement will be given by the Secretary.

#### SECRETARY:

On December 5, 1776, a group of young men, students of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, meeting in the Apollo Room of the Raleigh Tavern, Williamsburg, formed the Phi Beta Kappa Society, which they dedicated to high purposes, with eighteenth-century eloquence. In the Phi Beta Kappa Handbook you will find a brief account of the early days of the Society in Virginia, and of the fortunate establishment at Yale in 1780 and Harvard in 1781 of New England branches, which ensured the perpetuation and propagation of the Society when the parent chapter became inactive.

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During the following half century four more chapters were founded: at Dartmouth in 1787, Union in 1817, Bowdoin in 1825, and Brown in 1830. Then after a pause of fifteen years a slightly more rapid expansion began. At the end of the next half century of growth there were twenty-five chapters, and these, feeling the need of a closer unity and greater uniformity of practices, joined in 1883 in organizing the national body, the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa. In 1988 the name was changed to the Phi Beta Kappa Society. At present there are 255 chapters (*the number approved as of the Triennial Council of 1997*).

A woman was first elected to membership in 1875. In 1926 the 150th anniversary of the Society was made the occasion for raising an endowment fund and for exploring ways of encouraging scholarship in the educational institutions of the country. More recently the Society has joined in the defense of freedom of teaching and inquiry and of the liberal ideal in education.

The Secretary or another officer may continue with a brief history of the local chapter.

*SECRETARY (or another officer):*

On November 4, 1949, eight members of the faculty of St. Olaf College were granted a charter for the establishment of a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. As the fourth chapter to be established in this state, it was called the Delta of Minnesota. The names of the charter members are Julius Boraas, Paul Gerhard Schmidt, Karen Larsen, Clarence Clausen, Hildegard I. Stielow, Albert E. Finholt, Agnes M. Larson, and Helen M. Luvaas. The College is directly indebted to these faculty members for the honor of receiving a Phi Beta Kappa charter, and also to John M. Bly, Registrar and later Dean, who diligently prepared the necessary reports during the 1930's and 1940's. In a general way, the College owes the presence of its Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa to its consistent efforts to provide a well-qualified faculty, a good library, and a curriculum in which liberal subjects are respected and emphasized.

We must, as members of the Delta of Minnesota, do what we can to see that this tradition is maintained, that the faculty and administration of the College remain not only collectively committed to liberal education but also made up of liberally educated men and women. We owe to the old ideals of Phi Beta Kappa, to the old and the new members of our Chapter, and to ourselves our every effort to create and preserve an academic soil in which the liberal arts can flourish.

*The President or another officer will then give an explanation of the key and the "signs."*

*PRESIDENT (or another officer):*

The original organization at William and Mary was a secret society, and the oath transmitted to the first six Northern branches contained a promise to "preserve inviolate" the secret of the Society. As a result of the anti-Masonic agitation of the 1830's, however, most of the branches followed the lead of the Alpha of Massachusetts and repealed the injunction of secrecy. They retained the medal or key with its symbolic engraving, and the interpretation of these symbols and other "signs" of the Society has continued to constitute a part of the Form of Initiation.

**Key:** The present standard key, except for its smaller size and for the lower stem added by the branch at Yale, is substantially the same as the original medal of the Alpha of Virginia. On the obverse the medal bore the Greek letters ΦΒΚ, the initials of the words *Philosophia Biou Kybernetes*, translated as "Love of wisdom is the guide of life." In the upper left corner three stars symbolized the aims of the Society: Friendship, Morality, and Literature (or Learning). A pointing hand in a corner symbolized aspiration. On the reverse the letters SP represented the Latin name of the Society, *Societas Philosophiae*, "The Fellowship of Learning." Below them was engraved the historic date, December 5, 1776, and above them the name of the member was sometimes inscribed.

**Signs:** The "signs" of the Society which tradition has preserved are two. When members met, they greeted each other by drawing the back of the index and middle fingers of the right hand across the lips from left to right, thus, apparently, affirming that their lips were sealed. They followed this with a handshake, one of the traditional forms of which will be revealed to you at the end of this ceremony of initiation.

The Vice-President or another officer then speaks briefly regarding the interpretation of the ideals of the Society and the responsibilities of the membership. If he/she wishes, the following passages from an address by Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes given in 1930 at the 100th anniversary of the Alpha of Rhode Island (Brown University) may be used.

*VICE-PRESIDENT (or another officer):*

"The unique position of Phi Beta Kappa, and its usefulness, can be safeguarded only by unremitting attention to what has become the law of its being. The prestige of the Society is due to the fact that it is an association of men and women of scholarly attainments who have proved their merit according to the accepted standards of college discipline. The best proof of the utility of the Society is the esteem in which the election is held. Whatever may be said of the value of various activities proposed for the organization, the essential thing is to hold to the theory of the Society as a fellowship of scholars, admission to which is an honor conferred by reason of demonstrated worth. The success of Phi Beta Kappa continues to lie in what it is, rather than in what it does.

“The particular interest of Phi Beta Kappa is in liberal education. Whatever debate there may be as to its exact definition, or its prerequisites, it persists as an ideal. Intensive critical study of educational aims and methods has found nothing to take its place. It means the development by careful training of the capacity to appreciate what has been done and thought, the ability to make worthwhile appraisals of achievements, doctrines, theories, proposals. It is liberal because it emancipates; it signifies freedom from the tyranny of ignorance, and, from what is worse, the dominion of folly. Learning is not its aim so much as intelligence served by learning.

“At this time, when the world stands in need of every influence which favors intellectual discipline and achievement, as against a complacent indifference, the service of Phi Beta Kappa is of heightened value. It holds aloft the old banner of scholarship, and to the students who have turned aside from the easier paths and by their talent and fidelity have proved themselves to be worthy, it gives the fitting recognition of a special distinction.”

PRESIDENT (*this paragraph is optional*):

I shall conclude the charge in the words of the Ritual of 1779: “You all at this moment experience in yourselves the heartfelt satisfaction which I do at this, our valuable acquisition. Friendship itself, pleased with its success, now smiles at this addition to our Society. Let it be our just care to extend the friendship which has been exercised by this Society to these new members, that they may hereafter become veterans in its service.”

*During the large spring initiation it is customary to ask one of the students elected in the fall to speak on behalf of the initiates. These remarks, three or four minutes in length, should be given at the close of the initiation, but before the initiates sign the Roll Book.*

PRESIDENT:

The initiates will rise. By election of the Chapter, and by your assent to its pledge and the placing of your signatures on its book, the Society’s requirements for initiation are fully satisfied. I, therefore, in the presence of these members of the Society, declare you members of the Delta Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa in the State of Minnesota, authorized to wear its key as a badge, and to participate in its meetings.

It is now my pleasure to welcome you as members of the Chapter, giving each of you in turn the ancient grip of the Society. Please come forward to sign the Roll Book.

*As initiates come forward to sign the Roll Book, the President shakes their hands with the special handshake of the Society. During the fall initiation the initiates resume their seats after signing the Roll Book so that they may be introduced individually by a member of their department.*

[End of CEREMONY OF INITIATION]

Thereafter, these certain persons, having presented themselves agreeably to our invitation, having undergone the scrutiny of the constitutional electors, and having been deemed worthy of becoming members of this ancient and honorable Society, graciously return the smile of Friendship, accept the heartfelt felicitations of older members, and high-tail it to the dining hall, shouting “Um Yah Yah” and “Fram, Fram!” (“Forward, forward,” if a translation is needed.)

Indeed, the words “Forward, forward” from the motto of the College have a singular application to students admitted to Phi Beta Kappa. For many of our PBK graduates, the future has already come. In outstanding careers they have demonstrated the same love of learning, good character, and broad cultural interests that won their election to the Society while they were at St. Olaf.

The same will be true of those recently elected to membership. In a Phi Beta Kappa handbook appears this statement by a wise college president who addressed a group of new members in these words: “The honor conferred upon you today is one that will be included in any future summaries of your careers: see to it that it shall not be the only honor by which you are remembered.” The newest members of the chapter may be confident that further honors await them in lives of intellectual achievement and service to humanity.

Prepared by Joseph M. Shaw on behalf of the  
Semi-Centennial Committee, April 21, 2000

Printing of this booklet was made possible through a generous donation to Delta of Minnesota by Owen Hawley, Phi Beta Kappa graduate of St. Olaf College in the Class of 1952. The donation recognizes the 125th anniversary of the College and the 50th anniversary of Delta of Minnesota. It was also given to honor the memory of Owen Hawley’s parents and sister: Clarence E. Hawley (1886–1980), A. Myrtle (Hevle) Hawley (1893–1989), and Alicia E. Hawley (1934–1983).