

# Pledge's death spurs Greek reforms

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (AP) — The 14 newly pinned college fraternity pledges, roused by the members' speeches and their own desire to belong, were led downstairs into the darkened Lambda Chi Alpha basement and lined up in front of the bar.

On went the lights, revealing the final stage of the pinning night. There sat 200 "kamikazes," a potent vodka concoction.

They drank. James Callahan of North Bergen drank until he dropped dead.

The 18-year-old's alcohol death last winter at Rutgers University was one of a string of scandals at fraternity houses around the country that have brought more pressure for reforms of the Greek-letter brotherhoods.

With their futures at stake, fraternities are responding.

Bars in many fraternity houses are being closed and advisers are returning. And the National Interfraternity Conference is considering a total ban on pledging.

"It's not easy to change the culture, but until we do I think there are going to be very bad days ahead

for fraternities," says John Creedon, a Rutgers assistant provost. Since Callahan's death, Creedon has led the push for fraternity reforms at Rutgers.

"Fraternities are under fire as never before," Eileen Stevens, a national anti-hazing activist, says.

Stevens has traveled the country since her son died 10 years ago after drinking too much during a hazing at Alfred University in upstate New York.

"Their very future is in jeopardy," Stevens says. "I think we've come to a point where the people who supervise them realize the problems are enormous, and they're just not sure what to do about it."

The problems boil down to two hard-dying traditions — drinking and hazing.

Critics call fraternities an anachronism.

"Fraternities have been engaged, like the brontosaurus, in a futile struggle against a changed climate," Earl Smith, dean at Colby College, wrote last year in the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Fraternities have been banned at Colby since 1984, when administra-

tors decided they no longer fit in at the college in Waterville, Maine.

Fraternity leaders say the scandals are relatively few, that elitism charges are unfounded and that the positives such as friendship, leadership development and community service far outweigh any negatives.

But over the past two years, defenders of the fraternity system have wined at a series of incidents. In addition to the Rutgers death:

- Four members of the University of Alabama chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, the largest national fraternity, were arrested on charges of selling cocaine.

They were accused of making some of the drug deals out of the state's chapter house.

- At the University of Lowell in Massachusetts, six fraternity members were charged under the state's tough anti-hazing law over a stunt that sent a pledge to the hospital with a body temperature of 109. The members had bundled the victim in a sleeping bag and turned on heaters nearby.

- A former University of Delaware student claimed in a lawsuit that someone dumped caustic oven

cleaner over his head during a fraternity "Hell Night."

But nothing stirred an outcry like Callahan's death at Rutgers. It inspired nearly a dozen bills in the New Jersey Legislature and is cited by fraternity critics nationally.

"That probably had more impact on us than any other hazing incident," Jonathan Brant, director of the National Interfraternity Conference, says.

The reprisals against Lambda Chi Alpha were swift and harsh. The Rutgers chapter was disbanded and the house doors slammed shut.

The 29 other fraternities were ordered to pull out their basement bars, which had become standard equipment at Rutgers fraternities, and make other reforms.

It could have been worse.

In recent years, more than a dozen colleges have banned Greek-letter organizations. Besides Colby University, fraternities are passe at Amherst College and the University of Lowell, both in Massachusetts, and Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa.

At the Pennsylvania college, "the trustees felt the fraternities had been reduced in many ways to underage drinking clubs," college spokesman Patti Lawson says.

The mounting pressure against fraternities threatens what has been a steadily rising membership.

Undergraduate fraternity membership has climbed to 400,000, according to the interfraternity conference. That's more than double the 1970 figures and a 170,000 increase since 1980.

Unlike the Greek system's golden age of the 1950s, this heyday has come in a relatively unsupervised environment, campus administrators note. Gone are the housemothers, strict rules and other formalities that once characterized fraternity life.

But some college administrations are starting to reintroduce the supervision. It's met with resistance from many fraternity chapters, but some are starting to respond.

Resident advisers have moved into chapter houses on the University of Southern California's fraternity row. Fraternities have gone completely dry at Indiana University, home to one of the strongest Greek systems in the country.

The fraternities' national magazines abound with denunciations of alcohol abuse, sexism and racism.

A recent edition of Alpha Tau Omega's publication chronicles that fraternity's efforts to halt a national liquor promotion geared to male college students.

## Deaths from heart disease down sharply

MONTEREY, Calif. (AP) — Deaths from heart and blood vessel disease dropped 24 percent over the past decade, but it remains by far the nation's biggest killer, taking a life every 32 seconds, the American Heart Association said Sunday.

"The good news is that we continue to see an improvement in the death rate from the biggest killer of our population," said Dr. Bernadine Healy of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, who is president of the heart association.

"Those trends are dramatic and don't seem to be reversing," she said. "The bad news is that heart disease is still killing almost 1 million Americans a year, and we've got a long way to go."

Experts attribute the decline in death rates to a combination of healthier living habits, including fewer cigarettes and better food, and improved medical treatment.

"The public ought to appreciate the progress that has been made in heart disease over the past 20 years," said Dr. Myron L. Weisfeldt of Johns Hopkins University. "It's almost unbelievable. There is almost no form of heart disease that we can't approach with meaningful treatment."

However, Weisfeldt, who is president-elect of the heart association, also cautioned that much work remains, both in improving care and encouraging people to take better care of their health.

"I believe we can prevent at least 50 percent of the ischemic heart disease in the United States by the year 2000 if we stop smoking, get cholesterol treated if it's above 220, and identify and treat hypertension," he said.

Ischemic heart disease is the clogging of blood vessels that feed the heart. It underlies most heart attacks, the single most lethal heart ailment.

Association figures indicated that in 1986 — the most recent year for which there are statistics — an estimated 978,500 Americans died from heart attacks, strokes and other diseases of the heart and blood vessels.

Between 1976 and 1986, the death rate from all forms of cardiovascular disease fell 24 percent. It declined 28 percent for heart attacks and 40 percent for strokes.

## Job gives windshield washer second chance at career, life

ASBURY PARK, N.J. (AP) — The shortest job interview hotel manager Robert Fredy ever conducted took place at a New York City intersection as he waited at a light.

Something in Stephen Pearman's voice moved Fredy one cold day last February. Pearman had approached Fredy's car to wash his windshield, and, like many motorists who try to fend off the usually insistent beggars, Fredy flipped on the wipers to indicate he wasn't interested.

Pearman leaned into the window. "Come on, mister, give me a break," he said. "I need a job."

In the seconds before traffic started moving again, Fredy, general manager of the Berkeley-Carteret Hotel here, handed Pearman a business card and told him to call if he was serious.

Two days later, the 30-year-old windshield washer appeared in the lobby of the fancy hotel in this old seaside resort. In the past year, he has become a valued member of the hotel staff, found an apartment and married.

"I've gotten a second chance and took advantage of it," Pearman said with a grin as he sat recently in the hotel's restaurant, eating an omelette on the house.

"You know, I could have just come here a while, eaten up and left," he said. "But there ain't no future in washing windows."

Fredy paid for Pearman's bus ticket from New York to Asbury Park and put him up in a motel. He fed him three meals a day and loaned him pocket money while training him to be a banquet houseman.

Pearman now works full time, setting up the hotel's banquet rooms for conventions and business meetings. Neither man would say how much Pearman is paid, but he said he is saving up for a car.

Fredy acknowledged that there is a shortage of labor for such blue-collar jobs. "I didn't hire him for that reason," he said. "This was purely impulsive. A lot of people hate to get involved. New Yorkers tend to look the other way and say, 'That's not my problem.'"

"But being with the public all the time, I have a good sense of what people are all about," he said. "It gives me good judgment about people."

Pearman often works 12 to 14 hours a day, Fredy said.

"He was willing to work hard and listen," the manager said. "I never had any problem whatsoever."

In November, he was named employee of the month.

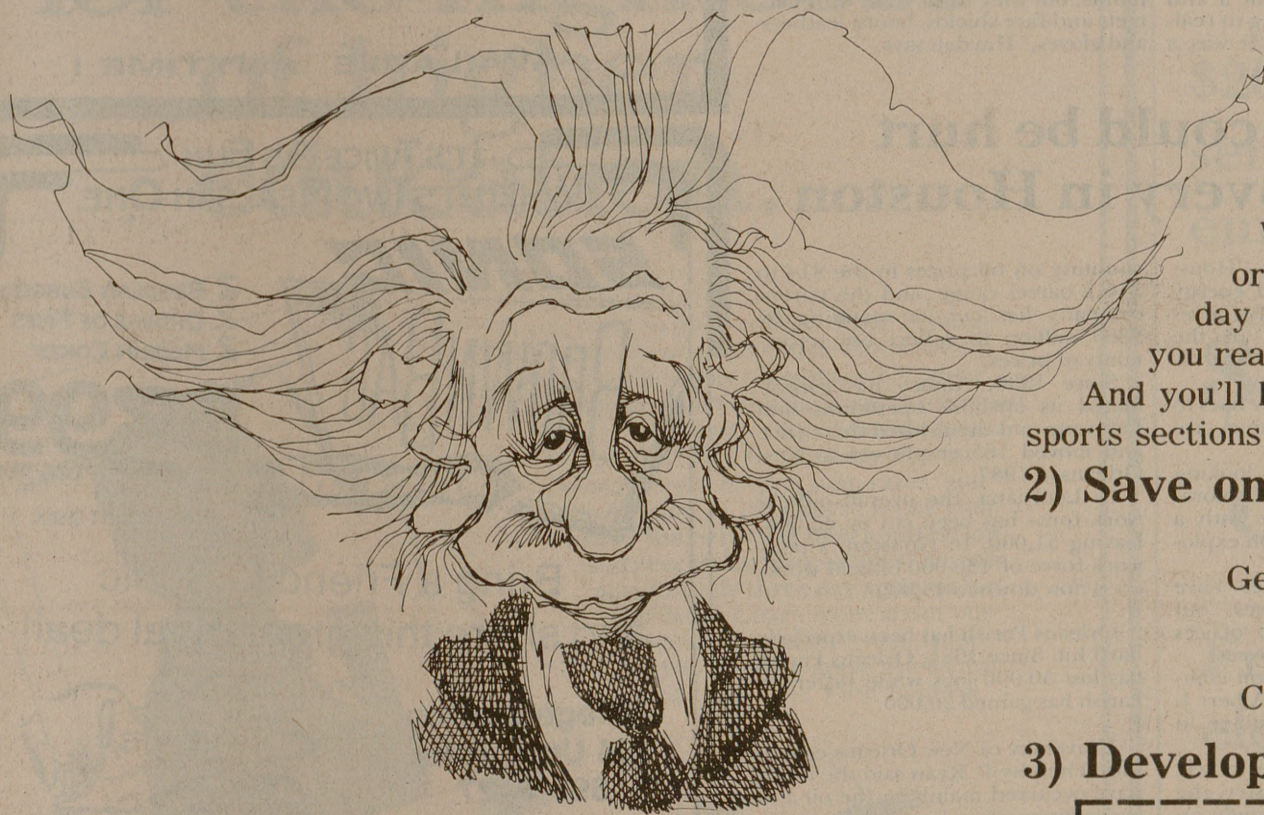
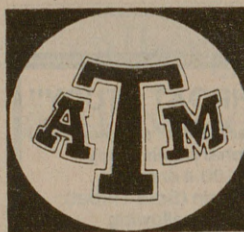
In December, he married Helena White, an 18-year-old housekeeper at the hotel. Fredy gave them a champagne reception and the bridal suite.

Ironically, it was Pearman who had doubts about Fredy's sincerity.

"My friends told me he was just pulling my leg when he handed me the card," Pearman said. "But I said, 'No, he's a businessman. I need to give it a shot. If there's a chance, I should take it.'"

Pearman has since returned to New York several times to hand out \$5 bills and sweatshirts to his old street buddies.

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