



INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF JEFF WAHLEN '81
PI KAPPA PHI'S 36TH NATIONAL PRESIDENT
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When I was sitting in your seat 26 years ago, I never dreamed that I would be up here delivering the National President's address. My journey with Pi Kappa Phi has taken me to places I never imagined.

And it began with a toothbrush.

Like many of you, my parents drove me to a college out of town, put my stuff in my dorm room and left me.

Alone.

All alone on a large college campus.

I only knew a few people. I did not know where my classes were, where to eat, which classes to take, or where to meet people. I was 17 years old and lost.

So, after feeling sorry for myself awhile, I did what all of you did – I went out to find my way. I ended up at Fraternity Row and went to several parties – had a great time. I went to the Pi Kappa Phi house, but at first it looked like the others.

Then, one morning during rush week, my phone rang. It was Skip Dvornick. He needed a toothbrush. He was going to the store and wanted to know if I wanted to come along. All of the other fraternities were inviting me to party, and Skip was inviting me to go to the store for a toothbrush. At first I thought that was odd, but then the light came on for me.

I was alone, trying to find my way and the brothers of Pi Kappa Phi could help me.

So, I went to the store with Skip. Later that day the brothers of Pi Kappa Phi invited me to play football. We went swimming at someone's apartment complex. And along the way, I started to feel something.

I felt family, a family of brothers. Guys just like my real brother, Eric, who is here today. So I joined, because one brother extended himself to me and showed me that Pi Kappa Phi could help me find my way.



Now, I may have joined Pi Kappa Phi because of a toothbrush, but I'm here today because of good leadership – not necessarily BY me, but good leadership FOR me.

For the last 27 years, I have followed some great leaders – local alumni; chapter advisors; regional governors; PUSH, Properties and Foundation Board members; National Council members; and members of the best fraternity staff in the nation. I've served with educators, real estate executives, bankers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, judges, doctors, engineers and military men.

And you know what? They applied good leadership on me. They did the things we heard about from General Kehler and Richard Viguerie.

They were positive. They encouraged. They were enthusiastic. They complimented. They set a good example.

I watched them carefully. They criticized ideas, not people. They shared the credit and they took the blame. They made it their business to find good skills and qualities in people and to put them to work. They helped people contribute.

And they took an interest in me. They helped me and encouraged me and when I needed it they kicked me in the seat of the pants. So, in so many ways, I am here because of the brothers of Pi Kappa Phi who exercised the art of good leadership on me. So if you like what you get for the next two years, you can thank them – if not, you can blame me.

I'm also here for a third reason – good family.

Pi Kappa Phi has been part of my family from the beginning. Tradition requires all good brothers of Pi Kappa Phi to marry up and I honored that tradition. I found a mate, Kris, who is nicer, brighter, more talented, harder working and better than me. And so, since she was at FSU and I was at Florida, I did what every red blooded American man in my position would do – I shamelessly chased her across the state of Florida by transferring to FSU.

Next Saturday we will celebrate 22 years of marriage. We have two beautiful children: Benjamin and Daniel. Benjamin is 12 and this is his fifth Supreme Chapter. Daniel is 9 and this is his third.

My brother Eric, who is an initiate of Beta Eta, joked yesterday that I take my family to Supreme Chapter and call it a vacation. But Supreme Chapter is more than a vacation for my family.

My job as a parent is to help my children be successful and part of that is exposing them to successful people. You do not meet people like Bruce Rogers every day. You don't get to hear from a person like General Kehler everyday. My children do not get to see successful college men like you who are committed to leadership, scholarship and service. So they come to Supreme Chapter and they see and they feel and they will be better for it.

The transfer to FSU changed my life. Glenn Dickson and Ernest Johnson showed up on my doorstep and invited me to help re-colonize the Beta Eta chapter, thus beginning my journey with the National Fraternity.



Now, people always ask what the Fraternity is going to do on my watch. Here's the answer:

We are going to take what we have and make it better. We are going to execute our Second Century Vision. We are going to find ways to help chapters better manage their finances. We are going to explore how we can better use technology. And we are going to expand – to blue chip schools like the University of Southern California, Florida State, Auburn, Nebraska, North Carolina, Miami, and Villanova.

But that's not all. We are going to focus on the art of leadership. We are going to make it our business to discover the really great things our chapters are doing so we share those successes with others – not just once a year at award time. We are going to identify the great student leaders in our chapters and hold them up as examples to others. We are going to showcase our great alumni leaders so we can all learn. We are going to develop some new programming. And we are going to figure out some new ways to reward our brothers and chapters who are being successful.

And you know, we are also going to focus on the Family part of Fraternity. We are going to find new and better ways to foster the family feeling we enjoy as a Fraternity.

There is a coin on your table. It's a challenge coin. Pick it up and take it home. And when you get home, carry it with you or put it where you see it every day. And when you carry it or see it, remember these challenges, these things we need you to do.

First, we need you – each of you - to commit yourself to the art of leadership – for yourself, your chapter and your Fraternity.

Be positive. Encourage. Compliment. Criticize ideas, not people. Set a good example.

Be competent. Whether you are the Archon or the Treasurer or the House Manager or the person responsible for setting up the room for Chapter meetings. Know the rules. Know your job. Do them well.

There was a famous admiral who said, "You don't manage people into battle. You manage things. You lead people."

And while our Fraternity needs good managers, we also need great leaders. In fact, our world needs great leaders.

So be a great leader. Help your Chapter have hope. Make it your business to find a good skill or quality in each of your chapter brothers and find a way to put it to work for your chapter. Help your brothers feel good about being a member of Pi Kappa Phi by giving them a job they can do and rewarding them when they do the job. Create a culture of success in your Chapter.

Second, I want you to find a way to embrace Push America's mission of Leadership through Service. Our best chapters have embraced Push America and made service as much a part of chapter life as eating and breathing. I have met hundreds of brothers who have been involved in Push America. Cyclists, builders, and brothers who volunteer at a local work center.



And whether they have ridden across America or across Florida or across town to a work center, all of them have been on a journey – a journey of discovery. They have learned about themselves, how blessed they are, how to be compassionate, how to extend themselves to others – how to serve. And whether that discovery takes place on the seat of a bicycle, or with a hammer in hand or sitting with a disabled child across town - it's a real journey, a personal journey and a journey that makes a difference for life.

Finally, I challenge you to remember the toothbrush.

Pi Kappa Phi is America's leading fraternity. Our mission is vital and our future is bright. There are thousands of young college men around America who are going off to school and will be trying to find their way. And they are thirsty for family. They are thirsty for our brotherhood. So, extend yourselves to them. Don't talk to them about brotherhood – let them feel it. And if you do, they will be knocking your door down to join.

Pi Kappa Phi is growing bigger and stronger every day. And we alumni know why. We stand up here and make speeches, but you men are the ones on the ground, fighting the battle every day and working to make our Fraternity even better. And for that, we all say thank you.

I am humbled by the opportunity to be your National President and speak for the entire National Council when I say we are honored by the trust you have placed in us. Thank you very much and God Bless our Fraternity.

