

## OFFICERS

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Bob "Dunkle" Lehmkuhl '74  
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## BY THE NUMBERS

**\$6,390**

raised as of 4/3/23

**\$13,000 goal**

**3**

ways to give:

1. Make a gift online. DONATE

2. Send a check to to our processing center listed below:

**Sigma Chi**  
University of Maryland  
Alumni Relations Processing  
Center  
P.O. Box 7007  
Albert Lea, MN 56007-8007

3. Call our toll-free Donation  
Hotline at: 1-800-975-6699



# CROSSROADS

A Publication of Gamma Chi Chapter of Sigma Chi, University of Maryland

April 2023

## BOB "BATGUY" CASAZZA '68

### "Sigma Chi molds your direction in life"

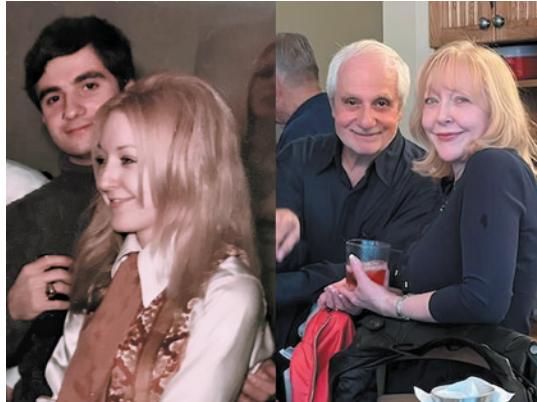
*We caught up with Bob Casazza, Class of 1968, to discuss his Sigma Chi experience. What follows is an abridged version of our discussion around his memories and reflections...*

I majored in fine art, which my father did not like. I minored in sociology. I found Sigma Chi through an older, family friend who was a member of the fraternity. There was a real appeal to the identity of that house. I think we were very outgoing, working with other fraternities and sororities at the time, and also with the university. I made a lot of good friends, lived in the house, and commuted back home on weekends.

And I got very involved. I wasn't much of an athlete, but I did a lot of things using my background in art, and I had a big interest in advertising as well. So the art really kind of took off after a while. I would create posters for fraternity events, and I had several comic strips with the Diamondback that went on for a couple years.

My nickname became Batguy, because at the time, the fraternity brothers liked to watch the Batman show on TV. I did a comic strip called *Batguy*, which was our own version of Batman, and so they gave me that nickname. I was able to do a lot of things with that comic strip. You know, when you have a comic strip, you can put people in it. I would feature the brothers. I would feature sorority girls. I would get dates because of it, things like that.

Things that stick out are the events. We had



**Batguy**

an annual coat-and-tie event around Christmas Break called the Kool Yule Derby Day was really popular too and it raised money to help out the community. We also had a Sweetheart Weekend in Ocean City every June at the Sea Scape Motel. The highlight was crowning the sweetheart of the fraternity. I think events like these, no one ever forgets.

We all did some crazy stuff, but mainly I think of the bonds that happen when you are working with certain people. All of us had little cliques within the fraternity that we hung out with. If we weren't playing sports, we were doing other things together. The beauty of it is we still get together. We have had reunions every year for the group called the "60s Sigs". Those reunions have been down in Emerald Isle, North Carolina, and recently moved to Bethany Beach, Delaware. It will be the 21st year of our reunion for the 60s group coming up this May.

I've always thought through the years that the fraternity kind of molds your direction in life in many ways. First of all, it allows you to understand that you're not the only person in the world; you have to get along with others. You're living and working and studying with people from all sorts of backgrounds. You learn how to cope and work as a team. You learn how to get through tough times together and help each other. And so it gives you this kind of survival instinct, but it also gives you values about some very important things in life, like the Jordan Standard stuff in our manual. You have an optimistic look at things. You have a history of,

-Continued on Page 2

## JP BISHOP '87

### Life lessons and lifelong bonds

Thinking back on his time at Maryland, JP Bishop sums it up this way: "College is for a formal education. Sigma Chi is for life lessons."

He remembers joining a house known around campus for "brotherhood and athletics" and recalls many good memories made on the "basketball court in our back yard and on the couch in front of the television." There was a lot of time for fun, but also many opportunities to learn.

"Living in a house with 50 brothers leaves a mark. Having Sigma Chi plus a focus on athletics taught me so many lessons that I still use today about working, winning, and also losing."

The fraternity also left him with lifelong friendships that carry

forward to this day. "If I needed one of my brothers, they'd be there for me. Before I was even pledged, I was invited to province weekend at Lehigh U. I met so many people that are still my best friends on that trip.

But the relationships JP formed through Sigma Chi didn't stop at brotherhood: "I met my wife playing on the coed volleyball team I organized with Delta Gamma. She was our Sweetheart and is still mine."

They have three children, aged 31, 29, and 12. An attorney and auto dealer, JP describes himself as "busy running a business and raising our gift child."

## BOB "BATGUY" CASAZZA '68

—Continued from Page 1

"I'm going to make this work no matter what." You learn you have to maneuver life. You have to adapt to things. And it's not going to be handed to you.

*Despite his father's early misgivings, Bob's pursuit of a fine art degree paid major dividends. After a stint as a cartographer in the US Army, he began a long career in television and advertising that took him from Washington, DC to Chicago to Seattle, where he lived for many years before recently relocating to Virginia. In addition to all the friendships, memories, and life lessons described above, his fraternity experience yielded another benefit, the best of all:*

"Back in the day, a high school friend of mine also pledged our Chapter. One weekend home, he took me to a party where I met a special young lady. She became my sweetheart and then my wife. After 57 years, we still see the brother that introduced us. Life has been good... because of Sigma Chi."



# Brotherhood is Forever

## HOUSE UPGRADE



### The Valz-Luzio Common Room Dedication

**Jonathan Valz '96** and **Mike Luzio '98** have generously created an endowment to upgrade the furnishings in our Common Room. On February 10th, the Chapter honored and thanked these men for their generosity to our Chapter. A great time was had by all including Significant Sig Chick Hernandez, who was kind enough to join us.

Brother Valz was awarded the Heise Award for 2022 and Brother Luzio was awarded the Heise Award for 2021 in honor of their contributions as alumni to our Chapter, in the Spirit of Jack Heise, who was a legendary Sigma Chi and University of Maryland alumnus.

In Hoc.

## BEN JOHANNES '10

### "You'll get out many times over what you put in."

When Ben Johannes arrived at Maryland, he had no interest in joining a fraternity. ("I wasn't against them. It just wasn't on my radar.") A Facebook message from a high school friend was destined to drastically change all that: Would he be willing to attend a free happy hour meeting with Sigma Chi alumni about possibly recolonizing the Maryland chapter?

"As a broke college kid, I was like, 'Yeah, I'll absolutely do that.' I was expecting 20 people to be there. It ended up being like 100, most of whom were alumni. Some of them were guys from the Fifties and Sixties. Instantaneously that hit me like, 'Oh, this matters to them.'"

The impact of seeing dozens of Sigma Chi's, spanning several generations, return to campus in support of giving their fraternity second life got his attention, and the chance to see a complex and challenging task through to completion appealed to his hands-on nature: "I latched on to this as important to these guys. This is a project I can work on to get from just a bunch of dudes hanging out at a bar to a fully established fraternity. Let's pull together a group. Let's see what kind of paperwork we have to do. Let's see what kind of process is needed. It ended up being exceedingly more fulfilling than I ever could have hoped for."

What followed was a multiyear journey of hard work, memories made, and lessons learned by Ben and his fellow "pledges," but at its end, Sigma Chi had returned to the University of Maryland.

"There were maybe 50 of us in that first group. I always joke I was in the world's longest-tenured pledge class. We were technically pledges, because we weren't fully colonized for like three semesters. Our first meetings were at the student union in



an empty room, because we didn't have a gathering place. We had an alumni advisor, **Scott Werber '86**, who was instrumental. We would have failed a million times over if it weren't for Scott. He was the adult in the room."

Ben recalls that, even in its earliest days, the newly resurgent Sigma Chi found ways of harkening back to the chapter's long and proud

tradition of standout athletics.

"We were active – not always good – but we were active in intramural sports. Randomly one of our best teams was the volleyball team; none of us knew that we were actually any good at volleyball, but we had a bunch of tall guys. We would get to games, and the other fraternity would have maybe a girlfriend or two that would show up. Maybe one or two other guys that had nothing to do. We would have 30 guys show up and cheer obnoxiously loudly. We eventually got a formal complaint from the Interfraternity Council that we were too mean, too aggressive and loud in our chanting. We took pride in that. We were absolutely wearing it like a badge."

Looking back on the recolonization effort now, he recognizes it as the most instructive and valuable experience of his college career.

"It's very weird, because I think back to a bunch of 18- to 21-year-olds who didn't really know what they were doing, and we were able to not only survive, but eventually to build something that thrived. The phrase that the alumni always used to say would be, 'You'll get out many times over what you put in.' And I thought that just was like some nice-sounding stuff to say, but it turned out to be true. I definitely got more out of it. My best friends are all guys from that time. To this day, I know I can give all those guys a call at any time, and they'll pick up the phone."

After graduation, Ben worked in sales before transitioning to commercial real estate analysis and research. His employer, Fraser Forbes Real Estate, does land development and real estate brokerage and recently launched a townhome building and rental company where he serves as principal.

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

### Meet our new undergraduate leadership and the Fall '22 Pledge Class

A lot has been happening for the Gamma Chi Chapter lately! Here are a few updates to our chapter leadership.

#### 2023 Undergraduate Executive Committee

Consul	Colby Demelfi	Newbury Park, CA
Pro Consul	Alex Soja	Bloomfield, NJ
Quaestor	Sam Chansky	Winchester, MA
Recruitment Chair	John Radovich	Larchmont, NY
Magister	Noah Cerrud-Osmer	Kensington, MD
Risk Co-Chairs	Jack Shamy	Point Pleasant Beach, NJ
	Zach Goldberg	Montville, NJ
Annotator	Adam Singer	Damascus, MD
Scholarship Chair	Braden Zehring	Elkridge, MD
Social Chair	Marcus Fini	Vero Beach, FL
Awards Chair	Justin Samoryk	Ellicott City, MD
Derby Days Chair	Nick Leccese	Hopkinton, MA

#### The Fall '22 Pledge Class

Jack Shamy	Point Pleasant Beach, NJ
Reilly Joyce	Annapolis, MD
Woojin Yang	Olney, MD
Nishan Rajavasireddy	Saratoga, CA
Zachary Goldberg	Montville, NJ
Jake Kranz	Ridgewood, NJ
Michael Maldonado	Commack, NY
Frank Chiocciello	Pine Brook, NJ
Justin Samoryk	Ellicott City, MD
Ian Kitterman	Pittsburgh, PA

#### The Gamma Chi Education Foundation Board

The following brothers were added to the board:

**John Boyle '76**  
**Jeff Hines '81**  
**Tom Parsons '92**

#### The House Corporation

New President: **Zach Gonnson '10**

New Vice President: **James Haviland '11**

The treasurer position is currently vacant.



## GAMMA CHI EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Our chapter has an education foundation, the Gamma Chi Education Foundation, that was endowed in 2016 with the proceeds from the sale of the property, where our former chapter house was located at the University of Maryland for 75 years. Plus, we also received a large endowment from the estate of a deceased Gamma Chi alumnus: **Jack Stringer '57**.

Gamma Chi's Education Foundation and the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland jointly collaborated to create and underwrite a three-credit course for undergraduates beginning last fall. The course specifically relates to social value creation and provides students with opportunities to work with entrepreneurs on opportunities to improve society.

The course provides students with:

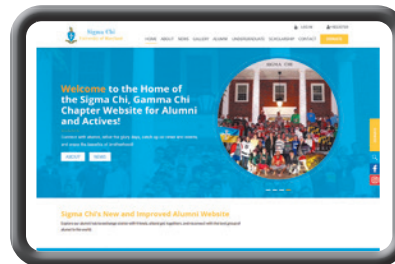
- a social entrepreneurship challenge
- a crash course on startup methodology
- a blueprint project for social change
- an interactive consulting experience

## GAMMA CHI ONLINE



#### Social Media

Instagram: [@sigmachiumd](https://www.instagram.com/sigmachiumd)  
 Facebook: [@UMDSigmaChi](https://www.facebook.com/UMDSigmaChi)



#### Our Website

Find us on the web at [www.sigmachiumd.org](http://www.sigmachiumd.org). Read the latest news from fellow alumni and the undergrads, submit an update, or look through our photo albums!

*If you think you or someone you know from the Gamma Chi Chapter would make an interesting alumni profile, please let us know at [www.sigmachiumd.org](http://www.sigmachiumd.org) and click on "Contact Us" tab*