

THE HISTORY OF PI KAPPA DELTA

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Introduction

It was over fifty years ago that two college students, John A. Shields and Edgar A Vaughn, met for a weekend to make the final draft of a document that had been discussed by mail for several months. After the final touches had been made late one night, the boys flipped a coin to see which would have the privilege of signing it. Thus, the Constitution of Pi Kappa Delta became a reality. One of the young authors ventured a prediction that some day as many as three hundred members might be added to the organization – perhaps even three hundred fifty.

That the young organization was destined to serve a definite need has been proven as almost sixty-four years later it has granted 384 charters and added at this date, October 1976, 49,942 members.

For a number of years the FORENSIC included accounts of the formative years of Pi Kappa Delta. However, little was done to bring the history up to date for almost twenty-five years. Realizing the need for a more complete history, the Public Relations Committee was authorized to prepare a history for general distribution. This version is based on a study of the historical accounts given in the early FORENSICs, an examination of records, and correspondence with the past presidents and other officials.

It would take an entire volume to record the history of Pi Kappa Delta. A complete history should contain the winners of national contests, results of business meetings, members who have served on the National Council, the record of admission of chapters and achievements of outstanding alumni. In this brief edition, no attempt has been made to include such details; however, that is a project that the Public Relations of the future might consider. The information was submitted to the National Secretary for editing.

The Establishment of the Fraternity

The Concept which resulted in the creation of Pi Kappa Delta was the realization of the need for a means of providing recognition for orators and debaters in the smaller colleges. The idea came to two of the founders of the fraternity, John A. Shields and Egbert R. Nichols, almost simultaneously.

In the autumn of 1911, Shields was a junior at Ottawa University, Ottawa, Kansas, and Nichols, who had been a professor of English for two years (1909-1911) at Ottawa, began his work at Ripon College, Wisconsin as head of the Department of Composition and Public Speaking. The two were friends and kept in touch with each other by occasional letters.

Nichols related how his debaters on a trip to Lawrence College, Appleton, Wisconsin, discovered the debaters were wearing a forensic key. Lawrence College had just been admitted to an organization, which at the time established only one chapter in the state. This suggested to the Ripon debaters the need of establishing a new organization.

In Kansas, Shields had likewise discovered the need for such a society. When the debaters to the Kansas State Prohibition Oratorical Association assembled in Manhattan, Kansas, Shields found another person, Edgar A. Vaughn, who was also interested in the means of giving recognition to orators and debaters.

The Ripon group adopted a constitution and sent it Shields at Ottawa and it was adopted by the Kansas group with some changes. Suggestions for the design of the key were also made. After some modification, a pear-shaped key with two jewels were accepted, and the first key was ordered by Vaughn in January, 1913.

The Name of the organization was supplied by Mrs. Grace Goodrich, a student in Greek at Ripon College. Pi Kappa Delta was chosen because it was composed of the initial letters of the phrase PEITHO KALE DIKAIJA, "the art of persuasion, beautiful and just."

The Kansas group proposed the idea of including degrees as well as orders in the new society, which showed the Masonic influence – both Shields and Vaughn were masons. Vaughn had the imagination to see the essential purpose of the organization, which was to bestow an honorary key on orators, debaters and coaches; he wished to show by jewelling the key the distinction of each individual.

Shields received credit for taking the action that officially launched the organization. He selected the officers from the founders and as secretary, cast the ballot which put them into office. According to Shield's selection, Nichols became the first president, Vaughn, vice-president and chairman of the charter committee; Shields himself acted as secretary-treasurer, and J.H. Krenmyre, Iowa Wesleyan, the historian. A.L. Crookham, Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas, and P.C. Sommerville, Illinois Wesleyan, were appointed on the charter committee.

The National Conventions, 1916-22

The first national convention of Pi Kappa Delta was held in the spring of 1916, with Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas, serving as the host chapter. The constitution was put in more complete form, the insignia and the ritual were designed, and the plans for inter-fraternity relations were developed.

The first contest was held at the second national convention at Ottawa University in 1918, and was a debate between Redlands and Ottawa. Later the contests became the chief feature of the national conventions. It was announced that plans were being made to establish an arrangement with Delta Sigma Rho for co-operative forensic endeavors.

The third national convention was held at Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa, in 1920. An oratorical contest was included in this program. No debate tournament was held but teams arranged debates to be held in route to and from the convention, and during free periods of the convention. To facilitate debate plans, Secretary Marsh suggested that the colleges adopt the same debate question, which was the first step toward the policy of selecting an official question.

The Development of Policy, 1922-26

The Fourth Biennial Convention was held at Simpson College, Iowa, in 1922. To facilitate scheduling debates, an official question had been adopted by chapter vote for the first time in 1922. The question was: "Resolved that principles of closed shop are justifiable." This was a period of rapid growth for Pi Kappa Delta as the society added forty-one chapters during two years.

Provincial Organization. In 1923, the chapters in some of the provinces initiated provincial conventions. These regional meetings were of historical importance since from them developed the debate tournament, the first being held at Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas. At the close of the first tournament a prediction was made that it was not beyond reason to expect that within the next biennium other provinces would hold like meets, resulting ultimately in intra-provincial contests.

Extempore Speaking. Experiments were made in extempore debate in which the question was not revealed until twenty-four hours before the debate. Also the extempore speaking contest was developed and was added to the program of the 1924 national convention at Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois.

International debating brought the British system of debating before the American colleges. This tended to free debating in the United States from its rigid system of memorized speeches and increased the popularity of the audience decision.

But the development of the tournament plan with its crowded program of many simultaneous debates and contest after contest on the same question forced the American schools more and more to the single expert judge, usually a debate coach, a method of judging which was gradually adopted for general use.

During Marsh's term in office, a number of Pi Kappa Delta members were interested in formulating a code of ethics. The National Council suggested that such a code covering "every phase of debate" should be undertaken.

During the early years of the 1920's there was a great deal of interest in the problem of judging. As debates multiplied in number it became difficult to provide disinterested judges. In an effort to improve the judging, H.B. Summers, Kansas State College, compiled and published a directory of judges, listing men in all parts of the country who had served as judges and giving a summary of the estimates of their ability made by the institutions they had judged.

The fifth national convention of Pi Kappa Delta was held at the Bradley Polytechnic Institute in Illinois, April 1-3, 1924. The addition to the program of extempore speaking contests and the scheduling of separate contests for men and women in both extempore and oratory attracted more delegates. Plans were made at this meeting for the inauguration of a national debate tournament at the next convention.

One hundred eighteen chapters sent five hundred fifty-five delegates to the 1979 convention held at the Chase-Park Plaza Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. Oral history interview was conducted as an experimental contest event. Interpretation of prose and poetry became two separate events. An amendment to the constitution provided for a student Lieutenant Governor in each Province. Two new chapters and one reactivated chapter were chartered.

The thirty-second convention was held in Gatlinburg, Tennessee in 1981 with ninety-four chapters and six hundred ninety-one delegates in attendance. Three contests were added to the schedule of events: a division of CEDA debate, impromptu speaking, and dramatic duo. Seven charters were presented to four new active charters, two reactivated chapters, and one alumni chapter. A professional activities day was scheduled prior to other convention activities. Emphasis was given to reports of research projects and to the exchange of ideas pertaining to forensic concerns. A recommendation of the Research Committee that the Spring issue of *The Forensic* be designated the "Forensic Research Publication" received immediate acceptance when the 1981 Spring issue was largely devoted to research articles. A significant action taken at the 1981 convention business meeting was the deletion of the constitutional provision requiring chapter attendance at national conventions.

Conclusion

Pi Kappa Delta is proud of its significant contributions to intercollegiate forensics. It helped to fill the period between the decline of the literacy society and the development of the speech department as a major phase of higher education. The organization on a national basis was established to co-ordinate the work of local clubs, and to give recognition to orators and debaters according to uniform criteria. Experiments were carried on with new types of speech activities, and policies were developed to guide forensics on the local, regional, and national levels.

Higher ethical standards have been maintained and requirements for membership increased from time to time to make affiliation of greater value. Pi Kappa Delta has provided a service magazine, *THE FORENSIC*, to members as a means of unifying the work of the local chapters and providing other information on speech and forensics.

At the regional and national level, conventions, tournaments, and congresses have been provided which have brought students together from all parts of the country. Many of these young people, otherwise, would never have had the opportunity to attend a national meeting with the many personal benefits to be gained from participation in forensic activities on such an extensive basis.

Although Pi Kappa Delta was the third fraternity of its kind to be organized, it became the largest in terms of the number of chapters and total membership. This may be attributed to its more liberal policy of granting charters to smaller institutions, and its more vigorous policy of sponsoring regional and national conventions and tournaments. With strict attendance requirements, as many as 182 chapters have sent more than 1060 members to participate in some of its national assemblies.

Pi Kappa Delta is the only forensic society that has provided several orders in which membership may be earned and a series of degrees through which the member may progress from year to year. After three years of forensic activity one may qualify for the highest degree and the distinction of wearing a diamond in his key.

The Period of National Tournaments, 1926-42

The sixth national convention was held in 1926 at Fort Collins and Greeley, Colorado. For the national debate tournaments for men and women were undertaken and the double elimination plan was used. At this convention the plan was adopted of holding provincial meetings in the years in which the national conventions were not held. The official debate question for 1925-26 was the proposal to control child labor by an amendment to the constitution. "The Crime Situation in America" was the topic selected for the men's extempore contest and the women's topic was "Marriage and Divorce". Pi Kappa Delta planned a certificate for proficiency in debate coaching to be awarded upon graduation to students who had been active in forensics. It was voted to publish the winning speeches of the national conventions; **Volume One of Winning Intercollegiate Debates and Orations** appeared in 1926.

Chapter Activities. The year 1929 marked the use of the airplane for debate travel. G.R. McCarty, South Dakota State College, and his debaters traveled by air from Oklahoma City to Chickasha to maintain their schedule. The College of St. Thomas debaters flew from St. Paul to Chicago for one of their forensic engagements.

Wichita, Kansas was selected for the location of the eighth national convention which was held March 31 to April 4, 1930. The tournaments had developed gradually with no definite plan; however, in 1930, an organization was planned for their administration, with carefully selected officers and committees in charge of each contest. At previous conventions, a chapter could enter more than one team. At Wichita, for the first time, each chapter was limited to a single team.

Changes in Contest Procedures. The Addition of contests in debate, oratory, and extemporaneous speaking resulted in a great increase of interest in the Pi Kappa Delta national conventions. Business sessions, side trips, banquets, and other special features were included in the convention programs; however, the contests were the outstanding features of the conventions. During the early years of the national contests, the National Council did most of the work of planning and conducting the events. In time, special committees were appointed to take charge of the contests with a different committee being responsible for each event. In the first contests in oratory and extemporaneous speaking, the contestants were divided into several divisions for a preliminary round with the best two or three in each division competing in the final round.

In the early tournaments, the double elimination plan was used with a team being dropped after its second loss. The number of preliminary rounds in debate was increased to five at the 1932 convention held at Tulsa, Oklahoma, with an elimination bracket set up for those teams that were undefeated at the end of five rounds. This plan was used in the national conventions of 1934 and 1936.

The next major change in contest procedure was made in 1938 at the Topeka, Kansas convention. In debate, the preliminary rounds were dropped and each team was scheduled to debate eight rounds with the teams given a rating based on the number of debates won. The committee in charge of debate asked tournament directors to recommend outstanding teams that were to be "ceded" teams. These were placed on the bracket at regular intervals in an attempt to provide equalized competition for all teams. In the individual events, four preliminary rounds were held and the six best speakers selected for a final round in which they were ranked from first to sixth.

Another new feature of 1938 convention was the addition of a Student Congress. State and regional congresses had been held for several years resulting in a demand for such activities at the national level. The Pi Kappa Delta Congress was held in the Kansas Capitol as a two-house legislature. Each chapter was invited to send one delegate to the lower house, and each province elected two senators to comprise the upper house. Interest in the Congress resulted in a new attendance record for Pi Kappa Delta conventions with more than 800 delegates and visitors being registered.

At the Knoxville convention in 1940, the plan used in debate was a combination of that used at Topeka and the earlier tournaments. Each team was scheduled to debate eight rounds and was given a rating based on the number of debates won. Teams winning seven or eight debates were rated superior; those winning six were rated excellent; and those winning five were rated good. At the end of eight rounds, eight teams were selected for a quarter bracket with first and second place winners being selected after three additional rounds of debate.

Because of the popularity of the Student Congress at the Topeka convention, another Congress was held at Knoxville. Several changes in the rules were made as a result of the previous Congress; however, without the atmosphere of the State Capitol, the Congress received less attention than the one held at Topeka.

In 1942, in the convention at Minneapolis, dissatisfaction with the combination plan resulted in a return to the 1938 pattern in which teams debated eight rounds and were rated on the number of wins and losses. The plans for the convention had already been made before the start of the war and an attempt was made to conduct the convention with little deviation as possible. The Student Congress was retained as one of the features of the convention but was modified to an unicameral house.

An Era of Maturity, 1947-61

Following a five-year interim of war years, Pi Kappa Delta resumed its national tournaments in 1947. In the individual events, four preliminary rounds were held and eighteen speakers were selected for the fifth round. In oratory and extemporaneous speaking, the 10 percent of the speakers ranking highest were given the rating of "Superior"; and the next 20 percent were rated "Excellent"; and the next 20 percent were rated "Good". The major change at the 1947 convention was the substitution of Discussion for the Student Congress. An interesting experiment in the Discussion was the use of ratings by opponents. Ratings were given in Discussion on the same basis as in extemporaneous speaking and oratory, with the rating being based entirely on scores given by the opponents from round to round.

The 1949 convention was held at Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois. Discussion was continued with a combination plan of coach judging and judging by opponents, with final ratings based on the combination scores of the two groups.

In 1951 the Pi Kappa Delta National Convention was held at Oklahoma A. and M. College, Stillwater, Oklahoma; this proved to be a popular place for a convention site as delegates from 135 chapters assembled for a four-day convention. The plan for the contests had become standardized from the previous conventions. The major change at Stillwater was that of doing away with all judging and ratings in the Discussion event.

The national convention was held at Kalamazoo College, Michigan in 1953. The decline in college attendance as a result of the Korean War was reflected in the attendance at Kalamazoo. However, the contests were held with little change from the procedure of the previous national. A distinctive feature of the Kalamazoo convention was the acceptance of an invitation that had been extended over a period of twenty-five years to hold the next national convention on the West Coast.

The 19th biennial convention was held at Redlands University in 1955 with 115 chapters sending 554 delegates. At Redlands, a return was made to a five day convention in order to allow free periods for sightseeing and other special features. The growth of Pi Kappa Delta in California had been impressive with an increase from five to thirteen chapters since the close of World War II.

The 1957 convention was held at South Dakota State College, Brookings, South Dakota. New features added to the program were a session devoted to professional problems with Robert T. Oliver, Pennsylvania State University as the speaker. The tradition of making a Distinguished Alumni Award was started at this convention with Senator Karl Mundt being selected to receive the award. Plans were made to inaugurate a Pi Kappa Delta forensic scholarship in honor of one of the founders, John A. Shields.

In 1959 the convention returned to the site of its 1947 meeting, with Bowling Green State University again acting as host. In attendance were more than 700 delegates and visitors from 135 chapters. The Distinguished Alumni Award was presented to Dr. Dwayne Orton, editor of THINK. Dr. Waldo Braden, Chairman of the Department of Speech, Louisiana State University, was the convention speaker. Plans were made by the convention for the celebration of Pi Kappa Delta's Golden Anniversary, especially directed toward bringing the alumni of the fraternity into the celebration.

A Period of Growth, 1961-1971

On February 18, 1961, the 200th chapter of Pi Kappa Delta was installed on the campus of the University of Kansas City. In the years 1961 to 1971 inclusive, charters were granted to 101 new chapters and 12,000 new members joined the organization. In 1961 Oklahoma State University in Stillwater was host for the twenty-second biennial convention. Ten years earlier, in 1951, it had hosted the convention. One hundred forty-eight chapters send 725 delegates. Twelve new chapters received charters. Edward Betz, past president of Pi Kappa Delta and Dean of Students at the University of the Pacific, was the convention speaker. Dr. Walter B. Emery, Professor of Radio and Television Law at Michigan State University, received the Distinguished Alumni Award.

The 1963 Golden Anniversary Convention was held at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois with 816 delegates representing 151 chapters. Fifteen new chapters were granted charters. Mixed team debate was introduced as a debate division. Distinguished Service Awards were made to the past-presidents, and secretary-treasurers of Pi Kappa Delta. Fifty distinguished living alumni were announced and those present were recognized. The Evaluation Committee noted the increased desire of students to have a greater voice in the affairs of the organization. The convention address, entitled "This is our Heritage," was given by Dr. Sylvester Toussaint, past-president and former secretary-treasurer of Pi Kappa Delta.

The 24th biennial convention was held in 1965 at Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington. In attendance were 743 delegates from 133 chapters. Eighteen new chapters were chartered. The office of Historian was re-established after a twenty-nine year period when there was no historian. The Degree of Highest Distinction was established. Open Division Cross-Examination Debate with power matching was substituted for the Mixed Team Debate event. Student meetings were included in the convention schedule. United States Senator, Henry Jackson was the convention speaker.

In 1967 the 25th biennial convention was held at Wisconsin State University, Whitewater, Wisconsin. Seventeen charters were granted to new and reactivated chapters. The first two alumni chapters were established; Chapter Number One was presented to the Robert C. Williams Chapter at Wisconsin State University, Whitewater, Wisconsin, and Chapter Number Two to Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois. Raymond H. Miller received the Distinguished Alumni Award. Professor Hans Morgenthau was the convention speaker.

A new attendance record was established at the 26th biennial convention held at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, in 1969. Twenty-four charters were granted to new and reactivated chapters. Two new alumni chapters were chartered. One hundred eighty-seven chapters sent 1068 delegates. A Championship Division Open Cross-Examination Debate was held for the first time, and an Interpretation event was added. A coaches' meeting was included on the convention schedule. For the first time, no separate divisions for men and women were held in any event.

The Contemporary Organization, 1971-1981

Membership in the Order of Individual Events began to increase in the latter part of the sixties while membership in the Order of Debate declined. This same trend continued into the seventies. In 1971 the national convention was held at the University of Houston, Houston, Texas. With 167 chapters in attendance, 870 delegates were registered. Charters were granted to fifteen new chapters and two alumni chapters. An Extempore Debate Division was added to the expanding list of events. Former United States Senator, Ralph Yarborough, was the convention speaker.

The 28th biennial convention was held in 1973 at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Seven new chapters were granted charters. Informative Speaking was an added event. A special sixtieth anniversary oratorical contest was held with entries limited to schools which were national founders and still active in Pi Kappa Delta. The number of rounds for all individual events was reduced from four to three. The Evaluation Committee submitted a five-point recommendation to increase student involvement in convention and tournament affairs. The Distinguished Alumni Award was presented to United States Senator George McGovern in absentia. Changes in the constitution included an increase in participation requirements for the Degrees in the Order of Individual Speaking. From 153 chapters, 775 delegates were registered.

As part of the nation's Bicentennial celebration, Pi Kappa Delta held its 29th convention in 1975 at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In attendance were 586 delegates representing 115 chapters. Ten new chapters received charters. Speaking to Entertain was an added event. A special feature was a parliamentary debate in Congress Hall where six top ranking extempore speakers debated the proposition; "Be it resolved that this House favors the convening of a new Constitutional Convention for the United States of America".

Early in the year 1977 Pi Kappa Delta membership reached fifty thousand. Soon thereafter the thirtieth biennial convention was held in the Olympic Hotel, Seattle, Washington. Lincoln-Douglas debate was added to the tournament schedule. Four new chapters received a charter. One hundred six chapters were represented by five hundred twelve delegates. Individual membership fees were increased from ten to fifteen dollars, and annual chapter fee of fifteen dollars was approved. A task force was appointed to study philosophy, function, and structure of Pi Kappa Delta.