



# USC Phi Kappa Phi Newsletter

*A Publication of the University of Southern California Chapter  
Spring 1997*

## **Greetings from the President**

As we come to the close of the academic year, I hope this has been a successful one for each of you. The University of Southern California Chapter of Phi Kappa Phi has been particularly active this year with an extremely well-attended series of events, including the freshman achievement awards, the faculty and student book awards, and the distinguished speaker series presentations in both fall and spring.

At a past president's luncheon over the summer, I was struck by the theme of the need to increase awareness of academic achievement at USC. I believe that Phi Kappa Phi has a role to play in heightening the awareness of the true academia that is extant at USC. Being an honor society that represents the entire campus, both on the undergraduate and graduate level, and crossing all disciplines positions us in a unique opportunity to foment an awareness of the academic excellence present at USC.

During the past academic year we had come perilously close to the doldrums, but Professor George Chilingar, through his unending generosity and financial largess, came to our rescue and provided us with the ability to stay viable during a difficult transition.

I offer an invitation to any of you who are initiates of our chapter, or of other chapters, to reconnect with Phi Kappa Phi. The national organization will reinstate you for merely the payment of one year's national dues (\$15.00) and the

local chapter dues. I invite you to join with us in the pursuit of acknowledging and rewarding academic excellence in our chapter and nationwide.

*For further information on re-instatement or connection to our chapter, please contact Dr. Janet Eddy at (213) 740-0776 or email: jeddy@mizar.usc.edu, and for information on our upcoming programs, contact Ms. Eleanor Hoppe at (213) 740-5239 or email: ehoppe@usc.edu.*

John H. Miller, MD  
USC Chapter President, 1996-97

## **1996 Freshman Awards Full House**

On Tuesday, October 22, the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi honored 165 sophomores for outstanding scholarship at USC. The criterion for receiving the award was earning a 3.85 or above grade point average during their freshman year. At the Faculty Center in front of a crowd of over 200 friends, family members, and current members of Phi Kappa Phi, students received certificates of recognition from the oldest honor society at USC. The students were then escorted to the steps of Doheny Library where they took a group photo.

Phi Kappa Phi is the only interdisciplinary honor society at USC. Established in 1887, it is one of the oldest and most prestigious honor societies in the country. In order to be eligible to join, undergraduate students must earn at

least 3.9 G.P.A. by their junior year in college, or 3.8 by their senior year. Master's students must earn at least a 3.9, and doctoral students must be recommended by their department. The sophomores were recognized by Phi Kappa Phi to acknowledge their significant academic efforts and encourage them to maintain their high standards so they will be eligible to join Phi Kappa Phi in coming years.

## **James Ragan First 1996-97 Phi Kappa Phi Distinguished Speaker**

A standing-room only crowd attended Phi Kappa Phi's first Distinguished Speaker Series event of the year on November 20th. Students, staff, and faculty from across the campus gathered in the Faculty Center to listen to world-famous poet James Ragan recreate selections from his recent books—The Hunger Wall and Lusions, both published by Grove Press. Director of USC's Master's in Professional Writing Program, Ragan has appeared before audiences around the globe, as chapter president John Miller noted in his introduction. Kings and presidents of half a dozen nations, including Sweden and Russia, have heard Ragan perform his poetry. "Perform" best captures Ragan's style because instead of reading from the printed page as other poets do, he rehearses his poems from memory and reenacts them verbally after providing an informal textured backdrop to the occasion each poem commemorates. Among the lighter favorites Ragan read at

USC was "Rilke on the Conveyor Belt at Los Angeles International Airport" from Lusions, while in a more serious mode the bloodshed depicted in "The Wedding" from The Hunger Wall was etched unforgettably by the reading. All in the audience could well appreciate Richard Wilbur's description of Ragan's poetry as full of "arresting collocations and striking phrases" and Studs Terkel's description of it as "a lyrical fusing of innocence and wisdom."

Besides Ragan, the program also featured Alan Fox and Jennifer Wooton, students in the Master's of Professional Writing Program. Poets Fox and Wooton read selections from their own work and their poems, like Ragan's, tended to the autobiographical. As heard in his poetic voice, Fox views his world through lenses tinted with humor and fond of surprise, while Wooton's delicate poetic voice suggests sensuality and delicacy.

Over dinner beforehand and refreshments afterwards, guests and poets chatted informally. The verbal richness of the performer's art found a notably receptive

ear among the audience of writers, would be writers, and the just plain envious.

### **Spring Speaker Series: To Live Or Die In L.A.**

The second Distinguished Speaker Series event of 1996-1997 was held in February on the Health Sciences Campus. Law Professor Alex Capron, Nursing Professor Sharon Valente, and Dean of Religious Life Rabbi Susan Laemmle presented legal, medical, and religious perspectives on the right to die issue. The roundtable discussion was moderated by Professor of Philosophy Dallas Willard. Lively debate filled the evening and participants eagerly look forward to a second session on this very current topic.

### **Phi Kappa Phi and Student Excellence**

A great university is known by its faculty and the caliber of its students. Phi Kappa Phi, the all university honor society, has played a significant role in encouraging student excellence at the University of Southern California. This role is consistent with the mission of the university as stated

by President Sample: "We strive constantly for excellence in teaching knowledge and skills to our students, while at the same time helping them to acquire wisdom and insight, love of truth and beauty, moral discernment, understanding of self, and respect and appreciation for others."

Both this year and last, as has been the case for many years, one of our Phi Kappa Phi student members was selected to receive a \$7,500 scholarship based on outstanding academic achievement, contribution to the university and the community as well as demonstration of leadership potential. We consistently have three or four students who have outstanding records, a 4.0 GPA and excellent scholarship who have been involved with the community. These students would easily qualify for the national award. We have acknowledged their achievements with an honorable mention. Dr. Carl M. Franklin and Sterling C. Franklin, as trustees of the Morris S. Smith Foundation, have provided \$5,000 to the local chapter as unrestricted funds to provide a special award to the students who receive an honorable mention.

## **Calendar**

- **Annual Initiation and Reception: Thursday, May 8, 1997**
- **USC Commencement: Friday, May 9, 1997**

**To continue to receive USC Phi Kappa Phi Mailings: Call 213-740-5239 or email [ehoppe@usc.edu](mailto:ehoppe@usc.edu)**

USC PHI KAPPA PHI  
C/O STUDENT UNION 201  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90089-4891