

Historically Speaking.....

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Would you please tell me about some of the traditions of Convention? The Fraternity's biennial Convention is a combination of traditions begun at earlier Conventions and those of the recent past. The program is designed to carry out Fraternity business.

Parade of Flags: The Parade of Flags was introduced in 1986. It takes place the night before Convention opens and is the visual representation of Kappa's permanent roll of chapters according to the dates of their founding. Alpha Deuteron Chapter leads the parade in honor of our first chapter, Alpha, founded at Monmouth College in 1870. The final chapter in the parade is the most recently installed chapter. In 2010, this chapter will be Eta Omicron, Northeastern University in Boston, installed in April 2010.

Wearing white: By looking at pictures from early Conventions, we can trace the tradition of wearing white to the business meetings. In 1896, delegates wore white or light-colored blouses with long dark skirts. In 1900, there was a mixture of white long dresses and white blouses with street-length skirts. *The Key* in 1938 reported that "the delegates and officers will wear caps and gowns during the formal business sessions and the Memorial Service. Guests are urged to wear white dresses for the Memorial Service. Delegates and officers should plan for one or two white dresses to wear under their academic gowns. White adds so much to the dignity of such dress."

In 1952, *The Key* had sketches of "a well-dressed conventioneer: a dark sheer dress for travel, an evening dress for formal functions and afternoon dresses for informal affairs, a short jacket which may be worn if the evenings become chilly, the white dress for business sessions and the Memorial Service and such sports clothes as the individual desires." Currently white attire is worn by all Kappas attending the opening and closing business meetings and the Memorial Service.

Opening of Convention: The processional, which began in 1916, is the very impressive beginning of each General Convention. Academic caps and gowns have been worn since 1896 when the Grand Council marched across the Northwestern University campus to Lunt Library where the Convention was being held. In 1930, a hood lined with two shades of blue was added to the regalia. Members of the Fraternity Council, Regional and Associate Councils, retiring Leadership Consultants and Standing Committee Chairmen wear academic gowns, mortarboards and hoods.

Until 1966, all members of the Convention processed following the Fraternity officers. A picture taken at the Convention held that year in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, shows the Kappas lined up on the outside porches of the hotel in their white dresses waiting to process into Convention Hall. That was the last Convention at which all attendees processed.

When was the first Memorial Service held? The permanent Memorial Service honoring deceased members began in 1920 and was written by Lydia Voris Kolbe, *Akron*, then Grand President. It showed the need for such a service for chapter and Convention use. The Committee on Ritual prepared a brief service that was adopted in 1922. The 1932 *History of Kappa Kappa Gamma* describes the particularly moving service at the Stanford Memorial Church at the 1926 Convention. The western sunset mingled with candlelight as the assembled Kappas sang "Day is Dying the West" and ended with the newly adopted recessional hymn, "We Look to Thee, Kappa Gamma."

What is the Habiteers Luncheon? Convention is a wonderful experience. Only there does one get an idea of the Fraternity as a whole. Convention attendance can easily become a habit, and it is with real pride that some Kappas count the number of the Conventions they have attended. By 1938, a special luncheon was made part of the official program for Convention "habiteers." Prior to that Convention, habiteers had met informally to recall old times and renew friendships. When a Kappa attends five Conventions, she becomes a habiteer and is ceremoniously welcomed into this ever-growing group. We look forward to welcoming new members to the Habiteers Luncheon in June.

Candlelight Banquet: This is the Convention's impressive climax. The toastmistress guides the Convention toward its end, anecdotally introduces members of the new Council and ties together the themes and events of the previous days. The moving "Passing of the Light" closes the evening. The continuum of the Convention passes on to the next, and to every Kappa Convention to come.