



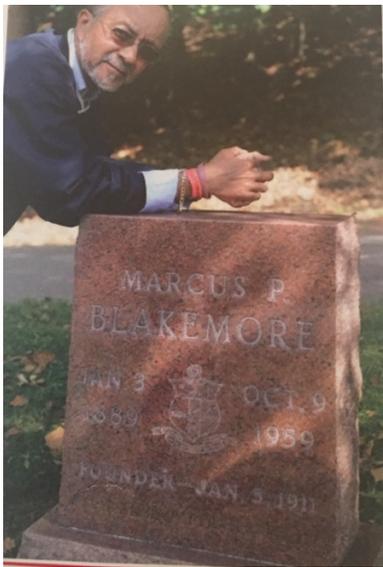
The Saracen Klub Journal

Documenting the History of the Beta Epsilon Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

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Brother Dr. Joseph Pinkney McCormick, II (BE: 1966)



Birthdate: December 22, 1947

Born/Raised: Born and Raised in Washington, DC

Parents: Joseph Pinkney McCormick Sr. & Helen Pleasants McCormick (both DC natives – Dunbar HS class of ‘38 and ‘42 respectively); Father was a Howard graduate (undergrad ‘48 and law school ‘51); Mother was a graduate of Minors Teachers College in D.C. Paternal grandfather was a 1917 graduate of Biddle (now JC Smith) College in North Carolina and Howard University (via Terrell law school) law school.

Joe’s paternal grandparents lived on 5th street NW between O & P St. From his birth through his elementary school years, Joe’s parents would drop him off on Monday and he’d stay with his grandparents until Friday. Joe’s permanent residence was in Mayfair Mansions, in far NE DC, where he lived with his parents in an apartment from his birth until 1963 – Mayfair Mansions was an all-Black apartment complex in DC popular among returning Black veterans after WWII.

Early Education: Joe attended Scott Montgomery Elementary from K through 3rd grades; he attended Morse Elementary from the 4th through the 6th grade. (these schools were both in his grandparent’s neighborhood in NW DC.) He attended Carter G. Woodson Jr. High (in his parent’s neighborhood in far NE DC).

High School: Joel Elias Spingarn HS in far NE Wash DC. Joe graduated from Spingarn in 1965.

College/Major: University of Pittsburgh, BA 1969, MA 1971 and PhD 1975 – All degrees in Political Science.

Life Milestones:

“Irony” was a word that Joe used often in his interview and it aptly applied as he discussed the key events of his life.

(1) The Mayfair Mansions was an apartment complex of more than 500 units built in 1946 where Joe lived for the first thirteen years of his life. Many of the folks who lived in that all Black community were on the first rung of the ladder toward the Black middle class. Many of the men worked in Joe’s neighborhood worked at the U.S. Post Office or for the Federal government. Some also had a second job driving a cab. The GI bill allowed folks, like Joe’s dad, to continue their post-high school education which he did after WW2, shortly after Joe’s birth in 1947. The McCormick’s neighbors, in the ground floor apartment in Mayfair, were the Daniels family. Dr. Walter T. Daniels was a professor of Civil Engineer at Howard University and member of KAPSI. Dr. Daniels wife, who also held a PhD (from the University of Pittsburgh), was a school teacher in the DC public schools and was a native of Pittsburgh. The Daniels’ son, Walter T Daniels Jr., though four years his senior, was Joe’s childhood playmate. Walter Jr. would spend his summers in Pittsburgh with his maternal grandparents. Walter T Daniels Jr would eventually become one of Joe’s sands in 1966.

(2) In the fall of 1965, the Kappa brothers of the Pittsburgh Alumni Chapter resurrected The Beta Epsilon (BE) Chapter at the University of Pittsburgh after many years of the chapter being dormant at Pitt, though there were BE brothers at The California State Teachers College, approximately thirty-seven miles from Pittsburgh (NOTE: The Zeta Eta Chapter was established at Cal State in 1971). During the early to mid-60s there was no critical mass of Black students on the campus at Pitt as there are today. Fortunately, during this time, the undergraduates at Cal State kept the BE chapter membership growing, initiating three lines between 1960 and 1965. However, there had not been any young men from Pitt to pledge the BE chapter since the late 1950s. That changed in 1966. A key event in the resurrection of BE at Pitt was the efforts of Pittsburgh Alumni brothers George Charlton (BE ’52) and Robert W Smith Jr. (Lambda, Temple). It turns out that these two Pittsburgh Alumni Kappas were also very good friends. In fact, Brother Charlton was the godfather of Robert Smith’s son – Robert, III. Robert III would eventually become one of Joe’s sands (along with Walter T. Daniels, Jr. on “The Line With No Name” – May, 1966).

(3) Brother McCormick was exposed to Kappa Alpha Psi at a young age. In high school, Joe and a few friends at Spingarn formed a group that they called “The Italics.” (NOTE: Two of Joe’s Italic classmates also became Kappa brothers – Andre Summers (Alpha Iota) and Burnell Holland (Beta Kappa)). Joe’s parents frequently attended the Kappa Dawn dance in DC while Joe was growing up. A childhood friend, from toddler days, Joe indicated during the interview,

frequently tells mutual friends that he and Joe attended a birthday party at the Kappa house of the Washington Alumni Chapter when they were both five years old. This friend has a black and white photograph to preserve that memory.

(4) One of Joe's high school teachers at Spingarn, Isadora Miles, had a way of motivating her Black students, and at the same time getting their attention, – perhaps by employing “reverse psychology” by asking her students, “who has done their homework?” – Only a few of them, including Joe, would raise their hands. She would say – “I bet all the white kids in the suburbs have all done their homework.” Joe's memories of her “reverse psychology” gambit imparted in Joe the necessary motivation to succeed and a sense that he could compete academically with anyone, Black or White. It may have been this challenge from a high school teacher that led Joe to pick up a pamphlet from the University of Pittsburgh in his high school counselor's office that led him to apply to Pitt, the institution from which he would earn three degrees (BA, MA, and Ph.D.).

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity

Smoker: By the fall of 1968, the Black “revolutionary movement” (following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) was a significant part of the culture and in full force in Pittsburgh. Joe had grown an afro, considered changing his name to Yosef Ali (but knew his father would kill him), and became an active member in the Black Action Society at Pitt. The previous spring trimester at Pitt, Joe had decided to run for Student Government at Pitt. Only one other Black person, Ludwick (Luddy) Haden, Jr., a member of Alpha Phi Alpha, had previously held such a position.

Seeing Luddy Haden brought back memories of his early years at Pitt. Though there was a well-established chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha at Pitt, Joe knew that with his personal background he was interested in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. In the fall of 1965, classmate Robert Smith III came to Joe and said his father (a member of the Pittsburgh Alumni Chapter) was trying to resurrect Kappa Alpha Psi at Pitt. Joe contacted his hometown neighbor and friend, Walter Daniels Jr. who had recently enrolled at Pitt while living with his grandmother. Joe mentioned to Walter about an upcoming Kappa interest meeting. His former DC neighbor said, “That's great, count me in”.

The 1965 smoker took place at a place called the Green Hearth in Homewood. Joe's main recollection of that event was that there were a lot of black men of various ages at the meeting. Two of Joe's line brothers – Robert Smith, III and Walter Daniels, Jr., were there. One of the experiences that Joe had at the

smoker was when he asked one of the Alumni brothers, Joe Golden, about the meaning behind the heraldry on the Kappa shield that Golden proudly displayed on his blazer. The Alumni brother laughed and told Joe that if he wanted to know, he would have to pledge the “noble clan” to find out the meaning of the shield. Joe took that as a challenge – he was determined to know all the mysteries of KAPSI.

**Scroller’s
Club:**

Joe’s introduction to Kappa as a Scroller was very different than many post ’66 BE initiates since he was brought into the fraternity by the brothers of Pittsburgh Alumni Chapter. Many of these alumni brothers were still new to Kappa, some only 4-5 years out of undergraduate school. Many brought with them their own pledge traditions from other undergraduate chapters.

During the pledge period – the scrollers had to wear a card board scroll around their neck and carry a “pledge book”, however many of the BE pledge rituals were not yet in place. The pledge program for him would consist of weekend sessions with the alumni brothers. The Alumni brothers would also randomly come down to Pitt’s campus during the week to look for Joe as he was the only scroller on campus. Walt lived at his grandma’s home on the west end, Robert Smith III lived at home with his parents in Homewood. Joe recalled a specific example of this randomness of brothers just showing up on campus, when Stan Lathan, a Kappa from Penn St, father of actress Sanaa Lathan, who was working on assignment in Pittsburgh. Lathan somehow tracked Joe down on campus and required as part of Joe’s pledge duties to call Lathan EVERY morning to wake him up. Joe to this day doesn’t know how this brother tracked him down, but this was just one of the unique experiences of Joe’s pledge program.

The historical aspects of learning the fraternity history was also part of the program. It was more limited to the basics about the founders of the fraternity, and knowledge about the single letter chapters of the fraternity but less knowledge was required about the founding of BE.

The Scroller Club pledge experience intensified during “hell week” as the Alumni brothers took the Scrollers up to California State every night to see and interact with the undergraduate brothers there. During this time, one of Joe’s line brothers who attended Duquesne University, dropped line; a little too much pressure had taken its toll. When it was all said, and done, the pledge program had lasted from October 1965 to May 1966. “The line with no name”, as Joe refers to his line, finally crossed on Friday, May 13, 1966.

Campus

Activism: After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in April 1968, Joe was elected as the chairman of the Black Action Society (BAS) at Pitt. On January 15, 1969 – the BAS lead a takeover of the University of Pittsburgh computer center on the 8th floor of the Cathedral of Learning. This action included members and the Scrollers of Kappa Alpha Psi, Incorporated, and included Brother James Edward Brown (“JB”) (BE ‘68) and then Scroller Dwayne Cooper (BE ’70).

The catalyst behind the Pitt computer center takeover, and many events like this, at predominately White institutions around the country was Dr. King’s assassination. It was a critical time for direct action on the part of many Black students. As the second chairman of the BAS, Joe was invited back to Pitt in October, 1988 to presents a paper he entitled, “The BAS: The Early Years. As with any story of this kind – the facts get twisted – and the story when told years later it is very different.

Joe fondly remembers that Dr. Norman Johnson, (a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity), a Pitt grad, and a Carnegie Mellon University administrator, would come by the Pitt dorms and talk to the young Black students. According to Joe, Dr. Johnson would provide valuable insight to Joe and to other members of the BAS. While Dr. Johnson wasn’t involved in the Pitt computer center takeover, in a separate interview, Dr. Johnson revealed that the Pitt computer center takeover was an important catalyst for opening the doors for Black students to seek admission at all of the predominately white colleges and universities in Pittsburgh.

Brotherhood:

With such a rich experience in Kappa Alpha Psi, as an undergraduate and graduate student, who witnessing the reemergence of The Beta Epsilon Chapter in 1966, Joe’s feeling about brotherhood has evolved over time. The late Samuel Lawler (BE ’52), an older Pittsburgh Alumni brother, use to say goodbye by saying, “In the Bond.” Joe often wondered “What does that mean?” ***It struck Joe that many of us have an enduring fraternal relationship because of this shared, much cherished BE experience that grew into something more fundamental and sound. This is the BE Bond. It is wrapped in a bond that is meaningful; it becomes more meaningful the older we get.*** Joe said “I have known many of the Kappas in Pittsburgh for 40 or 50 years. This long-term relationship translates into love; we as Black men don’t say that – I love you brother – too often to one another, but now I tell many BE brothers – I love you.” He added, “That is a good thing since we all are Black men, members of Kappa and Alumni of The Beta Epsilon Chapter – and that is special.”

Adult Life

Professional

Career: Faculty positions at The Cleveland State University (1976-78); Howard University (1979-2002), and Penn State University, York Campus (2002-2011) (where he was the first African-Americans Director of Academic Affairs), along with a Visiting Scholar appointment at U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (1980-81) and sabbatical leave at Brown University (1994-95) constitute a rich professional life well lived.

Dr. McCormick's subject matter expertise in political science was in American Government, with a specialization in the American legislative process (how Congress operates), urban politics, African American politics, and public opinion research.

His published work includes articles on 1984 Jesse Jackson campaign, the Million Man March, how the issue of race has been examined in major political science journals. His current work is an edited volume (with two other political scientists) entitled ***After Obama: African American Politics in the Age of Obama***.

Family: Married 47 years to his wife Janet – a graduate of Howard University. They have one daughter JaiSun, who is also a Howard graduate and a member of Delta Sigma Theta.

Other Anecdotes:

- Joe's comments on Everett Bannister: He was one of the brightest young men that he has ever met. He had gone to a private high school in Vermont. Everett's older brother was a Kappa and his he was a principal in the DC schools. Everette's widow was an AKA – Frances - who pledged at Pitt. So, when Everett came to Pitt with the limited number of Black students on campus – he and Joe bonded right off as two Black students from DC. When the subject of Kappa came up, that was when Joe found out that Everette's brother was a Kappa. That was probably how Everette became interested.
- Joe's belief on the origin of "Jericho" – The taking of "barbarians" to get lost and having to find their way back to campus. The line "Defiant Ones" – in Winter of 1969; late one afternoon Scrollers had a session with the BB's and the Scrollers took a "great loss." Joe actually felt sorry for the Scrollers, As a gesture of misplaced sympathy, Joe decided he would ride back to campus with the pledges. Joe thought they were going back to campus but the Scrollers instead drove to near a cemetery in Penn Hills. The Scrollers told Joe – "Get the Fuck out of the Car." Joe had no idea

where he was at the time, but employed his ROTC training in land navigation, wherein he went to the highest point around the area of the cemetery and looked for the radio towers on the hills overlooking the Pitt campus. He then walked toward those radio towers. Brother Dwayne Cooper (BE '70) will have to tell you the rest of Joe's experience if you want further details. Cooper was one of the Scrollers. Joe refers to this incident as "The Day of Infamy."

- While at Pitt, Joe was also a member of the U.S. Army ROTC unit rising to the rank of first lieutenant. As a result of his outstanding performance during ROTC summer camp (summer of 1967), Joe was named a Distinguished Military Graduate when he later graduated in April, 1969. He was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the Military Intelligencer Branch of the U.S. Army Reserve in April, 1969. He later attended the officer's basic branch school for Military Intelligence officers at Fort Huachuca, Arizona.