



The Saracen Klub Journal

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

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Brother Reverend James Edward Brown “JB”



Born/Raised: Born and Raised in Pittsburgh, PA (The Hill and East Liberty)

Parents: Reverend Augustus C Brown (Mobile, AL) and Anita M Whittset (Pittsburgh, PA). His mother attended Lincoln University (MO) and finished at University of Pittsburgh with the original interest in being a physician. Mrs. Brown later became a math, science and art teacher in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Early Education: A Leo Weil Elementary School, and Lincoln Elementary School

High School: Westinghouse High School, 1966

College/Major: Matriculated at California State University (PA); graduated from University of Pittsburgh, 1973, BA in History and minor in Black Studies.

Life Milestones:

Going to predominately black schools, especially high school, provided enrichment motivated by black youth who were very competitive and role models in achieving academically.

In 1964, brother JB attended a summer program called project ABC (A Better Chance) – at Dartmouth University. During his time in project ABC he was exposed to students from different parts of the country and of different nationalities including Asian, Hispanic and Black. Black awareness in 1964 was on rise and Brother JB’s exposure to some of the young black students, especially those from the New York City area, opened his eyes to black pride and reinforced his experiences growing up in Pittsburgh.

Brother JB was also significantly influenced by his spiritual upbringing in his home. His father being a minister and mother an educator their influence ultimately helped lay the foundation for brother JB's future calling in the ministry and missionary work.

When it came time to choose a college, brother JB considered Howard, Rutgers and Temple as possible school choices. JB's childhood friend and future line brothers Fred Gladney helped to influence his decision to go to Cal State – where Fred's brother Chuck was a graduate and member of Kappa Alpha Psi. His interest was originally to pursue a biology degree at Cal State with an interest in later going to pursue a career in medicine.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity

Smoker: Kappa Alpha Psi was the only fraternity at Cal State during the mid to late 1960's that had a membership of about 12 brothers. Most of the Kappa brothers were commuters from Donora, Brownsville, Redstone, and Clairton – PA - all towns not far from the campus of Cal State. In 1967-1968 when JB pledged the Beta Epsilon (BE) Charter, it was held at Pitt. The Pittsburgh campus had three undergraduate brothers that were active (Bros. McCormick, Smith and Bannister); however, the vast majority of the BE brothers were at Cal St. JB described the timing as perfect for going on line. He was impressed by the Kappa's he knew and was getting to know them better as men of influence. The black awareness and consciousness movement was at its height – so being around a group of black brothers who were achieving was influential.

Scroller's

Club: Following the smoker and interviews, the line started with 13 scroller's. During this time, the pledge period wasn't a set time period but "when you were ready". The line started in the spring 1967 (around May) and pledged through March of 1968.

The unique experience of pledging through the summer and fall provided an interesting set of requirements for the scroller's club. During the summer, the scroller's would come out to cabarets to help with the activities. All of the rituals of pledging – all scroller's wore a scroll, carried a book and goodie box – but during the summer you weren't required to have these items. The Pittsburgh boat ride was in its infancy and in 1967, Brother JB and his line of scroller's participated in boat ride. The boat ride was the 3rd Sunday in August, and it was an experience like no other.

When the scroller's club returned back to school the line was tested on the material that they learned, meetings with the dean and big brothers and the process of elimination started. By Christmas of 1967, the line was down to 5 scroller's. During this time brothers would travel from Penn State and Ohio State to provide a brotherhood beyond just BE. As an example, even though Cal State was in a rural area, the brothers decided to have a cabaret and it was not uncommon for brothers to come from Penn St, Kent St, Cheney and Ohio St. Brother JB remarked that the boat ride was such a super event – if you were a brother you had to make it through Pittsburgh and attend the boat ride weekend. The relationships built during the boat ride helped to strengthen the bond with brothers from other chapters.

The scroller line was named “Death Row” and the dean of pledges of the line was George Staples. As a result of Chuck Gladney's baby brother Fred being on the Death Row line – there was a special interest by the Big Brothers to make this line right. Chuck wasn't around to look out for his little brother – so that was quite an interesting experience for the line. All of the scroller's had in their heart that they wanted to be a Kappa but the big brothers weren't giving any indication of when they would go over. This would remain the case until late February when they were told to get a brick and burlap sack. The threat that all of the stroller's weren't going to make it lasted to the bitter end – but the line vowed that there were no weak links and even if they had to carry one or all of the five across the burning sands to Kappa – that is what would happen. The five line brothers who would cross on March 6, 1968 would be Fernando Austin, Joe Lofton Jr, John Skilling (deceased), James Edward Brown (line president) and Fred Gladney Jr.

The Death Row line had its going over ceremony at Ebenezer Baptist church where the pastor of the church was the Reverend Dr. James B Cayce – a Pittsburgh Alumni Kappa and native of Louisville KY – provided the use of the church for their initiation.

Brother JB would transfer to Pitt in the fall of 1968 into the largest black class of students at Pitt. During the boat ride of 1968 the weekend party took place at brother JB's parents house while his parents were out of town. When his parents came back to town, the house that had been restored to order – it was quite a party – with the only evidence of the event discovered by JB's mother in the trash can. She only fussed a little – because as a Pitt graduate herself, and an AKA – she understood fond college days.

During the fall of 1968 – a black college football game was played in Pittsburgh between Grambling and Morgan St. The brothers of BE hosted a fantastic cabaret in downtown Pittsburgh at the William Penn hotel which along with the

successful boat ride helped to influence many of the new black students on Pitts campus to become interested in Kappa. The event was supported by Jack Burley, who was working for Coca Cola at the time (an Omega and father of Janice Burley); he helped to get the word out. The event was a great success and added to a weekend of fun to coincide with a great atmosphere provided by a black college football game.

Brother JB was also around for the Pitt computer center takeover by the Pitt BSA in January 1969. When JB reflected on the takeover first it was a strategic and well-orchestrated effort that included a list of demands. The organizers made sure the press was there so that the university officials all the way up to the Chancellor of the university were aware. Also, a significant element of the protest was the recognition that there were not many blacks in professional positions at the university before the takeover. Many black employees at Pitt were hired at lower levels like janitors and clerical positions. This protest event opened doors for blacks to be hired in professional positions such as in accounting, computing and positions of authority all the way up to the Chancellors office.

JB's parents were understanding and supportive of his views about black awareness at the time and agreed that the takeover was necessary to bring about the needed change.

Brotherhood:

With such a rich experience in Kappa as an undergraduate and graduate brother – Brother JB witnessed the reemergence of the Beta Epsilon Chapter in the 60's and the golden age of BE (lines from the mid 60's to mid 70s). Over time JB's feelings about brotherhood continued to grow and have evolved over time, but certainly Kappa has meant more to him as he has gotten older.

Adult Life

Professional

Career:

After University of Pittsburgh, Brother JB worked several marketing and sales jobs and eventually was a volunteer to work on the Byrd Brown mayoral campaign in Pittsburgh. The campaign travelled to churches on Sundays to share the Byrd Brown political platform, and that was the start of Rev JB being drawn back to the church. Rev. Brown help to found the African American Council at the University of Pittsburgh. He eventually became a church deacon in the late 1980's. He and his wife then co-founded Mercy Acts International (MAI). MAI is a non-profit organization founded in 2012 by Reverend James E. Brown and Linda Ross Brown. James retired from marketing and sales, and Linda retired from being high school music teacher to focus full time on MAI. Prior to forming MAI, James and Linda were actively involved in home

missions. In 2010, they extended their service to include global missions specifically in Haiti and Liberia where they continue to serve on a regular basis. From the very first mission trip, they felt the urgent need to help children and families on the mission field as well as find support for them in the United States. Just recently as of July 2018 they sent a tractor trailer load of water to Flint, Michigan due to the water crisis there. Through Mercy Acts International they sent a tractor trailer load of needed items to Houston, Texas to support the relief effort of Hurricane Harvey. This strong desire to provide assistance to people in these impoverished countries led James and Linda to partner with churches in the United States to initiate a Tractor Campaign for Lott Carey Mission School in Liberia. The success of the Tractor Campaign motivated this husband and wife team to form Mercy Acts International, an organization that helps meet the needs of people who live in extremely poor countries, as well as assist people in the United States. James and Linda are committed to: *“Serving wholeheartedly, as if they were serving the Lord, and not people.” -Eph 6:7*

Family: Married to Linda Ross Brown and they have one son.



Group portrait of Kappa Alpha Psi members, standing, left to right: Joe Lawfton, Rev. Amos Prakens, unknown, Rev. James B. Brown, unknown, and Fred Gladney, with Joe McCormick kneeling on right, gathered around diamond shaped sign inscribed with Greek letters Kappa Alpha Psi and Phi Nu Pi, in Stouffers Restaurant

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