Jewelry and Symbolism

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The description of the sorority's jewelry and symbolism, taken from "Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities," provides the "basics by which Alpha Sigma Alpha distinguishes itself from the rest of the Greek world." These outward signs not only set the sorority apart from members of other sororities, but their esoteric meaning also ties Alpha Sigma Alpha members together.

All of Alpha Sigma Alpha's symbols represent a web of complex interrelated meanings that unite the experiences of the past to the present and future. They allow members to tell the Alpha Sigma Alpha story in a way that far exceeds the capability of words. A brief discussion of each shows that the sorority's symbols are not merely historical in nature but contemporary signs providing present focus and future direction.

The badge

A familiar symbol to each Alpha Sigma Alpha is the badge. Concretely, it is a black enamel shield with four concave-shaped corners on a background of yellow gold. On it are displayed the sorority letters, a star and a crown. It may be set with the sorority jewels, the pearl and the ruby.

The Greek letters depict the sorority name and the words of the open motto "Aspire, Seek, Attain." The star symbolizes the unfailing light of Christ's star toward which we aspire, and the crown represents leadership attained.

Each of the four points of the pin reminds members of one of the four aims: physical, intellectual, spiritual and social development. Beyond the physical reality of the gold metal from which the badge is fashioned is the abstract meaning: "The bestowal of an emblem of gold … is a testimonial to the ability of the wearer to be a source of power and light."



The badge sets off the wearer as an initiated member. In addition to these intellectual images, the badge may also evoke complex emotions and memories of past experiences for members as individuals. It may remind Alpha Sigma Alphas of the Santuary Degree ritual during which they received their badge, of the tears of joy that welled in their eyes that day, of the hugs of sisters and of the intense friendships they have experienced since then through Alpha Sigma Alpha. For new members the badge may evoke thoughts of anticipation and feelings of hope.

As a symbol of the sorority, the badge is treated with great respect and is worn on the left over the heart. It embodies the spirit and values of the sorority.

Other badges

The badge of the new member is a tiny silver shield that displays the sorority letters raised against a conven-

tional design of the rising sun. The sunburst signifies the self-renewing powers of the phoenix. "A silver new member pin signifies a time of testing for the sterling qualities of mind and heart."

Alpha Sigma Alpha has two other badges that may be worn by nonmembers. A gold crown-shaped pin set with four pearls is the badge for the Mother Patroness or Crown Degree. This honor may be bestowed upon a person who has given time and support to the sorority.

The Phoenix recognition pin may be given to members or nonmembers who have served the sorority in a special way. Often charter members of a collegiate chapter are recognized with the Phoenix recognition pin.

The jewels

The sorority's jewels are the pearl and the ruby. The pearl represents perfection attained through tribulation and has been designated as the jewel of the Phoenix Degree. The ruby, according to the ancient Hindus, confers invulnerability from all evil upon those who wear it and signifies "heart's desire." It is the jewel of the initiated member.

The colors

Pearl white is the perfect blending of all colors and, therefore, was chosen to represent sisterhood. That is why those attending or participating in the Phoenix Degree or Sanctuary Degree rituals of the sorority are required to wear "all white."

Crimson, like the ruby, is reminiscent of the love that binds women together as members. Secondary colors of the sorority are palm green and gold, both depicting victory achieved.

The colors are combined for certain sorority celebrations:

- Crimson and green: Christmas
- Green and white: Herme's Day
- Crimson and gold: St. Valentine's Day
- Green and gold: Founders' Day
- White and gold: installation of new chapters

The insignia

Alpha Sigma Alpha has four insignia. The star and the crown are described on p. 345. The palm tree stands as the emblem of sturdy development even in the midst of adversity. The phoenix has several meanings from its Greek origins: blood red, or heart's crimson, or the musical lyre or the fabled bird of Egypt. According to Herodotus, the phoenix was a large and beautiful bird that lived in India and Arabia. When it was 500 years old, it flew to Mount Lebanon and filled its wings with aromatic spices. Then it flew to the temple of the sun in Heliopolis, where it burned itself to death on the altar, only to rise fully renewed and more beautiful than before.

The Alpha Sigma Alpha coat of arms bears a phoenix rising from lambent flames and surmounted by a crown of gold. The ribbon beneath the shield carries the open motto "Aspire, seek, attain."

The flowers

The fall flower is the aster and the spring flower is the narcissus. The daisy has been designated as the Mother Patroness flower.

The aster, whose name comes from the Greek word meaning "star," is found in infinite variety in many lands. In the East, it is regarded as the emblem of human perfection since it comes in the fullness of the year.



Variations of the narcissus — the jonquil or daffodil — may be used interchangeably.

The narcissus received its name from Greek mythology. The tale was about an incredibly handsome youth who was so enamored by his own beauty that he could neither eat nor sleep and so ardently worshipped his image in the river waters that he died from exhaustion. When the nymphs came to prepare his body for burial, they found only a white flower in his place.