National Panhellenic Conference

By Sidney Gremillion Allen, ΨΨ, and Diane Yencic James, HH

The National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) evolved gradually from the efforts of women's fraternities to work together on areas of mutual concern. As early as 1891 there was a meeting in Boston of the seven Greek-letter women's college fraternities that existed at the time. NPC's field of colonization during the early years was liberal arts colleges that admitted female students.

NPC was officially organized between 1902 and 1904. However, according to "The National Panhellenic Review," NPC records show that there was dialogue among member groups of 18 sororities, which composed its nucleus, as early as 1901.

Alpha Sigma Alpha, Alpha Sigma Tau and Sigma Sigma Sigma became provisional members of NPC in 1947 after the nostalgic dissolution of the Association of Education Sororities (AES) was mutually agreed upon. Wilma Wilson Sharp, Alpha Sigma Alpha, Maude E. Hill, Alpha Sigma Tau, and Mabel Lee Walton, Sigma Sigma Sigma, provided the leadership for this bold move.

In 1951 NPC admitted those three groups to full membership, along with Alpha Epsilon Phi, Theta Phi Alpha, Phi Sigma Sigma, Sigma Delta Tau and Delta Phi Epsilon. These groups, along with 18 others, comprise the total membership of NPC today.

The conference officially adopted a constitution and formulated Unanimous Agreements, under which it still operates. Its goals are similar to Alpha Sigma Alpha's: "To promote mental, physical, social and ethical ideals among its members so as to help them meet the events of life more successfully; and to have a beneficial effect upon society at large." From time to time the agreements are unanimously amended to adjust to prevailing circumstances.



Sidney Gremillion Allen, ΨΨ, center, served as chairman of the National Panhellenic Conference from 1985 to 1987. With her are executive committee members Veachy Bloom, Phi Sigma Sigma, left, and Beth Saul, Alpha Epsilon Pi.

Alpha Sigma Alpha members have served capably as delegates to NPC, providing leadership and insight on committees and in dialogue. These women have been highly respected by their colleagues in the other 25 groups. Wilma Wilson Sharp, ZZ, who long had served on the NPC-AES joint field committee, was Alpha Sigma Alpha's first NPC delegate (from 1947 to 1957) and was instrumental in making the transition from membership in the AES to NPC a smooth one.

NPC functions as a conference, not as a convention,

and meets biennially in regular session. Each sorority selects one official delegate to represent it at the biennial or any other NPC meeting. She casts the group's vote and acts as liaison between her sorority and the other NPC groups. In addition, she serves on a standing committee during each biennium. Through the years Alpha Sigma Alpha delegates have been chairmen of several important committees.

Sidney Allen = NPC

In 1981, Sidney Gremillion Allen, ΨΨ, the voting delegate for Alpha Sigma Alpha since 1978, began service on the NPC executive committee as treasurer. Fittingly, she served with Cynthia McCrory, Alpha Sigma Tau, secretary, and Mary Barbee, Sigma Sigma Sigma, chairman.

In 1983 Sidney became secretary, and in 1985 she rotated into the office of chairman. Sidney was the first member of Alpha Sigma Alpha to serve in that capacity.

After serving as NPC chairman for the 1985-1987 biennium, Sidney became a member of the advisory committee to the NPC executive committee. She served as chairman of the advisory committee until 1998, when she retired from ΑΣΑ's NPC delegation.

Alpha Sigma Alpha was privileged to serve as the hostess of the 50th biennial NPC meeting in 1987. Held in New Orleans (in Sidney's home state), it was a conference filled with a respect for the past, a savor of the present and a positive feeling of hope for the future.

Besides having common ideals and respect for one another, Alpha Sigma Alpha, NPC and Sidney have important birthdays that coincide. In November 2001, the sorority turned 100 years old, and Sidney turned 80. NPC also celebrated its 100th birthday at its fall 2001 meeting, and in December Alpha Sigma Alpha marked 50 years of full NPC membership.

Sidney has enjoyed more than 60 years as a dedicated member of Alpha Sigma Alpha. "It all began in the fall of 1938 when I was a 17-year-old pledge and met Wilma Wilson Sharp, who placed her hand on my head and challenged me to lead a noble life and to do noble deeds," she said.

National Panhellenic Conference delegates

1947-57	Wilma Wilson Sharp, ZZ
1957-58	Evelyn G. Bell, ΠΠ
1958-59	Esther Bucher, HH
1959-61	Martha Green Dimond, AA
1961-64	Betty Phillips Hall, AB
1964-70	Helen Hooper Malone, BΓ
1970-74	Mary Goeke Backsman, AA
1974-76	Helen Hooper Malone, BΓ
1976-78	MaryAnn Sidehamer Linton, ΓH
1978-92	Sidney Gremillion Allen, ΨΨ
1992-94	Marilyn Manion Stratton, BB
1994-2000	Diane Yencic James, HH
2000-	Lynne Rachal Chambers, A

National Panhellenic Conference (first) alternate delegates

1970-76	MaryAnn Sidehamer Linton, ΓH
1976-80	Betty Urban Wallick, ZZ
1980-82	Rhetta Nesbitt Robinson, BΓ
1982-90	Betty Urban Wallick, ZZ
1990-92	Linda Bonine Rogers, ΔI
1992-98	Sidney Gremillion Allen, ΨΨ
1998-2000	Lynne Rachal Chambers, A
2000-	Ellen Funk Morris, BΛ