



## *Beta Phi Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity*

### **The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi**

#### **The Composers**

Written in 1911 by two undergraduates at Albion College in Michigan, "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" has become the most popular college fraternity song in history. Byron D. Stokes wrote the words one June day while in class. He took the words to his Sigma Chi Brother F. Dudleigh "Dud" Vernor, who was practicing the organ in the campus chapel; Vernor completed the music that day. It was written for the 25th Anniversary Reunion in June 1911 of Alpha Pi Chapter. It was first sung by Harry H. Clifford (Alpha Pi '11), who designed the drawing on the original sheet music, published by Richard Vernor (Alpha Pi '13), brother of Dud Vernor.

Stokes was asked by many people "Who is the girl who was the inspiration?" He answered it was no one in particular. "The 'Sweetheart' is the symbol for the spiritual ingredient in brotherhood. It was the Sigma Chi Fraternity itself that inspired the song. I wrote the words not long after my initiation, and the magic of our Ritual with its poetic overtones and undertones was, I suppose, the source of my inspiration."

There were a number of other spin-off songs written in honor of the Sweetheart including [The Daughter of the Sweetheart of Sigma Chi](#), [The Rose of Sigma Chi](#), [Our Brown Eyed Sweetheart](#) and [My Sweetheart](#).

Stokes later served Sigma Chi during the years 1916-1920 as Executive Secretary, Grand Editor, and Grand Historian, and retired in Pasadena, California. Vernor was organist for the Metropolitan Methodist Church in Detroit for over 50 years. Ironically, although the two collaborated on this classic song while undergraduates, they never saw each other after college: "Our paths simply have never crossed," Vernor said in 1955. However, the two collaborated on at least two other Sigma Chi songs: [The Fellowship Song](#) and **I'm Glad I'm a Sigma Chi**; the latter was dedicated to Sigma Chi Brothers who fought in World War I. Both died in 1974, Vernor at the age of 81 and Stokes at the age of 87.

#### **The Recordings**

Although "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" was popular when it was written and in the years that followed. The more popular recorded versions of the song were done in 1927 and 1928. The most popular version was by **Fred Waring and His Pennsylvanians**, a "glee club" type group which was extremely popular in the 1920's and 1930's. In November of 1927, the Sweetheart Song entered the "Top Ten," rising to #3 in December; it stayed in the top ten for seven weeks.

Almost as popular as Waring's recording was one by **Gene Austin**, born in Gainesville, Texas in 1900 and began his entertainment career in vaudeville. When he gained nationwide popularity in 1925, he was known as "The Voice of

the Southland." His recording of "My Blue Heaven," the biggest-selling, non-holiday song before rock and roll, was popular at the same time as his version of "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi."

Others that did recordings of the Sweetheart were **Dean Martin, Ames Brothers, Lettermen, Robert Merrill** and the **Mormon Tabernacle Choir**.

### **The Movies**

There have been two movies called **The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi**. The first was made in 1932, and starred Buster Crabbe and Burr McIntosh, both Sigma Chis and Significant Sigs, and included some other Sigs in supporting roles. The song is sung in the movie several times by Ted Fiorito, a popular bandleader of the 1930's. The movie's plot is pretty corny, but it's nice seeing Sigma Chi stuff in various scenes.

In 1946, another movie musical **The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi** was released. It starred Marjorie Ann Hoerner, the Sweetheart of Alpha Epsilon Chapter. Although the song was sung in the film by Phil Brito and played in the background, another song from the film became a number one hit for Frank Sinatra: "Five Minutes More."