



Sigma Alpha Commission Established

Graduates of the United States Military Academy join the Order

“Well, can you do it?” Knight

Commander J. Michael Duncan asked Jesse Lyons, Director of Communications, and E. Kent McMichael, Archivist. The trio and other staff were enjoying a beautiful Charleston evening after having just completed the inaugural initiation for the graduation class of the Theta Commission in 2010. Duncan was asking if a commission could be established for graduates from the United States Military Academy by the following May.

When the 73rd Convention (2009) moved to amend the *Kappa Alpha Laws* allowing the creation of commissions for the nation’s service academies, few thought the first would be established and initiating new members within the first two years.

But in May of 2011, six gentlemen became the founders of the Sigma Alpha Commission for graduates of the United States Military Academy in West

Point, New York. Duncan authorized the creation of the commission after a petition was received from five alumni and the Advisory Council approved the pending action.

Fraternities are not allowed to operate at the service academies, but the new legislation allowed for commissions to honor graduates with membership, thus giving them a lifetime KA experience.

All previous commissions were established for formerly Active Chapters, thus giving them an immediate name. For instance, since Beta Chapter was dissolved due to the abolition of fraternities at the Virginia Military Institute, the Beta Commission was the immediate name. The designation had to be considered for posterity and future growth. The Naval, Air Force, and other service academies are locations for continuation of the commission initiative.

The commission’s chairman-designate, retired four-star General Jack N. Merritt

Petitioning Alumni for the Creation of the Sigma Alpha Commission

The petitioning alumni were a proud group of soldiers and KA brothers.

- GEN Jack N. Merritt (Ret.)
(Beta Eta – Oklahoma ’49)
- MG Thomas H. Tait (Ret.)
(Beta Comm. – VMI ’99)
- MG John W. Knapp (Ret.)
(Beta Comm. – VMI ’54)
- LTC Chris Whittaker
(Beta Comm. – VMI ’90)
- MAJ Christopher J. Lowrance
(Beta Comm. – VMI ’00)

Top: Archivist and staff military advisor SGM. E. Kent McMichael (left) shows COL Brian Reed his excitement at West Point.

Fraternities are not allowed to operate at the service academies, but the new legislation allowed for Commissions to honor graduates with membership, thus giving them a lifetime KA experience.



Knight Commander Duncan congratulates newly initiated Brother Andy Uhorchak.

(Beta Eta – Oklahoma '49), did not think they evoked the excitement needed to compliment the new unit of the Order. During an early spring 2011 meeting of Duncan and Merritt in Washington, DC before the North American Interfraternity Conference's annual business session, the men agreed upon the designation Sigma Alpha. "Sigma" designates the commission for graduates of a service academy and "Alpha" assigns it as the first of its kind. Consequently, "Sigma Beta" may be assigned next, and so forth.

Four stellar graduates and two alumni were elected. Drawing from traditions established by both the Beta and Theta Commission plans took shape. On May 16, in West Point Lodge #877, national administrative staff held first a public induction for family of new members to attend and learn more about the Order. Guests and family departed. The first initiation in Sigma Alpha's history was then conducted in the shadow of West Point.

That evening, a celebration was held at the grand Thayer Hotel. With great fellowship, all new initiates, their families, staff, and the Knight Commander gathered first in the Patton Tavern for

a reception, then in the Hap Arnold Room for the banquet. Staff Archivist, SGM E. Kent McMichael (Beta Comm.-VMI '95) presented each new brother with a Military Division recognition pin. MAJ Lowrance of the Commission welcomed all attending on behalf of General Merritt. Lyons then introduced then Knight Commander Duncan. He told of the Order's legacy with graduates of VMI and The Citadel; of our ties with military luminaries such as Marshall, Patton, and Byrd. He remarked that Robert E. Lee served as Superintendent of the Academy and lived in the house designated as such at West Point. Years later another Superintendent, this time a KA initiate, would reside in the same home. LTG Sidney B. Berry (Alpha Upsilon – Mississippi '43) would join KA at Ole Miss then and transfer to begin his Army career. From former Commandant GEN Sam Walker (Beta Comm.-VMI '82) to many others, KAs have informally walked the grounds of the Academy before.

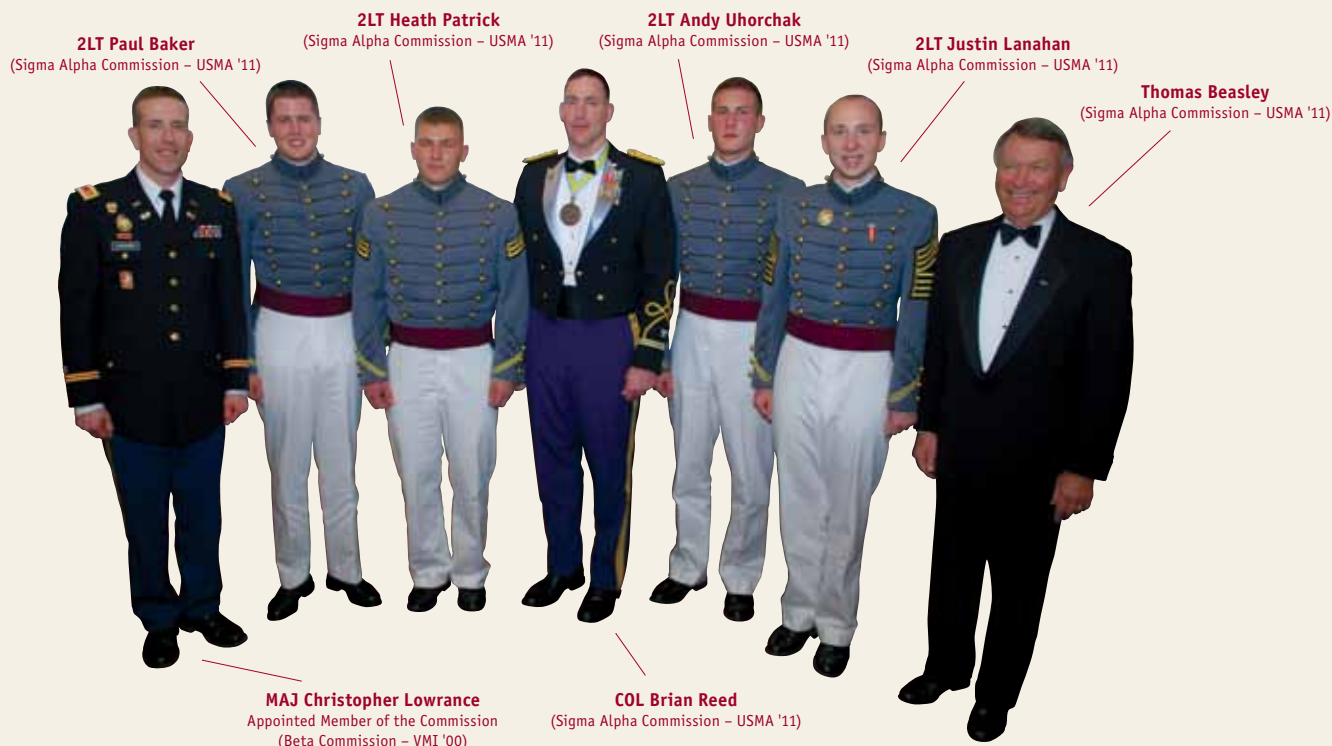
Duncan summed it up when he said, "the honor is all of ours to now have the humble opportunity to initiate graduates from this Academy. We seek not to add

anything to the history of West Point. We openly seek only to add some of these great men to our roll of honor and give us an opportunity to call them brothers." 🇺🇸

The Sigma Alpha Commission continues to look for nominees of gentlemen to elect to membership. If you know current year graduates or those who have previously graduated from the United States Military Academy, please send them to Jesse S. Lyons at jlyons@ka-order.org for consideration by the Commission.



Alumnus initiate Thomas Beasley, who was recommend by his son Matt, an alumnus from North Carolina, with his wife Wendy.



SIGMA ALPHA COMMISSION FOUNDERS

Initiated on May 16, 2011

2011 Graduates

2LT Justin Lanahan is currently at Ft. Gordon, Ga. conducting Signal Basic Officer Leadership Training until the end of Nov. before reporting to my permanent duty station at Ft. Bragg, N.C. to join the 1st Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division.

2LT Andy Uhorchak is at Fort Benning, Ga. He is attending the Infantry Basic Officer Leaders Course (IBOLC). Upon completion of IBOLC, he will attend Ranger School and any other follow on schools deemed necessary by our gaining units.

2LT Heath Patrick is also at Fort Benning, Ga. He is attending the Infantry Basic Officer Leaders Course (IBOLC). Upon completion of IBOLC, he will attend Ranger School and any other follow on schools deemed necessary by our gaining units.

2LT Paul Baker recently travelled to China to compete in the World

University Games, an international event that invites all nations to compete in an Olympic-style games. He then went to Fort Gordon, Ga. to start his Signal Corps Basic Officer Leadership Course. That course runs from until Jan. 26th, when he will travel then to Fort Lewis, Wash. to start his life as a Signal Officer.

Alumni

Thomas W. Beasley graduated in 1966. He reached the rank of Captain before discharge from the Army. While on active duty, Brother Beasley received, among other honors, the Silver Star, Bronze Star with V for Valor and Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Commendation Medal with V for valor an Oak Leaf Cluster.

Mr. Beasley is a founder and former Chairman of Correction Corporation of America, a company that manages detention and corrections facilities worldwide. He is also a founder and current Chairman of the Board

of Directors of Infrastructure Corporation of America and is a pioneer of the privatization concept. He spends his free time either on the golf course or with his wife Wendy and their grandkids on their farm in middle Tennessee. From 1974 to 1978, Mr. Beasley served as Chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party and continues to be active in state politics. In 1973, he received a doctor of jurisprudence degree from Vanderbilt University School of Law.

His son, Matthew Beasley (Upsilon – North Carolina '99) nominated him to the Commission for membership and was present at his initiation in May.

COL Brian Reed was commissioned as an infantry officer in 1989 from the United States Military Academy. He has served in a variety of command and staff positions. COL Reed was the Battalion Commander of 1st Battalion 24th Infantry (Stryker) from December 2006 to

December 2009. In his last post, he was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at West Point. He is currently a Senior Service College Fellow at Columbia University, and will take command of 1st Stryker Brigade 25th Infantry Division in summer 2012. COL Reed has participated in deployments in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. He is Ranger, airborne, and air assault qualified, and has earned the Combat Infantryman's Badge and the Expert Infantryman's Badge. COL Reed has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Maryland. MAJ John W. Downs, M.D. (Beta Comm.-VMI '00) nominated COL Reed, from Iraq, saying, "COL Reed remains the finest officer I've ever worked with/for. The absolute epitome of a humble, gentleman leader. I cannot recommend him enough."