

come out, but they never told me. They both legitimately believed a metamorphosis was needed for the American college fraternity.”

As Brother Posner recalls, “We posed questions—we didn’t know what the answers would be, but we trusted the process to find the answers. Frank would challenge us with questions like, ‘Is this the best we can do?’ or ‘Is this really how we want to think of ourselves?’”

Brother Posner introduced methods and processes that weekend that became the structure for SigEp Leadership Academies for years to follow. *The Leadership Challenge* curriculum is the basis for SigEp’s Leadership Continuum programs today, 25 years later.

“One of the things I remember about that weekend—and it’s still challenging for me even today—was learning to trust the process,” said Posner. “Whether working with undergraduates, alumni, or whoever, given the

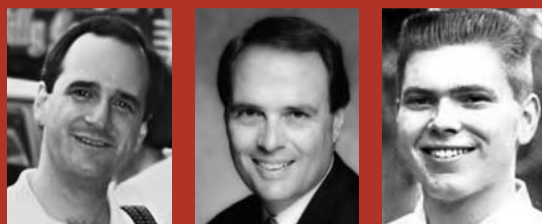
the 1990s, bottoming out in 2002-03. Membership has climbed steadily since then, with 6,053 new members and a total of 14,353 undergraduate members in chapters last year.)

### Ruck challenged convention

“He ran things in a very unconventional way,” said Williams. “He challenged us—and everyone—to think in creative ways. He started to change our thinking in a way that set us apart from the other fraternities.”

Posner calls Ruck “the catalyst that kept us moving from one curve to the next in a way that has made SigEp the best at always setting a higher expectation.”

**Bruce Hasenkamp, Dartmouth ’60**, a young Board member at the time who would also later serve as Grand President, marked Ruck’s efforts as the impetus that would transform the Fraternity. “It was the occasion that led off his whole objective to transform pledging,” said Brother Hasenkamp.



From left: Craig Templeton, Kansas '81, Mike Williams, Memphis '69 and Bruce Hasenkamp, Dartmouth '60

option, they will all do the right thing. We didn’t know where it would come out [at the Tarrytown retreat], but we believed if we asked the right questions we would come out in the right place.”

**Mike Williams, Memphis ’69**, a Tarrytown participant new to the National Board that year, who would go on to serve as Grand President a decade later in 1993-95, recalls how the mission statements we developed at Tarrytown shaped the way we focused our efforts on the undergraduates, the basic structure we still use today. “From that standpoint, it was a watershed moment,” says Williams.

Williams connects the weekend to the growth that followed. SigEp was headed into its greatest period of growth, peaking in 1990, when we recruited 7,522 new members and had 16,800 total members in our chapters. (Fraternity membership declined sharply in

“It was the kind of stuff he loved—there were a lot of sessions where we’d sit around thinking and working on new ways to do things.”

**“We didn’t know where it would come out [at the Tarrytown retreat], but we believed if we asked the right questions we would come out in the right place.”**

~ BARRY POSNER

**“Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees the others.”**

~ ARISTOTLE

# Marine Corps Commandant leaves his mark on leadership

By **MICHAEL MCDOWELL**, Nevada-Reno '03

“Almost everything I have needed to know about leadership for the Marine Corps, I learned at SigEp,” remarked **General James T. Conway**, Southeast Missouri State '69, 34th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, while accepting his Citation at the 50th Grand Chapter Conclave in Atlanta, Ga.

The position of Commandant has often been compared to that of CEO for a company with a multi-billion-dollar budget and nearly 200,000 employees. But that may be where the similarities end. The Commandant is responsible for manning, training and equipping the Marine Corps. By statute, the Commandant is appointed as a four-star general. The position is nominated by the President and must be confirmed by majority vote from the Senate. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he provides military advice to the Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of Defense and the President of the United States.

Conway learned how to lead and how to make an impact on the world's communities from his experience as an undergraduate member of Sigma Phi Epsilon. He said he learned the value of harnessing a collective effort to accomplish a goal, keeping in mind that he would always be dealing with a diversity of personalities and opinions. He learned the inevitability of facing obstacles, big or small, realizing that they must be faced, dealt with (by a combination of adaptation, improvisation and determination) and used as lessons for the future. That helps marshal the strength to move forward.

Conway's personal leadership philosophy is what he calls the “hands dirty” approach. He leads by example and by being involved in every stage that he has asked others to treat with importance. But his method is not about micromanagement. Far from it. In fact, Conway believes in trusting the team to get



**James T. Conway**, Southeast Missouri State '69, 34th Marine Corps Commandant

the job done and supports surrounding oneself with qualified individuals who are committed to the goal. In addition, he believes in taking care of those asked to follow you. In the Marine Corps, there is a well understood, albeit unwritten, rule that “officers eat last”—even if there isn't much to eat—indicative of the importance placed, not on the leaders, but the team.

Fellow Marines enthusiastically believe Conway backs up what he says with action and genuinely cares about all Marines and their families. They explain that he has always fostered an environment that encourages them to be “forward-thinking and forward-leaning without the fear of making mistakes.” As Marines move up in the Corps, they develop their own styles of leadership, but tend to learn how to lead from other Marines with whom they've served. One such Marine said, “For all Marines fortunate enough to have served with the General at any of his various levels of command, we have indeed had the opportunity to observe and learn from one of our Corps' most effective and successful leaders.”

Along his travels as a Marine, Conway has embraced a larger ideal of Brotherly Love and observed that people, everywhere, are basically the same. “The accents may be different,” Conway notes, “but we are one race of human beings. We share the same universal pain, joy, humor, love for family and desire for a quality life.”

Conway has represented the Marine Corps worldwide, from sitting down with sheiks and Iraqi military officers in the Anbar Province to meeting with members of Congress on Capitol Hill. While on tours with the Marine Corps, Gen. Conway was able to directly impact some of our world's communities by providing disaster relief and medical services to individuals and families who were in extreme need. Why? Because it was the right thing to do. This virtuous idea is central to Conway's and the Marine Corps' ideology.

“You have to ask yourself, ‘what is right to do?’” Conway says, “even if it may take longer, be more expensive or be harder to do.”



**Top Left:** The Commandant is visiting with a few Marines assigned to a training team that provides military instruction to the Afghan Army. **Above:** A visit to an Iraqi border post at the Syrian border gives the Commandant (center) and the Iraqi border post commander the opportunity to discuss ground conditions.