

SERVICES FOR FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

PREVENTION EDUCATION ADVISORY | THREE DEADLY NIGHTS

THERE ARE THREE, JUST THREE. AND NO MATTER WHAT THE LENGTH OF THE NEW MEMBER OR PLEDGE PROGRAM MAY BE, THESE THREE DEADLY NIGHTS ARE ALWAYS INCLUDED IF THE CHAPTER INVOLVED USES HAZING PRACTICES.

First of the Deadly Three

The first night, of course, is the evening that the new members or pledges receive their bids. Although the bids may be presented during the day, the activities always occur at night. In the Greek community, we have a lot of different names for the simple process of inviting someone to join, don't we? "Bid Night," "Presents"(sic), "Call out," "Pass out"(men are passed along over a crowd on the hands of members), "Jump" (men leap into a crowd) and the list is long.

But those are just the preliminaries. The main event comes later and involves alcohol, usually a lot of alcohol. And yes, we've heard all of the excuses and tortured rationalizations about new members or pledges consuming alcohol within the context of bid night. They come in many different forms, from many different people. "They didn't have to drink." "We drank with them." "No one forced them to drink." "It was their choice." "Some guys didn't drink at all."

All of those excuses have one thing in common. They will not hold up in court, much less during a university judicial hearing. The fact is that new members or pledges do not have a choice...not if they want to be accepted....not if they want to be part of the brotherhood...not if they want to demonstrate that they truly belong.

An ever-increasing number of young men---most of them 18 or 19 years old---have made the choice to drink alcohol during bid night, and their lives ended between six and 48 hours later. Sometimes they were clinically dead (irreversible loss of brain stem function), and other times they were simply dead. Nonetheless they died. Again and again, the same sad facts surface---drinking a bottle or bottles of liquor as a new member or pledge class until the alcohol was gone...matching members, drink for drink...drinking in competition, drinking to demonstrate manhood...heavy and high risk drinking.

Standing for Brotherhood?

The second deadly night: "Bigs" or "Big Brother Night" an evening for the fraternity to bond with the new members and demonstrate support.

In a hazing chapter, Big Brother Night often involves an exchange of "gifts," a bottle of liquor for another bottle of liquor. Sometimes the type of liquor is determined by the "family" that the new member or pledge is joining. Regardless, the focus is not upon the gift aspect. It is upon consuming the liquor as a means of bonding with your big or little brother.

Fight for acceptance or a fight for life

Finally, the last of the three deadly nights, pre-initiation. The third deadly night is often the fraternal equivalent of a floating holiday. At some point during pre-initiation, the new members or pledges must consume alcohol...often an excessive amount of alcohol. Sometimes it is an act of mercy, if you 10-4 the hazers. "These guys need a break--we're actually helping them out." Sometimes it is planned or a hidebound tradition--"This is the night that they must drink a keg." Regardless, consumption and needless death occurs.

Moving Forward

Each situation of the three deadly nights involves a violation of FIPG or fraternity risk management policy. The use of alcohol at any event involving or focused upon new members or pledges is a violation, pure and simple. Moreover, these activities often violate the most basic federal, state, and local laws. All in the name of brotherhood.

Many, many people have written articles far more eloquent than this piece about hazing and the use of alcohol in hazing. Some of those people have been parents of young men who died in the process of joining an FRMT member fraternity. Some have been friends of the young men. Some are administrators at colleges or universities. Some have been professional staff members or volunteers of fraternities. Some simply see a cause to write.

Regardless of the point of view, we know one thing for certain. If a chapter allows alcohol into a bid night event, big brother night, or pre-initiation, that chapter has set the stage for a tragedy. Men's inter/national fraternity chapters are a most regrettable example of that ancient adage that, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Perhaps this fall, we can demonstrate that we have learned two very important lessons.

- Hazing and brotherhood are polar opposites. We cannot have one and rightfully have the other.
- Alcohol and hazing are a deadly combination, especially on the three deadly nights.

We have so much to give to the young men joining our fraternal and interfraternal brotherhood...and they have so much to give to us. Let us commit ourselves to making these three nights examples of brotherhood, and brotherhood the example for fraternities.

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