

A Remembrance of Herman “Butch” Bryant

May 8, 2018

By Jim Cosby – Fraternity Brother

I met Butch Bryant in the 1958 – 1959 school year at the University of Virginia. During that year a group of undergraduate students who were not happy with the fraternity scene we found at U.Va. formed the Beta Pi Chapter of Sigma Pi Fraternity. We had started as “The Corinthian Club” for the required probationary period for new fraternities. Butch was one of five young men in our fraternity from the Rocky Mount area. The others were three Floras (no surprise there) and Frank Peake. The Chapter was chartered in 1959. Butch and I were among the charter members.

We were all good students and were determined to remain such but have social lives we could enjoy. We were not “jocks” but participated in intramural sports and did reasonably well. Butch and I were on the softball team. I started as catcher. Butch was our first baseman. If I had known that Butch had played center on the Franklin County HS football team, I would have been better prepared.

During the first game, the ball was sharply hit towards first base. Butch fielded it cleanly and threw to home trying to prevent a score from third. The ball came in so hard it knocked my glove completely off my hand and me on my butt. Needless to say, the runner scored. After a few more hard throws from first base, I realized I was overpowered by my teammate and was replaced by another player as catcher.

Butch and Pat were married before Butch graduated. A number of other Sigma Pi’s and I attended. During our fourth year Butch and Pat lived in an upstairs apartment in a house on Shamrock Road close to both the Engineering School and the College of Arts and Science. Four of us bachelors lived in the basement apartment. On one memorable night, we were suddenly awakened by a thunderous crash and voices from upstairs. We learned the next day that the crash was Butch and Pat’s bed breaking in the middle of the night. Of course, Butch didn’t hear the end of it at our later fraternity meetings.

Butch graduated in June 1961. He was a chemistry major and a Phi Beta Kappa, the highest academic honor an undergraduate student can receive. It is a national honorary society founded at William and Mary.

Our paths separated, but we kept in touch and attended occasional fraternity functions and reunions through the years. He was intelligent without an attitude, a good friend and a fraternity brother always willing to help. But he was a misfit. With a hard fastball like he had, he should have been a pitcher.

Rest in peace, my friend. We will miss you.