

Maya Halciug

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HUM 104

Dr. Wills

Human Endurance: Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.'s Probate

On the fateful day of April 23rd, at 7:11 pm exactly, a wondrous mix of performance and spoken word echoed throughout Union Atrium. It was the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.'s probate, a ceremonial, public introduction to campus, usually showcasing knowledge about the fraternity/sorority and strolling or stepping. A historical and traditional presentation, I received an email that a brother requested me personally to attend. Honored and confused, I headed over to the atrium to view an incredible display I would never forget.

The goal of any probate is to promote unity among the D9 communities scattered among campus. Although we do not have all nine, we have four, and to my knowledge this probate means more and unites the groups tighter. As I watched the probate, I did not anticipate other schools/other brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. to attend as well. Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.'s personal goal in the fraternity is achievement in any endeavor. For them, joining this group means cultivating leadership, personal growth, public service, and academic excellence.

The probate schedule went as follows: a traditional reciting of the history, along with a new name they are known to be in the fraternity, with a dance to a song of their choosing and either the dean of members exposing their identity, or a parent of their choice. To be a brother in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. felt like a legacy during the probate I witnessed, considering

many of the brothers had their parents reveal, or ‘free them’, during the ceremony. Before each brother ‘freed themselves’, they had a little part each describing what it is they do around campus, their athletic commitments (many were on the football team), and academic prowess. It is with this honor they represent Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., all planning to leave their mark in the Pi Mu chapter at Davidson College.

By technical and communal standards, the probate was very successful. The accomplishment of such a performance is measured by the ‘precision of the line,’ how well the brothers move in unison, and the ‘retention of lore,’ the accuracy of the recited history. The presence of visiting brothers from other schools serves as a check-in of the chapter's health; their attendance signaled that the Pi Mu chapter is a respected node in the national Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. network. Furthermore, the seamless integration of their personal feats into the choreography successfully humanized the secrecy of the initiate, proving that these men were already leaders before they ever put on the Greek letters.

I had no idea what a probate was, or what this ceremony meant, or practically any of its significance before watching it myself. I realized after all the brothers were freed that I was invited by my friend’s boyfriend, a wholesome moment that made me feel a mix of pride and unity, which I now know is the point of the probate. Throughout the probate, I was confused why the brothers would speak so fast, the significance of the choreography, and I felt the need to research these questions that would pop up into my head.

I realize now a lack of knowledge does not make me ignorant, but inquisitive and eager to learn more. This day meant so much to these brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., whom I learned spent countless months practicing for the 50-minute performance. What sticks with me throughout this performance is their attention to detail and how interwoven community

is for the National Pan Hellenic Council. It ranges from family driving long nights to see their sons carry out an important part of history for them, or brothers from other universities coming to congratulate and check out the strength of Davidson's Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. chapter, to friends of the brothers invited, or curious to see the probate.