



THE GENERAL SECRETARY

SETH R. BROOKS  
1810 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W.  
WASHINGTON 9, D. C.

At Home

Sept. 29, 1954

Dear Brothers: I saw your letter and I  
am sorry about Paul.  
Of course, we cannot  
get around the negative vote.  
I can only suggest  
patience and reason. Try to call  
the chapter and talk it out. I believe  
you can make the one man see  
the value of Paul. You could call  
Bill Littick, your new Chief, and  
ask him to come over and  
talk to the chapter.  
Keep me posted and  
call on me, if I can be of  
any real help.  
This letter may seem

insurance factory but you must  
handle this at the chapter level.

Best wishes to you \*

Love

in - 11-11-11

Sue R. Brooks

**Editor's Notes: The following is noted from memory of Thomas J Tatham OWU '56 and not from any direct knowledge of any facts other than those implied by the following notes and documents.**

**NOTE: 1** The following is from my "memory" recalling the reason for the Seth R. Brooks letter to the chapter dated September 29, 1954.

To the best of my "memory" as a sophomore returning to OWU for my 2<sup>nd</sup> year and participating in the pledging of incoming freshmen, one of the candidates was a "minority" ( I don't recall his race or origin). His name was Paul (according to the Brooks letter) and he had been "black balled" from pledging by one of the chapter members. Of course it only took 1 vote of "no" to veto his pledging.

Some in the OWU (Theta) chapter supporting Paul's pledging had written an appeal to Mr. Brooks, who was then our fraternities General Secretary, for his council. This letter was then his response to that request. As he explains, while supportive of the appeals' concern, his (Brooks) letter clearly left the ultimate decision and debate of the matter in the hands of the local (Theta) chapter of Beta Theta Pi.

While this action was his (Seth's) council in 1954, the General Fraternity finally took steps at a much later General Convention to require opening the fraternity to a non-discrimination policy for all future chapter pledging. The results have been a considerable positive growth in the makeup of the fraternity to an open membership in the fraternities' chapters.

## **NOTE: 2**

### **Seth R. Brooks, St. Lawrence '22 (From Google search)**

When the Oxford Cup was established as a recognition for living Betas of Achievement, there was simply no question that the first to be so recognized would be Dr. Seth R. Brooks. "Beta's living legend," he also ranked as one of the foremost spokesmen for the entire American fraternity system.

He was executive officer of Beta Theta Pi as General Secretary 1950-60, a decade when the Administrative Secretaries reporting to him from the Oxford office were Ralph Fey and Fred Brower. He was the Fraternity's President for two terms, 1960-66.

Since 1951, each issue of *The Beta Theta Pi* magazine had carried an essay by Dr. Brooks under the heading "Inter Fratres." These had been reprinted often in the magazines of other Greek societies. Many of these essays as well as some of his sermons and other addresses had been assembled in a 1967 volume, *In Beta's Broad Domain*, published by the Fraternity.

Dr. Brooks received the honorary degree Doctor of Divinity from Miami (Ohio) University at its 1955 Commencement — the morning after delivering a baccalaureate address in an outdoor Miami Field setting made memorable by his race with ominous approaching rain clouds. He also had given Greek Week and other addresses at Miami.

He was pastor of the Universalist National Memorial Church in Washington from 1939 until retirement in 1979. He continued to make his home in Washington. His wife Corinne, a leader in Washington community affairs for many years, died in 1983.

He had been a perennially exciting speaker at Beta Conventions for many years, as recently as the previous August, attending his 50th Convention. This was more than any other living Beta had attended. Four of these had been at Miami, the Centenary in 1939 and other anniversary Conventions in 1954, 1964 and 1979.

At the 1979 Convention, a new dimension had been added to the Beta student aid program with establishment of the Seth R. Brooks and Corinne H. Brooks Scholarship Fund. In contrast to other scholarships offering assistance to Beta undergraduates or Beta graduate students, this fund provides for sons or daughters of Betas, wherever they might attend college; membership in Beta Theta Pi is not a requisite. First donor to this new fund was the outgoing president of the Fraternity, Dr. James G. Martin, former Davidson College chemistry professor, later a Congressman and by this time Governor of North Carolina.

Dr. Brooks' achievements had not been limited to Beta Theta Pi or any other aspect of collegiate life. One of his "Inter Fratres" essays titled "Freedom Within" had gained him a Freedom Foundation Award in 1967. His alma mater, St. Lawrence University, which had awarded him an honorary degree in 1936, named him in 1979 recipient of its Sol Feinstone Award for "significant contributions to advance the