

Celebrating 100 Years of Oregon Alpha

By: Oregon Alpha KELSEY JENSEN LEWIS

I have driven the 110-mile stretch of I-5 from Portland to Eugene many times for football games and Chapter House Corporation (CHC) meetings. It is long, flat and uneventful. In September, as I traveled to Eugene a few days ahead of the Oregon Alpha centennial, my car filled to the brim with supplies, I had never been more excited for the drive.

The centennial celebration marked not just 100 years at the University of Oregon, but also the conclusion of the largest renovation to the chapter house since it was originally built. 1518 Kincaid, a stunning Ellis F. Lawrence house parallel to campus, is for many a symbol of her time in college. As women followed the construction progress through social media, the excitement for the centennial and a chance to see the finished project was building along with the new walls. Simultaneously, a capital campaign raising more than \$265,000 was the opportunity for Pi Phis to connect and invite sisters from around the country to the event.

An informal welcome reception kicked off the events on Friday. On Saturday, a ribbon cutting for top donors to the campaign provided the first glimpse of the renovated house. The construction team, architect and members of CHC led the first tours. More than 300 people attended the open house later that day. Many women stayed for hours walking the halls, reliving memories and engaging in conversation. As I walked the halls during this time, I was struck by the presence of women in the moment. The talk, the laughter and the enjoyment ... if you closed your eyes, it sounded like a house full of college students — not alumnae.

Saturday evening's banquet was an event for the ages. The banquet was a true celebration of sisterhood, with women spanning 70 years of New Member classes in attendance. A program provided a view of the legacy of Oregon Alpha and a video of collected photographs brought visual context to the transformation of both the house and the women over the years. The program also celebrated House Director Charlotte Mason, serving her final of 30 years in the role. We were thrilled to have Fraternity Housing Corporation President LISA GAMEL SCOTT, Colorado Alpha, as well as the Ring Ching Roadshow in attendance.



The Oregon Alpha Chapter centennial celebration not only marked 100 years on the University of Oregon campus, but also the conclusion of the largest renovation to the chapter house since it was originally built.

The weekend concluded on Sunday at the chapter house. The new renovation allowed for nearly 200 to attend three separate Cookie Shines. Women floated between the three and were excited to see the generational differences layered into the tradition of this signature ceremony. As the women filtered out and began their travels home, the thanks and happy comments were overwhelming. It was clear: the Oregon Alpha legacy had never been stronger.

As I drove back to Portland, Oregon, on Sunday afternoon, a calm settled. I was so thankful to the centennial celebration committee and CHC members for their time and dedication to the event. Only bittersweet for me was the absence of my mom, Oregon Alpha TRUDI FRANCISCO JENSEN, who passed away from breast cancer when I was a young girl. While I wore her badge next to mine to keep her close, it was the stories shared of her continuously throughout the weekend that brought her spirit to life. The friendship I hold with her class sisters is one my most cherished gifts of the Pi Beta Phi sisterhood.