

3659 Van Dyke Avenue
 San Diego, California 92105
 October 28, 1967

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity
 2395 Piedmont Avenue
 Berkeley, California 94704

Attn: Chapter President

Gentlemen:

This is perhaps the most unusual letter you have ever received, and it's strictly a shot in the dark. It has to do with a ship's bell from the USS BENNINGTON -- and with an old man who probably is her last survivor.

The BENNINGTON blew up in San Diego Bay in 1906, killing 65 men. Lee Strobel, now 84, was one of her three bosn's mates and the only one of them who lived. After the explosion the BENNINGTON was towed to Mare Island and about 1910 was sold to an Oakland wrecker. Her bell disappeared and Mr. Strobel (who recently has suffered a stroke) has been trying to find it, with a view to getting it to the Bennington Monument, over the graves of her dead, at Point Loma.

Some months ago "The Knave" of The Oakland Tribune ran a story about Mr. Strobel's quest, and the possibility that the bell was somewhere in the East Bay area. It brought a reply from the northern part of the state, that the bell was in one of two Berkeley fraternity houses; yours was one of the two.

No question of legality of possession is being raised; the bell could well have been bought from the Oakland man by some enthusiastic member of your chapter, as a house trophy. However, if you have the bell, I can think of no better pro-fraternity publicity than its return after all these years. As a fraternity man myself and a UC graduate ('81) I am pretty bitter about some of the anti-fraternity stuff being handed out by -- among others -- grand-standing college presidents.

The bell, by the way, is about a foot high and is lettered BENNINGTON -- 1890. I think you will agree with me that if it is available, its most appropriate location would be on the base of the Bennington Monument. I am sending a letter identical with this to the other fraternity mentioned. And as Mr. Strobel is not going to be with us too much longer, I'd appreciate an early reply.

Sincerely yours,

JERRY MacMULLEN