

A Touch of Elegance

an interview with SigEp's own Southern Belle, Douglas McRaney

On entering the large red doors, almost everyone who visits the Zollinger House for a tour requests the same thing. They want to meet the person with the Southern drawl who has helped them find someone to speak to regarding problems that range from purchasing jewelry to chapter emergencies. As the receptionist, Douglas McRaney has been helping SigEp undergraduates and alumni for more than twelve years. The *Journal* recently interviewed Ms. McRaney regarding her experience working with SigEp Headquarters.



Ms. Douglas McRaney answers one of 200+ phone calls that she receives at Zollinger House each day.

Journal: Among those who are involved with SigEp, your voice and dialect are almost famous. You are not originally from Richmond are you?

McRaney: No, I am originally from Clarksdale, Mississippi. It's a little town of fewer than 10,000 right in the heart of the Mississippi Delta - high cotton country. I have lived in Richmond since 1971.

Journal: Tell me about your start with SigEp.

McRaney: I started working with SigEp in July of 1988. We were at the old building on Chamberlayne back then.

My first day at work the air conditioning wasn't working and Richmond in July can be very hot. I thought it was some sort of hazing stunt — we almost melted.

Journal: What initially brought you to the Headquarters staff?

McRaney: I joined the staff here because, quite frankly, I needed a job. I had never worked outside my home, so I had no business experience. (Executive Director) Ken Maddox really took a risk by hiring me, for which I will be forever grateful.

Journal: What do you enjoy most about working at SigEp Headquarters?

McRaney: No question about it — the people! They are the best in the world: polite, courteous, fun, smart, interesting, with varied backgrounds and from all over

the United States. The turnover in SPERS (Sigma Phi Epsilon Richmond Staff) and Regional Directors keeps you on your toes learning new names and new faces. Each day is different, busy, and fulfilling. After twelve years, they're like family. The dedication and sense of teamwork are outstanding. Everyone pitches in to help when deadlines must be met.

Journal: With chapters spread out across the map, good communication must thrive on telephone calls. How busy are the phones around this place?

McRaney: The number of telephone calls varies according to what is going on at the different colleges and universities. The phones are very busy during formal recruitment periods and not so busy around holidays. On an average day, we probably get over 200 calls.

Journal: What is the strangest phone call you have ever received?

McRaney: I've had many unusual calls over the years like, "can you tell me the names of the Founding Fathers?" or "What is the true meaning of Virtue, Diligence, and Brotherly Love?" Each call presents a challenge and I have been at a loss for an answer many a time.

Journal: Do you feel like you get to know SigEps through the telephone?

McRaney: Oh yes, getting to know SigEps through the phone has been really fun. The most exciting thing is when I get to put a face with a voice. What a thrill!

To be sure, the dedication of staff members like Douglas McRaney has helped SigEp climb to the top of the Fraternity world.

Douglas McRaney greets everyone who comes through the red doors of Zollinger House.

