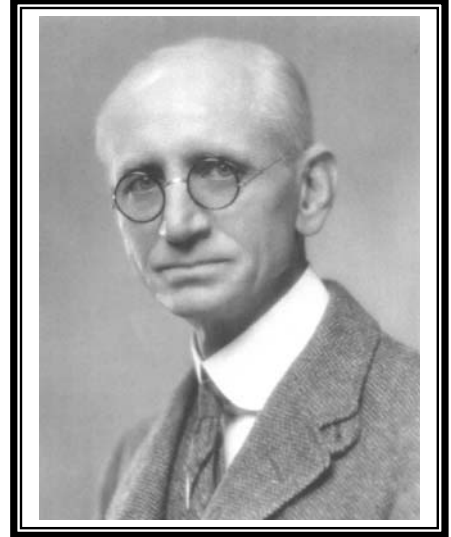


Sis Doc

Dr. Charles Richardson

Dr. Charles Richardson occupies a unique place in fraternity history--a founder of a women's fraternity. To a large degree, this charming Southern gentleman was also responsible for the development of the fraternity system at the University of Arkansas. A Virginian by birth, he was a graduate of schools in his home state and, after graduating from the dental department of Vanderbilt University, he located in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in 1888 to practice dentistry. As the University of Arkansas was the center of the town's interest and since he was fresh from campus life, he identified himself with the University and was soon admitted to the social life of the college town.



Dr. Richardson first met Ida Pace (Purdue) during her senior year as an English major at the University and it was in an early conversation with her that he was surprised to learn there were no fraternities in the state institution due to faculty opposition. He had acquired a taste for fraternal organizations and for the ritualistic work connected with them through his membership in the Kappa Sigma Fraternity while a college student in Virginia. Determined that the young men at the University of Arkansas should have the benefit of fraternity membership that he so enjoyed, Dr. Richardson set to work and within a short period after he came to Fayetteville was instrumental in establishing a chapter of his fraternity at the University. Soon thereafter, also through his influence, Sigma Alpha Epsilon and Kappa Alpha established chapters there. Later, he became a national officer of his fraternity and held memberships in other fraternal organizations having chapters in Fayetteville, such as the Masons, and attained high rank in all of them.

Dr. Richardson's finest achievement, and the one that gave him the most satisfaction, was the key role he played in the establishment of Chi Omega. Initially, he gave encouragement to a fledgling group of young women who desired the fun and companionship of a fraternal organization. Soon thereafter, he designed a plan and devised a setting for what is today the largest Greek women's group in the United States.

A student of esoteric systems, Dr. Richardson had delved deeply into the subjects of myths and rituals and to those who knew him, his knowledge seemed inexhaustible. With this unusual interest in secret work, he developed original ideas which became the foundation for Chi Omega; he wrote the first draft of the constitution and ritual and designed our first badge. By his choice of the Eleusinian Mysteries as the basis for secret work, he gave to the Fraternity an ideal setting and a source of

nomenclature so appropriate that it has met all the needs of the Fraternity. He said that "in founding a fraternity, there must be a central idea around which fact and fancy must be grouped and from which the imagery and symbolism must be drawn. These must be designed to contain and teach a central and ever-recurring, ennobling truth, so that the doctrines revealed to the initiated may give to them better hopes and higher aspirations."



Dr. Richardson's vision of what Chi Omega might become was an inspiration to the other founders and to those who assisted them in the early, formative years of the Fraternity. Through him and his friends, some of our finest chapters initially became aware of and interested in Chi Omega. And when Chi Omega was growing explosively, his clear vision helped unify the diverse elements into a beautiful whole.

Sis Doc

Dr. Charles Richardson

Chi Omega had a very special place in the life of Dr. Richardson and he, in turn, had a very special place in the hearts of Chi Omegas everywhere. Since the Fraternity's founding, no other interest was more important to him and he spoke of his membership in Chi Omega as one of his most highly prized possessions. He proudly wore his Chi Omega badge, a miniature mounted on one side of a gold disc slightly larger than a quarter; on the other side was his Kappa Sigma badge. Unfortunately, this disc and his badges were lost after his death.

Known affectionately as "Sis Doc," he arrived at Psi Chapter in his car, especially on Sundays, to take the girls for a ride. Every new Psi Chapter pledge had a Sunday afternoon ride with him and other pledges. When he appeared at Chi Omega functions he was always the center of a circle of admiring girls who were delighted to have an opportunity to give him the grip, ask numberless questions and even cast coquettish glances in his direction. He often attended initiation, had the privilege of attending meetings, and was always welcomed at any Chi Omega gathering. He seemed to know just how to time his attendance at rush parties, conventions and dinners, and terminated his stay so that his Sisters would long for his return. Sometimes when he was traveling, he would stop to visit a chapter; he was toastmaster or speaker at many annual banquets and he was frequently the host at entertainments given in honor of Psi Chapter. From time to time, he presented the members with appropriate gifts--a loving cup, a chafing dish, silverware for their table and, lastly, a portrait of himself for their house.

Dr. Richardson often attended portions of Chi Omega Conventions but in 1920 he was present during the entire session to celebrate with his Sisters the 25th anniversary of their Fraternity. He acknowledged that it was with some trepidation that he first entered a business session of Chi Omega delegates, but the cordiality of his reception soon put him at ease. He enjoyed posing for pictures with countless convention delegates and each considered her prized photograph to be a personal treasure.

His last convention was at the Greenbrier in 1924. While he seemed to enjoy the earlier conventions, this one meant more to him, apparently, than any occasion in his life. To the delegates' delight, Dr. Richardson spoke to the assembly, noting that he was thrilled and proud to have had a pivotal role in Chi Omega's founding, to have assisted in its development, and witnessed its rise to a highly esteemed and nationally recognized women's fraternity. Dr. Richardson entered Omega Chapter in December following this convention.

Dr. Richardson is considered the guiding spirit of Chi Omega throughout the first quarter century of its existence. From the one local chapter, Chi Omega grew, by the time of his death in 1924, to the point where in active memberships and number of chapters, it was one of the largest of all the national Greek-letter fraternal organizations for women in the United States.

