

It's 2001...the Grand Council is on Scott MacKay's back porch having one of those off-the-cuff conversations that probably every brother experiences at some point within their own chapters and alumni associations. Waxing poetic, even dreaming of pie-in-the-sky... What if we... We should... What about... Why not...

At some point, the conversation turns to I.M. Pei and we realize none of us were brothers when Mr. Pei was named Master Architect. In fact, no one has ever met the man. That's a shame. The architect who openly lists his affiliation with our Fraternity and none of us has ever bothered to take the time to try to contact him. In any event, someone...I honestly don't remember whom...asks the question, "So why don't we nominate a new Master Architect? A second Master Architect? Several Master Architects?" Brother Pelley says something like, "That's all well and good, but I bet you can't name one person you want to nominate." Greg should have known better. It took seconds to name several. I won't go into detail about those we named that evening, but suffice it to say at least one person here tonight knew of all of them; indeed, knew one of them well enough to write a book about him, quite literally.

Fast forward five years to 2006. The Imhotep Chapter requests the Fraternity accept their nomination of an Honorary Member to the Fraternity. The only person at the meeting who knows the nominee is Chooch Pickard, the Fraternity's Expansion Director, who quickly – even energetically – vouches for him. Not one to say no to someone who will bring honor to Alpha Rho Chi, my vote is an easy one to make, as are those of the rest of the Council members. Almost one year later, about 150 brothers of Alpha Rho Chi find themselves with front row seats to the most widely attended initiation in our Fraternity's history – yet one of the smallest: for one person. I'm well aware that many of you in this room were not there for the big event in Memphis. We missed you. We all got to know Robert during his initiation that evening, and this brother is proud to say I liked what I saw. I remember thinking, "This man is the real deal...the consummate professional, and the proverbial Southern gentleman." The Grand Council had the privilege of dining with Robert, his wife Holly, and his daughter Virginia that evening. Though it was only a few hours, we hit it off, beginning an entirely new friendship for me. Robert only cemented my first impression when he gladly welcomed the WGA's traditional hug for a new brother.

I'll never forget when I overheard him at the end of the evening say to Chooch, "Thank you for giving me one of the best days of my life." "Wow," I thought... "He gets it. Initiating this man may have been one of the best decisions we've ever made." In the three years since, the fraternal bonds have only strengthened between Robert, the Grand Council, and many, many brothers of Alpha Rho Chi. I think it's safe to say the Grand Council has looked forward to this day since March 24th, 2007, and many of you in this room likely share those sentiments.

Robert, you don't fit the proverbial mold of Alpha Rho Chi's Master Architect. You're not a Gilbert, or a Saarinen, a Root, a Mies, or a Pei. I think you might be a Ricker, or a Bucky, though. Seriously, we're delighted that you don't fit the stereotypical mold...because it means you're an Alpha Rho Chi brother. We don't accept the status quo...we raise, and then set, the bar. We don't wait for trends...we establish them. We don't rest on our laurels...we actively seek to broaden our influence. And it's my belief that in your initiation, we found a measure of influence that will prove difficult to surpass.

In closing, I'd like to quote from a message delivered to me by the Nominations Committee. "Brother Ivy meets or exceeds the standards set in all categories. He is involved with students and extremely influential in the field. I would hazard the hyperbole that most architects are familiar with his work, even if they don't know his name. His accomplishments stand before him, not behind him. While he is not a traditional architect, he still exemplifies the field. How many of our brothers would also not fit under the "traditional architect" banner? Our fraternity is not a studio or an atelier. The Master Architect, in his role with the fraternity, isn't there to make buildings for us. Thus, we feel that the accomplishments of Robert Ivy do fully and completely fulfill the requirements of being a Master Architect for our fraternity. It is now up to the voting Convention body to decide if he fulfills them in a way that makes him worthy of being our next Master Architect."

The delegates of the 63rd National Convention of Alpha Rho Chi have decided you most definitely fulfill our requirements...and you are undeniably worthy...and I thank them for giving us one of the best days of our lives.