



## **Carrie Washburne Staehle, Alpha**



When the National Council met on August 28, 1934, before the opening of the 5th National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, a serious crisis faced the three national officers present. The President and Vice President were absent, and a decision had to be made as to the presiding officer for the Convention. The Secretary, Mary Cook, was general chairman of the Convention, and she asked to be relieved of the responsibility of the meetings. Treasurer Carrie Staehle was next in sequence and was authorized by the Council to conduct the meeting of the Council and the Convention. At the Convention, the Nominating Committee presented the name of Carrie Staehle for National President.

It is safe to say that if Carrie Washburne Staehle had not become president in 1934, Alpha Sigma Tau would probably not exist today. Her intelligent and foresighted leadership, unstinting devotion, and prodigious efforts on behalf of Alpha Sigma Tau for 50 years have been an inspiration to Alpha Sigma Taus across the nation. No one in our 115-plus year history has had a more dramatic and lasting influence on our growth and development than Carrie Staehle.

Ever since she received her pledge ribbons at the home of Ada A. Norton at the Alpha Chapter in 1924, Carrie Staehle had been fascinated with Alpha Sigma Tau. The pleasant associations she made during her collegiate days in Ypsilanti continued with the alumnae chapter in Detroit, where she lived for 11 years. Carrie taught literature for three years in elementary schools. After receiving her A.B. degree in Ypsilanti, she taught English and Latin for five years at Southeastern High School there.

In high school and college, she was valedictorian of her graduating class, and she was a member of Kappa Delta Pi.

When Alpha Sigma Tau became a national sorority in 1925, Carrie Staehle (then Carrie

Washburne) was elected National Treasurer. Although she had just graduated from Michigan State Normal College at Ypsilanti and was the youngest member on the National Council, she was already well-known within the Sorority. She had already served a year on the committee appointed by Elmer Lyman and Ada A. Norton to make plans for the first National Convention in Detroit. She held the office of Treasurer until her election as President in 1934.

As National President from 1934 to 1949, Mrs. Staehle was responsible for establishing an efficient business organization of the Sorority. She was able to bring a feeling of unity to far-flung collegiate and alumnae groups and inspired many members to cooperate in a broader national-mindedness. Among her specific accomplishments were the establishment of the Central Office; appointment of alumnae representatives for every chapter; creation of 10 new national chairmanships to direct special activities; division of the Sorority into districts with a President in charge of organizing in each district and publication of sorority literature such as Central Office Bulletin, Pledge Manual, Officers Handbook, Courtesy Leaflets, the Alumnae Newsletters and others; increased the financial resources through an endowment fund and life memberships; directed the beginning of national social service work; and instituted a program for cultural study in the collegiate chapters.

After her election as President, she attended all of the meetings of the Association of Education Sororities, sometimes with our AES Representative and sometimes as Alpha Sigma Tau's AES Representative. She was a member of the Field Committee in AES, which directed the merger with the National Panhellenic Conference in 1947. She served as Alpha Sigma Tau's NPC delegate from 1947 to 1967.

She traveled extensively during her 15 years as National President, having attended all National Conventions, many district meetings, and made five nationwide complete inspections of all chapters. During her tenure the following 11 chapters were added: Zeta Tau, Upsilon, Phi, Chi, Psi, Omega, Alpha Alpha, Alpha Beta, Alpha Gamma, Alpha Delta, and Alpha Epsilon. She installed eight of these (Zeta Tau, Upsilon, Phi, Chi, Omega, Alpha Alpha, Alpha Beta, and Alpha Gamma).

After her retirement as National President in 1949, Carrie continued her devoted and capable service to Alpha Sigma Tau. In appreciation, she gained the title President Emerita in 1966. As mentioned above, she was NPC Delegate until 1967. From 1951 to 1960, she was National Secretary. In 1964, she became Constitution Chairman and Parliamentarian until 1974. At the 20th National Convention in Detroit in 1974, she was elected to the National Council as Director of Publications, a new position in the re-organized national structure.

Carrie and her husband, Haswell, a retired engineer, taught part-time at Columbus Technical Institute in Ohio. One son, Roger, was a professor of metallurgical engineering at Ohio State and another, George, was a nuclear physicist in Livermore, California. Their five grandchildren were a joyful part of their life always.

During her 75-year service to Alpha Sigma Tau, Carrie Staehle met and influenced more members than any other officer or chairman. In her writing and travels, she always stressed the Sorority's Ritual and values. She felt that the ultimate purpose of Sorority membership is to train college young women to become the best versions of themselves who in homes, business, and schools, can influence those with whom they come in contact to be finer and nobler. Because of this belief and emphasis, Alpha Sigma Tau's national reputation today is one of the strength and integrity. We are respected for our honesty and high ideals. We can be proud of our status in this respect among our sister sorority groups.

Carrie passed away on April 10, 2001, one day short of her 102nd birthday.

---

*Positions held:* Planning Committee for Nationalization (1924 - 1925); National Treasurer (1925 - 1934); National President (1934 - 1949); NPC Representative (1947 - 1967); National Secretary (1952 - 1960); Director of Publications (1960 - 1976); Board of Trustees (1990 - 2001)

*Honors received:* Ada A. Norton Award Recipient (1949); President Emerita (1970); Alumnae Top Tau (1990)