

# Secret societies thrive out of the limelight

**Editor's Note:** This is the first of a three-part series looking at secret societies at the University.  
By **DAMON CHAPPIE**  
Collegian Staff Writer

Last Wednesday night they met at sacred campus shrines, dressed in dark clothing, wearing the hats that identify them as members of the secret Skull and Bones society.

Following a six-hour mysterious initiation rite, more than a dozen students joined the ranks of one of the University's three secret societies for students.

Not just anyone can join one of these groups; you must be asked or, as it's called, "lapped" by one of the members. And the membership, which is kept confidential, includes the top leaders of student organizations, from the Interfraternity Council to Undergraduate Student Government to Black Caucus. The network extends to include faculty and administrators, including University President Bryce Jordan.

Skull and Bones and another secret group, Parmi Nous, are described variously as

"support groups" for students leaders, a forum for ideas away from public scrutiny, or a mode of meeting other student leaders. In interviews during the past three weeks, more than a dozen past and present members described the groups, kept largely secret from the public, as social networks for the so-called student elite.

Indeed, the social aspect seems central to members; unofficial meetings are held for Skull and Bones members each Thursday night at State College bars, such as the Gingerbread Man or the Lion's Den.

A former member of Skull and Bones said that although most members don't attend the functions with the intent of trading information about University issues, that's what often occurs.

"I've seen it happen," said the student, who asked not to be identified.

"Just by the mere fact that this organization is perceived as a support group, people trust one another implicitly. The danger comes when student leaders receive information affecting the student body and don't act on it."

Skull and Bones President William G. Landis Jr., also the business manager of *The Daily Collegian*, said the group does not consider its existence secret but keeps its membership confidential. Other members said they were told not to reveal their participation in the group.

As a recent graduate who is a member of Skull and Bones said: "They are honorary societies recognizing student leaders. They are not for Joe average student who sits around in his or her dorm room the whole time."

Landis wouldn't disclose a membership list but said the group is limited to 35 student members, called "actives." Alumni are considered associate members, and faculty and staff are called honorary members, with one chosen each semester during "tap week."

Skull and Bones and Parmi Nous are the last of a number of honor societies, or hat societies, that emerged in the early 1900s, during the University's early history.

Formed in 1913 by a group of upperclassmen, Skull and Bones aimed to promote "class spirit, by stimulating and cultivating

the best manifestations of college spirit and, by uniring watchfulness, to forestall and correct any tendency toward a disregard for or violation of college customs and traditions," according to a 1925 campus magazine article.

"This society prefers to work inconspicuously, chiefly by stimulating activity toward some good end on the part some appropriate organization, which is already in existence," the article continues.

But the society then was much more conspicuous than now. Members wore their black hats emblazoned with skulls on crossed bones around campus just as fraternity members wear their greek letters today.

A Hat Society Council existed to govern these societies. Hats, or beanies, were worn as a tradition to set members off from others and to show that they recognized a spiritual higher authority. The term "hat" also has been described as an acronym: "hazing allowed tonight."

John Black, a 1962 graduate and a member of Parmi Nous, said the hat societies "were very open, very much above ground,"

"The names of those people tapped would be printed in the *Collegian* each semester," he said. *La Vie* yearbook displayed group pictures of the members.

Black, an associate director for the Alumni Association, said the groups then ran the orientation programs for incoming freshmen and transfer students; formed an honor guard on the football field during games; and served as ushers at University functions.

"It was an honor to be in one of these organizations and everyone knew about it. If they are secret now that that is a departure."

So why did these groups go underground, shunning attention and avoiding recognition? The answer lies in social changes during the 1960s and the University's spectacular growth in that period.

"In the late '60s," said Landis, "being in a hat society just wasn't cool. With the student activist kind of mentality it was considered to be too close to the administration."

Other societies simply died. The Druids and the Friars, two sophomore societies for

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# Nicaragua downs plane

## American survivor accused of being military adviser

By **ANDREW SELSKY**  
Associated Press Writer

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — An American who survived when Sandinista soldiers shot down a cargo plane said yesterday that he is an aviation specialist who boarded the C-123 in El Salvador, and was captured in the jungle a day after the plane crashed.

Nicaraguan officials have claimed Eugene Hasenfus, 45, of Marinette, Wis., is an American military adviser serving in El Salvador and the transport shot down Sunday in southern Nicaragua was carrying weapons and ammunition to U.S.-backed Contra rebels fighting the leftist Sandinistas.

Sandinista army Lt. Col. Roberto Calderon said in Managua that Hasenfus and two Americans who died on the plane carried identification associating them with the U.S. military advisory group in El Salvador.

However, officials in Washington denied any connection between Hasenfus and the U.S. government. A Contra official in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, also denied that it had anything to do with the plane or the crew. Calderon also said Sandinista officials were considering whether to put Hasenfus on trial and whether to return the American victims' bodies to their families.

Hasenfus, unshaven and wearing muddied denim clothing, was led onto a stage at the Government Press Center in Managua after being flown by helicopter yesterday from the crash site.

"My name is Gene Hasenfus. I come from Marinette, Wis. I was captured yesterday in southern Nicaragua. Thank you," he said in a shaky voice. He was led away after 20 seconds, and reporters could not question him.

Hasenfus also was allowed to speak to local journalists briefly in San



In photo on left, Nicaraguan soldiers look at the wreckage of a C-123 transport plane shot down yesterday in El Talo, Nicaragua. American Eugene Hasenfus, the only survivor of the crash, is an American military advisor in El Salvador who was captured by the Sandinistas. At right, Sandinista soldiers lead a man identified as Eugene Hasenfus to a helicopter.

Carlos, a port on Lake Nicaragua near the crash site. He said the plane began its journey in Miami, picked him up in El Salvador, then took a Nicaraguan aboard in Honduras and entered Nicaraguan air space from Costa Rica at a site known as La Noca on the San Juan River.

According to Hasenfus, the Nicaraguan was one of three men killed in the crash.

Nicaraguan army officers who accompanied Hasenfus said the other two men killed were Americans they identified as Wallace Blaine Sawyer Jr. and Bill Cooper. Their hometowns were not available.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Pete Martinez said he had no information about either man.

Nicaragua had said initially that all three dead men were Americans, but

Calderon later said one was of "Latin origin."

The bodies were said to be in bad condition and still at the crash site in a remote jungle area north of the San Juan River, which helicopters had difficulty in reaching because of poor weather.

Calderon, chief of the military district where the plane was shot down, quoted Hasenfus as saying Sunday's flight had been his fourth Contra supply flight since July.

Calderon said Hasenfus' job in the supply flight was to kick bundles of supplies out of the plane. The C-123 is an older-model aircraft that was used widely during the Vietnam War.

Calderon said Hasenfus carried a card issued by the Salvadoran air force on July 28, 1986, authorizing him to enter restricted areas of Ilopango

Air Force Base in southern El Salvador.

Calderon claimed documents found in the downed transport plane and on the victims' bodies identified Cooper and Sawyer as members of the U.S. military advisory group in El Salvador.

He said Cooper was the plane's pilot, and Sawyer the co-pilot.

Another captured document had been issued to Cooper by a company called Southern Air Transport, Calderon said. That company, which reportedly has flown supplies to the Contras, said yesterday it knew nothing about Hasenfus or the flight.

Sandinista officials said the plane was shot down with a Soviet-made surface-to-air missile at a spot 35 miles north of Costa Rica and 91 miles southeast of Managua.

# Prof says S. Africa needs help of U.S. to end oppression

By **WINSLOW M. MASON Jr.**  
Collegian Staff Writer

In a speech yesterday on the education of blacks in South Africa, the Vice Chancellor and principal of the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, urged the University's Faculty Senate to help improve the oppressive conditions for black students and to help that country prepare for a post-apartheid era.

"We need your help now more than ever before," said Karl Tober, a well-known supporter of the education of black students.

The government has consistently tried to halt the education of blacks through admissions laws, zero financial support and the separation of education for blacks and whites, he said.

Tober, a proponent of academic excellence, has been touring the United States to let American universities know that the oppression of black students is abhorrent and cannot continue.

"My University cannot carry on unless this society gets involved," he said.

The University Office of the President and the Faculty Senate leadership invited Tober to speak here.

"Apartheid must go. There are no questions," he told Senate members.

Tober has delivered lectures at Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Penn, Stanford and Columbia Universities as part of a U.S. tour intended to let American Universities know that the condition of education for blacks in South Africa must be improved and that the help of universities abroad is desperately needed.

Tober emphasized that there is a white backlash called the moderate student alliance, which opposes efforts to upgrade the condition for students at the University of Witwatersrand. The organization "makes the KKK look like a heavenly choir," he said.

They hold demonstrations, show posters of violence and make a lot of noise. You would be surprised at what those "bastards" could do, he said.

But for all the efforts by the apartheid government and its supporters to suppress the education of South African blacks, Witswa-

**'My university cannot carry on unless this society gets involved.'**

—Karl Tober, Vice Chancellor and principal of the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

tersrand and Capetown Universities have continued to oppose and to fight the system. They stress active tutoring programs, financial assistance to poor blacks and a strong commitment by the University's administration, Tober said.

He said although his efforts have been somewhat successful, the time has come for other universities to get involved or the entire effort will be lost.

"We should talk more," he said of South African and American universities. "We need to establish an international scholarly solidarity." Tober described this as a system that would foster the critical communications link needed to support efforts to end oppression.

He also praised the University's SHARE program, which is designed to foster learning opportunities between the University and South Africa. He pleaded for its continued support.

"Please be aware that SHARE, in some essential elements, is precisely what we require from universities abroad. If we were deprived of your moral support, we would not survive."

Faculty Senate executive secretary George Bugyi said Tober's presentation was "absolutely spectacular. It's difficult for us (in the Senate) to realize what's going on over there. We don't have a good perspective."

When asked about the University's stand on divestment, Tober said "That's your problem, not mine," and added that he would not comment on this University's attempts for divestment and would not share his view on the issue.



Collegian Photo / Jody Stecher

## Head to head

A.J. Uscowskas (sophomore-architectural engineering) sketches the Old Botany Building under a watchful eye he sits on Atherton's Tomb. George

W. Atherton, who was president of the University from 1882 to 1906 is buried next to Schwab Auditorium.

## wednesday

### inside

The organizers of The Asylum, the on-campus non-alcoholic nightclub, hope to prove that Penn Staters don't have to drink alcohol to have a good time. For details about the its opening tonight, see Arts.....Page 12

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### weather

This afternoon, sunny and warmer. High near 70. Tonight, becoming cloudy with seasonable conditions. Low 47. Tomorrow, lots of clouds and it will be very windy with a high of 59.....Heldi Sonen