

Executive Director's Message



The Greatest Month of My Life (Embracing the Dream)

I turned fifty a few months ago. Yes, the Big Five-0. While that means that I've had my share of good times and bad, ups and downs, and that I have probably reached that age where I likely have had more yesterdays than tomorrows, nothing prepared me for the month of **January 2009**. Obviously, there have been other months; after all, I have been married for twenty-six years and have two great sons, but collectively, I had not experienced anything like this...*It was the greatest month of my life!*

First, we all know that January is the month of our founding, so naturally there is always a sense of excitement. As your Chief Operating Officer, generally that means several **Founders' Day** events. We began in Philadelphia, hosting the Grand Polemarch for what is believed to be the largest of our annual celebrations. Nearly **600 Brothers** attended. It was an outstanding program and celebration, very much representative of what our founding is all about. With little time to rest, he and I were off to Houston on that Sunday for the **Council of Presidents/Council of Executive Directors Meeting**. While in Houston, we had the opportunity to fellowship with our local Brothers including Senior Grand Vice Polemarch **William Randy Bates, Jr.**, and Southwestern Province Polemarch **Ronald V. Julun**, to announce that city as the site for our **2013 Conclave**. The next weekend led us to Charlotte and our **4th Annual National Founders' Day Celebration**. *It was simply a great time!* The Brothers of the Charlotte (NC) Alumni Chapter were exceptional hosts as we fellowshiped with nearly **500 Brothers**. As

we honored the 26th Grand Polemarch, **Dr. Ulysses McBride**, we were privileged with an outstanding keynote address by Brother **Michael V. Roberts**, CEO of the Roberts Companies. We also welcomed Rhodes Scholar Brother **Myron Rolle** from the Florida State University (Theta Eta) and presented him with the "*Creating Inspiration*" award. Our visit to Charlotte concluded with the kick-off of our **2nd Annual Sunday of Hope** program with stops at three of the area's top churches: University Park South, New Birth, and the University Park main facility. It was already the eleventh day of the month, but for me, it was just beginning.

So as I prepared for a trip to **Memphis** to serve as their Founders' Day speaker the next weekend, I began by attending the *America I Am* kick-off in Philadelphia, with my friend and Brother **Tavis Smiley**. The exhibit, arguably the largest and most significant display of African-American artifacts in the world, is displayed at the National Constitution Center. While walking a few steps behind Tavis and his mother, I could overhear him explaining the significance of it all as **Cornell West** looked on and smiled. It was truly an exciting and historical evening. I left Philadelphia a day later with my wife **Judith**; it was her first visit to Memphis. We started with a private tour of "our building" - **St. Jude Children's Research Hospital**. Each visit to the facility, the dream of the late entertainer **Danny Thomas** further highlights the great work they do and how important it is for Kappa to be a part of that. As I've said before, I believe our partnership with St. Jude will be one of the truly defining points in our history.

Our visit continued with a special visit to the *National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel*, the location of the death of **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** We, along with South Central Province Polemarch **Willie F. Brooks, Jr.**, were blessed to be a part of his birthday week celebration, as there were hundreds of visitors enjoying the timeless exhibits and displays. We ended the tour by standing outside of **Room 306** and in front of the balcony looking across the road at the place where the sound of the fatal bullet rang out. That was our final stop, staring through the window where the infamous bullet was fired. *It was Moving!*

For most, this would have been more than enough to be significant in the experiences of their life and times. Nevertheless, we hurried home that Sunday with just enough time to change bags, hop in the car, and begin our drive to the nation's Capitol to take part in the historic inaugural events. Having enjoyed

several events on Monday, including a prayer breakfast sponsored by the **Washington (DC) Alumni** Chapter, we prepared for the historic inauguration on Tuesday morning. It was truly historic, as we were packed in the crowd of millions that braved the cold for hours to witness the swearing in of our 44th President. And though, with tickets in hand, the Grand Polemarch, his wife **Lisa**, Grand Board Member **Thomas L. Battles, Jr.**, Judith and I, like countless others, never made our way inside the gates, it mattered not ("*how straight the gate*"). We laughed, we smiled, we even cried. A change had come to America, and we were there to witness it first-hand.

For me, that was not the end of this historical month. With another speaking engagement in **El Paso**, I was off to Texas a few days later. It was my first visit to western Texas and I was excited. As an avid sports fan, I remember El Paso as the home of Texas Western University, now the University of Texas El Paso. I remember the school as one of the first to start an all-black team during the 1966 NCAA basketball season. I clearly remember these underdogs, who were given no chance to win against the legendary Adolph Rupp led all-white Kentucky Wildcats, and winning the national championship. African-Americans all over the country were cheering, screaming, and celebrating. The events, now commonplace for those who have seen the big screen production of *Glory Road*, were spelled out throughout the university. So you can imagine the smile of contentment I wore as I strolled down "*Glory Road*" with Brothers **Dusty Rhodes** and **Bennie Cooley** and stood in front of the new **Don Haskins Arena**, named after the coach that must have said, if not out loud, certainly in his head, "*Yes, We Can!*" And they did. They managed the greatest upset of what is considered one of the most significant sporting event of our times. Just like Tavis, and Danny, and Barack, they embraced the dream Martin left us many years ago...and so did I.

I could live a dozen more lifetimes and it is unlikely that I will ever experience a month like **January 2009** again. Not sure I need to; I had seen a life time of good in 31 days...*it was the greatest month of my life!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Snow". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Richard Lee Snow

Executive Director/COO