

BETA DEKES GIVE AN OLD BROTHER NEW LIFE

WHEN DEKES FROM THE CLASS OF 1968 AT UNC CHAPEL HILL LEARNED THAT ONE OF THEIR OWN WAS IN NEED, THEY JUMPED INTO ACTION TO MAKE SURE THEIR BROTHER'S YEAR ENDED ON A POSITIVE NOTE.

By Cara Aungst, Affinity Connection



Beta Chapter's Class of '68 at their 50th reunion. Dickson Gribble is seated in the lower right corner. Tee Baur is beside Dickson, in the pink shirt. Bill Hollan, who organized the van project, is in the top row on the left end (wearing glasses). Peter Grauer is in front of Hollan wearing a white golf shirt.

An oft-touted benefit of fraternity membership is building friendships that last a lifetime. This story demonstrates that such promises are not only true, but just what good can come from the bonds of brotherhood more than five decades after they form.

It is thanks to such bonds of brotherhood that Dickson Gribble is still living his best life, even as the Army Military Intelligence veteran struggles with the effects of Parkinson's disease. Last Christmas, his fellow alumni from the class of 1968 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel

Hill came together to purchase a specially equipped van for Dickson and his wife. The gift — completely paid for in just two days — means mobility and freedom for their brother and friend.

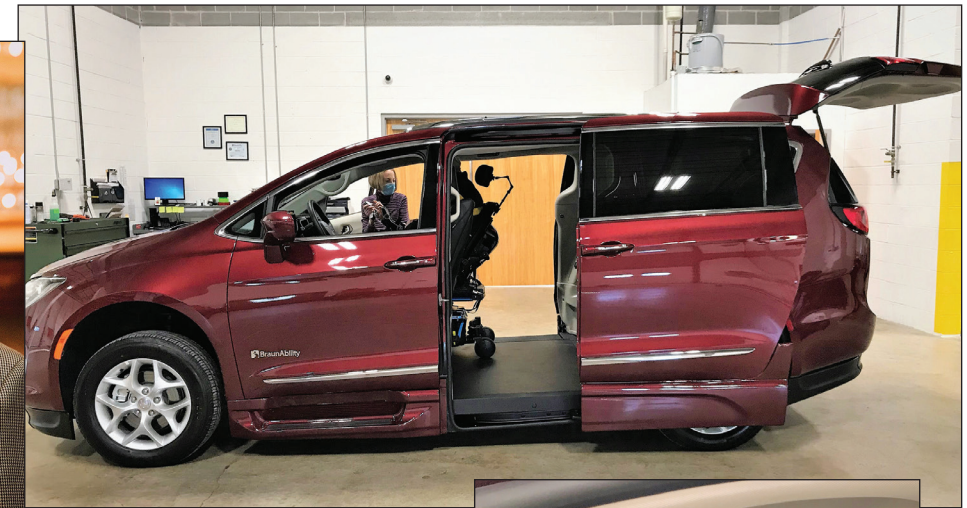
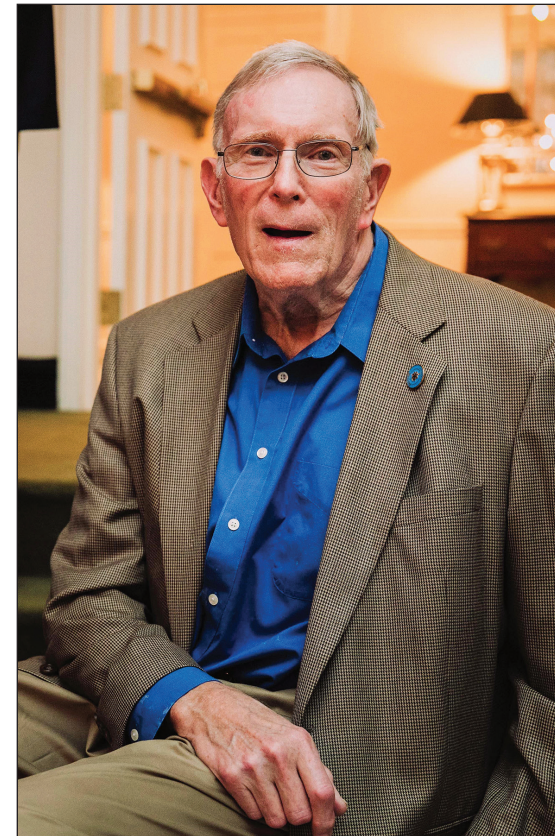
The friendship began during the spring of 1965, when a group of 32 young men pledged to the Beta Chapter of DKE together. From the get-go, they formed a bond that grew stronger over their four years of college. As they graduated and headed off into the world, these brothers promised to maintain their close connection. And year after year, they did. In fact, for their 50th reunion, 27 of the 32 brothers made the trip

to Chapel Hill to celebrate, reminisce and make new memories.

Around the time of the reunion, Bill Hollan had gotten in touch with Dickson, who had been his pledge roommate. It was a phone call that would eventually lead to the life-changing Christmas gift to close out 2020.

Brother Hollan, who made his career in real estate, recalls that Dickson was a basketball player, at least 6 ft. 8 in. tall. "He had to bring a special bed to the DKE house because he was too tall for any of the beds we had."

"We've stayed loosely in touch over the



Left: Dickson Gribble, Beta '68. Above: The specially outfitted Chrysler Pacifica the 1968 Betas bought for Dickson Gribble. Right: Susan and Dickson check out their 2020 Christmas gift.



years. Dickson spent his career in Army Military Intelligence, retiring as a full colonel, and he lived all over... in Thailand, Germany, England. Prior to our 50th reunion event a couple of years ago, I got back in touch with him and discovered that he was suffering from Parkinson's disease."

Some months after the 50th reunion, near Thanksgiving of 2020, Dickson and Bill connected again. In that phone call, Bill learned about how Dickson depended on his retirement community's vehicle for transportation.

Dickson also noted how getting around was more difficult during Covid, especially due to his height.

Through the Veterans Administration, Dickson and his wife Susan had applied for a grant to acquire a vehicle that would accommodate his motorized wheelchair. It would be a way to get out more, head to appointments, see grandchildren, and to enjoy excursions with his wife and friends.

As soon as Bill cradled the phone, he set out immediately to email his Beta pledge brothers. Of the original 32, only one, Brooke Williams has passed away, and the surviving brothers keep in touch through email. Bill gave them all a quick update of Dickson's health and mentioned that

Bloomberg L.P., sent back a one-line reply: "Can we help with the van?"

Later, Peter furthered his thoughts. "We're in the last half of the fourth quarter. We have to do all we can to help each other. Life is short. We've got to do something."

Peter and Bill had a conversation, and after that, "Bill did all the heavy lifting," Peter says. Bill looked into the cost for a vehicle that would accommodate Dickson's height and allow him and his wife to comfortably travel. They settled on a

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specially equipped Chrysler Pacifica. A second email went out to the brothers outlining the details.

What came next overwhelmed them both. "There was just an outpouring of support," Peter says. "That's what it's all about." Within days, 27 brothers jumped in with pledges. Not only was

the vehicle completely paid for, but it was ordered in time for Christmas.

"The DKE class of 1968 is already legendary within the UNC community, but I sincerely believe this has to be our proudest moment as a whole class," Bill said when he updated the group on December 4, 2020. "Because of your support, I was able to call the Mobility Works provider yesterday and tell her to put the wheels in motion to make

a configured van available before Christmas, if at all possible. When I explained where the funds were coming from, she said she had never seen such an act of generosity. I couldn't disagree."

"To me, that's what bonding and brotherhood are all about," Tee Baur, owner of Baur Properties, says. "We all feel close enough that when one of us has a concern or a problem, we have brothers who are there to help us out. To me, that speaks volumes about what brotherhood and fraternity life is all about."

Just after Christmas, Bill got a message that the whole pledge class had been waiting for. "This is one amazing van!" Dickson's wife, Susan, wrote. "We are absolutely thrilled and immensely grateful to you and all the guys for everything you have done. We're heading into 2021 full of hope and looking forward to the new freedom of movement for Dickson."

"This was a great ending to a very difficult year," Bill said. "Thanks, thanks, thanks."

Cara Aungst is a public relations partner to the Beta chapter.