

Looking Back

The Potter Club, Celebrating 75 Years, Looks to the Future

Author Joseph Persico, B.A.'52 (*Edward R. Murrow: An American Original, Nuremberg: Infamy on Trial*) is a member. So are U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Albert J. Kahn, B.A. 51, M.A.'52, and retired New York State Supreme Court Justice Daniel W. Joy, B.A.'52. Former Assembly Minority Leader and New York Power Authority Chair Clarence Rappleyea, B.A.'57, joined as a New York State College for Teachers undergraduate, as did Distinguished Alumnus Benjamin Button, B.S.'54, M.D. And the list goes on and on.

They are among the more than 500-plus Pottermen whose names appear in the database of the University's Potter Club, which disbanded in the 1980s. The club had its roots in the non-fraternal State Union, created in 1931 and open to all State College men regardless of race or religion. (The only fraternity on campus at the time was the restricted Kappa Delta Rho, which broke away from the national organization in 1952 and became the non-restricted Alpha Pi Alpha.) At the suggestion of then-State College for Teachers President Abram Brubacher, the State Union was renamed in 1933 for former student Edward Eldred Potter, who left school to join the Army's aviation service during World War I and died in a crash at Orly Field near Paris in 1918.

More than a half-century after joining the Potter Club, Paul Ward, B.A.'53, M.A.'54, hopes "there's some way we could keep Edward Potter's legacy alive on this campus." He and Robert Umholtz, B.S.'51; Robert Lanni, B.A.'52, M.A.'54; Milan Krchniak, B.A.'53, M.A.'58; James E. Panton, B.A.'53, D.P.A.'87; Kenneth Doran, B.S.'39, Ed.D.; Howard Lynch, B.S.'43, Ed.D.; Bernard McEvoy, B.S.'57, M.D.; and their fellow Pottermen are up to the task of carrying on the ideals of their club's namesake, who was known for his love of learning, acting, music, and poetry, and also excelled in gardening and furniture-making.

"Perhaps the club could be re-established as a coed service organization under the Potter name," suggested McEvoy. "We would be willing to help in any way possible."

The club's 75th reunion — planned for May 31 and June 1 and 2, just prior to Alumni Weekend — will feature a tour of the former Potter Club house at 415

State and a special presentation by University archivist Geoff Williams. A banquet will include the singing of the club song and the renewal of the initiation oath.

"I think it's remarkable that we still get together and have this bond of shared experiences," Ward observed.

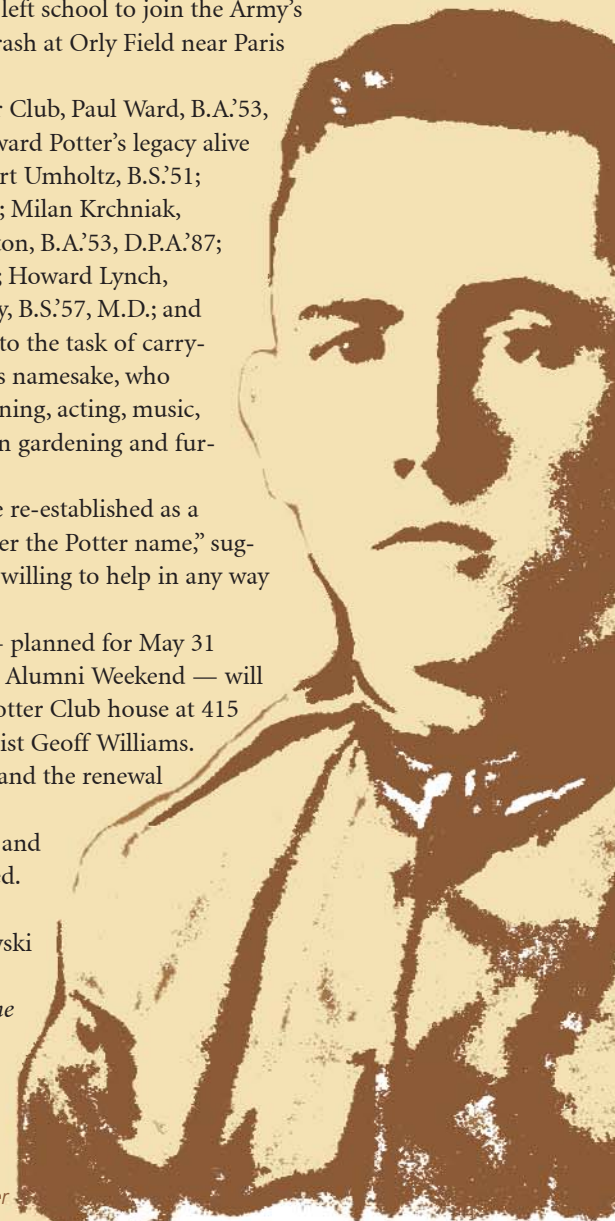
— Carol Olechowski

(For more information about the Potter Club or the reunion, please contact Jack Higham, B.S.'57, at (607) 748-9015 or highamwj@stny.rr.com.)



Photo: Mark Schmidt

Clockwise from lower right: Pottermen Milan Krchniak and Robert Lanni (seated), Robert Umholtz, Bernard McEvoy and Paul Ward gathered at Alumni House last December.



Edward Eldred Potter