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Depositions reveal hazing in former student's death

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Recent depositions from former pledges of the Texas Tech chapter of Delta Sigma Phi revealed incidences of hazing that took place before and may have contributed to the death of former Tech student and fraternity member Zachary Mullins in 2001.

According to a lawsuit filed by his parents, Mullins died Oct. 21, 2001, after a Delta Sigma Phi sanctioned, authorized and mandatory fraternity event.

According to the recent deposition of former pledge Gerald Lim, the pledges began "Hell Week" Oct. 18, 2001. The pledges were blindfolded and taken to Coleman Hall where they were subject to three days of sleep deprivation and exhaustion, disorientation, dizziness, fatigue and hallucination. The activities that took place at "The Ritual" specifically required the pledges to "meet the greatest test" as part of their initiation into the fraternity, according to the lawsuit.

The morning after initiation, Zachary Jameson drove while Mullins slept in the back seat. Jameson informed Lim that he fell asleep while driving, overcorrected and flipped the car.

According to the depositions, none of the actives provided rides home for the pledges and encouraged them to find their own ride.

The attorney for Mullin's mother, Thomas Herald, said the lawsuit pending in Lubbock is to hold the Delta Sigma Phi fraternity accountable for the death of Mullins.

"The pledges admitted to hazing, but the fraternity won't do anything against their own members," Herald said. "Zack James was directed by Scott Hunter, his big brother, to give false information to the police when the accident occurred."

Herald said he also recalls in 1994, the Sigma Delta Phi Fraternity was disciplined, due to the death of one member falling off a cliff in Palo Duro Canyon. In 2000, a member of the Delta Sigma Phi Fraternity in New York became permanently impaired from a car wreck driving home from his initiation.

The fraternity has not taken action to prevent further incidents of hazing, Herald said.



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"It's disturbing because after the incident, nothing changed," he said. "The national chapter has threatened to close only because of the decline in membership and smaller funds."

The defendant's attorney, Bob Craig, said a pending lawsuit also is against the national chapter and individuals pledged and active at the time of the event.

"On file, there is a motion for summary judgment, where there is no liability held against the individuals," Craig said. "I anticipate there will be a motion for summary judgment for the remainder of individuals and local chapter in the next few months."

Craig said the lawsuit is a significant legal issue as to whether members are liable.

Current President Delta Sigma Phi Chris Vance was a pledge at the time of the event.

"Since I saw what went on, my feelings on not hazing have been very adamant," Vance said. "I vocalize that were not hazing anymore."

The active members who participated in the fall 2001 informal initiation ceremony testified that they went through similar initiation to become a member of the Delta Sigma Phi fraternity.

According to Lim's deposition, the pledges did not report the hazing to the university or to any law enforcement authorities.

Jennifer Hammat, Student Mediation Center unit associated director, said the incident took place three code years ago. She said since the incident was a car accident in Coleman, Tech Police were not notified. No depositions were sent to Tech regarding hazing when the incident happened, so no action within the school can be taken.

"At this point, we have speculation," Hammat said. "It would take a formal

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