



William W. "Bill" Nicholson '65

Has been elected to membership in the

Beta Phi Hall of Honor Class of 2012

William W. "Bill" Nicholson put the Kansas farm where he was raised in his rearview mirror, and headed to the University of Arizona with the daunting realization that the campus held a larger population than his hometown.

He played freshman basketball and studied mathematical engineering while deciding to pledge Sigma Chi. The life skills that were difficult to develop in a rural setting started to come into focus. At Beta Phi, Brother Nicholson learned the value of interaction with multiple personalities and their willingness to provide guidance, solutions and friendships. Bill transferred to the University of Nevada to continue his basketball career, which included All-American honorable mention; the All-Century Team and an inductee into the Nevada Athletic Hall of Fame. He graduated with a degree in finance in 1966.

Brother Nicholson enlisted into the U.S. Air Force and graduated from pilot training in 1968. He completed two tours in the S.E. Asia, flying over 300 combat missions and was awarded two distinguished Flying Crosses, multiple Air Medals, the Vietnamese Medal of Honor and Cross of Gallantry. He was honorably discharged with a rank of captain in 1971. Upon returning from Vietnam, Brother Nicholson engaged in politics, charity work involvement and entrepreneurial activities. He became Appointments Secretary to President Gerald Ford. After the White House, he was named to the Presidential Commission on Personnel Interchange. He also was selected for Outstanding Young Men in America; Outstanding Young Political Leaders; and he created the Foundation for the Study of Presidential and Congressional Term Limits. Later he served as the Chairman of the Michigan Export Commission.

Charity focus has been in areas of environmental and animal protection and medical research. He has been associated with M.D. Anderson Cancer Center since 1992 and an advisor to the Van Andel Institute since its founding.

Business interests include ownership of radio stations, controlling shareholder of Swiftships, Inc. (largest building of patrol boats and offshore service vessels in the world). He took time off to race power boats and was a national champion in 1980. He joined two other investors and purchased the Superconducting Super Collider from the federal government; purchased and developed multiple parcels of Texas real estate that originated from the RTC Auctions and drilled for natural gas in north Texas. In 1984 Brother Nicholson commenced an eight-year stint as COO of Amway Corporation during which time he oversaw revenues grow from under \$1 billion to over \$6 billion in 1992. Since 1992, Brother Nicholson has continued his entrepreneurial efforts with investments and involvement in the fields of entertainment, nutrition and sports, alternative energy and recreational boat building.

Of his Sigma Chi experience, Brother Nicholson says, "The most critical dimension of my life was the formative years with my Beta Phi Brothers that established the roots of my life skills so necessary to functioning in all the varied chapters of my life."