

INTRODUCTION

The Greek and honors societies at Daniel Morgan University draw large numbers of students each year through their bid process. As a college predominantly in a rural area, these societies offer the social opportunities that cannot be found in the outside community. Though the honors societies choose their members differently than the traditional Greek organizations, there still remains an honored ritual of bid, acceptance, and initiation. Epsilon Sigma Epsilon (ESE) is no different in that regard. As a University accredited honors society, they are by nature co-ed. ESE engages primarily in service related activities, although there is an optional pledge process, as well as social events. Though not a traditional Greek organization, ESE has its own house through the generous philanthropy of an alumni member. ESE has all of the traditional roles as with Greek societies, like the chapter president, vice president, treasurer, social chair, education chair, and pledge master.

Saturday, August 29, 2009, was the last day in the pledge week for the ESE pledges. Throughout the week they had participated in various activities commonly referred to as the Pledge Olympics. This included activities each day, such as wiffle ball in the back yard, quiz sessions on University and ESE history, and team building activities. What loomed before the pledges on that Saturday afternoon was made out by other members to be the most dreaded event – Water Jeopardy. This was a variant of Jeopardy™ that was the culmination of all their studies about ESE and Daniel Morgan University. Much like Jeopardy™, contestants provided questions to the answers that were on the board. Only instead of earning points it was to avoid chugging water. Years ago ESE developed this as an alternative to forcing pledges to chug beer, which was clearly against University rules. Against the wall in the basement of the ESE house was a row of normal office water coolers, all with five gallon water jugs. The penalty for a wrong answer was to drink for a time period that increased with the value of the question. Failure to put the answer in the form of a question necessitated an even longer drinking period. Pledges were told that they could not go to the bathroom while playing the game. Nursing student Tammy Canes (who convinced Jessica Bateson to pledge with her) got fed up with the treatment during Water Jeopardy and quit. Additionally, Tammy said she learned in nursing classes that this was probably dangerous to all the participants. After consuming an excessive amount of water during Water Jeopardy, Jessica collapsed and appeared to have passed out. This scared the pledge master, pledges, and other members of ESE who were present. 911 was called.

EMS and University Police responded. EMS found Jessica in an unresponsive state and transported her to the local hospital. Jessica Bateson died within two hours of the collapse without ever regaining consciousness. From the initial investigation, Sgt. Chris Knight found no wrongdoing and concluded that Jessica simply collapsed while playing an ESE game. Further investigation prompted by the results of the autopsy, indicated that Jessica died due to a swollen brain stem brought on by acute hyponatremia from overconsumption of water. Pledge Master Taylor Durden was charged with involuntary manslaughter, and the lesser included offense of hazing. ESE Chapter President Alex Richards was granted criminal immunity and agreed to testify for the state, though civil suits are pending.