

March 21, 2019

Can you state your name for the record?

Elizabeth Hurdle

When were you born?

I was born April 5, 1995

Where were you born?

Oxford, MS

Where did you grow up? What other places have you lived?

I grew up in Oxford and I lived there until then past fall when I moved to Louisville, KY for Grad School.

What was your high school experience like can you share some stories?

Both my parents were teachers so I was home schooled through high school. I had the choice to go to public school but I decided not to because I had a lot more freedom being home schooled. I have a twin sister and we were both homeschooled so we were able to have a lot more freedom with our time when we wanted to choose our classes and we were both very into music and would go to concerts a lot during the week, which we were able to do because we were homeschooled, as long as we got our schoolwork done. We are both very into music and we are both very into art. We took art classes. I am almost 24 now so I don't remember a lot about high school.

What was the transition like from high school to college just as much as you can remember?

It really wasn't that difficult. I thankfully had a really good education with both my parents being teachers so I didn't find it particularly difficult. The only thing different was going from homeschooling with it just being me and my sister to being a lot more people. I enjoyed it. I liked it. I liked having more opportunities to interact with people.

Why did you choose Ole Miss?

I'm from Oxford and both my parents work there, and my grandparents work there and went there and because both my parents work there I got free tuition.

Did your parents attend Ole Miss even though they taught there?

My dad attended Ole Miss. My mom went to Tennessee.

Where else did you apply to college or was it just Ole Miss?

It was just Ole Miss.

What did you know about Greek life before coming to Ole Miss?

Not very much. My mom was a Theta at Tennessee. She was the only one in my family besides, well the only female in my family that was in Greek life and she was the first. And

so, at ole miss I knew about it because I grew up in Oxford but I didn't really. I only had one or two friends that were in it before and I think both of them ended up dropping before I started college. So, I didn't really have people in Greek life before I started.

When did you pledge?

When I was... 2015.

Was that your freshman year?

No, it was my Junior year.

What was your recruitment experience like?

It was good. I almost didn't... my mom when she was in college didn't go through recruitment until she was a junior either and my freshman and sophomore year I didn't have any desire to go through recruitment. But my mom told me that "I did it when I was a junior and I was more confident, more secure in what I thought about myself." She said just do it and, if you don't like it, you don't have anything to regret. So, I went through recruitment. It was exhausting but I enjoyed it for the most part. And I had good conversations with people. It was overwhelming but I mean I stayed in my sorority and graduated and now I am an alumna so, clearly, I liked it.

How would you describe Greek life on the Ole Miss campus?

It's very competitive and its very intense. I don't think a lot of girls know what they are getting into when they go through recruitment. I think especially going through recruitment as a junior I joined the sorority I liked it didn't really matter to me what other people were saying. Ole miss sororities can offer you really great opportunities, but I think sometimes people get caught up in the "I want to be in the one all my friends are in" or "I want to be in this house for this reason." There was only three or four that I really liked and I could see myself in and one of them was the one I ended up in so I'm grateful for that but it's very, very competitive and growing up in oxford I didn't realize how tense it was because I didn't really know anybody who went through recruitment.

What is the mission of theta?

Do you mean my chapter, or nationally, or both?

Either/or

I would say my chapter was very inclusive, and they were very accepting of others and what other people believed. A big thing for us was we had so many girls from so many different states. When I was a senior, we had girls from almost forty states. My family (big, grand big, and my littles) we were all from different states which I thought was really cool. Being diverse, and then nationally, it's the same. About accepting other people for who they are. When I went through recruitment, one of the biggest draws to theta was that I grew up in Mississippi in Oxford, I didn't have a whole lot of interest in being in a sorority which just had girls from Mississippi. There's nothing wrong with that, but that is what I grew up in. I wanted something different. Theta was different. Our tagline is "leading women" and so it's

about women supporting women when they need encouraging to be the best version of themselves.

What does theta mean to you?

That's a hard question. My chapter gave me so many opportunities and it really did embody "leading women." When I came in and I saw older girls who were officers, I remember thinking how cool and inspiring they were, and I ended up being an officer. I was shy, but my sorority gave me a lot of confidence to pursue leadership within my sorority but also outside of it. It gave me more confidence in myself and my abilities. I have some of my best friends who were in my sorority. I am super close to my big; she is like the older sister I never had. Theta's really were my sisters. We had a really close sisterhood. When you have hundreds of girls, you aren't going to get along 24/7, but we had each other's backs. We always would fight for each other.

Can you tell us about your philanthropy?

Our main philanthropy, we actually had several, was CASA (court appointed special advocates). Girls would be trained to be a CASA. My grand-little actually is a CASA now. You would be with a child in court and these kids were in the foster care system and they might have been abused. You are just supposed to be someone that is there who is in their life that is constant. They can be there to support them. Our philanthropy event, Theta Encore, for the past several years has raised the most money for CASA out of all the Theta chapters so that's great.

Can you tell us about other events, programs, or activities you sponsored or hosted for those individuals that are learning about Theta for the first time?

In the Spring, we did a couple of different things. We did cupcakes for CASA for a while. One year we did Pops for a Purpose which was raising money for one of our other philanthropies. I believe it was for the Friendship Fund. My last year I was on the fundraising committee and we put on Theta Carnival, and we raised money for CASA again.

What was your average day like when you were at Ole Miss? Can you walk us through a day in your life as a Theta?

I was an active for three years, and two of those years I was living in the house. I spent a lot of time at the house. I would get up normally go to class in the morning. My little lived in the house both years that I was there. I would spend a lot of time with her throughout the day. Most of my friends lived on my hall. I didn't know that many people when I first moved into the house so like for the second semester of the first year that I lived there I was friends with most of the girls on the hall so we would just go in each other's rooms and hang out. We had a meal plan which we had three meals a day throughout five days a week that we would eat at the house. I was a hospitality management major so I spent a lot of time with the hall. My mom worked at Farley hall and was at school most of the time so I spent a lot of time there. Not very exciting.

So, you never lived off campus in your time as a Theta?

No

What do you think were the challenges to recruitment?

When I went through recruitment, I looked up all the sororities philanthropies. I didn't really know anything about Theta's philanthropy. The only one I knew about was KD because I did girls scouts through high school. I knew that their philanthropy was involved with girl scouts, but other than that I didn't really know. I had a friend who was a Kappa besides that didn't really know much. When I looked up their values, Theta was one of the ones that I liked the most. I remember being in the ranking lines and weighing the other houses and girls standing next to me would say things about theta and I thought, "I have never heard any of these things" I didn't know what they were talking about or why people said things about them because I had a great experience. The first day, Theta was one of my top four houses. So, I didn't get what the issue was. In the sorority, I have inside practicing, but why PNM's would come in from the outside and not like it. I don't especially know because when I went through I had a good experience at Theta. Our last year, last semester I still have several friends who are there, and we had nationals come down and then told us that we put on one of the best recruitment's last fall that they had ever seen.

They told you that this year?

Last fall, yeah. I mean I wasn't there so I don't know how it went. So I don't really know why girls didn't like it and had negative opinions about it when they went through. I do know that I had friends that would come in my room and I would see they had been crying because PNM's were really nasty to them. I do know it was really hard for girls in Theta. Like I said, I had a really good experience. The first girl I talked to on Greek day ended up being my sister's big and we became really good friends. I am going to her wedding this summer. I had a great experience and it's hard for me to answer that question.

Was there a prior indication that you could lose your charter or was it sprung on you? How did the women react?

We knew that there were issues with retention, obviously. Headquarters always said they were trying to help us but we didn't always feel that we were getting the help that we needed. We didn't totally understand why. I know I had a friend call me after a meeting a week before they found out that the charter might get pulled and she was asking me questions about stuff that had happened while I was an officer. All the girls that got on bid day had ranked Theta first. My grand little was on exec, and she was in charge of COB and they had a lot of girls who had COBs. We had raised our GPA substantially the past few years, and we raised the most money for our philanthropy. Everyone thought that we were doing a lot better by all the standards that headquarters had sent us. We were doing everything that they asked of us. So I do know that a lot of the actives felt like it came out of the blue then you had just a couple of weeks later Clemson State's Theta charter get pulled. That was really bad; they had no idea that it was coming. So I would say no, we did know that there was issues in the past, but everyone thought that it was getting better. I don't think most people saw it coming.

Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experiences as a Theta?

Not that I can think of off the top of my head. I do have to say, the one thing that I will say, my experience at Ole Miss was made by Theta. I never regretted being a Theta. It was one of the best decisions that I made at Ole Miss.