

The Tortugas

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Alex Caldwell, president of CMC's Tortugas, lives on the quad side of Green Hall. But as our interview about the new Tortugas, led by Caldwell, Brian Fuerst, Brando McCune, and Owen Thal, continues he points out a fifteen foot long banner stashed in the corner of his room with massive green letters painted on, spelling out "Tortugas" and reminding every fan of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles symbol. Some of you would remember seeing it hung up in the Green lounge during the Tortugas Saki party, from January, or the more recent Easter TNC. The group is responsible for the revitalization of the Tortugas, a fraternity-like, invitation-only organization that was last seen on campus in 1970.



History of the Tortugas

The "Tortugas of Prado Dam" were last active at CMC in 1970. The name "Tortugas of Prado Dam" stems from the legend that the original Tortugas would float from **Prado Dam** ^[1] on a raft, all the while enjoying a special "Tortuga" drink. A hard copy of the recipe dates to 1952 and bears the name Mike Brown, one of the men believed to be a founder, written on it.

According to Jerry Cadagan, a Tortuga Alumni from the class of 1960, in the early '60s "the school coerced the club to change it's name to Mara Togas."

The original Tortugas were an exclusive social club founded in 1953. Mr. Cadagan, who was vehement that I address him as Jerry, said they were "absolute hell-raisers." Jerry is quick to note that "Tortugateers" were also commonly Dean's List students and have maintained a strong bond since graduation, leading to several reunions, financial contributions to the school, and a scholarship fund established in 2005.

The Tortugas Return

The current Tortugas began as a barbeque club in the fall of 2006 but evolved into a social club entitled the Saturday Night Stags that adopted the name Tortugas after John Faranda mentioned the name to Kyle Ragins. "We contacted [the old Tortugas] and they were pumped to help us start it up again...so we renamed ourselves the Tortugas," explained Caldwell. The alumni, led by Jerry Cadagan, provided a short history of the Tortugas and their traditions for the current Tortugateers so they could have an idea of what the group once was. Several current Tortugateers have also been invited to the upcoming reunion on April 26th.

The original revitalization of the club was sparked when the DAC and SAC sent out an email last year to the student body about the party scene. Several students felt the party scene was lacking; the email addressed those issues and asked for help from the students who could throw their own parties, according to Caldwell.

Membership

Membership is by invitation only, and members go through an initiation. Currently the Tortugas have about 40 members, all male students at CMC. Brian Fuerst, a Vice President of the Tortugas, was recently elected Social Affairs Chair of the ASCMC. What some see as a conflict of interest, the Tortugas see as an advantage— the leadership of the Tortugas say they work with the SAC and school administration. The Tortugas also have all four north quad dorm presidents and Yohei Nakijima, former SAC, as members of the Tortugas.

Though their numbers are growing, the Tortugas have been low key and are trying to gather more money from members. Dues are \$60 per semester, but not all members are paying. The money goes toward parties, says Caldwell, some of which are exclusive; some are open to all. According

to Caldwell, Tortuga parties have been tame and sparse this year compared to where the organization hopes to go in the coming semesters.

While the Tortugas have been fairly quiet this year, hopes are big for next semester. After Caldwell concluded the interview, he immediately began to explain where he sees the Tortugas going next year. Caldwell turned to his roommate at the time, Skipp Stillwell, and said, “Just talking about it gets me so excited– next fall I want to do even bigger things.”

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[1] Prado Dam: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prado_Dam