

Delta Chapter Turns 40

Forty years ago I bought a new 1969 Volkswagen beetle. Forty years ago I joined the Sierra Club. I still have the beetle, it's still running fine; I still belong to the Sierra Club, and it's going strong too.

It was 1969 when I read in the Tulane University Hullabaloo that a Louisiana chapter of the Sierra Club was forming. I had hiked and camped in Yosemite when I was on U. S. Navy active duty in California, so I had already heard a little bit about the club. The organizer, later chairman and even later president of the national Sierra Club, was a somewhat stuffed-shirt lawyer named Bill Futrell. Bill was intensely focused, with a missionary's zeal, on getting the chapter established, and his efforts paid off as the Delta Chapter makes 40 (as we say in New Orleans)



What is it about so much importance? times because forty is a built the ark, it rained for passed through the Red wandered for 40 years desert to pray and fast he stayed there 40 days. period during the 40 days commemorates when and whose name is given after Easter. St.. Paul when he was beaten 39 Corinthians that he had been whipped “forty times less one.” On the other hand, maybe Paul didn't like to write “thirty-nine.”

40 that carries so much power, Maybe it got started in biblical big number in the Bible. After Noah 40 days and 40 nights. After they Sea, Moses and the Israelites in the desert. Jesus went into the before beginning his mission, and Christians commemorate that of Lent. Ascension Day, which Jesus left the earth for heaven to Ascension Parish, is 40 days liked the number 40 so much that times, he reported in a letter to the

Remember the story of Ali Baba in Arabian Nights? He isn't associated with Baba Ganoush or Babas au Rhum but with 40 thieves who hung out with him in the desert.

In one of his sonnets Shakespeare elegantly described reaching the magic age of 40 as “When forty winters shall besiege thy brow. . . .” In Will's day I guess that was getting sort of old, and people were losing teeth; today forty-year-olds are still wearing braces. Something magical must have happened in the 400 years since Shakespeare's time. Four hundred years is ten times forty.

One of the wisest men in American history spoke of the importance of 40. In Poor Richard's Almanac Ben Franklin wrote that “At twenty years of age, the will reigns; at thirty, the wit; and at forty, the judgment.” I wonder how old he was when he was flying that kite in a thunderstorm.

After General William Tecumseh Sherman drove his army from Atlanta to Savannah, he issued a hopeful but unenforceable order giving freed slaves “40 Acres and a Mule.” They never got it; the magic of 40 didn't go that far. But the order was reasonably credible. Had he promised “40 Mules and An Acre” no one's hope would have been raised.